Confucian Thought and the
Modern Chinese Quest
for Moral Autonomy*

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This article attempts to add to the continuing discussion about the relation between the Confucian tradition and modernity. This discussion has already gone through several five stages: Wo-jen's (d.1871) rejection of Western ways; Chang Chih-tung's (1837-1909) idea of combining Western and traditional ways; May Fourth iconoclasm, which increasingly dominated intellectual life until the 1960 s or so; the rise of modern Confucian humanism, illustrated by the influence of Yü Ying-shih; and the continuing contemporary rejection or basic criticism of traditional values, illustrated by the writings of Yang Kuo-shu or even the recent television series *Ho-shang*. In the West too, criticism of Confucian values has continued, as illustrated by Benjamin I. Schwartz's view of Confucius as putting more emphasis on ritual, status, authority, and hierarchy than on the moral autonomy of the individual.

This article argues that some of this controversy can be clarified by distinguishing between normative questions (*should* Confucian values persist ?) and historical or factual questions (*have* they persisted ?). Turning first to the factual aspects, many scholars today reject exceptionalism. China was no exception in world history: As in other cases, modernization in China has been a mix of continuities and discontinuities with the past. Much of the Little Tradition has persisted; modern intellectual movements have explicitly evoked traditional values; so has the political philosophy of the Three Principles of the People; and many traditional modes of thinking have influenced even iconoclasm. Recent work by S.N. Eisenstadt and Robert N. Bellah suggests that as any "axial civilization" such as China modernizes, traditional orientations created thousands of years ago persist to a large extent even as controversy surrounds them.

Turning to the normative questions, scholars largely agree that modernization has been furthered by the traditional, persisting emphasis on socially harmonious, efficient, constructively competitive, and economically useful work. Second, they largely agree on

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the need to emphasize science and instrumental rationality, including full access to the world's historical and contemporary sources of knowledge (Karl W. Deutsch's "open -ness"). Many Mainland scholars today blame the traditional culture and the Communist regime for neglecting this need. Largely meeting this need, the political system in Taiwan did so by continuing that process of cultural revision going back to the thought of K'ang Yu-wei and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao. Third, scholars have also largely agreed that moderniza- tion requires an emphasis on freedom and equality, and that therefore Chinese should reject the tradition's emphasis on monarchy, the inferiority of women, and aristocratic rank (such as the imperial nobility).

What scholars still disagree about is whether the modern need for freedom and equal- ity is in conflict with the general Confucian approach toward the problems of authority and individual autonomy. Yang Kuo-shu says it is in conflict, and Benjamin I. Schwartz in effect has the same position, while modern Confucian humanists say that Confucian thought put primacy on the moral autonomy of the individual. This article offers more evidence supporting the position of modern Confucian humanism in this regard.

It also argues, however, that there is another aspect of the Confucian tradition which modern Confucian humanists and other scholars have largely overlooked, and which has a complex, partly problematic relation to the modern goal of a polity founded on equality and freedom. This aspect of the Confucian tradition is described here as "optimistic this-worldliness."

I. The Problem

The relation between the Confucian tradition and modernization was

first turned into a central intellectual problem when Chang Chih-tung (1837-1909) put forward his famous formula in 1898, "Chinese learning for the foundation, Western learning for instrumental adaptation" (*Chung-hsueh wei t'i, Hsi-hsueh wei yung*). Gradually thereafter, there was an increasing tendency for Chinese and Western intellectuals to believe that Chinese modernization required the rejection of the Confucian tradition. Professor Chang Hao has recently traced the roots of this iconoclasm back especially to the radical, paradoxically Confucian utopianism of T'an Ssu-t'ung (1865-1898), arguing that his utopianism was shaped also by Buddhist, Moist, Christian, and other influences. (Chang, 1987, 1988; Wang, 1987) Arising during World War One, the May Fourth Movement was radically iconoclastic, whether in case of the Marxist Ch'en Tu-hsiu (1879-1942) or the liberal Hu Shih (1891-1962). This iconoclasm then became basic to the Marxist ideology of the People's Republic of China, which began ruling the Mainland in 1949, but it was also strongly represented by intellectuals living in the Pepublic of China during the 1950 s and 1960 s, such as the liberal philosopher and political critic Yin Hai-Kuang (1919-1969), whose major iconoclastic work was first published in 1966, *Chung-kuo wen-hua-te chan-wang* (An Appraisal of Chinese Culture and its Prospects). While Chinese iconoclasm regarded the Confucian tradition as a still living set of values that should be largely rejected, many Western scholars suggested it had already died, or that any current Chinese support for it was absurd or moribund. This viewpoint was forcefully presented especially by Joseph R. Levenson in his 1958 book *Confucian China and its Modern Fate: The Problem of Intellectual Continuity*. Thus the belief that the Confucian era was at an end stemmed ultimately from the confluence of two different trends: an indigenously Chinese utopianism aroused by the crisis of the Western impact; and a rejection of Confucian values rooted in the European Enlightenment and expressed by some of the greatest European thinkers, such as Hegel, Marx, John Stuart Mill, and Max Weber.

East and West, Confucian values were usually criticized in three ways. First, they were regarded as somehow inimical to the development of science, and, more broadly, as having failed to promote a critical and rigorous approach to the problem of knowledge, such as was developed by Descartes and Hume. Second, they were correctly described as having not led to the invention of democratic political procedures subordinating the leaders of the government to the desires of the voters. Third, they were criticized from the standpoint of Western individualism as undermining the autonomy of the individual by making him submit to the norms of social groups, especially the family and the state. To use Emile Durkheim's influential formulations, one can speak of the general human need for some balance between group and self, avoiding both the anomie of "excessive individualism" and a situation in which "the ego is not its own property···it is blended with something not itself," and so "society holds" the individual "in too strict tutelage." (Parson, Shils, Naegele and Pitts 1961, I: 214, 217) Confucianism was rejected for exercising such excessive "tutelage" over the self when it was repeatedly described as authoritarian, collectivistic, familistic, putting primacy on social hierarchy, and so on.

Already in the 1920 s, however, Chinese scholars began to defend Confucian values against at least some of these criticisms. This defense goes back to the writings of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao (1873-1929), Liang Shu-ming (1893-), and Hsiung Shih-li (1885-1968). Their writings were basic to the rise of the New Confucians, strongly represented since the 1950 s by Hsu Fu-Kuan, T'ang Chün-i, and Mou Tsung-san, and to a broader movement, which includes historians critical of the New Confucians' philosophical and historiographical methods but sharing entirely their insistence that Chinese modernization can succeed only if based on the "values" or "spirit" of Confucius(551-479 B.C.). Such historians include the great master Ch'ien Mu and his student Yü Ying-shih, today a University Professor at Princeton Univer-

sity. Probably the single most moving vindication of Confucian values was T'ang Chün-i's *Chung-kuo wen-hua-chih ching-shen chia-chih* (The Human Value of the Confucian Spirit), first published in 1953, when so much of the Chinese and the Western world had accepted Marxism as China's "new historical orthodoxy." Another highly influential document arousing less controversy was Yu Ying-shih's *Ts'ung chia-chih hsi-t'ung k'an Chung-kuo wen-hua-te hsien-tai i-i* (Modernization and Chinese Culture: A Discussion from the Standpoint of the Traditional Value System), which grew out of a lecture given on September 1, 1983 at Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in Taipei and was first published in 1984.

All these defenders of Confucian values in effect regard these values as having found that balance between self and group sought by Durkheim. Yü Ying-shih describes Chinese generally, not just good Confucians, as believing "that moral value has its source within the mind of each self…" (Yü, 1984 : 74,87) Often quoted are these very expressive sayings of Confucius: "being moral is something that comes from the self (*yu-chi*) …. The man of integrity seeks within himself (*ch'iu-chu-chi*), while the petty fellow without intetgrity tries to get from others what he needs to be happy" (*Lun-yü*, 12.1,15.21).

With morality as something emerging out of the individual, "all the different kinds of relationships between human beings…equally cluster around the character of the individual as spokes do around the hub of a wheel, "as T'ang Chün-i put it. (T'ang 1972: 153-154)

Thus carrying the responsibility for making life moral, the individual also found his dignity. This idea of dignity was captured especially by Mencius' (371-289 B.C. ?) phrase describing what gives joy to the man of integrity: "He need feel no shame whether looking upward to heaven or standing before other human beings" (*Meng-tzu* ,7 A:20). Hsun-tzu (ca. 298-238 B.C.) is often described as the most authoritarian among the classic Confucians,

but T'ang Chün-i astutely showed that according to Hsun-tzu, "Man's dignity becomes evident as man is seen in relation to the whole natural world of heaven, earth, and the ten thousand things. "(T'ang, 1976: 437,441) In the thought of Hsun-tzu, "The one who is truly moral is a person who has the deepest respect for his own self (*tzu-ai*)" (*Hsun-tzu, Tzu-tao-p'ien*). Perhaps the most famous phrase evoking the dignity of the individual is Lu Chiu-yuan's (1139-1193) injunction *T'ang-t'ang tso i-ko jen*(Be a person fully aware of his dignity).

Aware of his dignity, relying on his inner moral strength, the individual also was autonomously committed to follow the *tao*, the Right Way, even if opposed by authority figures. Confucius said: "A great minister serves his ruler by following the *tao* and retires from office if this is impossible.···In a fundamental matter of morality, one does not yield to one's teacher" (*Lun-yü*, 11:23, 15:36). Mencius is famous for his spirit of moral defiance: "The man of real character cannot be corrupted by wealth or position, is not influenced by being poor or having low status, and does not submit to power and force"(*Meng-tzu*, 3 B.2). Yet Hsun-tzu, allegedly authoritarian, stressed moral autonomy as much: "One follows the *tao*, not the ruler, one follows what is right, not one's father" (*Ts'ung tao pu ts'ung chün, ts'ung i pu ts'ung fu*). Like Mencius, Hsun-tzu approved of popular uprisings overthrowing tyrants, but Hsun-tzu went further. Departing from Confucius' idea that the moral scholar exerts moral influence without forming an active political organization(*ch'ün erh pu tang*), Hsun-tzu approved of the moral minister who actively organizes a rebellion or a movement to seize the rulers authority: "There are those who can bring together all intellectual and physical resources, lead all the ministers and lower officials, and together with them coerce and correct the ruler···in order to save the state from great harm.····There are those who can oppose the orders of the ruler, seize his precious vessels, and act to thwart him in order to save the state from danger

and remove any source of dishonor."Hsun-tzu said such defiant officials were "the ruler's treasures."Although Hsun-tzu also recommended prudently submitting to the orders of a vicious ruler in some cases, his great emphasis on respect for authority was consistently correlated to the principle that authority must be moral (*Hsun-tzu*, *Tzu-tao-p'ien*, *Ch'en-tao-p'ien*)

Morally autonomous, aware of his dignity, seeking moral strength within himself, the individual also "served" (*shih*) those "above"him, especially his parents and his ruler, but these obligations were viewed not as conflicting with self-realization but as essential to it. Similarly, if we see a son lovingly care for a loving mother, we will see him as naturally following the impulses of his heart, not as "submitting to authority."The classic *Chung-yung* (chapter 25) sees such service of superiors as just part of the process of *ch'eng-chi* and *ch'eng-wu*, "fully realizing all that the self was meant to be," and "helping all other people and things reached the condition appropriate to them."Modern Confucian humanists like Yü Ying-shih thus regard Confucianism as asking the self to meet only "natural"social obligations, not to submit to authority "externally forced on the individual." (Yü, 1984: 69,72)

Modern Chinese humanists, moreover, reject not only the thesis that Confucianism puts the group above the individual but also the view that Confucianism lacks a religious dimension and sees human life as just a matter of this-worldly, social affairs. Rejecting this still-common view. (cf. Fingarette, 1972), Fung Yu-lan in the 1940 s spoke of Confucianism as "transcending the world. 'Transcending the world' means going beyond it while still being of it." (Fung, 1961: 3) T'ang Chun-i by 1951 also used this increasingly popular idea of "transcending" (*ch'ao*, *ch'ao-yueh*) as well as the idea of "inner transcendence": "Thus I understood that man has a moral self, an ultimate foundation of the mind that is within him and yet also transcendent." (T'ang, 1972, p. 2 of 1951 preface) Then when Yü Ying-shih in 1984 published his widely admired book on Chinese modernization, he used "inner

transcendence"as the central concept in his analysis of Chinese culture, force-fully arguing that "Chinese infer the concept of a transcendent 'heaven' from the fact that the mind has within itself the ability to become aware of moral value."He contrasted this with the Western concept of the transcendent or the divine as relatively or even absolutely external to and independent of the human condition. (Yü, 1984: 23-24) Thus the idea of "inner transcendence" has become crucial to the belief of modern Confucian humanists that the Confucian self does have autonomous access to a source of spiritual strength totally independent of the pressures of the social world.

While these discussions of the New Confucians and other modern Confucian humanists thus increasingly challenged iconoclasm, the story of success and failure in China since 1949 also convinced many that they should reexamine the relation between modernization and the Confucian tradition. Success, of course, is differently defined by different persons today. Some see it as "modernization"and regard modernization as having two main features: economic growth minimizing the ills of growth (such as inflation, social ills, political instability, ecological damage, or increasing inequality in the distribution of wealth); and democratization in some sense. Certainly given the pervasive modern Chinese goal of *fu-ch'iang* (wealth and power), one has to add at least a third criterion of success, national security. Some work has also added to these three criteria the Durheimian criterion above, the development of a national community finding some balance between the autonomy of the individual and the moral obligations of group life, a criterion that Robert N. Bellah and his colleagues recently used in their famous appraisal of American life today, *Habits of the Heart*. A fifth criterion can be derived from Karl W. Deutsch's *The Nerves of Government*, which holds that a societal system must manage "communication channels and memories in such a way as to open it to information from outside the system."(cf. Metzger, 1987: 19-81)

One can also argue that given these five criteria of success and certain culturally rooted tendencies in China, successful modernization in China has depended on solving three systemic problems: how to define and institutionalize property so as to both meet the ideal of equity and stimulate economic growth; how to maintain political cohesion and stability while also effecting political pluralism; and how to satisfy a need for ideological consensus while also "opening up" intellectual life to the great variety of ideas found in history and the contemporary world.

Yet however one defines success in contemporary China, there today is widespread agreement that since 1949, Taiwan under the Republic of China (R.O.C.) has been more successful than the Mainland under the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.). Moreover, while iconoclastic ideology has dominated the Mainland, Confucian values have been central to the ideological, cultural, and social life in the R.O.C. While traditional familism and its Confucian ethics have pervaded Taiwan, modern Confucian humanism has continuously played a major if not increasing role there, and the official ideology of the Three Principles of the People has explicitly emphasized Confucian ideals. After all, Chiang K'ai-shek, President of the R.O.C. from 1948 to 1975, explicitly put great emphasis on the Confucian and Neo-Confucian heritage, while Sun Yat-sen, father of the R.O.C., was heavily influenced by the Confucian literature, as has recently been made especially clear in an article by Professor Lü Shih-ch'iang. (Lü, 1988)

Yet the successes of the R.O.C. have not convinced all scholars that Confucian values are the key to Chinese modernization. Let us here leave aside the considerable number of Chinese scholars, like Hu Ch'iu-yuan, who in the first place are not impressed by these successes. Their attitude is due to the fact that their criteria of success go far beyond the modest five listed above. Their utopianism, clearly going back to T'an Ssu-t'ung's generation, demands that China achieve a kind of intellectual unification based on a sin-

gle correct undertanding of the world today (*li-kuo-chih tao*), the rapid politi-cal unification of China , a moral-political consensus throughout China (*t'uan-chieh*), a polity and economy free of all selfish interests, the achieve-ment of an international status second to no other nation, technological in-dependence from other nations, and so on. (Hu, 1980) Naturally, by these standards, Taiwan has achieved little.

While this argument downplaying the success of the R.O.C. is actually very influential in the Chinese world, as well as partly similar arguments advanced by some liberals or the Taiwan Independence Movement (cF. Peng, 1986), the more usual Western view today is that the R.O.C. has been suc-cessful, but that its success has had little to do with Confucian values, much to do with peculiar international and other situational factors, such as Ame-rican aid, the cold war, the small size of the island, and the economic infras-tructure inherited from the era of Japanese colonialism, along with some technocratic policies applied by the Government. This is the position of John K. Fairbank. (Fairbank, 1987: 268-269).

More significant from the standpoint of this paper, however, is the large-ly iconoclastic viewpoint that is still widespread in Taiwan, and that is impressively represented in the current writings of Yang Kuo-shu, a professor of psychology at National Taiwan University. From this standpoint, the R. O.C. has indeed been successful, and Confucian values have indeed been important there, but to a large extent these Confucian values have impeded progress rather than furthered it. Professor Yang's scholarly work is well represented in a collection of his articles published in 1988, *Chung-kuo-jen-te shui-pien* (The Metamorphosis of the Chinese), while his influential popular writings, representative of much contemporary liberalism in Taiwan, are found in collections like *K'ai-fang-te to-yuan she-hui* (The Open, Pluralistic Society), published in 1982.

Unlike many Chinese liberals, Professor Yang strongly affirms the prog-

ress that has occurred in Taiwan. He analyzes it using not only a theory of societal evolution but also much psychological, quantitative research into widespread attitudes, usually using college students in Taiwan to form a sample of the population. His focus is precisely on that relation between self and group classically formulated by Durkheim.

His extensive quantitative testing of college students going back to at least 1964 seems clearly to demonstrate the rise of what he regards as a more "individualistic" way of thinking and acting. More generally, I see his data as confirming the idea that Taiwan's society during the last decades has been based on the "self-propelled adult." In other words, given the need in adult life to choose between residential, economic, social, intellectual, moral, and political options, this need can be met either through the power of custom, the orders of the state, or the adults themselves autonomously applying norms developed in the course of their socialization as children and their education. In Taiwan, the latter pattern has increasingly been institutionalized as the central one.

But has this emphasis on adult autonomy developed with the help of or in spite of the influence in Taiwan of the inherited Confucian values ? Professor Yang partly admires Confucian values but finds that this current emphasis on the individual in Taiwan has been largely in conflict with the Confucian tradition and has been the result of the society's transition from an agricultural to an industrial stage. The premodern, agricultural way of life, he holds, required a form of social organization putting the group above the individual, while modern, industrial society emphasizes the individual. With this dichotomy as the basic one, he discusses a large number of associated ones. Agricultural society, for instance, emphasizes "collectivism," "familism," "hierarchy," "uniformity," and "structural rigidity," while industrial society emphasizes "individualism," "impersonal institutions," "relations between equals," "pluralism and diversity," and "structural looseness."

(Yang, 1988)[1]

Idiosyncratic cultural tendencies also play a role, he believes, (ibid.: 314) but Yang's emphasis throughout is on the necessary psychological and social consequences of industrialization in any society as a nomothetic process. He thus believes that the values which are required in an industrial society and which Taiwan has begun to form are largely different from the Confucian ones: "Traditional China's society and people had long-lasting, stable characteristics, and these characteristics frequently are utterly different from what is called modern society and modern man." (ibid.: 309) In other words, the value changes toward "individualism"now occurring in Taiwan are changes on the level of ultimate cultural premises (*t'i*), not on that of adaptation of these premises to new conditions (*yung*). (ibid: 223, 268). He thus sees much of the current emphasis on Confucian values as a dysfunctional clinging to a past that should be left behind: "First of all, we find that in Taiwan and Hong Kong, a new kind of modernized Chinese society has already taken shape, and in these new Chinese societies, a new kind of modernized Chinese has begun to appear. But since the Chinese living in these new Chinese societies lack experience regarding this new type of Chinese society, they do not have the slighteset understanding of this new type of Chinese person." (ibid. Introduction, p. 1) Conversely, Professor Yang never suggests that the moral autonomy which he ascribes to this "new kind of Chinese"has been or should be derived from any invocation of Confucian values.

Though it raises many methodological, interpretative, and empirical issues, Yang's analysis does indeed remind us that the economic transformation of Taiwan must have had a great impact on values. Moreover, if we criticize him by pointing out that his work entirely ignores the many Confucian statements emphasizing moral autonomy, such as those cited above, he can reply with some cogency that he is talking about widespread social values, not philosophy. What he implies, then, is that the modern Confucian

humanists have been discussing only thought, not society.

When, however, we turn to the problem of Confucian thought, we again find that the modern Confucian humanists have not convinced the scholarly world that moral autonomy was a supreme point of emphasis in Confucian thought. From this standpoint, there is little or no continuity between Confucian thought and the way that Chinese liberals and humanists in the twentieth century have emphasized moral autonomy. This modern emphasis is seen as a new event in Chinese history, and the attempt of modern Confucian humanists to base it on Confucian writings is implicitly regarded as a way of distorting or romanticizing history. This charge indeed is not automatically implausible, since the New Confucian philosophers have deliberately used the historical materials to find in them the ideas that have "value" (*chia-chih*) in their eyes and to discard the rest. Their approach is not a fully empirical one, describing ancient states of mind in an inductively comprehensive way and then evaluating these attitudes by explicitly defining and debating the criteria of evaluation.

The view that historical Confucian thought put the group above the self is common in the ranks of Western philosophers studying Chinese thought. Professor Donald Munro's *The Concept of Man in Ancient China* (1969) and his challenging *The Concept of Man in Contemporary China* (1977) both tend toward this view. The "concept of the autonomous man has little meaning," he says, for a "Chinese," even though Confucian thought recognized that the individual had to choose freely between acting properly and improperly after having understood what the objective rules of proper behavior were. (Munro, 1977:180) Thus "the issue of autonomy remained a subordinate one for Confucians···" (Munro, 1985: 12-13) Writes Professor Henry Rosemont, Jr.: "for the classical Chinese language has no semantic correlates for our 'individual,' 'moral,' or 'autonomy,' and hence there cannot be a notion, strong or otherwise, of 'individual moral autonomy' in those texts." (Rosemont, 1988: 622)

Professor Rosemont is here criticizing Professor Benjamin I. Schwartz for stating in his *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (1985) that Confucianism included "a strong notion of the individual moral autonomy particularly of those who have a vocation to lead society." (Schwartz, 1985: 414) Yet even Schwartz's highly nuanced position views Confucianism as putting its emphasis on status, authority, and hierarchy, not moral autonomy. (Metzger, 1986)

Schwartz thus seeks to refute the thesis of the Chinese humanists that Confucian thought put primacy on moral autonomy, although he does not explicitly criticize them. His position is important because it is based on decades of careful, perspicacious study, because it probably represents mainstream Western thinking today about this issue, and because, I would say, it constitutes the latest version of that Western criticism of Confucian values rooted in the European Enlightenment.

I would venture to sum up his thesis as follows. "Roles"are crucial to Confucian thought, as opposed to some more indeterminate, individually spontaneous way of being a person. The term "role,"originally borrowed by sociology from the world of the theatre, refers to a cluster of stable social expectations. In Schwartz's eyes, Confucian man is "a thoroughly social being" (Schwartz, 1985: 74), whose virtues manifest themselves largely through the way he plays his roles. All roles are hierarchically ordered in Confucian thought, Schwartz maintains. This is so partly because Confucianism "accepts unblinkingly what it regards as the need for hierarchy, status, and authority within a universal world order." (ibid.: 68) It is so also because in Confucianism, hierarchy has a certain sacred, cosmic aspect. Moreover, in this hierarchical order, most people end up accepting a status unequal and inferior to that of the more gifted minority morally qualified to lead them. Still more, even when this minority is revealed as morally incompetent, respect is owed to the positions of authority they occupy, as illus-

trated by Confucius' deferential behavior at the courts of hereditary aristo-
crats, whom he actually regarded as morally deficient (*Lun-yü*, ch.10,
13.20). True, Confucius did combine hierarchy with qualities like some ulti-
mate sense of equality, reciprocity, mutual respect or love, and moral auton-
omy. Yet these qualities were generally less important than the need to
respect the actual structure of hierarchy, status, and authority. Writes Pro-
fessor Schwartz about Mo-tzu: "As in the case of Confucius, the initiative for
enabling all men to 'love each other and benefit each other' lies with those
above. The authority which resides in the political order is still overwhelm-
ing." (ibid :150)

In what follows I would like to try to assess the historical accuracy of this
analysis presented by Professor Schwartz. When modern Confucian human-
ists pursue individual moral autonomy as a supreme value and claim this
value is a Confucian one, are they accurately using the historical materials?

At the outset, we should emphasize that what is at stake here is history
as intellectual reality, not necessarily as social reality. We are looking at the
Confucian "world of thought," to use Schwartz's term. As in any civiliza-
tion, intellectual ideals in imperial China were often honored in the breach
rather than the observance. Many terrible things have been done in the name
of Christianity, but Christian ideals still exist as a spirit that can inspire men
today. Our purpose here is not to analyze mass behavioral patterns in China
during the imperial period but to see whether the Confucian concept of the
self produced in that period can be used by modern Chinese wanting to build a
society based on the moral autonomy of the individual. The nature of these
behavioral patterns and the extent to which they were shaped by Confucian
ideals are an analytically distinct topic. In my opinion, some Western
scholars have been too cynical in seeing these behavioral patterns as little
influenced by the highest Confucian ideals. Many Chinese humanists who
have been immersed in the historical documents feel these high ideals were in

fact influential on the level of mass behavior, and I tend to agree with them, but that is entirely another issue.

At the same time, whether the modern Chinese quest for moral autonomy can be grounded in the historical Confucian faith depends not only on the historical data but also on the creative will of Chinese today as they go about developing their society. No historian, least of all a foreign one, can tell them what they can or cannot do. What I do hope to do here is merely to show that the historical data are completely compatible with the claims of the modern Confucian humanists. Their view, I will argue, fits the data better than Schwartz's does. Thus the contemporary emphasis in Taiwan on the moral autonomy of the self-propelled adult may reflect both Western influence and the new social possibilities generated by economic modernization, but there is strong evidence that this current emphasis also constitutes a major line of continuity with the Confucian moral tradition.

To make this argument, it is necessary to see that words like "authority" or "hierarchy" do not clearly and simply denote a universally identical kind of social relation. To be sure, though ancient Chinese lacks any word quite equivalent to our "hierarchy," the idea of hierarchy was basic for Confucians. They spoke often of "higher" and "lower" (shang, hsia), and Hsun-tzu used tz'u, which refers to a descending, step-by-step sequence, to describe a hierarchical order: "When sage kings ruled above, they ting-tz'u (fixed the hierarchical position of each person) by correctly determining the extent of his virtue (chueh-te)." (Liang, 1969: 246) But what kind of a community did Confucians have in mind when they made these statements? What kind of a higher-lower relation did they have in mind? The relation between a private and a sergeant.[2] In the American army or in the Israeli army? Or were they thinking of the higher-lower relation in the case of a father and his son as "we" understand it. Moreover, was the higher-lower aspect of the community they envisaged its most important aspect? What

other aspects were there ? Which were the most important ?

Thus to say Confucians emphasized "hierarchy" is correct, but unless one unpacks the meaning this idea had for them, breaking it down into more specific ideas, one cannot assess the importance of moral autonomy for them.

In my discussion I will try to unpack this idea by taking into account five basic concepts which Confucians used often to describe human interaction: the relation of higher and lower; the idea that authority should be based on absolute morality; the possibly but not necessarily contradictory idea that a certain kind of respect should be extended even to morally inadequate persons when they occupy positions of authority; the idea of a judgmental community, that is, the premise that every morally aware person should correctly evaluate his own moral character and that of all other significant persons, whether historical or contemporary; and the central emphasis not only on differential virtues applying to one kind of relation only, like filial piety, but also on the non-differential virtues of the "man of integrity" (*chün-tzu*) applying equally to everyone on the hierarchy, such as "loving others" (*ai-jen*), the golden rule (*chi yü li erh li jen*), and, indeed, the ability to evaluate others and oneself (*chih-jen, tzu-chih*).

Perhaps other key, building-block ideas should be adduced too, but my point is that although each of these ideas or themes was often discussed in a separate statement, it did not refer to a compartmentalized topic in Confucian minds. Rather, Confucians--we will here deal mainly with Confucius, Mencius, and Hsun-tzu, the three greatest members of the Confucian school in classic times, who together articulated just about all the main Confucian social ideals--to a large extent had a shared vision of the human community, and they combined ideas like the above five to articulate this vision. Whether this shared vision had internal logical consistency of course is still a further question.

I will argue that with these five ideas, Confucians discussed authority and hierarchy in terms of three moments or possibilities, vacillating between these three.

With this three-fold concept of hierarchy and authority, they indeed put a strong emphasis on moral autonomy. To the extent that they asked for respect for authority wielded in an immoral way, we have to note that much Western political thought, from "Crito"on, asked for it too. Indeed, one can argue not only that Western political thought emphasized this kind of respect more than Confucianism did, but also that the Western position is the more realistic or reasonable one. Confucianism has an especially unchecked utopian bent, and we may surprisingly find ourselves criticizing Confucian thinking for not emphasizing status, authority, and hierarchy enough.

I will argue, therefore, that from the standpoint of the modern Chinese quest for individual moral autonomy, Confucian thinking does not present any obstacle in the form of some principled, extraordinary emphasis on hierarchy. It does, to be sure, like much premodern Western thought, conflict with prominent modern ideals by calling for monarchy, accepting hereditary aristocratic status to some extent, and seeing women as inferior to men. Whether in the case of the Aristotelian or the Confucian tradition, these three ideas are usually rejected by modernizers. If, however, one grants that the three moments of authority noted above constituted the fundamental Confucian vision of the community, this vision lacks any extraordinary emphasis on authority and hierarchy.

In discussing the relation between Confucian thought and the modern Chinese quest for moral autonomy, I will finally argue that while the Confucian concept of authority seems not to conflict with this quest, another aspect of Confucian thinking does pose major problems, the optimistic this-worldliness of Confucianism, an issue that Chinese intellectuals today are only beginning to discuss.

II. Unpacking the Confucian Concept of Hierarchy and Authority

Confucians often discussed authority as based on absolute morality, which was denoted with words like *te* (virtue), *jen* (caring for others as much as for oneself), and so on. Political authority was identified with what Max Weber called an "ethic of ultimate ends." Thus Mencius called for a ruler who would never "kill one innocent person" (*Meng-tzu*, 2 A.2). These universally, absolutely correct ways of acting were summed up as the *tao* (the Right Way). The golden age of the Three Dynasties was perceived as an actual historical time when authority was based on the *tao*.

As we have noted, even the "authoritarian" Hsun-tzu said-- he said it twice in one chapter, *Tzu-tao-p'ien*--that in dealing with authority figures, one should autonomously follow moral principles even if one has to disobey one's superiors: "One follows the *tao*, not the ruler, what is right, not one's father." (The first part of this statement is found also in his *Ch'en-tao-p'ien*.) In other words, Hsun-tzu not only respected the autonomy of the inferior's inner moral judgment but also rejected the idea of overtly obeying orders while disagreeing in one's heart.

Less clear was the idea of positive action by the inferior to stop the bad exercise of authority by the superior. As we have seen, Hsun-tzu praised such positive, organized action by a minister to check or remove a bad ruler, but such positive action against a bad father was as abhorrent to Confucius (*Lun-yu*, 13.18) as it was to Socrates in "Euthyphro."

Respect, moreover, was owed to the morally inadequate ruler, not only the morally inadequate father. Confucius said of "those today in government": "Ah, they are just people occupied with petty details. They are not worth considering" (*Lun-yü*, 12.20). But he behaved in a most respectful and deferential way to these hereditary aristocrats, "seeming to bend his body"

when passing through the gate of a lord's palace, politely answering their questions, and so on (*Lun-yü*, 10.4). Indeed, though the ideal of yielding the throne to the most virtuous person became important to Confucians (*shan-jang*), only two passages in *Lun-yü* even hint that Confucius saw any problem with the hereditary transmission of of political authority (*Lun-yü*, 6.1, 8.1).

Yet this show of respect in no way contradicted Confucius' view that a "great minister serves his ruler by following the *tao*" (*Lun-yü*, 11.23). Respect for authority did not here mean obeying immoral orders. Authority in the sense of eliciting compliance, therefore, was limited.

Moreover, Confucius' courteous behavior when in the presence of high political authority was entirely compatible with his ideas about how to act in order to transform the moral character of government. The way to act was to carry oneself in a serious, gravely dignified way (*chin*, *chuang*), not to form an organization actively competing for power: "The man of integrity has a serious, dignified manner, he does not compete and argue with others; he associates with others like him but does not form a clique" (*Lun-yü*, 15: 22). Similarly, Christ did not believe in organized political defiance, but we still view him as calling for moral autonomy. Confucius' courteous behavior at court was also a particular application of the generalized respect or even reverence which Confucius required of all social roles, high or low; "When outside the family, treat everyone as you would when you meet an important guest" (*Lun-yü*, 12.2). Expressing this respect, trying to transform political life by presenting the ruler with a living example of morality, and expressing a pious acceptance of the will of heaven, Confucius' deferential attitude toward constituted authority even when wielded by the unworthy cannot be easily seen as conflicting with his moral autonomy.

Having thus seen that Confucian hierarchy involved at least two moments--respect for authority *per se* and the need to put morality above authority--we should note that Confucians mixed these two moments together

in various ways. Mencius called moral authority "heavenly rank" (*t'ien-chueh*) and the authority of "lords, ministers, and lesser officers" "human rank" (*jen-chueh*). He also added a third source of authority or object of "reverence" (*tsun*), "age."Moreover, he tended to put moral authority above the others, or at least above the authority of the lords, ministers, and other political figures (*Meng-tzu*, 2 B.2, 6 A.16). Hsun-tzu used the same three-fold categorization of the sources of authority: "The younger serve the older, those with lower status serve those with higher status, the less virtuous serve the morally superior, this is a principle that applies throughout the world....In human life, there are three unfortunate things: when younger persons are unwilling to serve older, when people with lower status are unwilling to serve those with higher status, and when those of lesser virtue are unwilling to serve those who are morally superior." (Liang, 1969: 73, 48)

Just how to reconcile with each other these three lines of authority in case of conflict was a question seldom clarified in Confucianism, though Mencius, as noted, tended to give moral authority primacy. The important point, however, is that in the Confucian "world of thought," hierarchy was inherently a complex process and was not restricted to the lines of authority within the family and within the actual political order of the day.[2] For Confucians, authority was restricted to the political and the familial hierarchies only after the ruler had "fixed the hierarchical position of each person by correctly determining the extent of his virtue."In Confucian eyes since the time of Confucius, this act of correct evaluation was precisely what the present political center had failed to carry out, and the perception of this failure directly shaped the three-fold Confucian conceptualization of authority.

This point brings us to a set of Confucian ideas that were basic to how Confucians conceptualized the human community even though going beyond the concept of hierarchy *per se*. To know what importance hierarchy had for Confucians, we have to ask whether other ideas also were important for them

when they thought about how a community should be, about the whole relation between ego and alter.

One of these ideas, as I have tried to argue elsewhere, was the assumption that every morally aware individual, whatever his status, should correctly evaluate himself and all significant persons in his present or historical environment. (Metzger, 1985-1987) As just mentioned, such correct evaluation was the responsibility of the ruler, who, Hsun-tzu points out, was to see to it that "in the case of all graded ranks, official positions, rewards conferred to honor a man for his accomplishments, and punishments, light and heavy, everyone received what he deserved, the kind of treatment matching the kind of behavior. The failure to weigh one thing properly is the beginning of trouble and disorder in society."(Liang, 1969: 243) In other words, Confucians looked for the morally perfect distribution of all rewards and punishments, including wealth, power, and prestige.

What they perceived in the present, given world, however, was a political center misdistributing these sanctions, especially honor and high office as the highest rewards for the virtuous. The proper evaluation of people, therefore, was left to morally aware people outside the political center, like Confucius. In other words, once the political center had failed to meet its obligation, the agent of evaluation was no longer necessarily a superior but anyone filling a universal or non-differential role, anyone with the ability to be a "man of integrity": "Only those with moral understanding are able to love or hate others" (*Lun-yü*, 4.3).

I have tried elsewhere to analyze the very large extent to which the discourse in *Lun-yü*, which authentically records the discussions in Confucius' circle, revolves around the question of evaluating oneself and others. Confucius viewed "knowledge" (*chih*) as "knowing men,"and he defined "knowing men"as "raising up the morally straight and putting them in office above the crooked" (*Lun-yü*, 12.22).

In *Lun-yü*, this act of "knowing men" and evaluating them to determine whether or not they should be "raised up" is constantly carried out. The need to *tsun-hsien* (deeply respect those who are superior) is basic, and evaluative statements fill up perhaps half the text: "Tzu-kung asked:' Who is superior, Tzu-chang or Tzu-hsia ? ' The Master said: 'Tzu-chang goes too far. Tzu-hsia does not go far enough'" (*Lun-yü*, 11.16). A vocabulary of evaluation was developed, ranging from *te-chih-tse* (destroyer of virtue) and *hsiao-jen* (petty fellow without integrity) to *chung-jen* (man of medium quality), *chün-tzu* (man of integrity), *hsien* (man of superior quality), and *sheng-jen* (perfect person, sage). The standards with which evaluation was carried out by Confucius consisted of all his character ideals, including *jen* (caring for others as much as for oneself). No standard was more basic than the ability to participate properly in the process of evaluation, especially by giving others their due and not lapsing into "anxiety" when others failed to return the compliment. Evaluation, moreover, was the single basis of friendship: "The man of integrity bases friendships on learning and cultivation, using his friends to help realize morality" (*Lun-yü*, 12.24).

Thus through moral evaluation, the morally aware person divided society into "men of integrity" and "petty fellows without integrity," in other words, into a "moral community" and an "immoral community." The moral community "hated" the immoral and expected to be "hated" in return (*Lun-yü*, 13.24, 4.3). Said Confucius of a disciple who had disappointed him: "He is not my disciple. Beat the drum and assail him ! " Jan-yu had been expelled from the moral community (*Lun-yü*, 11.17).

Constantly judging men to determine who was a *chün-tzu* (man of integrity) and who was a *hsiao-jen* (petty fellow without integrity) or one of those "people without conscience who affect an air of prudence and morality" (*hsiang-yuan*), Confucians often saw themselves confronting a political center which misjudged them, refusing to give them the esteem and high position

they felt was their due. Confucius lamented that "No one knows me ! "and he frequently tried to console his disciples: "Do not be so worried over the fact that no one knows you, worry about whether your abilities are sufficient" (*Lun-yü*, 14.30,14.35). Later Hsun-tzu said: "There is nothing more unfortunate than not giving a virtuous man the position for which he is suited, not giving an able man the office for which he is fit, conferring rewards out of proportion to any merit involved, or inflicting punishments out of proportion with any guilt involved." (Liang, 1969: 243) A saying still common today reflects this view, *hsiao-jen tang-tao* (mediocrities are in power). Thus confronting a political center that was wrongly evaluating men of talent and wrongly distributing wealth, power, and prestige, the follower of Confucius saw himself as promulgating correct evaluations of people. People with this way of thinking thus perceived themselves as living painfully in a "judgmental community," one filled by the *competition* between correct and incorrect evaluations of oneself and of others.

Certainly people in just about any culture live in such a judgmental community. Who of us has not asked a friend: "What do you think of so-and-so ? Do you know that he incorrectly criticized my last book and so prevented me from getting the professorship at so-and-so university ? "

There is good evidence, however, that in the Confucian world, the judgmental community was especially important. It is hard to think of any other philosophical document in the world so filled as *Lun-yü* is with remarks evaluating a particular individual, such as: "The Master said: 'I have never seen a firm-minded person.' Someone said:' Shen Ch'eng is. 'The Master said: 'Ch'eng is lustful. How can he be called firm-minded ! '" (*Lun-yü*, 5, 12). As already mentioned, perhaps half or more of the whole text consists of such evaluative remarks. Among all the premodern civilizations, only China broke the dominance of the aristocratic elite and institutionalized a central type of elite status based on the evaluation of the individual, a process gradu-

ally developing into an elaborate examination system. In recent years, the psychologist Yang Kuo-shu has argued that in traditional China, "collectiv-ism"took the form not only of hierarchy but also of a pervasive *t'a-jen ch'ü-*hsiang (orientation emphasizing the attitude of others toward oneself):

"With this orientation, the traditional Chinese were particularly sensitive about the opinion or criticism expressed by another person about oneself, always concerned about 'face' (*mien-tzu, lien*) . . . . Their hope was to preserve a good impression of themselves in the minds of other people." (Yang, 1988: 391)

If, then, the judgmental community was particularly important in the Confucian world, one can suggest a reason for this. People the world over seem to long for perfect justice, the morally perfect evaluation of everyone and the morally perfect distribution of rewards and punishments. In most historical civilizations, perfect justice was seen as impossible in this life and viewed as coming after death, when divine judgment would send the good to heaven and the bad to hell. Most remarkably, however, none of the great schools of thought during China's classic period, the Eastern Chou, posited such a bar of judgment in the afterlife. Instead, the famous Chinese "this-worldliness"led to the prevalent idea that perfect justice could be realized in this world as political leaders perfectly evaluated every person and with per-fect justice distributed all punishments as well as all rewards like esteem, high position, and good salaries. Without the comforting thought that mis-takes in evaluation would be rectified in the afterlife, Chinese came to put special emphasis on the evaluations put forward by the human community in this life and so put the highest value on "face" (*mien-tzu*), on "establishing one's reputation" (*ch'eng-ming*), and so on. (The ideas of heaven and hell or prugatory seem to have entered China only after the first century A.D., well after the "axial age,"when the basic worldviews of Confucianism, Taoism, and Legalism were established. They were brought to China by Buddhism.)

Whether or not this hypothesis is tenable, we cannot ignore the Confucian perception of a judgmental community when we describe how Confucians envisaged social life. Thus having already noted that their idea of hierarchy was complicated, we face the further problem of understanding the relation between these two ideas, hierarchy and the judgmental community. In Confucian thinking, however, we can distinguish not only between the social act of "knowing" or evaluating others and the social, hierarchical act of "serving those above" (*chih-jen*, *shih-shang*). We also need to differentiate these two from the great Confucian emphasis on certain non-differential feelings or attitudes that everyone should have, no matter whether he was "serving superiors" or dealing with those below.

These non-differential norms of the "man of integrity" (*chün-tzu*) constituted a most central theme in Confucian writing and were regarded as the indispensable basis for the differential virtues like filial piety (*hsiao*) or the virtues peculiar to the role of a minister (*chung*). Thus Confucius of course emphasized non-differential norms when he repeatedly stressed *jen* (caring for others as much as for oneself) and put forward his golden rule to the effect that one should "do for others what one wishes to do for oneself" (*chi yü li erh li jen*). Similarly, when Confucius said that "My Way is based on one principle," a disciple described this principle as "sincerity and empathy, that's all" (*Lun-yü*, 4.15). Also importance was the idea of a kind of diffuse "love" (*ai*) or "reverence" (*ching*) for others, an attitude largely independent of how one evaluated others and by no means restricted to the way those below should "serve" those above. A disciple of Confucius said: "The man of integrity behaves in a reverent way and avoids mistakes, respecting others and behaving in accord with the rules of moral propriety. Within the four seas, all are brothers. How can the man of integrity lament being in a family without brothers ! " (*Lun-yü*, 12.5).

Even for the allegedly "authoritarian" Hsun-tzu, such non-differential

norms were the true foundation of filial piety. As already mentioned, his chapter on filial piety twice states that the son should "follow what is right, not his father." Said Hsun-tzu: "What we can call the great kind of filial piety is that of the man who, knowing when to obey his father and when not to obey, is able to be careful in his actions so as to always be respectful, reverent, sincere, trustworthy, and upright." This chapter near its end then discusses "the man of integrity and true understanding" (*ming chün-tzu*), making clear that only such a man can realize "the great kind of filial piety." This is a man who not only "knows people" (*chih-jen*) and "loves people" (*ai-jen*) but even more "knows himself" and "has love or reverence for himself" (*tzu-chih*, *tzu-ai*). (Liang, 1969: 397,400-401).

In the twentieth century, many Chinese criticized the Confucian emphasis on differential virtues like filial piety, seeing them as calling for submission to the will of one's superior. Said the famous iconoclast Hu Shih: "In the future when you, my son, grow up, do not forget what I have taught you: I want you to be a proud and upright human being (*t'ang-t'ang cheng-cheng-te jen*), I do not want you to be a filial and obedient son of mine!" (Yang, 1988: 391) What Hu Shih did not want to face up to was that this injunction of his not only accorded with Lu Chiu-yuan's injunction to "be a man of pride and dignity" (*t'ang-t'ang tso i-ko jen*) but also was not so different from the way that that most "authoritarian" Confucian, Hsun-tzu, envisaged filial piety!

While Professor Schwartz emphasizes the differential, ritualized roles defined in Confucianism, these non-differential attitudes of the "man of integrity" also were central to Confucian thinking and have been much emphasized by many Chinese scholars like T'ang Chün-i and Yü Ying-shih, as well as by Western scholars like Wm. Theodore de Bary, who often sees Neo-Confucianism as an attempt to find and enlarge what is "human" in our lives, and Herbert Fingarette, who described Confucius as primarily interested not in hierarchy but in finding "human dignity" through one's interac-

tions with others. Fingarette used the term "ceremonial act"to describe interactions that were successful in this regard.

We should not overlook either that in envisaging social relations animated with this sense of human dignity, Confucians also emphasized a certain cosmic, historical, and, if you will, epistemological setting without which this quality of human dignity was not conceivable. Social life for them was not just a matter of interaction between living persons. Just as two Christians interact with each other in a perceived historical and cosmic setting made hopeful by the existence of God and of Christ, so Confucians perceived themselves as interacting against the background not only of an ancient historical period that had brought still available forms of absolute moral knowledge into the world but also of a cosmos, "heaven and earth, "visible as a vast and nurturing structure of moral order and beauty. Whether for Mencius or for Hsun-tzu, the non-differential dignity of the man of integrity reflected the non-differential vastness of the cosmic domain that he was in some way the center of, whatever his status (*wan-wu-chih ling*). This vision is as strong in *Hsun-tzu* as it is in the classic *Chung-yung*.

It is important to note, moreover, that this Confucian emphasis on non-differential virtues implies a concept of equality different from the "biological equality"Donald Munro identified as a basic Chinese idea since ancient times. "Biological equality"refers to the Confucian or more broadly Chinese assumption that all people are equally born with a mind able to learn to discriminate between right and wrong. While this kind of equality thus refers to the biologically given condition of all people, the equality we have been discussing here refers to the goal of life, to the way people *should* learn to act and can learn to act once they properly develop the biological traits they have all been equally endowed with by nature. People, it is true, should act by carrying out differential, often hierarchically organized roles, These roles often involved inequality: I "serve"my father, my father does not "serve"

me. But at the same time certain non-differential norms-- "loving others,"
"knowing oneself,"the golden rule, the autonomous commitment to the *tao*--
applied equally to all these roles. And these non-differential norms were pre-
cisely the ones that seemed crucial to Confucians.

They were precisely the norms that Hsun-tzu was trying to convince peo-
ple to focus on: "The elementary kind of human behavior is to act with filial
piety when living within one's family and to act in a brotherly way when
outside the family. The middle level of behavior is to comply with the proper
wishes of one's superiors and be deeply sincere in dealing with those below
one. The great way to behave is to follow the *tao*, not the ruler, to follow
what is right, not one's father." (Liang, 1969: 397)

In Neo-Confucian writing from the 11th century A.D. on, the emphasis on
this non-differential bearing of "the man of integrity"became if anything still
greater, as the "mind's"non-differential point of contact with the cosmos
(*wei-fa*, *i-fa*) became the focus of attention, along with the most generalized,
overarching virtues (*ching*, *jen*, and *ch'eng*). (Metzger, 1977: 75)

We have thus touched on five ideas Confucians used to conceptualize
what we call "authority":the higher-lower relation, the need to base author-
ity on absolute morality, the respect given to morally inadequate persons
occupying positions of authority, the judgmental community, and the non-
differential virtues, which were norms equally applied to all roles. These five
ideas can be combined to describe the three moments in the Confucian con-
cept of authority: the moment of morally perfect hierarchy during the Three
Dynasties; the moment of moral protest against immoral authority in the
present; and the moment of accommodation to or at least respect for the
morally inadequate structures of authority in the present.

Three Moments of Hierarchy and Authority in Confucian Thought

	1. The moment of perfect hierarchy during the Three Dynasties	2. The moment of moral protest against immoral authority	3. The moment of accommodation
1. Is virtue the basis of authority ?	yes	no	no
2. Have the non-differential virtues been realized ?	yes	no	no
3. Has the hierarchy been set up by correctly evaluating people ?	yes	no	no
4. Do subordinates comply in terms of outer, overt behavior ?	yes	no	partly
5. Do they comply in their hearts ?	yes	no	no
6. Do they carry out negative protest by refusing to carry out orders or withdrawing from government service ?	no	yes	maybe not
7. Do they carry out positive protest by remonstrating or acting coercively against the ruler ?	no	yes	maybe not

This table perhaps makes clearer the great differences in what the simple

word "hierarchy"can mean. Writing about Max Weber's concept of patriarchal authority, sociologist Gary Hamilton says it called for totally obeying the superior, depending on him for all access to higher levels of authority or morality, and submitting to him in a "pious"way, that is, in terms of inner subordination, not only overt compliance.[3] In other words, in this kind of hierarchy, authority is not contingent on current moral performance and is based on some amoral factor, such as divine right or the sanctity of the past. The inferior has no autonomous access to moral standards with which he can evaluate his superior. The relation between higher and lower is not interwoven with the need for mutual respect on the part of both. No matter what the command, the inferior agrees with it in his heart and acts on it.

This kind of hierarchy was out of the question for Confucians, even in the case of the third moment. Yet scholars like Professor Schwartz ambiguously leave the impression that Confucians favored this kind of absolutization of authority, speaking of the "overwhelming" "authority which resides in the political order."While the authority of the ruler was not "overwhelming" in terms even of the third moment, it obviously was not in the case of the first and the second. Indeed, in the case of the first two moments, there was no compliance except to the extent that the superior's authority coincided with the inferior's autonomous commitment to the *tao*. Scholars are well aware that this morally heroic stance was advocated by the strongly utopian Mencius, but seldom is it noted that this stance was as strongly advocated by the allegedly "authoritarian"Hsun-tzu. In other words, this stance was a point of deep Confucian consensus. Hsun-tzu's great emphasis on the need to respect the authority flowing out of the external social order was of course entirely correlated to the condition that this order be based on the *tao,* though he also allowed for some accommodation, notably when he recommended prudence in dealing with vicious tyrants under some circumstances. (Liang, 1969: 182-183)

I think the question to ask about the Confucian conceptualization of authority is which, if any, of these three moments had primacy in Confucian thinking. Many Chinese humanists, notably Hsu Fu-kuan, put primacy on the first and second moments, while Professor Schwartz's interpretation puts primacy on the third moment (and implicitly identifies it with almost total compliance).

I do not, however, see in Confucian thought any tendency to analyze out these three moments and look explicitly for a rationale determining such primacy. Thus it is safest to see the Confucian conceptualization of authority and hierarchy as vacillating between these three moments.

III. Reflections about the Confucian Concept of Hierarchy and Authority

I believe certain misunderstandings can be cleared up when We consider these three moments in the Confucian concept of authority and hierarchy. Confucians did have a notion of "biological equality," as Professor Munro states (leaving aside the issue of biological inequality posited by Neo-Confucians when they discussed the "material endowment" of the individual [ch'i-ping]). Yet equality was also implied by their emphasis on the non-differential virtues. Nor can this emphasis be brushed aside as just referring to some ideal or transcendent sentiments slighly softening the harsh reality of authority. We are talking of "the world of thought," not of the kind of oppressive or obsequious behavior found in all societies as part of the power structure. In this "world of thought," these non-differential norms were precisely of the highest importance. Moreover, given the distinctive Chinese belief that the practicability of these supreme virtues had been historically demonstrated during the Three Dynasties, the obligation to realize them in the present was even more urgent.

Nor can one say that for Confucians, full human dignity was reserved for

a moral elite. True enough, Confucians took monarchy for granted, accepted hereditary status to some extent, and saw women as inferior to men, just as did much Western political thought before the modern era. Apart from this point, however, Confucians made no distinction between the ruling minority and the rest of the community in terms of any ultimate human traits. On the contrary, for them "the people" were both the objects of government and part of an indivisible community devoted to the *tao*. The opening section of the central classic *Ta-hsueh* was emphatic: "From the son of heaven to the common people, everyone in all cases (*i-shih chieh*) makes the moral cultivation of his character the most basic part of his life."

True, Confucians assumed that a minority would be more successful at this task and so should rule. This low opinion of the masses' actual moral performance, however, implied no inequality in principle. It was just a judgment, and one indeed widely shared in the West, not only by Plato and Aristotle, not only by Max Weber, but also by the most important modern liberal thinker, John Stuart Mill. Mill, David Held notes, believed "all adults should have a vote but the wiser and more talented should have more votes than the ignorant and less able." (Held, 1987: 29,94,158).

Nor can one say that in the Confucian conceptualization of hierarchy, individual autonomy was compromised by the need to carry out what Professor Donald Munro calls "model emulation." Model emulation was certainly implied by the first moment of hierarchy: authority being wielded by a moral person, one tried to imitate him. According to the second and third moments, however, there were few if any authority figures available to serve as models. Chapter four in *Mo-tzu* put it most bluntly: "There are many parents in the world but few are moral. Thus taking one's parents as one's model is to take those lacking in morality as one's model. To model oneself on the immoral cannot be regarded as following a model." The passage then goes on to make the same point about the shortage of scholars and rulers who are

qualified to serve as models: "Therefore as for parents, scholars, and rulers, none can serve as a model for ruling the state." The answer is to model oneself on "Heaven."

This logic was quite in accord with that of Confucius, who praised the sage emperor Yao thus: "Great indeed was Yao as a ruler ! Only Heaven is great, and only Yao was able to take it as a model ! " (*Lun-yü*, 8.19). Moreover, Confucius saw the current world as virtually empty of individuals able to realize virtue in its highest form (*jen*): "I have not seen anyone who is devoted to *jen* ···to the point of putting it above all else" (*Lun-yü*, 4.6).

Thus the Confucian idea of model emulation must be understood in connection with this Confucian perception of the given world as suffering from a shortage of models. In the face of this shortage, what Confucianism demanded of the individual was to develop into a person serving as a model. In "acquiring a name" (*ch'eng-ming*), one carried out model exemplification at least as much as model emulation. Moreover, the focus on models in a world defined as short of models required a choice as to who could serve as a model, and this choice was up to the individual: "Being moral is something that comes from the self. How can it come from others ! " (*Lun-yü*, 12.1). To be sure, people were still asked to imitate the individual who had realized the highest ideals or who understood how to progress toward these, but how is that different from the Christian demand that people should "imitate Christ" ?

Again, to see Confucian ethics as emphasizing what we call a "role" does violence to that Confucian quest for non-differential "human" qualities that de Bary and Fingarette have both noted. When I love my mother and seek to make her comfortable or revere her memory, or when I as a father try to turn my son into one who will "revere himself" and "love others," as Hsun-tzu put it, am I "playing a role" ? Or am I acting in accord with a certain natural principle, as all Confucians believed ? Of course, the fact that proper behav-

ior entailed specific rituals does not of itself prove that Confucians envisaged it just in terms of conventional social expectations, not in terms of the ultimately natural effort to find one's humanity. Complaints about the cluttering up of life with mindless ritual have accompanied Confucianism no more than they have Christianity or Judaism.

But when all is said and done, did not Confucianism put an extraordinary emphasis on the need for hierarchy? Surprisingly, the answer seems to be "no."First of all, apart from modern liberalism, hierarchy has been basic to the Western mainstream of political thought, not only the Confucian. Ancient Western thought abundantly affirmed familial hierarchy and also typically approved of both slavery and aristocracy. What could be more hierarchical than a society divided into slaves, commoners, and hereditary aristocrats ? In Confucian China, on the contrary, both slavery and aristocracy played a more limited role than in the West, despite periods like The Six Dynasties (220-589 A.D.). There just about always were some slaves and hereditary aristocrats in China, but Confucians liked to think of society as just made up of people pursuing different economic occupations and being ruled by an elite, the *shih*, chosen through a process of moral evaluation. This way of thinking hardly eliminated all hereditary advantages. Yet in comparison with just about all Near Eastern and Western societies before the modern era, Chinese were remarkable in institutionalizing a form of elite status based on the evaluation of the individual, rather than hereditary, aristocratic status. It is hard to argue, therefore, that the Confucian order emphasized hierarchy more than did the Western political tradition before the modern, liberal era.

But why then does Confucian thinking dwell so much on the distinction between"upper"and "lower" ? The answer, I would suggest, is not that Chinese favored the division of society into "higher"and "lower"more than, say, Aristotle did. The answer lies in the distinctive way that they conceived

of the ultimate moral transformation of human life. One premise was Chinese this-worldliness, according to which, as already noted, the ultimate bar of judgment was located in the human community, not the afterlife. Thus the polity was expected to evaluate everyone perfectly and perfectly distribute all rewards and punishments, including high and low status. From this stand- point the Confucian preoccupation with "higher"and "lower"was based entirely on their goal of *eliminating all hierarchy* except that in full accord with the natural or rational inclinations of all morally aware persons. West- ern thinkers like Aristotle, in other words, had a more pessimistic view of the actual hierarchies in this world than Confucians did, and of course much Christian political thought, from Augustine through Luther, shared this pes- simism. Such hierarchies, more or less rationalized, had to be accepted, since political action in this world could not achieve total justice, according to the mainstream of Western political thought. In Confucian thinking, how- ever, total justice in fact was practically and historically possible. It had in fact been achieved during the Three Dynasties. With this highly optimistic view of political practicality, Confucians did not pessimistically accept the hierarchies of our actual, unjust world and then focus their political thought on optimizing the constitutional relations between some of the rungs on this hierarchy. That was Aristotle's way. The optimistic way of Confucians was to attack the root problem of hierarchy itself and demand the total rationali- zation of hierarchy, that is, the elimination of all hierarchies except those in harmony with their concept of absolute morality. Therefore their writing turned hierarchy into a central topic.

Apart from their optimistic this-worldliness, we also have to take into account a certain way of perceiving society. In any large civilization, much of the society cannot be personally experienced, it can only be abstractly symbolized or envisaged. I think about my country, the U.S., but I cannot *see* it as a whole. Neither could Confucius *see* "the world or the empire"as a

whole(*t'ien-hsia*). Any way of political thinking, therefore, has to conceive of the relation between this larger, abstractly depicted society and the personally experienced community made up of friends, family, neighbors, and so on. In Greek thought, there was a strong tendency to see a basic difference between the personally experienced community and the abstractly depicted society "out there,"and then to think about the latter on its own terms as a formally designed system based on laws, including a "constitution."Quite unlike the Confucians, Aristotle saw a difference in kind between ruling a household and ruling a city. In Confucian thought, the abstractly depicted society-- *t'ien-hsia* --was largely collapsed into the personally experienced community. Merely through "extension"(*t'ui*), the virtues that harmonized a family would harmonize the world. Moreover, among all these virtues of the personally experienced community, it was the love within the family that Confucians chose as the normative basis of the whole broader political structure, not friendship. Since the family is inherently hierarchical, a vision of the political order based on the family was bound to emphasize hierarchy.

Thus because of their quest for a perfectly just political order in this life diffusing throughtout society the love so often found in families, Confucians were bound to be preoccupied with the problem of how to eliminate all distinctions between "lower"and "higher"except those they identified with morality. Yet with their assumption that children were "lower"than parents, wives, than husbands, students, than teachers, and subjects, than rulers, they hardly stressed hierarchy more than most Western thinkers before the modern liberal era.

IV. The Problem of Optimistic This-worldliness

Confucianism, therefore, like much Western thought before the era of modern liberalism, did include an emphasis on the inferiority of women, on monarchy, and on hereditary aristocratic status largely incompatible with

modern egalitarianism or liberalism. Otherwise, however, it is hard to show that its concept of hierarchy interferes with the kind of individual moral autonomy that currently is sought by Chinese liberals and modern Confucian humanists to form the basis of modern life. I think it is clear that there is great continuity between this modern Chinese quest and Confucian thinking. Conversely, there is great discontinuity between Confucian thinking and the Maoist attempt to develop a kind of collectivism minimizing or precluding individual moral autonomy. The attempt of many Western scholars to see much continuity between this collectivism and Confucian thinking has been based on a mistaken understanding of the latter.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn has seen a similar tendency in American studies of the U.S.S.R.: "···every young American historian, writer, or journalist when undertaking a Russian theme automatically succumbs to the postulate that the USSR is the natural continuation of the old Russia. In reality, the transition from prerevolutionary Russia to the USSR was not a continuation, but a *fatal fracture of the spine*···" (Solzhenitsyn, 1988: 60)[4]

That is, there may be a link between Maoism and the first moment in Confucian thinking about authority. Positing that he and the Chinese Communist Party did essentially represent historical-moral truth, Mao felt that the whole society should be completely controlled by those acting on this truth. In brushing aside the Confucian emphasis on the moral autonomy of the individual, however, he did bring about "a radical fracture in the spine" of Confucian culture.

The optimism with which he did this, however, convinced as he was that the Party under him could morally purify society, involves not only the question of the first moment of authority but also an overlapping issue, the broad problem of optimistic this-worldliness. Is this optimism compatible with the modern Chinese quest for individual moral autonomy?

The optimism in the Confucian worldview has in recent years received

increasing attention. A major contribution was made by Professor Chang Hao when he wrote his "The Democratic Tradition and Consciousness of the Dark Side of Life" (*Yu-an i-shih yü min-chu ch'uan-t'ung*). (Shaw, 1983: 417-436) In the Confucian mainstream, and certainly in the thought of Confucius, Mencius, and Hsun-tzu, one finds not only an extremely high if not utopian goal-- total justice in this world-- but also an extremely optimistic view of the given means available for people pursuing this goal, the perception of a wonderful cosmic, historical, and epistemological setting for human life in the present. Thus tragedy, failure, corruption, and suffering were fully recognized by Confucians but were perceived as occurring despite this wonderful setting.

In perceiving this wonderful setting and establishing their high goal, Confucians made a number of assumptions which they themselves simply took for granted as obvious truth; which are still widely influential in modern China today; which are in fact culturally distinctive assumptions, not ideas obviously true to everyone; and which many Western intellectuals would reject as unreasonable. Whether they actually are unreasonable is a quite different question that we cannot even begin to explore here, except to remark that the Western criticism of them often strikes me as hasty.

The first assumption we should note is the idea that the totally just evaluation of everyone and the totally just distribution of wealth, power, and prestige should be the goal of the polity. Does pursuing this goal of absolute morality in public life lead to more justice than the Aristotelian acceptance of moral deficiency in society and the world of public affairs? Given Joseph Schumpeter's point that democracy can function effectively only if citizens avoid excessive criticism of their leaders and tolerate a lot of political disagreement, (Held, 1987: 176) can democracy flourish if citizens judge their government using what Max Weber called an "ethic of ultimate ends" instead of "an ethic of responsibility"? And if democracy is not feasible, can the

moral autonomy of the individual be realized ? As I have argued elsewhere, modern Chinese liberals, such as Yang Kuo-shu, not to mention the other leading modern Chinese ideologies, have forced us to confront this question, because all these ways of thinking insist on sublime ideals of political life, including a high degree of moral-intellectual consensus throughout society and a governmental process free of the power of selfish interests.[5] If such expectations are unrealistic-- and history says they are-- will not using them to judge politicians result in irrational political discussion ?

Another premise, as I have tried to argue elsewhere, was epistemological optimism, the assumption that the human mind can know absolute, universal, objective moral principles, that it can, as Hsun-tzu put it, "know the *tao*" (*chih-tao*) . (Metzger, 1985-1987) True enough, in the Western tradition of political thought, there also was much epistemological optimism, as illustrated not only by the Rousseau-Hegel-Marx tradition but also by the widespread tendency, still strong even in John Stuart Mill, to take for granted the universal validity of the Aristotelian and Biblical virtues. As scholars like Richard H. Popkin and Alasdair MacIntyre have made especially clear (Popkin, 1972, MacIntyre, 1981), however, in the West, epistemological optimism was accompanied by a tradition of ethical skepticism or epistemological pessimism which was rooted in Greek thought, and which came to play a central if not dominant role in the West as modernization occurred. In China from ancient times down to the present, epistemological pessimism was never that important, and all the main modern Chinese ideologies-- Chinese liberalism, modern Confucian humanism, the Three Principles of the People, and Chinese Marxism-- optimistically posit that objective, impersonal, universal moral standards are available on which to base society.

Again, epistemological optimism has major implications for the development of democracy. The tolerance of political disagreement needed if two or

more political parties are to compete for votes on equal terms seems to depend on some degree of epistemological pessimism. If people are to avoid viewing political conflict in "black-and—white,"Manichaean terms (*erh-fen-fa*), doubt about the human ability to define the public good in an objective way may be useful and indeed has become basic to American political discourse. Because I know that my view of the public good is likely to be biased by my selfish interests, I will not regard you as wicked when I see you as also promoting your selfish interests. Moreover, because I believe no one can have an unbiased understanding of the public good, I will be against establishing any kind of umpiring institution with the function of outlawing any interest group or political party at odds with the public good. According to epistemological pessimism, this function cannot be performed in a fair, unbiased way by any human being, since, as Ronald Dworkin says, objective knowledge of the public good is impossible. (MacIntye, 1981: 112)

In the Chinese world, however, such objective knowledge is regarded as obviously possible. Thus when Sun Yat-sen, the father of the Republic of China, in principle approved of political competition between two or more political parties, he added that only "good political parties" could be allowed: "Political views based on concern for national progress and the well-being of the citizens are the views of a political party. Competition based on such views is the competition of political parties. When the case is otherwise, when people are aiming to serve the interests of a minority or to satisfy the material, selfish desires of some individuals-- none of these outlooks or strategems is based on concern for the nation. Outlooks like these are selfish outlooks, competition based on them is just competition for private, selfish ends. Competition between political parties is permissible, competition for the sake of private, selfish ends is not."(Ch'en, 1988)

For a Western liberal, setting up an organ to outlaw political parties pursuing selfish interests is an idea that makes no sense, not only because, in

his eyes, all political competition is bound to be infected by some selfishness, and because such an organ could easily lead to dictatorship, but also because objective knowledge of the national interest is elusive or unavailable. In China, however, such doubts are minimal or at least regarded as less important than the need for consensus. Moreover, philosophers saying that there is no objective knowledge of the public good play no prominent role in China, and "reason" is still widely used there as a term referring not only to logic but also to universal, moral common sense. Its use in this way, often shunned by Western intellectuals today, is taken for granted by intellectuals as different as the Confucian metaphysician Mou Tsung-san, the liberal psychology professor Yang Kuo-shu, or the philosopher Ch'eng Chung-ying, who obtained his Ph.D. at Harvard with a thesis on Charles Sanders Peirce, not to mention more popular political-moral writing. (Ch'eng, 1984)

With this optimistic belief that "reason" and "morality" can objectively determine the public good, Chinese liberals have objected little if at all to Sun Yat-sen's view that selfish political parties should be outlawed. As shown by Professor Chang Yü-fa's meticulous study of Chinese political parties during the early part of our century, no one then advocated democracy as a form of competition between interest groups selfish or not. Nor have I seen any current Chinese writing to that effect. (Chang, 1985: 10-15)

If, however, continuing epistemological optimism in China leads to a continuing insistence that political competition must be kept within the parameters of the public good as defined and enforced by some group, can democracy develop in China? And if democracy cannot develop there, can the moral autonomy of the individual? My own opinion is that epistemological optimism is as tenable as epistemological pessimism and that both are both valuable and open to criticism. Therefore the Sunist view of competition between "good political parties" may indeed lead to a desirable degree of political pluralism. But this is only a personal judgment. The rela-

tion of epistemological optimism to the development of the self and to the political pluralism which modernity requires remains a question to be explored.

China's optimistic this-worldliness involved not only sublime political goals and epistemological optimism. Among other optimistic premises we can here briefly touch on was a perception of history as including a time when society and the polity in fact were morally perfect (*san-tai*). This perception of course was basic to epistemological optimism, because the absolute moral knowledge available to men in the present stemmed not only from the knowing powers of the human mind and the cosmic display of moral principles but also from written guidelines set down during this golden age and physically transmitted to men in the present in a still roughly clear fashion. The idea of a golden age has been dropped now to a large extent in China, but the idea that history has a clear moral and teleological structure, a virtually Hegelian structure, is one that is still accepted widely if not universally, even by a psychologist like Professor Yang Kuo-shu, who has been so deeply influenced by the American behavioral sciences, not to mention thinkers much less immersed in American thought, such as Mou Tsung-san or Hu Ch'iu-yuan, or the popular ideologies, the Three Principles of the People and Chinese Marxism. Again, is such a teleological view valid? Can one discover the authentic self when one sees oneself as playing a role in such a determinate, teleological process? I think so, but I certainly do not know.

The last aspects of China's optimistic this-worldliness that I would like to mention here are the belief that the self is totally perfectible, free of original sin; the belief that the center of the polity is like an all-powerful lever which, once grasped by a leader understanding objective moral principles, will immediately transform society if not the whole world, realizing the sublime goal mentioned above; and a most ambitious view of China's normative international role, a role "second to no one" in the words of Sun Yat-sen (*pu-hsun*

yü jen). The role of the state is the issue especially noteworthy here. As I have tried to argue elsewhere, Mencius' statement that "If the ruler has the spirit of caring for others as much as for oneself (*jen*), then everyone will have it"was just one version of a premise shared by many Chinese intellectuals from Eastern Chou times on to the effect that the "position" (*wei*) of the ruler not only was something inherently deserving respect but also carried with it enormous effective influence on behavior throughout society. Said Confucius in *Lun-yü* speaking to Chi K'ang-tzu, an aristocrat in the state of Lu: "Government is rectification. If you, sir, lead by doing what is correct, who will dare not to be correct ? "Confucius also told him: "If you, sir, want to do what is good, the people will be good" (*Lun-yü*, 12:17, 12:19). There are not a few other such statements in this book. In *Mo-tzu* one finds the view of Mo-tzu during the middle of the fifth century, a few decades or so after the death of Confucius, that "The ruler takes delight in something. Therefore his subjects carry it out."Should a ruler adopt his doctrine of morality, Mo-tzu said, society would embrace and carry out this doctrine "the way fire goes upwards and water flows downwards, and nothing in the world could stop this tendency" (*Mo-tzu*, ch.15, ch.16). Said Shen Pu-hai of the fourth century B.C., possibly the earliest "Legalist"thinker: "When the ruler says just one thing correctly, the whole empire is set in order.... As for the way an enlightened ruler governs his state, he controls, as it were, a pivot point of three inches: when he turns it, the world is set right." (Creel, 1974: 353-354)

This vision of the center of the polity as a "pivot point"or lever was still basic in nineteenth-century political thought, as illustrated by Huang K'o-wu's study of the early nineteenth-century "statecraft"book *Huang-ch'ao ching-shih wen-pien*. (Huang, 1985; 1987) It has deeply influenced modern Chinese political thought, even the liberal school. Combined with epistemological optimism, this view of the political center as an all-effective

lever has often led even Chinese liberals to give the state as much or even more responsibility than the civil society for shaping the moral and civilizational climate of society. This standpoint, of course, was not authoritarian, since such liberals merely hoped the state would correctly shoulder this responsibility and usually perceived the actual government of the day as precisely failing to meet this responsibility. The question to be raised, however, is whether this way of conceptualizing the relation between the political center and the civil society as activity determined by private individuals is the best way to further individual autonomy and democracy.

The optimistic Confucian view is one that at bottom draws our attention to the richness of human possibilities rather than that abyss of non-being which existentialism reveals. Yes, governments are often harmful, but isn't it hopeful that we human beings can organize ourselves to better our lives ? What if even the possibility of any such organization were outside human experience ? Yes, people are often selfishly biased, but isn't it hopeful that we have the ability to criticize bias and try to be fair ? Yes, history is full of foolishness, but isn't it hopeful that there has been an accumulation of wisdom we can use today ? Is not life enhanced by the possibility of using technology to alter the course of nature ? In order to do better in the future, why don't we concentrate our minds on these hopeful aspects of our given setting and then try to build a society based only on them ? Isn't this a more effective way to progress than to dwell on the disappointing aspects of life, to admit from the start that hopes can never be adequately realized in this world, and to put our faith in the afterlife ?

The optimistic this-worldliness of Confucianism thus runs against the grain of most Western thought in modern times, except perhaps for the more euphorically utopian moments of Marxism, and it includes a fundamentally optimistic view of the state that is particularly unfashionable in the West. Just how this optimism can be reconciled with the modern Chinese quest for

individual autonomy and political pluralism is an issue only beginning to be discussed. Particularly problematic is what can be called an *a priori* view of political practicality, deriving one's understanding of what is politically practical from one's intuitive view of human nature rather than from an *a posteriori* study of political history. Thus in arguing that democracy will not lead in China to any crisis of moral consensus, the psychologist Yang Kuo-shu relied only on theoretical arguments and ignored the political history of actual democracies such as the U.S. (Metzger, 1988). (This *a priori* view is an aspect of the "lever"principle.) Aso problematic is the great, optimistic emphasis on the moral leadership of the state, closely connected as it is with the widespread desire to make the state strong enough to turn China into the equal of any superpower (Hu Ch'iu-yuan expresses this view with special clarity).

V. Conclusion

Since the turn of our century, Chinese and others have debated whether the actually persisting heritage of Confucian values in China furthers or impedes the development there of the kind of society Chinese want or should want. Of course, this debate has often dubiously presupposed that the Confucian tradition is a single, determinate entity, and that the goal of modern China similarly is some kind of objective, determinate set of norms. This viewpoint raises questions not discussed here. Certainly this writer is more comfortable using the framework that Robert N. Bellah and his colleagues devised for analyzing the evolution of a society, a framework which defines culture itself as an ongoing, indeterminate "discussion"or "argument"about what a normal and appealing way to live is.

Leaving aside such issues, however, we can broadly see three main stages in the development of this debate. In the first, which lasted through the 1950 s at least, iconoclasm--though probably never accepted by a majority

of the Chinese people or even a majority of the intellectuals--gradually became the intellectually most respected outlook and for many foreign observers was the only one making sense. During the second stage, which appeared by the 1970 s, doubts about iconoclasm grew in intellectual respectability. The New Confucians and other modern Confucian humanists presented cogent arguments seeking to vindicate especially the Confucian view of the self-group relation. According to these arguments, the moral autonomy of the individual had been fully emphasized by the historical Confucian tradition. Moreover, the development of China's society after 1949 convinced many that Confucian values furthered progress in China. There was wide agreement that the development of the R.O.C. had been more successful than that of the P.R.C.; Confucian values were prevalent in the R.O.C.; many, therefore, reasoned that these values had been vital to the success of the R. O.C.

A third stage, however, can be seen in current writing casting doubt on these ways of vindicating the Confucian contribution to Chinese modernization. I have in this regard used the current writings of two scholars who each eloquently represents an outlook widely accepted by intellectuals today. Professor Yang Kuo-shu's thinking is very representative of many Chinese liberal circles, and Professor Benjamin I. Schwartz's view of Confucianism well represents the Western academic mainstream. According to Professor Yang, Confucian values are "collectivistic" and without any emphasis on individual moral autonomy. Therefore rejection of them to a large extent is needed in order to build up the "individualistic" kind of culture that has already begun to take shape in Taiwan as a result of industrialization. According to Professor Schwartz's view, industrialization may or may not breed a need for individual moral autonomy, but if Chinese today want a culture putting primacy on this autonomy, they will have to break with the Confucian outlook, which puts primacy on status, authority, and hierarchy. Though Schwartz has a

nuanced analysis or Confucian thinking missing in the writings of Yang, both scholars--representing many others as well--see Confucianism as ultimately putting the group above the self.

In this paper, however, I have argued that the historical data support not the positions of Professors Schwartz and Yang but the views of the modern Confucian humanists. The fundamental Confucian view of hierarchy and the self is entirely compatible with the modern Chinese quest for the moral autonomy of the individual. Even more, a state like the Republic of China that officially endorses and propagates Confucian ideals and writings necessarily legitimizes an ideological situation in which the individual's autonomous access to moral standards cannot be blocked off by any political organization or official order. According to this kind of Confucian ideological situation, the state of course can use its concrete power to intimidate the individual and can claim to have moral authouity as well, but there is no ideological principle available with which to deny that any effectively reasoning person can represent morality as well or even better than the state can. Thus in the Republic of China, individuals like Yin Hai-kuang expressing "the spirit of moral protest" (*k'ang-i ching-shen*) have been at times supressed by the state, but in the verbal competition between its arguments and those of Yin Hai-kuang, there was no principle which officials could adduce giving them any superior access to truth or morality. They could only argue with him the way any other person would. Thus the President could take a phrase from the Confucian classic *Lun-yü*, claiming that "one cannot yield on a matter of morality" (*tang-jen pu-jang*), but political dissidents like Hsu Hsin-liang eloquently made use of the same phrase to denounce the Government.

This is not to deny that the emphasis on individuality has been greatly developed in Taiwan. It has been. Professor Yang Kuo-shu's data confirm that it has. This is a major development in itself. Moreover, Professor Yang is convincing when he claims that without industrialization, this new empha-

sis on the individual in Taiwan would have been impossible. Western influ-
ence too, especially American, also was important. But obviously the pat-
tern of individualism in a society is not just a function of industrialization. If
it were, Japan today would exhibit a degree of individualism similar to that
in the U.S. Professor Yang himself allows for the influence of idiosyncratic
cultural patterns alongside that of economic structures, but I would argue
that whether in Japan, the U.S., or China, this influence is more important
than he grants. In particular, it is hard to deny that the modern emphasis in
Taiwan on individual autonomy and the self-propelled adult has Confucian
roots. Indeed, even Professor Schwartz's analysis allows for such roots,
although this paper has argued that the roots were far stronger than he
grants.

At this point, the concept of the "axial age," developed by Karl Jaspers
and especially S.N. Eisenstadt, is most pertinent. According to them, vari-
ous civilizations East and West, including China, went through an ideologi-
cal and institutional transformation during the first millennium B.C.,
redefining basic understandings about the nature of the self, the group, the
cosmos, and knowledge. These new orientations certainly persisted through-
out what Professor Yang Kuo-shu calls the period of the "traditional, agri-
cultural" society, but they seem to have remained influential as well during
the period of industrialization and modernization. Thus in *Habits of the
Heart*, Robert N. Bellah and his colleagues view the individualism in the
contemporary U.S.A. as rooted in the axial traditions of the West, that is,
the Judeo-Christian and the Greco-Roman traditions. It would be strange
indeed if the contemporary U.S.A. was still thus culturally rooted in the
axial past of its civilization, while contemporary China had managed to
break loose from its axial heritage. Thus in seeing great continuity between
contemporary China and its axial past, Professor Ying-shih Yü seems to be
on solid ground.

In other words, the striking emphasis on individuality that Professor Yang has documented in the case of Taiwan during the last decades certainly has a basic connection to new socio-economic patterns, just as he claims. But is not a more multi-causal analysis in order, as well as a more nuanced analysis of the continuities and discontinuities between the premodern and modern periods of Chinese history ? Professor Yang emphasizes the discontinuities while really ignoring much recent work highlighting continuities. Despite any functional need for group cohesion in a primarily agricultural society, the Confucian thinkers in agricultural China also saw a need for the moral autonomy of the individual. We know this because that is what they said. To analyze a society by brushing aside what its leading ideologues said is a form of reductionism that is hard to justify. How can a society be described without taking into account what its members think, feel, and say ? Culture, in other words, does not have a simple, one-to-one relation to economic organization. Professor Yang would ultimately grant this point, believe. The relation is complicated, often seemingly paradoxical, and cultural orientations like Christianity or Confucianism that arose before industrialization can well continue to be influential after industrialization.

Thus there indeed is strong evidence today that much of China's axial past has persisted and has seemed valuable to many Chinese pursuing modernization. The list of these persisting orientations is a long one and not restricted to the Confucian ideal of the morally autonomous self. Also often mentioned are the traditional orientations promoting frugality, hard work. and respect for learning, as well as popular attitudes toward authority and the desire to compete for wealth and position. Professors Yü Ying-shih and John C.H. Fei have recently also emphasized the Confucian mesh between moral ideals and free enterprise.

This emphasis on continuity, however, should not obscure the importance of the discontinuities. Thus Professor Mou Tsung-san, in his masterful

Cheng-tao yü chih-tao (The Philosophy of Political Authority in China), spoke of the need for a "circuitous connection" (*ch'ü-t'ung*) between the Confucian tradition and modernity.

Certainly a major discontinuity was in the way of understanding the cosmos. To accept modern science, Confucian thinking had to be basically altered, even though it seems that science (*ko-chih-chih hsueh*) was easily and indeed joyously accepted at the turn of the century by scholars with a strongly Confucian background, like Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and K'ang Yu-wei. Moreover, the Chinese acceptance of science did not necessarily conflict with all the traditional attitudes toward the relation between the self, the group, the cosmos, and knowledge. In particular, the idea of grounding morality in cosmic structure remained basic for many Chinese, as illustrated by Mao Tse-tung's *Mao-tun-lun* (On Contradiction) or the idealist ontology of the New Confucians like T'ang Chün-i. The switch from monarchy to democracy also was carried out with remarkable speed and ease in 1912, when we consider the contrast with Japan and the 3000 or more years when virtually all Chinese took monarchy for granted. The Confucian acceptance of hereditary aristocratic rank was even more easily discarded, a fact that of course is not surprising, since Confucian thinking had long deemphasized such status, in contrast to the Western mainstream. Again, the modern Chinese emphasis on equal rights for women has required a revision of traditional thinking, just as in the West.

Thus today many scholars feel that the main remaining Confucian concept still requiring revision is that defining the self-group relation. In this paper, however, I have argued that since Confucianism emphasized the moral autonomy of the self, modern Chinese ideas about autonomy are fundamentally continuous with the Confucian heritage.

Greater problems are posed, one may suggest, by the axial heritage in China of optimistic this-worldliness. Yet almost without exception, this issue

has been neglected in the modern debate about the relation between tradition and modernity in China. If Chinese modernizers turn their attention to this issue--as indeed Professor Chang Hao already has--will they conclude that this especially basic aspect of Confucianism also requires reformulation in order to combine the moral autonomy of the individual with a democratic political system fully subordinating the state to the wishes of the voters? Optimistic this-worldliness is so fundamental to Chinese thinking that it probably cannot be changed a great deal, not to mention that as a way of giving moral shape to life, its cogency is not necessarily less than any other way. What might be questioned is less its epistemological optimism and its optimistic view of a self without original sin than its sublime criteria of political success, its vision of the practicable political goal. In constructing democracy, should Chinese aim for the kinds of relatively modest goals often found in the Western academic literature: economic growth minimizing the ills of growth, national security, civilizational values promoting openness to the world's sources of information, and the Durkheimian balance between self and group? Or should they aim for the sublime goals often found in contemporary Chinese writing: an economy free of any unfair, selfish appropriation of wealth, a polity in which selfish interests do not affect the key leadership decisions, an international status equal to that of the two superpowers, an intellectual life free of confusing contradictions (*fen-yun*) and bringing all truths, moral and factual, into a single, unified doctrinal system (*hui-t'ung*), a civilization free of all oppression, insincerity, and selfishness, and a society in which the status of every individual is successfully and objectively based on his or her achievements? Is not this commonly articulated goal a utopian one the pursuit of which impedes reasonable, practical criticism of governmental policies? Cannot China's great heritage of opimistic this-worldliness be preserved and cultivated while putting to one side these impractical criteria of political success, thus following Max Weber's advice to

base politics on an ``ethic of responsibility,''not an ``ethic of ultimate ends'' ?

Notes

1. Professor Yang's thesis is developed consistently throughout, and a diagram on p.407 comprehensively pulls together all of his key categories for describing the transition from the agricultural to the industrial stage except for two levels his writings also deal with, the way of thinking, which he suggests, *a la* Comte, moves from the ``mystical''to the ``scientific,''and the level of political organization, which moves from the undemocratic to the democratic. Thus he puts his psychological statistics into the framework of a theory of societal evolution positing seven levels, some with a number of sub-categories: physical environment, ecotype, social structure, type of socialization, personality type, way of thinking, type of polity. Causation for him generally proceeds from the economic level to the others, but he allows for cultural idiosyncracy and some circular causation. He also identifies the industrial stage into which China is moving with morality, reason, and inherently desirable states of being, like individual autonomy and democracy. In this way moral norms are inherent in societal evolution, and history is a largely determinate, teleological proess. This point, therefore, he shares with other current Chinese ways of thinking, from Mou Tsung-san to the Three Principles of the People, not to mention Marxism. He also shares with them the idea that this teleological, ongoing historical process generates troubles and intellectual confusion and so requires the midwifery of intellectuals explaining to the rest of society the nature of the objective norms that should be followed. In his eyes, just as in the eyes of Mou Tsung-san and many other Chinese thinkers, the evolu-

tionary process is such that as it happens, most people do not understand it. He holds they ofter remain committed to the norms of the earlier evolutionary stage society is now leaving. This kind of dysfunctional clinging to the past, he makes clear, is what Chinese today are carrying out when they uphold Confucian ideology and resist further democratization. What Chinese ought to do today, therefore, is determined by grasping the right factual-moral doctrine of historical change. The assumption that such a doctrine is available goes back to the turn of the century as Chinese first became fascinated with K' ang Yu-wei's doctrine of the "Three Ages"and Western theories of evolution, especially Herbert Spencer's. It is striking that a scholar such as Professor Yang, so immersed in American psychological and social science writing, has adopted this doctrinal view of history as much as did an admirer of Hegel like Mou Tsung-san. Using this teleological approach to interpret his psychological data, Professor Yang unconsciously has already achieved that "Sinification of social science" that he and other scholars have put forward as their goal (Yang, Wen, 1982). Such a teleological would be resisted by many Westem scholars but in my opinion similar teleological premises often underly our own work more than we are aware. The choice is perhaps between a more and a less explicitly doctrinal and teleological way of thinking, and this choice requires further debate. Professor Yang's system raises many empirical and methodological questions, but it is an impressive synthesis based on a strongly moral spirit, and it vigorously demonstrates that the May Fourth spirit is still alive in Taiwan today, though in mellowed form. For the Western skepticism about looking in history for systemic laws or teleological principles. see Hall, 1985: 3-5.

2. Schwartz states: "While Confucianism posits the individual family as the alternative source of moral authority within society alongside that of the Son of Heaven---" (p.143) This statement might be tenable if Schwartz

were to specify that "within society"refers to "within the ideal society."
Unfortunately, in this book and nearly all of his other writing, Schwartz
does not distinguish between what Confucians said about authority in the
ideal society and what they said about it in the given, contemporary world.
Similarly, "Son of Heaven"is used without making clear whether it
denotes the current king or the ideal king, and no attempt is made to look
in the texts for specific statements pertinent to this problem of authority,
such as the *Hsun-tzu* passages in Liang, 1969: 73, 48. Thus Schwartz's
book lacks a precisely inductive discussion of the Confucian concept of
authority and includes some simply untenable statements, such as this one
on p. 143. Were this statement correct, Confucius, according to what
"Confucianism posits," would have had no "moral authouity,"and there
would be no Confucian norm calling on "those of lesser virtue"to"serve"
those of "superior morality"and to "respect" "heavenly rank."Nor would
"moral authority"have anything to do with what the "man of integrity"
"fears": "Confucius said: `There are three things the man of integrity
fears:he fears what Heaven has commanded; he fears great men;and he
fears the words of the sages'"(*Lun-yü*, 16.8). Obviously, as something
"feared,"Heaven had "moral authority"for Confucians, just as "heavenly
rank"did, and so "moral authority"in Confucian eyes was not limited to
the family and the Son of Heaven. I dwell on this point because when Pro-
fessor Schwartz thus uses the textual data, the mistake consistently is one
that leaves the unwary reader with the impression that the Confucian indi-
vidual was subordinated to the norms of the family and the state without
meaningful autonomous access to a moral standard transcending them.
More precisely, Professor Schwartz recognizes that Confucianism posited
such access but then avoids the evidence that it emphasized such access and
also makes erroneous statements such as this one on p.143 precluding such
access.

3. I am here taking the liberty of using a manuscript Professor Hamilton was kind enough to send me.

4. I have slightly altered the punctuation of this passage so as to make it fit the grammatical structure of mine, but I have not altered the original meaning.

5. On Professer Yang Kuo-shu's way of arguing that there is no danger that freedom will lead to a crisis in moral consensus, see Metzger, 1988.

6. This traditional use of reason as a mental tool for determining normative truth is found in virtually all Taiwan political writing today, from Mou Tsung-san to Yang Kuo-shu, but it is striking that it can be found even in the work of a professional philosopher so long immersed in current Western epistemology. The same can be said for Fung Yu-lan's *Hsin-li-hsueh*, a great metaphysical study written after Fung Yu-lan received his Ph.D. in phllosophy from Columbia University and also impervious to Humean doubts about the ability of reason to reveal normative principles. The fact that even such Western-trained Chinese philosophers have thus remained impervious to these doubts, not to mention philosophers like T'ang Chün-i or more popular Chinese writers on philosophy, reflects the pervasive role of epistemological optimism, a trend inherited from Confucian and other traditional ways of thinking in the Chinese past. This major line of continuity between modern and premodern Chinese thought is always ignored by those scholars who claim that in its most important or "substantive" aspects, modern Chinese thought is discontinuous with Confucian thinking. True enough, Chinese also came into contact with Western epistemological optimism as they started to learn about trends like Marxism, but in the contemporary West, unlike contemporary China, epistemological optimism is strongly challenged by epistemological pessimism, to the point that the latter has been identified with modernity by philosophers like MacIntyre. That is, what MacIntyre refers to as the view that humans cannot grasp

objective, imperial moral standards is what I call "epistemological pessi-mism."

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儒家思想與現代中國人對道德自主性的探索

墨子刻

摘　　要

　　儒家思想與現代性之間的關聯，無疑地已成爲中國思想史研究的重要課題之一，但由於參與此一關聯之探討的部分論者並未有效地釐清「規範問題」與「事實問題」的分野，以致在一定的程度上使問題的焦點無法清楚地呈現。本文的主要目的即是對有關此一關聯的爭論做總體的歷史考察，並檢省儒家倫理對權威與個人自主性的具體見解能否配合當前中國現代化過程裏，關於個人實現的理想。最後並分析儒家的「樂觀主義的現世觀」與民主化的關係。