

Chun-chieh Huang / John A. Tucker (eds.)

# **Confucianism for the Twenty-First Century**



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# Global East Asia

Volume 10

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## Contents

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Preface . . . . .  | 7   |
| Chun-chieh Huang / John A. Tucker  |     |
| Introduction . . . . .   | 9   |
| Roger T. Ames  |     |
| The Confucian Philosophy of Family Feeling as a Resource for a New<br>Geopolitical Order . . . . .                       | 31  |
| Torbjörn Lodén   |     |
| Confucianism and the Global Challenges of the Twenty-First Century . . .   | 57  |
| Alan T. Wood   |     |
| Confucian Democracy in the Twenty-First Century: A Global<br>Perspective . . . . .                                       | 87  |
| Jana S. Rošker   |     |
| Confucian Ethics of Relations and Alternative Models of Social<br>Organization in Periods of Crises . . . . .            | 107 |
| John A. Tucker   |     |
| Toward a More Compassionate Economic Order: The Confucian<br>Imperative for Greater Wealth Equity . . . . .              | 125 |
| Yong Huang   |     |
| Why Toleration Is Not a Value/Virtue? The View from Confucius . . . . .  | 153 |
| Edward Y. J. Chung   |     |
| Yi Toegye on Self-Reflection and Ultimate Human Life: A Korean<br>Neo-Confucian and Comparative Interpretation . . . . . | 175 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Heiner Roetz   |     |
| An Overlooked Dimension of Intergenerational Justice? A Note on Filial Piety in the Age of the Ecological Crisis . . . . . | 197 |
| Yi-Huah Jiang  |     |
| From the Inner Sage to the External King: The “End” of Human Life and Its Realization in Confucianism . . . . .            | 209 |
| Sébastien Billioud   |     |
| Historicity and Relevance of the Confucian Revival in Contemporary China . . . . .   | 229 |
| Guoxiang Peng  |     |
| Rethinking Nationalism, Patriotism, and Cosmopolitanism: A Confucian Perspective . . . . .                                 | 255 |
| Chen Sun (edited and translated by Kirill O. Thompson)   |     |
| Social Harmony and Economic Progress: Confucian Philosophy and Global Sustainable Development . . . . .                    | 269 |
| Jörn Rüsen   |     |
| Epilogue: Questions, Comments, and Reflections . . . . .   | 295 |
| Chun-chieh Huang / John A. Tucker  |     |
| Response . . . . .   | 297 |
| Contributors . . . . .   | 305 |

## Preface

This volume presents the thoughts, reflections, and proposals of contemporary scholars of Confucianism worldwide responding to the global challenges of our century. Since the time of Confucius, Confucians have eschewed escapism, and instead considered it their socio-political responsibility to facilitate the achievement of peace and brotherhood throughout the world. With the Covid-19 pandemic, the horrors of predatory warfare, and challenges facing democracies at every turn, the twenty-first century has left many feeling abandoned in a whirlpool of uncertainty, where once healthy waterweed has been uprooted from its underwater niche and thrown about on turbulent waves, while junky flotsam has settled below, polluting the riverbeds of our times. If Confucius and his disciples were alive today, we can only wonder as to what they might say. The authors of this book, each in their own way, have sought to explore how Confucianism, as an ancient and yet vital, resilient, and multifaceted teaching, might be relevant to contemporary challenges. We venture to offer possible solutions to the problems of our age from the perennially engaged perspective of Confucianism.

As editors, we are grateful to all contributors to this volume who have formulated their thoughts during these days of global pandemic, social and political turmoil, and widespread uncertainty and anxiety. Our special thanks are due to our senior friend Professor Jörn Rüsen who, from the perspective of a non-Confucian scholar, has read all chapters in the volume and then offered his incisive comments and reflections on them as a whole. The financial support of the China Foundation for the Promotion of Education and Culture in Taipei is also gratefully acknowledged; without its generous funding, this project might not have come to fruition. And our special thanks also goes to Eric Vognild for his careful, very professional copy-editing of this volume. Without his efforts, this volume would have been a far more awkward undertaking.

Chun-chieh Huang  
John A. Tucker



Chun-chieh Huang / John A. Tucker

## Introduction

### I. Opening Remarks

The twenty-first century is a century of uncertainty and anxiety. The rivalry between globalization and counter-globalization, the “democratic recession” in many democratic countries, the development of automation and artificial intelligence, and most recently and tragically, the deadly spread of the Covid-19 pandemic constitute a strong whirlpool of depression into which many people may be drawn. Given such difficult times that already define much of our century, one may become curious: What would a Confucian scholar say to our twenty-first century?

This volume includes essays authored by scholars whose specialty is Confucianisms. We say “Confucianisms” rather than “Confucianism” because we are reflecting on the multidimensional expressions and practices of Confucianism, i. e., “Confucianisms,” from the multifaceted perspectives of East Asia and globally in relation to the challenges of the twenty-first century. The topics discussed in this volume include Confucian role ethics, Confucian democracy, Confucian economic thinking, Confucian ideas on self-cultivation, Confucian filial piety, Confucian conceptions of economic development and social harmony, and so on. In each and every case, the essays in one way or another all pertain to what is in all of the varied Confucian traditions in East Asia, the quintessential core Confucian value, “humanity” (*ren* 仁), sometimes translated as humaneness, benevolence, and compassion. Therefore, in this introduction, before presenting a synopsis of the essays comprising this volume, we would like to make some remarks on the various nuances, meanings, and developments of the Confucian notion of humanity, historically and philosophically, as a prelude to the varied explorations of its contemporary relevance.

## II. Meaning and Development of the Confucian Notion of Humanity

If there is one word in the time-honored Confucian traditions in East Asia that may serve as a resource for global ethics in the twenty-first century, that word would be humanity (*ren* 仁). In order to tackle the contemporary relevance of the Confucian notion of humanity/humaneness, this introduction contains three parts: the first part deals with the meaning and the development of the Confucian notion of humanity in history; the second part ponders over the three major questions pertaining to global ethics as raised by the pandemic since 2020; the third section illustrates how Confucian discourses on humanity might serve as a possible agenda in our age of uncertainty.

In the history of Confucian humanism, *ren* has had many divergent meanings which can roughly be divided into four categories: (1) *ren* as the location of physical and mental relief; (2) *ren* as an incessantly procreating capacity for value judgment; (3) *ren* as social ethics; and (4) *ren* as political endeavor. The first two belong to the inner realm of individual human beings and the latter two belong to the outer realm of human society and beyond. Confucians emphasize that humanity must necessarily penetrate through and interconnect both the inner and the outer realms, and that it is most fundamentally the “humane mind” (*ren xin* 仁心) that constitutes the foundation of “humane governance” (*ren zheng* 仁政). As Ying-shih Yu (余英時, 1930–2021) observed, the development from the inner realm to the outer realm of humanity can aptly be called the “Confucian project.”<sup>1</sup> In view of this, we shall next discuss these four dimensions of the meaning of humanity/humaneness in historical and philosophical sequence.

First, Confucius (551–479 BCE) and Mencius (c. 372–c. 289 BCE) often explained humanity as the place in which people could put their body and heart-mind at ease and let their spirit roam freely. Confucius said: “Of neighborhoods, one that embraces humanity and humaneness (*ren*) is the most beautiful. How can a man be considered wise who, when he has the choice, does not dwell in humaneness?” (里仁為美。擇不處仁，焉得知) (*Analects* 4:1).<sup>2</sup> Humanity and humaneness, in Confucius’ thought, are the proper spiritual homeplace of humankind.

Secondly, humanity originated, in Confucius’ and Mencius’ view, in the capacity of the human heart-mind to make value judgments, a process which is

1 Yu Ying-shih 余英時, “Shishuo rujia de zhengti guihua 試說儒家的整體規劃 (On the Confucian Project),” in his *Song Ming Lixue yu zhengzhi wenhua* 宋明理學與政治文化 (*Song Ming Neo-Confucianism and Political Culture*) (Taipei: Yunchen wenhua shiye gufen youxian gongsi, 2004), 388–407; the term appears on 400.

2 D. C. Lau, trans., *The Analects* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 1992), BK. IV, 28.

both incessant and regenerative. Confucius' disciple Youzi (有子, 508/518–? BCE) said, “The gentleman devotes his efforts to the roots (*ben* 本), for once the roots are established, the Way will grow from them. Being good as a son and obedient as a young man are, perhaps, the roots of a man's character.” (其為人也孝弟，而好犯上者，鮮矣；不好犯上，而好作亂者，未之有也。君子務本，本立而道生。孝弟也者，其為仁之本與) (*Analects* 1:2).<sup>3</sup> In the above excerpt, the phrase “once the roots are established, the Way will grow from them” means that if a person stands firmly on and maintains their moral foundation, their value consciousness will be generated through a process of incessant procreation.

Thirdly, humanity was identified as constituting the interactive relations between “self” and “other,” the core value of which is “loving people” (*ai ren* 愛人). When Confucius' disciple Fan Chi (樊遲, 505 or 514–? BCE) inquired about the meaning of humanity, the Master replied: “Love your fellow man” (*Analects* 12:22).<sup>4</sup> And, when another student, Zhonggong (仲弓, 522–? BCE), asked about the same, Confucius responded with, “Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire” (己所不欲，勿施於人) (*Analects* 12:2).<sup>5</sup> What Confucius implied here was that humanity is made possible by taking others into serious consideration. This is humanity as interpersonal social ethics.

Fourthly, humanity was also taken to be a political endeavor, namely, what Mencius called “humane governance” (*ren zheng* 仁政). Thus, Confucius' conception of the superior man — and consequently that of humanity — metaphorically progresses by moving through a series of concentric circles, proceeding from the self to the family, society, the state, and finally up to all-under-heaven (*tianxia* 天下).<sup>6</sup>

To put the significance of Confucian humanity in a nutshell, we may be warranted in saying that the idea of the perfectibility of man underlies each of the four meanings. In the Confucian humanist tradition, to be human is to be humane. Moreover, it is one's autonomous decision to be either humane or inhumane. This foundational idea in Confucian humanism contrasts sharply with the idea of the fallibility of man in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

In the development of the concept of *ren* as the core value of Confucian humanism, Confucius and Zhu Xi (朱熹, 1130–1200) offered two of the most

3 D. C. Lau, trans., *The Analects*, BK. I, 3.

4 D. C. Lau, trans., *The Analects*, BK. XII, 117–118, esp. 117.

5 D. C. Lau, trans., *The Analects*, BK. XII, 109.

6 For a detailed illustration of the four meanings of humanity in East Asian Confucianisms, see Chun-chieh Huang, *Dongya rujia renxue shilun* 東亞儒家仁學史論 (*A Historical Treatise on the Humanity in East Asian Confucianisms*) (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2017), 136–149. Cf. Achim Mittag, “Reconsidering *Ren* as a Basic Concept of Chinese Humanism,” in *Traces of Humanism in China*, ed. Carmen Meinert (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2010), 69–82.

lofty and influential accounts. It was Confucius who succinctly pointed out the inseparability as well as the creative tension between humanity and propriety. It was Zhu Xi who composed his powerful “Treatise on Humanity” (*Renshuo*, 仁說), setting forth the ontological and cosmological dimensions of Confucian discourses on humanity. By enhancing the level and scope of significance of a human life, Zhu Xi, through expounding the Confucian notion of *ren* (仁) as the “existentiality (beingness) of the existence of love” (愛之存在的存在性),<sup>7</sup> prompted Confucians to reach new boundaries in their “search for understanding of the greater self.”<sup>8</sup>

### III. Confucian Humanity/Humaneness and the Covid-19 Pandemic

The year 2020 may be remembered either as an *annus mirabilis* or an *annus horribilis* in the long history of human civilization. The Coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19), as Henry A. Kissinger worried, may change the post-war “liberal world order” forever.<sup>9</sup> At least one scholar has suggested that the West must revise or abandon individualism to cope with the pandemic.<sup>10</sup> A senior fellow at one think tank mentioned the fact that “at present the most helpful news about our ability to defeat the epidemic comes from what could roughly be called the Confucian cosmopolis.”<sup>11</sup> The Taipei-based Foundation for the Sustainable Development of Chinese Culture has indicated that the number of deaths caused by Covid-19 per 100,000 population in the Christian cultural zone amounts to 58 times that in the Confucian cultural zone. It seems clear then that Confucian ethics are relevant to our times.<sup>12</sup>

Before we ponder the possibility of the Confucian learning of *ren* (仁) as a salutary resource for global ethics in these days when the pandemic is attacking

7 Mou Zongsan 牟宗三, *Xinti yu xingti* 心體與性體 (*Substance of Mind and Substance of Human Nature*) (Taipei: Zhengzhong shuju, 1968, 1973), 3:244.

8 Qian Mu 錢穆. *Guoxue gailun* 國學概論 (*Introduction to Guoxue*), in *Qian Binsi xiansheng quanji* 錢賓四先生全集 (*The Complete Works of Mr. Qian Binsi*), ed. Editorial Committee of *The Complete Works of Mr. Qian Binsi* (Taipei: Lianjing chuban gongsi, 1994–1998), 1:278.

9 Henry A. Kissinger, “The Coronavirus Pandemic Will Forever Alter the World Order,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 4, 2020, A/17.

10 Jan-Werner Müller, “We Must Help One Another or Die,” *New York Times*, March 19, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/19/opinion/coronavirus-politics.html>.

11 Bruno Maçães, “Coronavirus and the Clash of Civilizations,” *National Review*, March 10, 2020, <https://www.hudson.org/research/15801-coronavirus-and-the-clash-of-civilizations>, accessed on June 22, 2020.

12 For a detailed illustration of the relevant statistics, see the 2020 online presentation of the Wang Dao Sustainability Index (WDSI). <http://www.wangdaoindex.org/xmdoc?xsmsid=01351573930519617185> accessed on March 2, 2021.

us all over the world, we want to mention three important questions that have come to the fore since the pandemic began. The first is how to overcome the excessive individualism that has developed in modern culture since the Enlightenment. At the very least, this question pertains to recognizing and establishing the proper relationship between self and others. In other words, how might humanity maintain a dynamic equilibrium between individualism and communitarianism? The second is how to reestablish interactive relations between different sectors, be they people, societies, or states. The core of this issue lies in the ways of moving from contemporary “de-coupling” to future “re-interconnectedness.” And the last but most important question is how to keep one’s mind-heart unperturbed and calm even as the pandemic is spreading. This issue pertains to the proper relationship between the self and the world.

The answer to these three questions has very much to do with a keyword, namely, reconciliation. Some sort of reconciliation between self and other, man and nature, and man and super-nature must be made before we can cope with the challenges of the pandemic. In the Confucian tradition, the best way to reconciliation lies in maintaining imperturbability within our minds. Confucius and Mencius both declared that they were able to maintain their minds unperplexed and unmoved as of age forty. Wang Yangming reported his spiritual enlightenment of “attaining innate knowledge” (*zhi liangzhi* 致良知) in his painful exile experience in Guizhou. And as Mencius asserted,<sup>13</sup> “For a man to give full realization to his heart is for him to understand his own nature, and a man who knows his own nature will know Heaven” (盡其心者，知其性也，知其性，則知天矣). Two later Confucian scholars, Ōshio Heihachirō (大塩平八郎 1783–1836) of late-Tokugawa Japan (1600–1868) and Jeong Je-du (Chǒng chedu 鄭齊斗, 정제두 1649–1736) of Joseon Korea (1392–1910), understood Mencius’ views much as did Wang Yangming, holding that once we attain the spontaneity and calmness of our mind, the “great chain of being” from self to others and to the ultimate reality can be established.

#### IV. Confucian Humanity/Humaneness and the New Global Ethics

The cultural resources for a new global ethics after the pandemic may arguably be found in the Confucian humanism focusing upon the core value of *ren* (仁). The main theme or melody of the Confucian symphony of humanity was established on the humanist spirit of intersubjectivity in relations between people (and not

13 D. C. Lau, trans., *Mencius* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 1984), BK. VII, art. A, 265.

between man and metaphysical or spiritual entities). In that way, East Asian Confucian discourse on humanity unfolded within the context of four major pillars of Confucian humanism, namely, the unity of body and mind, harmony between oneself and others, unity of heaven and man, and dialogue between the past and the present. The special emphasis given to the intersubjectivity of interhuman relationships in the Confucian philosophy of humanity carries new revelations for the world of the twenty-first century.

A theoretically significant question pertaining to the core issue since the Covid-19 era, namely, reconciliation, is the question of the objectification of moral subjectivity. Confucius and Mencius fixed the original scope of humanity by fashioning the Confucian learning on humanity with an extremely powerful inner elan. Thus, discourse on humanity could not be confined to an abstract world of thought and reduced to an intellectual game — or as the Buddhists call it, mental proliferation (*xilun* 戲論, Skt. *prapañca*). Instead, with its inherent vitality, humanity and humaneness had to be put into practice and so issued a Weberian “calling” to intellectuals of all East Asian countries, arousing them to practice self-mastery in their everyday dealings with others in their greater social world. Confucian intellectuals set out from cultivation of their own moral characters (*xiushen* 修身) and committed to a form of statecraft that would extend benefits and aid to people. When Confucius discussed *ren* 仁 together with his disciples, he never defined its meaning but only emphasized the method of putting *ren* into practice. Confucian reflections on humanity were never just a series of theoretical discussions and inferences made by otherworldly hermits who resided in seclusion and considered themselves to be above the mundane world.

On the contrary, though diverse in their content, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese discourses on humanity were all permeated with the never-altering quality of viewing the self and others as interpenetrating, such that what is outside and what is inside are comprehensively connected, with the connection extending between those above and those below, between men and women, etc. This idea of comprehensiveness is best expressed in Tan Sitong’s (譚嗣同, 1865–1898) *Exposition on Humanity* (*Renxue* 仁學). The inner force of East Asian Confucian discourse on humanity and humaneness has, with surging grandeur, enveloped and enhanced the exercise of royal power throughout East Asia.

Consequently, the inner vitality of *ren* might inevitably answer the question “In what way can the moral subject of humanity and humaneness be objectivized?” Once the humane mind acquires its own practical realization and implementation in humane governance, this necessarily brings into play the structures of power that exist in the actual world. Confucius and Mencius first advocated the ideal of humane governance of the realm in the Spring and Autumn (722–464 BCE) and Warring States (463–222 BCE) periods when the au-

thority of the Zhou royal line was already in decline and feudal lords were beginning to contend with one another in their struggle for supremacy. But after the great unification of the Chinese empire occurred in 221 BCE, Confucian scholars were confronted with the real supremacy of royal power. Thus, whereas the power possessed by the Confucian scholars who embraced and cherished the ideal of humane governance was conferred upon them by their ruler, their monarchs were in control of ultimate and absolute authority over them.

Between sovereigns and Confucian scholars there existed a relationship of subordination, not one of coordination. The extreme inequality in power relations that existed between the two sides soon caused Confucian discourse to fall to a greater degree into “the arts of governance” (*zhengshu* 政術, or “the arts of politics”), and away from the domain of “philosophy of governance” (*zhengli* 政理, “political philosophy”). In the end, Confucian learning on humanity could not be saved from becoming an “unfinished project,” and the ideal of humane governance became a discourse of “counter-factuality,” ultimately reduced to an everlasting nostalgia in the minds of Confucian scholars.

*Ren* conveyed — as humanism, humanity, and humaneness — the most important cluster of ideas in the cultural tradition of East Asian Confucianisms. In the tradition of Confucian learning on humanity, the content of its thought experienced creative transformations in China, Japan, and Korea. The continuities and discontinuities, the processes of change and persistence turned *ren* into one of the most exciting movements in the symphony of East Asian cultures. Yet the ideal of humane governance and its concrete practice was betrayed by East Asian autocratic regimes, for it was under the control and restrictions imposed by royal authority upon East Asian Confucians that the great ideal of humane governance barely lingered on, growing ever denser, unable to develop and fully issue forth.<sup>14</sup>

If the main task for Asian thought in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries centered around the establishment and objectification of moral subjectivity, then we might well say that the challenge of the post-pandemic era lies in promotion of moral intersubjectivity. In the twenty-first century, as we strive for reconciliation, East Asian Confucian discourse on *ren* might reach new heights because in focusing on interpersonal relationships, it neither makes one completely abandon oneself by following others, nor does it make people completely surrender themselves to the pursuit of the self at the expense of their relationships to others. Hence, the latent intellectual resource of intersubjectivity implicit and yet in-

14 For a discussion on this point, see Chun-chieh Huang, “Human Governance as the Moral Responsibility of Rulers in East Asian Confucian Political Philosophy,” in *Morality and Responsibility of Rules: European and Chinese Origins of a Rule of Law as Justice for World Order*, ed. Anthony Carty and Janne Nijman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 270–291.

tegral to the Confucian notion and practice of *ren* is exactly what is required by humankind in the twenty-first century.

With regard to the current world order, the twenty-first century is an age of multipolarity, and not at all an age of unilateral world order. This new configuration within the emerging world order of the twenty-first century is in urgent need of a new humanist spirit through which the core values of Eastern and Western civilizations might be fused together in harmony as its spiritual foundation. This is also the reason why, in the world of today, intercultural dialogue is of such vital importance. The long and unbroken tradition of East Asian Confucian discourse on humanity, which spans nearly three thousand years of human history, with its majestic humanist spirit and values affirmed through its thinking about notions such as the humane mind (*ren xin* 仁心), humane governance (*ren zheng* 仁政), and the kingly way (*wang dao* 王道), has the capacity to lead the world of the twenty-first century towards a state of symbiosis, common prosperity, and peace through reconciliation. It is imperative to listen to the call of Confucius from East Asia in our century.

## V. Chapter Synopses

From the teachings of Confucius as recorded in the *Analects* forward, the primary if not exclusive focus of virtually all expressions of Confucianism, in East Asia and globally, has been on ethics as an intrinsic, integral dimension of the social, political, economic, and cultural spheres. While Confucian solutions to the problem of how those who govern might best proceed have been varied, none has denied the primary importance of taking the people at large as the ultimate concern. Not surprisingly, when described with just one word, Confucianism is often characterized as a quintessential expression of humanism, i.e., an unrelenting concern, both philosophical and practical in nature, with the world of humans, their moral character, and their efforts to provide for a realm in which the wealth, natural resources, and creative capacities of all between heaven and earth might best be merged with the needs, hopes, dreams, and ambitions of humanity at large and the larger ecological environment that — at least according to one account, that of the Song dynasty (960–1279) Confucian, Zhang Zai (張載 1020–1077) in his “Western Inscription” (*Ximing* 西銘) — serves as both the father and mother of all that is. The essays comprising this volume, summarized in successive synoptic accounts below, convey variously the multifaceted core of Confucian humanism as a living ethic vital to the remainder of the twenty-first century.

## 1. Confucian Philosophy of Family Feeling

In the opening essay, “The Confucian Philosophy of Family Feeling as a Resource for a New Geopolitical Order,” Roger Ames suggests that the Confucian philosophy of family feeling, grounded in its emphasis on “family reverence” (*xiao* 孝), might serve as the core of a minimalist morality informing a new, conceptually and practically reconfigured world geopolitical order embracing, rather than a collection of individualistic and often self-centered nation states, a more holistic and communal global order, one often conceptualized in Confucian terms as all-below-heaven (*tianxia* 天下). In light of the challenges of the twenty-first century, *tianxia* offers a vision of a comprehensive order of world reality in which states exist not in fiercely independent competition with one another but instead as internally-dependent, complementary units working together for the common good of all in a shared geo-political ecosystem embracing diversity and creativity within the shared, organic environment of our dynamic and ever evolving cosmos. Ames argues that this new world order, conceived of as a kind of “worlding,” is intrinsically and isomorphically related to a move away from the excesses of ego-driven individualism. Moreover, it is one that embraces inclusively, rather than an ethics of the self and the possibility of radical selfishness, more positively the Confucian morality of the family as rooted in family reverence and family feeling.

In Ames’ view, the still extant old-world order based upon individual nation-states egregiously echoes the excesses of individualism. Ames asserts that individualistically-driven approaches to social and political organization have repeatedly proven to be failures in addressing problems such as pandemics, pollution, inequities in resource and wealth allocation, and global hunger. Most typically, the old-world order — which Ames associates with the seventeenth-century Westphalian system affirming absolute and ultimate sovereignty for each individual state — allows, rather brutally, as one means for resolving world problems nothing better than the self-destructive and barbaric solution of war.

To provide for a more healthy, peaceful, and environmentally respectful global order, one upholding intra-nationalism rather than internationalism, Ames proposes the *tianxia* approach to relations between political entities at the state level, arguing that an outgrowth of this would be a new conception of human society grounded not in itself as a collection of individuals with each working for his/her own self-interests but instead, as an organic whole comprised of families working together, internally and externally, for the greater good of all. In the *tianxia* model of globalism, the world would be construed as an inwardly encompassing vital organism, without an exclusionary or discriminatory outside that sets an illusory us against them. In Ames’ view, this approach to understanding, in a moral and practical manner, people, polities, and the global order

is the most promising and perhaps the only viable one for the twenty-first century.

## 2. Confucianism and Global Challenges

In chapter two, “Confucianism and the Global Challenges of the Twenty-First Century,” Torbjörn Lodén approaches Confucianism as a living, resilient system of thought that despite many earlier critiques, including some pronouncements that it was either dead or at best simply obsolete and irrelevant to modern times, remains not only a vital option but moreover one full of possibilities for a future humanity and the pressing challenges of this century. In making his case, Lodén differentiates the “really-existing” Confucianism that often, in its political manifestations, is a distorted, bastardized expression of the multidimensional humanistic Confucian ideals affirming a shared human nature of goodness grounded in ethical principles and sensibilities that unite not only all of humanity but the human realm and the cosmos at large in an organic community seeking fulfillment through vital integration and fundamental cooperation at the ontological level as well as that of everyday life.

Rather than dichotomize and differentiate East and West as essentially incommensurable and somehow in danger of what Samuel P. Huntington (1927–2008) has called the “clash of civilizations,” Lodén emphasizes shared ground and the relatedness of the two, and how Confucianism, when uncompromised by those who would appropriate it for their own political purposes, offers insights for dealing with climate change, war, oppression and exploitation, the unequal distribution of wealth, and pandemics. Lodén highlights dimensions of Confucian thought especially valuable in our time including those of humanism, universalism, holism, the search for unity, the focus on moderation and harmony, the emphasis on duties, and the central role of study and learning. In the latter, Lodén sees not necessarily unique and unprecedented tenets but rather ones that in their shared, common presence in Confucianism and, potentially, some expressions of Western thinking, might offer solutions to the problems of modernity and avenues allowing for cultural diversity that well bypass the prospect of clashes and conflict.

## 3. Confucian Democracy

Efforts to reconceptualize, along complementary lines, the global arena in terms of society, ethics, politics, and science, continue in the third chapter, Alan Wood’s “Confucian Democracy in the Twenty-First Century: A Global Perspective.”

Wood's essential claim is that Confucianism and democracy are complementary, "with democracy providing the institutional hardware, and Confucianism the moral software." In support of his view, Wood notes the views of the mid-twentieth-century New Confucian thinker, Xu Fuguan 徐復觀, who held that in pre-Qin times, Confucianism harbored a "democratic spirit," especially evident in its emphasis on the importance of the people. However, this spirit was compromised by the rise of increasingly autocratic imperial regimes from the Qin dynasty forward. As a result, while Confucianism continued as the learning on which candidates taking the civil service exam were tested, its democratic spirit was subordinated to the formalism of a curriculum designed to ensure professional success within an authoritarian bureaucratic regime. Yet as Wood emphasizes, the spirit of democracy is hardly foreign to Confucianism. Indeed, the essential compatibility of Confucianism and democracy is of utmost relevance to the future of China and humankind. In solidarity with Ames, Wood notes that the global dimensions of problems facing humanity today and the foreseeable future, those of climate change, environmental degradation, pandemics and disease, nuclear proliferation, and inequities in wealth, cannot be adequately dealt with via the radical individualism still widely operative at the local and national levels.

Instead of a world order conceived of as a collection of individual nation-states in amoral competition with one another, with each seeking its own best interests, Wood observes that it will only be by means of "cooperative government on a global scale" that these problems might be solved. In "the Confucian outlook on life," Wood sees qualities such as love, empathy, cooperation, and respect for others in life and learning that could rescue democracy from "tearing itself apart through its commitment to radical individualism." Wood adds, for example, that with the Covid-19 pandemic, many Americans, excessively devoted to "their own private ideology of freedom" rather than the common good, exhibited "self-destructive selfishness" rather than a devotion to "the human family."

Rather than radical individualism, Wood calls attention to Confucianism's potential contribution, its "faith in the essential morality and complementarity of the natural world." This vision of holistic ethical complementarity Wood traces to the Song dynasty Neo-Confucian thinker Zhu Xi, whose synthesis of earlier Neo-Confucian philosophies was most exceptional in its ability to find, through the notion of the Supreme Ultimate (*taiji* 太極), their complementary nature so that rather than affirm an either/or approach elevating rational principle (*li* 理) or generative force (*qi* 氣), Zhu viewed the two ontological dimensions as complementary and inseparable aspects of all reality.

Taking Zhu's thoughts about the Supreme Ultimate as a starting point, Wood adds that Zhu's vision is not an idiosyncratic, inherently contradictory one so

much as a vision that foreshadowed in many respects the new paradigm shift in scientific theory away from the mechanistic, atomistic emphasis on a whole comprised of independent parts to a more organic, holistic grasp of things affirming their relational and mutual reciprocity. In the latter, the whole is understood as something more than a collection of its individual parts. This paradigm shift, conspicuously evident in early-twentieth-century quantum physics and its affirmation of the complementarity of opposites, represents a shift to a vision of things as long understood by Confucians such as Zhu Xi who, rather than insist on an either/or approach to reality, found cause for understanding things in terms of their complementary, organic nature embracing what might seem, at a superficial level, contradictory attributes. By incorporating such a deeply rooted Confucian holistic vision of things into our efforts to infuse democratic institutions with an ethical core, Wood foresees the possibility of a future empowered to meet, at the global level, the challenges of the remainder of the twenty-first century.

#### 4. Confucian Relational Ethics

The views of Ames and Wood resonate in the fourth chapter, Jana S. Rošker's "Confucian Ethics of Relations and Alternative Models of Social Organization in Periods of Crises." Rošker endorses the call for a new global order, one that goes beyond the failures of the nation-state system that has dominated the world for the last several centuries and which has, with the onset of new levels of globalization, proven to be bankrupt, incapable of meeting the global challenges facing humanity. Along with the modern nation-state, Rošker rejects the once regnant liberal individualism, a hangover from the Enlightenment and its elevation of the idea of "the free and autonomous individual subject."

Rošker contextualizes her critique of the nation-state and liberal individualism in relation to the pandemic, noting the extent to which dealing with the spread of the Corona virus globally has accelerated awareness of the ineptness of the *ancien* socio-political order, and heightened calls for a new, more global community engaged in active dialogue and so more fully capable of working together to deal with the myriad problems facing humanity, Covid-19 included. To facilitate this, Rošker presents a critical introduction to Confucianism and its "high valuation" on "interpersonal relationships, mutual empathy, and responsible autonomy."

More specifically, Rošker examines ways in which Confucian notions of personhood and autonomy might enhance, at the global cross-cultural level, the reinvigoration of "humanist values." Rather than endorse widely repeated yet ill-informed views about Chinese and East Asian societies as authoritarian in

character and undergirded by a docile, easily led population mobilized without resistance for causes such as dealing with the recent pandemic, Rošker notes how the “original Confucian teachings emphasized ‘humaneness (*ren* 仁)’ and ‘rituality (*li* 禮),” diversity and pluralism, and endorsed a number of “proto-democratic elements.” It is the humanistic philosophy of early Confucianism that Rošker elevates, not “the dogmatic state doctrine” and its “conservative normative ethic” more characteristic of “political Confucianism.” In Rošker’s view, teachings such as humaneness with their emphasis on the relational nature of ethics and the moral person’s mutual engagement and cooperation with other people, are more responsible for the successes of East Asian countries in their “democratic containment” of the pandemic than their supposedly authoritarian ruling elites and their allegedly docile subjects.

By “relational ethics,” Rošker refers to the fact that in the Confucian social order of much of East Asia, people are an expression of the dynamic network of relationships that they are involved in through their ties with their fellow human beings. Noting how three of the five basic relationships of Confucian ethics (*wu lun* 五倫) are grounded upon family relations, Rošker suggests that the core Confucian ethical notion, humaneness, is in fact an outgrowth of family reverence (*xiao* 孝). On this count, Rošker concurs with Roger Ames and notably Li Zehou in extrapolating relational ethics from the core ethical sense of family reverence, and then takes that as a grounds for growing moral practice in the larger community.

In this context, Rošker defends the collectivist tendencies of East Asian societies, affirming that instead of being the product of authoritarian regimes, they proceed from and in turn express a kind of individualism, one grounded in equality and mutual recognition rather than competition and domination of the other. Moreover, Rošker claims that mutual empathy and humaneness which are central to Confucian relationism, help to “assure the preservation of group solidarity and responsibility” and serve as solid and forceful tools for the solving of epidemic, ecological, and political crises of contemporary times.”

## 5. Toward A More Equitable Economic Order

In the fifth chapter, “Toward a More Compassionate Economic Order: The Confucian Imperative for Greater Wealth Equity,” John A. Tucker shifts the focus to the problem of inequalities in wealth and resources. Taking Thomas Piketty’s recent works, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (2013) and *Capital and Ideology* (2019) as a starting point, Tucker suggests that despite the short shrift Piketty gives Confucianism and Chinese history in his otherwise globally-oriented analyses, Confucianism offers a longstanding platform for achieving a

more equitable distribution of wealth and resources. Tucker notes that in the *Mencius*, the so-called “well-field system” (*jingtian zhidu* 井田制度, i.e., agricultural land distribution system) is proposed as a means of effecting not simply an equitable distribution of capital but instead, as a means of realistically achieving an authentically ethical society, one wherein all might be reasonably expected to embody the basic ideals of morality.

Mencius’ thinking on the well-field system emerged from his realistic recognition that people cannot be expected to behave ethically unless they have the basics of food, clothing, and shelter. Lacking the latter, Mencius admitted that there was nothing that people would not do to obtain them. If provided with a means of achieving the material necessities for a decent life, a plot of land in Mencius’ scheme, then people would behave in a decent, indeed ethical manner. Such provision, Mencius suggested, was fundamental to achieving what he called “compassionate government” (*ren zheng* 仁政), often translated as “humane government” or “benevolent government.”

Tucker acknowledges that a plot of land is often, in modern society, a rather archaic solution to the problem of inequities in wealth, and so calls for a contemporary hermeneutic of Mencius’ proposal wherein an egalitarian plot of land is reconceptualized as provision for the basic human needs for a decent life, including where necessary, food, clothing, shelter, education, and medicine. In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Mencian thinking informing the well-field system would energetically affirm that access to vaccines and decent health care ought not be a function of individual or even national wealth but rather, if we expect people to behave ethically, provided for all equitably as a fundamental expression of compassionate government.

## 6. Toleration and Confucian Virtues

With the sixth chapter, “Why Toleration Is Not a Value/Virtue?: The View from Confucius,” Yong Huang argues that contrary to the relatively widespread respect and advocacy that tolerance has received in Western philosophical literature, including notably, the support of John Locke, John Stuart Mill, John Rawls, as well as in widely respected documents internationally such as the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in Confucius’ thinking as recorded in the *Analects*, tolerance appears as a “fundamentally flawed” moral idea. Yet Huang adds that simply because Confucius did not emphasize tolerance of those who were immoral does not mean that he advocated intolerance. Instead of tolerance or intolerance, Confucius believed that those who did not deserve toleration, i.e., those who were immoral, ought to be greeted with moral education including non-coercive measures such as learning

the classics. Also emphasized is the importance of uprightness in the person or persons conveying the moral education. Their example at the personal level is, according to Huang's interpretation of Confucius, as important as the teachings themselves. Huang notes that the two characters included in the modern Chinese word for toleration, *kuanrong* 寬容, do appear individually in the *Analects*, but argues that therein they do not have the meaning of toleration as they do, when used together, in modern Chinese.

## 7. Confucian Self-Reflection and Ecological Humanism

In the seventh chapter, "Yi Toegye on Self-Reflection and Ultimate Human Life: A Korean Neo-Confucian and Comparative Interpretation," Edward Chung presents the basics of self-cultivation as expounded by the premier Korean scholar of Zhu Xi's learning, Yi Toegye, and its ramifications for contemporary life in the twenty-first century. Chung examines Toegye's theory and practice of self-reflection in light of four dimensions: (1) self-reflection and mind cultivation, (2) quiet-sitting contemplation and concentration, (3) self-reflection and reverential practice, and (4) being in harmony with nature. As Chung explains, one key to Toegye's approach is mind cultivation which involves making the mind the master and center of the self so as to maintain single-minded concentration, orderliness, solemnity, and dignity of thought. Through such mind control, moral principles will become clear and selfish inclinations overcome as "the illuminating mind" makes manifest Heaven's principle.

One practical approach for realizing this embodiment of the moral way through self-reflection and achievement of spiritual equanimity is, in Toegye's view, "quiet-sitting" (*jeongjwa* 靜坐). Through this practice, Toegye believed that the scattered, dispersed body and mind might be reunited and Heaven's principle manifested. Quiet-sitting, then, is the essential practice in Toegye's approach to self-reflection and moral behavior. Through it, the virtue of reverence (*gyeong* 敬) — sometimes rendered as "holistic attentiveness," "mindfulness," and "seriousness" — is the first principle which, with cultivation, emerges daily in practical, physical expressions of self-reflection. With the latter, a more holistic path of ethical and spiritual cultivation is realized facilitating a "deeper and higher realm of human existence."

According to Toegye's view of self-reflection, "the true human being manifests the Confucian belief in 'forming one body with heaven and earth,'" enabling achievement of an "anthropocosmic harmony" in which all forms of life are respected and treated with integrity. This in turn lends itself to a kind of "ecological humanism" and an "ecological awareness integrating 'religion, ethics, and aesthetics.'" Chung emphasizes that the contemporary relevance of Toegye's

thinking on self-reflection is found in its holistic approach to compassionate wisdom and “interaction with nature and other human beings.”

Chung concludes that while Confucianism has been, recently, studied in relation to modernization, economic development, politics, and human rights, Toegye’s thinking reminds us of its importance for ethics, spirituality, and religion. It also is important in relation to the search for convergence among the world’s spiritual traditions and as a basis for global ethical and interreligious dialogue. In these respects, Toegye’s sixteenth-century exposition of the Confucian way of self-reflection remains very relevant to the twenty-first century.

## 8. Intergenerational Justice and Filial Piety

In the eight chapter, “An Overlooked Dimension of Intergenerational Justice? A Note on Filial Piety in the Age of the Ecological Crisis,” Heiner Roetz questions the value of filial piety not only in Chinese history, wherein little evidence appears of its salutary impact on ecological concerns, but also in the present and the future. Instead of simply casting filial piety as a positive force, Roetz draws on a host of Western commentators such as Montesquieu (1689–1755), Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), and Max Weber (1864–1920), as well as Chinese critics such as the May Fourth thinker, Wu Yu 吳虞 (1872–1949), who linked filial piety and the “spirit of despotism” in China, to remind readers that filial piety has been “the breeding ground of submissiveness, traditionalism, and nepotism” in ways that leave little to “no place in a Chinese society that deserved the predicate ‘modern’ ....” Roetz thus observes that filial piety, as he translates *xiao* 孝, “is not a first rank candidate” for possible Confucian contributions to the twenty-first century. Rather than filial piety, Roetz suggests that Confucianism, if it is to contribute to modernity, must instead build on not the family but “the human being in an open world, stress individual autonomy rather than parental authority, and transcend the limits of tradition.” Roetz clearly is at odds with Tu Wei-ming’s more positive thinking on *xiao* and the “richly textured” family structures needed to convey moral values and is so because he sees little evidence of such in the wake of the social changes from an agrarian society to “an industrial and service economy.” Roetz’s thinking also stands as a challenge to Roger Ames’ ideas as set forth in the opening essay of this anthology.

Yet Roetz adds that *xiao* has meant more than “unconditional submissiveness,” i. e., it has also been linked to “principled moral vigilance that could lead to opposition, albeit moderate and never aggressive, and to clear rejection of following immoral, inhumane ... orders of the parents as well as orders of the ruler.” But Roetz adds that these more critical, subjective dimensions of *xiao* were not the ones emphasized or forefronted in most traditional literature. In this

context, Roetz notes that there is hope for *xiao* insofar as one can find in early texts filial piety associated with the careful use of resources, something that would, in his view, possibly contribute to an environmental ethics checking the ecological crisis by calling for preservation of the means for humanity to survive, though not, as has been argued, by extending *xiao* to the non-human realm. Roetz does not subscribe to what he refers to as “the currently abundant lyrical presentations of Confucianism as inherently cosmo-ecological.” His idea is rather that *xiao* might indirectly help to preserve the earth as the place of remembering the dead. It would thus enhance and ensure an intergenerational justice as an avenue to preservation of the world so as to have it relevant not simply to the present and future generations, but to those past as well.

## 9. Inner Sagehood and External Political Achievement

In chapter nine, “From the Inner Sage to the External King: The ‘End’ of Human Life and Its Realization in Confucianism,” Yi-Huah Jiang examines two expressions of Confucianism in contemporary discourse and practice. One is the New Confucianism primarily emerging from Taiwan and Hong Kong and emphasizing the pursuit of a virtuous life and the achievement of inner sagehood. This school of Confucianism affirms adoption of institutions associated with Western liberal democracy as the preferred system of political organization. The thinking of Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909–1995) and Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 (1904–1982) well exemplifies this version of Confucianism. The second school of Confucianism is the Political Confucianism of mainland China which considers the pursuit of inner sagehood to be politically irrelevant, though not necessarily misguided. It rejects, however, the notion that Western liberal democracy is the best form of political organization, noting how democracy is “plagued by serious problems.” Instead, it suggests that China develop its own political order, one wherein Confucianism “would be promoted as the state philosophy and Confucians would rule the country without democratic election.” Two exemplars of this approach are Jiang Qing 蔣慶 (1953–) and Chen Ming 陳明 (1962–).

Political Confucianism is the younger of the two lines of thought and, in part, has emerged by criticizing the seemingly accommodationist views of the New Confucians and their readiness to combine Chinese systems with those of the West. Much opposed to this perceived kowtowing, Jiang Qing, for example, has stated, “China is China, the West is the West. Confucianism is Confucianism, democracy is democracy... There is neither need nor possibility to combine the two,” thus dismissing the more accommodative and assimilative approach of the New Confucians in favor of an independent, distinctively Chinese line of development. Rather than partner with Western liberalism, Political Confucianism