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Why You Ought Not to Turn the Other Cheek: Confucius on How to Deal With Wrongdoers

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Abstract

On the issue of how to deal with those who have wronged us, Confucius holds a view very different from Jesus, although they are both against "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." While Jesus asks us to turn the left cheeks when someone strikes us on the right, Confucius advises us to repay an injury with uprightness. It is commonly believed that the position Confucius recommends here lies between the position Jesus recommends and the position they are both against: while the former is morally too demanding and the latter is morally too permissive, Confucius's position is morally realistic. This essay argues against such a common conception and claims that the position Confucius advocates actually sets a moral standard that is even higher than Jesus' position, since what Confucius asks us to do is to do all that we can to help the wrongdoer cease to be a wrongdoer and become a moral person.

Keywords: Confucius, Jesus, repay an injury with uprightness, turn the other cheek

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為什麼不該轉過你的左臉：孔子論如何對待作惡者

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摘　要

在如何對待傷害我們的作惡者問題上，孔子和耶穌持很不相同的看法，雖然他們都反對以牙還牙或者以怨報怨。耶穌要求我們在右臉被打了以後轉過左臉；孔子則明確反對這樣一種以德報怨的做法，而主張以直報怨。一種通常的看法是，孔子贊成的這種以直報怨的立場介於耶穌的以德報怨和他們都反對的以怨報怨之間：前者過於理想主義，很難做到，而後者過於放任，沒有原則，唯有孔子的主張比較實際。本文反對這樣一種看法，認為孔子所主張的立場實際上比耶穌的以德報怨理想更高，要求更嚴，因為孔子的以直報怨之直乃是正曲為直之直，因此以直報怨就是要求我們想方設法使傷害我們的作惡者不再成為作惡者，並成為為善者。

關鍵詞：孔子、耶穌、以直報怨、轉過左臉

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1. Introduction

What is the appropriate attitude toward wrongdoers? Jesus famously said, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles" (*Matthew* 5.39-41). Confucius's teaching is very different. When asked what he thought about the Daoist idea of repaying injury with a good turn advocated by Laozi in *Daodejing* 49 and 63, Confucius responded: "if so what do you repay a good turn with? You repay an injury with uprightness, but you repay a good turn with a good turn" (*Analects* 14.34). In this essay, I shall first examine the unique attitude that Confucius recommends to us toward wrongdoers (Section 2). Confucius's answer to our title question is that to turn the other cheek creates an opportunity for the wrongdoer to commit another wrongdoing, which is not good for the wrongdoer. So we shall examine in what sense Confucius believes that it is not in the interest of a person to commit wrongdoing (Section 3). In Confucius's view, we ought not to turn the other cheek primarily not because we do not want to suffer injustice but because we do not want to leave others in the immoral situation. This raises the question of whether we have moral duty to make others virtuous and, if so, how to make others virtuous (Section 4). The essay concludes with a brief summary (Section 5).

2. Repay Injury with Uprightness

The exact meaning of Confucius's "repaying injury with uprightness" is subject to scholarly disagreement.[1] While Confucius does not agree with the attitude that Jesus recommends toward wrongdoers: to repay an injury with a good turn,[2] does he agree with the attitude that Jesus condemns: to repay an injury with an injury? LI Ling 李零, a contemporary Chinese scholar, claims that this is precisely what Confucius means by "repaying injury with uprightness." LI Ling reads the Chinese character, *zhi* 直, here translated as "uprightness," as *zhi* 值, meaning "value." In this interpretation, what Confucius says is that you ought to repay injury by the wrongdoer with an injury of equal value, not more or less than the injury you received. To support his view, he cites what is also recorded as Confucius's saying in the *Book of Rites*: "with repaying a good turn with a good turn, people can be morally encouraged, and with repaying injury with injury, people will be warned"; and "to repay an injury with a good turn indicates a person of great lenience, while to repay a good turn with injury indicates a violent person" (*Liji* 32.6). In LI Ling's view, Confucius advocates the two attitudes in the

[1] It is not only a daunting but also an impossible task to decipher precisely what Confucius has in mind when he says this, as there is hardly any materials for us to conduct such a psychological interpretation, to use the hermeneutic term of Schleiermacher. The most we can do is to make best sense of what Confucius says here in light of what he says elsewhere without violating the principle of charity and the principle of humanity in interpretation. This is the goal of this essay.

[2] The Chinese character here translated as "a good turn" is *de* 德, normally meaning "virtue," and so it would be no problematic at all to return injury with virtue, since a virtuous person knows how to return injury appropriately in any given situations. However, clearly this is not what it means here, as otherwise there would be no reason to think what reason Confucius has for opposing it, and it would be difficult to see what differences Confucius could make between *de* and *zhi*, here translated as uprightness. Here I adopt the common interpretation, first put forward by He Yan, understanding it to mean "favor" (*enhui* 恩惠) (in Cheng Shude: 1017).

first group and condemns the two attitudes in the second group (LI Ling 2007: 262).

While there is some plausibility with this interpretation, it is not plausible after all. First, while the Chinese character which means "uprightness" can indeed also mean what the character with the additional radical of "person" to the left of it means, i.e., "value," the character without the radical is a central concept, appearing 22 times in 16 different chapters of the *Analects*. In none of these other places, some of which we shall examine more closely below, can it possibly mean "value." Second, if Confucius really means "repay injury with an [equal] injury," it would be much simpler and rhetorically more effective for him to say it directly, instead of using the character that can mean "value." Third, if the character should indeed be read as value, and Confucius indeed thinks that we should repay the wrongdoers the equal value of what they have done to us, then perhaps Confucius would similarly recommend that we should repay people the equal value of what they do to us. Thus, instead of two slogans, to repay a good turn with a good turn and to repay injury with *zhi* (equal value), Confucius could have used one single slogan: to repay anything with *zhi* (equal value). Of course, we know that Confucius does not do that.

According to a relatively more popular and perhaps more plausible interpretation, adopted by LI Zehou 李澤厚 among many others, repaying injury with uprightness is an attitude toward wrongdoers that occupies a middle position, in terms of moral demandingness, between repaying injury with injury and repaying injury with a good turn. While repaying injury with an injury is morally too permissive and repaying injury with a good turn is morally too demanding, repaying injury with uprightness is morally realistic or practicable. LI Zehou supports his interpretation by citing KANG Youwei's 康有爲 commentary on this *Analects* passage: "Confucius's teaching is not far from humans as they are ... and is something that everyone can practice. It is not that Confucius does not like a higher standard, but that, when high and deep, such standard can only be practiced by one or two persons and not by

everyone, and for this reason, it cannot be the great way" (in LI Zehou 1999: 339). Here the term "uprightness" is understood to mean "what one really feels" without attempt to cover it. This sense of "uprightness" seems to be consistent with another appearance of the same character in the *Analects*. It is about a person, WEISHENG Gao 微生高, who was asked by someone for some vinegar. As he did not have any, he asked his neighbors for some and then gave it to the person. In this *Analects* passage, Confucius says that WEISHENG Gao is not an upright person (*Analects* 5.24).[3]

This interpretation is also problematic. It assumes that, even for Confucius, to repay injury with a good turn is a higher moral standard than to repay injury with uprightness, and Confucius promotes the latter only because the former is too difficult for people to practice. This assumption is wrong, as I shall argue presently that to repay injury with uprightness is indeed a much higher standard than to repay injury with a good turn. Moreover, understood as acting according to what one truly feels, "to repay injury with uprightness" becomes morally empty. If I'm a bad person myself, when someone causes me harm, I may truly feel that I ought to take revenge, most likely causing more harm to the person than the person harms me. Would Confucius thus endorse my action simply because it comes from my true feeling? Certainly not. It might be said that a bad person cannot have the genuine feeling, and genuine feeling can only come from an upright person. This is perhaps true, but if so, we seem to get into a circular reasoning: we define uprightness with genuine feeling and then define genuine feeling with uprightness.

[3] According to the common interpretation, Weisheng should simply say honestly that he does not have any vinegar. However, I think Confucius's main problem with Weisheng is that he does not say that the vinegar is not his but rather his neighbor's. Rather than sending the person away by simply telling the truth (that he does not have vinegar), perhaps Confucius would approve Weisheng's action if he does not cover up the fact that the vinegar is from his neighbor.

Clearly, thus, crucial to our understanding of Confucius's advice regarding our attitude toward wrongdoers is the Chinese character translated here as "uprightness," and so it is helpful to take a look at some of the other appearances of the same character in the *Analects* to understand what it means. In one place, after stating that he never condemns or praises anyone unless he has tested the person, Confucius says that people in the three dynasties, Xia, Shang, and Zhou, Confucius's ideal societies, did exactly the same, and "so they practiced the way of uprightness" (*Analects* 15.25). Here clearly, uprightness does not mean to act from what one feels but to act in a way that is appropriate to the person in question: if one praises a person who deserves praise and condemns a person who deserves condemnation, one acts uprightly. In other words, to be upright is to stick to the moral standard about what is right and what is wrong. An important goal of Confucian moral cultivation is to fully realize or complete or accomplish (*da* 達) oneself. Asked when a person can be regarded as accomplished, Confucius mentions three things, the first of which is "to be upright in character and fond of morality" (*Analects* 12.20).

For Confucius, uprightness is only one of the virtues and so cannot be properly understood in separation from others. In the *Analects*, Confucius mentions two of them: learning and propriety. Confucius states that a person fond of uprightness and yet not of learning or propriety tends to be acrimonious to people (*Analects* 8.2 and 17.8). So a truly upright person is not acrimonious, which is echoed by Zigong, one of Confucius's students, when he says that one type of person he does not like is "people who mistake exposing others' wrongdoing for uprightness" (*Analects* 17.24). So an upright person is not merely a person who says or does things according to whatever he or she feels; rather it is a person who always says and does the right thing and says and does it in the right way. More concretely, as Xunzi, an early exponent of Confucianism, points out, "the virtue of uprightness means to regard what is right as right and what is wrong as wrong" (*Xunzi* 2.3). For this

reason, a person who acts uprightly sometimes may need to overcome what he or she actually feels in his or her heart, if what he or she feels is not a morally right thing. Of course, a truly virtuous person, as Confucius after he turns to 70, will always feel the right thing, and so the person will always act uprightly if he or she does so according to what he or she feels in his or her heart. Clearly this requires a long process of moral self-cultivation, an important aspect of which is what neo-Confucians mean by "training one's feelings according one's human nature" (*xing qi qing* 性其情), in contrast to "letting one's feeling control one's human nature" (*qing qi xing* 情其性).

So to repay injury with uprightness really means to treat wrongdoers morally. But this interpretation is too ambiguous to be of any practical use: what should we do toward wrongdoers if we want to do the morally right thing? One way to understand it is to see how Confucius contrasts the term "uprightness" with its opposites. Confucius makes a contrast between uprightness and deceptiveness. In one place, he says that "ancient people who were not smart were nevertheless upright, while contemporary people who are not smart are deceptive (*zha* 詐)" (*Analects* 17.16). In another place, he says that "uprightness makes it possible for a person to live, and a deceptive (*wang* 罔) person can live a life only with a good luck of escaping the damage" (*Analects* 6.19). So an upright person, instead of a deceptive person, is an honest person. This passage has an additional implication: it is not in the interest of the person to be deceptive in particular or immoral in general or, to put it in an affirmative way, it is in the interest of a person to be upright in particular or moral in general, an implication of particular significance that I shall discuss below.[4]

[4] In another place, Confucius contrasts three types of people who are good to make friends with, one of whom is an upright person, with three types of people who are bad to make friends with, one of whom is the one who flatters (*Analects* 16.4). So an upright person does not flatter people.

However, a truly upright person does not merely act from self-interest. This can be seen from the contrast Confucius makes between uprightness and crookedness (*wang* 枉). Confucius says that "promoting the upright person above the crooked person can make the crooked person upright" (*Analects* 12.22). In this same *Analects* passage, his student Zixia illustrates what Confucius means by saying that when sage Kings Shun and Tang promoted upright persons Gaoyao and YIN Yi, respectively, there were hardly people lacking in humanity, as people originally lacking in humanity were made upright by Gaoyao and YIN Yi. Zixia certainly got Confucius right, as it can be confirmed by the fact that Confucius praised SHI YU, an upright minister in the state of Wei. SHI Yu 史魚, about to die, told his son that he had not been able to persuade his boss, King Ling of Wei, to promote the worthy JU Boyu and demote the unworthy MI Zixia. Therefore, his funeral should not be held in the main hall but only in a side room. Soon he died and his son did as instructed. King Ling of Wei asked why, and his son told him what he father said to him. Hearing this, the king finally felt embarrassed and accepted the advice, promoting JU Boyu and demoting MI Zixia. This is the famous story of "remonstration with a corps (*shijian* 屍諫)" in Chinese history, and SHI YU was regarded as a person who not only made himself upright (*zhi ji* 直己) but also made the other (King Ling of Wei) upright (*zhi ren* 直人). Clearly with this double sense of uprightness in mind, Confucius exclaimed, "How upright SHI YU was indeed!" (*Analects* 15.7)[5] Here we see the unique feature of uprightness: a person with the virtue of uprightness is not only upright himself or herself but one who makes others upright. This is a feature of uprightness that is highlighted by Confucius's follower, Mencius. While saying that "a person who is not upright himself or herself cannot make others upright"

[5] In another place, Confucius was recorded as saying: "in the past, those who made strong remonstrations stopped with their effort when they died. There has never been one like Shi Yu who, after death, remonstrated with his corps. His loyalty transformed his ruler. How can it be not regarded as uprightness?" (*Kongzi Jiayu* 22; 145).

(*Mencius* 3a1), Mencius emphasizes that an upright person makes non-upright persons upright (*Mencius* 3a4). It is also confirmed by a statement connecting straightness (*zheng* 正) and uprightness (*zhi*) in the *Zuo's Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*: "To straighten the crooked is called uprightness" (*Zuozhuang*: Duke Xiang, Year 7).

With the term uprightness understood this way, what precisely does Confucius advise us to do toward wrongdoers when he asks us to repay injury with uprightness? For example, when someone strikes me on one of my cheeks, should I turn the other cheek or should I fight back? Confucius perhaps would not exclude either option absolutely. Confucius would approve both of them if they are truly conducive to making the wrongdoer cease to be a wrongdoer. On the one hand, to fight back, i.e., to repay injury with injury as a punishment, as we have seen, for Confucius, may warn the wrongdoer against or deter him or her from committing wrongdoing again. However, its effectiveness is highly questionable. First, punishment can perform the function of deterrence better when it is carried out by a neutral party, government for example. Punishment by the victim, even if rightly, will most likely be seen, particularly by the wrongdoer, as retaliation, which tends to invite the wrongdoer to commit further wrongdoing. Second, while Confucius does not exclude punishment as a governmental function, he is also highly skeptic of its effectiveness and significance (see *Analects* 2.3). On the other hand, to turn the other cheek, i.e., to repay injury with a good turn, as we have also seen, for Confucius, may indicate a person of great lenience. If the victim simply wants to show his own virtue, which might be the case with Jesus's teaching,[6] this is not something that Confucius would approve. However,

[6] At least this is how Reinhold Niebuhr sees it: "Jesus did not counsel his disciples to forgive seventy times seven in order that they might convert their enemies or make them more favorably disposed. He counseled it as an effort to approximate complete moral perfection, the perfection of God. He did not ask his followers to go the second mile in the hope that those who had impressed them into service would relent and give them freedom. He did not

Confucius could approve it if the victim's virtuous action is at least partially meant to transform the wrongdoer.[7] While Confucius does put a lot of emphasis on the importance of exemplary actions in moral education, he does not advise us to endure whatever harm the wrongdoer is going to inflict upon us, not only for our own wellbeing but also for the wellbeing of the wrongdoer, as he perhaps is afraid that our willing acceptance of, or even offer to receive, the injury from the wrongdoer may encourage the person to continue to do it, just as our repaying a good turn with a good turn can encourage the good person to continue to do good.

Confucius's view may be better illustrated in the following anecdotal story. ZENG Sen, a student of Confucius, famous for his virtue of filial piety, once harmed plants while weeding. His father became excessively angry and hit him with a thick stick so hard that ZENG Sen was knocked unconscious. After recovering, he went to his father, saying that he deserved the punishment and expressed worry that in hitting him, his father might have been exhausted. Then he went to his room to sing and play the zither, to show his father that he was fine. ZENG Sen thought that he was practicing filial piety as his master had taught him, and so he related what happened to Confucius. Instead of praising ZENG Sen, however, Confucius blamed him, asking him to learn from Shun, the legendary sage king who was also famous for his virtue of filial piety.

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say that the enemy ought to be loved so that he would cease to be an enemy. He did not dwell upon the social consequences of these moral actions, because he viewed them from an inner and a transcendent perspective" (Niebuhr 1960: 263-4).

[7] This seems to be what Laozi believes. He not only asks us to "repay injury with a good turn" (*Daodejing* 63) but also explains his reason: "I treat those who are good with goodness, and I also treat those who are not good with goodness. Thus goodness is attained. I am honest to those who are honest, and I am also honest to those who are not honest. Thus honest is attained" (*Daodejing* 49).

Shun's mother died when he was very young. His father remarried and had a son, Xiang, with his new wife. All three hated Shun, frequently causing him trouble and even attempting to kill him. Shun was still very filial to his parents and loved his brother. He did all the chores for the family and was willing to accept appropriate punishments when he made mistakes. However, he made sure that he would not let his parents kill him in their several attempts. Once, his father asked him to repair the roof of the grain store. When Shun was on the roof, his brother took the ladder off and set fire to the grain store. However, Shun managed to escape the disaster, using his bamboo hat as a parachute. Another time, his stepmother asked him to dig a well. When it was deep, she asked her son, Xiang, to dump the dirt in, attempting to bury Shun alive in the well. However, Shun had dug a tunnel in advance and escaped another disaster.

Confucius explains that Shun tried to avoid being killed by his parents and brother not because he was scared of death but because if he allowed them to succeed, they would have done something immoral. So by escaping their attempts to kill him, Shun actually helped prevent his parents from committing evil acts. Confucius told Zeng Sen that, to follow the example of Shun, when his father intended to hit him so hard for such a minor fault, which was obviously wrong, Zeng Sen should get away, so that his father would not have the opportunity to commit this wrongdoing, and he would not put his father in an immoral situation (*Kongzi Jiayu* 15; 103).

This is perhaps the most famous line in this equally famous story: putting your father in an immoral situation (*xian qi fu yu buyi* 陷其父於不義), whose philosophical significance has not been fully recognized not only in Western moral philosophy but also in Chinese scholarship, even though it has become a common phrase among contemporary Chinese. What is particularly revealing in this line is that one's action or inaction can not only make the agent himself or herself a moral or immoral person but may also make others (and consequently and ultimately the agent himself or herself as well) a moral

or immoral person. By turning the other cheek, we might think that we are showing our perfection in character. However, by doing so, we have created, or at least have not tried to eliminate, the opportunity for the person to commit a wrongdoing. In other words, our action puts the other person in an immoral situation or makes the person immoral.[8]

Of course, in the case of turning the other cheek, we only allow the person to hit us. So while it is still our responsibility, according to Confucius's high standard, to eliminate such opportunities for others to do wrong things, we may nevertheless think that at least we have not done anything positive to invite the person to hit us: the person wants to hit us and we simply don't resist. However, we may also put another person in an immoral situation simply because we eliminate or fail to create an opportunity for the person to do moral things. This is the moral implied in another anecdotal story. Another student of Confucius, Zilu, was the governor of Pucheng, a small town. There was a flood, and he led people to build dams and dig ditches. Seeing people were all hungry, he gave everyone a basket of food from his own household. Hearing this, Confucius immediately sent another of his students, Zigong, to ask Zilu to stop. Zilu didn't understand, as he thought he was practicing precisely the way of humanity that his master taught him. Confucius explained to Zilu that, if he saw people were hungry, he should report it to the duke of his state, who was supposed to then open the grain store of the state.

[8] It might be said that, simply by avoiding harm by a wrongdoer one contributes nothing to make the wrongdoer cease to be a wrongdoer. After all, a person can become a wrongdoer not only through a successful wrongdoing but also through intention to commit the wrongdoing. To this, a Confucian can at least have two responses. First, just as a person becomes a virtuous person by doing virtuous things, as stated by Aristotle, a person becomes a vicious person also by doing vicious things. So by eliminating or not providing opportunities for a wrongdoer to commit further wrongdoings, we reduce the opportunities for the wrongdoer to become a vicious person. Second, to not allow a wrongdoer to commit wrongdoing is indeed only an initial but also a necessary step to make the wrongdoer cease to be a wrongdoer, a step that has to be followed by other steps.

By giving out his own food, Zilu actually put the duke in an immoral situation (*buyi* 不義), as he eliminated the opportunity for the duke to take his moral responsibility or created an opportunity for his duke to be irresponsible (*Kongzi Jiayu* 8; 41).[9]

As we can do something to put others in an immoral situation, we can also do something to put others in a moral situation, by helping them to correct wrong deeds done, as seen from yet another anecdotal story. One of the things that Confucius did when he was the assistant minister of public works in the state of Lu was to change the arrangement of the tombs of the deceased dukes. After Duke Zhao of Lu died in exile, his body was taken back to the state of Lu but was buried south of the tombs of the previous dukes, separated by a road, in order to degrade Duke Zhao. This was done by the then chief minister Ji Pingzi, the father of the current chief minister Ji Huanzi, whom Confucius was serving. Confucius persuaded Ji Huanzi that, by improperly degrading Duke Zhao this way, his father himself committed the ritual impropriety. By changing it, his father, and therefore his family, would be freed from the charge of ritual impropriety. So Confucius got permission from Ji Huanzi to dig a ditch south of the tomb of Duke Zhao so that it was togeher with the other tombs of deceased dukes of Lu, as they were now all to the north of the ditch.

So precisely what does Confucius advise us to do toward wrongdoers when he asks us to repay injury with uprightness? The answer is to do whatever is upright, i.e., whatever can make the wrongdoer cease to be a wrongdoer or, to put it in a more positive way, make the non-upright person upright.

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[9] It is important to keep in mind that, in this case, it is known duty of the duke to take the grain of the state to give to people engaged in such public works. So Zilu should report it to the duke first. In normal cases where it is everyone's duty to help people, one is not supposed to refrain from providing such help in order to provide the opportunity for others to render such help (see Huang 2010a: 667-668).

3. Why It Is Not in the Interest of a Person to Be Immoral

It is important to emphasize that in all the stories above about what to do toward wrongdoers, Confucius is primarily concerned with the wellbeing of the wrongdoers. Of course the wellbeing in question here is clearly the person's internal wellbeing, which is more important than a person's external wellbeing. This ranking between the two different types of wellbeing is similar to what Aristotle says when he distinguishes between the genuine sense of self-lover and the vulgar sense of self-lover. In his view, a virtuous person is not only a self-lover but one who loves himself most. He points out that we often "ascribe self-lover to people who assign to themselves the greater share of wealth, honours, and bodily pleasures" (Aristotle: 1168b15-17); however, in Aristotle's view, a person who is "always anxious that he himself, above all things, should act justly, temperately, or in accordance with any other of the virtues ... would seem more than the other a lover of self; at all events he assigns to himself the most authoritative element in himself and in all things obeys this" (Aristotle: 1168b25-31). Although both wicked man and virtuous man are self-lovers, Aristotle argues that the former is reproachable, while the latter is laudable: "the good man should be a lover of self (for he will both himself profit by doing noble acts, and will benefit his fellows), but the wicked man should not; for he will hurt himself and his neighbours, following as he does evil passions" (Aristotle: 1069a12-15). It is important to note that, when Aristotle says that a good man both profit by doing noble acts and benefit his fellows, he is saying that, by doing noble acts, the person profits himself in his internal wellbeing and benefit others in their external wellbeing. In contrast, when he says that a wicked man will hurt himself and his neighbors, he is saying that the person hurts himself in his internal wellbeing and hurts others in their external wellbeing.

However, Confucius diverts from Aristotle in two important aspects. I shall discuss the first in this section and the second in the next section. The

question I shall discuss in this section is in what sense a person's internal wellbeing is more important than his or her external wellbeing, and so in what sense it is in the genuine interest of a person to be moral and not in the interest of the person to be immoral, even though being moral may require that one make some sacrifice of his or her external welling, and being immoral can often contribute to the person's external wellbeing. As is well known, Aristotle attempts to answer this question in his so-called function argument. According to this argument, the good and the "well" of anything that has a function or activity must reside in its unique function. So the good and the "well" of human beings must also reside in the uniquely human function, which is characteristic of human beings or, to use John McDowell's term, it is the business of human beings to perform. Aristotle ascertains that this human function is the "active life of the element that has a rational principle" (Aristotle: 1098a3), a good human being is one who performs this unique human function well or excellently, and this excellence of performance of the human function is what he means by virtue. Thus virtue is what makes a person a good human being, a human being who performs rational activities, or lives a rational life, excellently.

Bernard Williams, for one, has consistently argued against such a view. In an early work, he claims that "if it is a mark of a man to employ intelligence and tools in modifying his environment, it is equally a mark of him to employ intelligence in getting his own way and tools in destroying others" (Williams 1971: 73-74). In a response to the Aristotelian defense, Williams maintains that "the life of a wicked or self-indulgent person is equally a certain kind of life structured by reason; it is also a distinctive kind of *human* life. So far we still wait for the considerations that may move the idea of a life 'structured by reason' in the specific direction of life of moderation" (Williams 1995: 199). Williams's suspicion is shared by John McDowell. To illustrate his point that rationality does not lead to virtue, in an essay arguing against Aristotelian naturalism, McDowell imagines a rational wolf. Without reason, the wolf

would find it natural for him to play his part in the co-operative activity of hunting with the pack. However, "Having acquired reason, he can contemplate alternatives; he can step back from the natural impulse and direct critical scrutiny at it ... and frame the question 'why should I do this?'... wondering whether to idle through the hunt but still grab his share of the prey" (McDowell 1998: 171). In McDowell's view, even if the wolf by its nature does what virtue might require it to do, the addition of reason may cause it to question its natural behavior. Then, McDowell draws the lesson: "even if we grant that human beings have a naturally based need for the virtues, in a sense parallel to the sense in which wolves have a naturally based need for co-operativeness in their hunting, that need not cut any ice with someone who questions whether virtuous behaviour is genuinely required by reason" (McDowell 1998: 173).[10]

Confucius also attempts to answer this question from his conception of what is uniquely human in his view about the distinction between human being and beast (*ren qin zhi bian* 人禽之辨). He parts company with Aristotle, however, on what is uniquely human. In contrast to the Aristotelian conception, which has become a commonplace in the Western philosophical tradition, that regards rationality as the distinguishing mark of being human, Confucius begins a tradition in which humans are distinguished from beasts not in terms of their rationality but in terms of virtues.

Of course, to say that Confucius regards human beings as essentially moral beings is not without controversy, particularly if we assume that the question about the uniqueness of human beings and the question about *xing* 性, normally translated as human nature, are identical. Between Confucius's two most able followers in the classical period, Mencius and Xunzi, there was a debate on this issue, with the former claiming that human nature is good and

[10] For a more extensive discussion of the problem of Aristotle's function argument, see Huang 2011.

the latter arguing that it is bad. In the only relevant use of the term *xing* in the *Analects*, Confucius says that "humans are alike by their nature and become different through practice" (*Analects* 17.2). Since Confucius does not say in what sense humans are alike by nature, it is sometimes believed that Confucius either does not have a view about whether human nature is good or bad (Ye 1977: 294) or holds a view that regards human nature as neutral with respect of its being good or bad (CHEN Daqi 1969: 298).

This is a misunderstanding. If we are talking about a normative conception of human nature to refer to what is uniquely human, then even though Confucius does not say clearly that it is good, it is undoubtedly his view. He emphasizes the difference between humans and beasts: "I cannot be companions of birds and beasts. If I am not going to be companion with human beings, with whom should I be a companion?" (*Analects* 18.6) Moreover, for Confucius, humans are distinguished from beasts by their moral quality, which he calls *ren* 仁, or humanity. According to XU Fuguan 徐復觀, a contemporary Confucian, in the Spring and Autumn period, during which Confucius lived, ritual propriety was considered the distinguishing mark of the human world (Xu 1999: 69). Indeed, it is stated in the *Book of Rites* that "parrots can talk and yet cannot thereby separate them from flying birds; and orangutans can also talk and yet cannot thereby separate themselves from beasts. If humans lack the ritual propriety, even though they can talk, don't they have anything more than the heart of the beast?" So humans are distinguished from beasts because humans have ritual propriety (*Liji* 1.6). In the *Zuo Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*, it is also claimed that "ritual propriety is constitutive of humans" (*Zuo Commentary*: Duke Zhao, Year 7).

Ritual propriety is also an important idea for Confucius. However, Confucius argues that there is something more fundamental than ritual propriety, which is humanity or humaneness. He asks, "what is the use of ritual propriety if a human being does not have the virtue of humanity?"

(*Analects* 3.3) It is important to point out that here the Chinese character for human being, 人, and the Chinese character for the virtue of humanity, 仁, are pronounced the same as *ren*. Moreover, the Chinese character for the virtue of humanity consists of a radical of human being in the left and the character for the number "2" in the right, indicating it is about human relationship. So for Confucius, what distinguishes human beings from beasts is that humans possess the virtue of humanity, and it is in this sense that he claims that "the virtue of humanity is constitutive of human beings" (*Zhongyong* 20). Here clearly he sees humanity as a defining feature of human beings.

In this respect, I agree with XU Fuguan 徐復觀. In his study of the Pre-Qing theories of human nature, Xu argues that Confucius actually holds the view of human nature as good, because "Confucius believes that humanity is inherent in every human life. It is for this reason that he can say, 'Is humanity far away? It is here as soon as I desire it' [*Analects* 7.30] and 'to practice humanity depends upon oneself' [*Analects* 12.1].... Since Confucius believes that humanity is inherent in every human life, although he does not explicitly say that humanity is human nature ... he actually believes that human nature is good" (Xu 1999: 97-98). TANG Junyi, another influential contemporary Confucian, also argues that Confucius holds the view that human nature is good: "Confucius says that humans are born with uprightness [*Analects* 6.19], that humanity is here whenever I desire it [*Analects* 7.30], that a humane person can feel at home in humanity [*Analects* 4.2].... So it is appropriate to think that he regards the human heart/mind as the place where good human nature resides. His claim that humans are relatively similar by nature is no different from Mencius' claims that 'things of the same kind are relatively similar' and that 'sages and I are of the same kind.' They all mean that human nature is good" (Tang 1991: 31).

So although Confucius does not directly say that human nature is good, his view of humanity as constitutive of human beings shows clearly that he does hold the view that what distinguishes humans from beasts is that humans

possess the virtue of humanity. Humans are alike by their nature, because they all possess humanity, and they become apart from each other through practice, because some keep it and some abandon it. Mencius is thus paraphrasing what Confucius says here, when he claims that "the difference between humans and beasts is very slight. Superior people keep them [humanity and rightness], while inferior people abandon them" (*Mencius* 4b19). What Mencius does is simply develop an explicitly normative concept of human nature to explain Confucius's idea. In explaining the slight thing that distinguishes not only between humans (that have it) and beasts (that do not have it) but also between superior persons (who preserve it) and inferior persons (whole abandon it), Mencius claims that it is the heart/mind of humanity and propriety that makes the difference. On the one hand, "superior persons are different from other people because they preserve their heart/mind. They preserve their heart/mind with humanity and propriety. A person of humanity loves others, and a person of propriety respects others" (*Mencius* 4b28); on the other hand, if a person treats, in an outrageous way, a person of humanity and propriety, who has done his best to the person, then "such a person does not know what he or she is doing. Such a person is no different from beast, and one cannot expect such a person to know any better" (*Mencius* 4b28). Thus, in Mencius's view, while it is important that people be well fed, warmly clothed, and comfortably lodged, sages realize that, "without education, they will become almost no different from animals"; and for this reason sages make sure that people are "taught about human relationships: love between father and son, rightness between ruler and minister, distinction between husband and wife, proper order between older and younger brothers, and faithfulness between friends" (*Mencius* 3a4). This is because, according to Mencius, "everyone has the heart that cannot bear to see the suffering of others.... Whoever is devoid of the heart of compassion is not human; whoever is devoid of the heart of shame is not human, whoever is devoid of the heart of courtesy and modesty is not human, and whoever is devoid of the heart of right and wrong is not human" (*Mencius* 2a6).

The difference between Confucius and Mencius lies in their different foci when they use the term "human nature," or "*xing* 性." While Mencius uses it to refer to what is uniquely human, Confucius uses it to refer to what humans are born with. To put it another way, as QIAN Mu points out, Confucius is comparing human beings with human beings, while Mencius is contrasting human beings with beasts (Qian 2002: 444). However, they both agree that what sets human being apart from other beings is their moral quality. In this respect, even Xunzi, another important follower of Confucius, also agrees, although he is often regarded as a rival of Mencius, as he argues, directly against Mencius, that human nature is bad, and it is often debated whose view is closer to that of Confucius.

There are two passages in the *Xunzi* that are directly relevant to our question. In one place, Xunzi states that "water and fire possess vital force (*qi* 氣) but lack the life. Grasses and trees possess life but lack consciousness. Birds and beast possess consciousness but lack the sense of rightness. Humans possess not only vital force, life, and awareness, but also the sense of rightness. For this reason, humans are the noblest beings of all" (*Xunzi* 9.19). In another place, Xunzi answers the question of what it is that makes one a human being: "a human being is a human being not simply because it is a biped and is featherless, but because it can discriminate [between right and wrong]. Therefore, while birds and beasts have parents and children, there is no affection between them; while they are either male or female, they don't have proper separation between them" (*Xunzi* 5.9).

In both passages, Xunzi makes it clear that humans are distinguished from beasts by their moral quality. This is not contradictory with his better known view about the badness of human nature. First, he does not use the term *xing* (translated as human nature) in the same sense as Mencius to express the unique feature of human beings in contrast to other beings. What he means by it is the natural tendencies that human beings are born with. Second, while the two Chinese characters for the title of the chapter in which Xunzi explicitly

discusses the badness of human nature, *Xing E* 性惡, are often translated and understood as "Human Nature Is Evil," as De Bary has recently pointed out, it can also be translated and understood as "the badness in human nature" (de Bary 2011: 2) or, more appropriately, the badness in humans' natural tendencies.

The advantage of this new understanding of the chapter title in the *Xunzi* is that it also allows the existence of goodness in humans' natural tendencies, which Xunzi clearly also affirms in his very argument about the badness of human nature. In the very beginning of the chapter, Xunzi argues that "a natural tendency that humans are born with is to love profit; when this natural tendency is followed, aggression and greediness arise, while *courtesy* and *deference* disappear. A natural tendency that humans are born with is to have envy and hatred; when this natural tendency is followed, violence and crime occur, while *loyalty* and *trustworthiness* disappear. A natural tendency that humans are born with is to desire to have pleasing sounds and colors; when this natural tendency is followed, dissolute and wanton behaviors occur, while *ritual propriety*, *moral sense*, *gentleness*, and *conscience* disappear" (*Xunzi* 23.2; italics added). Clearly, what disappears must be something that originally exists. So, as de Bary alludes, before humans follow these natural tendencies, they must have courtesy and deference, loyalty and trustworthiness, and ritual propriety, moral sense, gentleness, and conscience.

This observation can be supported by two additional pieces of textual evidence in the same chapter. In one place, when he argues against Mencius's view that human nature is originally good but may be lost, Xunzi does not reject Mencius's view about the original goodness of human nature but argues instead that "it is a natural tendency (*xing*) of humans to deviate from their original simplicity and abandon their natural endowment" (*Xunzi* 23.5), which shows that the original simplicity and natural endowment that Mencius calls the sprouts of moral virtues do originally exist as something humans are born with. In another argument for the badness in humans' natural tendencies,

Xunzi claims that we desire what we do not have: just as "those who have little desire to have much, those who are ugly desire to be beautiful, those who live in small quarters desire to live in spacious places, those who are poor desire to be rich, and those who are in mean stations desire to be noble," "the fact that humans desire to be good shows the badness in humans' natural tendencies" (*Xunzi* 23.8). What Xunzi tries to show here is that since humans desire to be good, humans lack goodness (if they already have the goodness, humans will not desire it). However, their very desire to be good itself is clearly good.

So a proper understanding of Xunzi's view is that there are both goodness and badness in what humans are naturally born with. As a matter of fact, Xunzi himself states that "humans have both a love for rightness and a desire for profit. Although [sage kings] Yao and Shun cannot make people get rid of their desire for profit, they are able to cause them not to allow their desire for profit to triumph over their love for moral rightness. Although [wicked kings] Jie and Zhou cannot make people get rid of their love for rightness, they are able to cause people not to allow their love for rightness to triumph over their desire for profit" (*Xunzi* 27.67).[11] The reason we praise the sage kings who cause people to develop their love for moral rightness and condemn the wicked kings who do not allow people to do so is that the love for moral rightness is uniquely human, while the desire for profit is common to beasts. Moreover, Xunzi argues that every human being is naturally endowed with the ability to develop the love for moral rightness, and it is in this sense that he claims that everyone can become a sage: "all that makes [sage king] Yu a

[11] In this relation, Xunzi says that the reason people abandoned wicked kings Jie and Zhou and rushed to sage kings Tang and Wu is that, while the former did what people disliked, the latter did what people desired. Then he explains: "What people dislike? They dislike baseness and recklessness, contention and aggression, and a rapacious appetite for profit. What people love? They love ritual propriety and moral rightness, courtesy and deference, and loyalty and trustworthiness" (*Xunzi* 16.4).

[sage king] Yu is that he practices humanity, rightness, norms, and rectitude. There is a way to know and to practice them all, and everyone in the street has the faculty to know them and has the faculty to practice them" (*Xunzi* 23. 14).

4. Is a Virtuous Person Supposed to Make Others Virtuous?

What is unique and significant about Confucius, as we have seen, is that, precisely because he realizes that a person's internal wellbeing is one's true interest, when a truly virtuous person is concerned with the wellbeing of others, he or she should be more concerned with their internal wellbeing than their external wellbeing, especially when the two come into conflict. Turning the other cheek may be conducive to the wrongdoer's external wellbeing but is very likely detrimental to the person's internal wellbeing, and it is in this sense that my action of turning the other cheek is immoral and to that degree I am not a genuine virtuous person, a person who is not only concerned with others' external wellbeing but more importantly their internal wellbeing. In other words, since it is not in the genuine (internal) interest of a person to do immoral things, a moral person, a person who is concerned about others' interest, ought to do all that he or she can to stop the person from doing immoral things.

It is here that I want to highlight the importance of Confucius's teaching in question by contrasting it with virtue ethics in the Western traditions. Virtue ethics has made a significant revival in recent decades, as many people are not satisfied with deontology and utilitarianism, the two dominant moral theories in the modern world. However, one of its serious criticisms, largely made by Kantian philosophers, is that it is self-centered. As summarized by David Solomon, it claims that "an EV [ethics of virtue] tends to focus too much attention on the agent.... Such theories demand a focus on the character of the individual agent. What gives the point to the task of acquiring the virtues is that one supposes that one should become a person of a particular kind.... This

view demands that the moral agent keep his or her own character at the center of his or her practical attention... [while] the point of moral reflection essentially involves a concern for others" (Solomon 1997: 169).

Of course, critics of virtue ethics recognize that a virtuous person is concerned about the wellbeing of others. However, "the objection points to an asymmetry that arises between an agent's regard for his own character and his regard for the character of others. The question raised here has this form: Since an EV [ethics of virtue] requires me to pay primary attention to the state of my own character, doesn't this suggest that I must regard my own character as the ethically most important feature of myself? But, if so, and if I am suitably concerned about others, shouldn't my concern for them extend beyond a mere concern that their wants, needs and desires be satisfied, and encompass a concern for *their* character? Shouldn't I indeed have the same concern for the character of my neighbour as I have for my own?" (Solomon 1997: 172) Solomon uses the example of a Christian's view of love or charity as his or her primary virtue. This person will then make it his or her task to become a person who exhibits this virtue toward others, but this virtue does not require the person to bring it about that others around him or her also exhibit this virtue: "Christian love requires me to attend to the wants, needs and desires of others. But doesn't this suggest that I regard others as less morally important than myself? Satisfying their needs is good enough for them, but I require of myself that I become a loving person" (Solomon 1997: 172).[12]

[12] Two explanations are in order here. Frist, Thomas Aquinas developed an idea of fraternal correction, "to apply a remedy to the sin considered as an evil of the sinner himself," which is "the same as to procure his good, and procure a person's good is an act of charity, by which we do our friend well" (Aquinas 1952: II-II, q.33, a.1). More importantly, Aquinas thinks that fraternal correction is a kind of spiritual almsdeed, which is more excellent than the corporeal one (Aquinas 1952: II-II, q.32, a.4). Clearly Aquinas's virtue ethics can thus well avoid the self-centeredness objection. However, at least two things deserve our attention.

Aristotle's virtuous person as a true self-lover is also self-centered in this sense, as the virtuous person is one, as we have seen, who is "always anxious that he himself, above all things, should act justly, temperately, or in accordance with any other of the virtues ... would seem more than the other a lover of self; at all events he assigns to himself the most authoritative element in himself and in all things obeys this" (Aristotle: 1168b25-31). The virtuous person is exclusively concerned with the external wellbeing of others but is primarily concerned with the internal wellbeing of his or her self, when the person clearly realizes that the internal wellbeing is more important and more constitutive of human being than the external wellbeing. While Aristotle does think that bodily harm and pleasure are real harm and pleasure, he regards them as less important than the harm and pleasure of the soul. Yet, precisely with regard to the harm and pleasure of the soul, Aristotle's virtuous person is only concerned with himself. Moreover, he acquires the pleasure and avoids

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On the one hand, Aquinas regards fraternal correction as a virtue of charity, which belongs to the third category of virtue, theological ones, which "can be in us neither naturally, nor through acquisition by the natural powers, but by the infusion of the Holy Spirit" (Aquinas 1952: II-II, q.24, a.2). On the other hand, even though Aquinas does think a virtuous person, out of charity, should be concerned about others' virtues, he still thinks that "a man ought, out of charity, to love himself more than he loves any other person," and "a man ought not to give way to any evil or sin which counteracts his share of happiness, not even that he may free his neighbor from sin" (Aquinas 1952: II-II, q.26, a.5). Second, when I presented an earlier version of this paper at Cornell University, one of the students in the audience pointed out that a genuine Christian is one who not only lives a Christian life himself or herself but also makes effort to let others live such a life. In this sense, a good Christian concerns others' internal wellbeing as well as the external one. This is an interesting point. One thing we need keep in mind, though: even in this case, what the Christian is primarily concerned with is other people's spiritual rather than moral wellbeing. This is made clear by the fact that this Christian would not have any less urge to convert a Confucian sage, for example, who supposedly has reached the moral perfection, than any other non-Christians.

the harm of his own soul precisely by providing others with bodily pleasure and eliminating or decreasing their bodily harm.[13]

In contrast, Confucius's virtue ethics clearly avoids the self-centeredness objection, as he makes it clear that a virtuous person ought to be concerned with the virtue of others. Confucius once told his students that there is one thread going through all his teachings. After he left, students tried to figure out what this one thread is, and one of his student, Zengzi, said that it is *zhong* 忠 and *shu* 恕 (*Analects* 4.15). According to YANG Bojun, the editor, translator (from classical Chinese to modern Chinese), and commentator of the most authoritative contemporary edition of the *Analects*, the one thread that Confucius says goes through all his teachings is really the Confucian version of the Golden Rule: *Zhong* refers to its positive version: "one who wants to establish oneself shall establish others; and one who wants to prosper oneself shall help others prosper" (*Analects* 6.30), and *shu* refers to its negative version: "do not do unto others what you would not like to be done unto," which is mentioned in several places in the *Analects* (Yang 1980: 39). While there is scholarly disagreement about what *zhong* really means (indeed as far as I know, Yang is the only commentator of the *Analects* who holds this view),[14] there is a basic agreement on what Confucius means by *shu*, as he

[13] Thus Aristotle states, "since we say that the good man will resign goods in the way of utility to his friend, he will be loving his friend more than himself. Yes, but his resignation of such goods implies that he is compassing the noble for himself in resigning these to his friend. In a way, therefore, he is loving his friend more than himself, and in a way he is loving himself most. In respect of the useful he is loving his friend, but in respect of the noble and the good he is loving himself most" (Aristotle: 1212b12-17).

[14] In a recent article, Yang Guorong also incidentally endorses this interpretation (Yang Guorong 2011: 49). This interpretation does have some support from the *Mencius*, where it is stated that "*zhong* is to teach others to be good" (*Mencius* 3a4), which is based on an *Analects* passage, where Confucius says that if you are *zhong* toward a person, how can you not teach the person? (*Analects* 14.7).

gives a definition himself precisely in light of what is regarded as the negative version of the Golden Rule (*Analects* 15.24).

However, the debate about what *zhong* really means does not involve us here. Our task is to disclose the unique significance of what have been regarded as the two Confucian formulations of the Golden Rule. The Golden Rule, as commonly understood in the Western tradition, is no more immune to the self-centeredness problem than virtue ethics. To follow the Golden Rule, a person is supposed to do unto others what one would like to be done unto and not to do upon others what one would not like to be done unto. However, the same person is not required by the Golden Rule, desiring to follow the Golden Rule, to make others also follow the Golden Rule. For example, the Golden Rule requires a person, who desires to be helped by others when in need, to help others in need, but it does not require that the person, for the sake of following the Golden Rule, make others help (their) others in need; it requires a person, who does not like to be treated unfairly, to not treat others unfairly, but it does not require the person, for the sake of following the Golden Rule, make others not treat (their) others unfairly. Suppose it is in the interest of a person to follow (and not in the interest of the person to violate) the Golden Rule, then the person who follows the Golden Rule in the above sense, just like a virtuous person, is also self-centered.

However, whether you call the *Analects* passage in question the Confucian formulations of the Golden Rules or not, what Confucius means by them clearly avoids the problem of self-centeredness. Let us first examine the so-called positive expression of the Golden Rule. It is true that Confucius does seem to have the external aspect of the Golden Rule in mind when he claims that it is not easy "to serve my father as I would expect my son to serve me.... To serve my ruler as I would expect my ministers to serve me.... To serve my elder brothers as I would expect my younger brothers to serve me.... To be the first to treat friends as I would expect them to treat me" (*Zhongyong* 13). However, he clearly has something more than that in mind in his more famous

formulation: Instead of asking us to do unto others as we would like to be done unto, Confucius states: "one who wants to get established (*li* 立) ought to help others get established; and one who wants to prosper (*da* 達) ought to help others prosper" (*Analects* 6.30).

The meaning of *li* is clear enough, to establish or realize oneself, which according to Confucius certainly is more about one's internal character than one's external wellbeing. When Confucius lists several important landmarks in his life, he mentions that at the age of 30 he established (*li*) himself (*Analects* 2.4). There is no doubt that he is talking about the formation of his characters. With regard to the term *da*, Confucius himself provides a definition: "a person of *da* is one who is upright (*zhi*) in character, fond of rightness, sensitive to what other people say, observant of other people's facial expressions, and mindful of being modest" (*Analects* 12.20). All these clearly show that *da* is primarily related to one's inner wellbeing. Most interestingly, Confucius uses the same term, *zhi* (uprightness), to explain the meaning of *da* as he uses it to tell us what to do with the wrongdoers. Since a person of *da* would help others to become *da*, and one essential feature of a person of *da* is being upright, then when Confucius asks us to treat wrongdoers with uprightness, he really means to ask us to make other people also upright, and this is precisely what we have been arguing for.

So while we may continue to regard what Confucius says in *Analects* 6.30 as a version of the Golden Rule, and we may continue to think this Confucian version of the Golden Rule includes the ordinary meaning of the Golden Rule, i.e., as we would like have our own external wellbeing taken care of, we ought to also take care of other people's external wellbeing, it is important that we should not ignore its internal aspect, as it is more central to Confucius. Thus, commenting on this, the greatest neo-Confucian philosopher ZHU Xi states that "the two things [establishing and prospering] include both internal and external" (Zhu 1986: 846). What he means by external is such things as happiness, long life, health, and peace that everyone desires. This is our

common understanding of the Golden Rule: since I want to be happy, live long, be healthy, and have peace, I should also help others to be happy, live long, be healthy, and have peace.

What is unique about ZHU Xi's interpretation of the Confucian Golden rule is, however, his emphasis on its internal aspect, which is made clear by the sentence immediately after he talks about the internal and external aspects of the Golden Rule: "Take for the example the cultivation of virtue. One wants to get established in one's own virtue," and so, by implication, one should help others get established in their virtues (Zhu 1986: 846). Thus the deeper meaning of the Golden Rule for ZHU Xi is that, if one wants to develop one's own virtue, one should help others develop their virtue; and if one wants to prosper in one's own virtues, one should make others prosper in their virtues. This point is made more explicit in another place, where ZHU Xi claims that "what my heart/mind desires is also what the heart/mind of others desire. I want to respect my parents, love my brothers, and be kind [to my children], and so I must also help others respect their parents, love their brothers, and be kind [to their children] as I do to mine.... If only I myself can do these, while others cannot do them, I feel uneasy" (Zhu 1986: 363-364). The following statement, made by one of his students in a conversation with ZHU Xi, expresses this internal aspect of the Confucian Golden Rule well: "If one wants to be a superior person, then one also wants all others to be superior persons; if one does not want to be an inferior person, then one also does not want others to be inferior persons" (Zhu 1986: 1071).

The Qing dynasty scholar MAO Qiling 毛奇齡, in his *Corrections of the Four Books* 四書改錯, also interprets this *Analects* passage as to mean that one cannot establish oneself without establishing others, and one cannot make oneself complete without letting others complete. In other words, to establish others is the intrinsic content of establishing oneself and to let others prosper in virtue is the intrinsic content of making oneself prosper in virtue. To use Mencius's term, the self that one is to be concerned with is the great body, the

heart/mind with the four inborn sprouts of virtues: humanities, rightness, propriety, and wisdom. For this reason, MAO Qiling relates this passage not only to the idea of "realizing oneself (*cheng ji* 成己)" and "realizing others (*cheng wu* 成物)" in the *Doctrine of the Mean*, but also to "manifesting one's clear character (*ming mingde* 明明德)" and "loving people (*qin min* 親民)" at the very beginning of the *Great Learning*, "making oneself alone perfect (*du shan qi shen* 獨善其身)" and "making the whole Empire perfect (*jian shan tian xia* 兼善天下)" in *Mencius* 7a9, and to "cultivating oneself (*xiu ji* 修己)" and "bringing security to people (*an ren* 安人)" in *Analects* 14.42 (see CHENG Shude: 429). In his view, the two items in each of these pairs are inseparable: one cannot realize oneself without realizing others, manifest one's clear character without loving people, make oneself perfect without making the world perfect, and cultivate oneself without bringing peace to people, and vice versa.

In comparison, it is often believed that Confucius's negative formulation of the Golden Rule is nothing but the Golden Rule in its familiar sense: it is limited to the external aspect. First, in its several appearances in the *Analects*, it simply states: "One ought not to impose upon others what one does not like to be imposed upon oneself," without highlighting the fact that a superior person does not want to be immoral (with the implication that one should therefore help others not be immoral). In the *Great Learning*, the version of the negative Golden Rule is more concrete, but it appears also to be mainly concerned with the external aspect in mind: "what you do not like the people above to do to you, don't do to people below; what you do not like people in front to do to you, do not do to people behind you; what you do not like people behind do to you, do not do to people in front of you; what you do not like people to the right do to you, do not do to people to the left; what you do not like people to the left do to you, do not do to people to the right" (*Daxue* 10). Second, as we have pointed out, Confucius uses this negative formulation of the Golden Rule to explain his idea of *shu*, which he says is the one thread

that goes through his teaching. However, one of the literal meanings of *shu* is to forgive. Thus when we see a person doing wrong things, it seems that what we need is simply to forgive the person, instead of trying to help the person cease doing wrong. However, we would have to help them cease to do wrong things, since we do not want to do wrong things ourselves, if there is an inner aspect in the negative formulation of the Golden Rule. Third, this interpretation seems to get further support from a few other claims of Confucius in the *Analects*: "Be strict with oneself and be lenient with others" (*Analects* 15.15); "the superior person makes demands upon oneself, while the inferior person makes demands upon others" (*Analects* 15.21); while "happy in proclaiming merits of others" (*Analects* 16.5), "the superior person despises those who proclaim faults in others" (*Analects* 17.24); and "attack your own faults, not those of others" (*Analects* 12.21). All these passage seem to suggest that, in his negative formulation of the Golden Rule, Confucius does not require us to help others not do immoral things, even if we do not want to do immoral things ourselves. In other words, this negative formulation of the Golden Rule is only limited to people's external wellbeing and is not concerned with their internal wellbeing.

This interpretation, however, cannot be right. On the one hand, thus understood, it cannot be held consistently with Confucius's positive formulation of the Golden Rule, which unmistakably includes and even focuses on the concern with people's internal wellbeing: since we want to be superior persons, we ought to help others become superior persons. Now, suppose that we want to be superior persons, but there is an inferior person. How can we help the person become a superior person, as the positive Golden Rule requires us, if we simply forgive or ignore the person's faults and do not try to make the person to overcome them? On the other hand, in the *Analects*, there are also a number of passages in which Confucius does say that a virtuous person should be concerned about the internal wellbeing of inferior people. For example, Confucius states clearly that "I am really concerned

about people who fail to cultivate their virtue, don't go deep into what is learned, cannot go in the right direction when pointed out to them, and are unable to correct themselves when they make mistakes" (*Analects* 7.3); "if you love someone, how can you not instruct the person? If you are loyal to someone, how can you not teach the person?" (*Analects* 14.7); "a superior person completes what is good in a person and does not complete what is bad in a person. Inferior person does the opposite" (*Analects* 12.16). But the most important is the passage in *Analects* 4.3, where Confucius says that "only the person with the virtue of humanity knows how to love a person and how to hate a person" (*Analects* 4.3).

This passage is particularly relevant to our interest. First, it shows that a virtuous person not only has people to love but also has people to hate. In other words, a virtuous person does not simply forgive or ignore the moral faults of inferior people. Second, since Confucius elsewhere defines the virtue of humanity as to love people (*Analects* 12.22), clearly, the virtuous person's hating people in this instance, just like the person's loving people, also falls under the larger category of love that is constitutive of the virtue of humanity. Third and most important, since in appearance everyone has the ability to love or hate people, and yet Confucius says that only a person with the virtue of humanities knows how to love people and hate people, this shows that, for Confucius, only such a person knows how to love and hate people appropriately.

On the one hand, a virtuous person hates people who ought to be hated, just as the person loves people who ought to be loved. In other words, the virtuous person's hate, just like the person's love, is selfless.[15] In this context, CHENG

[15] Here I adopt the interpretation of this passage by Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi (see Zhu 1986: 645), which, while different from the classical interpretation, is closer to what Confucius says. According to the classical interpretation adopted by a number of interpreters, what Confucius says here is that a virtuous person loves what people love and hates what people hate (see Cheng Shude 1990: 230). The idea is very much to my taste, as it is what I have

Yi, a neo-Confucian, compares the heart-mind of a virtuous person with the "bright mirror" and "still water": "when things that should be loved appear, the sage loves them, and when things that should be hated appear, the sage hates them" (Cheng and Cheng 1989: 210-211). In other words, the virtuous person's hate and love are determined by things and not by themselves. In CHENG Yi's view, this is the main distinction between superior persons and inferior persons: "the anger of inferior persons comes from themselves, while the anger of the superior persons comes from things [they are angry at]" (Cheng and Cheng 1989: 306).[16] On this point, his brother CHENG Hao claims that "a sage is happy with something because it is the thing that one should be happy with; a sage is angry with something because it is the thing that one should be angry with. Therefore the heart and mind of a sage is not determined by itself but by external things" (Cheng and Cheng 1989: 460). This interpretation is consistent with what Confucius has in mind. One of his students asks whether a superior person also has people to hate, and Confucius replies: "Yes. A superior person hates those who proclaim faults of others, those who, inferior themselves, slander superior people, those who, though courageous, lack propriety, and those who, while resolute, are stubborn" (*Analects* 17.24). So a virtuous person only hates vicious people.

On the other hand, while a non-virtuous person may also hate a vicious person, a virtuous person hates vicious people not in the sense of cursing them or wishing them ill. What is crucial here is that a virtuous person hates a vicious person not simply to express his or her emotion but to express (or not express) his emotion, among other things he or she may do or refrain from

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advocated as the moral copper rule (see Huang 2005), as ethics of difference (see Huang 2010), and as patient-centered relativism (see Huang 2012), but it is difficult to discern this idea from Confucius' original saying.

[16] This is similar to what Aristotle says: "those who are not angry at the thing they should be angry at are thought to be fools, and so are those who are not angry in the right way, at the right time, or with the right persons" (Aristotle 1126a5-6).

doing, in such a way that the vicious person ceases to be vicious. So this *Analects* passage about a virtuous person's loving and hating people can be understood in tandem with what is said in the *Book of Rites*: "Loving a person, one ought to know the person's weakness; and hating a person, one ought to see the person's strength" (*Liji* 1.3). To see the weakness of the person one loves, one can help the person overcome the weakness, and to see the strength of the person one hates, one will not give up on the person.

If so, how should we understand those *Analects* passages in which Confucius seems to say that a virtuous person ought not correct the moral faults of others? While *shu* does have the meaning of forgiving, it is clear that Confucius does not use it in this sense, as he simply explains that *shu* means to not do unto others what one does not want to be done unto, and not to do unto others what one does not want to be done unto is very different from forgiving other people's wrongdoing. Thus, when asked by a student, regarding this *Analects* passage, whether a person of *shu* ought to forgive other people's moral faults, ZHU Xi says that "this is a strange idea. None of the *Six Classics* ever says that to be *shu* is to be tolerant of others' moral faults.... It is not right to take care of oneself only and let other people become bad" (Zhu 1986: 701).

In light of this, we need a different understanding of the *Analects* passages we mentioned above that advise us to be strict with ourselves and lenient with others, make demands upon ourselves and not upon others (*Analects* 15.21), and find faults in ourselves and not in others. What Confucius says is that when a virtuous person encounters a wrongdoer, the virtuous person ought, on the one hand, to reflect how he or she could have done things differently so that the wrongdoer would not be a wrongdoer and, on the other hand, to regard it as his or her own responsibility to renew the wrongdoer so that the person will cease to be a wrongdoer. The *Analects* records a saying, supposedly by King Wu, that illustrates this point very well: "if there are people with moral faults, I am the only person to be responsible" (*Analects*

20.1). So a virtuous person is lenient toward others not because he or she is not concerned with the characters of others, but because he or she regards it his or her responsibility to make others virtuous. So for a virtuous person, the very existence of moral faults in others indicates that he or she has not fully fulfilled his or her responsibility. This point is made most clear by Mencius when he describes YI Yin: "When he saw a common man or woman who did not enjoy the benefit of the rule of Yao and Shun, YI Yin felt as if he had pushed him or her into the gutter. This is the extent to which he considered the Empire his responsibility" (*Mencius* 5B1). The neo-Confucian ZHU Xi makes a similar point when he says that "Even if there is one person under heaven who is not touched by their goodness, superior persons will feel somewhat uneasy in their heart/mind; and they realize that they still have something within themselves that has not been fully realized, and so they cannot brighten the [originally] bright [but currently darkened] virtue of all people under heaven. For this reason, although what they do seems to be for the sake of others, as a matter of fact, they are for themselves" (Zhu 1986: 313).

5. Conclusion

In the above, we examined Confucius's view about what to do with wrongdoers. While he does not absolutely exclude the attitude that Jesus condemns, "an eye for an eye" and "a tooth for a tooth," or repay injury with injury, and the attitude that Jesus advocates, turn the other cheek, or repay injury with a good turn, generally speaking he disapproves of both. His principle is that whatever we do should be conducive to the goal of making the wrongdoer cease to be a wrongdoer. To repay injury with injury and to repay injury with a good turn in most cases may both lead to the precisely opposite result, although in different ways: to force or encourage the wrongdoer into further wrongdoings. Instead, Confucius advises us to repay injury with uprightness, first recognizing the immorality of the wrongdoer's actions and then preventing the wrongdoer from committing further

wrongdoings by not creating or even eliminating opportunities for them to commit such wrongdoings. We should take this attitude toward wrongdoers, for Confucius, primarily not for the sake of our own external wellbeing (so that we will not be further harmed by the wrongdoer) but for the sake of the internal wellbeing of the wrongdoer (so that he or she will cease to be the wrongdoer). Here Confucius argues that a person's internal wellbeing is more important than his or her external wellbeing, as it is the latter that makes a person a human being instead of a beast. Precisely because of this, a genuine moral attitude toward wrongdoers is not to allow them to commit wrongdoings against us (or anyone else), thereby enhancing the wrongdoer's external wellbeing, but to stop the wrongdoer from committing the wrongdoing, thereby enhancing their internal wellbeing in the sense that they will become non-defective human beings. Of course, to reach this goal, it is not enough for us just to eliminate or not create opportunities for them to commit wrongdoings; it is necessary to influence or induce them to be moral persons so that they do not have the desire to commit wrongdoings even if such opportunities presents themselves to them. This will be our topic of a different paper.

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