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SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION

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FROM THE EDITORS

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This issue breaks down into two distinct parts. Part 1, which is the brainchild of Daniel Corrigan, contains three articles that engage with Asian philosophical perspectives on privacy. Questions about the nature and value of privacy are thrust into the center of contemporary ethical and political debate by issues such as healthcare decision-making, personal relationships, digital surveillance technologies, and the role of the state. While much of this discourse has unfolded within the framework of Western philosophical thought, with its characteristic emphasis on individual autonomy, rights, and the limits of state power, there is growing recognition that the philosophical traditions of East Asia offer distinctive and illuminating perspectives on the tensions between personal life, intimacy, surveillance, and social order. The three essays collected in this special issue draw on Legalist and Confucian resources to reexamine the value of privacy in the contemporary era. Together, they demonstrate that the Chinese philosophical tradition suggests a variety of different positions; while the Legalist, Confucian perfectionist, and Confucian virtue-ethical perspectives discussed here converge on the recognition that privacy matters, they diverge instructively on why it matters and how much of it should be protected. Chen's Legalist argument reminds us that even thoroughly statist philosophies generate reasons to restrain surveillance; Corrigan's analysis exposes the unresolved tensions that perfectionist attempts to balance moral formation with political participation must confront; and Chan's intimacy framework demonstrates that privacy's deepest significance may lie not in what it keeps hidden but in its capacity to support the caring relationships through which persons and communities are ethically sustained. We hope these contributions will spur further discussion and debate about Asian philosophical perspectives on privacy.

Part 2 of the issue, which is the brainchild of Brad Cokelet, offers a set of interviews with distinguished philosophers whose work has shaped the field of cross-cultural and comparative philosophy: Guoxiang Peng, Amy Olberding, David Wong, and Owen Flanagan. Three of the interviews were conducted over email, and the fourth was recorded and edited for clarity and succinctness. These interviews range widely over questions of philosophical method, the relationship between philosophy and lived experience, the institutional challenges facing non-Western philosophical traditions in the contemporary academy, and the prospects for genuine cross-traditional dialogue and productive influence. Asian traditions in philosophy often recognize the value of tradition, the benefits and pleasures of personal conversations and reflections, and the importance of wisdom born of life-long study and experience, and these interviews were developed in that spirit. Brad is most grateful to Peng, Olberding, Wong, and Flanagan for their participation and patience, and was glad to learn more about their individual experiences and perspectives on philosophy.

ARTICLES

Han Feizi, Digital Surveillance, and Privacy

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Han Feizi (c. 280 BCE–233 BCE) was an ancient Chinese philosopher whose ideas greatly influenced Chinese political practice. A core idea of his philosophy is that most humans are driven by self-interest, which often conflicts with the state's interests, such as maintaining order and stability. Therefore, as a strong supporter of the state's interests, Han Feizi argued that an efficient system of incentives must be established to properly control and modify people's behavior. Furthermore, Han Feizi acknowledges the necessity for the state to not only rely on such incentives but also to enforce them rigorously. For example, the practice of the mutual-responsibility system was extremely harsh and inhumane since it severely punished not only the convict but also a large group of people related to the convict, such as family members, relatives, and friends. However, to enforce the incentive system and deter crime, this practice was endorsed by Han Feizi and was commonly implemented by dynasties following the Legalist view in early China. For a similar reason, the state, following Han Feizi's legalist teachings, would naturally have an interest in state surveillance. Therefore, if Han Feizi lived in modern society, he would probably support the use of AI and other technological systems, considering their apparent benefits, such as enhancing government surveillance and societal control.

However, does this mean he would endorse extensive use of these technologies, which raise serious concerns about information privacy and could potentially eliminate privacy altogether? While a conventional reading of the *Han Feizi* suggests this line of thinking, I believe a more charitable interpretation of his philosophy provides strong reasons to constrain the use of such systems. First, since privacy is a valuable personal interest, overusing these technologies could undermine the incentives essential for a functioning ruling system. Second, privacy is essential for promoting expertise, without which the state cannot function properly and become strong at all. Therefore, Han Feizi would probably present an "instrumental" argument for safeguarding privacy and limiting surveillance—a practical reason any government heavily relying on such systems must consider.

Here is a general outline of this essay. In the first section, I will briefly explain the core ideas of Han Feizi's philosophy of government. Then, in the second section, I will connect these general ideas to the discussion of digital surveillance technologies. I will articulate the reasons he would support the use of these technologies, as well as the reasons why he would respect the value of privacy and disagree with an Orwellian application of surveillance.

1. HAN FEIZI'S LEGALISTIC PROPOSAL FOR STABILITY AND ORDER

Before discussing what Han Feizi might think about surveillance technologies and privacy, it is important to explain his philosophical ideas of governance. In general, Han Feizi's proposal is designed to provide political order and stability. The fundamental assumption of his proposal is his sober observation that human beings are mainly driven by self-interest. In Chapter 49, he says, "When the people make plans, they all move toward security and benefit just as they avoid danger and poverty."[1] This observation also applies to ministers inside the government, as opposed to just those outside it. For Han Feizi, since there is no natural alignment between private interests and public interests, people would naturally satisfy their own interests, disregarding or at the expense of the public interest. If so, it is impossible to realize political order and stability.

One way to solve this problem is moral education, through which human dispositions can be transformed in the sense that humans can be motivated by their moral motivations. This is actually what Han Feizi's Confucian opponents advocate. For example, in *Analects* 2.3, Confucius argues that coercive regulations are ineffective means of governing common people because they make people become evasive, and only moral education can bring genuine order and stability because it renders people to have a sense of shame and enables them to behave reliably without the application of punishments.[2]

Han Feizi does not deny the possibility that human beings can become moral. In Chapter 49, Han Feizi says:

> Kongzi [Confucius] was the greatest sage in the world. He traveled throughout the land within the Four Seas, cultivating his actions and clarifying the Way. Throughout the land within the Four Seas, people were pleased by his benevolence and praised his righteousness, and yet his disciples numbered only seventy.[3]

Here, Han Feizi acknowledges that Confucius was the greatest sage who successfully taught seventy followers to become moral. However, right after this acknowledgement, Han Feizi immediately argues that it is not effective to govern a state through moral education because we cannot expect the ruler to become as virtuous as Confucius.[4] That is, moral education at best works for a few. However, it fails to be an effective method for governing a state with a large population:

> When a sage governs a state, he does not wait for people to do good for his sake; he ensures that they can do no wrong. If he waits for people to do good for his sake, within his borders there will be fewer than ten who do so; if he ensures that people can do no wrong, the entire state can be brought into line. Those who govern employ what works for the many and abandon what works for the few. Therefore, they do not work on their kindness, they work on their laws.[5]

Han Feizi believes that his legalistic program is precisely the method for governing the state, which I will now turn to.

While Han Feizi argues that human beings are mainly driven by self-interest, he does not believe that self-interest alone is problematic. Instead, the main issue with people's self-interest is that it often conflicts with the interests of the state. For example, order and security are the state's interests, but people may violate laws (such as robbery and murder) when doing so is profitable and punishments are not enforced or are reduced. For Han Feizi, the solution to this problem is not through moral education to make people public-spirited. Instead, he sees in human dispositions a healthy dose of self-interest, which is the key to establishing political order. Han Feizi says,

> Generally speaking, the Way to govern the whole world must be in accordance with human dispositions. Human dispositions have likes and dislikes. Hence, rewards and punishments are useful. If so, then regulations and laws can be established, and the way to govern will thus be completed. When the ruler controls the two handles (rewards and punishments) to occupy *shi* (勢, i.e., a position of power or positional power), then people follow what is ordered by him and avoid doing what is prohibited by him. The two handles are what control people's life and death. *Shi* is what the ruler uses to successfully command the majority.[6]

For him, effective governance is possible precisely because people are self-interested and have desires.

Accordingly, Han Feizi argues that the effective way of governance is a good system of incentives based on the

two handles of rewards and punishments. In Chapter 49, he says,

> Ordinary people are unwilling to discard even a yard of cloth or silk, but even Robber Zhi would not pick up 2,000 taels of molten gold. Without certainty of harm, even a yard of silk will not be discarded, while with certainty of harm to one's hands, even 2,000 taels of gold will not be picked up. Therefore, a clear-sighted ruler ensures that his punishments are certain. Because of this, in handing out rewards, nothing is better than ensuring that they are magnanimous and reliable, so as to cause the people to benefit from them. In handing out punishments, nothing is better than ensuring that they are weighty and certain, so as to cause the people to dread them.[7]

When one does what is beneficial to the state, one should certainly be rewarded. When one does what is harmful to the state, one will surely be punished as severely as possible. Since humans are generally self-interested, Han Feizi believes, this system of incentives can guide and regulate people's activities to align with the state's interests. Here, Han Feizi emphasizes the rigorous enforcement of the system, particularly the certainty of punishments, which, as we will see shortly, will be one of the main reasons he would support surveillance.

It is noteworthy that Han Feizi does not argue that the system of incentives should be designed arbitrarily. Instead, it should be regulated by laws or *fa* (法) that are enacted based on the Way or Dao—the fundamental way to live and govern. He says, "The Way is the beginning of the myriad things, the guideline of right and wrong. Because of this, the clear-sighted ruler abides by the beginning so as to understand."[8] The ruler should create laws based on the natural order of *the world*. As Harris's apt metaphor explains, "This is much more similar to a NASA scientist taking the laws of physics into account when planning a mission to Mars or a demolitions expert doing the same when taking down a building than taking morality into account."[9] Or, to use the example of the market system, if the ruler wants the market to be effective, he cannot do whatever he wants. Instead, he must respect the law of supply and demand, make laws that protect people's property, and ensure the fairness of the market. Thus, in Han Feizi's view, a prudent ruler, as a law-giver, must discover the overarching principles that embody the Way and enact laws based on these principles, and then he can establish "rewards that can be obtained and [set] up punishments that can be avoided."[10] Only by doing so can people's behaviors be *effectively* guided and controlled.

Once these laws are enacted and promulgated, the ruler himself should also uphold them. For Han Feizi, laws and regulations are the key to achieving political order. The gist is that laws and regulations are effective tools for aligning public interest with private interests, and they are mutually beneficial to both the ruler and his subjects. When they are abandoned, the ruler will find it impossible to order and channel people's behavior. If so, resentment from below will arise and chaos will be inevitable.[11] Because of its effectiveness, Han Feizi argues, even the sage-kings, who have extraordinary qualities, cannot cast aside laws and regulations and govern based on their own desires if they want to set their states straight. Moreover, Han Feizi keenly observes that most rulers are mediocre. If so, they should have more reason to govern based on laws. He says, "If a mediocre ruler abides by laws and techniques, or if a clumsy carpenter abides by the compass and square and the foot and inch measurements, in ten thousand attempts, he will not go wrong."[12]

To operate the legal system of incentives, the ruler definitely cannot do it alone but should rely on an administrative system composed of officials with specialized knowledge. While these officials assist the ruler in managing the actual government affairs, they can also pose threats to the ruler's authority. Like common people, they are primarily driven by self-interest. They will not hesitate to evade or breach their duties if there are no legal punishments. Furthermore, they are like tigers lurking around the ruler, gradually encroaching on his authority and potentially replacing him when the time comes ripe.

Accordingly, Han Feizi offers a series of techniques or *shu* to help the ruler oversee and control bureaucratic administration. One of the most important techniques is that all officials should be limited to their "name" (*ming*), which generally refers to their duties or proposals. The ruler only needs to examine their "form" (*xing*), which refers to officials' actual performance of their duties or proposals. If officials' "names" and "forms" match, it indicates they are performing their job properly and will be rewarded. However, if they do not match, officials will be punished because they are not fulfilling their duties or proposals as expected. During the examination process, Han Feizi argues that officials may obstruct the ruler by hiding actual information, such as how well they perform their duties, making it difficult for the ruler to evaluate them. Therefore, the flow of information is crucial. When the ruler can avoid being blocked and have accurate information to conduct the examination effectively, the ruler can deliver rewards and punishments promptly and fairly, ensuring officials stay within their proper boundaries.

To sum up, Han Feizi does not believe that moral education is the way to achieve order and stability. Instead, he argues that the ruler should rely on the strict enforcement of laws and regulations, which is backed up by rewards and punishments. Further, the ruler needs to rely on bureaucratic administration to help him maintain the system of incentives. According to Han Feizi, when the system runs perfectly, there is no resentment at all because people can gain and secure their interests within the system.

2. APPLICATION OF AI TECHNOLOGIES AND PRIVACY

2.1 AI-DRIVEN SURVEILLANCE AND HAN FEIZI'S IDEAS OF GOVERNMENT

So far, what has been outlined is a general philosophy of governance that can be extended beyond the specific context in which it was proposed. However, the methods

and tools for implementing it are influenced by the context. Han Feizi's philosophy of governance was not fully implemented, partly due to the technological limitations of his time. For example, in Han Feizi's design, due to his sober observations about human psychology, the government must maintain strong social control over people; however, the government of his period lacked efficient means (such as communications technology) to do so. As contemporary readers of Han Feizi, it is interesting to consider how his governance philosophy might be relevant today, given all the advanced technologies now accessible. Before proceeding, it would be helpful to provide a general introduction to surveillance and digital surveillance technologies available in modern society.

Although surveillance has been a part of human society for a long time, today's digital surveillance is without precedent. It has some peculiar features. First, it is extremely pervasive and intrusive due to the exponential growth of Big Data technologies. Now, an enormous quantity of data can be constantly collected through diverse sources of monitoring, including traditional sources (CCTV cameras, census records, etc.) and new sources (internet, social media, game applications, etc.), by millions of machines. This data will be stored and can be quickly processed, analyzed, and interpreted with the help of sophisticated AI algorithms. As such, nearly every aspect of daily life can be transformed into quantifiable data (i.e., datafication).[13] The second peculiar feature is that, unlike traditional surveillance, people "participate" in the surveillance in a way that they can hardly avoid. Smartphones, computers, and the internet keep us "connected, amused, entertained, supplied, updated, reassured, and informed."[14] Given the benefits, our everyday life is hardly possible without them in this "digital modernity." Meanwhile, our daily involvement with them also generates data that will be used for monitoring. Therefore, in his anthropological study of digital surveillance, sociologist and surveillance expert David Lyon states that surveillance in the digital era has become "a way of life."[15] The third feature is that these kinds of data generated by us are highly valuable as "commodities to be exploited" and also as a powerful means for monitoring and controlling.[16] As such, they have become of "tremendous interest to a growing range of actors, not just government departments, security agencies and police, but also internet companies, healthcare providers, traffic engineers, city planners and many more."[17] Corporations constantly suck up personal information from their customers for purposes such as monitoring and nudging their decision-making, and the same applies to governments.

Nowadays, AI-driven surveillance is widely employed by many governments worldwide.[18] For example, in 2018, China completed a surveillance network called "Skynet."[19] As the name suggests, the network aims to be an omnipresent system of surveillance. Unlike traditional surveillance that primarily relies on CCTV cameras to combat crime, digital surveillance can achieve this much more effectively. In this system, a large volume of personal data is collected via diverse means and is processed by AI-driven systems in real-time or near real-time (e.g., AI-assisted facial recognition technology). Likewise, since 2008, the New York City Police Department (NYPD) has begun to develop a similar surveillance system named the Domain Awareness System (DAS) that employs "a unique combination of analytics and information technology, including pattern recognition, machine learning, and data visualization."[20] When used properly, these AI-driven surveillance systems have the potential to be a powerful tool for supporting law enforcement and enhancing public security.[21] They can provide continuous, real-time monitoring of the public spaces, making it easier to detect suspected behavior as well as catch and arrest criminals. In addition, the ubiquitous monitoring and tracking also have a frightening effect on potential offenders, which would steer and prescribe individuals' behaviors.

Han Feizi could hardly imagine how powerful these modern technologies are in helping the government control society, but he would likely support their use. As discussed, the primary concern of Han Feizi is to establish social stability and order, and the core of his proposal is the system of incentives. To back up this system, the rewards must be magnanimous and reliable, while punishments must be severe and certain. Since people are driven by self-interest, Han Feizi believes, people's behaviors will be steered in a way that aligns with the interests of the state when the system of incentives is well-crafted and is clear to people. To quote Han Feizi again, "Talking about the benevolence and righteousness of the former kings will do nothing to improve your governance, while making clear your system of laws and making ***certain*** your rewards and punishments, this is the makeup, polish, powder, and eyeliner of the state."[22] Here, while the certainty of punishments involves many factors (e.g., the government's determination to inflict punishments), it surely indicates the government's ability to detect harmful behavior promptly. This is similar to what contemporary political scientist, Helen Margetts, says: "Governments need detectors: instruments for taking information. Detection is one of the 'essential capabilities that any system of control must possess at the point where it comes into contact with the world outside,' and governments are no exception."[23]

In this sense, Han Feizi would support the use of digital surveillance if it could effectively deter crimes and ensure political stability and order. To articulate this point, Bernard Williams's ideas of legitimacy may be relevant here. In Williams's view, the state needs to justify its exercise of power to its citizens when the demand for legitimation arises. Borrowing from Hobbes's idea in the *Leviathan*, Williams identifies the first political question—namely, "the securing of order, protection, safety, trust, and the conditions of cooperation."[24] For him, what makes a state legitimate is that it offers an "acceptable" solution to the first political question. Not surprisingly, governments often justify their use of surveillance technologies based on the claim that they are necessary for maintaining public order and security. This form of justification is often deemed acceptable when society faces extreme crimes (e.g., terrorism) or a crisis. For example, although the use of a tracing app was considered an extremely intrusive tool of social control during a regular period, it was nevertheless considered acceptable in some societies during the COVID-19 pandemic for the sake of the whole society's

security. However, it could also be used for whitewashing the corruption and injustice done by a government. For example, Government A may confiscate people's property illegally, leading to mass protests that seriously challenge its power. Then, Government A uses digital surveillance technologies to monitor and control these people, but claims that they are for political order and stability. In this case, Government A's use of these technologies is not justified.

Along with the benefits of political order and stability, there are some other benefits. Han Feizi argues that to make punishments generate sufficient deterrence effects, they should be certain and as severe as is necessary for effective deterrence, which leads him to support the use of some extreme methods of punishment that are commonly deemed inhumane in the modern world: for example, the mutual-responsibility system.[25] The deterrence effects are often determined by two deterrents: the (perceived) certainty of apprehension and the severity of punishments. However, contemporary criminology findings indicate that the former is a more effective deterrent than the latter.[26] That is, when individuals' perception of the risk of being apprehended is heightened, they are less likely to offend even when punishments are relatively less cruel.[27] Here, AI-driven surveillance can be beneficial due to its potential for increasing the certainty of apprehending criminals. If so, a less cruel mechanism of punishment could be adopted without undermining the deterrence effect. Accordingly, innovative surveillance technologies have the potential to make Han Feizi's ideas of governance easier to accept.

Certainly, the acceptance of his ideas of governance is also dependent on people's trust that the government will not use the technologies in an illegal way, as mentioned above. As an automated system, AI-driven surveillance could potentially foster public trust in government by making its operation more transparent. When cameras are constantly present in public spaces, officials—especially those working at the street level—can no longer act without oversight because everything is recorded. Han Feizi is particularly concerned about the issue of controlling the administration, so he offers numerous techniques to the ruler to ensure the flow of information. In particular, Han Feizi advocates that the ruler should depict himself as omniscient in knowing what his subordinates are doing, so that they feel dread and do not dare to hide anything from the ruler. With surveillance technologies in place, the ruler may be able to create this *sense* of omniscience as Han Feizi expects, causing officials to cultivate a firm impression that if they do something wrong, they have no way to hide it. Moreover, the evidence provided by these technologies could promote people's social trust in the bureaucratic system, since they believe that officials' actions in public space are recorded objectively (e.g., through body-worn cameras and CCTV cameras that are configured to record automatically, not manually). When disputes occur between law enforcement and citizens, there will be evidence from the recordings (this is why Video Assistant Referee is commonly adopted in professional sports). When evidence such as this is available, scholars have found that the sense of public trust increases and people are more willing to cooperate with law enforcement.[28]

2.2 THE POSSIBLE ROLES OF PRIVACY IN HAN FEIZI'S CONCEPTS OF GOVERNMENT

Certainly, all the benefits discussed above are desirable and possible only if these technologies are used within proper limits. However, the application of AI-driven surveillance also raises serious concerns, especially regarding the violation of privacy. With this in mind, it is time to address a serious problem they create—namely, the intrusion of privacy. Justices Warren and Brandeis famously claimed that the right to privacy is equal to "the right to be let alone." While scholars have tried to develop a definition to capture the unique features of privacy, there is no single definition of it.[29] Therefore, it is better to adopt the approach of family resemblance and treat this term as referring to a group of related concepts. Here, I will mainly focus on several dimensions of privacy identified by Roessler.

> The dimension of *decisional* privacy serves to secure the scope for a subject to make decisions and take action in all his social relations. The dimension of *informational* privacy serves to secure a horizon of expectations regarding what others know about him that is necessary for his autonomy. The dimension of *local* privacy serves to protect the possibilities for spatial withdrawal upon which a subject is dependent for the sake of his autonomy.[30]

One characteristic of digital surveillance is that it "is hard-wired into streets and buildings, wirelessly present in smartphones and via internet platforms."[31] Given its heightened intrusiveness, privacy at the local level becomes more vulnerable to violation because the space where individuals can protect their privacy shrinks. For example, surveillance cameras may be installed by residents and businesses, and they may be required to be connected to the surveillance system of the state. This would enable the state to access personal information from places that are conventionally considered free from the government's intrusion.

Furthermore, with the datafication of life, the traditional divide between private and public spaces is shifting. An individual's private data can be gathered by government agencies or commercial entities through digital devices like smartphones and laptops, whether they are at home or elsewhere. Similarly, large-scale data collection tends to become more invasive over time. This is because collecting more personal information allows the system to better simulate and predict individual actions. To effectively implement social control, the state has the incentive to do so when there is no political system to check its power or when there are no automatic costs involved. It may use all available means to breach boundaries and gather personal information.

Not surprisingly, it is widely believed that if digital surveillance continues to expand unchecked, humanity could face an Orwellian digital dystopia where every aspect of life is under government watch and privacy disappears. So, what might Han Feizi say about privacy, especially considering he would likely support the use of digital

surveillance technologies? Han Feizi rarely talks about privacy on a societal level, though he does emphasize that the ruler should protect his "privacy" (such as likes and dislikes) from being observed by others to prevent manipulation. Nevertheless, here is what I think he might say about privacy based on his overall philosophy. At first glance, Han Feizi might seem to favor a digital dystopia, given his understanding of human psychology and the private. To illustrate this point, we can refer to this quote:

> In antiquity, when Cang Jie invented writing, he used the character "private" (sī 私) to refer to that which revolved around the self. That which was opposed to "private" he referred to as "public" (gōng 公). The mutual opposition between public and private [benefit] is thus something that Cang Jie certainly already understood. Now, to take these two types of benefits to be identical, this disaster arises from a lack of scrutiny.[32]

Here, Han Feizi views the private as fundamentally opposed to the public. However, this does not mean that the private should be abolished, a view that is mistakenly attributed to Han Feizi. As mentioned in the first section, Han Feizi believes that a healthy amount of self-interest is essential for society's proper functioning. For this reason, he strongly opposes the government's interference with private property.[33] Therefore, a more charitable interpretation of his view is that the private is always at odds with the public. Given the tension, there must be political institutions employed to manage the tension to the benefit of the state and (most of) its inhabitants. As we will see in the following, this tension is also noted in the contemporary discussion of the relationship between privacy and security: while there are sufficient reasons for protecting privacy, protections for privacy may become support and protection for offenders.[34]

However, this interpretation does not fully do away with the potential problem of Han Feizi's philosophy. He prioritizes the state's interests, especially political order and stability, which, for him, are enough to determine the overall political and social structure. Consequently, the government could do whatever it takes to protect political order and stability until it becomes too costly.[35] While he acknowledges the value of the private, it is extremely fragile and always subject to government discretion and definition. This is particularly true in practice, as Han Feizi's philosophy does not include effective means to prevent the government's power from being all-powerful. Thus, the government may abuse its power and cross the line too much.[36]

Now, it is fair to say that Han Feizi does not deny the role of the private in his philosophy. If so, would he advocate for the protection of privacy to a certain degree if he were alive today? I believe he would, considering the crucial values that privacy promotes. Philosophers often disagree on whether privacy's value is intrinsic, instrumental, or both. Here, I do not want to engage in that debate. Instead, the focus will be on the instrumental values scholars have linked to privacy. One of the main values of privacy support is security and its role in human well-being.[37] Informational privacy guards against harm like identity theft and public embarrassment. Local privacy, such as private homes, offers spatial shelter from illegal government intrusion. It is not difficult to imagine—at least for modern people—that in a society where there is no privacy protection at all, no one would feel safe, since everyone would feel exposed or surveilled. As Jacques Lacan points out in his psychoanalytic work, "'gaze' creates anxieties."[38] In fact, the importance of privacy to human well-being is confirmed by numerous empirical studies. These studies suggest that both humans and nonhuman animals have an instinctual inclination to seek privacy. When privacy is absent, they would feel discomfited since "animals in the natural world are surveilled by predators. Surveillance makes us feel like prey."[39] Recent studies show that human crowding and the resulting lack of privacy often correlate with "violence, depression, suicide, psychological disorders, and recidivism."[40] If these findings are tenable, they indicate that privacy is a hard-wired part of human dispositions that a good law-maker should consider if his laws are to be effective.

Remember, Han Feizi believes his system can influence people's behavior because it provides security and order—the main things people value. Now, there is solid evidence proving that privacy is essential for people's security and well-being. Fair to say, Han Feizi does not value people's safety and well-being *per se*, but only as instrumental to the well-being of the state. However, if certain invasions of privacy are detrimental to people's value to the state, then there is sufficient reason for Han Feizi to refrain from or prohibit those practices. Certainly, the role of privacy has not always been salient in human history, but due to social and technological changes, there are new ways to collect and control information, which creates "new possibilities for harm."[41] Thus, there must be new methods for dealing with it, which Han Feizi would likely agree with, since he says, "When circumstances differ, methods of preparation must change."[42]

While privacy promotes and supports security, it can also sometimes conflict with it. As DeCew points out, "privacy appears to be something we value to provide a sphere within which we can be free from interference by others, and yet it also appears to function negatively, as the cloak under which one can hide domination, degradation, or physical harm to women and others."[43] That is, if we treat privacy as a natural, pre-political right, then it becomes something that the government should never interfere with, and people may use this to shelter the crimes they commit. For example, local privacy, such as private homes and family relationships, may become a safe harbor that protects domestic abusers.[44] For this reason, as DeCew and Roessler observe, the natural, pre-political distinction between the private and the public has been commonly criticized, and in the past five decades, most scholars of privacy have maintained that "the division between the private and the public is always *conventional* (and not natural) in character."[45] Given his understanding of human psychology, Han Feizi often worries that when the private domain is left unchecked, people will potentially do things that cause problems to the political order and stability. Thus, he probably agrees with the approach that treats privacy as a legal-conventional concept. However, while privacy may be used as a shelter by abusers, "a complete rejection

of privacy would result in everything being made public, leaving the domestic sphere open to complete scrutiny and intrusion by the state."[46] As just discussed, Han Feizi's philosophy may potentially grant too much power to the state for defining the boundary between the private and the public. Thus, modern readers of Han Feizi's philosophy must be aware of this.

Since security and privacy potentially conflict with each other, the security-privacy trade-off is common. For example, facial recognition in public spaces like airports may seem like an invasion of privacy, but people might find it acceptable if it helps deter or catch offenders such as terrorists. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, some societies supported invasive measures like contact tracing apps to enhance security. How much privacy individuals are willing to trade for safety depends on how much they value privacy, which varies culturally.[47] For example, Chinese citizens prioritize social security over privacy. As a result, they tend to support surveillance systems if they measurably boost their safety. However, support declines when the level of intrusion increases, from CCTV cameras to monitoring emails and internet activity.[48] This shows that while cultural differences influence the value of privacy, governments cannot ignore privacy protections entirely if they aim for effective governance. As discussed in the previous section, Han Feizi argues that laws and regulations should respect human dispositions and not demand compliance beyond what people can accept within the constraints of human nature.[49] In this context, governments can guide actions but should avoid exceeding limits that lead to inefficiency and counterproductivity. Therefore, the state must understand its specific conditions and know where to draw the line. To quote Williams, the state must offer an "acceptable" solution to the first political problem, though what is acceptable depends on the context. Likewise, if one asks Han Feizi how much privacy could be traded off for the sake of security, he would probably say that it is a context-sensitive question, and the government should respect human psychology and habits, the change of which would lead to the worst consequences.

In addition to enhancing security, privacy offers another advantage that aligns well with Han Feizi's philosophy: it promotes expertise. The system of Han Feizi relies on officials who are specialists in their roles. While they are essential for the system, they can also be susceptible to corruption and pose a threat to the state's interests. As just discussed, privacy may become a shelter for harmful behaviors, and it also applies to the cases of officials. Given the distrust in these officials, naturally, one might think that to prevent deception and corruption, their reasoning and operations must be entirely transparent to the overseer or their political master. However, as C. Thi Nguyen convincingly argues, there are downsides to transparency as such:

> It is a form of intrusive monitoring. When sufficiently pervasive, it creates a kind of justificatory paranoia. To be under the eye of such bureaucratic surveillance is to be constantly overseen by a distant, unsympathetic, and uncharitable outsider.[50]

One of the issues he highlights is epistemic intrusion. Specifically, due to the transparency requirement, "experts are forced to explain their reasoning to non-experts," but this is nearly impossible because "expert reasons are, by their nature, often inaccessible to non-experts."[51] If so, the demand for transparency could limit their expertise. As discussed in the first section, Han Feizi has a strong distrust of administrative officials and therefore advocates a series of methods for the ruler to oversee them. However, he also recognizes that rulers are mostly mediocre, which indicates that rulers are not likely to have the experience and knowledge to understand the information and processes overseen by officials. If so, since the system relies on experts, the ruler cannot demand complete transparency, but must reserve some autonomy (or "decisional" privacy) for the officials so that they can make use of their skills and experience.

While decisional privacy is crucial for government officials to exercise their expertise, it is also very important for ordinary citizens.[52] With the widespread use of AI and algorithms, people's decision-making can be easily monitored, interfered with, or manipulated. This can significantly weaken their ability to make independent choices, often leading them to conform mainly to the expectations embedded in algorithms. Consequently, diverse and innovative ideas may be suppressed, resulting in a stifled, static society. In his original context, Han Feizi was not very concerned about innovation. However, to build a strong and prosperous state in a modern capitalist society, technological innovation is essential. Therefore, a modern Han Feizian would still need to consider the risks of hindrance to technological progress.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, we live in a digital age, and surveillance has become a way of life. While digital devices, platforms, and technologies provide significant benefits that are essential for our daily routines, they also pose serious issues, particularly regarding privacy violations. I have explored this issue through the lens of Han Feizi's general philosophy of governance. I argued that Han Feizi would likely endorse the use of these technologies by the state if they could meaningfully enhance public order and security. However, this does not imply that he would support a digital dystopia characterized by totalitarian control over society. In my view, a charitable interpretation of his ideas in contemporary times suggests that the state should avoid extreme surveillance practices, even when utilizing these technologies. Although there are various other compelling reasons—such as the importance of privacy for moral development and autonomy—that may not stem directly from his philosophy, these are still vital for a pragmatic government to consider in its pursuit of political order and the establishment of a strong, prosperous state.

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NOTES

1. Harris, "Han Feizi," 370.
2. Slingerland, *Confucius Analects*, 8.
3. Harris, "Han Feizi," 361.
4. Harris, "Han Feizi," 361.
5. Harris, "Han Feizi," 361.
6. Chen, *Han Fei Zi Xin Jiaozhu* 韩非子新校注(*Han Feizi, With New Collations and Commentary*), 1045; my translation.
7. Harris, "Han Feizi," 361.
8. Harris, "Han Feizi," 324.
9. Harris, "Is the Law in the Way?" 83.
10. Harris, "Han Feizi," 341.
11. Harris, "Han Feizi," 342.
12. Harris, "Han Feizi," 341.
13. Fontes et al., "AI-Powered Public Surveillance Systems," 1.
14. Lyon, *The Culture of Surveillance*, 1.
15. Lyon, *The Culture of Surveillance*, 1.
16. Lyon, *The Culture of Surveillance*, 4.
17. Lyon, *The Culture of Surveillance*, 4.
18. Fontes et al., "AI-Powered Public Surveillance Systems," 5.
19. Su et al., "What Explains Popular Support for Government Monitoring in China?" 378.
20. Levine et al., "The New York City Police Department's Domain Awareness System," 1.
21. For example, it is reported that since the NYPD widely deployed DAS in 2013, "the overall crime index in the city has fallen by six percent." See (Levine et al., "The New York City Police Department's Domain Awareness System," 1).
22. Harris, "Han Feizi," 85; emphasis added.
23. Margetts, "Rethinking AI for Good Governance," 361.
24. Williams, *In the Beginning Was the Deed*, 3.
25. For example, in Chapter 55, Han Feizi recommends the mutual-responsibility system for stopping crimes. This system is recommended probably due to the limited resources available to the government for apprehending individual criminals. Thus, the government must implement this system and encourage mutual reporting by holding people accountable for crimes that they do not commit, but are committed by people in the same group. Here the function of mutual reporting is similar to digital surveillance in the sense both are employed to monitor the society and track individuals' behaviors. The difference is that the former relies on the eyes of those in a close-knit community to "watch over" the society, while the latter the "digital" eyes.
26. Nagin, "Deterrence in the Twenty-First Century," 202.
27. Han Feizi does not explicitly make this point, but it is compatible with his thought of risk and reward considerations in people's decision-making.
28. Wu et al., "Cooperation with Police in China," 343.
29. Mason, "Exploring Privacy from a Philosophical Perspective," 30.
30. Cited in Roessler et al., "Privacy."
31. Lyon, *The Culture of Surveillance*, 1.
32. Harris, "Han Feizi," 364.
33. He says, "Now, if superiors collect taxes from the rich in order to distribute it to poor households, this is to expropriate from those who are hardworking and frugal so as to give to those who are wasteful and indolent" (Harris, "Han Feizi," 373).
34. Mason, "Exploring Privacy from a Philosophical Perspective," 35.
35. As the following discussion shows, if research indicates that constant surveillance is against hard-wired human disposition and causes anxiety and depression in people, the government may have valid reasons to avoid this extreme approach.
36. While it would be interesting to consider how to help Han Feizi address this issue, I will not pursue it due to the space limitations.
37. Mason, "Exploring Privacy from a Philosophical Perspective," 35.
38. Lyon, *The Culture of Surveillance*, 20.
39. Cited in Katell and Moore, "Introduction: The Value of Privacy, Security and Accountability," 5.
40. Katell and Moore, "Introduction," 5.
41. Mason, "Exploring Privacy from a Philosophical Perspective," 32.
42. Harris, "Han Feizi," 360.
43. Cited in Mason, "Exploring Privacy from a Philosophical Perspective," 35.
44. Han Feizi's worry here can also apply to the issue with the collection of data by companies. While they can use their technologies to assist the government in collecting personal information or share the data they collect, their technologies may also help them accumulate power and influence that could threaten the state's order. One of the modern examples would be interference with the presidential elections by manipulating customers' decision-making through the collected data.
45. Roessler and DeCew, "Privacy."
46. Roessler and DeCew, "Privacy."
47. Roessler and DeCew, "Privacy"; see also Mason, "Exploring Privacy from a Philosophical Perspective," 33.
48. Su et al., "What Explains Popular Support for Government Monitoring in China?" 377.
49. Unfortunately, since these technologies are new, we have little knowledge of their downstream effects and where these limits are.
50. Nguyen, "Transparency Is Surveillance," 333.
51. Nguyen, "Transparency Is Surveillance," 331.
52. I want to thank Daniel Corrigan for encouraging me to discuss the importance of decisional privacy to ordinary citizens.

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Confucian Ambivalence About a Right to Privacy

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This paper will explore the prospects for a Confucian right to privacy by examining key elements of contemporary Confucian political philosophy. More specifically, the paper will explore this issue in the context of Joseph Chan's highly influential Confucian-inspired political philosophy, which he calls "moderate Confucian perfectionism."[1] There are three elements of Chan's theory that are important for considering a right to privacy: the service conception of authority, the Confucian account of rights, and the role of democracy. The service conception of authority provides the aims and justification for a moderately perfectionist Confucian government, the Confucian account of rights specifies the function and justification of individual rights, and a role for democracy plays an important part in the political framework. The paper will argue that the intersection of these three elements pull in different directions in the case of a right to privacy, creating ambivalence about whether the moderate Confucian perfectionist political framework will endorse a right to privacy, and if so, exactly what content that right will have. The tensions identified here present a challenge for Chan's moderate Confucian perfectionism, but are likely indicative of challenges that will confront many other forms of Confucian political philosophy.

SERVICE CONCEPTION OF AUTHORITY

Chan argues that Confucianism offers a perfectionist approach to political philosophy because it ties political authority to the "promotion or realization of the human good or what contemporary theorists call 'the good life.'" The "good life" is understood by classic Confucians as "a broad conception that takes material well-being, moral self-cultivation, and virtuous social relationships as constituents."[2] In other words, for Confucianism, the good life includes each household having sufficient resources to live a materially secure and ethical life,[3] individuals cultivating their moral virtue and agency, and the development and maintenance of mutually caring and harmonious social relationships.

This perfectionist orientation yields what Chan calls (borrowing a term from Joseph Raz) the "service conception" of political authority. The service conception holds that political authority exists for the instrumental purpose of protecting and promoting the well-being of the people. According to this view, there is no natural or moral right to rule, whether that be the right of an individual or the right of a group, such as the people themselves. For the service conception, political authority is always conditional on the government serving the purpose of protecting and promoting the well-being of the people and a harmonious society.

However, the service conception is not merely a one-sided affair in which the government imposes laws or policies that protect or promote the well-being of the people, potentially contrary to their will. There is a second aspect to this conception of political authority: the people must willingly accept and submit to the government. In other words, there must be a mutual commitment between the government and the governed. This requirement satisfies the Confucian goal of mutually caring or harmonious relationships, a constituent of the good life and key objective of Confucian perfectionism.

For our purposes, the most important aspect of the service conception of authority is that it specifies the government's aims as protecting and promoting (i) the material well-being of the people, (ii) the moral well-being of the people, and (iii) social harmony or harmonious relationships within society. The justification for political authority is based on successfully pursuing and realizing those goals.

THE CONFUCIAN ACCOUNT OF RIGHTS

The second relevant element of Chan's Confucian-inspired political philosophy is the account of rights. Chan acknowledges that classical Confucianism did not include the concept of rights, since that concept is both modern and primarily Western. Furthermore, since Confucianism places an emphasis on an ethics of benevolence and the promotion of harmonious social relationships, some argue it is incompatible with the individualistic and self-assertive nature of rights. While Chan agrees that certain Western conceptions of rights, such as those inspired by natural law theory or liberal schools of thought, will not be compatible with Confucianism, he argues that we should not equate the general idea of human rights—minimally defined as the rights human beings have by virtue of their humanity—with these particular conceptions. Since Confucianism is a perfectionist theory, it requires the justification, value, and function of rights to be understood in different terms. Chan claims there is a conception of rights that can satisfy these terms. Let us refer to this as the "Confucian account of rights." To understand the Confucian account of rights, we can first examine the function of these rights, and then turn to the justification or grounds for the rights.

The nature of Confucian rights is determined, in part, by the function or role they play within the Confucian perfectionism framework. The Confucian ideal involves virtuous people living together in mutually caring and harmonious relationships. In such an ideal situation, people do not conceive of themselves as right-holders who make justified claims against each other. Rather, people relate to and act towards each other in a spirit of benevolence. However, in our nonideal circumstances, we know people are not always virtuous, relationships break down, and conflicts arise. For these reasons, a modern Confucian political theory, adapted to our nonideal circumstances, can recognize a legitimate role for rights. Chan (borrowing an idea from Jeremy Waldron) suggests that Confucian rights should function as a "fallback apparatus." When virtuous and harmonious relationships breakdown, rights provide an important mechanism that the vulnerable can use to protect themselves from harm by powerful agents, such as the state.

However, a Confucian political theory is sympathetic to the concern that rights may eclipse the use of other normative concepts, such as virtues and the common good, and that rights may lead to litigious social relations in which individuals assert their claims against others rather than think of themselves as situated in mutually caring and reciprocal relationships. To allay these concerns, Chan suggests two strategies. First, Confucians should think of virtues and rights (as a fallback apparatus) as complementary. Since the Confucian state promotes the development of virtuous people, virtues will guide the conduct of right-holders and help to prevent the misuse of rights. Second, the list of rights should be limited, so we avoid the pitfall of rights discourse becoming all-encompassing. To accomplish the latter, Chan argues that the list of Confucian rights should be limited to "first generation" civil and political rights and exclude "second generation" socio-economic rights. Civil and political interests, he argues, are more suitable for implementation as legal rights, whereas social and economic needs require institutions and policies for their satisfaction and are less suitable for address through legal rights.

While the idea of rights as a fallback apparatus explains the function or role of Confucian rights, we can now consider the justification for these rights, which helps to determine the content and value of these rights. It is common to justify or ground individual rights based on the modern value of personal autonomy. As Chan points out, classical Confucianism does not recognize the modern value of autonomy. However, as a perfectionist doctrine aimed at the moral cultivation and development of the individual, Confucianism does recognize the value of moral autonomy. Chan suggests moral autonomy can provide a potential basis on which to justify individual civil and political rights within a Confucian framework.

According to Chan, Confucian moral autonomy has two primary elements. The first element he calls voluntary endorsement, which involves the idea that one must voluntarily choose to act morally and cannot be forced to do so. This is necessary if one is going to have genuine moral motivation, act for the right reasons, and exercise true virtue. The second element he calls reflective engagement, which involves personal reflection, deliberation, and judgement. This is necessary if one is to develop and exercise moral judgment, so one can determine the morally correct course of action in different and evolving circumstances. Confucian moral autonomy, with its elements of voluntary endorsement and reflective engagement, provides some grounds for protecting individual freedom and prohibiting interference in people's lives. Voluntary endorsement implies a person cannot be forced to be moral. Virtue and moral agency must be developed through moral education and practice, rather than governmental coercion.[4] Furthermore, reflective engagement can only be developed in an environment of relative open-mindedness, where people are free to explore ideas, including false ones. Moral judgment must be developed through a process of thinking, reflection, and imagination, that is free from blind dogmatism.[5]

However, as Chan explains, Confucian moral autonomy does not provide a firm foundation for civil and political rights. Confucianism tends to be intolerant toward behaviors or practices that are considered immoral.[6] This is due to its emphasis on shared moral vocabulary, beliefs, and principles as the basis for a stable and flourishing society, the idea that individuals should take morality as the supreme imperative of their lives, and a perfectionist political orientation that makes the promotion of morality and virtue a central aim of the state.[7] While the two elements of Confucian moral agency preclude oppressive intolerance, the intolerant tendencies of Confucianism permit milder forms of suppression and restriction. For example, while Confucianism may not allow for the systematic elimination of all ideas or doctrines it finds immoral, it does allow for the elimination of immoral ideas found to be extremely pernicious or influential. Therefore, individuals holding such views may be censored or punished.[8] Furthermore, while Confucianism must allow an environment of relative open-mindedness to enable people to reflect and develop moral judgment, this environment is compatible with a "circumscribed and ideologically selective school curriculum or moral environment."[9] In this sense, there can be restrictions on freedom of conscience, inquiry, and related matters. Thus, the Confucian emphasis on the development of moral agency, together with its intolerant tendencies, leads to the rejection of both an oppressively intolerant community and a liberal open society. Instead, Confucianism will endorse "a morally conservative environment in which liberties and their restriction are balanced in such a way as to best promote the moral good."[10]

Chan contrasts moral autonomy with personal autonomy. Moral autonomy derives its value from the moral life, while personal autonomy, at least for liberals, is intrinsically valuable and partially defines the good life and gives value to it. He suggests the distinction between these two capacities can be understood in terms of content-dependence and content-independence. Personal autonomy grounds a content-independent conception of decision and action, in the sense that freedom and toleration are not based on the content of a personally autonomous choice. In contrast, moral autonomy grounds a content-dependent conception

of decision and action, in the sense that freedom and toleration are based on the (moral) content of a morally autonomous choice. In other words, moral autonomy will ground tolerance and respect for freedom of choice only when the choice is morally correct.[11] For this reason, Chan argues, moral autonomy does not provide a secure foundation for rights and liberties, because it will "justify freedom only on the grounds that it allows people to pursue the good."[12]

However, we also need to consider historical context and circumstances. Classic Confucianism was developed in a very different social context, with social and economic life built around a set of hierarchical relationships, based on the family headed by an authoritative father and enmeshed in a clan-based social order. In this context, children should exhibit the virtue of filial piety by accepting the choices of their parents. Filial piety is the one of the key Confucian virtues that defines what it is to be a good moral agent. Personal autonomy, which involves self-determination and charting one's own course in life, would have upset the traditional hierarchical family and social order. But we now live in a modern society characterized by social mobility, rapid developments in technology, a wide array of occupations, and mass communications and exchanges of culture across societies. The rapid change and development of modern society, and the different ways of life it makes available, render choice-making a necessity and give it a central place in modern life. This also means the experience of parents is often no longer suitable for deciding issues such as their children's education, career, marriage partner, place of residence, and other matters that were traditionally decided within the hierarchical family and social relationships.

Chan argues that, given the circumstances of modern society, contemporary Confucian political philosophy has "internal reasons" for incorporating the value of personal autonomy, which constitutes "an internal revision in response to new circumstances." The "internal reasons" are two-fold. First, from the perspective of individual well-being, personal autonomy is a necessity. This is because personal autonomy is "an unavoidable way of life in modern society," since "one can hardly live a successful life without having the rational and emotional capacities to make choices in many of life's situations."[13] If an individual does not possess the capacity for personal autonomy, this will be detrimental to the person's well-being. Second, from the perspective of parental obligation, there is a moral responsibility to ensure children develop personal autonomy. "[P]arents hoping to help their children live successful lives will need to equip them with the rational and emotions capacities of personal autonomy . . . dictating children's lives, even when they are adults, is not only an unworkable option but is also an undesirable one, for it is detrimental to the long-term well-being of the children."[14]

Given these reasons for incorporating the value of personal autonomy into contemporary Confucian political philosophy, Chan suggests rights can have a dual basis or justification in both Confucian moral agency and personal autonomy. This provides firmer grounds for rights, because as discussed earlier, consideration of moral agency alone would allow too much suppression and restriction. By basing rights, in part, on personal autonomy, we recognize "the idea that sometimes it is more important for agents to direct their own lives and make their own choices, even if some of those choices may not be wholly desirable."[15] However, since rights are also based on Confucian moral autonomy, this allows for "moralistic and paternalistic considerations in defining the exact scope of the liberties."[16] Chan does not offer a precise way to adjudicate these competing justifications or grounds for civil and political rights. He offers only the general idea that Confucian rights allow individuals the freedom to do things that are not entirely desirable, while at the same time allowing moralistic and paternalistic considerations to constrain the freedoms provided by these rights.

THE ROLE OF DEMOCRACY

The final element of Chan's theory that should be considered is the role of democracy. Chan emphasizes the importance of distinguishing liberalism and democracy, because liberalism is concerned with the scope and limits of political power, while democracy is concerned with the source and distribution of political power. A focus on liberal democracy immediately turns our attention to liberal rights and civil liberties, which are not compatible with Confucianism, as previously discussed. However, since liberalism and democracy are conceptually distinct, we should examine democracy itself. Chan suggests democracy should be defined in procedural terms: "a mode of decision-making about collectively binding rules and policies over which the people exercise control."[17]

Chan then draws a distinction between the conditions of democracy and the constituents of democracy. The conditions of democracy include things such as tolerance, civility, civic duty, compromise, vibrant civil society, participatory culture, developed bureaucracy, a neutral military, etc. These conditions are necessary, but not sufficient, for democracy. These conditions may exist in a particular society, but the society does not have a democratic government. The constituents of democracy define what a democratic system of governance is. When democracy is defined in purely procedural terms, as Chan suggests, it provides very few constraints on the conditions of democracy. Democratic decision-making might disregard individual rights or the rule of law or show no concern for the general welfare. However, the procedural definition does place one constraint on the conditions of democracy: the content of democratic decisions must respect those things required by the decision procedure itself. For example, democratic procedure conceptually presupposes that participants in the procedure have certain rights and liberties that are constitutive of the procedure itself. Participation in the procedure presupposes "the right to form, express, and aggregate political preferences, which in turn presupposes the civil right to free expressions, communication, and association."[18]

In terms of the compatibility between Confucianism and democracy, Chan argues that democracy can help to realize certain Confucian values. First, in connection with the service conception of authority and its idea that the people must willingly accept and submit to the government,

democracy can contribute to this ideal political relationship between ruler and citizen. Democratic elections allow citizens to select publicly-minded and trusted leaders and make explicit the public's endorsement of the leaders who are selected.[19] Second, in our nonideal circumstances, we know that leaders do not always turn out to be virtuous, competent, and responsible people. Democracy can hold leaders responsible, by allowing citizens to protect and promote their well-being by voting out bad leaders.

However, while democracy can help to promote the Confucian values just mentioned, it also presents worries for Confucians. This is because in our nonideal circumstances, politicians can be self-interested and antagonistic, and voters can be partisan, short-sighted, and uninformed. This can result in campaign contributions that ensure politicians serve the interests of the wealthy and powerful, people who are not the most capable and virtuous gaining office, and voters becoming more polarized and hardened, rather than more deliberative and respectful toward each other. For these reasons, it is important to ensure a moral foundation for democracy.

Chan suggests two solutions to allay these worries, which involve supplements to democracy. The first supplement is the Confucian emphasis on a strong ethical foundation. Confucian ethics emphasizes prioritizing the common good over personal interest, nonpartisanship and noncombativeness, seeking harmony, and yielding to those with greater ability. Chan argues that this moral framework can be applied to politics and elections. It provides a model for how politicians should conduct themselves. It also provides guidance for how the citizenry should be developed. Confucians will implement moral education in the educational system. This helps to cultivate a virtuous citizenry, who will act according to morality in all areas of life, including voting in elections and other matters of politics.

The second solution is to provide an institutional supplement to democracy. This can be achieved by creating a second, nondemocratically selected, chamber of the legislature. Since the ideal of Confucian perfectionist political philosophy is to have the most virtuous and competent people serve as leaders, the second chamber helps to ensure that such people are in the legislature. The members of the second chamber can be chosen through the method of "selection by colleague." This method allows prestigious elderly people and officials in local districts, those who have the credentials and knowledge to select the most virtuous and competent people, to recommend individuals for the second chamber. Unlike democratic elections, where voters have limited exposure to and familiarity with political candidates, the "selection by colleague" method allows prestigious people to recommend individual they know well and very familiar with, individuals who are near the end of their political careers and have long histories of civil service. In terms of the power of the second legislative chamber, Chan suggests a range of options, including the power to override the democratic chamber, co-equal power with the democratic chamber, or simply an advisory role to the democratic chamber. He suggests the precise power given to the second chamber should depend on the level of virtue and competence in the general citizenry, and thus on the ability of the general citizenry to make good choices in democratic elections.

A CONFUCIAN RIGHT TO PRIVACY?

We can now consider whether a right to privacy would be recognized in Chan's moderate Confucian perfectionist political framework. Since we are concerned with a right, let us begin with his Confucian account of rights. Chan argues that Confucian rights should be confined to "first generation" civil and political rights, while rejecting "second generation" social and economic rights.

The right to privacy is among the civil and political rights recognized by the international human rights system. It is included in both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966). However, in a departure from the usual direction of development, the general right to privacy was first recognized as an international human right before it was recognized in national constitutions.[20] Certain aspects of privacy had been previously recognized in national constitutions, such as the US constitution, in which the Third and Fourth Amendments (1792) recognize a right to privacy of the home and a right against unreasonable searches of one's person, correspondence, or property. However, the idea of a general right to privacy is usually traced to a paper by attorney Samuel D. Warren and US Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis published in 1890.[21] Warren and Brandeis define privacy as the "right to be let alone." Yet it was not until the 1960s that the US Supreme Court formally recognized a constitutional right to privacy, with Japan doing so around the same time. South Korea and many European countries did not recognize a constitutional right to privacy until the 1970s and 80s. China does not have a general constitutional right to privacy, but has recognized greater privacy rights within the past several years (since 2020).

The concern here is that one might dispute whether the general right to privacy constitutes a "first generation" civil and political right, since, historically, its formal recognition coincides with the recognition of "second generation" social and economic rights. However, the idea of a general right to privacy, as developed by Warren and Brandeis, predates "second generation" rights. Furthermore, the general right to privacy is now widely recognized as a core civil and political right, both as an international human right and in most national constitutions around the world. Therefore, we can assume the general right to privacy will satisfy Chan's requirement that Confucian rights be restricted to "first generation" civil and political rights.

In terms of the content of the right to privacy, scholars often distinguish different types of privacy. Beate Roessler[22] divides these into three dimensions of privacy: 1) local or domestic privacy, which involves privacy of a physical space such as a residency; 2) decisional privacy, which involves private decisions and actions, such as choosing a career, a partner, or a religious affiliation; and 3) informational privacy, which involves the ability to limit the amount of information or data others can obtain about you. Some scholars have worried whether the different types of

privacy can all be subsumed within the same general right, but Roessler argues there is a common basis on which to justify a general right to privacy. "[U]nderlying the different dimensions of the right to privacy is a single principle: the principle of freedom or autonomy."[23] She argues the general right to privacy protects us from intrusions on our freedom or autonomy, and the different dimensions of privacy can be included within the same right because "there are several *different respects* in which the protection of privacy is needed for the realization of freedom and autonomy."[24] Local or domestic privacy provides a place for the individual to retreat from social roles, which is necessary for self-maintenance and preserving one's autonomy. Decisional privacy ensures an individual can autonomously decide how to live their own life, including decisions about career, marriage, religious practice and other matters. Informational privacy allows one to determine how they are perceived by others and to protect themselves from social control that results from being under constant observation, providing one the autonomy to determine the nature of their relationships with others and freedom from control by others.

While Roessler's account is helpful for conceptualizing the content of the general right to privacy, the basis or justification she offers cannot be accepted in a straightforward manner within Chan's Confucian account of rights. This is because Confucian rights have a dual basis, grounding them in both personal autonomy and moral autonomy. While personal autonomy may provide a secure ground for the right to privacy, as Roessler suggests, Confucian moral autonomy allows for moralistic and paternalistic limits on the content of the right. Privacy may serve to protect or promote the development of personal autonomy, but privacy may work against the development of Confucian moral autonomy. Here we can recall Chan's distinction between the content-independence of personal autonomy and the content-dependence of Confucian moral autonomy. A right to privacy grounded on personal autonomy alone will protect the privacy of decisions, actions, or information in a content-independent way, but a right to privacy grounded on Confucian moral autonomy will protect the privacy of decisions, actions, or information in a content-dependent way, or in other words, only the privacy of decisions, actions, or information that are morally proper.

However, P. J. Ivanhoe[25] has offered a recent discussion of state surveillance in relation to Confucian moral agency. He suggests the Confucian idea of improving the self, or developing one's moral potential or virtue, can provide an important perspective from which to assess the practice of mass surveillance. In short, Ivanhoe argues that when a person is under mass surveillance, they no longer cultivate "the ability to monitor [their] own thoughts and feelings, and regulate, order, augment and enhance them in an ongoing effort to cultivate [themselves]."[26] In particular, mass surveillance undermines people's cultivation of a sense of sincerity (*cheng*) and shame (*chi*), which are necessary components of moral development and improvement. This is because mass surveillance results in people being "forced to organize [themselves] and [their lives] around the aim of pleasing the state and its AI overseer," with a corresponding loss of independent judgment and motivational power, as personal responsibility is "outsourced to the state…and delegated to an algorithm."[27] Here, Ivanhoe echoes Chan's claim that Confucian moral autonomy involves voluntary endorsement—voluntary choice to act morally—and reflective engagement—the ability to reflect, deliberate, and develop the capacity to make moral judgements. Ivanhoe argues that mass surveillance undermines these elements of Confucian moral autonomy. This implies that mass surveillance constitutes a violation the right to privacy based on Confucian moral autonomy. So, perhaps Ivanhoe's argument shows that Confucian moral autonomy, like personal autonomy, grounds a general right to privacy, or at least a right to privacy against mass surveillance by the state.

However, Chan argued that rights based on Confucian moral autonomy are compatible with mild forms of suppression and restriction, such as the state eliminating immoral ideas found to be extremely pernicious or influential by censoring or punishing individuals who hold or promote such views, and enforcing a restricted and ideologically selective educational curriculum or social environment. For the state to take such actions, it would need to limit people's privacy to keep track of who is teaching, sharing, or otherwise disseminating immoral ideal, which ideas are gaining influence and popularity, and so forth. While it may be true that a pervasive invasion of privacy, such as mass surveillance, undermines Confucian moral autonomy, and hence violates the Confucian right to privacy, more mild invasions of privacy are permitted by such a right. These could be invasions of privacy that, while not rising to the level of mass surveillance, provide the state some ability to monitor and determine who holds, teaches, or promotes immoral ideas and hence should be subject to censorship or punishment, and empower the state to enforce an ideologically selective educational curriculum or social environment. This implication may prompt some to think Chan was right to be concerned about Confucian moral autonomy as the sole foundation for rights, because it provides an insecure foundation for civil rights, and this is apparent in the case of the right to privacy. However, this is precisely why Chan included personal autonomy as a second ground for rights, to balance the moralistic and paternalistic tendency of Confucianism. The problem is, Chan did not explain how to weigh or adjudicate the two grounds for Confucian rights. Thus, when the grounds for Confucian rights present conflicting considerations regarding the content of a right, such as the right to privacy, it is not clear which ground should take priority.

Perhaps we can turn to another element of Chan's Confucian political framework, the service conception of authority, for guidance on this issue. The service conception holds that the aim and justification of political authority is to protect and promote the people's material well-being, the people's moral well-being, and social harmony or harmonious relationships within society. Moral autonomy is necessary for the people's well-being and for social harmony, while Chan argues that personal autonomy is also necessary for people's well-being in the context of modern society. This aspect of the service conception does not help with our issue. However, there is a second aspect

of the service conception, which holds that the people must willingly accept and submit to the government. This aspect of the service conception requires the people's willing choice or consent, but the basis of that consent is unclear. One possibility is that this consent is based on personal autonomy. In that case, the choice about whether to accept and submit to the government involves a content-independent decision. Another possibility is that the consent is based on Confucian moral autonomy, with its element of voluntary endorsement. If the choice about whether to accept and submit to the government is based on Confucian moral autonomy, then it involves a content-dependent decision. In the latter case, the decision or consent will be legitimate only if it is based on moral reasons.

The implications of the service conception may be captured in an account of privacy articulated by Huw Roberts.[28] Roberts points to China's recent implementation of a legal framework[29] that gives people privacy rights against private actors, such as corporations, but for the most part, not against the state. He calls this account "informational privacy as relational obligations," and claims it is partly based on Confucian ideas. According to Roberts, the underlying rationale for this approach is the Confucian idea that "the ruler has to show benevolence whilst the subject should show obedience to achieve harmony."[30] In other words, the state has an obligation to act with beneficence towards the people, and the people have an obligation of obedience to the state, and when both parties fulfill their obligations, it results in social harmony. Based on that idea, if the state is fulfilling its moral obligation of beneficence towards the people, then there is no need for people to have privacy rights against the state. Furthermore, if people are fulfilling their moral obligation of obedience to the state, to "trust and comply with government rules,"[31] then they have no need for a privacy right against the state. However, Roberts contends, the account still allows for critique of, or "pushback against," state actions regarding privacy. If the people believe the state has failed to fulfill its moral obligations, they are entitled to "pushback" against the state. As an example of such a failure, Roberts points to surveillance practices that serve only to maintain and enhance state power, rather than to benefit the people.[32]

"Informational privacy as relational obligations" offers an account of privacy—at least regarding the state, if not private actors—based on moral obligations and moral autonomy, with no role for personal autonomy. This is clear when Roberts emphasizes that the relationship between citizens and the state is based on the "great self," or morally cultivated self, rather than the "small self," or self-interested self. Within the "relational obligations" framework, citizens have privacy rights against other private actors (e.g., corporations), because they relate to each other in terms of the "small self" or self-interested self. This is an acceptable form of relations between private actors because Chinese society has undergone a process of individualization, due to both Maoist ideology that sought to liberate the traditional family structure and the subsequent marketization of the economy.[33] However, in the case of the relationship between citizens and the state, citizens should rise above their "small selves" and relate to the state in terms of the morally cultivated "great self" or morally cultivated self. If we read Robert's "relational obligation" account of privacy into the service conception of authority, the people's acceptance and submission to political leaders is a choice based on the "great self," or moral autonomy. This implies that Confucian moral autonomy, not personal autonomy, is the operative norm, and therefore the legitimacy of the people's willing acceptance and submission to political leaders requires a morally grounded decision.

However, there is an obvious worry about the "relational obligation" account of privacy. Roberts does not specify what recourse citizens have if the state fails to fulfill its moral obligation of beneficence towards the people, suggesting only that "pushback" is permissible. But this is precisely why Chan introduces Confucian rights, which serve as a fallback apparatus when virtuous and harmonious relationships break down and the vulnerable need to protect themselves from more powerful agents. Chan illustrates this with the example of a breakdown in a marital relationship, where the husband no longer acts lovingly towards his wife and harms her interests.[34] While invoking rights and making justified claims against each other is not the ideal way for marital partners to relate to each other, rights can serve as a fallback apparatus when caring and harmonious relationships break down, and in this example, protect the vulnerable wife. The same idea can be applied to the relationship between the people and the state. When harmonious relationships between people and the state breakdown, or the state fails in its obligations of beneficence towards the people, Confucian rights can serve as a fallback apparatus to protect vulnerable people from the power of the state. If this is correct, then the service conception of authority is the not the right place to look for a resolution of the conflicting bases of Confucian rights. The service conception provides only an account of the aims and justification of state authority; it does not offer a framework for determining the content of Confucian rights, which provide protection for the people and place a limit on state actions.

Let us reconsider the specific argument Chan offered for incorporating personal autonomy into his Confucian political framework and treating it as one of the grounds for Confucian rights. The primary argument is that the capacity to make autonomous choices is necessary for an individual to live a successful life in modern society, and one implication is that parents should seek to develop personal autonomy in their children because it is necessary for the child's long-term well-being. In other words, the justification for incorporating personal autonomy is grounded in well-being. If well-being provides the justification for giving a role to personal autonomy, then well-being should determine the extent to which personal autonomy defines Confucian rights. This suggests the content of the Confucian right to privacy should be determined by personal autonomy only to the extent personal autonomy is necessary for the right-holder's well-being. While we may not have a precise conception of how much personal autonomy that is, Chan suggested an individual needs the capacity to make major life decisions, such those involving education, career, and marriage partner. But the ability to autonomously make those kinds of decisions seems

compatible with an ideologically selective educational and social environment maintained by state, and one in which the state censors or punishes people who hold, teach, or promote immoral ideas. In short, it is not clear that the level of personal autonomy necessary for well-being will justify greater content for the Confucian right to privacy than what is justified by Confucian moral autonomy alone. Therefore, so long as state surveillance does not rise to a level that undermines Confucian moral autonomy, there will be no infringement on the Confucian right to privacy.

However, the third element of Chan's theory, the role of democracy, may provide another basis for the right to privacy. Recall that Chan distinguishes liberalism and democracy, defining democracy as simply "a mode of decision-making about collectively binding rules and policies over which people exercise control." As Chan suggests, while this thin procedural conception of democracy places few constraints on a democratic system, it does entail at least one constraint: democratic decisions must respect those things required by the decision procedure itself. Among those things, Chan contends, are certain rights and liberties, including "the right to form, express, and aggregate political preferences, which in turn presupposes the civil rights to free expression, communication, and association."[35] It is possible a right to privacy could be among these conditions. Let us call this potential basis for the right to privacy "democratic privacy," as it better indicates the specific justification in question.

Roessler recognizes that the right to privacy is necessary for the functioning of a democratic system. Without going into much detail, she argues that privacy is necessary for the freedom of action and participation required by democracy. This is because "the unobserved spaces that we need in order to be able to act autonomously and authentically within the public sphere could not exist if we were constantly subject to (even just potential) observation and social control."[36] Roessler does not make it clear exactly how much privacy is required for democracy, but her reference to being "constantly subject to . . . observation and social control" does seem to prohibit mass surveillance. So, not only does mass surveillance undermine one's ability to develop Confucian moral autonomy, as argued by Ivanhoe, it also undermines the personal autonomy necessary to develop the independent and authentic choices required for democratic politics, which is required for Chan's democratically elected chamber of the legislature.

Annabelle Lever[37] develops the relationship between the right to privacy and democracy in more detail. She offers a liberal-democratic conception of democracy, based on the idea that people are free and equal. This is not a conception Chan will endorse, as he distinguishes liberalism and democracy and offers the thin procedural conception of democracy. However, Lever's conception also appeals to the idea that democracy involves individuals defining their own interests and that those interests need not conform to the interests of others. Chan can embrace this idea, as his argument for incorporating personal autonomy is based on a recognition that the capacity for autonomous choice is needed to lead a successful life in modern society and that the experience of parents is no longer relevant for making important decisions faced by their children (e.g., career, marriage, etc.). In other words, Chan recognizes that in modern society individuals need to define their own interests and those will not conform to the interests of others. So, Lever and Chan can agree on this idea underpinning democracy.

Given that assumption, Lever defines privacy rights as "rights of personal choice, association, and expression."[38] Each of these things refer to an aspect of privacy that can help to protect the democratic political rights of an individual. It is worth noting that Lever's definition of privacy, in terms of these three rights, closely mirrors the rights Chan listed as necessary requirements for the procedural conception of democratic politics, including "the right to form, express, and aggregate political preferences," which in turn requires "rights to free expression, communication, and association." Lever shows how privacy—understood as rights of personal choice, association, and expression—is useful, and in some cases necessary, for democracy.

The right to personal choice enables an individual to privately discover what is valuable and important to them in life. This ensures an individual can develop an identity of their own. This aspect of privacy can function in more than one way in the democratic context. On the one hand, it allows an individual to refuse political participation or to refuse the demand for their support, which can function as a relatively nonconfrontational form of protest. On the other hand, the right to personal choice facilitates political action by allowing a person to determine how much time they spend on political matters, what political tasks they engage in, and which political engagements with others that they find mutually beneficial.[39] Chan can endorse this aspect of democratic privacy, since a key function of democracy in his political framework is to demonstrate the people's willing acceptance of the leader. The only way one can show willing acceptance is to have the option not to accept. Privacy—as personal choice—helps to facilitate this, because it allows one to anonymously withhold participation or support, free from pressures to do otherwise. Chan holds that another key function of democracy is to ensure the state or political leaders protect and promote the well-being of the people. If the democratic chamber is going to serve that function, it must be able to register the interests of the people. To achieve this, people need the ability to determine how much effort they will dedicate to politics, what political tasks they will engage in, and which kinds of political engagements they find beneficial or worthwhile. The ability to decide those things privately facilitates people making genuine, rather than performative, choices. As a result, their participation and engagement in democratic politics better reflects their true interests and the well-being of the people.

The right to association allows a person to privately form associations that better reflect their interests, experiences, and sense of selves. In doing that, people can explore competing conceptions of politics, different ways of associating with others, and different reasons for doing so. A democratic system can be expected to have a range of different organizations through which people express and promote their interests, and the right of association allows

people to choose which organizations to associate with for those purposes.[40] It also allows individuals who are unsure of their values or their political skills to associate with others who can help them to clarify their values or develop the skills necessary to better participate in democratic politics. This can be particularly important for individuals or groups who are vulnerable or disadvantaged. When people can engage in these associations privately, it allows for exploration, development, and finding support for one's interests.[41]

The right to expression allows individuals to privately confide in those they trust and to examine and revise their political views before presenting them to others. It also allows individuals a space to develop their powers of persuasion and self-expression. Democracy involves many forms of public communication that require speaking up or speaking out, but it is important to have the ability to privately experiment with and test ideas and unconventional forms of political communication. This can be especially true for disadvantaged people who need to advocate their interests, or those who hold views that are politically unpopular.

Chan can also endorse these two aspects of democratic privacy. Again, a key function of the democratic chamber is to help ensure the state and political leaders protect and promote the well-being of the people. By allowing people the right to privately associate with whom they choose, they are better able to determine their interests and values in conjunction with others, to work together on developing skills for advocating and communicating those values and interests, and to determine the best ways of expressing and promoting them. By allowing people the right to privately express and test their views with trusted others, people are better able to examine and develop their views in confidence, free from the scrutiny that comes with the absence of privacy. Furthermore, people can hone ways of presenting those views, so they can be most persuasive or made more palatable to others who are not inclined to agree with or support such views. Both these aspects of democratic privacy help to ensure that democratic politics better reflects the true interests of the people, including those who are disadvantaged or hold currently unpopular ideas, and they thereby work to ensure the democratic chamber of the legislature protects and promotes the well-being of the people.

However, while the role of democracy and democratic politics gives Chan reason to endorse "democratic privacy" as a ground for the general right to privacy, we must also recognize that the role of democracy is only one element of Chan's Confucian political framework. That element must be balanced with the other elements, including the service conception of authority and Confucian account of rights. There are tensions between the degree of privacy justified by the Confucian account of rights and the degree of privacy justified by democratic privacy. As argued above, the Confucian account of rights suggests that Confucian moral autonomy, along with a level of personal autonomy necessary for well-being, will determine the content of the Confucian right to privacy. As discussed, this will ground a more minimal right to privacy that allows a level of state surveillance needed to maintain an ideologically selective environment and to censor or punish those who hold, teach, or promote influential immoral ideas. On the other hand, the role that Chan gives to democratic politics and the democratic chamber of the legislature suggests that democratic privacy should determine the content of the Confucian right to privacy. The role of democracy helps to realize the service conception of authority, by allowing the people to express their acceptance and submission to political leaders and holding political leaders accountable for protecting and promoting the well-being of the people. Democratic privacy requires a more robust Confucian right to privacy, which protects people's privacy to develop and form beliefs, privacy of personal choice, privacy of association, and privacy of expression, so that democratic politics can register the genuine interests of different individuals and groups in society. The more robust Confucian right to privacy justified by democratic privacy will not be compatible with a state that conducts the surveillance needed to maintain an ideologically selective environment and to censor or punish those who hold, teach, or promote influential immoral ideas.

It is worth making one final point, given the competing implications Chan's Confucian political framework has for the right to privacy. The Confucian account of rights aims to balance the content of rights by grounding these rights on both Confucian moral autonomy and personal autonomy. We can call this an "internal constraint," since it is built into the grounds of the right themselves. By contrast, Chan balances democracy through what we can call an "external constraint." The members of the democratic chamber of the legislature are determined through democratic politics and elections. However, there is a second, meritocratic chamber of the legislature whose members are determine through "selection by colleague." Depending on the conditions of society, Chan suggests the meritocratic chamber may have co-equal power with the democratic chamber or even be empowered to override the decisions of the democratic chamber. Thus, democracy is constrained by a legislative body that stands outside of democracy. As a result of these different constraints, it is not surprising we find each element of Chan's political framework yielding a different implication regarding the right to privacy. The Confucian account of rights justifies a more limited right to privacy, since the content of the rights is determined "internal constraints" imposed by the bases of the rights themselves, whereas the role of democracy and democratic privacy will justify a more robust right to privacy, since democratic politics is allowed to unfold on its own terms and then "externally constrained" by the meritocratic chamber of the legislature.

CONCLUSION

It is now clear that Chan's moderate Confucian perfectionist political framework is ambivalent about the right to privacy. While the framework will endorse a right to privacy, it has conflicting implications about the content of that right. The Confucian account of rights appears to justify a more minimal right to privacy, which is compatible with state surveillance needed to maintain an ideologically selective environment and censor or punish those who teach or promote immoral ideas. However, the role of democracy

appears to justify a more robust right to privacy, one that protects the elements of democratic privacy necessary for democratic politics. This reveals an interesting tension in Chan's political framework because various elements seem to conflict with each other. However, just as Chan did not explain how the two grounds for Confucian rights should be prioritized when they yield competing considerations, he also did not suggest which elements of his overall political framework should be prioritized when they have competing implications. For this reason, the nature of the right to privacy is on uncertain footing in Chan's Confucian political philosophy.

NOTES

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4. Chan, *Confucian Perfectionism*, 147.
5. Chan, *Confucian Perfectionism*, 149.
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31. Roberts, "Informational Privacy with Chinese Characteristics," 17.
32. Roberts, "Informational Privacy with Chinese Characteristics," 17.
33. Roberts, "Informational Privacy with Chinese Characteristics," 15–16.
34. Chan, *Confucian Perfectionism*, 124.
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37. Annabelle Lever, "Privacy Rights and Democracy: A Contradiction in Terms?" *Contemporary Political Theory* 5 (2006): 142–62.
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Confucian Virtues and Intimacy: Reassessing the Value of Privacy

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I. INTRODUCTION

The value of privacy has long been a central ethical concern across societies. Historically, surveillance by rulers or religious authorities raised questions about personal boundaries, while evolving issues such as freedom of the press and reproductive rights have further complicated privacy debates. Today, the rise of artificial intelligence and digital technologies introduces unprecedented challenges as extensive data collection and surveillance practices intensify tensions between protecting personal privacy and demands for transparency. Addressing these challenges requires not only technical and legal solutions but also a careful reconsideration of the philosophical foundations of privacy. A key debate in the value of privacy discourse concerns its individual versus social dimensions. Traditionally, privacy is framed primarily as an individual right, emphasizing personal autonomy and control over information. Nevertheless, privacy also encompasses a social dimension, wherein norms and practices are embedded within and shaped by relationships and community values. This perspective highlights privacy's role not only in protecting individuals but also in maintaining the integrity and harmony of social bonds.

Confucianism, with its rich emphasis on care, familial bonds, and social harmony, offers a valuable framework for exploring privacy's social dimension. This paper presents a conceptual framework rather than an exhaustive analysis, aiming to deepen our understanding of privacy as a relational and socially embedded concept through Confucian thought. By focusing on this framework, the paper seeks to clarify how Confucianism can contribute meaningfully to privacy discourse. At the same time, it acknowledges that no single study can cover all aspects of Confucian impact on privacy and therefore also points toward directions for future research. In previous work, I explored several preliminary concepts from Confucianism regarding familial relationships that contribute to the

intimacy account of privacy.[1] Confucianism emphasizes the moral importance of intimate relationships, particularly within families, highlighting virtues such as filial piety and the "five relationships," which extend ethical duties beyond the immediate family. It frames intimacy as deeply interwoven with public life and self-cultivation, offering a nuanced ethical foundation that supports trust and mutual care in privacy concerns. However, the debate over Confucianism and the intimacy account of privacy cannot be fully addressed in one or two papers. What I am going to argue below can be considered a continuation of my previous work but with a different focus. Particularly, I conduct a further philosophical investigation into the framework of Confucian influences, clarify key concepts in greater depth, and respond to possible challenges and objections.

Building on these conceptual foundations, this paper further develops a Confucian, intimacy-based framework for understanding privacy, emphasizing care-centered virtues such as *ren* (仁) and *xiao* (孝). Rather than drawing rigid contrasts between Confucian and Western views, I argue that Confucian perspectives enrich the debate by highlighting how privacy is rooted in trust, mutual care, and the cultivation of harmonious relationships. This relational approach clarifies privacy's ethical significance beyond individual autonomy and provides new resources for current debates in medical and public health ethics. The analysis focuses especially on practical dilemmas involving consent, the sharing of medical information, and familial obligations in contexts like organ donation and clinical decision-making.

The subsequent sections first situate privacy within broader discussions of individual, social, relational, and intimacy accounts, then analyze how classical and contemporary Confucian texts articulate care-based virtues relevant to the value of privacy, and finally apply these insights to key ethical issues in medical and public health practice. By foregrounding the practical and philosophical significance of Confucian intimacy ethics, this paper offers a framework for further inquiry and dialogue about privacy in a rapidly changing, relationally embedded world.

II. INDIVIDUAL, SOCIAL, RELATIONAL, AND INTIMACY ACCOUNTS OF PRIVACY

Privacy is difficult to define and often encompasses various meanings. For example, it has been described as the right to be left alone, as well as the ability to control personal matters.[2] More recently, scholars like Daniel J. Solove consider privacy a family resemblance concept, where different aspects share overlapping features without a single essence.[3] While debates about the precise definition of privacy are significant in philosophy and ethics, this paper will not focus on resolving those definitional issues. Instead, I will assume that privacy can be understood in multiple ways and focus on a more pressing question: What is the value of privacy? Specifically, I will analyze the value of privacy through the lens of the social accounts, in contrast to the individual accounts. Hereafter, unless otherwise specified, "privacy" refers to the value of privacy rather than its definition. Only if questions about the definition of privacy become relevant to its value will they be discussed as part of the main argument.

The individual accounts of privacy center on the idea that privacy is a personal right, vital for autonomy, self-determination, and protection from external intrusion.[4] This perspective emphasizes an individual's control over access to personal information and the freedom to make decisions without unwarranted interference. Privacy safeguards independence, providing the space to think, decide, and act freely. It is often framed as crucial for personal development and for maintaining one's dignity and individuality. By focusing on the individual, this dimension underscores the importance of personal boundaries and the right to be left alone, which are seen as fundamental to human flourishing.

While the individual accounts highlight significant aspects of privacy, focusing exclusively on the individual can overlook how privacy norms and practices are shaped by, and respond to, broader social contexts. The social accounts of privacy encompass several important aspects. First, scholars such as Regan, Solove, and Nissenbaum have argued that privacy is not merely an individual interest but also a social, public, and collective value.[5] They recognize that privacy is essential for the functioning of democratic societies, fostering the moral autonomy of citizens, and enabling meaningful participation in political and social life. Second, although it is open to debate whether group privacy should be considered part of the social dimension, Anuj Puri argues that group privacy is indeed a social concern, noting that privacy issues often extend beyond individuals to collective entities, especially in the context of modern technologies that impact different kinds of groups.[6]

The last but crucial aspect of social accounts of privacy concern the roles in shaping and sustaining relationships among people. Privacy supports trust, cooperation, and mutual respect, which are foundational for healthy communities, families, workplaces, and other associations.[7] Within this context, the concept of relational privacy clarifies how privacy norms define and protect various forms of interpersonal relationships. These relationships can range from intimate bonds, such as those between family members or close friends, to professional or collegial associations, and even to interactions with strangers.[8] Each type of relationship carries distinct privacy expectations and requirements, reflecting the social roles and mutual obligations involved.[9] Sara Bannerman further argues that relational privacy provides a stronger foundation for personal autonomy than traditional, individualistic accounts.[10] She contends that autonomy emerges not in isolation but through networks of relations, and privacy must enable individuals to configure and control the networks that constitute their autonomous selves. In general, relational privacy not only safeguards interpersonal connections but also enables individuals to navigate the complex social and technological networks that shape autonomy, emotional expression, and self-understanding in contemporary society. Rather than focusing solely on individual control, relational privacy emphasizes the shared norms and expectations that govern information

flows between people, varying according to the type of relationship involved. By constituting and regulating these connections, privacy makes meaningful social life possible.

Within this broader relational account, the intimacy account of privacy focuses even more narrowly on the unique importance of privacy in fostering and sustaining close, trusting relationships. It also emphasizes how the existence of intimate relationships creates or reinforces the need for privacy. Scholars such as Charles Fried, Robert Gerstein, Julie Inness, and James Rachels have significantly contributed to this understanding.[11] This perspective views privacy as essential not just for concealing information but for enabling trust and deeper connections. While the intimacy account specifically highlights the role of privacy in nurturing trust within close relationships, this emphasis on trust also resonates with broader discussions in privacy scholarship. For example, Ari Ezra Waldman, though not writing from the intimacy perspective or using the concept of intimacy as a central framework, argues that privacy is fundamentally about trust.[12] According to Waldman, privacy involves mutual expectations and respect for boundaries, which are foundational for trust in all kinds of relationships, not only intimate ones. In this way, the intimacy account's focus on privacy as enabling trust within close relationships can be seen as echoing Waldman's broader argument that trust is at the heart of privacy concerns. Intimate relationships may be particularly important for cultivating trust, although trust is also crucial in wider social contexts. Privacy allows individuals to exercise control over access to personal information, which is crucial for nurturing love and friendship. It supports personal autonomy and self-identity by helping individuals manage social boundaries essential for intimacy and growth. Furthermore, the intimacy account highlights privacy's role in intimate decision-making, allowing people to make personal choices about their relationships and identities. Importantly, the intimacy account does not require us to always share more information with those close to us. Sometimes, choosing to withhold certain information in order to maintain privacy can actually strengthen and protect intimate relationships. By controlling interactions and the flow of information, privacy helps maintain varied social roles and preserves the integrity of intimate connections.

The intimacy account of privacy offers a compelling framework for understanding how privacy enhances human connections, but it is not without limitations. Theoretically, this account is still under development. For example, Inness' concept of intimacy, which is based on love, liking, or care, lacks a clear and comprehensive explanation, as challenged by scholars such as Jasmine Gunkel and Carissa Veliz.[13] Given that trust is also an important component of the value of privacy, it is important to consider how the intimacy account addresses the role of trust within its framework.[14] Additionally, the intimacy account has traditionally focused on issues like bodily privacy and personal decision-making, which may not fully encompass the complexities introduced by advancements in AI, technology, and the freedom of information. These developments raise broader concerns about data privacy and surveillance, areas that the intimacy account has yet to fully integrate. Despite these challenges, the intimacy account remains a valuable framework for further exploration. It offers insights into how privacy contributes to the richness and depth of human relationships. For example, although Veliz does not agree with Inness' intimacy account, she still thinks that control over self-presentation and reputation in different relationships are important interests protected by privacy.[15] To fully realize its potential, the intimacy account must evolve to address the identified challenges and gaps, particularly in the context of digital privacy. By doing so, it could provide deeper insights into how privacy influences personal and relational dynamics in the modern world.

III. CONFUCIANISM AND INTIMACY ACCOUNT OF PRIVACY

To further develop the intimacy account of privacy, it is important to examine the value of intimacy and close relationships in greater depth. One effective way to achieve this is by drawing on insights from various religious, philosophical, and ethical traditions, which often provide rich discussions of the values embedded in human relationships. Exploring diverse traditions allows us to uncover different conceptualizations and practices of intimacy. This process helps us identify both universal themes and culturally specific meanings that might either be overlooked in other traditions or reveal similar understandings shared across cultures. In this regard, investigating the influence of Confucianism on contemporary debates about privacy and intimacy is especially promising for several reasons. First, Confucianism offers a distinctive East Asian perspective that broadens the cultural foundations of the intimacy account of privacy. By engaging with Confucian thought, we can identify both shared and contrasting values regarding intimacy, respect, and relational obligations, thereby fostering a more inclusive and cross-cultural understanding of privacy. Second, Confucianism provides detailed reflections on the roles and responsibilities within close relationships, such as those between family members, friends, and community members, which can offer fresh insights into how privacy functions to support intimacy and trust. These insights are not only relevant within East Asian contexts but can also contribute universally applicable ideas, enriching global discussions about the ethical significance of privacy in intimate life. By exploring Confucianism and other traditions, we can thus enhance the conceptual depth and cultural breadth of the intimacy account of privacy, making it more robust and relevant to diverse societies.

There has already been some research on Confucianism and privacy, including my own works.[16] As I argued in one of my previous works,[17] classical Confucian texts such as the *Four Books* and *The Classic of Filial Piety* (*Xiao Jing* 孝經) articulate a moral framework in which intimate relationships (especially familial ties) are central to societal well-being and moral cultivation.[18] For example, *Xiao Jing* declares that "filial piety is the root of all virtue," underscoring the primacy of family bonds in moral development. Similarly, the *Da Xue* (*The Great Learning* 大學) emphasizes the regulation of the family as a necessary step toward achieving social harmony and good governance. Confucianism further extends the notion of intimate relationships through the "five relationships" (wu lun 五倫), namely, father-son,

sovereign-minister, husband-wife, elder-younger siblings, and friends, each associated with specific virtues and mutual obligations. *Mencius* 3A4 asserts, "between father and son, there should be affection; between sovereign and minister, righteousness," highlighting the ethical foundations of these ties.[19] *The Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhong Yong* 中庸) frames these relationships as duties of universal obligation, stressing their normative weight beyond mere personal preference. These classical sources collectively reveal Confucian ideas on relationships. There are many other sources in Confucian texts that could serve the same purpose, but I do not have enough space here to discuss them all. Nevertheless, the examples I present here are sufficient to illustrate my argument.

Building upon these Confucian concepts, we should further develop how they relate to the intimacy account of privacy. One influential philosophical account of intimacy relevant to this discussion is Inness' framework, which conceptualizes intimacy as grounded in the interplay of love, liking, and care.[20] Inness emphasizes that intimacy involves not only emotional closeness but also ongoing care and mutual recognition within relationships. When mapped onto Confucian concepts, this account resonates strongly with the virtues of *ren* and *xiao*. Both virtues center the role of care in fostering trust, emotional closeness, and respect for boundaries. These are key elements in safeguarding privacy within intimate relationships. Below I argue for a more comprehensive and culturally sensitive account of intimacy, which is crucial to foreground the role of care, both as a foundational ethical orientation in Confucianism and as a vital component of the intimacy account of privacy.

Confucianism, especially as interpreted by Chenyang Li, offers a nuanced account of care as a core ethical orientation.[21] Li's work undertakes a comparison between Confucianism and feminist care ethics, notably those of Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings, who challenged abstract, principle-based moral theories by highlighting the ethical significance of relationality, emotional responsiveness, and the context-sensitive nature of caring practices.[22] Both Confucian virtue ethics and feminist care ethics share a focus on cultivating moral sensibility through caring relationships, particularly within the family. However, Li also emphasizes key differences between these traditions. While Western feminist care ethics tends to concentrate on immediate, personal relationships and sometimes treats care as the primary virtue, Confucianism situates care as both narrower, rooted in specific family roles, and broader, in its aspiration to extend care outward to distant others, future generations, and even the environment. It remains open for debate whether Confucianism and feminism are more similar or different.[23] Notably, in his later work, Li not only compares Confucianism with feminist care ethics, but also directly argues that care is a central virtue in Confucianism.[24] In this view, Confucian care serves as the foundation for the cultivation of moral character and the harmonization of natural affection with ethical duty, making it both a deeply personal and expansively social virtue.

At the heart of Li's interpretation is the argument that *ren*, which has traditionally been translated as "humaneness," "benevolence," or "love," is best understood as a care-centered virtue. Li contends that "care" more fully captures the dual nature of ren. As a specific virtue, *ren* involves active, empathetic engagement and a disposition to respond to others' needs with emotional investment and moral sensitivity. As a comprehensive virtue, *ren* serves as the organizing principle for all other virtues, with care as its central idea. This dual aspect sets Confucian ethics apart from many Western accounts, including feminist care ethics, by extending care beyond immediate personal relationships to include distant others, future generations, and even the environment. In Li's view, this expansive understanding reflects Confucianism's aspiration to harmonize natural inclinations, resulting in a model of moral cultivation that is both deeply personal and broadly societal.[25]

Another central Confucian virtue, *xiao*, is often translated as "filial piety," but Li argues that "filial care" is a more accurate and meaningful interpretation. This understanding highlights three essential components: material care, which involves providing for parents' physical needs; psychological care, which includes offering respect and emotional support; and moral care, which means helping parents maintain their moral integrity. The traditional view of *xiao* as mere obedience is therefore incomplete. While Confucius stressed respect and deference, later thinkers such as Mencius and Xunzi recognized that genuine filial care sometimes requires children to question or challenge their parents' actions when they conflict with ethical principles. Xunzi, for example, in *Xunzi* Chapter 29, insisted that filial duty should not involve blind obedience if it would lead to harm or dishonor.[26] Instead, filial care is best understood as an active and responsive engagement with the well-being and moral standing of one's parents, acknowledging both their dignity and their potential for error. In contemporary society, Li suggests that the focus of filial care should shift more toward psychological and moral support, since material provision is less often the primary concern. In this way, filial care encompasses not only physical and emotional support but also a shared commitment to ethical growth and accountability within family relationships.[27]

The emphasis on care within Confucian ethics offers a valuable perspective for re-examining Inness' intimacy account of privacy. While it is open to debate whether care is the sole or central concept within Confucian virtues such as *ren* and *xiao*, care is undeniably a significant and influential aspect of these virtues. Li's reinterpretation of *ren* and *xiao* as care-centered, even if not exhaustive, enriches our understanding of privacy from a relational standpoint and provides important resources for contemporary discussions. Confucian care-centered virtues highlight that intimacy is sustained not simply through emotional openness or information sharing, but through attentive responsiveness to the needs and boundaries of others.

Importantly, the intimacy account of privacy does not require that individuals in close relationships always share every private detail; rather, it recognizes that privacy can be essential to maintaining healthy and respectful intimacy. Confucianism supports this view, as mentioned above, practicing *xiao* in the family involves not only caring for

physical well-being but also respecting physical boundaries or even personal autonomy. For example, Chapter 15 of *Recorded Sayings of Kongzi's Family* (*Kongzi Jiayu* 孔子家語) includes a saying that can be roughly translated as "accept the small stick, but run from the big stick."[28] This suggests that even in close filial relationships, maintaining healthy and respectful intimacy sometimes requires setting boundaries and practicing self-preservation.[29] Although this principle is not directly about privacy, it demonstrates Confucian recognition that sustaining intimacy involves both care and, where necessary, self-preservation through the preservation of appropriate limits within relationships. Allowing for privacy within intimate relationships can help foster trust, ethical dialogue, and mutual growth, rather than leading to intrusion or suffocation. Thus, privacy should not be seen merely as the protection of information or the enforcement of boundaries, but rather as a relational achievement that provides a space in which care, respect, and moral engagement can flourish. This approach contrasts with hierarchical or authoritarian models of intimacy and aligns with Inness's insight that privacy is vital for relationships based on trust and mutual recognition, while also broadening the analysis: privacy becomes not only a shield, but a dynamic environment in which Confucian care-centered virtues are enacted and relationships are ethically sustained.

Another distinctive contribution of Confucianism lies in its potential to broaden our understanding of intimacy and privacy within a diverse range of close relationships. Both Inness' intimacy account of privacy and Confucian ethics take intimacy to extend beyond just romantic or sexual relationships, encompassing various forms of close or significant connections. While the above discussion of Confucianism may seem to suggest that intimate relationships are primarily familial, it is important to recognize that both the intimacy account of privacy and Confucian ethics have the potential to extend far beyond the family. The traditional Confucian framework of the "five relationships" (wu lun 五倫) includes not only familial and friendly bonds, but also relationships such as ruler and subject, which can be seen as professional or hierarchical. When the Confucian virtues of *ren* and *xiao* are interpreted as care-centered, they highlight the ethical significance of attending to the needs and boundaries of others within all of these relationships. In this way, Confucian care ethics can enrich the intimacy account of privacy by providing additional resources for thinking about privacy norms in a variety of social contexts, such as friendships that are less intimate or professional relationships where trust and mutual respect are important.

Moreover, Confucianism's care-centered ethics, with care as a core virtue, provides a rich framework for understanding privacy that extends beyond close relationships to encompass broader social and communal dimensions. As Roessler suggests, privacy involves not only interactions among close intimates but also professional relationships and even encounters with strangers.[30] By situating privacy within a wider network of moral responsibilities, Confucian care ethics, grounded in values such as *li* (propriety), guides ethical conduct across familial, professional, and public contexts, fostering respect, relational harmony, and collective well-being. This expansive view challenges reductive East-West dichotomies by demonstrating how Confucianism integrates individual autonomy with interconnected social interests. Nevertheless, applying a care-centered intimacy account to diverse social settings is complex and warrants further exploration, given the varying expectations and boundaries of privacy across different relationships. Overall, Confucianism enriches the intimacy account by emphasizing that privacy practices contribute not only to personal flourishing but also to relational and communal flourishing, offering a more inclusive and nuanced framework for privacy that resonates across cultural boundaries.

In addition, Confucianism, together with the intimacy account of privacy, offers useful ways to understand how trust is created and how privacy becomes meaningful in relationships. As mentioned above, Inness describes intimacy as built on love, liking, and care.[31] These qualities connect closely with Confucian virtues like *ren* and *xiao*, which focus on caring for others and respecting their boundaries. Following Waldman's discussion, trust develops in several ways: through repeated interactions, clear or subtle signals of care, acts of reciprocity, and the transfer of trust from known relationships to new ones.[32] In Confucian life, trust is built by consistent respectful behavior within families and between friends. Over time, trust can also be transferred from trusted entities to strangers or new acquaintances. In *Mencius* 4A12, for example, Mencius ties great filial piety to the cultivation of trust and virtue within the core relationships.[33] This also extends to whether a sovereign has confidence in the inferior. The text shows that trust is deeply associated with the cultivation of moral character, proper conduct within family and governance, and the fulfillment of one's role in society. Rituals and customs act as cues that signal reliability and safety. Reciprocity happens when care and support are returned, strengthening trust between people. Furthermore, Confucian traditions encourage extending trust from close relationships to wider social circles, which helps trust grow beyond the family.

These practices show that privacy is not just about hiding information. It is also about creating a shared space in which trust and care allow people to open up while feeling protected. When trust is established through Confucian and intimacy-based values, people become more comfortable sharing personal details because they believe their boundaries will be honored. This reflects the idea in Waldman's work that privacy grows from social norms of trust.[34] Trust leads to openness, but also protects against breaches. When trust is broken, privacy is put at risk and relationships suffer. By drawing on both Confucian care ethics and the intimacy account, we see how trust and privacy work together to support healthy relationships in different social contexts.

In summary, highlighting care in Confucianism, especially as articulated through Li's interpretations of *ren* and *xiao*, offers a relationally grounded framework for understanding intimacy and privacy. Integrating these care-centered virtues into the intimacy account developed by Inness provides a more holistic philosophical perspective, one

that recognizes the complexity of relationships, the ethical centrality of care, and the value of cultural pluralism. This approach not only bridges theoretical gaps between Western and Confucian traditions but also offers practical insights for sustaining and protecting intimacy and privacy across diverse contemporary societies and a variety of relational contexts, such as trust among people in different relationships. Of course, the arguments presented here do not exhaust all the issues or possibilities concerning privacy, intimacy, and Confucianism. Rather, they provide a framework for further research and dialogue. More detailed analyses and discussions will be needed to fully explore these important topics in the future.

IV. CONFUCIANISM, INTIMACY, AND PUBLIC HEALTH ETHICS

Privacy is a foundational concern across applied ethics, playing a crucial role in areas such as AI and technology, bioethics, public health, education, warfare, and human rights, to name just a few examples. In each of these fields, privacy safeguards personal dignity and trust, establishing necessary boundaries within increasingly complex technological and social environments. My account develops a Confucian approach to privacy rooted in the concept of intimacy, holding that relationships, especially those characterized by care and familial obligation, shape both our understanding and protection of private life. This intimacy-centric view offers distinctive contributions relevant to all these domains.[35] However, given the length of this article, below I will only focus on an ethical debate in medical and public health ethics to illustrate how my account applies to practical issues.

Let me begin by discussing an interesting but controversial argument from Shui Chuen Lee.[36] Although Lee's article does not directly address privacy, it offers valuable insight by grounding bioethics and public health ethics in Confucian ideas of intimacy. Lee argues that Confucianism treats the family as the moral foundation, where the principle of *ren*, or ethical empathy, flourishes through shared identity and mutual obligation. He contends that this approach stands in marked contrast to Western bioethics, which centers on individual autonomy and rights. For Lee, bioethical decision-making, such as medical consent, should be understood as a collective, family-based process, reflecting deeply felt family ties rather than isolated individual choices. He applies this analysis to contentious clinical cases, such as organ donation, emphasizing that family intimacy strengthens the sense of duty and moral motivation to help relatives.[37] This relational approach seeks not only to guide decisions within the family but also to extend compassionate solidarity outward to society at large.[38]

While I generally agree with Lee's emphasis on connecting an intimacy-centric view to Confucianism, some aspects of his analysis can be critiqued as overly extreme. In particular, his discussion of intimacy and organ donation, such as obligating a mother to donate part of her liver to her child, goes beyond what is supported by Confucian standards or by an intimacy-based account itself. Lee suggests that the moral imperative to assist family almost always overrides individual wishes, framing refusal as a moral failure.[39] He contrasts the Western focus on individual autonomy with the Confucian perspective that emphasizes familial obligations and relational intimacy. In cases like liver donation, Lee argues that the intimate bond between mother and child creates a profound moral obligation to help. However, this stance fails to recognize Confucianism's deep appreciation for emotional complexity, empathy, and the variety of moral reasoning that can exist within families. In Confucian thought, intimacy is not merely about demanding sacrifice or overriding autonomy without consideration; rather, it is grounded in mutual care, sincere emotional resonance, and reflective moral dialogue among family members. Classic Confucian texts seldom justify absolute sacrifice or insist on prioritizing family duties in ways that ignore individual feelings and circumstances. Instead, they promote balance, open deliberation, and the cultivation of harmonious relationships by honoring both familial connection and individual well-being. The Confucian account of intimacy is most compatible with voluntary, heartfelt actions arising from shared understanding and honest reflection, rather than the imposition of rigid moral duties that might undermine genuine empathy and relational harmony.

Let me offer another example from a different context. Thaddeus Metz and Joseph Gaie, for instance, present an argument similar to Li's, suggesting that Confucianism can justify allowing family members to override a patient's wishes in matters of medical privacy.[40] In my previous work, I have critiqued this approach for being overly extreme and not fully aligned with Confucian principles.[41] While it is true that Confucianism influences how intimacy relates to privacy, it is crucial to recognize the limits of this perspective. Intimacy is not restricted to family relationships alone, nor does it always justify the disclosure of private information within families. Sometimes, concerns about harm or the quality of familial relationships may actually provide reasons for withholding information, especially if sharing could jeopardize the well-being of oneself or other family or non-family members who have a close relationship with the patient. Therefore, taking intimacy seriously in a Confucian framework must involve a careful consideration of care as a central ethical value. Overemphasizing the authority of family risks distorting both Confucian tradition and the lived reality of family life, where negotiation, compassion, and respect for personal boundaries play a vital role in ethical decision-making.

While we are aware of the limitations of intimacy in the debate on privacy, we should also recognize its positive roles. The Confucian intimacy account provides valuable perspectives on medical and public health ethics, especially in areas such as organ donation, trust, consent, and confidentiality. Privacy is vital not only for protecting individual autonomy, but also for facilitating trust and creating safe spaces for relational decision-making. In Confucian settings, maintaining relational trust and confidentiality within families, as well as between families and health professionals, is crucial for ethical medical care and public health practice. For instance, while collective consent and family support are encouraged, respect for the private concerns, emotions, and wishes of individual members remains essential. An intimacy-based account balances collective decision-making with appropriate

privacy protections, ensuring that medical decisions do not become coercive or compromise individual dignity. Moreover, this perspective highlights that privacy is not opposed to relational ethics; rather, it functions as a boundary supporting the flourishing of intimate, trustworthy relationships that are crucial to well-being. In summary, a Confucian intimacy-based account of privacy offers a nuanced framework for medical and public health ethics, promoting both relational trust and respectful protection of individual boundaries. This establishes the conceptual framework for further exploration of how intimacy and privacy interact across other domains of applied ethics.

V. CONCLUSION: SUMMARY AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This paper has introduced a framework for understanding the value of privacy through Confucian intimacy ethics. It has emphasized the importance of treating ren as a care-centered virtue and explained how this approach supports related values such as *xiao*, familial and other types of relationships, and trust in shaping both the value and practice of privacy. By critically examining individual, social, relational, and intimacy-based accounts of privacy alongside Confucian ethics, this discussion challenges the view that privacy debates must remain within individualistic frameworks and rejects simplistic East-West dichotomies. The analysis shows that Confucianism offers a nuanced, relational foundation for privacy, viewing it as both a personal and social achievement. The paper demonstrates how Confucian intimacy ethics can guide contemporary ethical issues in medical and public health contexts. By focusing on practical dilemmas involving consent, sharing medical information, and familial obligations, including areas such as organ donation and clinical decision-making, Confucian intimacy ethics provides context-sensitive and relationally grounded ways to protect privacy and promote both collective and individual flourishing.

This approach enhances ethical understanding but also reveals several limitations and open questions. Future research should extend the Confucian intimacy framework to new contexts, particularly by examining how its relational perspective can guide the responsible design and use of emerging technologies to strengthen human bonds and safeguard dignity and authenticity. For instance, in the ethics of war and peace, debates about surveillance, civilian protection, and the use of autonomous weapons all raise important privacy concerns.[42] Similarly, the intersection of privacy, human rights, and equality merits further exploration, especially as international norms evolve to address technological change.[43] The increasing adoption of technology in educational settings also creates new privacy challenges, as digital platforms and educational robots collect sensitive information about teachers, students, and families.[44] The domain of robot ethics is especially rich for analysis. Innovations such as AI, robotics, and digital technologies are becoming increasingly prevalent in daily life and present novel privacy challenges across contexts including homes, healthcare, schools, and warfare.[45] In all these expanding domains, careful policy analysis and further research will be essential to ensure that technological advances protect privacy and continue to foster humane relationships in an increasingly complex world. In this regard, the Confucian intimacy account of privacy offers important resources for addressing these challenges and for guiding the development of technologies that respect both privacy and human relationships.

NOTES

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24. Li, *Reshaping Confucianism*.

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26. https://ctext.org/xunzi/zi-dao/zh.

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28. https://ctext.org/kongzi-jiayu/liu-ben/zh.

29. I acknowledge that there is a long and complex debate within Confucianism regarding how to balance respect and obedience in the virtue of xiao. This debate has evolved throughout the tradition. For example, Confucius in the *Analects* appears to emphasize respect and not disobeying one's parents (*Analects* 2:5, 4.18). In contrast, in Chapter 12 "Jundao" of his book, Xunzi regards true respect as involving moral consideration, but not unconditional obedience to parents' wishes. For further discussion, see Li, *Reshaping Confucianism*, 102–11. While this debate regarding the development of *xiao* within Confucianism is important, it does not affect the argument I am making here, as I simply use this example to illustrate that self-preservation is permissible.

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INTERVIEWS

Interview with Guoxiang Peng

(Written Interview)

Peng Guoxiang (彭國翔) is Qiushi Distinguished Professor of Chinese Philosophy, Intellectual History, and Religions at Zhejiang University, where he directs the Ma Yifu International Center for the Studies in Humanities; he also holds an appointment in the Department of Philosophy at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He previously served as a professor at both Peking University and Tsinghua University, and he received his PhD from Peking University. His research focuses on Neo-Confucian and contemporary Confucian studies, Chinese intellectual history, and the relationship between Confucianism and religion. He held the 2016 Kluge Chair in Countries and Cultures of the North at the Library of Congress and received the 2009 Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel Research Award from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. His numerous books include *The Unfolding of the Innate Good Knowing: Wang Ji and the Yangming Learning in Mid-Late Ming* (2003/2015) and *Self-Cultivation as Spiritual and Bodily Exercise in Confucian Tradition* (2022).

Brad Cokelet: How did you get into philosophy?

Guoxiang Peng: Ever since middle school, I was especially drawn to the humanities. At that time, though, my main interests were literature and history—especially classical Chinese works such as *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (三國演義), *Water Margin* (水滸傳), *Journey to the West* (西遊記), *Investiture of the Gods* (封神演義), *Three Words and Two Slaps* (三言二拍), *The Story of Yue Fei* (說岳全傳), *Seven Heroes and Five Gallants* (七俠五義), and of course the martial arts novels of Jin Yong (金庸) and Liang Yusheng (梁羽生). I also read texts like the *Daodejing* and the *Diamond Sutra*, which are often seen as philosophical classics, but I didn't really approach them as "philosophy" back then.

When I went to university, my major was political science, but gradually I found myself spending more time reading Chinese philosophy and history. At first, this was purely out of personal interest—I wasn't planning to make it my career. But after graduation, I realized that once I left campus, it would be very difficult to continue reading these works in a systematic way. That's when I decided to go to graduate school and devote myself to the study of Chinese philosophy, history, and religion as my life's work. In that sense, I was combining my personal interests with my professional career.

I mention my middle-school reading because I think that period was very important. It really laid the groundwork for my later decision to pursue a career in the humanities. And in the Chinese intellectual tradition, literature, history, and philosophy were never separated as sharply as they are today. A text like *Zhuangzi*, for instance, is both great literature and great philosophy. Modern Western academic disciplines—literature, history, philosophy—each have their own methods, of course, but if we apply these rigid boundaries to traditional Chinese texts, we sometimes risk becoming like the blind men describing an elephant, each seeing only part of the whole.

The metaphor in Zhuangzi of "*Hundun*" (Primordial Chaos) being drilled through the seven orifices and thereby dying is quite meaningful when reflecting on the drawbacks of treating literature, history, and philosophy as entirely separate disciplines without integration. In this regard, my early reading of literary and historical works—or, more precisely, my tendency to approach Chinese historical texts from literary and historical perspectives—did not conflict with my later philosophical training; on the contrary, it provided a valuable supplement.

Brad Cokelet: Which role-models, mentors, or friends (or critics/people you disagreed with) have shaped your philosophical life the most? What made them beneficial or important?

Guoxiang Peng: From middle school through my undergraduate and graduate years, many people have influenced me—mostly through reading their works, though in some cases I also came to know them personally. Listing them all individually—even if some were inevitably omitted—would make for an extremely long list. I'll just mention a few who have been particularly important.

First are two of the most important Chinese philosophers of the twentieth century: Mou Zongsan (牟宗三) and Tang Junyi (Tang Chun-I, 唐君毅). I never met either of them, but their writings had a deep impact on me already in my university years. In my view, they are the most seminal thinkers in the modern development of the Chinese philosophical tradition. From the 1980s down to today, I've kept returning to their works. What strikes me in reading them is not only the depth and subtlety of their thought, but also the vivid sense of the living persons behind the texts. This is quite different from scholars whose writings may look respectable on paper, but whose personal conduct leaves you disappointed. Of course, besides Mou and Tang, I was also deeply impressed by Lao Siguang (Lao Sze-kwang, 勞思光)'s *History of Chinese Philosophy*. I would regard it as another must-read, together with Feng Youlan (Fung Yu-lan, 馮友蘭)'s earlier work of the same title.

Second, two major historians of modern Chinese intellectual history have also been central influences: Qian Mu (錢穆) and Yu Ying-shih (余英時). I began reading their works as an undergraduate as well. I've always believed that truly profound philosophers must be deeply grounded in the historical and cultural tradition to which they belong—while also remaining open to other traditions. Philosophical reflection that grows out of a rich historical awareness, and that can think comparatively across traditions, is far less likely to become narrow or superficial. This is one reason why, among contemporary Western philosophers, I especially appreciate figures like Jürgen Habermas and Charles Taylor. Reading the works of Qian Mu and Yu Ying-shih during my university years not only deepened my understanding of Chinese history, but also showed me a different way of expressing ideas. Consequently, among modern Western historians, I have also come to admire historians such as Peter Gay.

I never met Qian Mu, but I did know Yu Ying-shih quite well. Since our first meeting in Taipei in 2000, we stayed in close contact. I benefited immensely from him not only intellectually, but also in terms of career guidance and personal support. Beyond scholarship, we also shared very similar values. Academically, I regard him as the historian

best able to think philosophically about Chinese history; personally, I saw him as a rare combination of the Chinese *junzi* (君子) and the Western gentleman, deserving of both respect and affection.

I completed both my MPhil and PhD at Peking University, studying with Chen Lai. From him I inherited a scholarly approach that runs from Hu Shih, Feng Youlan, and Zhang Dainian down to his own generation: namely, that philosophical analysis should always be grounded in careful, historically informed textual study. Interestingly, in my view, this is also the basic approach taken by Mou Zongsan and Tang Junyi.

As for the figures mentioned above, if you ask in what way they have been important or helpful to me, I would say that although they differ greatly from one another, their significance can largely be summed up in two main respects:

First, they taught me that any serious engagement with a philosophical tradition must begin with a deep understanding of its historical texts. Only on that basis can we responsibly reinterpret or develop the tradition in creative ways. Without that grounding, philosophical "innovation" risks becoming little more than castles in the air—or unwittingly repeating what others have already said.

Second, they showed me that both the interpretation and the modern reconstruction of Chinese philosophy need to take place within the broader context of world philosophy. A solid understanding of Western philosophy is essential—not to replace the Chinese tradition, but to serve as an important comparative background and conceptual resource. Only then can Chinese philosophy avoid becoming closed in on itself.

Brad Cokelet: What do you think of the idea of philosophy as a way of life? Any thoughts on how academic philosophy relates to that?

Guoxiang Peng: From the perspective of Chinese philosophical tradition, the idea of philosophy as a way of life is easy to understand and embrace. So, when I first read works like Pierre Hadot's *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* and Martha Nussbaum's *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*, I felt a deep resonance. I also realized immediately that ancient Greek and Roman philosophy—the roots of Western thought—isn't as radically different from Chinese philosophy as many people assume. And in fact, this way of understanding philosophy has a long-standing presence in the Western tradition as well.

In contemporary academia, however, there is often a gap between academic philosophy and philosophy as a way of life. Many academic philosophers do not see philosophy as a way of living, nor do they treat the philosophy they study as something that shapes their own lives. In such cases, philosophy easily becomes a kind of conceptual game. Of course, treating philosophy simply as an object of study, or as a body of knowledge to teach students, is entirely legitimate in modern universities. But it is worth asking: if the philosophy one studies has little connection to one's way of life, what then sustains one's motivation? And won't one's interest in philosophy gradually fade?

Søren Kierkegaard once criticized Hegel by saying that a philosopher may construct a grand theoretical system "which embraces the whole of existence and world history," yet in his personal life "he himself does not live in this immense high-vaulted palace, but in a barn beside it, or in a dog-kennel, or at most in the porter's lodge." His point, of course, was that philosophy should be part of one's way of life, not just an abstract theory. That said, I am not entirely sure this criticism really fits Hegel. It is hard to imagine that, without a deep love of philosophy and an intense, ongoing engagement with philosophical thinking—which itself already constitutes a way of life—Hegel could have created such an extraordinary philosophical system.

If "philosophy as a way of life" emphasizes living out one's philosophical commitments, then academic philosophy, by contrast, tends to stress a certain reflective distance—even from the very philosophy one lives by. In other words, even if my philosophical commitments shape my life, when I do academic philosophy, I still need to step back, examine, and critique them. Seen this way, philosophy as a way of life and academic philosophy are not necessarily in conflict. They can, in fact, complement one another.

Brad Cokelet: What drew you to the projects that you have worked on in philosophy? Which have been the most rewarding and why?

Guoxiang Peng: For me, the motivation has always been my own intellectual interests. I don't usually take on a research project because of external factors—for example, simply because a particular topic happens to attract funding from some organization. Of course, if a funding opportunity happens to align with what I already want to do, then applying for it makes perfect sense, as it can help me carry out my research more effectively. But in my experience, it is really one's inner interest—and the demands of scholarship itself—that should provide the true motivation for doing research.

For instance, if I find that a certain topic has been neglected in the field but is in fact philosophically valuable, and I myself am drawn to it, then even without any external funding I would still pursue it. Conversely, if a project attracts funding but lacks real intellectual substance, or is not something I genuinely care about, then I would not choose to work on it.

As for which projects have been the most rewarding: whenever I work on something that truly interests me and is driven by the intrinsic value of the subject, I feel deeply rewarded once it is completed. Every article or book produced in this way feels, metaphorically, like one's own child, giving rise to a profound inner satisfaction. At the same time, knowing that the work has real scholarly significance and can make a genuine contribution to the field makes the experience even more meaningful. This is fundamentally different from doing research merely for

external rewards, without regard for one's own intellectual commitment or for the true value of the work itself.

Brad Cokelet: Which traditions/philosophies/approaches interest you most? Has philosophy related to those improved or declined in your lifetime? How do you hope work on those goes in the future?

Guoxiang Peng: I'm interested in a wide range of philosophical traditions, schools, and approaches. Within Chinese philosophy, I care a great deal about the Confucian, Buddhist, and Daoist traditions. In Western philosophy, I'm especially drawn to ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, Hellenistic philosophy, and German classical philosophy. But since most of my work has been on Chinese philosophy, I'll focus on that here.

Within the Chinese philosophical tradition, my main research focus has been Confucianism. I have conducted specialized studies ranging from the pre-Qin period to Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism and modern New Confucianism. In studying Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism, which already integrates elements of Buddhism and Daoism, a deep understanding of these two traditions is necessary for rigorous scholarship. Likewise, modern New Confucianism, especially in the work of Mou Zongsan and Tang Junyi, is deeply engaged with Western philosophy. So, if we want to understand New Confucianism fully—and even more, if we want to develop Chinese philosophy further on that basis—we also need to keep learning from Western philosophy and integrating it into our interpretation and construction of Chinese philosophy.

Overall, I would say that research on Chinese philosophy has continued to make progress. Of course, that doesn't mean there are no problems. In the Chinese-speaking world, research in mainland China has looked very active since the 1990s, but there is also quite a lot of superficial or derivative work. Taiwan and Hong Kong accumulated very strong scholarship between the 1950s and 1990s, but since then, with the decline in manpower and increasing cultural distance from China, truly outstanding works have become rarer. One might say there are signs of decline.

In the Western world—especially the English-speaking world—Chinese philosophy has always been a very small field. Many of the scholars I'm most familiar with have passed away, are retired, or are soon to retire. It's hard to predict what the future will look like.

On the positive side, Western scholars often bring fresh perspectives and raise stimulating questions that are very valuable for Chinese-speaking scholars. But there are also limitations. In my experience, scholars in East Asian studies, history, or religious studies often have strong training in primary Chinese texts, so they are less likely to "mistake clouds in the sky for forests on the horizon," so to speak—but some of them may not always probe the philosophical arguments in depth. By contrast, some philosophers working in philosophy departments on Chinese philosophy or comparative philosophy often propose bold and creative ideas, but sometimes their grounding in the primary Chinese sources is not strong enough, so their interpretations can feel somewhat detached from the texts.

Looking ahead, I very much hope that Chinese philosophy will participate more deeply in the global philosophical conversation. For that to happen, I think scholars in the Chinese-speaking world need broader global perspectives and greater familiarity with non-Chinese traditions. At the same time, I also hope that Western philosophers can move beyond "the West and the rest" mindset, and try to understand Chinese—and other non-Western—traditions on their own terms: respecting their distinctive ways of thinking and internal structures, rather than simply fitting them into Western philosophical frameworks.

For example, when we introduce Chinese philosophy to readers in the English-speaking world, do we aim mainly to adapt Chinese philosophy to their existing intellectual habits? Or do we see this as an opportunity to invite them into the world of Chinese philosophical discourse itself? These two different orientations, I think, will naturally lead to very different outcomes.

Brad Cokelet: What is one idea from Asian philosophy that you think could have the most impact on people if they took it seriously?

Guoxiang Peng: I don't think there's only one idea in Asian philosophy that could have the most impact if people took it seriously. But if I had to pick one that I personally find particularly important, it would be a core idea shared across Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism: the idea that through self-cultivation, a person can become the kind of person they aspire to be.

Of course, what counts as an ideal person differs across the three traditions, and so do the methods of self-cultivation—what all three call "*gongfu*" (practice, effort, cultivation, 工夫/功夫). For example, in Confucianism, the ideal might be a "*junzi*" or a sage; in Buddhism, an enlightened being like the Buddha; in Daoism, the "*zhenren*", "*zhiren*", or even "*shenren*" (the "true," "consummate," or "divine" person, 真人, 至人 or 神人) described in the *Zhuangzi*. The practices themselves differ accordingly.

But the underlying idea is the same: through deliberate self-cultivation, a person can ultimately become the kind of person they want to be. Philosophy, then, is not just abstract theory—it is a practice that can transform one's whole existence, mind and body included. In Confucian terms, philosophy should be able to "*bianhua qizhi*" (change one's temperament, 變化氣質).

I believe that if people around the world took this idea seriously, it could have a profound impact. This notion isn't unique to Asian philosophy; it exists in Western traditions as well. But in the modern West, it has become less emphasized, while in Asian traditions it remains central and prominent.

This also raises another question: Can philosophy transform the world? That is a large issue, and I won't go

into it here. But even if philosophy can reshape the world, such transformation can be for better or for worse—bad transformations may bring disastrous consequences. My own sense is that if human beings can transform themselves through self-cultivation, guided by the pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty, then human society will naturally evolve and improve over time. There is no need for anyone to impose a so-called ideal blueprint from above, as though society were something to be molded like a manufactured product.

Brad Cokelet: What advice would you give to a beginning student of philosophy today? Any advice for an early or mid-career academic philosopher?

Guoxiang Peng: For students who are just beginning to study philosophy, my first piece of advice would be to build a solid foundation in languages.

For Chinese students, I always emphasize two languages. One is Classical Chinese, that is, *wenyanwen*. The other is English. Even though Chinese students are native speakers of modern Chinese, without professional training their level of Classical Chinese usually stops at what they learned in high school, because that's where formal instruction typically ends. Once they enter university, unless they major in something that requires Classical Chinese, they usually don't receive further training. But without a solid grasp of Classical Chinese, it's very difficult to truly enter the world of traditional Chinese philosophy. English, of course, is equally crucial, since today it is the main vehicle for global knowledge and thought. Without proficiency in English, a student's access to ideas and scholarship will be extremely limited.

For students whose native language isn't Chinese, it's important to learn not only Classical Chinese but also modern Chinese. This is because a great deal of modern Chinese philosophy is written in modern Chinese. To really understand Chinese philosophy, you need to be able to read both the classical texts—written in Classical Chinese—and the works of twentieth-century thinkers such as Mou Zongsan and Tang Junyi. Their writings are mostly in modern Chinese, though often mixed with Classical Chinese expressions. Philosophers of the next generation wrote even more consistently in modern Chinese. So, if Western students want to truly understand Chinese philosophy, they really do need the ability to read these works in modern Chinese. Of course, native English speakers already have an advantage when it comes to English, but students whose first language is not English should also try to master it, since English remains a major language for global philosophical discussion.

In general, the more languages a student can master, the better. But our time and energy are always limited. For students beginning Chinese philosophy, I would suggest focusing on Chinese and English first. Beyond that, Japanese and Korean can be very helpful for studying Asian philosophy more broadly, while European languages like German or French are beneficial for engaging deeply with Western philosophy.

For early- or mid-career academic philosophers, my advice is to read widely beyond philosophy—history, literature, religion, and the arts. This kind of broad exposure can expand their perspective and enrich their philosophical thinking, giving them what Michael Polanyi called "subsidiary awareness." For philosophers working in Chinese or comparative philosophy, having knowledge in Chinese history, literature, religion, and art can greatly deepen understanding of Chinese philosophical traditions.

Brad Cokelet: Have you had any major shifts or expansions in your main philosophical views or practices over the years? If so, how did these changes come about?

Guoxiang Peng: While studying Chinese philosophy and learning as much as I could about Western philosophy, I've gradually developed some of my own ideas on certain questions. But I wouldn't say that I have any major, fully formed philosophical views. Given that human philosophical experience stretches back thousands of years, truly creating something entirely new is no easy task. What's often called a "new philosophical idea" is sometimes just a change in words or terminology, rather than a real difference in substance from what has already been proposed.

I have always believed in Confucius's principle of "only reviewing what is old could one understand what is new." In other words, we can truly judge whether our own ideas are genuinely new only after fully understanding the philosophical ideas that others have already developed and argued. Because of this view, I would say that I am still very much in a process of learning. Rather than having experienced a major shift in my core philosophical positions, I have been constantly expanding and enriching my understanding and thinking by studying the insights of great thinkers throughout history.

The Confucian classic *Daxue* (*Great Learning*, 大學) says, "If you can make something new each day, do so daily and continuously." This applies both to self-cultivation—improving one's character—and to the continual expansion of knowledge and thought. These two aspects are closely intertwined. As Zhu Xi noted, if reading the classics only increases knowledge without improving one's character, then one hasn't truly benefited from them.

The great Chinese historian Sima Qian (司馬遷) said, "exploring the relation between Heaven and humanity, understanding the transformations of past and present, and establishing a doctrine of one's own." Here, "exploring the relation between Heaven and humanity" is mainly the work of philosophers, while "understanding the transformations of past and present" is the historian's task. Any scholar, whether philosopher or historian, naturally hopes to "establish a doctrine of one's own," but to truly do so—to offer insights that are genuinely one's own—requires a deep understanding of and engagement with the work of those who came before.

So, in answer to your question: I see myself as always in a process of learning. As I encounter different philosophical perspectives and gain new historical knowledge, my views

on particular issues are constantly evolving. These changes come from continual reading and sustained curiosity. I still wouldn't say that I have any major, overarching philosophical positions. Rather, for specific questions, I form my own perspectives through ongoing study and reflection—and I remain open to revising and adjusting them as my thinking develops.

Brad Cokelet: What do you think philosophy might be like in ten to thirty years, given imagined or predicted changes (technological and other)?

Guoxiang Peng: This is a really big question, and I'm not sure I could give an answer that would even fully satisfy myself. Different philosophers focus on different things—nature, the cosmos, society, human life—and all of these can be meaningful topics for philosophical reflection. But in my view, continual reflection on human beings itself should remain one of philosophy's enduring concerns.

Of course, understanding what it means to be human cannot be separated from society, nature, or the cosmos, because humans live within these contexts. Major changes in society, the natural world, or the cosmos will inevitably affect how we understand what it means to be human. So, to imagine what philosophy will be like in the next ten to thirty years, we first need to think about what our societies, the world, and the broader natural and cosmic environment might look like during that period. Even if nature and the cosmos do not fundamentally change, significant social or global transformations will surely influence philosophical thought. Many current discussions about artificial intelligence are connected to this.

Nevertheless, I believe that no matter how society or the world changes, and no matter how far artificial intelligence develops, reflection on self-cultivation and the shaping of one's own character will remain a central philosophical concern. In other words, the question of how a person can become the kind of person they aspire to be will probably never disappear. I wouldn't describe this as a kind of human-centered worldview. Rather, it reflects the fact that humans are inseparably connected with the rest of the universe. In Chinese philosophical terms, this is the idea of "*tian ren he yi*"—the unity of Heaven and humanity. Understanding humans properly requires considering their relationship with all things in nature and the cosmos. From this perspective, everything beyond humans can be seen as living, meaningful, and agentive in some sense. I find the late Thomas Berry's phrase very helpful here: "The universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects."

Even if artificial intelligence becomes extraordinarily advanced, it would still only mirror human-like intelligence, consciousness, or even emotion. And these are precisely the capacities through which the world and the universe are expressed and become meaningful to us. So, I believe that, no matter how much the world changes, philosophical reflection will always stay connected to our ongoing effort to understand ourselves.

Brad Cokelet: If you are an Asian philosopher, how has that shaped or impacted your life in philosophy? Has philosophy changed in good or bad ways for Asian philosophers or philosophies in your experience?

Guoxiang Peng: Ethnically, I'm Chinese, and culturally I grew up within the Chinese tradition. Although my work also engages with Western thought, my main area of research is Chinese philosophy. So, in that sense, it's natural to think of me as an Asian philosopher.

That said, being Asian by ethnicity doesn't automatically mean one understands Asian culture or philosophy. Likewise, being ethnically Chinese doesn't guarantee an innate understanding of Chinese culture or philosophy. True understanding requires serious engagement with the texts that carry these traditions. For example, someone who grew up in mainland China in the second half of the twentieth century, without specialized training, would find it difficult to read classical texts written in traditional Chinese characters. If that person then went to study in the West at a young age, it would be even harder to gain a real grasp of Chinese history, culture, and philosophy. I myself benefited from continuous training in classical Chinese from my undergraduate through doctoral studies, including reading original Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing thread-bound editions.

Although one's ethnicity, place of birth, mother tongue, and the culture in which one grew up may seem to constitute something essential about a person—and this is undeniable—the self is not simply, as Sartre once said, "nothingness at the beginning," entirely shaped by later choices. These factors are given; they are not chosen. In this sense, it is reasonable to say that they contribute to a person's "essence."

Nevertheless, a person's cultural and value commitments can indeed be matters of conscious choice. One's identity does not have to be determined by so-called "primordial ties" such as ethnicity, birthplace, or mother tongue. From this perspective, my identity as an Asian philosopher is not an inborn essence, but largely the result of my deliberate choice.

By the same token, people whose ethnicity, birthplace, mother tongue, and early environment have nothing to do with Asia may also, through such conscious choice, become Asian philosophers—though this is certainly not an easy process.

Among scholars in the United States and Europe working on Asian philosophy—and here I am referring to non-Asian scholars—quite a number have made outstanding contributions. In the older generation, notable examples include the late W. T. de Bary, Benjamin Schwarz, and David Nivison. Those approaching retirement or already retired include Roger Ames, Philip J. Ivanhoe, John Makeham, Heiner Roetz, and others. And among those in the prime of their careers are Steve Angle, Brook Ziporyn, Michael Puett, and others. Some have even embraced Asian philosophy in terms of Confucian values; Robert Neville and the late John Berthrong, members of the so-called "Boston Confucians," are excellent examples.

Of course, if we look at the global situation, Western philosophy still clearly occupies the dominant position in the discipline. It is only against this background—or based on this reality—that your question arises about whether there have been positive or negative changes in the way the philosophical community views Asian philosophy and Asian philosophers. From my experience, there have been both encouraging developments and disappointing aspects.

For example, if we take philosophy departments in American universities as an illustration, most major philosophy departments still lack positions dedicated to Asian philosophy. Asian philosophy is still mainly housed in East Asian Studies, History, or Religious Studies departments. The fact that this situation has changed very little over a long period of time is, in itself, not a positive sign. One could even say that this persistent lack of change shows that Asian philosophy still has not been fully recognized as a philosophical tradition in its own right, distinct from the Western philosophical tradition. Even in some philosophy departments that do include Asian philosophy, it is often treated more like a "dessert" rather than the "main course," so to speak.

On the other hand, interest in Asian philosophy does seem to be growing. More and more people—including both younger scholars and some very senior figures in the field—are becoming engaged with it. That is certainly a positive development. In fact, if we look at the development of Western culture itself, the continual incorporation of external influences has always been essential to its own growth. The leading figures of the Enlightenment, for instance, showed great interest in non-Western civilizations and sought to draw upon them as important sources of comparison and inspiration. The same should be true today: the ongoing development of Western philosophy cannot be a closed, self-contained process. Whether it can meaningfully absorb non-Western philosophical traditions, including Asian philosophy, will be an important factor in its renewal.

However, I would emphasize that genuinely engaging with Asian philosophy is not simply a matter of showing respect or goodwill toward it. What is needed is a real entry into the intellectual world of Asian philosophy—a world embodied in the classical texts and writings that have carried these traditions across the centuries. Only in this way can Asian and Western philosophy truly be brought into meaningful dialogue and perhaps even integrated at a deeper level.

So, I believe genuine change will only come when Western philosophers are able to read the original texts of Asian philosophy—rather than relying solely on translations—and engage in real conversation with Asian philosophers; and when major philosophy departments in the West establish positions in Asian philosophy, so that students interested in it do not have to go to Asia to study it. Only then, I think, can we say that there has been a truly fundamental—and positive—change in the way the philosophical community regards Asian philosophy and Asian philosophers.

Anyway, some positive signs are starting to show up, and maybe my own experience is a good example. Just this March, I found out that I was elected a Member of the Academia Europaea (MAE). I'm in the "Philosophy, Theology, and Religious Studies" section, which falls under the Humanities and Arts division. As far as I know, I'm the first scholar of Chinese philosophy and religion from a Chinese background to be elected. Of course, it's a personal honor. But what I think means more is that it shows that Chinese philosophy has now, institutionally, entered the highest level of European academia. Sure, it may still take time before European philosophy departments have real positions in Chinese or Asian philosophy. But the fact that the Academy's Philosophy section now has a scholar of Chinese philosophy is, I believe, a good start. I also hope this might encourage the American philosophical community to think more about Chinese and Asian philosophy, and in doing so, help the values of "diversity" and "openness" grow further in American philosophy.

Interview with Amy Olberding

(Written Interview)

Amy Olberding is Presidential Professor of Philosophy at the University of Oklahoma. Her research focuses on early Chinese ethics, with particular attention to everyday moral life, exemplarism, civility, and the ethics of interpersonal interaction. She is the author of *The Wrong of Rudeness: Learning Modern Civility from Ancient Chinese Philosophy* (Oxford, 2019) and *Moral Exemplars in the Analects* (Routledge, 2011), and editor of the *Dao Companion to the Analects* (Springer, 2013). Her widely cited article, "Etiquette: A Confucian Contribution to Moral Philosophy" (*Ethics*, 2016), has been influential in bringing Confucian resources to bear on questions in mainstream moral philosophy.

Q: How did you get into philosophy?

Amy Olberding: This is a question that can go too many ways! I'm going to dodge the deeper versions of the question because my existential sense of *being into philosophy* really comes and goes. Instead, I'll take this as a plainer question about how I began studying philosophy.

I was one of those students who got to college without much sense of how things work or what was possible. I knew I wanted to do something—in college, in life—that involved reading books. I started out in literature, but then took a history of philosophy class and felt I wanted to know more. I realize that this will sound naïve (and I was), but I thought I could well enough read literature on my own but that if I was going to know more philosophy, I'd need classes and professors to sort that out. So I became a major. I had no sense of what would follow from that, whether I'd end up a professor or a "philosopher" (a designation I still hesitate to give myself). Unlike so many of the students I now teach, I wasn't making a connection between what I would study and what profession I would seek to join. Philosophy seemed simultaneously super interesting and quite opaque, so it felt natural to choose it as a major.

After college, I drifted a bit—worked as a maid, worked at several public libraries. Going to graduate school in philosophy was just more seat-of-pants decision making. I started part-time in an MA program while working full-

time as a public library assistant. I still wasn't sure what to do with my life, but I liked studying (and holding student loans in abeyance, I confess). Then I realized quickly that if you are really going to get much from graduate school, you need to go where the department covers what interests you and try to go at it full throttle. So I applied to University of Hawai'i, started there, and started to really become more earnestly committed to pursuing philosophy as a future profession.

Q: Which role-models, mentors, or friends (or critics/people you disagreed with) have shaped your philosophical life the most? What made them beneficial or important?

Amy Olberding: In interviews like this that I've read before I'm always a bit taken aback at how philosophers name people big and important as their influences and teachers. I suppose I have some of those, not least my PhD advisor and teacher, Roger Ames. But he never felt Very Important, if I can say that. He was an advisor game to let me try what I would and creative in such a happy, scrappy way. Cheerful and open receptivity to other people's ideas can be a real gift and Roger has it.

Joel Kupperman is another important influence. His work seemed to me so humane. Again, I expect I'll sound naïve, but his written work seemed like it was written by a person who would be nice and kind. Because of that, Joel was the first professor I worked up the nerve to basically cold call—a professor not connected to me but from whom I wished to seek some advice for a project—and he was as his written work would suggest, incredibly gracious and generous with his time. I try to keep that in mind when I'm contacted by students not my own or younger scholars.

I'd be remiss not to note the most fundamental friend I have professionally—my husband. Garret and I met in graduate school at UH, but once we decided to marry, he left philosophy for sinology (it being obvious to us that we'd never find jobs in the same university or even state if we were both in Chinese philosophy). He is the first reader of anything I write, and his feedback is both committed to what I'm trying to do and to making it better. He also once wrote on a gnarly draft of mine: "You are prolix in your confusion." After I looked up "prolix," I made this one of my chief mantras while writing, for it was (is?) true that the less I understand something, the more I carry on at too great length. He just spotted that way ahead of me and it's helped ever since. To say more of him here would surely turn me prolix—he's great, but not in ways I can easily articulate.

Q: What do you think of the idea of philosophy as a way of life? Any thoughts on how academic philosophy relates to that?

Amy Olberding: I like it very much, but perhaps not in the way that it is typically described. As an idea—an idea of the sort attempted by the Confucians or Daoists, Epicureans or Stoics—it seems commendable and useful as an organizing aspiration. But I like best the parts of those "way of life" philosophers who just can't quite pull it off. I think it easy to idealize philosophy as a way of life, but I prefer when the cracks in that idealized endeavor show. I like seeing Kongzi in the *Analects* giving way to complaining or irritation (really, his students do seem sometimes very annoying). I like seeing Seneca talk big in ways that fall apart on any quick inspection of his life. I like Zhuangzi crying for his wife or going home to sulk after almost getting busted for poaching.

All of this is just to say that I think even in its most storied versions, philosophy as a way of life is a lot messier and wildly chaotic than we tend to well acknowledge academically. And maybe that's why I'm not too excited about contemporary possibilities for philosophy as a way of life. Professional academic philosophy is too governed by institutional norms and metrics to excel well at the most intriguing and humane bits of this sort of philosophy. We want things to hang together too tidily or at least our "productivity" norms seem to demand that. (I can imagine the rejection letters coming if Lucretius submitted *On the Nature of Things* for publication . . . really, lambs?!? And that ending?!?) I just expect that any contemporary philosophy as a way of life would do the cleaned up, altogether too disciplined and organized version. I'd be all for it if I felt like it would produce more philosophers letting the chaos peek through or rough up all the good sense. I wish philosophy more broadly could permit a heartier measure of human chaos, of the confusion and disorder of human efforts to sort things out.

Q: What drew you to the projects that you have worked on in philosophy? Which have been the most rewarding and why?

Amy Olberding: Having just above deflated the idea of philosophy as a way of life, I have to admit here that the projects that most drew my attention were those that seemed promising for offering some sort of *help* with the vexations of ordinary life—ritual and etiquette, grief and mourning, and how to sort out what our exemplars mean to us and how they work on us. Really, I don't think I've been much good at philosophy that doesn't somehow hook into things that bother me in life. In my more recent years, I've been less reticent about admitting that more openly in my work.

I'm not sure how it is for others in the field, but for me at least, the earlier years involved an effort to appear as (my idea of) a scholar would—engaged in somewhat detached analysis and reasoning about what my archaic sources contain. As I've aged, I've largely given up on that and as I fast approach the end of my career, I suppose I'm not hiding it much at all. I'm not sure that what I've come to do most recently would in some quarters count as proper philosophy, but I can here at least admit that the most rewarding projects I've pursued have involved unapologetic mash ups of my traditional ancient sources and the stuff of life. I *like* thinking about Xunzi at the grocery store (he can be an aid against misanthropy) so I also like writing about what it's like to do that, what Xunzi can add to grocery shopping. It would likely not be good for the field if we all did that or if that were all we do, but I also think we need more than staid scholarly work circulating.

Q: Which traditions/philosophies/approaches interest you most? Has philosophy related to those improved or declined in your lifetime? How do you hope work on those goes in the future?

Amy Olberding: Rather than emphasize particular traditions, my interests largely attach to particular texts: the *Analects*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Xunzi*. To say what exactly I admire about these texts would take too long for this short space, but suffice it to say that all three *stick* with me, not just as academic matters but on some more human level. (Indeed, the *Zhuangzi* sticks with me as text to avoid academically—I find it nigh impossible to write academically about the *Zhuangzi* without just ruining it.) Rather than extol the virtues of these texts, let me jump to the rest of this question.

One hope I have for the future of the field is that we can move away from overly broad characterizations of "traditions." Put more plainly, I'm deeply attached to the *Analects*, to *Xunzi* and to *Zhuangzi*—but far less to "Confucianism" or "Daoism." The "traditions" are of course a shorthand intended to capture what are wildly complex, disparate, and sometimes contradictory collections of work produced by many different people over vast stretches of history. They aren't meaningless as *traditions*, but the shorthand can too easily blend or fuse a cacophony of voices into one. There are particular voices that most interest me—picking out their distinctive tones and cadences. I expect that there are many in our field who operate similarly, but the wider field of philosophy can complicate this for us.

Some of my concern is just with the sociology and intellectual mapping of the field, with the ways that hiring, teaching, and study proceeds in academic philosophy. In a philosophy department, you will have multiple philosophers parsing Western-lineage philosophy into fine slices, such that we would never expect a single professor to study, teach, and speak intelligently about Plato, Aquinas, Descartes, Hume, Kant, and Nietzsche. Yet if you take up a post as a professor of "Chinese philosophy," there can be (and indeed often is) an expectation that you can speak to the *entirety* of Chinese philosophy, from the *Analects* to Zhu Xi to Mou Zongsan, throwing in recommendations for where to get the best Chinese food along the way or explaining to colleagues just what the May Fourth Movement was all about. This is a real problem and challenge.

When I started my career, I admit I envied my colleague in Greek philosophy. He studied Plato, and only Plato, and taught Aristotle because, alas, needs must. No one asked him where to get good Greek food, far less to teach a one semester course canvassing "European philosophy." But there was no way that I could comparably say that I study the *Analects*, throwing in *Mengzi* when I absolutely must. I was instead teaching that one semester course on "Chinese philosophy," an unwieldy sixteen-week tour through 2,500 years of philosophy (when I wasn't teaching the far worse one semester course on "Asian philosophies").

On some level, this is a teaching issue, about how courses get created and presented. But I find that the courses really do tend to reflect how the profession addresses philosophy outside the Western-lineage canon. I am sometimes asked to produce essays for anthologies of philosophical work on wide themes (e.g., death or ethics or a particular virtue). The proposed anthology will have myriad essays representing Western-lineage figures and movements, and the editors will want from me an essay on "X in Chinese philosophy." I don't agree to write such things, not least because I don't know "Chinese philosophy" (all of it!) nearly well enough to try. But for younger members of the field under publication pressure, such opportunities are harder to pass up. So I wish for them a world where they do indeed receive invitations, but ones that are actually manageable and enable them to perform at human scale, just as their peers in "mainstream" philosophy can do. I want younger scholars in the field to have the intellectual space to drill down into a text or a handful of texts and say, "I study *this*. If you want authoritative coverage of *all* of Chinese philosophy, you'll be needing to hire an army of people or invite an army of scholars, not just one." And for that to be accepted, just as it would be for the proverbial Plato or Kant scholar.

To be clear, this is not an argument for narrowness, but for the field writ large to recognize that "Chinese philosophy specialist" is about as meaningful a category as "European philosophy specialist." Progress in the (vast and myriad) "Asian philosophies" field will come when we who are in it are afforded greater freedom to circumscribe our work into smaller slices that operate on a human scale. Not only will this more accurately reflect the work I think most of us wish to do, it will also unburden younger scholars from needing to spread themselves too thin. It does, after all, take time and superhuman effort to be a department's single intellectual resource for all of Chinese or "Asian" philosophy.

Q: Asian philosophy is a diverse field of traditions but of course there are many other traditions and approaches (past and present). In what ways has it been fruitful (or not) to bridge or fuse or contrast traditions/approaches? What future work of this sort do you hope future philosophers pursue?

Amy Olberding: My sense is that there are too many avenues for fusion or contrast to capture in any quick way. My hope for the field is just that we can engage in ongoing experimental efforts to figure out—methodologically, conceptually, linguistically—what sorts of combinations will be fruitful and what will not. I hesitate to specify any that I personally have not found fruitful since I think it is, on the whole, positive to see where the dead ends might be. And of course, my dead end might be a long and fruitful road for someone with a better perspective or different gifts. In short, I think the best thing for the field is to have many different sorts trying many different things, for us not to prematurely settle on any orthodoxy regarding permissible forms of fusion or comparison.

The greatest peril in terms of orthodoxy, I expect, comes again from the sociological and institutional aspects of the field. There are incentives to make Chinese philosophies legible and acceptable to "mainstream" philosophy. This is aggravated by the improving but ongoing reality that the "best" journals or publishers just don't publish much

in Chinese philosophy. There can be a temptation arising from all of this to focus on those comparisons and fusions that most satisfy or best mimic "mainstream" approaches. Becoming a kind of supplicant for the signs of legitimacy or acceptance is a risk. I don't at all think that this should discourage those who do find comparison and fusion within "mainstream" sources edifying and illuminating, but I'd hope we can be catholic about the field writ large and open to alternative forms as well.

Q: What is one idea from Asian philosophy that you think could have the most impact on people if they took it seriously?

Amy Olberding: From the Confucians (and, really, multiple early Chinese sources): that the "problem of death" is *not* that I will die, but that other people do. That is, the greatest struggle with death is suffering the serial losses a flourishing life with others will include. It might not be possible to get good at enduring these, but to make it *the problem of death* seems to me to be at once a more mature perspective and one that promises to make a better vexation and trouble, a problem that might edify and enrich a life. There is a lot I could say here about the subject, but I won't carry on. (I have a paper addressing this a bit, called "Other People Die," if anyone is interested.) I just want to flag up here that the "idea" is not really an idea, but a change of problem.

Within the profession, the approach to including more philosophy from outside the Western lineage has too often been to look at all those global philosophies for what they have to say about problems that have preoccupied Western-lineage philosophy. I'd like here to suggest that we might have a shot at cultivating better and richer *problems* than we have so far sought to address. So, in addition to suggesting that Asian philosophies might contribute ideas, I'd like suggest that an even better result would be the "new" problems they could introduce, perhaps often (as in the case of bereavement) problems that really do vex human beings but that have somehow escaped the proper notice and attention of Western-lineage philosophy so far.

Q: What advice would you give to a beginning student of philosophy today? Any advice for an early or mid-career academic philosopher?

Amy Olberding: I am acutely aware that my experiences, both as student and in my early career, may be so out-of-date as to be irrelevant. The challenges facing the younger members of the field—the decline of the humanities, AI, greatly reduced tenure-track hiring—are ones I didn't face or were only brewing when I got started. We want to think long experience can confer a kind of wisdom that one can then pass on to newer members of the field, but here I think wisdom might be acknowledging that I have little that is useful to offer beyond the banalities they can find anywhere. In truth, I want to sound like that 1970s poster with a kitten clinging to a tree branch and tell everyone to try to "hang in there," however inept and useless that sounds. I think philosophy is valuable and that what we do generally adds something good to the world, but I have no special insight into how to keep it all going or how younger people could best navigate their present challenges. I hope the younger generation *can* hang in there and I salute them for their heroic efforts to keep faith. If good wishes for them had any power, they have all of mine.

Q: Have you had any major shifts or expansions in your main philosophical views or practices over the years? If so, how did these changes come about?

Amy Olberding: Too many to count, I expect. Most are just the stuff of ordinary work: One reads a book or paper and finds the world rearranged when one looks up from the page. But I suppose, more substantively, that when I first began, I isolated philosophy more easily from all the rest, whether from literature or from ordinary experiences. I took producing philosophy or scholarship as a project that largely kept, or needed to keep, to its own sources and to orthodox elements generally recognized as appropriate and respectably academic. Somewhere along the way the constraints of that really started to chafe. I gradually started explicitly introducing in my work the things that had formed my thinking but not been part of my writing: comparing Kongzi to Glenn Gould's eerie humming, openly using the brilliant Judith Martin (Miss Manners) as the singular authority she is, describing my grandmother's hair as an analogy for fortitude, comparing philosophizing about death to killing groundhogs—there's been a progression.

Maybe I can explain this by way of actually doing it. When I was a child, my grandfather annually made delicious fudge at Christmas. Sometime in my early adulthood, I learned that his fudge was, shockingly, made with Velveeta cheese—that fantastically slimy orange cheese you buy in great one-pound bricks straight off the shelf since its chemical composition means it needs no refrigeration. Who would expect such a thing as this cheese in fudge? It seemed so odd, but once you know it, you can tell—it's there in the background of the taste. Initially, I thought that I wished I'd never known there was Velveeta in the fudge, but I soon came around to appreciating it even more. It wasn't an orthodox fudge my grandpa made, but it was really good fudge, all his.

All of this is by way of saying that all sorts of things can, and likely should, feed thought. They won't all be orthodox or easily made to seem so. They won't all be "respectable" ingredients of high-end philosophical cooking. One of my greatest shifts was just realizing that I can go ahead and throw the great brick of Velveeta in there, and let people see me do it. Just as you wouldn't pass on that fudge recipe and leave it out, you can do philosophy and include the unorthodox sources of your thinking. I expect that doing this has made my work less palatable in some ways or perhaps to some, just as there are some who might not eat fudge if they know it has Velveeta in it. Velveeta isn't to everyone's taste, nor I expect would be some of the more idiosyncratic work I produce, but it has allowed me to better say the things I have tried to say.

Q: What do you think philosophy might be like in 10–30 years, given imagined or predicted changes (technological and other)?

Amy Olberding: I don't know what to say here except to say that any prediction I give would almost surely be wrong.

Interview with David Wong

(Written Interview)

David Wong is the Susan Fox Beischer and George D. Beischer Professor of Philosophy at Duke University, where he co-directs the Center for Comparative Philosophy. He received his PhD from Princeton University and previously held the Harry Austryn Wolfson Professorship at Brandeis University. His research centers on ethical theory, moral psychology, and comparative philosophy, with particular focus on early Chinese philosophy, Confucianism, and Daoism. He is known for his defense of pluralistic moral relativism, developed most fully in *Natural Moralities: A Defense of Pluralistic Relativism* (Oxford, 2006), and is also the author of *Moral Relativity* (California, 1984) and co-editor (with Kwong-loi Shun) of *Confucian Ethics: A Comparative Study of Self, Autonomy, and Community* (Cambridge, 2004).

Q: How did you get into philosophy?

David Wong: I took an elective high school course in philosophy. All I remember is existentialism (maybe Sartre and Kierkegaard), but it must have been enough to motivate taking a lot of philosophy once I got to Macalester College. Growing up in Minneapolis with a Chinese-American cultural background has always prompted in me the desire to better understand cultural differences about ways to live. When I got to the Princeton graduate program, Gilbert Harman exposed me to the possibility of a relativist position on such differences.

Q: Which role-models, mentors, or friends (or critics/people you disagreed with) have shaped your philosophical life the most? What made them beneficial or important?

David Wong: The teacher who influenced me the most at Macalester College was Thomas Hill, Sr. He was very clear and had a comprehensive philosophical outlook that included an epistemology, a metaphysics, an ethics, and a political philosophy. What impressed me the most was the way his character and moral commitments (a Southerner committed to civil rights) were integrated with his philosophical thinking.

In graduate school, the people who influenced me the most were Margaret Wilson, Paul Benacerraf, Hartry Field, Thomas Scanlon, and Gil Harman, and even though I did not take a course with him, Tom Nagel, whose writings in ethics I found to be pretty congenial in his recognizing the pluralism of value (that influenced my own form of pluralism) and the difficulty of resolving important philosophical questions (the questions are the most important things!). I took courses in the rationalists with Wilson, who showed me a model for doing the history of philosophy that influenced the way I do Chinese philosophy, trying to balance textual fidelity with connecting to live philosophical topics of enduring concern. I appreciated the rigor of Benacerraf's thinking, even in applying it to criticism of his own work in philosophy of mathematics. I learned from Field's clarity of philosophical writing and the extensive comments he gave on my papers, which were also written in a sympathetic spirit, and ever since then I have striven to provide the same for my students. I appreciated the depth of Scanlon's thinking about value and reasons (and just what a regular nice person he is), and Harman's willingness to take controversial stands and the enjoyment he seemed to take in defending them. As I go over this list of people, I have to say that they shared a clarity of thought and writing that inspired me to keep as much of that quality as I can while addressing and appreciating subjects and philosophical approaches that put up a lot of resistance to achieving that quality.

As a young assistant professor, I participated in a discussion group on moral psychology and ethics, that included Lawrence Blum, Owen Flanagan, Amelie Rorty, and later on in the history of the group, Sally Haslanger. Our weekly discussions brought home to me how dialogue could be such an important part of fashioning one's own philosophy while learning from others. Each of these people had a distinctive way of doing philosophy and I formed friendships with them that were both philosophical and personal.

In Chinese philosophy, I admire and have learned from Roger Ames, Henry Rosemont, Jr., Antonio Cua, Amy Olberding, Chenyang Li, P.J. Ivanhoe, Justin Tiwald, Chris Fraser, Steve Angle, Bryan Van Norden, Daniel Bell, Paul Goldin, Jee Loo Liu, Sorhoon Tan, Xinyan Jiang, Michael Ing, Aaron Stalnaker, and several Duke PhDs—Hagop Sarkissian, with his work on Confucianism and moral psychology, Songyao Ren on Zhuangzi, and Daniel Stephens on the Mohists and Confucianism. Jianping Hu and Jingjing Li are ones I am proud to claim as visiting scholars during my tenure at Duke.

Finally, I have been very fortunate to have both undergraduate and graduate students at both Brandeis and Duke (and from one visiting year at Boston University) with whom I formed mutually nurturing bonds. Most of them did not end up as professional philosophers, but their appreciation for what I could give them was more than matched by my admiration for them as thinkers and as whole persons, and by what they gave to me. I hesitate to name them for fear of forgetting some, but I hope they know who they are.

Q: What drew you to the projects that you have worked on in philosophy? Which have been the most rewarding and why?

David Wong: As I say above, Thomas Hill, Sr. impressed me with the unity of his philosophy, his life, and his character. I aspire to that. A good part of my interest in Chinese philosophy derives from that aspiration, because Chinese philosophers held themselves accountable to their experience of life, especially to their actual experiences with other particular human beings where Confucians are concerned, to the difficulties and satisfactions of living up to one's responsibilities to them, and life as relating to the

natural environment where Daoists are concerned, from whom I learned to recognize our small place in the world, as creatures among other creatures. I believe that philosophy has to keep up a connection to all that lived experience, and doing Chinese philosophy helps me to do that.

My theory of pluralistic relativism—that there is more than one true morality but that there are constraints on the plurality—goes beyond my interest in Chinese philosophy, but over the years has drawn more and more of what I have learned from Chinese philosophy. One of things I have learned is the importance of connection with others for a meaningful life and for a viable morality. Developed societies, especially the US, are weaker in the strength and variety of such connection, and I have tried to speak to the dangers of that weakening. I do take heart from the actions of people in my home city, Minneapolis, who at some cost and risk to themselves recently supported and defended their neighbors and friends and strangers just trying to find a place for themselves and families.

As a teacher, I aspire to give to my students a sense of what we gain when we do philosophy in a way that relates to our personal experience. It is possible to do serious academic philosophy such that it speaks to one's most personal concerns. My form of pluralism is rooted in my desire to make sense of growing up Chinese American in the Midwest, trying to fit in but sort of glad I didn't succeed because not fitting in gave me a peculiar outlook and an enduring source of creativity.

Q: Which traditions/philosophies/approaches interest you most? Has philosophy related to those improved or declined in your lifetime? How do you hope work on those goes in the future?

David Wong: I hope to have blended an analytic approach with the concrete experiential concerns to which Chinese philosophy holds itself accountable. I hope this is apparent from the way I do Chinese philosophy and also ethical theory even when I'm not doing Chinese philosophy. I think comparative philosophy has significantly grown in sophistication as more practitioners who are comfortable with that blend appear on the scene and contribute their writing. Recently, there have emerged philosophers who are able not only to write very well about more than one tradition but whose own approaches to philosophy constitute a well-integrated blend of those traditions.

Q: Asian philosophy is a diverse field of traditions but of course there are many other traditions and approaches (past and present). In what ways has it been fruitful (or not) to bridge or fuse or contrast traditions/approaches? What future work of this sort do you hope future philosophers pursue?

David Wong: My work in ethical theory is concerned with relativism and pluralism, and it draws heavily from my work in Chinese philosophy and from my experience as a Chinese American. It has drawn from the dialogue that can be created quite naturally between those traditions, especially as one worries about the US coming apart as a society. In addressing that worry, I have drawn from Confucian insights into our social and relational natures and into how to cultivate those natures, and from Daoism's keen awareness of the ways in which what we have learned about our world also narrow and restrict our vision of its possibilities.

Q: What is one idea from Asian philosophy that you think could have the most impact on people if they took it seriously?

David Wong: I refuse to be bound to just one, but I'll be brief. The Harvard Adult Development Study which has been following people over the course of their lives for over eighty years, confirms that having good relationships is the most influential factor in health and happiness. That just confirms Confucius' expressed heart's desire: "to bring peace and contentment to the aged, to share relationships of trust and confidence with my friends, and to love and protect the young" (*Analects* 5.26, translation Ames and Rosemont). Zhuangzi brings home a needed awareness that our knowledge also limits us and that we need to have a constant sense of what we don't know, and that we don't know what we don't know.

Q: What advice would you give to a beginning student of philosophy today? Any advice for an early or mid-career academic philosopher?

David Wong: I hesitate to give any advice since the fortunes of the academy are changing so much more than we could have expected even from several years back. The good news is that philosophy is in better shape than the other humanities. This is partly because of its stronger ties with the sciences, and partly because it remains responsive to the humanistic questions that most people who aren't professional academicians find meaningful and important. Rather than giving advice, I simply identify some things I wish I had done earlier in my career. I wish I had earlier focused on what interests and approaches to doing philosophy felt right for me as an individual and what I had to contribute given my particular package of strengths and weaknesses. When I got that focus, it just felt so much better writing philosophy, which most of know can be agony. It still feels very difficult at times, but doing it feeds me more now.

Q: Have you had any major shifts or expansions in your main philosophical views or practices over the years? If so, how did these changes come about?

David Wong: When I started doing ethical theory as an undergraduate, I was a committed realist who thought there was one objectively correct morality. I have departed from that position as I have tried to make meaning of my own experience as a Chinese American and be responsible to all the ethical traditions and the people who embody them that have gone into who I am.

Q: If you are an Asian philosopher, how has that shaped or impacted your life in philosophy? Has philosophy changed in good or bad ways for Asian philosophers or philosophies in your experience?

David Wong: See most of the answers above. I didn't read this last question before I wrote the answers to the previous questions. The category of Asian philosophers is too diverse for me to say whether it has changed in good ways or bad ways for them as a group. I can't complain about how I've fared in philosophy. I count myself as lucky. I am grateful.

Interview with Owen Flanagan

(This recorded interview has been minorly edited for clarity and compactness)

Owen Flanagan is the James B. Duke University Professor Emeritus of Philosophy and Professor of Neurobiology Emeritus at Duke University, where he also co-directs the Center for Comparative Philosophy. He received his PhD from Boston University and taught at Wellesley College for sixteen years before joining Duke in 1993. His research spans philosophy of mind, philosophy of psychology, ethics, moral psychology, and cross-cultural philosophy. His books include *Varieties of Moral Personality* (Harvard, 1991), *The Bodhisattva's Brain* (MIT, 2011), *The Geography of Morals* (Oxford, 2016), *How to Do Things with Emotions* (Princeton, 2021), and *What Is It Like to Be an Addict?* (2025). He was the 1998 recipient of the Romanell National Phi Beta Kappa Award for distinguished contributions to philosophy and the public understanding of philosophy.

Brad Cokelet: I want to start with an Alasdair MacIntyre quote that you often mention and that I also find insightful.

> . . . on the view that I have found myself compelled to take, contemporary academic moral philosophy turns out to be seriously defective as a form of rational inquiry. How so? First, the study of moral philosophy has become divorced from the study of morality or rather of moralities and by so doing has distanced itself from practice. We do not expect serious work in the philosophy of physics from students who have never studied physics or on the philosophy of law from students who have never studied law. But there is not even a hint of a suggestion that courses in social and cultural anthropology and in certain areas of sociology and psychology should be a prerequisite for graduate work in moral philosophy. Yet without such courses no adequate sense of the varieties of moral possibility can be acquired. One remains imprisoned by one's upbringing.[1]

I take that as a framing quote for this interview, because I'm interested in the kind of cross-cultural work you've done and the benefits you think it's generated. I'm curious about what you've gotten out of it, what philosophers generally can get out of cross-cultural work, and maybe some thoughts on how to pursue those aims well. To make this concrete, I'll ask some questions about your work as it has developed and evolved.

To begin, the first time I became aware of your work was when I read the *Destructive Emotions* book—a transcript of dialogues with the Dalai Lama that involved neuroscientists, psychologists, and you as the philosophical interlocutor. These dialogues were cross-cultural, but also interdisciplinary. I'm wondering if you have thoughts about the challenges and benefits of those early discussions, and whether that's how you got into cross-cultural philosophy?

Owen Flanagan: Let me put those three things together: the MacIntyre quote that we both love, my early involvement in cross-cultural philosophy, and interdisciplinarity. I'll start with the third one.

My earliest work was in philosophy of mind. There was a fork in the road where I had to decide whether to become a psychologist or a philosopher. It was a close call, and I had undergraduate teachers who encouraged me to go down both roads.

My dissertation work, completed in 1978, focused on the idea that there were different models of mind. At that time, there were still many competing models: Freudian models, behaviorist models, other psychodynamic theories, the beginnings of computational theories of mind, and very early neuroscience. The interdisciplinarity came naturally, simply because of my broad interest in the nature of persons.

I was reading Charles Taylor's early papers on philosophical psychology—like you were reading those when you were younger, twenty years after me. I was always working interdisciplinarily because I was a Quinean and believed that the best philosophy, in my case the best philosophy of persons and consciousness, would pay attention to the best psychology and whatever else was emerging, which eventually became neuroscience.

I was lucky to be in the Boston area through the seventies and into the early nineties. I knew B.F. Skinner at Harvard and wrote my dissertation partly on the influence of logical positivism on him. There's an interesting story there: Skinner read a paper by Bertrand Russell in a magazine called *The Dial*, where Russell discussed the importance of psychologists giving operational definitions of psychological terms. Skinner, who was then being a poet in Greenwich Village—yes, encouraged by Carl Sandburg and Robert Frost—decided to write to the chair of the Harvard Psychology Department offering his services to give operational definitions of belief and desire.

I was writing on methodological issues in the foundations of psychology, and I quickly became interested in consciousness and wrote a general book on models of mind. I was reading psychology and knew many early cognitive scientists. Fodor and Chomsky were in Boston, just down the street from Skinner. Dan Dennett was at Tufts. The MIT computer scientists were starting to work on these things—that was just my environment. I didn't find it hard to read articles in psychology or neuroscience because I'd been doing that as an undergraduate.

In graduate school at BU, although Alistair MacIntyre was on the faculty and I knew him a bit, we were almost all emotivists. We were still reading A.J. Ayer, and frankly

we thought ethics was nonsense—just noises people make. I never took a course with MacIntyre, but I knew him personally and had read his *Short History of Ethics*, which we read to pass our ethics qualifying exam. But I read that book entirely as a historicist deconstruction of ethics. We learned that you get Aristotelian virtue ethics because that's the price of being an Athenian citizen, existentialism because that's the price of being a modern European, and so on. I never actually took a course in ethics.

But as a Quinean, my early work was premised on the idea that the best philosophy and theories of mind would be empirically inspired. So that was the beginning of the interdisciplinary part. You're right that the first foray I really had into cross-cultural ethics was when I was invited to the conference at the Dalai Lama's residence in Dharamsala because of my work on philosophy of mind.

I was asked to speak about my views on consciousness, but also about Western views on destructive emotions. I was partly introducing the Dalai Lama and his team to Western thinking about human nature—mostly Plato, Hobbes, and Hume. But the biggest thing that happened there was the presence of people like Paul Ekman, the emotions researcher, and Richie Davidson, the neuroscientist from Wisconsin doing work on Buddhist meditators being the happiest people in the world.

It was there that I asked the Dalai Lama a question. I could tell they thought anger was the most destructive emotion. I asked - and this is in Dan Goleman's book—what he would have done if he had been in a park or movie theater with Adolf Hitler at the beginning of the Holocaust. I said that, in my culture, many would think it appropriate to kill him. And I asked, "What about you?" The Dalai Lama then consulted the lamas who sat behind him like a lion's pride, then turned back and said, "We think you should kill him too. But you should not be angry at him. You should have love and compassion towards him."

That was a moment where I thought, holy mackerel, this is so interesting. What kind of mind would you have to have to endorse that first-order normative principle? I thought about it the way I usually think about things—not just "mind," but mind *and* culture. I really understood that it was part of an ethical or spiritual tradition and wanted to know more.

There were so many other things about Buddhism that I learned on that trip, but also about neuroscience. I thought about these neuroscientists I enjoyed being with—how do they conceptualize happiness, even as a purely psychological state? How are they measuring it in the brain? I was energized by thinking: how different can humans be? I had confidence that humans could be very different just from hanging around the world, participating in different cultures. I was quite interested in general questions about human possibilities and what science informed philosophy can tell us about them.

Around the same time—and this brings me to the cross-cultural ethics work—both David Wong, my dear colleague, and P.J. Ivanhoe started asking me questions. I've known David since we were in Boston together from the late seventies and both David and P.J. started asking questions like: "Here's what Mencius says about human nature. He says there's a sprout of benevolence in us. What do you think? What do people in philosophy of mind or evolutionary biology say about that?"

I loved this because they weren't asking me to critique what they wrote about Mencius. I just had to trust them on the interpretive issues and focus on the questions they asked. I could confidently say, "Given your translation, P.J., this is how I think modern people in the human sciences would assess it."

That's how I started to realize that I could do work by simply relying on really good translations. After all, I wasn't going to learn the languages effectively. In fact, I'd already learned a similar lesson from studying Latin and Greek—you can't do much with original texts after four years of Latin. You can't read Aquinas like an Aquinas scholar can unless you just become an Aquinas scholar.

And I simply wasn't going to try to do what scholars of these traditions do. Instead, I realized I could poke around in Buddhism and classical Chinese texts and see what questions I could ask in their light. This was the approach that I developed and started to pursue as I was teaching a course with Dave Wong on comparative philosophy at Duke to undergraduates, getting more comfortable with classical Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist texts.

Linking back to the MacIntyre quote, there are actually two things that I love about it. One is that comparative work can help you avoid becoming imprisoned by your own culture. It helps you grasp the range of human minds and cultures that are possible.

But there's something he says before that which really struck me. He says we would never expect a philosopher of mathematics not to know mathematics or a philosopher of physics to just make things up about physics. But there's never even a hint that we want moral philosophers to take courses in anthropology or sociology. That really hit a chord with me. I thought: all Western philosophic debates about relativism and a host of other issues would look so different if people had paid attention to the anthropological record.

In fact, this reminds me of David Wong's wonderful first book, *Moral Relativity*. David said, "Look, I think there are a bunch of moral theories above a threshold of decency. Here are three: liberalism, Confucianism, Taoism." He was at least willing to entertain different frameworks. And I thought that this was a good way to think—a good way of disciplining thinking in philosophy.

Brad Cokelet: Later on in your career you wrote *The Bodhisattva's Brain*. I am curious to hear what led you to that project, but I am also curious about a general worry that some people have when philosophers with Western training engage in cross cultural work. Specifically, people raise worries about how fruitful it can be to approach non-Western traditions with contemporary Western philosophic or empirical scientific frameworks. There's a worry about

imperialism sometimes, but I think there's a deeper worry that you're doing something foolish if you're trying to understand these Asian traditions and texts and figure out what's really going on in them if you spend all your time comparing it to contemporary Western theories or analyzing it with Western categories.

You've said you didn't aspire to give the most accurate translation of these cultures yourself, and it sounds to me like when you're doing cross-cultural philosophy, you don't think your main goal is to best or most charitably understand the other tradition. Your goal seems to be more like cross-pollination or fusion. Is that right? And did that inform what you were doing in *The Bodhisattva's Brain*?

Owen Flanagan: That's a great question. I've thought about that a fair amount, and I feel fortunate that I considered it at the beginning. In *The Bodhisattva's Brain*, the subtitle is "Buddhism Naturalized," which makes things pretty clear.

I remember teaching Descartes for years at Wellesley and then Duke. One day the students asked me a question and I said, "Well, I'm not a scholar of this." A student later said, "Mr. Flanagan, I was really surprised you said you're not a scholar." I explained, "You have to understand—'scholar' represents credentials I don't have about Descartes. I didn't read these things in French and Latin, or the letters back and forth with Dutch people. I'm not a scholar in that sense. But that doesn't mean I didn't read the best translations very carefully, or the secondary literature carefully, and then tackle the questions that the texts provoke."

For analogous reasons I was so excited when P.J. Ivanhoe and Bryan Van Norden's textbook on Chinese Philosophy came out with Hackett. It is a wonderful collection with excerpts, mostly their translations, but also those by other top scholars, many trained by Ivanhoe, who's played such an important role here. When I read it, I thought, these translations are better than what I read twenty years before. That could just mean they're speaking in an idiom easier for me to understand, but I adopted a different attitude. I thought, maybe now, in the late twentieth century, we're in the same situation people were in with Plato and Aristotle 150 years before. We are getting really good vernacular translations that can enable us to think with the non-Western ancient philosophers, even if we don't become scholars of the original texts.

Here's where I drew on two of Richard Rorty's ideas about reading other texts. As I mention at the very beginning of *The Bodhisattva's Brain*, he basically gives us permission to be what he calls "anachronistic" and "ethnocentric." Of course, these are usually pejorative terms telling us what not to do, but Rorty playfully embraced them in a way that I love.

First, he said you're allowed to ask, for example, what would Plato think about abortion law in the United States? That's completely anachronistic, but it's a fantastic conversation starter. You might say you have no idea because there's nothing in the ancient Greek texts that would reveal it. But it can be more productive to say, "Hmm, let me think about that."

Similarly, you might say: Socrates worries about literacy, that the youth will go to hell in a handbasket if they start to read and write. I wonder what he'd say about AI? I think these are perfectly valid approaches—not just for college students smoking their first joint and getting excited about ideas, but for grownups too. That's the positive case for anachronism.

Next is ethnocentrism: What positive thing could that be when reading comparative texts? Here is an example from my own work. To start, we seem to have a problem with anger in our current culture. I've never seen the world angrier than now. So, we can ask whether anybody in any other cultural traditions has anything about that. We could read the Stoics or Buddhism and mine these other cultures for solutions to our problems. Of course some might say, that's not fair—they might say we are in that case taking our no doubt parochial problems too seriously.

My response is: tough. You're allowed to do that and that kind of ethnocentric problem-solving approach to philosophy is legitimate. In fact, we can say that *this* sort of ethnocentrism as actually quite respectful because it does not involve us telling others how to live in their worlds. In thinking about anger, for example, I don't aim to tell the Stoics or Buddhists how to live their lives. Instead, in developing what I call Buddhism Naturalized for example, I'm exploring what you'd need to do to some form of classical Buddhism to make it really attractive to modern secular people. And then I am exploring what we, now, can learn from that sort of cross-cultural inquiry and work.

Brad Cokelet: That's an interesting contrast with someone like Stephen Batchelor, who argues in favor of Buddhist modernism. People like that can help contemporary Buddhists debate whether and how to modify traditional beliefs and practices in our modern context, but your approach has a kind of broader audience. It asks how non-Buddhists can get advice from or ideas from the Buddhist tradition.

Owen Flanagan: Exactly. It's not inviting you to become a Buddhist.

Brad Cokelet: Later you wrote *The Geography of Morals* and *How to Do Things with Emotions*, which I think of as connected. When I read those books, I thought you were laying out a proposal for a methodology for thinking about morality and ethics. It centrally involves commitment to cross-cultural work—reading texts, but also looking at anthropological and sociological evidence. I'm curious to hear you talk about the benefits of doing that, or examples of how you've used that approach to raise questions about emotions.

Owen Flanagan: I'm the kind of person who thinks by writing. Sometimes when you ask what went into writing a book, the answer is I needed to work out some problems, or it seemed like a good idea to see where I could get by synthesizing material.

Early in my career, my second book—even though I'd never taken an ethics course—focused on moral psychology.

It was called *Varieties of Moral Personality: Ethics and Psychological Realism* and was very interdisciplinary. Around the time I was finishing *The Bodhisattva's Brain*, my relationship with P.J. Ivanhoe really gave me permission to more fully explore cross-cultural topics and the questions that brings into view.

I'd been invited to give the Aquinas Lecture at Marquette—great for a little Catholic boy like me—and so I decided to work on Mencius and his views in moral psychology that depend on views about underlying human nature. The basic question his work makes us ask is what are we like deep down beneath the clothes of culture?

You could take a tabula rasa view: we're nothing, we're empty. Either you go existentialist and make yourself into something, or you say culture stamps you into a certain kind of person. Outside the tabula rasa view, you could say we're angels deep down, or devils, or admixtures. That's broadly the lay of the land, and it's interesting to see how different times and cultures produce different answers.

I love the Mencius passages where he talks about the beginnings of virtue. We're not blank slates he says—we have little beginnings built into our nature. One is the sprout of benevolence. He gives the example: anyone seeing a child falling into a well would immediately feel alarm and compassion.

And to me, that raises interesting empirical question. What if you see an old person falling into a well? A person in a wheelchair? Your enemy? Is it only babies? And what's the activity? Alarm and compassion—a fully embodied response, presumably trying to prevent the child from falling. And was interested because these are empirical claims that we can pursue with interdisciplinary and cross-cultural inputs.

Then Mencius mentions other factors. There seems to be a sprout of propriety, what we now call manners. Maybe a sprout for fairness or justice. This brings to mind interesting work with capuchin monkeys on the sense of fairness. And there's work by everyone from Batson to your mother on empathy and sympathy.

Around this time, Jonathan Haidt—who'd been in touch with me when he was an undergraduate at Yale reading *Varieties of Moral Personality*—had come out with the first alternative in psychology to Kohlberg's theory of moral stages.

I was reading it carefully and thinking: how does Mencius's moral psychology map onto—this is back to the Quinean part—our best current views in psychology and empirical ethics?

So at this point, I had material on Buddhism because I was being asked to talk about it. I had material on Mencius. And, David Wong also said, "Owen, why don't you teach Mozi?" I came to learn that he's often read as a crass utilitarian and behaviorist. But when I read him, I thought, I love this guy. He's a pacifist who'll only fight on the side of people being invaded for profit. I also thought he clearly isn't doing what most people say—suggesting universal love for every person across all relationships. He's talking about the role of the ruler having universal compassion and attention to all citizens. He's not saying you should feel toward your own son the way you feel toward the sons of someone in Botswana.

So this was case where people writing about the tradition, at least from the texts they're translating, didn't seem to get things right. I was still working with psychologists on conceptions of the self at the same time. So with all this brewing, I thought, I've got a bunch of stuff and I'm going to pull it together; and that's where *The Geography of Morals* came from.

The book about emotions followed quickly. Going back to conversations with the Dalai Lama, here was a group who thought anger is the most destructive emotion. I'd also read and taught the Stoics, particularly Seneca's *De Ira*. His arguments were interesting, but the metaphysics was different. They were similar in their bottom line—anger is a problem.

As a student of the sixties, I felt I was living through even more angry times, more destructively so. This is where the MacIntyre "imprisoned by our own upbringing" idea comes in. I found people saying, "Everybody's angry, but that's the way you have to be given the world." I thought, that assumes anger's a ballistic emotion you have no control over. But if the Stoics and Buddhists are right, you have some control, and maybe there are reasons to moderate or modify it.

I was lucky to be at Stanford's Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences to do a comprehensive study of the anthropology of anger—how different cultures do anger. I was struck by the enormous variation. Not all of it seemed healthy from my ethnocentric point of view, but the variation was profound. That's why half that book invites rethinking our anger practices.

The other part goes back to conversations with Wong and Ivanhoe about the role of shame. If you're studying Buddhism and Chinese philosophy, you can't fail to notice that shame is considered – I don't want to say good, because it doesn't feel good and usually comes from negative situations—but it's considered an important, useful capacity to have. It's also often considered a perfectly acceptable tool that parents, educational institutions, and cultures to use to shape and transform character.

But I then thought: wait, but in the contemporary west we tend to say shame is the worst emotion. Guilt's not great, but shame is really bad because it makes you think you're a failure as a human being. It's holistic and so forth. To dig into this difference and the possibilities it might bring into view, I read the psychology and figured out an answer that satisfied me about how we in the west came to consider shame in such a negative light. The rest of the world thinks it's a perfectly reasonable emotion, so this is a good case for seeing beyond our assumptions by doing cross cultural and interdisciplinary work. And reflecting on all this I came to think we should rehabilitate shame. You don't want to

overdo it or shame and humiliate people; of course not. But there's nothing wrong with shame as such to identify dispositions unworthy of you that you don't want to have. In fact, it might be quite useful.

This connects to other work I did on addiction. I thought, everybody says addiction's a disease and you shouldn't feel bad or guilty or responsible or ashamed. But it's complicated—too glib. Even the person themselves, as I once was as an addict, makes negative judgments about themselves. They wish they weren't this way and feel ashamed. Is that a mistake? I didn't think so. We needed more subtle reappropriation and reconsideration of the positive roles shame could play in a person's life.

Brad Cokelet: One interesting thing that's coming out, is that when you or MacIntyre talk about living in your parochial world, in a little bubble with a constrained sense of what's possible—if you learn about other ways of life or thought, you might second-guess background assumptions or become aware of them.

Gadamer has a view that you could study ancient texts, for example Platonic ones, and at first can't understand them because of background assumptions. In trying to truly understand, you become aware of these conceptual assumptions. What's interesting about your discussion is that you're interested in interpreting texts and views, but you're also talking about people's psychology and collective anthropological ways of life.

So it's not just that we need to avoid being imprisoned in our parochial way of thinking—we might need to also envision and try out new ways of life. With the anger case, maybe there's a dimension of our psychology that could be modified individually, but you might also need to involve cultural change around you, connected to changing your ideas. So there seems to be the task of conceiving of other possible ways of life and then empirical questions about whether you can change.

Owen Flanagan: That's exactly right. I often say lately I might have been an anthropologist if I wasn't such a mama's boy. I remember getting a job offer to go to Australia in my late twenties. My parents were young still, forty-eight or fifty, and I thought I'd be too far away from my mother. What if something happened to her? But there was no reason to think anything would, plus there are airplanes. But the point is I was always really interested in other cultures and experiencing different ways of life.

I didn't think of it at the beginning as a philosophical anthropology project in the broadest sense—connecting with empirical work in psychology and anthropology. Because you're right about the Gadamerian idea—Taylor has it, Dreyfus has it, Hegel supposedly has it—the horizon of meaning, behind us and in front of us. What we bring to experience and interaction. It's holistic in that there's a form of life we're embedded in. We're usually focused on perceptual objects right in front of us, not the history of our perceptual experience. We're also focused on first-order values and norms right in front of us.

But often when there are clashes or other possibilities, and you might ask: is the other possibility not realistic for me because they're confused and wrong? Or are we just different kinds of people—the plasticity of human nature, mind, and culture has taken different forms?

I met a woman recently in Abu Dhabi who's Sudanese. She was telling me she was engaged for six years to a man and broke it off. I was saying something and then she said, "You know that even when you're engaged for six years, it would be sinful to hug your fiancé." I thought, wow. Here's a first-order norm she obviously abides by completely. She was saying it to me like "You know it's nice and sunny out"—common sense. I thought to myself, what would it take to live and think like that? But of course, the answer is that it would take being brought up in a different world.

Things like that thrill and amaze me. The diversity, the variety of ways that humans have figured out how to be in this world. But you're totally right. That leads to the question you articulated: can you change once you become aware of other human possibilities? Suppose you decided you want to be a different kind of person, anger-wise. Can you do it?

Even from my first work, in *Varieties of Moral Personality*, I had this idea about how much you can change in a lifetime once you're a formed person. But it's complicated. I used the example of my father. He was a seventeen-year-old soldier in World War II, and what you might call a casual racist. There weren't any Black men in his infantry unit, though he met some Black soldiers and that was his first exposure to Black people. Then he became a New Yorker, went to college on the GI Bill.

Later, when I was growing up, I could tell that my father was a casual racist, but one who absolutely hated that about himself. Anytime anything at the dinner table or in the house would indicate thoughts in that direction, he'd provide the most noble example and give speeches about dignity and equality. He could sound like Martin Luther King Jr. But I knew he didn't feel it completely in his heart. He couldn't do it, but he was working so hard to ensure his children didn't carry on what, for him, came as part of being a young man at that time.

That points to the importance of generational change. Sometimes we ask younger people to be different than we are because we judge it would be better for them and the world. And, with obvious caveats, we have to be compassionate with ourselves about our capacities to change once we're formed. The question of change after we become aware of more human possibilities is complicated and empirical, but perhaps it can clear ground for progress and hope.

NOTE

1. Alasdair MacIntyre, "On Having Survived the Academic Moral Philosophy of the Twentieth Century," in *What Happened in and to Moral Philosophy in the Twentieth Century?: Philosophical Essays in Honor of Alasdair MacIntyre*, ed. Fran O'Rourke (University of Notre Dame Press, 2013).

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION

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