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Review

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nomic, and spiritual confusion at the end of the second millennium. In that sense the teachings of Buddhism and so forth *must* be ahistoricized and universalized, so that we may learn from them whatever still speaks to our human situation today.

Confucianism and Human Rights. Edited by Wm. Theodore de Bary and Tu Wei-ming. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998. Pp. 327.

Reviewed by **Chongko Choi**, Seoul National University

Among the countless worldwide publications on human rights are many that have had their inception in East Asia. Some of the titles include *Human Rights in East Asia* (1985), *Human Rights in Contemporary China* (1986), *East Asian Perspectives on Human Rights* (1990), *Human Rights and Chinese Values* (1995), and *Human Rights and International Relations in the Asia-Pacific Region* (1995). There are also books on religion and human rights, for example *Human Rights and World Religions* (1988) and *Religion and Human Rights* (1994), and so forth. Among these numerous publications, *Confucianism and Human Rights*, edited by Wm. Theodore de Bary and Tu Wei-ming, is the first book written in English that reflects intensive, focused research on the relation between Confucianism and human rights in China and other East Asian countries.

After the promulgation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, there were serious debates regarding the universality and culture-bound aspects of human rights. These debates culminated in the Bangkok and Vienna conferences in 1993. There is hope that we will see further intensive investigation into human rights and Confucian "Asian values," and the publication of the present book is welcomed as a first step.

This book is the outcome of two conferences on Confucianism and Human Rights held at the East-West Center in Honolulu. The papers from a third conference, held in Beijing in May 1998, under the auspices of the International Confucian Association, are to be published at a later date. Even though other East Asian countries have been represented at these conferences, this book focuses on Confucianism and human rights today in the People's Republic of China.

The current repressive practices with regard to human rights in China today are not the book's emphasis, however, and the reader who anticipates a practical remedy for the problems of the past half century of the Chinese experience will be disappointed. This book seems to assume that human rights is a concept equally represented in different cultures, and it attempts to ground its discussion of the Confucian concept of human rights in the context of cultural differences.

The book does not pretend to be exhaustive either topically or geographically. Rather, it attempts to highlight broad and significant issues. The contributors, from diverse disciplines, seek to clarify the crucial questions surrounding the Chinese-

Western disagreement over human rights, and analyze the potential for a Chinese framework for the protection of human rights.

As the first work of its kind, this study presents arguments that are consistently serious and deeply considered. Eighteen contributors, including philosophers, historians, and legal scholars, attempt to develop a common ground between Confucian practice and human rights. Even though some essays show dangerous symptoms of “positive exposure” to dogmatic texts from the Confucian classics, the approaches seem to be basically philosophical, historical, and cultural. I share the view expressed in this collection that “historical conditions and cultural differences may affect both peoples’ understanding of human rights and their practice of them; and that it also affirms the possibility of working out some consensus on fundamental human values” (p. xix).

This book aptly assumes that the concept of human rights as presently formulated is neither forever fixed nor in all respects complete. It asserts that the topic of human rights can be reopened, expanded, and enriched by reference to diverse historical and cultural traditions.

De Bary’s introduction explains in considerable detail the background to the conferences that gave rise to these essays, and he summarizes each one. A rough consensus emerges among them in the form of seven points regarding future developments. The fourth point struck me especially: it is argued that although some contrasts may be drawn between the modern Western emphasis on individual autonomy and the Confucian emphasis on societal and communitarian values, this contrast is often overdrawn at the expense of understandings and common concerns that are shared between the two traditions. Societal and communitarian values have by no means been lacking in the Western traditions that have contributed to thinking on human rights, and respect for the dignity of the self and person have been central to Confucianism from its inception (p. 24).

Tu Wei-ming and Louis Henkin offer epilogues eschewing the significance of human rights as a Confucian discourse, seeing Confucianism and human rights in terms of “cultural relativism.” But the achievement of this conference seems to have been to reconfirm that Confucianism is not incompatible with human rights even though there have been no matching Asian terms for this Western expression. It has been proved that Confucian values are not incompatible with any of the prescriptions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as stated in 1948; there is no inherent tension between Confucianism and human rights (p. 313)—a perspective that I share.

Nevertheless, I do want to indicate some of the weak points of this book as a scholarly work. Although it is acknowledged that this is only the first volume in an ongoing series of conferences, we must ask about the academic composition of the participants. The volume seems to be rather weak in the social sciences, considering the relative lack of participation by political scientists, economists, sociologists, and anthropologists.

There is also a problem resulting from the fact that the preponderance of con-

tributions come from Chinese participants; as a consequence, the selection of essays here does not really offer points of view from Confucian traditions in East Asian countries other than China. The selection thus lacks a perspective that would allow us to develop an appreciation of the variety of ways in which Confucian practices (or "rites") and values have developed in different Asian contexts.

At least so far as China is concerned, this book would seem to be a timely publication. The Chinese government, which had formerly denounced Confucianism as an artifact of the feudal past, has made an abrupt reversal to endorse it as a belief system compatible with communist ideology. This development points with some urgency to the complexity of a discussion on the Confucian understanding of human rights, and I am not sure that this book is sufficiently engaged in this discussion.

A variety of views on human rights is presented in the contributions to this book. Sumner B. Twiss understands human rights as a constantly evolving process drawing from a rich variety of cultural sources, including Confucianism. Henry Rosemont argues that the Western ideal of individual autonomy and property rights is irreconcilable with Confucianism, and does not offer a groundwork capable of dealing with the social dilemmas and ecological challenges of the contemporary world. Julia Ching and Daniel Kwok concentrate on seeking out similar values between Confucianism and the other cultural traditions of East Asia.

I appreciate the theoretical work of Wejen Chang, who attempts to construct a Confucian theory of norms and human rights. He concludes that Western and Confucian ideas are conceptually compatible but different in practice (p. 134). He suggests a two-step approach to a good human life: people first learn the Confucian norms and become compassionate and respectful toward one another, and then they gain the assurance that they have earned certain "rights."

Chung-ying Cheng also offers an attempt at theorization, transforming Confucian virtues into human rights in five ways. As he aptly points out, the modern West, in developing the notion of rights and utilities, comes out of the Aristotelian tradition of virtue ethics, which Alasdair MacIntyre hopes to reclaim or recapture in the form of a Chinese view for modern China. The problem is how to preserve the Confucian virtues while at the same time extrapolating from them an ethics of rights for modern society (p. 147). According to Cheng, the possible transformation of Confucian virtues into rights lies in the cultivation of virtues by individuals in a community with a view to awakening an individual sense of consciousness of duty to the community, which in turn should call forth an awareness of the individual's legitimate potential to participate in public affairs (p. 151).

I would like to see more discussion concerning the relation between "rites" and "rights"—between Confucianism and legalism. Ironically, many Western ethicists and legal and political philosophers are seeking new ways to express communitarian virtues such as self-reflection and self-criticism. I feel that this book does not engage strongly enough in a discussion of virtue-based Confucian philosophy and ethics, most probably because the book's professed focus is on "human rights."

Recently a group of twenty-four former heads of state, following the leadership of the German theologian Hans Küng, formulated a Universal Declaration of Human

Responsibilities in nineteen Articles. The group, which calls itself the Interaction Council, aims to have this declaration endorsed by the United Nations. The proposed Universal Declaration has the endorsement of prominent leaders, none of whom is from China. I do not need to explain the significance to the contemporary world of the connection here with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but I would like to draw attention to the correspondence and suggest another conference and a subsequent book on "Confucianism and human duties or responsibilities." In recognition of the importance of the present book, I propose that the discussion on human rights, human duties, and human rites be continued. As Louis Henkin correctly concludes (p. 303), Confucian virtues should and do support the rules that human rights claim.

I do not believe this book offers the final word on a Confucian human rights. It is not clear that the Confucian concept of human rights should be understood as a sort of natural rights or as community/communitarian rights. This book says only that there is not necessarily a conflict between individual rights and economic/social/communitarian rights (p. 10). The development of a Confucian theory of human rights requires deeper academic digging and discussion.

The Way of Water and Sprouts of Virtue. By Sarah Allan. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997. Pp. xiv + 181.

Reviewed by **James D. Sellmann**, University of Guam.

Mirroring the classics, Sarah Allan presents a profound study of the root metaphors of ancient Chinese philosophy in *The Way of Water and Sprouts of Virtue*. Accepting George Lakoff's and Mark Johnson's argument in *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), Allan begins with the primordial images, not abstract concepts, of Chinese philosophy. She develops the insights of A. C. Graham, F. Mote, Tu Wei-ming, and Roger Ames to reconstruct early Chinese philosophy as contained in the foundational texts: the *Analects*, *Mencius*, *Xunzi*, *Laozi*, and *Zhuangzi*. To help us get the picture, the text is handsomely illustrated with ten Chinese landscapes. Enhancing the five chapters are a list of illustrations, preface, acknowledgments, notes, bibliography, list of Chinese sources, index of passages translated, index of Chinese terms, and a subject index. Chinese characters are analyzed in their archaic and modern forms.

The "Introduction" highlights two significant differences distinguishing Chinese philosophy from the Greek and Judeo-Christian traditions. First, the Chinese metaphors are planted in the natural world, not in religious mythology or transcendental metaphysics. Second, the Indo-European languages sharply differentiate between plants, animals, and humans, whereas *wanwu* (the "myriad living things") encompasses humans, animals, and plants. This classification bias demarcates an important difference between these traditions. Setting aside preconceptions and the desire to