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LISTENING TO THE ANIMALS: THE CONFUCIAN VIEW OF ANIMAL WELFARE

> The superior man is so affected by animals that having seen them alive, he cannot bear to see them die; having heard their cries, he cannot bear to eat their flesh.
>
> —*Mengzi* I.A.7

I

The Confucian tradition has always placed primary emphasis upon becoming humane (*ren*[b]).[1] Ethical values and moral sensibilities are inculcated in family life and early education. Progress in the cultivation of self and filial conduct expands ideally to embrace standards of propriety in social-political affairs, and these, in turn, are set within and integral to the wider context of nature and the operation of the greater cosmos, that is, "Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things." When the boundaries of the ethical expand to include all things, the project of cultivating properly the human *dao* must adapt its perspective and range of concerns to that of the greater *dao* (or *tian*, Heaven).

Since animals are an important part of nature, one would expect to find in this tradition information on the status and treatment of animals. References to animals are readily observed in the ancient classical writings.[2] These practices and ways of thinking provide the cultural background that gets reflected in the information included in the *Analects*. Although animals are not objects of concern in the *Analects*, the references are nevertheless significant in indicating an accepted perspective. This article will provide evidence for the claim that the information on animals in writings from the *Analects* to Mengzi, the Song dynasty (Neo-Confucian) thinkers, Zhu Xi in particular, to Wang Yangming amounts to a position that has considerable unity and continuity. The conceptual content and pattern of reasoning become more elaborate and detailed over time, but the

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basic elements of the position do not become problematic but remain constant in these major texts covering a period of some 2000 years. As a consequence, the major features can be referred to as the "standard position" of the Confucian tradition on the topic of animal welfare.

On the basis of an examination of the distinctive features of this "standard position," I will argue that the way it functions in practice can be challenged by the principles of the normative view of nature that the tradition itself advances. In effect, the ideas that are central to the Confucian conception of Heaven, self-cultivation, virtue, and good governing provide the basis for criticism as well as revision. When the main concepts of *ren*[b] and *shu* (reciprocity) entail the principles of deference and enhancement, and when both *ren*[b] and filiality (*xiao*) extend beyond the bounds of the human community, the particular rationale for preferences and practices sanctioned by the "standard position" that involve the suffering, deprivation, or killing of animals becomes morally problematic. The principles it has come to sponsor provide the basis for a reform of such traditional preferences and practices. The textual evidence for this examination and critique ranges from the *Analects* (Sections II–III) and Mengzi (IV–V) to Zhu Xi (VI–VII) and Wang Yangming (VIII).

II

The fundamental patterns of right behavior for Confucius are discernable in the historical documents referring to previous Chinese societies. In the *Liji*, for example, we find an account of the pre-Confucian past that involves major historical epochs, from those prior to the use of fire,[3] those that reaped the benefits of fire and crafts,[4] to more recent cultural developments. Confucius, who characterizes himself as a transmitter of the tradition, reflects upon the values of the past and acknowledges that

> the Yin dynasty adapted the observances of ritual propriety (*li*[a]) of the Xia dynasty . . . the Zhou adapted the observances of ritual propriety of Yin . . . If there is a dynasty that succeeds the Zhou . . . the continuities and changes can be known. (*Analects* 2.23)[5]

Confucius notes that the documentation regarding observances of the past is often inadequate and that the Zhou dynasty, nevertheless, has "such a wealth of culture" because it has benefited from previous dynasties. As a result, he says, "I follow the Zhou" (3.14).

Confucius, then, admits that tradition changes, that standards of propriety have been adapted and made more refined while nevertheless preserving continuity. He finds that the most recent past pro-

vides for a fuller expression of characteristics that constitute *ren*[b], the human *dao*. These characteristics are expressed through the customs (*li*[a]) sanctioned during those times.

Confucius assumes, following these historical sources, that there is an intimate link between the cosmos, moral integrity, and proper governance. But he was clear that the expansiveness of exemplary persons begins to develop through the routine exercise of fraternal and filial responsibility.[6] From this origin, he says, "the way (*dao*) will grow . . . As for filial and fraternal responsibility, it is, I suspect, the root for authoritative conduct (*ren*[b])" (1.2). Exactly how "the *dao* will grow" in the future is assumed to be a legitimate, open question.

What qualified as acceptable standards of animal welfare for Confucius must be discerned from some sixteen passages in the *Analects* that refer to animals. He observes, first off, "We [humans] cannot run with the birds and beasts. Am I not one among the people of this world. If not them, with whom should I associate?" (18.6). The focus of attention should be on the distinctive features of learning and understanding how to be human (*ren*[a]). With respect to commonly accepted practices, we see that animals, fish, and birds, variously prepared, were used as food (10.8). Hunting and farming activities obtained meat and other animal products. Meat from sacrifices was also eaten (10.9). Dried meat was accepted as tuition (7.7). The instrumental value of animals is evident in references to oxen used for plowing (6.6), horses for riding and pulling carriages (10.20), dogs are mentioned, apparently used for purposes of security. There are references to clothing made of lambskin, fawn fur, and fox fur, which were considered luxury items for the wealthy (9.27). Fox and badger furs were also used for rugs (10.6). From a question about how to understand and handle an incident of a stolen sheep (13.8), it is clear that there were rules to protect animals as property. There is also an expression of concern about assessing responsibility when tigers or rhinoceroses escape from their cages (16.1). This information is noteworthy because it illustrates commonly accepted practices. Perhaps not surprisingly, animals are assumed to have value and are worthy of interest primarily because they are resources or serviceable for human needs and enterprises.

Another indication of appropriate and differential treatment is given in a response to Ziyou who asks about filial conduct. "The Master replied: Those today who are filial are considered so because they are able to provide for their parents. But even dogs and horses are given that much care. If you do not respect your parents, what is the difference?" (2.7).[7] It is taken for granted that dogs and horses deserve care in the form of adequate provisions; parents of course deserve "more."

Animals also had an important role in formal ritual observances and divination. Animals were used as gifts to express respect and gratitude (e.g., suckling pigs, 17.1). They may portend good or bad, for instance, a hen pheasant was seen as a good omen (10.27). Animals were commonly used in ceremonies, including sacrificial offerings of various sorts. Proper conduct required payment of respect to the spirits of mountains and rivers, to the gods of soil and grain, at border areas, and for other personal, family/clan, seasonal, or state occasions (16.1).

In an interesting interchange related to judgments about quality or merit rather than class, origin, or planning, we see that "The Master, remarking on the humble origins of Zhong-gong, said, 'If the calf of a plow ox has the red coat and the nicely shaped horns of a sacrificial ox, even though some might not want to use it in the sacrifice, do you think the spirits of the mountains and rivers would turn it down?' " (6.6) In effect, it seems to be quality or merit that qualifies a candidate, not considerations such as its "origin."

This way of thinking is the result of observed correspondences between non-human and human natures. What constitutes proper conduct can often be learned in some measure from animals. Thoughtful reflection on animals can contribute to a more genuine awareness of both animals and humans. The other-regarding virtue of reciprocity (*shu*) is precisely the ability to correlate the condition and experience of others with one's own. Those beings that are observed to be affected by an action or condition properly generate sympathy interests in the observer. Such reactions are natural and well grounded in the operation of nature. They provide an important basis for normative reasoning.

Along these lines is an interchange between Confucius and a follower. "Zigong wanted to dispense with the sacrifice of a live sheep at the Declaration of the New Moon ceremony. The master said, 'Zigong you begrudge the sheep, I—ritual propriety (*li*[a])' " (3.17). The specific reason for Zigong's preference is not clear, but since the word translated 'begrudge' (*ai*) could also be translated as 'love' or 'concern,' it is arguable that Zigong had an interest in preserving the sheep from death. But it is clear that Confucius favors past precedence as the way to fulfill the requirements of the occasion. In effect, what is "known" to be good form and serves as an effective, proper procedure settles the matter for him.

In this respect, established ceremonial practices involving animals can be understood as ways of preserving proper, harmonious relations with the forces and powers of nature and of sustaining and advancing the orderly and productive operation of things. As animals were integral to nature, so they were taken to be integral to the formal

expression by humans of respect to the powers of nature. The value an animal (such as the sheep) has for itself and the value it has for a considerate person like Zigong can be overridden by the value that it had in the ceremony, which is itself a part of the larger affairs of nature. If sacrifices are seen to help support the *dao* of "Earth and Heaven," then what a ceremony requires is not out of accord with what nature itself requires of creatures. Zigong should reorganize the mistaken preferences and sensibilities that support his judgment. The sacrifice was, in its way, honoring nature with its own resources. Forfeiture of particular present values may be a way of confirming those very values that are an important part of the whole process. In a less problematic familiar example, the gift of cut flowers is an honor even to themselves as they support the recognition of other values that are made possible by such a ceremonial (sacrificial) observance.

From this example one can also gather that pragmatic, moral, and aesthetic elements are operative in judgments about proper practice. Ceremonial observances are "befitting" when they are able to realize a richness and depth in the experience of the states of affairs. It makes them prized because they work (are effective), are worthy (contribute moral goodness and rightness), and are beautiful (uplifting, lovely, etc.) events.

In another instance, Confucius observed that Zang Wenzhong prepared a chamber in which to keep his ceremonial tortoise. It had mountains carved on the column dividers and aquatic grasses painted on the rafters (5.18). Whatever this example may otherwise mean, it is evident that Zang attempted to provide an artificial setting in a way that would respond to the natural environment preferred by the tortoise. Such respect was due to it according to its own nature. Its function within a human ceremonial setting did not eliminate, although it compromised, the legitimacy of its own self-values. Zang's confinement of the tortoise apparently generated feelings of obligation to compensate. But also for Zang, the tortoise's ritual function placed it within the matrix of Heaven's way in the sense that proper ceremonial homage to Heaven justified its presence and utility-value in this way. The tortoise served a higher purpose of which it was quite unaware.

Another noteworthy instance is when Confucius says that he "fished with a line but did not use a net; he used an arrow and a line, but did not shoot at roosting birds" (7.27). Principles of fairness and proper procedure were presumably at stake in the determination of these actions. The judgments of right hunting conceded normative weight to the natural parameters of the animals as related to the human capacities that could violate these "principles" of nature,

that is, nature's order. A successful hunt, then, requires that it be without unfair advantage, excess, waste, or needless damage in its accomplishment.

A more extensive application of this perspective is given in the *Liji* (Book of Rites) and attributed to Confucius. "Zang-zi said, 'trees are felled and animals killed only at the proper seasons.' The Master [Confucius] said, 'To fell a single tree or kill a single animal not at the proper season is contrary to filial piety.' "[8] This response is not included in the *Analects,* although a similar formulation appears in the *Mengzi*. The principle behind the judgment involves a value to be discerned in cycles or patterns of growth in nature. As *tian* supports the development of excellence in humans, so it also supports the developmental fruition (excellence) of trees and animals. Good "governance" is that which is in accord with Heaven and Earth. When the value matrixes conflict, the adjudication process would be one which concedes priority to the good of the whole—recognizing that this good itself requires, to the extent feasible, the good of the constituents that make up the whole. Disvalue could be tolerated (in a matrix) to the extent required for such harmony. In this way, collateral, derivative "disvalue" is integral to the operation of things; it is how nature properly functions.

A very telling element in this formulation, it must be noted, is that the respect due to trees and animals is identified as a filial one. In effect, it affirms the value of the other and it assumes a normative and natural bond with the other. Animals and trees are, in some extended but significant way, beings that deserve moral consideration as kin. They are extended members of the family. More generally considered, the idea that one could misuse, overuse, or use at the wrong time may be derived from ancient folk wisdom, common to many cultures, but in this case it has been integrated into the conception of a properly structured way of living. In effect, rational and moral judgments are to recognize that living creatures deserve accommodating treatment in their own right according to their natures, life stages, and seasons. This would count as properly observing nature's (Heaven's) way, even as this way means that the good of some will be used for the realization of the good of others, which would not be to the advantage of those so used.

III

There is no evidence for the claim that Confucius intended to break new ground on the topic of animals. The remarks in the *Analects*, though incidental, make it possible nevertheless to extrapolate a

number of points. Following information contained in the historical documents that Confucius took to be authoritative about exemplary living, the working assumption in the *Analects* is that animals have three concurrent value ratings: (1) for/in themselves as living beings, (2) for others, and (3) as part of the whole ongoing affairs of nature (*dao*, *tian*). Each point arranges the world into an evaluative matrix according to its own nature and circumstances. Normative judgments derived from each of these matrixes will be relative to that matrix. The assessment of any animal, an ox for example, would need to acknowledge the value it has for itself, that is, the value of living and prospering as best it can as an ox. But it also has value relative to the needs and preferences of others, for example, other oxen, wolves, beetles, birds, humans, et al. Finally, the ox has value in the context of the vitality and diversity of nature's good, that is, the great *dao* of the productive, interrelated, transforming world.

The values delineated by the matrix schema comprise centers of normative appraisal. The overall welfare and operation of this unity, matrix 3, has priority or takes precedence in the sense that its "way" is the range of total occurrences that take place. Continuity and repeated patterns are characteristic features, although the specific details have a measure of idiosyncrasy (spontaneity, indeterminateness). Humans are distinctive but do not by any means exist carte blanche. In the interrelationships between humans, animals, and the environment, the attempt to have one's own human interests be supreme should be set within the bounds of the established patterns of nature (matrix 3). It is the sage who will best be able to exercise proper and prudent judgment regarding the treatment of animals by knowing their placement in the three matrixes.

The general disposition of the sage would be to advance the course of nature in human life as well as the myriad things. As such, there is a built-in general norm to minimize the devaluation of anything. Animals deserve attention that is in accord with their nature and their place in nature. They are generally characterized as being on different scales or levels of functionality than plants or material objects and processes, but such higher levels may or may not convert into a higher value for nature (or relative to the other matrixes). Appropriate treatment will be differential treatment according (relative) to the nature of a thing and the more general environment within which it exists. An animal, like everything else, has a value rating relative to the other matrixes. That value may alter at any time—for better or worse from its own point of view—because conditions are subject to change. In general, however, it would seem that any depletion or elimination of value that animals have for themselves which is caused by humans

would require reasons or evidence that such action is for the best. *Ren*[b] would involve respect for and deference to the value of others and nature. *Ren*[b] would, in effect, entail the principle of non-maleficence, and this principle would function in the context of each matrix, that is, relative to the *dao* of its own affairs, the affairs of other(s), as well as of Heaven and Earth.

For Confucius, the parameters of the proper treatment and desert of animals were already delineated in the learned cultural practices of his time. He did not express objection to them. A right acting person would have learned to think and behave according to such standards. This heritage, then, was taken to exemplify the norms appropriate to animal welfare. In more contemporary terms, the perspective might be characterized as a modified (soft, discriminating) anthropocentric or humanistic approach to animals. Animals have value, but the value of humans can take precedence over that value. As a result, the treatment of animals should be determined by the two matrixes, the second and higher being that involving human interests and preferences. It would be "humane" treatment understood as an expression of matrix 3 in the sense that nature legitimizes the use of animals and the environment for human advancement. A properly constituted self-identity for humans would be one disposed to give animals their due, even as this assessment may often be weighted in favor of human interests.

This soft humanistic view of animals is not, however, an accurate representation of the implications of the Confucian perspective. Since the human value matrix is neither dependent solely upon human self-appraisal nor does it simply have priority of status, it is subject to qualification by the other matrixes.[9] In this way, the Confucian perspective would seem to be more akin to the Land Ethic position as advanced by Aldo Leopold and J. Baird Callicott.[10] In effect, the integrity (harmony, beauty) of the environment (as Leopold formulates this) serves as the fundamental measure of value. Humans certainly have a significant role to play in these matters, but their own sense of virtuous living must adjust activities and judgments so as to protect, sustain, and otherwise support the ongoing affairs of nature. This would include not only the flourishing of human individual and collective life—virtue and right governing in the limited sense—but also of all life forms and natural processes. This expanded virtue ethic perspective might best be referred to as a cosmocentric approach to the environment.[11] The three matrixes operate within the traditional cultural referent of "Heaven, Earth, and humans/the myriad things." There is disunity within unity; nature is sustained by utilizing some parts for the good of others which is the good of nature as a whole. This conceptual and normative structure is implicitly assumed in the *Analects*.

IV

The material by Mengzi has the advantage of providing more information for the position it advances. Mengzi's explanation of human nature relates directly to his assessment of animals. Although he does say that "That whereby man differs from the lower animals is small. The mass of people cast it away, while the superior preserve it" (IV.B.19),[12] what is preserved in the superior person is, of course, significant. He says: "No man is devoid of a heart-mind (*xin*) that is sensitive to the suffering of others" (II.A.6). We cannot bear, as humans, to see occurrences of pain, distress, affliction, harm. The feeling of commiseration is basic (essential) to man; to be devoid of such compassion is not to be truly human. This "feeling of commiseration is the principle (germ, sprout) of benevolence (*ren*[b])." Along with the elements of righteousness (*yi*), propriety (*li*[a]), and knowledge (*zhi*),

> If a man is able to develop these four germs that he possesses, it will be like the beginning of a fire which will spread or a spring beginning to flow. When these are fully developed, he can take under his protection the whole realm within the four seas. (II.A.6)

Such a person would be greatly empowered and all embracing.

Mengzi is quite clear about the development, extension, and application of these primary moral traits.

> For every man there are things he cannot bear. To extend this to what he can bear is benevolence. For every man there are things he is not willing to do. To extend this to what he is willing to do is rightness. If a man can extend to the full his natural aversion to harming others, then there will be an over-abundance of benevolence. (VII.B.31)

The extension accomplishes something like a correspondence or alignment between a person's moral view of the world and the values that truly make up the world. The cultivated self of a fully benevolent person would embrace the ongoing affairs of the world—"take under his protection the whole realm"—with an expansive heart-mind of compassion. This would become a part of his own discerning perception and sense of responsibility. The commiseration would be properly perceptive of the world, properly responsive to it, and thus have achieved a self-identity congruent with things as they are.

Besides the illustration of the child about to fall in a well (II.A.6) and another about the cutting of trees on Mt. Niu (Ox mountain) (VI.A.7), there is an even more direct example of Mengzi's nature-based moral psychology. It comes from a conversation with King Xuan of Qi. The King has doubts about his capacity to be sufficiently

virtuous so that, as ruler, he can bring peace to his people. Menzi asks if it is true that the King, on one occasion, could not tolerate having an ox sacrificed for a ceremony to consecrate a new bell once he had actually seen the ox on the way to be killed. The King said, "You are right . . . It was simply because I could not bear to see it shrink with fear, like an innocent man going to the place of execution. . . ." Mengzi says of the King's moral sensibility, "The heart behind your action is sufficient to enable you to become a true King" (I.A.7). The King, however, not wanting to cancel the ceremony, decided forthwith to have a sheep replace the ox.

With some embarrassment the King acknowledges in later reflection that the sensibility exercised on the ox did not really leave any choice between an ox and a substitute animal, that is, a sheep. The correct decision should be grounded in the proper exercise of *ren*[b]. But *ren*[b], as involving commiseration, had effectively expressed its opposition to the King. As Mengzi formulates this, "The attitude of an exemplary person towards animals is this: Once having seen them alive, he cannot bear to see them die, and once having heard their cry, he cannot bear to eat their flesh" (I.A.7).

The observers in each of these cases (involving a child, trees, animals) are provoked to exercise those naturally based traits that are supportive of a fuller realization of virtue. Our nature is functioning properly if it acts in accord with the deep-seated intuitions or sensibilities about right, respect, propriety, humaneness. "The understanding heart-mind (*xin*)" of a *ren*[b] person cannot evade the values that are perceived to be present in such actions or situations. If one were inconsiderate of or unwilling to respect (the child, the trees) the ox, that would suppress the natural sentiments. The normative development and exercise of human nature would be thwarted as a result. Harsh, disrespectful actions mold and fabricate the moral identity (or character) of such a person. The circumstances that cause the alarm, that is, the perception of suffering, are the conditions that exercise and develop moral capacities but also do so because they are objective conditions that deserve these affective-cognitive responses.

The proposal that one take the point of view of the other, which is also found in the *Analects*, is reaffirmed by Mengzi in a way that explicitly links ontology/cosmology, psychology/human nature, and ethics:

> All the ten thousand things are there in me. There is no greater joy for me than to find, on self-examination, that I am true to myself. Try your best to treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself, and you will find that this is the shortest way to benevolence. (VII.A.4)

V

If one expected a change in Mengzi's allegiance to "the standard position" on the basis of his rather dramatic formulation (I.A.7 above), it would be a mistake. The sentence that follows directly may seem to be a somewhat surprising conclusion but it merely punctuates the traditional rationale: "That is why the exemplary person stays out of the kitchen" [butcher or slaughter area, etc.] (I.A.7).

One wonders exactly how keeping one's distance from a morally distressful situation can somehow resolve the conflict in values and practices that are taking place. Such a tactic can hardly overcome the sincere, benevolent, reciprocal attitude of the exemplary person whose expanded heart-mind is empathetically disposed to be receptive to all such affairs. If "what one cannot bear" is a sufficient basis for aversion in one case, why not others as well? If "All the ten thousand things are there in me," how can the self-examined person be true to themselves without taking the perspective of all beings who are the objects of such selected actions? If a self is, in effect, constituted by the way others are treated, a virtuous self will be one whose identity and sense of excellence/good must include the well-being of others. And if, as Mengzi says, genuine joy comes from benevolence, and benevolence involves treating others as one would wish to be treated, then animals would seem to be the proper beneficiaries of the commiserative acts of virtuous persons. In the above quote (I.A.7), however, Mengzi seems to identify with all others and then restrict that identity to humans.

What may seem troublesome with this restriction is not problematical for Mengzi. He observes:

> The superior person's attitude toward inferior creatures is that he loves (is kind to) them but he does not treat them as human beings. His attitude toward people generally is that he treats them as human beings (loves them, but is not affectionate) but does not treat them as parents. He treats parents with affection, is lovingly disposed to people generally, and is kind to creatures. (VII.A.45)

Love or benevolence, as understood by Mengzi, is always expressed with a difference of degree. It is to be adjusted in composition (affect and intention) according to the nature of the being or situation. It is not an appropriate exercise of *ren*[b] to apply equal value to unequal objects of moral concern. Mengzi elaborates on this:

> The benevolent embrace all in their love, but what they consider of the greatest importance is to cultivate an earnest affection for the good and virtuous. Even Yao and Shun did not use their wisdom on all things alike, but they attended earnestly to what was urgent. Their benevolence did not show itself in acts of kindness for everyone. . . . (VII.A.46)

Benevolent actions are, in effect, guided by an assessment of the interplay and weight of factors of the three matrixes. For the acting agent, the evaluative perspective proceeds in expanding zones of propriety from parents, to family, state, and on eventually to all things. Mengzi says, "It is the nature of things to be unequal. If you equalize them you will throw the world into confusion" (III.A.4). Judgments about the proper exercise of *ren*[b] are done within the context of respect for nature and its inequality, while earnestly attempting to select and realize the most feasible positive outcomes.

When the natural affections are subject to the regulation, discipline, and structuring according to the discernments of a virtuous person, that person will know, says Mengzi, to stay "out of the kitchen." Propriety (*li*[a]), rightness (*yi*), and understanding (*zhi*), in effect, guide judgment even when the initial sensibilities of *ren*[b] might respond otherwise. A person thereby learns, for example, to eat suckling pigs, bear paws, and a whole menagerie of other life forms, trained along the way not to be disturbed by the actual connection between the once-alive beings and their eventual destination as items for human consumption, ceremonial occasions, or uses in many other contexts.

We find growth in Mengzi's characterization of the human *dao*. The three matrixes are much more value laden, requiring a corresponding attendance by the discerning, well-cultivated, constant, overflowing, expanded heart-mind of a benevolence person. In effect, the grounds for enlargement as well as criticism of Mengzi's position can be found within the moral cosmology and psychology that he advanced.

VI

More detailed and vigorous expressions of the Confucian cosmocentric position are developed in writings that follow Mengzi. The cultivated person was already characterized in the *Doctrine of the Mean* as one who helps not only other persons, but also "assist[s] the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth."[13] The "Western Inscription" by Zang Zai provides a vivid expression of this.

> Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother, and even such a small creature as I find an intimate place in their midst. Therefore that which fills the universe I regard as my body and that which directs the universe I consider as my nature. . . . all things are my companions. . . . The sage identifies his character with that of Heaven and Earth. . . . One who knows the principles of transformation will skillfully carry forward the undertakings [of Heaven and Earth], and one who penetrates spirit to the highest degree will skillfully carry out their will.[14]

This passage contains a number of fundamental points that are set forth in a more comprehensive way by Zhu Xi. He too portrays the exemplary person as one whose character development culminates in an identification with the *dao* of Heaven and Earth. Zhu Xi elaborates on this perspective.

> For saying that "humanity (*ren*[b]) is the mind of Heaven and Earth whereby they produce and give life to creatures and this is what men and other creatures receive as their mind," means that Heaven and Earth and man and all things alike possess this mind, and its force (*de*) has always run through all. Thus although Heaven and Earth and man and other creatures each are different, nevertheless in reality there is, as it were, a single circulatory system running thorough them. Therefore if one personally realizes this mind and can preserve and foster it, there is nothing that the principle of the mind does not reach and one naturally loves everything.[15]

In the passage that follows immediately, Zhu Xi says that "those who can see others suffer and are without commiseration are just blocked up by selfishness" and have lost their original mind. This shift from self-orientation to other-orientation is decisive because the shift from the "human" mind to the mind of Heaven is what determines the fuller expression of virtue as *ren*[b] and *de*. Zhu Xi refers to this as impartial love.

> *Jen* is just the principle of love. If one is impartial, then he looks upon Heaven and Earth and all creatures as forming a single body and there is nothing he does not love.[16]

Zhu Xi's observes this further distinction in the progression of self-cultivation.

> . . . impartiality as such should not be equated with *jen* [*ren*[b]]. It must be made man's substance before it becomes *jen*. Impartiality, altruism, and love are all descriptions of *jen*. Impartiality is antecedent to *jen*; altruism and love are subsequent. This is so because impartiality makes *jen* possible, and *jen* makes love and altruism possible.[17]

This conception of the person of *ren*[b] is really quite amazing. Impartial love functions, in effect, in each matrix by both differentiating the points of view of creatures and things and also unifying with the whole of nature. In addition, the resulting disposition is one of creative participation that aims to preserve and foster the ongoing productive forces of nature.

Zhu Xi also maintains that this original mind is boundless in such a way that there will be "no distinction between inner and outer."[18] A realization of this unity, continuity, and sharing is possible because of the presence of mind in all things. The transformed mind of the exemplary person takes on the mind (and principles) of nature and

can, thereby, function impartially (without self-centeredness), with reciprocity (*shu*), and with appropriate compassion.

> What mind is this? In Heaven and Earth it is the mind to produce things infinitely (which fills the universe). In man it is the mind to love people gently, be kind to other creatures, and benefit things.[19]

This way of understanding commiseration as constituting an expansion of self-identity means that no thing is either isolated or completely different in kind. In some very fundamental sense, nothing in nature is alien to any other thing or process. Everything is a part of the organizational field ("circulatory system") of *qi*. "The feeling of commiseration pervades the whole body. It can be aroused anywhere. For example, we have a feeling of commiseration when we see a child about to fall into a well. When we see an ant in similar danger, do we not have the same feeling?"[20] Zhu Xi was not advocating a rescue program for ants in peril. Nevertheless, the implications of his position are clear. The interests of the universe must be part of one's own individual human interests as well. As such, an egocentric or anthropocentric perspective cannot be one's own correct perspective. Proper care, kindness, deference, must lead to a policy that does justice and is fair to all beings, objects, processes. And there is ample opportunity to wake up to this perspective because the stimulus for this realization may come from an encounter with anything, that is, for Zhou Duni it was the grass by his window, for Heng Zhu, the neighing of a horse, and Zhu Xi also mentions the leaves of a tree. All are "equally akin" in this respect.[21] This kinship is formulated in several ways. Zhu Xi points to evidence for the attribution of "prevailing uniformity" and sameness in what may appear to be a sharply delineated natural order. He says,

> Even inferior creatures . . . if you study their habits you will find that in some particular direction they too manifest the same principles: they, as well as we, have the affection of parent and child; in their male and female there is the relation of husband and wife, in their differing ages that of leader and younger brothers, in the flocking together of those of a class that of friends, and in their leadership that of sovereign and minister. It is because all things are produced by Heaven and Earth, and together proceed from the one source, that there is this prevailing uniformity.[22]

Zhu Xi points out that virtues are not limited to humans. He observes that

> . . . [*ren*[b]], for example, in tigers and wolves or propriety [*li*[a]] in the jackal and otter, or righteousness [*yi*] in bees and ants, the penetration of these ethical principles is, as it were, not more than a chink of light. In the monkey, where form is similar to man's, the intellectual faculty is superior to that of other creatures, so that it seems only

> to lack the power of speech. It is not the case that man, as the being possessed of the highest intellect, stands alone in the universe. His mind is also the mind of birds and beasts, of grass and trees.[23]

Because Zhu Xi sees everything as originating from and being rooted in "one source," referred to variously as *taiji*, *dao*, the Mind of Heaven, original nature, one *li*[b], the delineation of value related to the three matrixes can be analyzed in terms of the value imbuing factors of *li*[b] (principle) and *qi* (material force). This analytical approach highlights in new ways the function, empowerment, intelligibility, and beauty of things.

The main axiological characteristics emphasized by Zhu Xi, central to matrix 3, include the creativity, spontaneity, richness, and diversity of nature. Although the bountifulness and thriving of nature, in its ongoing transformation, will inevitably result in instances of pain, deprivation, and death of individual life forms, the *ren*[b] person will want to minimize these instances insofar as such is neither unnatural nor unfeasible. Both criteria (the natural and the feasible) require, as a prima facie moral obligation, that a person persist in and exercise the disposition to maximize value and minimize disvalue whenever it is possible and proper to do so. A person's moral identity (expanded character) is at stake. The virtuous self is, as we have seen, an environmental self. Such a perspective applies directly to animals. They are, as clearly expressed by Mengzi and Zhu Xi, companions and significant members of the moral community whose interests cannot be disregarded or diminished in status.

VII

If mind (*xin*) operates by means of the formal or structural factor of *li*[b] (principle, intelligibility) in the constitution of everything and functionality is tied to the material force (*qi)* basis of things, Zhu Xi is led to find "consciousness" present most everywhere throughout nature. Since it is an aspect of animals, birds, trees, grasses, and minerals, and "all these are simply the one mind of Heaven and Earth,"[24] the moral dimension of every item in nature can hardly be overlooked. But neither can the differences in the "planes" (functional levels) of their natures be disregarded. Zhu Xi says: ". . . the consciousness of animals is not on the same plane as that of man, and that of plants is not on the same plane as animals."[25]

Like Mengzi, Zhu Xi is continuing to refine the Confucian heritage. All things have value, but not equal or unchanging value. The first part of this claim is egalitarian, that is, nothing is denied moral standing. But this must, secondly, be qualified and relativized. Proper treat-

ment must be adjudicated according to the good in each of the evaluative matrixes. Treating others as they deserve to be treated must respond to individual value, interrelational value, and holistic value. Such assessments will undoubtedly be a complex and difficult matter requiring the skills of a highly virtuous person. The discriminating yet impartial mind that investigates all things, says Zhu, is able to respond appropriately to the nature of things. Put simply,

> The daily moral self-cultivation of the sage seems to be rather elementary. But when reason is within principle (*li*[b]) there is nothing that is not included, and nothing which does not go through. When it reaches its fullest extent it is equal to the greatness of the universe. So to be a sage or a worthy is to have a place in the universe and to nourish all things.[26]

VIII

The final contributor to this survey is Wang Yangming. Although he was a critic of Zhu Xi on some fundamentals, he was nevertheless a clear advocate of "the standard position." He begins by affirming the unity and continuity of nature that can be realized by "the great man":

> As to those who make a cleavage between objects and distinguish between the self and others, they are small men. That the great man can regard Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things as one body is not because he deliberately wants to do so, but because it is natural to the humane nature of his mind that he do so . . . when he observes the pitiful cries and frightened appearance of birds and animals about to be slaughtered, he cannot help feeling an "inability to bear" their suffering. This shows that his humanity forms one body with birds and animals.[27]

Wang, like Zhu Xi, does not draw the line of reciprocity at animals, but extended the commiseration of *ren*[b] to include (broken) plants and even (shattered) stones. "Such a mind," he says, "is rooted in his heaven-endowed nature." The task of learning involves precisely this realization. But he also affirms "a relative importance among things."

> Take for example the body, which is one. If we use the hands and the feet to protect the head, does that mean that we especially treat them as less important? Because of their principles this is what should be done. We love both plants and animals, and yet we can tolerate feeding animals with plants. We love both animals and men, and yet we can tolerate butchering animals to feed our parents, provide for religious sacrifices, and entertain guests. We can tolerate all these because by principle these should be done. . . . What the *Great Learning* calls relative importance means that . . . there is a natural order which should not be skipped over. This is called righteousness.

> To follow this is propriety. To understand this order is called wisdom.[28]

Wang proceeds with assurance to show the relationship between "what we cannot bear" and "what we can tolerate." The natural ability to discern disvalue and to feel that the disvalue is not tolerable is conjoined with the ability to learn to tolerate precisely what it is that we cannot bear, prima facie, once an understanding of the nature order is achieved. If one lets undisciplined intuitions take precedence in determining "what one cannot bear," they will obscure truths ("principles") of nature and its proper order. Since things are not equal, a person of *ren*[b] cannot think, feel, or act as if animals deserve treatment appropriate to humans. Fair or right treatment is differential treatment. The commiseration of *ren*[b] is to be readjusted by the equally well-grounded discernment of what is right (*yi*). The humane person learns to respect nature as nature deserves to be respected, that is, "there is a natural order which should not be skipped over."

Wang can thus confidently declare that we humans should butcher animals. The principle of being human legitimizes this exercise of power so that humans will be able to fulfill their nature appropriately. The principle of being an ox (pig, chicken, etc.) legitimizes, in the wider natural order, its being used for human activities by having its own nature supervened by human needs. The value and disvalue that result are sanctioned and the practices that realize the value and disvalue are validated by the principles that apply. For Wang, the natural grounding of the moral order is clear: to observe it is right (*yi*) and to follow it is propriety (*li*[a]). Nature exhibits principle (*li*[b]), which is the basis of rightness (*yi*), which is properly expressed in appropriate (*li*[a]) practices. The sage (person of *ren*[b]) understands this grounding, it is his own mind, and this way ought to be respected. The linkage of these major concepts employed by Wang is further evidence of the continuity of the position on animal welfare with the perspective adumbrated in the *Analects*.

IX

This paper has identified material in major Confucian writings that supports the claim of a standard, uniform position on the status of animals. Although differences between animals and humans are not denied, it is clear that the lines of demarcation include the affirmation that everything has membership, a place or role, in the whole ongoing process of nature. Animals are a part of the productivity, richness, diversity, and beauty that are central features of this conception of Heaven and Earth. The three matrixes provide a structural basis

for a comprehensive perspective on both the details and the interrelationships that constitute "the whole." They also provide the information necessary for wise judgment to be exercised by the *ren*[b] person.

The critical thrust of this paper is to show that the principles which support the interpretation of acceptable practices with respect to animals can be used to appraise the practices of that tradition. If we assume, according to the Confucian orientation to value, that virtue is not only the realization of full humaneness for humans but also includes the fullness of sentient and non-sentient constituents of nature, then the argument would be that this orientation has implications that are more demanding than that of the standard position. If a virtuous person's well-being includes the well-being of non-human beings and natural processes, it would seem to be impossible to stay out of the farms, ranches, dairies, venues for breeding, training, racing, entertainment, processing and slaughter companies, zoos, experimentation labs, and so on.

A critical rejoinder from the standard position could maintain that the lines of tolerance and legitimate action are determined by the conception of Heaven (nature, *dao*) and "Heaven requires the ceremony and the ceremony requires (e.g.) an ox." If the limits of propriety and tolerance are set by the ancient presumptions about the mandate of Heaven, then the standard default position will remain. The challenge to the practices then would be directed to the credibility of the conception of "the natural order" and its specific rationale. To function in the contemporary world, however, the position must meet the tests of counter rationales, critical epistemological concerns, and perhaps something like (as Aldo Leopold would have it) a perspective on evolving human sensibilities and practices.

If the demeanor of Confucius in the *Analects* is to serve as a model, the person of *ren*[b] is always ready to review what is considered to be right. The distinction between what is tolerable or intolerable for a society and tradition deserve not only prima facie respect, they also deserve careful assessment by disciplined perception and penetrating thought regarding natural limits and practicality. Revision may be required over time; but the weight and influence of tradition, which molds dispositions and beliefs, cannot be sufficient in itself to continue a practice. Because there is an accessible base of information that is always to be juxtaposed to the general traits (goals) of right living, all cases where the self-value of others is disadvantaged should be subject to review. The incentive to upgrade and refine should be affirmed as part of proper operating procedure for a humane person and a humane culture, that is, as the "mandate of heaven."

That is why the advice given by Mengzi to "stay out of the kitchen" seems naïve, humorous, and troubling. Somewhat comparable in our day would be the advice to stay out of the sweatshops and immigrant labor practices ("sanctity of private enterprise"), family abuse relationships ("sanctity of the family"), sexploitation of children ("sanctity of free communication"), and so on.

The friendly Confucian critic would argue that the challenges relating to animal welfare need not be seen as a fault of the basic system of values or principles. The critical issues have to do with the specific interpretation and application or execution of a system that has the conceptual and ethical resources to remedy deficiencies. The disputes can be worked out within the worldview that is distinctively Confucian.

The exemplary person, then, "exerts their mind to the utmost" and engages in a communal life style that is supportive of all natural functioning. This mind extends to embrace and have affection for all things. It achieves "the mind of birds and beasts, of grass and trees." As such, the person of *ren*[b] is said "to have a place in the universe and to nourish all things" . . . "to uphold the endowment of Heaven in constant reverence."

These characterizations should be the major dispositional markers to test the treatment of animals. Animals have a specific normative standing and a range of prescriptions that apply to them. The reasoning required from matrix 1 is quite straightforward: they are beings who deserve to be treated according to their nature, including the way in which they develop and function. Harm, as this may involve pain, stress, deprivation, death, wastage, or disregard, conflicts with such goals. As an imperative of virtue, a concern for animal welfare is grounded solidly in the ontology and cosmology of the Confucian tradition. Matrix 2 qualifies this assessment by juxtaposing any animal's status to the status of other beings—including humans. Here, humans must show the necessity of overriding the value observed from matrix 1. In addition, humans must show the necessity of overriding the values that are observed from matrix 3. The assessment process is complex; reciprocity does not have a single dimension dynamic. But the moral incentive is clear: One who knows cannot but act with reciprocity and deference. Properly locating and identifying the nature and value of myriad things is referred to as "making the outer inner and the inner outer."

From the perspective of the three matrixes, more extensive practical implications can be derived from those ancient injunctions of the *Analects*: "Do not impose upon others what you yourself do not want" (12:2; 15:24) and "Enrich others in enriching oneself" (6:30). "Lis-

tening to the animals," as Mengzi puts it, should provide the incentive to tolerate the minimum of disvalue done to them. Given such a conception, persons of *ren*[b] would be those who are able to penetrate the normative depths of nature and are thereby called to act with full *xin* (mind-heart) respect for all things. It has been argued that the principles advocated by the Confucians have a resourcefulness that surpasses their own use of them. Although Confucius' reference to "how the *dao* will grow" did not anticipate this critique, the standard position can be judged to be inadequate by the implications of the basic principles accepted by Confucius and carried on by those who followed his line of thinking. By providing a conceptual structure and normative principles that are not comparably available in the West, the Confucian tradition can serve as a valuable contribution and a challenge to thinking about the status of animals and the environment in our time.

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Endnotes

* Some material in this article appears in Donald Blakeley, "Neo-Confucian Cosmology, Virtue Ethics, and Environmental Philosophy," *Philosophy in the Contemporary World* 8, no. 2 (2001): 37–49. The topic of that article focuses on the environment rather than animal welfare. This article was first presented at the 11th International Conference on Chinese Philosophy, Taipei, Taiwan (July, 1999). The current version is abridged from a longer paper.

1. Use of the phrase "the Confucian tradition" in this paper refers to ideas that are common to the texts of the *Analects*, Mengzi, Zhu Xi, and Wang Yangming.
2. See James Legge, *The Sacred Books of China, The Li Ki* [*Liji*], Vol. 3 and 4 (1885; reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1966) and *The Chinese Classics, The Shoo King*, Vol. 3 (1935; reprint, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960).
3. James Legge, *LiKi* vol. 3, p. 369.
4. Ibid., pp. 369–370.
5. Roger Ames and Henry Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998).
6. On the ranking of persons in the *Analects*, see Henry Rosemont, Jr., "Tracing the Path of Spiritual Progress in the Analects" in *Confucian Spirituality*, edited by Wei-ming Tu and Mary Evelyn Tucker (New York: Crossroads Press, 1999).
7. A similar assessment is provided by Mengzi: To feed a scholar and not love him is to treat him as a pig. To love him and not respect him is to keep him as a domestic animal. (VII.A.37)
8. James Legge, *Li Ki* (Book XXI, Section II), pp. 227–228.
9. The features of this extensionalist moral perspective become more explicit in later Confucian writings and fall roughly into the category of an environmental virtue ethics position. See Blakeley, "Neo-Confucian Cosmology," 2001.
10. Aldo Leopold, *A Sand Country Almanac* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949); J. Baird Callicott, *Beyond the Land Ethic* (New York: State University of NewYork, 1999).
11. Tu Wei-ming *(Way, Learning, and Politics* [New York: State University of New York, 1993]) uses the term "anthropocosmic" to capture the unity and difference of this

perspective. Chung-ying Cheng (*New Dimensions of Confucian and Neo-Confucian Philosophy* [New York: State University of New York, 1991]) has set forth more extensively the philosophical detail of what he identifies as "inclusive humanism," including also "onto-cosmology" and "cosmo-eco-ethics."

12. Quotations from Mengzi are based upon translations by D.C. Lau, *Mencius* (New York: Penguin Books, 1970) and James Legge, *The Chinese Classics, Vol. II, The Works of Mencius* (Taipei: SMC Publishing, 1991).
13. *Doctrine of the Mean* (#22) in Wing-Tsit Chan, trans., *A Sourcebook of Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1963), p. 108.
14. Ibid., p. 497.
15. Michael C. Kalton, *To Become a Sage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 153–154. I utilize available English translations for the material by Zhu Xi, occasionally including pinyin terms to clarify some of the older translations.
16. Ibid, p. 152.
17. Chan, *Sourcebook*, 1963, p. 633.
18. Allen Wittenborn, trans., *Further Reflections on Things at Hand: A Reader: Chu Hsi* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991), p. 68; p. 103.
19. Chan, *Sourcebook*, 1963, pp. 594–595; J. Percy Bruce, trans., *The Philosophy of Human Nature* (London: Probsthain & Co., 1922), p. 352 f.
20. Chu Hsi and Lu Tsu-Ch'ien, *Reflections on Things at Hand*, translated by Wing-Tsit Chan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 21.
21. Bruce, *The Philosophy of Human Nature*, 1922, p. 338.
22. Ibid., p. 20–21.
23. Ibid., pp. 60–61.
24. Chan, *Sourcebook*, 1963, p. 643.
25. Ibid., p. 623; Bruce, *The Philosophy of Human Nature*, 1922, pp. 65 f.
26. Wittenborn, 1991, p. 78.
27. Chan, *Reflections,* 1962, pp. 272–273.
28. Ibid., pp. 222–223.

Chinese Glossary

ai	愛	*shi*	士
dao	道	*shu*	恕
de	德	*taiji*	太極
di	弟	*tian*	天
he	和	*tianming*	天命
junzi	君子	*xiao*	孝
li[a]	禮	*xing*	性
li[b]	理	*xin*	心
qi	氣	*yi*	義
ren[a]	人	*zhi*	智
ren[b]	仁	*zhong*[a]	中
shengren	聖人	*zhong*[b]	忠