

顏元

6. Yan Yuan

Like many other Neo-Confucian thinkers, Yan Yuan¹ (1635-1704 C.E.) studied a broad range of traditions. For example, as a young adult, he strictly observed Daoist practices.² But in time he declared his allegiance to Confucianism. The course of his intellectual development was leading him along a familiar trajectory and toward becoming a respected member of the Cheng-Zhu School, until, at the age of thirty-three, the death of his foster grandmother precipitated a radical turn in his life and thought.

In grieving for his foster grandmother, Yan committed himself to observing every detail of proper ritual mourning³ as described by the renowned and revered *Jiali* 家禮 "Family Ritual," attributed to Zhu Xi.⁴ But the extreme difficulty that he experienced in attempting to follow certain of the *Jiali*'s prescriptions, led him to compare its recommendations to classical discussions of ritual. Much to his surprise and dismay, he discovered a number of significant discrepancies that opened a growing vein of doubt concerning the reliability of Song and later Ming Confucian teachings. In time, this doubt blossomed into the complete rejection and pointed criticism of Song and Ming Confucians for being at odds with the classics, fatally tainted with Buddhist and Daoist elements and out of touch with the practical human concerns at the heart of the Confucian tradition.

Yan Yuan became convinced that both the Cheng-Zhu and Lu-Wang schools had lost sight of and severely distorted the original teachings of Kongzi, and he called for a return to and restoration of what he believed was Kongzi's true and original vision. In calling for a return to a past golden age, Yan sounded a classical Confucian theme. For Confucians have always looked back to an ideal past for guidance and inspiration. As we have seen in the earlier chapters of this volume, since the death of Kongzi, Confucian thinkers focused as much upon his teachings and examples—both real and imagined—as upon those of the sage kings of old. And since at least as early as the time of Xunzi, they have seen threats to their Way both within as well as outside their own tradition. In all these respects, Yan Yuan represented mainstream, traditional Confucian concerns.

Because his philosophical reflection was motivated by a break with orthodoxy, Yan tended to present his philosophical views in the course of advancing criticisms of prevailing Confucian belief and practice. Such an approach also makes sense given his fundamentally traditionalist perspective. He sought to revive and defend an ancient vision; he was not

attempting to describe a novel opinion of his own design. Many of Yan's objections can be seen as part of an increasingly strong turn away from the speculative metaphysics that had characterized the Song (960-1279 C.E.) and Ming dynasties (1386-1644 C.E.)—the ages of Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming, respectively—and toward the more philologically and historically rigorous approach to the classics, that would become the hallmark of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911 C.E.).⁵ However, Yan did not develop the more elaborate philological methods and theories that were the mark of these later Confucian thinkers; he remained steadfastly dedicated to ritual practice and a more physical approach to self cultivation.

Yan's primary motivation for criticizing his Confucian predecessors and contemporaries was always close to the surface of his philosophical writings. Put simply, he was frustrated and impatient with their failure to bring about the successful transformation of society. Like other Chinese intellectuals of his age, the collapse of the Ming and the founding of the Qing dynasty by the non-Chinese Manchus had a profound effect on Yan Yuan's thinking. Contrary to the explicit and often proclaimed goal of Confucian practice, Chinese society was anything but peaceful, orderly, and flourishing; it had decayed and been overcome by "barbarian" invaders. Yan Yuan believed that the teachings and practices of Song and Ming Confucians, and their followers in his own age, were directly responsible for this sad turn of events. They had allowed Chinese culture to become weak and incapable of fending off these foreign invaders. And so their way surely could not be the Way.

One possible response to this aspect of Yan Yuan's thought would be to point out that on such practical criteria, Kongzi himself would not have fared very well. For Kongzi too had failed to bring about the return to the golden age of the Zhou that was his guiding vision and goal. But Yan Yuan insisted that there were important differences between Kongzi's case and the case of these later, Neo-Confucians. Kongzi had been denied an opportunity to put his teachings into practice, while Song and Ming Confucians had had ample opportunity to influence the course of political and social events.⁶ Instead of producing a new golden age, their policies had proved disastrous for China. Worse still, these Confucians were pompous and complacent about their failure and seemed oblivious to how empty their teachings had become. In Yan Yuan's words,

When I tried to make sense of the teachings of Song Confucians, it was like blowing up a pig's bladder. All I could do was make something small and trifling into something large and empty.⁷

Yan argued that there was an irreconcilable and important difference between Song and Ming Confucians and Kongzi and that a confusion of their distinct and very different cases was at the heart of later Confucian misconceptions about the Way. To believe, as later Confucians had done, that one's historical situation and particular mission are just like those of Kongzi, is symptomatic of a particular kind of muddle. Later Confucians had fundamentally misunderstood what Kongzi had taught because they mistook what he was *forced* to do by the particular historical circumstances that he faced, as what he advocated as the ideal form of learning and practice.

The reason why, since the time of the Han and Song Dynasties, the Way has not been clearly understood, is because people have misunderstood what the word *xue* 學 "learning" means. Since they have been mistaken about what learning is, how could they not be mistaken about what proper *xi* 習 "practice" consists in? And since they are mistaken about both learning and practice, how could they understand *dao* 道 "the Way"? . . .

People only see Kongzi's narrating the *History*, passing on the *Rites*, editing the *Odes*, correcting the *Music*, elaborating the *Changes*, and composing the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. They don't realize that Kongzi intended all of these works as guides designed to enable one to regulate and perfect one's practice in order to bring order to the world and benefit to the people. He hoped that people in later ages would follow these methods and put them into practice. Instead [later Confucians] mistakenly came to believe that to be a sage, one must compose and edit various writings and to be a worthy, one must pass down and annotate different texts. They thought that those who are widely read, clear in providing explanations and proficient in composition are all true disciples of Kongzi. As a result the last two thousand years have been empty and useless.⁸

Yan Yuan admits what was accepted as fact: that Kongzi himself engaged in scholarly, written work. He edited, amended, elaborated upon, and transmitted the classical texts of the tradition. But contrary to what later Confucians came to believe, this had nothing to do with his method of self cultivation. In fact, this more scholarly work is something he turned to—and could succeed at—only *after* he had mastered the ancient ways through diligent and protracted practice of ritual and passed through the experience of teaching these things to his disciplines. Kongzi turned to his scholarly work of editing and transmitting the classics only at the end of his life, when it became clear to him that no ruler was going to employ him and allow him to put the Way into practice in his own age. Kongzi's scholastic achievements were something he did as a last resort,

something he was forced to do by historical circumstances.⁹ Song and Ming Confucians and their contemporary followers foolishly and tragically took Kongzi's textual labors as the core of his teachings on self cultivation. And so they engaged in scholarly pursuits at the expense of more concrete learning, and never mastered the real and requisite skills of the sage. The result is all too evident—Confucians had become a pathetic flock of feckless scholastics.

From the time of the Song and Yuan Dynasties (1280-1385 C.E.), Confucians have worked at becoming like women. It is terribly disgraceful! With nothing to do, they sit with their hands in their sleeves and discuss *xin* 心 "the mind" and *xing* 性 "human nature." When danger comes, all they can manage to do for their lord is to find some way to die.¹⁰

Of those who these days sit straight-laced and dignified in their studies, none are not fragile and weak, the laughingstock of soldiers and farmers. Is this how men should be?¹¹

Not even friends escaped Yan's withering criticism.

My friend Zhang Shiqing is broadly read in every kind of literature. He himself says that of the literary and historical works of the Qin (221-207 B.C.E.) and Han Dynasties (206 B.C.E.-8 C.E. and 25-220 C.E.) on down through the last two thousand years, none has escaped his notice. He works to explain the meaning of these texts to his young students until his strength is exhausted and he must rest in bed. After lying there panting for some time, he rises to resume his lecture until his strength is again exhausted.¹²

This confusion in both the content and style of true learning was the source of the tradition's decay. Yan Yuan offers an ingenious genealogical account of how this error arose and took hold that both diagnoses the problem and points the way back to proper understanding and practice. His narrative turns on a purported philological slippage that occurred—as most such things are wont to do—over the course of time. The crux of his argument is the claim that later Confucians misunderstood the sense of the character *wen* 文 in its classical context. This character has a long and rich history, extending all the way back to designs found on Neolithic pottery.¹³ Its earliest sense was something like "pattern" or "form" and this early sense gave rise to the related meanings of "writing"¹⁴ and "culture."¹⁵ But Yan Yuan insists that, in the classical texts, the common and primary meaning of this character is "culture"—broadly construed. The later Confucian thinkers he criticizes went awry in regularly and mistakenly reading it as meaning "writing."

Those Han and Song Confucians only regard various collections of writing as *wen* 文 "culture." On such a view, then Yu and all the great sages and worthies who lived prior to the Xia Dynasty all were ignorant, base, and without any real learning . . . But culture is not just the *Odes*, *History* and the Six Arts; an impressive personal presence, clear speech, the military, farming, hydraulics, the use of fire, finance, grain, labor, and risk—anything that can refine who I am and embellish the fundamental forces in the universe—all are part of culture!¹⁶

Earlier, Wang Yangming had bemoaned the degree to which the Confucians of his age had focused on the letter rather than the spirit of the Way. He believed that this obsessive concern with words led people away from the "pure-knowing" of their own minds and gave rise to a variety of selfish desires. Wang argued that Kongzi himself was not concerned with the written word to the degree that the members of the Cheng-Zhu school were; because of the extreme, context-sensitive nature of ethical decisions, Kongzi did not want to rely on words at all.

Yan Yuan developed a version of this line of criticism, but in his own novel and distinctive way. He agreed with Wang about the overly scholastic approach of the Cheng-Zhu School, but rejected Wang Yangming's heroic metaphysical views about an originally pure and perfect moral mind, which constantly guides us through "pure knowing."¹⁷ Yan Yuan even regarded Zhu Xi's more moderate conception of the mind as a combination of *li* and *qi* or, expressed differently, as having two modes—the "*dao* mind" and the "human mind"—as deeply misguided.¹⁸ He regarded all such talk as overly abstract and ultimately just Buddhism in Confucian garb. Such grand metaphysical speculations, along with the excessive study of books, only served to generate unending and pointless scholastic debates. These led people away from concrete practice and toward a passive, inactive, and overly cerebral form of life.¹⁹

When the Confucian school talks about "broad learning"²⁰ they mean to learn ritual, music, archery, charioteering, writing and mathematics²¹ and extend this to classics like the *Changes* and *History*. In regard to these things they always say "learn" them. When they talk about the Zhou Nan and Shao Nan,²² they always say "do" [i.e., recite and practice] them. What the Confucian school means by learning and doing cannot be confused with what later generations call reading and discussing nor can ritual, music, archery, charioteering, writing, and mathematics be equated with commentaries and punctuation.²³

Yan also rejected quiet sitting as another obvious case of Buddhist influence. Like metaphysical speculation, it too led to inactivity, and all it ever produced were useless illusions.

That extreme calm can give rise to enlightenment is what the Buddhists call the “ultimate and extreme mystery.” But in reality all such impressions are like the reflections of flowers in a mirror or the moon on water—they only exist upon the vacuous surface [of the mirror and water]. If you try to illuminate something with the image of the moon or pluck the flowers, it will not work.²⁴

Yan Yuan responded to these bad tendencies within the Confucian tradition by trying to fuse together Neo-Confucian ideas about *li* and *qi* in a way that made it impossible to conceive of self cultivation as primarily a matter of “preserving” an original and perfectly pure endowment of *li* “principle” and “purifying” and guarding against the errant tendencies of our actual physical natures, i.e., our endowments of *qi*.²⁵ In order to undermine earlier descriptions of the relationship between *li* and *qi*, he offered an analogy between the “principle” of vision and the physical organ of sight.

The eye presents a good analogy. The socket, eyeball, and pupil are *qizhi* 氣質 “physical stuff.” The brightness within these that is able to see things is *xing* 性 “nature.” But can one then go on to say that the *li* 理 “principle” of vision sees only what is correct while the socket, eyeball, and pupil see only what is perverse? I regard the principle of vision as indeed endowed by Heaven. But the socket, eyeball, and pupil are also all endowed by Heaven. And so there is no point to distinguishing what is *tianming zhi xing* 天命之性 “Heavenly endowed nature” from what is *qizhi zhi xing* 氣質之性 “physical nature.” It is proper simply to say that Heaven endows people with the nature of the eye. . . .²⁶

Yan was seeking for a way to ensure that the focus of self cultivation would always consist in reshaping and training the physical human body and so he fought any tendency to conceive of our nature—and especially the good elements or aspects of it—as in any way separated from our physical embodiedness. He saw Song and Ming Confucians as the main proponents of precisely this kind of mistaken conception. Such views and practices departed from what Yan Yuan regarded as the proper early Confucian emphasis on the body and regular physical practice. The more ethereal, speculative theories of Song and Ming Confucians had eviscerated the tradition and enervated its later followers.

Yan Yuan advocated a method of learning that in important respects resembles Xunzi's *re-formation model*. Like Xunzi, he believed that self cultivation was very much an outside-in affair. One acquired virtue through repeated and concerted practice and inculcation, the accumulated effect of which shaped and transformed the self. Such a view entails a reverential attitude toward traditional norms, practices, and models, and so Yan was, like Xunzi, a cultural conservative. But there are significant differences between these two thinkers as well. While Xunzi endorsed the hands-on practice of the rites, he did not elevate the martial aspects of the tradition to the status they enjoy in Yan's writings. While Yan Yuan was clearly reacting to the more literary spirit of his and earlier times, as well as to the victory of the Manchus and other "barbarian" invaders, the result was a very physical—even macho—form of Confucianism.

Are you not aware of the fact that within Kongzi's school, they were never without their bows and arrows, their swords and scabbards, even in times of peace, and that dancing the War Dance,²⁷ with battle axes and shields, was always a part of their course of learning?²⁸

It is also important to note that Yan did not share Xunzi's view that human nature is bad; he explicitly endorsed and defended Mengzi's competing theory that human nature is good. Another difference between Xunzi and Yan Yuan concerns their respective views about the role that the intellect plays in the process of self cultivation. While Yan endorsed the study of classical texts, he does not manifest Xunzi's subtle appreciation of how, at more advanced levels of cultivation, a theoretical understanding of ritual and social norms plays an important role in shaping the self and justifying one's commitment to the Confucian Way.²⁹ Yan tends to show a much greater and comprehensive faith in the efficacy of ritual practice. Given these different features of his position, and particularly the preeminent status of ritual practice, I will refer to Yan Yuan's view as the *praxis model* of self cultivation.

Yan Yuan supported his general view of the tradition by showing how it relates to and explains a range of problems at the heart of Confucian philosophical debate in his time. For example, according to Yan, the true meaning of the term *gewu* 格物 supports the kind of hands-on practice of the traditional rites and related Confucian disciplines that he advocated. Contrary to what the Cheng-Zhu School maintained, to engage in *gewu* is not to discover some rarefied thing called principle, nor is it, as Wang Yangming claimed, to rectify one's thoughts. Rather, it is to *ge* "reach into" *wu* "things" by mastering the daily practice of the rites and norms of the Confucian way. That is to say, it was not a

theoretical discipline leading to understanding but a practical process that resulted in know-how.

One can understand Yan's view as a claim about what it takes to arrive at the same goal Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming worked toward—Confucian sagehood. But for Yan the unity of knowledge and action was realized when one gained the kinds of abilities that come only from reflective practice of a craft. As with the earlier thinkers whose thought we have explored, the main difference of opinion among these later Confucians concerns how to practice and realize a generally agreed-upon goal. Yan Yuan believed that Zhu Xi did not emphasize hands-on practice and practical problem solving enough while Wang failed to appreciate how much one must acquire from traditional norms and methods of practice.

Yan Yuan also insisted that his praxis model illustrated that the true and original meaning of the word *jing* 敬 “reverence” is more common-sensical than what Neo-Confucians—and in particular Zhu Xi—had claimed. Recall that for Zhu Xi *jing* meant something like “reverential attention.” He described it as the state of mind that one needed to be in in order to ensure that one's practice would be efficacious. Zhu Xi's conception of *jing* gave him a way of uniting the practices of *cura* 存心 “preserving the mind” and *dao wenxue* 道問學 “pursuing inquiry and study.”³⁰ According to Zhu Xi, these practices described efforts directed at two aspects or modes of the mind: the original mind and its subsequent activities. Yan rejected this elaborate and elegant scheme and insisted that *jing* simply meant to be focused on and serious about what one was doing. He accused Zhu Xi of importing Buddhist ideas into the original Confucian conception of seriousness and thereby divorcing it from its context of everyday practice.

The word *jing* “seriousness” is nice to look at, but its meaning has been obscured and corrupted by the influence of Chan Buddhism. The ancients taught [their students] to clean the floors and to clean them with a serious frame of mind. They taught them to respond to questions, to advance and retire, and to do these things with a serious frame of mind. They taught ceremonies, music, archery, charioteering, writing, and mathematics, instructing their students to determine the appropriate grade of ritual, set the proper musical pitch, shoot with resolute and settled intention, control the team with precision, compose each character with care, and solve every problem of multiplication and division precisely—to perform all of these tasks with a serious frame of mind. . . . And so it is said, “Be serious when carrying out your official assignments.”³¹ “Be serious in serving your ruler.”³² “Be careful and serious in your conduct.”³³

In all these tasks, and in everything one does, in body and in mind, one must be serious in every respect. But if one abandons the established methods of the ancients, and describes seriousness only in terms of quiet sitting, composing oneself, walking sedately, and speaking slowly, this is to use our Confucian word "seriousness" to do the work of Buddhism. Far indeed is this from the Way!³⁴

Such was Yan Yuan's diagnosis of the problems plaguing his age. But what treatment did he prescribe for these maladies? Essentially he advocated a return to simple, concrete practice. Yan did not conceive of moral self cultivation in terms of discovering and manifesting the *li* "principles" within the mind or engaging some innate capacity. He believed that the classics and traditional rituals contained the lessons for the acquisition of sagehood and the idea was to assiduously practice these lessons.³⁵ Sageliness was like a skill or a craft, one needed to study and practice in order to acquire it.

In one of many memorable passages, Yan Yuan compares mastering the Way to mastering the playing of the lute.³⁶ Clearly, he insists, one cannot master playing the lute by merely making a study of an instruction book about how to play the lute. In order to master the lute, one must actually pick it up and practice playing it, and one must do so until every nuance of the music it can produce flows forth effortlessly and without reflection from a heart that is well trained, harmonious, and in tune. Yan Yuan believed that the Song Confucians went so far as to confuse the classics (the instruction book) for the Way itself (the skillfulness or virtue of the sage). But the classics are not the *Dao*; they are books about the *Dao*.³⁷ In terms of his analogy with lute playing, the Song Confucians confuse the instruction book for the virtuoso skill of the master lute player. But the book itself does not produce the beautiful strains of the lute, only one who has mastered the instrument can do that. In the same way the classics are not the *Dao*; the actions of sages constitute the Way.

In another telling analogy, Yan Yuan illustrates this point by comparing self cultivation to the art of medicine—a profession he once pursued and considered as a career.³⁸ He draws out and focuses upon the distinction between those who know about the art of healing and those who know how to heal.

Medicine provides a good analogy. Huang Di's *Suwen*, along with the *Jingui* and the *Yuhan* are all works that make clear the principles of medicine.³⁹ But if one wants to heal the afflicted and save the world, then one must go out and feel pulses, prepare medicine, and apply acupuncture, cauterization, massage, and pressure. Now there are deluded individuals who only work at gaining an extensive

command of medical books. After they are well versed in the details of such works, they consider themselves to be world authorities on medicine. They regard feeling pulses, preparing medicine, and applying acupuncture, cauterization, massage, and pressure as mere "techniques" not worthy of study. Their collections of books grow broader each day and their understanding of them more refined. Everyone praises them and the whole world seeks to imitate them. The Qi Bo's and Huang Di's fill the world, and yet sick people lie side by side and the dead follow one another in succession!⁴⁰

Yan wanted Confucians to be practicing physicians, healers of their age, not scholars who could discuss the history of the profession. He insisted that the Confucian Way, like traditions of music and medicine, are disciplines that one must master through prolonged and concerted effort. "Studying" these disciplines involves practice, and "knowing" them entails special kinds of "know-how." While Yan tends to emphasize the role of practice to the detriment of theory, there is a sensible intuition at the heart of his ideal that is reflected in our own way of talking about what is now the profession of medicine; we too say that physicians *practice* their vocation.

Like others among his contemporaries, Yan Yuan was reacting to the proliferation of highly abstract and increasingly arcane philosophical speculation that had become the norm in his age. He believed strongly in the idea that people acquire virtue as a result of the daily practices that they pursue over time—what Alexis de Tocqueville called the "habits of the heart."⁴¹ It is easy to understand his impatience with those who ignored such practical endeavors and instead argued over subtle points of speculative philosophy during periods when China had lost or was losing ground to foreign invaders and the society was in turmoil. Like others before him, an underlying belief in the truth and the efficacy of Confucianism led him to identify improper methods of self cultivation as the ultimate source of these difficulties and to look back to the early tradition for guidance and inspiration. The result was an invigorating, even muscular form of Confucianism.

Notes

1. Yan Yuan is also known as Yan Xizhai 習齋. For a dated but still helpful introduction to his life and thought, see Mansfield Freeman, "Yen Hsi-chai. A 17th Century Philosopher," *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 57 (1926): 70-91. Fung Yu-lan describes several important aspects of Yan's philosophy in his *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 2, Derk Bodde, tr., reprint (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973): 631-50. See also the entry on Yan Yuan in Arthur

W. Hummel, ed., *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1944): 912-5. For an important essay criticizing modern attempts to appropriate Yan Yuan's thought as "materialistic," "revolutionary," "scientific," "pragmatic," etc., see Tu Wei-ming, "Yen Yuan: From Inner Experience to Lived Concreteness," in his collection, *Humanity and Self-Cultivation: Essays in Confucian Thought* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979): 186-215.

2. For example, when he married, in 1649, he did not sleep with his wife because he was observing Daoist longevity practices that prohibit sexual activity. See Yan's *Nianpu*, sui 15.

3. Yan Yuan did so in the mistaken belief that he was a member of the family surnamed Zhu. His mourning was so extreme that it endangered his health and led a member of the Zhu clan to disclose his true parentage. Yan resolved to use his true surname but deferred doing so until after the death of his foster grandfather, five years later.

4. For a translation of this important work, see Patricia B. Ebrey, tr., *Chu Hsi's Family Rituals: A Twelfth-century Chinese Manual for the Performance of Cappings, Weddings, Funerals, and Ancestral Rites* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

5. For an important early work describing this turn, see Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, *Intellectual Trends in the Ch'ing Period*, Immanuel Hsu, tr. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959). For a more recent study, see Yü Ying-shih, "Some Preliminary Observations on the Rise of Ch'ing Confucian Intellectualism," *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies* 11 (1975): 101-46. The most thorough and revealing introduction to this aspect of Qing thought and culture can be found in Benjamin Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

6. Among later commentators on the *Analects*, it was fairly common to invoke the idea that Kongzi's "not gaining an official position" offered an explanation for why he "transmitted rather than created" (*Analects* 7.1; cf. *Zhongyong* chapter 30.1). One finds further precedents for this notion in passages like *Analects* 8.14, 14.27 and *Zhongyong* chapter 28.

7. *Nianpu*, sui 30.

8. *Sishu zhengwu* 四書正誤 "Correcting Mistakes Regarding the *Four Books*," juan 3 in *Yan Yuanji* 顏元記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987): 174-5.

9. See Mansfield Freeman, tr., *Preservation of Learning* (Los Angeles, CA: Monumenta Serica of the University of California, 1972): 143-4. A similar explanation would later be advanced and used as a criticism of fellow Confucians by the Qing dynasty thinker Zhang Xuecheng. However Zhang extends this line of thought by adding interesting claims concerning the need

to grasp earlier and contemporary historical contexts in order to truly understand the *Dao*. For a discussion of Zhang's views, see David S. Nivison, *The Life and Thought of Chang Hsueh-ch'eng 1738-1801* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1966): 149-52.

10. *Cunxue bian* 存學編 "Preserving Learning," *juan* 1 in *Yan Yuanji*, p. 51.

11. *Cunxue bian*, *juan* 3 in *Yan Yuanji*, p. 73.

12. *Cunxue bian*, *juan* 3 in *Yan Yuanji*, p. 73. Xunzi also criticizes decadent Confucians for being physically weak and wimpy. For example, "Evasive and timorous, disliking work, lacking integrity, shameless, interested only in food and drink, they insist that 'a gentleman naturally would not engage in manual labor'—such are the base Ru of the school of Ziyou." Translation from John Knoblock, *Xunzi*, vol. 1, p. 229. Thanks to Eric Hutton for pointing out this passage to me.

13. For examples of such patterns on pottery, see K. C. Chang, *Art, Myth and Ritual. The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983): 83. For a discussion see pages 84-5.

14. Myth has it that Cang Jie invented writing by looking at the *wen* "patterns" of bird tracks and that this discovery marked the beginning of true culture. For a discussion of this account of the invention of writing, see Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1999). 272-4. Lewis also discusses the myth of Cang Jie and its relationship to earlier stories about Fu Xi's discovery of the trigrams of the *Yijing* on pages 199, 201, and 208. Lewis's work provides a magisterial study of the role written works played in legitimating authority in early China.

15. Chinese characters, especially when written with a brush, are aesthetic forms as well as a means for recording language. The degree to which Chinese culture evolved around this evocative written form further blends the senses in which *wen* can mean "pattern," "writing," and "culture."

16. *Sishu zhengwu*, *juan* 3 in *Yan Yuanji*, p. 190. Yu was the last of the early mythical sage-kings and founder of the Xia dynasty whose traditional dates are 2205-1766 B.C.E. The Six Arts composed Kongzi's basic curriculum. They were: ritual, music, archery, charioteering, writing, and mathematics. Yan's point is that Yu and other sage-kings, such as Yao, Shun, and early cultural heroes such as Fu Xi, Huang Di, and Shen Nong all lived long before the classics were composed. If "culture" is conceived of primarily in terms of such "writings," then most of the greatest figures in the tradition must have been bereft of culture.

17. For Wang's views about the mind, see pp. 60, 68.

18. For these aspects of Zhu Xi's thought, see pp. 47-9.

19. See Freeman, *Preservation of Learning*, p. 119 for an example of this

kind of criticism.

20. Here Yan is glossing a line from *Analects* 6.25, "[The master] broadens me with wen 'culture.'"

21. i.e., The Six Arts. See note 16.

22. The Zhou Nan and Shao Nan are the first two sections of the *Odes* and are often used to refer to the entire text.

23. *Cunxue bian*, *juan* 4 in *Yan Yuanji*, p. 97.

24. *Cunxue bian*, *juan* 2 in *Yan Yuanji*, p. 69. For another passage that compares such Chan-like practices to Song Confucians, see *Sishu zhengwu*, *juan* 3 in *Yan Yuanji*, p. 191.

25. Fung Yu-lan offers a good description of Yan's attempt to fuse the earlier distinction between *li* and *qi* and why ultimately it did not succeed. See *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, pp. 644-7.

26. *Cunxing bian* 存性編 "Preserving Human Nature," *juan* 1 in *Yan Yuanji*, p. 1.

27. For a description, see James Legge, tr., *The Chinese Classics, Vol. 3, The Shoo King*, reprint (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1970) 66.

28. *Cunxue bian*, *juan* 2 in *Yan Yuanji*, p. 58.

29. Yan was criticized for taking his emphasis on practice too far and failing to see the importance of theory by later Confucians. See Benjamin Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China*, p. 51.

30. See pp. 49-52.

31. *Analects* 13.19

32. *Analects* 15.37

33. *Analects* 15.5.

34. *Cunxue bian*, *juan* 4 in *Yan Yuanji*, p. 91. The four practices Yan describes were followed by Neo-Confucians as ways of cultivating "reverence." Yan implies that there is an obvious parallel between these and Chan practices designed to cultivate "mindfulness."

35. At one point, Yan criticizes Song Confucians as those who "create rather than transmit, who really do not trust in and love the ancients." Thus they are the mirror image of what Kongzi describes in *Analects* 7.1. For a discussion of the passage in the *Analects*, see p. 1. For Yan Yuan's remark, see *Sishu zhengwu*, *juan* 3 in *Yan Yuanji*, p. 191.

36. See Freeman, *Preservation of Learning*, pp. 145-6.

37. Here again we find an issue and line of inquiry that is later pursued

by Zhang Xuecheng. For a discussion, see Nivison, *The Life and Thought of Chang Hsueh-ch'eng 1738-1801*, pp. 150-1.

38. Yan began to study medicine in 1656 (see *Nianpu*, sui 22) and began to practice around two years later (see *Nianpu*, sui 24).

39. Huang Di, along with Qi Bo below, are ancient paragons of the medical profession and co-authors of the *Suwen*. The *Jingui* and *Yuhan* are other early works on the art of healing.

40. *Cunxue bian*, juan 1 in *Yan Yuanji*, p. 50. Cf. Freeman, *Preservation of Learning*, pp. 81-2.

41. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, George Lawrence, tr., J. P. Mayer, ed. (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1969), p. 287. For a contemporary study of American habits of the heart, see Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, reprint (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1986) and *The Good Society* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).