

A Way without a Crossroads

Confucius in his teachings in the *Analects* does not elaborate on the language of choice or responsibility. He occasionally uses terms roughly akin to these. But they are not developed or elaborated in the ways so characteristic of their central import in Western philosophical and religious understanding of man. To be specific, Confucius does not elaborate the language of choice and responsibility as these are intimately intertwined with the idea of the ontologically ultimate power of the individual to select from genuine alternatives to create his own spiritual destiny, and with the related ideas of spiritual guilt, and repentance or retribution for such guilt.

Precisely because we of the West are so deeply immersed in a world conceived in just such terms, it is profitable for us to see the world in quite another way, in Confucius's way. He was, after all, profoundly concerned to understand man and man's place in society. He was dedicated to defining and illuminating what we would call moral issues. He was a great and an original teacher. How, then, could Confucius omit this whole complex of notions centering around "choice" and "responsibility"?

We must recognize at once that the absence of a developed language of choice and responsibility does not imply a failure to choose or to be responsible. Some men were more responsi-

ble than others in Confucius's day as in ours. It is also obvious that men made choices in ancient China. I am not so sure we can speak as confidently about guilt, repentance or retributive punishment in the sense we use these words, but also the realities which we use these words to designate did not exist. The notion of punishment, which did exist in ancient China, was that of deterrent punishment—not due retribution to cleanse guilt, but a stern "lesson" or literal crippling which would deter future malfeasance.

However, without arguing this latter point here, we can allow that in the case of "choice" and "responsibility," the realities they designate did indeed exist. Yet, although we in the West have an elaborated language in which to express these realities and to trace out their inner shape and dynamics in detail, Confucius (and his contemporaries) did not possess such a language. And they had no significant concern with these moral realities so central to their contemporaries, the peoples of Greece and the Near East.

Perhaps the most revealing way to begin to bring out this "omission" is to consider the primary imagery in the *Analects*. It centers around the "*Tao*." *Tao* is a Way, a path, a road, and by common metaphorical extensions it becomes in ancient China the right Way of life, the Way of governing, the ideal Way of human existence, the Way of the Cosmos, the generative-normative Way (Pattern, path, course) of existence as such. (In the *Analects*, "*Tao*" never takes its rare but possible alternative sense as "word" or "speak.")

The imagery in the *Analects* is dominated by the metaphor of traveling the road. Written characters that occur typically and frequently in the text are those meaning path, way, walk, tracks, follow, go through, from, to, enter, leave, arrive, advance, upright, crooked, level, smooth, stop, position.

The notion of a Way is, not surprisingly, congenial to the central Confucian notion of *li*, rite or ceremony. *Li*, for Confu-

cius, is the explicit and detailed pattern of that great ceremony which is social intercourse, the humane life. The transition from the image of walking the true Path uprightly to carrying out a ceremony properly is an easy and congenial one. We may even think of *li* as the map or the specific road-system which is *Tao*.

It is easy, if one is so inclined, to develop this path-imagery to bring in the notions of choice, decision, responsibility. We should need only to introduce the derivative image of the crossroads, an obvious elaboration of *Tao* imagery to us. Yet this image, so perfectly suited, so plainly available for use as a metaphor for choice, is *never* used in the *Analects*.

Indeed the image of the crossroads is so natural and even insistently available as an element of any richly elaborated path-imagery that only the most profound commitment to the idea of the cosmos as basically unambiguous, as a single, definite order, could make it possible to ignore in the metaphor the image of the crossroads as a challenge to the traveler on the Way. This Confucian commitment to a single, definite order is also evident when we note what Confucius sees as the alternative to rightly treading the true Path: it is to walk crookedly, to get lost or to abandon the Path. That is, the only "alternative" to the one Order is disorder, chaos.

Where does one finally arrive if one follows the Way? Is there a goal that puts an end to the travel? The imagery of Confucius does not lead us to dwell upon the person arriving at a destined or ideal place, whether it be depicted as harbor, home or golden city. Instead, the spiritually noble man arrives at a condition rather than a place, the condition of following the Way without effort and properly. He arrives at that tranquil state that comes from appreciating that it is the following of the Way itself that is of ultimate and absolute value. Thus in this respect it does not take time to "reach" the goal since one does not have to arrive at any particular point on the map:

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to reach the goal is simply to set oneself to treading the Path now—properly, with correct appreciation of its intrinsic and ultimate significance.

One can be truly following the Way at whatever the level of one's personal development and skill in the Way, whatever the level of one's learning—for a wholehearted commitment to learning the Way is itself the Way for those who are not yet perfected in the Way. However, although the learner may be following the Way for the learner, he cannot rest; his burden is heavy for he is the apprentice, not yet the Master, the *jen* man, the man perfected in *li*, the truly noble man.

The basic conception of man in the *Analects* is that he is a being born into the world—more especially into society—with the potentiality to be shaped into a truly human form. There is, to begin with, the raw stuff, the raw material. This must be elaborated by learning and culture, shaped and controlled by *li*. Either this "cutting, filing, chiseling and polishing" (*ri*) is done well or poorly. If it is well done, through painstaking and properly directed effort by the person and good training by his teachers, then to that extent he will walk straight upon the Way. If there is a failure to shape according to the ideal, then by virtue of this defect he will deviate from the Way.

Thus there is no *genuine* option: either one follows the Way or one fails. To take any other "route" than the Way is not a genuine road but a failure through weakness to follow *the* route. Neither the doctrine nor the imagery allows for choice, if we mean by choice a selection, by virtue of the agent's powers, of one out of several equally real options. Instead it puts the task in terms of either using one's powers to walk the Way or being too weak, *without* power, and of going crookedly nowhere, falling or weaving about pointlessly in quest of the mirages of profit, advantage and personal comfort.

It is true that the Master said: "If a man doesn't constantly

ask himself, 'What about this, what about this?' I can do nothing about him." (15:15) Our own tendency, reading this isolated remark, may be to read this as a concern with choice. But it need not be so at all. It need not be read as "What about this—which of the alternatives, to do it or not to do it, shall I choose?" Instead, one may suppose that the notion of equally valid alternatives is not implied, that there is presumed to be only one right thing to do and that the question then means in effect, "What about this, *is* it right; *is* it the Way?" Put in more general terms, the task is not conceived as a choice but as the attempt to characterize some object or action as objectively right or not. The moral task is to make a proper classification, to locate an act within the scheme of *li*.

There are two passages in the *Analects* in which Confucius comments on a matter that can be rendered as a mind "deluded" or in "error" or in "doubt," but which Waley translates as a matter of "deciding when in two minds." Although Waley's translation makes choice or decision the issue, the Master's elaboration of the notion reveals, I believe, that Waley's rendering is misleading for purposes of a philosophical understanding of Confucius. In both passages (12:10, 12:21), the meaning is not that of a mind in doubt as to which course to choose but of a person being inconsistent in his desires or acts. Paraphrasing the theme of these texts: one wants someone—perhaps a relative—to live and prosper, but out of anger, one wishes that he perish or one actually endangers him out of a blind rage. In such conflict, the task is not posed as one of *choosing* or *deciding* but of distinguishing or *discriminating* (*pien*): the inconsistent inclinations. Furthermore, in each passage, we have no doubt about which inclination is the right one when we have discriminated one from the other. In short, the task is posed in terms of knowledge rather than choice. *Huo*, the key term in the passages, means here "deluded or

led astray by an un-*li* inclination or tendency." It is not doubt as to which to choose to do.

There is one other passage in the *Analects* that is of particular interest in connection with choice. More than any other passage, this one seems to me to present a situation where the issue, as we would define it, is one of internal conflict in the moral code, a conflict to be resolved by personal choice. We are told (13:18) of a man called "Upright" Kung whose father stole a sheep. Kung testified against his father. The Duke, who reports the case to Confucius, is proud of what he considers to be Kung's uprightness. But Confucius disagrees tactfully, remarking that in his country the son who would protect his father is the one who is considered upright.

The passage could be a model one for posing the need for choice between two conflicting moral requirements. A Westerner would almost inevitably elaborate on it by emphasizing that in this case we do have knowledge (it is right to respect the law; it is right to protect one's parents; both are profound obligations), but when two profound duties conflict, *we* must choose. And it is in this necessity to make a critical choice that lies the seed of tragedy, of responsibility, of guilt and remorse. But this way of seeing the matter, so obvious a possibility to us, is not even suggested by Confucius. It is the very obviousness of this view of the matter that makes Confucius's failure to show any recognition of it the more blatant. We could have no better proof than this that the problem of genuine choice among real alternatives never occurred to Confucius, or at least never clearly occurred to him as a fundamental moral task. Confucius merely announces the way *he* sees the matter, putting it tactfully by saying it is the custom in Li. There is nothing to suggest a decisional problem; everything suggests that there is a defect of knowledge, a simple error of moral judgment on the Duke's part.

We are supported in the view that Confucius saw nothing

distinctive in this sort of situation, i.e., the sort of situation that we see as distinctively posing a choice, by the fact that in all the *Analects* there is mentioned only one such case. We know there must have been many such situations in the actual daily life of the Chinese of those times—times of exceptionally great social turmoil and transformations. Furthermore, when we take into account Confucius's stature as a moralist and his insightfulness into human nature, his failure to see or to mention the problem of internal moral conflict in such a case as this can only be accounted for by supposing that his interests, ideas, concerns, in short his entire moral and intellectual orientation, was in another direction.

Any task that is as conceivable as that of *choosing* can also be formulated, instead, in terms of the Confucian task. This is the task of objectively classifying the *prima facie* alternative paths within the order of *li*, of discovering which is the true Path and of detecting which is only an apparent path, perhaps a clearing in the brush leading nowhere except into brambles. We need only make the tacit assumption that there *is* a Way, a self-consistent, self-authenticating way of universal scope.

The notion of choice as a central feature of man's existence is only one element in a closely related complex of notions, and the absence of such a concept of choice reflects the absence of the rest of this complex. Among the chief notions closely linked to choice are moral responsibility, guilt, deserved (retributive) punishment and repentance.

Sometimes when we speak of a person as responsible for something, we refer merely to his role as a critical causal factor in bringing it about. The problem of meaning here is complex, but the general drift in this usage is to treat responsibility as a matter of production or causality rather than moral obligation.

This causal notion of responsibility is quite familiar to the ancient Chinese. There is no lack of explicit discussion of the

question who or what brought about a certain state of affairs. But of course it is not discussed under a heading translatable as "responsibility." For the root sense of the latter term is the moral one, and its use with respect to mere causality is a de-moralized derivative use. The root of "responsible" is of course not "cause" or "produce" but "respond"; the root question is: Who must respond for the way things go? One who is obligated to respond for the way things go will have some actual or potential causal connection with the way things go, but not everyone who has a causal connection with the way things go is obligated to respond for how they do.

The intense concern of Confucius that a person should carry out his duties and act according to what is right reflects one aspect of our notion of responsibility. But if this were all that was characteristic of our notion of responsibility, it would be a redundancy—another way of saying that one should carry out one's duties and act rightly. What gives distinct content to the idea of responsibility is derived from the root "response." Herein lies the peculiarly personal commitment—I answer for this deed; it is mine—and this in turn links the notion of (moral) responsibility to those of guilt, deserved punishment and repentance. It is the one who must respond whose response may involve guilt, acceptance of punishment, repentance, restitution or merit, pride, reward.

The issues in the West can become confused because of a certain sort of utilitarian view to the effect that responsibility is ultimately a purely causal notion. On this view, "responsibility" ought to be considered merely as a matter of diagnosing past causes in order to influence future events; sanctions and reward are assignable anywhere in the human causal chain that promises future prevention. If present sanctions will deter future malfeasance, then they are justified; if sanctions will not deter, or if in a particular case they would increase tendencies to malfeasance, then countersanctions are indicated. The

ground for and value of repentance lie entirely in the future deterrent consequences of repentance, not in any relation to the moral aspect of the past deed. Such value as guilt-feelings have must on this view be justified by an analogous rationale. Subtler and more complex forms of utilitarian views have been emphasized in recent philosophical discussion, but these do not eliminate the possibility of the type of confusion so evidently generated by the simpler view. The fact that Confucius uses language that pertains to sanctions for law-breaking has led translators to render this as "punishment" and naturally misleads the unalerted reader to suppose that Confucius understood and used our concept of punishment (with its root implication of moral guilt).

The view that never appears in Confucius, the view that is peculiar to the Graeco-Hebraic-Christian tradition and for the most part profoundly contrasting with utilitarianism, is that punishment is justified not simply by its consequences but because it is *deserved* by virtue of what went before. Punishment is an appropriate moral response to prior guilty wrongdoing by a morally responsible agent. Repentance, in turn, is not simply a device which is appropriate or not depending on its psychological consequences; it is repentance *for* the past deed. Repentance is a moral response to a past wrongdoing for which one is morally responsible. Guilt is a moral (or spiritual) property accruing by virtue of accomplished wrong.

If punishment is given and received as a genuine moral experience, it is a kind of payment of a moral debt—a clearing of the slate. Of course a person may as a consequence also be inclined to be more averse to similar future wrongdoing, to the guilt-feeling it involves as well as to the quite nonmoral discomfort and the pain of the punishment. And if repentance is genuine, it constitutes an expression of repugnance with oneself for one's former course of conduct, an acknowledgment of moral guilt, and therefore it is expressed in a recommitment

to a different course in the future. Thus normally the *consequences* of guilt, punishment and repentance upon moral character and upon morality-related behavior are likely to be salutary. There is a utilitarian value here. But the moral *ground* for each, that which gives it its moral status, is the past wrongdoing for which one was (morally) responsible. Were "punishment," "guilt" and "repentance" to be unrelated to prior moral wrong for which the person was responsible, we would have social engineering rather than morality—and this was precisely why Confucius took the use of "punishments" as a main target and saw his own positive teaching as in direct contrast.

For Confucius moral education consists in learning the codes of *li*, in studying literature, music and the civilizing arts in general. One's own effort provides the "push," but it is the intrinsic nobility of the goal that provides the "pull." It is by *being* a spiritually noble man that the teacher—or Prince—draws others into the direction of the Way. It is the Way that has power, and this power is effortless, invisible, magical. It is characteristic of the *Analects* that in every case, except for one clearly late "Legalist" insertion (13:3), the use of sanctions and punishment is explicitly contrasted as the undesirable alternative to the use of virtue (*te*), of humanness (*jen*), of ceremonial propriety (*li*) and of such related strategies as "yielding" (*yang*). The *Analects* present the issue flatly: either one can govern by *li* and "yielding" or one can't (4:13); if one can't, then there is no use deceiving ourselves, and we might as well turn to "punishment," to sanctions and rewards. For these can influence people in a coercive way or by payment; but they are not truly human (i.e., moral) ways, nor do they establish a truly human life. Lacking any concept of moral guilt, or of moral responsibility as the ground for guilt and hence punishment as *moral* retribution, Confucius could see no humane potentiality in the use of sanctions.

We should not suppose that the contrary, pro-"utilitarian" point of view on these issues was alien to the Chinese mind of the times rather than being a view whose rejection by Confucius was distinctive of his own viewpoint. Confucius's outlook was in obvious contrast to that of a rival group which soon became very powerful, the so-called Legalists. Typically the latter taught that reliance on anything but the stick or the carrot was sentimental self-deception. They thought the moral approach a sham and ultimately a snare for the user.

For the tiger is able to subdue the dog because of its claws and fangs. If the tiger abandons its claws and fangs and lets the dog use them, it will be subdued by the dog. Similarly, the ruler controls his ministers through punishment and kindness (i.e., the "advantages" of "congratulations and rewards").¹

This Legalist text contrasts flatly with the Confucian teaching: the Master said, govern the people by regulations, keep order among them by punishments, and they will evade shamelessly. Govern them by moral force (*te*), keep order among them by ritual (*li*), and there will be not only shame but correctness (2:3).

There is tacit agreement, however, that punishment, if it has any role at all, has the purely utilitarian role of practical deterrent and not of moral desert. More to the point: the notion of punishment as *moral desert* does not even arise in either the *Analects* or Legalist thought. We must, therefore, avoid reading moral meaning into the term here.

Furthermore, as has been suggested already—and it now calls for more detailed comment—there is developed in the *Analects* no notion of guilt and repentance as a moral response to one's wrongdoing. It is recognized that one may regret for practical reasons one's previous actions; one may change

1. Han Fei Tzu (circa 350 B.C.), cited in Chan, *Source Book*, p. 256.

course and follow the Way. But the "inward" stain of guilt is absent. It will, as usual, repay us to consider in a little detail some apparent exceptions to this thesis, not merely in order to support the thesis but to see better how to read the text rather than reading our own ideas into the text.

One group of passages in the *Analects* deals with "shame" (*ch'ib*), another group deals with inner flaws; a final passage seems to call for inward self-accusation. All of these, therefore, at least suggest a quasi-explicit concern with moral responsibility and guilt-related notions.

One reference to shame (*ch'ib*) has already been cited: where one relies on punishment (i.e., fear), there is no shame; where one relies on *te*, there is shame. (2:3) *Te* may be rendered as the power of virtue, or as the virtue of one who is *jen* and follows *li*; it is the power or virtue inherent in the Way. It is to be contrasted with physical or coercive power. Thus the passage cited, as well as others, makes it clear that shame is conceived by Confucius as a moral response. And this raises the question whether the term *ch'ib* really amounts to "guilt" rather than "shame." *Ch'ib* is certainly the closest that Confucius comes to mentioning anything like guilt. The word, therefore, calls for careful examination.

The notion *ch'ib* occurs in several contexts. One group of remarks deals with the concern for or the possession of material advantages for themselves alone—e.g., good clothes, good food, wealth. [4:9; 8:13(3); 9:26(1); 14:1] These, when acquired by departing from the Way, deserve *ch'ib*. Another group of comments concerns one's public commitments and *ch'ib* from the failure to keep them. [4:22; 14:29(1)] Another group concerns *ch'ib* deserved for excess in speech, appearance, obsequiousness, pride and dissembling. [4:22; 5:14; 5:24; 14:29(1)] Finally, and more generally, *ch'ib* is a specifically moral response several times paired with disgrace (*yu*), and in these contexts it seems to be the analogue in private conduct of the

public officer's acting with disgrace in his official role. (1:13; 13:20)

If we are unaware of the crucial differences in perspective, these texts on *ch'ih* lend themselves easily to an assimilation of Confucian "shame" with Western "guilt." Yet the differences are crucial with respect to the issues that concern us here. Although *ch'ih* is definitely a moral concept and designates a moral condition or response, the moral relation to which it corresponds is that of the person to his status and role as defined by *li*. *Ch'ih* thus looks "outward," not "inward." It is a matter of the spoken but empty word, of the immorally gained material possession, of the excessive in appearance and in conduct. It is not, as is guilt, a matter of the inward state, of repugnance at inner corruption, of self-denigration, of the sense that one is as a person, and independently of one's public status and repute, mean or reprehensible.

It would be a basic error, however, to assume that shame is concerned with "mere appearances" rather than moral realities. The Confucian concept of shame is a genuinely moral concept, but it is oriented to morality as centering in *li*, traditionally ceremonially defined social comportment, rather than to an inner core of one's being, "the self." The violation of the moral order is thus of the essence in Confucian shame no less than in Western guilt. A personal response, a morally infused feeling-tone is also crucial in both cases. But the direction in which one turns to interpret and to deal with this feeling is different in the two cases. True, the ground for guilt is some immoral act or betrayal of someone other than oneself, but the object of guilt is oneself. Ultimately, guilt is an attack upon oneself, whereas shame is an attack upon some specific action or outer condition. Shame is a matter of "face," of embarrassment, of social status. Shame says, "change your ways; you have lost honor or dignity." Guilt says, "change yourself; you are infected." A St. Augustine can speak of the "disease of my

soul," of its "wound," of "sticking in the mire," of being plucked out of the mire and washed by God, of being soul-sick and monstrous. It takes no demonstration to remind even the casual reader of Confucius that such imagery, or analogous tone, is alien to the *Analects*.

There are two passages in the *Analects* that suggest moral corruption, which at first glance might be thought akin, say, to the corruption contemplated by Augustine. One passage is about Tsai Yu. (5:9) In this passage, how different in import from Orphic, Hebrew or Christian imagery is the imagery of Confucius. Tsai Yu is rotten wood which cannot be carved, a wall of dried dung which cannot be troweled, a man who sleeps all day. Here the active disease, the fulminating wound of Augustine, is replaced by a state of mere deadness, of passivity and inherent insensitivity to moral values. Tsai Yu is at the utmost stage of the loss of capacity to be a moral human being. But in Augustine's imagery, the intensity and dynamism of the corrupting guilt are the measure of the *vitality* of his moral concern and of his imminent conversion.

The second statement in the *Analects* about moral corruption does suggest inner sickness; it is to the effect that a man would naturally have no anxiety or fear if he looked within and found nothing ill (sick). [12:4(3)] But this is the single such use of the image of "illness." We can, I believe, treat this isolated comment about "illness" as an *ad hoc*, unelaborated metaphor, one which, unlike a number of others, receives no further sign of interest on Confucius's part. It certainly is not an enunciation or metaphor of a central doctrine. Its precise point remains therefore obscure, though we are not likely to feel this because the image is so familiar to us and has so rich a meaning for us in *our* usage.

There remain two other passages that call for comment here since they do explicitly call for an orientation "inward" and for "self-accusation." Confucius in one passage enjoins us to

look "in" ourselves when we see others who are not worthy. (4:17) In another place he bemoans the fact that no one is able to see his own transgressions and bring charges "within" himself. (5:26) Once again, our own rich background imagery of the inner life seems to make these passages stand as simple and plain evidence of Confucius's appreciation of the inner world of the self, of guilt or, as Legge suggests,² of conscience and of moral responsibility.

Perhaps the recognition that, together with the "inner ill" of 12:4(3), we find in the entire text of the *Analects* a total of only three such "inward-looking" comments ought to remind us to be more cautious in supposing that Confucius was talking of conscience and guilt. For if conscience or guilt are clearly appreciated at all, it must be clear that they are central to the moral life of most men. Why, if Confucius had in mind notions presupposing and stressing an "inner" life, should there be only three such references out of some 500 paragraphs (a number of which, in turn, treat more than one topic)? And why should these few references be so vague and unelaborated? We know that Confucius did not hesitate to repeat and to elaborate other notions such as *Tao*, *jen*, *te*, *li*, and the *Analects* as a whole and in all its detail is predominantly moralizing discourse, the kind that above all others invites elaboration of the themes of conscience, guilt and the inner life.

In fact these last two comments using the "look inward" image may be read in quite other contexts completely consistent with his main emphases. The comment in 4:17 tells us to concern ourselves with being like men who are worthy. But what of those men we meet who are not? The natural inclination in an age, like Confucius's of political in-fighting, social competition, military combat and contentious litigation, would be to seize upon the other's flaws, to hold them up to

the light, to relish doing so and to profit from them. Confucius admonishes us instead to look "in oneself" (4:17), to "bring charges in oneself." (5:26) The former comment is entirely vague and unelaborated. The latter saying may well have been uttered in the specific, and at the time, very common context where public accusation and litigation were being explicitly discussed. Quite naturally in such a context Confucius says, in effect, don't look for the splinter in the other fellow's eye; better to discover the beam in one's own. In its juristic imagery, Confucius's comment in 5:26 is also similar to Jesus' "judge not." But whereas the language of accusation, trial and judgment pervades both Old and New Testament, it occurs as a moral metaphor only this once in the entire *Analects*. We in the West know all too well the aptness of this metaphor, too, for the moral life; therefore, from its being used and thereafter ignored, I believe we must draw, once again, the inference that Confucius was systematically oriented in another direction and saw only an *ad hoc*, topical reference in the metaphor.

There are more positive grounds for taking this "self-accusation" to be an *ad hoc* metaphor on Confucius's part, a metaphor incompatible with his main orientation and used only in a special context for special purposes. Not only is the whole spirit of the *Analects against* litigation (punishments, regulations, etc.) but Confucius says explicitly that "what is necessary is that there be no litigation." (12:13) The standard use of the word "*sung*" to mean litigation rather than a moral stance, the negative attitude toward litigation, and the single use of it with a moral nuance in this one passage suggest strongly that this emphatically exclamatory sentence is to be taken in an ironic sense: people today are constantly squabbling with each other, instituting charges against the real and fancied misdeeds of others—"If they are so quick to bring charges, why is it that I've yet to see anyone who could see his own misdeed and bring the charge to himself?" (5:26)

2. See Legge, *Confucian Analects*, p. 183, note 26.

In the preceding commentary on the text, I have considered the possibility that Confucius does concern himself in substance with choice, responsibility, punishment as moral desert, guilt and repentance. The conclusions reached may be summarized as follows. Although the opportunity for explicitly and richly elaborating the notion of choice is latent in the central imagery of the Path, that opportunity is with remarkable thoroughness ignored. And, although there are isolated references to a moral illness, self-accusations, and inner examination—each potentially so fertile and apt for use by one concerned with responsibility, guilt and repentance—none of these is developed or in any way further remarked upon by Confucius. They remain isolated, *ad hoc* metaphors, very possibly with an ironic or topical meaning in their original context, a meaning now lost in the cryptic saying handed down to us. Finally, although there is more frequent and systematic reference to shame, this is associated with specific external possessions, conduct or status; it is a moral sentiment focused upon one's status and conduct in relation to the world rather than an inward charge against one's stained, corrupt self. The absence of the choice-responsibility-guilt complex of concepts, taken in the textual context, warrants the inference in connection with such an insightful philosopher of human nature and morality, that the concepts in question and their related imagery, were not rejected by Confucius but rather were simply not present in his thinking at all.

The language and imagery that is elaborated and that forms the main frame of Confucius's thought presents a different but intelligible and harmonious picture to us. Man is not an ultimately autonomous being who has an inner and decisive power, intrinsic to him, a power to select among real alternatives and thereby to shape a life for himself. Instead he is born as "raw material" who must be civilized by education and thus become a truly human man. To do this he must aim at the

Way, and the Way must—through its nobility and the nobility of those who pursue it—attract him. This outcome is not conceived as one that enhances a personal power as over against society or the physical environment, but rather as one that sharpens and steadies a person's "aim" or orientation to the point where he can undeviatingly walk the one true Way: he is a civilized human being. Walking the Way incarnates in him the vast spiritual dignity and power that reside in the Way. One who walks the Way rather than going astray, who does so "naturally," "yielding" rather than forcing, such a man lives a life of personal dignity and fulfillment, of social harmony with others based on mutual respect allowing to each just such a life.

Therefore the central moral issue for Confucius is not the responsibility of a man for deeds he has by his own free will chosen to perform, but the factual questions of whether a man is properly taught the Way and whether he has the desire to learn diligently. The proper response to a failure to conform to the moral order (*li*) is not self-condemnation for a free and responsible, though evil, choice, but self-reeducation to overcome a mere defect, a lack of power, in short a lack in one's "formation." The Westerner's inclination to press at this point the issue of personal responsibility for lack of diligence is precisely the sort of issue that is never even raised in the *Analects*.

To summarize finally in a schematic way, moral problems resolve into one of four forms for Confucius: (1) the wrongdoer is not well enough educated to be able to recognize and properly classify what is according to the Way and what is not; (2) the wrongdoer has not yet learned the requisite skills to follow the Way in some respect; (3) the wrongdoer has not *persisted* in the required effort (this is conceived as a matter of strength, not choice); (4) the wrongdoer knows enough to go through some of the motions, but he is not totally committed to the

Way, and he is then either erratic or he systematically perverts the outer forms of *li* to serve personal profit.

Confucius's vision provides no basis for seeing man as a being of tragedy, of inner crisis and guilt; but it does provide a socially oriented, action-oriented view which provides for personal dignity. Moreover, when we place the comments made here in the larger context of Confucius's view of man, a context further discussed in the other essays in this book, we see then that the images of the inner man and of his inner conflict are not essential to a concept of man as a being whose dignity is the consummation of a life of subtlety and sophistication, a life in which human conduct can be intelligible in natural terms and yet be attuned to the sacred, a life in which the practical, the intellectual and the spiritual are equally revered and are harmonized in the one act—the act of *li*.

3

The Locus of the Personal

There is no doubt that for Confucius "*jen*" is at least equal in importance to any other single concept such as *li*. Unlike *li*, however, *jen* is surrounded with paradox and mystery in the *Analects*. *Jen* seems to emphasize the individual, the subjective, the character, feelings and attitudes; it seems, in short, a psychological notion. The problem of interpreting *jen* thus becomes particularly acute if one thinks, as I do, that it is of the essence of the *Analects* that the thought expressed in it is not based on psychological notions. And, indeed, one of the chief results of the present analysis of *jen* will be to reveal how Confucius could handle in a nonpsychological way basic issues which we in the West naturally cast in psychological terms. The psychological, subjective use of *jen* in Chinese is a later development, a use whose import is exaggerated both by the profound psychological bias of Buddhist commentators and by the Western, Graeco-Christian outlook of translators. The truly novel aspects of Confucius's doctrine of *jen* are precisely what we need to see but fail to see because they are novel and hence not easily formulated in the psychologically biased language we have ready to hand.

Jen has been translated variously as Good, Humanity, Love, Benevolence, Virtue, Manhood, Manhood-at-Its-Best and so on. For various commentators *jen* has seemed to be a virtue,