

* Review Essay *

Recent Directions in Western Scholarship on the Confucian Classics and Their Commentaries: A Review Essay

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- Confucius and the Analects: New Essays.* Edited by Bryan W. Van Norden. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. Pp. x + 342.
- Zhu Xi's Reading of the Analects: Canon, Commentary, and the Classical Tradition.* By Daniel K. Gardner. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003. Pp. x + 226.
- Transmitters and Creators: Chinese Commentators and Commentaries on the Analects.* By John Makeham. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003. Pp. xi + 457.

As the earliest texts to attract scholarly attention in the West, the Confucian classics were long the mainstay of European sinological interest, although in the period roughly from the First World War to the mid-1980's there was a marked decline of interest in this topic. However, in the mid-80's a renewed interest in the Confucian classics arose, initially centered on the old standbys of scholarly and popular Western interest, the *Yijing* 易經, together with its Daoist counterpart, the *Daodejing* 道德經.

To China scholars in the West, the subsequent resurgence of interest in the *Analects* can hardly have escaped notice. Since the beginning of the 1990's, including reissues of earlier translations, over ten new or revised English translations of this classic have been published.¹ Although it is, of all the Confucian classics, the one

¹ The more significant of these are as follows: D. C. Lau, trans., *Confucius: The Analects* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1979); Simon Leys, trans., *The Analects of Confucius* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997); Chichung Huang, trans., *The Analects of Confucius* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr., trans., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine Pub. Group, 1998); David

which has had the most attention in the West, both in general readership and critical interpretations, the most recent crop of translations is exceptional. As if in response to this wave of translations, there has also been a subsequent increase in works of discussion and critical commentary on the *Analects*, exemplified by the three books under review. These three works are noteworthy, not only as an indication of ways in which the *Analects* itself is being approached in Western scholarship, but as representative of scholarly approaches with which the Confucian classics are being considered.

The most traditional of these approaches is that in which scholarly investigation is an exercise in determining the original, the correct meaning of a text. Although this may be the most traditional approach, the work under review that exemplifies it is the most challenging to traditional notions of the *Analects*. The second approach is one where the classics, in this case the *Analects*, are viewed as extensions of conceptual systems traditionally associated with Western thought.² This is done either by viewing the *Analects* through the lens of Western concepts, drawing it into that conceptual context; or by mining the *Analects* for notions that are foreign to Western ways of thought, thereby stimulating development of that context. The last of these three approaches is to consider the *Analects* as the object of one or more historical commentaries, wherein the commentaries are the primary focus of the analysis, rather than the text itself. This approach is perhaps the newest of the three since consideration of the genre of the Chinese commentary (*zhushu* 注疏) has been slower developing in Western scholarship.

In this essay I consider these three approaches in sequence, the first two as represented by essays from *Confucius and the Analects: New Essays*, which is a collection of recent essays edited by Bryan Van Norden, a professor in the Department of Philosophy and the Asian Studies program at Vassar College. With nine of the ten essays authored by professors with at least a joint appointment in a department of either philosophy or religious studies, its focus is on philosophical aspects of recent research on the *Analects*.

1. Seeking the Original Version

The essay, “Word Philology and Text Philology in *Analects* 9:1” is representative of a much more extensive body of work. Its authors, E. Bruce Brooks and A. Taeko

Hinton, trans., *The Analects: Confucius* (Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 1998); E. Bruce Brooks and A. Taeko Brooks, trans., *The Original Analects: Sayings of Confucius and His Successors* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Edward Slingerland, trans., *Confucius Analects: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 2003).

² Although the distinction between “Western thought” and non-Western thought may be increasingly difficult to maintain under critical consideration, I use it to the extent to which it is employed by the original authors.

Brooks, have been quite prolific in the past decade and the current essay is an excellent example of their iconoclastic approach to the Chinese classics. Their essay takes as its topic a single line from the *Analects*, one that has challenged commentators over the centuries and resulted in a variety of explanations, none of which seem completely convincing: “子罕言利與命與仁。” The main problem addressed by previous commentators on this line is that three discordant concepts are placed together as a select group of topics on which Confucius did not speak. These concepts are personal profit (*li* 利), which is always disparaged by the Master; destiny (*ming* 命), whose moral status is not clear; and benevolence (*ren* 仁), which is one of the poles of Confucian virtue. One of the previous interpretations that the Brookses reject is that of William Boltz,³ whose reading of this line might be paraphrased as: “Confucius rarely spoke of profit along with fate [or] along with benevolence.” The Brookses consider Boltz’s approach unsuitable since they fault his statement that this reading of the character *yu* 與 is the only way that it could be read for this time period, although this seems to overlook the fact that it seems to be a very plausible reading in this case since it clearly places the materialistic profit in opposition to the idealistic destiny and benevolence.

Since they accept none of the previous interpretations of this passage, the Brookses propose that there is a problem with the text. This problem, as they see it, is not simply an issue of minor textual corruption, which would be “Word Philology” as they put it in their title, rather it is an issue of lines that were deliberately added after the original composition of this chapter had been completed, which is what they consider to be “Text Philology.” This approach is based on a particular understanding of the process by which the *Analects* was edited into its current form. It is a view they present at much greater length in their book *The Original Analects*,⁴ and since their method in that book has been fully discussed elsewhere,⁵ I will not go into it at length here. But in summary, it has been criticized for its tendency to make revolutionary claims based on slight linguistic evidence, to see clear patterns that others might perceive as fuzzy, to give less consideration to philosophical understandings of the text in favor of broad-brush political interpretations, and to view the different schools of thinkers they see as contributing to this text as being highly consistent and unified bodies of thought. Although the Brookses display a comprehensive knowledge of the text and impressive command for the tradition of its scholarship, many scholars have questioned the nature of the process they posit, whereby chapters of the text were sequentially composed as complete units and transmitted verbatim to later

³ William G. Boltz, “Word and Word History in the *Analects*: The Exegesis of *Lun Yü* IX 1,” *T’oung Pao* 69.4-5 (1983): 261-271.

⁴ Brooks and Brooks, *The Original Analects*.

⁵ William G. Boltz, “Name and Actuality,” *China Review International* 6.1 (1999): 1-3; Edward Slingerland, “Why Philosophy Is Not ‘Extra’ in Understanding the *Analects*,” *Philosophy East and West* 50.1 (Jan. 2000): 137-141; David Schaberg, “‘Sell It! Sell It!’: Recent Translations of *Lunyu*,” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 23 (Dec. 2001): 115-139.

generations—with the exception of deliberate transpositions (which account for any and all materials that do not fit their precise chronological sequence). There are few scholars who would concur with them that the processes by which texts were assembled and transmitted in the late Warring States and the Western Han were that neat since the Brookses' vision of compilation seems to have little room for errors due to common occurrences such as missing bamboo strips, errors in copying, phonetic loan words, or partial transmission.

Their essay in this collection presents both the strong and the weak points of their method. After showing that this passage has been subject to numerous conflicting interpretations, they propose to analyze it in terms of its context, both in chapter 9 of the *Analects* and in that classic as a whole. To do this, they work not from the standpoint of linguistics or philosophical consistency, but from a detailed consideration of the form of the passages that comprise this chapter. They posit that this chapter can be divided into four groups of passages based on the subject matter of each passage,⁶ and that this passage along with several others does not fit into these categories.

So why was this passage interpolated after the original composition of this chapter and what does that tell us about its meaning? They contend that the passages in the *Analects* should be understood as coming from two groups of scholars. The earlier group was comprised of students who had been closely associated with Confucius and who were primarily concerned with the virtue of *ren*; while the later group was dominated by descendents of Confucius who were primarily concerned with details of ritual practice. It is this premise that is their basis for claiming that the passage which is the topic of their essay here was a transposition by the later group, who were trying to discredit Confucius' earlier teachings on *ren* by associating them with the less desirable profit and fate, and moreover saying that the Master had spoken little on any of the three.⁷

Their general proposal for a radical reinterpretation of the contents in the *Analects* may indeed go a long way to explaining apparent conflicting materials therein. But since they present little evidence outside material in the *Analects* for such a strong division of groups within the Confucian schools, their argument in this essay appears inherently circular. That is to say, their hypothesis about conflicting schools explains how the passage should be interpreted, and the interpretation of the passage confirms the hypothesis about competing schools. Although they develop

⁶ The four topics that they believe define the passages originally belonging to this chapter before later Warring States interpolations are: Culture, Confucius' Life and Teaching, The Pursuit of Virtue, and Conflicts in Government Office. These topics are hardly unique to this particular chapter of the *Analects*, but the Brookses see the original passages occurring thematically in sequence according to these four groups, with all of those referring to Culture coming first, followed by those referring to Confucius' life and teaching, etc.

⁷ It might be noted that Mark A. Csikszentmihalyi's historically verifiable claim that the *Analects* was used as a teaching material by the tutors to the Heirs Apparent in the late Western Han, could at least as well explain the presence of passages placing a higher value on *li* 禮 than on *ren*.

their argument in much greater detail in *The Original Analects*, even there it does not completely escape this problem.

But in sum, although some scholars question whether the Brookses' view of the composition of the *Analects* is a correct representation of how that text actually came to be, it is also worth remembering that being correct is not the only virtue of a line of scholarship. Certainly, the *Analects* has been subjected to a great many conflicting interpretations, and it seems to have survived them yet. On this point, we might consider the title of their signature work, *The Original Analects*. This was, I am sure, meant to refer to the fact that they were considering the *Analects* in its earliest, most correct version, the way it was "meant to be." But the word original also has another sense, that of being a novel creation, such as "a truly *original* work of art." If the Brookses would pardon my reinterpretation of their book's title, I would suggest that the latter meaning might better indicate the value of their essay. John Makeham makes the same point more eloquently in his (also generally critical) review, noting "the tremendous intellectual creativity and passion that distinguished this study as a tour de force of sinological virtuosity [that] promises a sea change in *Lun yu* studies."⁸ That it has indeed provided stimulus to these studies can be seen in that many of the other essays in this volume to a greater or lesser extent use its conclusions and methodology.

2-1. Peering through Modern Lenses

Although the Brookses' essay is the only one in this collection to focus so closely on the notion of the primal meaning, the next essay seeks both to find an original meaning, and to do so using a contemporary conceptual approach. With the second essay in *Confucius and the Analects*, originally published in the journal *Philosophy East and West*, we are presented with an entirely different way of considering meaning in the *Analects*. Kwong-loi Shun here presents a dense and tightly reasoned analysis to reinterpret the type of relationship that exists between the concepts *ren* and *li* 禮 within the *Analects*.

Shun addresses this topic as the continuation of a debate that has continued over the past thirty years, here formulating this problem as a choice between the *instrumentalist interpretation* and the *definitionalist interpretation* of the relation between these two most fundamental concepts in the *Analects*. By the instrumentalist relationship he means that the two concepts are distinct and independent, and that one of them can be used to develop the other: that is to say, by observing the rituals (*li*) properly an individual can develop benevolence (*ren*). By the definitionalist relationship he means that one concept is defined or delimited by the other: that is to say, what defines the notion of benevolence is observing the correct rituals. Shun points out that these two types of relation between *li* and *ren*, although they are mutually opposed, can each be substantiated by passages in the *Analects*. The importance of resolving this opposition can be seen in his observation that, according to the

⁸ Boltz, "Name and Actuality": 15.

instrumentalist interpretation, since the purpose of observing rituals is to develop benevolence, the rituals may be altered so long as they still promote benevolence; whereas according to the definitionalist interpretation, since the rituals define what is benevolence they should not be changed. Moreover, this can be considered as indicating the difference between a liberal view of society and a rigidly conservative one. Since Shun contends that, although parts of the *Analects* may indeed come from different hands, a general consistency should be observed through the text, he proposes a third type of relation to resolve this apparent opposition.

This third type of relation, one which remains unnamed, he presents in the form of two examples in order to demonstrate that it is possible to have a relationship that is neither of the first two and yet can describe the relation between *li* and *ren*. The first example he uses is marriage within a particular culture, where a specific ceremony is necessary for two persons to be considered as being in the proper state of marriage. This relationship between the ceremony and the state of marriage, Shun claims, is not instrumental: that is to say, the ceremony is actually not the cause of the proper state of marriage since in fact the two are inseparable and therefore essentially the same. Nor is this a definitional relationship since other forms of marriage in other cultures can also be recognized as constituting a proper marriage.

The problem I see with this example of Shun's third type of relation is as follows. To show that this type of relation is not instrumentalist, Shun initially posits that we are considering the case from the standpoint of a single culture, where "the only way of getting married is for the partners to perform certain motions" (p. 62). To show that this relationship is not definitionalist, he then considers the situation from a different basis, stating that "different communities may have different ceremonial procedures for the undertaking of such commitments" (p. 62). The flaw in this argument is that in order to show that his third type of relation is neither of the first two, Shun uses different contexts. The second context is where the recognition that there are other types of marriage ceremonies demonstrates that the relation is not definitional; but it can only be effective based on the first context, which posited a limited universe of marriage ceremonies in each community. For consistency between these two contexts, I think that the second context would be more accurately considered as a larger macro-community composed of sub-communities. Each of the sub-communities has its own limitations to the marriage ceremony; but from the view of the larger community, the total of the marriage rituals of the sub-communities would delimit, and in that sense define, what can be considered a proper marriage.⁹ So it appears that Shun's marriage example for the third type of relation can be considered definitionalist.

The second example Shun presents for his non-instrumental and non-definitional relation is that of language, using a linguistic example of the relation

⁹ This problem with Shun's example might be illustrated by the fallacious counter-example of a sailor with one wife in Tahiti and one in England, but who does not consider himself a bigamist since the laws and ceremonies of each country differ.

between “the mastery of a concept and the mastery of a corresponding linguistic practice” (p. 63). If we master a concept in one language, Shun would claim that this cannot effectively be separated from having ability in that language to express the concept, and thus the relationship cannot be considered causal. Shun states: “Within [a linguistic] community, mastery of the corresponding linguistic practice is not only necessary, but also sufficient, for the mastery of the concept; . . . we cannot make sense of a member of the community that has one but not the other of the two capacities” (p. 63). This lack of independence would demonstrate that the relation is not instrumental. This seems to some extent tenable, although it may be possible to think of counter-examples. The primary flaw, I think, in Shun’s example is that he considers mastery of a concept and linguistic ability as being already accomplished states, and so of course they cannot have a causal relationship; whereas in fact they are learned gradually in a reciprocal fashion. For example, my five-year-old son certainly observed that a toy would rest on the surface of the water before he had the linguistic tools to express his initial understanding of the concept of floatation.¹⁰ Thus, mastery of a concept is to some extent both independent of and necessary for the linguistic ability; and so Shun’s demonstration that his third type of relation is not causal might be questioned.

Shun’s demonstration that the linguistic example for his third type of relation is not definitional, similar to his marriage example, is that concepts can be expressed in different languages, and so linguistic practice in one language does not define a concept. For example, the English and Chinese languages, which clearly differ in many respects, both contain concepts of the past. Clearly, “*zuotian* 昨天” and “yesterday” differ very little as concepts, which Shun would take as evidence that the relation between concept and language is not definitional. This I would question on the basis of what in this case constitutes separate languages, similar to my question of separate communities for the marriage ceremony. My point is that we only can know that these two linguistic practices stand for the same concept to the extent that Chinese and English are combined as essentially one linguistic meta-system for an individual with capabilities in both languages. And thus the combined linguistic term *zuotian*-yesterday could be considered definitional of that concept for an individual with abilities in only those two languages. For the language practices (i.e. terms) to not be definitional, the language systems must be truly separate, and if they were truly separate then they would not be mutually intelligible, and so we could not know that the concepts were the same.

In sum, it would certainly be desirable to find a common ground between the two poles of instrumentalist and definitionalist understandings of the relationship between *li* and *ren* in the *Analects*, to find a type of relation that would work better to bring some consistency to the different ways in which these two concepts are presented. But this is a goal that assumes there is an inherently consistent meaning to concepts in the *Analects*, a core original meaning, and this assumption is brought

¹⁰ Shun also notes that “it is a subject of controversy whether mastery of concepts is generally dependent on mastery of corresponding linguistic practices” (p. 63).

into question in other of the essays in this collection. Shun's proposal for a third type of relation is a move to find this common meaning, although the extent to which the alternative type of relation he presents here to reconcile apparent conflicts is actually distinct from the two previous types of relation seems open to question in some respects.¹¹

The next essay, "Unweaving the 'One Thread' of *Analects* 4:15," is similar to that of the Brookses in that it also considers a single passage from the *Analects*, proposes that it may be a later interpolation and suggests a new interpretation for it. But its means for doing so differ greatly and its objective lies in accommodating the *Analects* to current thought, rather than simply recreating its original meaning. Bryan W. Van Norden, the editor of this collection, here considers how we can understand this passage from a much broader view of the possible interpretations of Confucius' thought, its development during the compilation of the *Analects*, and its significance in the contemporary world of philosophy. The passage that he considers is from *Analects* as follows:

子曰：「參乎！吾道一以貫之。」
曾子曰：「唯。」
子出，門人問曰：「何謂也？」
曾子曰：「夫子之道，忠恕而已矣。」(4:15)¹²

On one hand, the essential problem grammatically in this passage lies in the way that the first line (吾道一以貫之) is to be understood, and there are two lines of interpretation that Van Norden refers to. First, there is the understanding that, in effect, takes 一以 as 以一, so that this line might be read as "My Way uses one [aspect] to connect the [myriad things of the world]." The connective "aspect" here would be principle (*li* 理) according to Xing Bing 邢昺 (932-1010) and heart-mind (*xin* 心) according to Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200). There is also a second understanding to this line, as put forth by Dai Zhen 戴震 (1723-1777) and William Legge that reads this line as speaking of an essential unity pervading Confucius' teaching that binds it together.

On the other hand, the problem that Van Norden finds in terms of meaning lies in the final line (夫子之道，忠恕而已矣), which indicates that the Master's Way is composed solely of loyalty (*zhong* 忠) and concern for others as yourself (*shu* 恕). This is problematic since *zhong* and *shu* are clearly two virtues, not one, as the first interpretation of the first line would have; and these two virtues are mentioned very seldom in the *Analects*, which makes them seem strange candidates for the unity of the

¹¹ Shun notes that previous versions of this essay have benefited from the comments of persons much better qualified than I to discuss it, including David Nivison and the anonymous reviewer for *Philosophy East and West*. Thus, it may be that his argument stands on points other than those that I have criticized above.

¹² For consistency, the punctuation for quotations from the *Analects* is taken from D. C. Lau, trans., *Confucius: The Analects*.

Master's way.

Faced with this conundrum, Van Norden uses a tactic similar to the Brookses of viewing this passage as an interpolation, in this case by students of Zengzi 曾子 (505-436 B.C.) attempting to bolster the standing of their teacher. This claim might be questioned from several standpoints. Even if one accepts the notion that the *Analects* was codified into its final form essentially finished chapter by finished chapter (with the exception of interpolations), problems remain. For example, what was the standing of Zengzi's students: how would they manage to sneak a passage into an already completed chapter without it being removed by editors at that time? And if the passage in question was intended to increase the reputation of Zengzi, wouldn't it have been written to do so more effectively: if this passage were designed to demonstrate Zengzi's understanding of his teacher, why would it do so by introducing two concepts that are rarely seen in the *Analects*?

Overall, we should also note that the question of whether or not this is an interpolation, although it occupies a large portion of this essay, is actually not essential to the point that Van Norden is making here. Even if it was not an interpolation by Zengzi's students or others, its meaning and relation to the rest of the *Analects* is suspect and has not been satisfactorily resolved, and there could be other more likely explanations for the difficulties in its interpretation. Van Norden's point, which he derives from reviewing the way that the meaning of the terms *zhong* and *shu* relate to concepts in the *Analects*, is that we should not look to this passage if we are searching for an overall continuous thread of meaning or a sense of unity of purpose in the *Analects*. More importantly to his essay, Van Norden contends that the sense of an organized view or theory of virtue, one that he considers fundamental to Western philosophy as early as Plato and Aristotle, is foreign to the *Analects*: a point well worth further consideration.

And indeed this theme is picked up in the next essay, by Lee H. Yearley, who states this clearly as: "we face in the *Analects* a classically indeterminate text, a text that can support either no single interpretation or a number of coherent ones" (p. 237). Based on this observation, Yearley uses an interpretive tactic based on Western philosophical notions to understand concepts in the *Analects*; in his essay titled "An Existentialist Reading of Book 4 of the *Analects*."

Now by "existentialist," Yearley is referring to the nineteenth century line of thought relating to Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and his associate, the Biblical scholar Rudolph Bultmann (1884-1976). The contribution of Bultmann that Yearley uses in this essay was his "demythologizing" of the New Testament, by which he referred to the process of realizing the mythic characteristics in a religious text and then separating the textual materials from their mythic form so they can better be used to clarify either the materials' real meaning or their meaning as applicable to contemporary situations. In this sense, Yearley is considering "the *Analects* as if it is a sacred text about a founder" (p. 240), employing notions of religion and mythology developed for use in Biblical criticism.

To clarify the way that he here uses the term “existential,” Yearley uses the dual definition of *existential* understanding and *existentiell* understandings. The difference between these two terms is that an *existential* understanding is “a worked out understanding of the ontological structures of existence” (p. 252). In contrast to this, an *existentiell* understanding is “inseparable from one’s most immediate understanding of one’s self as a person. It is an act of thinking [inseparably] connected with an act of being” (p. 252). The primary example of this that Yearley uses is the difference between “seeing death as a part of the ontological structure of human life and facing death as a part of your own grasp of who you are” (p. 252).

Yearley’s choice of Chapter 4 of the *Analects* for discussion is based on the Brookses’ analysis, which considers this to be one of the earliest, perhaps the first of the chapters to be completed, shortly after the death of Confucius, and therefore the one most representative of the Master’s thought. The passage that most clearly indicates Yearley’s use of an *existentiell* understanding is 4:8, which laconically states: “子曰：「朝聞道，夕死可矣。」” The translation of this passage that Yearley uses is “If one hears about the Way in the morning, one may die in the evening;” with the assumption that hearing about the Way refers to understanding it, and that death indicates a peaceful acceptance of it.

The three mythological aspects to this brief passage that Yearley points out are: 1) the narrative form in which an event in the morning leads to a resolution in the evening; 2) the use of a mythic time that is “both removed from ordinary processes and yet also fundamentally relevant to them” (p. 265); and 3) the passage’s concern with an “any person,” whose general significance is greater than his particular characteristics. When these mythic characteristics are seen as such, it becomes easier to perceive this passage in existentialist (or to be more precise, *existentiell-ist*) terms. This view of death is characterized by Yearley as a direct facing of frailty (p. 264) and a “coming to terms with the apparently broken, often fragmentary character of human life . . .” (p. 263). It is also involved with “the fundamental human need to achieve ‘recognition’ (*Anerkennung*)—to be seen by others as having integrity” (p. 263).

On one hand, Yearley uses this view to seek a further understanding of the passage in its original context by noting that this understanding of the import, the significance of the Way, leads to an inner acceptance of the inevitability of death. This acceptance leads to a broader view of human life that, most significantly, enables us to understand the notions of virtue that are presented in the preceding passages of this chapter from the standpoint of performing them as expressions of the self, rather than for gains of moral or other capital. As an example of this, we could consider

君子去仁，惡乎成名？君子無終食之間違仁，造次必於是，顛沛必於是。(4:5)

The translation for this that Yearley uses is: “If nobles forsake virtue how can they make names for themselves? Nobles never desert virtue, not even for as long as it takes to eat a meal. If they hurry and stumble, one may be sure that it is in virtue that they do

so.” Thus this passage seems to clearly present the characteristics Yearley identifies, such as the awareness of virtue as an inalienable part of oneself and the need for recognition of this to occur.

On the other hand, Yearley then considers the passage in terms of its applicability to approaching an *existentiell* understanding of current human situations. In this context, the confidence presented by knowledge of the Way can enable “virtuous people both to see clearly the frailty of what they are about . . . and yet also to continue to embrace the significance they do have” (p. 265). As such, this is perhaps the most successful of the essays in this vein that presents the *Analects* as seen through Western concepts.

The final essay in this line of thought also relates to a significant term in the *Analects*, and here the term is Heaven (*tian* 天). But in contrast to the other essays, “What Does Heaven Say?” considers Western interpretation of Confucian thought in a specific European historical context. Robert B. Louden looks at notions of Confucian thought that were connected to debates in eighteenth-century Europe over religion in China—or the lack of it. Based on this, he draws conclusions as to the pitfalls of cross-cultural understanding.

The principal actor in this essay, Christian Wolff (1679-1754), one of the central figures of the German Enlightenment, created a political and philosophical controversy by his 1721 lecture entitled “Discourse on the Practical Philosophy of the Chinese.”¹³ The controversy was, at least in part, due to the fact that Wolff claimed Confucius “is esteemed today by the Chinese just as much as Moses is by the Jews, Mohammed by the Turks; yes, just as much as Christ is by ourselves, to the extent that we regard him as a prophet or teacher, given to us by God” (quoted on p. 73).¹⁴ Moreover, Wolff contended that the ancient Chinese, although they were “free from all religion,” practiced virtue based only on the force of nature, not based on religion. As a result, Wolff was not only dismissed from the University of Halle, but in fact expelled from Prussia under threat of execution.

Louden shows that Wolff, however, did not actually hold Confucius in especially high regard as an enlightened moral teacher, and he considered that Confucius, along with the rest of the “ancient Chinese,” had no clear idea of a Creator of the world, and therefore had nothing that could be called natural religion. To evaluate the actual degree to which Confucian thought might be considered religious, Louden considers the way that the concept of Heaven is understood in the *Analects*. He finds that, although the concept is not entirely consistent, the *Analects*’ understanding of Heaven as “a more-than-human power that is believed to give moral values and obligations a deep grounding entitles us to call Confucius ‘religious’” (p. 79). Louden

¹³ Following Louden, I use English translations for titles of works.

¹⁴ One inflammatory aspect to this statement beyond Louden’s sinological point that Christ is referred to in the same context as Confucius, Moses and Mohammed, is that Christ is moreover referred to as merely a “prophet and a teacher,” which would be demeaning and potentially heretical reference to one properly considered as the Son of God.

then goes on to show that Wolff had “read his own ethical theory into Confucianism at nearly every available opportunity, and his resultant interpretations of what Confucius was up to are severely strained.” Based on this observation, Loudon reminds us of the difficulties in cross-cultural understanding and the need for us to “put our own philosophical agendas on hold” (p. 85).

This point is of course well taken, as may be Loudon’s indication that the Confucian notion of the relation between religious spirit in the *Analects* and the notion of morality may be a further contribution to the contemporary discussions of ethics. But I think that we might draw a further point from the material he presents. Loudon’s point is that Wolff misread the *Analects* to support his contention that there was no natural religion in ancient China. The problem here is that what Loudon claims to be the religious aspect actually expressed by the notion of Heaven in the *Analects* is not the same as the natural religion that Wolff thought Confucius lacked. Wolff in fact defined his notion of religion clearly: “Natural religion consists in worship of the true God, who is known through the light of reason as derived from His attributes and works” (quoted on pp. 82-83).¹⁵ Now, if the *Analects* contains the notion of worshipping Heaven or of a rationally understood Heaven through its works, including the Creation of the world, Loudon does not demonstrate it. This, I think, is a reminder of the critical importance of terminological clarity, especially when dealing with concepts in a cross-cultural context.

2-2. The *Analects* as Corrective

The first of the essays illustrating how concepts found in the *Analects* can be used to supplement Western notions is “Naturalness Revisited: Why Western Philosophers Should Study Confucius.” Here, Joel Kupperman returns to a topic on which he originally published in a 1968 issue of *Philosophy East and West*,¹⁶ although the essay included in the current collection is significantly revised from the original article, comprising essentially a new work. The changes are not so much in Kupperman’s conclusions, but in further developing his line of thought to include recent advances in Western philosophy that bear on his points drawn from the *Analects*.

But just what is this quality that Kupperman denotes with the word naturalness? He describes it as “a certain ease of behavior, an absence of strain: the agent is reasonably comfortable with her or his behavior, and there is no conflict between the behavior and what the agent normally is like” (p. 44). This seems to be a workable indication of how this word is used in English and since it might literally include the way that an undesirable person “naturally” behaves in undesirable ways, Kupperman goes on to clarify this notion as how a “reasonably well brought-up person” would

¹⁵ Based on other passages from Wolff quoted in Loudon’s essay, “works” would include the Creation of the world.

¹⁶ J. J. Kupperman, “Confucius and the Problem of Naturalness,” *Philosophy East and West* 18.3 (Jul. 1968): 175-185.

thank another for a favor simply and without second thought. This aspect of the roles of training and education is certainly also significant in the *Analects*, and it is one that could further strengthen and clarify the argument that Kupperman is making.

The text Kupperman uses for his investigation is a combination of English-language translations of the *Analects*, and he presents only a few keywords in Chinese. The theme of this paper, naturalness, is in fact the word *he* 和, based on William Edward Soothill's 1910 translation of the key passage for this essay, *Analects* “禮之用，和爲貴” (1:12) as “In the usages of decorum it is naturalness that is of value” (quoted on p. 42). In contrast, the other translators Kupperman consults, Waley and Lau, both use the term “harmony,” while Legge uses “natural ease.” Moreover, the term naturalness in English also has a strong sense of the unfabricated, as indicated by Kupperman's clarification that this is not the sense in which he takes it. In some places Kupperman does use the term “harmony” together with naturalness, and although this may point us more in the right direction, it is not yet clear. Furthermore, this lack of terminological clarity is compounded by Kupperman's following Soothill's choice of the term “nature” to render *zhi* 質 in the passage “質勝文則野，文勝質則史。文質彬彬，然後君子。” (6:18) In his original article on this topic, Kupperman distinguished his use of the term naturalness from Daoist uses, while in the current essay he does not bring up that issue. Although this elision helps avoid opening a much larger debate, I wonder if it might not have been clearer to choose a term other than naturalness, one that was not so closely tied to other philosophical territory.

In addition to issues of terminology, the article might have been stronger with more consideration of the textual context for its passages regarding naturalness-harmony. In Kupperman's key phrase, quoted above, the full passage is:

有子曰：「禮之用，和爲貴。先王之道，斯爲美，小大由之。有所不行，知和而和，不以禮節之，亦不可行也。」

However, Kupperman gives little attention to the first phrase, 「禮之用」, which indicates that Confucius' high valuation of naturalness/harmony (*he* 和) is in particular for the “uses of decorum” (Soothill) or “the rules of propriety” (Legge)—not necessarily as a general direction for living, as Kupperman takes it. And moreover, we should also note that the passage which directly follows on this states that there are limitations on situations in which naturalness/harmony should be implemented: “There are instances where it should not be practiced: knowing natural harmony and being naturally harmonious without the limitations of decorum—this should not be practiced.” (有所不行，知和而和，不以禮節之，亦不可行也) The sense of decorum (*li* 禮) is such a fundamental concept in the *Analects*, and in this passage has such clear association with naturalness/harmony, that it might strengthen Kupperman's argument greatly to give this further consideration beyond his relatively brief mention of *li* (p. 48). Not only would it present a clearer picture of the subtleties of this Confucian concept, but it would present naturalness/harmony as a concept that differs

even more dramatically from Western philosophical notions than the naturalness that Kupperman presents.

Finally, I would return to my previous line of discussion and note another phrase that follows Kupperman's key passage on naturalness, quoted first above, that "this is the beauty in the way of the earliest kings" (先王之道，斯為美). Notions such as the way of ancient kings are quite foreign to Kupperman's presentation of naturalness since he has translated this term not only linguistically but also culturally, bringing it into the range of conceptual currency that is now in circulation. It may be said that this is hardly a new move; for example, as Makeham points out in *Transmitters and Creators*, one of Zhu Xi's goals was to have readers experience the teachings of the *Analects* directly and personally. It is also a move that is to some extent necessary if the comparative exercise is to be practiced. But at the same time, I think we may regret the loss of strangeness in the original text, a strangeness from the world we are familiar with.

Despite these points regarding the way Kupperman treats this theme in the *Analects*, in essence his main points are well taken. Overall in the *Analects*, the emphasis on working for a balance between extremes (naturalness / harmony) is of undeniable importance; and the significant details of how the Master comported himself, his "style" to use Kupperman's word, are a recurrent topic. Thus, this sense of a behavior that is at ease at the same time it is constrained that is part of the foundation for a philosophical construct does indeed differ from the Western thinkers that Kupperman discusses, giving us a better perspective on their work.

The second essay in this corrective line is "Conformity, Individuality and the Nature of Virtue: A Classical Confucian Contribution to Contemporary Ethical Reflection," by Stephen A. Wilson.¹⁷ Wilson's discussion of *ren* and *li* shows how these concepts in the *Analects* express the tension between the primacy of the individual and the matrix of society, rather than the structural relationship between *ren* and *li*. In addition, the contribution of Wilson's essay derives from his considerations of two significant interpretations of this issue in its English-language scholarship, rather than on intensive examination of passages in the *Analects*. Wilson's essay, like that of Shun, uses the structure of thesis-antithesis-resolution to compare two conflicting previous understandings of these concepts (in Shun's essay, these are the instrumentalist and the definitionist interpretations), and then proposes a middle way to resolve this conflict.

The two previous interpretations of the *Analects* that Wilson considers are contained in *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred* by Herbert Fingarette¹⁸ and *Thinking Through Confucius* by David A. Hall and Roger T. Ames,¹⁹ both of which have played significant roles in the cultural translation of this Confucian classic into the realm of

¹⁷ This essay was originally published as "Conformity, Individuality, and the Nature of Virtue," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 23.2 (Fall 1995): 263-289.

¹⁸ Herbert Fingarette, *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

¹⁹ David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking through Confucius* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987).

contemporary Western philosophy. Fingarette's interpretation strongly emphasizes collective values and the central importance of *li* to shape "the members of a community to fit certain antecedently valued patterns of interaction" (p. 97). Moreover, he gives to tradition the primary role for arbitrating what is correct, considering accepted tradition to be "the beginning and end of how the *li* are justified" (pp. 97-98). Wilson there criticizes this relatively one-sided view since it overlooks or denies any metaphysical content in the *Analects*. Although there are certainly passages in the *Analects* that could be read as indicating Confucius' lack of interest in metaphysical concerns, Fingarette takes this direction to the point where Confucius "slights the individual side of full human flourishing" (p. 99). In terms of Shun's dichotomy between instrumentalist and definitionist approaches, Fingarette would be considered highly definitionist since he claims that *li* is important, not because it gives rise to *ren*, but because it constitutes and therefore defines what is traditionally defined as *ren*.

Hall and Ames, on the other hand, view tradition—and by extension, *li*—as malleable in the quest for *ren*, for a particular *ren* that is appropriate to the individual who is seeking it. Although the notion of appropriate application of *li* is clearly present in the *Analects*, Wilson describes Hall and Ames' extension of this by using the analogy of a jazz musician, who has the freedom of improvising on songs and styles according to individual expression. In contrast to Fingarette, this is an extremely instrumentalist view since it values the effect that *li* produces on the practitioner, with little concern for the definition or delimitation of *li*. Wilson faults Hall and Ames' extreme view of *li* in the *Analects* since it overlooks the necessity for a firm basis of tradition in order to maintain a language of *li* that is mutually intelligible to the participants, and by extension slighting the value of community.

Wilson's resolution to the extremes of these two views of the *Analects*, based on his reading of how *li* is treated in that text, has two aspects. First, one can practice *li* in order to cultivate one's personality through its virtues, even though one may have little understanding of how this might operate. And secondly, as one achieves a mastery of *li*, it is practiced for its own sake with little sense of separation between it and the practitioner.²⁰ This resolution, in itself, does not seem to go significantly beyond views already put forth, for example those of Tu Wei-ming 杜維明,²¹ and I think the main contribution of this essay lies instead in the way this understanding of Confucian

²⁰ This latter aspect might be identified with the quality Kupperman referred to in the first essay as naturalness or harmony.

²¹ Although Wilson mentions Tu's synthesis between "spiritual individualism and ethical socialism" briefly in a note (p. 112), a fuller passage—based on another of the Confucian Classics—is illustrative of the similarity of his synthesis: "We can also regard morality as a way of maintaining the community on a certain level of solidarity and in a certain degree of 'benevolence.' And as has been shown *Chung-yung* does recognize the instrumental value of morality as a necessary condition for political stability and as an active force for social integration." See Wei-ming Tu, *Centrality and Commonality: An Essay on Confucian Religiousness* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 68.

values is applied to Wilson's own field, that of contemporary virtue ethics.

Here Wilson goes beyond Kupperman, to show how views contained in the *Analects* may be novel to and worthy of attention from Western scholars of virtue ethics, pointing out three specific shortcomings that they may overcome: The slighting of individuality within society,²² excessive concern with political control of the individual,²³ and utilitarian concern with the individual actor.²⁴ In sum, Wilson calls for a "virtue approach to ethics" that goes beyond the conflict between rights of the individual and the matrix of society. This would be a Confucian-derived virtue that would involve moral actions that are performed: 1) for their own sake, without the hope of profit and 2) with naturalness and enjoyment in their performance. This, together with the essay's fuller discussion of current directions in virtue ethics might not contribute a deeper understanding of an "original meaning" in the *Analects* itself, but it is a telling example of how reading the *Analects* might be useful in a time and culture far removed from its own.

3. The *Analects* in Society

The first of the two essays focusing on the *Analects* in a specific social context, "Confucius and the *Analects* in the Han," is related to concerns more fully discussed in the essay by P. J. Ivanhoe, discussed below, on the distinction between Confucius' teachings on the observable and the metaphysical phenomena.²⁵ However, the question is here considered from the standpoint of its significance in a more narrowly defined historical context, and this essay examines the question primarily from evidence external to the text of the *Analects*. Mark Csikszentmihalyi in this essay considers

²² Wilson cites the example of the proposal for a unified society where "there is no 'outside' except that of the stranger. A man who tried to withdraw himself from his given position in [this] society would be engaged in the enterprise of trying to make himself disappear." See Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), p. 126.

²³ Wilson cites: "The absolute prohibition against any efforts by governments to impose . . . motives of duty" should remain in force because "[i]t is by keeping its hands off our characters that governments provide the setting and conditions in which we might begin our poor but epic battle against vice." See Judith Shklar, *Ordinary Vices* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 235.

²⁴ Wilson cites the advocacy for an autonomy that is "the right to make . . . decisions about matters affecting one's own life without interference by controlling threats and bribes, manipulations, and willful distortion of relevant information." See Thomas E. Hill, Jr., *Autonomy and Self-respect* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 48.

²⁵ This connection between these two authors is more extensive than merely these two neighboring essays, as shown by their previously co-authored study on another early Chinese text: Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Philip J. Ivanhoe, eds., *Religious and Philosophical Aspects of the Laozi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999).

the differing ways in which Confucius himself, as distinct from his teachings, was considered during the Western and Eastern Han dynasties.

One striking difference between this essay and many of the preceding ones is the different intellectual context in which this essay situates itself. Whereas other authors, including Ivanhoe, primarily used references to contemporary Western scholarship, both sinological and philosophical, Csikszentmihalyi presents his investigation in the light of early-modern Chinese scholars, primarily Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858-1927), Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 (1893-1980), and Hu Shih 胡適 (1891-1962). Thus, Csikszentmihalyi shows how his study of the ways that the person of Confucius was presented stems from an essay of Gu Jiegang, but is more nuanced, less rigidly developmental than that earlier work. This frame of reference reduces the feeling of disconnection between the contemporary Chinese-language and English-language sinological contexts that may be felt in some of the other essays in this collection.

To set the stage for his discussion of the portrayals of Confucius, Csikszentmihalyi outlines the historical framework for the compilation of the *Analects*, doing so in a way that contradicts the Brookses' view. He begins with the contention that before the Han this text probably did not exist as a collection resembling the currently transmitted version. He makes this claim based on the archaeological finds of scattered elements of the *Analects*, but with no indication of the existence of a sizeable collection of Confucius' sayings.²⁶ He then notes that during its dramatic rise in popularity during the Western Han after Wudi 武帝 (156-87 B.C.), many of its editors and transmitters also held the position of imperial tutor to the heir apparent.

In discussing the Han portrayals of Confucius, Csikszentmihalyi considers them from the basis of the two texts considered to be most representative of the Master, the *Spring and Autumn Annals* 春秋 and the *Analects*. The first of these was by far the more prominent of the two during the late Warring States and the first half of the Western Han, and the portrayals of Confucius that can be gained from discussions of this text and from this period are characterized by their focus on his supernatural aspects.

In contrast, the portrayal of Confucius that developed with the rising importance of the *Analects* was much closer to that of the wise and disillusioned sage that has ruled since the Song. The turning point in this transition seems to have been Sima Qian's 司馬遷 (145-86 B.C.) narration in *Shiji* 史記 of Confucius' life, which contained aspects of both traditions and firmly established the use of Confucius biographical information as a tool in interpretation of the *Analects*. Up to this point, Csikszentmihalyi's argument follows that of Gu Jiegang in its main points. Where it differs is in Csikszentmihalyi's acknowledgement that the supernatural portrayals of Confucius were not simply a stage in an evolution, but that they continued very strongly into the Eastern Han "weft texts" or apocrypha (緯書). As such, the changes of portrayals of Confucius are not so much indicative of their chronological development as their use by different segments of

²⁶ Makeham concurs with this, see John Makeham, "The Formation of *Lunyu* as a Book," *Monumenta Serica* 44 (1996): 1-24

the scholarly community. Overall, this essay reminds us that the image of a scholarly gentleman discoursing to his students on ritual and benevolence was not the only way in which the Master was viewed. Indeed the relative consistency of the views of the Master, even within the diverse directions of the essays in this collection, is clear testimony to the limitations of our current views of Confucius.

The second essay in this section, “A Woman Who Understood the Rites,” could hardly be more different from the others in this collection. In it Lisa Raphals discusses the views of women, two in particular, as found in a number of early Chinese texts—though not in the *Analects*. Both women are connected to Confucius: Jing Jiang 敬姜 since her son was claimed to have been a student of Confucius in these narratives, although he is not mentioned in the *Analects*; and the Girl of Agu 阿谷處女 since there is a narrative mentioning Confucius’ praise of her as a knowing individual despite her low social status.

In her essay Raphals covers a broad range of materials. There are early texts beginning with the late Warring States *Guo yu* 國語, then including the *Li ji* 禮記, *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策, *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳, *Kongzi jia yu* 孔子家語, up to the *Han Shi wai zhuan* 韓氏外傳. In addition, there is also a brief section on Neo-Confucian (i.e. Zhu Xi) views on female education, and another on woodcut illustrations from Ming editions of the Jing Jiang narrative. From her consideration of these materials, she contends that these Confucian narratives indicate that there was a certain degree of flexibility in the roles that women could play in the society of the time.

This is a point well worth making, and Jing Jiang is certainly portrayed as an educated and perceptive woman who wields a fair degree of power upon the death of her husband. However, in the narrative of the washer woman referred to simply as the Girl of Agu, Confucius’ disciple Zigong 子貢 offers a cup of water, which she requests that he place on the ground before she will take it; offers a lute, for which she claims no ability; and offers the bridal present of a bolt of cloth, which she modestly declines. It is at this point that Confucius praises her knowledge of the rites and human affairs. Although Raphals focuses her attention on this praise from the Master, it might also be noted that in this example women are worthy of praise, though not a proper name, when they present the proper respect to men. The narratives surrounding Jing Jiang present a different picture, but her assumption of the role of a man to present opinions on proper ritual behavior is largely predicated on the fact that her husband has died and she is acting in his place, in effect as a surrogate man.

Moreover, this essay has only the barest of connections with the *Analects*, at least in part since there is almost no mention of women in that text for Raphals to discuss. Since the Confucius portrayed in the later narratives she uses here has a questionable (or at least unexamined) connection with the Confucius of the *Analects*, this essay sits alone, with little relationship to the others in this collection. It could have benefited from the type of diachronic analysis that Csikszentmihalyi uses to discuss differing portrayals of Confucius over the same period. Or it could instead benefit greatly from a more supportive context of other essays that considered the

issues of gender roles in early Confucian society such as Raphals' earlier monograph on gender issues in early China, where she has the range to present a fascinating picture of this little-considered issue.²⁷ As it stands, it makes a strange ending to an otherwise coherent collection of essays.

4. Commentary as Text

The notion of commentary as a genre with an identity of its own, tied to but not solely dependent on the original classic (*jing* 經) received a theoretical basis for its consideration within the tradition of Western scholarship by John Henderson's work, *Scripture, Canon and Commentary*.²⁸ That study considered the Chinese commentarial tradition in comparison to parallel traditions in Hindu, Islamic, Judaic and Biblical contexts. Although this work provided an entry into the Chinese tradition for Western scholars, especially those not grounded in Chinese studies, it did not offer detailed discussions of any single commentary, focusing rather on the basic strategies and assumptions of commentaries from a cross-cultural perspective. The essay by P. J. Ivanhoe sketches out commentarial issues that are discussed at much greater length in the books by Gardner and Makeham discussed below based on a discussion of six different commentaries on the following passage from *Analects*:

子貢曰：「夫子之文章，可得而聞也；夫子之言性與天道，不可得而聞也。」(5:13)

Ivanhoe first discusses the commentary of He Yan 何晏 (190-249), noting his interpretation for the compound term *wen zhang* 文章 as indicating “pattern, color, form and substance [that] are plainly manifest and can be followed with the ears and eyes” (quoted on p. 121). It is this interpretation that enables He Yan to present the two sentences of this passages as a contrast between observable (*xingexia* 形而下) phenomena, on which the Master did teach, and metaphysical (*xingershang* 形而上) entities, on which the Master did not speak. Moving to the Song Neo-Confucian thinker, Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032-1085), Ivanhoe notes that Cheng Hao, while accepting He Yan's division into the observable and metaphysical, understood this distinction as indicating higher and lower levels of understanding. Ivanhoe refers to Cheng Hao's understanding of this passage as “describing an elaborate and nuanced process of learning . . . in terms of the personal spiritual narrative of Zigong's life” (p. 122). The next interpreter of this passage is Cheng Hao's younger brother, Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033-1107), who viewed this passage in a way similar to that of his brother, although he affirmed the use of intellect in apprehending the higher level of teaching. Subsequently, Zhu Xi further clarified

²⁷ Lisa Raphals, *Sharing the Light: Representations of Women and Virtue in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

²⁸ John B. Henderson, *Scripture, Canon and Commentary: A Comparison of Confucian and Western Exegesis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

the importance of teaching at different levels, in accord with his own emphasis on graded levels of instruction. Moving to the Qing 清 dynasty, the commentator Dai Zhen considered that *wen zhang* referred to the classical cultural forms of the sages, which could be learned from many sources, but that teachings on human nature (*xing* 性) and the Way of Heaven (*tian dao* 天道) were available only from the Master himself. This interpretation was based on Dai's philological interpretation of the term *wen zhang*, in contrast to the Song interpretations, which had little precedent. The final commentator, Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠 (1738-1801), went beyond Dai Zheng to claim that Confucius never spoke directly on human nature or the Way of Heaven, although these concepts were inherent in all that he taught.

Ivanhoe's concluding remarks about the greatly divergent understandings of the Chinese Classics that can be found in a review of historical commentaries such as this may seem less necessary when viewed from the perspective of the extensive study of this topic, *Transmitters and Creators*, which appeared in print the year after this collection. But it is, all the same, a point that is always well taken. It is also worth noting Ivanhoe's call for a more systematic use of commentaries based on a better understanding of the commentarial genre itself, in particular as they are used for preparing translations of the classics. In the philosophical context of this collection of essays, his point has particular significance since he associates it with the view of the need for individuals to situate themselves with traditions, as presented by Alasdair MacIntyre, a view that was criticized in the earlier essay by Wilson based on his understanding of the *Analects*.²⁹ The question that Ivanhoe brings up here, of whether a translator should navigate among commentaries to synthesize their views, or whether the only proper translation is one based on a single commentary is an issue that has received a great deal of consideration. The weight of scholarly consensus is now falling to the side of translations based on single commentaries, as indicated by the two following works.

5. Zhu Xi: The Philosopher as Commentator

Daniel Gardner is best known for his scholarship on aspects of Zhu Xi's work and the broader context of the Confucian classics.³⁰ Moreover, of his numerous articles, the most recent, "Confucian Commentary and Chinese Intellectual History,"³¹ provides a more general foundation for the specific commentarial issues discussed in this book. He observes there that, although both the system of *boshi* 博士 during the Han and the

²⁹ See note 22 above on MacIntyre.

³⁰ Daniel K. Gardner, "The Classics during the Sung: Chu Hsi's Interpretation of the *Ta-hsüeh*" (Ph. D. Diss., Harvard University, 1986); *idem*, trans., *Learning to Be a Sage: Selections from the Conversations of Master Chu, Arranged Topically* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

³¹ Daniel K. Gardner, "Confucian Commentary and Chinese Intellectual History," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57.2 (May 1998): 397-422.

standardization of the imperial examination system in the Song were certainly powerful influences on the preparation of and debates over commentaries, the commentarial tradition was apparently still quite vigorous after the *boshi* system had expired and after the canon for examinations had been codified.³² Accordingly, the commentarial tradition could be better viewed as a way of expressing current schools of thought and bringing the understanding of the Confucian Classics in line with them,³³ not simply explaining the obscure meanings of the classic. Moreover, Gardner's work shows how Zhu Xi's commentary plays in between these two poles of explanation and interpretation.

Gardner's book on one hand is thus an introduction to the genre of commentaries on the Chinese Classics, showing by example some of the different strategies that commentators may take to interpret a classic and differences in the texts they produce. On the other hand, and I think more importantly, it also seeks to comprehensively present one of the most influential of the commentaries on the *Analects*, Zhu Xi's *Lunyu jizhu* 論語集注. In doing so, to clarify by contrast how Zhu Xi is operating in this commentary he presents it *in tandem* with the most influential earlier commentary, He Yan's *Lunyu jijie* 論語集解. Preserving the original structure of the interlinear commentary in his translation, Gardner arranges the sections that he discusses by presenting the original lines from the *Analects* first, followed by the commentary of He Yan, and then repeats the lines from the *Analects*, followed by the commentary of Zhu Xi.³⁴

The forty-four passages from the *Analects* that Gardner chooses for this comparison are grouped thematically to cover five key concepts. These themes are: learning (*xue* 學), true goodness (*ren*), ritual (*li*), ruling (*zheng* 政), and the superior man and the way (*junzi* 君子 and *dao* 道). Some of these are subdivided according to different aspects of these themes, such as the section on learning, which has subsections on what is learning, its relation with worldly accomplishment, Confucius' personal love of learning, and distinctions among students. For each of these four thematic groupings, Gardner provides an introduction to show how it fits into the overall teachings of the *Analects*, and then in discussing each individual passage he provides further discussion of Zhu Xi's own view of it, supplemented by extensive quotations from the *Conversations of Master Chu, Arranged Topically* (*Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類).

As a method to help the reader better understand the important themes for Confucius (or for Zhu Xi) and how they are related, this arrangement can be quite effective, and in this arrangement Gardner's work echoes that of the *Conversations of Master Chu, Arranged Topically*. One aspect to this operation that could be clarified is

³² *Ibid*, p. 407.

³³ *Ibid*, p. 407.

³⁴ In one case, Zhu Xi's commentary is placed first (p. 112). Although this follows Gardner's line of argument in his discussion of this passage, as a unique occurrence, this reversal seems out of place.

whether Gardner is arranging these themes according to their importance to Zhu Xi or according to their more general importance to Confucius in the *Analects* as understood by a knowledgeable reader, e.g., Gardner. A similar tendency to blur the difference between the views of Zhu Xi and those of Confucius can be noted in Gardner's introductory material to these thematic groups, where he notes general tendencies in the *Analects*. For example: "[Confucius] believes that it is in the will to learn that he is truly distinguished from others" (p. 40). This arrangement is helpful to pull the material together into a coherent whole, although it also seems to be conceptually at odds with Gardner's other intention for this work, to show that the *Analects* has no one real meaning. After reading Gardner's work, however, one can easily come away with the impression that the *Analects* does indeed have "one real meaning," and that Zhu Xi may be one of its most trustworthy interpreters.

Gardner's translations of material from the two commentaries are clear and forceful presentations of the originals, conveying the differences between the scholastic tone of He Yan and that of moral conviction in Zhu Xi. Moreover, he changes his translations of the same passages from the *Analects* for each of the commentaries in small but significant ways to convey differences in how these two commentators understand the original text. Here Gardner's presentation of the particular nuances of the translated passages is critical since they demonstrate clearly the different ways that He Yan and Zhu Xi understand a single text. As he puts it in his earlier article, "English translations of the Confucian classics have tended to present what we might call a normative reading, the aim of which is to present the 'true meaning' of a text, at least as the translators apprehend it. As a result readers are easily left with the impression that the translation in hand is *the* way that a classic is to be understood, the only legitimate or meaningful way that the text can be read. . . . There is simply no one stable or definitive reading of a canonical text; rather, as the tradition of commentary makes abundantly clear, there is a He Yan understanding . . . a Zhu Xi reading, on and on."³⁵

A notable example of this tactic for translation is Gardner's dual translations of a phrase from *Analects*, *huishi hou su* 繪事後素 (3:8). In this case, the diametrically opposite readings of this passage by the two commentators lead Gardner to render it as, "lay on the color, then the white," for He Yan; and, "lay on the color after the white," for Zhu Xi (pp. 90-91). Further examples of Gardner's careful differentiation of his two translations of *Analects* passages are numerous.³⁶

There are, however, a few examples where Gardner might have been more exacting in differentiating his two translations of the original passages from the *Analects*. On this point I could first mention two examples from the "Xue Er" 學而, "有朋自遠方來，不亦樂乎?" (1:1) (p. 31). For the translation of the character *peng*

³⁵ Gardner, "Confucian Commentary and Chinese Intellectual History": 398, 416 (Wade-Giles romanization changed to *pinyin* for consistency here and other instances following, except for titles of works).

³⁶ For other examples, see pp. 50, 97-98, 101, 108, 115-116, 131-32, 143-44, and 148.

朋 Gardner uses the conventional English reading for this passage as, “friends” for both He Yan and Zhu Xi. But in explaining the different ways the two commentators understand this passage, Gardner contrasts He Yan’s explanation, which quotes the earlier commentary of Bao Xian 包咸 (6 B.C.-65 A.D.), “Fellow disciples are said to be friends (同門曰朋);” with Zhu Xi’s reading, “Friends means ‘the same kind’” (朋，同類也).³⁷ To more closely present these two distinctly different understandings of the original term, Gardner might have used “fellow disciples” in the case of He Yan, and “kindred spirits” in the case of Zhu Xi, to more accurately represent the ways in which the original text was being read by the two commentators.

A second example, one that occurs constantly throughout the text, is the way the reference to the primary speaker in the *Analects*, *zi* 子, is consistently translated as “the Master” for both commentators. Although readers with any familiarity with the text of course understand to whom this term refers, the two commentators present his identity in slightly different ways. To clarify unambiguously that the speaker is Confucius, He Yan quotes the earlier commentary of Ma Rong 馬融 (79-166) as “Zi, a general designation for a male, refers to Kongzi” (子者，男子之通稱，孔子也) (p. 30). This clarification is not as trivial as it may seem since it supports Gardner’s observation that one of the basic characteristics of He Yan’s commentary is his presentation of the *Analects* in a more specifically historical context, in contrast to the more general moral framework that Zhu Xi’s commentary seeks to develop. Thus Gardner’s translation of *zi* as “the Master” in this sense might be better suited to Zhu Xi’s version, and “Kongzi” for that of He Yan.

In Gardner’s discussion of Zhu Xi’s commentary, he presents the relevant material clearly and succinctly, showing how his two decades of research on this topic have enabled him to speak on it with a natural authority not burdened by excessive discussion of minor points. Where the book might benefit from further development is in Gardner’s discussion of He Yan’s commentary. True, since the focus of this book is on Zhu Xi, and He Yan’s commentary is provided as a background comparison for that, we might not be too concerned with the broader system of He Yan’s commentary. But even so, there are some aspects of He Yan’s commentary that might have received more careful consideration.

One notable example of an issue with He Yan’s commentary is the question of why He Yan’s commentarial entries are often so laconic. Gardner states, “He Yan seems to believe that the reader can understand the meaning of the *Analects* with the aid of simple glossing . . . [that] the elite would already be reasonably familiar with its teachings and the tradition of understanding surrounding them. His glosses are often little more than reminders of a textual understanding he presumed to be generally shared” (p. 164). But I think this is questionable for two reasons: First, He Yan was separated from Confucius by almost a millennium, a period of time that was punctuated by significant breaks in the continuity of cultural traditions, so that

³⁷ In my quotations of Chinese passages used by Gardner, for consistency I add punctuation to passages from He Yan although Gardner does not punctuate them, as discussed below.

any original consensus on the meaning of the text that may have existed would have been unlikely to survive. Secondly, many of the issues that He Yan does comment on appear, at least to the modern reader, somewhat self-evident, so that even an “elite” understanding of the text may not have been so complete if a significant portion of the issues that required comment were fairly straightforward ones. Gardner presents little material to support his contention of a “shared cultural understanding” that existed for the readers of He Yan’s time, and the numerous commentaries in the two centuries before He Yan might indicate a lack of consensus rather than its presence. Instead, it is possible that the commentaries on the Classics tended to become more complex not, as Gardner implies here, because over the time since the *Analects* had been compiled, there was less understanding of the original meaning, but rather because the commentarial tradition itself had developed extensively over that millennium. Certainly, in the process of explaining the original text, commentators are commenting on previous commentaries, rebutting, further clarifying, presenting their understanding of the “original meaning.”

This issue is significant since Gardner, in his comparison of the two commentators, often presents an explanation for the fact that He Yan has not provided commentary on a particular line and uses this explanation to highlight characteristics of Zhu Xi’s commentary. For example, regarding one line for which He Yan does not provide commentary, Gardner notes, “for He [Yan, Confucius’] sitting on a mat has no particular ritual meaning in itself, and so ‘if the mat was not straight, he would not sit on it’ is not an especially coherent or meaningful statement on its own. Consequently, He does not offer a commentary on the line” (pp. 96-97). Although an explanation such as this is certainly plausible, the lines for which He Yan has little or no commentary are so numerous that, without more extensive investigation, to assume a meaning for why he did not choose to discuss any particular line is highly speculative, and the reasons may not in fact conform so neatly to the differences with Zhu Xi’s commentary that Gardner presents. On the other hand, Gardner does not consider significant one of the only areas where He Yan comments on an issue that Zhu Xi chooses to skip over, the issue of the term *zi* discussed above.

Overall, my main regret on this book is only that I wish Gardner had been able to present a complete translation of Zhu Xi’s commentary. Although the material he presents in this book is certainly sufficient to make the points he wishes to make, a complete translation, similar to that of Richard Lynn’s translation of Wang Bi’s 王弼 (226-249) commentaries to the *Yijing*,³⁸ could be an invaluable resource for teaching. Presenting any of the Confucian classics to a non-Chinese speaking audience can be a daunting task because there is so little available in English to represent the vast amount of commentarial material. Since Zhu Xi’s commentary, as Gardner notes, is one that ties the *Analects* together as a whole with a strong vision of its meaning on a personal basis for the reader, it effectively conveys the ways in which the text could be

³⁸ Richard Lynn, trans., *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

meaningful to modern readers. Thus, a complete translation of his text and commentary could be quite helpful in making this classic more accessible to English-speaking audiences.

6. Four Commentators as Philosophers

That two books so similar as Gardner's and Makeham's should have been published in the same year is unusual in the world of Western-language Chinese studies and certainly an indication of a growing interest in the *Analects*. At the same time, these two books differ greatly in their authors' goals and their intended readerships.³⁹ Gardner's book on Zhu Xi and the *Analects* addresses two types of readers, the non-specialist who is interested in the thought of the *Analects* and the scholar who is interested in the thought of Zhu Xi. Although compromises may be inevitable in such a situation, overall I think Gardner succeeds quite well. Makeham's book, on the other hand, makes no such compromises; it is directed at scholars with a background and interest in a broad range of Confucian commentary from the Han through the Qing. With twice the number of pages and much smaller print, Makeham addresses this audience with vigor.

Makeham has written primarily on early Chinese thought and scholarship,⁴⁰ though he has also published articles on contemporary Confucianism, as well as Confucian aspects in Taiwan indigenation (*bentuhua* 本土化).⁴¹ To present a topic so broad as the Chinese commentarial tradition on the *Analects*, and by extension on the commentarial tradition for the Confucian classics, Makeham proceeds by example, discussing the four most significant commentaries on the *Analects*: (1) He Yan: *Lunyu jijie*; (2) Huang Kan 皇侃 (448-545): *Lunyu yishu* 論語義疏; (3) Zhu Xi: *Lunyu jizhu*; (4) Liu Baonan 劉寶楠 (1791-1855) and Liu Gongmian 劉恭冕 (1821-1880): *Lunyu zhengyi* 論語正義.

In presenting each of these four commentaries, Makeham posits a key problematic to characterize it. Although I take issue with some of his choices, as I discuss below, the significant point is that he clearly presents each of these commentaries as individual works that are positing a particular point of view, not simply explicating the original text. By doing so, he conveys the understanding that there may be no one single most valid meaning to the *Analects*, and does so more

³⁹ The difference between these two books, it might be noted, is an indication of the difference between Columbia University Press, which tends to seek works that appeal for a more general audience with an interest in more specialized research; and Harvard's Asia Center, which publishes scholarly monographs that might have more limited readership.

⁴⁰ His best known work in this area is *Name and Actuality in Early Chinese Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

⁴¹ John Makeham, "Indigenization Discourse in Taiwanese Confucian Revivalism," in *Cultural, Ethnic, and Political Nationalism in Contemporary Taiwan: Bentuhua*, ed. John Makeham and A-chin Hsiau (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 187-220.

convincingly than Gardner is able to do in the scope of his smaller book. To discuss aspects of the commentaries, each of the four sections in this book has two or three chapters, each of which is a semi-independent unit, similar to a substantial journal article. Although the book may have less focus in terms of discussing the genre of Confucian commentaries due to this structure, there is correspondingly a greater attention to the particularities of each individual work. Each section includes a comprehensive summary of the intellectual background and influences of the period during which the commentary was composed and a presentation of the commentator's background, other works and motives for compiling the commentary. The book also includes an epilogue and six appendixes: the commentarial tradition that existed prior to the works discussed, the previous commentators selected for He Yan's *Lunyu jijie*, early history and editions of the *Lunyu jijie*, early history of the *Lunyu yishu*, other commentaries by Zhu Xi on the *Analects*, and the writings of Liu Baonan.

6-1. He Yan's *Lunyu jijie*

In the first two chapters Makeham makes two main points, respectively, as to the He Yan commentary. The primary one is Makeham's characterization of the *Jijie*, that the editors as a group "sought to present that 'collective' commentary as a performative expression of Confucius' claim to have been a transmitter rather than a creator" (p. 26). The secondary point is a sustained criticism of the acceptance of the traditional view that He Yan took the lead in the process of compiling and editing the *Lunyu jijie*.

The first of these two claims might be questioned from two directions. For one, Makeham does not present a discussion of how the notion of being a transmitter rather than a creator was actually understood in the latter Han. This phrase was indeed used by certain scholars to describe their approach, at least since Sima Qian, but I am not sure that its intended meaning was as straightforward as Makeham takes it to be. This straightforwardness in his view is indicated by his use of that phrase to describe the commentarial work of He Yan and his collaborators as characterized by having "no obvious sign of a hermeneutic behind either the choice of [previous] commentaries [to be included] or their ordering" (p. 26). This characterization as an intention of the *Jijie* might also be questioned since there is little indication, other than the internal evidence of the looseness of the previous commentarial material presented and the scarcity of incisive new commentarial additions, that He Yan or the other editors had this notion as part of their intent when they prepared the commentary. There is a significant difference between using a phrase such as this to characterize one's evaluation of a work, and saying that the authors of a work intended to express this phrase in their work.

In making the second claim, that He Yan was not in fact the lead in the group of editors, Makeham presents a wealth of material on what we know of the early evolution of the text, the philosophical ideas that characterize it, and what may have

been the intellectual tendencies of He Yan. In doing so, we learn a great deal about all three of these aspects, but I am not sure that the evidence against He Yan's key role is as convincing as Makeham would have it. Although there may be inconsistencies in the traditional claims in the early histories as to He Yan's role, that is not clear evidence that he did not play a key role. In addition, Makeham's claim that there were significant differences between He Yan's philosophy and that of the *Jijie* is predicated on Makeham's definition of the Xuanxue 玄學 school of thought, which as an extremely diverse collection of Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist thought, is difficult to define in a way that would fit all examples commonly ascribed it. Although I may not share Makeham's conclusion that He Yan did not play the lead role in compiling this commentary, Makeham's work does indeed advance our understanding of this complex issue.

More significantly, and building on his previous study of the earlier Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200) commentary,⁴² Makeham shows clearly how the *Jijie* differed from Zheng Xuan's commentary, especially in the way in which the *Jijie* presented the statements of Confucius as being deeper, more subtle and consistent in comparison to the explanations of Zheng Xuan. Confucius' statements of not knowing are presented by the *Jijie* as expressions of modesty, rather than admissions of the limitations of his knowledge. In addition, explanations based on the *Yijing* are relatively common in this commentary, in contrast to others. (e.g., p. 72) Overall, Makeham shows how the "editorial commentaries," those that were new contributions of the *Jijie*, "reveal a concerted attempt to establish that Confucius was a sage whose actions were in complete harmony with the way as revealed through heaven and to reconcile Confucius' lack of worldly success with this claim" (p. 73). This is a much fuller realization of He Yan's commentary than Gardner presents, but it is all the more difficult to reconcile with the notion of being simply a transmitter of previous materials.

6-2. Huang Kan's *Lunyu yishu*

Makeham introduces this commentary with a discussion on some of the facets in the debate on the origin of the *shu* 疏 commentary, including the contention that it originally had an oral basis stemming from lectures, discussions, or debates on the meaning of the original text, similar to the debates that were associated with the translation of Buddhist sutras. He goes on to characterize the work as "an integrated philosophical statement grounded on a theory of hierarchically differentiated grades of human nature" (p. 97). This view of the work is significant for several reasons. First, it is the basis for a more completely worked-out theory on the status of the sage, in particular Confucius, a question that Makeham shows was a commentarial issue at least as early as He Yan. Secondly, it demonstrates the significance of understanding

⁴² John Makeham, "The Earliest Extant Commentary on *Lunyu: Lunyu Zheng Shi Zhu*," *T'oung Pao* 83 (1997): 260-299.

individual ability and how the individual could make progress along the path towards sagehood, a line of thought that was critical in the later work of Zhu Xi. Thirdly, it tied the *Jijie* to the contemporary interest in particular qualities of the individual that was a hallmark of that time, as seen in works such as the *Shishou xinyu* 世說新語. And lastly, it may have been related to the system of ranking candidates for government office, the *jiupin zhongzheng* 九品中正 (Nine Grades and the Imperial and Upright Official).

Although this presentation is already extremely rich, it might have benefited from more detailed consideration of ideas of personality that were so significant during that period, and how they influenced the commentary. Makeham also draws attention to the fact that the flourishing of Buddhist thought at that time may have influenced Huang Kan's commentary, although he does not bring up the issue of possible relationships with tradition of Buddhist scriptures and commentary that was developing at that time.

6-3. Zhu Xi's *Lunyu jizhu*

In presenting the *Jizhu*, Makeham focuses on the *daoxue* 道學 fraternity that formed the context for production of this commentary. He also notes how Zhu Xi bolstered the legitimacy of his pre-Qin *daotong* 道統 lineage by selecting a work directly associated with each of these individuals—Confucius, Yanzi 顏子 (521-490 B.C.), Zisi 子思 and Mencius (372-289 B.C.)—to make up an essential core within the greater canon of the Confucian Classics. In addition, he notes the relationships between Zhu Xi's commentary and other fundamental concepts of *daoxue*, for example the way in which Zhu Xi frequently used the notion of *li* 理, a unifying pattern, to present what he saw as deeper meanings of passages in the *Analects*. Makeham also notes the way that Zhu Xi used his commentary as a means of overcoming historical distance between the *Analects* and the Southern Song. Although Makeham does not go into the influences of social, institutional and historical contexts he refers us to other scholars who have covered those fields in more depth than would have been possible given the scope of this book.⁴³

Following on this, Makeham discusses Zhu Xi's hermeneutics of reading, his ideas on learning and human nature, and his views on the learning of the sage. Based on material from the *Zhuzi yulei*, Makeham shows that Zhu considered the most important part of study to be the process of internalizing the original text, not a

⁴³ For example, Peter Bol, *"This Culture of Ours": Intellectual Transitions in T'ang and Sung China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); John Chaffee, "Chu Hsi in Nan-k'ang: *Tao Hsüeh* and the Politics of Education," in *Neo-Confucian Education: The Formative Stage*, ed. Wm. Theodore de Bary and John Chaffee (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 414-431; Hoyt Cleveland Tillman, *Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi's Ascendancy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992); Thomas A. Wilson, *Genealogy of the Way: The Construction and Uses of the Confucian Tradition in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

process of understanding it through commentaries, and thereby to develop a deeper understanding of “their meaning / intention (*yisi* 意思) just as if one were talking to them face to face” (*Zhuzi yulei* 1:162) (p. 198). Makeham also notes Zhu Xi’s concern with the importance of a student’s considering the text over a longer period of time in order to more fully appreciate its subtle meanings. This is more fully explained as the process of initially encountering the text with an empty mind (*xuxin* 虛心) and then proceeding to make it personally relevant (*qieshen* 切身).

Makeham highlights Zhu Xi’s hermeneutics of reading by comparison with that of Paul Ricouer, showing that they have a similar notion of the independent existence of meaning (or pattern in the case of Zhu) apart from the reader’s apprehension of it, although the process of interpretation is primary for Ricouer, whereas the authorial intention is primary for Zhu. Though this contrast may be helpful in order to bridge the historical gap between our own contemporary understandings and those of Zhu Xi, similar to Zhu’s own intent in writing the commentary to the *Analects*, it however leads one to question what the other hermeneutics of reading were at the time of Zhu Xi, and how did his differ from them.

In terms of learning, Makeham considers the issue from two standpoints, the activity of the student who is learning in order to become a sage, and the learning activity of one who has already become a sage, that is to say, Confucius. Makeham’s summary of Zhu’s reading is that the expressions of desire for learning were due on one hand from the Master’s sincere humility in the face of the works of the earlier sages that he edited and transmitted, and on the other, from his desire to encourage his students to learn on their own by providing a model for them.

A final concern that Makeham shows Zhu Xi confronting in his commentary is that of whether ordinary people could become sages. Makeham approaches this issue by contrasting the paths of three of Confucius’ primary students, Zigong, Zengzi and Yanzi. In his commentarial notes regarding interchanges between Confucius and Zigong, Zhu Xi indicates that Zigong was a student who, although intellectually gifted, was unable to attain true humaneness (*ren*). Although he had an intellectual understanding of the need for it, he was unable to actualize it. In contrast, Zengzi was characterized as being obtuse (*dun* 鈍), but able to see the connection that tied together the teachings of the Master. The third, Yanzi, although both intellectually gifted and having a dedication that overcame his poverty, was ultimately also unable to attain sagehood. Thus, Makeham concludes, Zhu Xi’s view of the possibility of attaining sagehood was that it was—in theory—possible for most individuals and thus should be our goal, though in practice it had never been attained.

One problem that Makeham is faced with in discussing Zhu Xi’s *Lunyu jizhu*, in contrast to the commentaries of He Yan or Huang Kan, is the overwhelming amount of literature relating to the subject. Not only are Zhu Xi’s other commentaries on the *Lunyu* relevant, but there are his commentaries on other classics and collections of sayings and writings; and beyond this there is the vast secondary literature. As such, Makeham has made a judicious selection of what is necessary to the topic that he is

addressing.

6-3. Liu Baonan and Liu Gongmian's *Lunyu zhengyi*

This last of the four commentaries that Makeham discusses is worlds away from that of He Yan in terms of its scope, and Makeham claims for it the distinction of being the most detailed commentary on the *Analects* written in pre-modern China. But at the same time, Makeham is faced with a problem that is not dissimilar to that of analyzing the first of these commentaries since there is such a high proportion of citations of previous works and “editorial attempts to summarize and synthesize are minimal;” (p. 256) although the scale of the problem is vastly different.

Makeham begins with a summary of the lives and careers of the father-and-son authors, showing their relationships with other Qing scholars in the Yangzhou 揚州 prefecture, where Liu Baonan had studied in the Anding 安定 Academy and was to become director of the Guangling 廣陵 Academy. As to the question of how much of this commentary should be attributed to Baonan and how much to Gongmian, Makeham does not make a pronouncement, though he notes that Baonan was preoccupied with official duties in his later years and there were twenty years between his death and the publication of this work, which indicates the possibility of a relatively significant contribution by Gongmian (p. 262).⁴⁴ That seems a judicious position on an issue that is not critical to Makeham's discussion, although his claim that “it remains questionable if there ever was a Yangzhou school” (p. 265) may incite scholarly debate that is peripheral to his argument.

In discussing the characteristics of the *Zhengyi*, Makeham notes several aspects, first of which is the extensive use of the narrative of Confucius' life from the *Shiji*. This is significant since it enables Liu Baonan to tie together the commentary, both thematically in terms of the themes of “political decay . . . Confucius and office; and Confucius' purpose in editing the classics” (p. 271); and formally by using the narrative to date particular passages from the *Analects* and show pair relationships between them.⁴⁵ He also notes the broad and inclusive attitude to previous scholarship in this commentary that might put it outside the mainstream of Han Learning. As examples of this breadth of learning, Makeham cites the interest, especially of Liu Gongmian, in Xunzi 荀子 (313-238 B.C.) as a valid expositor of Confucian philosophy, to the extent that he placed Xunzi in the genealogy of Confucian scholars in direct line with Zengzi, Zisi and Mencius (p. 288). Makeham also shows that Liu Baonan sought to present a common thread that tied together the teachings of the *Analects*, not from a synthetic view such as that of Zhu Xi, but rather through the concepts of *zhong*, *shu*, and *ren*. This is an observation that demonstrates the historical significance of the topic of

⁴⁴ Although the authorial responsibility may not be clear, for simplicity I follow Makeham in referring to the author of this commentary as Liu Baonan.

⁴⁵ In this aspect, Liu Baonan would be a significant figure in the line of thought that is more fully developed by E. Bruce Brooks and A. Taeko Brooks, as I discuss above.

Bryan Van Norden's essay discussed in the above, which appeared before Makeham's book.

Though it is difficult to provide a single characterization for such a diverse work, perhaps its most significant contribution in Makeham's view is what he refers to as the view of Confucius as "cultural custodian." Key to this portrayal is the connection that Liu Baonan sees between the *Analects* and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, especially as this classic was interpreted by the Gongyang 公羊 commentary. Following the view that the *Annals* embodied the technique of *weiyán dàyì* 微言大義, or expressing significant principals through the use of subtle phrasing, Makeham shows how Liu Baonan wove this commentary together into a web that connects the *Analects* with other works of Confucius and presents the *Analects* as closely based on cultural traditions of Confucius' time.⁴⁶

In conclusion to the last of these four commentaries, I would add a further note following on my observation of this commentary's similarity with that of He Yan. It would seem to me that Liu Baonan's commentary might in fact be a better candidate for being a "performative demonstration" of Confucius' role as a transmitter not a creator, the problematic that Makeham claims for He Yan's commentary. Not only does Liu Baonan transmit a vast and diverse body of scholarly work, but more importantly, his central image of Confucius is of one who preserves and transmits the culture of previous ages. Although Liu Baonan may not state explicitly that this is also his own role, it may not be an unreasonable assumption.

7. In Summary

Looking at these works overall, beyond the issue of the three approaches that they exemplify, one may be struck by two more general aspects. First, there is the degree to which this classic has drawn the interest of scholars of philosophy as well as Chinese studies, despite the difficulty—or perhaps impossibility—of finding truly satisfying solutions to the difficulties posed by its interpretation. In particular, running through *New Essays* is a creative tension between the search for original, authentic meanings of the text and a desire to integrate lessons learned from it into the various streams of contemporary Western thought, a tension that gives that collection a vibrancy beyond any one of the individual contributions. These two approaches were characterized by Yearly as all-to-often antagonistic to one another in practice, whereas the works in *New Essays* tend to approach the problem in a more flexible way, using one view to stimulate the other.

At the same time, it we can note a certain degree of opposition between scholarly camps, as indicated by the positions that scholars take on the work of the Brookses. Those who are more accepting of their work, for example, most of the contributors to *Confucius and the Analects*, tend to be more closely associated with philosophical approaches to the *Analects*. In contrast, scholars who focus more closely

⁴⁶ This shows a notable similarity to the Brookses work in approach, if not conclusions.

on textual and commentarial aspects tend to be more skeptical of that approach. Although it is hardly a black-and-white issue, there is a tendency to for scholarship to be divided along these lines.

Secondly, in Gardner's work and particularly in Makeham's, we can see clearly a trend within Western Sinology, where consideration of the Classics is shifting from a first-order discussion of their original meaning and how we read them now, to a second-order discussion of how they were read at various stages in their transmission. As such, it becomes an investigation in the history of thought. This is certainly a productive direction of research; but at the same time, there might be a deeper consideration of the motives and scholarly biases of such an approach, a consideration that indicates one of the signal differences between the works of Gardner and Makeham. For example, Makeham touches on the issue of tradition in his "Epilogue," where he briefly sites his analysis of commentaries in Hans-George Gadamer's and Edward Shils' understanding of tradition. Makeham uses their notions of this subject and the "aura of pastness" (p. 349) to explain the long-standing reverence for the transmission of classics and creation of commentaries. But we can further consider a different side to the role of tradition, one that is pointed out by David Gross, who Makeham also quotes here, albeit in a somewhat different sense. Gross posits that "One of the consequences of modernity is that the connection between the need to feel anchored or 'at home' and the availability of tradition to satisfy this need, has been broken."⁴⁷ It is, I think, this modern disconnect from tradition that is conveyed by Makeham's detailed discussion of four commentaries; and it is this disconnect that Gardner inherently seeks to bridge by his exposition on the canonical commentary of Zhu Xi. Thus it is considerations such as this that show how discussion of the Classics can remain a vital issue, embedded in the intellectual context of the present.

While these three works under review do present many of the current directions in Western scholarship on the *Analects*, there are yet other important directions in contemporary research that they do not include, for example the issue of how oral transmission of this material may relate to aspects of the written text, or considerations stemming from the recently excavated texts related to the *Analects*. Moreover, the breadth of interest in the *Analects* that is evident from these works highlights, by contrast, the scarcity of English language research on other of the Confucian Classics. There is, of course a great deal of material on the *Yijing*, and some on the *Shijing* 詩經,⁴⁸ but many of the other classics have seen little new work in the past fifty years. It is a situation that badly needs remedy. Beyond the need for renewed interest in more of the classical canon, another significant area of research in need of further consideration is the mutual influence of different types of Chinese commentaries (Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist). The difficulties presented by the cross-disciplinary aspects of this research are hardly more than those faced by Henderson in his work mentioned above

⁴⁷ David Gross, *The Past in Ruins* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), p. 90.

⁴⁸ For example, Steven Van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality: Reading, Exegesis, and Hermeneutics in Traditional China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

on commentaries in different cultural traditions, and the rewards for our understanding of the Chinese classics I think may be potentially greater.

It is also worth mentioning that this revival of Western interest has not gone unnoticed in the Chinese-language scholarly world, as indicated by the fact that these three books are part of a much larger series of translations of Western works on the Confucian classics currently being sponsored by the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy at the Academia Sinica. That, more than my own review, should indicate the importance of this scholarly revival.