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INTRODUCTION: A CONFUCIAN PHILOSOPHICAL AGENDA

The purpose of this supplemental volume is to show what happens when Confucian philosophy sets the creative agenda for philosophical inquiry more generally. Our shared presupposition is that Confucianism is a philosophical force in its own right, on a par with the world's major religions in its breadth and depth of influence, but more self-consciously concerned with moral and philosophical reflection than its peers. Much as philosophy had to come to terms with Christianity, Judaism, and Islam in order to develop and innovate in the late Hellenistic and Medieval periods of Europe and the Middle East, so now does philosophy have to come to terms with Confucianism in order to survive and grow.

Broadly speaking, one crucial way that philosophy has come to terms with popular and reflective visions of life is by giving them a certain benefit of the doubt. Philosophy has always and necessarily entertained big (constellations of) ideas without having a rigorous account or good justifications for those ideas ready at hand. That is, it has always engaged in a certain amount of "thinking backward" from conclusions to premises. Philosophy needs to indulge in thinking backward in order to remain a nimble and creative intellectual force, and it needs robust reflective traditions to provide such conclusions if it is to remain a living field of study. So if philosophy is to flourish in the present day, it needs to exhibit a similar sense of indulgence toward the Confucian thinkers, letting their big ideas be the subjects of inquiry, even if we (philosophers) do not immediately see the motivation or basis for them.

In short, at present there are very few major religions or ideological forces that see higher-order moral thought as so essential for the kind of moral and spiritual development it advocates, and among those that do regard such thought as a core feature of its practice, few have penetrated so widely and deeply as Confucianism. If Confucianism is not the sort of creative force that philosophy needs to thrive in the next era, then no large-scale religion or unified vision of life is.

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That Confucianism should play a role in setting the philosophical agenda has several implications for philosophical inquiry, which are exemplified in the substantial articles between the covers of this volume. Perhaps the most obvious of these implications is that we must explore ways of making Confucianism reasonably compatible with modern life and contemporary thought, that we should be encouraged to find ways of folding present-day presuppositions and ideas into updated forms of Confucianism. In Chung-ying Cheng's "A Transformative Conception of Confucian Ethics," he develops a form of contemporary Confucian ethics according to which Confucian virtues are the ground for a viable system of modern duties and rights, drawing especially upon the *Yijing* 《易經》 and the many ideological forces that it can take under its wing, including Chinese Buddhism. In Lauren Pfister's "Family Ethics and New Visions of Selfhood," he reports on several prominent attempts to modernize China's religions by leading figures that he calls "post-secular engaged intellectuals," who are actively involved (or "engaged") in showing how traditional views of selfhood and family can adapt to unavoidable features of modern life, especially the smaller family unit that has become so characteristic of it. And in Stephen Angle's "A Productive Dialogue," he illustrates how Neo-Confucianism (and in particular Zhu Xi) can chart a much-needed course for contemporary psychological work on moral education and human development.

Another upshot of the view that Confucianism should be agenda-setting is that it should, under some circumstances, serve as a separate or independent nexus of philosophical inquiry. Confucianism need not always contribute to philosophical development by showing how it compares with major schools or ideas in Western thought. In some circumstances, Confucianism is better positioned to advance the global dialogue without hastening to connect itself to the tradition that finds its roots in Plato and Aristotle. Not all philosophical roads must lead to Athens. A model of this approach is Daniel Bell and Thaddeus Metz's "Confucianism and *Ubuntu*," which develops multiple areas of agreement between the basic moral tenets of Confucianism and a moral tradition that comes from sub-Saharan Africa. Similarly, we need not assume that Confucianism should look outside its own borders in order to find meaningful criticisms and alternatives to its core doctrines. Sometimes we can go about the business of critiquing Confucianism by looking to its *internal* critics, as I attempt to do in "Dai Zhen's Defense of Self-Interest," where I explicate and develop Dai's most sophisticated arguments against the more ascetic or self-abnegating tendencies in Neo-Confucianism. Kwong-loi Shun's "Wang Yangming on Self-Cultivation" draws out the finer

points of disagreement between Wang and Zhu Xi on disputed processes of moral development such as the extension of knowledge (*zhi zhi* 致知). Shirley Chan's "The Concept of *Tian* 天 (Heaven) in the Guodian 郭店 Texts" illustrates how we can use excavated texts to develop the underlying moral framework that motivates the ways that well-known Confucian philosophers distinguish between the way of humankind and the way of heaven.

Another way that a major religious or intellectual tradition can play a creative role in philosophical inquiry is by establishing the challenges to which contemporary philosophers must answer if they are to have a philosophical theory worth considering. Much as contemporary theories of universals must indicate some answer to the challenges posed by Plato and Aristotle if they are to be taken seriously, it is arguable that future theories of virtue will have to meet requirements posed by Mencius and Xunzi, or that future accounts of civil society will have to find ways of accommodating Confucianism's more relationship-oriented and role-based conception of persons. Several of the articles in this collection either implicitly or explicitly offer up problems that have potential to play such a role. Chenyang Li's "Xunzi on the Origin of Goodness" develops a coherent picture of how bad people can be conceived as forming a civil society with other bad people, such that they are able to perfect their character in spite of their mutual failings. Pauline Lee's "Spewing Jade and Spitting Pearls" develops several ways in which to conceive an ethics of authenticity, drawing from the Neo-Confucian philosopher Li Zhi. In "Mou Zongsan on Confucian and Kant's Ethics," Wing-Cheuk Chan argues that Mou's attempt to reconcile Confucian and Kantian ethics overlooks several key dissimilarities between the two. Finally, Anne Cheng's "Virtue and Politics" asks how classical Confucians understood sovereignty, in spite of the fact that for them (as for many traditions) the boundary between personal and political virtues is porous.

Earlier I said a bit about why it is important for philosophy to think backward from conclusions that have earned the right to our indulgence. The very proposition that Confucianism should play a part in shaping philosophy may be one such conclusion, and so it is important to begin exploring the reasons or justification for it. We hope that this collection of articles helps to accomplish precisely that. And it may not be for present-day philosophers to decide whether they must come to grips with Confucianism, just as it was not for the late Hellenists to decide whether philosophy could eventually come to grips with the new religions of Europe and the Middle East. As long as the influence of Chinese and Confucian societies continues to grow, philosophically creative minds will want to think deeply about the posi-

tions of the great Confucian thinkers and their arguments for those positions. Perhaps this is reason enough to think it inevitable (and thus warranted?) that Confucianism play a major role in shaping philosophy in generations to come.

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