De and Virtue in Early Confucian Texts: Introduction

Xinzhong Yao

Center for Ethical Studies, School of Philosophy, Renmin University of China, Beijing, China

yao.xinzhong@ruc.edu.cn

Abstract

The introduction to this special issue describes the emergence of the virtue ethics approach within the study of Confucian virtues in recent decades. It will first examine scholarly contributions to the discussion of Confucian virtue ethics and then raises questions concerning whether or not *de* 德 in early Confucian texts is identical with *arête* or virtue. It will then investigate the meaning and implication of *de* in Confucian contexts and make an argument for a new type of Confucian *de* ethics. It will finally come to the project on *de* and virtue ethics in early Confucian texts and define its purpose and boundaries.

Keywords

virtue ethics – *de* 德 ethics – Confucian texts

A kind of consensus has been reached among the majority of scholars on Chinese philosophy that discourses on *de* 德 (usually translated as “virtue” or “virtues”) occupy a central position in Chinese culture. Indeed, *de* or virtue was often taken as the driving force in the development of Confucian traditions in education, politics, family and communal life. Although Confucian ethics has embodied and comprehended duties and rights, and has presented strong arguments in favor of consequential benefits and utilitarian values when evaluating moral action and choice, virtue or the cultivation of a good character for human flourishing remains the key concern for generations

of Confucian scholars. Consequently, one of the frontiers in reinterpreting Confucianism has been engaged, for over the last three decades, in the way of enquiring or examining the issues concerning whether or not Confucian ethics can be defined or identified as a “virtue ethics” that was first formulated in Aristotelean works and has been recently revived by modern moral philosophers. Particular interests are concerned with Confucian discourses on self-cultivation, good personal traits or habits, excellence in promoting familial or communal wellbeing, and moral capabilities in dealing with and managing public affairs. Questions that are repeatedly asked include whether or not these traits or qualities bear a certain similarity with those in ancient Greek philosophies; whether or not they share some commonality with later new developments in Western virtue ethics; whether or not Confucianism should or could be identified as a particular kind of “virtue ethics” and, if it should or could, then how particular it would be. Recognizing the importance of “*de*” in Confucian ethics, a number of scholars have made an attempt to reconstruct it as Confucian “*de* ethics,” in parallel with western virtue ethics and yet with its own characteristics.

1 “Confucian Virtue Ethics”

One of the most brilliant minds behind the virtue ethics reviving “movement” in the late 20th century, Alistair MacIntyre, made an early attempt to engage in a dialectic conversation between Confucians and Aristotelians and to examine what

commonality between them could be singled out in a number of key issues for virtue ethics.¹ This engagement has attracted considerable attention from various quarters of the intellectual world in the 1990s, when many scholars who were concerned with the contemporary meaning of traditional ethics came to reinterpret the nature and function of the so-called “Confucian virtue ethics.” This trend continues and accelerates in the 21st century, as more and more research projects are devoted to the historical, philosophical, philological, phenomenological, hermeneutical, ontological and comparative studies of Confucian virtues. Pioneering works in English have been produced, in particular, by leading scholars such as Chung-ying Cheng, Roger T. Ames, Philip J. Ivanhoe, Bryan van Norden, Edward Slingerland, Jiyuan Yu and many others.

As far as our own purpose is concerned, it is worth highlighting the three major orientations that have been observed in a wide range of academic works on the so-called Confucian virtue ethics. In the first orientation we find that a considerable amount of energy was devoted to the examination of Confucian discourses on virtues in the last decade of the 20th century, specifically to define or interpret, in light of the new interpretative paradigms of virtue ethics in North America and Europe, Confucian ethics as a “virtue ethics.” While not specifically focusing on virtue ethics, David Hall and Roger T. Ames take *de* as one of the grounding concepts of “Confucius’ aesthetic cosmology” and as “the authoring concept” that plays a significant role in constructing the moral universe.² Early examples of these works on Confucian virtue ethics can also be found in such titles as “The Tao of Confucian Virtue Ethics” by

James T. Bretzke,³ “Confucius’s Virtue Ethics: *Li*, *Yi*, *Wen* and *Chih* in the *Analects*” by Chong Kim Chong,⁴ and the book chapter titled “Transforming Confucian Virtues into Human Rights: A Study of Human Agency and Potency in Confucian Ethics” by Chung-ying Cheng,⁵ and “*Jen*, Love and Universality – Three Arguments concerning *Jen* in Confucianism” by Xinzhong Yao.⁶ In these works, questions concerning Confucian virtues are raised that have since remained at the center of modern Confucian studies, and systematic attempts are made to examine or interpret the nature and function of virtue or virtues in a Confucian context.

In the second orientation, attentions are focused on the question of what similarities and differences can be established between Confucian ethics and virtue ethics, how virtue ethics as developed in the West could shed new light on contemporary reinterpretations of Confucian moral philosophy, and what points that are made in Confucian ethics have revealed new dimensions of virtue ethics. This orientation may be discovered from the titles of books and articles such as “Virtue Ethics and Confucian Ethics,” or “Virtue Ethics and the Chinese Confucian Tradition.” While some scholars, such as Robert Gassmann, who points out the difficulty of interpreting *de* in Confucian texts in parallel with “virtue,”⁷ a wide range of published

1 Alastair MacIntyre, “Incommensurability, Truth, and the Conversation between Confucians and Aristotelians,” in *Culture and Modernity: East-West Philosophic Perspectives*, ed. Eliot Deutsch (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), 104–122.

2 David L. Hall, Roger T. Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987: 200.

3 James T. Bretzke, “The Tao of Confucian Virtue Ethics,” *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 35 (1995): 25–42.

4 Chong Kim Chong, “Confucius’s Virtue Ethics: *Li*, *Yi*, *Wen* and *Chih* in the *Analects*,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 25 (1998), 101–130.

5 Chung-ying Cheng, “Transforming Confucian Virtues into Human Rights: A Study of Human Agency and Potency in Confucian Ethics,” in *Confucianism and Human Rights*, eds. William T. de Bary and Wei-ming Tu (Columbia University Press, New York, 1998), 142–153.

6 Xinzhong Yao, “Jen, Love and Universality – Three Arguments concerning Jen in Confucianism,” *Asian Philosophy – An International Journal of the Philosophical Traditions of the East*, 5,2 (1995): 181–195.

7 See Robert Gassmann, “Coming to Terms with *dé* 德 – The Deconstruction of ‘Virtue’ and an Exercise in Scientific Morality,” in *How Should One Live? Comparing Ethics in Ancient China and Greco-Roman Antiquity*, eds. R.A.H. King and Dennis Schilling (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 92–125.

literature has contributed to multidimensional explorations of this theme. Vincent Shen made it clear that “Confucian ethics is an ethics of virtue, not an ethics of obligation” and David Wong also argued that “Confucian ethics fits into the category of ‘virtue ethics’ and can appropriately be compared with ancient Greek ethics in this regard.”⁸ The following are highlighted as representative works on these issues: Edward Slingerland’s paper on “Virtue Ethics, the *Analects*, and the Problem of Commensurability,”⁹ Wai-ying Wong’s article on “Confucian Ethics and Virtue Ethics,”¹⁰ Jiyuan Yu’s book titled *The Ethics of Confucius and Aristotle: Mirrors of Virtue*,¹¹ Chen Lai’s discussion of “Virtue Ethics and Confucian Ethics,”¹² May Sim’s paper on “Rethinking Virtue Ethics and Social Justice with Aristotle and Confucius,”¹³ in particular, the collection volume of *Virtue Ethics and Confucianism* edited by Stephen C. Angle and Michael Slote¹⁴ and its fifth chapter titled “Toward a Synthesis of Confucianism and Aristotelianism” by Bryan van Norden.¹⁵

In the third orientation, an emphasis is placed on the questions concerning whether or not, and in which sense, virtue ethics or elements of virtue ethics were developed within various lineages of traditional Confucianism, especially from the perspectives of new studies on virtue ethics in the 21st century. For example, P. J. Ivanhoe discusses

this issue in the context of Mencius and Wang Yangming in his book entitled *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation*,¹⁶ while Yong Huang approaches this question from an ontological perspective and considers Neo-Confucian ethics as an “ontological virtue ethics” with a particular focus on Neo-Confucian masters such as the Cheng brothers (Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi) in his article entitled “Cheng Brothers’ Neo-Confucian Virtue Ethics: The Identity of Virtue and Nature.”¹⁷ Discussions of virtue developed by different Confucians or Confucian traditions are engaged with in such works as Antonio S. Cua’s paper on “Early Confucian Virtue Ethics: The Virtues of *Junzi*,”¹⁸ Yong Huang’s article on “Two Dilemmas in Virtue Ethics and How Zhu Xi’s Neo-Confucianism Avoids Them,”¹⁹ Joseph Emmanuel D. Sta. Maria’s article on “Shu and Zhong as the Virtue of the Golden Rule: a Confucian Contribution to Contemporary Virtue Ethics.”²⁰

2 De Ethics and Virtue Ethics

When defining Confucianism as a kind of virtue ethics, there is always an underlying question concerning how to compare Confucian “*de* ethics” and the “virtue ethics” in the West, and how to study Confucian *de* ethics from the perspectives of other ethical traditions. This has become another important theme in the study of Confucian virtues

8 Antonio S. Cua, *Encyclopedia of Chinese philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 644, 52.

9 Edward Slingerland, “Virtue Ethics, the *Analects*, and the Problem of Commensurability,” *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 29 (2001): 97–125.

10 Wai-ying Wong, “Confucian Ethics and Virtue Ethics,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 28, no.3 (2001): 285–300.

11 Jiyuan Yu, *The Ethics of Confucius and Aristotle: Mirrors of Virtue* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

12 Chen Lai, “Virtue Ethics and Confucian Ethics,” *Dao – A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 9, no.3 (2010): 275–287.

13 May Sim, “Rethinking Virtue Ethics and Social Justice with Aristotle and Confucius,” *Asian Philosophy* 20, no.2 (2010): 195–213.

14 *Virtue Ethics and Confucian Ethics*, eds. by Stephen Angle and Michael Slote (New York: Routledge, 2013).

15 *Ibid.*

16 P. J. Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000).

17 Yong Huang, “Cheng Brothers’ Neo-Confucian Virtue Ethics: The Identity of Virtue and Nature,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 30, no.2 (2003): 451–467.

18 Antonio S. Cua, “Early Confucian Virtue Ethics: The Virtues of *Junzi*,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 34, S1 (2007): 125–142.

19 Yong Huang, “Two Dilemmas in Virtue Ethics and How Zhu Xi’s Neo-Confucianism Avoids Them,” *Journal of Philosophical Research*, 36 (2011): 247–281.

20 Joseph Emmanuel D. Sta. Maria, “Shu and Zhong as the Virtue of the Golden Rule: a Confucian Contribution to Contemporary Virtue Ethics,” *Asian Philosophy* 27, no.2 (2017): 100–111.

and it strongly calls for further exploration into how different Confucian ethics would be from those of other philosophies that either emphasize duties (deontology) or stress the consequences of actions or motives (consequentialism), and what contribution the reinterpreted Confucian *de* ethics might be able to make to a deeper understanding of human nature, the heart-mind, feelings or emotions, rule of law, moral education, moral psychology and moral anthropology. Many leading scholars have raised questions in this respect and then made good efforts to answer them, which can be seen from Jiyuan Yu's inspiring comparison of Confucius and Aristotle in their views of virtue.²¹ Bryan van Norden's book entitled *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism in Early Chinese Philosophy*,²² Chung-ying Cheng's book chapter entitled "A Confucian-Kantian Reflection on Mutuality and Complementarity: Virtue and Law,"²³ Deborah S. Mower's article "Situationism and Confucian Virtue Ethics,"²⁴ Vytis Silius's paper on "Neo-Aristotelian Confucianism? Applicability of Virtue Ethics in Early Confucian Studies,"²⁵ and Stephen C. Angle's "A Productive Dialogue: Contemporary Moral Education and Neo-Confucian Virtue Ethics."²⁶

What are listed above have revealed the central position of a comparative approach to the study of Confucian virtues, not only comparing it with Greek (Aristotelian) virtue ethics and contemporary virtue ethics, but also comparing it to other ethical paradigms, traditions and theories. The reason for the importance of this approach is that although Confucian virtues bear certain similarities with those that we find in ancient Greek philosophy such as justice, generosity, bravery and wisdom, they nevertheless were understood and cultivated in different cultural and historical circumstances. Without a proper and careful comparison, it would be difficult for us to justify the thesis that Confucian *de* ethics (in the sense that Confucian ethics is centered on *de*) is a kind of "virtue ethics" or the proposal that good qualities and characteristics for Confucians are more or less the same as "virtues" in an English context. In addition, multiple perspectives in ethical theories developed in the modern era would help us appreciate the special features of Confucian "virtues" and their values for the Chinese way of life, either in history or in contemporary times.

No matter what approaches have been adopted in the study of Confucian virtue ethics, the priority is always given to detailed analyses of the meaning, presentation, usage and application of virtues in Confucian texts. This priority can be further analyzed in two dimensions. The first is concerned with the key term of *de*, a widely used character appearing in almost all Confucian texts. Is this *de* that indicates both the power and the quality of a good person equivalent to "*arête*" in Greek or to "virtue" in the contemporary literature of virtue ethics? How is "*de*" treated in different kinds of Confucian contexts? What insight can we gain for understanding virtue ethics from an analysis of "*de*" in the Confucian tradition? The second aspect is concerned with how to understand specific "virtues" in such forms as benevolence, wisdom, propriety, trustfulness, courage, honesty, generosity, rightness, humility, filial piety, loyalty and so on, in a Confucian context and how to assess the roles these good qualities, or the ideal character

21 Jiyuan Yu, "Virtue: Confucius and Aristotle," *Philosophy East and West* 48, no.2 (1998): 323–347.

22 Bryan van Norden, *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism in Early Chinese Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

23 Chung-ying Cheng, "A Confucian-Kantian Reflection on Mutuality and Complementarity: Virtue and Law," in *Strukturen der Macht – Studien zum politischen Denken Chinas*, Volume 13, eds. Harald Holz and Konrad Wegmann, (Muenster: Lit Verlag Muenster, 2005), 291–333.

24 Deborah S. Mower, "Situationism and Confucian Virtue Ethics," *Ethical Theory & Moral Practice* 16, no.1 (2013): 113–137.

25 Vytis Silius, "Neo-Aristotelian Confucianism? Applicability of Virtue Ethics in Early Confucian Studies," *International Journal of Area Studies* 8, no.1 (2013): 70–89.

26 Stephen C. Angle, "A Productive Dialogue: Contemporary Moral Education and Neo-Confucian Virtue Ethics," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 38, S1 (2011): 183–203.

that is composed of them, have played in the presentation or construction of Confucian views on the world, government, education, the family and the self.

As an important concept with multiple meanings, *de* is not confined to Confucian texts in the formative stage of Chinese thought, when different schools of philosophy debated with one another and competed for the acceptance by the audience and in particular for the attention of political leaders of great or small states during the Spring and Autumn period (722–479 BCE) and the Warring States period (479–221 BCE). As one of the key words that is applied to various situations, *de* is invested with different meanings or values in different contexts. For example, in the key Daoist text *Daode Jing* 《道德經》, we read “*de*” as the power and individualization of *Dao* – the origin and the way of the whole universe. In a typical Confucian context,²⁷ however, *de* would normally carry a strong moral sense and would often be related to human flourishing, indicating the goodness or good capacity humans can achieve or the property humans may possess through personal cultivation and in managing political and family matters. It indicates both internally good dispositions and externally teleological ends. As a good quality, *de* is the result of conscientious

cultivation. In the sense of being an achievement, it can be divided into that of the superior person (*junzi zhi de* 君子之德), and that of a morally underdeveloped person (*xiaoren zhi de* 小人之德). As a teleological end, *de* is closely related to communal or human flourishing. As far as its source is concerned, *de* is said to have been endowed or generated (*sheng* 生) by Heaven (*tian* 天), the spiritual supreme power of the metaphysical, natural and supernatural world. However, as a capacity or potential, it must be cultivated or nourished through learning (*xue* 學), behaving (*xing* 行) and thinking (*si* 思) in order to lead an ethical life (*xiu de* 修德). *De* in different contexts not only differs in kinds, but is also diverse in quantity, and there is difference between the highest, the great and the small (*zhi de* 至德, *da de* 大德 and *xiao de* 小德). *De* is a powerful quality that is said to enable one to be the true king (*keyi wang* 可以王) or to enable the state to flourish (*fu shu* 富庶). It is a kind of goodness that must be epistemologically understood (*zhi de* 知德), morally loved (*hao de* 好德), or politically glorified (*chong de* 崇德), not only because it is useful and beneficial for living well and ruling well, but also because of its intrinsic value, independent of one's living circumstances. Although *de* is a perfect combination of good disposition and appropriate action, it itself is subject to conscientious cultivation and protection. Confucians were therefore often worried about *de*'s vulnerability, as it seemed apparent to them that *de* was prone to being confused (*luan* 亂), discarded (*qi* 棄) or even ruined (*zei* 賊).

Another important feature of *de* in Confucian texts is that any discussion of *de* will inevitably involve many other key concepts such as the nature (*xing* 性) and feelings (*qing* 情) of human beings. Confucian *de* is not only manifested as a good habit in behavior and a good disposition to deal with various kinds of human relations, but also as a commensurate feeling towards others and conscious distinction between what to do and what not to do. In this sense, we may say that *de* is a potential power of moral action that leads to the satisfaction of a moral value. *De* must be

27 By “typical Confucian” I mean the discourses as we find in the texts attributed to Confucius and Mencius. It is apparent that *de* plays an extremely important role in the five classics and that for example, in *Shu* 《書》 or *Shangshu* 《尚書》 (the *Documents Classic*) *de* appears 224 times, in *Shi* 《詩》 (the *Book of Poetry*) we have seen it 74 times, or *Chunqiu Zuozhuan* 《春秋左傳》 (*Zuo's Commentaries on the Spring and Autumn's Annals*) it appears as many as 333 times. It could be argued that these texts give more attention to *de* than the two Confucian texts, especially when we take into account the fact that it appears only 40 times in the *Analec*s and 39 times in *Mencius*. However, it is the last two texts that have had the greatest influence over later Chinese thought on virtue or moral goodness in relation to how it helps human societies to flourish and they therefore deserve special attention when we discuss the nature, role and function of *de* in early Confucian texts.

both internal and external, internal in the sense of giving rise to moral consciousness or the moral heart-mind (*xin* 心), while external in the sense of relating to others in the world by way of understanding and knowledge, activity and interaction. In other words, it is internal as moral feeling and external as moral action. Together with its internal and external concerns, *de* is open to improvement, cultivation and perfection. It aims to maintain the integrity of one's self and the integration of the internal and the external in a practical process of self-improvement, self-cultivation and self-fulfillment to manifest the perfection of human nature and human excellence. To illustrate this point, we can refer to the saying in the *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong* 《中庸》) that has demonstrated the essence of *de* in Confucianism: "the *de* of [human] nature is to combine the internal way and the external way."²⁸ It is in and through the combination of the internal and the external that a new type of the Confucian "*de* ethics" comes into existence.

With the integration of the internal and the external, characteristic of Confucian discourses on *de* is the conviction that *de* is a system of all the necessary qualities of being fully human. Bryan van Norden asserts that "it is not until the third century BC (long after the time of Confucius and Mencius) that '*de*' starts to be used as a countable term that refers to individual virtues."²⁹ However, there is no ambiguity whatsoever that a morally good quality or trait is often regarded or implied as an individual embodiment of *de* in Confucian contexts preceding Mencius where distinctive kinds of *de* are already in use and show a comparable character as applied in later texts. Central to moral goodness or ethical excellence is *ren* 仁, often translated as humanity, humaneness or benevolence. *Ren* is no doubt a self-reflective power and the sentiment of humanity. As the

core of human virtues, it is bound to expand and give rise to all other virtues, as can be seen from the case of Mencius who provides an account of how *de* is differentiated into the four feelings (*si xin* 四心) or four beginnings (*si duan* 四端). As an essential quality of being a fully realized human, *ren* involves both the inward understanding of one's own humanity and the outward appreciation of the needs of others. As it involves the determination of human ends and the realization of human nature or human will in terms of feelings in response to other people and the world, *ren* naturally gives rise to *zhi* 智 (practical reason or wisdom) as to what is to be done as right and what is not to be done or is to be avoided as wrong. Right and wrong distinctions presuppose a distinction between what is and what is not as well as what there is and what there is not (*shi* 是 and *fei* 非). To determine and know the distinction between *shi* and *fei* is a matter of knowing reality, including human existence as part of that reality. It is to know how human beings are situated and constituted in the world and to know what sort of the world humans could possibly experience. In this sense *de* already presupposes both an ability to know and a willingness to know as required in any moral action. In other words, it not only presupposes but also embodies as its integrative part, the practical reason which guides us with both a sense of purpose and a sense of direction.

3 The Project on *De* and Virtue

With such complexity in composition and meaning, *de* in Confucian texts raises many questions concerning how it could operate as an equivalent to "virtue" in an English context. To examine this question, a research project has been initiated in order to investigate the usage of *de*, not only in its multiple senses, contexts and situations in early Confucian texts,³⁰ but also in the divergence and

²⁸ *Zhongyong* 25.

²⁹ Bryan W. Van Norden, "Virtue Ethics and Confucianism", Chapter Five of *Comparative Approaches to Chinese Philosophy*, ed. Bo Mou, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003): 99–121.

³⁰ "Early Confucian Texts" as used in this special issue refer to those works that have traditionally been attributed to the Confucian masters of the Spring and

convergence of its meanings, applications and implications, between *de* in these Confucian contexts and other philosophical contexts, and between *de* as the Confucian virtue and “*arête*” as the Greek virtue. With strong support from the editors of the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, we have successfully coordinated a special issue entitled “*De and Virtue in Early Confucian Texts*,” by which leading scholars are invited to expand their works on this theme. While some of the articles are devoted to specific examinations of “*de*” and virtues in individual Confucian classical texts, others are more focused on cross-textual examinations of the uses of *de* and the implications of specific virtues in a number of texts. Considering its complexity, it has become necessary that the authors are not required to take a fixed approach to the study of *de* in Confucian texts. Instead, they are free to choose their own perspectives which are either the textual analysis of the character “*de*” and its association with good character traits of being a fully realized human, or the comparative studies of *de* and “virtue” through examining the implications of *de* and various kinds of good habits or qualities both in Confucian texts and in other philosophical traditions. Historical overviews on the evolution or expansion of “*de*” and virtues in different texts are also clearly displayed in a couple of excellent contributions to this project. As far as the topics of the invited articles are concerned, our authors focus their studies either on one specific “virtue” or on the connection and interaction between different “virtues” in the same text or between those in different texts. In terms of the subject matter of the articles, the discussion of *de* as ethically worthy qualities will be either centered on the private aspect of virtues and qualities in personal life, or engaged with a

cluster of good qualities in terms of family virtue, communal flourishing and public goodness.

Lisa Raphals, Professor at the Department of Comparative Literature and Languages, University of California, Riverside, focuses her attention on the virtue, mind, body and spirit in *Shi* 《詩》 or *Shijing* 《詩經》 (the *Book of Poetry*) and explores new perspectives in understanding the pre-Warring States conception of personhood and virtue. Kwong-Loi Shun, Professor of Chinese philosophy at the Department of Philosophy, University of California, Berkeley, explores the three dimensions of the virtue of humility in early Confucian thought, which include a deflated self-conception, caution and fearfulness, as well as seriousness and awe, and argues that *jing* 敬 is closely related to all three dimensions and is the virtue in early Confucian texts closest to encompassing all the different aspects of humility understood in a broad sense. Dennis Schilling, Professor of Chinese philosophy at Renmin University of China, starts with a discussion of the Neo-Confucian concept of virtue drawn from *Yijing* 《易經》 (the *Book of Changes*) and then go back to the *Yijing* itself, to examine how *de* is used to illustrate *de*'s physical, empirical, political and ethical meaning and application in the text. Michael Nylan, Professor of History and Chinese classics at the Department of History, University of California, Berkeley, provides a unique insight into how *de* is used as political capabilities or properties in *Shu* 《書》 or *Shangshu* 《尚書》 (the *Documents Classic*) of the Han dynasties and how the text prescribes actions that embody the virtues of foresightedness, compassion, and fairness, in her article entitled “The *Documents Classic* as Guide to Political Philosophy in the Early Empire.” Ann White-Pang, Professor of Chinese philosophy at the Department of Philosophy and Asian Studies, the University of Scranton, examines the mutual affective relationship between *de* and ritual (*li* 禮) in *Liji* 《禮記》 (the *Book of Rites*) and argues that owing to *de*'s interrelationship with ritual, its requirement of thick interpersonal relationships, and ritual's aesthetic transformative effect on virtue, Confucian *de* carries multilayers of

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Autumn and the Warring States periods, especially the so-called Four Books and the Five Classics, plus that by Xunzi. Some of these texts might have been edited or recompiled in a later time but in general it is believed that they reflect the ideas and ideals of the Confucians who together with the intellectuals of other schools laid down the foundation of Chinese civilization in the Axial Age as Karl Jaspers put it.

meaning that neither the English term “virtue” nor the Greek word “*arête*” can fully convey. Yuri Pines, Professor of Chinese History at the Department of Asian Studies, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, examines *de* in *Chunqiu Zuozhuan* 《春秋左傳》 (*Zuo’s Commentaries on or Zuo Tradition of the Spring and Autumn’s Annals*) and engages in a thorough examination of the hermeneutical richness of *de* in this claimed commentary on the *Annals*. Xinzhong Yao, Professor of Ethics at the School of Philosophy, Renmin University of China, focuses his attention on the Confucian *de* ethics that is aimed to integrate the internal and the external realization of what we have learned from the Way, through reconstructing the discourses on *de* in the Four Books. Siufu Tang, associate Professor of Philosophy at the School of Chinese, University of Hong Kong, explores the interaction between *de* and ritual regarding the role of habituation in ethical cultivation in the extant text of *Xunzi* 荀子. Chung-ying Cheng, Professor of Chinese philosophy at the Department of Philosophy, University of Hawaii at Manoa, reconstructs *de* in early Confucian texts, and outlines an integrative theory of *de* in Confucianism and *arête* in Greek philosophy, which perfectly concludes this special project.

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Raphals, Nylan and Pang-White and is scheduled to be published in the first issue of 2021, while the last five respectively by Cheng, Schilling, Pines, Yao and Tang are to be included in Part II and to be published in the 2nd issue.

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