Five Virtues: Scientific Approach for Studying Confucian Ethics and Morality

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ABSTRACT

Confucian ethics for ordinary people（庶人倫理）is the transcendental formal structure for sustaining lifeworlds of the Chinese people. It has been stored in the Chinese language system and manifests in any situation of using the Chinese language for social interaction. It is the generative mechanism for developing Chinese social science that makes Chinese society essentially different from others, as well as the fundamental framework for practicing moral education in Chinese society. However, because it is very hard for Chinese cultural tradition of pursuing immanent transcendence to transform Confucian ethics and morality into objective knowledge, a comprehensive understanding on the Western philosophy of science is necessary for us to construct culture-inclusive theories to illustrate the uniqueness of Confucian ethics and morality. Based on such a belief, my epistemological strategy for developing indigenous psychology consists of two steps: First, constructing universal models of self and social interaction; second, constructing culture-inclusive theories by using those models as frameworks for analyzing a given cultural tradition. (Hwang, 2017a, b)
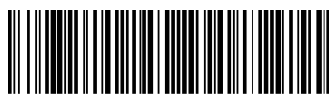
INTRODUCTION

The epistemological strategy of my scientific approach to studying a cultural system had been formulated in accordance with a fundamental principle of cultural psychology, namely, one mind, many mentalities; universalism without uniformity (Shweder, Goodnow, Hatano, LeVine, Markus & Miller, 1998: 871). Mind means the totality of actual and potential conceptual contents of the human cognitive process determined by biological factors (Shweder, 2000: 210). Mentality denotes cognized and activated a subset of mind, which had been cultivated and owned by a particular individual or group so that it can serve as subjects of research by cultural psychologists.

This principle indicates that the psychological functioning or mechanisms of the human mind are the same all over the world, but that people may evolve diverse mentalities in different social and cultural environments. For the sake of achieving the goal of universal psychology, indigenous psychologists have to construct culture-inclusive theories to reflect not only the deep structure of universal human mind but also the mentalities of people in a particular culture.

Mandala Model of Self

As I mentioned before, the construction of my *Mandala model of self*-was inspired by the insight that the structure of Borobudur Temple, is a three-dimensional Mandala, which I noticed when visiting this site in July 2010 (Hwang, 2011).

Borobudur Temple is located 40 kilometers northwest of Yogyakarta. The temple was built in the Sailendra dynasty, the ruler of Java in the 9th century A.D., and was the world's largest Buddhist building at the time. Then the temple sank because of volcanic eruption and laid hidden under dense jungle for almost one thousand years until the early 19th century. Now

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177

Borobudur, together with the Great Wall, the Pyramids and Angkor Wat, are known as the four wonders of ancient Orient.

Mandala

Hence, I will begin my discourse with Mandala model of self; here I shall introduce the meaning of Mandala first. Mandala, a term from Tibetan Buddhism, is usually plotted in color as a symbol of Buddhist cosmos, representing compassion and wisdom. Its basic structure is a circle inside a square. Lamas may spend one or two weeks using colored sand to build Mandala during the festival of Tibetan Buddhism. There are strict rules for making a sand Mandala; the production process itself is a training of meditation and wisdom. The finished Mandala is colorful, symmetrical, magnificent and solemn, bringing blessings to the festival and all of the participants.

At the end of the festival, lamas destroy the Mandala with their fingers. Colored sands are put into small bottles and distributed to the participants to take home for worship. The remaining is sprinkled on river or land. Accordingly, the Mandala also symbolizes the transformation of a Buddhist's life. The process from making a Mandala to its destruction represents the forming, staying, and emptying of one's existence.

The attitude involved in making and handling a Mandala contains the highest wisdom of Buddhism: Do everything seriously without taking it seriously. Buddhists believe in karma, the principal cause. People have to bear their own success and failure, so it is important to do everything seriously. However, Buddhists also believe in subsidiary causation: since things change in themselves, it is unnecessary to take them seriously.

Ultimate Goal of Life

The wisdom contained in the process of building a Mandala includes almost all the major

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178

ideas of self-cultivation in Oriental culture. The structure of Mandala with a circle inside a square is a symbol of the self, representing the spiritual integrity to coordinate the relationship between human beings and the external world. In her article "*Symbolism in the Visual Arts*" published in a book entitled *Man and His Symbols* edited by Jung (1964), Aniela Jaffe indicated that alchemists played an important role around 1000 A.D. when various sects appeared in Europe. They sought for the integrity of mind and body and created many names and symbols.

Jaffe (1964) indicated that no matter where it is—in the sun worship of primitive people, in myths or dreams, in the Mandala plotted by Tibetan lamas, in modern religion, or in the planar graph of secular and sacred architectures in every civilization, the symbol of the circle represents the most important aspect of life, namely ultimate wholeness, whereas the square indicates secularity, flesh, and reality. Both symbols represent the most important aspects of one's life, and Mandala itself can be viewed as a symbol for the prototype, or the deep structure of one's self!
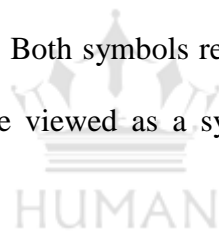
A person, Self, and Individual

In my *Mandala model*, self in the circle is situated in the center of two bi-directional arrows: One end of the horizontal arrow points at *action* or *praxis*, the other endpoints at *wisdom* or *knowledge* (see Figure 1).The top of the vertical arrow points at *a person* and the bottom points at the *individual*. All of the four concepts are located outside the circle but within the square. The arrangement of these five concepts indicates one's self is being influenced by several forces from one's lifeworld. All the five concepts have special implications in cultural psychology, which needs to be elaborated in detail.

Grace G. Harris (1989) proposed the distinction between a person, self, and the individual. Based on an intensive review of the previous anthropological literature, she indicated that the

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179

triple structure of personality can be found in most cultures worldwide, but these three concepts have very different meanings in the Western academic tradition. As a biological concept, the individual regards each human being a member of the human species who is motivated to pursue some resources to satisfy their biological needs, which might be no different from other creatures in the universe.
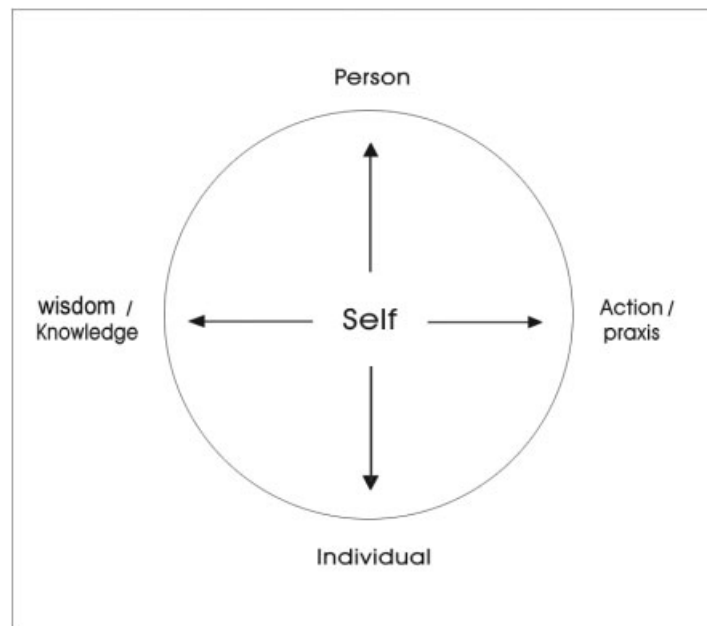

Figure 1. Mandala Model of Self (Adopted from Hwang, 2011: P.330)

A person is a sociological or cultural concept. A person is conceptualized as an agent-in-society who takes a certain standpoint in the social order and plans a series of actions to achieve a particular goal. Every culture has its own definitions of appropriate and permitted behaviors, which are endowed with specific meanings and values that can be passed on to an individual through various channels of socialization.

Self is a psychological concept. In the conceptual framework of Figure 1, the self is the locus of experience that is able to perform various actions in different social contexts, while also able to indulge in self-reflection when blocked from goal attainment.

Citation: Kwang-Kuo Hwang. Ijsrm.Human, 2018; Vol. 10 (3): 176-198.

180

Habitus and Reflexivity

According to Giddens' (1984, 1993) structuration theory, the self as the agency is endowed with two important capabilities, namely, reflexivity and knowledgeability. Knowledgeability means that the *self* is able to memorize, store, organize various forms of *knowledge* and transform them into a well-integrated system of *knowledge*.   Reflexivity means that the self should have the *wisdom* to monitor his or her own *actions*, and is able to give reasons for such *actions*.

However, it is unnecessary for an individual to reflect on each of his or her actions. Giddens (1993) argued that one's practical consciousness enables oneself to be familiar with and even embody particular practical skills or knowledge in a tacit way. Bourdieu's (1990) constructivist structuralism used the term "habitus" to denote this kind of embodied and structuralized behavioral tendency. Habitus means an actor's disposition toward praxis or action in a specific social context that enables the actor to carry out the dynamic physical and mental practice within specific socio-cultural orders.

Culture may provide an attribution of what is worth of noticing and worth pursuing in the world and assumes "causal autonomy" by influencing "what people want" (Vaisey, 2010). In order to understand how culture affects individual and collective action, Abramson (2012) reviewed works in disciplines of modern social science such as sociology, anthropology, and political science, and constructed a context-dependent model of culture in action, in which he introduced the term "cultural input" to refer to a wider set of attributions that may organize the complete sequences of actions while still pointing towards a preferred outcome.

Face and Favor Model

The *Mandala* model is supposed to be a universal model of self. Because all human beings

Citation: Kwang-Kuo Hwang. Ijsrm.Human, 2018; Vol. 10 (3): 176-198.

181

are relational beings (Gergen, 2009, 2015), nobody can survive without social engagement, meaning that a new model of man needs a universal model of social interaction in addition to the universal model of self. In Chapter 4 of my book, *Foundations of Chinese Psychology: Confucian Social Relations* (Hwang, 2012), I explained how I constructed the model of *Face and Favor* for depicting the universal mechanism of social interaction. In my theoretical model of *Face and Favor* (Hwang, 1987), the dyad involved in social interaction was defined as "petitioner" and "resource allocator." When the resource allocator is asked to allocate a social resource to benefit the petitioner, the resource allocator would first consider: "What is the *guanxi* (relationship) between us?"

In Figure 2, within the box denoting the psychological processes of the resource allocator, the shaded rectangle represents various personal ties. It is first divided into two parts by a diagonal. The shaded part stands for the effective component of interpersonal relationships, while the unshaded part represents the instrumental component.

A solid line and a dotted line also divide the same rectangle denoting guanxi (interpersonal relationships) into three parts (expressive ties, mixed ties, and instrumental ties). These parts are proportional to the expressive component. The solid line separating expressive ties within the family and mixed ties outside the family indicates a relatively impenetrable psychological boundary between family members and people outside the family. Different forms of distributive justice or exchange rules are applicable to these two types of relationships during social interactions. In expressive ties, the need rule for social exchange should be adhered to and people should try their best to satisfy the other parties with all available resources. In mixed ties, following the *renqing* rule, when individuals want to acquire a particular resource from someone with whom they have instrumental ties, they tend to follow the equity rule and use instrumental rationality.
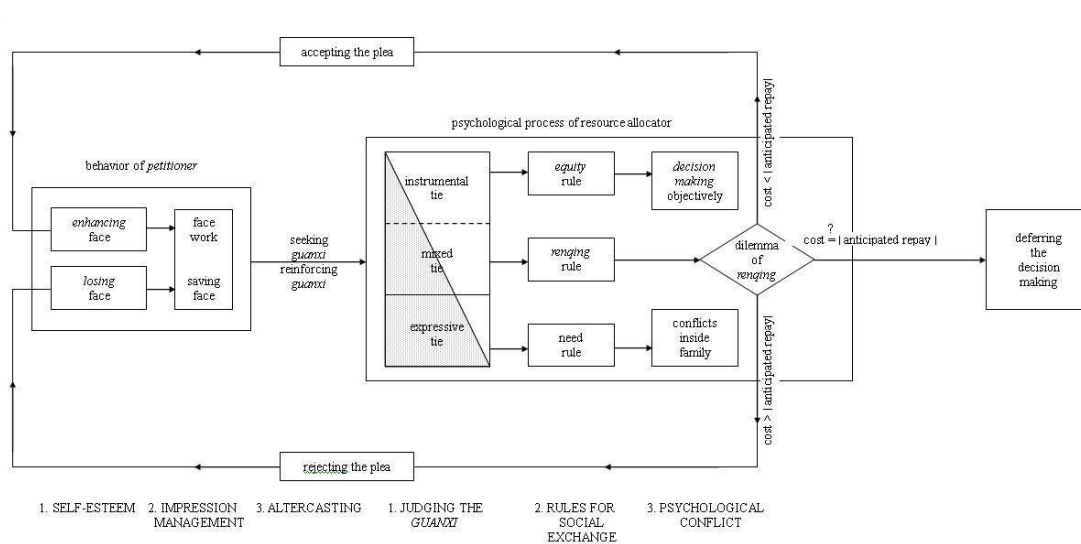
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182

Figure 2. A theoretical model of *Face and Favor* (Adopted from Hwang, 1987: P.948)

In Hwang's (1987) article, *Face and favor: Chinese power game*, he intensively elaborated on the meaning of the *renqing* rule in Chinese society. It is conceptualized as a special case of *equality* rule, which emphasizes that once an individual has received favor from another, s/he is obligated to reciprocate in the future. Thus, the Face and Favor model can be viewed as a universal model applicable to different cultures. Is there any evidence to support this argument?

Structuralism: Elementary Forms of Social Behavior

Following an intensive literature review of the sociology, anthropology, and psychology, Fiske (1991) proposed four elementary forms of social behavior in his book, *Structures of Social Life*. The four relational models are:

1. Communal Sharing: This is a relationship of equivalence in which people are merged together to achieve the superordinate goals at hand so that boundaries among individual selves are indistinct. Group insiders have feelings of solidarity, unity, and belonging. They strongly identify with the collective and in some significant aspects think of themselves as an

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183

identical "we", instead of as an individual "I."

2. Authority Ranking: Individuals in this unequal relationship perceive each other as different in social importance or status. They can be ordered in a linear ranking, which may not translate across other ranking systems. Their ranking is hierarchical with the high-ranking people controlling more persons, things, and resources. High-ranking individuals are also regarded as possessing more knowledge and mastery over events. The attention paid to them is asymmetric, with authority figures more salient than subordinates. Inferiors tend to show abeyance and loyalty to their superiors, whereas leaders are entitled to provide protection and support to their followers.

3. Equality Matching: This is an egalitarian relationship among distinct and individual peers, each of whom has equal social presence including shares, contributions, and influence. Such one-to-one equality matching may manifest in turn-taking or in-kind reciprocity, where people exchange resources of the same value. These relationships entail matched contributions of the same kind and quantity. As a distributive justice, it takes the form of even distribution into equal parts among all people who prove indifferent about their portions. In the case of conflict or assignation, this relationship requires eye-for-an-eye retaliatory vengeance: if a person takes something, s/he has to compensate in equal measure, so that the exchange is balanced.

4. Market Pricing: This exchange relationship is mediated by the price determined in a market system. People evaluate others' actions, services, and products according to the rates at which they can be exchanged for other commodities. Money is the most important medium in market pricing, and people can decide whether to trade with each other based on this universal metric. Prior to making purchasing decisions, they can consider potential substitutes or complements, assess the temporal conditions of the market, and bargain with

Citation: Kwang-Kuo Hwang. Ijsrm.Human, 2018; Vol. 10 (3): 176-198.

184

others out of self-interest.

In *Structures of Social Life*, Fiske (1991) examined the manifestations and characteristics of these four elementary forms of human relations in various domains, including the aforementioned reciprocal exchange, distributive justice, contribution, as well as work, meaning of things, orientations to land, social influence, constitution of groups, social identity and relational self, motivation, moral judgment and ideology, moral interpretation of misfortune, aggression and conflict, etc. He indicated that the four relational models are methods for human beings to organize their social domains. Manifestations of these four elementary forms of relations can be found in various situations, works, and activities, domains of action, substantial problems and attitudes, which implies that such structures are produced from the same psychological schemata or the deep structure of the universal mind.

Sundararajan (2015) compared Fiske's (1991) four elementary forms of relational models with my *Face and Favor* model (Hwang, 1987). Her results show that the three relational models of communal sharing, equality matching and market pricing correspond with the expressive tie, the mixed tie, and instrumental tie, as well as the three rules of exchange for the dyad of those relationships in the *Face and Favor* model, namely, the need rule, the *renqing* rule, and the equity rule. Moreover, the relationship between the petitioner and resource allocator implies the power distance (Hofstede, 2001) or the authority ranking (Fiske, 1991) between the dyad of interaction. Such a comparison shows that Fiske's (1991) model provides a system for classifying elementary forms of social relations in human society, while my *Face and Favor* mechanism was constructed as a universal mechanism of social interaction for human beings. From the perspective of constructive realism (Wallner, 1994), the core concepts in these two models can be translated from one model to the other. Therefore, the *Face and Favor* model was constructed to reflect the deep structure of the universal mind for interpersonal interactions.

Citation: Kwang-Kuo Hwang. Ijsrm.Human, 2018; Vol. 10 (3): 176-198.

185

Five Virtues and Three Bonds

The construction of universal models of self and social interaction is the first step of my epistemological strategy for analyzing a cultural system. In order to use these models to construct culture-inclusive theories for a given culture, it is necessary for us to understand Archer's (1995, 1996) advocacy of analytical dualism which should not be confused with the philosophy of dualism. She emphasized that social structure, culture, and agency are not separate entities, but it is necessary to treat them as analytically separable. These analytical distinctions enable us to understand the substantial differences between them, to examine their interplay, and to maintain the respective analytical distinction between material interests and cultural ideas in social life.

The distinction between Cultural System and Social-Cultural Interaction

Instead of listing representative samples of cultural artifacts without further investigation, Archer (1995) proposed the concept of cultural system (CS) and highlighted its distinction from social-cultural interaction (S-C) in her analytic dualism. Compared with the social structure where units of analysis such as roles, organizations, institutions are easily identified, the concept of culture and its properties tends to be grasped rather than fully analyzed. This lack of development in the concept of culture can be attributed to "the myth of cultural integration" which might be traced back to early anthropology (Archer, 1995, p. 333).

Based on Archer's (1995) advocacy of analytical dualism, in Chapter 5 of *Foundations of Chinese Psychology*, Hwang (2012) explained how he analyzed the inner structure of pre-Qin Confucianism by using the universal *Face and Favor* model as a framework of reference. *The Doctrine of the Mean*(*Zhongyung*, 中庸) was said to be works completed by some Confucian scholars in Han dynasty (206 BC-200 AD) and Zisi (子思), a grandson of Confucius. It seems to me that the following passage from *Zhongyung* can best depict the

Citation: Kwang-Kuo Hwang. Ijsrm.Human, 2018; Vol. 10 (3): 176-198.

186

relationships among three key concepts in Confucian ethics for ordinary people, namely benevolence (仁, *ren)*, righteousness (義, *yi*), and propriety (禮, *li*):

Benevolence (ren) is the characteristic attribute of personhood. The first priority of its expression is showing affection to those closely related to us. Righteousness (yi) means appropriateness, respecting the superior is its most important rule. Loving others according to who they are, and respecting superiors according to their ranks gives rise to the forms and distinctions of propriety (li) in social life. (Zhongyung, Ch. 20)

The idea of loving others according to their relationships with us and respecting superiors according to their rank indicates an emphasis on the differential order of interpersonal relationships. Such an abstract statement is relatively unusual in Classical pre-Qin Confucian works. The above citation from *Zhongyung* not only demonstrates the interrelated concepts of benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), and propriety (*li*) but also implies two dimensions along which Confucians assessed role relationships in social interaction.
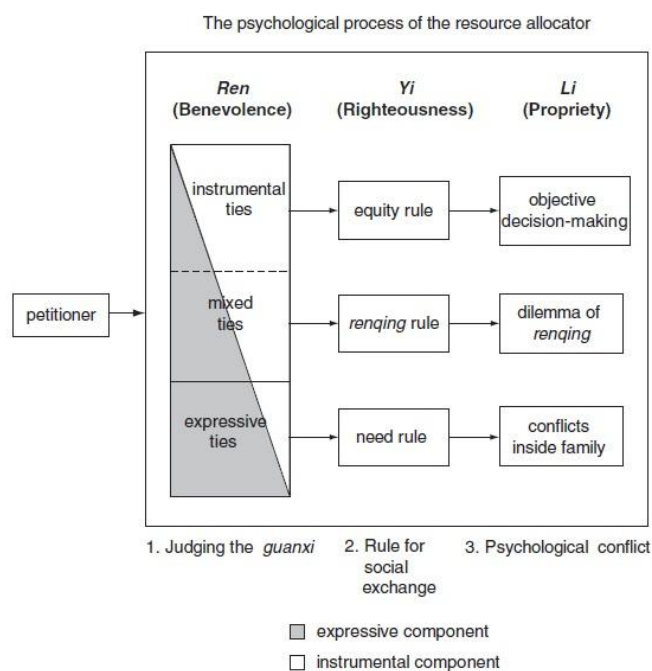

Figure 3. The Confucian ethical system of benevolence-righteousness-propriety (Source: Adapted from Hwang, 1995, p. 233)

Citation: Kwang-Kuo Hwang. Ijsrm.Human, 2018; Vol. 10 (3): 176-198.

187

Transcendental Formal Structure

Confucian ethics for ordinary people can be interpreted in terms of Western justice theory. In Western social psychology, the concept of justice in human society is classified into two categories: procedural justice and distributive justice. Procedural justice refers to the procedure to be followed by members of a group to determine methods of resource distribution. Distributive justice is the particular method of distribution that is accepted by members of that group (Leventhal 1976, 1980).

Confucius advocated that procedural justice in social interaction should be based on the principle of respecting the superior meaning that the role of resource allocator should be played by the person who occupies the superior position. The resource allocator should follow the principle of favoring the intimate in choosing an appropriate method for distributive justice. In other words, for Confucian followers, it is righteous for the resource allocator to distribute resources in favoring of close friends and relatives.

It should be emphasized that the Confucian ethical system of benevolence-righteousness-propriety as shown in Figure 3 is isomorphic to the psychological process of resource allocator in the model of *Face and Favor* as shown in Figure 2. Therefore, the Confucian ethical system is the transcendental formal structure for sustaining the lifeworld's of Chinese people and might be applied in any kind of social interaction with another party of various relationships. Moreover, the Confucian concept of *yi* (righteousness) is frequently translated into English as justice. However, inasmuch as *yi* is usually used in connection with other Chinese characters like *ren-yi* (literally, benevolent righteousness or benevolent justice) or *qing-yi* (literally, affective righteousness or affective justice), it should be noted that the meaning of this term is completely different from the concept of universal justice in Western culture (Rawls, 1971).

Citation: Kwang-Kuo Hwang. Ijsrm.Human, 2018; Vol. 10 (3): 176-198.

188

Substantial Ethical Values

Emphasizing the principle of respecting the superior in procedural justice and the principle of favoring the intimate in distributive justice constitutes the formal structure of Confucian ethics for ordinary people. While this transcendental formal structure manifests itself in many types of interpersonal relationships, Confucians also make substantial ethical demands relationships. Confucians have established five cardinal ethics for the five major dyadic relationships in Chinese society, proposing that the social interaction between members of each pair should be constructed on the basis of the *Way of Humanity*(天道). Because each of the roles or functions in these five cardinal relationships is distinctive, this indicates that the core values that should be emphasized in each are also different:

…Between father and son, there should be affection(親); between sovereign and subordinate, righteousness(義); between husband and wife, attention to their separate functions(別); between elder brother and younger, a proper order(序); and between friends, trustworthiness(信). (The Works of Mencius, Chapter 3A: Duke Wen of Teng)

In the aforementioned passage, affection(親), righteousness(義), separate functions(別), proper order(序)and trustworthiness(信)are substantial ethical values for regulating dyad interactions of the five cardinal relationships advocated by Mencius. Three of these five cardinal rules were designed for regulating interpersonal relationships within the family (expressive ties). The other two relationships – friends and sovereign/subordinate – are relations of mixed ties. It should also be noted that, except for the relationship between friends, the remaining four relationships are vertical ones between superiors and inferiors.

Nature of Human Being

After the death of Confucius, Mencius, who lived during a pre-Qin period, engaged in

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189

several debates with his opponents about human nature. In his dialogue with Gongdu zi (公都子), Mencius proposed his famous says about "Four Origins"(四端) in answering Gongduzi's question:

"When I say human beings are inherently good, I am talking about their most fundamental qualities of feeling. If some do evil, it is not the fault of their natural endowment.

Everyone has the feeling of concern for the wellbeing of others.

Everyone has the sense of shame and disgust at their own evil,

Everyone has the sense to treat others respectfully,

Everyone has the sense to judge right and wrong,

The feeling of concern for the wellbeing of others is Benevolence, (仁, *ren*)

The sense of shame and disgust is Righteousness, (義, *yi*)

The sense to treat others respectfully is Propriety, (禮, *li*)

The sense to judge right and wrong is Wisdom. (智, *zhi*)

Benevolence, Righteousness, Propriety, and Wisdom are not melded into us from outside. They are our original endowment. You have not really thought them through yet!

Hence it is said: "If you strive for it, you will attain it; if you ignore it, you will lose it.' Men are different in their extents of actualization. Some are double, some fivefold are, and some manifest it to an incalculable degree because some are not able to fully develop their natural endowments" (Mencius, Gaozi, Part I, Ch. 6).

In addition to these positive statements, Mencius also argued for his sayings of "Four

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190

Origins" with more assertive mode of negative statements to defend for his position that the four virtues of Benevolence, Righteousness, Propriety, and Wisdom are essential to human being (See *Mencius*, *Gongsun Cheu, Part* I, Ch. 6). Many Confucian scholars had tried to expound the meaning of four origins from various perspectives, but it is very difficult to explain the relationships among those four concepts without any theoretical construction for illustrating the nature of human being.

Second-order Morality

Conceiving Mencius discourse on the four origins in the context of my theoretical construction, benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), and propriety (*li*) can be explained in the context of Confucian ethics for ordinary people (Figure 3), while wisdom(智, *zhi*) is located in the *Mandala* model of self (Figure 1). In his book *Relational being: Beyond self and community*, Gergen (2009) classified morality into two categories:

First-order morality has meaning in a certain style of life: it consists of values for constituting long-lasting patterns of relationship, it is implicit and existing everywhere, but it has nothing to do with good or evil. An individual may utilize it to integrate various ideas about one's personhood to formalize his personal identity: s/he may also use it to constitute social identity in a given social group. First-order morality may change from an implicit state into second-order morality, which can be explicitly stated as a set of norms, rules or principles. This situation usually happens when two cultural groups encounter and are in value conflict with each other.

Conceived in terms of Gergen's (2009) classification, wisdom (*zhi*) is the first-order morality, which can be used flexibly to deal with any situation of social interaction. One's reflection on an entire problematic situation may become the second-order morality of benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), and propriety (*li*), which can be stated explicitly as norms, rules, or

Citation: Kwang-Kuo Hwang. Ijsrm.Human, 2018; Vol. 10 (3): 176-198.

191

principles.

Modal of Five Virtue

After the destruction caused by the First Emperor of Qin's burning books and burying intellectuals alive, the Martial Emperor of Han dynasty (156-87 B.C) adopted Dong Zhongshu's (董仲舒, 179-104B.C) proposal of promoting only Confucianism and dismissing other scholars of thought. Dong also proposed his famous saying of Three Bonds and expanded Mencius' discourse on Four Origins into Five Virtues, namely, benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), propriety (*li*), wisdom (*zhi*) and trustworthiness (信, *xin*) which signifies the accomplishment of Confucian theorization on Relationalism.

Following the reasoning presented in this articles, a model of Five Virtues can be constructed to depict the ideal dyad interaction of Confucianism (see Figure 4), which must be elaborated in more detail. Most dialogues between Confucius and his disciples as recorded in *Analects* involved questions by disciples that were answered by Confucius. However, those sayings which were actively mentioned by Confucius may reflect the core values of Confucianism:

The Master said, "Shen, my doctrine is that of an all-prevailing unity."

The disciple Zeng replied, "Yes."

The Master went out. The other disciples asked, "What do his saying means?"

Zeng seng said, "The doctrine of our master is just 忠 (zhong, literary loyalty) and 恕(shu, literary forgiveness), and nothing more."

In accordance with Zhu Xi's (朱熹) annotation, *zhong*(忠)means to be authentic to one's best effort (盡己); while *shu*(恕)means the benevolent exercise of it to others (推己及人). Conceiving this in the context of the model of Five Virtues for dyad interaction (see Figure

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192

4), when *yin*(陰)and *yang*(陽)components of the *Taiji*(太極)represent two parties of interaction, the characters *zhong*(忠)and *shu*(恕)within the small circles of the two components imply that, when one of the two parties is exercising authentic benevolence in dealing with its opposite, the other party will repay and treat the first party in the same way. Both parties are acting in congruence with the ethical codes of benevolence-righteousness-propriety, the virtue of trustworthiness(信)may emerge as a consequence of their interaction. Therefore, the character 信 is located at the top of *Taiji* for dyad interaction.
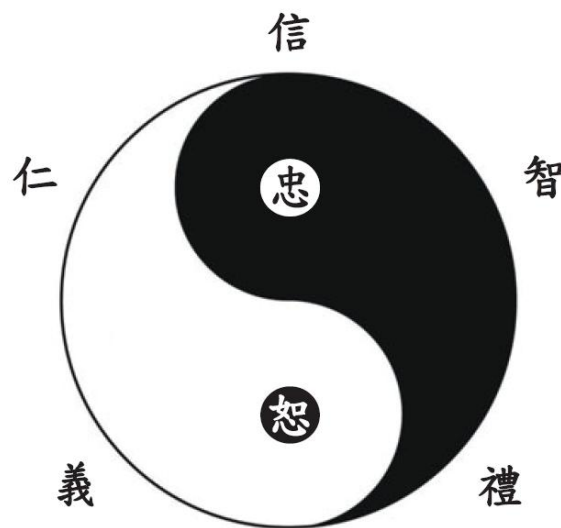

Figure 4. The model of Five Virtues for dyad interaction.

Three Bonds and Ten Forms of Righteousness

In addition to the ideas discussed above, Dong Zhongshu also proposed the idea of the *Three Bonds* (*sangang*), which had been frequently and closely linked to *Five Virtue*s (*wuchang*). However, the *Three Bonds* delineated the absolute authority of the ruler over the minister, the father over the son, and the husband over the wife. Under the influence of *the Three Bonds*, some Han scholars also further advocated the idea of the *Ten Forms of Righteousness* (十義).

Citation: Kwang-Kuo Hwang. Ijsrm.Human, 2018; Vol. 10 (3): 176-198.

193

What are the things which humans consider righteous (yi)? Kindness on the part of the father, and filial duty on that of the son; gentleness on the part of the elder brother, and obedience on that of the younger; righteousness on the part of the husband, and submission on that of the wife; kindness on the part of the elders, and deference on that of juniors: benevolence on the part of the ruler, and loyalty on that of the minister. These are the ten things that humans consider to be right.

As I indicated before, the substantial ethical values for each of the five cardinal relationships (五倫) might be changed from time to time, depending on the atmosphere of social context. The *Book of Rites* (禮記, *Liji*) contains many works composed by Confucian scholars during the Han dynasty. For the sake of transforming Confucianism into the orthodox state philosophy for Han Empire, the ten items of righteousness are specifically defined in the *Liji* such that there exists a differential order within the five sets of roles involved. In accordance with the ten forms of righteousness (*yi*), father, elder brothers, husbands, the elderly, or rulers should make decisions in line with the principles of kindness, gentleness, righteousness, kindness, and benevolence, respectively. As for the son, younger brothers, wives, juniors, or ministers, the principles of filial duty, obedience, submission, deference, loyalty, and obedience should apply.

Absolute Authority of Three Bonds

Based on the deep structure of ethics for ordinary people, Mencius proposed five cardinal ethics with the core value of benevolence (*ren*), requesting each party to fulfill in role obligations in dyad interactions (i.e. the five significant relationships) in the lifeworld. Nevertheless, the idea of Three Bonds or Ten Forms of Righteousness implies the power domination of absolute authority which have exerted negative influence over Chinese culture in general.

Citation: Kwang-Kuo Hwang. Ijsrm.Human, 2018; Vol. 10 (3): 176-198.

194

From the modernist point of view, the Three Bonds and Ten Forms of Righteousness are primarily based on power and domination; such exploitative relationships can hardly be redeemable as either social or family ethics. Therefore, Tu (1998, p. 130) suggested that it is necessary to differentiate and to study the complex interaction between the authoritarianism of the Three Bonds and the benevolence of the five cardinal ethics at the cultural system level. As the politicized Confucian ideology of control, the institution of three bonds was a deliberate attempt to utilize Confucian values for the maintenance of a specific social order. This has proven detrimental to human flourishing. On the contrary, the five cardinal ethics deliberated by Mencius with the idea of self-cultivation are not only compatible with but also essential to personal growth. Therefore, he argued that a sophisticated critique of the Three Bonds must involve an adequate appreciation of the Mencian conception of the five cardinal ethics.

CONCLUSION

Baltes and his research team devoted many years to studying the wisdom of human beings at Max Planck Institute, Berlin, Germany. They defined wisdom as a perfect state of Utopia which is a collective product of culture and argued that both culture and individual are carriers of wisdom (Baltes & Kunzmann, 2004). A distinction should be made between an individual's actual performance of wisdom and abstract existential wisdom of culture. In any cultural group of the world, there are some "wise men" whose realization of wisdom in life are frequently mentioned, discussed or even imitated. Furthermore, there are much crystallized intelligence in any cultural heritage which may help its members to deal with major problems related to life planning, life management and life review (Baltes, Dittmann-Kohli & Dixon, 1984; Baltes & Smith, 1990).

An individual's performance of acts and ideas of wisdom in one's daily life are actually

Citation: Kwang-Kuo Hwang. Ijsrm.Human, 2018; Vol. 10 (3): 176-198.

195

manifestations of abstract cultural ideas. Therefore, one has to learn *wisdom-related knowledge* and store it in one's personal stock of knowledge which should be differentiated from the abstract culture ideas of existential wisdom stored in the social stock of knowledge.

An individual may bring his/her wisdom-related knowledge into fully play when s/he is facing challenges in dealing with various core life issues and particularly when s/he is handling complicate affectional, interpersonal, or existential dilemmas. For example, Clayton (1982) and Kramer (1990, 2000) indicated that adult wisdom is generally showed forth in five major domains, i.e., problem-solving, establishing and leading an organization, life review and spiritual self-cultivation. Sternberg (2000) also recognized that Wisdom may give its function into fully play in coordinating one's personal interests with these of others and collectives. For the sake of advising an individual to have personal wisdom that follows cultural wisdom, in this case, Confucian ethics and morality, pre-Qin Confucians tried to establish such wisdom on the metaphysical foundation of Way of Heaven, while Neo-Confucians in Song and Ming dynasties attempted to provide it as part of a discourse on the Mind and Nature of Self which we are going to discuss in another article.

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196

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197

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HUMAN

Citation: Kwang-Kuo Hwang. Ijsrm.Human, 2018; Vol. 10 (3): 176-198.

198