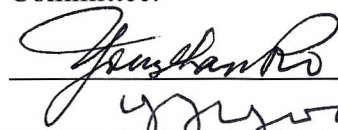


THE ECONOMIC MORALITY OF LEADERSHIP: THE CONFUCIAN ETHICS
THAT AFFECTED EMPEROR KANGXI OF THE QING DYNASTY

by

Shihlin Ema Fu
A Thesis
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty
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Master of Arts
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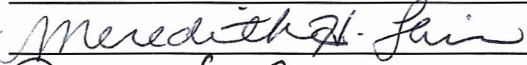
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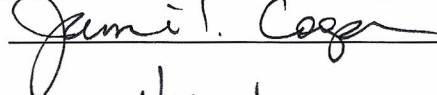
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Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts at George Mason University

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to Peter and Seay, my lovely and supportive parents.

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I would like to thank the many friends, families, and supporters who have made this happen. My loving parents and supportive husband encouraged me through the hard work. Dr. Young Chan Ro, Dr. Cuong T. Nguyen assisted me in constructing my ideas properly. Dr. Yong J. Yoon reviewed my concepts of economics with his outstanding specialties. Finally, thanks go out to Dr. John Barclay Burns and my friend Scott D. Seligman, who helped me realize this thesis in its best writing style.

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ABSTRACT

THE ECONOMIC MORALITY OF LEADERSHIP: THE CONFUCIAN ETHICS THAT AFFECTED EMPEROR KANGXI OF THE QING DYNASTY

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George Mason University, 2014

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This thesis investigates the evolution of Confucian ethics that affected Emperor Kangxi (1622-1762) ranging from 1644 to 1762, China. During the period of late Ming and Early Qing dynasties around 16th -17th CE, business activities had merged and gradually became controversial against the dynastic finance. The emperors of Ming and Early Qing were reluctant to promote merchants under a socio-economic milieu centered by Confucian concerns. Many historians of Chinese history usually criticize that such conservative mindset impeded China's modernization and industrialization leading to wealth. They connect mathematically management to bureaucratic efficiency, therefore they blame on Confucianism for its inefficiency in administration and trapping imperial China in an "economy of Feng Jian" and recycled poverty. This thesis is aimed at arguing: 1) that bureaucratic inefficiency is not caused by Confucianism, but by ineligibility of execution on the balance among law, economics and morality; 2) the

development of Confucian morality in terms of business and merchants throughout imperial China, and to examine economic ethics of Emperor Kangxi as a model to demonstrate that since Confucianism is able to make a state prosperous and its people self-content, it is a feasible and ideal economic morality of leadership.

CHAPTER ONE: THE ISSUES OF CONFUCIAN ETHICS

This paper was inspired partly by the concepts of “macro-historical interpretation” and “mathematical management” put forth by Ray Huang¹, and *The Great Divergence*, illustrated by Kenneth Pomeranz. The theories are applied to a case study of one specific reign in one dynasty, the era of Emperor Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty.² My argument is intended to refute what Huang criticized about Confucian ethics as the reason for the collapse of the Ming Dynasty. Huang claimed that if Confucian ethics had not cramped the imperial administration and blocked the way to modernization, the state would have been empowered. Huang blamed Confucian bureaucracy for the financial mismanagement of the late Ming Dynasty. However, the successor the Qing Dynasty adopted almost the same Confucian bureaucracy, as had most imperial successors in China, and developed into a powerful empire after it took over the crown in Beijing. I don’t believe that Confucian ethics was responsible for the corruption of the late Ming Dynasty. On the contrary, Confucian bureaucracy would have been an efficient mechanism under a devoted Confucian leader, and the Emperor Kangxi was such a leader.

¹ Huang, in his *China: a Macro History*, he claimed that the late Ming Dynasty collapsed because of its deadlock caused by Confucian bureaucracy and lack of mathematical management.

² The Emperor Kangxi was born in 1662 and died in 1722 CE. He ruled the Qing Dynasty between 1662 and 1722.

In addition, according to Pomeranz's book, with its devoted Confucian bureaucracy the late Ming Dynasty actually had flourished in business and economics, and commerce thrived through the early Qing Dynasty. In his view, imperial China was indeed one leading actor in world commercial activities that generated substantial revenue from international trade. Since both the Ming and Qing were known for acting in accordance with Confucianism, there must have been a substantial relationship between Confucianism and commercial activities in China. Basically, Confucius himself did not encourage commercial activity, nor did he or his followers promote making profits in any way. Emperor Kangxi employed Confucianism as his administrative doctrine, but his reign was characterized by commercial prosperity. A devoted Buddhist as well as a Confucian, Kangxi had a special understanding of Confucianism that helped him overcome the conflict between profit and justice. In addition, as a Manchu, a minority group that governed China's majority Han people, the Qing emperors had to employ the late Ming's bureaucracy as a means of controlling Han people. However, if Confucian administration was dysfunctional, as claimed by Huang, it would not have been an effective way to do so. From my study of Kangxi, I found that Confucianism had been a religious belief held by most of the imperial courts of China, and it was particularly so to Kangxi. I also found that the reason for the collapse of the late Ming was not Confucianism but misconduct and a misunderstanding of Confucianism.

Therefore, this paper aims to reveal Kangxi's special interpretation of Confucianism, and focus on the development of economic morality and leadership from the perspective of Confucian business ethics. The transition of traditional rankings of

social status according to the order of scholar, farmer, labor and businessman will be examined, as well as the challenges faced by the elite. Finally, this paper will discuss how the Emperor Kangxi demonstrated Confucian morality and state justice.

Confucianism will be regarded as a religion and relevant evidence will be provided.

During the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, between the 16th and 18th centuries CE, business activity flourished around the world.³ In China, as businessmen gradually acquired wealth, they began to make demands on the imperial government. However, the expansion of business was generally discouraged by the government for several reasons. First of all, China's social situation was not supportive of it. The Qing Dynasty lacked modern concepts regarding economic systems. Neither were there credit and banking institutions, nor was there any idea of insurance. Business had no access to capital to expand. Also, it was a time when both the imperial government and the people still concentrated, and mostly depended, on agrarian production and assets. Thirdly, the imperial government tended to be conservative and was uninterested in promoting commercial growth.

Nevertheless, many historians still call this an age characterized by the "sprout of capitalism" in China, even though the emperors of the late Ming and early Qing dynasties were as reluctant to promote commercial activity as most of their predecessors.⁴ Their reason was a belief that the wealth of state was generated from the gains in, and

³ Wong, p. 17, "Smithian dynamics across much of China between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. The broad features of increased cash cropping, handicrafts, and trade are well known in the Chinese and Japanese literature."

⁴ See Brook, 195-196. Brook and Tao Xi-sheng oppose to this idea because they believe that the China "feng-jian" system is not a confronting situation to commercial capitalism, and will not naturally be replaced by the latter. On the contrary, the two systems can coexist well if there are plenty of chances for more profit through playing making via the market.

development of, agriculture, a traditional concern shared by the rulers of past dynasties since the Qin (221-207 BC).⁵ Many scholars of Chinese history have declared that such a mindset impeded China's modernization and prosperity. While the Western world was moving toward a much richer and industrialized era, China continued to limit commercial activity, which left little room for the development of capitalism. Among these scholars, Huang not only blames the collapse of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE) on its Confucian bureaucracy, but also claims that whenever new challenges emerged, the dynastic officials fell into impractical arguments about Confucian morality. According to Huang, the overemphasis on the primacy of Confucianism obstructed flexibility in administration and eventually caused the decline of the Dynasty. In Huang's words, governmental efficiency is conducted by "mathematical management." The government should be able to run the nation with valid information such as the size of the harvest, a precise and regular census and valid taxation statistics. Huang links mathematical management to bureaucratic efficiency, and commercial affluence to modernization. Therefore, he claims that Confucianism is responsible for the bureaucratic inefficiency that failed the late Ming Dynasty and China's modernization, which he assumes was an essential world trend in which imperial China had to join.

⁵ In imperial China, people understood the advantages of business, which is an effective way of acquiring wealth. According to the "Biographies of Usurers"(HuoZhi Lie Zhuan) chapter in *The Grand Scribe's Records I-VIII: the Basic Annals of Pre-Han China* (Shi Ji, written between 109 BC and 91BC, a historical document about Sima Qian and the Han Dynasty), farming is not as effective as laboring to alleviate poverty, and laboring is not as good as business. However, the emperors of the Han Dynasty gave priority to scholars, farmers, laborers and businessman, in that order. This guided policy from then until the Qing Dynasty. The imperial authority had no hesitation to oppose business throughout China's dynastic history. For an annotated translation, see Sima Qian's *The Grand Scribe's Records I-VIII: the Basic Annals of Pre-Han China* (edited by Nienhauser W.H. Jr., Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

Other scholars attribute the downfall of the Ming to its adherence to traditional Chinese “fengjian” administration.⁶ For scholars like as Zheng Tian Ting, the biggest fault of autocratic monarchy was its bond to Confucianism. As a consequence, only development of agriculture was acceptable to imperial government because it effectively prevented people from becoming powerful. Such a statement also defines an anti-mercantile mindset, links it to conservatism, and finally concludes that it is anti-liberal. Worse, these associations lead to a belief that anti-mercantilism was the agent of poverty and was responsible for the weakness of the late Qing Dynasty. In brief, all these arguments suggest that commercial affluence should have been a top priority of the governmental system. On the contrary, they advocate that the mistake of government was not focusing on agriculture but defending domestic and local trading tenaciously.

Nevertheless, some scholars regard traditional Confucian bureaucracy as “bureaucratic rationality.” In his article on the growth of modern capitalism, Brook proclaims that Confucian bureaucracy allowed socioeconomic liberty to a certain degree. Also, Confucian ethics made people content and uninterested in pursuing extra wealth beyond the amount necessary for one’s duty, a belief that yielded no room for the capitalism to expand in imperial China. However, Confucian ethics did not limit people’s access to business. On the contrary, people integrated Confucian ethics into their economic activities. As business became prosperous because of rich international trade beginning in the 16th century, businessmen of imperial China progressively

⁶ Fengjian, also known as “Fengjian Zhidu” in Chinese, refers to the feudal system in imperial China. It is like European feudalism, but designates different social ranks through different methods of decentralization.

conveyed the core values of Confucianism to rationalize commercial profits.⁷ Such a mindset was predominant among the populace throughout the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. It claimed that Confucianism was an incentive rather than an obstacle, and a commercial morality instead of a restriction.⁸ Besides, the rankings of scholar and businessman were changed, according to the Neo-Confucian philosopher Wang Yangming.⁹ Wang declared that the privileged ranking of scholars had been replaced by that of businessmen since the late Ming Dynasty.¹⁰ Although Confucianism is often considered a doctrine of inner reflection on the pursuit of moral greatness, its teaching in essence has an application to implementation of government policy and state management.¹¹ From the perspective of macro-history, the Confucian interest in personal, mind-and-heart learning actually supports social order as a result.¹² In sum, a stable society provides a better infrastructure to realize prosperity because business relies on interactivity among people and communities, both of which demand constant, long-term relationships.

The period considered in this paper is the reign of the Emperor Kangxi between 1662 and 1722. Sixty one years of Kangxi's reign was the longest reign of any Chinese

⁷ Based upon Weber's argument, Yu Yingshi and Tu Weiming assert that businessmen had generally adopted the core values of Confucianism to make profitable commercial activities morally right.

⁸ Brook, 184-196. Brook includes the theories of Max Weber, Tao Xisheng, Tu Weiming and Yu Yingshi about the methods of production in Asia to make his statement.

⁹ Wang Yangming, 1472-1529, was a great Confucian philosopher who focused on heart-and-mind learning of and who had a good command of the principles of Buddhism and Taoism.

¹⁰ Yu Yingshi. However, the Qing emperors might have different thoughts. Enthroned after Kangxi, the Emperor Yongzheng legitimized the rankings of people to re-enforce the traditional sequence of scholar, farmer, labor and businessman. Although this edict re-emphasized a belief that business was of less use to society, it also revealed a truth that the status of businessmen had gradually gained more popular attention.

¹¹ Lam, 2003.

¹² This is one reason some scholars attribute the oppression of individualism and liberalism to Confucianism.

Emperor.¹³ But more importantly, apart from its length, the reign of Kangxi is also celebrated as the initiation of the "High Qing" era, when the Qing Dynasty reached the zenith of its social, economic and military power.¹⁴ Emperor Kangxi is generally considered "magnanimous" and "every inch a model emperor in the Chinese image."¹⁵ Between the fall of the Ming and the uniting of China by Kangxi in 1681, China encountered both political and economic challenges.¹⁶ Two years after the occupation of Beijing in 1644, the first Manchu Emperor, Shunzhi (1638-1661) faced financial issues caused by warfare aimed at the suppression of remaining Ming loyalists. He took control over the previous dynasty's territory and debts as well but eagerly expanded coinage to relieve the burden of the expense of war.¹⁷ Even throughout the first twenty years of his reign, the imperial government relied on maximizing the values of coinage and reversed the late Ming's monetary policy. Meanwhile, the international trade generated by silver had consistently been impacting China. the flood of New World bullion initiated by Spain since the time of the "Silver Century" between the 1550s and the 1650s brought about the first global economy.¹⁸ It is debatable whether the import of silver ushered in the fall of the Ming Dynasty; imperial China had been exposed to global trends of trade flow, bullion currents and Christianity as well. In other words, Old China was pushed into the modern world and global market, and to participate in global economic

¹³ Emperor Kangxi was born on May 4, 1654, and died on December 20, 1722 at the age of 69. He reigned for sixty one years, the longest of any Chinese emperors.

¹⁴ Buoye, p.32.

¹⁵ Huang, pp.187-188.

¹⁶ 1681 was a time of severe civil war, during the "Revolt of the Three Feudatories" or "San Fan Zhi Luan" (1673-1681). It was a revolt led by three warlords in Yunnan, Guangdong and Fujian provinces.

¹⁷ Von Glahn, 1996, p.208.

¹⁸ Von Glahn, 1996 Myth, p.429.

prosperity and recession.¹⁹ It was a big challenge for Kangxi to deal with, in addition to domestic issues such as the collapsed financial system, rebel militarists, and destroyed fields and loss of fertile farmlands into wilderness left behind by the late Ming's inefficient bureaucracy.²⁰ First, it was imperative to annihilate tenacious Ming loyalists in order to stabilize political power and invigorate the economy. Secondly, the risk of globalization needed to be dealt with cautiously.²¹ Kangxi shouldered his father's incomplete mission and in 1681, finally suppressed the "Revolt of the Three Feudatories." After that, he presided over the full bloom of the empire, which lasted for generations, through the reigns of Yongzheng and Qianlong.²² It is interesting that Kangxi achieved his goal by employing traditional Confucian ethics and creating an "unprecedented era of peace and sustained economy and territorial expansion," so-called "High Qing" era.²³ Whereas some historians suggest that its prosperity was a bureaucratic fake because poverty was more common than wealth in civil life according to some historical resources, many more scholars of Chinese history acknowledge the "High Qing" era as an enormous achievement. Huang even asserts that Kangxi is an "inner sage so as to rule the outer world" in accordance to ideal Confucian image of state leader.²⁴ For most historians, Kangxi's achievement through Confucian ethics of leadership is commonly validated. That is to say, the Emperor Kangxi made a success by

¹⁹ Von Glahn, p.429.

²⁰ Huang, pp.180-191.

²¹ Lin (1978), pp.39-52.

²² "High Qing" is also known as "Kang Qian Sheng Shi" (the Kang-Qian Golden Age).The Emperor Yongzheng (1678-1735 CE) reigned from 1723-1735. The Emperor Qianlong (1711-1799 CE) was on the throne between 1735 and 1795.

²³ This is the so called "High Qing" era. See Feuerwerker (1976), cited by Buoye, p.34.

²⁴ In Huang's words, Kangxi is "every inch a model emperor of the Chinese image" (Nei Sheng Uai Wang) and "kind and gentle, yet resolute." See Huang, p.213.

inherited traditional Confucian bureaucracy, which is criticized by Huang for failing the late Ming Dynasty. All these challenges required Kangxi to consider financial prosperity as a priority.

Ideally, generating mutual benefits between the ruler and the ruled is a priority for any economic policy. The reign of Kangxi had several characteristics that are valuable for the study of economic ethics. On the one hand, Kangxi needed to pacify recalcitrant Chinese and the remaining pro-Ming rebels with an extensive armed force that taxed the nation's finances. On the other hand, he had to tap new resources and economize to fund warfare and long-term development.²⁵ Eventually, economic ethics helped the Emperor achieve his goals and successfully restored social order after 1644, according to Pomeranz.²⁶ Emperor Kangxi finally suppressed rebellions, stabilized state power and also fixed the economy through public finance (including monetary policy and taxation) and a fix of farmland justice.²⁷ If Confucianism is blamed for its ineffectual administration how did Kangxi apply it to reconstruct a workable civil administration?²⁸ Did he amend Confucian ethics? If he did make alterations, what were they? Furthermore, how did Kangxi respond to both domestic and international commercial

²⁵ Buoye, p.414.

²⁶ Pomeranz claims that, despite difficulties encountered by population growth and shortage of land, which were unable to be addressed by trade, imperial China failed to sustain its business boom after 1750 because of local shortages of land-intensive products, whereas Western Europe expanded its business growth with the advantages of coal and New World resources. This accounts for imperial business success before 1750.

²⁷ Some evidence has demonstrated that the Qing ruling style is a hybrid of the Han, Manchu and Mongol styles, according to Zheng (2009). Kangxi conducted a land policy that restricted noblemen from taking people's land, which had been legal in the past but was abandoned since the time of Emperor Shunzhi, see Cheng, p.189.

²⁸ Huang, pp.176-178. Huang suggests that one reason Kangxi followed the Ming's administration is because the situation he encountered was reversed. After the pro-Ming revolt was eliminated, Kangxi no longer needed transportation of silver from the south to the north and thus saved money for the imperial court.

demands of business? Is the ruler an active agent who creates social trends, or a passive law maker who responds to civil demands?²⁹

In order to answer those questions, this paper attempts, through the case of Kangxi, to explore the morality of leadership when a ruler stands at a turning point and faces economic chaos. Religious ethics, as well as what specific Confucian morality impacted Kangxi's idea of business will be examined. In the first chapter, the main transition of Confucian concepts of wealth and business morality applied to imperial policy between the Han and Early Qing dynasties will be reviewed. The second chapter will examine the socioeconomic milieu during the late Ming (1573-1644) and early Qing (1644-1722) dynasties, including popular religious ethics among scholars and officials, and the economic ethic held by Kangxi. Then the third chapter will emphasize the issue of social justice during the reign of Kangxi through comparing and contrasting Confucianism and other religious ethics in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. The last chapter will discuss Kangxi's economic morality, which could be a model for the ruler of a state.

For a national ruler, economic policy is the system that funds national administration. His commitment is to balance profit and loss, much like a CEO of any business, but revenue earned is intended for the financing of the state. That is to say, the responsibility and obligation of the ruler of a nation aims at maintaining equilibrium between revenue and expense in order to preserve state management as long as possible, whereas a successful CEO of a business must increase profits. Because the revenue of a

²⁹ Huang, p.147.

nation comes from its people, in the national treasury there are ideally only budgets and funds for providing service to the populace to make people prosperous. Unlike a businessman, a national ruler should not demand profit because his goal is the advancement of his people. It's more like running a non-profit organization, but with a broader and longer-range scope to create national power which will translate into better security for the common people. It requires measurement of economic ethics to evaluate leadership. Is it fairer when government deals with everything in terms of numbers? If the essence of law lies in fairness, does this mean mercy is overlooked?³⁰ From the perspective of common people, their living and wealth are subject to severe legal constraints. For people, the criteria for assessing efficiency of leadership and law must be how positive its influence is. The idea of mathematical management seems objective because it is fact-based. But its objectivity relies on its credibility, such as how the numbers are obtained and how accurate they are. Nevertheless, whether it is true or not the suggestion that governing people through monetary digits is a more advanced strategy requires further research.³¹

³⁰ This was a famous argument among the Ming Dynasty legal scholars. See Qiu Peng Sheng 2008, Chapter 5.

³¹ See Huang (1993).

CHAPTER TWO: THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONFUCIAN MORALITY

This chapter will explore the formation and components of Confucian morality through a “long term” approach suggested by Braudel.³² Its purpose is to clarify Confucians’ core concepts and applications that have influenced its business morality from the Han Dynasty to the court of the Emperor Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty. I intend to demonstrate how Confucianism developed into the predominant religion of imperial China, and how it became a code of behavior followed by both literati and ordinary people despite diversities of interpretation over time.³³ As a result, on the one hand, it is impossible to consider Confucian business morality apart from its correlative ideas. On the other, because of its long history as a comprehensive, popular religion, it was hard for a ruler mandated by Heaven to disregard it, despite the fact that Chinese emperors were traditionally considered law makers. Although there was a department of justice, there was no difference between administrative and judicial authority.³⁴ In fact, Confucianism

³² Braudel, *On History*, p.26-27: “...history, or rather the dialectic of duration as it arises in the exercise of our profession, from our repeated observations, is important in the coming debate among all the human sciences: economists, ethnographers, ethnologists (or anthropologists), sociologists, psychologists, linguists, demographers, geographers, even social mathematics or statisticians—all neighbors of ours whose experiments and whose researches we have been following for those many years because it seemed to us (and seems so still) that we would thus see history itself in a new light...an increasingly clear idea has merged—whether consciously or not, whether excepted or not—of multiplicity of time, and of the exceptional value of the long time span. It is the last idea which even more than history itself—history of a hundred aspects—should engage the attention and interest of our neighbors, the social sciences.”

³³ Ching, p.86

³⁴ Hulsewe, p.528, “Traditional China...ignored the sharp division between administrative and judicial authority; in the majority of cases the administrator of a region was at the same time the sole judge of the area under his direction.” As a result, the emperor became the supreme judge, and how he viewed his

had become so compulsive that the succeeding emperors embraced voluntarily.³⁵ During imperial times, new legislation proclaimed at the beginning of each dynasty was not actually new, but just a modification of earlier codes. In other words, although imperial bureaucrats were repeatedly replaced, the ideals of government remained identical. Therefore, it is no surprise that even the alien dynasties like the Mongol and the Qing followed the same steps.³⁶ With only a few exceptions, Confucian ethics enjoyed tremendous prestige throughout the history of China, starting in the Han Dynasty (202BCE-220CE) when the Confucian classics were legitimized as the exclusive texts used for the civil service examination.³⁷ During Confucianism's more than two thousand years of development, Confucian classics have been interpreted by innumerable people, and therefore have become integrated with other ideologies such as Taoism and Buddhism.³⁸ However numerous those modifications have been, Confucianism has consistently concentrated on the morals and personal cultivation of officials to create a harmonious society. From one point of view, because of its official approbation,

judicial power depended on his personality. Also, Chinese people never attributed their laws to a divine lawgiver, unlike other peoples, see p.525.

³⁵ Moreover, according to Confucianism, collective sentiments may affect the Divine, according to the *Books of History* (also known as *Shang Shu*, a compilation of documentary records of ancient Chinese history) since Heaven has mercy for people, it will follow their desires (Tien Jin Yu Min, Min Zhi Suo Yu, Tien Bi Cong Zhi).

³⁶ Hulsewe, p.527.

³⁷ The first exception was between the Wei Jin period (220-420CE) and the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420-589CE) when Confucianism was used to disguise the selfishness of some politicians, and scholars turned toward Taoism for spiritual comfort. The second exception was during the Tang Dynasty (618-907CE) when Buddhism, the new arrival, became prominent.

³⁸ Weber (1922), p.62, "many Chinese have been brought up in the Confucian ethic...yet still consult Taoist divining priests before building a house, and that Chinese will mourn deceased relatives according to the Confucian rule while also arranging for Buddhist masses to be performed in their memory."

Confucian ethics was conceived as an endorsement of kingship.³⁹ From another, because of Confucians' strong reverence for the will of Heaven, Confucian ethics possessed religious characteristics.⁴⁰

From a political point of view, it is true that one of core Confucian values is governance, according to Lu Xiangshan (1139-1193) and Cai.⁴¹ Some scholars, such as Weber, recognize it as "the ethics of a powerful officialdom."⁴² Mencius was an activist who tried harder than Confucius to express his insights in terms of politics.⁴³ Also, the *Book of Rites* and the *Rites of Chou*, two of the Confucian classics, are regarded as providing social and political applications of the great tradition.⁴⁴ Many scholars agree that Confucian teachings helped the ruler stabilize his state. Since Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty adopted it as an exclusive subject matter of the civil service examination, Confucianism also became the infrastructure that underpins the law.⁴⁵ Because Confucianism was the ethic of the aristocrats who formed "a particular social class," in Weber's words, Confucian bureaucracy then defined people's mode of life.⁴⁶ Over time,

³⁹ According to Weber (1922, 120), Confucianism was borne by aspirants to official positions who have received a classical literary education or philosophers. As became civil officials, they theoretically would remain a stance of loyalty to the ruler in terms of Confucian patriarchy obedience.

⁴⁰ Ching, p.67.

⁴¹ Lu Xianshan (1139-1193), an influential Neo-Confucian philosopher during the Southern Song Dynasty, was the founder of the School of the Universal Mind. According to Cai (p.118), "the Confucian words are philosophical and political."

⁴² Weber(1922), p.122.

⁴³ Tu (1993), p.17.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p.88.

⁴⁵ Ibid; Since the Emperor Han Wu (156BC-87BC) designated the Confucian Classics as the standards for the civil service exam (Du Zun Ru Shu), Temples of Confucius were built for seasonal worship around the country. The process of Confucianization of Chinese Law had been slow and it was not until the Tang Dynasty that the communion of Confucian teachings and law was completed. See Qu Tongzu, p. 267, quoted by Hulsewe, p.542.

⁴⁶ Weber (2004), p.57.

people adapted to Confucian doctrines as they were legally unbreakable.⁴⁷ Indeed, the trouble has been that Confucianism imposes submission, and thus promotes political conservatism.⁴⁸ However the introduction of Confucianism was not satisfactory to explain its tenacious, long-term development in the context of community. In fact, Confucianism did not acquire social psychological dominance until the Song Dynasty as Neo-Confucians refreshed Confucian classics by incorporating them with Buddhism and Taoism.⁴⁹ It is believed that before the emergence of Neo-Confucianism, Confucianism acquired its legal status mostly because the government promoted its supremacy and the government imposed the system on the people. Nevertheless, it was the religious character of Neo-Confucianism that made Confucian ethics predominate. Confucius and the other Confucian sages had been worshipped before the Song dynasty, but it was not until Neo-Confucianism began to revitalize Confucian teachings that Confucius was esteemed as a religious leader.⁵⁰ In a word, Confucianism had been ethical humanism and state orthodoxy since the rulers of the Chou Dynasty started to educate people through ritual and music.⁵¹ It became the doctrine of education after the Han Dynasty when the Emperor Wu legitimized the Five Classics as requirements of officialdom. This was the turning point for Confucianism to formulate its inner-worldly asceticism for a secular goal.⁵² It transformed into a religion during the southern Song Dynasty when Zhu Xi revitalized the Confucian classics, especially the Four Books, and initiated the

⁴⁷ Cai, pp.172-173.

⁴⁸ Ching, p.87

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ching, p.63

⁵² Ching, p.86, the concept of “inner-worldly asceticism” is a term adopted from Weber by Ching.

transition of classical Confucianism by “metaphysical thought”, later titled Neo-Confucianism by western scholars.⁵³

Confucian teachings evolved over time, but their emphasis on the interrelationship between moral development and social stability from a bottom-up viewpoint was always adopted by people.⁵⁴ Centered on humanity and righteousness, Confucianism always stresses humans’ potential in the fulfillment of moral greatness. Confucian moral greatness is carried out in every aspect of life with relation to spirituality. For example, Confucianism values traditional filial obedience and ancestral worship.⁵⁵ But it argues that showing filial obedience to parents requires more than keeping parents physically alive.⁵⁶ Confucianism also prescribes proper practice between monarch and subordinate, father and son, and between brothers, to maintain harmonious communities.⁵⁷ It is true that the interpretation of Confucian teachings varied over time, but such rites of behavior remained unbreakable rules. For Confucius, in Neville’s words, “the key to social life is the inculcation of properly ritualized habits of life.”⁵⁸ It is through ritualized

⁵³ Cai, p.218. Also Ching, p.77-78

⁵⁴ Tu Weiming, (1989). Also, Huang Junjie, P.50. Huang also cited the claim of Zhang Lonxi that all Chinese classical texts were inter-texts because the Chinese tradition was so open-mindedly allowing multiplication, see Zhang Lonxi.

⁵⁵ *Analects*, Book 2, Chapter 5, the Confucius remarked that true filial piety was “not being disobedient”(Wu Wei), which meant “that parents, when alive, be served according to propriety; that, when dead, they should be buried according to propriety; and that they should be sacrificed to according to propriety.”(Sheng, Shi Zhi Yi Li; Si, Zang Zhi Yi Li, Ji Zhi Yi Li)

⁵⁶ See Fingarette, p.76. The original context of *Dialectics* is” Today, people say that the filial piety is to feed your parents. However, even dogs and horses are able to feed. If you don’t show respect to your parents, what is the differential between you and animals?” (*Analects*, Book 2,Chapter 7)(Jin Zhi Xao Zhe Shi Wei Neng Yang, Zhi Yu Quan Gou Je Neng You Yang, Pu Jin He Yi Bie Hu ?)

⁵⁷ See *Analects*, Book 12, Chapter 11, Confucius observed that a good government was one “when the prince is prince, and the minister is minister; when the father is father, and the son is son.” (Jun Jun, Chen Chen, Fu Fu, Zi Zi). See translation by Legge.

⁵⁸ Neville, p.34

conventions that Confucius' expectation for high civilization is realized.⁵⁹ Because of the innate humanity, or "ren" in Confucius' word, rituals even if performed in different forms and for different occasions still result in consistency effect.⁶⁰ Also, the definition of how to be a proper ruler might differ in different Confucian commentaries, but the fundamental concepts of ritual and humanity remain effective, and so do the original words of the Confucian classics.⁶¹ For both classical and Neo Confucians,⁶² being a qualified sage, who leads a life "that connects the human heart in resonance and harmony with all the things in the universe, including the rituals, symbols, and institutions that facilitate that harmony," is one's ultimate goal in life.⁶³ In this respect, Confucian beliefs in the worth of the human being, the possibilities of sacralization and a society of ethical values essentially form the basis of human dignity, freedom, and equality.⁶⁴ For Confucians, "Humanity is man's mind; righteousness is man's path".⁶⁵ Moreover, according to the commentary of Dong Zhongshu, the scholar who promoted Confucian classics and convinced the Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty to legitimate Confucian texts as approbation of officialdom, Confucianism is altruism: "the way of humanity is to love

⁵⁹ Ibid, p.35

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ The Confucian classics are the thirteen canons of Confucianism, also titled "The Thirteen Classics," including the "Four Books" (*The Analects, Mencius, The Great Learning and The Doctrine of the Mean*), the "Five Classics" (*The Classic of Poetry, Classic of History, Classic of Rites, Classic of Change, and the Spring and Autumn Annals*), the "Three Commentaries" (*The Commentary of Zuo, The Commentary of Gongyang, and the Commentary of Guliang*), and *The Rites of Zhou, The Ceremonies and Rites, The Classics of Filial Piety, and Luxuriant and Refined Words*.

⁶² The Neo-Confucians' focus on metaphysical dimensions has been strongly influenced by Buddhism's rich spiritual tradition. It is impossible to separate Classical and Neo Confucianism, since there is no sharp distinction that can define each individually. See Ching, p.81

⁶³ Neville, p.35

⁶⁴ Ching, p.90

⁶⁵ Mencius, Book 6-1, Chapter 11, "Ren, Ren Xin Ye; Yi, Ren Lu Ye".

others, not to love self; the way of righteousness is to correct self, not to correct others”.⁶⁶

Therefore, it is necessary to take these components into consideration when we examine Confucian business ethics.

Similarly, Confucian classics discuss proper politics and how to be a great ruler, but all of the teachings related to kingship took a stance on people’s welfare in terms of the core Confucian concept of humanity. In responding to Duke Jikang’s question about how to get people revere their ruler, Confucius remarked if the king treated his people with dignity, they would respect him; if he promoted filial obedience and mercy, would be loyal; and if he advocated goodness and reform those incapable, would be promoted.⁶⁷ In addition to treating the people with dignity and respect, Confucius encouraged the ruler to behave virtuously as a model for his people to imitate.⁶⁸ These statements echoed the importance of personal cultivation on the part of the ruler and the people as well. Furthermore, in his conversation with pupil Zikong, Confucius claimed that with sufficient food and soldiers, people would completely trust in the ruler, however, military equipment was of the least importance and could be discarded, as compared to food. But, food could be discarded as compared to trust because most critical for a state to survive is the people’s faith in the ruler. That is to say, to work for the people’s trust and

⁶⁶ Dong (179-104 BC) emphasized one Confucian classic, *Spring and Autumn Annals*, based on which he wrote the *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn* (also known as *Chunqiu Falu*). Chapter 29 of this book examined the concepts of humanity and righteousness, and laws.

⁶⁷ The *Analects*, Book 2, Chapter 20. Trans. by Legge, “(Ji Kang) asked how to cause the people to revere their ruler, to be faithful to him, and to go on to dedicate themselves to virtue. The Master said, “Let him preside over them with gravity; then they will revere him. Let him be final (FILIAL???) and kind to all then they will be faithful to him. Let him advance the good and teach the incompetent, then they will eagerly seek to be virtuous.”

⁶⁸ The *Analects*, Book 2, Chapter 3. Trans. by Legge, “The Master said, if the people be led by laws, and uniformity sought to be given them by punishments, they will try to avoid the punishment, but have no sense of shame. If they be led by virtue, and uniformity sought to be given them by the rules of propriety, they will have the sense of shame, and moreover will become good.”

preferences is the priority for the ruler.⁶⁹ In Confucius' opinion, the ruler's personal cultivation towards goodness and justice was also more effective than legislation.⁷⁰ From this perspective, Confucian governance indicates a method of indoctrination instead of governance. The ruler of a state, to Confucius, is a model of virtue to be followed by the people instead of an authority supervising the people. Moreover, if the ruler is a righteous person of virtue, the people will act likewise.⁷¹ Therefore, killing is ineffective for the ruler and the lord's eligibility to lead the people by goodness and virtue is the most important.⁷² Such interrelationships between the lord and people were reinforced by Mencius, a pupil of Confucius' grandson Zisi.⁷³ Ensuring that people benefit from the government in terms of humanity and righteousness is the right way to ensure state power. That is to say, a Confucian ruler must strive for the maximum benefit for all his people. Accordingly, it is improper for the ruler to speak in favor of businessmen

⁶⁹The *Analects*, Book 12, Chapter 7. Trans. by Legge, "Zikong asked about government, the Master said, 'The requisites of government are that there are sufficiency of food, sufficiency of military equipment, and the confidence of the people in their ruler. Zikong said, 'If it cannot be helped, and one of these must be dispensed with, which of the three should be foregone first?' 'The military equipment," said the Master. Zikong again asked, 'If it cannot be helped, and one of the remaining two must be dispensed with, which of them should be foregone?" The Master answered, 'Part with the food. From of old, death has been the lot of men, but if the people have no faith in their rulers, there is no standing for the state.'"

⁷⁰The *Analects*, Book 2, Chapter 19, "The Duke Ai asked about how to secure the real submission of the people, 'What should be done in order to secure the submission of the people?' Confucius replied, 'Advance the upright and set aside the crooked, then the people will submit. Advance the crooked and set aside the upright, then the people will not submit.'"

⁷¹The *Analects*, Book 12, Chapter 17, "The Duke Jikang asked Confucius about government moral, Confucius replied, 'to govern means to rectify. If you lead on the people with correctness, anyone dares not to be correct?'"

⁷²The *Analects*, Book 12, Chapter 19, "The duke Jikang asked Confucius about government. The Master said, 'What do you say about killing the unprincipled for the good of the principled?' Confucius replied, '... why should you use killing at all? Let your evinced desires be for what is good, and the people will be good. The relation between superiors and inferiors is like that between the wind and the grass. The grass must bend, when the wind blows across it.'"

⁷³The *Mencius*, Book 4, Chapter 3, "Mencius said to the king Hsuan of Chi, 'When the prince regards his ministers as his hands and feet, his ministers regard their prince as their belly and heart; when he regards them as his dogs and horses, they regard him as another man; when he regards them as the ground or as grass, they regard him as a robber and an enemy.'"

without thinking of social righteousness. Furthermore, though religious ethics has an effect to “penetrate” social system is rather its “theoretical attitude toward the world” instead of its intensive attachment to magic, ritual or distinctive character of religion.⁷⁴

In the same way, even though the ruler was able to make use of Confucianism through political power, if people did not benefit from it Confucianism would not have been able to retain its prestige over time. Because of its historic prestige, some scholars regard Confucianism as a tradition embodied in Chinese society, such as “religiousness” proclaimed by Tu Weiming.⁷⁵ It acts like a social creed, similar to “public sentiments” in Spencer’s words, or Weber’s “legitimacy,” or Durkheim’s “collective representation.” Some scholars assert that Confucianism is a religion and shares characteristics of religion.⁷⁶ It has periodical rituals, worships, sacrifices, and temples.⁷⁷ It has faith in the divinity of the cosmos, and parallels religion in a way to “appease the powers that control of nature or human life”.⁷⁸ It also stresses that people should live virtuous lives, which is common among most religions of the world.⁷⁹ Its teachings emphasize ethics and mercy and consideration to others.⁸⁰ On the one hand, it regulates rituals of ethical values for daily lives through which ordinary people are transformed into sages, who conduct

⁷⁴ Weber (1922), p.209

⁷⁵ Tu Weiming, (1989).

⁷⁶ Such as Tu Weiming and Rodney Taylor, see Neville, p.57.

⁷⁷ Cai, p.118. In the Han Dynasty, “should anyone’s statement oppose to Confucius, he will be punished for denying the sage and defying laws”. According to Cai, the Confucian teachings had religious forms, but it was after Chu Xi, that it became a religious authority. See Cai, p.218.

⁷⁸ Frazer (1890); quoted by Wilkinson.

⁷⁹ According to Wilkinson, some religions focus more on honoring their gods rather than moral lives, and some concentrate on amoral gods. (pp.14-15)

⁸⁰ “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”, according to the *Analects*, Chapter 15. Also in the *Book of Mencius*, Part 8(Li Lou), Chapter 29, “Yu thought that if anyone in the kingdom were drowned, it was as if he drowned him. Ji thought that if anyone in the kingdom suffered from hunger, it was as if he famished him.”

themselves carefully through maintaining not only the peaceful interaction of humans but also the order of the cosmos.⁸¹ On the other, Confucianism shares similarities with some religions that regard the “Tian” (the Divine or the Sky) as the ultimate judge of virtuousness and sin.⁸² It is a pantheistic faith centering on the worship of “Tian”, which is considered an omnipotent force.⁸³ The worship of “Tian,” along with the worship of ancestors, Confucius and his disciples, is a ritual performed regularly, together with sacrifice. Indeed, Confucianism is a part of Chinese religion, which is a synthesis of ancient Chinese beliefs, Buddhism, and Taoism.⁸⁴ Consequently, the development of Confucianism portrays elements of religious evolution. However, Confucian religiousness does not illustrate the so called “anti-intellectual” character of religion.⁸⁵ In contrast, as Weber declared, Confucianism itself is an extremely high standard of

⁸¹ The Confucian focus on harmony is not only applicable to inter-personal relationships, but also to relationships between humans and the cosmos. See Lam, p.154.

⁸²See *Books of History: Book of Yu, Chapter of Go Tomo*, “From Heaven are the (social) relationships with their several duties; we are charged with (the enforcement of) those five duties - and lo! We have the five courses of honorable conduct. From Heaven are the (social) distinctions with their several ceremonies; from us come the observances of those five ceremonies - and lo! They appear in regular practice. When (sovereign and ministers show) a common reverence and united respect for these, lo! The moral nature (of the people) is made harmonious. Heaven graciously distinguishes the virtuous - are there not the five habiliments, five decorations of them? Heaven punishes the guilty - are there not the five punishments, to be severally used for that purpose? The business of government! Ought we not to be earnest in it? Heaven hears and sees as our people hear and see; Heaven brightly approves and displays its terrors as our people brightly approve and would awe - such connection is there between the upper and lower (worlds). How reverent ought the masters of territories to be.” See translation by James Legge.

⁸³ According to Taylor, “Tian” functions as an absolute and people are related to it so as to be capable of ultimate transformation. Also, Neville, p.57

⁸⁴ In China, Confucianism is one of the “Three Religions”, along with the Buddhism and Taoism. The concept of “Three Religions” developed in the middle and late Tang Dynasty when Buddhism flourished and the Zen Buddhist school was dominant. Meanwhile, since the philosophy of Buddhism resembled that of Taoism in many ways relating to personal cultivation, these two religions fused well. People tended to incorporate them as religious doctrine, whereas Confucianism was employed as a creed of social interactions. Therefore, popular religion in China adopted the “Tian” and ancestral worship from Confucianism, and Buddhist and Taoist Gods as well. See Yu (2007), p.172. Also, Cai (2010), p.119. However, there is no evidence for Weber (2004, p.435) to claim that Buddhism actively integrated the others into the fusion of the Three Religions.

⁸⁵ Weber, 1992, pp.195-197

rationalism.⁸⁶ Confucian religion has many rites, but no initiation. The worship of Confucius and the sages had never been relating to fascination. For instance, the “misterium fascinans” that interested Otto also attracted Neo-Confucians of the Song Dynasty but resulted in an approach of fearlessness to mysterious fascination of nature.⁸⁷ According to Shao Yong (1012-1077 CE), human beings are able to transform themselves into sacred men through intense observation of nature, and the best way to complete such a transformation is through studying the Confucian *Four Books*.⁸⁸ Shao reaffirmed Confucius’ encouragement that a man could be as virtuous as the great Lord Shun in ancient China if he devoted himself to learning.⁸⁹ The goal of cultivation of self is to take the responsibility to reform this world, the mundane world. For Confucians, secularization is to actively transform this world, not to adapt to what the world is.⁹⁰ When applied to education, such transformation conveys traits of rituals and rites, and traditionalism and ethics as well.⁹¹ Confucians are “world organizing bureaucrats.”⁹² As mentioned, from a Confucian perspective, the individual should consistently modify himself through modeling the sages’ words and behavior. The civil service examination

⁸⁶ Weber, 1922, p.160

⁸⁷ Otto, p.4 and Eliade, p.8

⁸⁸ Shao was the influential Confucian philosopher of the Northern Song Dynasty who ushered in Neo-Confucianism. His idea of “observation on objects” is a method to investigate the essence of nature, which is similar to the concept of intuition of the universe” claimed by Friedrich Schleiermacher. In Shao’s book, *Observation on Objects: the Inner Part* (Guan Wu Nan Pian), Chapter 53.

⁸⁹ Mencius, Book3, Chapter 1, “Yan Yuan said, ‘What kind of man was Shun? What kind of man am I? He who exerts himself will also become such as he was.’”

⁹⁰ Yu (2007), p.58

⁹¹ Such goals were particularly promoted by philosophers of the Song Dynasty, such as Fan Zhongyan (989-1052) and Chang Zai (1020-1077). Fan claimed that man should inherit the past sages’ ultimate teachings, and contribute to the eternal peace of the world”. Fan advocated in his famous essay “Notes of Yueyang Tower” (Also known as “Yueyang Lou Ji”), that men should “be worried before everyone, be happy after everyone has rejoiced”

⁹² Weber (1922), p.132

might be mundane in the nature of reform this world, but the literati who passed the test were acknowledged by ordinary people as transcendental sages of magical charisma.⁹³ Accordingly, learning/cultivation is equivalent to the relationship between desacralization and transcendence proclaimed by Eliade. The ultimate goal of Confucian education is reform of this world, which is also a sacralized mission for every well-cultivated person.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, for Confucians, descralization is about decoding the sacredness of the divinity in order for a man to emulate it. The reason that humans are able to decode the divinity is that we are unique creatures who are able to acknowledge the holiness of the divinity, or “hierophany” in Eliade’s words. For instance, according to Xu Shen (58-147 CE), only humans created written languages via deciphering the images of nature. In Xu’s view, this also meant that humans were the only creatures that participated in the divinity secret.⁹⁵ Thus, the words in the Confucian classics are sacred guidelines to practice in every aspect of life, certainly including one’s attitude toward business and wealth. For example, the *Analects* is generally regarded empirical, rationalist and humanist,⁹⁶ but its profound meaning originates from “a communion with the sacred.”⁹⁷ Moreover, a leader at any level of society should act as a virtuous Confucian ruler. Admittedly, in the Confucian idea of life sanctification, commercial activities had no excuse for being exclusive. As a result, in the context of business and

⁹³ Weber (1951), p.128

⁹⁴ Weber (1951), p. 126, “Chinese education served the interest in prebends and was tied to a script, but at the same time it was purely lay education, partly of a ritual and ceremonial character and partly of a traditionalist and ethical character.”

⁹⁵ Xu Shen was a famous Han Dynasty scholar who compiled the ancient Chinese dictionary “Explaining and Analyzing Characters” (Shuo Wen Jie Zi).

⁹⁶ Fingarette, p.1

⁹⁷ The term is borrowed from Eliade, p.14

profit, a merchant should act as virtuously as possible. In fact, Confucians have never restrained businessmen from usury.⁹⁸

In sum, Confucian morality has four critical traits. Firstly, it shows deep respect for the Divine and faith in the order of the cosmos, and regards the harmonious order of nature as the paradigm of human society. Therefore, Confucianism thinks highly of rituals and worship as essential guidelines of social order. Secondly, Confucianism is rationalism but with a highlight that humans naturally inherit humanity and everyone has a measure of sympathy.⁹⁹ Thirdly, because of sympathy, Confucianism is also altruism. Fourthly, Confucianism values learning and cultivation through ritualized behaviors called “Li” (rites). In a broad sense, the word “Jiao” literally refers to “religion,” “cultivation,” “education” and “teaching” as well. Also, “Li” (rites) essentially resemble rituals of religion.¹⁰⁰ To acknowledge and practice ritualized behaviors and social habits is the basis of virtuous Confucian societies.¹⁰¹ In this respect, Confucianism is not only altruism but also utilitarianism. Therefore, on the one hand, it is hard to reduce Confucianism to political mean for the ruler when leadership is well-managed by the concerns of mandate morality/obligation.¹⁰²

Although the Confucian emphasis on political responsibilities might label it activism and degrade it to a mean of politics, Confucianism has never been too sacrosanct

⁹⁸ Weber (1922), p.215

⁹⁹ Mencius, Book 3, Chapter 6, “All men have a mind which cannot bear to see the sufferings of others“, and “The feeling of commiseration is the principle of benevolence”.

¹⁰⁰ Weber (2004), p.210

¹⁰¹ Neville, p.39

¹⁰² The concept of mandate is specifically designated to the ruler but also a fated mission for every educated person. See [Theodore de Bary](#), p.4

to be moderated, reformed and changed.¹⁰³ On the other hand, it is difficult to categorize Confucianism as a religion because the bond of learning/cultivation can be achieved not through any external salvation/transcendence but through studying and practicing, which is inner transformation.¹⁰⁴ Besides, the goal of learning is to make everything in life become a sacrament. Once this goal is accomplished, the whole society would possess such a religious/ultimate esteem to follow in every aspect of livelihood. Accordingly, Confucianism has become rather a religious ethic than a social system.¹⁰⁵ Through Confucian education, people believe their life is transcended and sacralized.¹⁰⁶ Because the sacred characteristics are derived from the Divine, acting against Confucian teachings is to violate the innate morality/obligation of humans. When such moral dependence to nature formulates, a psychological process similar to prayer “that by cultivating the continuous sense of our connection with the power that made things as they are, we are tempered more toward their reception” develops. Such inner transformation contributes different expressions to the world in spite of having a similar outward appearance. Consequently, “when one's affections keep in touch with the divinity of the world's authorship, fear and egotism fall away; and in the equanimity that follows, one finds in

¹⁰³ Ching, p.74

¹⁰⁴ Cai, p.216. According to Zhu Xi, *Book of Investigation* (Jin Si Lu), Vol. 3, Chapter 9, “One thing has one principle, which we must investigate. There are many ways to approach it: through studying to explore its indications, or through people’s arguments in history and nowadays to understand it, or through interactions with others to manage it.

¹⁰⁵ Weber (1922), p.147, “...the Confucianism is a religious ethic but it knows nothing at all of a need for salvation”

¹⁰⁶However, the focus of Confucian tradition was challenged after the late Qing Dynasty, when Kang Youwei, the leader of “Hundred-days Reform” movement who spoke in favor of commerce and enterprise, called Neo-Confucianism too focused on the study of individual morality instead of social institutions. He claimed that the interests of the people and the state were the same, but that in order to promote the former, the state’s wants were prior, according to Lam, p.157.

the hours, as they succeed each other, a series of purely benignant opportunities.”¹⁰⁷ The faith in a Confucian ideal world gives people “extraordinary excellent things to desire, and extraordinary evil to avoid”, and forms “the sums of the conventions that shaped the natural endowments so that they can be fulfilled and together fulfill the human.”¹⁰⁸

Traditionally, before the age of Confucius, politics was integrated with a popular belief called “natural religion” that the universe is an organic mix of “yin” and “yang” whose interaction reveals itself both in natural phenomena and worldly affairs. Such cosmic idea had been overwhelming in Chinese imperial history and made it impossible to separate religion from state administration. Consequently, the royal court was not just a mundane entity but had responsibility for “Heaven” to make the populace enjoy felicity. When such a mandate was incorporated with the Confucian values of humanity and righteousness, it illustrated an ideal of altruistic interrelationships between the government and people that reflected the relationship between the Heaven and humans. Such political ideology also generated the historic dilemma that Confucian thinking makes the ruler act with compassion toward the poor such as lowering the rate of taxation, while at the same time he has to consider the state’s revenue. The challenge here is since the moral concern was over clauses of law, whenever ethic appeals failed there was no alternative.¹⁰⁹

Nevertheless, for Chinese, in general, if the mother-nature functions improperly it is the ruler of the state who has to take the responsibility. The ruler who fails to

¹⁰⁷ James (1929), Chapter 19.

¹⁰⁸ Neville, p.28.

¹⁰⁹ Huang, p.54.

discharge his obligation of shouldering the Mandate of Heaven is censured as “imbecilic and perverted.”¹¹⁰ The presumption here is that as long as the empire is ruled righteously, both the human world and the cosmos would be in order.¹¹¹ Over the centuries, imperial Chinese history was written in a high moral measurement even during the chaotic period between the fall of the Han Dynasty in 220 and the uniting of the Sui Dynasty in 589.¹¹² In the history of imperial China, the delinquent ruler was replaced whenever public administration suffered difficulties. However, the Confucian ethic remained, reign after reign, with some modifications.

But it is not sufficient to define Confucianism as a “concept of history” and assume its prestigious weight is earned by “self-determination,” or even worse, “symbol of justification” through the centuries.¹¹³ Admittedly, in Mills’ words, to believe that government originates from the moral identity of men is to confuse its legislation with its cause because the ruler might likely monopolize the “value orientations” employed by the people.¹¹⁴ However, from the perspective of sociology, though some authorities may monopolize the normative symbols and force people to obey the institutional norms, people are not always passively and blindly subject to authorized symbols. There are interactions between those justifying symbols, institutional authorities and the obedient persons.¹¹⁵ Among the interactions, according to Mills’ definition, when:

¹¹⁰ “Natural Law worked its way from the top down. When the ruler was said to hold the Mandate of Heaven, it implied that he alone embodied universal virtue and wisdom.” See Huang (1988), p.70.

¹¹¹ Tu (1933), p.23.

¹¹² Huang (1988), pp.70-74.

¹¹³ Mills, p.595. Used by Mills as he quoted Weber and his followers’ interpretation of the conception when the authority attempt to justify the rule over institution.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Mills, p.605.

“A great proportion of the members of an institutional order have taken over that order’s legitimations, when such legitimations are the terms in which obedience is successfully claimed, or at least complacency secured. Such symbols are then used to ‘define the situations’ encountered in various roles and as yardsticks for the evaluations of leaders and followers.”¹¹⁶

The “common value system” definitely has a counterpart of “superimposed discipline,” and in between the two of them there are countless divergent forms of “social integration.”¹¹⁷ Eventually, it is the integration centered on the common values that generated the human communities.¹¹⁸ At this point, the common values that have gone through influx and fusion are able to root so profoundly that they could remain consistent over a long period of time. This is the reason why Confucianism had retained its prestige over two and a half thousand years and developed into a reliable standard of high civilization that is manifested on many levels, and that few imperial rulers could ignore.¹¹⁹ For centuries, despite the fact that the power over the land of China varied, because Confucians embraced and infused other philosophies and religious concepts, each succeeding authority was never hesitant to construct new values upon the infrastructures of its predecessors when necessary. However, even though every upheaval was tortuous, stability endured longer with dominant Confucianism that morality should be emphasized over politics, and also over the commercial policy.

¹¹⁶ Mills, p.610.

¹¹⁷ Mills, p.631.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Neville, p.58, According to Neville, such a civilization complex resembles the basic levels of world formation such as “the sacred canopy,” in Berger’s words. In addition, the Confucian ruler is not only mandate leader but also sage lord, who is a qualified well-educated, humane person in harmonious relationships with the Earth and Heaven. This ultimate esteem is so encouraging that a man of power would like to receive and maintain it.

CHAPTER THREE: THE MAKING OF CONFUCIAN BUSINESS ETHICS

Given its core values of humanity and righteousness, it is understandable that Confucianism made “gain,” “profit” and “commerce” subservient to morality. Nevertheless, Confucianism had been developing throughout imperial China. During the evolution of Confucian business ethics, three dynamics were discussed. First, traditionally, scholars and peasants were honored in an agrarian economy, whereas merchants were despised. However, the status of merchants and Confucians became mingled in the 10th century after the Song Dynasty. Having undergone a transformation between the 13th and 15th centuries, Confucianism was re-titled Neo-Confucianism and more attention was paid to commercial ethics in response to the development of the international economy.¹²⁰ Secondly, honesty and righteousness were always valued over gain and profits, and fairness was emphasized because of the Confucian idea of humaneness. Confucianism had never condemned making profits; it simply placed humaneness and justice before it. Thirdly, the Confucians had played the roles of preacher in the context of business ethics and realized their calling of “teaching”, or “reforming” to keep Confucianism up with times.

The emperors were allegedly all superior lawmakers, but with Confucian ethics and the duty of mandate kingship they had to make economic decisions based on moral

¹²⁰ Lam (2003), p.153.

principles.¹²¹ That is to say, a substantial kingship was the result of interactions with common ethics shared by the officialdom and the people.¹²² In fact, it became a principle that whatever the bureaucracy might amend in politics, the social priority of Confucianism remained.¹²³

Generally speaking, before the 20th century, the social status of merchants in China had been lower than that of the literati.¹²⁴ From top to bottom, the social ranks were literati, peasants, laborers and merchants. This hierarchy originated before the “Spring and Autumn Period” (770-476BCE).¹²⁵ However, social standing was irrelevant to socio-economic status, and even nowadays the literati usually enjoy higher status than the other categories if only because they are acknowledged as cultivated people, regardless of wealth. The literati are praised if they remain poor but honest and upright. In ancient China, poverty was not equal to humility or low-birth;¹²⁶ it also referred to helpless people such as orphans and seniors without families.¹²⁷ Merchants and laborers were not categorized as humble.

¹²¹ Qian (2008), p.27, “many systems were legitimized with regards of morality”.

¹²² Qian (2008), p.49 and p.117. The imperial emperors of the Han, Tang and Song dynasties were not autocrats because in the central government the power of emperor and the right of prime minister functioned as rivals. It was until the Ming Dynasty, when the first emperor abolished the prime minister, the royal power became totally in charge of the central government. However, despite the position of prime minister had been abolished since then, the imperial rulers were dictators.

¹²³ Lam, p.158

¹²⁴ See Weber (1951), p.136. Weber used “literati” to describe educated scholars who were also known by the Confucian as the intellectual noble-man.

¹²⁵ See one of Confucian Classics, *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the official chronicle of the State of Lu (722-481BCE), Vol. 8, Chapter 1, “At ancient times, people had been classified by four social standings: literati, merchant, peasant, and laborer”.

¹²⁶ Liang, pp.133-135; humble people referred to those who had no official position, in contrast to noble officials. But since the Middle Ages, humility paralleled to criminals, beggars, slaves and those who were legally immoral-

¹²⁷ Liang, p.131.

However, during the latter phase of the Northern Song Dynasty, no merchants, laborers, people those who had ever harmed elders, people who failed to act in a filial manner or monks who resumed secular life, were permitted to register for the civil examination.¹²⁸ It was reasonable for Confucian officialdom to praise the literati over merchants because by their nature the Confucians had to promote righteousness over profit. However, this is not to say that Confucian officialdom restrained business activities. Strictly speaking, Confucius never condemned making profits, nor had Confucian authorities discouraged business activities in imperial China. Nor had they spoken in favor of merchants.¹²⁹ Moreover, Confucius did not condemn wealth, either. One of his favorite pupils, Zigong, was a successful businessman. He once asserted that "If the search for riches is sure to be successful, though I should become a groom with whip in hand to obtain it, I will do so. As the search may not be successful, I will seek after that which I love."¹³⁰ To Confucius, wealth and honor acquired by unrighteousness are as insubstantial as floating cloud.¹³¹

Beginning in the Han Dynasty, the authorities praised scholars while they despised merchants, and scholarship was highly valued as precious capital. When an educated person became an official, a good salary would make him wealthy. For instance, during the Han Dynasty, even a prefect, chief of the smallest political division,

¹²⁸ See History of Song, Vol. 155, "people have ever harmed seniors of close relations, failed to act brotherly manner or filial obedience, and merchants, laborers, and Taoist and Buddhist monks or nuns who later resumed secular life were restricted to register the civil examination" (不許有大逆人總麻以上親,及諸不孝,不悌,隱匿工商異類,僧道歸俗之徒). Also quoted by Liang (1993), p.136.

¹²⁹ According to Yu (2007), p.124, Weber contributed the constraint of business in imperial China to Confucianism because he failed to investigate the business ethics of Neo-Confucianism since the Song Dynasty in tenth century. Also cited by Lam (2003, p.159).

¹³⁰ Legge, *Analects*, Book VII, Chapter 7.

¹³¹ Legge, *Analects*, Book VII, Chapter 15.

could become rich if he continued the public service for several years in many prefectures.¹³² The bond of knowledge and reputation inspired people to pursue erudition.¹³³ From the perspective of the ruler, when people were managed by educated Confucians, society would be orderly, according to Confucian rites and ethics. Also, the ruler presumed that since the top social ranks were filled by humanistic and righteous noble-men, the people would correspondingly restrain their desire for gain and profit. From the perspective of the people, since Confucian education could reward them with the highest social status, respect and wealth, they consequently embraced it. Therefore, as Confucian classics were enshrined as political ideology, imperial China established strict restrictions on merchants.¹³⁴ When Tung Zhongshu, a statesman during the reign of the Emperor Wu (156-87 BCE), initiated Confucian officialdom, he clearly defined Confucian ethics in terms of profits: “To rectify one’s righteousness without scheming for profit; to enlighten one’s Way without reckoning achievement.”¹³⁵ That is, the Confucian should committed himself to personal dignity and never be adulterated with wealth and power.¹³⁶ But it didn’t mean people should endure poverty. On the contrary,

¹³² Qian, pp.38-39; During the Han Dynasty, the prefect had the power to impeach officials for misconduct. Besides, the imperial officials were guaranteed a good salary beginning in the Han Dynasty partly because the emperors believed that would prevent them from becoming corrupt.

¹³³ This is the reason some scholars like Huang (1988, p.178) believe that in the case of the late Ming Dynasty, officials of the imperial bureaucracy tended to act like scholars debating philosophy and morality in a diplomatic language, which distracted them from practical solutions for financial problems.

¹³⁴ In fact, Chinese society does not really have social classes in the Western style. Instead, Chinese society has an idea of “standing in society.” For example, the standing of a civil official is higher than that of a military official in spite of the fact that they are of the same official rank. Also, an official is more highly honored than an officer. In the imperial period, well-educated Confucian officials did not directly involve themselves in general affairs. General affairs, such as the selection of talented people, punishment, finance and taxation, ceremonies, prison, the law and public construction were the officers’ duties. See Qian (2008), p.138

¹³⁵ See Pan Ku’s *Han Shu* (also known as History of Former Han Dynasty); also quoted by Tu (1993, p.25) and Cai (2010, p.130).

¹³⁶ Tu (1993), p.25

it was right for ordinary people to gain wealth and accomplishing this was the duty of the ruler. Such thinking had been put forth by famous philosopher and statesman Guan Zhong (c.720-645 BCE), also known as the Prime Minister of the State of Qi. Guan believed that humans would be corrupt and become immoral not just because they lacked cultivation, but also because they suffered from a meager livelihood. To Guan, the best way to prevent people from immorality was to make them wealthy, which was also the ruler's obligation, whereas the people's duty is to work hard at farming.¹³⁷ Though Guan himself was not Confucian, his argument of morality and wealth was later adopted by two important Confucian philosophers, Mencius and Xunzi (c.312-230BCE).¹³⁸

However, governments never depressed business activities. In fact, during the Spring and Autumn Period (770-403BCE) when Confucius (551-479BCE) lived, and the Warring States Period (403-221BCE) when Mencius (372-289BCE) lived, commercial and industrial activities flourished.¹³⁹ After the development of the Silk Road during the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty, long-distance international business had been active and cross-border trade was thriving.¹⁴⁰ During the Han Dynasty, markets and merchants were under the strict control of the government. Merchants at that time had very low social status. During the reign of Emperor Gaozu (256-195BCE), the founder of the Han Dynasty, merchants had to pay heavier taxes than others, and were restricted from wearing silk and horseback riding. Their offspring were not allowed to serve as

¹³⁷ Guan, "Only when their storage is full will people practice rites; only when their food and clothes are sufficient will people understand what is dignity and ignominy.", quoted by Cai (2010), p.96. In Cai's interpretation, "The ruler has to make people rich, while people have to work industriously."

¹³⁸ Cai (2010), p.97. Although both employed the teachings of Confucius, as a counterpart of Mencius, Xunzi followed Guan Zhong and considered that humans had no innate endowment of goodness.

¹³⁹ Nishijima, p.545-548

¹⁴⁰ Nishijima, p.579; also Hulsewe, p.543

officials. During the reign of the Emperor Wu (141-87BCE), merchants and their families were forbidden to own land, and violation of this rule was punishable by confiscation of land and enslavement.¹⁴¹ But merchants were richer and more powerful than before despite, harsh repression. The merchants gained great profits through trading goods while the peasants gained little from agricultural cultivation. During this period taxation was based mainly on agricultural production and ownership of land, so peasants and landlords had to pay most of the taxes. However, merchants took advantage of the peasants and landlords, who sometimes had to sell goods and property at a lower price than usual in exchange for the money they needed to pay tax.¹⁴² Accordingly, more people joined in commercial pursuits than before.¹⁴³ Many merchants invested their profits in farmland and rented it to the peasants in order to accumulate greater wealth.¹⁴⁴

Making easy money by trading so surprised Sima Qian (145-86BCE), the great historian of the Han Dynasty, that he wrote, “the poor people rely on minor occupations like farming, needlework and study to make a living. But there is no way for them to get richer than artisans, while artisans find it hard to be richer than merchants.”¹⁴⁵ The statement of Sima was a comment on how commercial activities were obviously flourishing before the 1st century BCE. Indeed, through prohibiting improper gains by business, the imperial government was able to funnel merchants’ profits into the state treasury. Nonetheless, although restricted, businessmen became rich and powerful, while

¹⁴¹ Sadao, p.577

¹⁴² Sadao, p.600. Before the Tang Dynasty, most taxes were paid by cash, except land tax and labor service.

¹⁴³ Hulsewe, p.543

¹⁴⁴ At that time, merchants tended to become rich through secondary occupations (e.g. trade) but sponsored themselves by the fundamental occupation (agriculture) (以末致財用本守之). Quoted by Nishijima, p.578; also, Hulsewe, p.543

¹⁴⁵ Sima Qian.

under protection the peasants suffered even more.¹⁴⁶ Obviously, the government did not mean to suppress the development of business; it merely wanted to control it in order to preserve national tax revenue and social justice. Such an attitude was adopted by succeeding imperial regimes through the early Qing Dynasty, when business and international trade became even more profitable and popular. It also illustrated the fact that it was hard for government to control the commercial boom. Consequently, because Confucian governments did not oppose commercial activities, Confucianism per se was not an oppressor of business, but rather an opponent of merchants.¹⁴⁷

As mentioned, social harmony and the transformation of the world had been a primary concern of Confucians. It was true that unlimited commercial development not only depressed the state's revenues, but also harmed the majority peasants. However, more restrictions on business obviously reflected the fact that business activities were more advanced. With the mandate to reform this world, Confucians persisted in teaching and transforming the new emerging power, the merchants. In terms of their emphasis on education, Confucians officials would apply their religious utilitarianism to economic policy.¹⁴⁸ As a result, economic policy then concentrated mainly on the Confucian "welfare-state" ideal. A Confucian welfare state means the people enjoy equal prosperity. Therefore, the government would focus more on tax reduction, rather than t

¹⁴⁶See *Book of Han*, Book 24,"At this time, in spite that the law despises merchants, merchants have been rich and noble; the law respects the peasants, the peasants have been poor and humble". Also cited by Sadao, p.577

¹⁴⁷ Huang (1988), p.78. Huang blames on Confucians for restricting business in the late Ming Dynasty. He claims that overly focusing on morality sometimes ushers overlook of technical skills which are also critical for construct well-disciplined bureaucracy on top. The officials of late Ming were indulged in moral precepts and so focused on making assessment on each other's characteristics which distracted them from practical solutions for financial problems.

¹⁴⁸ Weber (1951), p.136.

trade, as imperial China usually left economic life alone, with the exceptions of monopolistic and financial policies allied with Confucian characteristics.¹⁴⁹ For instance, the state salt monopoly began during the reign of Emperor Wu (141BCE-87BCE). The government was not attempting to intrude in the salt trade but rather to protect peasants from exploitation by merchants.¹⁵⁰ Also, with the same mindset, merchants and manufacturers usually collected heavier property and poll tax.¹⁵¹ That is to say, just like other policies, the imperial policy on the economy was more a reflection of the Confucian ideal of sacralization than a system of administration. The social status of the merchant was reassessed during the Ming and Qing dynasties, and socio-economic backgrounds of merchants and literati became mixed.¹⁵² Wang Yangming (1472–1529), one of the most important Neo-Confucians of the Ming Dynasty, once proclaimed that scholars, peasants, laborers and merchants were four occupations but held Confucian ethics in common.¹⁵³ Nevertheless, civil prejudice against merchants had never been challenged until after the 19th century; neither had Confucian ethics been affected.¹⁵⁴ Instead, some ministers, such as Wang Mang (45BCE-23CE)¹⁵⁵ and Wang Anshi (1021-1086CE)¹⁵⁶ tried to legislate a

¹⁴⁹ Weber (1951), p.136-137

¹⁵⁰ Sadao, P.584; before and during the early Han Dynasty, salt production and sales were private business. Like iron manufacturers, salt merchants traded in their products and invested the profits in land, and eventually became wealthy landlords controlling over lots of peasants and manufacturing labors.

¹⁵¹ Sadao, p.598-599

¹⁵² Yu (2007), p.110.

¹⁵³ Cited by Yu (2007), p.121, “Si Min Yi Ye Er Dong Dao”.

¹⁵⁴ Yu (2007), p.121.

¹⁵⁵ Wang Mang seized the throne from the Han Dynasty and established the Xin Dynasty (9BC-AD23), but was eventually replaced by the prince of Han. Wang’s reign marked the separation of the Han Dynasty, thus in the imperial history, the Han Dynasty was divided into the Former and the Later, also known as the Western and the Eastern Han.

¹⁵⁶ Wang Anshi, statesman and economist of the Northern Song Dynasty, was famous for his great economic reforms though it ended in failure.

more extensive planned economy to manage the expansion of business, but eventually failed.

With their concentration on teaching and transformation of the world, the Confucian intellectuals and officials generally played the role of “watchdog,” both for the ruler and for ordinary people. On the one hand, they “could help the ruling minority maintain law and order in society and had some coercive power to bring deviants in line”. They used their influence through moral persuasion as teachers. On the other, they were “critics and censors” of the sins of the imperial court, and served as representatives of the people to speak in favor of people’s difficulties with authority.¹⁵⁷ In reality, Confucian officials themselves might fail to carry out their duty of keeping social order, but they knew their goals would be achieved once ordinary people developed Confucian ideology.¹⁵⁸ Besides, the imperial Chinese bureaucracy had been granted the right to interpret Confucian theories. Instead of being a merely professional organization in the service of political power, it was not a non-thinking mechanism such as that in western civilization.¹⁵⁹

In addition, as the economic environment changed during the Ming and Qing dynasties, many scholars became merchants in order to earn a living, especially when they failed to pass the civil service examination. Consequently, as more scholars turned to business, the merchant rank became more educated rank than that of peasants or laborers. Moreover, because business management demanded a certain level of

¹⁵⁷ Tu (1993), p.27

¹⁵⁸ Tu (1993), p.26

¹⁵⁹ Xu, p.15.

knowledge, the merchant was actually a rank with a high standard of education at that time. Although doing business received more and more attention and praise from the people, the traditional devaluation of merchants had never changed.¹⁶⁰ The scholarly merchants became socially and economically powerful but they still embraced the Confucian requirement of showing benevolence in interpersonal relationships in both commercial and non-commercial spheres. Thus, merchants of the Ming and Qing dynasties had two characteristics. On the one hand, they employed the Confucian classics as the basic knowledge for doing business. On the other, they applied Confucian morality to their careers and developed the business ethics of merchants, namely the “Way of Merchants”. Throughout imperial history, it seemed the more success merchants enjoyed by applying the teachings of the Confucian classics to business, the more they were encouraged to embrace Confucianism.¹⁶¹

Nevertheless, there is no way to investigate Confucian morality except in terms of Confucian perspectives on justice and profit. Besides, due to its stress on the people’s welfare, it is also important to examine its concept of liberty and utilitarianism. In order to render implication and application of Confucianism universality, many Western interpretations will be examined.

Some scholars, such as Adam Smith and Goffman, ascribe morality to human’s utilitarian orientation, which is close to Confucianism. MacKlin names liberty, utilitarianism and justice as three criteria with which to analyze issues of ethics. In his words, the principle of liberty is to guarantee a right of freedom of action; the utilitarian

¹⁶⁰ Yu (2007), p.122-124.

¹⁶¹ Yu (2007), p.128-131.

principle defines righteousness for the maximum welfare for the society as a whole, and the principle of justice can regulate everyone's equitable access to necessary goods and services. According to MacKlin, practicing justice is the spirit of morality as well as its goal, and acting out morality is ethics.¹⁶²

However, scholars like Durkheim assign a sacred derivation to human virtues but set aside the utilitarian orientation. Others like Hegel have a very opposite approach colored by the empirical process. Smith describes morality as a nature of sentiment and justice as a restraint of "self-interest," including greed and the profit motive. In his "The Wealth of Nations," Smith asserts that self-interest is always balanced by several moral sentiments, one of which is "sympathy for our fellow humans". For Smith, the feeling of justice is natural, and it is natural for humans to consider other people's approval as the initiate motive of their behavior.¹⁶³

Solomon echoes the idea that human beings share common feelings for the sufferings of others, and justice is the foremost self-restraint dynamic to keep us from offending other people.¹⁶⁴ Such an idea is amplified by Goffman, who argues that society is constructed based on the principle that anyone with social features has "a moral right to expect that others will value and treat him in an appreciative way".¹⁶⁵ To sum up, all of these people claim that empathy is a basic agent of individual mobilization. Furthermore,

¹⁶² MacKlin, p.38.

¹⁶³ Smith, p.38, "As he is conscious of how much he is observed, and how much mankind is disposed to favor all his inclinations, he acts, upon the most indifferent occasions, with that freedom and elevation which the thought of this naturally inspired."

¹⁶⁴ Solomon, p.143.

¹⁶⁵ Goffman, p.13.

Goffman broadens his theory into a socialized performance that is a reciprocal interaction to reinforce the moral value of community.¹⁶⁶

Nevertheless, as Confucianism connects humaneness to Heaven. Durkheim relates moral sentiments to sacred objects.¹⁶⁷ Unlike Smith and Goffman's utilitarian orientation, Durkheim claims that morality is apart from sensations or sensory tendencies; instead it is more similar to the purely individual autonomy expressed by Kant.¹⁶⁸ For Durkheim, moral activity, and its conceptual thought, is one of the two very different forms of intelligence.¹⁶⁹ For Kant, Durkheim and Confucius, morality is a metaphysical feature of human nature and not a consequence or performance of social interaction. It is because of such metaphysical features that morality can be validated consistently and comprehensively among different traditions and cultures.¹⁷⁰ Hegel is also opposed to the utilitarian orientation, but he replaces Kant's austere deistic moral belief with a folk moral perspective. Hegel, who began as a Kantian, later claimed that ethical life is the natural unit of social life since morality is a pre-social "general will."¹⁷¹ Hegel argues

¹⁶⁶ Goffman, p.35. The major premise which Goffman makes for his dramaturgical interaction is "any projected definition of situation also has a distinctive moral character", and "it is this moral character of projections that will chiefly concern us in this report" (13). In his mind, doing ritual is an individual's natural desire to acquire others' respect and cognition, and his signal to ask for others' coordinate reward as a matter of course. Goffman presumes that moral sense is the groundwork to make any interaction ritual effective and reliable, and thus it validates people's judgments about whether their behaviors and interactions with others are honest or not. He also asserts that morality as a social order is a collective norm respected by individuals mutually. However, how the sense of morality derives and develops in this kind of reciprocal interaction, Goffman does not explain.

¹⁶⁷ Collins, p.104.

¹⁶⁸ For Kant, the moral law is actual a moral ground that plays a role of human duty instead of practical rules. It is a motive strong enough to move us to choose good or bad actions and the moral values is the concern with the invisible inner principles rather than the external actions, see Kant, p.19.

¹⁶⁹ Durkheim (1973), p.151.

¹⁷⁰ In Kant's mind, it's impossible for humans to reconcile freedom to moral actions unless we obey the absolute moral law that we are to follow our true moral will. See Beiser, p.212.

¹⁷¹ Beiser, p.214. However, it should be noted that Hegel claims such "general will" is the result of history and experience, which doesn't conform to ideas of Kant or Confucianism.

that when actualizing the “general will,” the individual realizes his freedom. In other words, as processing moral actions with concerns of responsibility and consequence of the actions, we are actualizing the values of subjective freedom that is based on empirical grounds. It echoes Confucius’ comments that the noble-man is satisfied and composed, while the mean man is always full of distress,” The Confucian noble-man is free of desire and is self-content.

In sum, whether or not morality is derived from the demand of utilitarianism, social order benefits from its positive action. Morality contributes the maximum fairness among different social classes, and between people and the state. Whether it has a sacred quality or not, morality in such a context can be applied to both religious and nonreligious people. In other words, if morality has a human nature root to serve for fairness, its comprehensive power over different ethnic groups can assure stability of society.

As to the concept of justice, Neo-Confucians promoted the virtues of “honesty” and “no deception” in which they responded to the way of Heaven. Thus, Confucian merchants during the Ming and Qing dynasties built up this-world morality as well as a belief in doing business. Merchants of the Ming Dynasty even initiated a term, the “Way of Merchants,” to boost their new social status, as well as to live up to their virtue and proficiency in a calling, such as Weber said about the Protestants. The “Way of Merchants” was imposed not only on the business owners but also the sales clerks. People in the trading business highly valued this measurement of morality. Such a climate

lasted even until the early days of Modern China.¹⁷² In other words, we may confirm that the “Way of Merchants” was a mainstream business ethic dominant after the Ming Dynasty, and that it functioned as a law of business. Besides, one of its most important guidelines, “low price, and larger turnover” coincided with the concept of justice. Such a concept also carried with it the idea of fair price, and fair profit.

According to MacKlin, justice is the regulation of equitable access to necessary goods and services, and we may relate justice to the spirit of law which conveys a quality of fairness. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle makes an understandable declaration of the relationships among justice, law and fairness. He defines justice as “a state of character, a cultivated set of propositions, attitudes, and good habits,” and claims “what is just will be both what is lawful and what is fair.”¹⁷³ Furthermore, Aristotle differentiates conditioned justice from general justice. He says that conditioned justice is “not complete virtue unconditionally, but complete virtue in relation to another.”¹⁷⁴ In his words, the critical condition for special justice is fairness and equality: “what is unjust is unfair...but what is unfair is not the same as what is unlawful.”¹⁷⁵

In addition, for Aristotle, in a pluralistic world toleration is the core trait of justice. The idea of toleration implies a sense of respect and sacrifice of the individual, because “toleration requires respect for beliefs and practices different from our own.”¹⁷⁶ However, in order to validate an ethical system and to protect the individual, both toleration and respect should be regulated by rights: natural rights and social rights.

¹⁷² Yu (2007), p.147, pp.150-151.

¹⁷³ Quoted by Solomon, pp.35-36.

¹⁷⁴ Solomon, p.37.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p.39.

¹⁷⁶ MacKlin, p.41.

According to MacKlin, natural rights guarantee that humans have the right to be independent, and social rights formalize the obligation of the community by providing the individual a fundamental standard of living and goods. For example, by natural right, the individual has the liberty of action, but is forbidden to annoy others by law or social right. Usually, natural and social rights are commonly acknowledged as moral principles instead of legal rights. They are a rule of great generality for the most common good of individuals. This is indubitably a reflection of Aristotle's and Confucius' declaration of justice and righteousness. It also conforms to the Neo-Confucian "Way of Merchants".

Moreover, during the Ming and Qing dynasties, the "Way of Merchants" was conceived by Confucians as premier consideration more important than law. Thus, lacking legitimization would not necessarily incite social disorder because Confucian knowledge of morality would naturally cover legal inadequacy. Most importantly, such predominance could not be surmounted by any other religion, for it is initiated by the Way of Heaven, and people take it as a mission to work for the common welfare. When such a mindset prevails in every aspect of society, everyone would be righteous, fair and honest. Nonetheless, this business ethic is not merely a consequence of group activities, but also an inner doctrine, because in general, morality is an accumulation of thinking through history, and the individual passes on his rational conclusions through morality dynamics. Furthermore, according to Durkheim, assemblies are the occasions where moral ideals originate and are acted out, thus "heroic, self-sacrificing, high morality individuals are created by experience in such occasions."¹⁷⁷ It is the common desire of

¹⁷⁷ Collins, p.378.

individuals to maintain society as of one mind. As a voluntarily formed community, society is regulated by a social order and takes the shape of a mechanism within which the individual participates in diverse roles. The participants follow a conscious principle to act in harmony. To achieve common demands of peaceful living, the individual must authorize such abstract objectiveness with self-evident superiority. In Collins's statement, such mechanism is generated from "emotional energy" and then transformed into "interaction ritual". In this perspective, we then are able to explain why merchants worshiped Zhuxi (1130-1200), the Neo-Confucian of the Ming who was the favorite scholar of Emperor Kangxi, as their patron saint.¹⁷⁸

Indeed, Confucian merchants rationalized their law of business by a religious approach. However, it is not broad enough to explain the forging of such common ethics. Firstly, from the point of view of sociology, the individual feels it is necessary to defend such group solidarity, or even to honor it. Through the transformation from "emotional energy" to "interaction ritual," morality then became the rational result. Secondly, even in its origin, morality itself is not purely an effect of sensation and sensory tendency. According to Durkheim, "morality begins with disinterest, with attachment to something other than ourselves but sensory affections are all about self."¹⁷⁹ In other words, morality exists even when the individual is alone because such emotional energy is naturally part of the human being. That is also to say, when business ethics are forged, they are validated through the individual's inward compulsion rather than an external requirement like law. Moreover, since ethics were in themselves a value, like sacredness, all mundane

¹⁷⁸ Yu (2007), p.130.

¹⁷⁹ Durkheim (1973), p.151.

goods were sacrificed to this moral sentiment.¹⁸⁰ It was this moral law that could be everlasting because, in Kant's words:

“A metaphysics of morals is thus indispensably necessary, not because of motives of speculation regarding the sources of practical principles which are present a priori in our reason, but because morals themselves are liable to all kinds of corruption as long as the guide and supreme norm for correctly estimating them are missing. For in the case of what is to be morally good, that it conforms to the moral law is not enough; it must also be done for the sake of the moral law. Otherwise, that conformity is only very contingent and uncertain.”¹⁸¹

It parallels Confucians' mandate to “conduct the way Heaven does,” and resonates with the theories of Zhuxi that “humans have two minds, one initiated by the Tao of Heaven called ‘Tao mind,’ and the other propelled by temper and called the ‘Human mind.’ We should subordinate the ‘Human mind’ to the ‘Tao mind’ and put the ‘Tao mind’ in charge of our behavior.” Obviously, the “Human mind” responded to the idea of “moral sentiment” asserted by Durkheim and Collins.¹⁸²

According to Yu, the Confucian family had processed from a merely academic orientation to a complex of management of livelihood orientation at the turn of the 16th century CE because of the interaction among its inner motive, political turmoil and social changes (176-177). When more and more Confucians launched business, Confucian spirit became their ideological prop rather than an obstacle. The Confucian merchants conveyed the contradiction between justice and profit through their belief in the “Way of Merchants.” For them, righteousness was primary both for scholars and merchants. The

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, p.40.

¹⁸¹ Kant, p. 3.

¹⁸² Quoted by Cai, p.216.

Neo-Confucians at that time realized that no matter how much a merchant focuses on profit, one could and should practice morality before gain. Such a doctrine had a long history since the Yin and Shang dynasties (c. 17th -11th BCE) when fairness and righteousness were not only valued by scholars but also by businessmen.¹⁸³ It had been an overwhelming principle throughout the time between Confucius and Wang Yangming (1472-1529). It set a clear measurement of business ethics of welfare/righteousness versus selfness/profit, with a premise that righteousness and profit are incompatible. Nevertheless, these two contradictory concepts were reformed into two complementary concepts after the 16th century, as profitable commercial activities were developing vigorously. Wang once commented that if merchants were able to harmonize their bodies and minds, they could possibly become sages.¹⁸⁴ Confucians of the 17th and 18th century advocated “to guide profit by righteousness, and to assist righteousness by profit”, and emphasized righteous profits and profitable righteousness.¹⁸⁵ Such an ideological trend had been dominant throughout the Qing Dynasty, a time when thriving domestic commercial activities coincided with flourishing international trade, and since the 19th century people started to believe that the goal of economic production was to meet human desires.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Yu (2007), p.205-208.

¹⁸⁴ Lam, p.156.

¹⁸⁵ Yu (2007), pp.209-211.

¹⁸⁶ Lam, p.157, declared by Kang Youwei (1848-1925) when he led the “Hundred-Day Reform”.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE CONFUCIAN CHARACTERISTICS OF EMPEROR KANGXI

the kingdom. After the Western Zhou, the sage of virtue was not necessarily esteemed kingship, while the king had also to be a sage of virtue because being a sage meant being acknowledged by the Mandate of Heaven. This notion encouraged the noble-man progressing himself virtually, and intrigued the ruler to dedicate to revolting behavior. It had been a criterion for imperial rulers to gain political orthodoxy through Confucian orthodoxy. A king of Confucian orthodoxy could be recognized as a sage king.¹⁸⁷ The characteristics of being a sage were more emphasized than those of being a ruler/king in this respect. Thus, the Confucian was usually regarded as a scholar rather than a prophet.¹⁸⁸ Even without a close relationship to the royal court, as during the Han Dynasty, Confucians could be characterized by their “idealistic dedication, shared values as a company of scholars, instead of economic benefits, propriety power, party organization, or entrenched social position.”¹⁸⁹ Through the Tang, Song, Ming and Qing dynasties, the criterion for being a Confucian had never been changed and consistently followed the definition from the *Doctrine of the Mean* (Zhongyong):

Benevolence is the characteristic element of humanity, and the great exercise of it is in loving relatives. Righteousness is the accordance of actions with what is

¹⁸⁷ Yu, p.117-124. However, the notion of the sage king did not possess the connotation of prophet after the Western Zhou Kingdom, as claimed by Barry,

¹⁸⁸ De Barry, Chapter 3.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 49

right, and the great exercise of it is in honoring the worthy. The decreasing measures of the love due to relatives, and the steps in the honor due to the worthy, are produced by the principle of propriety.¹⁹⁰

And such characteristics may well be identified in those of the sage in a broad sense yet without any prophetic trait, which could be found in Kangxi's leadership and life. He pursued the Confucian trademarks that merited him both the Confucian noble-man and sage king designations. He also demonstrated a "perpetual task of lifelong learning" of Confucianism.¹⁹¹ There are two criteria that demonstrate that he was deeply influenced by the notion of the Mandate of Heaven for the noble-man and that he practiced it in every way throughout his realm: one is his profound research and study of Confucian books and classics, and the other is his application of Confucianism to governmental policy. There were plenty of accounts of Kangxi's characteristics, his diligent study of the classics and his application of Confucian concepts of kindness, eagerness to learn, hard work, industry, austerity and thrift.¹⁹²

Kangxi had good reason to learn Chinese culture and values, because his mother was a Han Chinese. His father, Emperor Shunzhi, was also an admirer of Chinese culture and Confucianism. Having been exposed to Confucian teachings since the age of five, three years before he was enthroned, Kangxi was raised in all aspects to be a nobleman, gentleman, and noble-man.¹⁹³ The strongest evidence lies in Kangxi's study of the Confucian classics and his interest in Zhuxi's theories of Neo-Confucianism. His

¹⁹⁰ Mean, Chapter 20.

¹⁹¹ The posthumous name and title for Kangxi was "Ren" which in Confucianism means humanity and kindness. His whole appellation in history is Sage Forefather and Kind Emperor" (Sheng Zu Ren Huang Di)

¹⁹² Liu, p.18.

¹⁹³ Liu, p. 11. Also *Qing Historical Archive of Kangxi* (Sheng Zu Jen Huang Di Shi Lu), Vol.117.

readings focused on the Confucian classic, *Great Learning* (Da Xue, 大學) and *Doctrine of the Mean*, followed by the other two of the “Four Books”: *Analects* and *Mencius*. The Four Books had been considered the authoritative canon of Neo-Confucian teaching since the third Ming Emperor Chengzu (who reigned in 1402-1425). They were also basis for the imperial examinations during the Ming and Qing dynasties; the answers were required to be based exclusively on *Si Shu Ji Chu* (*Commentary on the Four Books*) by Neo-Confucian Zhuxi (1130-1200), whose teachings on Confucianism were recognized as the Neo-Confucian canon during the Ming and early Qing.¹⁹⁴ In order to study Confucian classics in depth, Kangxi established a Daily Class of Classics (經筵日講, Jing Yan Ri Jiang) in the palace in 1670 (the ninth year of his reign), in which he investigated Confucian classics with Han Chinese official Xiong Silu (熊賜履), a devoted Neo-Confucian with an excellent reputation who specialized in Zhu Xi.¹⁹⁵ Kangxi once observed, “After I complete my official business, I love to read, beginning with teacher Xiong’s lectures on classics and history. I have been enjoying solving my problems with the readings.”¹⁹⁶ Being so dedicated to Confucianism, Kangxi educated his sons in a strictly Confucian way. He put them in a Confucian school at the palace to learn not only

¹⁹⁴ *Qing Historical Archive of Kangxi*, Vol. 9, before August, 2nd year of Kang Xi reign, the imperial examinations also required exam candidates to write articles in Eight Sections Format (Ba Guwen), which context must be only derived from the Four Books commentaries by Zhu Xi.

¹⁹⁵ Liu, p.12. In the 9th year of coronation, Kangxi designated civil officials such as Grand Secretariat (Neige Da Xuishi), Six Ministries (Liu Bu Shangshu), and Deputy Chief of Six Ministries (Liu Bu Shilang) to lecture on Confucian teachings in the Daily Class. Those erudite officials then were assigned to work a shift in the emperor’s study room “South Study” (Nan Shufang, established in 1677) in the palace discussing classics and political issues with Kangxi as if they were classmates/instructor.

¹⁹⁶ *Daily Records of Qing Dynasty, the Kangxi Realm* (Qingdai Qi Qu Zhu Kangxi Chao), Year of 26, May 11.

Confucian leadership but also how to be a Confucian noble-man.¹⁹⁷ Since Kangxi's mother was a Han Chinese, he had a natural affection for Chinese culture and values. However, having been raised by his Mongolian grandmother, he was forced to learn the Manchu language and customs when he was very young. And before his coronation at the age of eight, Kangxi had been trained under four council regents in a Manchu way to prevent him from learning Han culture.¹⁹⁸ Nevertheless, as soon as he took over the reins of government upon attaining the age of fourteen, Kangxi decided to "respect Confucianism and focus on the True Way" (Zun Ru ZhongDao), which became the national policy throughout his reign. Upon his coronation, he appointed Han Chinese ministers to important governmental positions such as the instructors of his sons, and uniformed official ranks of the Manchu and Han Chinese to eliminate racial stress.¹⁹⁹ Kangxi ordered all Manchu civil officials above grade three to attend Confucian worship rites, fast for two days and bathe before the religious observance.²⁰⁰ Kangxi was concerned that his sons learn the Confucian classics. According to the *Qing Historical Archive*, Kangxi would visit to check whether the princes studying in the palace had memorized the classics they were taught. It was almost routine for Kangxi to visit the students at least twice a day to examine the princes and determine whether they were proficient in *Rites*, the *Doctrine of the Mean*, the *Great Learning*, etc. One day he asked the crown prince to recite the Rites a hundred and twenty times because he insisted that

¹⁹⁷ Zheng (2011), Chapter 2.

¹⁹⁸ *Sheng Zu Ren Huang Di Shi Lu*, Vol. 1.

¹⁹⁹ Chen (2010), p. 101-102. As improving relationships between the Manchu and Han Chinese, Kang Xi also made the same policy to take care of the Mangos.

²⁰⁰ Chen(2010), p.102

“without doing so, one is unable to carry through the meaning of the classics.”²⁰¹ He even taught the crown prince the Four Books and the Five Classics, and demanded that he recite those he had studied the previous day in order to make sure he had mastered the texts, according to the journal of Wang Shizhen, who eventually served as Minister of Defense.²⁰²

As mentioned before, Kangxi studied the Four Books under the instruction of Xiong Silu. Xiong was an important Neo-Confucian during Kangxi’s reign. He specialized in the teachings of Zhuxi.²⁰³ Kangxi therefore showed much interest in Neo-Confucianism, influenced by Zhuxi’s emphasis on the investigation of things (格物, pronounced as “gewu”). Zhuxi was always upright in his demeanor, and always on good behavior in eating, walking, meditating, sleeping, and reading. This was modeled by Kangxi.²⁰⁴ He resembled Confucius’ preaching and had a great impact on Neo-Confucianism a century and a half after his death and shaped the bureaucracy and governmental system of imperial China that followed.²⁰⁵ Confucianism was a theory and became a civil religion when promoted as an official ideology by Dong Zhongshu (179-104 BC) during the Han

²⁰¹ Chen (2010), p. 52.

²⁰² Wang, Vol. 3. Also cited by Chen (1997), p.139

²⁰³ The Neo-Confucianism referred to the development of Confucianism during the period of Sung Dynasty, which focused on metaphysical thoughts, and therefore in Chinese the Neo-Confucianism is called “Metaphysical Thoughts” (pronounced as “Li Xue” in Chinese). The Neo-Confucian was like a scholastic philosophy and tried to interpret Confucianism in response to Buddhism, as declared by Ching, p.77.

²⁰⁴As described by Zhu Xi’s student and son-in-law Huang Gan (1152-1221), Cited by Huang Sidong (1846-1910), Vol.6. Also, Cai, p.214.

²⁰⁵ Kung, p.182

Dynasty. However, Confucianism had never been authoritatively religious until Zhu Xi.²⁰⁶

Kangxi handled affairs of state so industriously that he got up before dawn, visited officials and reviewed reports submitted by his officials with care every day. In the 33rd year of his reign, the Grand Secretariat suggested that he meet officials every other day since it wouldn't affect the conduct of government affairs at all. Kangxi rejected the advice and said, "Having dealt with politics in person for more than thirty years, it has become routine to me. It would disturb me if I didn't do it every day...I will follow the routine as usual, and visit my officials every day."²⁰⁷ Kangxi reflected an image of Zhu Xi in this passage.

Zhu Xi took inspiration from Taoism and Buddhism in his commentaries and writings on Confucianism, as claimed by Kung, but this didn't necessarily relate Kangxi to Taoists and Buddhists. On the contrary, Kangxi esteemed Confucianism as the state orthodoxy and deemphasized other ideologies.²⁰⁸ In an imperial edict in the 9th year of Kangxi's reign, the emperor asked the Ministry of Rites (Li Bu) to enact the Sixteen Principles. According to the Sixteen Principles, firstly, Kangxi announced that they stood on education instead of law, "...education lasts long but law remains valid only for a time. Law without the prerequisite of education is like neglecting the root and pursuing the tip...I want to model myself on ancient kings and focus on virtue by voiding punishment, and cultivate the people to adopt civility." He also proclaimed that he would

²⁰⁶ Cai, p.218

²⁰⁷ Liu, p.18. Also, *Sheng Zu Ren Huang Di Shi Lu, Vol. 16.*

²⁰⁸ According to Chen (2000), p.204-208, based on accounts from *Sheng Zu Ren Huang Di Shi Lu, Vol. 139*, Emperor Kangxi felt contempt for Chinese alchemy of Taoism. Also, p.194, Chen declared that Kangxi dislike Tibetan Buddhism, the Manchu religion.

promote filial piety and fraternal duty to manifest good virtues of humanity, and to promote peaceful relationships among relatives, neighbors and communities. In making this announcement, Kangxi pointed out that his priorities in making state policy were investment in agriculture, thrift, establishment of schools to encourage learning, and the esteem of orthodoxy.²⁰⁹ Kangxi enumerated his responsibilities toward the populace: to educate his people, to create a peaceful life for them, to unite people of different races, to economize in the use of goods and materials and to esteem orthodox doctrine. All these were inspired by the notion of the Sage King in feudal China. He demanded that civil officials be respectful of the populace because "...the first thing required by 'The Rites' is being respectful...One's consciousness is sober, and craving for material things would diminish if one is respectful enough."²¹⁰ In his mind, "the leader should be kindhearted and the official should be respectful" to the people.²¹¹ Kangxi's idea of lessening the desire for material things was inspired by the concept of investigation of things, namely "ge-wu", promoted by Zhuxi, which is derived from Confucians of the Song Dynasty. The term "ge wu" had two meanings. The "ge" meant to uncover the underlying principle behind things, including the human body, the mind, consciousness, family, country and the world, as enumerated by Kangxi's instructor Xiong Silu. The "ge wu" also meant to shed one's desire for these things, otherwise one would be unable to perceive the underlying principle.²¹² Kangxi told his sons "To be a sage you must investigate and

²⁰⁹ Liu, p.51. Also, *Sheng Zu Ren Huang Di Shi Lu*, Vol.34.

²¹⁰ Liu, p.106. Also *Imperial Anthology of Emperor Kangxi* (Kangxi Yu Zhi Wenji), Vol.19, and Vol.26.

²¹¹ Liu, p.106, "Jun Ren Chen Jin".

²¹² See "Principle of Kangxi's Politics"(Kangxi Chen Yao), Vol.16, cited by Liu, p.106.

penetrate things, learn the words and behavior of earlier sages.”²¹³ To Kangxi, Zhu Xi’s doctrine of “discovering the principle and eliminating the desire for things” was the way for ordinary people to reform themselves and become sages. Following the notion of the investigation of things called “ge wu,” Kangxi undoubtedly devalued benefit. He declared, “The sage regards righteousness as his benefit, and where there is righteousness there is benefit. Everyone must discard those things that are beneficial to him and seek only those that are righteous. It is the same with being loyal, and being filial.”²¹⁴

Another statement also showed Kangxi’s concepts of righteousness and industry, “One must do those things that take physical effort but leave one’s mind in peace. One must do those things that have little benefit but plenty of righteousness.”²¹⁵ His main idea was, “there is a limit of demanding daily commodities such as clothing, food, housing, and income. If one doesn’t spend extravagantly, one can save a fortune and lead a long life.”²¹⁶ Kangxi emphasized education so much because people could learn to be better through orthodox teachings. “Studying is the basic method for one to make progress in virtue and learning. Besides, studying more can lessen one’s demand for material things. When demand for material things is lessened, one can reduce expenses. When expenses are reduced, the desire for benefit lessens. As long as the desire for benefit lessens, one’s personality is better.”²¹⁷

Kangxi was affected by Zhu Xi in acting out his words, too. “Learning is endless. Talk can’t make you knowledgeable, but performing what is learned can deepen your

²¹³ Liu, p.107.

²¹⁴ See “Teachings from Father”(Sheng Zu Ren Huang Di Ting Xun Ge Yan), cited by Liu, p.106.

²¹⁵ See “Principle of Kangxi’s Politics”(Kangxi Chen Yao), Vol.16, cited by Liu, p.106.

²¹⁶ See *Teachings from Father*, cited by Liu, p.369.

²¹⁷ Ibid, p.368.

comprehension.”²¹⁸ Consequently, Kangxi applied these notions to his state policy. When applied to his economic and financial policies, obviously the priority was creating more benefit for the people and trying to cut costs. The officials were naturally required to be as incorruptible as possible. As declared by Kangxi, the best way to avoid punishment was to provide people with education. He required civil officials to study the Confucian classics as hard as he did. In this respect, we may conclude that the reason Kangxi established the Daily Class and Imperial School for his sons was not just to give himself and the imperial family a Confucian education, but also to refine the officials through the teachings of Confucianism. Naturally, in order to prepare lessons for the emperor and princes, the civil officials had to pursue relevant studies. On the one hand, they would have no time for other things. On the other hand, since they were devoted to studies, they were hopefully impacted by the orthodox teaching. When the emperor promoted those who specialized in Confucianism, others would model them. As a result, the emperor was the ultimate winner.

Indeed, it is arguable whether Kangxi’s adoption of Confucianism was out of his moral conscience as a noble-man, or merely out of political ambition. Was Kangxi truly a devoted Confucian, or was he a utilitarian taking advantage of the favorable impression toward Confucianism on the part of Han Chinese?²¹⁹ Some claimed there was no administrative system unique to the Qing Dynasty, as declared by Qian Mu, “We can say that there was no system of the Qing Dynasty at all. All systems of the Qing were conventions of the former Ming Dynasty, with a touch of Manchu selfishness, which is

²¹⁸ See *Sheng Zu Ren Huang Di Shi Lu*, Vol.67, cited by Liu, p.107.

²¹⁹ Chen (2010), p.102.

also the selfishness of a ‘tribal power,’ Manchu chauvinism. Therefore, there was no system, but only black magic.”²²⁰ However, to force Han Chinese to adopt Manchu customs was easier than forcing Manchus to adapt to a more sophisticated brand of Confucianism. In addition, if Kangxi’s preference for Confucianism was merely utilitarian, why should he take the princes’ learning the classics so seriously? It makes no sense for the emperor to commit to classics so much that he needed to educate every son in a truly Confucian way only to please his Han Chinese subordinates. It is improper to conclude Kangxi’s dedication to Confucianism was only out of hypocrisy in order to curry favor with the Han Chinese.²²¹ It is proper to say Kangxi needed to find legitimacy from Confucianism to consolidate both his Confucian and ruler orthodoxy, and in order to achieve this goal he worked hard and eventually he succeeded in being a praiseworthy sage king. It is reasonable to attribute his accomplishments to his belief and practice of Ren, the nature of humanity.

²²⁰ Qian, pp.161-162

²²¹ Zheng (1999), p.58.

CONCLUSION

Confucianism has been the official ideology of imperial China since the 2nd century BC and esteemed as official knowledge for public service since the 13th century AD. It is critical to explore why the emperors had so much trust in Confucianism. Its dominance was definitely not circumstantial. Moreover, Confucianism encountered economic globalization in the 16th century, but survived well even after the fall of imperial China.²²² Although it had been eradicated by the Communists, Confucianism retains its traditional place of honor in mainland China at the turn of 21st century.²²³ Apparently, downgrading Confucianism to a political system is not a convincing proposition to explain its consistent impact on the Chinese people of across different forms of government. More importantly, at a time when economic globalization has become more powerful than local politics, the dynamics of Confucian teachings that functioned well in the past still have influence now.

This paper attempted to define Confucianism as a religion and attributed its popularity to its religiosity. The reason for doing so is not because a religious position would honor Confucianism more, but because only religiosity can explain why Confucianism was accepted by the Chinese people, from the ruler on down to the people, and from the intellectuals to illiterates alike. It is debatable whether Confucianism is a

²²² Will (1998), p. 333-375.

²²³ Theodore de Bary, Preface.

religion or not, but it has retained a higher position than other teachings throughout Chinese history, and has become fused with Taoism and Buddhism over time.²²⁴ The controversy over Confucian religiosity mostly stems from its relationships to politics. Critics have declared that Confucianism was a means for the emperors to control intellectuals and common people. The ruler used Confucianism as a tool to make his people obedient. Nevertheless, politics is inadequate to explain why Chinese emperors had to work so hard to study and implement Confucian teachings. The emperors inherited this tradition with some amendment. In other words, no emperor took it exactly as is. For the ruler, to be acknowledged as a Confucian sage-king was an imperative. And in order to achieve this, the ruler had to be Confucian himself, which implied practicing righteousness and benevolence in order to serve as a moral model for his people. From the example of Emperor Kangxi, we found it was exhausting to be a devoted Confucian. However, we also found it rewarded the ruler with a stable and flourishing state. Obviously, Emperor Kangxi did not take advantage of Confucian teachings as a conventional tool of politics. Otherwise, being the most powerful person in his country, Kangxi or any emperor in imperial China could just do what he thought was easiest to control the people without concerning himself with people's happiness. On the contrary, Kangxi took what he learned from Confucian classics as a mandate, an imperative duty to carry out voluntarily. From this perspective, the religiosity of

²²⁴ Chen, p.1.

Confucianism caused the ruler to act like a devoted believer.²²⁵ According to Tillich's idea of faith, "faith is ultimate concern," Confucianism is certainly a faith.²²⁶

From the perspective of Western religious studies, it has been hard to define Confucianism as a branch of religion because it is hard to theorize about Confucian teachings.²²⁷ Besides, there is no transcendental component in the Confucian classics, nor is there anything to do with revelation from the Divine. Confucian concepts of Heaven parallel the order of the universe, which is more of a scientific orientation than a religious one. The Confucians perceive the order of universe through self-awakening from their innate humanity, not calling from the Divine. In addition, Confucian humanity rests in this world. It deals with personal issues and focuses on how to promote good relationships among people. But this is not to say that Confucianism drove human beings away from the concept of the Divine. In fact, Confucianism related human beings to the Divine through the character "ren," because "ren" was indeed a reflection of the divinity. If a man wants to admire the moon, he has to open his eyes and discover the moon first. For the Confucians, to perceive the order of universe is the way for them to perceive Heaven. In this respect, if belief in the Divine is one of the criteria for being classified as a religion, Confucianism could be so defined.²²⁸

Unlike Christianity, Confucianism has more trust in "ren" than "love". When discussing "love," Confucianism distinguishes different "loves" toward different subjects.

²²⁵ According to Kangxi's sixteen principles, he believed that education based on Confucian teachings was more important than anything, and he upheld Confucianism as guideline for laws and regulations.

²²⁶ Tillich, p.1.

²²⁷ Ibid, p.2-4.

²²⁸ This was what Neo-Confucians in the Song Dynasty claimed "serve the Heaven by ration" (Yi Li Shi Tien), according to Wu (2009), pp.68-69.

According to Zhu Xi's commentary on *Mencius*, the noble-man's love of subjects like animals and plants is "cherishing" rather than "benevolence"; love of people is "benevolence" rather than "affection"; and love of families is solely "affection."²²⁹ For Zhu Xi and his Neo-Confucian followers, "love" couldn't apply to everything and everyone fairly. Confucianism emphasizes one critical idea, "ren," rather than love because "ren" is inborn in human beings. By nature, everyone is able to practice benevolence equally toward others. To Confucians, "ren" is the meaning and value of being human. To conduct business activities through "ren" is more feasible than through love.

As an inborn characteristic of human beings, "ren" is accessible to everyone and applicable to all things. The state of "ren" is cross-cultural and universal in this aspect. Moreover, once a person perceives "ren," he or she develops morality, and then relevant virtues like righteousness, justice, love, and altruism are produced as well. Roughly speaking, "ren" resembles Plato and Aristotle's idea of tolerance. Plato and Aristotle defined tolerance as the core trait of justice, implying a sense of respect and sacrifice to others. Such a sense usually refers to "respect for beliefs and practices different from our own."²³⁰

Nevertheless, from the exploration of Confucianism in history, we find it was not the idea of "ren," itself that made Confucianism sustainable through the imperial history, but rather the continuous dialogues and discussions among the Confucians of different times. It was those interchanges among scholars and common people, and between the

²²⁹ See "Jinxin I", *Mencius*, Mencius said," in regard to inferior creatures, the superior man is kind to them, but not loving. In regard to people generally, he is loving to them, but not affectionate. He is affectionate to his parents, and lovingly disposed to people generally. He is lovingly disposed to people generally, and kind to creatures.

²³⁰ MacKlin, p.41.

ruler and the officials, that made Confucianism develop and thrive in different circumstances. We also find that in spite of more or fewer amendments over time, the core values of Confucianism were fully examined and adjusted to apply to new circumstances. This was why Confucianism was abandoned by people when it stopped discourse in the late Qing Dynasty. Confucianism paid a price for its attachment to the “classical humanist tradition” in a changeable world deeply involved with business and trade, and people lost out in the midst of gains and suffered from the absence of moral guideline.²³¹

As the world’s economic environment moved from a domestic to an international scale beginning in the 16th century, business thrived.²³² In imperial China, the socio-economic rank of the scholars was blended with that of the merchants. Consequently, most scholars were from families with a business background. The merchants of that time were also Confucians.²³³ Such circumstances had prevailed for almost three centuries, and Emperor Kangxi was right at their early period of development. Imperial China had been the strongest economic power in the world between the 13th and 15th centuries, but it declined at the end of the 15th century, when maritime Europeans took charge of world trade.²³⁴ Though China became less powerful in economics, business activities were still vigorous during the early Qing Dynasty, and Emperor Kangxi welcomed international trade as the presentation of tribute to the emperor, a tribute-trade system following that of his predecessors. However, Kangxi let business activities alone

²³¹ De Bary, pp.110-111.

²³² Li (2010), p.1. Also Wills (1998), pp.333-375.

²³³ Huang (2007), p. 98-100.

²³⁴ Li (2010), pp.4-5.

and followed the anti-merchants tradition. Commerce was under appropriate government control.²³⁵ Therefore, businessmen found no opportunity to take advantage of governmental support. This also meant that the government would not use merchants to expand its political power.²³⁶ By avoiding doing so, the government could decline any give-and-take exchange which might be seen as counter to righteousness and harmful to people's welfare. Also, imperial China held a consistent distrust of foreign merchants for reasons of state security. In other words, with Confucian thoughts, as long as the state and the people were financially self-contained, the primary state policy was to maintain political stability rather than increase wealth. In fact, not only in imperial China but also in ancient Greece and Tokugawa Japan, commerce was usually considered a "low status" occupation. As a minority in preindustrial societies, low status merchants of great wealth were especially degraded and viewed suspiciously.²³⁷

However, in Western history, some states were willing to take part in commercial activities and offered political support to merchants. For example, merchants in the Muslim Mediterranean earned comparatively high social status and were supposedly protected by the state. The government of medieval Egypt engaged in commerce and considered that the state had a right to generate revenue from commercial transactions in order to increase state's revenue. In Venice, the ruler used state power to increase state revenue and the income of merchants. As a result, Venetian merchants eventually amassed enough power to control state policy.²³⁸ Governmental sponsorship came along

²³⁵ Curtin, pp.124-125, pp.168-169.

²³⁶ Pomeranz, pp.244-245.

²³⁷ Curtin, pp.5-6.

²³⁸ Curtin, p.116.

with commerce in European maritime expeditions. The Age of Discovery in the 15th century became a time of political exploration by Europeans. Since then, political invasion has been intermingled with trade expansion. More powerful militaries also brought about more commercial gains. The problem for globalization then and now is the same: no power, no gain. On the one hand, a nation must remain as powerful as possible to secure the most profitable commercial relationships with its partners. More powerful also means more investments in armed forces; however, more investment invites more economic stress.²³⁹ Relieving economic stress requires either increasing tax revenues, increasing international trade revenue, or both. However, the former affects people's livelihoods, while the latter leads to excess production of goods that might be harmful to the earth.

According to Curtin, "traders and rulers are distinct groups of people with distinct interests in both theory and practice."²⁴⁰ When rulers join hands with merchants in pursuing profits, the welfare of the people is replaced by the benefits of commercial transactions. Even worse, state policy unavoidably centers on commerce. For instance, increasing imports from overseas can raise revenue in the form of import duties, but importing goods might affect sales of local goods and depress local economics. It is essential for the ruler to choose a stance carefully. For most of Chinese emperors, the ruler, in Kangxi's words:

“...took reverence for Heaven and observance of ancestral precepts as the fundamental way in ruling the country. To be sincere in reverence for Heaven

²³⁹ Pomeranz, p.247.

²⁴⁰ Curtin, p.116.

and ancestors entails the following: Be kind to men from afar and keep the able ones near, nourish the people, think of the profit of all as being the real profit and the mind of the whole country as being the real mind, be considerate to officials and act as a father to the people, protect the state before danger comes and govern well before there is any disturbance, be always diligent and always careful, and maintain the balance between leniency and strictness, between principle and expediency, so that long-range plans can be made for the country.”²⁴¹

For Kangxi, a leader had to be a Confucian sage before being a king, and had to be disinterested and incorruptible, “unless it was for military matters or famine relief, I didn’t take funds from the Board of Revenue treasury, and I spent nothing recklessly, for the reason that this was the people’s wealth.”²⁴²

Also, for homeland security reasons, Kangxi would put protecting his people before supporting commerce. He proclaimed a ban on maritime activities to defend the state between 1655 and 1684, given that international trade was flourishing at that time.²⁴³ The ban was later removed but some restrictions remained. In the concept of Eurocentrism, opposing commerce is as bad as rejecting advanced civilization.²⁴⁴ However, this idea only falsely relates more commerce to more progress while it overlooks the danger of connecting profits to civilization. If we step back to view the overall history of imperial China and adopt a macro-historic viewpoint, we can see an enduring “story line” describing the similar cycle of each dynasty: the founder and the

²⁴¹The statement was quoted from an edict announced to the courts in 1717, which was edited in *Qing Shengzu Shilu*, Vol.275. Also translated and quoted by Spence (1975) p. 144.

²⁴² Ibid, p.145.

²⁴³ The Emperor Hongwu of Ming Dynasty was the first to ban all maritime shipping in 1371, see Von Glahn,1996, Fountain of Fortune: money and monetary policy in China, 1000-1700. As to the year of maritime ban, some scholars regard it was between 1644 and 1684, but others believe the ban was strictly started in 1655. See Li Longsheng p.20 and p.24.

²⁴⁴ Pomeranz, p.141, “commerce has often been seen as a civilization passion.”

early rulers devoted themselves to empowering the state in a belief that they were executing the mandate of Heaven, whereas the following emperors enjoying the fruits of development often failed for absence of such virtue. If it had not been for the Opium War in 1840 and the imperialistic invasion one hundred years later,²⁴⁵ the story line would not have changed.²⁴⁶ From 1840 to 1940, China was invaded 84 times by those eager for more commercial profit.²⁴⁷

From then on, China had been forced to adapt to a set of values different from its traditional values, and the story line was redefined. The dialogues and discussions of Confucianism among scholars decreased. Once foreign traders broke into China through the port of Tiger Gate under the terms of the Treaty of the Bogue, the economic morality of China changed. To support prosperous international trade, the late Qing emperors unwillingly took part in the game. Taking part in world trade was good for China's modernization, and the country benefited from the revenue generated. Nevertheless, in the realm of globalization of today, since the eco-damage of overly commercial production has become clear, it is hard to suggest that such transformation of ethics is good.

This paper is not an attempt to argue whether commerce is evil or not. Instead it attempts to analyze economic ethics in the context of inner-worldly asceticism and cultural universalism characterized by Confucianism between the late Ming and early Qing dynasties when international trade and globalization bloomed, and how Emperor

²⁴⁵ Li (2010), p.7.

²⁴⁶ Wu (2002).

²⁴⁷ Xu, pp.25-28.

Kangxi succeeded in preserving Confucian bureaucracy. These explorations investigate the development of Confucian ethics during an early period of modernization.

Humanity, or “ren,” in Confucianism is a critique of moral virtue in accordance with the divine doctrine. Thus, to realize Confucian humanism is to conduct what the Divine expects from human beings, and in so doing to reflect the True Way and to praise the sacredness in the creation of, and within, all creatures. As claimed by Ruether, being human is to conceive that “we are the mind of universe, the place where the universe becomes conscious of itself.”²⁴⁸ In order to avoid abuse of the environment we must remain “with patient passion,” neither optimistic nor pessimistic, with a clear understanding that “life is not made whole once and for all.”²⁴⁹ Confucians have long held that those who fulfill the “mandate of Heaven” are blessed, and those who fail and act against it are punished.²⁵⁰ For Confucians, humans are closely connected to Heaven through the conscience of humanness. By contrast, Western humanism focuses on escaping from the domination of God and the church, seeking independence from the divine doctrine. Due to the promotion of man-centered humanism, humans lose a spiritual interrelationship with nature. As a result, humans cut off their spirituality from their bodies, and gradually construct a habitat by processing materials. Humans consider themselves free but in fact it is merely an illusion of freedom, because they are bound to modernization greed.²⁵¹ It becomes a big issue if the ruler takes a stance apart from the conscience of humanness.

²⁴⁸ Ruether, p.249.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, p.273.

²⁵⁰ Yu (2000), p.161.

²⁵¹ Hawken, p.100.

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