

Article

The Ethics of Contingency: An Alternative (to) Morality in the *Analects*

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Abstract: An appreciation of the emphasis on flexibility in the *Analects* is one of the most consistent motifs in the various interpretations of this text. When applied specifically to normative readings, embracing adaptability, having malleable standards, and taking particulars into account are both promising and challenging ways to think about whether something might be moral or ethical. This paper attempts to deconstruct this familiar discussion along novel lines that can reveal new ways to reflect on the importance of flexibility in the *Analects*, while, at the same time, it reconstrues ways in which comparative projects might be oriented. The main argument is this: the *Analects* does not recognize a categorical distinction between a moral and non-moral realm. Whereas, in much modern academic thought, there is a distinction between what counts as contingencies and what is up to the individual, which, in turn, loosely corresponds to the non-moral and moral realms, the *Analects* does not make such clear distinctions. Everything, including core moral issues such as the individual's own choice, moral guidelines, and the contextualization of (moral) models, is all ultimately grounded in contingencies. Nevertheless, the *Analects* provides ways of reflecting on choices and actions that aim to steer people in specific directions. We may understand this as a type of morality, but one that is significantly distinct from those wherein the difference between the moral (non-contingent) and non-moral (contingent) is foundational.

Keywords: contingency; Confucianism; comparative philosophy; ethics; morality



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1. Introduction

The *Lunyu* 論語 or *Analects* of Confucius is among the most widely studied and richly commented-upon texts in human history. In China, readers have often interpreted it in a *jing-quan* 經權- or *du* 度-based style—in other words, purposely fitting the text to their own particular personal, social, and political circumstances. For the purposes of this paper, we may loosely refer to this as a “contextualizing models” way of reading and philosophizing with the *Analects*. Far from “violating” the text, the “contextualizing models” style of understanding is actively encouraged within the *Analects* itself. In this way, the concept of contextualizing models concerns not only the content of the *Analects*, i.e., specific models, examples, or “principles”, but also speaks to the way in which the *Analects* itself expects to influence others. The *Analects* itself becomes a *jing*¹ or “model” and it is weighed or contextualized against the specifics of one's circumstances in a broad way. This is how, for example, some of the earliest commentators on the *Analects* interwove the ideas found therein with those in the *Laozi* 老子 (*Book of Master Lao*) and *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (*Book of Master Zhuang*).² Relatedly, the methodology expounded upon within the *Analects* can be taken to indicate various “degrees” (*du*), which can be creatively interpreted according to encounters with other systems of thought.³ There are, however, limits to how far the boundaries should be pushed—a controversial topic that has persisted throughout the history of the *Analects*' reception.⁴

In its interpretations by Western scholars,⁵ the *Analects* has held quite a variety of positions. Some of the earliest Western interpretations related the *Analects* to Christian thought.⁶ There have also been a number of studies expounding upon similarities between Immanuel Kant and Confucius. More recently, as Aristotelian ethics has become popular in Western academia, Confucius too becomes Greek, sometimes with little to offer apart from some alternative virtues and slightly different views on family and social relationships. And, in step with the burgeoning fashion that promotes liberalism in “diverse” and “inclusive” ways, Confucius is increasingly read with enough creativity to allow positive views on gay marriage, individualism, and democracy to pervade the *Analects*.

There is good reason to be suspicious of seeing the *Analects* as a mirror to whatever is most fashionable in contemporary academic philosophy. Despite the flexibility of the *Analects*, a characteristic that is put forth by the text itself and is demonstrated in its long history of influence in China, much of what happens in the *Analects*, when it echoes Christian thought, Kant, Aristotle, or liberalism, critically undermines not only the content of the text but also the very spirit of contextualizing models or *jing-quan/du* and their flexibility. One underlying problem is that these more recent readings claim to speak *about* the *Analects*, rather than *with* it. Or, that they say they *know* what the *Analects* is about, but do not attempt to reflect a perspective having learned *from* it.

In this paper, I will address one of the most foundational issues related to an interpretation of the *Analects*: reconstructing the basic framework of the text in a way that unveils its particular adaptability. By more specifically addressing comparative philosophers, I will present an argument that speaks not necessarily to the *Analects* on “its own terms”, but instead provides a reply to specific contemporary concerns.⁷ To narrow the scope, I will look primarily at morality or ethics,⁸ and while the target audience is comparative philosophers, I will not directly engage in comparative issues beyond basic structural observation. The main argument is this: the *Analects* does not recognize a categorical distinction between a moral and non-moral realm.⁹ Whereas, in much modern academic thought, there is a distinction between what counts as contingencies¹⁰ and what is up to the individual, which, in turn, loosely corresponds to the non-moral and moral realms, the *Analects* does not make such clear distinctions. Everything, including core moral issues such as the individual’s own choice, moral guidelines, and the contextualization of (moral) models, is all ultimately grounded in contingencies. Nevertheless, the *Analects* provides ways of reflecting on choices and actions that aim to steer people in specific directions. We may understand this as a type of morality, but one that is significantly distinct from those where the difference between the moral (non-contingent) and non-moral (contingent) is fundamental.

2. Moral and Non-Moral

The moral/non-moral distinction, along with its non-contingent/contingent sister, are key in many areas of modern thought. The development of all types of ideas, spanning the existential to the socio-political and even more metaphysical arenas, rests on an awareness of these differences. Liberalism and democracy find deep roots, at least in part, in making these distinctions, and many key issues, from consent and responsibility, through meritocratic ideas and understandings of communities, are all heavily reliant upon them as well. While these distinctions and their related vocabulary are not always overtly referenced in treatments of morality and ethics in the *Analects*, they are often incorporated into the underlying frameworks that scaffold research. In this section, we will briefly outline some discussions of these distinctions, which will be referenced with the somewhat general “morality and non-morality” terminology. The section that follows will then look at one particular example of how this “moral versus non-moral” thinking informs philosophical treatments of the *Analects*.

Immanuel Kant's work on morality is sometimes referenced as an important marker for when the distinction between the moral and non-moral became widely popularized.¹¹ Although we can find such separations being made earlier in Western thought, particularly if we focus on the idea of evil and its division from the merely bad, Kant is illustrative insofar as his work is very clear on isolating the moral and non-moral from one another.¹² Paramount in Kant's notion of morality is the place of reason and the autonomy of the will. Other aspects of the person are not (or should not be) relevant to morality and belong to the non-moral.

Kant argues that the moral agent is one who gives a moral law to themselves; they are self-legislating, and then motivate themselves accordingly. The capacity to reason, which is autonomous and is not constrained by anything outside of reason (i.e., contingencies), is what allows the agent to discover a moral law. Importantly, Kant also thinks that proper (rational) willing alone is enough to constitute morality. Whether or not a good effect is brought about cannot be part of a moral evaluation. There are too many contingent factors that can influence real-world actions and their effects—and these effects are themselves entirely contingent. But so long as the agent had the right will and has at least attempted to act accordingly, they can be said to be moral. Along with the contingent factors of the world, Kant also throws out any contingent factors of the person. Emotions, desires, and any other parts of the person that are not purely rational should have no place in morality. These are problematic because they are not self-caused; therefore, they are not products of autonomous reason-based will. They are external (i.e., external to pure reason) and can be representative of other sources of authority or power.

Describing the distinction between the moral and non-moral in Kant's works, Eric Entrican and Wilson Lara Denis write:

Kant draws a bright line between moral and non-moral phenomena, such as prudence, politics, or aesthetics. Morality's normative standards and the nature of its demands distinguish it sharply from the non-moral.

[...] For Kant, the moral is distinguished from the non-moral not only by a special form of obligation but also by its elevation above the rest of life. Morality itself has a unique status or "dignity", as does the rational being from whose autonomous will the law springs. (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-hume-morality/> (accessed on 9 August 2023))

(Entrican and Denis 2022)

One quite famous example of Kant's strict rejection of contingent factors in moral considerations is the axe murderer. Kant argues that if a sinister-looking person wielding an axe were to knock on one's door and ask the whereabouts of a certain person, the person being asked should tell the truth. Even if telling the truth leads to the harming or death of another person, this act should not weigh on the truth-teller's conscience because telling the truth is always the right thing to do. Correspondingly, Kant adds, if one were to lie, then the consequences can weigh on the liar's conscience because the lie itself is bad from the start. All lying is bad because it harms trust. Therefore, no matter the consequences, one must tell the truth.

Here, the consequences are contingent. It is not the truth-teller's fault if the axe wielder hurts or kills someone. What someone else does with the truth is contingent; it cannot be controlled and lies outside the realm of pure reason. It is a non-moral aspect. Moreover, the feelings one has, or one's inclinations or desires, ought not to be taken into account either. One may very well have a bad feeling about telling a scary-looking axe wielder the whereabouts of a friend, but this feeling must be completely set aside when considering moral obligations. Morality has nothing to do with feelings, emotions, or inclinations. They, too, are all contingent and lie outside the realm of morality—they are non-moral.¹³ (We can all sympathize here; feelings, emotions, and inclinations often lead people astray.)

Much of contemporary Western academic philosophy is underpinned by related distinctions between the moral/non-moral and non-contingent/contingent. Although rationality and emotions often constitute some part of the split, real-life factors are often pushed aside in favor of a less messy view of the will or intention. There are major differences between how scholars have separated these two spheres. Generally speaking, the distinction that Kant makes between the contingent and autonomous, or between those things that one can control and those that exist within a deterministic chain of cause and effect, tracks well with many understandings of morality. Of course, philosophy professors have wildly differing views, and some do allow contingencies to bleed into the moral sphere, but, for the most part, there remains a basic recognition that too much contingency cannot be at play when moral praise or blame is at stake. Specifically, we find examples of heated debates about what constitutes contingency and non-contingency as representative of what is non-moral versus moral in the discourses surrounding moral luck and moral motivation.¹⁴ Even in less academic, more everyday examples, we too find a similar split between moral and non-moral, with contingencies playing a definitive role.

3. Morality Lies

Before looking specifically at the non-split between the moral and non-moral in the *Analects*, we can briefly explore one minor way in which the separation of these two spheres serves as a groundwork for interpreting what Confucius says and does in much of the contemporary literature. Lying, which is a major issue for Kant, is an excellent example. A lie is, itself, nearly always thoroughly involved in contingencies, and is often explained or excused by an appeal to the contingent as well. But the problem with lying, the reason it is so often criticized on moral grounds, is that it is often divorced from contingencies. Like Kant, many believe that truth-telling is good in and of itself. The truth might hurt, it might make someone feel worse than a lie, but it appeals to a higher or abstract sense of morality, and is, therefore, often placed outside contingencies (i.e., hurting someone with the truth is not morally relevant). Various forms of consequentialism can obviously be used to defend lying on contingent grounds, but even then, it is often a response to an underlying idea of lying being bad in and of itself. If there were no separation of the contingent and non-moral from the non-contingent and moral, then there would be no reason to assume that lying is categorically wrong. A lie would, like everything else, always be assessed based on the entire situation. While, in Western philosophy, this might seem to leave us with certain versions of consequentialism, virtue ethics, or care ethics as our best options, the *Analects* provides its own unique alternative.

When investigating morality in the *Analects*, many scholars quickly turn to section 13.18 as a key example. In Ni Peimin's translation, we read:

The Duke of She said to Confucius, "Among my community there is someone called 'upright body.' When his father stole a sheep, he bore witness against him".

Confucius said, "Those who are upright among my community are different from this. Fathers cover up (*yin* 隱) for their sons, and sons cover up for their fathers. Uprightness is to be found in this". (Ni 2017, p. 310)

Paul D'Ambrosio has neatly summarized the different interpretations of this passage by contemporary scholars:

Liu [Qingping] believes that this kind of attitude fosters corruption in modern China, and desires to "purge" Confucianism of this "practical evil" [...] according to May Sim, the son acts for his father's good, which, in turn, becomes the good of society. Roger Ames and Henry Rosemont explain that *this* theft can be dealt with in the family, so there is no need for the son to report anything to the authorities. Bryan Van Norden argues that this case is an exception because Confucians generally look down on falsity as it might begin to spread to other parts of one's life. These interpreters all share the view that deception is basically bad, but excusable in this case because it can bring about some good. [...] In effect

they are employing a type of consequentialist reading of falsity in the Confucian tradition. (D'Ambrosio 2015, pp. 138–39)

As noted by D'Ambrosio, these scholars focus on 13.18 because it aligns closely with contemporary concerns about morality, where lies are seen as categorically problematic. Even if we can find a consequentialist reason (Sim), explain “this” lie (Ames and Rosemont), or choose to overlook this instance (Van Norden), we are always already presupposing that lying is morally wrong. There needs to be some way to address Confucius blatantly advocating telling a lie (even if it is a lie of omission).

What many scholars further overlook in their treatment of 13.18, and of the *Analects* in general, is that lying, pretense, and other forms of falsity are not discussed in terms of being inherently problematic here or in other places in the text. In fact, there are numerous cases where different forms of “covering up” or pretending are mentioned. Yet in none of them is the falsity itself abstracted from its circumstances and discussed. Rather, the issues are always understood in a broad context. Intent is important, but so is the outcome, and so are feelings, relationships, reason, the cultural context, the particulars of the situation, and many other (contingent) aspects. The *Analects* demands that people take all these factors under consideration when reflecting on what they should do, or when thinking about what is good or not good as a model for action. Sometimes, some elements might be more important than others, but again, that is always determined within the context of the particular case. By drawing on contingent factors, there is no reason to apologize for lies or pretense, or to appeal to an outcome as an excuse. Whether it is Confucius lying about not being at home (17.20), or someone else pretending to have vinegar when asked by a neighbor (5.24), the *Analects* offers an understanding of the broader circumstances and expects readers to go beyond an abstract principle-based evaluation of what is done or said. No separate “moral” sphere is contrasted with the contingencies—contingencies are appealed to, and they alone provide the standards for evaluation (we will return to this point below).

Looking at various passages where forms of lying are evident, we can clearly see that behaviors are not taken out of their contingent contexts and that contingencies themselves are utilized in making sense of what is going on. For example, in *Analects* 17.20, we find another example of lying:

Ru Bei wished to see Confucius, but Confucius declined on the grounds of being ill. But just when the messenger was stepping out of doors, the Master took his lute and sang, making sure that he heard it. (Ni 2017, p. 401)

Li Zehou 李澤厚 (d. 2021) comments:

Several commentators, such as Kang Youwei [康有為 (d. 1927)] above, say that this is a way of “educating” Ru Bei by telling him that he [Confucius] is not sick, but just unwilling to receive him. Is this really the case? Is it not a deliberate lie? I think there are other specific circumstances and reasons that are not known. (Li 1998, p. 522)

In other words, there are certainly reasons why Confucius acted as he did. To “excuse” it as a type of teaching methodology, or otherwise try to rescue Confucius from “lying” is not necessary (though this may also be a good way to evaluate this passage). There is nothing about the lie or pretense itself that is problematic.

As will be shown below, this view does not preclude the (contingent) development of ideas about lying as a pretense being generally associated with what is “bad”. But this is not because lying and pretense are bad in themselves—rather, the idea that lies and pretense are often bad is nothing more than a general rule that is based on models. Often, lying is associated with less-than-commendable activities, so it is understandable that we might pay special attention to cases wherein someone is not telling the truth. Pretending is, likewise, often associated with bad behaviors and is usually not good. But, as Confucius himself exemplifies, both can be perfectly fine. To speak with the spirit of Li Zehou, why does it matter if Confucius lies?

In his commentary to 13.18, Li Zehou further exemplifies what an entirely contingency-based reading of the *Analects* looks like. Li makes no reference, either implicit or explicit, to any distinction between a moral and non-moral distinction:

This is an important issue which is worth researching. Confucius and Mencius insisted on clan politics, where the family was the most important and “filial piety” was the first priority. Mencius had the saying that the son (Shun) fled with his father after his father killed someone. In later times, the situation has changed, and Confucianism also has references to “importance of appropriateness/justice¹⁵ [even to the point of] killing relatives” and “loyalty and filial piety cannot be completely reconciled”. In modern society, this of course violates the rule of law and constitutes perjury; yet it is about human emotions, and we can still see this happening in the world around us. There are issues related to sociology and psychology here as well. Traditional Chinese law allows family members to conceal a certain degree of information. Sociologically speaking, this is a stubborn emphasis on the family as the foundation of society, and psychologically speaking, this is the cultivation of emotions above all else. Therefore, the so-called “uprightness” here is not in reference to a legal right or wrong, rather it has social justice connotations. This highlights the difference and conflict between social public morality and religious private morality. In the *Analects*, the word “uprightness” is related to the sincerity of emotions, as we also find in 6.19 5.24, etc. (Li 1998, p. 378)

This discussion by Li Zehou perfectly illustrates the main point of this paper. Li does not attempt to dismiss the falsity that Confucius promotes, nor does he look for ways to excuse or explain it away. In other words, Li does not approach this section (or 17.20) with the pre-established assumption that lying is bad. Going beyond even a way to explain Confucius’ comment in terms of the particular contingencies of the situation, Li looks at the broader context, explaining the importance of appreciating historical and cultural contingencies as well—“there are other specific circumstances and reasons that are not known”. However we explain this passage, Li reminds us that we must work with a framework wherein contingent factors, such as human emotions and cultivating filial piety, are paramount. Further appreciating historical and cultural contexts will then allow the reader the space to reflect on this passage without presupposing their own moral/ethical framework. There is no split between the moral and non-moral and nothing outside of contingencies.

This section seeks to demonstrate that many scholars approach the *Analects* with their own ideas about morality and then apply them to the text. Li Zehou provides an example of how to avoid this problem, and in doing so, he excellently illustrates the main argument provided here. The goal of this paper is to be critically aware of the assumption about distinguishing the contingent and non-moral from the non-contingent and moral and to attempt to revalue the concerns that the *Analects* itself expresses.

4. Ethics of Contingency

Familiar moral problems such as lying and stealing do arise in the *Analects*, though they are comparatively few and far between. Moreover, as noted already in the previous section, they are not taken as moral issues in and of themselves. In fact, most of the examples related to what is normally interpreted as “moral” or “ethical” behavior in the text concern humaneness (*ren* 仁), filial piety (*xiao* 孝), appropriateness (*yi* 義), and other “virtues”, as well as ritual (*li* 禮). These values, furthermore, do not directly speak as to lying or pretense. The works of some contemporary scholars, including Li Zehou, Chen Lai 陳來, Yang Guorong 楊國榮,¹⁶ Herbert Fingarette, Henry Rosemont, and Roger Ames, among others, have sought to keep these notions within the realm of contingency as they vehemently reject attempts to read them in terms of speaking directly or indirectly to transcendental concerns and other non-contingency-based associations.¹⁷

Yang Lihua 楊立華 (b. 1971) goes further in claiming, somewhat radically, that the *Analects* contains no system, systematic thinking, or “concepts” in the way that we normally think of philosophical concepts.¹⁸ Thus, concentrating on, for example, “humaneness” is likely to lead one to conclusions that do not fit the text. Ultimately, the *Analects* is about (self-)reflection, cultivation of the person, and attunement to the particulars of a situation. Whenever generalized standards, rules, or principles are pulled out of the text, or even “concepts”, the most basic understandings proffered by the *Analects* have already been violated. Yang offers “not changing from following the way (*dao* 道) of one’s father for three years after he dies” (1.11; 4.20) as an example. One may, Yang notes, variously challenge this idea: “What if one’s father is wrong?”; “Can one change after three years?”; “Why is three years significant?”. These orientations are all, Yang argues, wrong-headed (Yang 2019, p. 48). One should, first, actually put their father’s ways into practice before challenging this model. Moreover, this “way” does not have to include everything, and in correcting it, or thinking about ways to change, one changes not their father’s way, but themselves. After all, Yang says, one does not simply imitate their father’s way, they take it on board, personalize it in their own manner, and, in doing so, apply it to unique circumstances.¹⁹ Like most ideas in the *Analects*, and in many traditional treatments of this text, the “way” is a model, a model that always exists in a (contingent) context, and that must always be continually contextualized whenever it is applied. Again, how this contextualization happens, and what types of analyses are made, are necessarily a matter for discussion. The only real problem appears, as this paper argues, when the awareness of this “contextualizing models” method of philosophizing with the *Analects* is lost in favor of the “real” way to read the text (i.e., one that does not appreciate contextualizing models as a primary methodology).

There is certainly a concentration on the particulars of the situation in Yang’s analysis. For the purposes of the paper, however, we can also note his thorough appreciation of contingency (which serves as the necessary foundation for a philosophy of contextualizing models). There is no “moral” or “ethical” examination of one’s father’s way, or of not changing it, which is somehow outside of, or transcendent of, contingencies. Yang argues for this position on the level of the individual and their relationship with their family members; above, we saw how Li Zehou addresses the same issue within broader historical and cultural contexts. The general move is, then, away from abstraction, concepts, and complex systems, and toward a way of reflecting on how we think about concrete factors in our own lives. The *Analects* has been read in this way by many Chinese commentators and non-scholars for over two thousand years, and the challenge is, then, how to incorporate this into a modern form of philosophical appreciation—especially one that seeks to communicate with contemporary Western academics.

When discussing the *Analects*, and particularly when highlighting its moral or ethical perspectives, many contemporary Western scholars have tended to follow the pattern set by Plato and continued in that tradition. They concentrate on a virtue or concept, such as humaneness or filial piety, and then explain what it means in and of itself. Specific examples from the *Analects* and the concrete ways in which these virtues or concepts are supposed to function are used to reinforce the more abstract treatment (which is, accordingly, prioritized as the assumed correct way to philosophize). In this way, the vector of philosophical interpretation echoes Plato: start from the abstract concept and define what it means. Concrete examples are supposed to fit into the abstract concept, demonstrating how it can be applied. According to this line of thinking, when we do start from examples, we must remember that they are always ultimately pointing to a higher concept. We should not get too caught up in the details. Where there is dissonance—when an example and a concept do not seem to match well—we should explain it away, favoring the abstract discussion, normally citing contingent factors as giving rise to an exception or a polluted actualization of a concept. (Examples of this are mentioned above in the way that various scholars have explained *Analects* 13.8.)

In this paper, the vector of appreciation is reversed, and the argument is that this is how the *Analects* itself sought to be understood, and, generally, was understood in this way by many scholars throughout the tradition. Particular examples are given more primary importance, whereas abstract conceptual discussions are seen as secondary—even unnecessary. According to Yang Lihua, Li Zehou, and many others, this is exactly how the *Analects* functions. Contemporary academia does not follow this model and thereby forces the *Analects* into a framework of discourse that is completely different, even to the point of a total reversal of what the text promotes. One significant consequence is that the *Analects* is approached with a bias toward separating the contingent and non-moral from the non-contingent and moral. However, there is no evidence of this type of thinking in the *Analects* itself, and any such “bright line between the moral and non-moral” is a perversion. In fact, the text quite clearly advocates the opposite approach. In 12.8, we find:

Ji Zicheng said, “For exemplary person, all that is required is the substance (*zhi* 质). What do they need refined form (*wen* 文) for?”

Zigong said, “[...] Refined form is (*you* 犹) the substance, and the substance is (*you* 犹) refined form. The skin of a tiger or a leopard, stripped of its fur, is not different from the skin of a dog or a goat stripped of its fur”. (Ni 2017, pp. 286–87)

Separating what seems to be the substance or essence of something from its appearance or form is rejected here. The skins from a tiger or goat are more or less similar, but their values differ greatly. The difference is due to the desirableness of the rare tiger-skin pattern (*wen* 文) over the more common pattern seen in a dog or goat. Of course, this is wholly contingent, and if we were to try and make some abstract distinction it would be silly at best—and this is exactly what the *Analects* asks us to appreciate. Looking through the *Analects*, one finds that the text is not only full of discussions about contingencies but there is also little, if anything else, going on.

Ideas about humaneness, filial piety, appropriateness, the way (*dao* 道), and other easily identifiable virtues (such as *zhong* 忠 or *xin* 信) lend themselves fairly well to a discussion wherein the moral and non-moral can be differentiated, even if the *Analects* itself does not endorse this type of thinking. One method to highlight the foundational importance of contingencies is to demonstrate that the *Analects* is always describing these ideas in thoroughly contingent ways. Lu Xun 鲁迅 (d. 1936) did so much with “differing based on the specific persons involved (*yin ren er yi* 因人而異)” (which is sometimes creatively reworked as “different depending on the situation (*yin qing er yi* 因情而異)).²⁰ (Lu 1933). Many other readers of the *Analects*, from Mencius 孟子 (d. 372 BCE) to He Yan 何宴 (d. 249) and Wang Bi 王弼 (d. 249), through Li Zehou, Fingarette, and Rosemont, have likewise attempted to show that the concentration on contingencies is what makes the *Analects* the *Analects*.

Another way to further the same project, which is especially targeted at an audience of contemporary academics, is to stress that much of the *Analects* comprises discussions that have nothing to do with anything that could conceivably be read as not entirely contingent. While scholars of the *Analects* know this well, they must also admit that there is no separation between these parts and those that have been reinterpreted as hinting at a more abstract and conceptually distinct “moral realm”. Accordingly, everything from the way one sleeps, eats, and walks to what objects one owns, how one greets others, and when and where one prays are not just matters of etiquette, they are moral or ethical matters as well.

Much of the *Analects* is populated by these entirely contingent discussions.²¹ While they are sometimes explained as hinting at a higher conceptual realm, this is not what the text itself says, and it is not how most readers have understood the text in its over 2000-year history—at least, not until very recently. The most well-known example is the tenth book of the *Analects*, which contains detailed descriptions of how to walk, get into and out of carriages, eat, sleep, walk by elders and blind people, and the like. In his opening comment to this chapter, Xing Bing 邢昺 (d. 1010) says that the discussions here are no different from those in other parts of the *Analects* (Dong 2016, p. 144). Passages about stealing and lying are not categorically distinct from “if the mat was not straight, he would

not sit on it" (10.9) or "when fasting he thought it necessary to change his diet, and to change where he sat in his house" (10.7). In fact, the issues with which the *Analects* seems most concerned, those that seem to be "the most moral" in terms of the attitude taken by the text and in its commentarial tradition, are almost exclusively entirely contingent issues that do not readily lend themselves to non-contingent explanations.²²

Likewise, some of the places in the text where Confucius seems to become most upset concern entirely contingent issues as well—issues that would not have a place in most contemporary academic philosophy journals. In one example, Confucius complains about the Ji family having eight rows of dancers, a number that is reserved for families of higher status (3.1). That same family also performed sacrifices to the Tai Mountain, which is also an activity reserved for those of higher rank, and this, too, made Confucius quite unhappy (3.6). He also severely criticized the minister Guan Zhong for having a type of screen and stand that was only appropriate for a prince (3.22). The way that someone performs sacrifices, what traditions they follow, how they mourn the dead, and similar issues are among the most important topics in the *Analects*. Generally speaking, these are not counted among "non-contingent" matters in much of contemporary philosophy—and the *Analects* itself does not hint at them being non-contingent either. What is appropriate or how one should act always changes according to the particulars of a situation, including the other people involved. The customs of a place or of social institutions also have a significant effect. There are no transcendent rules, static principles, or abstract concepts or systems that establish what one "must" do. Confucius says of himself: "I am different from others. There is nothing I must do and nothing I must not do" (18.8).

5. Flexibility and Emergence

If everything is completely contingent, then there are no absolute or objective principles for establishing morality. We must, similarly, recognize that there is no one thing about a person that is necessarily somehow of higher or more relevant moral value than anything else. Any type of "autonomy" that does exist is not independent of contingencies, and thus, from the perspective of much of contemporary thought, there is no real "autonomy". There is nothing outside the contingent person that is somehow of higher or more relevant moral value. Since we do not see any clear split between contingent and non-contingent elements, either in depictions of the person or in the world portrayed in the *Analects*, we cannot but surmise that the *Analects* sees morality itself as grounded in contingencies. This includes both the standards that we use for assessment and also the situations and persons assessed. It does not, however, necessarily mean that everything is determined or that people cannot make choices.

The *Analects* does speak of better ways to be a person and advises that certain practices are effective for cultivation. It makes sense to regard this as a type of morality. The *Analects* can meaningfully be interpreted as arguing that some people are more moral than others, and also that some ways of doing things are moral and others are not. We can interpret sections of the *Analects* regarding moral practices and the cultivation of personal reflection as "emergent", which will allow us to understand how morality can be developed from contingencies without supposing a non-contingent origin. Likewise, the flexibility that composes the "*jing-quan* dynamic" or one that calls for contextualizing models—widely recognized in readings of the *Analects*, and repeatedly described in the text itself—can be taken as a necessary consequence of a take on morality that is wholly contingent and emergent. Indeed, this might be the best and most thorough way to appreciate flexibility.

Jing or "models" can be anything from actual people (living or dead) to practices (including habits, norms, customs, and rituals), to the famous virtues or values such as filial piety (*xiao* 孝), humaneness (*ren* 仁), duty²³ (*yi* 義), and the like. From classic texts, such as the *Book of Poetry* (*shi jing* 詩經) or the *Analects* itself, down to a person's own past practices, models surround everyone. As will be discussed below, navigating these models is central to the *Analects*. Rather than seeing the text as offering specific principles, standards, or even guidelines for reflecting on behavior, we can read the *Analects* as drawing our atten-

tion to the models all around us, and reminding us that we can adopt them in meaningful ways.²⁴ Again, this is a way of appreciating that the *Analects* is largely continuous with traditional readings and where contingency is paramount.

Many recent philosophical readings of the *Analects* have been influenced by Aristotelian thought and, therefore, concentrate on virtues such as filial piety, humaneness, or duty. However, when reading the *Analects* itself, we see that virtues are not any more special than other models. In fact, often, the “virtues” are mentioned as a way to loosely label a successful model, and the vast majority of these instances are not speaking about actual people but rather about how one should be, or they are speaking of an ideal.²⁵ The virtues are famously never discussed in an abstract manner.²⁶ Putting these virtues alongside other models, especially living people or one’s own practices, we can easily see why there is no final or static understanding of any particular virtue. Models are always obtuse and are resistant to analytic identification or even clear discussion.

If we approach the *Analects* while assuming, even implicitly, that it makes a distinction between what is contingent and what is not contingent, then we might assume that there is something more or less stable behind individual models, and perhaps all models in general. It makes sense to reason that even if Confucius does not speak about virtues or models with great precision, this does not preclude our ability to do so. By piecing together various instances of a particular virtue, for example, we can come up with a more or less reliable definition of what that virtue means. This is, of course, possible to some degree. When this project is approached with the assumption that there must be something final or stable behind all instances of a model, or that the concrete examples participate in some higher version of the model, then the importance necessarily shifts from the actual model to something more objective or universal. This type of “top-down” appreciation of the *Analects* downplays the models themselves, along with *quan* or “weighing” or “contextualizing” them. The “top” is more important, and it is something non-contingent. Once this comes into the picture, contingencies are taken as the “bottom” and become unavoidably pushed aside. But there is another way to think about the models that we find in the *Analects*, one that speaks better to the text as a whole (and to models like living people and one’s own actions), and the long tradition that follows.

Instead of imposing the abovementioned top-down approach, we can read models in the *Analects* as they are described, as models of behavior, reflection, and cultivation that are constantly remade in the way people learn from them and reflect on their own lives. As examples, we can take two of the more strictly regulated ritualized practices in early China: funerals and mourning. Confucius was considered an expert in these rituals, and the *Analects* records what he says about them. Rather than the actual behaviors, clothing, eating habits, and other regulated activities, Confucius is clearly more concerned with how one feels after the death of a loved one (17.21). Indeed, we find this same attitude throughout the *Analects*: following exactly what is prescribed by whatever model is not as important as having the proper thoughts and feelings and expressing them well. Ritual practices change, what is prescribed must be modified, and there is no such thing as a perfect ideal that must be minutely followed. Two of Confucius’ more famous statements demonstrate the idea that things must constantly change and that there is not anything that must be strictly imitated. In step with Yang Lihua’s discussion regarding following the way of one’s father, in the *Analects* 15.29, we find: “Confucius said, ‘Humans can broaden the way, the way does not broaden humans.’” We also find Confucius differentiating himself from others, saying (18.8): “There is nothing I must do, and nothing I must not do”. These lines demonstrate the flexibility of the *Analects* while simultaneously demanding critical reflection from the person themselves. In other words, the *Analects* does not offer a ready-made way (*dao* 道) for people to follow. It does provide orientation for thinking about how to interact with others, but instead of a “way” to do it, the text suggests key markers to pay attention to. Accordingly, if there is one thing of which Confucius is acutely critical, it is simply following the prescribed models without modifying them. One should learn from

models, but that means remaking them as one critically reflects on oneself, one's relationships, and the broader environment.

A perfect funeral does not exist. The funeral practices that are revered are those that have worked well. These were created by people who were truly sad and performed well in expressing this sadness. Alternatively, we can say that these people did well at contextualizing models and identifying the appropriate patterns of thinking, feeling, behaving, and interacting. There is nothing about a funeral that is somehow "good" or "appropriate" in and of itself. A proper funeral must always be understood in its own context. What one wears, who one invites, what one does, when one does it, and all other issues cannot somehow be assessed in an objective or universal manner. Anything about a funeral that is objective or universal—such as "one should be sad"—is more or less meaningless outside of its connection to contingencies. The *Analects* is not concerned with establishing extremely basic ideals that can be universalized. It teaches how to reflect within one's contexts by pointing to particular issues as being central in self-reflection and is always foundationally related to contingencies.

This is not a top-down approach, and there is no perfect abstract concept to be imperfectly mirrored in our flaw-filled world. The funeral and mourning practices that Confucius celebrates were born from contingencies and will always be contingent themselves. This is precisely why they can, and always do, change. If people broaden the way, then that way must be just as contingent as the people who tread and make it. If there is nothing that one must or must not do, then this also points us toward appreciating contingencies as meaningfully shaping the contours of how we think about ourselves and our interactions with others. The Confucian way, in its conception of the person and discussions of how to interact, is not focused on certain isolated (non-contingent) aspects of life; here, everything is considered.

There are, of course, issues that are of more importance than others. Not creating a split between the contingent and non-contingent does not mean that everything is the same, or that there is no room for debating the relative significance of things. On a most basic level, Confucius clearly values humans more than animals (2.7; 10.12) and thinks that family relationships require special consideration (13.8). Furthermore, he sees that there is room for changing old ways (9.3) and has specific ideas about the best ways in which to mourn (17.21) and, arguably, how to do everything from sleep and eat (10.6; 10.8) to govern (13.3) and wage war (7.13). In other words, there are aspects of life that are more ethically relevant than others, there are meaningful ways of valuing things, and people should learn how to interact well with others. In navigating these areas of the *Analects*, instead of introducing a split between the moral and non-moral, or between the contingent and non-contingent, to make sense of what is being discussed, we can think instead of certain contingencies as becoming more valuable or more important as emergent. For example, the relationship with one's parents is of critical importance in the *Analects*. It is not important because of how people are, but of how the relationship shapes people, how it helps cultivate people, what the relationship teaches one about interacting with others, and a host of other reasons. All these reasons are also contingent. There is nothing about this relationship that is somehow "absolute" or even universal.²⁷ Adopted children, stepchildren, orphans, and others in difficult situations all have the ability to develop these types of relationships as well. All the other values discussed in the *Analects* can equally be described as contingent.²⁸ Again, this is what allows for flexibility and is why *jing-quan* and *du* are such crucial notions in understanding the *Analects*.

6. Conclusions

In a recent paper, Wayne Alt argues for "A Non-Moral Interpretation of *The Original Analects* of Confucius". Here, Alt very harshly criticizes the over-moralization of the *Analects*. For instance, Alt calls the translations of *ren* 仁 as "good" or even "the Good", which populate works from Arthur Waley to Edward Slingerland, as "simply nonsense" (Alt 2023, p. 6). According to Alt, these translations severely misrepresent the concerns of

Confucius as being aimed at an ideal that is not flexible, is overly abstract (absolute and universal), and is critically divorced from the thinking shown in the *Analects*:

Moral judgments about good and evil, right and wrong, virtuous and vicious, express a kind of absoluteness, imperative urgency, and universality that ethical judgments lack. This is because moral values and rules are not tethered to individual or collective goals, purposes, and situations. To be morally good is to be good no matter what anyone wants or believes and no matter what else is true. People are deemed morally good when they do not neglect their moral duties in order to accommodate their personal beliefs, creeds, cultural practices, situations, needs, or interests. They “do the right thing” without veering from the path that morality requires. Did Confucius expect his charges to meet these sorts of requirements for being morally good people? (Alt 2023, p. 5)

Many contemporary scholars of Confucianism have answered this question in the affirmative. This “yes” is expressed either implicitly or explicitly and is the foundation upon which similarities between Christian thought, Kantian philosophy, and even many forms of democracy, liberalism, and virtue ethics are imagined.²⁹

According to Alt, one way to salvage the *Analects* from “morality”-based readings and all the baggage of absoluteness, imperatives, and universality—which correspondingly downplay the significance of personal beliefs, norms, cultural practices, and the specific demands of particular circumstances—is to distinguish not between the moral and non-moral but rather between the moral and ethical. The personal, cultural, and situational dimensions are quite clearly of the utmost priority in the *Analects*, and this expresses not a “moral” concern, but an ethical one.

In this paper, we have not strictly distinguished morality from ethics. While this is certainly one way to appreciate Alt’s point, we might also see him as drawing attention to the deeper issue of recognizing that the *Analects* does not differentiate between the contingent and non-contingent, as well as the related notions of contextualizing models (*jing-quan*), weighing (*du*),³⁰ and flexibility, as described above. Morality-based readings of the *Analects* push it beyond its tradition. Ideas like “the person broadens the way” or “there is nothing I must do and nothing I must not do” are not moral, or at least not in the way that morality is depicted by Alt, or in much contemporary academic philosophy. We can also see that claiming that Confucius would accept same-sex marriage, that the *Analects* actually promotes liberal values and democracy, or that we should read Confucianism through the lens of virtue ethics, similarly (at least potentially, and in much of the actual scholarship) devalues the concentration on the personal, cultural, and situational as being thoroughly interconnected and wholly contingent. When philosophizing about these issues, the attitude should be one that reflects *with* the *Analects* and attempts to learn *from* it, as opposed to claiming that “Confucius would think X” or supposing that one has special access to the real *Analects*.³¹ This way of appreciating the *Analects* allows it to make significant contributions to contemporary philosophy, rather than diminish it or provide simplistic amendments and garnishes.

The tradition of *Analects* commentary and the incorporation of the ideas presented in this text into social and political institutions has often been difficult when strict rules have been promoted, or when the text has been followed to the letter and not its spirit. Late-period Han thinkers worried about this issue, and Xuanxue scholars of the Wei-Jin period completely reimagined the *Analects* in ways that resisted following *what* the text says, or supposing that any form of strict modeling is desirable. As the *Analects* becomes increasingly influential in Western academia, we should be wary of committing the same mistakes that were noticed by Wang Fu 王符 (d. 163) and Xu Gan 徐干 (d. 217), and were so creatively avoided by the reinterpretations of Wang Bi 王弼 (d. 249) and Guo Xiang 郭象 (d. 312).

This paper can also, of course, be subject to the very critique that it puts forth. One might argue that promoting contingency, flexibility, and the “contextualizing models” or *jing-quan* dynamic is just another way of claiming to know what the *Analects* is about, and of supposing some special access. It is, however, a way that is contingently informed, flexible, and within the contextualizing models of the *jing-quan* dynamic itself. Furthermore, recognizing that the *Analects* does not distinguish between the contingent and non-contingent helps us appreciate the ways in which this text can help us meaningfully reflect on contemporary conceptions of the person, agency, and interaction.

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Notes

- ¹ One literal meaning of *jing* is a “classic text” and, in this way, the *Analects* is among the ultimate *jings* in the Chinese tradition.
- ² This style of philosophizing was already exceedingly evident in the Wei-Jin period, when scholars such as Wang Bi 王弼 (d. 249) and Guo Xiang 郭象 (d. 312) drew broadly on the *Analects*, *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* to both comment on these texts and develop their own philosophical understandings; see Tang (1957), D’Ambrosio (2016).
- ³ Li Zehou 李澤厚 (d. 2021) describes *jing-quan* 經權- or *du* 度-based styles of philosophizing, in reference not only to Chinese thought in general but also the Confucian tradition in particular, in many of his works; see Li (1998, 2014). In their respective works, Li (Jana Rošker 2020; Robert Carleo 2023) has further elaborated on the importance of *jing-quan* and *du*.
- ⁴ Here, it is relevant to think about the tension between an authorial internationalist reading and reader-oriented text reading. A “reader-oriented text” reading opens up the text to make it applicable to new circumstances and novel interpretations, but when taken too far beyond the circumstances of the work itself start to become untethered and thus lose meaning, but an authorial intention reading prevents the text from generating meaning for novel circumstances and, thus, also limits the production of meaning. For more on this discussion with regard to early Chinese philosophy, see Sarafinas (2022).
- ⁵ This paper includes a number of generalizations about “Western scholars”, “Western philosophy”, and “traditional interpretations” of Kant, Aristotle, and other figures, as well as religious thought. These sweeping categorizations are intended as useful backboards for thinking about the argument being given. They are not intended to be definitive in what they say about their subject, but rather, simply point to very general ways of thinking, and are utilized because they can be instructive in terms of appreciating their contrast.
- ⁶ This is still popular in references to the “Confucian Silver Rule” and in various translations of key terms. Arguably, even the vocabulary of “righteousness” or “the Good” can be taken as remnants of the Christian readings of the *Analects* (some details of this perspective will be given later in the paper).
- ⁷ It has been widely noted that while scholars often speak of addressing a text or tradition on its own terms, this is only possible to a limited extent. With regard to the *Analects* in particular, Yang Lihua 楊立華 argues that the text clearly does not have an foundational system or provide a systematic approach, nor does it employ “concepts” in the way we often perceive them (Yang 2019, p. 19). Therefore, to speak alongside Wang Qingjie 王慶節, discussing the *Analects* in terms of “morality versus non-morality” and contingency is to put the text in a framework that is not its own (Wang 2016). That, however, does not preclude the possibility of a study such as this one lending itself to more “thorough (*tong* 通)” appreciations of the *Analects*.
- ⁸ In the conclusion, some distinctions between morality and ethics will be addressed. Of course, we can differentiate the two, and this is often helpful. But, in this paper, I will not place the emphasis here.
- ⁹ It is often assumed that early Chinese philosophical texts do distinguish between the moral and non-moral. For example, in their recent article (for the same Special Issue), Shuwen Liu and Xiaodong Xie discuss “Moral *li* [rituals] and non-moral *li* [rituals]” (Liu and Xie 2023, p. 8). Like many others who reference this distinction, Liu and Xie do not provide much evidence for this claim, their argument resting mostly on the assumption of many readers that this is correct. Later in this paper, this view will be specifically challenged. Readers should note that the argument that there is no split between the moral and non-moral can be found in the works of many other scholars, from Wang Bi to Herbert Finagerette and Li Zehou. In fact, the claim that early Chinese thinkers sharply distinguish between the moral and non-moral is, as will be discussed later, quite recent. For other ways to differentiate ideas related to morality, normativity, and virtues, see Liu (2020).

- 10 In this paper, I am using “contingency” to refer to those aspects of our world that are outside the scope of autonomy or agency — these terms refer to something more abstract or even transcendental. Contingency can refer to those things that are incidental, which are particular and concrete, which change and influence one another to a degree that is not easily conceived. The general orientation of this use of contingency is roughly related to the way that Kant thought of “heteronomy” and meshes well with the way that contingency is used by Richard Rorty (1989), as well as how some scholars read Hegel (see Pinkard 2017).
- 11 Many philosophers and non-academics distinguish between the moral and non-moral for reasons that differ drastically from Kant’s, but this is not important for this section.
- 12 To reiterate, I am not suggesting that Kant somehow represents the starting point of the distinction between the moral and the non-moral, nor am I claiming that he is, necessarily, directly influential in separating the two. Rather, I am referencing Kant because he very clearly distinguishes these spheres and is, therefore, helpful as a backboard for some of our reflections.
- 13 Various apologies for Kant have been written; some aim to demonstrate that he was actually saying something more in line with common sense, but the basic point serves as an illustrative point. No claims are being made here about exactly what Kant means.
- 14 Any cursory glance at these topics immediately yields the importance of contingency plays in their discussion. The reader can also reference the entries on “moral luck” and “moral motivation” in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- 15 The word being translated here is *yi* 義. In much of the *Analects*, we can understand *yi* as “appropriate” in an ethical or moral sense. Here, Li is also referencing the legal and political understandings of this word; “justice” is a decent gloss.
- 16 Many Chinese scholars reject the idea of transcendence and are strongly opposed to readings of early Chinese thought as referencing transcendence as well. However, many argue for *neizai chaoyue* 內在超越 or “immanent transcendence”. It is outside the scope of this paper to describe exactly what this means, but the discussion in Section 5 provides a good starting point.
- 17 Herbert Fingarette’s *Confucius: Secular as Sacred* (Fingarette 1972) is another example, as already evident from the title.
- 18 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAbkZEySDIk> (accessed on 22 September 2023) 從語錄體的《論語》勾勒完整的孔子哲學
The discussion of “concepts” and Chinese thought is complex, and many scholars have varied perspectives on how to approach this issue. It is outside the scope of this paper to go into much detail on this matter, but a discussion by Zhang Dainian 張岱年 (d. 2004), Feng Qi 馮契 (d. 1995), Tang Yijie 湯一介 (d. 2014), and others on “research on ‘concepts’ in the history of Chinese thought (*zhongguo zhexueshi fanchou yanjiu* 中國哲學史範疇研究)” occurred in 1983. Some of the subsequent publications, for example by Zhang (1987), Feng (1983), and Tang (1991) outline ways to approach this issue.
- 19 For a similar and much more extended discussion of this passage and a look at the tension between “creativity” or personalizing and following relatively static models, see Amarantidou (2020).
- 20 This phrase (因人而異) was first followed by two similar phrases: “different depending on the particulars of the situation (or specific aspects of the situation) (*yin shi er yi* 因事而異)” and “different depending on the time (or timing involved) (*yin shi er yi* 因時而異)”.
- 21 We can extend this into areas such as *tian* 天 (heaven, sky, nature), where those who argue for non-contingent aspects in *Kong-Meng* focus much attention. In his discussion of the *Mengzi*, to which these arguments can equally be applied, Kevin Turner argues that in early Confucianism, the “subjective and objective entail one another” (Turner 2019, p. 360). Accordingly, “the Confucian moral worldview [...] become[s] the very interpretive framework through which the world is known, and [...] outside of this Confucian moral worldview, there is no other and more real world to be had” (Turner 2019, p. 360).
- 22 In his work on Confucian ethics/morality, Wang Qingjie focuses on how emotions can touch a person, which inspires them to do what is appropriate (Wang 2016). Developing this approach, Wang demonstrates that everyday aspects of life play a vital role in cultivating a moral person (Wang 2017). Thus, it is not so much reason or special events that determine moral character, but how one is, emotionally as well as rationally, and how one behaves in mundane situations.
- 23 Translating *yi* as “duty” is not supposed to connote a Kantian sense of duty. Instead, as suggested by Li Zehou, who has asked that *yi* be translated as “duty”, this term is supposed to reference the sense of responsibility related to one’s social role, as well as the specific relationships one has with the others involved.
- 24 For a much more elaborate depiction of the way that models work, see Olberding (2012). One can also look at how the commentarial tradition itself works, or try to read the *Analects* outside of a theoretical lens and come to similar conclusions.
- 25 For further elucidation of these points, see Yang (2019).
- 26 Confucius does not describe any “virtue” in and of itself. Furthermore, when his students press Confucius to define these virtues outside of examples and models, he vehemently denies them.
- 27 Zehou Li (2014) argues that what we think of as universal or absolute is actually just what has been built up through history, tradition, and culture. He calls this a process of “sedimentation (*jidian* 積澱)”. Once again, we can apply this type of thinking to aspects of early Confucian thought that some argue are non-contingent, such as *tian*. In the words of Kevin Turner, “*tian* is best understood as the cultural tradition that sustains human community as a source of intergenerational moral values” (Turner 2023). Wang Qingjie, in his works on Confucian ethics/morality, which are arguably very close to the focus on contingency in this paper, also borrows the notion of “sedimentation” from Li Zehou (Wang 2016, 2017).
- 28 The thoroughness of contingency may also contribute to the pervasiveness of irony in the *Analects*. For a further discussion, see Amarantidou (2022).

- 29 Again, these similarities are drawn out, not only in terms of explicating, for instance, Christian or Kantian thought as productive models for interpreting the content of the *Analects*, but also through translations, labels, and other less overt forms.
- 30 In the work of Li Zehou and others, *du* also indicates more than “weighing”; it can also indicate an orientation to a more refined normative expectation. In these contexts, *du* can be understood as “proper measure”. For more on this topic and a discussion of how several scholars, including Li, use this term, see Xing (2023) or Carleo (2020).
- 31 Henry Rosemont and Roger Ames have highlighted similar readings in their respective and collaborative works. For example, Rosemont provides robust responses to the reliance on individualism, based on early Confucian texts. He even goes so far as to say that he does not mind if others think that his ideas are not “Confucian” because his focus is on what he has *learned* from Confucianism (cf. Rosemont 2015). Ames holds a similar attitude and relates what he has learned from Confucianism to responding to everything from contemporary views on justice and environmentalism to democracy and same-sex marriage (Ames 2020).

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