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**A CONVERSATION BETWEEN CONFUCIUS AND DEWEY ON INDIVIDUAL
AND COMMUNITY — A HOPE FOR HUMAN UNITY**

A Dissertation
Presented For the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Juqing Peng and Xiulan Song, my sister Yongmei Peng, and my husband Songnan Yang, for their generous love and tremendous support.

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I wish to thank all those who helped me complete my Doctor of Philosophy degree in Education.

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between 'individual' and 'community', or others, is a focal concern in philosophy both in China and in the Euro-western world. Individualism and collectivism, the two entirely different traditions of philosophy that describe a different relationship between 'individual' and 'community', have a long polemic history and are still practiced in our everyday lives. They play an essential role in schools in terms of the way teachers teach our children and relationships children develop with their classmates. This dissertation is a philosophical comparative effort to explore the conceptions of individual and community, and the relationship between the two in Confucian Grand Union and Deweyan democracy. Confucius's and Dewey's shared dedications to a philosophy of social engagement, philosophy of education, and social organism provide a theoretical ground for them to engage in a philosophical conversation. The researcher's perspective as a philosopher and cultural studies scholar is analytical, pragmatist, and social feminist. The rejection of private/public and individual/social dichotomies in both Confucius's and Dewey's work is a hope for human unity that involves taking the human society as an organism and helps actualize the best possibilities of individuals as well as the human community. This theory of human unity with an emphasis on a pluralistic relational view of human community has much to offer for schools and will contribute significantly to the improvement of

educational opportunities for all people. The implications for schools are developed in this work.

PREFACE

I taught middle school children in China for almost five years. I loved to work with the teenagers that were energetic and full of creativity, which always refreshed my field of vision and inspired me to be an innovative educator. But, life is not all the way smooth sailing. The more I spent time with the children, the more I struggled.

I come from a culture with a collective focus that traditionally emphasizes the spirit of unselfishness and communal interests, by which I mean teachers may be pleased to see the individual improvement of their students, but more importantly, they care more about the *collective progress* of all students. Personally, I think there are two essential factors that give rise to this collective mindset. First, from the angle of the popular criteria of evaluation, the more the students keep higher test scores and behave themselves, the higher the quality of the class collective indicates. Second, it is customary with us — the teachers — to inoculate our students with the idea that the strength of both the intellectual and physical of the collective is more powerful than that of individuals. That is why in China students stay in the same class for six years in the elementary level, three years in middle school, at least one year in high school, and four years in college. In this context, students are expected to form a sense of collective where they belong, grow, and make contributions. Based on the collective performance, most of the schools

evaluate each class every week or every other week and award the winner with a red flag and with the tile of “civilized class.” At the end of each semester, the class awarded the most is entitled “most civilized/excellent class.” This achievement is hard to attain for it requires that all or, at least, most of the students behave appropriately and maintain good academic performance during the 5-month semester period. On the first day of school, every child is taught to cherish and maintain the good name of their shared community, such as the class collective, the grade collective, and the school collective. An organized, disciplined, and academically successful class collective is the aim for which every teacher strives.

I was delighted to see the students work together to make collective improvement hand-in-hand, as I believe through *cooperation*, the young know each other, learn from each other, help each other, and then build friendships with each other. A truthful friendship, such as the one between Engels and Marx, can be a long-term supportive force throughout people’s lives. What I did was to arrange for the students at different academic levels to form afterschool study groups. But from time to time, some students, particularly those who held high test scores, complained that the slower students were hard to work with, which also made the group work inefficient. I understood that this uncomfortableness in working with others was due to their different learning styles and the pressure of text-based exams and graduation and hence team work was deemed as a drag

on their own progress. But still, I could not have the child work always alone and isolate himself/herself from others, since I knew it would be a loss to the child and his/her peers. By loss, I do not mean that the child is lacking the ability to work well with others which might be the case but not necessarily, but loss in the sense of missing an opportunity to learn and to learn well since the very best way to learn the material is to try to teach it to somebody else. Cooperation demanded in group work in current society is a life experience as well as a learning experience and contributes to the development of individuals and that of the society by and large. However, on the other hand, I could not deny that if they could not cooperate with each other well, the group work was at the cost of students' individual development. When I ran into this dilemma, I wondered how I could equally encourage the team work, cooperation, and have my students develop their potentials to the best possibility. In the spring of 2003, I started my graduate studies in the US, an adventure of seeking an answer, a solution to my dilemma in one of the most advanced countries in the world.

For the past four years, I have been working as a graduate research assistant for Dr. Barbara Thayer-Bacon, and a teaching associate of an education core course, "Teachers, Schools, and Society." Dr. Thayer-Bacon is a professor in the program of Cultural Studies and she is currently working on a research project: C.A.R.E. (Culturally aware, Anti-racist, Relationally focused, Educational

communities). While helping her with this project, I became richly informed that the USA was founded on a concept of democracy that has philosophical roots in the Euro-western classical liberal theory of John Locke (1632-1704) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778), which stresses individualism and rejects subordination of individual liberty to the “general will” of the community.¹ As Ostrom (1980) recognizes, liberal democracy has its roots in methodological individualism, namely the view that every individual is actually or potentially sovereign by nature and only by leaving the state of nature through a political compact enters into society, or, more accurately, civil society. Bobbio (1990) also argues, “Without individualism, there can be no liberalism” (p. 9). Munro (1979) further points out it is individualism that “has long symbolized cardinal ideals in liberal democratic societies such as America and England” (p. 40). Every year that I teach the course, “Teachers, Schools, and Society,” I can see the influence individualism still holds on the way my students, the future teachers, deal with their classmates. Some of them show complete indifference in group discussions, while some don’t feel comfortable working with their fellow students on a group

¹ In this paper, the patriarchic and culturally intrusive abbreviation BC in dates is replaced by a prefixed zero, for instance, 0551 is 551 BC, and 1859 is AD 1859. Similarly, 08c means 08th (pronounced oh-eighth) century. I am in debt to Thayer-Bacon (2000, 2003), who introduces the term “Euro-western” to me. I use it to specify what has been traditionally referred to as Western thought. Without naming Western thought as European-based thought, other peoples’ cultures are invisibly included in that category, such as African culture and native American culture. Africa and Northern, Central, and Southern America are continents in the Western hemisphere of our world, and yet they have their own cultures and traditions which predate European influence. All of the Western hemisphere has come under European influence, due to the colonization of the Western hemisphere by European countries such as Spain, France, and England. However, there undeniably remain significant differences among cultures in the Western hemisphere, and not all of these cultures are European-based.

project. Coming from a culture with a collective focus, I wonder when my American students are so attracted to individual autonomy, whether they feel isolated if they loose touch with a larger group where they socially come from and with whom they live together, and how they look at the power of the collective or the community; I also wonder while my American students enjoy the fruits of freedom whether they have ever desired the enjoyments that spring from a feeling of union, of solidarity, with others (Dewey, 1989). It seems that after I traveled a long way to seek the answer, I find myself coming back to the departure point again. The two entirely different traditions of philosophy, collectivism and individualism, which have remarkable influences on the way teachers teach students and students communicate with their classmates, have become increasingly interesting to me and have sparked my thought.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Objectives and Theoretical Framework

This dissertation is a philosophical project to explore the conceptions of individual and community and the relationship between the two proposed in Confucius's doctrine and John Dewey's democracy. Among various philosophical schools and trends in Chinese history, Confucius's doctrine has the most lasting and profound impact on Chinese society, particularly on the formation of the mindset of the Chinese intellectuals. Dewey, as one of the most significant American thinkers who breaks away from the dualism in the tradition of classical Euro-western philosophy, rearticulates the private-public relationship toward human association and individual flourishing. My main effort in this study is to bring these two influential thinkers into conversation and explore the pedagogical implications of their work. A cultural explanation will be attended to in their philosophical conversations. The rejection of private/public and individual/social dichotomies in both thinkers' work, I argue, is a hope for human unity that involves taking the human society as an *organism* and helps actualize the best possibilities of the individuals as well as the society.

I plan to begin by describing in this introduction, my position and the methodology I use in conducting the study. My thinking is indebted to

critical/social feminist theory, pragmatism, cultural studies, and ordinary language analysis. I proceed with feminist theory.

Feminism is a blanket term that covers both a historical and conceptual dimension, which “do not neatly cohere” as Seigfried (1996) discovers.

I can conceptually define feminism as any of multiple theories or perspectives either based on the premise that women have been and continue to be oppressed, in which case the emancipation and empowerment of women is taken as a goal, or based on the premise that gender is a fundamental category of analysis. Or I can identify feminism with the beginning of an organized women’s movement and seek some precipitating event, such as the women’s rights convention at Seneca Falls in 1848, or a period of organized protest, such as the nineteenth-century struggle for enfranchisement (p. 4).

In line with Seigfried, Jaggar (1983) also believes that feminism takes many forms due to the disagreement over the sources of inequality, how to attain equality, and the extent to which gender and gender-based identities should be questioned and critiqued. However, a major premise of feminism is that women have been defined as “the other” and suffered from oppression for centuries (de Beauvoir, 1952/1974). A corollary to this idea is that, in a society defined by men, women have been both invisible and voiceless.

We have had almost universally what is here called an Androcentric Culture. The history, such as it was, was made and written by men. The mental, the mechanical, the social development, was almost wholly theirs. We have, so far, lived and suffered and died in a man-made world (Gilman, 1914, pp. 16-17).

This short however trenchant comment on reality tells us that feminism, no matter on what grounds and in its various forms, is an appeal for the recognition of the validity of women's interpretation of their lived experiences and needs, and hence the term "feminism" is largely motivated by or concerned with the liberation of women. According to Hatch (2002), in current usage, feminists are those who believe that the apprehended world makes a material difference in terms of race, gender, and class, view knowledge as subjective as well as political, embrace transformative inquiry, and value mediated critiques that challenge existing power structures (p. 13). 'Feminism' is commonly used to end women's subordination and to help them achieve the fullest possible liberation as Jaggar (1983) describes. Indebted to Hatch and Jaggar, this is how I shall use the term in this work. It prepares me to look at possible gender/race/class issues contained in Dewey's and Confucius's ideas and to be critical to their biases and how they may effect their theories.

Next, pragmatic analysis is another approach I will take in this study. Represented by Charles S. Peirce, William James, John Dewey, and George H. Mead, classical pragmatism, in all its variety of forms, is always a form of philosophy that strives toward social engagement and requires arguments made on behalf of cultural explanations and practical relevance (Konvitz & Kennedy, 1960). In other words, classical pragmatists remind me that there is always a context/culture where human beings or thoughts are born. It is my purpose through this project to scrutinize 'democracy' and Confucius's doctrine, particularly 'Grand Union,' in their historical and cultural contexts. Meanwhile, in doing this project, it is my hope to open a philosophical conversation between Confucius and Dewey for the possibility of mutual understanding, which provides both cultures with an opportunity to learn from each other without sacrificing their own cultural uniqueness. Moreover, I want to convey that when eras move forward, according to pragmatists, ideas should be examined accordingly and are adaptable to change. When I just finished phrasing the last point, I was thinking of Wei, Yuan's words, a famous thinker in the Qing Dynasty, "Learn from foreigners to refrain from being invaded and to compete with them." Obviously, I need to modify this saying to adapt to the theme of an increasingly globalized environment: peace and development. Thus, the mutual learning experience proposed is a

process of critical examination with reason and sympathy toward mutual development and a flourishing human society.

On the other hand, classical pragmatism also inspires me with its strong protest against dualisms that subscribe to a false dichotomy between mind/body, theory/practice, facts/values, and private/public worlds (Thayer-Bacon, 2000). Therefore, in seeking the ideal of human unity, I will be conscious of not falling into the traps of dichotomizing between the individual/social and aims/means. In other words, my theoretical framework is grounded upon the union of individual and social and that of aims and means. It is the people, the social beings, who live their everyday lives in relation to each other, constitute the society, and run the government. Individual and social are desperately inseparable. Ultimately, it is people themselves who maintain the continuity of the society, decide the way they do it, and enjoy the fruit of a flourishing society. The contribution of this study to the conversation on human unity is to bring the consideration of people themselves into account, specifically the perception of 'individual' and 'community' and the relationship between the two. There will be no flourishing society of whatever form it takes if there is no person, and vice versa. In addition, the means to achieve democracy needs to be consistent with the achievement of democratic ends. In the words of Dewey (1937/1987), "*The fundamental principle of democracy is that the ends of freedom and individuality for all can be attained only*

by means that accord with those ends” and “[D]emocratic means and the attainment of democratic ends are one and inseparable” (p. 298, 299, emphasis in original).

So, generally speaking, pragmatic analysis helps me look into ideas contextually and get away from any false dichotomy that leads to dualism. But I do realize that pragmatism is not a panacea that can protect me from all the criticisms. One of them I can anticipate may come from postmodernist scholars represented by French philosopher Michel Foucault (1986), whose work makes classical pragmatists vulnerable to the charge of missing the opportunity to address power issues.

In response to this criticism, first of all, I have to admit that power is not taken to be central in the pragmatic analysis. However, what the pragmatists engage in is social philosophy that stresses the relation of theory to practice, or what Paulo Freire (1970/2000) called “praxis,” which means reflection and action upon the world in order to change it. At this point, what the pragmatists take on is a political project as the postmodernists propose, “The problem is not changing people’s consciousnesses – or what’s in their heads – but the political, economic, institutional regimes of the production of truth” (Foucault, p. 74). Even though the issue of power is not pointed out literally by the classical pragmatists, pragmatism as a method or a way of analyzing problems, not just a doctrine or an “ism”

(James, 1963), is so promising for revisioning “in the interest of fair play and justice” (Dewey & Tufts, 1908/1938, p. 334) if the concern of power has to be put on the agenda.

Second, through this study I want to underscore that in the writings on ethics and the relation of economics to social philosophy, Dewey does show an awareness of power, which is owned and manipulated by the favored economic class in history. In his lectures in China in the early 20th century, Dewey (1973) believed industrialization took a tragically wrong turn in bringing modern society to the Age of the Money-Machine. He realized the one-sided growth of “the stronger” “under a system of free enterprise and in the absence of governmental controls” (p. 105). He exposed that “inequality and injustice” were caused by discrepancies in ability and resources that gave advantage to the stronger (p. 105). The further exploration of the power issue is found in Dewey’s ethics. When investigating the conception of common good which is involved in the very idea of community, Dewey (Dewey & Tufts, 1908/1938), reveals the problem of “an inequitable distribution of power” that he believes “produces a one-sided growth in those who have privilege” (p. 386). Thus, what Dewey seeks is a conception of common good that connotes equal empowerment and encourages “the full development of individuals in their distinctive individuality” (p. 386). While realizing power as a force for oppressing people, Dewey also provides an idea of power in its positive

sense, by which I mean the equal capacity to grow when the appropriate environment is provided. Consequently, this project involved with the study of individual and community is a commitment to the empowerment of human beings, and postmodernist concerns of power will be attended to instead of being neglected in my work. In addition, given my work is also inspired by cultural studies, I will surely include an examination of power in connection to knowledge in this study, and I am now about to take note of how cultural studies influences my perspective.

By cultural studies I do not mean the general study of culture or the study of intercultural relations. The cultural studies discourse that is carried out in the Cultural Studies Program of the Department of Instructional Technology, Health and Cultural Studies here at the University of Tennessee is derived from a relatively new discourse, which had its institutional origins at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham, England, in the 1960s.¹

Although cultural studies is notoriously difficult to define, the more active and important question to me as well as to other cultural workers is not “what is cultural studies” (Johnson, 1986/7; Storey, 1996), but “what does cultural studies

¹ CCCS was reconstructed as the Department of Cultural Studies and Sociology at the University of Birmingham, UK later, but in July 2002, the department was closed. See Ann Gray, “Cultural Studies at Birmingham: The Impossibility of Critical Pedagogy?” in *Cultural Studies* 17 (6) 2003, 767 -782.

do?” Looking back at the British tradition, the intellectuals that gave cultural studies its name and set up the CCCS as the first named center of cultural studies were interested in developing a discourse that would allow them to undertake progressive activism in an academic setting and to address pressing issues of social justice in and through culture in ways that were not constrained by the limits of specific disciplines. They avoided providing a definition of it because they were afraid of limiting the openness of cultural studies. As Stuart Hall (1990), director of the Birmingham Centre throughout the decade of the 1970s and still a major figure in the field, says, “cultural studies is not one thing. It has never been one thing” (p. 11). As a consequence, what these British intellectuals developed was a new academic field that was not merely interdisciplinary, anti-disciplinary, but also post-disciplinary, “one that examined how *power* operated in culture and society and represented and championed the oppressed and marginalized in the society” (Wright, 2001/02, p. 11, emphasis added). Power relations shape every aspect of cultural experience: from the way in which truth is produced (Foucault, 1986), to the way in which women and men negotiate their everyday relationships. As “a way of taking up projects that will address issues of social justice and radical democracy,” cultural studies tries to understand these power relations and to think about how they can be changed (Wright, 2001/02, p. 12). For cultural studies

scholars, there is always a connection between “an inequitable distribution of power” and the production of Truth.²

Through the lens of cultural studies, I discover that Chinese philosophy is marginalized and not taken seriously as “philosophy” in the Euro-western world. This phenomenon is caused largely by the fact that Chinese philosophy does not fall into the type of either speculative ‘idealism’ or speculative ‘realism’ as Euro-western philosophy is traditionally categorized (Fung, 1976). It is not unusual for Asian philosophies to be assigned to the Religious Studies department in universities. Confucianism, consequently, is viewed as religion rather than as philosophy through the eyes of Euro-westerners (Fukuyama, 1992). False dichotomies of mind/body and material/spiritual aside, I doubt if the criteria for defining philosophy include or even ever consider the voices from Chinese scholars.

This issue of power is not only exposed in the academic sphere, but reflected in the trend of globalization. In a book titled *The End of History and the Last Men*, Fukuyama (1992) provides us with the following statement,

Just as impressive as the growth in the number of democracies is the fact that democratic government has broken out of its original beachhead in Western Europe and North America, and has made significant inroads in other parts of the

² By using a capital ‘T,’ I mean truth taken in a universal sense.

world that do not share the political, religious, and cultural traditions of those areas (p. 50).

What Fukuyama indicates in this statement is “a Universal History of mankind in the direction of liberal democracy” (p. 48). The similar point is conveyed in another writing by Fukuyama (1989) that Western liberal democracy may constitute the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and *the final form of human government*, and as such constitutes the “end of history.” This quote more plainly reveals what Fukuyama expects for the ultimate development of human society: democratization, or more specifically Westernization, should be a world trend in the process of modernization. In contemporary usage, liberal democracy, strictly speaking, is a form of representative democracy with an emphasis on the form of government, free and open elections, individual rights and freedoms (Huntington, 1991, 1993). “The rights that are important in Western liberal democracies are natural in the senses that individuals are said to possess them from birth. Other people can neither bestow them nor have license to interfere with them” (Munro, 1979, p. 42). Munro takes us to the heart of the Euro-western value that others or the society is the potential violator against the inalienable human rights. This concept of *ready-made* human rights signifies a dualism that hopelessly separates the individual from the social. As mentioned earlier, the liberal model of

democracy in actuality emerged from the thought of the Euro-western political philosophers in seventeenth and eighteen centuries, most particularly John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose theories are based on the assumption of individualism. This assumption is contradictory with the values the Chinese hold, which I shall take up in Chapter 3. Liberal democracy will be discussed more fully in Chapter 2.

When considering the criticisms of Chinese philosophy and the wholesale embrace of liberal democracy, I could not help asking myself a question, “What do they (Euro-westerners) mean by ‘philosophy’ and ‘democracy?’ Again, I must also question where the criteria come from for defining ‘philosophy’ and ‘democracy,’ and whether the criteria have taken into account the values the Chinese people embrace, or even have been open for the different voices from China. Foucault’s (1986) trenchant pen reminds me, “There were no ready-made concepts, no approved terms of vocabulary”, but a whole new “regime” in discourse and forms of knowledge (p. 52, 54). From a cultural studies lens, truth is man-made, while the marginalized culture, Chinese, for instance, is powerless in society to produce or get involved with the production of truth. So, the truths that bear assumptions acknowledged by white, male, and upper/middle class Euro-westerners are inappropriately imposed on Chinese culture. This is what Antonio Gramsci (1971) calls “hegemony” — a phrase he developed during his imprisonment. Gramsci’s

theory of hegemony explains the capacity of dominant groups to persuade subordinate ones to accept, adopt and internalize their values and norms, and hence to maintain their power. According to Gramsci, once hegemony takes full play in shaping the discourse in the public sphere, it results in the empowerment of some cultural beliefs, values, and practices to the submersion and exclusion of that of others.

In summary, cultural studies as a progressive activism helps me look at the issues of power and hegemony in the production of concepts, ideas, and values, and seek a way which can make a change. This proves that a philosophical conversation between Confucius and Dewey is a necessity in clarifying the ideas, attaining a richer understanding of different values reflected in their theories, and examining these values in current social settings. In conducting this study, I also ensure the voices from China will be heard in world conversations, while preventing the Euro-western criteria from turning 'naturalized' in the progress of globalization.

Finally, I would like to look at ordinary language analysis as I intend to use it in this study. Due to misunderstandings caused by unclear usage of ordinary language, philosophers appealing to a critical analytical approach strive to eliminate ambiguities through examining the common usage of language. This method originated with the Viennese-born philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein

(1973). This method is applicable in this project because first, on the part of Confucius, 'Confucianism' is incorrectly equated with Confucius's doctrine in the criticisms of Confucius, and his 'harmony' is mistaken for sameness. Second, on the part of Dewey, his 'individual' is easy to be confounded with 'generalized other,' and hence has been misinterpreted. Therefore, ordinary language analysis that aims to clarify these concepts and weed out the confusion is indispensable in this study.

However, although referring to the analytic method, I do not assume that philosophical problems can be resolved through description of the ordinary uses of terms, an assumption that runs the risk of universalism that deems philosophy as neutral. In other words, I don't want to claim that ordinary language is normative. The purpose for me to employ ordinary language analysis in this study is to demonstrate a common ground that ensures the possibility of conversation between the two philosophers, and particularly, to give a fair and generous read of Confucius. And, ultimately, my intent is to sketch out a research program sufficiently promising to be further revised and developed by others. Both Confucius and Dewey have a long, distinguished career and their thoughts on individual and community are deep as well as wide. For both practical and theoretical reasons the project envisioned must be a collaborative endeavor if it is to succeed at all: pragmatically, it is beyond my powers to develop such a large

project on my own; and theoretically, it is axiomatic to both feminism and pragmatism that knowledge is developed interactively among communities of inquirers and given conditions. I can not assume an omniscient point of view even if I wanted to, because we are situated knowers (Benhabib, 1992; Thayer-Bacon, 2000, 2003); therefore what I present in this work is my reflection based on my knowledge and experience. It is, I believe, the function of open conversation to supply missing points of view to strive for a mutually satisfactory understanding of the conceptions and ideas involved, or at least to understand and express more clearly what areas of disagreement still remain.

1.2 Conclusion

It is my purpose that through the lens of social feminism, pragmatism, cultural studies, and ordinary language analysis I will look into the conceptions of 'individual' and 'community' and the relationship between the two proposed by Confucius and Dewey. Hence, this study involves an examination of gender, race, and class issues, contexts of thoughts, and power issues in Confucius's and Dewey's theories. It is *not* my intent to question whether democracy brings positive influences to people's lives along with the development of human society, and to explore whether Confucius's doctrine is democratic, non-democratic, or anti-democratic. What I want to bring to the scholarly conversation is the

consideration of people themselves, such as ‘who constitutes the people?’ in Confucius’s ‘Grand Union’ and Dewey’s ‘democracy’ in and for a hope of human unity. Moreover, since what is problematic in the trend of globalization is the cry for democratization which is full of Euro-western assumptions, individualism, for instance, this study can be taken as “a way of bringing out and taking seriously the perspectives of previously marginalized groups in society” (Wright, 2001/02, p. 12). The voices from China need to be heard as part of ‘we’ who constitute the world village. In pursuit of peace and human development, both China and the U.S.A., I believe, should actively participate in building up a common framework of communication that is pluralistic and truly global.

Wittgenstein (1961) once said that the limits of our language are indeed the limits of our world. One episode I want to share here is my feeling in conducting this study. It will not give me a hard time to write a paper on Confucian theory, if I do it in Chinese, my mother language. But, when I write it in English, I find it is difficult for me to choose the most appropriate English translation to express Confucius’s theory and convey the world in Confucius’s mind. Sometimes, the same problem occurs when I try to accurately translate Dewey’s ideas into Chinese. It is hard to deny that language shapes our world and culture, or vice versa. And, in effect, as language per se, Chinese, particularly classical Chinese, and English signify different cultural distinctivenesses. Sometimes, when I read

some English version of the *Analects*, I can't help laughing, because what it conveys is just the literal meaning. And, sometimes it seems to me that the meaning is translated appropriately, but it still needs an explanation with long notes, otherwise, English speakers will not understand it.

Therefore, one of my aims in conducting this study is to achieve a fair read of both Confucius and Dewey as much as possible. I studied both classical Chinese and Chinese classical literature for almost four years when I was in college. This experience has created a firm foundation for me to understand and interpret Confucius's ideas written in classical Chinese. This valuable experience also allows me to make appropriate modifications if needed in the English version of Chinese classical literatures I refer to, such as the *Analects*, the *Great Learning*, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, and so on, which show a good record of Confucius's thoughts. On the other hand, reading Dewey from a Chinese perspective, I have a hard time finding the counterpart of some of Dewey's language in Chinese, particularly in classical Chinese. My interpretation of Dewey is also a considered one. Every small step of the progress I make in conducting this study consists of a pain, a struggle and an enjoyment.

Although with this awareness of the problem of language I am trying to convey a culturally understanding of Confucius's and Dewey's ideas, Wittgenstein's axiom always reminds me of the difficulties and criticisms I will

encounter in conducting this study. So, I am also prepared and open to any criticisms on my work. As a situated, limited and fallible knower, I understand that I cannot make this study flawless (Peirce, 1958; Thayer-Bacon, 2000).

In order to achieve my aim, I start in Chapter 2 with an introduction to give the audience a general picture of the ideal societies Confucius and Dewey seek in their work, as well as the social contexts where their ideals were cast, and how I see the connections between the two philosophers. An investigation of 'individualism' is included in this chapter in order to distinguish the Deweyan version of democracy from the liberal one that is currently dominant in the Euro-western world. Chapter 3 focuses on exploring the ideas of 'individual' and 'community' in Confucius's doctrine that have helped me develop the idea of Confucian collectivism. Dewey's thoughts on the conceptions of individual and community and the relationship between the two are scrutinized in Chapter 4. In the fifth chapter, I look into the commonness and differences in the ideal of 'human unity' both Confucius and Dewey aim to achieve. My criticisms of these two thinkers' theories and the educational implications of this study are also included to end the dissertation.

2.0 CONFUCIAN GRAND UNION AND DEWEYAN DEMOCRACY

2.1 Introduction

Confucius (0551-0479) and John Dewey (1859-1952) have an inseparable relationship because of their great contribution to philosophy and philosophy of education in their own countries and elsewhere.¹ Chinese people will not forget May 1, 1919, the date John Dewey arrived in China for his twenty-six month visit. His arrival coincided with the eruption of the New Culture Movement, which was initially anti-Confucian and a cry for new ideas.² Everywhere, Dewey was warmly received. In the eyes of the students, Dewey embodied the new thoughts, and represented a new hope for intellectual enlightenment and guidance. Quite interestingly, on one occasion, Cai, Yuanpei, chancellor of National Peking University, likened Dewey to Confucius given their common interest in education and societal ideal (Dewey, 1973; Han, 2003). This is the first acknowledgement of the commonality between the work of Confucius and Dewey in Chinese academia as well as the earliest connection between the two thinkers made by a modern

¹ Unless indicated otherwise, from now on, the term 'Confucian' in this dissertation only points to *Confucius* himself.

² In this movement, Confucius's doctrine, the pre-Qin (pronounced '*pre-ch'in*.' Qin dynasty, the unification of China 0221 under the First Emperor Qin Shi Huang, marked the beginning of imperial China dynasty.) Confucianism, and the Neo-Confucianism coming out in the Song Dynasty (960-1279) were inaccurately mixed up and covered by one phrase: 'Confucianism.' Hence, during the movement, Confucius was accused for his 'feudal and inhumane principle," and became the target of all the criticisms. His doctrine was completely discredited by the "new youths" who were eager for a cultural revolution and looked to the Euro-west, including Hu, Shi, Dewey's former students at Columbia University and professor at the National Peking University. For more details about the different branches of Confucianism and the criticisms of Confucius in the New Culture Movement, see Li (1988) and Fang (2004).

scholar. However, no other “mavericks” echoed and further developed Chancellor Cai’s point of view due to the pressure of the New Culture Movement. Today, some contemporary Confucian scholars have taken notice of the connection between Confucius’s doctrine and Dewey’s philosophy — I do not wish to claim that I am the only one.³ I do wish to locate my study within feminist, pragmatist and cultural studies scholarship and to focus on the conceptions of ‘individual’ and ‘community’ in these two thinkers’ societal ideals.

The ideal societies that Confucius and John Dewey propose can be concluded as Grand Union and democracy respectively. In their ideal societies, the issues of how individuals should be educated, what characterizes a fully realized human being and how people should live together are fully attended to, rather than how political systems should be constituted. In other words, both theories Confucius and Dewey work on are to guide people to live a fruitful life and resolve the problems aroused in their daily life. In this chapter, I would like to make a case that conversations between Confucius and Dewey are possible and valuable and, therefore, worth exploring.

I intend first to introduce the historical, intellectual, social and economic context that gives rise to Confucian thoughts. This includes the picture of pre-Confucian China and the time of Confucius’s life. The context is important

³ For other Confucian scholars’ work, see Hall and Ames (1999) and Tan (2003).

because, philosophically, I am aware that thought is highly contextual as well as subjective. "Context is incorporated in what is said and forms the arbiter of the value of every utterance. The same ideas and words apart from context would be the extravagancies of a madman" (Dewey, 1960, p. 92). Therefore, with "context" in mind, I may protect myself from falling into the trap of unlimited extension or universalism (Dewey, 1960). More importantly, a contextual understanding of the past ideas will equip me with critical consciousness in exploring the applicability of these two thinkers' theories in the contemporary world. As Dewey (1960) recommends,

Philosophy is criticism; criticism of the influential beliefs that underlie culture; a criticism which traces the beliefs to their generating conditions as far as may be ... Such an examination terminates, whether so intended or not, in a projection of them into a new perspective which leads to new surveys of possibilities (p. 107).

Following the background introduction, I shall provide a brief biography of Confucius, present his ideal of Grand Union, and then look at the implications of his ideal. Confucius's ideas on the conceptions of 'individual' and 'society'/'community' are to be fully addressed in Chapter 3.

The second purpose of this chapter is to present Dewey and his general theory of democracy, with an introduction of the historical, intellectual, social and economic context that gives rise to Dewey's thoughts. For the same reasons

considered before, this background includes the picture of pre-Deweyan U.S.A and the time of Dewey's life with an examination of the individualist culture that historically shaped the idea of U.S. democracy. After that, I will lay out Dewey's thoughts on democracy followed by an examination of the similarities and differences between Confucius and Dewey. In order to differentiate Deweyan democracy from the liberal one, Huntington's and Fukuyama's propositions will also be attended to.

2.2 Confucius and Grand Union

Confucius is a great philosopher, educator and politician in China's history, whose legacy continues to this day. "There are six million people in the world who describe themselves as 'Confucianists' while the Chinese belief system that Confucius helped preserve has 379 million followers in 91 countries" (Clements, 2004, xvii). This influential thinker's family name was Kong, his given name Qiu, or "Mound" for a little lump on the top of his head (Clements, 2004), and his courtesy name Zhongni ("Second Son").⁴ However, throughout Chinese history, he is referred to as either 'Kong Zi' or 'Kong Fu Zi' (Master Kong), known in the Euro-West under the Latinized name Confucius that was given by Jesuit missionaries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Creel, 1960). Derived

⁴ Courtesy name is also known as name of maturity, which is taken at the age of twenty. See Chapter 43 'The Meaning of The Ceremony of Capping' (Legge, 1967, vol. 2).

from the Latinized Confucius, Confucianism is also coined by Euro-westerners, while it is called the School of Literati (*rujia*) in Chinese tradition. Confucius did not establish Confucianism in his lifetime, but his disciples and successors from generation to generation developed his doctrines, and later these doctrines constituted by different interpretations of Confucius became the School of Literati or the Confucian School. Therefore, Confucius's thoughts are by no means identical with Confucianism, even though he is regarded as the "founder" of the school.⁵ Confucius considers himself a "transmitter" rather than an "innovator". He once says of himself that "Following the proper way, I do not forge new paths" (*Analects*, 7.1**).⁶ According to this autobiographical statement, it seems Confucius is only a classicist, by which I mean a scholar who only treasures cultural heritage from the past, rather than an innovative thinker. Is it what Confucius is? To find the answer for this question, we may need to dig further into the specific context, Confucius's life and his thoughts.

⁵ For more details about this, see Creel's work. Creel (1960) makes a strong argument of the difference between the ideas of Confucius and the later forms of Confucianism.

⁶ Unless indicate otherwise, all my English references to the *Analects*, *Mencius*, *The Doctrine of the Mean* and the *Great Learning* are taken from Legge (1966). The Chinese references to these four books are taken from Zhang (1990). My Modifications are indicated by asterisks. Any modified references to the *Analects* taken from Ames and Rosemont (1988) are indicated by double asterisks. As mentioned in the previous chapter, I hope the modifications will help convey the Confucian thoughts more clearly.

2.2.1 The Socio-historical Context⁷

Many archeologists and historians have reached the agreement that the basin of the Yellow River was the cradle of the Chinese culture, and that their ancestors were a nomadic people who, some five or six thousand years ago, migrated from the north-western part of Asia and finally settled in the northern-central part of what is now China. Then, the immediate history entered an age of mythology. Silence of history makes room for the legends of the cultural heroes who lived millennia ago. It is said that China was first ruled by the Three Divined Rulers, who were followed by the Five Sovereigns. To these mythical kings are attributed such beneficent inventions as the gift of fire, the building of houses, the invention of farming and the use of the compass, and, by the Yellow Emperor's wife, the invention of the silk culture. From the kings also came the discovery of medicine and the inventions of the calendar and Chinese script. Among the Five Sovereigns were the model rulers Yao and Shun. Then Yu, another great benefactor, is said to have founded the first dynasty, the Xia dynasty.

Yao and Shun were paradigms of virtue and regarded as the ideal rulers in Chinese tradition, who did not follow a hereditary system. They overcame all problems in their times mainly through the appointment of brilliant and capable

⁷ Unless indicated otherwise, my introductions of the Chinese historical context and Confucius's biography are indebted to the work by Clements (2004), Creel (1960), Li (2006), Michael (1986), Morton and Lewis (1980/2005), and Tu (1998). I understand that due to some uncertainties in the early Chinese history and different sources people refer to, some scholars may not agree with me on what I describe here. This is what I can find out that is in common according to the above sources I refer to, while I am open to any criticisms at this point.

ministers and, particularly, successors: Yao selecting Shun, and Shun selecting Yu. Shun used to be a farmer before he was recommended to Shun as the man best fitted to be his successor. Although Yu's father had worked for the government, he was executed by Shun due to his unsuccessfulness in regulating the floods and other crimes he had committed. Yu, recruited as a successor to his father, was admired for his contribution to flood control and irrigation as well as the close relations he maintained with his people. It is said that he worked for thirteen years before bringing the flood under control, and during this period of time, he passed by home three times but never took time to go in. In the *Analects*, Confucius refers to Yao, Shun, and Yu as models as humans and rulers, who are *responsible* and *selfless*, whose days were generally accepted as China's Golden Age (*Analects*, Book 8).

In addition to the sage-kings of legend, the scholarly tradition envisioned by Confucius also can be traced back to the Zhou Dynasty about a half century before Confucius was born. The Zhou Dynasty, which conquered the Shang ruled by the notorious wicked Zhòu Wang and took over their territory, marks the beginning of a new epoch in Chinese history.⁸ It was a time of fresh creativity and inventiveness in the realms of thought, technology, and social change as well as violence and intrigue. The Zhou Dynasty was to China what Greece was to

⁸ *Wang* means king and all the early rulers of China held this title. The name Zhòu Wang is a little confusing, but he was, of course, not of the new Zhou line.

Europe; for most of the customs, laws, and institutions which we see today have been handed down from this period. For my purpose here, this longest Chinese dynasty may be divided into three periods: the first, Western Zhou (011c-0771), embraced the rise of the dynasty and down to the removal of its capital to the east; the second, the age of Feudalism, or Spring and Autumn period (0722-0481); and the third, the age of the Seven States, or Warring States period (0475-0221). The last two are also known as Eastern Zhou Dynasty.

The fall of the Shang and the establishment of the Zhou Dynasty was more than a dynastic change; it was the end of an era. The age of magic, with its wild dances, animistic religion, divination, human sacrifices, and fertility rituals was over. The importance of the change from Shang to Zhou rule also consists in the interpretations put upon this event by the Zhou. The new ruling family incorporated *dé* (德), the idea of *virtue* with an emphasis on morality, into the belief in the Mandate of Heaven inherited from the Shang (*The Book of History* ·*Shaogao*, as quoted in Li, 1988, p. 11).⁹ They maintained that their authority was acquired through the Mandate of Heaven for their careful attention to virtue, while Heaven removed and made an end to the state's mandate if the king, such as Zhòu Wang, the last king of Shang, "did not reverently attend to his

⁹ The Mandate of Heaven, *tianming*, is equivalent of the will of Shangdi, the Lord-on-High. The term virtue in this project is not used only as moral excellence as we do in our ordinary language usage. In agreement with Aristotle (1925), I think virtue should be categorized as moral, intellectual, and, I will add, aesthetic.

virtue” (Li, 1988, p. 12). From this time on in Chinese history, all new dynasties unexceptionally adopted this theory of the Mandate of Heaven when to claim their legitimacy.

Among the early founders of Zhou power who have remained famous throughout Chinese history, the Duke of Zhou, younger brother of Wu Wang, is another hero Confucius worships, maybe the most.¹⁰ It was he who first clearly formulates the theory of the Mandate of Heaven by introducing the idea of virtue. The Duke of Zhou furnished the virtue of the ruler with a specific requirement, which was above all concern for the well-being of the people on which the authority and eventually the continuation of the dynastic rule depended. The fall of the Shang informed the outset Zhou rulers that the common aspiration of the people was more important than the Mandate of Heaven, “Where the popular will inclines does follow Heaven,” “Heaven sees from the people see and Heaven hears through the people hear” (“民之所欲，天必从之”，“天视自我民视，天听自我民听”，from the *Book of History · Taishi*, as quoted in Li, 1988, p. 12). Therefore, for the Duke, both Heaven and the people should be attended to by the kings of virtue, while the popular will, people’s happiness was more essential in order to serve Heaven and hence to maintain the mandate. It is undoubted that this theory is an expedient explanation of the Zhou’s conquest and a decent concept of

¹⁰ It was the Duke of Zhou who completed what had been left undone by Wu Wang, for the latter’s death left a boy of thirteen on the throne, and the responsibility of the government rested with the Duke who was the regent.

government; however, it also indicated the awakening of the awareness of the people as primary importance rather than the pure Heaven worship. The very recognition of the theory and the constant reference to it by all later dynasties has approved its worth throughout the lengthy Chinese imperial history. In addition, the Duke is also credited with refining the ritual system that enabled the Zhou Dynasty to retain a stable government surviving in relative peace and prosperity for several centuries (*Analects*, 3.14).¹¹

Confucius, about a half century later, shares the Duke of Zhou's theory on the triangular structure of Heaven, king and the people – where the three elements interacted and conditioned one another, while the virtues of the kings were taken as a focal consideration (Huang, 2002; *Analects*, 2.3). Inspired by the Duke, he also advocates the ritual system of Zhou Dynasty, which he believes is in light of as well as attending to the idea of virtue and hence fosters a harmonic and flourishing political and social order (*Analects*, 2.3, 3.14, 7. 5).

The new Zhou order has also been called a feudal system, which in actuality was a system of enfeoffment, where the Zhou kings invested the nobility, their relatives and a few allied leaders, with hereditary titles, territories and people, who were serfs of their respective lords, and under the lords' jurisdiction, while the

¹¹ The ritual system of Zhou Dynasty involves the ideas about every facet of life. It covers everything from how to run a government, regulate the army, and organize education in general to how we live our everyday life in particular. A book titled the *Rites of Zhou* is a later compilation about the Western Zhou's ritual system, which however is viewed as forgery and the authenticity of the content is under debate.

kings retained their own domain. This system already existed during the Xia and Shang Dynasties, but the Duke of Zhou perfected it by the introduction of the five orders of nobility, which were dukes, marquise, earls, viscounts, and barons. A duke or a marquis was entitled to rule over a territory 100 mile square; an earl, 70 mile square; and a viscount or baron, 50 mile square. These were classified as the first, second, and third class states respectively. States, whose area was less than 50 mile square, had no direct representation at the court of the emperor and were obliged to send their tribute through a neighboring first-class state. Peace was maintained in such a feudal order for almost three hundred years.¹²

The history of the early Zhou Dynasty reminds us that the patriarchal hereditary system was still strictly maintained by the kings of Zhou. In other words, the society was governed by men, whose rulership was based on inheritance not merit, while women's role was limited to the play in the private sphere.¹³ It is not true that the early Zhou period, namely the Western Zhou, was an almost ideal time of Chinese unity and equity as the people in the time of Confucius and later pictured. As to the fact of the early Zhou's relative prosperity and stability, according to the historians and archeologists, there are several reasons that may possibly help to understand the phenomenon. They include, first, its stress on the

¹² Tribute here means a payment in money or other valuables made by one ruler or state to another in acknowledgment of submission.

¹³ Based on the history texts I have read and the *Analects*, women seem never shown in the public sphere during the Western Zhou period. Wu Wang claimed that he had ten talented ministers, but among which his wife was only in charge of the internal/domestic affairs (*Analects*, 8. 20). Also see Pang (2005) for more details about the fact that women disappear from the public.

virtues of the kings/administrators as we have discussed earlier, second, a strong royal military force, next, the preservation of the kings' authority in adjudicating quarrels among the lords and the major vassal, last, the vitality of the "feudal" ritual system. In the Western Zhou period, writing was more prevalent and records were kept in much greater quantity. Many of the documents of the *Book of History* (*Shu Jing*/Shangshu) date from this period; some poems of the *Book of Poetry* (*Shi Jing*) deal with topics of this time, as does the *Book of Changes* (*Yi Jing*) that describes a method of divination to take the place of political oracles of the Shang. According to the *Analects*, these literatures are often referred to by Confucius in his teaching.

Eventually this period came to an end with You Wang's dissipation, which repeated the record of Shang's last king, Zhòu Wang. Like Zhòu Wang, You Wang was completely under the influence of a beautiful woman. By a well-planned stroke of policy, this woman had the queen degraded and the crown prince disinherited in favor of herself and her son. This was the infamous Bao Si, whose smile cost You Wang his crown and his life.

Tradition says that Bao Si was hard to please, and that You Wang tried every means in his power to make her smile, but without success. He at length thought of a scheme. He had all the beacons lighted, which, it must be remembered, was to be done only as a signal for the nobles to come to the defense of their overlord.

The loyal nobles responded promptly with what forces they were able to collect at short notice. To their dismay they discovered that no danger existed and that the whole thing was but a false cry of 'wolf.' You Wang was indeed successful, for he saw a smile on the face of Bao Si. The mistake he thus made, however, was a fatal one. Soon thereafter, in 771, the Western Zhou was invaded by a nomadic tribe, the Quanrong. As the country was by no means prepared for the attack, this emperor lighted the beacons again, but no one responded. The capital was sacked and You Wang was killed. In 770, the succeeding king, Ping Wang, was forced to move the capital eastward to present-day Luoyang, far away from the danger of the tribal people. The Western Zhou subperiod was over and the Eastern Zhou had begun. During the remainder of about five hundred years, the Zhou rulers existed in name but not in reality.

One more thing that I should draw our attention to is the situation of education in China before the time of Confucius. Neither historians nor archaeologists inform us about it. It is probable that all prospective rulers, and perhaps all sons of high nobles, had tutors. Creel (1960) gives us a brief description of pre-Confucian education, which also mirrors the political system in that age:

Young men in minor offices were trained by their official superiors. But this was not the same thing as the educational program of Confucius. This had been training by teachers who were in fact government officials, of men who were already in the

government or were destined by heredity to rule; it was designed to implement the conduct of government according to the existing pattern (p. 76, as originally written).

According to Creel, there was a great deal of study during the time but with private tutors and restricted to the privileged class.

By Confucius's time, the period is known as the Spring and Autumn (Chunqiu) period which is counted as the first section of Eastern Zhou period. It is called from the title of a historical work covering the years from 0722 to 0481, the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. The period witnessed not only frequent bloody wars for more territory between states and endless struggle for power within the state, but also unprecedented economic growth accompanying the use of iron for agricultural implements, development of handicraft industry, and commercialization, as well as the loosening of the kinship bonds of rigidly stratified society. The economic growth and the loosening of the kinship bonds brought relative freedom to the individual. As the feudal lords expanded their territories through warfare, the private fields were rapidly increasing. In order to recruit labor to work on these lands, a new class of peasants freed from serfdom now came into being. This group of people owned their land, paid taxes and performed corvée labor (unpaid labor in lieu of taxes) for the state. Only the prestige of the concept of the Mandate of Heaven enabled Eastern Zhou rulers to continue to perform the sacrifices to Heaven, exercise some nominal control and

reign from their shrinking central territory, under the protection of the hegemony alternately held by the more powerful feudal lords. The year, 0551, when Confucius was born, was a century before the golden age of Greece, five centuries before the Roman Empire, and a period when Europe, Africa, and the Americas were inhabited mostly by unlettered nomadic tribes. By that time China was already an ancient civilization, although it was bogged down in total disintegration, a turbulent situation.

After a changing series of alliances, intrigues, and open wars, there were thirteen major feudal states that paid symbolic homage to the Zhou rulers. Political crises precipitated a profound sense of moral decline. People were profit-making-driven without regard to any consideration of accepted moral standards. As stated in the *Analects*, "The kingdom has long been without the principles of truth and right" (*Analects*, 3.24). Between the states there were intrigues of all kinds. Polygamy among the nobles gave rise to endless trouble. Monarchs often lost their lives at the hands of their own children, and murder was frequently resorted to by an ambitious prince to put his brothers or half-brothers out of the way. A famous cook, in order to obtain favor with his sovereign, killed his own son and prepared his flesh as food. It was not uncommon for the ruler of a stronger state to wage war against a weaker one for the purpose of capturing a

beautiful queen. In a word, relations between states were characterized by as great a lack of ethics as those between individuals.

The change of the society during the Spring and Autumn period called for a philosophical foundation for the new social, political, and economic order not only for political decision making, but also for sustaining a viable system of beliefs and values, a system or a common code of ethics that would be accepted by the new rulers as well as by society as a whole. This need incubated an age of intellectual ferment and widespread questioning of traditional standards and the problematic reality, providing a great wealth of new concepts, an age that coincided with other global intellectual rousings: the birth of Buddhism in India and the foundation of Greek philosophy in the Euro-west. This was the time of The Hundred Schools of Thought, which reached its height of splendor in the Warring States Period (the second section of Eastern Zhou period). Emerging in the late Spring and Autumn period, Confucius's doctrine represented one of many contending philosophical schools. The school of Confucius, although its later development to some extent was divergent from Confucius's original thoughts, eventually became the accepted standard of morality for the social and political order of the Chinese empire down to the twentieth century.

2.2.2 The Life of Confucius and His Grand Union

Confucius was born in the state of Lu which was once the fief assigned to the Duke of Zhou, in a town located near the modern city of Qufu in southwestern Shandong Province, which was renowned for its preservation of the traditions of ritual and music of the Zhou civilization. Confucius was the youngest child of the eleven children of his father, Shuliang. This man married the first wife who had given him nine daughters and a son, but the son was disabled. Confucius's mother, Zhengzai, was the second woman Shuliang married, who was expected to provide her husband with a male heir when this man had realized that his first wife was not able to supply another one (Clements, p. 8). Confucius himself had a son, who died when Confucius was still living, and a daughter. No mention whatever is made of his wife (Morton and Lewis, 1980/2005).

Sources differ on how far the ancestry of Confucius can be traced into the past. He believed that he was a distant descendant of Shang royalty (Clements, 2004). By the 6th century, the Kong family had a long reputation for scholarly researches, loyalty, modesty and a refusal to involve themselves in violence, except one member of the family. That person was Confucius's father, who had a long military career studded with honors and dispatches for his strength and bravery. However, when Confucius was born, the power and the economic situation of the family was on the decline. His father died when Confucius was

three years old, but neither Confucius's mother nor the infant Confucius were invited to the funeral, possibly due to the status of this poor woman as second wife.

By all accounts, Confucius grew up in genteel poverty — a declining aristocracy, largely ostracized by his father's first wife and family (Clements, 2004). However, Confucius did not lack for an education, and was acquainted with the local aristocracy, if not regarded as a member. Confucius himself said that when he was young, his condition "was low," and therefore he acquired his ability in many things, "but they were mean skills" (*Analects*, 9.6*). This autobiographical statement is not altogether accurate — Confucius was a capable scholar with the mastery of the six arts: ritual, musicianship, archery, chariot-driving, calligraphy, and arithmetic — but the statement captures a basic characteristic of what came to be called Confucianism: being humble of a deep self-reflection, what in the *Analects* is called "learning without satiety" (7.2). By chance or by his mother's design, Confucius grew up preoccupied with his reason for entering the world — performing the necessary rituals to revere his father and forebears. Despite the enmity of his relatives, the young Confucius made worship and ritual fundamental parts of his daily routine. His mother also ensured he learned the songs and poems of the day, which served as an education of sorts, and possibly the only form of entertainment available during Confucius's indigent

childhood (Clements, 2004). In his later teaching, he was heard saying to children:

Little ones, why do you not study the *Book of Poetry*? The songs/poems will give power to your imagination, strengthen your self-contemplation, teach you the art of sociability, and show you how to regulate feelings of resentment. From them you learn the more immediate duty of serving your father, and the remoter one of serving your prince. It helps you be largely acquainted with the names of birds, beasts, and plants (*Analects*, 17.9*).

Encouraged first by his mother, Confucius then distinguished himself as a determined learner in his teens (*Analects*, 2.4).

In addition to self-teaching, it is also possible that Confucius acquired the rudiments of his education by doing clerical work as he served in minor government posts in his early twenties, keeping records for granaries and managing stables and pastures (*Mencius*, 5(2) 5.4). In an age with pitifully little literature and very few people who could read, it turns out that for his expertise on the six arts, poetry, history and religious ceremonious and rituals, Confucius may have already acquired a high reputation as a polymath — a person of great learning in several fields of study — at an early age. Later on, this most accomplished scholar of his day established the first private school in China's

historical records starting his long teaching career in his thirties (Tu, 1998). This school is grounded upon an optimistic view of human nature as Confucius phrases, “Human beings are nearly alike in their natural qualities, but vary greatly by virtue of their habits” (*Analects*, 17.2**). Apparently, Confucius cares more for how people deal with real life rather than involving himself in the hopeless debate on innate needs or constituents of individuals. The phrase discloses Confucius’s belief that human beings are equal by nature and also of shapeable character if proper intervention, education, for instance, is introduced. Therefore, this school of Confucian hope intends to provide equal schooling opportunities to everybody, no matter from a wealthy family or humble social status (*Analects*, 15. 39). However, women are not included in this ideal. There is a tradition that Confucius has about three thousand disciples, among which he is highly credited with seventy-two worthies (*xiánrén*, 贤人), while no female students are found. I will take up this gender issue later in Chapter 5.

As a philosopher as well as an educator, Confucius devotes his whole life to train individuals to become a man of *rén* (仁) in the virtues proper to transforming and improving society (I will have a discussion on the idea of *rén* (仁) in depth in Chapter 3). Confucius takes learning from both books and practice not only as the acquisition of knowledge, but also as a process of the cultivation of a fully realized, admirable human being and continuous social interactions. As a reformer,

Confucius adopts the idea proposed by the founding rulers of Western Zhou Dynasty: governing with *dé* (德), which he develops from “virtues” to “excellence” in reference to his idea of *rén* (仁) (Ames & Rosemont, 1998, p. 57). He strives for a bloodless revolution to recover a government that is aimed to promote the welfare and happiness of the people (Creel, 1960). He holds a belief, “He who exercises government by means of *dé* (德) may be compared to the north polar star, which keeps its place and all the stars turn toward it” (*Analects*, 2.1).

Confucius has a conversation with his disciples on aspirations in reply to Zilu’s request. He shares with us his thoughts thus, “In regard to the aged, to bring them peace and happiness; in regard to friends, to enjoy the trust of them; in regard to the young, to show them solicitude” (*Analects*, 5.25*). This is what Confucius aims to achieve. In his dream world, people are interrelated and concerned with the pains and pleasures of others. To have a more concrete idea of Confucius’s blueprint of society, I want to present a picture below, namely Grand Union (*Dàtóng*, 大同) (Legge, 1967, vol. 1):

When the perfect order called the Grand Way (*dào*¹⁴) prevails, a public and common spirit rules throughout the world; virtuous and capable people are elected to public office;¹⁵ the truism of living is to believe in peace and harmony, sincerity and trust among all people. Thus everyone loves and respects his or her own parents and children, as well as the parents and children of others. There are caring, provision, and protection for the aged until their last days; there is appropriate employment for the able-bodied; and there are nourishment and education for the children and youth. There is kindness and compassion for the widowers and widows, for the orphans, for the childless and for the disabled and sick; these people are all sufficiently maintained. Men and women have an appropriate role to play in the family and society. (People live a life of plenty.) Although nobody likes to see natural resources and wealth wasted on the land, no one keeps it for oneself. Nobody likes wealth which is not the creation of one's own labor, mental and manual. Moreover, nobody

¹⁴ About 'way' (*dào*), there are many interpretations people can refer to. Bruce (1923) defines *dào* as the moral principle from which proceeded the common virtues of daily life (p. 161). Creel (1960) translates it as the Way. He uses Lorraine Creel's analysis to understand the idea of *dào* from the sociological perspective, "Tao (English sound of *dào*).... is what Confucius considered to be the ideal way of life for the individual and the state. It is a way of life which includes all the virtues, sincerity, respectfulness, justice, kindness, and the like ... tao provides a standard of action and more constant and enduring than law" (pp. 123-24). For my purpose here, I adopt the interpretation of 'way' from Mencius. As Confucius's great successor, Mencius was born about 100 years after Confucius's death. He says, "*Rén* (仁) is a human being (人). When the two are incorporated into one, the way ensues" (*Mencius*, 7Pll. 16*). According to Mencius, 'way' consists in the process of taking actions toward '*rén*.' I will take up the concept of *rén* more fully in Chapter 3.

¹⁵ Legge (1967) translates "选贤与能" as "they chose men of talents, virtue, and ability" and indicates in the footnote, "perhaps it would be well to translate passively, — 'Men of virtue and ability were chosen (to govern).' Given the prerequisite, "a public and common spirit rules throughout the world," in the text, I decide to interpret this phrase as "virtuous and capable people are elected to public office."

does things just to benefit oneself. In this way, a devotion to public service leaves no room for idleness, while schemes and intrigues are repressed and found no development. Robbers, filchers, and rebellious traitors no more exist. The door of every house needs not to be locked, and can remain open during day and night. The above-mentioned is what we call *Dàtóng* (*Li Chi*, pp. 365-66).¹⁶

This Confucian ideal emerges as the times require. To have a deep understanding of Confucian ideal — *Dàtóng*, I start from the word of *tóng*. Etymologically, the Chinese character for *tóng*, 同, is actually known as “𠂔” in classical Chinese, which is created by way of associative compounds (one of the six principles of character formation) that are formed by combining two or more elements, each with a meaning of its own, to create a new meaning. This graph of *tóng* is made up of three elements: 宀, — and 口. According to Xu (1981), “宀” means “to cover” which we may understand as ‘tent,’ “𠂔” means something repeated at some place, and “口” means “to drink, eat and talk.” Accordingly, Xu explains “同” as “meeting together, be gathering.” Inferentially, the further interpretation of the whole character could be “in a shared tent, everybody has a say, and is willing to communicate with one another to achieve common understanding, people living together in plenty, happiness and harmony.” Situated

¹⁶ *Li Chi* (*Li Ji*, also known as the *Book of Rites*) is a compilation usually dated from middle Zhou down to the first part of the Han Dynasty (Morton and Lewis, 1980/2005, p. 33). I have made some emendations to this translation.

in a world where the maxim of living was to believe in absolute selfishness, people cheating and fighting each other for more territory and property, well-read Confucius started to recall a peaceful past recorded in the literatures. Based on this past, Confucius portrays his ideal world of common good, namely Grand Union, an age of ‘*tóng*’ (同), where human society, the whole world, is taken as an extended family.

This ideal apparently reflects a peace in the Golden Age of the sage-kings of legend, such as Yao, Shun and Yu, and in the time of the Duke of Zhou. But, it is definitely not a copy of the past, which only serves as a motivation for Confucius. This outstanding thinker actually develops his own thoughts in this hundred-word statement. It is inclusive of the important values the Chinese hold; it articulates an ideal outlook on a socio-political system and attitude on life the Chinese nation embraces; moreover, it expresses an ideal character the Chinese are devoted to cultivating. Let's take an in-depth look of the Grand Union, which will bring us to the heart of Confucius's ideal.

First, it carries forward the idea of the people as primary importance from Yao, Shun, Yu and the Duke of Zhou, while it initiatively takes the world as an *extended family*, which is equally shared by everyone and makes everyone related to one another. Second, it makes public ownership institutionalized through the idea of shared power by all. Confucius *innovatively* suggests that the masses elect “the

virtuous and capable” to public office, and in his world, there are no kings and life long positions of public office, which the sage-kings of legend and the Duke of Zhou still hold to. Third, on the premise of public ownership of property and wealth, all the people as a member of the social-family have to do their best to make contributions to the society in order to maintain common good and social equity. Consequently, every individual’s unique value of existence is affirmed by the society.

Next, “Nobody likes wealth which is not the creation of one's own labor, mental and manual. Moreover, nobody does things just to benefit oneself.” This statement conveys two inferential viewpoints. First, as long as you create wealth on your own labor through legitimate ways, you deserve a prosperous life. Obviously, the pursuit of individual interest, profit making, is not denied in Confucian ideal. Second, in a society like Grand Union, people despise making profit by other people’s toil , or any selfish motives; in this regard, everyone takes labor as a pleasure as well as a responsibility and moreover a way to maintain dignity instead of a load or a means to make a living. This has also become a moral principle people follow and is necessary to achieve a fully realized human being in Chinese culture. Therefore, in Confucian ideal, everybody is dedicated to public service and commitment, and in turn everybody receives caring and protection from others, the public.

Finally, on the assumption of public commitment and shared ownership Confucian Grand Union advocates equal and harmonious interpersonal relations where sincerity, selflessness, a sense of responsibility and peace are taken as core values. Nobody is excluded and everybody's talents as well as welfare are attended to. "Men and women have an appropriate role to play in the family and society." Based on the patriarchal clan system to which the Golden Age belongs and the developing level of the mode and tool of production of Confucius's time, this expression can be interpreted as that men play a role in the public sphere or where heavy physical strength is needed, such as tilling, hunting, or dealing with business to make a living, while women are in charge of the domestic affairs, delivering and raising children, cooking, knitting, quilting, and rearing poultry, for instance. This division of societal roles is gender-directed to have both women and men fulfill their potentials in proportion with their physiological conditions. In addition, in this harmonious world, individuals are caring and interpersonal social beings, who treat each other with love as family member.

Generally speaking, the essence of Confucius's ideal lies in the idea of public ownership of power as well as property and public commitment of the entire people, grounding upon which every individual is equally valued in the society, and hence the achievement of both the common good and individual development can be accomplished. Consequently, the moral principle of 'All for one, one for all'

(我为人人 , 人人为我) must be adopted by everyone, while any selfish motives need to be cast away. With this ideal in mind and his optimistic belief in human nature, Confucius unprecedentedly opens the doors of education to all, which he is convinced is not merely a way leading to a virtuous and highly self-disciplined character, but also prepares competent individuals for public office. What Confucius engages is a philosophy aimed to resolve human problems in living a communal life and to help individuals achieve a fully realized, admirable human being in associated living. The Grand Union, *Dàtóng* (大同), well reflects Confucius's philosophical and social ideal, but the term *tóng* (同) simultaneously incurs various criticisms of Confucius's doctrine. To have a comprehensive understanding of Confucius's ideal, the term *tóng* (同) will be fully attended to in Chapter 3.

In view of the preceding discussion, in response to the question proposed at the beginning, I would like to regard Confucius as a creative thinker and innovative reformer, although he plays a role of transmitter in terms of critically handing down ancient culture and values to the times he lives. Confucius does have a love of antiquity, a ritual system that belongs to the Zhou Dynasty, while he is the first thinker in China's history that makes education approachable to common people, changing the situation of education run by government and owned by the privileged. He shows faith in human capacity as well as human

nature and innovatively proposes that the virtuous and capable should be elected to public office, breaking the tradition of inheritance. Confucius dedicates his entire life to his social and educational ideal and never gives it up even though his ideas are not appreciated in his own day. It is unexpected that when Confucius died, he was considered a failure in that none of his chief ambitions were accomplished.

2.3 Dewey and Democracy

Many believe that Dewey was the most significant American thinker of the first half of the twentieth century. He also built an inseparable relationship to Confucius as well as China in the early twentieth century.

On May 1, 1919, Dewey (1973) and his wife, Alice Chipman Dewey, arrived in Shanghai, China, where they spent two years, two months, and ten days. After visiting Hangzhou and Nanjing, Dewey settled in Beijing, devoting most of his first year to several series of public lectures delivered in Beijing and other cities. During his second year Dewey taught regular courses at National Peking University, National Peking Teachers College, and National Nanking Teachers College. He also lectured in most of the coastal cities, and visited at least eleven different provinces. It is known, "All who met him were impressed by his personality, his intellectual honesty, his enthusiasm, his simplicity of nature, his

friendliness, and his sympathetic understanding of the Chinese people and their problems” (p. 11). In 1959, in a public lecture delivered at the Third East-West Philosophers’ Conference at the University of Hawaii, Dr. Shi Hu (1962), Dewey’s former student at Columbia as well as a distinguished Chinese philosopher, spoke of the thirty-year lasting influence of the pragmatic philosophy and method of Dewey on Chinese education when he looked back on that history. U.S. scholar Berry (1973) also believes that China is the one foreign country on which Dewey leaves his greatest impact, particularly, in the field of Education. It is not my purpose here to explore Dewey’s original and decisive influence in China. However, I do believe Dewey’s popularity both among the intellectual and among the common people was due to the sincerity the Chinese hold to their friends and the value of conversation and social interaction they embrace in searching for solutions to social crisis. These elements are intimately related with the well received Confucius’s philosophy, which originated twenty-five hundred years’ ago and holds a resonance with the pragmatic spirit. As for Dewey, the two-year-two-month-and-ten-day sojourn in China likewise had a deep and enduring influence upon him. Jane Dewey (1939/1989) describes this influence thus, “He [Dewey] left feeling affection and admiration not only for the scholars with whom he had been intimately associated but for the Chinese people as a whole. China remains the country nearest his heart after his own” (p. 43).

I now intend to take note of the historical and intellectual context where Dewey's theory comes from with an emphasis on the development of individualism that grounds the idea of liberal democracy. An introduction of the life of Dewey is also attended to followed by a presentation of Deweyan democracy.

2.3.1 The Historical and Intellectual Context¹⁷

To understand the classic idea of democracy, namely liberal democracy, which takes roots in the Euro-western world, as well as Deweyan democracy that is inspired by his experimentalism, some background knowledge both on the Dewey's time and the formation of the United States is good to have.

Although the former Asians, the population of what we now call Native American, were possibly the first settlers on the continent, Europeans eventually made America and shaped the history of the United States. Except for a brief visit from Vikings about thirty hundred years ago, the New World and the Old remained unknown to one another until October 12, 1492, when Columbus (1451-1507) claimed a Caribbean island for Spain. Other European voyages followed in the footsteps of Columbus; like Spain, they were undertaken not for the sake of exploration, but for the purpose of conquest and colonization. On May 23, 1607, after exploring the Atlantic coast at various points and making their first settlement

¹⁷ Unless indicated otherwise, my introduction to the U.S. historical and intellectual context is indebted to the work by Axelrod (1996), Barnes & Co. (2006), Billington (1963/1974) and Handlin (1968).

at Jamestown, the British claimed this vast territory, which they termed Virginia. Among the British settlers, there were Puritans, who sought a more complete purification from the Church of England viewing the New World as havens for *freedom* of worship, and the populations motivated by a hunger for wealth and power, who believed the new territory was full of chance and opportunity. Since 1660, Britain embarked upon a long series of wars carving up the land of the Indians and fighting other Euro-Americans, such as the Dutch and the French. In America, this struggle consolidated the British grasp on the whole coast line between Maine and Georgia, but in the process, Britain started losing its North American colonies, which “traditionally competitive with one another, emerged from the crucible of war feeling stronger bonds among themselves than with an aloof and unfeeling government across the sea” (Axelrod, 1996, p. 73). The British settlers directly influenced the history of the colonies in North America, and the thirteen colonies finally declared their independencies from the British Empire as the United States of America with a new political system in 1776.

It is undoubted that the roots of the American War of Independence were tangled up in money, but they grew into a great tree of freedom and individualism that the entire world has gazed on. It is known Britain treated the settlers as an inferior class of people. The laws were framed to favor English manufacturers and merchants at the expense of colonists. When the British government attempted to

tax the colonies in order to raise money to defray the expenses of the French and Indian War, the colonists, not represented in Parliament, resisted the measure, proclaiming that taxation without representations is tyranny. As the Puritans who came to the New World seeking the *freedom* of worship, the Founding Fathers of the United States fought back the odious British laws which were denounced as completely against *freedom and equality*, and they claimed the rights of citizens through the *Declaration of Independence*. Thomas Jefferson is the composer of this well-known proclamation.

As a distinguished statesman and the third president of the United States, Jefferson's (1743-1826) contributions in creating the United States as an independent nation, in general, can be best assessed within the larger European intellectual movement of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, when human reason and scientific method took priority over divine revelation as the key to knowledge. In particular, Jefferson's republican political principles were influenced by the liberalism of John Locke (1632-1704), the English political philosopher, and historians find few traces of any influence by his French contemporary, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778) (Pocock, 1975, p. 533; Matthews, 1986, p. 17). If we take a look at the *Declaration of Independence*, we will discover the spirit of Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* reflected from Jefferson's thoughts. Challenging hereditary monarchs' political supremacy,

Locke (1823/1960) contended that government arises from the consent of the governed, who, to protect their natural rights of life, liberty, and property, unite in mutual association and elect a government of their representatives. Like Locke, Jefferson (2003) proposed a representative government based on the principle of election by citizens and service by the elected official; his statement of certain *inalienable rights* such as “*Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness*” conspicuously paralleled Locke’s identification of human rights, the individual’s naturally ordained sovereignty; they both agreed that the people had the right to rise and overthrow a repressive government (p. 37). Living in a time when absolute monarchies, established churches, and hereditary aristocracies reigned supreme, Locke and Jefferson, along with other Enlightenment thinkers like Rousseau, took government and religious institutions as the most possible violation of human rights.

Following the lead of Locke’s liberalism, or “classical liberalism” as we refer to these ideas today, Jefferson planted an individualistic culture in a new country. By natural rights, Locke (1823/1960) actually meant that we were born as individuals, autonomous and free, and we decided whether to team up with others or not to make associations. This claim starts from a position of individualism, where people possess rights as *individuals apart from society*, which has an obligation to protect them, while individual interests are apt to take precedence over the

community needs. Jefferson's *Declaration of Independence* well mirrors Lockean hope to establish certain inalienable rights for all individuals that no social institution has the right to infringe upon, and fully affirms the power of individuals. After taking a nine-month trip to the US to see what a great republic was like in 1830, a French liberal de Tocqueville (2000), who did not align himself with the formal liberalism of John Locke, said "what struck him most was its equality of conditions, its *democracy*" (xviii). For de Tocqueville, the foundation of American democracy is the principle of the sovereignty of the people, for which individualism is another name (liii).

de Tocqueville (2000) wrote down the following words in his travel logs:

[I]n centuries of equality, each man seeks his beliefs in himself ... *Individualism* is a recent expression arising from a new idea ... Selfishness is a passionate and exaggerated love of self that brings man to relate everything to himself alone and to prefer himself to everything....Individualism is a reflective and peaceable sentiment that disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of those like him and to withdraw to one side with his family and his friends, so that after having thus created a little society for his own use, he willingly abandons society at large to itself (p. 482).

Equality is a presupposition of individualism, because everyone, regardless of social status or group identity, is held to reason well enough about his own affairs.

However, it is in the soil of individualism that the virus of selfishness is bred, and the atomistic grows as de Tocqueville finds out, for in most of the operation of mind, each American calls only on the individual effort of his/her reason.

Therefore, the nascent United States reflected a radical break from the normative governmental structures of the time, favoring representative, elective government over monarchies. The system borrowed heavily from enlightenment age ideas, particularly Locke's liberalism, in that a primacy was placed upon, equality, *individualism* and constraining the power of government.

In the following ages after the Jeffersonian era, this new country experienced constant wars to consolidate and expand its land expanse, while the Indigenous population was largely displaced by the white settlers. In the three decades after 1820, due to a flood of newcomers who spread over the load of the settled East, numerous men and women pushed westward to the Mississippi and beyond for a hope of economic betterment. Technology played a key role in westward expansion. The McCormick reaper and Deere plow made farming the plains practical, while Morse's telegraph made the vastness of the West less daunting.

This period is taken as important by historians because it witnessed the pioneering experience that helped to shape a distinctive American character. On the one hand, facing a tough and unpredictable natural environment, frontierspeople had to choose cooperativeness of some degree in order to

survive.¹⁸ On the other hand, living in a land of plenty, where superabundant opportunity allowed each to rise or fall to his/her proper level as long as governments did not meddle, frontierspeople were more inclined to be individualists in the *pursuit of profit making* based on the belief that all men were equal (excluding women, African-Americans, Native-Americans, Asians, and other minority groups), and that all should have a chance to prove their personal capabilities without restraint from society. During the course of moving westward, frontierspeople came to form a style of frontier individualism, of which the uniqueness, as Billington (1974) observes, consisted in the faith that all men (again, excluding women, African-Americans, Native-Americans, Asians, and other minority groups) would *achieve affluence* regardless of their *family background* if given the equal opportunity and no government interference with their freedom as they followed *the road to riches*, namely free competition.

Vestiges of this frontier individualism remain to distinguish the social attitudes of modern America from those of modern Europe. As Billington (1974) points out, the distinctive American individualism lies in “its continued insistence on a degree of economic freedom that has long since vanished in those countries [France and England, for instance], and in a glorification of the individual's ability to care for himself despite daily proof that joint effort alone will succeed in a society

¹⁸ I changed the version of “frontiersmen” used in the history books to the gender neutral “frontierspeople.”

increasingly enmeshed,” while its relative lack of class awareness also singles U.S. democracy out from that of the older European countries (p. 157).

In 1859, the year of Dewey’s birth, the great British naturalist Charles Darwin (1809 - 1882) published *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selections*. The book set forth the theory of evolution, or called Darwinism, arguing that in nature, only the fittest — the strongest, the most cunning, the ablest — creatures ultimately survive to reproduce their kind. In the following years, Darwinism was translated from nature into human society along with the emergence of social science. In a study of U. S. ethnic diversity of population, an anthropologist proposed the idea that human beings are divided into separate and unmixable races and could have evolved as biologically distinct species (Handlin, 1968, p. 601). Sociologist William G. Sumner (1840-1910) also argued that the state should not interfere in economic life, “whether by the tariff or rate regulation or misguided acts of sympathy toward the unfortunate,” because people who at the top of the socioeconomic heap were the fittest, having survived the demanded battles of the marketplace (p. 602). Sumner’s concept was the well-known Social Darwinism, which supplied an intellectual framework for the idea of *laissez faire* economics, a synonym for strict free market economics. Social Darwinism, by all means, reinforced the faith in individualism, free competition and a government only in name, inherited from the westward movement. Even though its original

emphasis was on the economy, Social Darwinism has grounded the ideas of racism, classism, and sexism, consolidating autonomy and a tendency for human beings to look to their own interests rather than to those of others.

By the time of the prevalence of Social Darwinism, the U.S. individualism with an emphasis on equality, absolute freedom, individual interests, and profit making reinforced as well as excused selfishness and discrimination in society. On the other hand, the consideration of the marginalized and the public was missing in the development of U.S. culture.

The years that follow along with Dewey's long life saw the Civil War, the full-settlement of American West, the Great Depression, the New Deal, and two World Wars. The United States was rapidly transformed by science and technology from a predominantly rural and agricultural economy and society to an industrial, technological and commercial one and became a dominant global influence in economic, political, military, cultural and technological affairs. Dewey (1930) thus described the ages he lived in:

We live as if economic forces determined the growth and decay of institutions and settled the fate of individuals ... [T]he actual system would seem to imply a pretty definitely materialistic scheme of value. Worth is measure by ability to hold one's own or to get ahead in a competitive pecuniary race (p. 12).

No wonder, during the early twentieth century, the most successful men were defined by their “ruthless and self-centered energy in getting ahead” (p. 13). The idea of individualism was further facilitated by “a pecuniary culture” — an age practiced with “economic determinism,” where Dewey found a self of selfishness and single “business mind,” in which individuals lost their “individuality” (p. 57).

2.3.2 *The Life of Dewey and His Democracy*¹⁹

Burlington, Vermont, is a New England town, where settlement did not begin until the 1770s. In this town John Dewey was born on October 20, 1859, the third son of a middle class couple. Dewey’s father, Archibald Dewey, was from a farmer’s family but moved to Burlington and engaged in the grocery business, except during the years of the Civil War when he served as quartermaster of a Vermont cavalry regiment. As a businessman, Archibald Dewey’s energy was seldom directed toward moving himself ahead financially. This man had a gift for composing advertisements with a sense of humor to attract customers. The advertisements which obtained local fame at a time when writing copy was not recognized as an art; however, he was said to sell more goods and make less profit than any other merchant in town. Lucina Artemesia Rich, Dewey’s mother,

¹⁹ Unless indicated otherwise, the introduction of the life of Dewey is indebted to the work by Martin (2002) and Jane Dewey (1989), one of Dewey’s daughters, who edits “Biography of John Dewey” collected in *The Philosophy of John Dewey*. Schilpp, P. A., the editor of *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, mentions in the preface that this biography is “written by Professor Dewey’s three daughters on the basis of facts directly available to them and, indeed, with some help from Dr. Dewey himself.”

came from a more prosperous family. Lucina's grandfather was a congressman in Washington and her brothers graduated from college. She was a member of the Congregational Church and had more missionary passion than her easy-going husband, so that she equipped the boys with moral purpose and committed them to the pursuit of responsibility. "It was largely due to her influence that the boys broke with family tradition and obtained a college education" (Jane Dewey, 1939/1989).

However Dewey left Burlington for his graduate studies at Johns Hopkins University and then spent most of his life in Ann Arbor, Chicago and New York City where he started his professorship and scored great successes in his career. According to his daughters, Dewey's early life in Burlington played a large part in shaping his ideal of democracy and philosophy of education. "His boyhood surroundings, although not marked by genuine industrial and financial democracy, created in him an unconscious but vital faith in democracy which ... form the foundation of much of his philosophical writing" (Jane Dewey, 1939/1989, pp. 19 - 20). When Dewey grew up, Burlington was a small town where life was quite democratic marked by equality and few privileges or class distinctions. Dewey went to a nearby public school with his two brothers, where almost all the boys and girls of the town went, from different kinds of families, well-to-do and poor. "As a boy and young man he saw almost all his associates assuming a share in

household activities and responsibilities” (p. 9). While the prescribed school curriculum was tiresome and Dewey and his brother were interested in reading almost anything except their school books, summer vacations spent on his grandfather Rich’s farm were the happiest time of his boyhood. Jane Dewey (1939/1989) describes his father’s pre-collegiate education as,

The realization that the most important parts of his own education until he entered college were obtained outside the school-room played a large rôle in his educational work, in which such importance is attached, both in theory and in practice, to occupational activities as the most effective approaches to genuine learning and to personal intellectual discipline (p. 9).

Years later, when explaining to Joseph Ratner, a Columbia pragmatist, why he stressed the skills to produce something in the world in his writings on educational theory and practice, Dewey (Martin, 2002) admitted that he had been influenced by the Vermont environment, especially of his maternal grandfather’s farm (p. 14). The childhood surroundings and experiences is like a poetic painting in a late essay by Dewey,

There in the village was the old-fashioned sawmill, the old-fashioned gristmill, the old-fashioned tannery; and in my grandfather’s house there were still the candles and

the soap which had been made in the home itself. At certain times the cobbler would come around to spend a few days in the neighborhood, making and repairing the shoes of the people. Through the very conditions of living, everybody had a pretty direct contact with nature and with the simpler forms of industry. As there were no great accumulations of wealth, the great majority of young people got a very genuine education ... through real contact with actual materials and important social occupations (as quoted from Martin, 2005, p. 14).

This picture shows that a life of few differences of wealth, active occupational responsibilities, and intimate personal contacts with people in all walks of life as well as nature was treasured in Dewey's memory after he left Burlington, Vermont for his professional pursuits. This farming family model represents a harmonious community in which all members take part through an indispensable role they play and the unique contribution they make to maintain everyday life and the associated living. It is Dewey's truism that engaging in a productive and interrelational life is a pragmatic way to learn and to live. To some extent, this treasured memory in Dewey's mind helps explain why "experience" and "a community of human interaction" are taken as central foci in Dewey's theory.

After Dewey entered college, he was exposed to the natural sciences and the theory of evolution in the junior year. Actually, young Dewey's love of philosophic study did not result from his interest in speculation or religious purpose, but the

“intellectual curiosity for a *wide* look on things” motivated in him by a course in physiology, from which Dewey obtained “an impressive picture of the *unity* of the living creature” (Jane Dewey, p. 10, emphasis added). In addition to the influence of natural science, in Dewey’s life-long pursuit of philosophic study, he met quite a few brilliant and innovative scholars, such as his revered teacher, Professor George S. Morris, colleagues G. Stantley Hall, William James, and George H. Mead who inspired, encouraged, and supported him to develop his instrumental or experimental pragmatism with an emphasis on the scientific method. In connecting pragmatism to democracy, Dewey was greatly indebted to James B. Angell’s impressive leadership as well as his boyhood surroundings I have taken note of earlier. Angell was the president of Michigan University where Dewey was offered an instructorship in philosophy in September, 1884 (Dykhuizen, 1973). At that time Angell was piloting this great state university to achieve leadership and creative scholarship. “To all who taught under him,” wrote Jane Dewey (1939/1989), “Angell remains the ideal college president, one who increased the stature of his institution by fostering a truly democratic atmosphere for students and faculty and encouraging the *freedom* and *individual responsibility* that are necessary for creative education” (p. 19, emphasis added). The weekly faculty meeting gave young instructors as well as professors a sense of ownership in the education system, and was also regarded as a highly educative process for them.

This experience triggered Dewey (1903, 1916/1997) to associate the idea of democracy grounded upon the assumption of public ownership with freed capacity of thought and intellectual responsibility.

Another profound influence in Dewey's life that deserves our heed derives from his interest in Hull House when he dwelt in Chicago, 1894 -1904. Hull House was a social settlement where people of different beliefs and socio-economic statuses met on a common basis, and especially where social and educational opportunities were provided for the poor people in the neighborhood. As a regular visitor, Dewey "formed warm personal friendships with its residents, especially with Jane Addams" (Jane Dewey, 1939/1989, p. 29), who was one of the co-founders of Chicago Hull House and 1931 Nobel Peace Prize awardee. Inspired by Miss Addams' belief of "joint learning how to live together" for both the more privileged and the poorer, Dewey strengthened his faith in democracy that should be taken as "a way of life, the truly *moral and human* way of life," not just "a political institutional device" (p. 29, emphasis added). In 1935, Dewey dedicated *Liberalism and Social Action* "To the Memory of Jane Addams."

There were many other admirable and innovative women scholars to whom Dewey held indebtedness in his professional career, among whom Alice Chapman Dewey should not be forgotten. At the time Dewey and Alice met at the University of Michigan, Alice was "a strong-minded girl, descended from a family

of radical and free thinkers, and ardent woman suffragist, deeply religious but of no church, and brilliantly intolerant of 'bunk'" (Eastman, 1959, p. 264). According to their daughter Jane (1939/1989), Alice's influence on Dewey, a young man from conservative Burlington, was stimulating and exciting. She "was undoubtedly largely responsible for the early widening of Dewey's philosophic interest from the commutative and classical to the field of contemporary life" (p. 21). Eastman (1959) points out that as Dewey's wife and life partner, Alice's major influence lay in getting Dewey involved in practical social and political issues, community affairs and advocacy of women's equality, for instance. As the principal of the Laboratory School in Chicago and Dewey's career partner, Alice also had a significant effect on the development of Dewey's theory on education. "Dewey's view of his wife's influence is that she put 'guts and stuffing' into what had been with him mere intellectual conclusions" (Eastman, p. 273).

Over the course of his long career, inspired by his mentors, colleagues, friends as well as his intimate life partner — Alice, Dewey grounds his thinking in the conviction of the integration of philosophy with democracy and of both with educational theory. When he lectured in China, Dewey (1973) articulated a statement below in an occasion,

Education is basic to democracy, because democracy, by definition, is based on the conviction that most people have the capacity to be educated, and that they are

capable of learning. In fact, democracy means education; it is, itself, a process of continuing education of all the people If we had effective education, we would have a world in which each person would recognize that his own welfare is intimately interrelated with that of his fellow men. The entire world would benefit from this sort of education, not just one nation or a single society (p. 180).

This statement is a development of the ideal of the peaceful village-communal life where Dewey helps us see a connection between *democracy* and *education* in a communal life — a *pragmatic* way of living. To better understand this statement, we need some help from Dewey's (1916/1997) classic: *Democracy and Education*. In the above statement, Dewey clarifies democracy as “a process of continuing education of all the people,” which reminds me of his definition of philosophy in *Democracy and Education*: “the general theory of education.” Apparently, for Dewey, “democracy” and “philosophy” point to the same thing: a way to live an educative life, or, more specifically, a way of *associated living*, where “each person would recognize that his own welfare is intimately interrelated with that of his fellow men” as cited above. The “process of continuing education” is grounded upon the assumption of individuals' ability to learn and *free communication*. The following quotation from *Democracy and Education* informs us of what Dewey deems communicable and educative and why we should be interpersonal and caring beings. “[T]here are material, intellectual, aesthetic interests in which all

participate and that the progress of one member has worth for the experience of other members – it is readily communicable” (p. 83). This concept of communication will be fully explored in Chapter 4.

Therefore, in Dewey’s ideal — his democracy — both individual and public interests are taken into account, since, for Dewey, the individual and the public are only two sides of the same reality, which affect each other and depend on each other for existence and further development. This idea, in the spirit of the theory of biological evolution, is actually adopted from his good friend and colleague, Mead (1934), who proposes that the living organism and its environment together constitute an inclusive functional system where individuals are found. Consequently, for Dewey, individuals by all means are socially interrelated and individuals’ welfare cannot be achieved until the public welfare is taken into account. This theory will be deeply explored in Chapter 4. Simply put, what Dewey innovatively introduces into the idea of democracy through this statement is the inseparable *sociality*, particularly social *interaction* and *responsibility*, in every individual.

In view of the preceding analysis, Deweyan democracy is obviously not the one that currently dominates Euro-western world, namely liberal democracy. As we have witnessed the growth and modernization of the United States since its formation, American democracy is based on the assumption of individualism

adopted from Locke and Rousseau, whose liberalism assumed isolated individuals, self-centeredness and limited government interference. This liberal democracy day is also known as “representative democracy” we have looked at in Chapter 1. Huntington (1991) clarifies this democracy as “institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote” (p. 6). What is accentuated in this idea of democracy is: the form of government, electoral competition and the right to vote. Like Huntington, Fukuyama (1992) takes liberal democracy as “a supremely rational political art,” and believes that the success and the stability of liberal democracy mainly “requires a degree of *conformity between peoples and states*” (p. 212, 213, emphasis added). Both of these scholars take democracy only as a political device, where universal suffrage, natural rights of individuals, and an antithesis between individuals and the state are focal considerations. They still cannot stay away from the influence of classical liberalism as they take democracy or democratic institution as something *ready-made*.

In response to liberal/representative democracy, Dewey (1888/1969) questions its citizens as “fragments of political power,” and the state “a numerical aggregate” (p. 230). Dewey (1927/1991) also criticizes individualism which sustains “singular persons in isolation from any association, except those which

they deliberately formed for their own ends, with native or natural rights” (pp. 86-87). For Dewey, what is missing in this form of democracy is a consideration of the *public* and individuals who construct and live a democracy everyday. To distinguish his own model from the liberal one, Dewey (1916/1997) further clarifies democracy thus:

A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of *conjoint communicated experience*. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity (p. 87, emphasis added).

This enunciation reveals both the political and social aspects of democracy held by Dewey. Taking the assumption of individuals’ sociality, first and foremost, democracy for Dewey is a form of associated living with interaction, and moreover shared interests and experiences. Here in this enunciation, the “conjoint communicated experience” holds a resonance with what Dewey articulates, “[T]here are material, intellectual, aesthetic interests in which all participate and that the progress of one member has worth for the experience of other members – it is readily communicable” (p. 83). In this context, these two statements reveal

that democracy in whatever forms it was assumed, 'a form of government' or 'a mode of associated living,' for instance, is a joint intellectual effort with communication, and is participatory and collaborative for Dewey. This model of democracy is oriented more toward consultation than confrontation in decision-making in that we are capable learners and every member's experience is attached with great importance in the community. "[C]ontrol of individual actions is effected by the whole situation in which individuals are involved, in which they share and of which they are co-operative or interacting parts" (Dewey, 1938, p. 241). Dewey (1941/1988b) urges us to dedicate our "loyalty to intelligence" and "to the intrinsic connection between it and free communication: the method of conference, consultation, discussion, in which there takes place purification and pooling of the net results of the experiences of multitudes of people" (p. 276). This way of decision making is consistent with the stand Dewey (1939/1988a) sustains that democratic ends should be achieved through democratic means.

In summation, Dewey's philosophy is a philosophy of education that prepares people as capable learners to participate in a democracy, which is a way of communal life that is interpersonal and educative and hence gives rise to continual growth. This philosophy is a study of humans in order to bring their potentials to fulfillment in a context of social responsibility and public commitment.

2.4 The Possibility of the Conversation

Confucius and Dewey lived in two exclusively different worlds with no spatio-temporal intersections. Situated in a industrialized and modernized society, Dewey's thought is influenced and inspired by the speedy progress of science and technology. Living in a time of a predominantly rural and agricultural economy when people still deified nature, Confucius developed his theory by creatively referring to the values people in the past hold, through which he hopes to bring the constant wars and moral chaos to an end. In spite of these distinctions, the research interests and affirmed values shared by Confucius and Dewey provide a common ground for the conversation in which they are to engage in this dissertation.

First of all, for both Confucius and Dewey, education is central in their theories. When Dewey lectured in China, he "found that the Chinese themselves, more than most of peoples, were aware of the social function of education" (Berry, 1960, p. 215). If we trace this cultural attribute back to the past, we will find the high value Confucius held for education. In line with Dewey, Confucius has a faith that education makes a difference to human practice, and helps to maintain the prosperity and peace of the state (*Analects*, 13.9).

Second, Confucius and Dewey strive toward a philosophy of social engagement, namely integrating theory with practice. In the face of moral and

social crisis, all Confucius cares about is what characterizes a fully realized human being and how human beings should live their everyday life as an extended family. Pulling apart from the speculative tradition of Euro-western philosophy, Dewey develops a theory that contests the dualism of mind and world, and thought and action, introduces the scientific spirit into philosophy, and brings down philosophy from the clouds to dwell among men (Dewey, 1973, p. 57). His theory takes human experience into account, and is aimed to resolve human/social problems.

Next, in seeking an ideal world, both Confucius and Dewey take human society as an organism, rejecting the private/public and individual/social dualisms, giving hope to human unity. In these two thinkers' ideals, individuals are socially interrelated and an individual sense of social responsibility is greatly emphasized, while selfishness is resolutely discarded. In other words, morality is taken as a focal interest by Confucius and Dewey.

Grounded on these commonalities, a philosophical conversation between Confucius and Dewey is viable, and hence is worth exploring to give people inspiration on how to live together in an increasingly globalized environment. The following discussion is an effort to explore the conceptions of individual and community Confucius and Dewey develop. I proceed with Confucian theory.

3.0 INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY IN CONFUCIUS'S IDEAL

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explored the possibility and the value of bringing Confucius and Dewey into conversations, by rounding out the ideals of Grand Union and democracy they strive for respectively along with the investigation of the historical and intellectual contexts for these two thinkers. In this chapter, it is my hope to examine Confucius's theory in depth on the conceptions of individual and community, and the relationship between the two as reflected in his Grand Union. By approaching the heart of Confucian values, I would like to present a tradition, a culture, that the Chinese are born into that has profoundly influenced the way the Chinese think and act. I also wish this effort will help my reader look at the cultural differences between Confucian doctrine and Deweyan theory as well as the commonalities they share. "Difference-blindness" shouldn't be encouraged any more, since it leads to cultural hegemony as I pointed out in Chapter 1, when Euro-western, white, upper/middle class, able-bodied male values are well accepted under the umbrella of civilization or democratization.

I started to know Confucius and study a couple of chapters from the *Analects* when I was in middle school. Those excerpts were mainly the principles to guide people how to learn, such as "Is it not pleasant to learn with a constant

application” (*Analects*, 1.1*)? Then it was in a collegiate classroom that I was exposed to the heart of Confucius’s values. I was impressed by the ideal of the self and society Confucius conceives,

When things are investigated, intelligence is extended. When intelligence is extended, the thought becomes sincere. When the thought is sincere, the heart is then rectified. When the heart is rectified, the self/character is cultivated. When the self/character is cultivated, the family is regulated. When the family is regulated, the state is rightly governed. When the state is rightly governed, there will be peace throughout the land (*the Great Learning*, 1. 5*).

One of Confucius’s favorite disciples, Zeng Zi, recorded this maxim from Confucius. It has been passed on from generation to generation by the later Confucian successors. This ideal addresses a theory of knowledge, character building, and the way to live. It was designed for the Chinese men – the male, to be the superior men (*jūnzǐ* 君子), to reach their socio-political ideals. I was informed from this statement that no men are by birth more exalted than others and thus entitled to higher places in the social hierarchy. Provided you take initiative and are cultivated morally as well as academically, you will surely make yourself outstanding and contribute to the family, state and even the whole world. Confucius shows his faith in every human being, who is educable and can make

changes to life. The first time when I read it I fell in love with it immediately. It portrayed an ideal picture that motivated you to reach it. However, at the same time, I felt a sense of pity. I was born in a very traditional family. In my memory, my parents never encouraged me to have more education, while what I always heard in school was that girls were not as smart as boys. I always lingered at the question of where my life voyage was supposed to navigate when I was a little girl. Confucius's statement clued me to how life should go. If I had learned it earlier in my school years, many times I asked myself, "Would your life have had a big difference?" The answer is undeniably positive. I couldn't resist the great power of encouragement conveyed from those logically arranged ideas where I saw an equal, responsible, and *empowered self* grow up and fulfill his/her potentials in an unalienable social context. I was convinced that those ideas were navigators and would give me tremendous moral support throughout my life journey. I have long been thinking that if Confucius had included women in this ideal, women of today might lead a different life, with self-confidence and higher self-expectation.¹

Confucius's doctrine, though interpreted in various ways by different scholars along with times changing, has left an ever-lasting impact on the Chinese mode of thinking, particularly the Chinese intellectuals who carry a sense of mission entrusted by Confucius. As indicated in Chapter 2, in the face of the moral and

¹ About this gender bias, I discussed it in another paper "Using Ideals to Pursue Self-Improvement", presented at the Research on Women and Education Annual Conference, October, 2004, Cleveland, Ohio. I will take up this issue in greater detail later in Chapter 5.

political crisis in the whole society, the Confucian ideal emerges to fill the need of reconstruction in people's beliefs. Instead of resorting to religion, Confucius draws his attention to the way human beings live their everyday life in the secular world (*Analects*, 11.11). Hence, the construction of fully realized, admirable individuals who perpetuate a peaceful human society becomes a focal concern in Confucius's mind. To start with, I move to examine the Confucian conception of *self* through his personal example as well as verbal instruction. What follows is a presentation of Confucian community, an ideal of familial interpersonal relationship, and a conclusion to end the chapter.

3.2 Self: A-Complete-Human-Being-always-in-Action

True enough, *jūnzǐ* (君子), the superior man, is taken as the ideal human character in Confucian theory. However, it would be more rigorous if we choose *man* of *rén* (仁) as an alternative, given Confucius's concern, "Superior men, and yet not always *rén*, there have been, alas" (*Analects*, 14.7*).² Since the superior man, who aimed at the achievement of *rén*, is "absent-minded" once in a while, he may do things that are not *rén* as expected (Zhu, 2005, p. 161-2). Therefore, a man of *rén* maybe more accurately represents the ideal conception of Confucian self. The following text consists of three divided efforts. I plan on

² In this project, *rén* is used as both noun representing a virtue, and adjective of that kind of virtue.

investigating the external forms of self, then diving into the idea of *rén* (仁), which embodies the internal value individuals aspire to reach as well as a guide and motivation in the journey of self-construction, and finally attending to the clarification of the confusion: whether the idea of *rén* entails self-suppression and opposes personal gain. Although I use the terms *external* and *internal* to help us examine a *self* whose act and belief are consistent with Confucian values — the idea of *rén*, I do not want to suggest that a man of *rén* can be accomplished without either of these performances, for only the integration of the both can be regarded as a man of *rén*.

3.2.1 The External Form of Self

In modern Chinese, *wǒ* (我) or *jǐ* (己) is a popular pronoun meaning ‘self’. The situation becomes different in classical Chinese. Except for *wǒ* and *jǐ*, there are a number of other pronouns in the *Analects* equal to the English expression of self, such as *wú* (吾), *zì* (自), and *qí* (其). They serve either as subject, object or attribute in the structure of the sentence. As to the word *shēn* (身), a noun with the basic meaning of body, is often used as the synonym of *jǐ*.³ If there is only one choice allowed, I will say that *jǐ* is the closest one to the meaning of ‘self’ in English. This variance of the expression, however, will not distract us from exploring the

³ For examples, see parallel passages in the *Analects* 1.4 and *The Doctrine of the Mean* 14.

interior world of Confucius, where each individual of *self-consciousness* behaves in an appropriate manner and is equal by nature with *self-determination* and an *independent will* of his own.

First of all, one distinct external characteristic Confucian self carries is *self-determination*, which is based on the idea of equal human dignity. Confucius suggests, “Do your utmost to exhort them [meaning friends, my interpolation], and skillfully lead them on. If you find it is unacceptable to them, stop. Do not disgrace yourself” (*Analects*, 12.23*). His disciple Ziyou raises a similar statement, “With friends, frequent reproofs make the friendship distant” (*Analects*, 4.26*). For Confucius, in addition to honesty and concern, the principle of befriending should include respecting friends as men of dignity as you are; or, put yourself in their place, you would not feel happy to have others make the decision for you. So, in opposition to coercion and bossiness, Confucius in effect indicates a viewpoint that everyone’s self should be equally esteemed, and hence the right to self-determination is what we should embrace, not violation of that right. Later in this chapter, I will be approaching “*what we do not want done to ourselves, do not do to others*” (*Analects*, 15.24), a general principle for any relationship, where Confucius well justifies why frequent reproofs are not viable.

Another external character trait is the self of strong, free *will*. The counterpart of *will* in classical Chinese is 志 (*zhi*). This word actually implicates two essential

meanings in the *Analects*, namely ‘volition’ and ‘purpose’. As “The commander of the forces of a large state may be deprived of, but the will of even a common man cannot be taken from him” (*Analects*, 9.26*). And, in an essay entitled “The Conduct of the Scholar” (*Rú Xíng* 儒行), Confucius (Legge, 1967, vol. 2) elaborates his ideas on scholars thus, “With the scholar friendly relations may be cultivated, but no attempt must be made to constrain him; near association with him can be sought, but cannot be forced on him; he may be killed, but he cannot be disgraced” (p. 405). Through these remarks, we see a Confucian self owns not only *the freedom of volition* but *a strong purpose*. If the former the freedom of volition is something *intrinsic* and interacted with self-determination, the later would be grounded upon *courage*. In line with this view, he gives his high regard to Boyi and Shuqi, two descendants of princes, who, living in the turbulent days resolutely, refused to surrender their wills so as to adhere to their belief or purpose and maintain their autonomous will (*Analects*, 18.8). It is said they were fearless in the face of starving and finally gave their lives for their upheld purpose as well as the freedom of their volition.

If looking back on Chinese history, we have no shortage of this kind of courageous people who hold their dignity, autonomous will more vital than their lives, such as Suwu from the Han Dynasty, a well-known diplomat of unyielding integrity, and Zhu, Ziqing, a talented writer, scholar and a

strong-willed patriot in the 1940s. I knew them from history and literature classes I took when I was a teenager. These people have proved Confucius's belief that every *self* maintains a dignified freedom of volition and fearless courage, which co-build an indestructible castle in his heart, even at the cost of his life. Mencius nicely develops this idea as, "[T]o be above the power of riches and honors to make dissipated, of poverty and mean condition to make swerve from principle, and of power and force to make bend – these characteristics constitute the great man" (*Mencius*, 3: 2:2). As to where the courage comes from, I will take a look at it later in the discussion on *rén*.

If the preceding external traits of Confucian self are more *intrinsic* by nature except for courage, the following three maybe can be taken as acquired habits. First, based on the self of self-determination and free will Confucius takes *self-consciousness* as a cornerstone that grounds the *construction* of individual self. Always start from the self emphasizing willingness and the dynamic role of the self. "In ancient times, men learned with a view to their own perfection. Nowadays, men learn with a view to the approbation of others" (*Analects*, 14.24*), or "The practice of *rén* is from a man himself. How come is it from others" (*Analects*, 12.1*)? For Confucius, to impress other people cannot generate a true sense of learning, and hence is divergent from self-improvement. On the other hand, Confucius suggests that the practice of *rén* (仁) in actuality sets demands

on *self* not others. It explains why individuals should require much from themselves and little from others (*Analects*, 1.4, 15.15), and it also helps explain why Confucius encourages his disciples to be the man “who could perceive his faults, and inwardly accuse himself” (*Analects*, 5. 27). So, provided that a man is not satisfied with his job position, according to Confucius, what he needs to do first is *reflecting* about how much he knows about himself, whether he is ready to take on heavy responsibilities or hold an important post. Instead of blaming everyone and everything but himself, or complaining of not being appreciated, Confucius would suggest this man to think of his own want of capability and then work on it to make advances in his competence. In other words, if one wishes to be discovered and appointed to one’s desired position, one should start from knowing one’s self and making one’s self prepared for it (*Analects*, 4.14, 14.30). In addition, this self-consciousness is also embodied in *reflective thinking* Confucius requires in his doctrine, which encourages thinking for one’s self or independent thinking (*The Doctrine of the Mean*, Chapter 20; *Analects*, 2.15).⁴

In response to the question, “Is *rén* a thing remote?” Confucius gives a definite answer, “I wish to be *rén*, and lo! *rén* is at hand” (*Analects*, 7.30*). The achievement of the self by all means depends on individuals’ self-consciousness.

⁴ I discussed this topic in greater detail in a paper titled “Confucius on Philosophy of Learning,” which was presented at SEPES Annual Conference, 2005, in Orlando, FL.

In other words, for Confucius, self-construction starts from the self, and is for the self and eventually is completed by the self on a voluntary basis.

Next, supplementary to as well as consistent with *self-consciousness*, Confucian self never claims infallibility. “There were four things Confucius abstained from entirely: he did not impose his will, he did not claim or demand certainty, he was not inflexible/stubborn, and he was not self-absorbed” (*Analects*, 9.4).⁵ This Confucian self represents a humble human being of a pragmatic mindset, who is willing to include differences and ready for change if needed.

Another marked external form of Confucian self is conducting appropriately, or observance of the rules of propriety (*lǐ* 礼).⁶ This external form of self well embodies a cultivated human being through his words and deportments. As “Look not at what is contrary to propriety; listen not to what is contrary to propriety; speak not what is contrary to propriety; make no movement which is contrary to propriety” (*Analects*, 12.1). To speak or behave in a manner that does not offend others as well as retains self-dignity anytime and anywhere demands a person’s inner attainment by virtue of learning and practicing. Therefore, generally speaking, it would not be incorrect if we deem this external form of self as an embodiment of the Confucian value.

⁵ This translation is in reference to Ames and Rosemont (1998) and Muller (1990/2004).

⁶ As to the concept of *lǐ* (礼), I will be looking into this idea in a greater detail later under the topic of “Does the Man of *Rén* Suppress oneself or Sacrifice Personal Gain?”

From the standpoint of the preceding discussion, the Confucian self of humbleness and equal human dignity symbolizes a strong, free will holding fast to his purpose/belief, and his inviolable autonomy in *self-determination*. It is Confucius's belief that every individual can own this regardless of his family background, or socio-economic status. Self-construction, accordingly, is by all means from the self, for the self and eventually completed by the self. One pursues one gets it, one doesn't one forfeits it. I would dare to infer that if Confucius were still alive, he would probably enjoy a conversation with the classical liberalists, since they both agree with each other on the inviolable individual dignity and the autonomy of the individual will. The external self of self-determination, autonomous will and self-consciousness without more restrictions from outside reveals a strong faith Confucius holds in individuals. This actually encourages a liberated self of independent thinking, a mind of his own, as Fingarette (1983) remarks, "Because of this emphasis on the individuals as of ultimate value, and on free will as the engine of individual self-expression, the central task of life is readily seen as consisting in the fullest realization of that *individuality*" (p. 346, emphasis added).

I am reminded of Confucius's *dialogic* teaching style and his suggestion of popular education and equal opportunity to seek public office (*Analects*, 15.39, 19.13). I think it won't be wrong if I suppose that it is Confucius's intention to

entrust these liberated individuals with a sense of mission and responsibility as well as cultivation which in turn helps shape a sound individuality and suitable demeanor in liberated individuals. No wonder in the later years of Hu, Shi (Song & Liu, 2004), he looks into the tradition of liberalism in the Chinese culture and gives credits to Confucius's teachings, which particularly leave a mark on the cultivation of individuality among the Chinese intellectuals.

3.2.2 *Rén* – the Internal Value Individuals Pursue

We have looked into the Confucian self of strong, free will who shows great courage in self-determination even at the cost of life. To seek the foundation of this courage, fearlessness, this Confucian saying may be helpful for us, "For the resolute scholar-apprentice (*shì* 士), and the man of *rén* (仁人), while they would not compromise their conduct of *rén* to save their lives, they might well give up their lives in order to achieve it" (*Analects*, 15.9**). Apparently, the value of *rén* is what attracts and gives rise to a person of great courage. In addition, if we recall the logically arranged ideals cited at the outset, to cultivate the characters, to regulate the families, to govern the states, and then to bring peace to the entire world, we will find that Confucius's ideal self is a cultivated one by and large. The Confucian self-construction is impossible to be completed without self-cultivation where *rén* serves as a guide as well as an aim.

The word *rén* occurs a hundred and nine times in the *Analects* of its nearly five hundred passages. *Jen* is another expression used by some Euro-western scholars according to the pronunciation in Chinese. Etymologically, the term, *rén*, meaning a good moral character, can be found as early as in the *Book of History*.⁷ At this point, *rén* is quite similar to *dé* (德), the idea of morality the Duke of Zhou introduced into the ruling art as I took up in Chapter 2. Like *tóng* (同), the Chinese character for *rén*, 仁, is created by way of associative compounds. The graph of *rén* is made up of two elements: ‘亻’ (pronounced as *rén*) meaning person and ‘二’ (pronounced as *èr*) meaning two; the implication being that one can never become a *moral* person without another human. Confucius once responds to Fan Chi’s inquiry of *rén*, “Love your fellow men” (*Analects*, 12.22). The love of others to which Confucius refers is a passion or sentiment that generates *human kindness* and can be viewed as a cornerstone in the theory of *rén*.

Are we to infer, then, that Confucius suggests that individuals should take *rén* as a moral virtue to pursue in order to be truly human? It would not be completely wrong if we say so. But I am afraid that we may never be able to achieve a fully realized, admirable human being as Confucius expects if we do so. In other words, morality is only one facet on the crystal of *rén*. Otherwise, Confucius can just borrow the idea of *dé* (德) from the Duke of Zhou instead of developing his theory

⁷ The *Book of History*, *Shangshu* or *Shu Jing*, is a set of documents (speeches, laws, etc.) from the Xia to the Zhou dynasties. For more details, see Legge (1960), vol. 3.

of *rén*. Therefore we next need to find out what Confucius means by *rén*, both its denotation and connotation.

It is hard to find a clear definition of *rén* for a conceptional understanding from the conversations between Confucius and his disciples. In his teachings, Confucius seldom speaks of profitableness, destiny and innate qualities, and *rén* (*Analects*, 9.1*).⁸ However, individuals should by any chance have a general picture of *rén* in order to take it as a pursuit. If we go over all the conversations with patience, we will note that Confucius does respond to his disciples in different circumstances when they inquire *rén* of him. From these responses, we may get a hint of what Confucius expects for *rén*.

One time, Zizhang asks Confucius about *rén*. Confucius says, “To be able to *practice* five qualities anywhere constitutes *rén*,” which are deference (*gōng* 恭), tolerance (*kuān* 寬), making good on one’s word (*xìn* 信), earnestness (*mǐn* 敏), and generosity (*huì* 惠) (*Analects*, 17.6**, emphasis added). We should be clear that this is not a definition of *rén* and Confucius does not indicate that this is all *rén* is about either. Although the performance of these five *virtues* is not a sufficient and necessary condition to *rén*, it provides a general idea of *rén* reflected in the *Analects* we can refer to. ‘Deference’ involves dignity of manner and can be applied either to dwelling at home, handling public affairs, or encountering a

⁸ *Ming* (命) contains different meanings in classical Chinese according to different contexts where the term appears. In this context, I translate it “Destiny and innate qualities.” This consideration is indebted to Yang’s (n.d.) essay on the exploration of destiny and innate qualities in the *Analects*.

person attired in mourning dress passing by (*Analects*, 13.19, 9.9, 5.16). 'Tolerance' means being broadminded to others, such as forgiving people's past misdeeds, or to assail one's own fault and wickedness not to assail that of others (*Analects*, 7. 29*, 12.21). This idea seems not completely new to us, when thinking of individuals of *self-consciousness*. Also, "We require much from ourselves and little from others (*Analects*, 15.14). This external form of self in a sense reflects the virtue of being tolerant individuals in practice with each other. As to 'making good on one's word,' there is, "In my interactions with the colleagues and friends, have I failed to make good on my word?" (*Analects*, 1.7**, 1.4**). In respect of 'earnestness,' Confucius proposes, "the superior man (*jūnzǐ* 君子) wishes to be slow in his speech and earnest in his *conduct*" (*Analects*, 4.24, emphasis added). For 'generosity,' the spirit of it is actually expressed in the conversations everywhere, such as "[the superior man] was generous in attending to needs of the common people" (*Analects*, 5.16**).

Based on the preceding quick review of these "five qualities" concerning *rén*, or say five virtues, we are able to discover the commonalities they share with each other. In any case, there are three essential points of view that Confucius wants to convey to his audience. First, the Confucian self who takes *rén* as pursuit is by no means an atomistic entity, but situated in a social environment. This is not only a Sinological (adjective of Sinology, which means the study of the language,

literature, history, customs, etc., of China) truism. That self-formation in essence is a social process is, after G. H. Mead (1934), not denied by modern Euro-western social psychology either. Never saying a single word about individualist living as Robinson Crusoe, mostly Confucius focuses his idea of *rén* on the way human beings deal with each other. As a result, here comes the second feature of *rén*, which indicates the necessity of the application of ideas and the importance of practice. It is true that Confucius values knowledge and studies thoroughly the classics in the past as he initiatively opens the gate to education to common people and enthusiastically transmits the classics in his teachings. However, from the five qualities Confucius emphasizes in his ideal of *rén*, we come to form the understanding that although knowledge from the text is crucial, how knowledge affecting human conduct or, in other words, how people live their everyday life in relation with others holds equal importance for Confucius. With a stress on daily practice, the achievement of *rén* can never come true if individuals only stay at the phase of reading or meditation. This is what Confucius tries to convey to us as the Chinese character 仁, the graph of *rén*, signifies, in order to reach *rén*, being truly human, we always need another human being to form a relationship where we live, applying and practicing ideas. The subject on human relationships will be more fully attended to in the discussion on Confucian community.

Third, if studying the five virtues (deference, tolerance, making good on one's word, earnestness and generosity) closely, we will notice that *rén* mainly points to morality. This feature is right in line with its emphasis on daily practice, since *rén* as an ethical consideration is aimed to solve the problem of how people treat each other and live together. So in Confucius's view, unequivocally *rén* is a *moral* virtue. However, we cannot deny there is wisdom hiding behind these five qualities, for example, 'earnestness.' While earnestness has a direct connection to practice, it is supported by determination that is grounded in wisdom. Confucius strongly opposes acting blindly, but emphasizes reflection before taking any actions. So earnest thinking, in Confucius's view, embodies a sense of wisdom. Likewise, 'deference,' making good on one's word, and 'generosity' can not be gained without an understanding of them as core values, which are motivating forces that leads to action regardless of the circumstance (Malloy, 2003). According to Malloy, only the values internalized by individuals can lead to consistent moral actions anytime anywhere. The process of internalization definitely demands wisdom. Hence, we may infer that *rén* is a virtue, which is intellectual as well as moral, for Confucius.

This finding leads to the following discussion on wisdom — an indispensable element of *rén* as well as the cornerstone of the accomplishment of *rén*. Let me start with the Chinese character for wisdom. In the Chinese language, 知 is the

counterpart of wisdom. The character of 知 in effect has two different pronunciations in classical Chinese, the first tone and the fourth one. By the first tone, *zhī*, mainly it involves the meaning of ‘understand, know, knowledge, or awareness,’ such as, “Be aware of what is yet to be learned on a daily basis” (*Analects*, 19.5**). By the fourth tone, *zhì*, it means wisdom, which Confucius refers to here and believes is crucial to the achievement of *rén*. “[T]he wise flourish in *rén*” (*Analects*, 4. 2**). Confucius recognizes that wisdom facilitates the completion of *rén*, and hence should be a constitutive element of *rén*. The function of wisdom is actually to equip *rén* with reason that enables the understanding of *rén* and then make it an internal principle for individuals. In this context, *rén* helps human moralities become wise without being accused of naïveté or blindness in action, and is practiced voluntarily by individuals. As “There is the love of being *rén* without the love of learning; – the beclouding here leads to a dupability. There is the love of being wise without the love of learning: – the beclouding here leads to dissipation of mind” (*Analects*, 17. 8*). Simply put, the remark indicates that *rén* demands wisdom which requires learning.

I now move to a deeper examination of ‘wisdom’ (*zhì* 知) which may help us have a better understanding of *rén*. Confucius once defines wisdom as “to know others,” and he further explains, “If you promote the upright into positions above the crooked you can make the crooked upright” (*Analects*, 12.22**). This

statement about *zhì*, as Zhu (2005) interprets, is succinct and thought-provoking. First, as part of human wisdom, individuals should by all means know their fellow men. It again proves that *interacting* with people is the centerpiece in Confucius's consideration. Next, in order to "know others," individuals should enter the society and commit themselves to the various social relationships. This is Confucius's unspoken words in that passage left to the understanding of the reader. Particularly, for the people as leaders, knowing others means having a keen insight into the people and various human relationships in an attempt to distinguish "the upright" from "the crooked." And hence, the direct effect of knowing others is that "virtuous and capable people are elected to public office" as envisioned in *Dàtóng*, the Grand Union, and "the crooked are made upright", or as Zixia explains, "all who were devoid of *rén* disappeared" (*Analects*, 12.22). In this context, Zhu points out, "promoting the upright into positions above the crooked is *zhì*, while having the crooked made upright means *rén*" (p. 149). It is right in the same passage where Confucius describes *rén* as "to love others." Therefore, "having the crooked made upright" is right in line with this remark in that it shows the leaders not only love and appreciate "the upright" but also extend this love to "the crooked" in having them made upright. In saying "If you promote the upright into positions above the crooked you can make the crooked upright," Confucius actually demonstrates how *zhì* works for the achievement of *rén*. Finally, by

“knowing others,” Confucius reminds us that *zhì*, like *rén*, should not stay at the phase of learning theories or textbooks, rather it needs to be engaged in the real life, and only by then can *rén* be accomplished.

Because of ‘wisdom,’ a man of *rén* is able to distinguish the good/bad from the right/wrong. So, a man of *rén* is in no way one who tries not to offend anyone, of which “excellence under false pretenses” is another name given by Confucius (*Analects*, 17.13**). In contrast, a man of *rén* is wise to know what to love and what to hate (*Analects*, 4. 3, 14.34, 17.24). Also, owing to ‘wisdom,’ a man of *rén*, who is kind and generous, may be deceived, but not duped (*Analects*, 6. 26*).

In addition to wisdom, ‘courage’ (*yǒng* 勇) is another constitutive element of *rén*. When Confucius says, “A man of *zhì* is free from perplexities; of *rén* from anxiety; and of courage from fear” (*Analects*, 9. 29*), it is noteworthy that he is pointing out the distinctions between *zhì*, *rén*, and courage in terms of their external expression and function, not splitting *rén* from *zhì* and courage. As “The man of *rén* is sure to be courageous, but those who are courageous are not necessarily *rén*” (*Analects*, 14. 4*). Like wisdom that is necessary to *rén*, courage is also indispensable to *rén*. Think about it in this way: no perplexity represents the intellectual side; no fear signifies the volitional side. When *rén* is equipped with both wisdom and volition, no anxiety ensues. “The commander of the forces of a large state may be deprived, but the will of even a common man cannot be taken

from him” (*Analects*, 9. 25*). You may be familiar with this remark, which I cited in the discussion of the external forms of the Confucian self. Now it seems pretty clear that it is *rén* that provides the ideological prop for the great courage the Confucian self owns. More specifically, it is the love of learning the man of *rén* owns that grounds human courage, as Confucius teaches, “there are learning extensively, and having a *firm will*; inquiring with earnestness, and reflecting on what is at hand: –*rén* is in such a course” (*Analects*, 19.6*, emphasis added). I am reminded of another comment by Confucius, “Men of *rén* are content in *rén*” (*Analects*, 4.2**). It similarly reflects a state of mind, which is free from perplexities, anxiety, and fear.

Based on the foregoing attempt to look into the idea of *rén* by tracing the origin of the word, analyzing its character formation, and laying out the five things Confucius suggests that lead to *rén* which generate an effort to explore the constitutive elements of *rén*, I would like to conclude to end this discussion.

In summation, Confucian *rén* is not restricted to a compassionate self as “loving others” (*Analects*, 12.22). It is a word that connotes a lot of things. First of all, it is a complete virtue of *wisdom*, *morality* and *courage* that contains everything of humanity manifested in every facet of life. For Confucius, to be a moral and courageous person demands wisdom that provides individuals with ideological support, while “extensive learning” is necessary to be wise, since it is a

process of gaining experience as well as book knowledge. This idea leads to the second trait of *rén*: a stress on what individuals *do*. *Rén* will never remain at the conceptual level, while action is an important consideration in this idea, as “to give one’s full strength to *rén*” (*Analects*, 4.6**). The practice of *rén* in reality is necessary to the achievement of the ideal.

Third, *rén* is definitely not something given but is an achievement, which is within the grasp of every individual, but needs broad learning and unremitting effort to practice. It is the way ‘self,’ a human being, should be defined. When Confucius says, “*I wish to be *rén*, and lo! *rén* is at hand*” (*Analects*, 7.29*, emphasis added), he intends to emphasize individuals’ self-consciousness on the one hand as we pointed out before, and on the other he may want his disciples to know that *rén* is not something far beyond reach. Finally, given the atomistic culture that is not regarded by Confucius at all, it would be correct to say that *rén* can not be attained until the individual is socially interacted with another man. As Fingarette (1983) points out, for Confucius, “where there are at least two truly human beings, there is not even one” (p. 340).

As a result, instead of taking *rén* as “benevolence,” “goodness,” or “humanity,” I think about translating it as the less popular version of “*complete person*.” This rendition gives consideration both to *rén* as a complete virtue of wisdom, morality and courage and to its emphasis on the way “human being” should be defined.

Now we may infer that Confucius does not define it in his teachings for the reason that he does not want his disciples to take *rén* as a conception, or to have it formalized, which moves far away from the essence of *rén* as something that we *do*. He is afraid that any definition will limit the openness of *rén*, which is always in construction toward a *fully* realized human being. It reminds me of Cultural Studies, which is really not a question of what it is but what it does. “Cultural studies is not one thing. It has never been one thing” (Stuart Hall, 1990, p. 11). Neither is Confucius’s *rén*. In a sense, defining *rén* as ‘complete person’ represents a dynamic state of *rén*. As an ideal, Confucian *rén* does not denote any universal norms, and instead it is context-oriented, of practicality and infinitely open.

3.2.3 Does the Man of Rén Have to Suppress Individuality and Oppose Personal Gain?

We have noticed that, as both a guiding principle and aim for self-construction/cultivation, *rén* is a pursuit of intelligence, courage as well as morality in a social context. Here we come upon some questions related to the idea of *rén*: Does individuality have to be suppressed and does the pursuit of personal gain have a place in Confucian doctrine?

True enough, Confucius rarely speaks of how to make profit or pursue personal interests. However, seldom mention does not equal that Confucius does

not care about self interest at all. There is no doubt that Confucius embraces individual's free will and full development as a wise, moral and courageous human being in accordance with the preceding discussion. My effort in the following text is to clarify some of Confucius's sayings in relation to individuality and personal gain which have been long misinterpreted.

In explaining the connotation of *rén*, Confucius once speaks of, "To control *jǐ* (己) and return to the rules of propriety (*lǐ* 礼), is *rén*" (*Analects*, 12.1*).⁹ *Jǐ*, as I pointed out above, is a pronoun meaning *self*, or individuality which is also feasible in this context. Accordingly, sometimes this statement is translated as "Subdue *oneself* to return to the *lǐ*." For years, this remark has been used to justify various criticisms of Confucius, whose doctrine suppresses individuals or disfavors self interests. From the structure of the sentence, *jǐ* should not simply represent a pronoun of first person, since both *lǐ* and *rén* mean a rule or a value system we stick to. In this context, *jǐ* should be interpreted as *something from ourselves* against or opposite to *lǐ* or *rén*. Zhu (2005) interprets *jǐ*, or self, as "selfish desire" (p. 141). While this version is better than "oneself," I am afraid I cannot completely agree with him. Strictly speaking, *jǐ* does not equal selfish

⁹ *Lǐ* is normally translated as rituals in most of the English works. In the *Book of Rites (Li Ji)*, it is defined either as reason, sense or human feelings, while in English, it has been translated as "ritual," "rites," "etiquette" and so on. In agreement with Legge (1966) and Fingarette (1983), I think the English version of "the rules of propriety" is a better choice in understanding this statement. In effect, *rén* and *lǐ* are two sides of same coin. *Rén* can be viewed as an inner self-cultivation, while *lǐ* conveyed through human conduct is the external expression of *rén*, namely proper conduct as I addressed in the external forms of self. "Act according to the rules of propriety" (*Analects*, 15.18*). For more details about the relationship between *lǐ* and *rén*, see Meng (n.d.).

desire, which is only part of the negative traits of the self. Therefore, what we really need to control is not oneself or selfish desire, but all the opposite values and motivations of *lǐ* or *rén*. “Look not at what is contrary to propriety; listen not to what is contrary to propriety; speak not what is contrary to propriety; make no movement which is contrary to propriety.” The right following explanation of Confucius exposes a breach of propriety one’s self may carry. In this case, “disciplining one’s self” could be a better interpretation of “controlling one’s self” than “subduing one’s self.” It is clear that Confucius by no means intends to suppress the self or individuality. On the contrary, we have proved before that Confucius emphasizes the free will and autonomy in self-determination. All Confucius tries to oppose is the self that is not acting according to *lǐ* or *rén*.

Although seldom speaking of profitableness, destiny and innate qualities, and *rén* (*Analects*, 9.1*), Confucius never indicates in the conversations with his disciples that individuals should seek no personal gain. Quite the reverse, Confucius proposes, “Riches and honors are what men desire” (*Analects*, 4.5), and even “if the search for riches is sure to be successful, though I should become a groom with whip in hand go get them, I will do so” (*Analects*, 7. 11). Behind this argument, Confucius’s only requirement is that any personal gain should not violate the principle of *yì* (義) (*Analects*, 14.13).¹⁰ In consequence,

¹⁰ The term of *yì* usually translated as “right” or “righteousness,” actually connotes a more complicated meaning than the one we use in our ordinary language. It involves ‘a sense of appropriateness,’ which means

“pursuing what he desires without being covetous” is encouraged and deemed as one of “the five excellent things” the superior man (*jūnzǐ* 君子) honors (*Analects*, 20.2*). True enough, Confucius once remarks, “The mind of the superior man is conversant with *yì*; the mind of the mean man is conversant with gain” (*Analects*, 4.16). However, if we infer from this statement that the superior man does not care about personal gain, it would be contradictory with “Riches and honors are what men desire,” and therefore misrepresent Confucius’s point. Given *yì* as a principle Confucius holds fast to in making personal gain, it would be more proper to interpret the above statement as ‘the superior man lets *yì* commands gain, while the mean man does the opposite.’ In Confucius’s view, if the self is regulated by *yì*, there is no problem at all with the pursuit of personal gain, which in effect is a reasonable as well as natural human desire; he even suggests “being generous without great expenditure,” which is counted as another excellence the superior man honors (*Analects*, 20.2*). It is obviously that Confucius does not embrace to sacrifice self in doing a good deed. If we can think deeper, *yì* is actually a gauge, according to which individuals make a decision that is suitable for both sides without sacrificing the interest of either side. On the other hand, Confucius also gives warning to his disciples, “He who acts with a constant view to his own advantage will be much murmured against,” which reminds us that the

‘what is suitable.’ For more details about this term, see the *Doctrine of the Mean* (20.5*), Zhu (2005), p. 74, and Creel (1960), p. 134.

pursuit of personal gain should by no means be at the expense of others (*Analects*, 4.12). Hence in Confucius's view, making personal gain is not contradictory to clinging to the principle of *yì* if the way people make it is in line with the principle.

In short, Confucius never denies personal gain in his doctrine, and on the contrary he is an advocate of this pursuit. In addition, Confucius does not indicate that benefiting oneself necessarily causes harm to others or is necessarily at the expense of others, while subscribing oneself to *yì* will help avoid the possible harm to other people. Confucius even opposes doing a good deed which is at the great cost of private interests.

To sum up, in any case, it would not be fair to say that the ideas of self-denial and self-sacrifice are the central considerations in Confucius's theory. Confucius does rarely speak of how to make personal gain or put much stress on individuality. This is largely due to his awareness of the possible harm they may lead to if we ignore considering self-discipline and individual responsibility, which weigh quite much in the pursuit of *rén*.¹¹ Therefore, while acknowledging the pursuit of both individuality and personal gain, Confucius calls for self-cultivation/construction in order to be reverent and bring accord to our fellow men (*Analects*, 14.42), which is consistent with the inspiring Confucius's ideal on

¹¹ I will take up Confucius's view of individuality in the next section on Confucian community.

the self and the society I quoted at the very beginning of this chapter. Taking *rén* (仁), a complete virtue of wisdom, morality and courage, as a core value, Confucian self-construction puts stress equally on both learning (including reflective thinking) and practicing, free will in self-determination and responsibility, and gain (*li* 利) and appropriateness (*yi* 义).¹² This pursuit of *rén* as a life-long task attainable to every individual needs unremitting efforts and is context-based, which means what and how one does in a specific context matters a lot. So it won't be incorrect if we infer that the Confucian self or individual is a-complete-human-being-always-in-action. The following discussion on Confucian community will help us look at this point more thoroughly.

3.3 Community: An Association of Familial Person-to-Person Relationships

It is not an amazement to me that after I perused the *Analects* for this project again I didn't find the term of 'community,' an ordinary word to the speakers of English language which Dewey refers to and develops in his works. The book of *Analects* was compiled more than twenty-five hundred years ago when Classical Chinese was dominant as the written language of ancient China. The English word 'community' coming from the Latin 'communis' and developed by the Europeans, is undoubtedly hard to have a counterpart in Classical Chinese that

¹² I will look at the idea of responsibility in terms of human relationships deeply in the following discussion on community.

embodied the different culture of ancient China. With Chinese language per se, classical Chinese based on the grammar and vocabulary of old forms of Chinese is different from modern Mandarin Chinese, where ‘community’ likewise as an exotic term, is translated as ‘gongtongti’ (共同体) meaning a group of people having common interests, or ‘shequ’ (社区) meaning the district or locality in which such a group lives. In view of these renditions in modern Mandarin Chinese, I have no problem finding a number of terms involving this community-reference in the *Analects*, although they are not exactly the same as we use in modern language.

Rather than talking of human community in general, Confucius lends his thoughts to the idea of family (*jiā* 家), state (*guó* 国) and land under heaven – the world or China (*tiānxià* 天下). For this Chinese thinker, if a man acts out *rén* (仁) to achieve self-cultivation, he is to be able to regulate the family well, to run the state smoothly, and then to bring peace to the entire world as quoted from the *Great Learning* at the outset of this chapter,

When things are investigated, intelligence is extended. When intelligence is extended, the thought becomes sincere. When the thought is sincere, the heart is then rectified. When the heart is rectified, the self/character is cultivated. When the self/character is cultivated, the family is regulated. When the family is

regulated, the state is rightly governed. When the state is rightly governed, there will be peace throughout the land (*the Great Learning*, 1. 5*).

Taking a deep look at this articulation again, we discover that besides motivating common people, Confucius also indicates that the root and branches of things and the beginning and end of affairs are subject to a logical sequence of development. Particularly, this expression indicates the importance of an organized, harmonious family as a community in achieving a world of peace. Although it is true that the family involved in this passage, as the commentary by Zeng Zi one of Confucius's disciples indicates, is the *one family of the ruler*, it by no means denotes that the common family or the common people are not included. As Mencius speaks of, "If the sovereign be *rén*, all will be *rén*" (*Mencius*, 4:2:5*), and Zeng Zi explains, "From the *rén* example of one family a whole state becomes *rén*" (*The Great Learning*, Ch. IX*). Zeng Zi later details it with, "When the ruler, as a father, a son, and a brother, is a model, then the people imitate him. This is what is meant by saying, 'The government of his state depends on his regulation of the family'" (*Great Learning*, Ch. IX*). I will explore this idea of *effect of model* later in the discussion on family and state that are regulated in the same way. So Confucius takes family as a crucial as well as a basic human community where human beings come from and start their social life. In Confucius's view, if every family is regulated well, the state will consequently be run well, and then peaceful

coexistence will be brought about among the states. Why is family so important in the society that a fine regulation of it leads to the achievement of a peaceful and prosperous state and world?

It would be helpful in finding the answer to this question if we go back to Confucius's times, which were 2500 years' ago when agricultural economy predominated in ancient China. Except for girls who were supposed to marry a man and move out from their paternal house after they grew up, the whole family of parents, sons, daughters-in-law and grandchildren would live together from generation to generation. Before the introduction of industrialization and commercialization from modern Euro-western world, the male offspring commonly carried on their paternal career in order to survive. To the majority of the Chinese population, namely the peasants, this tradition was far more natural and normal. Fung Yu-lan (1976) describes the Chinese family system thus,

The farmers have to live on their land, which is immovable, and the same is true of the scholar landlords. Unless one has special talent, or is especially lucky, one has to live where one's father or grandfather live, and where one's children will continue to live. That is to say, the family in the wider sense must live together for economic reasons. Thus there developed the Chinese family system, which was no doubt one of the most complex and well-organized in the world (p. 21).

It was the economic conditions of the time that undergirded the family system as a community for living, a miniature social system, where all the members were not isolated individuals, but a kinship family team living on the land in a particular place. Under these circumstances, the unity of the family and harmony in home meant everything. In agreement with Feng, I can see the contribution Confucius makes to the “rational justification or theoretical expression of this social system” (p. 21). As thus, for Confucius, if a man cannot live in peace with each other within the family and share responsibility, he is not able to regulate the family well and make it prosperous, and further he will not be conducting himself well to get along with others outside the family, or helping others lead a good life. This Confucian doctrine, the government of the state hinging on the regulation of the family, remained a long-lasting influence on Chinese scholars in pursuing the ideal of *rén* which has an emphasis on social practice and responsibility. This influence lasted until the introduction of industrialization and commercialization from the modern Euro-western world.

Now people might ask, “How is this doctrine reasoned out and how does it work in reality?”

3.3.1 Family and State Are Managed in the Same Way

If we look at the passage cited from the *Great Learning* earlier closely, we find there is an assumption implicated in Confucius's argument, that family and state are structured and managed in the same way. This idea reflects two-fold assumptions of the Confucian ideal. First, the family is a miniature state, where we learn and practice human relations, the art of getting along, and hence are provided with the basis for living together in the society; second, the state is an extended enlarged family, where we treat each other as our beloved family members. I begin with the family system of the traditional social relationships which Confucius emphasizes in his theory followed by the relations we need to form between each other recommended by this thinker so as to live in harmony under the shared roof.

In the book of *The Doctrine of the Mean*, there is a chapter which is a response to the Duke of Ai, who asks about government. Confucius brings up the natural regularity (*tiān* 天) as he understands.

There are five pervasive relationships in this world, and the virtues wherewith they are practiced are three. The relationships are those between *ruler and minister*, *father and son*, *husband and wife*, *elder brother and younger brother*, and between *friends*. These five are the relationships pervasively accepted. Wisdom (*zhì* 知), *rén*

(仁), and courage (*yǒng*, 勇), these three, are the pervasively accepted virtues (Ch. 20, *emphasis added*).¹³

Out of the five social relationships pointed out, three are family relationships, which are the major ones Confucius particularly attends to. According to *Er Ya* (尔雅), the oldest dictionary of the Chinese language, there are actually more than one hundred terms for various family relationships, most of which have no counterpart in the English language. The following effort is drawn to looking at the three major familial relationships. As to the remainder, ruler and minister, and friend and friend, Fung Yu-lan (1976) says, “although not family relationships, [they] can be conceived of in terms of the family” (p. 21). In line with Fung’s point of view, my next effort will be to examine how Confucius extends the familial relationships to the bigger community, namely the state or the world.’ Wisdom, *rén*, and courage’ are the three virtues we have looked into before, where wisdom and courage are actually two constitutive elements of *rén*. Consistent with what he holds in the ideal of self-construction, Confucius resorts to them, which he is convinced are necessary in forming peaceful social relations among human beings. As we will observe in the following discussion, to apply *rén* to the life of community wisdom and courage are indispensable.

¹³ The emphasis on the father-son relationship reminds us of a patriarchal social system Confucius comes from. Although mothers/daughters undeniably play a role in the family, they are not included in these five human relationships. I will discuss this issue in Chapter 5. In addition, this translation is indebted to Muller’s (1991/2005) version of *The Doctrine of the Mean*.

3.3.1.1 Three Major Familial Relationships

I now begin to examine the principles Confucius especially suggests to practice between the major family members. “Filial responsibility (*xiào*孝) and fraternal deference (弟) are the root of *rén*” (*Analects*, 1. 2*). Youruo’s remark, Confucius’s disciple, shows the ways sons treat their parents and younger brothers the elder ones, while on the other hand, it indicates the importance of kinships in the Confucian doctrine of *rén*. Look at filial responsibility first. Although Confucius, like the idea of *rén* (仁), does not define the term filial responsibility in his doctrine, he offers some clues in response to people’s inquiries. The term of filial responsibility occurs almost twenty times in the *Analects*. Based on these conversations, the connotation of the term can be summarized as deference to parents anytime with no contrary to the rules of propriety (*lǐ*礼) (*Analects*, 1.6, 1.7, 2.5, 4.18), with a dutiful heart, serving, burying and sacrificing to them according to the rules of propriety (*Analects*, 1.7, 2.7), attending to their physical well-being (*Analects*, 2.6), and always with a kind and pleasant countenance (*Analects*, 2.8). When the father passes away, the filial son refrains from reforming the ways (*dào*道) of his late father at least three years (*Analects*, 1.11, 4.20).¹⁴ Among these Confucian expectations of filial responsibility, being of a *dutiful* and *respectful*

¹⁴ “Refrains from reforming the ways (*dào* 道) of his late father,” according to *The Doctrine of the Mean*, can be interpreted as continuing the work left by his father or the right principles his late father sticks to (“夫孝者，善继人之职，善述人之事者也”). And, again, we need to keep in mind that this is a patriarchal system and women are excluded from the public world.

heart (*jìng* 敬) is the one that distinguishes serving parents from raising livestock (*Analects*, 2.7). As a consideration that humanizes us, this expectation can be inferred to be the root of filial responsibility.

As to the father' or parents' responsibility, Confucius does not leave many words. Among those conversations, the only deep discussion of parental love/concern is found between Confucius and Zaiwo, who proposes to shorten the mourning period for parents from three years to one, however Confucius doesn't think Zaiwo has a point. He remarks,

Zaiwo really shows a great want of *rén*! It is only after being tended by its parents for three years that an infant can finally leave their bosom. The ritual of a three-year mourning period for one's parents is practiced throughout the state (*tiānxià* 天下). Certainly Zaiwo received this three years of loving care from his parents (*Analects*, 17.21**)!

For Confucius, parents are the ones who unconditionally give us care with selfless love in our infancy. This love/concern is out of a biological connection that can never be intentionally abandoned. It would not be wrong to infer that this *fatherly loving-kindness* (*fùcí* 父慈) will be all along with one's growth; even when one enters the adult world, leaving his parental home, it will not vanish. Wherever one goes, one's parents are always concerned how he is and if he leads a good life.

Thereupon as children, in Confucius's view, we owe our parents a debt of gratitude, for their nurturing, caring in bringing us up and serving as a role model in cultivating our good characters.¹⁵ So loving-kindness is on the part of fathers, and filial responsibility the part of sons.

With regard to the elder and younger brother in a family, fraternal deference is suggested for the younger one to keep in mind. It is a respect the elder deserves to have from the younger in the family. The elder brother, like parents, should show his kindness and concern to the younger one. Simply put, they mutually discharge their duties (*The Great Learning*, Chapter 9, p. 332). Given Confucius does not leave much room to the discussion on fraternal deference, I consider it helpful to borrow this expression to more clearly describe elder-younger-brother relation, “*qièqiè* (切切)”, “*sīsī* (悌悌)”, “*yíyí* (怡怡)”, meaning being critical while encouraging, but most importantly maintaining amicableness between each other (*Analects*, 13.28).

If kinship is an essential requirement in the Confucian doctrine of *rén*, the husband-wife relation, to which the early Confucianists from Confucius to Xunzi attach great importance, can be viewed as the basis of all familial relationships. As “The way (*dào* 道) the superior man (君子) follows is found in the life of the

¹⁵ Based on my observation of the *Analects*, the teaching responsibility on the knowledge wise is *mainly* taken on by teachers, not fathers, although there could be exceptions. But, still fathers are responsible for character education, teaching by personal example as well as verbal instruction. Mencius explains why a father may not himself teach his own son from a socio-psychologist perspective. For more details, see *Mencius*, 4:1:18.

married couple, husband and wife, which is the start of the way” (*The Doctrine of the Mean*, Chapter 12*, p. 363). Traditionally, if there is no husband-wife relationship, all other familial relationships will not exist, not even a mention of the ruler-minister and other social relationships. However, the *Analects* does not involve many conversations on this familial relationship. So, what does Confucius think of the husband-wife relation, and is it true that in the ages when women were excluded from the public world, wife is inferior to husband as those anti-Confucianist scholars criticize?

I resort to the *Book of Rites* (*Li Ji* 礼记, Legge, 1967, vol. 2), and find the chapter titled “The Meaning of the Marriage Ceremony” may help me out with these queries. Confucius makes clear the main theme from the very beginning. “The ceremony of marriage was intended to be a bond of *love* between two (families of different) surnames” (Chapter 44, p. 428). Later in the chapter, Confucius more than one time sheds light on the “mutual affection” the husband and wife should hold for each other after the important, cautiously arranged, and highly respected ceremony. Accordingly, it would not be wrong if I infer that *love* and *respect* are indispensable elements in the husband-wife relation. I would like to share the passage below to help both of us form more sense of this husband-wife relation:

The father gave himself the special cup to his son [the bridegroom], and ordered him to go and meet the bride; it being proper that the male should take the first step (in all the arrangements). The son, having received the order, proceeded to meet his bride. Her father, who had been resting on his mat and leaning-stool in the ancestral temple, met him outside the gate and received him with a bow, and then the son-in-law entered, carrying a wild goose [a present given to the bride, my interpolation]. After the (customary) bows and yieldings of precedence, they went up to the hall, when the bridegroom *bowed twice to the bride* and put down the wild goose. Then and in this way he received the bride from her parents. After this they went down, and he went out and took the reins of the horse of her carriage, which *he drove for three revolutions of the wheels*, having handed the strap to assist her in mounting. He then went before, and waited outside his gate. When she arrived, *he bowed to her* as she entered. They *ate together* of the same bowl, and *joined in sipping from the cups of the same melon*; thus showing that they now formed one body, were of *equal rank*, and *pledge to mutual affection* (Chapter 44*, p. 429-30, emphasis added).

From the preceding narrative of the partial details in the marriage ceremony, we may conclude a few viewpoints Confucius would agree with. Both the bridegroom's repeated bows before and after the bride stepping into their bridal chamber, and driving the carriage for his bride in person indicate a high respect for the bride, or the wife. Next, looking at the term "equal rank," my thinking tells me

that both the husband and the wife are equally valued in the family with no hint of superiority or inferiority applied to either of them. Or, we can think about the expression of forming “one body” in the way we consider our own body, human body. For instance, we could hardly make the claim that brain is superior to eye, or the liver is inferior to the heart. Each human organ performs a specific function or group of functions, and all different organs work together to help the human body keep a balanced, healthy state. We do not favor any of them while ignoring some of others lest we may damage the natural environment they are used to. What we do is to treat them equally and let them play their roles properly. This will help shape a harmonious physiological environment for an animate, healthy human body on which all the organs rely. If the preceding reasoning is correct, it is natural and normal that Confucius is the proponent of *equality* as a principle in the husband-wife relation.¹⁶ Therefore, even though women are not included in the public world, Confucius does not hold a belief that women or wives are inferior to men or husbands. Situated in a patriarchal social system while not associating himself with hierarchy, Confucius wisdom and courage commands admiration!

¹⁶ Although I believe that Confucius by no means discriminates against women and can feel his sincere respect for women through the works I have read, still people may not think so and will argue with me by quoting Confucius's remark, “It is only girls and petty persons who are the most difficult to behave to” (*Analects*, 17.25). In response, I would like to suggest those reader to be aware of two things. First, the book of *Analects* is not a full, well-structured philosophy paper, but a collection of the excerpted conversations, most of which are not provided with a context where the conversation occurs. Second, when Confucius makes this comment, he was disappointed by a prince and the woman the prince indulged. It is not Confucius's purpose to despise all women in this remark, but those who are good at playing politics and bring the state into chaos. See Pang (2005) for more details of the historical context of the Confucius's remark.

This thinker continues to propose in the next passage to “establish the distinction to be observed between man and woman, and appropriateness (*yi* 义) to be maintained between husband and wife,” which in another chapter he reasons as, ‘Husband and wife have their separate functions’ (Chapter 44, p. 430). When husband and wife function appropriately they maintain the principle of appropriateness. Twenty-five hundred years ago, the husband was to preside over all that was external, or say *public*, and the wife over all that was internal, or say *domestic*. Confucius fully recognizes the value of the role a wife plays in a family for “when the internal harmony was secured, the long continuance of the family could be calculated on.” It is the times that decide the division of duty between husband and wife, and even the distribution of political power. However, it is Confucius’s truism that men and women are of equal human dignity, and need to be respectful to each other. No wonder he names wife the “fitting partner of her husband,” and believes that even the rulers should, like the common people, treat their wife with respect and love in the *Book of Rites* (Chapter 27, vol. 2).

If we think through Confucius, we will not take men as superior to women in terms of different roles they play in the society, although the latter are assigned to take on all household affairs and not prepared for being public officials. Confucius cannot go against the flow of history, while he remains faithful to equal human dignity of men and women. (I will come back to this gender issue in Chapter 5).

Between husband and wife, according to Confucius, there should be mutual respect and affection, and shared responsibility in order to maintain a harmonious and happy family, which constitutes the foundation of a peaceful and prosperous state.

Up to this point, following Confucius's lead, we have looked into three major familial relationships, father-son, elder brother-younger brother, and husband-wife. Chinese men, or fathers, fulfill the ideal of *rén* in raising a child, being a role model and developing a good relation to the child. In returning this love, children should accordingly show their respect to parents and give them full support, attending to their physical well-being, protecting and providing for them, and having them spend their remaining years in happiness. These efforts embodying human concern (*rénqíng* 人情) and human appropriateness (*yì*, 人义) are part of the practice of *rén*. “[B]etween father and son, there should be affection” (*Mencius*, 3:1:4). This is a two-way communication. Mencius makes a concise however precise remark on father-son relations. The principle of mutual affection also applies to elder and younger brother, another pair of kinship. The younger one treats the elder one with fraternal deference, and the latter treats the former with brotherly concern and caring. As to the husband-wife relationship, it grounds all other relationships in the society. It is Confucius's hope to have husband and wife establish a stable, supportive, and long-lasting relation of mutual respect and

affection. They are life partners for each other, sharing different responsibilities in a family. Chinese husband provides for the family by being a good scholar to make an official, farming industriously, or engaging in business; he shows respect and love for his wife and fills the home with warmth and peace.

In summation, I would like to borrow the verses from “Minor Festal Songs” (*xiǎoyǎ* 小雅), *the Book of Poetry*, which is also cited by Confucius in *The Doctrine of the Mean*, “Happy union with wife and children is like the chord of zithers and lutes. When there is concord among brethren, the harmony is delightful and enduring. *Thus* may you regulate your family, and enjoy the pleasure of your wife and children” (Chapter 15*, p. 369). Confucius suggests that if one is seeking the art of living together within a family, one can think about music. The beautiful music results from perfectly harmonizing different musical tones.

3.3.1.2 The Extended Familial Relationships

Is it feasible for us to be able to treat other people in a way we treat our family members? Confucius’s answer will be a positive one. But how can we extend the familial relationship to the bigger community, namely the state and the whole world? Confucius has discussed this topic with many inquirers, from the dukes of different states to those ministers and his own disciples. His responses can be understood in three dimensions.

First, Confucius takes the sensibility of the family ethics as the foundation of all virtuous practice as Youruo (Confucius's disciple) remarks that filial responsibility and fraternal deference are the root of *rén* (*Analects*, 1.2*). This helps to explain why Confucius compares the pursuit of way (*dào* 道) to what takes place in traveling and climbing, “when to go to a distance we must first traverse the space that is near, and in ascending a height, when we must begin from the lower ground” (*The Doctrine of the Mean*, Ch 15, p. 369). If translated to the daily words we use, this claim becomes, “Great oaks from little acorns grow”. For Confucius, it is a rare thing for someone who has a sense of filial and fraternal responsibility to have a taste for offending against their superiors (*Analects*, 1.2). Obviously, this thinker does not take the practice of the family ethics only as personal or familial, but also social if we think about the influence of this practice on the formation of human beings' character, which in turn affects the way human beings behave in the society.

Next, it will be consistent with what Confucius proposes if one thinks that one's own person, wife and children, these three things are an image of what is true with the whole other people.¹⁷ So what one needs to do is to simply “take his

¹⁷ This idea comes from the *Book of Rites*, where Confucius illustrates how he looks at the self and parents. As “[A man] is in his person a branch from his parents; – can any son but have this self respect? If he is not able to respect his own person, he is wounding his parent. If he wound his parents he is wounding his own root; and when the root is wounded, the branches will follow it in its dying” (chapter 27 “Questions of Ai Gong”). For Confucius, it is the parents who bring us into the world. Therefore we have no right to hurt ourselves, but have ourselves cultivated, take the responsibility to return our parents' love and care, preside at the sacrifices in the ancestral temple and continue the posterity of the former sages.

kindly heart [towards the family members], and exercise it towards others” (*Mencius*, 1:1:7*, p.457). “Reach the love of and respect for one’s own person, one’s own children and one’s own wife to the persons of others, the children of others, and the wives of others” (*Book of Rites*, Chapter 27, p. 266). In this context, the state/world has been entirely converted into an extended enlarged family. It reminds me of a similar picture from the Grand Union, “everyone loves and respects his or her own parents and children, as well as the parents and children of others”. This love and respect are based on the practice of them with the family members as we have explored before.

Now it is time to take up the last two relationships that Feng (1976) observes “can be conceived of in terms of the family”: ruler-minister, and friend-friend (p. 21). If the ultimate aim for practicing the family ethics is to reach the harmony of family, so is the extension of the family ethics to the state, but an upper level, the harmony of the state. When Zeng Zi looks at “In order rightly to govern the state, it is necessary first to regulate the family” in the *Great Learning*, he interprets Confucius’s idea thus,

There is filial responsibility (*xiào* 孝): – therewith the sovereign should be served.

There is fraternal deference: – therewith elders should be served. There is

loving-kindness (*cí* 慈): – therewith the multitude should be treated. In the

Announcement to Kang, it is said “Act as if you were watching over an infant” (Chapter 9*, pp. 329-30).

This explanation is a fine summary of the application of Confucian familial relations to the state, a bigger community. Filial responsibility, fraternal deference and loving-kindness can be extended to the members outside the family boundary. As to what these conversions mean to the ruler-minister and friend-friend relations, Confucius gives his deep thought to this issue.

Let me start with the ruler-minister relation. If we look at the ruler-minister relationship in a broad sense, it also can be taken as the superior-inferior or senior-junior relationship that people have to face in their everyday life. Confucius gives his advice on this relationship when the Duke Ding of Lu consults him about how a ruler should employ his ministers, and how ministers should serve their ruler, “A ruler should employ his minister according to *the rules of propriety (lǐ 礼)*; ministers should serve their ruler by *doing their utmost (zhōng 忠)*” (*Analects*, 3.19, emphasis added).¹⁸ This reply connotes much more than just two short statements we are looking at. First of all, take note of the order of Confucius’s expression. Rulers go *first* followed by ministers. This means doing ministers’

¹⁸ About *zhōng* (忠), there are different versions of translation in English, including faithful, loyalty and doing one’s utmost/best. I choose the last one, because when the term *zhōng* first occurs in the book of *Analects*, Zhu, Xi (2005) annotates it as ‘doing one’s utmost’. Therefore, I consider that *zhōng*, doing one’s utmost, can be given different specific meanings according to the different context it is situated. Confucius also remarks that serve rulers according to *lǐ* (*Analects*, 3.18). So, I would like to take *zhōng* as one of the embodiments of *lǐ*, and actually, it is also a general principle we apply in the way we deal with each other. I will take up this point of view later in this chapter.

utmost has a prerequisite that they are treated with the rules of propriety by rulers. In other words, no rules of propriety from rulers, no doing one's utmost from ministers. Next, in the world of Confucius, *filial responsibility* can be converted to *doing one's utmost* on the part of ministers. Confucius is convinced that if a person is of a dutiful and respectful heart to his parents, he is able to do his utmost to his ruler, or superior, when he is treated with the rules of propriety. And, Confucius leaves the rein to our further elaboration when he applies *the rules of propriety* to the way rulers or superiors deal with their ministers, or inferiors. Confucius does not specify the rules of propriety rulers need to follow after he gives his advice to the Duke of Ding. This is because, for a ruler of the state, *the rules of propriety* may vary depending on the context he is situated.

First and foremost, as Zeng Zi interprets in the *Great Learning*, 'loving-kindness' (*cí* 慈) is a basic requirement in the way a ruler treats his ministers. Confucius grounds his claim in the assumption that a ruler is like a father that nurtures his children and protects them as well as his wife by providing housing and a secure situation in the social group, so his responsibility is not only ruling the state but also taking the well-being of his people into consideration and striving for the harmony of the state like a big family (“乐只君子，民之父母,” *The Great Learning*, Chapter 10, p. 336). This fatherly loving-kindness providing the foundation of the harmony in a family will likewise brings out a harmony in the

state. It is Confucius's belief that a ruler can extend his fatherly loving-kindness to his people as he says,

“[T]he cultivation of his own character ... affection towards his parents; *respect* towards the great ministers; *kind and considerate treatment* of the whole body of officers; dealing with the mass of the people as his own children (“敬大臣也 ; 体群臣也 ; 子庶民也,” *The Doctrine of the Mean*, Chapter 20*, p. 387).

Therefore, in addition to loving-kindness, ‘respect’ is another requirement applied in the way a ruler treats his ministers. As to this point, Mencius’s insight helps us further understand how Confucius extends the familial relationships to the art of governing,

When the ruler regards his ministers as his hands and feet, his ministers regards their ruler as their belly and heart; when he regards them as his hounds and horses, they regard him as any other man; when he regards them as the mud or as weeds, they regard him as a robber and an enemy (*Mencius*, 4:2:3*, pp. 733-734).¹⁹

Traditionally, if we say regarding one as our hands and feet, we make the point that we treat one as our brother. In the *Book of Poetry*, the first major collection of Chinese poems edited by Confucius, there are a great deal of works that indicate

¹⁹ According to Legge (1966), “as his hands and feet,” – i.e., with kindness and attention; “as their belly and heart,” – i.e., with watchfulness and honor; “as his dogs and horses,” – i.e., without respect, but feeding them.

the importance and intimateness of elder-younger-brother relationship. Therefore, brother to us is like the hands and feet to our body. Consequently, if the age difference between the ruler and his minister is like that between elder and younger brothers, respect or, more specifically, *fraternal deference* and *brotherly concern and caring* can be applied to this ruler-minister relationship. For Confucius, this fraternal deference and brotherly concern and caring which lead to familial harmony will equally generate the union of the government like a family that is essential to the achievement of the harmony of the state.

In summation, for Confucius, the principles employed between the major family members can be applied to the art of government, particularly the ruler-minister relationship, contain loving-kindness, fraternal deference, brotherly concern and caring, and filial responsibility. And, importantly, if a ruler does not treat his ministers with equal human dignity and kindness, he should not expect respect from his ministers, who do not have to do their utmost to serve the ruler either. No wonder Mencius makes the comment, “By the sages, the human relations are perfectly exhibited” (*Mencius*, 7:1:2, pp. 692-93). A real ruler is one who is able to figure out the human relations very well, and hence transforms the state into a big family.

I now move to take up the last relationship that also “can be conceived of in terms of the family,” friend and friend (Fung, 1976, p. 21). Personal friendship is

another important consideration shown in Confucian doctrine. As Zeng Zi says, “The friendship helps the superior man (*jūnzǐ*, 君子) achieve *rén*” (*Analects*, 12.24). Why friendship? I hope my reader still remember ‘*qièqiè*’ (切切), ‘*sī*’ (悝), ‘*yí*’ (怡怡), which Confucius uses to describe the elder-younger-brother relation, actually they are also applicable in the friend-friend relationship but with an emphasis on ‘*qièqiè sī*’, namely being critical as well as encouraging to each other. This is a criterion for being a friend, which implies that we by no means treat everyone as our friend without differentiation. In the words of Confucius,

Having three kinds of friends will be a source of personal improvement; having three other kinds of friends will be a source of personal injury. One stands to be improved by friends who are upright, who are trustworthy in word, and who are broadly informed; one stands to be injured by friends who are ingratiating, who feign compliance, and who are glib talkers (*Analects*, 16.4**)

It is obviously not a wise choice if we have the ‘three other kinds of friends’ in our life. According to Confucius, we develop true friendship with people who are of moral and intellectual virtues, from which we benefit ourselves. This is consistent with his previous remark of being ‘*qièqiè sī*’ with friends. Since a true friendship is such a valuable acquisition to our growth, Confucius takes friend-friend relationship seriously, saying, “To have friends like-minded come from distant

quarters – is this not a source of enjoyment” (*Analects*, 1.1)? For Confucius, every friend of ours has his own strength we need to be aware of and learn from (*Analects*, 1.8).²⁰ He even insists, “[W]here the superior man (*jūnzǐ*, 君子) does not neglect his old friends, the people will not be indifferent to each other” (*Analects*, 8.2**).²¹

Thus in Confucius’s vision, a long-standing and supportive friendship facilitates closeness between people outside of the family boundary and makes them obligated to each other as they are in the family. This friendship proves the possibility that two originally unrelated people can hold to each other and develop themselves together. With this friendship in mind and looking back at his ideal of the Grand Union, we can hardly deny it is Confucius’s hope that someday we will own a world of no distance and apathy between people that are not of kin.

Since the superior man never fails reverentially to order his own conduct, is deferential to others and observant of the rules of propriety (*lǐ* 礼), everyone within

²⁰ My translation of this Confucius’s saying is entirely different from Legge’s (1966), and Ames’ and Rosemont’s (1998) versions, which interpret it as “Do not have as a friend anyone who is not as good as you are”. This version of translation presents a conceited, disrespectful and arrogant Confucius, which is in conflict with the one I observe. For a modest, prudent and well-informed thinker like Confucius who makes the claim, “Even when walking in the company of two other persons, I am bound to be able to learn from them” (*Analects*, 7.22*), it will be contradictory to his own philosophy if he raised that point. It is Confucius’s belief that every individual serves as a source of knowledge to us, since “Identifying their strengths, I follow them, and identifying their weaknesses, I reform myself accordingly” (*Analects*, 7.22**). Confucius will never deem himself superior to others and let himself miss any opportunity to learn from others. If he did that, he was heading in an opposite direction to the pursuit of *rén*. Zeng Zi, Confucius’s disciple, once remarks, “[I]t is that there are few people in the world who love and at the same time know the weaknesses of the object of their love, or who hate and yet know the strengths of the object of their hatred” (*The Great Learning*, Chapter 8). Confucius can not be more agreeable to this viewpoint.

²¹ *Jūnzǐ* 君子 can also be understood as people who are in high positions.

the Four Seas [meaning the world, my interpolation] is his brother. Why would the superior man worry over having no brothers (12.5*)?

Through proposing the analogy of friendship to the relation of brothers, Zixia shows his understanding of the essence of Confucian doctrine, that friendship as supportive as your kinship is an extension of the elder-younger-brother relationship to the society. In this bigger community, every individual shares a heart of *rén* and implements it in their everyday life. For Confucius, friendship is by choice, not by birth. However, similar to any kind of kinship where either party needs to take on his responsibility in order to live an authentically humanizing person-to-person relationship in the pursuit of *rén*, friendship needs the commitments from the two people who choose to live this relationship properly and make improvements in the pursuit of *rén* by developing a true friendship. If there is anything that helps friendship go smooth and last long, that must be, “take his kindly heart [towards the family members], and exercise it towards others” (*Mencius*, 1:1:7*, p. 272). Loving-kindness, fraternal deference and brotherly concern and caring can be possibly applied to this friend-friend relationship. Therefore, comparing friendship to the relation of brothers is natural and normal if we think through Confucius.²²

²² As women's role is assigned to the domestic sphere in the times Confucius lived, when extending the familial relationship to the society, Confucius does not talk about women or any relationship between women. Again, as indicated before, I will come back to this gender issue in Chapter 5.

After exploring the extension of the familial relationship to the ruler-minister and friend-friend relations, I now start approaching the last aspect in Confucian doctrine that supports the belief: people can treat each other in a way as they treat their family members. Confucius puts his effort into the discussion on the art of governing as much as he does into the inquiry about the ideal of *rén* in his teaching. There are two reasons for this arrangement based on my observation. First, many people, including the dukes and ministers, consult Confucius about this topic, how to rule the state effectively. This is a big issue, even today, as well as a huge problem in the Spring and Autumn Period when Confucius lived if we look back at the history; on the other hand, this problem becomes a motivation for Confucius to establish the first private school in China's history to cultivate virtuous and capable officials for the government. This topic is given full attention as the times require.

As to the other reason, it goes to Confucius himself, who is convinced that the ruler, including those in administration, is one who not only runs the country, but also serves as a *role model* to the masses as well as the officials at a lower level.

Confucius once proposes the point, "Let your evinced desires be for what is good, and the people will be good" (*Analects*, 12.19). The morality of the ruler, according to Confucius, is equally infectious. With this in mind, transforming the state into an extended, enlarged family is not impossible in Confucius's vision.

Since “Filial responsibility (*xiào* 孝) and fraternal deference (*tí* 弟) are the root of *rén*” (*Analects*, 1. 2*) as examined earlier, Confucius correspondingly raises, “Where those who are in high positions (*jūnzǐ* 君子) are earnestly committed to their parents, the people will aspire to *rén*” (*Analects*, 8. 2*). This is equal with the idea that when the ruler, as a father, a son, and a brother, is a model, then the people imitate him (*The Great Learning*, Chapter 9, p. 333). As a result, if the ruler hopes he and the people share one heart and treat each other as their own beloved family members, foremost he needs to extend the familial relationships to the state by setting himself as an example. In the words of Confucius, “dealing with the mass of the people as his own children” (*The Doctrine of the Mean*, Chapter 20), and “regarding his ministers as his hands and feet” (*Mencius*, 4:2:3). Therefore, in order to achieve the ideal of Grand Union, the ruler has to make his loving-kindness, fraternal deference, brotherly concern and caring, and even filial responsibility as mentioned in the Grand Union approachable to people outside of his family, such as the people who work for him, the parents and children of others, as well as his friends. In Confucius’s view, when “the ruler being a sage can look on all under the sky [means *the world*, my interpolation] as one family,” the rest of the people will do so (the *Book of Rites*, Li-yun, Ch 9, p. 379). By then, what we achieve is not a state of peace, but a family-like state (国家) of peace.

We are to infer, then, that Confucius holds a belief that the influences of the family from the top certainly and rapidly extends to the entire state. This conviction in the power of the influence of the ruler is largely based on the proposition Confucius holds in the Grand Union: the ruler is not chosen by the hereditary system but elected based on merit, intellectual, moral and capable. Hence, the ruler owns prestige and faith among the people (*Analects*, 1.8). “If you [the administer, my interpolation] lead by doing what is proper, who would dare do otherwise?” and “If you [Jikang, a minister of the state of Lu, my interpolation] are filial and at the same time treat your children with loving-kindness, the common people will do their utmost for you” (*Analects*, 12.17**, 2.20).

All in all, the influence of the ruler who sets himself as an example facilitates the extension of the familial relationship to the state. By making this argument, Confucius assumes that every individual shares a heart which takes *rén* as pursuit. Fingarette (1983) elaborate this effect of modeling as,

[T]he basic Confucian image is that of the ideal model – living the life-forms of highest humanity – emanating an utterly non-coercive but powerfully attractive power to those with human potential, who in turn, inspired by this model, can make a dedication to learn to participate in that model form of life by mastering it and living it with art (p. 347).

Up to this point, in the attempt to bring some of Confucius's key ideas into sharp focus, I have been reluctantly resorting to an important simplification of Confucius's theory. I hope the following summary will help to clarify what I have discussed and make sure I didn't mislead anyone. At the outset, I introduced the five social relationships, namely ruler-minister, father-son, husband-wife, elder-younger brothers and friend-friend, followed by an examination of the relations between those major family members, such as father and son, husband and wife, and elder brother and younger. Then I moved to look at the extension of the familial relationship to the state, the bigger community by laying out Confucius's beliefs that the sensibility of the family ethics is the foundation of all virtuous practice, one takes one's kindly heart towards the family members, and exercise it towards others, and the morality of the ruler is infectious as I just wrapped up. At the same time, I also had my attention drawn to the transformation of the ruler-minister and friend-friend relationships to the familial ones which indicates a successful conversion of the state into an enlarged familial community.

If anyone has formed the idea that in Confucius's vision every individual lives for the sake of the family, or state, the bigger community, they probably get a false impression. Confucius never makes this remark in the works I have read. Think about the formation of the Chinese character for *rén*, 仁. In Confucian picture, what makes us truly human is to live a person-to-person relationship where we

appropriately behave according to the role we are in. As he says, “The ruler *ruler*, the minister *minister*, the father *father*, and the son *son*” (*Analects*, 12.11*, emphasis added). Unlike the more popular one – “the ruler is ruler” or “the ruler must rule” – my translation is in admittedly non-standard English, however conveys the point closer to what Confucius intends to propose. The classical Chinese text expresses the point with elegant economy by simply using for each concept the same written character twice in immediate succession, the first used being as noun, the second being as verb, which I cannot make in proper English. Consequently, for instance, to be a ruler is not the possession of that status, but an activity, behaving properly as ruler. In other words, if the ruler does not *ruler*, i.e., who does not act *in relation to the minister* as ruler should, he cannot be viewed as an authentic or qualified ruler at all. The same is applied to ministers, fathers and sons. This insight leads to another significant Confucian idea, that inherited status is neither sufficient nor necessary to be a ruler, which perfectly reflects Confucius’s ambition for a revolution in the government as mentioned in the Grand Union, electing virtuous and capable people to public office.

So I may properly interpret 仁, the Chinese character for *rén* as *that I can never become a truly human being (instead of “a moral person”) without another human. Because of another human, with whom I build a proper relationship that I live, where we both develop with the support from each other, my living becomes*

truly human.²³ I would like to borrow *the ten qualities which humans consider appropriate* (*shí yì* 十义) from Confucius to summarize the way we treat each other or more specifically the duties we need to take on in living such interpersonal relationships:

loving-kindness (*cí* 慈) on the part of the father, and filial responsibility (*xiào* 孝) on that of the son; gentleness or gentle caring (*liáng* 良) on the part of the elder brother, and fraternal deference (*tì* 弟) on that of the younger; appropriateness or righteousness (*yì* 义) on part of the husband, and correspondence (*tīng* 听)²⁴ on that of the wife; kindness (*huì* 惠) on the part of elders, and deference (*shùn* 顺) on that of juniors; *rén* (仁) on the part of the ruler, and doing one's utmost (*zhōng* 忠) on that of the minister (*Book of Rites*, vol. 1, Chapter 9 Li Yun, pp. 379-80*).

For Confucius, we all live relationships we can not escape as a social being, and where we have to make our commitments. To be a father is not because one has that title, but he properly lives with his children and treats them as a father should. On the other hand, accordingly the son needs to engross himself in this relationship, behave properly, in order to be entitled to the status. And, among the ten qualities which humans consider appropriate, the senior always set

²³ Fingarette (1983) provides good insights into this topic.

²⁴ After pondering the description of the husband-wife relation in the chapter of "The Meaning of the Marriage Ceremony" from the *Book of Rites*, which includes equal rank, mutual affection and righteousness/appropriateness (*yì*) between the couple, I decided to render the term *tīng* (听) as *correspondence*. Given the couple as life partners, who share responsibility of equal importance in the family, I don't think 'submission,' a more popular translation of *tīng*, expresses Confucius's point well.

themselves as a model first, *rén* on the part of the ruler first, then doing one's utmost shown on that of the minister, for instance.

By diving into the major social relationships developed by Confucius, we envisioned this thinker's ideal human society, namely a community of familial interpersonal relationships. However if this picture of human warmth and peace leaves the impression of subservience, docility, unity without individuality among human society, it must make Confucius feel wronged. This would be a false impression, since what Confucius holds is just the opposite if anyone still remembers the Confucian individual of strong self-consciousness, self-determination and an independent will of his own that I explored at the outset of the chapter. In actuality, Confucius also addresses some general principles about the way people treat each other in his theory, which I would like to attend to in the following section. Whatever relationship people live, these apply to them.

3.3.2 The General Principles

In addition to the specific attention Confucius gives to the five major social relationships, there are some other general principles we may need to look into. It is beyond my power as well as limited to the space I have in this project that I can cover all of, but I will sketch the main considerations Confucius has in mind. These principles and the ten qualities which humans consider appropriate (*shí yì*)

十义) we just went over are actually complementary to each other, while they are both in light of the doctrine of *rén* (仁). People can choose to apply either or both of them given the specific situation they are in. The general principles contain harmony, doing one's utmost and the art of *zhōng* and *shù*. I will be taking up these points in their given order.

3.3.2.1 Harmony

Based on the preceding discussion on the five major social relationships, we may infer that in the Confucian doctrine *harmony* is celebrated as the highest cultural achievement. This is a central truth either Confucius or the rest of us will not deny. However, we come across a terminological trap here right away. Does the English word “harmony” exactly express what Confucius has in mind? The Euro-western concept of “Confucian harmony” places too much emphasis on the idea of sameness or hierarchical submission. In point of fact, this too happens to quite a few of people who speak Chinese language and read the original work of Confucius. Unfortunately, this is not the way Confucius uses the term, harmony (*hé*, 和). For this thinker, harmony connotes many things but not “sameness” and “hierarchical submission.” Limited to the space I have, I can only focus my exploration on what harmony means to living together.

First, harmony stands for unity, which “brings about more strength and intelligence by which human beings are empowered and hence are able to

conquer any difficulties” (Mo, 2001, p.197). However, not all associations entail unity. In the words of Confucius, “The superior man unites with others but not cliques” (*Analects*, 2.14*), and “[The superior man] gathers together with others, but does not form cliques” (*Analects*, 15.22**). In making the two statements, Confucius distinguishes the idea of unity from “cliques.” The latter, for instance gangs, which are only based on sameness, selfish interests-oriented, reluctant to interact and communicate with more people outside of them, and hence lead to exclusion, are not the unity we pursue. What Confucius strives for as we have examined is to extend the familial relationship to the whole society, which means exclusion is the last thing he wants to happen. The real unity can only be reached when every individual regards *the world* as one family if we think through Confucius (*Book of Rites*, vol. 1, Chapter 9 “Li Yun”, p. 379).

Although Confucian association, namely unity, is nonexclusionary, it does not mean that people have to change themselves for the sake of association. Confucius once makes a comment below with exclamation, “The superior man cultivates an affable harmony, without being excessively accommodating. – How firm is he in his will” (*The Doctrine of the Mean*, Chapter 10, p. 359*)! The phrase of “without being excessively accommodating” here at least implies two things. First, it involves a sense of principle-orientedness. One cannot give up his/her principle stand, and cater to the other side in order to make association. As to this

point, Youzi, one of Confucius's disciples, helps provide us with more information. He remarks thus, "Of the things brought about by the rules of propriety (*lǐ* 礼), harmony is the most valuable .. [However] to realize harmony just for its own sake without regulating the situation through the rules of propriety (*lǐ* 礼) will not work" (*Analects*, 1.12). As I explained the connotation of *lǐ* in the external forms of Confucian self, *rén* and *lǐ* are two sides of same coin. While *rén* can be taken as well-received value for inner self-cultivation, *lǐ* conveyed through human conduct is the external expression of *rén*, namely proper conduct. With the aid of Youzi, it is clear enough that for Confucius, in the pursuit of harmony, we should by all means stick to the principle we hold, such as *rén* or *lǐ*, and anyone who favors harmony at the cost of principle will never make the real harmony. To be always principle-minded needs wisdom as well as courage. This proposition reminds me of what Confucius expects for a man of *rén* (仁) I looked into earlier, who in no way tries not to offend anybody, but is a wise human being, clear about what to love and what to hate (*Analects*, 17.13, 4.3, 17.24, 14.34). What Confucius presents here reaches the same goal just by a different route, a man seeking harmony is the man of *rén* who is principle-oriented and with a strong will. So, precisely speaking, Confucian harmony stands for *principle-oriented* unity. If we take this idea into consideration, there is no reason that doing one's utmost (*zhōng* 忠) on the part of ministers and filial responsibility (*xiào* 孝) on the part of

the son suggest a sense of being absolutely obedient at the cost of *rén* (仁) or the rules of propriety (*lǐ* 礼). Hierarchical submission is excluded from Confucian harmony.

Next, “without being excessively accommodating” involves a respect for individuality. According to Confucius, we should not change our individuality to meet the requirement of conformity. This stand is further clarified in the statement, “The superior man (*jūnzǐ* 君子) seeks *concord* not sameness; petty persons, then are the opposite” (*Analects*, 13.23*). In this context, I prefer to translate *harmony* as “*concord*” not “agreement.” This rendering is a considered choice.

Today, most of the people equate harmony with agreement that indicates no conflict or diversity. But it would be a mistake if we ascribe this indication to Confucius. By no means does Confucius, who does not favor sameness at all, teach that *harmony* gives no room to *discrepancy*. In the mind of Confucius, harmony more emphasizes a state of chording, a combination of pitches sounded simultaneously, instead of being identical.²⁵ Therefore Confucian harmony by no means signifies sameness. In actuality, the earlier differentiation between harmony and sameness can be traced back to the end of Western Zhou Dynasty when Shibo, a senior minister, analyzed the trend of the times for the Duke of

²⁵ Confucius loves to compare human relationships to playing music because of his strong interests in music. People probably recognize the following quotation Confucius cites from “Minor Festal Songs” (小雅), the *Book of Poetry* to describe his ideal relations of husband and wife, father and son, and elder brother and younger. “Happy union with wife and children is like the chord of zithers and lutes. When there is concord among brethren, the harmony is delightful and enduring” (*The Doctrine of the Mean*, Chapter 15*, p. 369).

Zheng (郑桓公) and pointed out that favoring sameness over harmony would let a state perish. Shibo expressed his idea thus, “Harmonization is the principle of producing everything on earth while sameness gives no hope to the birth of new things” (*Guo Yu* · Zheng Yu, n.d.). Then, he used the examples of the five elements,²⁶ flavors of spices, music playing and so on to support his argument: it is because of the different constitutive elements, tastes and sounded tones working in concert that we have a world of variedness, alternative tastes, and euphonious music; conversely, provided there is only one sounded tone, one color or taste, only one thing without its opposite, the world undeniably becomes monotonous, dull, where there is no way we can figure out the difference between things, compare and optimize things, and hence make progress. Therefore, harmony (*hé* 和), in the view of Shibo, leading to continuing growth implies *diversity* and even contraries disregarding sameness.

Another record in history that helps us look at the difference between harmony and sameness from another angle is from the book *Zuo Commentary to the Spring and Autumn Annals* Zhao 20 (左传·昭公二十年). About two hundred years later, Yanzi, the prime minister of Qi, carried on Shibo’s stand and had it focused on individual uniqueness and the process of coordination or harmonization,

²⁶ They are metal, wood, water, fire and earth, held by the ancients to compose the physical universe.

Harmony is like making thick soup. One uses water, fire, vinegar, sauce, salt, and plum to cook fish and meat, and burned firewood and stalks as fuel for the cooking process. The cook blends these ingredients harmoniously to achieve the appropriate flavor. Where it is too bland, he adds flavoring, and where it is too concentrated, he dilutes it with water. When you partake of this thick soup, sir, it lifts your spirits (Legge 1960, volume V, p. 684).²⁷

If a cook only uses water to make soup, probably nobody would enjoy insipidness. The above remark informs us that the tasty flavor of the soup results from the contributions of diverse ingredients of their uniqueness through the effort of the cook's *coordination* or *harmonization*. Correspondingly, harmony of society, like the good taste, is a good life we want for all human beings. What really matter in achieving it are the valuable human individualities, different voices, and the effort to discover and then coordinate them. It is human individuality, like different ingredients, that complements each other in bringing about various possibilities for the future and the hope for the society to grow. It is diversity that provides us with a chance to see differences which enrich our understanding and help us reach a more considerate decision. It is the effort of coordination or harmonization that optimizes human resources and has individuals fulfill their potential that in turn leads to a society of peace and prosperity.

²⁷ This translation is indebted to Ames and Rosemont (1998), p. 255.

With the help of the preceding discussion, we are to infer that in addition to *principle-oriented unity*, by proposing “The superior man (*jūnzǐ* 君子) seeks *concord* (harmony) not sameness,” Confucius’s harmony entails an *effort* to coordinate individuality as well as a respect for it (*Analects*, 13.23*). Therefore, in raising this nonexclusionary associated living which is also full of *individuality* and *vitality*, Confucius actually recommends every individual to take the responsibility to have this concord achieved. First and foremost, don’t try to change or destroy others’ individuality as you would not do that to yourself. After that, establish a conversational relationship with other people in order to know them, both their strengths and weaknesses, and hence you will be clear about what you can learn from them as well as what you can do for them. Next, when you and the other side reach a mutual understanding, you can start to form a complementary relationship to meet each other’s needs. Finally, as long as you commit yourself to this coordinated or harmonized state, you are exposing yourself to an informative and supportive learning environment that breeds the seeds of new things, the hope of continuing growing, developing. This is what we name harmony (*hé* 和) or harmonious human relationship, *maintaining discrepancy and individuality while being in accord and continuing growing*, the one Confucius has in mind.

In short, for Confucius, harmony is an achievement by every individual's effort as well as a principle in guiding people to live together, know each other and accept each other.

3.3.2.2 Doing One's Utmost

I now move to examine the second principle Confucius holds, namely doing one's utmost (*zhōng* 忠). It is true that we approached this idea in the ruler-minister relationship, nevertheless, the following exploration, will present the principle of *doing one's utmost* that people refer to on a general basis and bears more implications.

I start with Zeng Zi, Confucius's disciple, who takes this principle to examine himself everyday. As "In my undertakings on behalf of other people, have I failed to do my utmost?" (*Analects*, 1.4**) Basically, Zeng Zi indicates we employ the principle of *doing one's utmost* in every relationship we build to the people, whom we offer advice or consider a plan for. As to Confucius, he further extends this principle to every relationship we develop with others as the following conversation shows,

Fan Chi inquired about *rén* (仁), and Confucius replied, "At home be deferential, in handling public affairs be respectful, and *do your utmost in your relationships with*

others. Even if you were to go and live among the Yi or Di barbarians, you could not do without such an attitude” (*Analects*, 19.19**, my emphasis).

Confucius’s response reveals that the usage of the principle is restriction-free. Either in your home country or not, whether you are the ruler or the father, there is no exception. The application of this principle does not cause any contradictions with any other principle we discussed earlier. As a matter of fact, *doing one’s utmost* which applies to both sides can be viewed as a bottom line for establishing and maintaining any relationship in Confucian doctrine.

In order to differentiate *doing one’s utmost* from being absolutely obedient, which is completely against the principle of *harmony* we just looked at before, Confucius sheds light on the idea, “Can you do your utmost for anyone without instructing him?” (*Analects*, 14.7*)²⁸ In Confucius’s view, once we find that others do something incorrect, we should by all means point out the mistakes so that they can be corrected. By referring to this standpoint, Confucius suggests to ministers, “Let there be no duplicity when taking a stand against the ruler” (*Analects*, 14.22**). This is also true for children, who need to expostulate with their parents, dissuading them from doing things wrong (*Analects*, 4. 18). In another classic, *Xiao Jing* (孝经, Wang, 1998), a conversational essay where Confucius elaborates the essence of filial responsibility to Zeng Zi, I found the

²⁸ We clarified in the previous section that harmony connotes principle-oriented unity.

same remarks on this idea. “When something is found against appropriateness (*yi*, 义), don’t feel hesitate to correct/criticize” (Chapter 15 “The Duty of Correction”, p. 72). In Confucius’s view, it is the admonitory son, admonitory minister and admonitory friend that prevent us from falling into inappropriateness, while the child who is of all obedience goes against filial responsibility. This Confucian remark is radical in that it shows his concern about power issues involved in senior-junior and superior-inferior relationships. Confucius is afraid that because the senior and the people in a higher position are regarded in society, the junior or the inferior will sacrifice their own opinions and be submissive to the senior or the people in a higher position in order to show their respect for them. Another of his famous remarks, “[I]n striving to be a man of *rén*, do not yield even to your teacher” reflects the same concern and embodies the same spirit this thinker encourages: don’t feel hesitate to express yourself when you feel you are doing the right thing even under pressure (*Analects*, 15.36*). But in order to keep respectful and prevent resentment while to ensure different voices to be expressed, Confucius suggests people to make the expostulation gently, and maybe consider using some techniques (*Analects*, 4.18). Otherwise, as indicated in the discussion of self-determination, humiliation or estrangement might ensue.

In brief, in order to be truly *doing one’s utmost* to others, which means being considerate and preventing others from making mistakes, we surely need to be

truthful as well as respectful, while *absolute obedience* that almost equals deceiving should be definitely abandoned. But, in any term, this principle should be applied in a moderate way so as to achieve the expostulation appropriately, which seems in line with the doctrine of the Mean Confucius incorporates in his teachings. Hence, *doing one's utmost* that integrates emotions with human reason cannot be simply categorized as faithfulness or obedience, and to make it in an appropriate way also demands wisdom as well as courage.

3.3.2.3 The Art of Zhōng and Shù

As to the third principle, it is noticeable that it actually contains two elements, *zhōng* (忠) and *shù* (恕). I choose to look at them together for two reasons. First, Confucius names the two “one thread that binds my way (*dào* 道) together” (*Analects*, 4.15); second, *Zhōng* and *Shù* symbolize two sides of same coin, which helps people determine appropriate conduct in an optimal way.

Let me begin with the art of *shù*. Zeng Zi does not clue us into what *shù* and *zhōng* are after he points out that they are “one thread” running through Confucius’s doctrine (*Analects*, 4.15). Confucius himself explains the art of *shù* in a conversation with Zigong, one of his disciples, thus “What we do not want done to ourselves, do *not* do to others” (*Analects*, 15.24).²⁹ It is a prescription for how to decide an appropriate conduct from the *negative* aspect. Next, let’s look at the art

²⁹ This saying or some similar one also can be found in *Analects*, 12.2 and 5.12.

of *zhōng*. I have rendered *zhōng* (忠) as *doing one's utmost* (for others), which is based on the commentary made by Zhu (2005) as I footnoted earlier. I brought it in as the extension of filial responsibility (*xiào* 孝) on the part of ministers and the second general principle which demanded human reason while refusing absolute obedience that might lend a hand to someone who was doing things inappropriately. I now bring it out again since it works perfectly with the art of *Zhōng* in helping people determine their conducts as appropriate as they can. So, as being complementary to “What we do not want done to ourselves, do *not* do to others,” *doing ones' utmost to others* can be interpreted as “*Establish others* in seeking to establish ourselves and *promote others* in seeking to get there ourselves” (*Analects*, 6.30**, emphasis added). It is a prescription for how to decide an appropriate conduct from the *positive* aspect.

The art of *zhōng* and *shù* which are complementary to each other allows people to “be able to judge of *others* by what is nigh in *ourselves*” in any given situation, which Confucius also takes as a method of *rén* (仁) (*Analects*, 6.30). Therefore, for Confucius, *zhōng* and *shù* are two sides of same coin, a method that takes the *I-and-the-other* relationship as *I-and-I* relationship. It is starting from ourselves, regarding others as exactly ourselves instead of others, and then making a decision, to do or not to do. This is also called ‘empathetic thinking.’ One thing we should be aware of is that when Confucius proposes the art of *zhōng* and

shù, he assumes every individual shares one heart that strives for being *rén* (仁). Actually, the reader might already notice that the Chinese characters for *zhōng* and *shù*, 忠 and 恕, are made up of a shared component, 心, which means heart and mind. Only grounded upon this idea, can human beings use empathetic thinking to treat others with equal human dignity, and to love others and avoid hurting them as you would yourself.

I have discussed the three general principles of determining appropriate conduct in this section. To cover everything is beyond my powers and not possible to do in just one book. These three principles and the discussion of the five major social relationships overlap in a way while are nicely complementary to each other. Importantly, they are consistent with the doctrine of *rén* in spirit. My effort mainly is to expose the reader to a mode of associated living Confucius envisions and his thought-provoking advises. Manifestly, Confucian community is not restricted to “a group of people having common interests” or “the district or locality in which such a group lives” as we customarily use, but it points to an extended, enlarged family. What I have presented are some basic ideas cast in a way that will aid the reader in reading the world in Confucius’s mind and hopefully drawing a collaborative endeavor to explore the question, how we should live together in a Confucian manner?

3.4 Conclusion

I have gone through an adventure of diving into Confucius's world where the self and the community live on a familial person-to-person relationship. In this adventure, Confucian doctrine of *rén* (仁), interpreted as a complete person, leads us to see how a truly human being is defined and how the formation of a familial community starts from filial responsibility and fraternal deference.

Every Confucian *self* owns equal human dignity, the freedom of volition and self-determination. It does not mean that individuals are born as an independent human being, but, quite the reverse, a bearer with socially located statuses such as a son, a father, a neighbor, an official and the like, who acts appropriately in each relationship according to the status he holds. This is part of the reason why our philosophical search light couldn't find Confucius's conception of *community*. According to Confucius, it is the person-to-person relationship that lays the foundation for a familial community of harmony.

Neither this Confucian self nor familial community is something given, but an achievement through self-cultivation as well as construction by referring to the idea of *rén*. Therefore, individuals immerse themselves in extensive learning to gain the ability to reason and interact with another person to form a harmonious relationship and extend the familial relationship to the bigger society. On the part of individuals, this is a process that accumulates wisdom as well as knowledge to

develop themselves, to continually grow, which in return provides ideological prop for morality and human courage to sustain a strong, free will in self-determination. On the part of the community, namely *an association of familial person-to-person-relationship*, this process brings *vitality* as well as *diversity* for human community to sustain its existence and further development. One single person or sameness is impossible to maintain the continuity of the human community as the salt alone cannot make a delicious dish.

Keep in mind, Confucius's ideal world, while allowing room for individual style and originality, holds ever in focus the fact that the individual can have truly human significance only by living in *person-to-person relationships* and transforming the society into a familial community. On the other hand, although this ideal life is visibly and pervasively a life lived in ordered community, it by no means consists of absolute obedience in a sense of hierarchy, or social service in a self-sacrificingly patriotic or altruistic way.³⁰ Confucius is quite explicit about the crucial importance of committing oneself to every relationship where a human being lives, while all the relationships are reciprocally obligating. For instance, the human meaning and value of my daughterhood is not embodied in a merely biological relation, but the ongoing, lived relationship where I conduct properly as

³⁰ As to the responsibility for the well-being of the entire community, or the state, I agree with Fingarette (1983) that it is a role-limited responsibility for the ruler and those currently serving as minister. Confucius does mention, "[The superior man] cultivates himself by bringing accord to the people," but he adds immediately, "Even a Yao or a Shun would find such a task daunting" (*Analects*, 14.42).

daughter to my parents, or, to put it the other way around, where I conduct in a truly daughterly way to my parents, and the parents should perform in the same manner to be truly parental. In our commitment, letting the other party keep his individuality and trying to prevent the other party from making mistakes are also important.

In closing this chapter, I want to have a conclusion of the ideal 'self' and 'community' Confucius envisions. When closing my eyes and immersing myself in the ages of Confucius and those conversations of Confucius's wisdom, what presents in my mind is a scene of associated life of interpersonal relationships, or a *collective/communal* way of living, where individuality and human unity are evenly valued for the sake of both individuals and the human society.

4.0 INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY IN DEWEY'S DEMOCRACY

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented Confucius's ideal society by an excursion into his conceptions of self and community, where human beings live on a familial person-to-person relationship. Confucius regards 'individuality' and 'human unity' as equally important in bringing about a harmonious state of continual growth. I now move to take note of Dewey's philosophy, which, I argue in Chapter 2, is a theory of education that prepares individuals as capable learners to participate in a democratic way of life that is *interpersonal* and *educative* and hence leads to continual growth. In Dewey's (1927/1991) words,

To learn to be human is to develop through the give-and-take of communication an effective sense of being an *individually distinctive member of a community*; one who understands and appreciates its beliefs, desires, and methods, and who contributes to a further conversion of organic powers into human resources and values. But this translation is never finished (p. 154, emphasis added).

Like Confucius's ideal, Dewey's theory puts an emphasis on the development of full humanity or, more specifically, both individuality and shared values and responsibility. This Dewey's ideal gives hope to human unity that in return helps

actualize the best possibilities for individuals as well as for human community. There are two main considerations in Dewey's democracy as he (1927/1991) contends,

From the standpoint of the individual, it consists in having *a responsible share according to capacity* in forming and directing the activities of the groups to which one belongs and in participating according to need in the values which the groups sustain. From the standpoint of the groups, it demands *liberation of the potentialities of members* of a group in harmony with the interests and goods which are common. Since every individual is a member of many groups, this specification cannot be fulfilled except when *different groups interact flexibly and fully in connection with other groups* (p. 147, emphasis added).

This is what Dewey calls "the nature of the democratic idea in its generic social sense," which actually has a three-fold focus rooted in our inalienable sociality. It includes *individuals'* contributions to or influences in human community and the *communal* power that brings out and supports individuals' potentials and development. Individuals and human communities are interdependent by nature similar to ecosystems. In addition, the entire human community, namely the largest group, is actually constituted by an uncountable number of various groups. In order to accomplish this mutuality between individuals and the entire human

community, the third aspects of the focus would be to have all the groups communicate and interact with one another as much as possible. Under these circumstances, we find human unity. To learn more about the details, I will start with an examination of Dewey's conception of individuals followed by that of human community.

4.2 Individual: An Active Self-always-in-the-Making¹

First and foremost, Dewey's individual is not something given, but an accomplishment. He (1920/1964) clarifies this standpoint in his critique of British liberal social philosophy, "The identification of democracy with political democracy which is responsible for most of its failures is, however, based upon the traditional ideas which make the individual and the state ready-made entities in themselves" (pp. 209-10). From this manner, we draw an inference that the 'individual' is something to be *achieved* which is the cornerstone of Dewey's theory on individuals. And for Dewey, this achievement cannot be completed without considering the social context.

Mostly, when we talk of individual and society, both words are used in a vague way. The social, for many people, seems exterior or even antagonistic to the individual. Dewey (1927/1991) spent his lifetime helping people see the

¹ The term 'self-always-in-the-making' is influenced by Thayer-Bacon (in press) and Greene (1995), who inspire me with their "democracy-always-in-the-making."

inseparability of these two words, warning us, “[B]oth words, individual and social, are hopelessly ambiguous, and the ambiguity will never cease as long as we think in terms of an antithesis” (p. 186). He (1973) suggests to “think of society as being constituted of people in many sorts of groupings, rather than being made up of collections of individual persons considered as entities” (p. 73). In other words, individuals are the component elements of diverse groups that constitute the society which is far beyond a simply individual aggregate, not outside of or opposed to the society, and definitely not non-social isolated atoms.

I will start with ‘individuals.’ I want to consider in greater detail the conception of this term that denotes every sense of sociality and individuality. The idea of “groups” will be taken note later on in the discussion of human community.

4.2.1 Individual: A Socially Related Human Being

In Dewey’s mind, it is unequivocal that individuals are social beings by nature due to the influence of Darwinism and George Mead’s (1934) social behavioristic theory as introduced before in chapter 2 when I described the historical and intellectual context where Dewey’s theory is incubated. There are several texts that can serve as ways into Dewey’s position, for he is a prolific writer who lived a long, full life. In one of his classics, *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (1916/1944) gives an articulation on individual growth. It reads,

As matter of fact every individual has grown up, and always must grow, in a *social medium*. His responses grow intelligent, or gain meaning, simply because he lives and acts in a *medium of accepted meanings and values*. Through *social intercourse*, through sharing in the activities embodying beliefs, he gradually acquires a mind of his own (emphasis added, p. 295).

For Dewey, each individual is born immature, helpless, without language, beliefs, ideas, or social standard (p. 2). It is “a social medium” of “accepted meanings and values” where an individual’s mind is rooted and grows through participation in various social activities, interactions. On the other hand, as the component elements of the society, in return individuals’ behavior is by all means bound to have societal influence. In Dewey’s (1973) words, “No man lives to himself; his welfare is part of the welfare of his society; his suffering is always at society’s cost” (p. 115). He supposes for example that a group of people were willing to engage in work which would clearly be injurious to their health. He explains,

Their agreement to undertake such work would not be a mere personal concern of these hundred men, but could harm their whole society. Parents whose health is impaired may give birth to defective children who become a burden on society, or who in their turn may further beget defective children (p. 115).

The positive individual effect on the society will be looked into fully in the discussion on ‘individuality.’

Sociality of individuals is not only embodied in a value-laden social context where we form selfhood and societal influence associated with every personal choice, but also revealed through the fact that we develop *relationships* with others to help us grow since our infancy. As Dewey (1927/1991) notes,

Each human being is born an infant. He is immature, helpless, dependent upon the activities of *others*. That many of these dependent beings survive is proof that others in some measure look out for them, take care of them. Mature and better equipped beings are aware of the consequences of their acts upon those of the young. They not only act conjointly with them, but they act in that especial kind of association which manifests interest in the consequences of their conduct upon the life and *growth* of the young (p. 24, emphasis added).

In this statement, Dewey reveals a relationship between individual growth, or more specifically growth of the young, and “others.” He (1916/1944) uses the image of human infant as a metaphor for immaturity, which indeed designates a “positive force or ability” – the power to grow instead of “void or lack”– he addresses in the classic *Democracy and Education* (p. 42). This image occurs far more than one time in Dewey’s works vividly reminding us of the earliest relations

which we build with others and owing to which we are able to grow rapidly in childhood. The following is another example that helps us see the importance of “others” in the formation of our own experience,

Because of his physical dependence and impotency, the contacts of the little child with nature are mediated by other persons. Mother and nurse, father and older children, determine what experiences the child shall have; they constantly instruct him as to the meaning of what he does and undergoes; the conceptions that are socially current and important become the child’s principles of interpretation and estimation long before he attains to personal and deliberate control of conduct (Dewey, 1920/1964, p. 92).

If we look back on the life journey we have gone through, we will recall without difficulty how many times we resort to others for help when we have questions, confusions, and how important “others” are in exposing us to new adventures and experiences, owing to which our potentials are released toward individual growth, and hence we direct our sail to the next life journey. We are related to “others” since we are born, and because of ‘others’ we gain power to grow and form our own experience.

So, the inference is that sociality is a truism in Dewey’s theory which individuals as relational beings cannot and should not deny. It is in a social

context where individuals develop indispensable relationships between one another and achieve individual growth, which in return brings about a flourishing human society. What Dewey adopts is an organic conception of society that exists for and in individuals. I will further explore this point of view in the following text.

4.2.2 Individual: A Societal Contributor of Individuality

Although Mead's (1934) social behaviorism provides a theoretical foundation for Dewey's conception of individual, unlike his friend and colleague, Dewey's individual does not fall into the trap of "generalized other" or the mind/body and public/private dualisms.²

First, we should not ignore that, as pointed out in Chapter 2 on the introduction of Dewey as a young scholar at college, influenced by natural sciences and the theory of evolution, Dewey comes to form "an impressive picture of the unity of the living creature" in his mind, which was later developed to an organic view of human society (Dewey, 1888/1967). By organism, Dewey means "a thoroughly reciprocal" relationship between the individual and the whole, namely human society (p. 237). Compared to the animal body which is an "incomplete" organic relation, Dewey deems,

² For more about the problems in Mead's theory, see Benhabib (1992), Hanson (1986) and Thayer-Bacon (2003).

[H]uman society represents a more perfect organism. The whole lives truly in every member, and there is no longer the appearance of physical aggregation, or continuity. The organism manifests itself as what it truly is, an ideal or spiritual life, a unity of *will*. If then, society and the individual are really organic to each other, then the individual is society concentrated (p. 237, emphasis in original).

This statement furnishes further insights into Dewey's idea of social organism involving the independent organic individual and the organic whole – “a unity of will.” No wonder in the article, *On Some Current Conceptions of the Term “Self,”* Dewey (1890/1969) aligns himself with Prof. Seth on the notion, “the self *is* the world, and the world is the self. The self and the world are only two sides of the same reality: they are the same intelligible world looked at from two opposite points of view” (p. 57, emphasis original). Based on this conception of social organism, Dewey's individual by no mean embraces the social/individual or public/private dualism. In other words, his individual of every sense of sociality is a being of independence. More importantly, Dewey acknowledges individuals as organically *capable* and *independent* components that participate in the life of the whole. This stand protects his individual from being accused of social determinism or “generalized other,” while it is a contextualization of the word “individual” that should be considered in all its human qualities reflected in everyday life. This concern leads to another perspective with more details that will help us

understand Dewey's active individual: the connotation of individual in Dewey's theory.

The exploration will start right with the meaning of individuals Dewey (1920/1964) proposes, "[I]ndividual' is a blanket term for the immense variety of specific reactions, habits, dispositions and powers of human nature that are evoked, and confirmed under the influences of associated life" (p. 199). Obviously, Dewey does not think that "individual" simply means a single person or one thing. On the contrary, the word "individual" for Dewey contains many elements, human qualities which are gained and presented through social life. This proposition holds a resonance with another definition Dewey (1891/1969b) gives to individuals in his *Outlines of a Critical Theory of Ethics*. In a more concise way, Dewey describes an individual as a person of "individuality" which is "constituted by capacity and environment in their relation to one another" (p. 301, 303). Here, he (1916/1944) refers capacity to ability, a power, a positive force in his classic *Democracy and Education*. If the word "individual" represents an abstract concept, "individuality" is one that fleshes out "individual," making abstraction concrete and practical, like the phrase "a field of selves" or "character."³ So, more strictly speaking, it is individuality that covers both social environment and "the immense

³ Sometimes, Dewey uses the four terms, individual, individuality, personality, self/selfhood and character interchangeably in his works.

variety of specific reactions, habits, dispositions and powers of human nature” for which “capacity” is another name, as shown in figure I below.

Figure 1 reveals that individuality is an outgrowth of the interaction between human capacity and its surroundings, of which I use the line of dashes to show the dynamic characteristic, by which I mean capacity and environment are not two separated fields but permeable and interdependent. One thing that challenges our attention is that individuals do not merely confirm themselves to the particular environment or reproduce it, but always react on it and adjust it to fit themselves to it. What really matters and will be attended to in the following discussion is the word “capacity,” because Dewey’s individual is an active entity and a contributor to the construction of accepted values and beliefs, and hence changes general society.

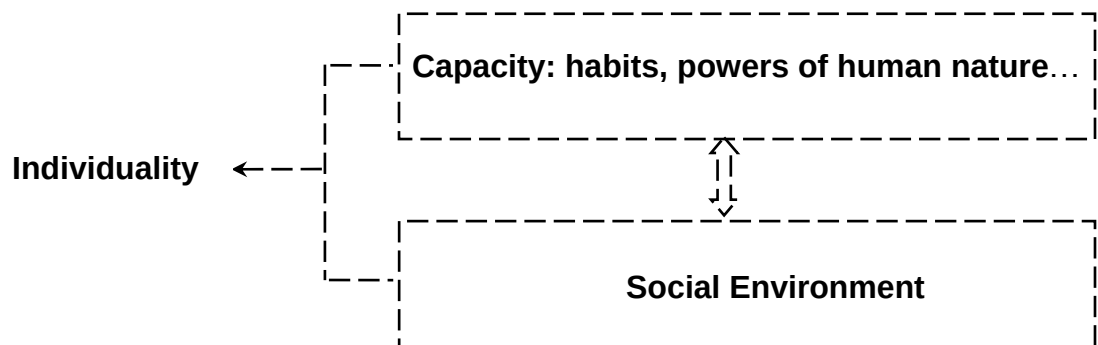


Figure I Components of Individuality

There are several texts that can serve as ways into Dewey's position. Let me proceed with his *Outlines of a Critical Theory of Ethics* (1891/1969b), which contains a detailed description of capacity right after that of "environment" as the other "constituent factor" of individuality. He claims thus,

On the other hand, it is capacity which makes the environment really an environment *to* the individual. The environment is not simply the facts which happen objectively to lie about an agent; it is such part of the facts as may be *related* to the capacity and the disposition and gifts of the agent" (pp. 302-03, emphasis original).

As to why the environment does not just "happen objectively" and how human capacity functions, Dewey continues,

Two members of the same family may have what, to the outward eye, are exactly the same surroundings, and yet each may draw from these surroundings wholly unlike stimulus, material and motives. Each has a different environment, made different by his own mode of selection; by the different way in which his interests and desires play upon the plastic material about him. It is not, then, the environment as physical of which we are speaking, but as it appeals to consciousness, as it is affected by the make-up of the agent. This is the *practical* or *moral* environment. The environment is not, then, what is then and there present in space (p. 303, emphasis original).

This articulation implies that individuals interpret their surroundings differently due to their unique capacities that reconstruct a “practical” environment in individuals’ consciousness, and hence capacity and social environment are actually two sides of the same coin. This interdependent relationship reflects Dewey’s position on the union of mind and world, and moreover distinguishes Dewey’s individual with a stress on the functioning of human capacity from a socially determined individual.

Covered by “capacity,” “habits” is another concept which deserves our attention, and on which Dewey spends lots of writings and efforts when developing his social psychology. When lecturing in China in the early of 1900s, Dewey (1973) talks of habits, “A habit is a regulated pattern of individual behavior derived from prior experience” (p. 85). When a habit becomes common to the members of a society, it marks the birth of a custom. For Dewey, from a socio-psychological perspective, both habits and customs are “the most economical means of getting cumulative value from the common experience of life” (p. 85). This fact is accentuated by the fact of infancy – the fact that each human being begins life completely dependent upon others who pass on their habits to the immature. Therefore, basically, habits are acquired and save us energy and time from thinking “about each of the innumerable actions we perform every day” (p. 85). We form our habits towards assimilation or reproduction due to

our immaturity – the power to grow, for all human being, as Dewey emphasizes – and the need for growth. Meanwhile, Dewey (1916/1944) also notes that immaturity entails two chief characteristics: plasticity and dependence (p. 42). Up to this point, we couldn't help coming up with this question: how is immaturity connected to plasticity and the latter to habits?

To answer this question, I want to turn to another work, *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922/2002), an introduction to Dewey's social psychology that was originally published right after his twenty-six months' visit in China. In this book, "the place of impulse in conduct" is discussed throughout Part II where Dewey refers impulse to "something primitive, yet loose, undirected, initial" (105). Impulses are native to us and unshaped just as our immaturity. They are flexible *starting points* for diverse activities, since "any impulse may become organized into almost any disposition according to the way it interacts with *surroundings*" (p. 95, emphasis added). For instance, curiosity may become scholarly diligence, irresistible eagerness, or pathetic indifference. So it would not be false if we infer that from a socio-psychological perspective, immaturity in actuality takes its roots in human impulses. Indeed, the plasticity of immaturity and that of impulse are practical equivalents. Accordingly, we cannot ignore the most precious part of plasticity that consists in ability to form *habits* of independent judgment and of creative initiation, which Dewey (1916/1944) also names in general "active

habits.” I will take note of active habits in the later discussion. The ultimate outcome, in the view of Dewey (1922/2002), depends on how human *impulses* interweave with each other. This in turn hinges on what the social environment will supply (p. 95).

I want to turn to a different text, though, to consider a significant contribution Dewey makes to the conception of active and contributing individuals of continual growth. In *Democracy and Education* (1916/1944), Dewey proposes the aim of education as continuity/growth of life where individuals and society are both found. He categorizes habits as habituation and active capacities to readjust activity to meet new conditions. The former grounds growth, while the latter constitutes growing. “Active habits”, in Dewey’s words, “involve thought, invention, and initiative in applying capacities to new aims,” and they are rooted in human impulses as discussed above (p. 52-3). The relationships between impulse, habits, environments, and growth can be demonstrated in figure II. From this figure we can see that in the formation of individuality, what really interact with actual environment are our impulses, which are native to us, unshaped, and of ability to develop. It is this plasticity of impulse that furnishes tremendous chances to form habits including the active ones. Both forms of habits are equally important to us, while the active ones more likely represent individuality of varied resourcefulness, initiative and inventiveness as Dewey describes. For Dewey, impulse is a

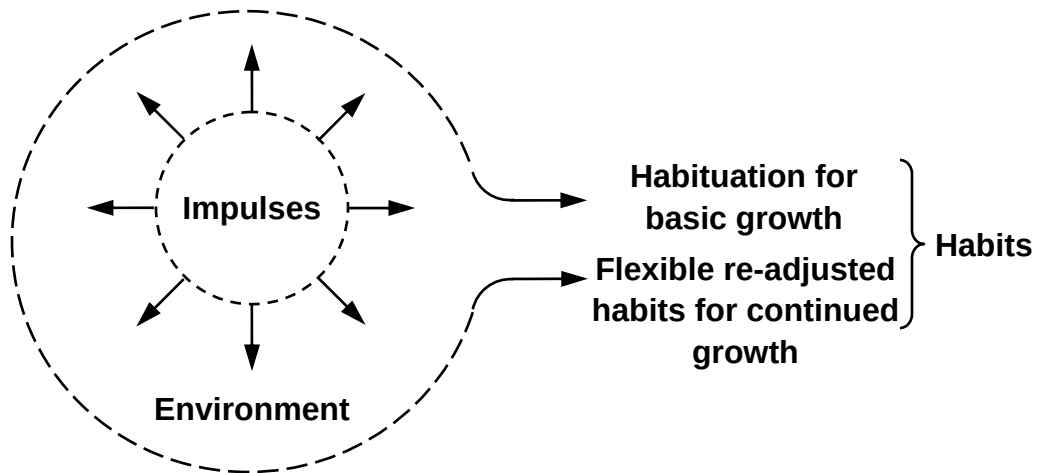


Figure II Formation of Human Habits

valuable source of liberating power to form flexible easily re-adjusted habits — the active habits — to bring in new elements, to meet new situations, and hence to generate growth.

To facilitate active habits and continual growth, Dewey (1916/1944) agrees with George B. Emerson on the valuing of impulses and an intervention of appropriate education: to keep children *natural*, but “stop off their uproar, fooling, and horseplay;” to keep children’s *nature* and “*arm it with knowledge in the very direction in which it points*” (p. 52, emphasis in original). For Dewey, human nature consists in human impulses, and it is shapeable in disposing of the bad habits and the formation of the active ones. For both of them, the room for the play of impulse itself as well as education or instruction is indispensable.

We have touched upon a most debatable and extensive topic: the changeability of human nature. To avoid some unnecessary confusion, I want to take a look at this problem. By human nature, Dewey (1973) doesn't mean human innate goodness or evilness, but "objective study of observable human behavior and scientifically derived hypotheses about its changing trends" (p. 85). From a pragmatic perspective, it is idle if we devote our effort to the debate whether the innate needs or constituents of individuals change or not, since either of the positions are hard to show. Therefore, Dewey (1922/2002) focuses his theory on the observable human habits where an impulse is a constituent. This focus makes us be aware of human gifts, problems, and changing tendencies to help accomplish the best possibility of individuality. Apparently, grounded upon a theory of changeable human nature, Dewey's individual, or more specifically individuality, is by no means settled or a "generalized other." So the question becomes: how our innate elements, impulses, are to be most efficiently modified to successfully *cope with* the environment under given conditions? "This problem," Dewey (1938/1961) believes, "is ultimately that of education in its widest sense" (p. 192).

Therefore, individuality must be educated, and individuality cannot be fully educated by confining its operations to book knowledge-based exams. Deviating from the quantitative comparative scale traditionally employed to evaluate

students, Dewey (1920/1964) embraces the position that full education comes only “when there is a responsible share on the part of each person, *in proportion to capacity*, in sharing the aims and policies of the social groups to which he belongs. This fact fixes the significance of democracy” (p. 209, emphasis added). This suggestion is a call for the creation of opportunities for the play of individuality, which I will further explore in the later discussion on the idea of equality. It also reminds me of the maternal grandfather’s farm in Dewey’s memory that we explored in Chapter 2, where life is full of active occupational responsibilities, intimate personal contacts among people, and a harmonious environment. The emphasis on individuality shows the belief in individuals’ unique capacity and contribution to society that gives hope to the accomplishment of the best possibility of both individuals and society. On the other hand, the emphasis on the creation of opportunities for the play of individuality is a moral consideration. As Dewey argues, “The ground of democratic ideas and practices is faith in the potentialities of individuals, faith in the capacity for positive developments if proper conditions are provided” (Dewey, 1940/1960c, p. 242). He (1920/1964) goes further to illustrate this idea in another text:

Individuality in a social and moral sense is something to be wrought out. It means initiative, inventiveness, varied resourcefulness, assumption of responsibility in choice of belief and conduct. These are not gifts, but achievements. As

achievements, they are not absolute but relative to the use that is to be made of them.

And this use varies with the environment” (p. 194).

Accordingly, individuality becomes an absurd word without application of specific capacity and provided surroundings, opportunities.

In summation, the plasticity of human nature/impulse and the consideration of the environment in giving a direction and providing a platform ground a theoretical foundation for individuals-always-in-the-making that in turn contributes significantly to the improvement of educational opportunities for all people. The following words from *Individualism Old and New* well express Dewey’s (1929/1930) position on the conception of individual:

When the *patterns* that form individuality of thought and *desire* are *in line with actuating social forces*, that individuality will be released for *creative effort*. Originality and uniqueness are not opposed to social nurture; they are saved by it from eccentricity and escape. The positive and constructive of individuals, as manifested in the *remaking and redirection of social forces and conditions*, is itself a social necessity whatever is *distinctive* and potentially *creative* in individuals, and individuals thus freed will be the *constant makers* of a *continuously new society* (p. 143, emphasis added).

All in all, individuality and the society are interdependent or in Dewey's phrase "organic" to each other. Dewey (1900/1962) notes, "Only by being true to the full growth of all the individuals who make it up, can society by any chance be true to itself" (p. 7). It is also true that in the absence of appropriate social conditions, individuality is impossible to be achieved.

4.2.3 Function as Ethics of Self-construction

Now it's time to look at the term "function" which Dewey (1891/1969b) uses to express union of the two sides of individuality, capacity and environment. This will help us further look into Dewey's theory of individuality and its relation to morality. As we have explored before, the term "function" describes "an active relation established between power of doing, on one side, and something to be done on the other" (p. 303). "So, morally, function is capacity *in action*; environment transformed into an element in personal service" (p. 304, emphasis in original). The "moral end" or "the good," Dewey contends, is "[t]he performance by a person of his specific function, this function consisting in an activity which realizes wants and powers with reference to their peculiar surroundings" (p. 304). So, the completion of this performance of individualized function is with consciousness and intelligence in taking needs of the environment into account.

More importantly, in line with the “active habit” he (1916/1944) develops in *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (1891/1969b) makes a critical point that individual capacities and environments live in *mutual* adjustment, not the one-sided accommodation of individuals to a given environment. “[A]djustment, to have a moral sense,” Dewey claims, “means *making the environment a reality for one’s self*” (p. 313, emphasis in original). “True adjustment,” according to Dewey, lies in more than adjusting one to a fixed environment, often asserting oneself against one’s surroundings, for instance. Dewey further clarifies, “[T]ransformation of existing circumstances is moral duty rather than mere reproduction of them. The environment must be plastic to the ends of the agent” (p. 313, emphasis in original). Again, fitting one’s self in a particular environment may meanwhile demand substantially changing it. If, in Dewey’s case, self-construction is a moral ideal, the change/reform of the society is an ethical as well as individual need.

Strictly speaking, in a moral and social sense, individuality is something to be “wrought out” and is emotionally, intellectually, and consciously sustained. On the other side of the performance of function lies an indispensable environment. I want to move to explore the other crucial conception, *community*, in Dewey’s democracy where individuals are born, grow and thrive or, in the language of Dewey, “exercise a function.”

4.3 Human Community: A Garden with No Fence

We have been informed of the importance of the social environment in the development of individuality in the previous discussion. This environment, as Dewey (1891/1969b) indicates, “when taking in its fullness, is a community of persons” (p. 335). Why is it ‘human community’ not ‘society’ and what is the difference between the two? When people ask these questions, their thinking is moving toward the core of Dewey’s democracy. The following exploration starts with an effort to seek answers to these two inquiries. What is expected from this exploration is a detailed picture of Dewey’s community, which he believes provides the most promising social environments for a full development of individuality.

4.3.1 Non-exclusionary Association

The word ‘society’ is equivalent to ‘human community’ in terms of association. The reader may have noticed the phrase “associated life” in the previous discussion on individuality. It seems Dewey does use these two words interchangeably in the sense of association on occasion. However, in developing democracy as a way of life, Dewey adopts the word “community” that connotes more than simple association the *current* society sustains. I want to resort to different texts that serve as a guide to the heart of Dewey’s community.

In *The Public and Its Problems*, Dewey (1927/1991) exposes the problematic “eclipse of the public” in the lives of Americans, which he thinks seriously hinders progress toward democracy. What he proposes is a search for the “great community.” He says, “We are born organic beings associated with others, but we are not born members of a community” and “[N]o amount of aggregated collective action of itself constitutes a community” (p. 154, 151). For Dewey, although Americans associate, very few live in community, since relatedness or associations themselves are not sufficient to the formation of human community. To heal this sickness, Dewey offers his prescription: “Till the Great Society is converted into a Great Community, the Public will remain in eclipse” (p. 142).

In another classic *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (1916/1944) considers the democratic conception in education with an examination of the implications of human association. He points out that humans associate together in all kinds of ways and for all kinds of purposes, but what we have is “a congeries of loosely associated societies” (p. 82). Even associated life, as Dewey sees it, can be different in terms of the extent to which people bond together. The current society with the “eclipse of the public” signifying itself as a baggy association is a disappointment to Dewey. In his mind, “an *inclusive* and *permeating* community of action and thought” represents an ideal mode of associated living that values every individual’s influence and hence is a democratic way of life (p. 82, emphasis

added). This community reveals that human association is not grounded upon homogeneity or physical aggregation, but assumes *free communication* and *shared interests by all*. In short, Deweyan community demands no exclusion. Follow this lead, our imagination evokes a picture of great union of human society, the union of every individual and states, and that of diverse associations, political, industrial, commercial, educational, scientific, and religious, for instance. This association is completely compatible with the two criteria of democracy raised by Dewey, namely “How numerous and varied are the interests which are consciously shared? How full and free is the interplay with other forms of association” (p. 83).

If we apply these standards to reality, we will find out that not any association of common interest is a superior form of community life, a gang of thieves, for example. Illegality aside, the formation of gangs is an attempt to seek individual gain for a small group of people while rejecting any communications or interactions with other groups of people outside of gangs. This group of people is loosely tied by a common interest of money-making through plunder, and is exclusive in nature.

For individuals who want to gain an integrated individuality, Dewey (1929/1930) suggests, “Each of us needs to cultivate his own garden. But there is no fence about this garden: it is no sharply marked-off enclosure. Our garden is

the world, in the angle at which it touches our own manner of being” (p. 171). The appropriate social environment recommended by Dewey is a non-exclusionary world in virtue of a unity of various non-exclusionary communities. The elimination of a demarcation line — the “fence” — includes one between people, one between associations, and even one between nations, for example. I now move on to take note of the values sustained in Deweyan community that characterize a spirit of non-exclusion.

4.3.2 A Community of Freedom, Equality and Fraternity

“Liberty, Equality, Fraternity” indebted to the classical liberalism represented by John Locke, is the motto of the French Revolution (1789-1799). This motto outlived the revolution, and later became the rallying cry of the activists who promote democracy or overthrow oppressive governments. Born in a revolt against royal absolutism and in aspirations for freedom of religion, it is not surprising that this famous motto was identified with natural, inherent individual rights as the American founding fathers reiterated in the *Declaration of Independence*. However, as the situation has developed since the French and American Revolutions, Dewey (1927/1991) proposes, “Fraternity, liberty and equality isolated from communal life are hopeless abstractions” (p. 149). The

following discussion is focused on Dewey's nascent interpretation of the motto that becomes meaningful and instructive to the communal life.

4.3.2.1 Freedom as Power to Release Individuality

Since the theory of freedom has been explored by different people for different purpose along with the change of times, to gain a general understanding of the focus of Dewey's work, I would like to start with distinguishing what is not considered in Dewey's freedom from what Dewey is committed to.

First, Dewey (1928/1960) seeks freedom "in something which comes to be, in a certain kind of growth, in consequences, rather than in antecedent" (p. 280). This effort singles Dewey's idea out from the orthodox theory of freedom of will and the classic theory of liberalism that both seek freedom in something already there, given in advance. In other words, for Dewey, freedom is not an original possession or gift, but "something to be achieved, to be wrought out" (Dewey, 1926/1984, p. 61).

Second, Dewey (1938) notes that the external side of activity, freedom of movement, physical liberty, for instance, cannot be separated from the internal side of activity — freedom of thought, desire, and purpose. The commonest mistake for this thinker is to *identify* freedom with the external side of activity. This mistake will cause harmful effect to human society. As Dewey (1941/1988b) criticizes during the World War II, "The attempt to identify democracy with

economic individualism as the essence of *free action* has done harm to the reality of democracy and is capable of doing even greater injury than it has already done” (p. 277, emphasis added). Dewey (1938) clarifies, “The only freedom that is of enduring importance is freedom of intelligence, that is to say, freedom of observation and of judgment exercised in behalf of purposes that are intrinsically worth while” (p. 245). In a sense, freedom is a unity of action and thought with an emphasis on intelligence. I will take a more detailed look at this emphasis later in the discussion.

Next, it is Dewey’s purpose to accentuate the achievement of positive freedom that demands ethical living rather than the negative one. In Dewey’s words, “[O]nly the good man, the man who is truly realizing his individuality, is free, in the positive sense of that word,” or, with regard to his notion of function, “In the performance of his own function that agent satisfies his own interests and gains power. In it is found his *freedom*” (p. 344, 327, emphasis original). So, it will not be false if we interpret positive freedom in a more detailed manner as the completest development of an individual who “has found that place in society for which he is best fitted and is exercising the function proper to that place” (Dewey, 1888/1967, p. 243). Although Dewey (1891/1969b) acknowledges the negative aspect of freedom — freedom from the appetites and desires — as “the power of self-government,” he does not pay much attention to this concept, and hence

differentiates himself from the continental European tradition (classical liberalism) that affiliates freedom with the idea of rationality.

Finally, Dewey (1916/1944) does not reject “freedom from restriction” completely, which to some extent is in line with the classic liberals and the founders of the United State. However, he disagrees with the doctrine of the “intelligent self-interest” of individuals that assumes individuals’ acts only from regard for their own pleasures and pains, and those generous and sympathetic acts are only indirect ways of procuring and assuring one’s own comfort. While criticizing the doctrine involving a self-enclosed mind, Dewey goes further to expose the superficial union of people grounded upon individual material or pecuniary gain resulting from this doctrine. More fatally, “[I]liberty is then thought of as independence of social ties, and ends in dissolution and anarchy” (Dewey, 1927/1991, p. 150).

For Dewey (1973), recognizing that rights entail obligations is the most stable foundation on which a non-exclusionary community, a nation, can be built. Obligation corresponds to the social satisfaction, freedom to the self-satisfaction (Dewey, 1891/1969b, p. 327). They are inseparable and correlative as two sides of the same coin just as individual and social, individuality and sociality signify. In the words of Dewey (1891/1969b), “One has to realize himself as a member of a community. In this fact are found both freedom and duty” (p. 327).

Moreover, Dewey (1973) suggests us to recognize that liberty and equality do not “go hand in hand.” It is not the case, “if liberty were granted to everyone, equality would automatically follow” as the slogan of “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity” indicated at the end of the eighteenth century (p. 106). Given that gross *inequality* has been so commonplace in the current society that many now argue its inevitability, Dewey comments, “inequality *is* inevitable when those who can enjoy unrestricted liberty do so” (p. 106, emphasis in original). As a result, he proposes that the present problem is “one of devising appropriate limitations on individual liberty, to the end that every person may enjoy both liberty and equality in the kind of balance which will afford him maximum opportunity to develop himself to his full potential” (p. 106). Instead of emphasizing “freedom from,” Dewey is more concerned with “freedom to” — the positive consequence of freedom for every individual, namely the best possibility for individuals’ growth — even at the expense of freedom which generates social inequality.

We have here in skeleton outline the main positions Dewey holds for the idea of freedom. We may infer that freedom is not a numerical notion of isolation or something inherent, but an intellectual and ethical way to live in a community of no exclusions; it is an ethical ideal that embraces every individual’s growth without exception, because the more individualities cultivated, the more contributions

individuals make, and then the more flourishing the society becomes. As Dewey (1927/1991) articulates,

Liberty is that secure release and fulfillment of personal potentialities which take place only in *rich and manifold* association with others: the power to be an *individualized* self making a distinctive contribution and enjoying in its own way the fruits of association (p. 150, emphasis added).

I now turn to a more detailed exploration of the idea of freedom as a power to generate individual growth, which is noticeably resonant with Dewey's aim of education, by looking at the critical elements, considerations Dewey addresses in his theory.

In *Human Nature and Conduct*, Dewey (1922/2002) takes up the problem of freedom. He singles out three crucial elements contained in the complex idea of freedom: (1) efficiency in action, ability to carry out plans, the absence of cramping and thwarting obstacles; (2) capacity to vary plans, to change the course of action, to experience novelties; and (3) the power of desire and choice to be factors in events. Although on the surface not all of these elements are directly compatible with one another, we are still able to infer that desire, which is natural to us, and choice, which is an acquired habit, constitute the starting point

of freedom. In actuality, most people are more familiar with “choice,” and take it as a mode of freedom, with which Dewey has no problem at all.

Dewey (1928/1960) looks at the idea of choice in depth in the article “Philosophies of Freedom.” He tells us, “There is an inexpugnable feeling that choice is freedom and that man without choice is a puppet, and that man then has no acts which he can call his very own” (p. 262). However, Dewey also reminds people that making choice proceeds from the person, from the human being in his/her concrete makeup of habits, desires, purposes, disposition, and character, or, in short, individuality (p. 264). “Freedom is *power* to act in accordance with choice. It is actual ability to carry desire and purpose into operation, to *execute* choices when they are made” (p. 267, emphasis original). Again, Dewey reveals that freedom by no means can be narrowed down to physical liberty. In the meantime, we are led to facing “the essential problem of freedom,” by which Dewey means the problem of the relation of *choice* and *unimpeded effective action* to each other (p. 275). His answer is: intelligence, which is rooted in human individualities. “Intelligence is the key to freedom in act” (Dewey, 1922/2002, p. 304). Dewey (1928/1960) expands his answer somewhat in “Philosophies of Freedom,” “A choice which *intelligently* manifests individuality enlarges the range of action, and this enlargement in turn confers upon our desires greater *insight* and *foresight*, and makes choice more *intelligent*” (p. 276, emphasis added). This

is a circle of dynamics or, in Dewey's phrase, "a widening spiral," where intelligence is a power provider and also fruit we reap from the realization of freedom.

The discussion on the connection between choices as freedom and power of action as freedom draws our attention to human intelligence, the crux of the issue as Dewey (1938) insists, "Genuine and continued growth of individuals is rooted in the intellectual springs of freedom" (p. 246). What is counted as intelligence or what are the crucial considerations in cultivating human intelligence? Dewey (1928/1960) tells us,

Social conditions interact with preferences of an individual (that *are* his individuality) in a way favorable to actualizing freedom only when they develop intelligence, not abstract knowledge and abstract thought, but power of vision and reflection. For these take effect in making preferences, desire, and purpose more flexible, alert, and resolute" (p. 287, emphasis in original).

Intelligence is "power of vision and reflection" that brings us "greater insight and foresight." Armed with this power, "choice signifies a capacity for *deliberately* changing preferences" (p. 267, emphasis added). In this sense, individual participation or, more specific, the participation of individual thinking is indispensably involved in choices as a form of freedom. No wonder Dewey argues (1888/1967),

It is true, indeed, that when an individual has found that place in society for which he is best fitted and is exercising the function proper to that place, he has obtained his completest development, but it is also true (and this the truth omitted by aristocracy, emphasized by democracy) that he must find this place and assume this work in the main for himself (p. 243).

We are not pushed from “behind” into action. We form our own thoughts and deliberations before we act. More importantly, we do it consciously for ourselves, for the utmost individual growth we can reach. It reminds me of another of Dewey’s (1938) statement about the internal side of activity in freedom we have looked at before, “The only freedom that is of enduring importance is freedom of intelligence, that is to say, freedom of observation and of judgment exercised in behalf of purposes that are intrinsically worth while” (p. 245). “Intrinsic” indicates being internally related to a person’s life. Due to the misunderstanding of the nature of the freedom demanded for the child, Dewey (1903) critiques the “improper restriction of the intelligence of the mind of the child” (p. 199). Freedom, Dewey emphasizes, means “primarily intellectual freedom, free play of mental attitude, and operation which are sought” (p. 199).

To cultivate human intelligence or individuality in education, Dewey (1916/1997) believes, teachers should encourage independent thinking—thinking for one’s self. He explains, “One is mentally an individual only as he has his own

purpose and problem, and does his own thinking” (p. 303). Therefore, “Freedom means essentially the part played by thinking — which is personal — in learning: — it means intellectual initiative, independence in observation, judicious intention, foresight of consequences, and ingenuity of adaptation to them” (p. 302). Dewey (1928/1960) admits, “No one can foresee all consequences because no one can be aware of all the conditions that enter into their production ... Even with his best thought, a man’s proposed course of action may be defeated” (p. 276). But, as long as a person forms “the habit of choosing and acting with conscious regard to the grain of circumstance, the run of affairs,” such a man becomes able to turn frustration and failure to account in his further choice and purposes. (p. 277).

I have gone over the ideas of choice and “unimpeded effective action” and human intelligence that connects choice and action in Dewey’s positive freedom. For Dewey, freedom, in its fullest and most pragmatic sense, means being free to the maximum opportunity to realize one’s full potential as a member of community with an emphasis on individual intelligence; it is not “a numerical notion of isolation,” but “the *ethical* idea that personality is the supreme and only, that every man is an absolute end in himself” (Dewey, 1888/1967, p. 245). I would like to borrow the following words from *Reconstruction in Philosophy* to conclude Dewey’s theory of freedom and then take up the idea of equality:

The long-time controversy between rights and duties, law and freedom is another version of the strife between the Individual and Society as fixed concepts. Freedom for an individual means growth, ready change when modification is required. It signifies an active process, that of release of capacity from whatever hems it in. But since society can develop only as new resources are put at its disposal, it is absurd to suppose that freedom has positive significance for individuality but negative meaning for social interests” (p. 207).

4.3.2.2 Equality as Opportunity to Secure Individuality and Responsibility

Dewey is not an advocate of equality of rights or evenness that is bound to fall into the trap of mediocrity. He (1927/1991) believes, “Equality denotes the unhampered share which each individual member of the community has in the consequences of associated action” (p. 150). Grounded upon this idea of “the unhampered share” and the context of non-exclusionary communal life, Dewey’s concept of equality has a triple meaning.

In the first place, every one is equal in terms of personality/individuality one has, which indicates “an infinite and universal possibility” to grow in the society (Dewey, 1888/1969, p. 247). This equality acknowledges human uniqueness and hence every one is irreplaceable; moreover, it denies a hierarchical structure of personality. Apparently, for Dewey, the popular phrase accepted by some scholars in multicultural education, “Every one is the same,” is not a solid

argument. Dewey (1927/1991) is concerned with something distinctive inside a person that is incommensurable as

Equality does not signify that kind of mathematical or physical equivalence in virtue of which any one element may be substituted for another. It denotes effective regard for whatever is distinctive and unique in each, irrespective of physical and psychological inequalities" (p. 151).

Therefore, every individual deserves respect and recognition from one another, which are incommensurable by quantity.

In the second place, every one is equal in terms of opportunity provided to develop one's self. "The democratic faith in human equality is belief that every human being, independent of the quantity or range of his personal endowment, has the right to equal opportunity with every other person for development of whatever gifts he has" (Dewey, 1939/1988a, pp. 226-27). In light of the above proposition of individual uniqueness, for Dewey, equality entails the appropriate opportunity or the maximum opportunity in accordance with individual needs and capacities. Same treatment or opportunity will generate inequality that hinders the development of individuality, the growth of individuals. Hence, the true meaning of equality is, in the words of Dewey (1888/1967), "the form of society in which every man has a chance and knows that he has it — ... a chance to which no possible

limits can be put, a chance which is truly infinite, the chance to become a person” (p. 246). What Dewey recommends is the “unhampered share” of opportunity in accordance with individual needs and capacities, which is an appropriate piece of the communal pie every individual enjoys. Equal wealth distribution as a numerical, quantitative measure of equality does not fall in Dewey’s consideration.

Last, as a member of the community, human equality lies in shared responsibility or individual contribution. As we have looked into earlier in Dewey’s moral end and positive freedom, the fulfillment of individual growth has to meet two requirements: the social satisfaction as well as the self-satisfaction. “When there is an equation in his *own* life and experience between what he contributes to the group activity and experience and what he receives in return in the way of stimulus and of enrichment of experience, he is *morally* equal” (Dewey and Tufts, 1908/1938, p. 384, emphasis original). Accordingly, Dewey (1973) suggests that the school must help the children build an awareness of the needs of their society and develop their ability to participate in social living. Similarly, this share of responsibility or contribution cannot be measured in terms of quantity. As cited before, “Full education comes only when there is a responsible share on the part of each person, in proportion to capacity, in shaping the aims and policies of the

social groups to which he belongs. This fact fixes the significance of democracy” (Dewey, 1920/1964, p. 209).

Based on the preceding discussion, we are able to infer that human beings are *morally* equal based on their internal unique qualities which result in individualized contributions to the community to which they belong. “Each individual is incommensurable as an individual with every other, so that it is impossible to find an external measure of equality” (Dewey&Tufts, 1908/1938). A person is not a machine or a simple quantitative aggregate, but a social being of feelings, thoughts and infinite potentialities. What Dewey seeks for is the opportunity for individuals to become truly human, a social contributor as well as a unique person of developed personality. “Equality, in short, is the ideal of humanity; an ideal in the consciousness of which democracy lives and moves” (Dewey, 1888/1967, p. 246). There is no doubt that equality is not an arithmetical, but an ethical conception. As morality, equality means incommensurability, the inapplicability of common and quantitative standards; it means “intrinsic qualities which require unique opportunities and differential manifestation (Dewey, 1922/1983, p. 242).

4.3.2.3 Fraternity as Tie to Bond Individuals Together

If liberty and equality are perspectives of individuals from which we look at the communal life, fraternity provides another angle for us to examine communal life. Dewey (1989) describes fraternity thus,

Cooperation — called fraternity in the classic French formula — is as much a part of the democratic ideal as is personal initiative. That cultural conditions were allowed to develop (markedly so in the economic phase) which subordinated cooperativeness to liberty and equality serves to explain the decline in the two latter (Dewey, 1989, p. 24).

For Dewey, fraternity as social cooperation is of the same significance as liberty and equality are in a democracy. Any preference of liberty or equality over cooperativeness will not make democracy works. As Dewey (1939/1988a) claims, “[D]emocracy as a way of life is controlled by personal faith in personal day-by-day working together with others” (p. 228). More importantly, for Dewey, in a sense, ‘cooperation’ well reflects “the nature of the democratic idea in its generic social sense” and a moral way of living. As he (1916/1944) notes,

What is learned and employed in an occupation having an aim and involving cooperation with others is *moral knowledge*, whether consciously so regarded or not.

For it builds up a *social* interest and confers the *intelligence* needed to make that interest effective in practice (p. 356, emphasis added).

Cooperation as fraternity's substitute in Dewey's theory is not strange to us. In the previous discussion on Dewey's community, I have demonstrated that Dewey's (1919/1997) non-exclusionary community is "an inclusive and permeating community of action and thought" (p. 82). This concept takes the assumption of the cooperation in communication and of the exchange of action and thought. Moreover, the term "moral community," Dewey (1891/1969b) explains, is "made what it is by the co-operating activities of diverse individuals" (p. 326). In addition, when lecturing in China, Dewey (1973) speaks of "associated living" of shared interests that serves as the chief source of the criteria for judging systems of thought and is characterized by cooperation, interaction and to the mutual advantage of everyone concerned in it (p. 87, 89). Undoubtedly, cooperation is necessary in sustaining Dewey's democracy.

Cooperation can take different forms in different environments. For Dewey, cooperation takes shape in a non-exclusionary association and is maintained by every participant on purpose. "Fraternity is another name for the consciously appreciated goods which accrue from an association in which all share, and which *give direction* to the conduct of each" (Dewey, 1927/1991, p. 150, emphasis added). Importantly, this cooperation as "appreciated goods" has an instructive

effect on individuals' act. In his late work *Experience and Nature*, Dewey (1925) points out a direct connection between human goods and social knowledge. "Shared experience is the greatest human goods" (p. 389). This work helps us see "the consciously appreciated goods" as more intellectual and ethical rather than material. Hence, it would not be false if we infer that 'cooperation' takes shape in shared human experience which, as a source to social knowledge, is the greatest 'human goods' appreciated by all.

Dewey's insight leads to another consideration and an important means necessary to the formation of "shared experience as cited at the start of this chapter, "To learn to be human is to develop through the give-and-take of communication an effective sense of being an individually distinctive member of a community ..." (Dewey, 1927/1991, p. 154). Up to this point, when rereading these words, we gain an enriched understanding based on the idea of the unity of individuality and sociality. While acknowledging liberty and equality, as a "social being," we also need to participate in the experiences of others that contribute to the shared values or social knowledge to realize our full humanity by the lively exchange of ideas through communication. "Free and open communication," Dewey (1973) speaks to his Chinese audience, "unself-seeking and reciprocal relationships, and the sort of interaction that contributes mutual advantage, are the essential factors in associated living" (p. 92). He even believes that

communication not limited to the linguistic can alone create a great community. “Our Babel is not one of tongues but of the signs and symbols without which shared experience is impossible” (Dewey, 1927/1991, p. 142). Actually, we have lightly touched this “free” communication when talking of the awareness of the public and shared values in building a non-exclusionary association. To gain this public awareness, shared values on which a democratic society depends, we need to proceed from free communication. I want to turn to Dewey’s (1916/1944) classic, *Democracy and Education*, where he offers insight into the importance of communication.

Dewey (1916/1944) starts *Democracy and Education* with a discussion on education as a necessity of life where he points out a direct connection between *education* and *communication*. He first broadens the denotation of the concept of education we usually take equal to schooling, which Dewey describes as “only one means, and compared with other agencies, a relatively superficial means” (p. 4). Then, he claims,

Society not only continues to exist *by* transmission, *by* communication, but it may fairly be said to exist *in* transmission, *in* communication. There is more than a verbal tie between the words common, community, and communication. Men live in a community in virtue of the things which they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common (p. 4, emphasis in original).

To form a non-exclusionary community, we must form something in common, including knowledge, beliefs, aspirations and aims, for instance, for which common/mutual understanding is another name. For Dewey, only successful communication which is *educative* can insure participation in a common understanding and secure “similar emotional and intellectual dispositions” (p. 4). After every successful communication, both the communicator, the one communicating, and the communicatee, the one receiving the communication, gain an enlarged and/or changed experience. What is crucial in fulfilling a successful communication is to formulate a communicable experience for the both parties. This means, on the part of the communicator, one needs to figure out how to make one’s experience connected to the communicatee’s so one can articulate one’s experience in a way the communicatee will be able to understand; on the other hand, on the part of the communicatee, one needs to figure out the same thing as the communicator does in order to receive and understand the communicator’s articulated experience. To achieve these aims, Dewey believes both of them must be able to step outside of the experience and see it as the other would see it by using imagination in order to assimilate the other’s experience. Think about the moment when we watch a movie, our eyes are filled with tears when we are so into a tragic character. It is our willingness to put ourselves, who

doesn't necessarily go through the same experience as character does, in the place of the character that makes us share the same feeling with the character.

For Dewey, all communication as education is not simply a process of speaking and listening, but necessitates putting oneself in the place of another, using other-regarding, sympathetic thinking. This communication does not assume universality, by which I mean a universal perspective, one absolute truth, but is located in the everyday experience of specific individuals and their beliefs and values. It does not try to homogenize people, but gives rise to inclusion through transforming passive toleration into the communicable experience which leads to sympathy and active cooperation. Moreover, it ultimately underscores the importance of cooperativeness in the idea of individuals-always-in-the-making toward continual growth and human solidarity. But, some points Dewey fails to address here in his 'communication' is the difference in people and the issues of power. Communication is crucial, but definitely not a panacea. I will come back to this problem in Chapter 5.

Therefore, communal life which is identical with communication demands learning and other-regarding thinking for its own continuity, however, this very process of living together itself educates. In short, communal life of communication toward shared values and beliefs is cooperative and educative. If liberty and equality serve us as power and opportunity to insure individuality,

fraternity is an emotional, intellectual and moral tie to bond us firmly together as a whole and secure the flourish of individuality. “[A]ssociation itself is physical and organic, while communal life is moral, that is emotionally, intellectually, consciously sustained” (Dewey, 1927/1991, p. 151). “The term ‘moral community’,” Dewey (1891/1969b) contends, “can mean only a unity of action, made what it is by the co-operating activities of diverse individuals” (p. 326). Because of our individualized functions cooperativeness becomes necessary in human activities. “The more individualized the functions,” Dewey indicates, “the more perfect the unity” (p. 326).

Dewey puts such a stress on ‘individualized functions’ in a cooperative community that he cannot avoid the problem of the possible conflicts aroused by diverse individualities. In *Freedom and Culture*, Dewey (1989) describes a predicament in “transforming physical interdependence into moral — into human — interdependences”: “individuality demands association to develop and sustain it and association requires *arrangement* and *coordination* of its elements, or *organization* — since otherwise it is formless and void of power” (p. 127, emphasis added). Dewey does not propose the term ‘conflict’ in the above description, but as long as the term “arrangement” or “coordination” is used, it indicates something is not in order or in harmony. What Dewey raises is the question: how can we coordinate individuals of specific capacities into

cooperativeness, into working powers, if conflict or disharmony exists? In order to find Dewey's position on this question, let me turn to two of his other works.

In one essay from his late works, Dewey (1939/1988a) describes democracy as “the belief that even when needs and ends or consequences are different for each individual, the habit of amicable cooperation — which may include, as in sport, rivalry and competitions — is itself a priceless addition to life” (p. 228). He then points out,

A genuinely democratic faith in *peace* is faith in the possibility of conducting disputes, controversies and conflicts as cooperative undertakings in which both parties learn by giving the other a chance to express itself, instead of having one party conquer by forceful suppression of the other (p. 228, emphasis added).⁴

What Dewey offers here is ‘free communication’ — to have both parties express themselves. The other text I refer to is *Ethics*, where Dewey (Dewey & Tufts, 1908/1938) examines the struggle between the dominant group, which “always thinks of itself as representing the social interest,” and the group or groups, “occupying an *inferior* position of power and economic wealth” (p. 360, emphasis in original). In this work, Dewey not only touches the problem of conflict but also the issue of power. Let's take a look at the solution he provides:

⁴ In this statement, Dewey uses the term “peace” instead of ‘harmony,’ which is also used by Dewey extensively in some other texts I have not had the chance to bring into this discussion. Based on the texts I refer to in conducting this project, I believe that Dewey is also aware of “disharmony” in terms of conflicts and different opinions in our daily living, which will be explored in my another project in the future.

It is, in short, the method of democracy, of a positive toleration which amounts to sympathetic regard for the intelligence and personality of others, even if they hold views opposed to ours, and of scientific inquiry into facts and testing of ideas (p. 363).

Both other-regarding thinking in communication and scientific method are recommended by Dewey. This time Dewey's experimentalism is well expressed through the provided method. I will discuss this scientific method in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Being aware of power issues and social conflicts, apparently for Dewey, any cooperation that refuses communication, other-regarding thinking, or leads to one-sided growth can not be counted as cooperative in a true sense. I want to turn to two other texts that serve as guides into Dewey's position on the *negative* effect of cooperation in an industrial-commercialized society.

In *Individualism Old and New*, Dewey (1930) presents a vivid picture of American society in the early 20th century that took a sadly wrong turn in its serving only the ends of profit-making rather than wider organic and moral human ends. Dewey is critical of modernity for having generally skewed our organic human drive to respond to problems creatively and innovatively toward the sole problem of economic development. Accordingly, cooperative life in the machine age brings about conformity, commitment to the same values, money-making, for

instance. Although there is cooperativeness in the work of a factory on the assembly line, those who labor without free communication are like the parts of a machine that work with a maximum of cooperativeness for a common result, and do not form a community. With this historical and social context in mind, let's take a look at Dewey's (1973) speech on economics and social philosophy in the early 1920s in China. "Nowadays, of course," Dewey, in a statement I also cited in Chapter 1, admits,

there is a degree of cooperation among individuals in commercial and industrial enterprises, but this cooperation is overshadowed by competition, and in this competition, discrepancies in ability and resources give advantage to the stronger, and result in inequality and injustice (p. 105).

With a mindset of profit-making, cooperation by no means entails equal opportunities for individuals in accordance with their needs and capacities. Dewey continues, "To put the matter bluntly, in theory, capitalists and workers can cooperate with each other, but in fact, under a system of free enterprise and in the absent of governmental controls, the capitalist nearly always take advantage of the workers" (p. 105). What Dewey notices is "discrepancies in ability and resources" that make a difference in cooperation on both parties and powerlessness of the working class people, who are not provided with appropriate

opportunities as they need. Again, in an industrial-commercialized age, Dewey is conscious of the conflict between the capitalists on the one hand and the workers on the other.

In summation, in Dewey's non-exclusionary community, freedom, equality and fraternity go hand in hand which take the flourish of individuality as the first and final reality while emphasizing responsibility, shared values and beliefs, and solidarity as factors that insure and secure a stable and flourishing environment, namely human community. If there must be something that can provide us with some concrete ideas about Dewey's ideal human community, that is 'family.' More than one time in different texts, Dewey refers to the image of the ideal family, where he believes democracy should start.

4.3.3 Family: A Place Democracy Starts

In Dewey's (1916/1944) mind, "Family life may be marked by exclusiveness, suspicion, and jealousy as to those without, and yet be a model of amity and mutual aid within" (p. 83). Therefore, Dewey grounds his democracy upon family life that may serve as a model of ideal human community. As he describes,

If we take, on the other hand, the kind of family life which illustrates the standard, we find that there are material, intellectual, aesthetic interests in which all participate and that the progress of one member has worth for the experience of other members – it

is readily communicable – and that the family is not an isolated whole, but enters intimately into relationships with business groups, with schools In short, there are many interests consciously communicated and shared; and there are varied and free points of contact with other modes of association (p. 83).

Apparently, for Dewey, family is and should be a place of free communication and shared experience and interest from within and various associations and connections to other groups from without. Moreover, it is a cozy community of love, caring, understanding, and support that creates various opportunities for its member's growth, which as an absolute end helps remove all the demarcation lines between the family and other associations. This model reflects a perfect continuity of life through embracing individual growth by encouraging free communication and maximum association, and hence serves as a guide for the construction of any other human community.

With regard to schooling, in *The School and Society*, Dewey (1900/1962) uses the image of family for analogical purpose to make an educational recommendation:

We are apt to look at the school from an individualistic standpoint, as something between teacher and pupil, or between teacher and parent....Yet the range of the outlook needs to be enlarged. What the best and wisest parent wants for his own

child, that must the community want for all of its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy.... (p. 6-7)

This description reveals that for people who are in charge of schools or teach our children, treating other peoples' children as your own is a principle needed to keep in mind and crucial to maintain democracy. In Dewey's mind, there is very little ethical difference between school life and family life, when people take the parent-child relationship as the principle in the functioning of schools in a democracy. Ultimately, it is Dewey's hope to extend the familial relationships to school life in an attempt to heal the social/individual split and make schools, where our children are cultivated to be human, a more human environment.

Like the school life, the neighborhood community life should be considered as an extension of family life. In the words of Dewey (1927/1991), "Democracy must begin at home, and its home is the neighborly community" (p. 213). Next to family, our neighborhood is the closest community — distance wise — where we live and where we can start our experience of understanding others as well as communicating our ideas like a family. Dewey's concern is if we don't know our next door neighbors well how it will be effective "for the world's peace," as some people claim, that we understand the peoples of foreign lands (p. 213). Hence, our inference is that we need to transform our neighborly community and all

communities with which we are involved into an extended family, which should be a model of non-exclusionary association.

4.4 Conclusion

I now want to sum up the preceding discussion so as to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the conceptions of individuals and community: two aspects to Dewey's democracy.

With regard to the need of individual development, individuality which represents the uniqueness and power of individuals is a moral product, a result of social relationships, a consequence of publicly acknowledged and stable communal functions. In the full growth of *every individual member*, we find a flourishing community which provides opportunities for human development is also an achievement through every individual's effort and consciously sustained by human morality and intelligence: the will to work together. In the words of Dewey (1973), "[O]n the one hand each individual must have the opportunity to develop his potentialities to the fullest, regardless of the status he occupies; and on the other hand, the common will of the society must be realized" (p. 299). The "common will" Dewey uses here is equivalent to "a unity of will" he describes in social organism. This entire ideal on 'individual' and 'community' embodies a social and moral ideal Dewey (1891/1969b) strives for, namely "a common good"

or “the moral end” — “a good which in satisfying one, satisfies others” (p. 261).

This ideal is also well indicated in his “the ethical postulate.” It reads:

IN THE REALIZATION OF INDIVIDUALITY THERE IS FOUND ALSO THE NEEDED
REALIZATION OF SOME COMMUNITY OF PERSONS OF WHICH THE
INDIVIDUAL IS A MEMBER; AND, CONVERSELY, THE AGENT WHO DULY
SATISFIES THE COMMUNITY IN WHICH HE SHARES, BY THAT SAME
CONDUCT SATISFIES HIMSELF (p. 322, capitals in original).

In calling it a postulate, Dewey does not mean to call it unprovable, but “a condition necessary for further operations and requiring further experimental inquiry to determine its consequences” (Garrison, n.d.). Dewey further explains,

[T]he postulate is that there is a community of person; a good which realized by
the will of one is made not private but public. It is this *unity* of individuals as
respects the end of action, this existence of a practical common good, that makes
what we call the moral order of the world (p. 322, emphasis added).

This ideal is an effort to heal the split of private/public and involves the concern for everyone. In the mean while, it is also a challenge to us to accomplish two things at the same time: “a good which in satisfying one, satisfying others.” In other words, taking myself as an example, while I develop myself as a useful member of

the community, the way I do/achieve it should contribute to the development of my fellow human or the other members in the community.

In response to how to achieve “a common good,” Dewey’s solution lies in his developed values of freedom, equality and fraternity (cooperation). If freedom and equality are more attended to the good for the individual, fraternity is a call for cooperative effort, “public collective intelligence,” where free communication and scientific method are the key elements (Dewey, 1937/1985). Or to be more specific, this solution is also contained in the formula for the moral end Dewey develops: “The performance by a person of his specific function, this function consisting in an activity which realizes wants and powers with reference to their peculiar surroundings” (1891/1969b, p. 304). In a word, for Dewey, however different we could be in terms of individualities, values, beliefs or positions, we should find a way to work together where we both gain enriched experience and enlarged understanding. This very idea is the cornerstone of individual-always-in-the-making and a non-exclusionary community. In practicing this idea, we realize ourselves “as a member of a community”, and “[i]n this fact are found both freedom and duty” (p. 327). According to Dewey, the key to the realization of both the social-satisfaction and the self-satisfaction consists in the adjustment *not* subordination of individuals.

We may still believe that Dewey holds a faith in individualism, but not the one proposed by the classical liberals that leads to a conception of individuality as something “ready-made,” and to society as a numerical and loose aggregate. His neo-individualism conceives individuality as a moving entity, something that is attained only by exercising our specific capacity in or in relation to a specific environment, for which society is another name. On the other hand, in this neo-individualism, Dewey’s ideal society represents a solidary community of a common will without exclusion or homogenization. As Dewey (1888/1969) describes, “There is an individualism in democracy but it is an ethical, not a numerical individualism; it is an individualism of freedom, of responsibility, of initiative to and for the ethical ideal, not an individualism of lawlessness” (p. 244). It is time to compare Confucius’s and Dewey’s theories, bring in criticisms, and offer educational implications.

5.0 A COMMON IDEAL OF HUMAN UNITY AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Now that I have laid out Confucius's and Dewey's theories on 'individual' and 'community,' I would like to take up a comparative discussion on these two thinkers' ideas. To do this, I think it's important that I begin by briefly summarizing Confucius's and Dewey's ideas that I have explored thus far. I will then move to a discussion of another central conception in the title of this dissertation, *human unity* which both Confucius and Dewey strive for and where they also show different emphases. Then I will look into the problems to Confucius's and Dewey's theories followed by a discussion of the implications this dissertation has for schools in China, and beyond. My voice has the chance to become stronger in this chapter, but I want to invite my reader to join in the conversation and keep the conversation going.

5.1 Summation of Theories

I began this text by describing my research objectives and theoretical framework. It was my hope to achieve a fair read of both Confucius's and Dewey's ideals, namely the "Grand Union" and democracy, in order to bring them into a philosophical conversation. The focus of my study is threefold, including the conceptions of 'individual' and 'community' and the relationship between the two

in these two thinkers' ideals. The rejections of private/public and individual/social dichotomies both Confucius and Dewey hold, I have argued, is a hope for human unity that involves taking the human society as an *organism* and helps actualize the best possibilities of the individuals as well as the society or their fellow human beings.

Then I proceeded with Confucius's theory, where *rén* (仁) is a focal interest with its humility, flexibility, and infinite openness. I have interpreted *rén* as "complete person," which indicates a complete virtue of wisdom, morality and courage and the way "human being" should be defined. I described Confucian self as a lifelong pursuit with a focus on everyday practice — "a-complete-human-being-always-in-action" — who lives person-to-person relationships in a society as extended family members. This theory of self-construction is grounded upon three major assumptions. First, "Human beings are nearly alike in their natural qualities, but vary greatly by virtue of their habits" (*Analects*, 17.2**). Second, no one is perfect and can claim infallibility as Confucius abstains from four things entirely: not imposing his will, not claiming or demanding certainty, and not being inflexible/stubborn and self-absorbed" (*Analects*, 9.4). Next, we always need another person in order to be truly human as the Chinese character for *rén*, 仁, indicates. Based on these beliefs, Confucian school, the first private school in China's history, initiatively opens the door to

formal education to common people, who are believed should have the equal rights to develop themselves and make public decisions.

By taking *rén* as a life-long pursuit, Confucius's 'self' treats people with dignity and respect and is aware of different moral requirements in different social roles they play or in all relationships s/he lives. Confucian 'self' is a humble, diligent, and pragmatic human being, who has a love of learning, does her/his own thinking, takes every individual as a source of knowledge, and is good at applying theory to practice. This 'self' acknowledges the importance of both individuality and diversity, and morality in maintaining a continual growth of human community. "Maintaining discrepancy and individuality while being in accord" is what Confucius embraces in living interpersonal relationships. There are two other general principles he mentions in living a familial communal life. First, "doing ones' utmost to others." Next, "establish others in seeking to establish ourselves and promote others in seeking to get there ourselves" while "what we do not want done to ourselves, do not do to others" (*Analects*, 6.30**, 15.24, 忠道 & 恕道).

By all means, Confucian self is aimed to be cultivated as a role model both in the domestic and the public worlds, and more importantly be prepared as a leader and a public official, who functions appropriately in public service. However, this ideal does not include women, who only belong to the domestic sphere. I will come back to this issue later.

Dewey's distinguished career spans three generations and is inspired by many people who have touched his life as well as by Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selections*. In Dewey's democracy, I discovered an active *self-always-in-the-making* living in a *non-exclusionary* human community with face-to-face interactions/communications. This theory of self-construction is rooted in the assumptions of an indispensable *caring* relationship we need in starting our life journey and keeping ourselves growing, changeable human nature, and the power of collective effort/intelligence. Dewey reinterprets the famous French motto "*liberty, equality, fraternity*" to maintain his democratic ideal, and to help people see the inseparability of 'individual' and 'community' from an ethical perspective.

Dewey's (1891/1969b) theory of self-construction can be plainly found in his ideal of the "moral end" or "the good," which is "[t]he performance by a person of his specific function, this function consisting in an activity which realizes wants and powers with reference to their peculiar surroundings" (p. 304). He believes that the idea of "*liberty, equality, fraternity*" should serve as a guide to provide optimum opportunities for every 'self' to develop their individuality, which in return maintains the continual growth of the human community as a whole.

A non-exclusionary human community is also an individual and ethical consideration for Dewey. Since the ideal of self-construction is shared by every

individual, in this moral sense, a non-exclusionary human community ensues. Any decisions or conduct that facilitate one's self-construction but are at the expense of the other's pursuit of self-construction is not a democratic and ethical way to live. The other reason which makes a non-exclusionary human community necessary is that with its infinite diversity a human community without exclusion provides tremendous possibilities for individuals to see differences, discover our own limitations, and gain greater insights through free communication with sympatric thinking. A non-exclusionary community cannot be achieved without cooperative efforts, which is based on the *will* to work together. Dewey uses the metaphor of family of caring and mutual support from within and various interactions from without for us to think about how an ideal non-exclusionary human community should be. He is also convinced that the scientific method is crucial in resolving the conflicts arising in human cooperation.

When we entered into the 20th century, industrialization and commercialization took a tragically wrong turn in bringing modern society to the Age of the Money-Machine. Accumulation of capital in the hands of the capitalists bred people of privilege, the dominant group, which "always thinks of itself as representing the social interest" (Dewey & Tufts, 1908/1938, p. 360). Dewey starts to consider the class conflict in a democracy. After witnessing two catastrophic World Wars, Dewey (1941/1988b) puts forward his criticisms on the

“existing totalitarianism,” and points out that this failure is because democracy has never been widely practiced as the *will* to transform passive toleration into active cooperation, the *will* to work together.

5.2 Why Human Unity?

‘Unity’ shapes the heart of Confucius’s and Dewey’s work and is a unique contribution they offer, in terms of drawing our attention to a heal of the split between individual and social, and to communal forms of self-construction as opposed to individual descriptions, which have been dominated Euro-western socio-political theories for decades. Indebted to Confucius’s and Dewey’s efforts, I will argue that we come to form a field of selves due to an ever growing community which we *belong to* and consciously *maintain*. Without a community, none of us are able to grow and construct a contributing self. By ‘unity,’ I do not mean “a sacrifice of individuality,” but that we become complete individuals — fully realized and active human beings — only when we form a non-exclusionary community of public commitment and full interaction from within and without. I will describe a theory of self-construction that acknowledges we are imperfect while changeable and active beings. I will also argue that human unity which involves everyone into an associated life is a pursuit of *common good*, a good that satisfies

all. I turn now to a further elaboration of each of these ideas that will help the reader find ways to the heart of Confucius's and Dewey's ideals.

5.2.1 An Imperfect but Shapeable & Active Self

In Confucius's Grand Union and Dewey's democracy, we discover *an imperfect however shapeable and active 'self.'* This concept is rooted in our everyday life experience and in an optimistic view of human nature, which gives hope to human development toward a fully realized 'self.' I begin with *everyday life experience.*

Both Confucius and Dewey realize a caring relationship between the young and their parents/guardians and other care-givers, owing to whom the young grow and become more and more mature in the society, physically, psychologically and intellectually. This imperfectness of human beings based on real human experience indicates the necessity of a community of persons where we help each other grow. Although we need each other to form "a field of more mature selves," it does not mean we come to become "generalized others." In contrast, Confucius's and Dewey's shared optimistic view of human nature helps us see a shapeable and active 'self.' Let me proceed with Confucius.

It is Confucius's belief that "Human beings are nearly alike in their natural qualities, but vary greatly by virtue of their habits" (*Analects*, 17. 2**). As pointed

out in Chapter 2, this conviction provides a foundation for Confucius's ambition to found a private school for every one, including common people. Taking a close look at Confucius's phrasing, we will notice this thinker does not intend to hide his *uncertainty* about human nature, which he believes is hard to figure out without any proofs. Due to this uncertainty, he cautiously chooses the phrase "nearly alike" in an attempt to show his belief in general equality in human innate endowment. In his teachings, Confucius never involves himself with anything that is hard to know, such as "strange happenings" or "the spirits" (*Analects*, 7.20 & 11.11). As to "destiny and innate qualities," he seldom speaks of this (*Analects*, 9.1*). Therefore, we may infer that the crucial point Confucius wants to express through the statement, "Human beings are nearly alike in their natural qualities, but vary greatly by virtue of their habits," lies in the second part, namely the influence of *practice* on the construction of individuality, which he is quite certain about.

Staying away from the topic of innate human qualities that are still hard to figure out in *his* time, Confucius focuses more on what people do, how people act, and the effect of habits that will make a difference in our self-construction. So, for Confucius, individuality as acquired habits is what should deserve our attention. But, it does not mean Confucius proposes a 'self' that is socially determined. As I discussed in Chapter 3, in fact Confucius believes that we all own a 'self' of

self-determination and *free will* that represents equal human dignity and a sense of self-consciousness human beings share. Although 'community' provides an environment for us to develop a 'self,' we fulfill this process on our own with our independent/reflective thinking.

This active 'self' is also embodied in the principles Confucius proposes, *rén* (仁), appropriateness (*yì* 义), and the rules of propriety (*lǐ* 礼), for instance, for which he leaves the definitions infinitely open. In doing so, Confucius shows his belief in an active self of independent/reflective thinking who is able to function appropriately according to the specific context where s/he is situated. Again, self-construction, in the mind of Confucius, is by all means from the self, for the self, and eventually completed by the self. This Confucian self encourages self-reflection and independent thinking in an attempt to acquire an active self with a mind of one's own. This theory of self-construction in turn provides a theoretical foundation for Confucius's teaching style, which is dialog-focused and practice-oriented.

Dewey shares Confucius's position on human nature, which has nothing to do with the intrinsic goodness or evilness, while his argument is more certain that human nature *is* changeable. As he (1938/1961) claims, "If human nature is unchangeable, then there is no such thing as education and all our efforts to educate are doomed to failure" (p. 190). Let me further explain.

As I pointed out in Chapter 4, Dewey (1922/2002) develops a theory that recognizes, “[A]ll conduct is *interaction* between elements of human nature and the environment, natural and social” (p.10, emphasis original). Instead of bogging himself down in idle research on pure human innate qualities, Dewey focuses his study on the observable human *habits* and the study of their changing trends. So, Dewey shares his position with Confucius on the importance of habits or human practices that play a crucial role in shaping individual selves. As he points out, “All habits are demands for certain kinds of activity; and they constitute the self. In any intelligible sense of the word will, they *are* will” (p. 25, emphasis original). Dewey’s (1916/1944) self is an active one due to “active habits” the human being comes to form, which involve “thought, invention, and initiative in applying capacities to new aims” (p. 53). By “a thought,” he emphasizes “what a thing suggests but is not as it is presented,” which is equivalent to the essentials of reflective thinking (p. 158).

Therefore, we may conclude that this Confucian and Deweyan imperfect, shapeable, and active self is grounded upon human experience, a unity or organism of ‘individual’ and ‘social,’ an optimistic view of human nature, the effects of habits, and reflective/independent thinking that involves readjustment and creativity. If there is a difference between Confucius and Dewey, Confucius stresses more on ‘self-consciousness,’ which means a ‘self’ can not be achieved until a person forms a mind of his/her own. As for Dewey, his work is more in line

with modern psychology in general and James's (1952) concept of "habit" in particular, both of which put an emphasis on scientific method applied to the study of the relationships among human impulses, environments, and human behaviors.

5.2.2 Non-exclusionary Familial Community

In reference to Confucius's "extended familial relationships" and Dewey's "non-exclusionary association" with a preference on the model of the ideal family, the ideal society both thinkers aim to achieve is an extended and enlarged family for everyone. This familial community is grounded upon communication, inclusion, and caring. I start with communication.

As I pointed out in Chapter 3, when discussing *rén* (仁), Confucius defines 'wisdom' (*zhì*, 知) as "to know others." For Confucius, knowing other people is a way to gain wisdom as well as knowledge. In addition, Confucian *self* lives *person-to-person* relationships. In other words, interpersonal relationships are our lives, without which human lives are meaningless. Although Confucius does not literally recommend communication, in order to understand others and to live interpersonal relationships properly individuals by all means need to communicate with others, which is not dispensable. As for Dewey (1916/1944), he clearly describes the importance of communication in seeking sympathetic understanding to form a community without exclusion. He prescribes

other-regarding/sympathetic thinking that will lead to an educative communication, where experience is successfully communicated.

Inclusion is another trait embodied in Confucian and Deweyan ideals. That is why both thinkers unanimously single out “cliques” or “gangs”, which entail narrow-mindedness and exclusion. This type of association may also cause harm to the people who are not included. For Confucius and Dewey, a human community in a true sense represents collective strength and intelligence that will provide the best possibilities for the development of everyone. Confucius challenges us to think why in embracing individuality we still maintain a nonexclusive community as “maintaining discrepancy and individuality while being in accord.” He suggests to us to think of the most euphonious music, beautiful painting, and flavorful soup we have ever enjoyed, which result from harmonization, a compensation of varied sounded tones, colors and spices. Analogously, a harmonious world should be a world that values diversity constituted by human uniqueness, with which individuals make their unique contribution to the world. If only one element exists without its opposite, the world will not only be monotonous, and dull, but also will perish soon. Confucian harmony encourages diversity, which brings vitality to human community, while it rejects sameness or conformity as the ticket for inclusion.

Dewey shares Confucius's position on the unique contribution individuals make to the groups they belong to through their individualities, while he also believes that the fulfillment of individuality is a moral demand, since every individual should equally have the opportunity to develop their full potentials. Dewey (Dewey & Tufts, 1908/1938) uses metaphors from the botanical world. As he remarks, "[A] violet and an oak tree are equal when one has the same opportunity to develop to the full as a violet which the other has as an oak" (p. 385). Dewey (1927/1991) believes that "liberation of the potentialities of members of a group in *harmony* with the interests and goods which are common" is demanded in a democratic community (p. 147, emphasis added).

Like Confucius, Dewey does not think that maintaining our individuality is contradictory to maintaining a non-exclusionary community. Also, in line with Confucius, he thinks that there is a state called "harmony" human beings can work out, where we fulfill our full potentials. Sometimes, in his writings, he uses the term "peace" instead of "harmony." Witnessing two World Wars and the formation of the dominant group along with industrialization, Dewey is aware of the problem of disharmony and does have a concern for it.

Finally, Confucius's and Dewey's ideals are aimed to extend the caring relationship between family members to the bigger society. As explored in Chapter 3, *rén* (仁) as a complete virtue of morality, wisdom, and courage is the

cornerstone of Confucian theory with shared human sentiment, namely “loving others.” As we can observe, for every relationship that human beings live, or in a well-defined role system where human beings live as rulers, ministers, fathers, sons, brothers, and friends, caring, *in whatever form it takes*, is indispensable. Confucius is pretty good at noticing the different styles of caring that take shape in different relationships. It reveals Confucius’s awareness of the problematic universalism, although he does not completely move himself beyond it. I will come back to this issue later in the discussion.

As for Dewey, caring, as an ethical approach, grounds the very idea of individual growth. In other words, the advocacy of individuality takes the assumption that we care for each other’s development as a unique social being. Hence, because of this caring relationship, we include every individual in forming a community which takes every individual’s development into consideration. Also, due to this caring relationship, we commit ourselves to free communication with others and cooperative undertakings to help each other gain greater insights and enlarged views. Like Confucius, Dewey holds a same desire to have our schools and our larger community become an extended family, where each member cares for one another. Making this recommendation without considering the cultural differences of the conception of caring, Dewey fails to prevent himself from the charge of universalism. I will come back to it again later on.

5.2.3 Human Unity as Pursuit of Common Good

By exploring *human unity* contained in both thinkers' theories, we have touched the heart of Confucius's and Dewey's social ideals. We now should form a solid understanding of Confucian Grand Union and Deweyan democracy. Their work helps us see the inseparability of private/public, individual/social, and political/social. More importantly, their theories inform us that learning to be a fully realized human being is an ethical way to live. Human unity as a socio-political ideal entails a moral end for us to achieve. While pursuing a fully realized human being and a non-exclusionary community, we strive for the achievement of "a common good."

For Confucius and Dewey, "a common good" starts with interpersonal relationships or person-to-person interactions, where individuals as social beings gain, practice, and develop ideas, values, and aims in an attempt to support a mutual growth. In the words of Confucius, "Establish others in seeking to establish ourselves and promote others in seeking to get there ourselves" (*Analects*, 6.30**), which is more plainly expressed in Dewey's (1891/1969b) "a good which in satisfying one, satisfies others" (p. 261). This common good is based on cooperative efforts and oriented toward the full development of individual capacity rather than material equality. This common good cannot be measured in a quantitative sense.

In summation, human unity, for Confucius and Dewey, is a socio-political and ethical ideal which is aimed to achieve the best possibilities of both individuals and human community as a whole through cooperative efforts, and collective intelligence. As a pursuit of common good, human unity does not demand a sacrifice of individuality, which indicates a poor community whose members are personally undeveloped. In particular, as an ethical ideal, human unity informs us how to live together as social beings in an increasingly globalized world of irresistible diversity. In pursuing human unity, Confucius and Dewey present a human community that represents a more perfect organism. Their shared concept of human unity is also a powerful criticism against an atomistic culture that classical liberals maintain. I now move on to discuss the problems to these two thinkers' beliefs in their ideals.

5.3 The Problematic

In line with Confucian scholars, such as Creel (1960) and Ames and Rosemont (1998), I do believe that Confucius is a creative thinker and innovative reformer, whose beliefs and propositions go against traditions in a deep sense. I also agree with Dewey's neo-individualism which is powerful in awakening our awareness of "the public" and reinstating it to a democracy. However, through the lens of feminism and cultural studies, we still can see the limits of Confucius's and

Dewey's abilities to break all the bonds of tradition and culture of their times and their biases that cause limitations for their recommended solutions. I proceed with Confucius.

First, let me recover a historical picture of Confucius's time, which was portrayed in greater detail in Chapter 2. Confucius was born and lived in the age known as the Spring and Autumn period (0722 - 0481). During that time, China was a country of a predominantly rural and agricultural economy and run by a patriarchal hereditary system. The predominant population lived on the land using iron for agricultural implements. This historical context indicates that women, first, due to their relative physical inferiority, have to leave the strenuous labor to men and align themselves with less laborious duty, which engender the custom of "men tilling and women weaving." Consequently, when this custom later becomes regularized, systematized, and consciously insisted upon, it turns out *natural* that women stay in the domestic sphere taking care of the internal affairs while men become ones who provide for the family playing their roles in the public sphere.

Confucius cannot move beyond his own embeddedness within a patriarchal culture. His ideal "self-cultivation, regulation of family, governance of state, and pacification of world" is only proposed for men. As a result, his ground-breaking claim that *the virtuous and capable* should be elected to public office, does not include women. His school that innovatively advocates popular education takes

roots in the belief, “In teaching people, there is no discrimination (of class, type, etc.),” while it ironically shuts the door to women students (*Analects*, 15.39*).

In Confucius’s defense, his teaching is aimed to cultivate people of *rén*, who are able to rescue a country in chaos and create times of peace and prosperity for its people. For women, who are supposed to improve their “virtues, manner in speech, grace in appearance, and housekeeping skills,” Confucian school is definitely not proper for them (*Rites of Zhou*, as quoted from Pang, 2005, p. 11). A Confucian scholar Pang (2005) expresses his sympathy for Confucius who is criticized for excluding women from his school. He believes that if Confucius had enough energy to teach home economics and how to do makeup things, he wouldn’t refuse to accept women students.

Admittedly, Confucius’s defense may have a point. However, we cannot ignore this cultural bias about women that affects his recommended solutions, which reinforce the patriarchal system where women are voiceless in the public. Even though women taking their responsibility in the private/domestic world are equally respected as men are in the community, by excluding women from the pursuit of self-cultivation toward a fully realized human being both in the domestic and the public worlds, Confucius misses a chance to recover women’s voices back to the public in decision making, which will inevitably affect the private world.

The consequence is that status quo has been maintained forever: men not only rule the public but also define how women should live their lives.

Now we understand why Confucius does not include women in the discussion of the five major social relationships except for the husband-wife one, mother-daughter and elder-younger-sister relationships, for instance. For Confucius, women relationships are not important in the public world, will not be extended to the public world at any rate, and hence are not worth having our attention. Along with these women relationships disappearing from the field of the public vision, the idea that women should not enter into the public world is underscored. Situated and limited to the patriarchal culture of his time, Confucius cannot deny that his recommendations support gender bias while they provide an invaluable chance to include common men into the ideal of self-construction and the public decision making. On the other hand, by prescribing women to the domestic world, Confucius is not able to move beyond the private/public dichotomy entirely in his *a-complete-human-being-always-in-action* in an extended familial community.

The other crucial concern Confucius partially fails to address are power issues in the operation of *maintaining discrepancy and individuality while being in accord*. I use the term “partially,” because Confucius is aware of the issue of power involved in senior-junior and superior-inferior relationship, and offers his

solutions: being critical and outspoken while remaining respectful. However, due to his own embeddedness, Confucius is not able to point out that the valuing of diversity cannot be fully realized until all kinds of coercion or hegemony involved in person-to-person relationships are addressed, sexism and classism, for instance.¹ Women, who were not allowed to participate in the public conversations, would never be informed of what's going on in the public world and would be left behind in the public world. In this case, women would not be able to have their different voices heard in the public decision making. People from a lower social economic status also had trouble making their voices heard or seriously taken in the public sphere. They were usually deemed as “unknowing” or “deficient,” and didn't represent “the common interest.”

I share Thayer-Bacon's (in press) concern that power issues also take shape in the languages and communicational styles we use, which can be discovered through sexism or classism. People from the dominant culture were (or at least had the chance to be) eloquent in the dominant language and were pretty good at the relational skills valued by the dominant culture. These people more easily make their voice heard and win consent in person-to-person relationships. Women were not accepted in the public world, not only because they belonged to the domestic sphere, but also because they didn't use men's language and their

¹ I don't point out the issues of racism and sexual orientation, because they did not exist there in Confucius's time.

communicational styles, which were used to define and justify the world we lived, for instance.

As to the limitations of Dewey's theory, I proceed with a recovery of a general picture of Dewey's time. In 1859, the year of Dewey's birth, Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selections* was published. And yet, later on, the influence of this epoch-making work went far beyond the field of natural science that it came from. The theory of "natural selection" was extended to the field of social science, and used against women, African-Americans, Native-Americans, Asians, and other minority groups. In the early 1900s, the application of science and technology on a wide scale under a system of *laissez faire* economics brought modern society into a highly developed industrial-commercial age, where discrepancies in ability and resources gave advantage to the stronger, and resulted in inequality and injustice as Dewey (1908/1938, 1973) noticed.

I have argued that Dewey successfully separates himself from the liberal individualism that takes "individual" and "social" as antitheses. However, due to his embeddedness within a liberal culture, he still cannot completely move beyond the assumptions of universalism and rationalism in his recommended solutions.²

Let me further explain.

² For classical liberalism's assumption of universality and rationality, see Mouffe (1993) and Thayer-Bacon (2000, 2003).

In the discussion of his redefined values “liberty, equality, fraternity,” Dewey shows his high regard for intelligence (freed and cooperative) and scientific method, which he holds as “panaceas.” He (1928/1960) believes that intelligence as “power of vision and reflection” will bring us “greater insight and foresight.” (p. 287). He (Dewey & Tufts, 1908/1938) offers a “scientific inquiry into facts and testing of ideas” to resolve the conflict in cooperation (p. 363). Here we find that relying on rationality and the valuing of reason, human intelligence and science are taken as neutral and universal in Dewey’s theory. Looking back on history, we can easily find examples that show human intelligence and science which have done a lot of harm to human beings.

During Dewey’s time, Darwin’s “means of natural selections” were applied to social science and used to justify the inferiority of women, African-Americans, Native-Americans, Asians, and other minority groups as history shows. This influence has lasted until today. Ben A. Barres is female-to-male transgendered professor at Stanford University School of Medicine. He (2006) uses his previous personal experience as a woman to explain what is wrong with the argument, “women are not advancing in science because of innate inability,” which is being taken seriously by some high-profile academics (p. 133). Barres critiques this argument made by people both in administration and science which is wrongful and a personal attack on his “character and capabilities” (p. 134). He insightfully

points out power issues hidden behind this gender-biased argument, “I am suspicious when those who are at an advantage proclaim that a disadvantaged group of people is innately less able” (p. 2006). Barres’s experience teaches us a lesson on assuming the neutrality and universality of human intelligence and science.

The problems of human intelligence and science can also be found in the use of nuclear power and technology of cellular clone. The former was originally used as an alternative to generating electricity, while the latter was invented for the improvement of medical technology. However, nuclear power has been used in modern warfare to damage human beings while clone technology also engenders medical ethical issues when it comes to the cloning of human beings themselves.

From the examples above, how can we assume that intelligence and science applied and controlled by human beings are neutral? As embedded human beings, how can we claim our objectivity?

In the discussion of “fraternity” (cooperation), Dewey (1916/1944, 1927/1991, 1973) prescribes “free and open” communication with an emphasis on other-regarding/sympathetic thinking as a tool to make communication educative. According to Dewey, in formulating my experience for another, I must get outside of it — see it as the other would see it and connect it with the experiences of the other by imaging I were the other person. What Dewey fails to address in this

theory of communication is the differences of culture where we are situated and embedded. This embeddedness explains why we cannot always share the same feeling with the other even though we all have come through the same experience. By ignoring the cultural differences human beings bear which cause us to form different assumptions of the world and have different ways of thinking, Dewey assumes other-regarding/sympathetic thinking is universal.

From the lens of feminism, I also discover that either in his theory of self-construction or a non-exclusionary community as far as I have read, Dewey rarely mentions the rights of women, African Americans, and Native Americans, or discusses the issues of sexism and racism that were prevalent in the American society during his time. Dewey's embeddedness within a liberal culture makes his theory so vulnerable to feminist criticisms. However, I still can see that in his daily practice Dewey did stand up for women's rights, while he did have some writings in support of women's education and their academic abilities. In a male-defined academic world against women, I understand that this problem is way out of Dewey's control, although he could have done more.

Another limitation of Dewey's ideas lies in his limited view on power issues and what he offers for addressing them involved in communication or face-to-face interactions in our neighborhood meetings. Dewey (Dewey & Tufts, 1908/1938) recognizes we cannot ignore the dominant group, which "always thinks of itself as

representing the social interest,” and the group or groups, “occupying an *inferior* position of power and economic wealth” (p. 360, emphasis in original). However, Dewey resorts to other-regarding/sympathetic thinking and scientific method as solutions to “struggle” between these two groups of people. What are problematic here is, first, the assumptions of universalism and rationalism that other-regarding/sympathetic thinking and scientific method take which I have critiqued before. Second, from a cultural studies perspective, power issues or “struggles” between the dominant culture and the marginal culture take place in a more subtle and hidden manner.

Even though both parties engage in a conversation by referring to other-regarding/sympathetic thinking, my concern is that, again, people from the dominant culture who have mastered the dominant language and are skilled at the relational styles valued by the dominant culture are easily able to make their voices heard. In this case, “educative communication” always goes one-sidedly to the silenced group. This is the same concern I pointed out in my criticisms of Confucius’s *maintaining discrepancy and individuality while being in accord*.

My last criticism is in regard to the extension of familial relationships to schools, our neighborhood, and the bigger society that both Confucius and Dewey recommend. In making this recommendation, Confucius and Dewey assume a caring relationship which is universal across cultures. Take parenting as an

example. Women and men have different parenting styles, which may be entirely opposed to each other, but, they both believe, show their caring for the children. People across gender, race, ethnicity, or geographic boundaries do share their common human sentiment, caring, for instance. However, it is the cultural uniqueness that decides the different ways we choose to care for others. In making the case for cultural distinctiveness, I am not arguing for naïve relativism, that anything goes, and that all caring styles should be equally embraced as good and right.³ I am creating an open conversation for people to negotiate these differences. In the meanwhile, I am arguing for a differentiated politics of difference that recognizes some differences should be tolerated, even valued and protected from intrusion or harm, while other differences should not be maintained (Thayer-Bacon, in press).

Let's turn to looking at the educational implications of this dissertation.

5.4 Educational Implications

Since Confucius and Dewey share with each other the ideal of human unity in general, and have much in common on the conceptions of 'self' and 'community' in particular, I would like to have two focuses on this discussion. I will start with an exploration of implications this study has for schools in general. Then I will discuss

³ Thayer-Bacon (2003) talks about "vulgar relativism" at length in her *Relational "(e)pistemologies*." The reader can refer to Chapter 2 of the book for more details.

the recommendations Confucius and Dewey would like to make for schools in their own countries according to their cultural uniqueness.

5.4.1 Implications in General

I agree with both thinkers that human beings are not perfect, but embedded due to the culture where they are situated, and fallible due to their embeddedness within the culture where they are born. In this context, both students and teachers are growing and always-in-construction. I am also in line with Confucius that every one serves as a source of knowledge to us, and with Dewey that every experience can be educative. I believe if we can broaden our views of ‘student’ and ‘teacher’ we open up more possibilities to our inquiring. In other words, we need our students to be *student-teacher* while teachers can exchange their role to *teacher-student*. The purpose is to transform our classroom to be a truly learning community where every one is a teacher as well as an inquirer. In this way, we also help each other gain greater insights, enlarged views.

I share with Confucius and Dewey that we have a changeable human nature, and our active habits, initiative in applying capacities to new aims, for instance, can be formed through practice. We need our teachers to have a faith in every child and never give up their hope on any of them. We also need our teachers to create safe and motivating environments, where our children’s potentials can be discovered and then be guided to form active habits. This is, in the words of

Dewey, “capacity in action.” As long as human nature is plastic, it is educators’ responsibility to provide our children with appropriate environments or opportunities in an effort to help them reach their full potentials.

In light of Confucius’s and Dewey’s argument that we should treat each other with dignity and respect as we value human equality and seek an ethical way to live together, I recommend three things to practice in our schools. First, on the part of teachers, they need to help our children see human differences in terms of race, gender, and other cultural distinctiveness they have to deal with both in schools and in society. Next, they also need to allow our children to do their own thinking, respect their own opinions, and even encourage difference voices resulted from their own thinking. In doing these two things what we achieve more than just showing our respect for students’ dignity.

We teach our students to appreciate their differences, in our efforts to embrace diversity and plurality. In showing them how to listen to others while not have our own voice silenced or harming others, we provide our children with a chance to learn how to communicate with others. Children need to know that however unlike we look from each other or however different our cultural values are, we all are part of the world with our cultural uniqueness. It is also important for them to understand and expect cultural differences and disagreement which happen all the time. However, it is more important that our teachers guide our

children to deal with differences and disagreement. In fact, they can show students that differences and disagreement are a great good, where we know others' needs, gain different perspectives, and discover our own embeddedness and limitations. Then teachers can teach students to figure out a way to work together. In this way, children come to form the valuing of the differences, others, by learning from others' strong points to offset the limits of their ability in cooperative undertakings.

In the practice of treating each other with dignity and respect, we also need students and our schools to show their respect for teachers' dignity as well. They need to have a faith in our teachers' professional knowledge that enables them to claim authority and to share what they know with a learning community. Due to this respect, teachers feel valued and trusted. They become more confident and active in sharing their knowledge and seeking professional improvements. Due to this respect, teacher will also be more open to criticisms which they deem as constructive advice rather than oppression or attack.

Since the presented work is also inspired by feminism and cultural studies, I would like to recommend our teachers to help students be aware of domination/oppression existing in the society, which engenders one-sided growth and inequality, and is harmful to individuals who seek a non-exclusionary community to develop themselves to their full potential. It is important for our

children to know reality, be prepared for harms, and learn how to protect themselves as well as others from being harmed. It is also vital for students to learn to form a community to resist harms and oppression as a cooperative effort, where they don't feel lonely or helpless and can shared their limited resources.

I have offered implications of this work for schools at a general level. Now let me turn to a discussion that focuses within cultural distinctiveness. Due to my cultural background which is Chinese, I would like to begin with Confucius.

5.4.2 Implications in Particular

Reading Confucius very carefully was originally for conducting this study. But later on, when I found out what I was reading was so different from what I had heard/known, I couldn't help making myself more carefully read this thinker's thoughts lest I might miss something as I did before. What makes me admire this thinker most is his deep understanding of his own culture, more specifically the limitations of his time, which we still cannot move beyond today.

In chapter 3 where I discussed *doing one's utmost* as a general principle that guides individuals to live together, I used the following quote from Confucius: "When something is found against appropriateness (*yi*, 义), don't feel hesitate to correct/criticize" (Wang, 1998, p. 72). This quote, bearing the encouragement of criticism and questioning, was founded in an essay, "The Duty of Correction" collected in *Xiao Jing* (孝经), a classic where the sphere of filial responsibility is

extended to embrace almost everything that is desirable in human conduct. The essay is where Confucius elaborates the essence of filial responsibility to Zeng Zi, one of his favorite disciples. It was a surprise read to me. In Confucius's view, essentially, it is the admonitory son, admonitory minister and admonitory friend that prevent us from falling into inappropriateness, while the child who is of all obedience *goes against* filial responsibility. This point of view is entirely different from what I heard about *Xiao Jing* (孝经), which has long been deemed as an advocacy for absolute submission!

The other similar remarks Confucius make is, “[I]n striving to be a man of *rén*, do not yield even to your teacher” (*Analects*, 15.36*). As I pointed out in Chapter 3, this speech equally embodies the same spirit this thinker encourages: don't feel hesitate to express yourself when you feel you are doing the right thing even under pressure. I did not feel anything special for this remark until I read the essay “The Duty of Correction.” When looking into the two things together, I realize that in the remark, “[I]n striving to be a man of *rén*, do not yield even to your teacher,” Confucius's point is not located at *rén*, which we always think vital in his doctrine, but at the second part, “do not yield even to your teacher.” Why is it? Let me further explain.

In Confucius's time, Chinese society had been dominated by a not only patriarchal but also hierarchical system for centuries. Gender distinction, class

distinction, age distinction as well as seniority distinction was well received and practiced both in the public and the domestic spheres. The essay “The Duty of Correction” mirrors Confucius’s awareness of oppression and the consequence of domination involved in socio-familial relationships. He is concerned about people that are so used to a hierarchical system and may not be able to step back to discover the harm domination causes to all of us as we seek to form a non-exclusionary community in an effort to become truly human. When I reread “[I]n striving to be a man of *rén*, do not yield even to your teacher,” I realized Confucius was afraid that the tradition of absolute obedience of the young would take shape in a teacher-student relationship when teachers are assumed to have a higher social status, either due to their seniority or superiority. When that happens, we lose our own thinking, our *self-consciousness*, and our *self-determination*, and *a-complete-human-being-always-in-action* will be a dream that can never come to be true.

Therefore, “do not yield even to your teacher,” I argue, is aimed to encourage every one to claim his/her authority in inquiring. Confucius is making a case for those students who bravely question their teachers when doubts occur due to his deep understanding of the limitations of the culture of his time and his desire to help people move beyond it. Confucius’s worry was very radical in the time he lived, and I am afraid to say that I still share his worry today even as we live in the

21st century China and the patriarchal and hierarchical system has been long gone. Based on my personal experience both as a student and a teacher, I could feel students were always afraid of challenging the authority of their teachers by the expression of their different opinions or their doubts, while our teachers who assume their seniority and superiority didn't feel comfortable with a "different" opinion or students doubting, which made them "lose face." I had colleagues who came to me and complained about how "disrespectful" my students were.⁴ I remember one of my students who said aloud his different idea in class really upset a teacher who had been teaching for twenty years.

I share Confucius's "[I]n striving to be a man of *rén*, do not yield even to your teacher" as a recommendation for schools in China. Like Confucius, I also recommend people find ways to express their voices without generating harms or oppression as we seek an interpersonal relationship that is constructive and supportive. Our teachers need to be models who demonstrate a spirit of doubting and challenging in an appropriate manner. Our teachers also need to create an environment by every effort that encourages class conversations and welcomes the sharing of different thoughts. In encouraging doubting and challenging in education, we let our children do their own thinking to *form a mind of his/her own*, which is crucial in self-construction.

⁴ Since I was the homeroom teacher, I was in charge of the overall development of all the students. And other teachers teaching different subjects communicated with me all the time to make sure I was updated about what's going on with my students.

Dewey impresses me too with his insight into the limitations of individualism which is rooted in the liberal culture where he is born. As mentioned in Chapter 2 and 4, liberal individualism represented by Locke and Rousseau takes ‘individual’ and ‘society’ as antitheses, emphasizing individual freedom and autonomy. Many U.S. parents, even today, want their individual child’s needs to be met, and expect more personal room and individual care from the teacher, and are afraid that many *others* would be a hindrance and get in the way of their own child’s development. Dewey was aware of this problematic of liberal individualism. He reinterpreted “fraternity,” one of the words from the slogan of the French Revolution “*Liberty, equality, fraternity*,” as “cooperation,” in his effort to affirm the value of *being willing to work together*, since the conceptions of ‘individual’ and ‘social’ are too porous to be separated.

In agreement with Dewey, I recommend US teachers incorporate more activities that demand cooperative efforts. The activities do not have to be purely academic, but our teachers need to make sure that every student plays a role in the group, in their cooperative effort to achieve some goals, particularly for those elementary children. ‘Human unity’ is not to simply keep us together or to make every one the same, but a cooperative effort, as Dewey phrases, “in action,” through which we reach our full potential. Every time I think of “cooperative effort,” I cannot help thinking of a movie titled “Remember the Titans (2000)”. Here is the

plot summary. By the early 1970s, suburban Virginia schools have been segregated for generations. One Black and one White high school are closed and the students are sent to T.C. Williams High School under federal mandate to integrate. The year is seen through the eyes of T.C. Williams High School football team where the man hired to coach the Black school is made head coach over the highly successful white coach. Based on the actual events of 1971, the team constituted by different races becomes the unifying symbol for the community as the boys and the adults learn to depend on and trust each other.

The most impressive scenario to me in this movie is that when players of different races are forced by their coach to know each other, some of them do it as going through the motions. However, they later find out if the team does not share one heart and every player does not do his job, the “team” is only a loose aggregate which can never beat a firmly banded team. Some of players start to feel the need to know their teammates and sincerely invite them to conversations at a deep level, while some of them start to open up their mind and share their true feelings with each other. The conversations with respect and sincerity among teammates help young players see the value in each other and establish trust between each other. This is my favorite part. When people feel a need to do something, they do it passionately and thoroughly. So the challenge to form a real cooperative group is to make students feel the need to work together and to have

every one involved. It is also a challenge for our teachers to think about their curriculum and how to plan a lesson in order to incorporate cooperative team work.

I want to mention that Confucius's "[I]n striving to be a man of *rén*, do not yield even to your teacher" can also be a recommendation for schools in the USA, while Dewey's cooperative community also needs Chinese teachers' attention. When using the term "in particular," I want to help my reader see a cultural distinctiveness represented by these two recommendations

5.5 Conclusion

I started this study with the inspiration from a same teaching dilemma I encountered in China and the USA. Most homeroom teachers in Chinese middle schools lead a class of students for three year. In order to maintain the overall quality/performance of the class to meet the schools requirements, homeroom teachers have to help form a caring and supportive *collective* — a term we use in China instead of 'classroom community' — in our efforts to have students stay together — not suffer from each other — for three years and make progress together (I had 51 students in my class). Unfortunately, I always had students who did not like working together with their fellow students, and preferred to work alone. The same phenomenon appeared in my Cultural Studies 400 class, "Teachers, Schools, and Society" in the USA. Some of my American students

didn't even want to join discussions in groups. And later, when I helped Dr. Barbara Thayer-Bacon with her C.A.R.E project, I discovered part of the reason for this is that USA culture has its philosophical roots in the Euro-western classical liberal theory represented by Locke and Rousseau, which puts a stress on individualism, including the values of individual freedom, autonomy, choice, and competition.

I started this study wondering what was collectivism and why in our Chinese culture we value "collective" so much, and if collectivism means we should sacrifice our individuality in order to make everyone the same like many people believe. I was wondering if my American students feel isolated from one another in a class and whether they have ever desired the enjoyments that spring from a feeling of union with their fellow students. I was also wondering what kind of relationships individuals need to form with others. I decided to have Confucius and Dewey engage in a philosophical conversation to seek answers.

Most people believe that Confucius, who claims the social ideal of the "Grand Union," is the one in Chinese history who embraces collective culture, docility, and sacrifice of individuality and makes it institutionalized. I hoped my study of Confucius would help me clarify the meaning of "collectivism" and what human relationships he recommends in his doctrine. Dewey, as a philosopher who comes from a liberal culture, has a long distinguished career in the development

of democratic theories with his criticisms of liberal individualism. Through studying his ideal of democracy, I believed I would gain a solid understanding of “individualism,” and be able to explore the commonalities Dewey and Confucius have in their work.

Even though the journey of conducting this study was mixed with pain, struggle and enjoyment, I have to admit — when I am near ending this dissertation — that it is completely worth it. Because of this work, I have gained a new understanding of Confucius’s theory, including his ‘self’ and ‘community’, and more importantly his “collectivism.” Based on my observation, Confucius himself never uses this term in his teachings, but people later created the term and traced it back to Confucius. Undeniably, Confucius values collective efforts as he proposes interpersonal relationships and seeks human unity in his doctrine of *rén*. However, he never mentions that we should sacrifice our individuality or personal gain for the sake of “others” or the community. On the contrary, it is Confucius who claims equal dignity, self-consciousness, and self-determinations for us, and initiates the tradition of liberalism in the Chinese culture as Hu, Shi (Song & Liu, 2004) observes. His “[I]n striving to be a man of *rén*, do not yield even to your teacher” also provides us with the evidence where we learn he is aware of the harms the patriarchal and hierarchal system would cause to the young in educational settings. Also the essay, “The Duty of Correction,” more

straightforward reveals Confucius's position on absolute obedience, which should be completely rejected. If we do want to define Confucius's theory by "collectivism," I would like to define it as: *we become complete individuals — fully realized and active human beings — only when we form a non-exclusionary community of public commitment and full interaction from within and without*, for which 'human unity' is another name.

Dewey's democracy shares many assumptions with Confucius's doctrine and also is a call for human unity — a will to work together and reach our full potentials. His individuals-always-in-the-making and a non-exclusionary association, and his reinterpretation of the famous French motto "*liberty, equality, fraternity*" is a wonderful reflection of liberal culture. For the people in China who resort to the Euro-west for problem-solving, and the classic liberals in the Euro-west who want to democratize China, I would like to recommend Dewey's work to read in order to figure out if China needs to be completely Euro-westernized. His strong recommendation of "cooperation" nicely shows his deep understanding of the problematic of individualism rooted in the liberal culture and hopefully will help us move beyond the atomistic culture and reinstate "the public" back into the development of USA culture.

I believe that as educators, we need to encourage both *individuality* and *cooperation* in our teachings. They are not opposed to each other, but supportive

and will reinforce each other if our teachers have the group work well set up. To achieve this aim, it needs our unremitting effort to work on curriculum development, course design, and methods of instruction in order to let our students feel a need to work together, reap the fruit of their cooperative effort, and eventually come to form a *will* to work together. In embracing both individuality and cooperation, I propose a theory of human unity. With an emphasis on a pluralistic relational view of human community, this theory will contribute significantly to the improvement of educational opportunities for all people.

Undeniably, due to the limits of Confucius's and Dewey's abilities to move beyond their own embeddedness, both thinkers have their biases in their theories that affect their own criticisms and recommended solutions. It is fine, because we all have our embeddedness, we are not perfect, and hence we can never claim infallibility just as these two thinkers teaches us. That is why I started this conversation, and want you, my reader, to join in this conversation and keep the conversation going. This work is a cooperative undertaking where we share our emotions, feelings, ideas, and criticisms to help each other achieve greater insights, and enlarge our views in and for human unity.

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