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The Common Good: Chinese and American Perspectives

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The Common Good

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The common good is an essentially contested concept in contemporary moral and political discussions. Although the notion of the common good has a slightly antique air, especially in discussions in the North Atlantic, it has figured prominently in both the sophisticated theoretical accounts of moral and political theory in recent years and also in the popular arguments brought for particular political policies and for more general orientations toward policy. It has been at home both in the political arsenal of the left and the right. It has had special significance in ethical and political debates in modern and modernizing cultures. Broadly Aristotelian views about community, family, and the common good have played an important role in Western debates about the impact of modernizing trends on traditional intermediate institutions. Similarly, debates in East Asian cultures traditionally influenced by Confucian teachings have worried about these same influences. Both Aristotelianism in the West and Confucianism in the East have been to some extent pushed aside from the center of contemporary political debate, but both remain options frequently sought out by those uncomfortable with some of the more unsettling features of modern culture.

In both the Chinese and the North Atlantic discussions of the common good, the discussion takes place in the presence of a looming political ideology that has dominated twentieth century life. In China, Maoist-Marxist thought in combination with statist capitalism, which fueled the revolutionary changes in Chinese life during the last half of the twentieth century, provided the background for Confucian attempts to revive the notion of the common good. In North Atlantic conversations, it is the increasingly well-defined commitments of the secular, liberal state that loom over

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the conversation. Confucians try to sustain (or perhaps refashion) their traditional commitments in a social context utterly dominated by debates between neo-Marxist and liberal ideologies, while Western thinkers writing in a cultural context where Marxist thought has largely ceased to be a realistic option must cope with the dominance of the prevailing secular individualism, increasingly more precisely articulated in the work of such philosophers as John Rawls, Ronald Dworkin, and their students—and such late liberals as Richard Rorty and Michel Foucault.

The chapters in this volume grew out of two conferences that brought together a group of Chinese philosophers with serious scholarly interests in Confucian thought and a group of American philosophers trained in Western philosophy, but with an interest in Confucian attitudes toward the common good. All of the philosophers in this group found the notion of the common good important in their work, but there were a variety of attitudes towards its ultimate usefulness in dealing with contemporary problems in moral and political thought. All of the contributors were, however, interested in a dialogue in which the North Atlantic approach to these issues confronted the Chinese approach. The first conference was held on October 29–30, 2009, at Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) and was sponsored by the Center for Applied Ethics at HKBU under the direction of the Director of the Center, P.C. Lo. The second conference was held on March 20–21, 2011, at the University of Notre Dame and was sponsored by the Notre Dame Center for Ethics and Culture under the direction of the Director of that Center, David Solomon. At the first conference, chapters were circulated before the conference and each chapter was subjected to rigorous criticism by the other members of the group. Participants' revised chapters were again circulated before the second conference, and each chapter was again subjected to criticism by all the participants.

These chapters do not fall into a tidy set of categories, nor did the conversations at the two conferences from which they emerged always flow smoothly. The organizers of these conferences thought that open dialogue was more important on these matters than regimented discussion. There were a variety of questions posed by the chapters and by the critical discussions of them. Important questions were raised about the interpretation of both the Confucian tradition of the common good and the broadly Aristotelian/Thomistic tradition, which has largely carried the discussion of this notion in European philosophy. In neither tradition is there a clear consensus about what the favored view of the common good might be. Chinese and Western commentators raised concrete questions about how the concept of the common good might be made relevant to current concrete political issues. There was special interest in the role the common good might play in dealing with trends of secularism both in China and the West, and in what is increasingly being called the crisis of the family. One chapter focused precisely on the relation of the common good to large-scale failures in eldercare in contemporary China. A number of the contributors were also especially interested in the project of building and sustaining "intermediate institutions" of a variety of sorts to fill in the space between rampant individualism and the threat of totalitarianism. Fundamental philosophical questions were raised, especially by the North Atlantic contributors, about the meaning and significance of the notion of the common good and also about the philosophical underpinnings

of the individualism endemic in the West since the seventeenth century—which has become increasingly evident in China.

While the chapters do not fall neatly into a set of categories, it is possible to group them roughly into three sets of chapters based on their general orientation. Three of the chapters, those by Engelhardt, Erickson, and Solomon, deal with fundamental philosophical questions that arise when the notion of the common good is addressed. All three of these chapters are guided by the concerns of broadly Western academic philosophy, although all three are, in quite different ways, critical of the general way in which the common good has been treated by philosophers. A second set of chapters, those by Chen, Zhang, Wang, J. Chan, Lo, and Fan, focus primarily on resources within the Chinese tradition for making the notion of the common good relevant to contemporary moral and political matters. The chapters of Chen and Zhang are straightforward exercises in the retrieval of insights from the Chinese intellectual traditions relevant to contemporary discussions of the common good. The chapters by Wang, J. Chan, Lo, and Fan have a somewhat more complicated relation to the tradition. Finally, there is a set of three chapters—by Keys, K. Chan, and McCann—that focus on topics central to the broadly Aristotelian/Thomistic tradition within which the notion of the common good was refined in the European philosophical tradition. Keys and K. Chan tend to focus on the more abstract and philosophical aspects of this rich tradition, while McCann is primarily interested in the manner in which this larger tradition has been interpreted, contextualized, and applied by the Roman Catholic church in its rich tradition of Catholic social teaching.

There is no doubt that Engelhardt's chapter, Chap. 2, was the most significant chapter in structuring the overall discussion within the research group. His relentless attack on the adequacy of the notion of the common good, understood in strictly secular terms, for resolving fundamental issues in ethics and politics oriented much of the discussion in the other chapters—both the discussion of those who, like him, were skeptical of the significance of this notion and of its defenders. Engelhardt's central claim in this chapter is that in contemporary secular culture, the notion of the common good—severed from an absolute perspective on reality such as the perspective of God—cannot ground anything like a substantial moral or political view. He emphasizes throughout the fact of moral pluralism in contemporary culture, and argues that the fundamental moral and political disagreements in our pluralistic culture cannot be resolved in merely secular terms. The notion of the common good is just one more secular attempt to provide a bridge across these deep disagreements, but it is bound to fail.

Engelhardt emphasizes three particular considerations that demonstrate why what he calls a "God's-eye perspective" is essential to an authentically moral life. Without such a perspective, he argues, (1) moral pluralism is intractable, (2) one can find no adequate reason to choose moral considerations over merely self-interested ones, and (3) there can be no genuine political authority, but at most "simply *modi vivendi*." He explains the continuing desire on the part of philosophers to pursue a secular account of the common good as the result of their felt need to "fill a moral and cultural vacuum" characteristic of contemporary life and also of

an "exaggerated and/or an unjustified view of the capacities of discursive moral reflection" (Engelhardt 2013, pp. 21–43).

Engelhardt does think that there is a useful notion of the common good suited to the human condition, but it is much weaker than the traditional notion and unlikely to satisfy the traditional supporters of it. He says of his favored notion, "If there is a common good, it is the good of a public space structured by the rule of law within which persons can with consenting others and in non-geographically-located communities of their choice pursue their own vision of common goods" (Engelhardt 2013, pp. 21–43). This libertarian-friendly conception of the common good is accompanied by a more general picture of society directly at odds with the broadly Aristotelian tradition that has traditionally nurtured the notion of the common good. Engelhardt says of human society generally, "Society is not a moral community with a substantive view of common goods, but rather society is appreciated as an open framework within which diverse moral communities can pursue their own views of common goods" (Engelhardt 2013, pp. 21–43). He dubs this notion of society "foundational moral pluralism" and suggests that it characterizes the human condition.

This strong rejection of the traditional aspirations of common good theory provided a benchmark for the discussion of others in the group. While not all of the participants fully rejected Engelhardt's hard line on the common good, everyone struggled to stop short of the full implications of his strongly negative approach to the topic.

Steve Erickson, along with many others in this volume, is primarily concerned to defend the essential place of "families and "thick" communities" in any successful human life. His approach to this task is to examine the sources in the history of Western thought (especially Western philosophy) for the pervasive individualism of contemporary culture, which he claims is "poorly thought through." He is especially critical of certain Enlightenment notions central to contemporary accounts of liberal political theory, particularly autonomy and universality, as leading to our acceptance of "empty notions" of the common good. He also makes use of the work of such philosophers as Sellars and Hegel to give an account of the individual as constituted by families and thick communities. In the end, Erickson is able, with modernity and the Enlightenment, to celebrate the individual, but not the individual of the Enlightenment. He is striving to avoid the individual as either Taylor's "punctual" self or MacIntyre's near relative, "the emotivist self."

Erickson's primary target throughout is what he calls "Billiard Ball Individualism," which he defines as:

> A strongly held Western belief that on final analysis various aggregates of human beings are constituted by multiples of entities we would most perspicuously refer to as distinguishable, separable, and therefore distinct and quite separately existing individuals. I choose to refer to this view as "Billiard Ball Individualism" (BBI) (Erickson 2013, pp. 45–64).

Erickson, not surprisingly, locates the philosophical origins of BBI in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially in the work of Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, and Newton. He finds its contemporary progeny in the self of mid-century existentialism (Sartre's young man, perhaps, in "Existentialism is a Humanism")

or liberal political theory (Rawls' "blade-counter"). In the heart of his chapter, he explores an alternative conception of the self, rooted in Hegel and Sellars, and drawing on a conception of the spiritual origins of the self. The account allows him both to bring in the necessity of thick communities for the development of the healthy self, but also to connect his account with the problematic now confronting Asian thinkers.

Solomon's chapter, Chap. 4, like Engelhardt's and Erickson's, is interested in examining reasons rooted in modern moral philosophy for the philosophical resistance to a strong doctrine of the common good. He suggests that there are two commitments of much of modern philosophy that explain this resistance: (1) a strong focus on the tension between egoism and altruism as the central problematic of modern moral philosophy; and (2) the failure on the part of most modern moral philosophers to note the ubiquitous institutional features in contemporary moral thought and discussion (Solomon 2013, pp. 65–82). He goes on to argue that these two commitments are the result of the rejection of a much broader Aristotelian orientation in practical philosophy—an orientation that makes the central issue in ethics not the question of whether I pursue my own good or the good of the other, but rather whether I pursue genuine goods rather than spurious ones. The Aristotelian view also brings with it a picture of human social life that is structured by layered institutional features (akin to MacIntyrean practices) that become almost invisible to modern philosophers made blind by their commitment to methodological individualism. His over-all suggestion is that the rehabilitation of the notion of the common good will require a more general recovery of a classical conception of human life and the goals of practical reason. From this perspective, Engelhardt's radical rejection of the relevance of the classical notion of the common good is just what one should expect from someone whose approach to moral and political thinking is so thoroughly shaped by Enlightenment presuppositions.

When we turn to the second set of chapters, the tone of the discussion shifts significantly. These six chapters are focused primarily on the resources within the Chinese intellectual traditions—especially the Confucian tradition—for making sense of the notion of the common good and for bringing it to bear on concrete moral and political concerns in contemporary Chinese culture. There is no synonymous phrase for "common good" in either the ancient or the contemporary Chinese language. Confucians used to emphasize "matters of the family, the state, and all-under-Heaven" (*jiashi*, *guoshi*, *tianxiashi*). Contemporary Chinese discourse uses phrases such as "public interests," "national interests," and "social interests," but there are no expressions synonymous with "common good." Therefore, strictly speaking, these six chapters can only look for notions analogous to the common good in Chinese traditions.

Albert Chen's chapter, Chap. 5, is primarily intended to recover some important ideas from the early twentieth century Confucian classic, *Datong Shu* (*Book on the Great Community*), by Kang Youwei. Chen proposes that the ancient concept of *datong* is "an expression of the idea of the common good in traditional Chinese social and political philosophy" (Chen 2013, pp. 85–102). He points out that Kang Youwei radically reinterpreted this notion, which appears in the oldest Confucian classics, in his book, *Datong Shu,* early in the twentieth century. Chen draws on Youwei's interpretation in the *Datong Shu* to defend his identification of *datong*

with the common good. He also argues that this concept is the key to understanding "the ideology currently propounded by the Chinese Communist Party, including the ideas of the "preliminary stage of socialism" and the "*xiaokang* society" (society of lesser prosperity) (Chen 2013, pp. 85–102).

Chen points out that while in the Confucian classics *datong* typically referred to "an ideal state of human social existence probably in the mythical Golden Age of the remote past," in the radical reinterpretation of the notion by Kang it is

> An ideal world in the distant future, when social evolution has progressed to the Age of Complete Peace-and-Equality. In both of these *datong* worlds, "the world is shared by all alike" (*tianxia weigong*). Human pursuits are directed to the common good of all rather than to the satisfaction of selfish or private desires. Property is held in common. The well-being of all in society is well taken care of. The practice of *ren* is not confined to one's family members but extends to all in a kind of universal brotherhood/sisterhood (Chen 2013, pp. 85–102).

The most surprising part of Kang's interpretation and defense of this view is his support for the abolition of the family. For a Confucian, this would seem to be an impossible position to countenance, but it is clear that Kang does hold it. Indeed, Chen argues, Kang's interpretation is compatible in most respects with classical utilitarianism with its radical attack on institutions or norms that might stand in the way of maximizing human happiness. As Chen puts it,

> Kang's thesis is that the ultimate realization of the common good in human social existence consists of the dissolution of the "nine boundaries," which includes, among other things, the abolition of sovereign nation-states and the establishment of a world government with local democratic autonomy, the disappearance of social classes and private property, and the transfer of familial functions to publicly established institutions, which will care for all aspects of individuals' welfare from the cradle to the grave. Social, economic and political equality will be achieved, and individuals will enjoy maximal autonomy and freedom, including, for example, freedom from family obligations, freedom to change marriage partners, freedom to pursue a homosexual lifestyle, freedom to pursue spiritual development, and freedom or right of euthanasia. Even animals' rights to life and humane treatment will receive recognition. Hence Kang's philosophy, built upon a synthesis of Confucianism, Buddhism, utilitarianism, and the conception of social evolution and progress, points toward a utopian future with elements of socialism or communism and liberalism (Chen 2013, pp. 85–102).

Like Albert Chen, Ellen Zhang in her chapter, Chap. 6, is interested in exploring the resources of traditional Chinese thought for producing material to interact with the largely Western discussions of the common good. While Chen turns to Kang's interpretation of *datong*, Zhang looks for resources in the ancient, and long-neglected, tradition of Moist ethics. Her chapter gives both an introduction to Moism for readers unfamiliar with it and a lengthy discussion of how it provides resources for talking about something at least conceptually similar to the common good. She describes her central task:

> It is my contention that developing resources for a Moist critique of Confucianism is significant because its critical insight does not originate from the confines of modern Western liberal tradition (or "Western learning," xixue, 西學), but from within the intellectual and cultural milieu of early China itself. Although the type of ideal communities, or

structured organizations, advocated by the Moists is by no means the civil society we have in mind today, there are certain things we can learn from Moist moral philosophy: particularly, its conception of the good in terms of mutuality, reciprocity, and commonality. It is crucial to note that when we talk about the reconstruction of moral philosophy in contemporary China, we must recognize both the possibilities and limits of ALL our traditions, which include Moism as well as other ethical theories besides Confucianism (Zhang 2013, pp. 103–128).

Although Moism shares some features with Confucianism, Zhang explores a number of important differences. In particular, she states that the "Moists are quite skeptical about the Confucian notion of moral sentiments based on natural human feelings" and, as a result, "they engage themselves in a self-conscious search for objective moral standards and ethical principles that, they believe, would better the socio-political well-being of humanity" (Zhang 2013, pp. 103–128). Moreover, Zhang emphasizes how the notion of "inclusive care" (*jianai*) in Moist ethics contrasts quite sharply with the "differentiated care" (*chadeng zhiai*) central to Confucianism, which suggests that one should give more attention to the needs of family members and close relatives than to strangers. The dispute here is reminiscent in many respects of the debate within recent analytic moral philosophy in the West about "special relationships." Those philosophers like Bernard Williams—and certain virtue ethicists—who have emphasized the priority of special relationships in gauging our obligations to others are closer to the Confucian ideal in this regard than to the Moist one.

Zhang sums up the differences between the Confucian and Moist ideal in a characteristic passage.

> The rationale behind the Moist critique of "filial piety", a la Confucianism, is that the notion of distinction and preference fails to promote a kind of "common good" that should be principle-based rather than role-based. Familial love and family-specific norms, though important, might entail too many emotional configurations and preferential treatments that may undermine the impartiality and fairness needed for the common good (Zhang 2013, pp. 103–128).

Of first importance to the Moist, too, is the notion of reciprocity and mutuality. Zhang recognizes that the use made of self-interested motivation in Moism suggests a close relation to Hobbesianism. She is hesitant to accept this view, and seems to suggest that self-interested motivation in Moism, albeit it has a utilitarian bent, ultimately points to a kind of "good" that is non-instrumental. One alternative to a Hobbesian contract view as an interpretive principle for Moism is to accept a straightforward utilitarian foundational normative theory.

Zhang agrees that Moism is not without its difficulties in giving an account of the common good. As she says,

> Since the Moist ethics demands complete impartiality towards others and the agreement of the community, the common good has meant the subjection of the particular to the universal, or at least when we comprehend a particular good, we have to place ourselves above that particular good. Further because Mozi's universality and principle-centeredness is not rooted in a liberal self and individual autonomy of the Western Enlightenment tradition, it fosters another kind of universality that can easily be transformed into a totalitarian politics (Zhang 2013, pp. 103–128).

In Wang's Chap. 7, she explores a particular feature of contemporary Chinese culture—the breakdown of any system for appropriate elder-care—from the perspective of the common good. She brings a good deal of evidence to show that in fact this system of eldercare is in crisis. Many elderly Chinese are suffering because they lack adequate social means of support. She also links this crisis to certain mistaken approaches to the common good. In particular, she argues that recognition of the deep-rooted interdependence of human beings has been neglected in contemporary Chinese culture. She focuses this criticism on the possibility of recovering and returning to its proper place in a well-ordered life the virtue of filial piety. She is adamant that she is not merely defending prudential reason on each person's part to make commitments to aid the elderly. She wants something deeper and something more intrinsic to the human condition itself. She says in this regard:

> It should be noted that by interdependence I refer not to a means like cooperative bargaining, which we need in order to achieve our own goals, but to a value that in its own right constitutes an independent primordial dimension of human flourishing and can not be fully defined on individual grounds. This means every one inevitably benefits from the network of interdependence *per se* in order to flourish *qua* human, but it cannot be reduced to every one's own private goods. It suggests that the crisis of elderly support actually bears witness to the decline of the notion of the common good in contemporary China (Wang 2013, pp. 129–153).

The key Confucian concepts deployed in her argument are *li* and *ren*. She gives subtle and sensitive treatments of each concept, characterizing *li* as the notion of relatedness providing the fundamental ordering of human lives. She characterizes *ren* as "tenderness" or "caring." She sums up her treatment by saying, "*li* denotes the common space of humanity, i.e., the ideal order of human society. *Ren* refers to a network of mutual caring, which is viewed as the foundation of *li*" (Wang 2013, pp. 129–153).

Wang admits that Confucius does not have a notion that is easily translatable as "common good," although she argues that "*ren* plays a role similar to the common good that MacIntyre defends in the Aristotelian-Thomist tradition" (Wang 2013, pp. 129–153). She suggests two reasons for this claim. First, "given humans' vulnerable nature, a network of mutual caring, or a network of giving and receiving, is needed for everyone to be able to flourish." And, second, "the network of mutual care plays an essential role in the transformation of humans from a dependent infant to an autonomous moral agent" (Wang 2013, pp. 129–153).

She argues that filial piety is the virtue necessary "for sustaining the common good of the mutual-caring network" (Wang 2013, pp. 129–153). She is skeptical, however, about whether there is any notion in Western thought that corresponds directly to it. Indeed, she thinks that most Westerners misunderstand the notion altogether. As she says,

> Far from Westerners' false impression of filial piety as absolute submission to one's parents—a combination of paternalism and natural affection– in the Confucian literature filial piety is formulated with reference to an elaborated system of virtues, well beyond the range of the one-sided submission of the son to the father. For example, the Confucian tradition requires that parents must also respect (*jing*, 敬) their children in the name of filial piety. "The son was the descendant of the ancestors—could any father dare not to respect him?" (Confucius 1967) (Wang 2013, pp. 129–153).

She thinks, however that the closest we can come to this notion is in MacIntyre's "virtues of acknowledged dependence."

Jonathan Chan in his chapter, Chap. 8, also appeals to the Confucian ethical concepts of *ren* (as in Wang's chapter) and *datong* (as in Chen's chapter; but translated as Grand Union by Chan) as expressions of the common good. His chapter focuses on the particular issue of global poverty and our related obligations. He points out that current Western arguments in favor of assisting the global poor are largely rights-based, and thus are limited in their persuasiveness. Instead, he proposes that the notion of common good on the basis of *ren* and *datong* can be the ground of a moral obligation to help the global poor. He also argues that such an approach can overcome the inadequacies of Peter Singer's classic argument, and concludes that

> It is the moral position of the Confucian that the affluent have a moral obligation to give a large part of their wealth to those who are suffering for want of basic necessities, and that the moral obligation of the affluent is not diminished either by the physical distance between rich and poor, or by the fact that there are many other people similarly able to help, assuming that doing so would not compromise the conception of the good informed by the Confucian tradition (Chan 2013a, pp. 155–167).

P.C. Lo, in his chapter, Chap. 9, does not turn, as Chen and Zhang do, to the Chinese classics of ethical and political thinking to shed light on the contemporary situation in China. Rather, he is emphatic in his approach to the discussion of the common good that social analysis is the key to understanding the issues surrounding this concept both in American and Chinese society. He also believes that the cultural problems that give rise to the contemporary concern with the common good are similar both in China and the United States. He draws on the work of Robert Bellah and his colleagues for the main outlines of his approach to social analysis. Using their work, he concludes that if contemporary Chinese citizens, as well as the citizens of Western democracies, are to avoid being whip-sawed between individualist and collectivist fantasies about social life, it is important that intermediate institutions of various sorts be supported and sustained. The Confucian emphasis on the family is the main symbol of Confucianism's commitment to the common good, though Lo argues that the family is not sufficient for sustaining the common good. We need rather a variety of intermediate institutions to repair some of the damage wrought on contemporary culture by individualism and collectivism. He is especially suspicious of the use made of the metaphor of the family for understanding the exercise of state power—he suggests that this has been one of the ways in which Confucianism has gone wrong: applying the metaphor of the family in areas where it is inappropriate.

Lo follows Bellah et al. in arguing that at the heart of many contemporary cultural problems are what Bellah calls a "crisis in civic membership," a crisis whose main upshot is that "at every level of American life and in every significant group, temptations and pressures to disengage from the larger society" (Bellah et al. 1996, pp. xi). Lo suggests that what is necessary to pursue the common good is "to pursue goods common to all by participating in communities for common causes" (Lo 2013, pp. 169–191).

While the United States has a tradition of individualism, China has a long tradition of a more collectivist approach to social matters. This collectivist approach was re-emphasized by the Chinese revolution and the overt adoption of a broadly socialist command economy. With current economic liberalization and government-sanctioned capitalism, however, China is committed to a far-ranging individualism, which Lo finds quite dangerous. He states,

> Here in China we have not only the tyranny of the "free market," but also the tyranny of the pseudo-free market under the "collusion of government officials and entrepreneurs." The symptoms of China's "common bad" include the difficulty of getting quality health care, a poor education system in the countryside, poor labor rights (independently formed labor unions are illegal in China), and a rapidly deteriorating natural environment (Lo 2013, pp. 169–191).

Lo provides a comprehensive and brilliant account of current attempts by different political groups—especially the "New Left" and "traditional liberals"—to analyze China's contemporary cultural and economic problems, especially the threat of excessive individualism. He concludes that

> Between the individual, who is in a web of inter-personal relationships and bonds, and the state we need a plurality of communities of civic commitment engaging in civil debates. Among these communities the importance of the family cannot be understated, but family should not be the only intermediate group between an individual and the state (Lo 2013, pp. 169–191).

Ruiping Fan, like P.C. Lo, is concerned with developing ideas about the common good that can respond to certain critical features of contemporary Chinese culture. In his chapter, Chap. 10, he develops a diagnosis of the difficulties in this culture that is even more radical than Lo's. Fan declares that contemporary China is suffering a moral crisis, a crisis that has two main features. First, the culture is suffering from a fragmentation and weakening of traditional Confucian ethical culture. He argues that this weakening has occurred as the result of a number of political revolutions and other reform movements in the twentieth century, especially the Communist revolution culminating in the Cultural Revolution. Though this fragmentation is quite serious, it has not destroyed altogether the Confucian character of much of Chinese culture. The second component of the moral crisis is a residual commitment to Confucianism on the part of a majority of the Chinese people even today. As Fan says,

> Confucian morality still governs a wide range of contemporary Chinese life…and a substantive "Confucian personality" has continuously informed the social base of Chinese culture and morality and significantly accounted for the motivation behind and strategies adopted for the success of Chinese economic reforms in the recent three decade (Fan 2013, pp. 193–218).

The main goals of Fan's chapter are (1) to summarize the main components of the Confucian ethical system that still operate, in Chinese culture, (2) to demonstrate that liberal democratic reforms based on the ideas of John Rawls are utterly unsuitable for Chinese culture, and (3) to explore the possibility of what would be involved in building a new Chinese culture on a Confucian notion of the common good.

His argument for the inadequacy of Rawlsian liberalism for Chinese culture is quite straightforward. He claims that since Rawls' views took their political turn (and he gave up on any metaphysically-based view of liberal justice), these views are derived from intuitions about justice that arise from particular features of political and social development in the West. These intuitions, rooted in the Western experience of the religious wars and the pluralist response to those wars, form an overlapping consensus that undergirds the principles of liberal justice that form the core of Rawls' view. Fan argues that since Chinese history has had no episodes like the Western religious wars—or the consequent settlement of them—there is simply no basis in Chinese life for an overlapping consensus of the sort necessary to undergird liberal justice. There is consequently no reason to believe that the principles of liberal political theory could be easily imposed on current Chinese culture.

The most exciting part of Fan's chapter is surely his creative attempt to imagine what it would be like to rebuild Chinese political culture around a set of political ideas rooted in the traditional Confucian notion of the common good, but refashioned to fit conditions of late modernity. His ideas, especially with regard to the accommodation of rights-talk, religious freedom, and gender equity, are innovative and refreshing.

The final three chapters in this volume explore in different ways the resources of the broadly Aristotelian/Thomistic tradition for helping to define and defend contemporary uses of the common good. Karen Chan's chapter, Chap. 11, focuses on the particular implications of the traditional doctrine of the common good for how we should regard the question of whether a successful political leader is required, as a condition of his success, to be personally virtuous. She begins by noticing that "in today's Western political climate, political leaders often depend on the assumption that their personal indiscretions will be forgiven, or at least overlooked, by the general public" (Chan 2013b, pp. 221–242). Personal indiscretions, even those indiscretions amounting to serious dishonesty, are often overlooked in political life if the indiscretions are regarded as "merely private." As Chan notes, a number of contributors to this volume, especially Fan and Zhang, point out that the tradition in Asian cultures, especially those influenced by Confucianism, is quite different. In these cultures, political leaders are expected (for the most part) to be moral exemplars for the citizens they participate in governing. Political leaders whose "private" behavior is scandalous demonstrate, by that very fact, their incapacity for governing others. Her suggestion is that vicious political leaders show themselves incapable of discerning their own good, and hence incapable of discerning the common good, as is required for political leaders. She admits that in these Asian cultures, as in the West, political leaders frequently fall short of these expectations, but she nevertheless argues that the expectations are a fixed part of the political landscape in many Asian political cultures.

Her question is whether there is in Western cultures a tradition that, like Confucianism, would hold that the requirements of success as a political leader include a virtuous private life. She suggests that the broadly Aristotelian/Thomistic tradition embodies such a view, and much of her chapter is an attempt to articulate and defend this view. She begins by acknowledging that there is a broad range of

reasons why it is good, in this tradition, for every man, including political leaders, to act virtuously. Virtue is necessary for genuine personal fulfillment, it seems to follow from the social nature of action, and it is necessary to avoid scandal. These points, however, do not touch the deeper question she is pursuing—is it necessary for the political leader, qua political leader, to possess virtue in order to succeed as a political leader? Her methodological approach here is to answer these questions: "we must explore whether there are virtues specific to the political leader that allow him to rule well. If there are, then we must determine if these virtues that perfect the political leader qua leader can exist without the virtues that perfect the political leader qua man" (Chan 2013b, pp. 155–167).

In seeking the virtues essential for a good ruler, Chan suggests that what is necessary is good reasoning directed at the common good of the community. She follows Aristotle and Aquinas in distinguishing, first, theoretical reasoning and practical reasoning, and then, within practical reasoning, productive practical reasoning (art) and ethical reasoning. Chan concludes that the reasoning necessary for the successful political leader is practical reasoning that is ethical—not productive—in its nature. Chan's central thought is that just as will and reason have to be perfected for successful individual action, i.e., action aimed at *eudaimonia*, will and reason must also be perfected in the political leader who pursues, qua political leader, the common good. The perfection of reason in each case is a form of the intellectual virtue of prudence (called regnative prudence in the case of the political leader). But, as both Aristotle and Aquinas argue, the intellectual virtue of prudence requires the perfection of the will, as found in the virtuous individual. Hence, it follows that a "good" political leader requires regnative prudence, but in order to possess that intellectual virtue, it is necessary that he/she also possess the moral virtues.

Chan is careful to point out that nowhere in Aristotle and Aquinas' writings on this matter do we find specific formulas for how we are to measure required individual virtues for successful rulers. There will be hard cases about how to trade off private vice for public virtue. That there is a deep conceptual connection, however, between private virtue and the virtue of the ruler is beyond a doubt in the Thomistic/Aristotelian tradition, she argues.

Chan ends her piece by addressing a question that was frequently discussed in the conference sessions where all of the chapters were critically evaluated—what is the definition of the common good? Like many others, Chan insists that we must abandon the search for a concrete and material definition of the common good, and rest content with a formal definition. She suggests the following formal definition:

> The common good is the mutual and communal flourishing of many persons who live and act virtuously together in a community. The common good of a group or community will vary according to the members of the community, their needs, their goals, etc. Since there is no concrete definition of the common good, there is no set formula for reaching the common good (Chan 2013b, pp. 155–167).

Mary Keys in her chapter, Chap. 12, examines the relation between justice and the common good in the broadly Aristotelian/Thomistic tradition. Her essay begins with the observation that Western political thought has traditionally identified

justice with the common good. The central aim of her chapter is to call that commitment into question. As she states,

> One may still wonder whether justice *suffices* for fully human common goods to subsist and for the persons, families, and other societies sharing in these common goods to flourish. Is attention to the truth of justice and its implications enough? If not, what other important sources and aspects of the common good should be understood, stressed, and supported? (Keys 2013, pp. 243–259).

Her answer is quite straightforward—justice is insufficient for "the formation and sustainment of common goods" (Keys 2013, pp. 243–259), and it is necessary to supplement justice with the complementary virtues of charity (*caritas*) and mercy (*misericordia*). In her words, "In our contemporary globalized, post-traditional societies it is critical that the sources of *caritas* and mercy be recognized, respected, and reinforced as indispensable educators for and aspects of the common good" (Keys 2013, pp. 243–259).

Keys draws on Aquinas' treatment of love and justice to argue that while justice promotes the common good only indirectly, love promotes it directly. As she says,

> Justice causes peace "indirectly," by "remov[ing] obstacles" to its achievement and fulfillment. Charity surpasses justice, however, because "according to its very nature it causes peace" and does so "directly" by forging true and good union within and among human beings, and between them and God (*ST* II-II 29, 4, ad 3; emphasis added) (Keys 2013, pp. 243–259).

In support of her overall argument, she draws on the examples of Mother Teresa and William Wilberforce as instances of figures who worked for justice, but whose work would have been unfruitful, had their commitment to justice not been coupled with love and, especially, mercy. Wilberforce is a particularly important example for Keys, because he not only was personally motivated by mercy, but he was able to use it to bring about institutional change that significantly affected the justice of social institutions. The suggestion in this example is that not only are love and mercy essential for the effective pursuit of the common good, but that they are also more fundamental in important respects than "mere" justice.

Dennis McCann's essay, Chap. 13, appropriately brings this volume to a close. If the probing and critical questions in Engelhardt's chapter structured much of the discussion in this collection of essays, McCann's cool review of the history of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) provides a comprehensive look at the most sustained twentieth-century effort to respond to those questions. McCann expresses his own personal loyalty to the tradition of CST and to his belief that it fits nicely with many concerns about the common good expressed by our Chinese colleagues. He says in this regard,

> CST provides a vision of the human person and society that is as relationship oriented as that offered by Confucian moral philosophy. The two traditions also approach consensus in their estimates of the moral significance of the family. Where they differ, the differences are immense. For CST is emphatically theocentric—as one might expect from a "God's eye perspective"—while Confucianism is anthropocentric, a practical philosophy focused primarily on what human beings might reasonably make of themselves through self-cultivation (McCann 2013, pp. 261–289).

Like Karen Chan and others in this volume, McCann is reluctant to attempt to formulate an explicit definition of "the common good" (although he offers as a quick suggestion "the good to be pursued in common"). He says that the term, "the common good," "has no essential social content, no minimal list of non-negotiable rights and responsibilities. Instead, it serves to mark off an important arena for political debate, or if you will, ideological controversy. Initially, we may find the absence of an essential definition perplexing" (McCann 2013, pp. 261–289). He suggests, however, that we should not find this perplexing. He goes on to say that "the want of an essential definition of the common good is not the result of carelessness or a lack of intellectual rigor. It does suggest that the meaning of the common good—as Wittgenstein might have observed—is to be found in its use, or more accurately, in its range of uses" (McCann 2013, pp. 261–289). His proposal, then, is to explore its "range of uses" in one particularly important tradition of discussion—the tradition of CST. His chapter first explores the history of CST since its emergence in Catholic teaching in the late nineteenth century. He suggests that the principle of subsidiarity, which only emerges in the tradition of CST quite late in the tradition, has a particularly important role to play in our thinking about the common good, and the last half of his chapter focuses especially on this principle.

He points out that the closest we get to an explicit definition of the common good in CST is the famous passage from *Gaudium et Spes*, where the common good is characterized as "the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment" (McCann 2013, pp. 261–289).

McCann suggests that we regard the discussion of the common good in CST as reflecting "the vicissitudes of Roman Catholicism's ongoing struggle with modernization, a struggle that takes place in four stages:

 (i) Resistance (1830–1907)
 (ii) Critical Engagement (1891–1959)
(iii) Accommodation (1959–1978)
(iv) John Paul II and Benedict—combines elements of all three (1978–)
      (McCann 2013, pp. 261–289).

This history of CST as a history of engagement with modernity leads to his conclusion that "the common good serves as a limit-concept for ordering priorities among a number of aspirations and imperatives that give it concrete meaning and resonance" (McCann 2013, pp. 261–289). It cannot be finally and concretely defined because it is an "eschatological notion" and "represents a Telos that is not expected to be fully realized in history as we know it" (McCann 2013, pp. 261–289). Among the aspirations and imperatives that give the common good concrete meaning and resonance are "public order, the rights of working men and their families, social justice, human rights, integral human development, a preferential love (or option) for the poor, concern for the natural environment, and the sanctity of prenatal human life" (McCann 2013, pp. 261–289).

McCann takes the principle of subsidiarity, first promulgated as a part of CST in the 1930s, to be the key to contemporary thinking in this tradition about the common

good. The principle that essentially claims that genuine authority should be expressed at the lowest possible level of social organization where it can be effective plays a central role, McCann argues, in the most recent developments of CST, especially as expressed in Pope Benedict's recent encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*. McCann sums up Benedict's treatment of the common good in this encyclical as follows:

> Just as "caritas" or Christian love thus animates the Church's mission as a whole, so CST itself is defined by Benedict as "*caritas in veritate in re sociali*: the proclamation of the truth of Christ's love in society" (2009, par. 5). Within this theological horizon, the common good is redescribed as "*a requirement of justice and charity*" (*italics* in the original text). Seeking the common good, then "is the institutional path — we might also call it the political path — of charity, no less excellent and effective than the kind of charity which encounters the neighbour directly, outside the institutional mediation of the *pólis*" (Benedict XVI, 2009, par. 7). In light of the conceptual linkage between the common good and charity as well as justice, the church's interest in it becomes more obvious and compelling (McCann 2013, pp. 261–289).

McCann argues that Benedict's views as expressed in *Caritas in Veritate* are more ambitious than sometimes understood. Indeed, he argues that in this encyclical, Benedict offers a "comprehensive social theory that specifies the meaning of the common good for our times. In continuity with the teachings of John Paul II, Benedict understands society as "a system with three subjects: the market, the State and civil society" (McCann 2013, pp. 261–289). Each of these fields is differentiated according to its own inner "logic"—the market, by economic logic; the State, by political logic, and civil society, by the logic of "unconditional gift." All three of these, in his view, "are and ought to be oriented to the achievement of the common good" (McCann 2013, pp. 261–289).

McCann concludes that

> The practical consequence of Benedict's triadic understanding of society is that the common good realistically is pursued by an ever-expanding number of participants—persons and institutions—working in social locations as diverse as business corporations, professional associations, civic organizations, churches and educational institutions, etc., throughout the world. This thicker description of how the common good may be envisioned and enacted, to be sure, requires something like the principle of subsidiarity to regulate, orchestrate, or, if you will, harmonize, the various activities in pursuit of the common good. With so much social activity now not only recognized but also encouraged, it is not unrealistic to be cautiously optimistic about the world's chances of successfully addressing today's problems of globalization (McCann 2013, pp. 261–289).

The practical lesson that McCann draws from this account is that each of us must take responsibility for the pursuit of the common good. If we are to avoid a crippling statism, we must all learn to "work together in good faith to achieve the common good" (McCann 2013, pp. 261–289). The point of his comments here is to counter the radically different view expressed in this volume by Engelhardt, who argues that only a "God's-eye view" can give us the resources for finding social peace and genuine progress. The disagreement between McCann and Engelhardt is stark, and the positions are well-buttressed on both sides. It is fitting that their respective pieces form the bookends of this volume, aimed at exploring the deepest issues now confronting contemporary cultures striving to think intelligently about the elusive notion of the common good.

To conclude: American-Chinese dialogue is at this moment in history arguably the most important dialogue for the world, and this volume is a small contribution to this dialogue. This volume contains voices of both consonance and dissonance not configured according to each coast of the Pacific Ocean. We invite readers to join us in this common endeavor.

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Part II
The Philosophical Background
for the Common Good

Chapter 2
Beyond the Common Good: The Priority of Persons

H. Tristram Engelhardt Jr.

2.1 Introduction: Reflections on the Common Good Lead Beyond the Common Good

This essay is about God. It is not a paper on religious matters. At least, this is so if one understands religious concerns to be about how properly to worship God and/or about the nature of revealed divine commands and truths. The notion of a God's-eye perspective is addressed in this essay because of its cardinal moral significance as a final, unconditional perspective: a viewpoint unshaped by particular, socio-historical circumstances. Nevertheless, reflections on the importance of a God's-eye perspective, indeed of the idea of God, are often mistakenly taken *ipso facto* to be religious reflections, given the significant impact of secularist and laicist ideological movements. This confusion prevails widely, despite the circumstance that appeals to God were made by philosophers ranging from Aristotle (384–322 B.C.), René Descartes (A.D. 1596–1650), Benedict Spinoza (A.D. 1632–1677), and Gottfried Leibnitz (A.D. 1646–1716), to Immanuel Kant (A.D. 1724–1804) independently of any religious concerns.[1] These philosophers in different ways recognized the necessary place of a God's-eye perspective in developing a coherent account of reality and/or morality. This essay speaks to the necessity of a God's-eye perspective for a coherent attempt to speak of the common good.

Indeed, G.W.F. Hegel (A.D. 1770–1831) understood that without a transcendent God's-eye perspective, the significance of morality changes, as when he recognized that the vanguard secular culture of his time had come to act as if God were dead,

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[1] Kant appreciated the necessity of engaging the idea of God, even though he was likely an atheist. As Manfred Kuehn puts it, "Kant did not really believe in God" (Kuehn 2001, pp. 391–392).

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that it was characterized by "the feeling that 'God Himself is dead'" (Hegel 1968, pp. 413, 1977, pp. 190).[2] Hegel replaced the God's-eye perspective of Western culture with the surrogate "God's-eye perspective" of philosophical reflection.[3] The final perspective for Hegel, beyond which there is no other, is the perspective of philosophers. Morality, Hegel recognized, should also be accepted as normatively plural, as socio-historically conditioned.[4] The result was that there is no final, canonical, first-order[5] perspective on reality or morality. As a consequence, Hegel was willing to accept the implication that, as the categories affirmed by philosophy changed, reality and morality changed.[6] Against Hegel and on the side of Kant, whose view in these matters Hegel opposes and whose view of God is opposed to Hegel's, this chapter addresses God as integral to assessing our moral condition. It shows that one cannot make sense of references to a canonical view of morality or of the common good (whatever that may be) without invoking a God's-eye perspective (Engelhardt 2010c, d). On the matter of God in this respect, Kant was right and Hegel was wrong.

For reflections on these matters within the Confucian cultural domain, much will turn on the significance of Heaven (*tsien*), as well as the *Shang Di* (High God) for

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[2] Hegel's "Glauben und Wissen oder Reflexionsphilosophie der Subjektivität in der Vollständigkeit ihrer Former als Kantische, Jacobische und Fichtesche Philosophie" originally appeared in *Kritisches Journal der Philosophie*, volume 2, number 1 (Tübingen: Cotta, 1802).

[3] Hegel eschewed all reference to transcendent reality ranging from the thing-in-itself to God. Instead of God, the final standpoint for Hegel was self-reflective thought, philosophy. It is philosophy that for Hegel is truth, as thought about being thinking itself. "Truth … is only possible as a universe or totality of thought…" (Hegel 1892, p. 24). For Hegel, philosophy, albeit always culturally and historically located, becomes in its self-reflection the God's-eye perspective, the equivalent for Hegel of God. However, this God's-eye perspective is radically immanentized. Hegel makes this point at the end of *The Encyclopedia*, which culminates in the standpoint of absolute spirit as philosophy, which is for Hegel the final and ultimate perspective. The standpoint of philosophical reflection is for Hegel the standpoint of God. It is in philosophy that Hegel's "god" is self-conscious. "God is God only so far as he knows himself; his self-knowledge is, further, a self-consciousness in man and man's knowledge *of* God, which proceeds to man's self-knowledge *in* God" (Hegel 1991, p. 298, §564). Philosophy asks the final rational questions and answers them.

[4] Morality for Hegel gains content within his category *Sittlichkeit*, socio-historically conditioned mores. Morality's content is acquired from being embedded in a particular and contingent socio-historical context, which context with its content is plural over space and time. It is *Sittlichkeit* that is the higher truth of *Moralität*. "In an *ethical* community, it is easy to say what man must do, what are the duties he has to fulfil in order to be virtuous: he has simply to follow the well-known and explicit rules of his own situation" (Hegel 1952, p. 107, § 150).

[5] For Hegel, only at the level of categorial reflection on the categories, that is, on a meta-ontological level, does one secure a final or absolute perspective. This perspective is, however, articulated within the horizon of the finite and the immanent (Engelhardt 2010d).

[6] Hegel takes the position that, as absolute spirit, that is, as philosophy changes its categories, reality itself changes because there is no standpoint from which to understand the canonical criteria for morality and reality beyond the standpoint of philosophy. "All cultural change reduces itself to a difference of categories. All revolutions, whether in the sciences or world history, occur merely because spirit has changed its categories in order to understand and examine what belongs to it, in order to possess and grasp itself in a truer, deeper, more intimate and unified manner" (Hegel 1970, p. 202, §246 Zusatz).

Confucian moral reflection. Even though Confucius uses the term Heaven and not *Shang Di*, the centrality of the emperor for Confucian thought and the role of the *Shang Di* in the ritual functions of the emperor indicate that there is a place for God in Confucian thought, similar to that in Western theocentric philosophical thought. One might consider, for example, the prayer that the emperor Jia Jing (A.D. 1522–1566) used as a part of the Border Sacrifice Ceremony.

> O awesome Creator, I look up to You. … Therefore will I observe all the rules and statutes, striving, insignificant as I am, to be faithful. … Your servant, I bow my head to the earth, reverently expecting Your abundant grace. All my officers are here arranged along with me, dancing and worshipping before You. All the spirits accompany You as guards, from the east to the west. Your servant, I prostrate myself to meet You, and reverently look up for Your coming, O Di. O that You would promise to accept our offerings, and regard us, while we worship You because Your goodness is inexhaustible! (Thong 2006, pp. 138).

At the very least, there appears to be recognition of and an invocation of a personal God's-eye perspective closely analogous to Western invocations.

This chapter argues that, apart from religious issues, God matters for the moral life and for reflections on the common good in five cardinal ways. First, without a God's-eye perspective, morality in principle shatters into a plurality of moralities. Absent the possibility of the invocation of a God's-eye perspective, this chapter contends, one cannot in principle maintain that there is a canonical morality or view of the common good, or of how to order private goods and common goods, because there is no possible canonical normative perspective from which a canonical morality or final defining appreciation of the common good can be identified, much less an ordering of private and common goods. Moral pluralism becomes in principle intractable. Second, absent a God's-eye perspective, there is no longer a definitive basis for holding that concerns for morality and/or for the common good should always trump prudential concerns. When one's own good and/or that of one's family and close associates would be radically put at risk by acting morally and by supporting the common good, while acting immorally and against the common good would be very advantageous to oneself and one's close associates, while involving very few risks to oneself and one's close associates, the question is then why in a universe regarded as ultimately meaningless it would always be rational to favor a disinterested view of morality and the common good over one's own prudential concerns. The issue is not just that without a God's-eye perspective there will not be the possibility for a final and reliable enforcement of morality, but also that moral actions will have no enduring significance. The force of morality is radically deflated. Third, in the face of a plurality of moralities and the deflation of the force of morality, claims regarding the moral authority of political structures that support the common good are also undermined. The state, law, and public policy no longer possess a compelling, canonical moral authority; they become instead at best simply *modi vivendi*.

Fourth, the only way out of this triple impasse of lacking a canonical morality, a basis for morality trumping concerns of prudence, and a moral authority for the state is to invoke a God's-eye perspective from which one can both understand what it would mean to establish a canonical moral perspective in

terms of which moral actions would have enduring significance and from which morality could be reliably enforced so that one would always have a compelling reason to act morally. However, once a God's-eye perspective is invoked, so it will be argued, one is led to reject Socrates' choice in the *Euthyphro* where Plato argues that God approves of the good and the right because they are good and right, not that the good and the right are such because God approves of them. Among other things, Plato fails to appreciate the plurality of the visions of the good, the reasonable, and the rational, and the need to have a final defining perspective if one wishes to escape an intractable moral pluralism and a radical deflation of morality and public authority. Once one recognizes a fully transcendent God, Who supplies the perspective in terms of which one can in principle understand one morality and one view of the common good as canonical and have them enforced definitively, it is no longer possible to understand properly the good and the right, much less the common good, without reference to this Being Who is the ultimate focus of meaning for everything. God as the personal ultimate reference point of all meaning (including the enduring meaning of moral actions) and the personal ultimate enforcer of morality situates and defines the good, the right, and the virtuous.

The fifth point notes the paradoxical character of invoking a God's-eye perspective. Once one has secured a concept of God adequate for affirming the notion of a canonical view of morality and the common good, one is confronted with the circumstance that the concept of God can better direct moral action and bind persons in community than that which can be secured through an appeal to a personal view of the common good. It is reference to God that finally defines community and rightly-ordered relationships among persons. This is the case because the good, the right, and the virtuous, including the common good, must be defined with reference to God in order to be thought of as canonical and as having a moral authority that can trump prudential concerns. They are defined in terms of, and in this sense subordinated to, one's relationship to God. God as omnipotent and omniscient becomes the cardinal reference point of all moral concerns. In particular, the common good is reinterpreted with reference to one's relationship to God, in regard to Whom alone a canonical vision of the common good can be understood. The common good then loses the significance that it had when it was approached within a moral-philosophical account that treated the right and the good in impersonal terms in the sense of norms or values detached from a recognition of persons, in particular detached from a recognition of God as the personal criterion of the good, the right, the virtuous, and the common good. Given the centrality of the concept of God, the moral focus is directed to the bonds among persons. The moral focus shifts from a common good to a common bond between humans and their God in connection with which the bonds or relationships between students and their teachers, children and their parents, and wives and their husbands can be understood as more or less well ordered, depending on their harmony with this final canonical point of reference. Concerns about morality and the common good are as a consequence supplanted by a concern about how relationships among persons are understood with reference to God.

The question is then why in the face of obvious and robust moral pluralism anyone would speak about the common good. The desire to fill a moral and cultural vacuum, combined with an exaggerated and/or an unjustified view of the capacities of discursive moral reflection, may motivate some. Others may be reacting to the loss of a sense of ultimate orientation, a thinning of what is considered to be matters of moral concern, and the substantial disarray of traditional social structures such as the family. The emerging moral vacuum in Europe, China, and the Americas, recognized by many, including Benedict XVI (Ratzinger and Pera 2006), has led some to a hope against all good grounds for hope that one can philosophize oneself out of this moral wasteland by re-establishing through philosophy a vision of the common good. This chapter shows that attempting to define the common good requires one to address foundational philosophical issues concerning the place of a God's-eye perspective. This chapter argues that only through affirmation of a God's-eye perspective can one in principle coherently speak of a canonical morality, a normative account of the common good, and the priority of moral concerns over prudential concerns.

2.2   Confronting Moral Pluralism

In addressing the common good, one is confronted with a plurality of goods important in the lives of humans. This leads to the vexing challenge of determining how the various human goods ought properly to be ordered, integrated, or composed so that one can secure a canonical view of the good that should inform the moral life of persons and their communities, as well as direct the moral integration of persons within the life of their communities. One must also determine under what circumstances and to what degree the pursuit of common goods should trump the pursuit of private goods. Imagine, for example, that one embraced the view that the communal good is achieved through pursuing a family-oriented concern for security, by means of the common good of a *Rechtsstaat* in which families and persons in families are nested in a family-centered rule of law. Second, one might also hold that the next communal good in order of priority is family prosperity: the more financial resources a society allows its citizens in families to possess, the more such persons with families can pursue the full range of goods and services important to those families and to persons in their families. Third, only when there is rule of law and a sufficient level of prosperity can one thus be concerned with the realization of liberties such as freedom of speech, freedom of association, and participation in the governance of one's polity, insofar as these do not set security and prosperity at risk. One may also, but not as keenly, be interested in equality before the law and in contracts, insofar as this is compatible with security and prosperity. There may be little interest in equality of opportunity, as long as one's family bonds, security, and prosperity are significantly enhanced. One may also not be interested in whether some have significantly more resources than others. Instead, one may be concerned only to address the needs of persons (including oneself considered as crafting social

structures within which one might find oneself) who might become members of a relatively impoverished class, where life would be marked by significant as well as easily and relatively cheaply ameliorable suffering.

The sketch just offered presents a vision of the common good that comes close to that sought through governmental arrangements such as Singapore's political structure. Confronted with the problem of ranking cardinal human goods such as security, prosperity, liberty, and equality, Singapore and other one-party capitalist family-friendly oligarchies in the Pacific Rim have generally embraced a vision of human flourishing rooted in understandings quite different from the rankings of cardinal social moral goods affirmed by views around a thin theory of the good, such as advanced by John Rawls (1921–2002) in *A Theory of Justice* (1971). That is, priority has been given to security, prosperity, liberty, and some concerns with equality, rather than to liberty, equality, and prosperity, in that order. Such different accounts of morality, of the common good, and of social justice are in conflict one with the other. Clashes among visions of the common good reflect the heterogeneity of human goods along with the diversity of orderings and compositions of those goods, as well as views regarding the circumstance and degree to which the pursuit of common goods should trump the pursuit of private goods. Further, the heterogeneity of common goods and their diverse orderings recommends not speaking of the common good in the singular, but rather always of common goods. Disagreements regarding the nature, importance, and appropriate ordering of goods render appeals to common goods a source of moral disagreement and controversy, rather than a source of concrete guidance. If one attempts to organize a society around a content-rich view of common goods, one will need either to face controversy or suppress dissent.

2.3   The Authority of the State in the Face of Moral Pluralism

These circumstances have provided a substantive impetus for stepping away from conceiving of the state and the society it compasses as a single moral community united around a concrete vision of common goods and instead to conceive of the state as directed primarily to securing rule of law for a civil society that compasses diverse communities with different, often conflicting concrete visions of human flourishing and of common goods. If there is a common good, it is the good of a public space structured by the rule of law within which persons can with consenting others and in non-geographically-located communities of their choice pursue their own vision of common goods.[7] A response to the diversity of understandings of human flourishing and of common goods (which *inter alia* results from the diversity

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[7] Given the moral pluralism that defines the fallen human condition, there will be a diversity of moral communities each united around its own understanding of the moral life. Such moral communities find their exemplar instantiation in non-geographically-located communities, such as those of Orthodox Jews and Orthodox Christians.

of the possible orderings of the goods in which humans have interest) is to retreat from public discussions of a society's common goods and to focus instead in public interactions on a sparse commitment to the common good of the rule of law. It is such considerations that led to the emergence of accounts of constitutionally limited democratic states within which individuals and communities by agreements (both formal and informal), as well as through the market, can decide freely to collaborate within a social space structured by the rule of law.

Such accounts of constitutionally limited formal-right democratic political structures acknowledge the foundational moral pluralism that characterizes the human condition. Consequently, such accounts in great measure tend to abstain from recommending the imposition of or pursuit of a content-full view of the common good or common view of human flourishing. For that matter, such accounts of limited polities tend to refrain from imposing a content-full view of human rights, justice, fairness, or equality. It is for this reason that they support a formal-right rather than a material-right constitutional framework. Examples of formal-right constitutions include the American Constitution (1787), in particular as engaged before the Late Unpleasantness (1861–1865), and the Constitution of the Republic of Texas (1836). In such political frameworks, society is not a moral community with a substantive view of common goods, but rather society is appreciated as an open framework within which diverse moral communities can pursue their own views of common goods. In their theoretically pure form, such political structures take the form of a not-more-than-minimal state that acts only to protect its citizens from being used without their consent and that embraces no substantive view of common goods. The authority of such a state is drawn only from the sparse consent of those who will to be used, and who use others, only with consent.[8]

Although in this account society itself is not thought of as a single moral community, the functioning of the polity presupposes that individuals are generally embedded within communities with thick understandings of human flourishing and common goods. This is the case because it is such communities, not the polity or the society as a whole, that nurture virtue and moral orientation. The result is a counterpoint between, on the one hand, the polity as a whole with its general abstention from a thick common moral vision and from a normative view of human goods (other than as building blocks available for the construction of different moral visions) and, on the other hand, particular communities with their own thick views of the common good and of human flourishing. Substantive communal goods tend to be pursued within particular, often non-geographically-located communities (i.e., as with Orthodox Jews and Orthodox Christians). Society in such circumstances functions as a relatively morally neutral space within which numerous consensual communities with diverse views of the common good can peaceably interact. This approach to political life, which emerged in the English cultural domain during the Enlightenment, particularly in the United States and Texas,

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[8] For an account of the character and scope of a minimal, but not more-than-minimal state, see chapter four of Engelhardt (1996).

reflected elements of ancient Germanic views of governance that were preserved in common law and that received new life on the American and Texan frontier.[9]

The idea of a limited political structure came into question under pressure from the ideological forces set loose by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic conquests. These developments supported a move to create a fraternity of citizens thickly bound by particular substantive commitments to liberty and equality. Many of Western Europe's and America's various communities of religious belief were recast as a consequence of the ideological pressures born of the Enlightenment and the so-called reforms of Napoleon, bringing them to embrace very particular views of liberty and equality. Insofar as particular traditional moral communities were illiberal and not supportive of equality, these communities in various degrees were brought under moral suspicion. The result is that in the West, where once there had been relatively taken-for-granted, traditional (non-Girondist), religious-moral communal frameworks, these were undermined by commitments drawn from the French Revolution's support of social-democratic moral visions. Under pressure from the forces of secularization and from supporters of socio-democratic accounts of justice and fairness, many persons come to regard themselves less as members of particular traditional religious denominations and instead more as citizens of a liberal state. In the process, many communal visions of human flourishing and of common goods, including religious communities, were ideologically transformed, becoming more anemic and ever less determinative of the actual lives of their members. The more persons became morally committed to a common societal view of justice and

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[9] Germanic law and customs stressed the rights of individuals and their freedoms over against the state. Tacitus, for example, describes how authority flowed from individuals to the community. "On small matters the chiefs consult; on larger questions the community; but with this limitation, that even the subjects, the decision of which rests with the people, are first handled by the chiefs … It is a foible of their freedom that they do not meet at once and as if commanded, but a second and a third day is wasted by dilatoriness in assembling: when the mob is pleased to begin, they take their seats carrying arms" (Tacitus 1980, pp. 147, 149). This view is recaptured in the Magna Carta (June 15, 1215), especially in section 39, which recognizes the security of free men against the sovereign. This was built around an Anglo-Saxon common-law view of the *prima facie* untouchability of free persons.

> The least touching of another's person willfully, or in anger, is a battery; for the law cannot draw the line between different degrees of violence, and therefore totally prohibits the first and lowest stage of it: every man's person being sacred, and no other having a right to meddle with it, in any the slightest manner. And therefore upon a similar principle the Cornelian law *de injuriis* prohibited *pulsation* as well as *verberation*; distinguishing verberation, which was accompanied with pain, from pulsation, which was attended with none… (Blackstone 1969, Book III, vol. 4, p. 120).

In the light of these concerns with personal freedom and forbearance rights, one can appreciate why the American Constitution, which in its body and amendments makes no reference to human dignity, human rights, or social justice, was understood as a limited compact among the states, a point made clear in the 9th and 10th Amendments in the Bill of Rights. "Amendment IX. The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people. Amendment X. The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." For an account of the influence of Germanic ideas of freedom on sixteenth- to eighteenth-century thought, see also Hölzle (1925).

fairness, generally the less they were able to orient themselves in morally fine-textured and substantive life-projects or to live comfortably within traditional, religiously-defended, moral communities. Moral universality is purchased at the price of content. Their moral views had instead become grounded in abstract moral principles rather than supported by the rituals, pieties, and observances of a concrete, metaphysically-anchored, religious moral vision.[10] The attempt to find community in a liberal society as a substitute for the life one had once possessed within a community of religious observance generates a hunger for community and for common goods, as well as an inability to feed that hunger. It has also provoked culture wars between those communities that were transformed by Enlightenment ideals and those that effectively resisted transformation (Hunter 1991).

The hunger for community, the hope for moral orientation, and the view that this might be available by reference to common goods are not simply the result of social-democratic ideologies undermining the structure and life of illiberal, inegalitarian, traditional religious-moral communities. As significantly, this state of affairs is the outcome of an increasing recognition that there is an intractable plurality of moralities and of visions of common goods. This state of affairs also radically brings into question the possibility of philosophers providing canonical, normative guidance in the face of a plurality of visions of morality and common goods through conclusive sound rational arguments. The view of the office of the moral philosopher as one able to establish a canonical moral vision had by the early second millennium taken root in an understanding of the office of the moral theologian as able, through sound rational argument, to lay out and to justify the requirements of natural law and/or of right reason for a concrete understanding of the good life and of a well-ordered community. By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this moral-theological understanding had led to the affirmation of the capacities of secular moral philosophy. These understandings have now been brought into question. A plurality of moral accounts and narratives, along with a plurality of visions of common goods, characterize the contemporary post-traditional, post-religious cultural context, along with an increasing recognition of the inability of moral philosophy to set moral pluralism aside, much less to give definitive moral direction.

2.4 After Moral Philosophy

The recognition of the impossibility of moral-philosophical reflection's establishing a canonical, content-full morality by sound rational argument is ancient, although it has taken on significant force in contemporary societies. This recognition of the

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[10] Friedrich Hayek observes that social justice

> Seems in particular to have been embraced by a large section of the clergy of all Christian denominations, who, while increasingly losing their faith in a supernatural revelation, appear to have sought a refuge and consolation in a new 'social' religion which substitutes a temporal for a celestial promise of justice, and who hope that they can thus continue their striving to do good (Hayek 1976, p. 66).

limits of moral-philosophical reflection has existed at least since the inception of the moral-philosophical project, which arose as the Greeks attempted to find cultural orientation in the wake of the secularization of Hellenic society that occurred around the period when Solon became the first archon of Athens (594 B.C.) (Versenyi 1968). During this time, an anti-traditional hermeneutic of suspicion developed within the emerging post-traditional culture. Despite attempts through moral philosophy to find a canonical point of orientation grounded in sound rational argument, Protagoras (480–410 B.C.) appreciated the unfeasibility of this project.[11] Moral rationality is plural. This state of affairs was summarized by Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150–215),[12] as well as by the early third-century skeptic Agrippa,[13] who understood that, absent common moral premises and rules of moral evidence, the arguments of moral philosophers always in the end crucially beg the question, argue in a circle, or engage an infinite regress. Clement of Alexandria and Agrippa, looking back at three-quarters of a millennium of moral philosophical reflection, saw that the moral-philosophical project was not just in fact but in principle inconclusive. It had failed. It was not able to justify, much less establish, a canonical morality or a canonical view of common goods. Starkly in contrast to the position of the Christian religion that emerged in the West during the early second millennium, the early Church Fathers recognized this incapacity of secular philosophy. One might think of St. John Chrysostom's (A.D. 347–407) first homily on the Gospel of St. Matthew, which ridicules the attempts of Greek moral philosophy to establish a canonical moral view,[14] as well as his second homily on the Gospel of St. John, which addresses the limits of secular moral rationality.[15] The

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[11] Protagoras affirmed moral pluralism in arguing that there was not one canonical view regarding any moral issue. "Protagoras was the first to maintain that there are two sides to every question, opposed to each other, and he even argued in this fashion, being the first to do so" (Diogenes Laertius, vol. 2, p. 463).

[12] The resolution of moral controversies by sound rational argument requires conceding basic premises and rules of evidence, which are always controversial. "Should one say that Knowledge is founded on demonstration by a process of reasoning, let him hear that first principles are incapable of demonstration; for they are known neither by art nor sagacity" (Clement of Alexandria 1994, vol. 2, p. 350).

[13] An overview of Agrippa's *pente tropoi*, his five ways of demonstrating that controversies such as those about the canonical content of morality cannot be resolved by sound rational argument, is provided by Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Pyrrho 9, 88–89. See also Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I.15.164–169.

[14] St. John Chrysostom articulates clearly the Orthodox Christian view that secular moral philosophical reflection leads at best to nonsensical if not immoral views. In the worst-case scenario, that the views of the pagan moral philosophers "are all inventions of devils, and contrary to nature, even nature herself would testify" (Chrysostom 1994, vol. 10, p. 5).

[15] In his second homily on the Gospel of St. John, St. John Chrysostom stresses the inability of philosophical reflection to comprehend the true context and condition of man. "The human soul is simply unable thus to philosophize on that pure and blessed nature; on the powers that come next to it; on immortality and endless life; on the nature of mortal bodies which shall hereafter be immortal; on punishment and the judgment to come; … what is the nature of virtue, what of vice" (Chrysostom 1994, vol. 14, p. 5).

Fathers acknowledged the impossibility of the moral-philosophical project of grounding a canonical secular morality or a canonical account of the common good through sound rational argument alone.[16]

These Church Fathers did not endorse a moral relativism, but rather a secular moral-epistemological skepticism. The issue for them was recognition of the incapacity of moral philosophical reflection to establish the canonical content of morality. This moral-epistemological skepticism bearing on the incapacity of moral philosophy was not tied to, nor need it be tied to, a general skepticism regarding the possibility of knowledge. For example, there is a crucial difference between moral claims and empirical claims. In the latter case, there are constraints imposed by external reality. For instance, if one denies the truth of germ theory or denies that the world is round, there are considerable explanatory costs involved in discounting the

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[16] St. John Chrysostom's view regarding the unreliability of secular moral reflection is one embraced generally by Orthodox Christian Fathers. St. Neilos of Sinai († ca. 430), for example, notes that

> Many Greeks and not a few Jews attempted to philosophize; but only the disciples of Christ have pursued true wisdom, because they alone have Wisdom as their teacher, showing them by His example the way of life they should follow. For the Greeks, like actors on a stage, put on false masks; they were philosophers in name alone, but lacked true philosophy. … Some of the Greeks imagined themselves to be engaged in metaphysics, but they neglected the practice of the virtues altogether. … At times they even tried to theologize, although here the truth lies beyond man's unaided grasp, and speculation is dangerous; yet in their way of life they were more degraded than swine wallowing in the mud (Neilos 1988, vol. 1, p. 200).

This hermeneutic of suspicion regarding secular philosophy in the Fathers before Augustine reflects St. Paul's clear statements about the incapacities of secular wisdom and by implication philosophy.

> Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength (I Corinthians 1:20–25).

This attitude towards theological knowledge remains central to the lived and prayed theology of the Church. Consider, for example, the Einos sung on the Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council:

> When the blessed Christ-preachers received wholly the torch of the Holy Spirit, they spoke with divine intuition, with supernatural inspiration of few words and much meaning, bringing to the front the evangelical doctrines and traditions of true worship, which, when they were clearly revealed to them from on high, they were illuminated therewith, establishing the Faith they had received from God (Nassar 1993, p. 315).

The gulf between the theology of the Church of the first 500 years and that which developed in the West in the second millennium is substantial. See Engelhardt (2006) and (2000).

constraints imposed by reality, given one's attempt to sustain a "false" account. Such is not the case with moral claims. Each moral vision has its own self-supporting standard or measure of costs and success. For example, Kantians and utilitarians disagree regarding standards for having acted morally, and in each case they invoke their own criteria to vindicate their own positions. The indeterminate character of moral claims about moral truths is also different from the indeterminate character of some historical truths, such as who first invented the wheel. On the one hand, there was surely a person or group of persons who first invented the wheel. On the other hand, there would appear to be no way to determine the identity of that inventor or group of inventors. Absent a God's-eye view on history within which the past is preserved, the determination of the inventor's identity is likely unattainable, even though the proposition that there is in principle a truth of the matter remains compelling.

Such an "objective" constraint is not available regarding moral issues, for their determination requires a background normative standard in order to establish the criteria needed to identify any particular moral content as canonical. To accomplish this determination, one needs a further background normative moral sense or sense of moral rationality to identify that correct background view, and so on *ad indefinitum*. If one cannot envisage a final and ultimate moral standpoint (as is the case from a God's-eye perspective) that is uniquely and definitively the standpoint to identify a canonical account of morality and of common goods (i.e., a standpoint that is the authority in moral matters so as to be able to identify the canonical moral vision, or that is simply in authority to choose which view will be authoritative), then moral-philosophical reflection in attempting to establish a canonical morality or a canonical view of common goods will beg the question, argue in a circle, or engage an infinite regress. Secular moral pluralism is in principle intractable.

2.5   God, the Unity of Morality, and Common Goods

A watershed event for Western philosophy was its disengagement from a recognition of the centrality of a God's-eye perspective. From the latter half of the eighteenth century, the place of God began to be marginalized in philosophical reflection. Enlightenment figures, such as David Hume (A.D. 1711–1776), as well as post-Enlightenment thinkers, such as Jeremy Bentham (A.D. 1748–1832) and John Stuart Mill (A.D. 1806–1873), attempted to frame moral accounts that were independent of an appeal to the perspective of God. The result is that such moral reflection, including reflection on the common good, was disengaged from any sense of reality and of human life as having an ultimate purpose or significance. Morality and human life were disengaged from reference to an omniscient, omnipotent Creator God. The consequence is that morality and the common good were reconceived in the shadow of an atheistic methodological

assumption, which directs one to construe everything as if in the end all were ultimately meaningless. Within such atheistic or at least agnostic accounts, one could no longer invoke a God's-eye perspective, a perspective in terms of which one can at least in principle presume a unity of morality either in terms of a God Who commands or a God Who is the ground of rationality, including moral rationality.

Once morality is set within the horizon of the finite and the immanent, morality and the common good in principle shatter into a plurality of normative visions. The claim is not that agreement exists or ever existed concerning God and what God requires. Rather, the claim is that without a God's-eye perspective as a point one can in principle invoke, one lacks a standpoint from which at least in principle one can envisage setting aside moral pluralism and the plurality of views regarding the common good. Absent that perspective, moral pluralism takes on a foundationally intractable character. As long as one maintained the concept of God, even as a merely possible God's-eye perspective from which a canonical ordering or composition of cardinal human goods could count as canonical, the plurality of moralities could at least in principle be understood as able to be set aside (Engelhardt 2010c). Again, this claim does not deny that there is a plurality of understandings of God and of the compositions of the goods that could be affirmed from a God's-eye perspective. Nor does the invocation of God involve holding that a philosophical appeal to a God's-eye perspective can *de facto* resolve the controversies at stake and the moral pluralism that is manifest. The point is instead that moral pluralism and intractable moral controversy have a principled character absent a God's-eye perspective. That is, moral pluralism is in principle irresolvable because, absent a God's-eye perspective, there is no standpoint from which to envisage a possible resolution of the plurality of moral visions. One encounters an in principle intractable plurality of orderings of basic human goods and right-making conditions expressed in irresolvable disputes about the circumstances under which, for example, it is licit, obligatory, or forbidden to have sex, take human life, or transfer property.

Within 5 years after the death of Hume, Kant had at least implicitly recognized the threat of moral pluralism by making God the hinge point for his account of the kingdom of ends. In the kingdom of ends, it is God's will that wills flawlessly the categorical imperative, thus uniting volition and rationality in one moral vision.[17] Similarly, but more strongly and explicitly, in the *Opus Postumum* God is the source of the unity of morality. Moral unity is grounded in God's being law-giving.

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[17] In Kant's account in *The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, God has the perfectly good will, the coincidence of rationality and morally ordered volition. "Thus no imperatives hold for the divine will or, more generally, for a holy will. The 'ought' is here out of place, for the volition of itself is necessarily in unison with the law" (Kant 1959, p. 31, AK IV.415). For this will, there is no moral pluralism.

> There exists a God, that is, one principle which, as substance, is morally law-giving. … the concept of duty (of a universal practical principle) is contained identically in the concept of a divine being as an ideal of human reason for the sake of the latter's law-giving [*breaks off*] (Kant 1993, pp. 204, AK 22:122–123).

God as the holy will in the kingdom of ends and as the lawgiver in the *Opus Postumum* functions to provide a perspective from which at least in principle there could be a canonical understanding of morality and of the common good. From this perspective, the viewpoint of God, moral pluralism is set aside.

2.6 Naturalizing Morality and the Common Good

Absent a God's-eye perspective, and therefore absent an in principle canonical view of moral rationality, morality can be naturalized so as to be regarded as a biological or socio-culturally-developed adaptive strategy for mutual cooperation. Once the turn to naturalize morality is taken, one encounters further good reasons to hold that moral pluralism is intractable, because more than one morality would have emerged as an adaptive strategy. In addition, morality as a general strategy for mutual cooperation and group survival is likely to encompass both morality-abiding behavior as well as hypocritical behavior that affirm morality in its breach. For example, it may often be useful with respect to maximizing inclusive fitness, as well as one's own survival possibilities and that of one's community, to affirm the general moral canons that support group cooperation, whatever those might be, while quietly violating some of these very norms. Thus, males who are kind, friendly, and apparently morality-abiding may be able to get their neighbor's wife pregnant while still cooperating with their neighbor, all along increasing their own biological fitness and the chance of their communities surviving. Such strategies may have played a role in the evolution of human sexuality (Symons 1981). Effective social cooperation is likely supported by a complex balance among the different "moralities" and behavioral types. That is, moral pleomorphism likely exists as a natural phenomenon driven by persons with different moral inclinations, leading among other things to rule-governed, moral-social behavior, hypocritical moral behavior, and even some forthright violations of moral norms. Morality as a natural phenomenon, as a complex of behaviors supporting group survival, is likely very complex and surely not Kantian.

David Wong provides an example of the multi-tiered character of much actual moral behavior (and implicitly of how its complex character may have supported inclusive fitness and overall social cooperation in a fallen world) through his reflection on a report by the anthropologist Brad Shore (Shore 1990).

> Following the violent murder of his father, a young man receives public counsel from a village pastor in formal Samoan that he must resist the temptation to avenge his father's death, and keep in mind the values of peace and harmony and forgiveness. Yet later this same pastor, this time in colloquial Samoan, warned the young man that if he *failed* to kill the murderer of his father, he would not be his father's son (Wong 2006, pp. 21).

The pastor's two-tier approach to giving advice can be interpreted (an interpretation that is not Wong's interpretation) as on the one hand supporting the importance of the deterrent and other positive rule-enforcing consequences that would flow from the son killing his father's murderer, while on the other hand setting the son's act of retribution and deterrence within general constraints and goals that emphasize peace, harmony, and forgiveness. If morality is regarded as a natural phenomenon that persists as long as it supports inclusive fitness, one would expect a complex balance among different moral strategies or moral phenotypes, just as one finds balances among various other biologically-based characteristics and behaviors that in different environments maximize the long-term survival of a group.

Here once again the challenge of moral pluralism returns. There is no canonical standard for the moral comparison of such strategies without a canonical background normative standpoint, which is precisely what is missing once one loses a God's-eye perspective. That is, without begging the central question of which morality is canonical, arguing in a circle, or engaging in an infinite regress, there is no basis to hold that there is one canonical, normative balance among such morally adaptive strategies, because the same morally adaptive strategy will work better or worse in different environments judged according to different standards of success and failure. In this regard, one must establish the degree of importance of group or species survival. There is no natural common good or moral standard, absent granting a background set of norms. Given moral pluralism and the absence of a God's-eye perspective, no one canonical standard can be established to evaluate which adaptations in different environments are "better" or "worse", more or less successful. Morality once naturalized continues to underscore the circumstance that there is no canonical account of the common good. Moral diversity remains intractable.

2.7   The Deflation of Morality and of Common Goods

The authority of morality, i.e., the strength or force of reasons to be moral, is thus undermined in the absence of a God's-eye perspective. If one views the universe as if it came from nowhere, were going nowhere, and was for no ultimate purpose, and, if one is confronted by a choice between acting morally in circumstances where this will lead to great personal harm, as well as harm for all with whom one is most closely affectively associated (e.g., friends and close family members), or, on the other hand, acting immorally which will involve little or no personal risks but will save one's self and one's associates from great harm, while conveying great benefits, there will be compelling grounds to act immorally. In a universe considered ultimately deaf to the good, the right, and the virtuous, one is confronted with the question as to why one ought in all circumstances to favor the right, the good, and the virtuous over the personally advantageous. When all are dead and forgotten, one may reasonably conclude that one and one's closest associates will at least not have suffered but instead enjoyed life.

In many circumstances, it will appear more reasonable to be corrupt, alive, and happy rather than to be virtuous and moral when this will lead to suffering great pain and an early death.

Immanuel Kant recognized that the possibility of a fundamental disjunction between moral obligation and the realization of one's happiness undermined the rationality of morality. He therefore invoked the postulates of God and immortality. For example, he stated that "without a God and without a world invisible to us now but hoped for, the glorious ideas of morality are indeed objects of approval and admiration, but not springs of purpose and action" (Kant 1964, pp. 640, A813 = B841). At first blush, one might read Kant's remark as involving, *pace* his general eschewal of heteronomous considerations in moral reflections, an introduction of heteronomous considerations, namely, avoiding Divine punishment. Kant's observation might suggest that he was taking a position similar to that of Elizabeth Anscombe, when she notes the change in the significance of morality, once one loses the recognition of God as morality's enforcer. In such circumstances, being immoral would be something like being a criminal "… when criminal law and criminal courts had been abolished and forgotten" (Anscombe 1958, pp. 6). Kant's point is subtler. He recognizes that the very rationality of morality is undermined, once what is right to do is disconnected from happiness proportionate to what one deserves. The rational coherence of morality requires one at least to be able to think the harmony of happiness and worthiness of happiness. Kant makes this point in his solution to the tension between acting rightly and achieving happiness in proportion to one's worthiness of happiness in his solution to the antinomy between whether the pursuit of happiness leads to virtue (for Kant a moral impossibility) or whether virtue necessarily leads to happiness (a factual impossibility) (Kant 1956, AK V.114–19). In order to supply the condition for the ground of morality's rationality, the harmony of the good and the right, Kant affirms the existence of God and immortality. In a world without ultimate meaning, there is no including significance to one's moral acts.

Without a God's-eye perspective from which a canonical morality can be understood and enforced, there is also a deflation of the moral authority of public policy, law, and the state. Against the background of an in principle intractable plurality of moral visions and a plurality of understandings of common goods, and given that there will often be grounds to act prudently rather than morally, it follows that the state, law, and public policy no longer possess a canonical and compelling moral authority. The result is that the state cannot on the basis of a conclusive moral argument reasonably be regarded as grounded in a generally rationally justifiable, canonical account of justice, fairness, or common goods. In particular, attempts to establish at law and public policy a particular view of common goods fail to have, at least in principle, a canonical moral authority in the absence of a God's-eye perspective. By default, the force of law and public policy is then calculated in terms of the punishment connected with breaking the law or violating public policy multiplied by the likelihood of being punished. The more-than-minimal state, the state that imposes a particular

understanding of the consequences, under these circumstances becomes at best a *modus vivendi*, not a structure that enjoys compelling moral authority (Engelhardt 2010a, b).

2.8 Beyond Principles and Toward Persons

Engaging the concept of God changes everything. That is, in order to avoid an in-principle intractable plurality of moralities and/or in order to ensure that non-moral reasons will not trump reasons to be moral, one must not merely invoke God as existing or treat God as if He existed, as Kant does in the appendix of the dialectic of the first *Critique* for purely epistemic reasons,[18] but in addition affirm God's existence as a postulate of pure practical reason for moral considerations, as Kant does in the dialectic of the second *Critique*.[19] When one does this, the conceptual and moral terrain does not remain the same. The role of enforcer of morality requires a strong claim of omniscience and omnipotence in order to ensure that all persons in the end are happy, at least insofar as they are worthy to be happy, a point Kant concedes in his distinction between theism and deism.[20] Given the extraordinarily cardinal character of this Being, once invoked, all elements of moral discourse must implicitly make reference to this Being in terms of

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[18] In the appendix to the Dialectic of the first *Critique*, Kant argues for the necessity of affirming a regulative engagement of the idea of God as integral to approaching reality as if reality manifested a comprehensive unity:

> This highest formal unity, which rests solely on concepts of reason, is the *purposive* unity of things. The *speculative* interest of reason makes it necessary to regard all order in the world as if it had originated in the purpose of a supreme reason. Such a principle opens out to our reason, as applied in the field of experience, altogether new views as to how the things of the world may be connected according to teleological laws, and so enables it to arrive at their greatest systematic unity. The assumption of a supreme intelligence, as the one and only cause of the universe, though in the idea alone, can therefore always benefit reason and can never injure it (Kant 1964, p. 560, A687f = B715f).

[19] The postulates of pure practical reason are for Kant necessary for the coherence of morality, in particular for the coherence of the right and the good. "These postulates are those of immortality, of freedom affirmatively regarded (as the causality of a being so far as he belongs to the intelligible world), and of the existence of God" (Kant 1956, p. 137, AK V.133).

[20] Immanuel Kant provides the following distinction between deist and theist:

> Those who accept only a transcendental theology are called *deists*; those who also admit a natural theology are called *theists*. The former grant that we can know the existence of an original being solely through reason, but maintain that our concept of it is transcendental only, namely, the concept of a being which possesses all reality, but which we are unable to determine in any more specific fashion. The latter assert that reason is capable of determining its object more precisely through analogy with nature, namely, as a being which, through understanding and freedom, contains in itself the ultimate ground of everything else. Thus the deist represents this being merely as a *cause of the world* (whether by the necessary of its nature or through freedom, remains undecided), the theist as the *Author of the world* (Kant 1964, p. 525, A631-32 = B659-60).

Whom the content of morality can at least in principle be determined and morality enforced. All other moral agents and their choices are understood at least in part and in principle by reference to this Being. Once one has invoked the perspective of a Being with reference to Whom the good, the right, and the virtuous find a final and authoritative judge of their content, and morality its ultimate enforcer, the significance of morality and the common good is transformed.

This is as one would expect. Once one has taken a theistic turn (which is not equivalent to a religious turn) so as no longer to approach reality engaging what Jürgen Habermas has termed an atheistic, methodological postulate,[21] reality ceases to be regarded as ultimately meaningless. Reality, morality, and life are no longer approached as if reality came from nowhere, went to nowhere, and was for no ultimate purpose. Instead, reality is regarded with reference to a God's-eye perspective so that all reality and all human action are at least in principle able to be judged from that God's-eye perspective. However, when one invokes a God's-eye perspective in order to gain the possibility of referring at least in principle to a canonical, content-full morality, and/or in order to secure a perspective in terms of which all persons will always have strong reasons to act morally, God is prior to the good and the right. God is not a canonical good but the canonical perspective from which one can envisage a canonical determination of the good and an enforcement of morality. This is the case because the hinge point of morality is recognized to be a person, in particular an omnipotent, omniscient, and transcendent Person able to punish the immoral and reward the moral.[22] The point is that one cannot avoid invoking a God's-eye perspective if one wishes to embrace anything like the traditional expectations concerning morality and public authority. However, once a God's-eye perspective is invoked, important and wide-ranging consequences follow. The character of morality and of common goods, at least as these could be understood absent God, changes.

The idea of God is not like other ideas, because it is invoked in order to have an ultimate perspective that can serve as a vantage point in terms of which one can envisage a final, canonical determination of the content of morality and of the common good, as well as a perspective reflecting an omniscient and omnipotent enforcer of morality. A Being that is so singularly significant and powerful becomes the cardinal point of moral orientation. It functions, given its character, as the final point of orientation for moral concerns, in that *inter alia* this is why the concept was engaged. As a consequence, one must then critically reassess Plato's attempt in the *Euthyphro* to ground morality wholly in the immanently rational (i.e., where

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[21] Habermas recognizes the break in the history of philosophy consequent on a loss of an acknowledgement of the centrality of an idea of God. Habermas notes "the *methodical* atheism of Hegelian philosophy and of all philosophical appropriation of essentially religious contents" (Habermas 2002, p. 68).

[22] With regard to Christian theology and in recognition of the centrality of one Person (the Father) to the significance of morality, one can appreciate the evil of the doctrine of the *filioque* (the later Western Christian claim that the Holy Spirit proceeds in eternity from both the Father and the Son). The *filioque* obscures the truth that all reality comes from one Person, the Person of the Father.

there is no recognition of the radical gulf between created and uncreated being, which recognition does occur in different ways in neo-Platonism, Orthodox Judaism, and Orthodox Christianity). When one recognizes the unavoidability of a reference to a God's-eye perspective to secure an in principle canonical morality along with the priority of the moral over the prudential, one has in the process recast morality. Once one engages God as a possible canonical perspective on the content of the good, the right, and the virtuous, one has a perspective on the content of morality that transcends the perspective of finite persons. Once the moral focus in the order of knowing is shifted foundationally to God, then the good, the right, and the virtuous are for their part understood canonically in terms of their relationship to God. Once this shift in focus occurs, then the good, the right, and the virtuous can only be one-sidedly and incompletely understood apart from reference to God, because the content of morality is defined from that God's-eye perspective. Moreover, the relation of persons to God becomes recognized as the cardinal commonality of persons in a way that is more central than any community provided by reference to common goods.

To say more about the consequences of invoking a God's-eye perspective for an understanding of the common good, one would have to explore in greater detail the character of a God's-eye perspective. The more this exploration shows that one is invoking the perspective of a personal, omnipotent, omniscient, and radically transcendent Being as the criterion of morality and as its enforcer, the more the moral life would be understood in terms of a rightly-oriented relationship with this personal God in a fashion that would transcend immanent accounts of the good, the right, and the virtuous. This focus on that Being would also transcend any immanent account of the common good. This is the case because, insofar as God is the reference point in terms of Whom one can envisage a canonical view of the good, the right, and the virtuous, God is not merely the good, the right, and the virtuous, but the transcendent Person in terms of Whom and by Whom the good, the right, and the virtuous are determined in their content and enforced. Insofar as the Person of God is transcendent, the focus on Him is that which persons "morally" have in common, not some concept of the good, much less immanent, finite, common goods. The more one acknowledges the transcendent character of the Person of God, the more even speaking of the goodness of God reflects a best-case, but nevertheless inadequate, description of what is involved in acknowledging this transcendent person.

This circumstance not only further distances this understanding of morality from that which one is invited to embrace by Plato in the *Euthyphro*, but it also transforms moral discourse from having a focus primarily on impersonal concerns for the good, the right, and the virtuous, to having a focus on life centered on a personal relationship to a personal God, through which relationship one can then understand that which is normative for rightly-ordered relationships with other persons. If this is the position to which one is in the end brought, then the appropriate moral character of the cardinal bonds among persons must also be appreciated in ways that would regard impersonal discourse about the good, the right, and the virtuous as a category mistake. If the moral life must be understood with reference to a transcendent

personal God in order to secure reference to a canonical moral content and the priority of the moral over the prudential, then approaching the moral life in terms of abstract principles considered independently of the bonds among persons would at best be radically one-sided and importantly incomplete (Engelhardt 2000). Much more would need to be said regarding the position to which these reflections take us, matters that fall beyond the scope of this essay. Among other things, one would be taken to a position similar to that embraced by St. Gregory Palamas (A.D. 1296–1359) in his rejection of Scholasticism (Engelhardt 2000, chap. 4, 2006; Hierotheos 1997).[23] One would need with care to re-examine how the meaning of human flourishing within the horizon of the finite and the immanent is tied to the perspective of a transcendent personal God.

For Western moral-philosophical and theological reflection, recognizing the cardinal place of a fully transcendent personal God would mean stepping back from the twelfth- and thirteenth-century theological and philosophical developments that engendered Western Christianity, which stepwise came to hold that the transcendent God can be compassed by immanent reason. That momentous development in the history of thought and religion, as David Bradshaw observes, involved a foundational step away from the first half-millennium's Christian view regarding God, which had "no concept of God. It view[ed] God not as an essence to be grasped intellectually, but as a personal reality known through His acts, and above all by oneself sharing in those acts" (Bradshaw 2004, pp. 275). Western Christianities' exaggerated expectations from human discursive reflection produced a conceptually domesticated God,[24] as well as an expectation that natural law and common goods could be understood apart from God. These changes in the end engendered much of the character of contemporary moral discourse, including the attempt to substitute the perspective of reason for a God's-eye perspective, which has led to the plurality of moralities incarnate in a plurality of rational moral perspectives that frames the salient moral pluralism and agnosticism of our contemporary age, which this chapter critically confronts (Buckley 1987).

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[23] The author of this chapter finds unconvincing the attempt made by A. N. Williams to narrow the gulf between St. Gregory Palamas and Thomas Aquinas; Williams fails to appreciate the empirical noetic character of Orthodox theology. See Williams (1999).

[24] On the basis of the history of thought underlying the emergence of the Western Christian philosophical and its theological synthesis, David Bradshaw argues that one is warranted in stepping back from the approach taken by Western Christianity regarding God (e.g., considering that God's nature is knowable) that emerged in the second millennium tied to the emergence of Western Christianity itself.

> We children of the Enlightenment pride ourselves on our willingness to question anything. Let us now ask whether the God who has been the subject of so much strife and contention through western history was ever anything more than an idol. We may find that Nietzsche was wrong – that the sun still rises, the horizon still stretches before us, and we have not yet managed to drink up the sea (Bradshaw 2004, p. 277).

> The God Who is not an idol is the fully personal God Who transcends all concepts, but Whose uncreated energies we can experience.

This chapter also supports the view that important Confucian moral concerns should not be recast in Western moral-philosophical terms and principles, but rather appreciated within an idiom focused on the proper character of bonds among persons (Fan 2009), the cardinal bond of which is the bond of creatures to their God. All other bonds, such as those between citizens and the state, children and parents, wives and husbands, teachers and students, can only be adequately appreciated with reference to the canonical bond between persons and God. It is this latter bond that should be the hinge moral focus in the life of a community, not the common good, which can only be understood with reference to a God's-eye perspective. It is this perspective, this bond that in principle secures a content-full canonical view of morality and common goods. Because this perspective defines the bond between created persons and their God, a Person Who is radically transcendent, and because this is the reference point for the content and force of morality, all the bonds among persons are properly construed in a foundationally person-directed manner that defines the content and sense of the right, the good, and the virtuous. A substantive exploration of the issues involved in this state of affairs leads beyond philosophy to matters substantively theological.[25]

2.9 A Brief Conclusion

Without reference to a God's-eye perspective, morality and the common good, along with the moral force of public policy supporting common goods, are radically deflated, along with the possibility of moral community. Absent a God's-eye perspective, the force of any canonical account of the common good or common goods is substantively undermined, including the strength of reasons to be moral rather than to act prudently. Invoking God in order at least in principle to avoid affirming irresolvable moral pluralism, and/or in order to overcome the deflation of the force of morality in the face of compelling prudential concerns, has a further significant consequence. Reference to a God's-eye perspective changes the character of one's appreciation of morality and the common good, in that the God's-eye perspective provides a perspective of a Person Who is in authority and/or Who is the authority concerning which among the plurality of moral visions is to be regarded as canonical and which will be enforced. Given the force of this perspective, morality is re-oriented in terms of God. The good, the right, and the virtuous are understood in terms of the holy. Concern for the common good is no longer cardinal. Indeed, concern for the common good is then radically recast, with the result that orientation to this God's-eye perspective is as close as one can come to a point of substantive community orientation and of general moral direction.

[25] In order to learn more about this transcendent God, one would need to engage a noetic experiential theology. See Engelhardt (2006) and (2000).

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Chapter 3
Attacks on the Family East and West: Evidence for the Erosion of a Common Good

Stephen A. Erickson

3.1 Introduction

In this essay I am concerned to allow families and "thick" communities to be better appreciated as foundational to our human lives and not be perceived as merely derivative. To set about accomplishing this, what I offer is less an argument to this effect than a highlighting of historical and philosophical impediments to seeing matters in this way. I construe these impediments to be deep, influential and not often well-comprehended biases. They grow primarily out of a commitment to individualism that is poorly thought through. I enumerate and comment on a number of these individualist undercurrents, from Newton's atomism to recent secular existentialism. Later, I suggest that Enlightenment notions of universality and autonomy not only contribute to these "anti-family" biases, but also paradoxically engender a vacuous sort of "commonality" that plays into equally empty notions of the common good. In the interim, however, I draw from both Sellars and Hegel to forward a richer notion of the "individual" that enables us better to appreciate the spiritual life and the central role that families and thick communities play in its constitution and in the constitution of all human life. I conclude with some brief reflections on the importance of empathy and of spiritual families in our contemporary world.

My underlying concern, thus, is to place the family in a better and more highlighted focus as an indispensable and foundational reality in the nurturing and development of our spiritual lives. To accomplish this, I will be examining and thereby removing some obstacles that sometimes prevent philosophical recognition of the family's centrality. Most of these obstacles I believe to be of Western historical and philosophical origin, though in an economically oriented, rapidly globalizing era they cannot but have come to influence the Eastern world as well.

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I must also make mention of the "common," for any discussion of individuals and the importance of families, any discussion of human spiritual life, must acknowledge philosophical influences and entanglements stemming from diverse sources. While some have hopes for a thickly pervasive "Common Good" in and for human life, others have aspirations for a very individualistically-oriented, libertarian autonomy. Still others are quite concerned to advocate and thereby preserve the family as the central and continuing normative human reality. These various stances are very much in conflict with each other, bear significantly on our understanding of persons, and require a careful sorting out. Consider once more. Is the common to be understood as the thickly shared and thereby as that by which we bond and comprehend our humanity? Or, might the common better be understood as a somewhat vacuous, lowest "common" denominator, that which covers everyone, but speaks to the diverging personalities and excellences of no particular person, family, or community? Could it function in some or even all of these ways? Answers to these questions will strongly influence our understanding of what it is to be human, to live in families and to share in community.[1]

3.2   Reflections on Billiard Ball Individualism (BBI)

There are some prevalent and unfortunate undercurrents and assumptions in terms of which discussions of the individual and the *common good* are often cast. These are often problematic.[2] The major undercurrent I wish to pursue and to undermine stems from a strongly held Western belief that on final analysis various aggregates of human beings are constituted by multiples of entities we would most perspicuously refer to as distinguishable, separable, and therefore distinct and quite separately existing individuals. I choose to refer to this view as "Billiard Ball Individualism," (BBI).

Let me state as clearly as possible, yet quite briefly, what BBI entails for those who would be its advocates, keeping in mind that it is an ideal type. It comes to the view that in principle whatever humanly "is" exists in independence of other such human beings. It is the belief that a human being could be understood philosophically—and

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[1] Once the normative notion of the "good," as in "common good," is introduced into our reflections, even more issues arise. These vexing issues include regarding relations between the rights some say that individuals have as individuals, the foundational and intermediary positions occupied by families in fostering and transmitting human values, and those shared, thus allegedly "common" moral aspirations we are so often enjoined to pursue.

[2] It is a spiritual notion of *the person* that I wish to adumbrate. I believe that some deep failure of understanding has prevented spiritual conceptions of human life from flourishing and the unavoidably central and sustaining role of the family from being sufficiently appreciated. This has allowed secular conceptions of the person to proliferate. If we more fully comprehend our spiritual nature, by no means an easy task, we will contribute to a more insightful understanding of the vital importance of families and communities. We will also achieve a better understanding of the various ways in which the notion of a *common good* can serve us well or serve us poorly.

thus comprehended in its true reality—outside of and in sharp separation from other humans. This comprehension is not thought to be compromised by the concrete embeddedness and complex social relations that are found on the empirical level. Although not a solipsism, BBI does involve a commitment to the belief that most fundamentally the care of the human is isolate, inviolable, and therefore not metaphysically subject to the various relations into which it enters with others. In short, the individual person is viewed more on the model of a billiard ball than that of a multi-dimensional context or interactive web.

This view is by no means patently false. In fact, it has much to be said for it. It has distinguished forebears that have fostered productive results in a variety of significant areas of intellectual investigation intimately adjacent to that of the human. Adoption of BBI's own particular assumptions has also engendered fruitful, if one-sided insights in the course of investigations of the specifically human itself.

Consider Newton's atomism, a great stimulant of BBI. This atomism guided well over two centuries of scientific progress. In philosophy proper, Descartes' methodological commitment to the pursuit of clear and distinct ideas and Hume's frequently stated dictum that the impression of a complex is a complex of impressions, themselves variants of atomism, have motivated inquiries that spread into many domains (Descartes 1981, pp. 3–18; Hume 1960, pp. 1–13). In the twentieth century, these lines of thought not only morphed into logical atomism but came to exert a considerable influence on a number of aspects of libertarian economic and political thinking as well. What was emphasized in each instance was the individual item.

It is helpful to note how philosophical principles, such as Hume's and Descartes', work themselves out programmatically. Four overlapping assumptions form the basis for numerous practices and conclusions. These assumptions can be stated quite succinctly: (1) only what is capable of being known with utter clarity could qualify as the underlying, foundational reality of the world; (2) only simple, decisively distinguishable and separable items could be so known; (3) only such items could be constitutive of reality itself, that is to say, could comprise the nature of things; and (4) all other, more complex entities must be analyzable without remainder into these simple, foundational units.

Over the last century and a half or so, we have seen these principles extended from their initial residence in the *natural sciences* to more decidedly humanistic domains. These domains have themselves increasingly been construed to be under the aegis of something referred to as the *human sciences*. As applied to aggregates of people, the conclusion came to be drawn that only *individuals* were ultimately *real*.

The evolving BBI conclusion that only separable items, individuals, could be *real* was further aided—conviction of its truth made firmer—through reflection on what is referred to in Leibniz as the predicate-in-notion doctrine: to be true of a thing, any aspect of that thing must be part of it (Leibniz 1951, pp. 217ff). It must be internal to that thing. Relational properties, thus, could not truly be part of an entity, at least not in any fundamental way, for though they would have one leg in the entity, so to speak, their other leg would be elsewhere. Consider a simple example. Upon final analysis, a chair's being next to a table could not be an underlying

feature of that chair, for the "next-to" relation is also located elsewhere, *viz.*, in the table. The particular "next-to" relation possessed by the chair would then depend on the presence and position of the table, were it to have the proprietal residence in the chair that is claimed for it. Remove the table in question and the "next-to-the-table" relation the chair has had simply vanishes.

This Leibnizian line of argument plausibly claims that the chair under consideration will remain the chair that it already was and that it will still continue to be this chair regardless of the items relationally surrounding it. Rhetorically, if not altogether convincingly stated, isn't that which remains amidst such relational changes the "real" chair, fundamentally unaffected by the vicissitudes of what goes on around and beyond it? Must one not distinguish between relational manifestations, "real" in a phenomenal, i.e., derivative sort of way, and those underlying entities grounding these relations that are actually real in a primary sort of way?

It is easy to see how this line of reasoning might be applied to varying forms of social, communal and familial reality. Your parent dies, but you remain the *you* that you are, and the same would be the case were your spouse to vanish, your neighborhood with the exception of your home to be bulldozed, your community to relocate without you, or your governing bodies to abandon their activities without having secured replacements to perform at least some of their functions.

There are a number of other undercurrents that support the account I am adumbrating. Leibnizian-type motivations and the temptations of a fastidious and contextually emancipated atomism do not comprise the entire story. Another undercurrent supporting BBI stems from a brave and often noble stoic attitude. It avows that you are who and what you are, regardless of what may happen around or even to you. From such an orientation come self-possession and a potentially robust self-reliance. A kind of strength is engendered that would be all too easily compromised, if not completely undermined through a capitulation to various seductive matrices of support and reassurance. In our time, such matrices have often come to stifle initiative and discourage creative, entrepreneurial risk-taking. In this sense, BBI has a courageous and noble lineage, and the consequences of adopting its stance have provided much to recommend it.

Another significant undercurrent supporting BBI arises through the tempting and recurrent Pythagorean-Socratic notion that the human soul—the ultimate human reality for much of the Western tradition—is itself simple and therefore without parts, certainly and particularly without *relational* parts. As simple, such a line of reasoning infers, this soul is indestructible, all "corruption" issuing only from some form of decomposition. As indestructible it is thereby also immortal. This is a compelling, axially oriented *desideratum* that has exercised an extraordinary influence over human life, invariably lived in precarious circumstances and always vulnerable. The insularity provided through the BBI model, thus, offers not only fortitude for dealings *in* the world. Prior to its secularization, BBI itself drew strength from a spiritual inheritance that offered not only consolation but also hope for a final refuge *beyond* this world.

Still another undercurrent supporting BBI is found in the protestant, primarily Lutheran notion of the priesthood of all believers. This is the doctrine that every

human being finally and inescapably faces God alone. To face God alone and thus without the benefit of mediating agencies, it is strongly believed, is to confront a God hopefully of mercy but certainly of judgment and possibly of wrath. Searching and exhaustively uncovering every darkness and depravity of the individual human heart, such judgment is taken by protestant believers to be a relentless activity through which God engages with human beings throughout their earthly lives. This mode of engagement cannot but terrify the human soul. Such was Luther's unequivocal understanding of the matter. At the same time, however, when in conjunction with a supervening grace, this circumstance is said to liberate human beings for productive activities *in* the world. Salvation—immortality now construed through an alternative and significantly life-altering vocabulary—is not for human beings to achieve through their own means, but is divinely and undeservedly bestowed. Invariably, however, it is bestowed only on individuals. In these matters, families and communities can be of no help. All the weight and responsibility falls on individuals.

At its articulated extreme, these most fundamental, salvific concerns of the protestant faith become an utterly private affair in which in every instance only two are involved: God and the individual human being. A spiritual situation is thereby constructed that is damaging in its consequences to the familial, communal, and social. These latter are not given due attention or consideration. The damage inflicted is similar to that which BBI brings about when it constructs an analogous residence in the secular domain.

With regard to each particular individual and very private spiritual relationship, this influential protestant view contends, no third party could possibly know the actual disposition of the matter, nor could that party even be relevant to its outcome. This strongly individualistic stance is the radical core of classical Protestantism (Luther 1972). Nonetheless, on its basis not only is an introspective and relentlessly conscientious individualism encouraged, liberated from hopes of a salvation that is self-constructed, or in important respects even cooperatively aided, but a life *in* the world that is energetically dynamic is also made possible.

Protestant doctrine and capitalist commitments have been significant contributors to an explosively productive set of economically driven historical advances. Such progress has further contributed to the allure of BBI and not altogether without some very powerful reasons. BBI's temptation, however ignorant of its own origins, grows not only out of a potentially isolating, though more typically seductive self-centeredness, it also stems from the observation of extraordinary industrial and technological productivity that has benefitted countless numbers of people. Families and communities have been substantial beneficiaries of this productivity, but according to received doctrine the agency of benefits has been singular individuals acting largely in separation from those families and communities out of which, as individuals, they emerge.

A further undercurrent supporting BBI is found in the existentialist notion—promoted most concertedly by Sartre—that we are "condemned" to freedom as an ineradicable component of each of our individual situations (Sartre 1993). The claim is also made that the choice of those human relations into which each of us

enters—and may then sustain or decide to terminate—is ours alone to make. Also claimed is that each of us is responsible individually and without recourse for each of our individual actions. This existentialist position is a prod to responsibility with respect to one's own person and perhaps to productive and even creative output that is idiosyncratically personalized through and through—a typical existentialist aspiration. Such a position is best construed as a secular successor to the configurations inherent in classical Protestantism. Stripped of those spiritual dimensions that initially shaped it, however, it tends toward isolation and despair. It is a truly radical individualism.

Leaving Kierkegaard, Heidegger and other, more derivative thinkers aside, this existentialist dynamic can be seen to have many of the same strengths and weaknesses that most forms of secular and individualist voluntarism possess. It depends on an activation of the will at the expense of reason and emotion, and it values action over understanding. Though it may motivate the passive and conformist person to awaken to new and stimulating possibilities, this existentialist dynamic has little to offer regarding our ineradicable, supportive, and enriching human connectedness, familial, communal, and social. It is antagonistic to them.

Of course, there are significant, if not devastating vulnerabilities in the derivation of BBI that I have just traced, especially with respect to the existentialist position. One way to highlight a vulnerability of BBI is through reference to children. Children simply cannot be left to their own devices. They are not radically self-sufficient beings. There is an obvious reason for this: a long time passes before children are able to fend for themselves in complex and demanding situations. Measured by the standards of individuality promoted by BBI, children are less than fully formed. It could be argued that very few individuals are so formed and that even these individuals should act in accordance with BBI standards only in carefully considered circumstances. But this is not the tenor of BBI's argument.

In fairness, we must note the counter-objection that BBI consistently launches against those who would challenge its individualist model in this manner. Grant, these proponents state, that children must be partially exempted—at least transitionally—from BBI's normative standards. However, children do grow up. At this point, it is claimed, the transitional exemption temporarily granted them must be lifted. On its own telling, BBI is the only valid account of human beings because in the most value-laden of senses it is the final story. It is forwarded as the regulative *ideal* for human existence. To be sure, many fail to become those fully resourceful and resilient adults of which BBI speaks. It is these latter individuals, nonetheless, who most fully exemplify those underlying "simples" that enter into the constitution of every complex social reality. It is precisely these insular, if episodically outgoing monads, these separable units that are the basic constituents in BBI's largely atomistic account of human existence. Always construed as adjuncts, family and community become progressively marginalized. If not overlooked in actual fact, they are altogether disregarded in BBI's paradigmatically developed theory.

3.3   BBI, Hegelian Possibilities, and Biological Models

I have noted a number of philosophical motivations that lead toward BBI, but have also indicated inadequacies in its stance regarding many of the complexities of human life. Is there a more acute and compelling way to construe the human person than is made available through what the provocative BBI model offers? If there is, how might that way reconfigure our understanding of the familial and communal, and what might its account suggest regarding various notions of a common good?

It is one thing to adumbrate BBI's limitations. It is quite another to provide a complementary and perhaps even divergent option that might replace BBI. Is there in fact a genuinely plausible philosophical (and spiritual) alternative, or must BBI stand as the sole regulative principle that could engender productive results when sorting out the complexities of the human? Cast in terms of philosophical history, how might one supplement or supplant the regulative antitheses that Kant articulates in his Antinomies of Pure Reason (Kant 1961, pp. 384–484)? Similar to these antitheses, BBI is at best a one-sided approach. It serves objective considerations far better than it does contextual ones. But, again, in some respects it nonetheless has remained tempting.

BBI, after all, does issue the promise of clear demarcations. It caters to the analytically productive, deeply human urge to sort out and in most cases, if successful, to have uncovered and brought into focus unambiguously simple elements. Extracted from those countless indistinct, overlapping, and oppressively vague complexes that issue and thereby complicate and confuse human lives, these elements provide reassurance. However unwittingly, BBI also caters to the human need for fixed and stable foundations—if not their actual discovery, at least to the focused and orienting possibility of their meaningful pursuit. BBI also renders both credible and compelling a variety of forms of quantification that issue in number counts and, in a more sophisticated manner, in the vocabulary of statistical probability. None of these dimensions of BBI's allure is small or insignificant. They cannot easily be discounted. They speak to authentic, if often misguided conceptions and to the underlying attitudes and desires that drive them.

A selective appropriation and recasting of philosophical history can sometimes prove helpful, especially if BBI has been seen to be fundamentally inadequate. Contemporary human beings, after all, are more than just dispersed individuals, an unfortunate BBI assumption as well as a prescription that has overhung much current philosophical discussion of families and their individual members.

Whether to their benefit or detriment, humans are also outcomes and bearers of cultural, intellectual, and spiritual temperaments and traditions. They flourish or suffer through their various responses to these inheritances. Through reflection on a step Hegel once took, we are offered an opportunity to establish and reaffirm some credentials for partially eluding BBI's clutches (Habermas 1987, pp. 23–44). Reorienting discussions of human life in a more contextually-sensitive and familially cognizant way will thereby become easier. Through Hegel, in fact, we are offered a fruitful alternative to BBI—a set of "theses" to offset BBI's

antitheses—though this Hegelian alternative is not without its own limitations and vulnerabilities.

Hegel understands the person in terms of three complementary yet potentially conflicting dimensions: (a) the conceptions (or images) that a person has of him- or herself; (b) the conceptions (or images) that significant, and most frequently familial "others" have of that person; and (c) the person—that human *self* to whom those images and conceptions found in (a) and (b) apply. Somewhat problematically, each of these three dimensions is claimed to have an unstably coequal status with the other two, though by no means the same status as either of them (Hegel 1977).

There are of course difficulties inherent in such an account. It would seem all too easy to conclude that (c) is unavoidably fundamental, (a) and (b) transparently derivative, and, thus, that BBI might turn out to be foundational in a manner that undercuts Hegel's tripartite project as just described. In one obvious and routinely grammatical sense, subject-predicate logic dictates that (a's) and (b's) are predicated of (c's) and could not reach any status at all without some (c's) or other to sustain them. And this is not all.

In a very fundamental biological sense, Hegel's tri-partite construal of human beings would seem to be undercut as well. It is a newborn infant, separate from birth from other biological entities, to whom various ascriptions are predicated. Many of these ascriptions are deemed appropriate and are adopted and validated, whether through observation or, later, through introspection. Some ascriptions are generated through the perceptions or inclinations of others, but many are self-generated and thus autobiographical in origin. But are not all such ascriptions predicated of a singular biological creature, a separately existing and quite distinct human being?

There is a counterargument to such an objection even on the biological level. It is the chromosomal unifying of two separate genetic strains that brings this new biological entity into existence. It is precisely such a unification that generates its being. Biological considerations, thus, can be made to cut both ways and in and of themselves must be construed as inconclusive.

Note that the emphasis, if not exclusionary commitment of BBI, is to the former biological consideration. The emphasis of a Hegelian model must be on the latter rendition. BBI is reductive with respect to the relational features of the subject matters that become its concerns. BBI takes this stance toward referential ascriptions in general, insofar as they are claimed to rest on irreducible relational properties. In large part, this is because of BBI's analytic need for unambiguously achieved dissections that overcome all forms and species of adhesion.

3.4   Concerning the Spiritual Dimension of the Human

The underlying, secular bent of BBI lurks in the background of virtually all of the positions it takes. In contrast, religious tradition in the West has stressed that humans are made in the image of God. Between BBI and spiritual belief, thus, there exists an enormous chasm. This impacts not only understandings of the nature and

significance of the family, but it also dramatically influences conceptions of what it is to be an individual person is.

As construed by Western religious traditions, humans are opaque, even to themselves. Only through reference to and confession regarding their personal spiritual nature can this condition be overcome, and then only incompletely. An essential part of the confession must involve the acknowledgement of a foundational dependence upon God. The matter is complex. This dependence can only come to be known through the mirroring medium of that very God-dispensed image that first constitutes humans as human and calls them to confront and recognize that they are spiritual in nature, not just metaphysically but personally.

Relatedness and mediation, thus, are at the core of the very notion of person. A position further from the paradigm articulated by BBI is hard to imagine. *Image* itself is a notion of extraordinary spiritual significance. It may even be of spiritual origin. Methodologically, if not always substantively secular in its underlying orientation, BBI must eschew the relatedness and mediation that an "image" grounded understanding of the person inescapably requires. But without an anchoring in relatedness and mediation, families and communities cannot be comprehended.

As has been indicated by Sellars,[3] among many others, some form of "encounter" must have occurred in the context of which an image of the human person arose for each person so encountered. Through this occurrence human persons would have come into being. For humans to come into existence—and not just in terms of an evolutionary or quasi-emergent historical beginning—image-creating encounters would thus have been necessary. Such encounters cannot but be construed as special because they are rationally inexplicable events. In the absence of their occurrence, however, no human person could come into existence. This conviction is at the core of Western religious thinking.

Let us note some consequences of such an understanding for any notion of the common—and much more so for the notion of a common good—as applied to human beings. Construed as special creations requiring for their existence an image-engendered encounter that cannot help but involve an origin from beyond their own resources, human beings cannot help but be comprehended as individuals, not mere instantiations of an overarching "commonality." That which is common to them will be so in a derivative, not a basic sense, and ministering to what is common to them will require reaching these individuals in a secondary and indirect, not a primary and direct way.

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[3] Sellars distinguishes between a manifest and a scientific image of human life in the world (Sellars 1971, p. 6). It is in terms of the manifest image that humans become aware of themselves and thus become human in the first place. Sellars asserts that having a conception of itself is an essential feature of humanity. Were human beings to have a significantly different image of themselves, they would be human beings of a significantly different sort. On this Sellarsian view, the claim that human beings are special creations is most fundamentally supported by the fact that to be human one must have encountered oneself, but to encounter oneself one must already be human. This suggests an extraordinary difference between the pre-human and the human. Although he ultimately rejects the claim, Sellars believes that one is driven towards a holistic account in which the arrival of the human is much like an extraordinary event, virtually inexplicable.

This is in large measure because their individuality as individuals will have been constituted as relational, as standing in an essential relation to something which itself derives from a transcendent source. That such constitutive images share certain "common" features will prove to be far less significant than their relatedness to their source—itself the origin of an imagery that creates the human, imagery accepted through confession and believed in religious terms to be the gift of an individual and personal God.

But if it is a personal God through whose action and bestowed image individual human beings are created, if it is a personal God who is their foundation and source, such individuals might seem to have little of significance in common except separate personal relations to that God. And here lies a serious problem. Is this account only a spiritual variant of that problematic individualism already under challenge? At its theological extreme, this was what was demanded by the dynamics of that protestant thinking previously considered. Is such thinking credible? Is what is now under consideration itself any more credible?

If spiritual creation by means of a personal image provided by a personal God constitutes human existence as something crucially transcendent of the exclusively biological, those other, relational dimensions of human existence must nonetheless also be accounted for. The empirical realities of human life demand a cogent explanation and plausible elucidation. An account of human existence that speaks to a common and shared humanity is hardly avoidable. That such an account leads to an abstractly common as opposed to, say, a familial, communal, and spiritually motivated good is altogether implausible. This would controvert fact. At the same time, however, such thinking does have portions of the conventional wisdom of the Enlightenment's secular universalism to offer support.

3.5   A Short Reprise and Extension of the Spiritual Alternative to BBI

The alternative account now being forwarded is surely paradoxical. It is neither secular nor removed from the particularities of actual human life. It is unorthodox, if by this is meant not in fashion. To be human is to have encountered oneself. But to have had and to continue this encounter, one must, it seems, already *be* human. Embedded in this configuration of connections and their attendant implications is a core set of conditions in terms of which the continuing viability of the transcendently religious persuasion becomes inescapable. This configuration is at the heart of the conceptual power of the doctrine of Special Creation. It is hard not to conclude that a transcendent spiritual event must have taken and even now continues to take place out of the sustained occurrence of which human beings remain in existence. This conclusion arises as much from a logically mandated space of entailments as it does from a set of spiritual beliefs. A choice between these approaches is not required, for each leads to the same conclusion. Exclusive alternation is not involved.

To these conclusions, however, some supplementary reflections must be added. Three are of particular importance. It is best to begin with the least palatable to the contemporary secular intellect:

1. The constitutive "events" to which I have been alluding must be construed as multiple, not as aspects of one original and singular event. Account must be taken of the continual coming into being of quite specific and unique individuals over historical time. The core claim of Special Creation far transcends issues of historical origin as might involve debates with Darwin.

   Consider the core claim once more. Individuals are constituted in their individuality in a spiritually relational manner through the mirroring presence (and mediation) of a divinely bestowed spiritual image of themselves. Appeal to a virtually infinite, yet invariably personal plurality of such bestowals—rather than to a historically singular occurrence—offers the more perspicuous account of this mysterious happening that is our continuing human existence as individuals.

2. As helpfully adumbrated by many twentieth-century secular contextualists, though the thinking is generated from at least as early a philosopher as Hegel, such events could not but happen in holistic settings, in contexts the component parts of which both precede and yet also depend on those wholes of which they are precisely and paradoxically the components parts. The significance of this circumstance is not inconsiderable. To be concretely operative, holistic contexts must be "thick." They must be intimately embedded in those who grow up in them, and configure and sustain them. The supportive and mediating settings for the development and enrichment of individuals, thus, can only be those families and communities in which those individuals are originally embedded in their historical-biological lives. Any other account would generate intimate familiar particulars out of remote abstractions.

   The intimate and familiar provide essential and altogether appropriate nurturing ground for the development of individuals, not only in terms of spiritual support but in terms of social connectedness as well. In comparison, the generic and/or global—the "common" and allegedly universal as decreed from the abstract and distanced agenda generated by a secular overview—cannot but dilute and thereby deplete both individual human lives and the bonds that sustain those lives. Note in passing that Confucius would hardly have drawn these inferences differently. The energies involved are centrifugal. To ignore them might be theoretically elegant, but it would border on the empirically vacuous.

3. Historically, it has been families or family analogues that have provided the settings, those mediating contexts through which human self-awareness and thereby concrete, particularized, human selfhood has emerged. In this, the findings of cultural anthropology, philosophy, and clinical psychology converge—though from the epicenter of their convergence a further question emerges: could there be a credible sense in which the existence of a family more spiritual than biological might come to take precedence? Might it be not just coexistent with the more traditional notion of family, but as its successor and consummation? Doctrines regarding the work of the Holy Spirit in Christianity and concerns for the continuing expansion of *li* in Confucianism suggest something of this nature.

3.6   The Enlightenment Model and Human Selfhood

The reflections I have been offering are not orthodox in any comfortably secular sense. They collide with many conventions and are at cross-purposes with an influential philosophical tradition that has come to dominate in many quarters of the West. This tradition has provided additional support for BBI. Through the dissemination of a variety of United Nations declarations, for example, this tradition has spread further as well. It neither quite appreciates the individual in its genuine complexity nor responds with contextual sensitivity to such nuanced circumstances as are found in families and communities. The tradition in question, of course, is the "Enlightenment." Not to speak of and to it would falsely simplify our current discussion.

In the thinking of the Western Enlightenment, itself a curious introversion of the rationalist dimension of Platonism, it was thought that knowledge must replace faith and that philosophy must conclusively replace religion. But philosophical knowledge was construed in a traditional manner as best achieved through detachment from the personal and orientation toward the *common*, i.e., toward those constituent elements *held in common* by the items to be known.

Under the influence of Enlightenment-inspired Kant,[4] moral insight was severed from the enriching bonds of family and community. As part of a deliberate strategy, it was deracinated and in numerous ways removed from those contexts that invigorated it as well. Moral insight was thereby converted from a species of consensus reached through varying forms of localized, often familial and communal consultation into formalized and prescriptive injunctions achieved through the internally generated production and application of highly abstract (transcendental) principles. These principles themselves had to have been generated from out of the resources of a homuncular subject, a virtually monadological subjectivity delivered in principle, if not in fact, from the constitutive, intimately contextualized, supportive and enriching bonds of human connectedness.

Not only this. Regarding the notion of "ontologically" formative spiritual self-imagery that we have just adumbrated, Kant and his rationalist successors (and predecessors) have very little to say. The concern to escape from superstition has had as a less-scrutinized result the hegemonic promotion of BBI's radically isolated individual—in regulative hope, if not in human fact. It has also contributed decisively to the production of a secularized one-dimensional person as opposed to the multi-dimensional conception of what that self must in reality be, given its actual manifestations within the fabric of human life.

Reasons for such a truncated configuring of human selfhood as is found in Enlightenment thinking are not hard to locate. They derive from several sources. Two are of primary significance in the context of Enlightenment thinking:

1. A notion of dignity emerges—itself a secular successor to the spiritual notion of dignity noted earlier—whereby human dignity is only to be found through

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[4] This is perhaps most clearly seen in Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals* (Kant 1949).

pursuit of the universal, not through engagement with the specific and the particular. By a line of reasoning suspect in its inferential links, the universal, it was concluded, could itself only be achieved in human terms through the discovery and subsequent adherence to principles free of specific, thus local, historically bound content. Given the parameters imposed by these artificial constraints, the only hope for human contact with and transformative connection to the universal, and thereby at least a derivative dignity, would be through rationally certified principles altogether liberated from concrete settings.

That those personal selves involved in the pursuit of such principles would or could be conceptualized in terms of BBI's notion of persons is surely not just strange. This would in fact be an understatement. Because the notion of (universal) principles involved, requiring Platonic underwriting and the notion of individuals promoted by enlightenment nurtured BBI, is insularly nominalist through and through, the account is also irremediably paradoxical. That these two notions could connect had to involve a conceptual slight-of-hand of enormous proportions.

The Enlightenment's notion of dignity, of course, is very much, if nonetheless covertly, derived from the historically ancient distinction between the universal and the particular. Only the universal, because it is invisible, eternal, and unchanging, can have true dignity. Only the pursuit of it can generate a derivative dignity on human beings living in the world. However much the dynamics of BBI might claim otherwise, on this Enlightenment account the only genuine dignity possible would be *common* dignity together with its attendant *common goods*. But these notions of *common* are at best degenerate, for they are fatally parasitical on a decayed Platonism that has already been undermined by nominalism.

For such a point of view to achieve any traction, the very notion of *common* must be extracted from profusely differing contexts. It must be abstracted from specific localities and from countless diverse, currently embedded and vibrantly living customs and historically motivated traditions. This notion of the common, in short, must be sterilized to become effective, but as sterilized it cannot be effective at all. In resisting all ascriptive reference to differentiated settings, the very notion of the common becomes vacuous. As articulated in terms of one of its major philosophical genealogies, rather than illuminating the human spirit and elevating it to a level less selfish and nobler, it degrades it to the status of lowest common denominator.

2. Not only is such a truncated configuring of human selfhood—and thus of connectedness and of family—motivated by tangled concerns regarding dignity, but it also arises from a number of other sources and considerations. These are important to an understanding of the rise of secularist BBI's conception of the individual and its reciprocally impoverishing displacement of notions of family and community toward the periphery of relevant consideration.

A prime source of the Enlightenment's truncation of human selfhood has been a surprisingly tangled quest for autonomy. Autonomy has been construed as self-determination. It is semantically opposed to heteronomy. The latter is

construed as determination through agents transcendent of and thus hazardous, if not fatal, to the development of autonomous personhood.

Again, traditional distinctions are in play. Reason, the alleged generator of (common) principles, is viewed as capable of self-determination and, thus, deemed capable of overcoming dependency. Desires, emotions, and perceptions, in contrast, are construed as determined by and thus dependent on external, unpredictable, and uncontrollable sources. Desires, emotions, and perceptions are thereby understood to be prime causes and contributors to dependency itself. At the extreme, they are construed as the very constituents of dependency, the implacable components of heteronomy. Without reference to these "implacable components," of course, any constructive elucidation of the realities of family and community is rendered impossible. Since family and community are altogether real, an account that discounts their reality must itself be wildly implausible. That such an account may seem supportable speaks to the allure of theoretical elegance, not to the bedrock of human fact.

3.7   Autonomy and Community

Within the seemingly univocal notion of autonomy, there are numerous conflations. These conflations provide space for BBI to flourish, however problematically. How does a distinction that in one of its manifestations has controversial philosophical force in a transcendentally oriented epistemology find its way into moral considerations that arise out of the contextualized circumstances of family, community, and confessional life? Autonomy as liberation from superstition, custom, and tradition is one (highly problematic) notion. It represents a secular struggle to produce injunctions and commandments rather than to acknowledge and to accept them. However un-thematically, it seeks to secure and to celebrate the individual. This autonomous individual is allegedly made in his or her own image through the generation of self-determining, because altogether self-determined, principles. This individual is also "commonized"—an existential reality, if not a word—through a mandated adherence to the abstracted features these principles must possess in order for them to escape the charge of heteronymous origin and the consequent taint of dependency. (Dependency, after all, is what the notion of autonomy in all of its forms strenuously seeks to overcome.)

The quest for such autonomy, extricated from human historical origins and divested of the fabric of connectedness, construes bonds as bondage. It is both spiritually empty and indifferent to the familial. The dynamic of its agenda requires no less. It is a vacuous autonomy, the very possibility of which rests on a failed understanding of what it is to be a person.

Of course, other interpretations of autonomy are also possible. Autonomy can also be construed as cognitive reliance on subject-generated *a priori* conceptual schemes not themselves derived from empirical content. Another alternative is to construe autonomy as the promise and possibility of a "higher," more stable and

reflective self-securing rule over a "lower," more impulsive and immediate self. This lower self gets construed as bundles, perhaps webs of recurrent, often tangled and episodic thought-tinged desires. Taken together or in separation, however, how do these multiple and conflated notions of autonomy render plausible and much less sustainable that truncated notion of personhood upon which Enlightenment-nurtured BBI rests its program? Any conceptually motivated, surgically antiseptic extraction of the person from the constitutive and nurturing bonds of family, community, and confession has extraordinary obstacles and resistances to overcome. (That such obstacles and resistances might not be insurmountable, or might only be surmounted in an extraordinary manner, is adumbrated through the Christian, and not just the Christian notion of a kingdom not *of* this world.)

It was Hegel's multi-dimensional insight to realize that such a generation of the moral and existential life of human beings—and of the underlying conception of the person that it presupposes and that it requires for its plausibility—was irremediably flawed. Such a program is bereft, even, of sufficient content to enable its pursuit. However honorable BBI's intentions might be, it lacks concrete resonance with genuine, real-life human situations. However honorable its concern to insulate human freedom from possible encroachments—and to construct a support system to reinforce belief in and commitment to the inviolability of individual conscience—it nonetheless fails to speak credibly to the authentic human situation, spiritual, familial, or communal.

Hegel himself could not remain within this configuration of thought. Although Hegel's particular views are not of concern, how and why they emerge is instructive and provides a cautionary note. His conclusions were more critical than productive, a circumstance insufficient to his intellectual ambition. With an intellect as subtly conflicted as it was searching and acute, Hegel ultimately insisted on a life of reason that absorbed and overcame specific contexts in the course of their articulation and comprehension.

This requires mention because it underlines an unfortunate truth. Dangers to the constitutive bonds of human connectedness arise not only from BBI. They emerge also through various temptations undergone by some of BBI's opponents. Specifically, as in Hegel's case, they can arise from progressivist concepts of history, whether rational, scientific, eschatological, collectivist, technological, socio-economic, or various combinations of the preceding. That any and all progressivist conceptions of history must harbor this threatening feature is altogether doubtful, but that some may possess it is quite certain.

Hegel himself, it is worth noting, was not unaware of such troubling possibilities and the destructive consequences that attend them. One passage is particularly helpful for the purpose of highlighting this:

> The religiosity and *Sittlichkeit* of a limited life—of a shepherd, a peasant—in its concentrated inwardness and its limitation to a few and wholly simple conditions of life has infinite value, and the same value as the religiosity and *Sittlichkeit* of well-developed knowledge and an existence rich in the scope of relations and actions. This internal center, this simple region of the right of subjective freedom, the hearth of willing, deciding, and doing, the abstract content of conscience, that in which guilt and value of the individual, his eternal

judgment, is enclosed, remains untouched and outside the loud noise of world history—outside not only external and temporal changes but even those which are involved in the absolute necessity of the Concept of freedom (qtd. in Kaufmann 1965, pp. 268).

With proper qualifications, what Hegel offers in this passage is not only an antidote to various, largely Enlightenment- and post-Enlightenment-inspired programs aimed at human improvement through the pursuit of a somewhat one-dimensionally scripted, prospectively oriented, historical meta-narrative. Through sensible interpolations that supplement an unnecessarily "subjective" tinge to Hegel's remarks, we can recognize those sorts of supportive, familial, and communal matrices that BBI rejects as cumbersome and derivative. Many grand historical narratives also seek to leave these concrete matrices behind in the service of a coming world in which the variegated and localized complexities of the present serve only as prelude.

Hegel's template offers the possibility of plurality as well. It is offered in terms of space and opportunities for those differing configurations and interactions that may enter into the composition of diverse families and communities. The internal cohesion of such families and communities does not require that such "groupings" adhere to any set of uniform, largely external criteria. These would be invalidly imposed from beyond the parameters of such groupings in the name of purportedly "common" values. Inescapably, standardization would be promoted to achieve these "common" values.

3.8   BBI Versus Multi-dimensional Relational Selfhood

The Kant/Hegel bifurcation, as it might be labeled, facilitates the drawing of some clean distinctions and indicates clear dangers and limitations arising both from BBI and from Hegelian multi-dimensionalism regarding the relational ingredients of selfhood. This bifurcation is also of heuristic significance, in that its features recur in contemporary arguments between various proponents of libertarianism on one side and numerous advocates of communitarian notions on the other.

If concerns regarding future-oriented historical triumphalism may have waned—though some proclamations regarding human rights and economic globalization appear strongly to favor a standardized adherence to uniformity over a far more flexible and nuanced appreciation of diversity—numerous issues regarding the structure of personhood and the role of family and community in its constitution remain very much alive.

Kant and most of his deontological successors, covert or overt BBI proponents, insist on a common morality, thoroughly decent, if emotionally unresponsive and sterile—applied at its relentless best in somewhat mechanical and repetitive ways that suffer a failure of nuance. The common is sought, but its purchase is at the price of the individual and of specifically particularized circumstances in which that individual is invariably embedded. As a common standard and regulative principle either for the acknowledgment or the pursuit of the common good for a community or family, this model is abstract, insensitive, and heartless.

Although problematic in a different way, the Hegelian tendency is to encourage a greatness of spirit that might easily separate itself from the concrete and ordinary in the course of its perilous reach toward the extraordinary. But where does this situate the embodied personal self, living in specific circumstances that involve interpersonal opportunities as well as inter- and multi-personal constraints—options in some cases, their closure in others? It is precisely in these situations that we find the vast majority of actual human beings.

In terms of the Hegelian model of the person, that person is engendered as person in a mirroring context. Such a generative context is concrete and unavoidably familial and communal in its dynamic, however possible its partial transcendence through the active, thoughtful, and creative trajectories of the extraordinarily gifted may be. Self-conception—an essential constituent of the person—first emerges as self-conception in a specific setting composed of other selves who both conceive that self and in so doing formatively and constitutively relate to it. Analogously, those (equally constitutive) conceptions that others have of an emerging person are themselves directly influenced and guided by what is encountered, however "pre-personal" and undifferentiated that emerging person may be. In such reflections, we find a highly plausible account of individuals within families.

If there is credible danger in committing a genetic fallacy with respect to persons, thereby reducing them in significant measure to the conditions of their origination and their early development, there is also a hubristic fallacy in believing that persons can altogether transcend their origins, reaching an autonomy, a state of extraordinary fruition that entails the overcoming and transcendence of those vital elements that have entered into the very fabric of those persons' being.

Gnosticism is that philosophico-theological fallacy, the guiding imagery of which involves the descent of the fully formed into an alienating and imprisoning "material matrix." The BBI fallacy, on the other hand, is that persons may become utterly self-contained and completely self-dependent. This consummation is to be achieved without the contamination of others. But without the sustaining presence of others, surely such a person could not have achieved original stabilization, consequent character formation, and the continuity of an identity over time in the first place. That family and community are indispensible with respect to these crucial matters is a conclusion that cannot be evaded.

A person is a person through an unavoidable and robustly constitutive mediation that is not only concrete and particular, but culturally, historically, familially, and communally bound. Appeal to BBI as a higher level of self, separable and in principle transcendent of those ingredients that enter into its very constitution, is at best a distortion. It represents a destructive flight from concrete personhood. In the name of maturity, it attempts to eradicate bonds that in the supportive outreach of their nature nurture attitudes and interactive structures that promote sharing, deliberation, and consensus-guided action. These attitudes enrich families and communities. This enrichment heightens the value of the common in a more legitimate and context-sensitive sense than does the abstract and generic. It fosters the appreciation of the common, now as the jointly and communally shared, which can be drawn from, participated in, and contributed to in ways that are complementary and supplementary.

3.9 *Chimerica*: A Brief Excursis

That extraordinary events have been occurring over the last 40 years that have brought East and West ever closer together is no revelation. That the underlying driver of these cooperative interactions has been primarily economic is no revelation either. Great hopes have been kindled that much will be accomplished that will heighten material prosperity and bring cultural enrichment as well. The degree to which these hopes will be realized and the extent to which they will spread depends largely on what has come to be called *Chimerica*. This, too, is no revelation. Are there, then, any new insights to be had, or does the emerging consensus and conventional wisdom offered at the end of the twenty first century's first decade circumscribe the parameters of reasonable reflection?

Whether in any sense new or not, it is helpful to remember that much of economic progress attained by the West has involved the continual disruption of various habits, patterns, and traditions. Innovative activity has been central to growth. It has often left varying degrees of stagnation, even devastation in its wake.

It is presumptuous for an American professor to speak of China to Chinese people who live its reality. Nevertheless, there is a sense one has that many in China also harbor the hope of recapturing tradition, not just of innovatively transcending it. The Confucian spirit, for example, is one that nurtures human-heartedness (*jen*) and in empathic ways seeks centripetal deepening and the gradual enlarging of connectedness. The Confucian spirit appreciates *Constant Relationships*, and it also pursues the arts of peace (*wen*), including culture, poetry, music, and the arts more generally, in their spiritual as well as their aesthetic dimensions.

Can these cultivated virtues survive the individualistic and competitive temptations of a materially-oriented market capitalism? Will the extraordinary mobility offered through fast moving and productively diverse allocations of capital endanger a more grounded appreciation of family and community? Might intimacy undergo a gradual, if not at times rapid surrender to workplace anonymity? No one can be sure, though it is clear that much is at risk and much will be learned regarding the stability, resourcefulness, and supportive capacities of family-oriented living as the next few decades unfold.

Economic opportunities may not always be friendly to family circumstances. Often they are not. Of course, not all spiritual orientations are supportive in this manner, either. A tracing of the genealogy of BBI has shown this. On balance, however, the matrix of spiritual life has had far more to offer with respect to the needs and realties of family and community. If one accepts the argument that the spiritual is most fundamental, considerable consolation and encouragement are thereby offered.

How the spiritual and the economic come to terms with each other will be a large part of the emerging *Chimerica* story. Should the spiritual find ways not just to accommodate but also to inform the economic, and should the economic ways not just tolerate but also appreciate, even to have reason on occasion to subordinate itself to the spiritual, there is great hope. *Chimerica* will be at the center of these

issues, as families will be at their heart. What will emerge is far more uncharted than many centuries of human life have ever been brought to navigate. There is both promise and peril.

3.10 Spiritual Families

One might think that my family-oriented remarks are only directed toward families in utterly concrete and localized manifestations. To some degree this is the case. But such a conclusion is also misleading, for it disregards an important distinction and the ascending possibilities it fosters. Families have the capacity to be quite selfish. As inwardly turned realities, they can be a detriment to their surrounding human environment. At the same time, they have the potential for generative activities that are communally supportive as well as receptive to the kind of support communities and likeminded families can provide. Under appropriate conditions, families can be increasingly motivated to aspire to more inclusive and pervasive levels of outreach, consideration, and concern. In principle, what families and their surrounding, supportive communities might hold empathically in common with other families, and with communities quite similar to their own, might eventually be extended further. The limit of this potential extension cannot in fact be known, for it cannot be rationally projected.

Again, to what degree such extensions of families and communities might continue to occur—and from what historical starting points and to what realistic and feasible ends they might move—can only be a matter of unquantifiable conjecture. Even the projection of such possibilities is a Utopian undertaking in any historical age. This is in overwhelming measure because spiritual families and communities, and the movements to which they have given rise and have nurtured, have invariably been un-programmed. They have been to a considerable extent unmanaged and have been largely unpredicted, if not mysterious in their origins and their outcomes.

The cohesion spiritual families come to achieve is not that of the commonly common. This is a least common denominator of superficially, if pervasively shared similarities that issue in professions of values and claims to rights. Rather, the cohesion of which I speak arises from a very uncommon intensification of something much more significant: the expansive extension and deepening of empathically concentric, yet outwardly directed venues of consideration and caring love.

The *actual* family empathically protects and cultivates the nutriments of such love. It is the spiritual family, however, through which that love is most likely to find its most dynamic, if also most vulnerable development. It is thus in the resonance of the continuing, if sometimes precarious relations among families and their supportive communities, actual and spiritual, that the uncommonly common is in turn shielded and protected from its diverse opponents, not the least of which are the robust representatives of what I have been referring to as BBI.

3.11 Concluding Remarks

To conclude: It is "common" to distinguish the common from the individual. But how is the individual itself to be understood, especially if it is taken as a means of focusing the common? This consideration has been at the heart of my undertaking. I have highlighted a number of historical and philosophical prejudices that reinforce BBI's account of the individual as atomistic and external in its relation to other human beings. Such an account goes hand in hand with—and even promotes—a most generalized notion of the common. On this account, the common comes to be construed generically and thus in a thin, virtually vacuous manner. The common is thereby not rendered contentful. It offers little to reflection that is helpful or palpable.

The alternative I have adumbrated is a spiritual and holistic one, derived in part from such (unlikely) figures as Hegel and Sellars. It understands the person to be the consequence of spiritual encounter and thus multidimensional. I argue that for such an account to integrate with the realities of our human lives, it must and in fact does recognize and avail itself of those actual, thick, and real circumstances in which spiritual individuals are nurtured and subsequently develop, *viz.*, families and concrete communities. It is in such specific settings that particular, plural, and over-lapping yet distinct families and communities emerge for philosophical reflection as both vital and with the capacity to be genuinely and contentfully helpful in the understanding of human beings.

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Chapter 4
Why Modern Ethics Rejects the Common Good: Some Suggestions

David Solomon

4.1 Introduction

We frequently hear that the concept of the common good has fallen out of favor in modern moral and political thinking in the West. It is a notion that has seemed to many to carry with it the teleological conception of nature and of the human person characteristic of the classical philosophy in which it finds its origin. Since the rejection of such teleological conceptions is among the deepest commitments of modern science, any political theory resting on these beliefs must also be rejected. Not only, however, is the common good tainted by its association with teleology, but it also has seemed to many to carry in its wake a theological taint associated with its prominent role in the political thought of the high Middle Ages, especially the thought of Thomas Aquinas. The modern liberal state is widely believed to have dispensed with the necessity for recourse to the common good. The citizens of a modern liberal state look for protection and for inspiration, not to some shared conception of the common good, identified and pursued by political leaders, but rather to a system of rights and liberties rooted more directly in the rationality and autonomy of individual citizens. The doctrines of (1) the priority of the right to the good and (2) neutrality with regard to the good (firmly anchored as they are at the heart of contemporary political theory) seem to leave little or no room for a rich notion of the common good.[1] In addition, the widely held belief that "the fact of reasonable pluralism" is a central truth about social life under conditions of late modernity

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seems to call into question any sufficiently "common" feature of conceptions of the good to ground a robust notion of the common good.[2]

While it is true that the common good is surely not at the heart of contemporary political thinking, it has turned out to be a powerfully resilient political notion. It has been hard to kill. Modern philosophers like G.W.F. Hegel and T.H. Green have made important use of the notion, as have many of the philosophers such as Jacques Maritain and Yves Simon who have played important roles in the Neo-thomist revival.[3] The common good has also played an important role in the development of Catholic social thought in the last century and especially in the political movements associated with Catholic social thought, like the vibrant Christian Democratic movement born in the interwar years in Europe and South America.[4] Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, Michael Sandel and other contemporary critics of the thin liberalism characteristic of much recent academic philosophy have also had frequent recourse to the notion of the common good in developing their views.[5] Such recent political movements as communitarianism and even the much discussed "politics of meaning" developed by Michael Lerner and celebrated by Hillary Clinton have also played a role in keeping talk about the common good alive in contemporary life (Lerner 1996). It has played a significant role in the popular political rhetoric of both right-wing and left-wing political movements in Europe and America in recent years.[6]

The common good is thus situated in contemporary political discourse in a complicated way. It seems to rely on assumptions about Nature, God, and the metaphysical nature of persons that many people in late modernity reject. On the other hand, the notion does not simply fade away as, for example, other relics of late medieval political thought such as "the divine right of Kings" have done. The notion of the common good seems, indeed, indispensable when we are trying to reflect in a serious way about the shortcomings of modern global culture. At the same time, the notion carries with it certain liabilities that make many reflective persons hesitate to appeal to it.

I would like in this brief chapter to reflect on certain assumptions that make the notion of the common good toxic to many moral philosophers. For many philosophers, of course, it seems almost mad to attempt to resurrect the notion and restore

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[2] For a discussion of "the fact of reasonable pluralism" see Rawls (1993, p. 63).

[3] For a good discussion of Hegel, and especially Green, and their use of the notion of the common good, see Brink (2007, p. 154). Maritain's (1947) heroic effort to use the notion of the common good to develop political ideas that would allow one to avoid the excesses of individualism as well as totalitarianism is best articulated in *The Person and the Common Good*. For an excellent recent account of Simon's treatment of the common good, see Cochran (1978).

[4] An excellent discussion of the rise and significance of the Christian Democracy movement can be found in Kalyvas (1996).

[5] Sandel has discussed recently the prospect for a "politics of the common good" in his Reith Lectures on the BBC in 2009. MacIntyre discusses the common good in a number of places, but the clearest statement of his view is in *After Virtue* (1981, ch. 17). For Taylor's discussion of the common good, see Taylor (1992).

[6] For a good example of its use by the left, see van den Heuvel (2006).

it to philosophical respectability. At the beginning of Philippa Foot's classic paper, "Moral Beliefs," she boldly attacks the sharp logical distinction between facts and values: "Given certain widely accepted assumptions, the prospect of overturning the influence of this distinction is about as likely as squaring the circle" (Foot 1958–59, pp. 83). Similarly, I think there are some widely held assumptions within moral and political thought that make it difficult even to imagine bringing the common good back to the center of normative thinking. I would like, however (as Foot did with regard to the fact-value distinction), to attempt to bring these assumptions into the light and see if they are as resistant to criticism as they may at first seem.

Before turning to the explicit discussion of these assumptions, however, I would like to set aside two sets of issues with which I will not deal specifically. I have mentioned above that the teleological and religious associations of the common good are widely cited as reasons why we must abandon this notion. I am not, however, going to discuss either of these issues. First, the topic of classical teleology and the moral and political teachings of the Roman Catholic Church are issues too large to discuss in a chapter of this length. More importantly, however, I think the intellectual climate of recent decades is much less hostile than it was earlier in the last century to basing the common good on either of these grounds. Recent work in the philosophy of biology, as well as in metaphysics and historical scholarship about classical treatments of teleology, makes the case against teleology less compelling than it seemed in the heyday of logical positivism and reductionist philosophy of science.[7] The same changes in intellectual climate make the charges against the common good rooted in its religious associations less compelling also. We are today less under the sway of doctrines of practical rationality that place religious traditions of thought outside reason altogether.[8] I think that there are many things to be said about both the teleological and religious roots of the common good, and that most of those things would help rescue the notion from Enlightenment calumnies against it. But I'm not going to say anything about either of these topics in this chapter for the very good reason that plenty of others are already beginning to develop these ideas.

I'm also going to put aside in this chapter the kind of general attack against the common good that is the focus of H.T. Engelhardt's chapter in this volume. Engelhardt's arguments are powerfully articulated and of primary importance. I put them aside here because their bearing on the viability of a moral or political theory giving the common good a central place in ethics and politics is quite different from the kinds of attacks on which I choose to focus. Engelhardt's attack on common good theory is also, and at the same time, an attack on *any* foundational account of the moral or political. That his argument is of this general nature is made obvious by the repetitive use in his chapter of the disjunctive phrase, "a canonical moral theory or the common good" when describing the object of his attack. His attacks

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[7] An interesting, if somewhat limited, account of some of this recent work and a defense of an appeal to teleology in ethics is found in Casebeer (2003).

[8] I am thinking here specifically about the recent dialogue between Jürgen Habermas and Pope Benedict (2007) and Charles Taylor's monumental work, *The Secular Age* (2007).

on the common good are attacks on the very idea of moral theory understood in traditional terms. A common good theory is, for Engelhardt, mistaken insofar as it is a foundational ("canonical") theory with pretensions to bring general rational grounds forward to support a particular set of normative principles or stances. He would be best characterized based on his arguments here (and elsewhere) not so much as an opponent of the common good, but as an opponent of ethics and political theory as traditionally understood. He is an anti-theorist in ethics and politics.[9]

Although his anti-theoretical arguments are powerful and important, they do not, it seems to me, bring out anything distinctive about the position of those political theorists who focus on the common good in their battle with other conceptions of political theory. In this chapter, I am more interested in the objections to talk about the common good that emerge from modern moral and political theories, especially as these have been shaped by Kantian rationalist theories and consequentialist theories that draw on classical utilitarianism. Such arguments are not touched on by Engelhardt's critique.

4.2 Egoism and Altruism

What are the assumptions that underlie the present reluctance to place the common good at the center of our thinking about ethical and political matters? I will discuss two assumptions and although I will treat them as if they were distinct and stood alone, it will become obvious in discussing them that they are related and cumulative in their influence. The two assumptions are the modern claims: (1) that the central conflict in ethics is the struggle between the egoist and the altruist; and (2) that the institutional features of human life are not deep features of it and that their significance for human good is to be explained in terms of their broadly causal impact on states of individual human satisfaction.

I will argue that these two assumptions are commonly held in late modernity and that their broad acceptance goes some significant distance toward explaining why common good theories are frequently looked on with disdain. In what follows, I will discuss each of these assumptions briefly. Having done that, I will turn to an even briefer commentary about how their acceptance might explain contemporary resistance to a strong doctrine of the common good. The first assumption maintains that the problematic of moral philosophy is primarily a matter of reflection on the tension between egoism and altruism. As many have noted, the question of the justification of morality emerges in the modern world as a question about the extent to which altruistic or other-regarding action can be justified to agents who are

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[9]As an anti-theorist, he joins the company of such other recent anti-theorists as Annette Baier, Richard Rorty and Bernard Williams. For a good discussion of recent anti-theoretical work see Clarke (1987). That Engelhardt's motives for his anti-theoretical stance are much different from others in the anti-theoretical camp does not constitute a significant difference in the upshot of his views.

naturally egoistic or utterly self-regarding. The question at the heart of modern morality is the question, "How can I come to have reason to care about others—or have reason to act on their behalf?" Or, as Thomas Nagel puts it, "How is it possible for reasons for action to act at a distance?" (Nagel 1979, pp. 14). In this way, the modern problematic of ethics parallels in important respects the central issue in modern epistemology. Descartes set the stage for modern epistemology by suggesting that *the* problem of knowledge is the problem of breaking out of the egocentric predicament. How, he asked, can I have good reason to believe anything that is not guaranteed by my subjective, immediate, and self-authenticating experiences? The problem of epistemology is then the problem of breaking out of the confines of my subjectivity. For Descartes, the philosophical struggle to escape from the confining circle of one's own subjective ideas provided the central drama of philosophical thought. For Hobbes, similarly, the fundamental moral and political issue is, how can one break out of the enveloping circle of one's own selfish desires. Hobbes regarded natural man as a thorough egoist. He also regarded the central problem of ethics and politics to be one of assembling sufficient social and political material to render the upshot of these self-regarding actions conducive to general well-being.

To say that this problematic dominates modern moral philosophy is not to say that the egoism-altruism distinction operates in the same way in the thought of every modern moral philosopher. Bishop Butler, for example, has a much more nuanced view of the diversity of essentially self-centered motivation than did Hobbes.[10] Similarly, there is an important distinction between the way the movement from egoism to altruism is understood in the two most significant modern moral traditions, the broadly empiricist—and utilitarian—tradition that follows from Hume and the Kantian tradition. For Hume and his followers, the movement from self to other is, as Bernard Williams has described it, "a kind of gentle slide" (Williams 1973, pp. 258). For Hume, we can, as it were, sneak up on altruism. The egoist becomes an altruist by gradually expanding the range of his concern for others, perhaps beginning with the seemingly natural concern for friends and family and ending up, with the assistance of sympathy and the sentiment of humanity as well as appropriately ordered educational and legal institutions, caring about the whole world. For Kant and his followers, however, the movement is a leap across the open chasm that separates the merely pathological from the genuinely moral. There is no middle ground between the realm of the hypothetical imperative and that of the categorical. Appropriate moral formation for a Kantian does not consist of the gentle prods to expand one's circle of concern characteristic of the Humean tradition, but rather of the demand that one choose membership in the Kingdom of Ends and put oneself under the full authority of the Moral Law. These broad differences in understanding the nature of the gap between egoism and altruism go a long way in explaining the different approaches Humeans and Kantians take to resolving fundamental justificatory problems in ethics. In his ethics, Kant requires philosophical

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[10] See especially Butler's discussion of self-interested action in Sermon XI (Butler 1827).

materials sufficient to move agents across this chasm.[11] The task for Humeans is lighter, in that they need only to have materials sufficient to nudge agents along a continuum.[12]

While there are these deep differences between the approach of the two great modern traditions in moral philosophy to the question of self and other, there is no doubt that both share the view that the fundamental problem in ethics is the problem of how agents who are in some sense *naturally* self-absorbed can be brought to take others seriously.[13]

It is in Henry Sidgwick, writing in the late nineteenth century at a moment when the problematic of modern moral philosophy is fully mature, that we find the clearest and most radical identification of the moral with the other-regarding.[14] For Sidgwick, egoism and morality are two competing forms of practical rationality.

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[11] And there is no doubt that the amount of philosophical material required is quite significant. The entire philosophical apparatus implied by the distinction between the phenomenal and the noumenal and the metaphysical machinery that apparatus requires are surely essential, in Kant's eyes, for the success of his moral project. Many neo-Kantians, especially John Rawls and many of his students, believe of course that they can have Kantian conclusions without the heavy-breathing metaphysics—a kind of "Kant without tears." Many of us are skeptical of the success of this slimmed-down Kantianism. I suspect Kant would have classified it as theft rather than honest toil.

[12] The materials required in the broadly Humean tradition are also largely social rather than philosophical. It is in the lengthy and sophisticated discussion of sanctions and their importance in moral philosophy where this tradition focuses most on these matters. What Mill calls the external sanctions—education, criminal punishment, and pious religious formation—are the main social tools for turning the self-centered into the other-regarding (discussed most fully in Mill 1958, ch. 3). The centrality of these sanctions in this tradition explains why classical utilitarians like Bentham, the two Mills, and Sidgwick spend so much time on questions of designing prisons and schools—and on trying to shape religious institutions which were based on foundational beliefs they found ludicrous. The dark side of this social tinkering is seen in Dickens' Mr. Gradgrind. I will leave it to others to decide if there is a bright side.

[13] One might think that Kant's well-known defense of moral duties to one's self (in, for example, his well-known taxonomy of duties in Sec. II of *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Kant 1956a)) would suggest that he thinks that there is one department of morality that does not concern other persons. After all, one could seem to recognize and be moved by moral duties to one's self without any knowledge of or concern for other people. This is a difficult matter, I think, but a proper understanding of duties to self in Kant seems to me to remove the problem. In duties to oneself, we take up, as it were, a fully moralized attitude toward our own situation. Having recognized our duties to others, we then find it possible to regard ourselves as we regard others. We assume a certain distance from ourselves in recognizing that we have duties to ourselves. This fact about Kantian duties to oneself partially explains the strangeness that Bernard Williams and others detect in the cases where it is alleged that the agent "has one question too many." The naturalness of self-regard—or of the regard for our loved ones—is distorted by the moral overlay implicit in the Kantian account of these matters. Some features of our self-concern or our concerns for those with whom we have "special relationships" are distorted when these aspects of our life are moralized in the Kantian style.

[14] Sidgwick's most important work in ethics is *The Methods of Ethics*. This book was repeatedly revised throughout Sidgwick's adult life. Like most commentators, I rely on the remarks in the final, seventh edition, published in 1907. It is necessary, however, to read all of the editions to fully appreciate the tortured nature of Sidgwick's struggle to overcome the tension between egoism and altruism.

The drama of Sidgwick's life-long attempt to refine the classical utilitarianism of Mill and Bentham into an architectonically articulated and rationally defensible normative theory is provided by his attempt to reconcile the egoistic rationality dictated, as he saw it, by human agency, with the selfless other regarding rationality required by morality. In the seventh edition of Sidgwick's *Methods of Ethics*, he finally admits that he has failed at this reconciliation. In the final chapter of *The Methods of Ethics*, Sidgwick concludes that the demands of egoism and of a regimented altruism are ultimately irreconcilable, and that there is therefore a permanent and painful conflict at the heart of practical rationality. As he puts it, "It seems, then, that we must conclude, from [arguments given earlier in the book] that the inseparable connexion between Utilitarian Duty and the greatest happiness of the individual who conforms to it cannot be satisfactorily demonstrated on empirical grounds" (Sidgwick 1964, pp. 503).

The upshot of this tragic ending of Sidgwick's long quest is well known. After concluding that knowledge of life in this world is insufficient to bridge the normative gap between the self-regarding and the other-regarding, he spent the remaining years of his life seeking empirical evidence of some future life for rational agents in which the this-worldly gap between what is good for me and what is good for everyone might be closed. Perhaps he thought, as Kant had suggested in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, that a just God could allocate rewards and punishments in an after-life to balance the books with regard to the egoistic and the altruistic.[15] Those who acted on behalf of others—and at some cost to themselves—in this life would have their satisfactions topped off in the next life so that self-regard and regard for others would coincide after all. While Kant thought that the so-called postulates of morality—God and immortality—would have to be merely assumed by those who would render the demands of morality consistent with the demands of self-regard, Sidgwick, more empirically minded than Kant, looked for empirical evidence of an after-life governed by the allocative decisions of a just and loving (and no doubt moral) God. He spent his last years in traveling around England interviewing mediums that claimed to have communicated with the dead. His hope was that testimony from those who had actually communicated with departed souls could empirically establish that egoism and altruism could finally be reconciled. Sidgwick was neither credulous nor easily fooled, however, and his search was in vain. His efforts were instrumental in bringing about the founding of the British Psychical Association, which exists to this day in order to examine empirical evidence of human existence beyond the grave.[16]

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[15] I am referring, of course, to Kant's (1956) discussion of the moral postulates in the "Dialectic" of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, pp. 126–137.

[16] Sidgwick's interest in psychical phenomenon was deep and life-long. It is also difficult to relate it with precision to his ambitions and disappointments in ethical theory. My remarks here are an oversimplification of a complicated and as yet insufficiently studied part of Sidgwick's thought. The best study of Sidgwick's moral theory, Schneewind (1977), says disappointingly little about these matters. Schultz (2004) is much more forthcoming. Schultz also has a much better ear for Sidgwick's religious sensitivities than does Schneewind. There is still much work to be done,

The modern focus in normative ethics on the tension between the self-regarding and the other-regarding contrasts sharply with the conception of the problematic of ethics in the classical world. If the central problem for modern moral philosophers is how can I come to care about others, the central problem for classical moral philosophers was, how can one distinguish genuine goods from mere simulacra of the goods. It is not uncommon to find modern moral philosophers reading Plato as if the ethical villains (if we may so designate them) in the dialogues are egoists. This reading of, e.g., Callicles and Thrasymachus seems to me wrong-headed. It makes the mistake of reading back into classical ethics the modern view of the conflict of egoism and altruism as the dominant conflict in ethical thought. It may be that Socrates' opponents in the ethical dialogues are excessively egoistic or self-concerned, but that is surely not their primary fault, according to Socrates. Their primary fault is rather to confuse what is genuinely good with what is merely apparently good. Thrasymachus' commitment to a life of unbridled power is shown by Socrates to rest on confusions about what is genuinely good (and also on what constitutes genuine power). He is able to show Thrasymachus that, even in his own terms, he would not choose such a life if he were thinking more clearly.[17] Socrates' discussion with Callicles, another prime villain, should be understood in a similar way.[18] Callicles is prepared to defend the goodness of a life utterly devoted to the pursuit of pleasure. Indeed, Callicles wants to make pleasure the measure of goodness, while Socrates defends the exact opposite of this view. Socrates, as in his discussion with Thrasymachus in the First Book of the *Republic*, is able to bring Callicles to see that such a life is not genuinely good.[19] In the case neither of Callicles nor of Thrasymachus, perhaps the most paradigmatically "bad" interlocutors in the Platonic corpus, does Socrates attempt to turn his dialectical opponent into altruist. Indeed, the discussions in both to the *Republic* and to the *Gorgias* take for granted that all parties to the discussion are seeking knowledge about what kind of life is best for them. The reason Socrates' opponents should agree with him, if they should, is that he is prescribing a life that is best for them. It is assumed throughout that we all should be guided—and are inevitably guided—by the desire to live the best life we can. The problem for ethics is just to identify what kind of life that is. This has led, of course, many commentators to suggest that Socrates himself is simply an egoist. (Prichard is perhaps the most noteworthy example of someone who has made this charge, but Kant and others have made similar charges.[20])

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however, on Sidgwick's overlapping concerns with foundational moral theory, late Victorian religious skepticism, and the burgeoning world of *fin-de-siècle* investigations of parapsychology.

[17] These arguments take place towards the end of Book One of Plato's *Republic* (1985).

[18] This discussion takes place in the final section of Plato's dialogue, the *Gorgias* (1952).

[19] Perhaps it is too strong to say that Socrates *convinces* Callicles on this point. What is clear is that he makes him very angry and also ensures that he is unlikely ever again to advance his views in public without being better prepared to fend off objections of the sort Socrates pushes so effectively.

[20] Prichard (1912) makes this charge in the opening pages of his classic paper, "Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?"

What is true of Plato's approach to ethics is even more clearly true of Aristotle's (and of the Stoics and Epicureans generally, though I will not discuss them here). From Aristotle's opening salvo in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, "All men seek the good," the central question of the treatise is the question of identifying and specifying the genuine good for creatures like us. Aristotle's careful survey of candidates for the role of the good in the first book gives way in the rest of the treatise to careful explorations of these candidates and the cases that can be made for their genuineness. Aristotle's rejection of lives consumed with seeking wealth, or to the mere pursuit of pleasure or honor, as ultimately good is supported by arguments similar in their structure to those used by Socrates against opponents such as Thrasymachus and Callicles. With Aristotle's specification of the good for humans as "activity in accord with virtue," it is taken as established that each of us has reason to pursue that kind of life *because* it is good for each of us.

Again, many have found an unsatisfactory hint of egoism in Aristotle here. This suggestion that ancient virtue ethics is tainted by self-centeredness is also frequently made in the contemporary debate about virtue ethics, where it is argued that there is no place for genuine other-regardingness in the various contemporary versions of an Aristotelian virtue ethics.[21] The charge that the ethical theory of the ancients is excessively self-centered and unable to recognize the demands of genuine altruism central to any stance worthy of being called moral is a difficult one to evaluate fully. Happily, we do not have to adjudicate it in this chapter. It is enough for us to recognize that there is a general consensus that modern moral philosophy largely regards the central problems in the moral life as involving a deep tension between the egoistic demands of the self and the demands placed on us by the needs of others. It is also generally recognized that the dominant ethical views in the ancient world did not give the same central place to this tension. The recognition of this difference may be accompanied by the further thought that either ancient ethics or modern ethics is superior—or perhaps that one is superior in certain aspects while inferior in others. This question may be for the moment at least left aside while we turn to the second assumption I wish to discuss.

4.3 Institutions and Ethics

The second assumption that is instrumental in marginalizing talk about the common good in modern philosophy is what one might call the anti-institutional assumption. It is the assumption that institutional features of human life are not deep and that their significance for human good is to be explained in terms of their broadly causal impact on states of individual human satisfaction. When we speak of institutions here, of course, we do not intend that notion in the narrow sense in which it might refer to consciously organized human organizations. Rather, by institutional features of actions we mean those background conditions for action that make certain actions—promising,

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[21] I have discussed these criticisms and the responses available to defenders of an ethics of virtue in Solomon (1988).

marrying, winning a game, etc.—possible. Such institutional features of actions involve settings for actions that engage human intentions in complicated ways and embody norms that are more or less transparent to those actors within the institutions. Philosophers otherwise as different as John Rawls, John Searle, and Elizabeth Anscombe have been at pains to point out how certain institutional features of our life impinge in complicated ways on questions of obligation and correct action.[22] The appeal to institutional rules, to constitutive rules, and to human conventions in areas as diverse as language use, games, and the world of contracts and everyday obligations has been an important part of their philosophical work.

Rawls was one of the first moral philosophers to take the institutional background of human action seriously. In his 1952 paper, "Two Concepts of Rules," he argued that the failure to distinguish two different notions of moral rules was responsible for serious misunderstandings in ethics. The first concept of a rule, *the summary view*, treats rules as "reports that cases of a certain sort have been found on other grounds to be properly decided in a certain way" (Rawls 1955, pp. 5). This concept of rules when coupled with a utilitarian normative theory would picture rules as "summaries of past decisions arrived at by the direct application of the utilitarian principle to particular cases" (1955, pp. 19). Rawls distinguishes four features of the view that moral rules are summary rules:

1. "The point of having rules derives from the fact that similar cases tend to recur and that one can decide cases more quickly if one records past decisions in the form of rules."
2. "The decisions made on particular cases are logically prior to rules."
3. "Each person is in principle always entitled to reconsider the correctness of a rule and to question whether or not it is proper to follow it in a particular case…On this view a society of rational utilitarians would be a society without rules in which each person applied the utilitarian principle directly and smoothly, and without error, case by case."
4. "General rules are simply rules of thumb which we follow only because we regard it as more likely that we would make a mistake in calculating the right thing to do if we were to apply the general principle directly" (Rawls 1955, pp. 6–8).

Rawls clearly thinks that a summary conception of rules is inadequate for doing justice to the full range of rule-governed activities that we encounter in ethical thinking. Indeed, he says that arguing as if all moral rules fit the summary conception is "a mistake one makes while doing philosophy" (1955, pp. 23).

Rawls thinks that in addition to rules that fit the summary conception, we also encounter in ethics rules that define practices. Such rules, he argues, fit a *practice conception* of rules. By a practice, Rawls means "any form of activity specified by a system of rules which defines offices, roles, moves, penalties, defenses, and so on, and which gives the activity its structure. As examples, one may think of games and rituals, trials and parliaments" (Rawls 1955, pp. 12). Rawls' favorite examples of practices are games, and his favorite examples of rules that fit the practice conception are rules of a game. The rule that "after three strikes you are out," for example, is not a summary of past

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[22] See, for example, Rawls (1955), Searle (1964), and Anscombe (1958).

reasonable judgments about how to react to swinging and missing three times. Rather, that rule helps define the practice of baseball. It tells us that three strikes "amount to" or "constitute" being out. Decisions made based on rules that fit the practice conception are never logically prior to those rules (since prior to the rules there would be neither strikes nor outs). Indeed, without the constituting presence of such rules the actions would themselves be impossible. One cannot strike out all by oneself. One cannot even strike out when playing with others unless one is playing baseball with them. (For example, swinging and missing at three consecutive serves at tennis does not amount to striking out, although it might lead to things that are as bad as striking out.)

The upshot of Rawls' quite complicated and abstract discussion of the logical features of rules and their institutional settings is a distinction between two areas of human action—the institutional and the non-institutional.[23] Within the realm of the institutional, human possibilities for performing individual actions and pursuing even some quite complicated strategies (e.g., trying to achieve an off-side trap in soccer or trying to pull off a currency deal in international finance) are dependent on there being certain human practices or institutions defined by rules, a shared commitment to which the participants in the practice make certain human actions, pursuits, and achievements possible. Rawls' main point in this early article was clearly simply to call attention to the distinctive features of institutional life. It is also clear, however, that he was convinced that the realm of the institutional includes most of the most significant and rewarding human actions and pursuits.

This broad distinction between the institutional and the non-institutional has been explored much more extensively by a number of thinkers since Rawls. John Searle, influenced as was Rawls by the speech act theory of J. L. Austin, distinguishes between regulative and constitutive rules in much the same way that Rawls distinguishes between the summary and practice conceptions of rules. Searle's regulative rules "regulate activities whose existence is independent of the rules; constitutive rules constitute (and also regulate) forms of activity whose existence is logically dependent on the rules" (Searle 1964, pp. 55). Searle's institutions, like Rawls' practices, "are systems of constitutive rules. The institutions of marriage, money and promising are like the institutions of baseball or chess in that they are systems of such constitutive rules or conventions" (Searle 1964, pp. 54). Elizabeth Anscombe appeals to similar distinctions in her classic paper, "Modern Moral Philosophy." Like Searle, she uses the apparatus of constitutive rules to explicate the notion of institutional settings within which certain apparently "evaluative" claims can be logically derived from other apparently "descriptive" claims. Within rule-governed institutions, claims about what one ought to do will often follow necessarily from certain facts about one's situation within that institution. Anscombe

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[23] Rawls clearly thinks there are some areas of human life that are, as I characterize it here, non-institutional. In those areas action-guidance can make free use of rules understood in line with the summary conception. But things are complicated and I am not so sure. There are certainly areas of human practical life where the institutional setting is lighter than in others—where choice and decisions seem to be made "out in the open," as it were. It is not clear to me, however, that we can make sense of a distinctively human action that is utterly outside the reach of the institutional. It may be, though I am not sure, that the same considerations arise here as with regard to the assessment of Wittgenstein's private language argument.

describes the relation of the "evaluative" conclusions of such arguments to the "descriptive" premises as one of *brute relativity* (Anscombe 1958, pp. 4).

It is in the work of Alasdair MacIntyre in the last quarter century, however, where the most sophisticated account of the institutional aspects of human life is articulated and the implications of that account for ethics are most fully explored.[24] As is well known, MacIntyre attempts in the second half of *After Virtue* to develop a positive account of the virtues in the tradition of an Aristotelian theory. He is developing this Aristotelian account of the virtues in the teeth of many of the same objections that confront attempts to rehabilitate the notion of the common good in late modernity. A virtue theory in ethics is alleged, as was the notion of the common good, to draw on outdated and indefensible accounts of natural teleology and to be tainted with its close association with now widely rejected theological claims. MacIntyre himself readily admits (at least at the time he wrote *After Virtue*) that modern thinkers can no longer draw on natural teleology (or what he calls "Aristotle's metaphysical biology") in defending an ethics of virtue.[25] MacIntyre's strategy in attempting to rehabilitate the notion of a virtue is to replace the teleological metaphysical setting in classical virtue theory with a social and institutional setting for the virtues. He suggests that the virtues are necessary for successful human living just because successful human living is only possible (not guaranteed, but at least possible) within the tri-leveled social setting he argues is essential for any distinctively human life. The three levels of this social setting are the levels of practices, the narrative unity of human life, and the historicity of human life with its necessary relation of us and our practices to traditions of thought and action. In this way, MacIntyre carries forward and indeed expands the work of Rawls, Anscombe, Searle, and others who had emphasized the role of institutions in providing settings for human actions. We cannot here explore in depth MacIntyre's discussion of each of these three levels of social involvement for human agents, but we can note that he defends two major theses with regard to his discussion of these matters:

1. The most significant goods for human beings can *only* be realized by (1) actions within well-ordered social practices, (2) actions undertaken by agents whose lives exhibit sufficient narrative unity and (3) actions of those whose lives and practices are related appropriately to the traditions that inform them.
2. The ability to realize the goods of practices, to achieve narrative unity in one's life and to establish a proper relation to tradition requires that one have the virtues (MacIntyre 1981).

Both of these claims are, of course, deeply controversial, and MacIntyre was willing to admit at the end of *After Virtue* that he had not advanced anything like adequate arguments for their full defense.[26]

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[24] MacIntyre's most extensive discussion of these matters occurs in chs. 15–16 of *After Virtue* (1981).

[25] In a number of later writings, MacIntyre qualifies his rejection of Aristotle's "metaphysical biology," most notably in the introduction to *Dependent Rational Animals* (1996).

[26] Though he has certainly added additional arguments in the years following the publication of *After Virtue*. *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1989) is especially important in bolstering the account of practical reasoning necessary to defend his view.

On encountering these recent figures that have called our attention to the institutional background for human action, one might take away the impression that this view of the importance of the social and institutional dimension of human action has carried the day. But, of course, that is not the case. All of the philosophers who have mined this particular vein in the last half-century have done so in the face of dominant and widely-held views that resist this picture of human action. All of them put their views forward as a criticism of the received wisdom about the social setting of human action. And this received view is largely deeply individualistic. Among the most common assumptions about the social background of human action is the view that Tim Scanlon has called "philosophical utilitarianism." He uses this label for the view that "the only fundamental moral facts are facts about individual well-being" (Scanlon 1982). According to this view, the institutional features of human life are not deep. Nor are they "fundamental moral facts." He distinguishes this philosophical utilitarianism from normative utilitarianism, which he characterizes as a normative doctrine that seeks to specify right action in human behavior.[27] He is confident, however, that there is an intimate connection between philosophical utilitarianism and utilitarianism taken as a normative theory. Although he argues that philosophical utilitarianism does not entail normative utilitarianism, he recognizes that those who defend philosophical utilitarianism find themselves driven toward normative utilitarianism. Indeed, he thinks that philosophical utilitarianism is the best argument for normative utilitarianism. While Scanlon seeks to replace philosophical utilitarianism with a contractual approach to morality, I will suggest that one might equally seek an alternative to it in an Aristotelian virtue theory that places the common good at the center of the ethical.

4.4 The Common Good

I have argued in the two previous sections of this chapter that modern philosophy has been deeply influenced by two assumptions about the ethical that are inimical to the project of restoring the common good to a prominent place in contemporary political discourse. The first assumption is that the central conflict within ethics is that between the self-regarding and the other-regarding, between the egoist and the altruist. If this is right, the primary goal of normative moral argument is to move agents to care about others, to help them overcome a focus on one's self. The second assumption is that the institutional features of action are not deep ones, and that their significance for human good is to be explained in terms of their broadly causal impact on states of individual human satisfaction.

In the case of both of these assumptions, I have discussed alternatives to the received view. In contrast with the modern emphasis on the egoist confronting the altruist at the heart of ethics, classical moral philosophy regards the central problem

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[27] Scanlon discusses these matters in a number of places, but most extensively in his classic article, "Contractualism and Utilitarianism" (1982).

of ethics as one of helping agents to discern genuine goods and to avoid the allure of false ones. The notion of a flourishing human life will be the key to practical thinking on this classical view, and agents need not apologize for the fact that there are virtues other than beneficence.[28] The various particular goods are identified as good because of the role they play in the good life for human beings. In this sense, the notion of a flourishing life has a kind of priority over the particular goods within a life.

The contrast with that modern individualistic view that ignores the complicated entanglements of human action with various institutional settings is provided by those philosophers like MacIntyre who, in the teeth of modern individualism, have attempted to explore systematically the ordered social settings within which genuine human flourishing can take place. MacIntyre and Anscombe in their attempts to retrieve the institutional aspects of human life draw inspiration from the same classical models, especially Aristotelian ones that provide the alternative to the modern focus on the egoist and his struggle to come to care about others.

It is time now to say something about why these two assumptions of modern moral philosophy are so inimical to a robust respect for the notion of the common good in political thinking. First, why is the focus on the contrast between egoism and altruism a problem for the common good? The primary reason is that it seems to leave no room for genuinely common goods. In ethical thinking dominated by the contrast between egoism and altruism (self and other), the central focus is not on the goods in question in ethical conflict, but rather on the recipient of those goods. It is the self-focused aspect of egoism that moderns find so objectionable. And it is the other-regarding aspect of the altruistic that makes it attractive. In both of these judgments, however, little attention is directed to the content of what is selfishly hoarded in the one case or made available for others in the other case. But common good approaches to ethics and politics must have their focus on the goods in question. The primary question is the question of what is genuinely good—not the question of who gets it.

This is one of the points where Engelhardt's attack on the notion of the common good betrays its deeply modern commitments (Engelhardt 2013). One of his major objections to any "secular" account of the ethical is that it cannot provide agents with an adequate reason to choose moral considerations over merely self-centered ones. But why should we suppose that the moral battle is one between self and other? Aristotle certainly did not see the ethical battle in this way, nor did any of the other ancient ethicists. Indeed, in a real sense (though one that has to be carefully formulated) when one acts virtuously, one is always acting in the interest of the self. On a broadly Aristotelian approach to ethics, ethical motivation is always motivation that grows out of appropriate self-concern. For Aristotelians, after all, the goal of action is not some kind of moral purity earned by a mysterious noumenal act of self-renunciation, but rather simply human happiness—the everyday happiness of human agents pursuing human activities together. Of course, there may be times when one has to choose between what is best for oneself or what is best for others,

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[28] Indeed, beneficence is notably lacking in most lists of the virtues in the pre-Christian classical world.

but it is certainly not decided ahead of time by the very nature of the ethical that the other guy always wins.[29]

And the common good of an association or a community is not just a good that is spread across the community, but it is a good that is shared. It is a good held in some important sense *in common*. That which constitutes the common good of any group must be a good to each member of that group qua member. Victory, as the common good of an athletic team, is a good for every member of the team—even for those who did not play in the actual competition or who played badly. This fact about the shared nature of common goods has important consequences. For one thing, it goes a long way toward solving the large motivational problem that we noted has bedeviled modern ethics. If the question at the heart of ethics is, as Sidgwick and many other modern moral philosophers have thought, how we can make egoistically motivated persons care for others, there does indeed seem to be a broad motivational gap to be crossed. Self-centered motivation is disjoint on this modern view from other-regarding motivation. Bringing persons to care about the common good is, however, much easier. The common good is at one and the same time a good for me and a good for you—precisely because it is a good for all of us.

In the case of the common good, free-riding temptations do not arise. If the good in question is a genuinely common good, then members of the community will always harm themselves by not promoting it.[30] This point allows us to see also the important fact that the common good is often itself constituted by forms of behavior—and

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[29] Aristotle's most well-known discussion of these matters is found in Book IX of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where he addresses directly the question "whether a man should love himself most, or someone else." After disposing of some preliminary matters, he concludes that

> *the good man should be a lover of self* (for he will both himself profit by doing noble acts, and will benefit his fellows), but the wicked man should not; for he will hurt both himself and his neighbours, following as he does evil passions. For the wicked man, what he does clashes with what he ought to do, but what the good man ought to do he does; for reason in each of its possessors chooses what is best for itself, and the good man obeys his reason. It is true of the good man too that he does many acts for the sake of his friends and his country, and if necessary dies for them; for he will throw away both wealth and honours and in general the goods that are objects of competition, gaining for himself nobility; since he would prefer a short period of intense pleasure to a long one of mild enjoyment, a twelve-month of noble life to many years of humdrum existence, and one great and noble action to many trivial ones. Now those who die for others doubtless attain this result; it is therefore a great prize that they choose for themselves (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1169a 14–24).

[30] Of some relevance here is MacIntyre's well-known parable of the "chess-playing child" which he has said on many occasions is the most significant thing he has ever written. He says of this child who has learned to play chess initially by being bribed to play hard by the offer of candy when he wins, "So motivated the child has no reason not to cheat." He goes on to say, however,

> But, so we may hope, there will come a time when the child will find in those goods specific to chess, in the achievement of a certain highly particular kind of analytical skill, strategic imagination and competitive intensity, a new set of reasons, reasons now not just for winning on a particular occasion, but for trying to excel in whatever way the game of chess demands. Now if the child cheats, *he or she will be defeating not me but himself or herself* (MacIntyre 1981, p. 188).

this brings us finally to the reason why the rejection of institutions has been harmful to the prospects of common good playing a significant role in contemporary ethics and political philosophy. The common good is not itself something external to action that comes to us—or to others—as a result of what we do. It is the doing of whatever it may be in the right way and in the appropriate setting. The common good of an amateur dramatic group is not, if the group is organized for the purpose of enjoying the artistic talents of its members, a matter of the proceeds from the ticket office (although these proceeds may be important *instrumentally* to the survival of the group). The common good is simply the action of the members of the troupe itself, organized and coordinated with an eye to achieving a dramatic success. How could one possibly be a free-rider in such a case?

In this respect the common good in important ways is like what MacIntyre has called the goods internal to practices.[31] Both internal goods and the common good are not scarce. They are not objects of competition. They can also *only* be fully understood—as goods—by those within the association or community. How could one possibly explain the common good of that amateur dramatic group to someone who has never acted—or never collaborated? Unlike the external goods of money, power, and fame, the nature of any particular internal good is tied to the particular practice within which it is found.

The manner in which the common good of associations is tied to actions ordered to a certain kind of end allows us, as we have already noted, to see why the anti-institutional stance of much modern thought is damaging to the prospects of taking the common good seriously. Common goods are shared goods primarily because they emerge from activities that are shared. But typically for activities to be genuinely shared *in a human sense*, institutions and the authoritative norms that constitute such institutional arrangements must structure them.[32] Games like chess, the

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[31] MacIntyre's definitive discussion of the distinction between internal and external goods is found in *After Virtue* (1981, pp. 188 ff.).

[32] I gather that Albert Chen in his chapter in this volume rejects this view. On his interpretation of "*datong*" which he proposes as an expression of the common good in the Confucian tradition, he suggests that "*datong*"—and hence the common good—is to be identified with a future, perfected state of the world which is, as I understand him, beyond institutions. In elaborating this view, Chen argues that on his interpretation of "*datong*"

> The ultimate realization of the common good in human social existence consists of the dissolution of the "nine boundaries," which includes, among other things, the abolition of sovereign nation-states and the establishment of a world government with local democratic autonomy, the disappearance of social classes and private property, and the transfer of familial functions to publicly established institutions, which will care for all aspects of individuals' welfare from the cradle to the grave. Social, economic and political equality will be achieved, and individuals will enjoy maximal autonomy and freedom, including, for example, freedom from family obligations, freedom to change marriage partners, freedom to pursue a homosexual lifestyle, freedom to pursue spiritual development, and freedom or right of euthanasia (Chen 2013, p. 85–102).

One might, of course, disagree with Chen on the advisability of all of these particular reforms, but I am concerned only to point out that the ideal state he envisions seems to be quite distant from the traditional notion of a state that realizes the common good—and precisely because it seems to be a world stripped of the institutional arrangements necessary for the common good. His resort to

rituals through which we can express commitments or regard for other persons, to other communities, or to God, and the simple institutional arrangements that govern everyday polite personal interactions are all necessary background features for some of our richest shared experiences. The tendency within modern ethics to focus on individual satisfactions of individual persons standing outside the structures and norms of institutional settings makes it difficult to discern and properly appreciate the importance of common goods. Philosophical utilitarianism, in Scanlon's sense, seems to be ubiquitous in modern moral sensibilities.

There is, of course, much more to be said about how these two presuppositions of modern ethics interact with the possibility of developing an account of ethics and politics which gives the common good a central place. I hope I have said enough to suggest, however, that recovering a rich notion of the common good in modern culture will require significant foundational philosophical work. Indeed, it seems to me that we are unlikely to discover a single issue or small set of issues on which the fate of the common good will turn. The notion of the common good found its home in a nested set of philosophical positions dominant in the classical world and largely given up in modernity. It seems unlikely that there will be a single crucial argument that will either vindicate the common good or finally show that it is a mere relic of an earlier time with no relevance to modern life. The intellectual struggle over this notion will of necessity take place along a ragged front where the philosophical riches of the classical world meet our more austere modern doctrines. The classical view emphasizes the good and the virtues, while the modern view emphasizes obligation and rules. The classical view emphasizes community and the importance of associations for making complex human action and rich human satisfactions possible; the modern view emphasizes autonomy and the importance of rights to protect a zone of personal freedom of action. The classical view finds the highest goods in the common good of community life, while the dominant modern view finds the highest good in maximizing satisfactions of individual agents. The fate of the notion of the common good in future political discourse will surely be determined by this complex and large-scale intellectual struggle.

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the notions of the "individual's welfare from the cradle to the grave" (p. 95) and "maximal autonomy and freedom" (p. 97) as fundamental to his utopian vision surely signals his individualist retreat from the institutional. It, of course, might be possible to construct a reformist notion of the common good from these notions, but it could not be put forward plausibly as in continuity with the classical notion of the common good.

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Part III
Chinese Philosophical Reflections on the Common Good

Chapter 5
The Concept of "*Datong*" in Chinese Philosophy as an Expression of the Idea of the Common Good

Albert H.Y. Chen

5.1   Introduction

The concept of "*datong*" in Chinese philosophy was developed more than two millennia ago in the Confucian classics. It has been translated as "Great Unity," "Great Community," "Great Universality," "Great Similarity," "Grand Harmony," etc. In the "*Liyun*" section of *Liji* (the *Book of Rites*), the concept of "*datong*" was first introduced, and a distinction was drawn between the society of *datong* and that of *xiaokang* (translated as "Small Tranquility" or "Lesser Prosperity").

In the early twentieth century, the great Chinese thinker and reformer Kang Youwei wrote a book entitled *Datong shu* (*Book on the Great Community*) in which he put forward an original and radical interpretation of "*datong*," drawing mainly on both *Liyun* and another of the Confucian classics—the *Gongyang Commentary to the Spring and Autumn Annals*, which propounds a theory of progress in human history from the Age of Disorder to the Age of Ascending Peace and finally to the Age of Universal Peace.

This chapter will analyze the concept of "*datong*" in *Liyun* and in Kang's *Datong shu*, and suggest that the concept is an expression of the idea of the common good in traditional Chinese social and political philosophy. It will also examine and reflect on Kang's *Datong shu* and the elements of Confucianism, Buddhism, liberalism, utilitarianism, utopianism and socialism/communism that can be found in the book. It will also show that the ideology currently propounded by the Chinese Communist Party, including the ideas of the "preliminary stage of socialism" and the "*xiaokang* society," may be better understood in light of the concept of "*datong*" in Chinese philosophy.

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5.2 "*Datong*" in *Liyun*

The term and concept of "*datong*" in the history of Chinese thought originates from the opening passage of the "*Liyun*" ("Evolution of Rites") chapter of *Liji* (the *Book of Rites*), one of the great books of Confucian classics. The *Book of Rites* is believed to have been complied by Confucian scholars more than two millennia ago in the Han dynasty. This passage on "*datong*" has been described as "one of the most celebrated in Confucian literature" (De Bary et al. 1960, pp. 175). It reads as follows.

> Once Confucius was taking part in the winter sacrifice. After the ceremony was over, he went for a stroll along the top of the city gate and sighed mournfully. He sighed for the state of Lu.
>
> His disciple Yen Yen [Tzu Lu], who was by his side, asked: 'Why should the gentleman sigh?'
>
> Confucius replied: 'The practice of the Great Way, the illustrious men of the Three Dynasties – these I shall never know in person. And yet they inspire my ambition! When the Great Way was practiced, the world was shared by all alike. The worthy and the able were promoted to office and men practiced good faith and lived in affection. Therefore they did not regard as parents only their own parents, or as sons only their own sons. The aged found a fitting close to their lives, the robust their proper employment; the young were provided with an upbringing and the widow and widower, the orphaned and the sick, with proper care. Men had their tasks and women their hearths. They hated to see goods lying about in waste, yet they did not hoard them for themselves; they disliked the thought that their energies were not fully used, yet they used them not for private ends. Therefore all evil plotting was prevented and thieves and rebels did not arise, so that people could leave their outer gates unbolted. This was the age of Grand Unity.
>
> Now the Great Way has become hid and the world is the possession of private families. Each regards as parents only his own parents, as sons only his own sons; goods and labor are employed for selfish ends. Hereditary offices and titles are granted by ritual law while walls and moats must provide security. Ritual and righteousness are used to regulate the relationship between ruler and subject, to insure affection between father and son, peace between brothers, and harmony between husband and wife, to set up social institutions, organize the farms and villages, honor the brave and wise, and bring merit to the individual. Therefore intrigue and plotting come about and men take up arms. Emperor Yu, Kings Tang, Wen, Wu and Cheng and the Duke of Chou achieved eminence for this reason: that all six rulers were constantly attentive to ritual, made manifest their righteousness and acted in complete faith. They exposed error, made humanity their law and humility their practice, showing the people wherein they should constantly abide. If there were any who did not abide by these principles, they were dismissed from their positions and regarded by the multitude as dangerous. This is the period of Lesser Prosperity' (qtd. in De Bary et al. 1960, pp. 175–6).

The passage thus portrays two forms of society, that of Grand Unity (*datong*) and that of Lesser Prosperity (*xiaokang*). Both are good, with *datong* being the greater good or the best and *xiaokang* being the lesser good or the second best. *Datong* is where the Great Way prevails. It is usually interpreted to refer to a Golden Age in prehistoric times (such as the periods of the rulers Yao and Shun), as the dominant Confucian view of history or prehistory is that the ideal society existed in an immemorial time and has subsequently declined.

The first sentence of Confucius' reply to Yen Yen refers to the Three Dynasties in ancient Chinese history—Xia, Shang and Zhou—preceded by the rulers Yao and Shun. The "illustrious men of the Three Dynasties" Confucius refers to in the first paragraph actually includes the "six rulers" (Emperor Yu, Kings Tang, Wen, Wu, and Cheng and the Duke of Chou) referred to in the second paragraph in his discussion of *xiaokang*. Thus Confucius' opening sentence implies that society never conformed to the criteria of either *datong* or *xiaokang*—even the lesser ideal of *xiaokang* remained unrealized in his time.

It may be seen from the passage's detailed description of *xiaokang* society that it actually practices the basic teachings of Confucianism. For example, Confucianism emphasizes the "five cardinal relationships"—those between father and son, ruler and subject, husband and wife, elder brother and younger brother, friend and friend—as the foundation of ethics. The *li* (rites, rituals, and norms of propriety) is also stressed by Confucianism as the indispensable basis for social order and social life. In the passage on *xiaokang*, it is said that "Ritual and righteousness are used to regulate the relationship between ruler and subject, to insure affection between father and son, peace between brothers, and harmony between husband and wife, to set up social institutions, … all six rulers were constantly attentive to ritual." This reflects the centrality of the *li* and of the cardinal human relationships in the *xiaokang* society. Other Confucian virtues, such as righteousness, faithfulness, humanity (benevolence) and humility, are also practiced in *xiaokang* society: "all six rulers were constantly attentive to ritual, made manifest their righteousness and acted in complete faith. They exposed error, made humanity their law and humility their practice."

If Confucian teachings are already practiced in the *xiaokang* society, why is it not the ideal society? One sentence from the passage strikes the reader: "Therefore intrigue and plotting come about and men take up arms." Thus establishment of the *li*, of social institutions and the obligations associated with the cardinal human relationships, cannot ensure social harmony and peaceful co-existence among human beings. There will inevitably be competition, struggles, and even wars among them. The root of the problem is identified at the beginning of the passage on *xiaokang*: "the world is the possession of private families. Each regards as parents only his own parents, as sons only his own sons; goods and labor are employed for selfish ends." These circumstances contrast sharply with those in the *datong* society: "the world was shared by all alike. The worthy and the able were promoted to office and men practiced good faith and lived in affection. Therefore they did not regard as parents only their own parents, or as sons only their own sons."

In *xiaokang*, "the world is the possession of private families." This may be regarded as a reference to dynastic rule, under which the monarch is succeeded by his son and the state is considered his family possession. This can be contrasted with the *datong* world in which all people enjoy the benefits of social cooperation and the ruling elite are chosen on the basis of their merits and abilities rather than being a hereditary aristocracy ("hereditary offices and titles are granted by ritual law" in *xiaokang* society). Another key difference between *datong* and *xiaokang* is that in *xiaokang* society people care only about themselves and their family members,

whereas in *datong* society people care about all members of society. Thus the welfare of all is considered in the *datong* society: "The aged found a fitting close to their lives, the robust their proper employment; the young were provided with an upbringing and the widow and widower, the orphaned and the sick, with proper care. Men had their tasks and women their hearths." A third major difference is that in *xiaokang* people use their property and invest their labor for their own benefits ("goods and labor are employed for selfish ends"), whereas in *datong* property and labor are devoted to serving the public good: "They hated to see goods lying about in waste, yet they did not hoard them for themselves; they disliked the thought that their energies were not fully used, yet they used them not for private ends."

Datong society is therefore one in which everybody is devoted to serving the common good instead of seeking primarily to benefit only themselves and their families. Thus, *datong* can be regarded as a society where the common good prevails or as a society embodying the idea of the common good itself. To use Confucian language, *datong* is a society in which the Confucian virtue of *ren* (benevolence or love) is most fully practiced by its members. According to Confucianism, as developed by Confucius and Mencius, the practice of *ren* naturally begins with one's family members – hence the importance of the social relationships of father and son, elder brother and younger brother, and husband and wife, and the cardinal virtue of filial piety. Beginning with the circle of one's relatives, the practice of *ren* should then extend to include more and more people, eventually embracing all under Heaven (Liang 1968, chs. 2–3).

5.3 *Datong* in Kang Youwei's Thought

Approximately two millennia after the concept of *datong* was first formulated in the *Liyun* chapter of the *Book of Rites*, *datong* came again to the fore of Chinese political and social thought as Chinese scholars confronted the challenges of the West and modernization. Dr. Sun Yat-sen, founder of the Republic of China established in 1912, was well-known for his high regard for the *Liyun datong* passage and even developed the Three People's Principles[1]—the political doctrine he developed as the ideological foundation of the Republic of China—to bring about *datong* (Zhang 1988, pp. 6). Upon his death the phrase "*tianxia weigong*" ("the world is shared by all alike," a phrase taken from the *Liyun datong* passage), which he loved when he was alive, was inscribed on his tomb. It is noteworthy that *datong* was also a favorite concept of his political adversary, Kang Youwei, who had opposed the revolution but advocated peaceful constitutional reform and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy. Kang was a Confucian thinker, a political activist, and an ardent advocate of China's political and social reform. In one of his books, *Datong shu*, completed in 1902 (Hsiao 1975, pp. 480) but published only posthumously in 1935

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[1]The three principles are the Principle of People's National Consciousness, the Principle of People's Rights, and the Principle of People's Livelihood.

(Thompson 1958, pp. 31), Kang put forward an original and radical interpretation of *datong*. This interpretation is the primary focus of the remainder of this essay.

Before addressing the central thesis of *Datong shu*, two important influences must be considered. They are the Confucian doctrine of *ren* (benevolence or love), and the theory of history elaborated in He Xiu's work (written during the Latter Han dynasty) on the *Gongyang Commentary to the Spring and Autumn Annals*.

Ren is one of the most important virtues or values preached by Confucianism. It may be translated as benevolence or love, and refers to feelings of humanity, sympathy, and empathy among human beings. The significance of *ren* as an ultimate moral principle is demonstrated by the following passage from Confucius' *Analects* (Confucius 1992, book XV, section 9): "For Gentlemen of purpose and men of benevolence (*ren*) while it is inconceivable that they should seek to stay alive at the expense of benevolence, it may happen that they have to accept death in order to have benevolence accomplished." As pointed out by Chan Wing-tsit, a leading authority on Chinese philosophy:

> This love [*ren*] is universal in nature, but there must be distinctions, that is, an order or gradation in application, beginning with the love for one's parents. … *Jen* [*ren*] is extended to include not only all human beings but the universe in its totality, man and the universe thus forming one body. … *Jen* is not merely an attitude or consciousness but an active and dynamic relationship between men and all things. … *Jen* is the foundation of all goodness, the 'mind of man,' and the source of everything produced in the universe. … As such, *jen* is both ethical and metaphysical (Chan 1967, pp. 356).

Drawing on the long tradition of Confucian reflections about *ren*, Kang Youwei developed his own interpretation and attached central importance to it in his own system of thought. Liang Qichao, Kang's pupil who was as famous as Kang as a leading intellectual and political activist in early twentieth-century China, wrote in his biography of Kang:

> The philosophy of Master K'ang is the philosophy of the school of universal love. In his doctrine he considered *jen* [*ren*] as the one fundamental principle, believing that the foundation of the world, the birth of all creatures, the existence of states, and the development of moral institutions are all based on it (qtd. in Chan 1967, pp. 357).

What then is the essence of *ren* as understood by Kang? Drawing on Mencius, Kang emphasized that *ren* is the compassionate mind or "the mind that cannot bear to see the suffering of others" (*burenren zhixin*).
According to Mencius,

> Whoever is devoid of the heart of compassion is not human, whoever is devoid of the heart of shame is not human, whoever is devoid of the heart of courtesy and modesty is not human, and whoever is devoid of the heart of right and wrong is not human. The heart of compassion is the germ of benevolence [*ren*]; the heart of shame, of dutifulness; the heart of courtesy and modesty, of observance of the rites; the heart of right and wrong, of wisdom. Man has these four germs just as he has four limbs (Mencius 1970, book II, part A, sec. 6).

This passage suggests that *ren* is one of four basic virtues that define humanity. But as pointed out by Chan Wing-tsit,

In K'ang's philosophy, on the contrary, *jen* is not a particular virtue but the general one, the foundation of all that is good and true. The concept of *jen* as the general virtue goes back to Confucius. What is new with K'ang is to interpret the feeling of compassion, not in the sense of a particular virtue as Mencius had it, but as the general virtue (Chan 1967, pp. 358–9).

Apart from the doctrine of *ren*, another intellectual resource Kang drew on in his work on *datong* was the philosophy of history scholarship derived from the *Gongyang Commentary to the Spring and Autumn Annals*. Such a philosophy was clearly formulated by the Confucian scholar, He Xiu (129–182 A.D.), author of *Chunqiu Gongyang jiegu* (*Explanations on the Gongyang Commentary to the Spring and Autumn Annals (Chunqiu)*), in the Later Han dynasty. In contrast with the traditional Chinese view that the written history of China consists of cycles of order and disorder, He Xiu derived from *Chunqiu Gongyang* an interpretation of Chinese history consisting of "Three Ages": the Age of Disorder (*shuailuan shi*), followed by the Age of Ascending Peace (*shengping shi*, also translated as Age of Increasing Peace-and-Equality), followed by the Age of Universal Peace (*taiping shi*, also translated as Age of Complete Peace-and-Equality). He Xiu interpreted the history of the Lu state, as told in *Chunqiu*, as unfolding in accordance with the three stages, comprised not only by a chronological dimension but also by a spatial dimension—with more and more territories brought within the sphere of civilization over the course of time. According to Xiu's philosophy of history, there is and can be social progress over the course of time; society can evolve from a lower level of cultural development to a higher level.

The originality and genius of Kang Youwei's thought was to combine the doctrine of *ren* and the *Gongyang* philosophy of history to produce a theory of human historical progress where the ideal of *ren* is realized in stages and the highest degree of its realization is associated with the ancient concept of *datong*. An advancing level of culture, education, and moral cultivation among the people,[2] and the gradual reduction of inequality in society accompany the increasing realization of *ren*. This line of thinking is not only evident in *Datong shu* but also in Kang's other writings. In *Mengzi wei* (*Esoteric Meanings of Mencius*), he writes:

Confucius instituted the scheme of three stages. In the Age of Disorder *jen* [*ren*] cannot be extended far and therefore people are merely affectionate to their parents. In the Age of Approaching Peace, *jen* is extended to one's own kind and therefore people are humane to all people. In the Age of Universal Peace [Great Unity or *datong*], all creatures form a unity and therefore people love all creatures as well. There is distinction and graduation in *jen* because there are stages in historical progress (qtd. in Chan 1967, pp. 367).

The following passage from Kang's *Liyun zhu* (*Commentary on Liyun*), which may certainly be considered radical from the traditional Confucian perspective, anticipates our discussion of Kang's *Datong shu*:

Now to have states, families, and selves is to allow each individual to maintain a sphere of selfishness. This infracts utterly the Universal Principle (*gongli*) and impedes progress. …

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[2] Zhang Xiang (2009) stresses the importance of culture and education (*wenjiao*) or cultivation (*jiaohua*) in Kang's philosophy of progress towards *datong*.

Therefore, not only states should be abolished, so that there would be no more struggle between the strong and the weak; families should also be done away with, so that there would no longer be inequality of love and affection [among men]; and, finally, selfishness itself should be banished, so that goods and services would not be used for private ends. … The only [true way] is sharing the world in common by all (*tienxia weigong*) … To share in common is to treat each and every one alike. There should be no distinction between high and low, no discrepancy between rich and poor, no segregation of human races, no inequality between sexes. … All should be educated and supported with the common property; none should depend on private possession. … This is the way of the Great Community [*datong*] which prevailed in the Age of Universal Peace (qtd. in Hsiao 1975, pp. 499).

In order to understand the further details of Kang's vision of *datong* in the Age of Universal Peace, let us now turn to his book, *Datong shu*. The book consists of ten parts, with each part divided into several chapters. Part I of the book, "Entering the world and seeing universal suffering," introduces the core ideas of the book. The first section of Part I, "Introduction: Men have compassionate natures," was likely influenced by Buddhist thought and underscores the universality of the experience of suffering in the world. "[W]e see that the whole world is but a world of grief and misery, all the people of the whole world are but grieving and miserable people." (Kang 1958, pp. 63).[3] But human beings seek happiness and do not want to suffer. "[U]nder the firmament, all who have life only seek pleasure and shun suffering" (D71). Kang goes on to make the utilitarian argument that the distinction between good and evil depends on whether happiness is promoted and suffering is minimized. "The establishment of laws and the creation of teachings [of the Way] which cause men to have happiness and to be [entirely] without suffering: [this] is the best [form] of the Good" (D71).

In Kang's view, human beings are not indifferent to the suffering of others. "I myself am a body. Another body suffers; it has no connection with me, and yet I sympathize very minutely. Moving about I am distressed; sitting I reflect [on it]" (D63). This is because humans have the "compassionate mind" (D64). The compassionate mind is part of the essence of humanity. "[I]f men sever what constitutes their compassionate love, their human-ness will be annihilated" (D64). On the other hand, the more we understand what is really going on in the world, the greater will be our compassion for others. "[T]hose whose perceptiveness and awareness is great, their *jen*-mind is also great. Boundless love goes with boundless perceptiveness" (D67).

Turning back to the subject of suffering and happiness, Kang points out that the happiness of individuals is consistent with, and, indeed, dependent on the sociality and solidarity of human beings.

To enjoy being in groups, and to hate solitude, to mutually assist and mutually help, is what gives pleasure to man's nature. Therefore the mutual intimacy, mutual love, mutual hospitality, and mutual succouring of fathers and sons, husbands and wives, elder and younger brothers – which is not altered by considerations of profit or loss, or of difficulties – are what give pleasure to man (D69).

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[3] Subsequent page references to Thompson's translation of *Datong shu* will be abbreviated Dx (x being the page number).

In Kang's view, social institutions, such as the family and the state, were established by the sages—"persons of *jen*" (D63) —in ancient times for the benefit of mankind.

> The sages, because of what gave pleasure to man's nature, and to accord with what is natural in matters human, then made the family law to control them. They said the father is merciful, and the son filial; the elder brother is friendly, the younger brother respectful; the husband is upright, the wife complaisant (D69).

Similarly,

> [T]he sages, because of what man's nature cannot avoid, and to accord with what is natural in matters human and in the conditions of the times, on their behalf established states, tribes, rulers, ministers, and laws of government. This method is simply [for the purpose of] enabling man to avoid suffering, and nothing else (D70).

While affirming the utility and legitimacy of such social institutions, Kang also points out that they are contingent on the circumstances of the time, and that institutions originally established for legitimate purposes may in their practical operation be oppressive and produce suffering.

> Even if there be sages who establish the laws, they cannot but determine them according to the circumstances of their times, and the venerableness of customs. The general conditions which are in existence, and the oppressive institutions which have long endured, are accordingly taken as morally right. In this way, what were at first good laws of mutual assistance and protection end by causing suffering through their excessive oppressiveness and inequality (D72).

Kang then refers to the theory of the "Three Ages" —which he attributes to Confucius himself—as a solution to this problem. Social institutions can and will evolve in the course of time so as to achieve rising levels of development and perfection. "[F]ollowing [the Age of] Disorder, [the world] will change to [the Ages, first] of Increasing Peace-and-Equality, [and finally], of Complete Peace-and-Equality; following the Age of Little Peace-and-Happiness, [the world] will advance to [the Age of] One World" (D72). Kang believed that he lived in the Age of Disorder, but he was able to work out how the "Way of One World of Complete Peace-and-Equality" was to be realized (D72).

Kang works out this Way by first identifying and classifying the types of suffering in the world, tracing their causes or sources, and then designing remedies. Kang identifies, analyzes, and further subdivides six kinds of suffering in six separate chapters of Part I of *Datong shu*. The six categories are "sufferings from living," "sufferings from natural calamities," "sufferings from the accidents of human life," "sufferings from government," "sufferings from human feelings," and "sufferings from those things which men most esteem" (D73-4). Kang believed that most sufferings were ultimately attributable to the existence of nine boundaries (*jie*, alternatively translated as "distinctions"): (1) nation-boundaries ("division by territorial frontiers and by tribes"); (2) class-boundaries ("division by noble and base, by pure and impure"); (3) race-boundaries ("division by yellow, white, brown and black [skin types]"); (4) sex-boundaries ("division by male and female"); (5) family-boundaries ("the private relationships of father and son, husband and wife, elder and

younger brother"); (6) occupation-boundaries ("the private ownership of agriculture, industry, and commerce"); (7) disorder-boundaries ("the existence of unequal, unthorough, dissimilar, and unjust laws"); (8) kind-boundaries ("the existence of a separation between man, and the birds, beasts, insects, and fish"); and (9) suffering boundaries ("[this means], by suffering, giving rise to suffering") (D74–5).

Kang states that "[t]he remedy for suffering lies, therefore, in abolishing these nine boundaries" (D75). The remaining parts of the book (parts II to X) each address the abolition of one of the nine boundaries. In Kang's view, all nine boundaries will have been completely dissolved in the *datong* world of the Age of Complete Peace and Equality. Kang's portrait of this world in *Datong shu* has been rightly described as "the most imaginative utopian construct in Chinese intellectual history" (Hsiao 1975, pp. 500)[4] and "the most notable work of its kind which has yet been produced, either in West or East" (Thompson 1958, pp. 55). It is a vision of the common good of humankind—and not just the common good of the Chinese people[5]—inspired by traditional Chinese philosophy at a crucial historical moment when this tradition of thought first came into contact with modern Western thought. It also represents a radical reinterpretation of traditional Confucian philosophy.[6]

In Kang's *datong* world, the family, private property, and the state and social classes as we understand them will all cease to exist. The world will no longer be divided into sovereign nation-states but will be administered by a world government. The planet Earth will be divided into administrative districts of equal size, each of which will practice local democratic self-government. There will be complete equality between men and women, and society will no longer be divided into classes. The enjoyment of property will be shared in common, and economic activities will not be for private gain but will be directed to the common good. The functions of the family as a social institution will be taken over by public institutions such as nurseries and schools, which will take charge of the rearing and education of children, as well as hospitals for the sick and institutions for the aged. Marriage will no longer be a legal and social union intended to be permanent but will be a renewable short-term contract. Homosexuals may practice their way of life as they wish. Euthanasia will be allowed. Animals will not be treated cruelly, and in the final stage of the evolution of the *datong* world, they will no longer be killed for food because vegetarianism will be practiced by humankind. There will be no social distinctions between people, except that persons of great *ren* or knowledge will be given badges of honor to wear. In the *datong* world, the highest achievement in life

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[4] For a comparison of Kang's utopianism and utopianism (including Marxism) in Western thought, see Malmqvist (1991).

[5] Wang Hui (2008, chap. 7) stresses the universalism in Kang's thought. He also identifies a tension between the universalist logic of *datong* and the logic of strengthening the Chinese nation (and rescuing it from its weak position in the world, particularly in face of the Western powers and Japan).

[6] Chang Hao (2002, pp. 174–204) points out the radical nature of Kang's interpretation or reinterpretation of Confucianism.

will be the self-cultivation and practice involved in seeking spiritual enlightenment and becoming buddhas.

Although several crucial components of Kang's *datong* world are reminiscent of the communist society postulated by Karl Marx as the eventual goal of historical development and social evolution, there are fundamental differences between them in terms of their basic premises and the dynamics of social evolution each envisaged (Thompson 1967). Marx emphasized people's selfish material or economic interests as members of particular social classes; Kang believed that all human beings have a compassionate mind, and caring about others is part of the essence of being human. Marx considered class division to be the fundamental division in society; Kang identified class division as merely one of the nine "boundaries" which give rise to struggles, conflicts, and suffering, and in his thought other divisions such as those between the sexes, racial or ethnic groups, or between nation-states are equally if not more important. Marx believed that class struggles and violent revolutions are necessary and inevitable for the purpose of realizing communism; Kang suggested that the evolution towards the *datong* world of the Age of Complete Peace-and-Equality is a natural, gradual, and spontaneous process in which *ren* will be practiced to increasing degrees. It is also a process through which rising levels of culture or civilization, education, moral cultivation, awareness, and enlightenment among human beings in society will be achieved.[7]

Some of Kang's proposals for the *datong* world are easy to understand, given his faith in *ren* and his utilitarian inclinations. For example, the establishment of a world government will put an end to wars, one of the important causes of suffering in human history. Recognizing homosexuals' rights and permitting euthanasia may also be understood as reducing unnecessary suffering and maximizing potential happiness. In developing these ideas and others, such as women's rights, gender equality, democratic self-government and the humane treatment of animals, Kang was indeed progressive and well beyond the dominant values of his time (particularly in China, which at the end of the nineteenth century lagged behind the West in social, political, and intellectual modernization). Indeed, some of his "utopian" ideas, surely considered fanciful in China at the time, have today been implemented or are in the process of being implemented in various parts of the world, more than a century after he wrote.

Take, for example, the treatment of animals, which is dealt with in Part IX of the book, entitled "Abolishing boundaries of kind, and loving all living [things]." Kang points out that "man is merely one species of creatures" (D264), and the distinction between humans and other living things is a distinction in "kind," which "is no more than a distinction of appearance and physique" (D264). Writing about domesticated animals, Kang points out that "[w]hen we consider that they are not far removed from man in intelligence, that they too have feelings of terror and pain, that they are not a threat to our survival or essential to our diet, then it is against natural principles and the greatest of uncompassion to kill them" (D266). However, Kang was of the view that the Buddhist prohibition against the killing of animals "cannot be carried

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[7] See note 2.

out at present. The Way of Confucius is a progress in three stages: loving one's kin, loving all people, and finally loving all creatures. The stages correspond [of course] to the Three Ages" (D266). Kang believed that "gradual progress" (D267) can be achieved, and even after the world has entered the *datong* era, there will still be three separate stages of development concerning the relationship between mankind and other animals. In the first stage, mankind will refrain from killing animals which are "intelligent and useful" (D267).

> [T]he [stage in which there is still] eating of flesh and killing of living [creatures] is One World's [*datong*] Age of Disorder; [the stage in which] electrical machines [are used] to slaughter animals is One World's Age of Increasing Peace-and-Equality; [the stage in which] killing is prohibited and the desire [to kill and eat animals] is ended is One World's Age of Complete Peace-and-Equality (D267).

Kang's view regarding the phased implementation of benevolence for animals is consistent with and an integral part of his philosophy of gradual progress, which not only prescribes what is progressive but also emphasizes the inappropriateness and possible counter-productivity of attempting to implement what is suitable for the Age of Complete Peace-and-Equality in an earlier age (Zeng 2009, pp. 249).[8] Kang realized that his prescriptions for the Age of Complete Peace-and-Equality were so radical that if immediately publicized the impact on society would not be positive, which is why Kang never published the full text of *Datong shu* during his lifetime (Li 1990, pp. 174, 177). Consequently, Kang was only radical in his thinking regarding humanity's distant future; in his life, actions, and political advocacy, he was much more conservative, even more so than many of his contemporaries (Spence 1981). Indeed, he opposed the Chinese revolutionaries' attempt to overthrow the Manchu dynasty, and proposed instead the establishment of a constitutional monarchy. This was consistent with his theory of political development (Zeng 2009, pp. 247, 253; Wang 1988, p. 40): the political systems that correspond to the Age of Disorder, Age of Increasing Peace-and-Equality and Age of Complete Peace-and-Equality are respectively absolute monarchy, constitutional monarchy and democratic republicanism. Kang believed that China's conditions during his time were such that democratic republicanism would be premature.

The single most radical and controversial part of Kang's thought regarding *datong* is the abolition of the family as a social institution in the *datong* world. Given that traditional Confucian ethics values above anything else the human relationships within the family and privileges filial piety and other familial virtues, how or why did Kang come up with this radical idea? To answer this question, Part VI of the book, "Abolishing family boundaries and becoming 'Heaven's people'" (D169), requires close examination. In this part, the basic Confucian principles of the family are elucidated and their positive contribution to Chinese society over the course of history is acknowledged, but ultimately it is argued that they have to be superseded in the *datong* world.

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[8] See also a passage in Kang's commentary on *Liyun* in Kang (1987, pp. 241–2).

Kang begins Part VI of the book by pointing out that "love of the parents for their offspring is fundamental to all life" (D169). Such love is "spontaneous" and "is the Heaven-[conferred] (or Natural-) nature, the root of *jen*" (D169). "The family is the basic institution for all human beings throughout the world. Upon the family we depend for protection, support, and spiritual solace from the cradle to the grave" (D173). As regards filial piety, Kang suggests that this is based on a fundamental moral principle of requital for favors received.

> No grace, no virtue, can compare with those of parents, to whom we owe the very fact of our existence. … The principle of requital is a universal, unchangeable principle. Since our greatest obligation is to our parents, our greatest responsibility is to repay this debt. Confucius emphasized filiality, considering this to be simply the requital of that debt (D173–4).

Kang believes that Confucian family ethics and Chinese social practices relating to the family and clan "enacted by Confucius for the Age of Disorder … [are] very conducive to propagation and to consolidation into groups of like kinds" (D171) and have made significant contributions to Chinese civilization and its population growth. "[T]he Chinese system is the ultimate development of the family" (D171).

Kang goes on to point out that

> The family is a necessity of the Ages of Disorder and Increasing Peace-and-Equality [because it is "an institution essential to mutual support among men" (D182)], but is the most detrimental thing to [attaining] to the Age of Complete Peace-and-Equality. … if we wish to attain the beauty of complete equality, independence, and the perfection of [human] nature, it can [be done] only by abolishing the state, only by abolishing the family (D183).

What then is wrong with the family as a social institution to be maintained permanently? Several strands of reasoning may be discerned in Part VI. First, Kang points out that filial piety, though a good ideal, is often not practiced (D173) and is no more than "an empty ideal" (D176). "Those who can resist the call of their own desires and care for their parents instead are but few" (D176). "[T]he reason filiality is difficult and [parental] compassion is easy, is due entirely and solely to opinions. [If parents and children] are unable to hold the same opinions, then they are unable to live together" (D179). Second, Kang highlights "the sufferings of members of a family who are constrained to live together" (D179), which include those caused by discord and quarrels—they are the "inevitable consequences of forcing several human beings to live together, … with all their prejudices, special affections, dislikes, frailties, and cross-purposes. This situation is worst in China, because of its large-family system" (D179). Third and most significantly, Kang associates care and concern for one's family members with selfishness and considers the social institution of the family an impediment to the realization of a society in which everyone is devoted to the common good, and all persons, whether male or female, enjoy equality and autonomy and are well taken care of by society.

> If there are families, then there is selfishness (D180). … The family is too exclusive: parents try to give the best only to their own children. Since there are very few wealthy and high-class families in comparison to the poor and low-class families, and each gives only to its own as best it can, it follows that there can never be any universal equality, and that there will always be only a few in a nation who are strong, intelligent, good, and brave, and vast

numbers who are weak, stupid, vicious, and cowardly (D179-180). … If people hold selfishly to their own families, then private property cannot be used as public property, and there is nothing whereby to publicly support the people of the whole world; but there are numerous poor and suffering people. (D182) … If people all hold selfishly to their own families, then there cannot be much of a levy for public expenditures to provide public benefits (D182).

Kang anticipates and responds to one fundamental objection to the abolition of the family:

> It may be said that for the parents to be with their children is [inherent in our] Heaven[−conferred] nature; and that to give them up is contrary to natural principles. And yet nowadays in France, America, and Australia there are many illegitimate children. … After men and women are free, there will necessarily be many illegitimate children (D186).

Kang thus implies that human nature is not such that having a family and living within a family is essential to its realization. But the abolition of the family is not a goal that can or should be immediately achieved. "[T]here is a Way to get there. Gaining it will be gradual; [we must proceed] in orderly sequence to perfect it" (D184).

5.4 Reflections on *Datong* and the Common Good

It may be seen from the above analysis that both the *Liyun* section of the *Book of Rites*, written more than two millennia ago, and Kang Youwei's *Datong shu*, written more than a century ago, use the concept of *datong* to express the idea of the common good in human society. The philosophy of *datong* may be understood as a Chinese contribution to universal thinking about the common good. In *Liyun*, *datong*, in contrast to *xiaokang*, refers to an ideal state of human social existence, probably in the mythical Golden Age of the remote past. In *Datong shu*, the same term *datong* is used to describe an ideal world in the distant future, when social evolution has progressed to the Age of Complete Peace-and-Equality. In both of these *datong* worlds, "the world is shared by all alike" ("*tianxia weigong*"). Human pursuits are directed to the common good of all rather than to the satisfaction of selfish or private desires. Property is held in common. The well-being of all in society is well taken care of. The practice of *ren* is not confined to one's family members but extends to all in a kind of universal brotherhood/sisterhood.

Whereas the discussion of *datong* in *Liyun* is only one paragraph in length, Kang Youwei elaborates the theoretical foundation and practical details of the *datong* world in his book on the subject. The theoretical foundation includes the Confucian doctrine of *ren*, interpreted by Kang as the compassionate mind, and the *Gongyang* philosophy of history as progress unfolding in Three Ages. Now insofar as *ren* means love for others and care and concern for others' welfare, it is necessary to develop criteria for determining what is good for others and what their well-being consists of. Here Kang adopts the utilitarian criterion that happiness or pleasure is good and pain and suffering is bad, with the qualification that human nature is such

that individual happiness is closely related to and dependent upon sociality and solidarity within a community.

Thus human nature as *ren* seeks the realization of the common good of all, which consists of the minimization of suffering and the maximization of potential happiness. The philosophy of history as progress suggests that it is possible for *ren* to be realized in increasing degrees over the course of social evolution and historical development. The question then is how suffering is to be minimized and happiness maximized. Influenced by Buddhist thinking, Kang perceives suffering as a universal phenomenon inextricably linked to human existence. He then develops the original idea that suffering is a result of the existence of the "nine boundaries," the gradual dissolution of which will usher in the *datong* world of the Age of Complete Peace-and-Equality. The theory of the "nine boundaries" and their dissolution is thus Kang's most important contribution to the Chinese tradition of *datong* thinking.

Kang's thesis is that the ultimate realization of the common good in human social existence consists of the dissolution of the "nine boundaries," which includes, among other things, the abolition of sovereign nation-states and the establishment of a world government with local democratic autonomy, the disappearance of social classes and private property, and the transfer of familial functions to publicly established institutions, which will care for all aspects of individuals' welfare from the cradle to the grave. Social, economic, and political equality will be achieved, and individuals will enjoy maximal autonomy and freedom, including, for example, freedom from family obligations, freedom to change marriage partners, freedom to pursue a homosexual lifestyle, freedom to pursue spiritual development, and freedom or right of euthanasia.[9] Even animals' rights to life and humane treatment will receive recognition. Hence Kang's philosophy, built on a synthesis of Confucianism, Buddhism, utilitarianism, and the conception of social evolution and progress, points toward a utopian future with elements of socialism or communism and liberalism.

Kang's *datong* world is a far cry from today's world of sovereign nation-states and global capitalism, with its gross social, economic, and political inequalities among states and classes and the extreme contrast between those living in wealth, prosperity, and freedom and those oppressed and/or living in poverty. Insofar as *datong* embodies a credible—or at least partially credible—vision of the common good in human social existence, we need to think seriously about the common good and how far away from it we are, especially when we consider how different the portrayals of the datong world in *Liyun* and in *Datong shu* are from the world today. Is the form of capitalism that exists today consistent with the common good of humankind? Is socialism still a viable alternative, at least in the long run? The Chinese tradition of *datong* thinking is clearly relevant to our reflections today on these fundamental questions of social and political philosophy.

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[9] Women, however, will have no right to abortion, as Kang believed that such a right may lead to population decline and endanger the survival of the human species (D190–193).

To what extent, if any, does the ancient Chinese concept of *datong* and Kang's adaptation of it to the modern world provide a useful contribution to our thinking about the common good? I would suggest a positive answer to this question. The Chinese character for "*tong*" in *datong* literally means "common" or "in common," while the Chinese character for "*da*" literally means "great". The key phrase "*tianxia weigong*" in the celebrated *datong* passage in the *Book of Rites* may be translated as "all under Heaven is held in common" or "all under Heaven is publicly held". The concept of *datong* is thus a concept that was intended by the ancient Chinese to embody a society whose organization is in accordance with the common good, or a society in which all members enjoy the good life. As pointed out above, all members of society share in the enjoyment of the benefits of social cooperation in the *datong* society. The welfare or well-being of all, including those who are weak, vulnerable, or unable to care for themselves, is well taken care of. Everyone is devoted to serving the common good instead of seeking primarily to benefit oneself or one's family members. "They did not regard as parents only their own parents, or as sons only their own sons" (qtd. in De Bary et al. 1960, pp. 175). Thus *ren*, benevolence, compassion, care, or love for fellow human beings is extended to all. But this *datong* concept was developed more than two and a half millennia ago, and in the *datong* passage of the *Book of Rites* it was only used to refer to a more perfect society in the distant past which was no longer realizable—for only *xiaokang* was realizable in the contemporary world. Is *datong* a credible vision of the common good in the twenty first-century world?

The modern welfare state seeks to ensure a minimum standard of living and a reasonable quality of life for the weak, vulnerable, disadvantaged, or underprivileged members of society. To this extent, it gives effect to the *datong* ideal. But the *datong* ideal goes further than guaranteeing minimum welfare to all. It envisages a kind of transformation of human motivation and human action from being self-centered to being altruistic. In the post-communist world of global capitalism, this core element of the *datong* vision would seem to be a utopian and an impossible dream. Instead, what has apparently prevailed is Adam Smith's idea of the invisible hand in the market system, which ensures that the self-interested actions of individuals, or actors in the market, will ultimately maximize the common good.

Kang's modernized version of *datong* is more optimistic regarding the possibility of human and social transformation. He introduces the idea of progress in history, drawing mainly on the theory of the Three Ages in *Chunqiu Gongyang*. In the West, belief in progress was a mark of the Age of Enlightenment, which gave rise to social movements that continue to thrive in the current day. In Kang's philosophy, progress is possible, worth striving for, and an inherent dimension of human history. Progress includes not only material and scientific progress, but also moral progress (increasing degrees of the realization of *ren*), cultural progress (increasing achievements in education and moral and intellectual cultivation), and social progress (reducing inequality, discrimination, injustice, exploitation and oppression, and advancing levels of freedom, autonomy, equal rights, and democracy). The belief in and efforts to bring about progress in all these dimensions are still very much alive

and well in the contemporary world. To this extent, Kang's *datong* philosophy still speaks to, and resonates within, our world today.

Even today, Kang's concepts of *ren* and progress can still provide a persuasive and coherent theoretical foundation for the practical struggles of fighting for a better world, in which the common good is better realized than it is today or has been in the history of humankind, and of fighting for the global realization of human rights, justice, democracy, and peace. Moreover, some of Kang's practical and concrete suggestions for a better world are still sound and yet to be realized today. For example, he understands that the ultimate solution to the sufferings of warfare can only be found in a rational and democratic system of governance at the global level. Additionally, his proposals regarding women's rights and animal welfare are still in the process of being fought for in many parts of the world.

What is most controversial in Kang's *datong* philosophy is the abolition of the family and of private property. Here it must first be pointed out that Kang was writing about *datong* in the distant future, and he made it clear that traditional family ethics have played a very important and positive role in traditional China and should continue to be respected now and in the foreseeable future. Indeed, he himself practiced the virtue of filial piety faithfully (Li 1990, pp. 161). Additionally, Kang's rejection of the family and private property for the purpose of *datong* should be understood in the context of China's circumstances at the end of the nineteenth century. During this time, the extended family and clan operated in many cases as a hierarchical, authoritarian, and oppressive institution, which discriminated against women and suppressed their rights (or what we would today think of as their rights) in the name of morality (Li 1990, pp. 158–61), and gross social and economic inequalities existed. With the benefit of hindsight, it might be said that Kang's prescriptions for remedying gender discrimination and social and economic inequality are too extreme, and that a fundamentally reformed family law (such as that which exists in many parts of the modernized world) and a social market economy are better solutions to the problems than the radical ones Kang envisaged.

5.5   Conclusion

Since the May Fourth Movement in the early twentieth century, many Chinese intellectuals abandoned Confucianism and other traditions of Chinese thought and became Westernized in their mode and content of thinking. The triumph of Marxism-Leninism in mainland China was, in a sense, a sign of the Westernization of the modern Chinese mind. However, as the radical Maoist excesses of the Cultural Revolution era came to be repudiated, and as the People's Republic of China began to chart its new course of "reform and opening" three decades ago, many aspects of traditional Chinese thought have been quietly rehabilitated or gradually resurrected, or have regained the interest or even faith of Chinese intellectuals. The Chinese social and political philosophy of the twenty first century need not and will not draw exclusively or primarily from Western sources. It is possible and likely that

indigenous concepts and doctrines, such as the *datong* thought discussed in this chapter, will have a role to play in shaping the Chinese social and political philosophy of the future.

Although this has never been officially recognized, there is in fact a surprising degree of convergence between some important ingredients of Kang Youwei's *datong* thought and the official ideology currently propagated by the Chinese Communist Party. According to this ideology, the Marxist vision of the communist society is still the highest ideal pursued by the Party and the Chinese people. However, this ideal can only be realized after socialist society has reached a high level of development. "The development and perfection of socialism is a long historical process."[10] China is, and will remain for a long time, in the "preliminary stage of socialism," because China, as an "economically and culturally backward" nation, needs to undergo "socialist modernization."[11] The theory of the preliminary stage of socialism implies that full socialism cannot be practiced yet, and China may legitimately borrow capitalist techniques from the West. Not all means of production will be socialized and subject to public ownership, and there will still be economic inequality among the Chinese people. The idea that the ideals of socialism and communism will be realized, and will only be realized, in the course of a long process of historical development and social evolution thus converges with Kang's idea of historical progress and his vision of the *datong* world in which socialist or communist principles will be applicable in economic life.

The official view of the current level of economic development in Chinese society is that it has just reached the *xiaokang* level. It is hoped that by the centenary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party (2021), China will have reached a "higher level of *xiaokang* society," and by the centenary of the establishment of the People's Republic of China (2049), it will have reached the level of a middle-level developed country and will have "basically completed its modernization".[12] Thus the term *xiaokang*, which dates back more than two millennia ago to *Liyun*, is still being used today to refer to the second-best level of development. The concept of "harmonious society" advocated in recent years by the Chinese Communist Party also draws on traditional Chinese thought, particularly the Confucian vision of social harmony and amicable social relationships.

In the final analysis, the *datong* philosophy in *Liyun* and in *Datong shu* speaks not only to the Chinese people but to the whole of humankind. It is a philosophy that is universalist in nature rather than particularistic and dependent on a particular culture or religion. As a philosophy of the common good, it is a valuable contribution to the common heritage of mankind. Though ancient in origin, it still speaks to the needs, circumstances, and challenges faced by the contemporary world. Though Chinese in origin, *datong* is capable, as Kang Youwei has demonstrated,

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[10] Author's own translation of a sentence in the third paragraph of the Preamble to the Constitution of the Chinese Communist Party (as amended in 2007).

[11] The quoted words are the author's translation of parts of the ninth paragraph of the Preamble to the Constitution of the Chinese Communist Party (as amended in 2007).

[12] Ibid. (ninth paragraph of the Preamble).

of entering into dialogue with the utilitarian, socialist, and liberal traditions of the West. It is to be hoped that *datong* thinking will continue to develop and contribute to the Chinese social and political philosophy of the twenty first century.

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Chapter 6
The Common Good in Moism: A Reconstruction of Mozi's Ethics of "Inclusive Care" and "Reciprocal Well-Being"

Ellen Zhang

6.1 Introduction

Moism (*aka*, Mohism, *Mojia*墨家) refers to an influential philosophical, social, and religious school that flourished during the Warring States era (ca. 475–221 BCE). As a major philosophical work embodying the Moist thought and responding to the increasing dominance of the Ru School/Confucianism (*Rujia*, 儒家), the *Mozi* (《墨子》) presents a moral vision and political doctrine quite different from that of the latter. Moism, among all philosophical schools of pre-Han China under the name "One Hundred Schools" (*Baijia*, 百家), was engaged in rational debate, which covered a wide range of topics from politics, ethics, and law, to economics, government, and warfare. Although Moism once emerged and flourished in the intellectual history of China, and Moist communities under their Master were quite influential through the fourth and third centuries BCE, they lost their vitality after the Han. The *Mozi* and Moist philosophy have been neglected over two millennia in China in the sense that there is neither a surviving commentary tradition, nor a revival of Neo-Moism, as we see in other schools such as Confucianism and Daoism.[1] Then why should I bother studying a philosophical/ethical tradition that died a long time ago?

The aim of this chapter is not to discuss the possibility of revitalizing Moism as an alternative tradition to fulfill the so-called "moral vacuum" that exists in

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[1] Like most pre-Han Chinese texts, the *Mozi* is not a text of one author but is a compilation assembled in the centuries following the death of Mo Di or Mozi (Master Mo, ca. 480–438 B.C.E.), the philosopher named in its title. It claims to be a record of his teaching, the dialogues of Mozi and disciples and opponents. Based on the texts, two major trends developed in the Moist school, one stressing social ethics and religious beliefs, the other (later Moists) focusing on epistemology, logic, theory of analogical reasoning, and utilitarian ethics.

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contemporary China.[2] Rather, it attempts to show that some Moist ethical concerns are still relevant in a contemporary context and that Moist philosophy can be useful in supplementing and revising Confucianism without necessarily compromising the basic thrust of Confucian ethics. Meanwhile, the chapter attempts to explore some key ethical arguments in Moism, where special attention is given to the Moist conceptions of "inclusive care" (*jianai*, 兼愛) and "reciprocal well-being" (*jiaoli*, 交利) in an effort to bring them into the conversation with the contemporary discourse regarding ethics and the common good.

While some similarities exist between Moism and Confucianism, such as respect for authority and the hierarchical nature of society, acknowledgement of the value of tradition, promotion of meritocratic government, and seriousness of social commitment, Moism disagrees strongly with certain essentials of Confucian ethics. For example, the Moists are quite skeptical about the Confucian notion of moral sentiments based on natural human feelings. As a result, they engage themselves in a self-conscious search for objective moral standards and ethical principles that, they believe, would better the socio-political well-being of humanity. Meanwhile, the notion of "inclusive care" in Moism, in contrast to "care with distinction" in Confucianism, has both religious and ethical implications that are less clear in Confucianism.

Moism with its critical insight is significant not only because it was historically an important philosophical school in its own right, but also because as a rival school of Confucianism, it has explicitly pointed out problems with some key ethical arguments given by Confucianism which deserve further exploration. The Moist ethical system emphasizes unity in diversity, the importance of interpersonal relationships, the role of community, and the authority of the ruler. As such, the Moist common good approach offers an alternative way to addressing how self-interest as an individual motive is operated within the Moist rationalized scheme of the common interest, where community is seen as an organism sustained by the idea of mutuality and reciprocity. Moist ethics strives to realize its ideal of a harmonious world by focusing on the importance and methods of "doing good for the society." The good is defined not only through the sage-king tradition but also through coherent moral guides that entail both a transcendent power and a consequentialist principle that promotes and encourages good social behavior.

This chapter will address the problem of common good ethics in general, and the common good theory in Moist philosophy in particular. It will also expound certain crucial arguments that differentiate Moism as a tradition from

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[2] Up until relatively recently, interest in Moist moral philosophy has been increasing. Scholars such as A. C. Graham, Benjamin Schwartz, Ian Johnston, Chad Hansen, and Chris Fraser have all been engaged in Moist studies. As a matter of fact, the Moist teaching had a special appeal to Chinese in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and it has seen some signs of revival in the works of some Chinese intellectuals such as Kang Youwei who claims to be a Confucian. At the same time, Christian missionaries such as James Legge and those Chinese modernizers who were influenced by Christian and Western/Enlightenment thought were also attracted to the Moist ideas of inclusive care and social justice. For a detailed discussion on the thought of Kang Youwei, see Chen (2013). For the issue on the "moral vacuum" in China, see Fan (2013).

Confucianism in the relevant context. It is my contention that developing resources for a Moist critique of Confucianism is significant, because its critical insight does not originate from the confines of modern Western liberal tradition (or "Western learning," *xixue*, 西學), but from within the intellectual and cultural milieu of early China itself. Although the type of ideal communities, or structured organizations, advocated by the Moists is by no means the civil society we have in mind today, there are certain things we can learn from Moist moral philosophy: particularly, its conception of the good in terms of mutuality, reciprocity, and commonality. It is crucial to note that when we talk about the reconstruction of moral philosophy in contemporary China, we must recognize both the possibilities and limits of ALL our traditions, which include Moism as well as other ethical theories besides Confucianism.

6.2 Inclusive Care

According to a signature principle of Moist ethics, "inclusive care" or "inclusive caring" (*jianai*, 兼愛), that is, the principle of undifferentiated love, contrasts with the Ru/Confucian (*ru*, 儒) doctrine of "differentiated care" or "love with distinction" (*qinqin yousha*, 親親有殺), according to which one should care more for one's families and close relatives than for strangers.[3] Before getting into a detailed discussion of the Ru-Mo debate on this issue, it is important to examine the Moist concept of *jianai*. The Chinese character "inclusivity" (*jian*, 兼) indicates a person holding rice shoots in both hands, suggesting the notion of sameness or an identical concern. The most popular English translation of *jianai* is "universal love" (Chan 1973; Graham 1978; Johnston 2010). A. C. Graham, for instance, says in his *Later Moist Logic Ethics and Science*, "He (Mozi) calls it *jianai*, which we can hardly avoid translating as 'loving everyone' or 'universal love'" (Graham 1978, pp. 12). However, in *Disputers of the Tao*, a book written more than a decade later, Graham corrects himself by saying that the translation of "universal love" is "convenient but rather misleading" and as such he has replaced "universal love" with "a concern for everyone" (Graham 1989, pp. 41). Graham insists that the word *jian* implies the idea of "for each" rather than "for all" and that the word *ai* means "an unemotional will" to do good rather than harm to people (Graham 1989, pp. 41). Graham has made a good point here, for the Moist concept of love (*ai*) which, in contrast to Kongzi's "benevolence" (*ren*, 仁) and Mengzi's "compassionate heart" (*ceyin zhi xin*, 惻隱之心), is more rational than intuitive and emotional. As for *jian*, the Mozi does not make a clear distinction between "for each" and "for all." In fact, in the chapter *Xiaoqu*

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[3] The term *jianai* is traditionally translated as "universal love." In this paper I adopt the translation of "inclusive care" that has been used in recent years by scholars like Chris Fraser and Dan Robins. I think that the concept of inclusiveness points to an all-embracing gesture that is connected to Mozi's ideal-type of a social community, and that the word "care" is a more rationalized one than "love," for the latter may bear emotionality and partiality that the Moist ethics tries to avoid.

(*Choosing the Lesser*, 小取), "inclusive care" is also called "universal care" or "generalized love" (*zhouai*, 周愛). The word *zhou* implies "universality" in the sense that it is both "generalized" and "all-embracing," and the latter indicates clearly the idea of "for all." This point is worth noting because the idea of "for all" is intrinsically connected to the Moist argument concerning community and the common good, which I shall discuss later. The *Mozi* states:

> Loving people depends on having a universal care (*zhouai*) of people first and then there is love of people. Not loving people depends on not having a universal care of people. There is loss of a universal care and, for this reason, there is not loving people (*Mozi* 45.8).

The argument made by the Moists here is that in order to meet the requirement of loving people, a person needs to love all people all the time. Failing to love even one person at any time invalidates the description of "loving people." The notion of "loving people" reminds us of a section in the *Lunyu* (*Analects*, 論語), when Fan Chi, one of Kongzi's disciples, asks about the meaning of benevolence, and the Master responds with reference to "loving people" (*Analects* XII.22). Quite obviously, both Moist and Confucian philosophers accept the idea of "loving people." The question, however, is how to practice love, as well as how to define the emotion. For the Confucians, the way of benevolence should start with a shared experience with one's family members before being cultivated and extended to everyone else. For the Moists, however, the way of benevolence should start with an awareness of a principle of love that goes beyond the relationships of kinship, since care for one's family is characterized by emotions and intuitions, and care for everyone else is characterized by rationality and impartiality. Mozi uses the word *jian*, while *bie* or *sha* (discriminating and partial) are used by the Confucians.

In his trilogy of essays on "Inclusive Care," Mozi begins the argument with the statement that the cause of social disorder comes from a lack of inclusive care, or reciprocal love, something that should exist within all human relationships. The second essay goes further to explain that those who follow the principle of benevolence should practice impartial love that will benefit all people and eliminate the world's harms. The third essay discusses the difference between inclusive care and discriminative care, supplemented by examples from ancient sage-kings, who practiced inclusive care. The conception of inclusive care is "revolutionary" in the sense that it has challenged the Confucian moral tradition, which is so deeply rooted in the familial relations and is context-laden and role/ritual-based. Moist philosophy has been interpreted as a thought system par excellence that goes to the opposite pole of Confucianism, since its understanding of universal love deconstructs Confucian ritual practices. Wing-Tsit Chan, for example, points out that "What distinguishes the Moist movement is its doctrine of universal love: other people's parents, families, and countries are to be treated like one's own. This is of course absolutely incompatible with the basic Confucian doctrine of love with distinctions or discriminations" (Chan 1973, pp. 211). A.C. Graham also observed that the Moist ideal of "inclusive care" or "universal love" that goes beyond the relations of kinship is not only alien to Confucian thinking, but "to the whole Chinese civilization as in

these few centuries it assumes its lasting shape"[4] (Graham 1989, pp. 43). In the *Mengzi* (Mencius《孟子》), we find a well-known passage where Mengzi criticizes two philosophers from rival schools, namely, the Daoist Yangzi and the Moist Mozi:

> The doctrines of Yang Zhu and Mo Di fill the world. If a doctrine does not lean toward Yang then it leans toward Mo. Yang is "for oneself" (*weiwo*, 為我), which involves denial of one's ruler; Mo is "inclusive care" (*jianai*, 兼愛), which entails denial of one's parents. To deny one's parents or to deny one's ruler is to be an animal. (Mengzi 3B9.9)[5]

This is quite a straightforward and strong critique of the two philosophical schools that were rivals of Confucianism at Mengzi's time. The animal analogy is used by Mengzi to emphasize the difference between the ethical human and the unethical beast. According to Mengzi, what distinguishes a human being from an animal is that the former is an ethical being. Therefore, to say someone is like an animal is to say that he has no morality. Obviously, those who interpret the Moist doctrine as one that denies family and filial piety agree with Mengzi's line of thought. Despite the fact that this kind of interpretation of the Moist "inclusive care" has some merits, it remains problematic because there is no evidence in the *Mozi* to show that Moism categorically denies family or rejects filiality. To the contrary, not respecting family, or not respecting parents, as Mozi sees it, is the root of social evils. For instance, when asked about the most serious social problems of his time, Mozi lists what he calls six "harms" (*hai*, 害) in society: (1) states attacks each other; (2) families dispossess each other; (3) people rob each other; (4) ruler and minister do not respect each other; (5) father and son do not love each other; (6) the elder and younger do not help each other (*Jianai*, section 16). Of these six harms, three relate to family. Rather than downplaying the role of familial relationships, Mozi is affirming the proper social norms that are also crucial in Confucianism. For Mozi, it is morally right to be loving parents and filial children, for they are the natural feelings of any human being (though self-interested in a broad sense, according to Mozi).[6] On the other hand, the idea of "inclusive care" is seen as compatible with, and even supportive of filial piety and traditional family structures.[7] In fact, Mozi discusses filial piety as a virtue, which implies that one has special responsibilities to one's family and parents.

I am not suggesting that Mozi is secretly a Confucian. My argument is that, for the Moists, the problem of the Confucians is not that they are filial, but they are filial in the wrong way, because the argument of "inclusiveness" presupposes that it is

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[4] Graham continues to say, "No one else finds it tolerable to insist that you should be as concerned for the other man's family as for your own. The doctrine in any case involved a complication, not clarified until the refinement of the ethical system by later Mohists (Moists)" (Graham 1989, p. 43).

[5] The translation is based on Van Norden (2008, p. 85). There are modifications and added Chinese phrases in brackets.

[6] When Mozi argues for the necessity of authority in society, he uses the family as an example tin order to explain why without authority the proper relationship of father and son would not be maintained. See Robins (2008, pp. 386–387).

[7] For a detailed discussion of the Confucian concept of filial piety, please see Wang (2013).

one's duty to see that the needs of one's family are provided for. The differences between the two can be seen in two aspects: first, the Moists do not hold that family relations should be preserved at all costs; second, the Moists view that the "value of care" is one that should be placed above the mere fact of blood-relatedness. Indeed, they are skeptical about the logical extension of care across the board (i.e., from inside to outside, or from private to public) if there is a priority of the care of one's family over the care of strangers.[8] The Moists question the Confucian claim that filial piety can effectively transcend the confines of kinship to achieve the ideal of universal humane love. The rationale behind the Moist critique of "filial piety," a la Confucianism, is that the notion of distinction and preference fails to promote a kind of "common good" that should be principle-based rather than role-based. Familial love and family-specific norms, though important, might entail too many emotional configurations and preferential treatments that may undermine the impartiality and fairness needed for the common good.[9] The difference between universality and partiality here points to a key difference between the two schools in relation to maintaining harmonious human relationships within society. Thus Mozi says:

> If there were inclusive care in the world, with the care of others being like the care of oneself, would there still be anyone who was not filial? If one were to regard father, older brother and ruler like oneself, how could one not be filial? Would there still be anyone who did not feel compassion? (*Mozi* 14.3)

> If one were to regard the states of others as one regards one's own, then who would raise up one's state to attack the state of another? It would be like attacking one's own. If one were to regard the cities of others as one regards one's own, then who would raise up one's city to attack the city of another? It would be like attacking one's own. If one were to regard the families of others as one regards one's own, then who would raise up one's family to overthrow that of another? It would be like overthrowing one's own (*Mozi* 15.3).

The citations above indicate that Moists take a reverse approach to social harmony. In other words, for the Moists, the notion of harmony ranges from the general to the specific, and from the impartial to the partial. Confucians, on the other hand, argue that harmony ranges from the specific to the general, and from the partial to the impartial. Furthermore, the notion of a "general society" through "inclusiveness" in Moism is directed towards the concept of group and community (*qun*, 群) that is wider and more abstract than the kinship relations of Confucianism.

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[8] We have a famous saying in the *Mengzi* (1A.7): "Treat with respect the elders in my family, and then extend that respect to include the elders in other families. Treat with tenderness the young in my own family, and then extend that tenderness to include the young in other families. Then you may move the world in the palm of your hand."

[9] Scholars like Feng Youlan (Fung Yulan) link the Moist idea of inclusive care to its social context. He points out that Mozi's philosophy represents "a logical extension" of the professional ethics of the class of knight-errant from which the School arises, suggesting that "exclusive care" is more practical for warriors. Since all humans were self-regarding, according to Feng, the Confucian teachings are more practicable, which is why Confucianism had a longer-lasting impact on Chinese history. See Fung Yulan (1948, p. 53). This kind of reading fails to see the larger ethical scheme that Moism attempts to establish.

From another perspective, the principle of inclusiveness maintained by the Moist school involves a higher level of ethical engagement than one that is based on filial piety. More specifically, the principle of inclusiveness is defined by something more transcendent than human sentiments or affections represented by filial piety. To validate this point, Moism links inclusive care with the idea of the "Will of Heaven" (*tianzhi*, 天志), or the "Purpose of Heaven" (*tainyi*, 天意), arguing that while filial piety is the natural expression of human feelings, establishing one's will (*lizhi*, 立志) *via* the rational practice of inclusive care requires a kind of will endowed by a higher power, through which one can obtain, to borrow Tristram Engelhardt's phrase, a "God's-eye perspective" (Engelhardt 2013). It is here that we see an explicit religious implication from which the practice of inclusive care is derived. Meanwhile, the Moists insist that the principle of inclusive care is possible, as one sees in the story of the three ancient sage-kings. They firmly believe that a principle-based ethic works better because it avoids discrimination and bias led by emotional configurations and personal/particular preferences. Accordingly, the Moists intend to replace the moral sentiment of the Confucian notion of benevolence (*ren*, 仁) with the impartial moral principle of the Moist notion of care (*ai*, 愛). In this respect, the former is more specific and context-laden, while the latter is more general and standardized. The insistence on clear standards is deeply rooted in Mozi's fear that the Confucian elevation of love, with its distinctions and relational orientation, would exacerbate people's tendencies toward partiality that will ultimately damage the rational distinction between right and wrong. Therefore, they search for more objective moral standards and unified principles by which to guide action and reform society. The core thought driving Moism is that in both ethics and politics, as in any other practical areas in life, one can indeed find and apply objective standards and unified principles. A passage from the essay *Fayi* (*On Standards and Rules*, 法儀) explains the necessity of standards and standardization as follows:

> Our Master Mozi said, "Those in the world who perform any task cannot work without standards and rules (*fayi*). To work without standards and rules, yet complete their task successfully, it is impossible. Even officers serving as generals or ministers have models; the hundred artisans performing their tasks, they too all have models. The hundred artisans form squares with the L-square, circles with the compass, straight edges with the string, vertical lines with the plumb line… Whether skilled or unskilled, all artisans take these five as standards and rules" (*Mozi* 4.1).

In the chapter *Feiming* (*Against Fate*, 非命), Mozi also talks about the necessity to establish standards and rules:

> In general, it is not permissible, when making a statement, to fail to establish a standard before speaking. If you do not establish a standard first before speaking, it is like using the upper part of a potter's revolving wheel and trying to establish the direction of the sunrise and sunset with it (*Feiming* III).

This emphasis on standards and impartiality also leads to an emphasis on rationality in the process of moral decision, represented by the model of the "threefold tests of theory:" (1) its basis, (2) its verifiability, and (3) its applicability. For the

Moists, in order to determine the validity of any moral argument, one must be able to evaluate the assumptions upon which it is based, the conditions under which it can be verified, and the situations to which it can be applied. The principle of unifying moral codes and conducts must be established *via* a proper process of distinguishing. This is the very reason why the Moists, especially the late-Moists, are so concerned with the methodology of discrimination (*bian*, 辨/辯), that is, the logical distinction between right and wrong in any given moral judgment.

Hence, the *Mozi* questions the logical possibility of ethical extension in Confucian moral reasoning by retaining "filial piety" as the core value of its ethical system. This point can be illustrated through another example taken from the *Mengzi* (3A5), where Mengzi is engaged in a debate with Yizi, a Moist philosopher, on the nature of love and care. As we know, Mengzi holds to the basic Confucian doctrine that our concerns and care for another are graded according to the concrete relationships we have with that person. The passage begins when Mengzi questions Yizi as to why he, as a Moist, would give his parents a lavish burial ceremony, given that a Moist should reject ritual practices. Yizi responds to Mengzi's question with a quotation from the *Shujing* (*Book of Documents*, 書經), which says, "The ancients tended the people like taking care of the baby." What Yizi tries to say here is that our concerns for all people should be the same, and such concern should start with one's own parents. Then Mengzi asks if Yizi truly believes that a person's affection for his elder brother's son is the same as his affection for his neighbor's baby, and he introduces a scenario about a crawling baby who is about to fall into a well.

This point brings to mind the famous argument made by Mengzi regarding the notion of a compassionate feeling (*aka* a sprout intuition), which we all experience when seeing a baby fall into a well. In this case, it surely does not matter whether it is our elder brother's son or our neighbor's baby. Does Mengzi here take a Moist position to say that love or care after all has no distinction? When discussing this passage, David B. Wong defends Mengzi's position by contending that Mengzi is talking about two different situations: one is the normal situation in which there is a priority of affection for one's elder brother's son over one's neighbor's baby; the other is an emergent situation, where we see a baby who is about to fall into a well, in which there is no distinction at this decisive ethical moment (Wong 2002, pp. 203–204). Although Wong's explanation is quite sound, it discusses two very different situations, and avoids answering the Moist question of how we can ensure that someone's moral intuition of non-exclusiveness at a crucial moment can be utilized in a normal situation which is, after all, the primary concern of the ethicist. In other words, the Moist questions if we can trust the psychologically intuitive compulsion as a normative moral principle. The reason for this doubt comes from the Moist assumption that self-interest, or self-regarding love, is an important aspect of human nature, and that we need to ensure that this self-regarding love can be transformed into regard for the care of others in moral considerations of daily practice. From the point of view of Moism, the ethical consciousness of "caring for others like caring for oneself" requires more than moral intuition. Something else is needed, aside from the divine command mentioned earlier, to make our caring and regard for others possible. The principle of inclusiveness does not attempt to do away with the

familial relationships, nor does it intend to overturn all family-specific roles and rules. Rather, it offers a way to supplement what is lacking, as the Moists believe, in the Confucian "contextualized" paradigm of emotional or intuitive reasoning.

Moreover, the debate between the Moists and the Confucians with regard to the notions of distinction and non-distinction, or partiality and impartiality, has a lot to do with the idea of "extension of affection" (*tuien*, 推恩), which in itself is promoted by Mengzi, and later adopted by Confucianism:

> Treat with respect the elders in my family, and then extend that respect to include the elders in other families. Treat with tenderness the young in my own family, and then extend that tenderness to include the young in other families (*Mengzi* 1A.7).

While acknowledging that Confucian ethics are correct in affirming the special bond between familial relations as fundamental in human life, the Moists emphasize the difficulty, if not implausibility, of developing kinship *ren*/care to all-inclusive *ren*/care through the method Mengzi has suggested. Yet it should be noted that the notion of "extension" insisted upon by Mengzi implies an important message that may be ignored by the Moists and contemporary commentators. That is, by speaking of extension, Mengzi has shifted moral sensibility from an innate nature, or the external divine demand as suggested by Mozi, to the fluid and developmental aspect of human character. That is, extension indicates a process of moral self-cultivation.

6.3   Reciprocal Well-Being

In the *Mozi*, the principle of "inclusive care" is directly connected to the principle of "reciprocal well-being" (*jiaoli*, 交利), another key element of Moist philosophy. This principle provides both the incentive as well as applicable means for people to practice "inclusive care." According to the Moist point of view, reciprocity or mutuality (*jiao*) helps to explain how and why the principle of inclusiveness can be applied and maintained. Traditionally, the phrase *jiaoli* is translated as "mutual benefits," and as such, scholars in Moist studies tend to see self-interest as the primary motive for a Moist to promote care and love. It follows that the Moists are sometimes depicted as "amoral rational calculators" and "reciprocity" is seen as an argument based on self-interest. Benjamin Schwartz, for instance, makes a claim that "all men and women, whether they be fathers, mothers, teachers, or rulers, tend to be non-loving and self-interested" (Fraser 2008, pp. 437).[10] Philip J. Ivanhoe also argues that in the Mozi tradition, people could be motivated to care for others *only* by seeing that doing so they can benefit themselves (Fraser 2008, pp. 437). Wing-Tsit Chan holds the view that "For Confucius, moral life is desirable for its own sake whereas for Mo Tzu (Mozi) it is desirable because of the benefits it brings"

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[10] For a detailed exploration on the self-interest thesis, please see Fraser (2008), where the author explains different kinds of self-interests in Moism and argues that the Moist theory of motivation has been largely misunderstood by being reduced to the single dimension of self-interest.

(Chan 1973, pp. 211). Li Shenglong has suggested that the Confucian-Moist debate lies in their different interpretations of the word care/love (*ai*). For Mengzi, it is part of the consideration of human nature, whereas for Mozi, it is part of the concern for utility (Li 1996, pp. 6–7). All scholars mentioned here seem to look at Moism from a Confucian perspective.

I am using the term "well-being" here instead of the commonly translated word "benefit." The concept of "well-being" is usually used in philosophy to describe what is non-instrumentally or ultimately good, whereas the word "benefit" suggests strongly a degree of utility with which Moism is usually identified. I intend to explicate that an instrumental interpretation of Moism tends to ignore the implied notion of "justifiable equality" (*gongping*, 公平) and "justifiable benefits" (*zhengli*, 正利) in the principle of "inclusive care," and the element of the "divine will" as the highest standard in Moist ethical reasoning suggests an ultimate good beyond pure utilitarian concerns. Meanwhile, "benefit" in Moism does not always point to the idea of benefiting oneself; instead, it aims at a common interest where both self and others are better off. The second point is extremely important because it is associated with the Moist argument of rightness, or justice, (*yi*, 義) in light of the Moist vision of how the common good is understood. For the Moist, the highest social good is constitutive of the ultimate moral goal.

We need to understand that the Moist principle of "reciprocal well-being" mainly concerns itself with the issue of practicability of moral principles. As mentioned earlier, the Moists are skeptical about moral intuitions suggested by Mengzi, and require an alternative to ensure moral actions among people. The solution for the Moists is to start with something low and basic to achieve a high and ultimate goal. Specifically, they speak of self-interest or self-regarding care as one of the motivations to achieve the moral goal of inclusive and non-discriminative care. Chris Fraser has rightly pointed out that Moists "recognize that self-interest is among the common motives for which people act" (Fraser 2008, pp. 438). Here, Fraser follows Nivision's argument that Moism puts forth a proposal directing people to follow a moral code by harnessing their self-interest via a means of "a suitable structure of constrains and inducements" (Fraser 2008, pp. 440). However, he quickly adds that self-interest cannot be the sole reason for people to act morally; otherwise, it would be difficult to explain why Moists are as concerned with the question of right and wrong as they are with the question of justice and justification (Fraser 2008, pp. 440).

Are there other possible reasons that are not utilitarian concerns motivated by self-interest? One is surely the "will of Heaven." Scholars such as Cai Renhou and Chen Wenmei have observed that the Moist concept of inclusiveness cannot be viewed independently from its argument based on the "will of Heaven," because the practice of inclusive care is considered to follow the will of Heaven (Cai 1978, pp. 42; Chen 1988, pp. 191). Thus, inclusive care is also referred to as "Heavenly virtue" (*tiande*, 天德), which directs towards an ultimate good and ultimate benefit that goes beyond human calculations. This "Heavenly virtue" is also known as the *dao* (way) of humanity. In the *Mozi*, "righteousness" is thus understood as "rightness" (*zheng*, 正) and objective rightness or fairness (*gongyi*, 公義) that calls for equal treatment rather than differentiation. It follows that Mozi does not deny

self-interest but views morality as something other than self-interest. The following passage denotes the "Will of Heaven:"

> Now how do I know what Heaven desires and what does it hate? Heaven desires righteousness (*yi*) and hates unrighteousness (*buyi*). In the world, where there is righteousness there is life; where there is unrighteousness there is death. Where there is righteousness there is wealth; where there is unrighteousness there is poverty. Where there is righteousness there is order; where there is unrighteousness there is disorder…. The Son of Heaven does not follow his own wishes in bringing about what is right. There is Heaven to rectify him (*Mozi* 26.2).

For Mozi, from a higher vantage point, it is the will of Heaven to implement inclusiveness (love for all) in the world rather than practicing inclusiveness only because of its usefulness and efficacy. If the will of Heaven represents the highest standards and rules, the rulers, who are ranked highest in the Moist hierarchical political structure, should be compliant with the will of Heaven. Nevertheless, how can a ruler know whether he is compliant? Mozi's answer to this question is two-fold: (1) The one who practices righteousness is noble and wise (i.e., he is endowed with virtue and wisdom); (2) Heaven is able to punish and reward according to what the ruler has done. Mozi also uses examples from ancient texts to validate his argument that inclusive care and overflowing love (*fanai*, 泛愛) will eventually lead to the well-being of humanity. Yet, the question remains as to how the first argument can be applied to common people who may not be as virtuous or wise as the sage-ruler. Mozi has acknowledged this problem and as such uses the utility argument to make his theory more attractive and practical. It is here that Mozi brings in the idea of "interest" (*li*, 利) to respond to the Confucian critique that inclusive care is contrary to human nature and almost impossible to implement in daily life.[11] By recognizing self-interest as part of human nature, Mozi attempts to convince people that the practice of inclusive care, with its emphasis on reciprocity and mutuality, does not hurt self-interest; instead, it benefits self-interest. To emphasize this point, Mozi cites the saying from the *Daya* (大雅): "No words are without response and no virtue is without reward. If you present me with a peach, I will repay with a plum," claiming those who love others must themselves be loved (*Mozi* 16.13).[12]

Mutuality is therefore a means to ease people's worry that "inclusive care" is too difficult to practice. Nevertheless, even though Mozi accepts self-interest, it is by no means the principal reason for his establishment of moral rules. The following dialogue between Wu Mazi, a Confucian follower, and Mozi in the chapter *Gengzhu* (耕柱) illustrates this point:

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[11] In the chapter *Jianai* III, Mozi poses the hypothetical question as to whether inclusiveness is too difficult to practice (it is like "holding up the Mount Tai and leaping with it across the Yellow River"). He has offered the following answers to respond to the challenge by his opponents: (1) it is not contrary to the natural feelings of human beings; (2) it was practiced by the four sage-kings in the past; (3) it does not harm filial piety; and (4) if the ruler is delighted in practicing inclusive care, common people would be encouraged and follow his example.

[12] Chris Fraser calls the utility bent (i.e., the consequentialist bent) of Moism a "practice consequentialism" that is not grounded in a single principle, but based on a loose notion of human welfare. See Fraser (2009, p. 148).

Wu Mazi spoke to Master Mozi, saying "You practice inclusive care for all in the world yet there is no benefit. I do not practice inclusive care for all in the world yet there is no harm. In both instances, nothing has been achieved so how can you claim that you are right and I am wrong?"

Master Mozi said, "Suppose now someone lights a fire and one man is bringing water which he will pour on it and another is gathering fuel with which he will increase it. In both cases, nothing has been achieved so which of the two men do you commend?"

Wu Mazi said, "I regard the intention of the one who is bringing water as right and that of the one who is gathering fuel as wrong."

Master Mozi said, "I also regard my intention as right and yours as wrong."

…

Wu Mazi spoke to Master Mozi saying: "I am different from you. I am not able to care inclusively. I love the people of Zou more than I love the people of Yue. I love the people of Lu more than I love the people of Zou. I love the people of my district more than I love the people of Lu. I love the people of my family more than I love the people of my district. I love my parents more I love the people of my family. I love myself more than I love my parents…. If someone strikes me, I feel the pain, but if I strike someone, the pain is not mine. Why then should I not prefer the pain of striking someone to the pain of being struck myself? This is the reason why I would kill another to benefit myself rather than be killed to benefit another."

Master Mozi said: "Is your way of thinking to be kept secret or is it to be told to others?"

Wu Mazi replies: "Why should I keep my way of thinking a secret? I shall tell others."

Master Mozi said: "In that case, then, if one person agrees with you, one person will want to kill you to benefit himself. If ten persons agree with you, ten persons will want to kill you to benefit themselves. If everyone in the world agrees with you, then the world will want to kill you to benefit themselves" (*Mozi* 46.4; 18–19).

The passage above is clearly targeting the Confucian notion of graded and discriminative love, although a Confucian would argue that the idea of killing someone else to benefit oneself is not part of the Confucian doctrine. However, what I intend to do through this citation is to illustrate that self-interest, or benefiting oneself, is not an argument maintained by Moism either, and thus the claim that "the Moists are amoral rational calculators" is baseless and unwarranted.

If we accept that self-interest is a person's principal source of ethical motivation, then the Moist philosophy would resemble a Hobbesian social contract theory, according to which persons make contracts with one another in order to avoid the potential harms due to the conflicts of (self)interest. No doubt, contracts are usually directed toward mutual benefit and trust, as we see today, but according to Moist theory, reciprocity with its emphasis on the standardized and objective principles does not yield to a normative structure for contracts. The social contract theory in the West, at least in its classical form, views the human self as independent, autonomous and rational, capable of transcending its contingent circumstances, including personal relationships. However, this may not be the case with Moist ethics, even though its bottom-up ethical argument is more rational compared to that of Confucianism. The problem facing the Moist is how to establish the relational aspect of the social bond on the one hand, and how to set up an agreement founded not necessarily on the actual consent itself, but instead on objective manifestation of consent. One solution may be to establish a common ground via the principle of utility, that is, through consequentialist reasoning.

Throughout its history, Moist ethics has been criticized because of its utilitarian bent. One severe criticism comes from Mengzi, who believes it is wrong for Mozi to focus too much on the notion of benefit. Yet Mengzi does not question utility per se, but rather the effectiveness of Mozi's version of consequence/utility. In the *Mengzi*, for example, Mengzi corrects a fellow scholar, Song Keng, who attempts to deter the kingdoms of Qin and Chu from engaging in hostility. Song Keng tells Mengzi that he plans to persuade the rulers of the two kingdoms that warfare between them is "not to their benefit" (*buli*, 不利), to which Mengzi responds:

> Your intention is indeed great. But your plan is unacceptable. If you persuade the kings of Qin and Chu by means of benefit (*li*), the kings will be delighted in the thought of benefit and stop their armies….This will force the ministers to serve their lords because they delight in benefit; it will force sons to serve their fathers with thoughts of benefit…. Because of this, lords and ministers, fathers and sons, and elder and younger siblings will end up abandoning humaneness and righteousness and embrace benefit in their interactions. In such a state, there has never been a kingdom that did not fall to ruin (*Mengzi* 6B4.5).

In the above passage, Mengzi ostensibly argues against benefit as the sole motive for someone's action. However, if we look at the passage more closely, it is clear that Mengzi considers the consequences of acting consciously for the sake of benefit to be counter-productive to the goal of attaining benefit, this being the reason for someone not to act with such a motive. What Mengzi is proposing is that one's action should not be led by benefit (self-interest) as the sole value, but there is nothing negative about considering benefit in itself. Though Moism is not explicitly mentioned in the above passage, it is usually read as a direct critique of Mozi's principle of utility. However, this kind of criticism may not be fair to Moism, as its focus is centered on mutual benefit rather than any kind of self-regarding benefit. The *Mozi* states: "The business of humaneness (*ren*) is to promote the well-being and benefits of the world and to eliminate social harms" (*Jianai* III). Thus, Mozi condemns conduct that is merely self-beneficial. For Mozi, benefit ultimately relates to the notion of "harmonizing with rightness" (*yizhihe*, 義之和). The central idea here is the harmony between benefit (*li*) and rightness (*yi*) rather than the maximization of one of either value. The criticism of the utility also ignores another important aspect of Mozi's ethical reasoning, that is, the interconnectedness between an individual's well-being and the well-being of the society. For Mozi, this interconnectedness between one individual and another must be handled with the sanctity of promises, known as "the Will of Heaven," which aims to constrain any kind of immoral desire and unilateral self-interest. Behind the argument of inclusive care lies the real intention of Moist philosophy, which seeks to promote the value of a society that transcends family and its common good.

Yet Moism has its own problems. Since the Moist ethics demands complete impartiality towards others and the agreement of the community, the common good has meant the subjection of the particular to the universal, or at least when we comprehend a particular good, we have to place ourselves above that particular good. Further, because Mozi's universality and principle-centeredness is not rooted in a liberal self and individual autonomy of the Western Enlightenment tradition, it fosters another kind of universality that can easily be transformed into a totalitarian

politics. Like Confucianism, Moist philosophy attempts to provide a moral prescription as to how to maintain harmonious and caring relationships in society, but the Moist universal prescription in terms of the conception of inclusiveness remains vague in many ways: Why should we be in a caring relationship in the first place? If mutuality or reciprocity means that caring may not be an unconditional love, how can we ensure that one is not forced or compelled into a caring relationship if he does not share the ethical ideal of the community? Is it not difficult to maintain this kind of commitment unless we are to "imagine ourselves in the position of equal persons who jointly agree on and commit themselves to principles" accepted by the community? As Mozi has acknowledged the possibility that ideal caring interactions may not be present in all social relations, even in family relations, then if the relationship is devoid of caring, can one, as a member of the community, relinquish it? As Gregory Bateson notes, "a human being in relation with another has very limited control over what happens in that relationship. He is a *part* of a two-person unit, and the control which any part can have over any whole is strictly limited" (Bateson 2000, pp. 267). The common good in its broadest sense is supposed to be enjoyed not by individuals only, but by persons in their relation to others. Yet the Moists cannot ensure that that will be the case; what is left is nothing but an aggregation of separate useful goods, either material or spiritual.

Although the notion of "agreement" or "consent" (*tong*, 同) in the *Mozi* does not result in the subordinates' total obedience to the superior, it does not offer specific measurements to ensure the inviolability of mutuality. The authority to exercise social justice also remains a problem in Moist ethical reasoning, in that the equality qua inclusive care does not pertain to breaks in the social hierarchical structure in terms of power distribution, as suggested in the following passage:

> Subordinates do not decide what is right for their superiors; rather the superiors decide what is right for their subordinates. Therefore, the common people devote their strength to carrying out their tasks, but they cannot decide for themselves what is right. There are gentlemen to do that for them. The gentlemen devote their strength to carrying out their tasks, but they cannot decide for themselves what is right. There are ministers and officials to do that for them. The ministers and officials devote their strength to carrying out their tasks, but they cannot decide for themselves what is right. There are three high ministers and feudal lords to do that for them. The three high ministers and feudal lords devote their strength to managing the affairs of government, but they cannot decide for themselves what is right. There is the Son of Heaven to do that for them. But the Son of Heaven cannot decide for himself what is right. There is a Heaven to decide that for him (*Mozi* 26.3).[13]

The above top-down structure, which incorporates a multitude of levels of divisions, can be interpreted in different ways. Totalitarian or not, it depends on our interpretation of the notion of "Heaven" and its relationship to the "Son of Heaven," because we cannot exactly define how the "Will of Heaven" functions. However, it is clear that the passage does not show the kind of modern democratic thought we have in mind in the sense that the state is "for the people, "of the people," and "by the people." The Moist ideal society is, after all, based on conceptions of a unified

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[13] Also see *Mozi*, the chapter on *Tianzhi* (*The Will of Heaven*). Watson (2003, pp. 82–83).

whole, a collective group, and the state that is in power. Viewed in this light, we have to conclude that the Moist sense of the common good is limited to its historical and political context.

6.4   Inclusiveness and the Common Good

One of the key issues that face both Moism and Confucianism is the concept of the "common" or "commonality" that defines the scope and the nature of the good. At the same time, both traditions have to deal with the question in terms of an innate sense of ethical principles (emotional or rational) that could function as the basis for the order of society. Like the Confucians, Moists have a collectivist, non-individualist conception of what it is to be human. They conceive of people fundamentally as members of social groups—specifically, the family and the political community— not as autonomous individuals as conceived in contemporary society. As an off-shoot of the Confucian school, Moism shares some similarities with Confucianism in its political philosophy, such as its emphasis on social commitment, the role of leadership and governing, merit-based bureaucracy, and the exemplar of a morally superior person who can be emulated by others. Then how should the common good be understood according to Moist philosophy?

In the Moist ethical system, the most important concept connected to the idea of common good is "righteousness" (*yi*, 義) which also means a "shared interest/ benefit" (*gongyi*, 公益). Although the Moist notion of *yi* refers to "benefits" (*li*), it has two other crucial meanings: (1) being objective or impartial and (2) being public or common, both of which guarantee a more transcendent well-being for a given society. In this context, what is conceived to be good should not be taken as a personal preference, particularly not as a preference of someone (whether state, family, or individual person) who is stronger and more powerful. In the chapter *Jianai*, it states:

> The business of a benevolent person must be to try to promote the world's well-being and to eliminate the world's harms: large states attacking small states, large houses attacking small houses, the strong plundering the weak, the many ill-treating the few, the cunning scheming against the foolish, the noble being arrogant towards the lowly. These are the world's harms (*Mozi* 16.1).

For the Moists, the good, as opposed to the harmful, demands a more egalitarian society as implied in the above statement. Moreover, the notion of inclusive care seems to suggest that righteousness qua rightness and justice means to establish the conditions of social life that would bring about benefits to those who are small, weak, and lowly in society. Here, we see a tendency towards egalitarianism (*qi*, 齊) in Moist thought. That is, it attempts to promote a society in which there is a fair opportunity for advancement to all.

It is here that I would like to say more about the major difference between the Moist *yi* and the Confucian *yi*. For Confucians, *yi* refers to "one's best judgment on

how one disposes oneself in one's relation to others in order to accomplish the recommended action and confidence that what one is doing is appropriate in the circumstances" (Ames 2011, pp. 202). Roger Ames sees *yi* as "appropriateness" that suggests flexibility and consideration of the situation when one makes a moral judgment. Moreover, unlike Moism, the Confucian *yi* bears no relation to egalitarianism. The Moist *yi* is rather a constant principle of rightness that must represent the judgment of fairness and justice that can be standardized and institutionalized. When *yi* is in conflict with other principles such as *xiao* (filial piety), *yi* should override *xiao*. This argument can be seen as in the Ru-Mo (Confucians-Moists) debate on whether a son should cover the crime of his father. For the Confucians, the answer is most certainly affirmative, yet for the Moists, the answer is clearly no. From the standpoint of the Moists, covering-up, even for the family members, would offend against the notion of *yi* (justice). From a Confucian standpoint, however, the Moist formulas of *yi* are too rigid and simple-minded. Ames seems to agree with the Confucians, contending that ethical value is something that grows from human relations rather than from abstract ideas.

In contemporary society, the term "common good" as a moral vision in sociopolitical life is notoriously difficult to define. In the West, the common good is a notion that can be traced back over 2,000 years ago to the writings of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero. Since the Enlightenment of the modern age, the common good has been redefined as a utilitarian ideal, thus representing the greatest possible good for the greatest possible number of individuals, or the sum total of the conditions of social life, thus representing a correlation between the good and the just. The anti-utilitarian liberal ethicist, John Rawls, defines the common good as "certain general conditions that are in an appropriate sense equally to everyone's advantage" (Rawls 1971, pp. 246). The difficulties here lie not only in the impossibility of a consensus regarding those "general conditions," but also in the ambiguity of the idea of "being equally shared." The Moist model of the common good, to borrow this term, resembles in many ways the Rawlsian vision, despite the fact that the Moist notion of "authority" as an absolute and necessary entity may sound too harsh for contemporary democratic ears. For the Moists, promotion of certain common goods such as order, unity, and equality are an integral part of a harmonious human society. In ancient China, that which is considered in both Confucianism and Moism as the "common good" is usually associated with a political community. The state is viewed as a political community unified by a sagacious and ruling personality. As such, the state is an embodiment of the welfare of the general community. While for the Confucian the community is a state-family, for the Moist the world is a state-community.

Yet some scholars would be more skeptical about the possibility of the common good within a particular community except for a specific sociological response, where one invokes a "God's-eye perspective" which can make reference to a canonical morality and canonical common good (Engelhardt 2013). Some even argue that we will face a moral hazard when we insist on the common good without qualifications, since the notion of common good usually presumes the existence of commonality that is often connected to something "universal," or what Rawls describes as

"certain general conditions."[14] In the West, the common good tradition from Plato through Thomas Aquinas and beyond is characterized by an envisioned realm of universals in which the good, the true, and the beautiful exist as eternal and unchanging forms. Today, this kind of universality has been transformed into a discourse of a globalized common good, a "Globalization for the Common Good Initiative." Contemporary ethicists veer towards the belief that a culture of the common good provides for the health, welfare, and dignity of all people and promotes the best interests of everyone. In particular, they see the common good as one that focuses on helping those who are most in need, for example, the poor and the vulnerable. However, the philosophical question with regard to universality implied in the common good remains unsolved.

Any discussion of community and its common good should take into consideration what constitutes the "good" of the community. If community is an abstract or an imagined idea, then the dilemma is to prioritize between the community and the individual within that community. The common good entails the question of parts and wholes. That is, the common good involves the relationship between individuals as parts of a collective entity (such as community, state, or society). Before exploring this relationship between the part and the whole, however, we need to differentiate two kinds of wholes: strong and weak. A strong whole is an entity whose parts cannot exist independently from the whole, while a weak whole is made of parts that are independent of the whole. We can use the example of the hand, which is part of the body, but does not exist, or function, independently from me. If I say that my hand is holding a book, we can infer that I am holding a book. Clearly, my hand in this case is a part of a strong whole, for no body part enjoys an independent status without the existence of my body as a unified whole. However, this analogy does not work well in the case of human communities. If we say that an individual person, X, Y, or Z, may exist independently and meaningfully without a community, what makes a community (even with a consensual commitment) is not just the sum total of X, Y, and Z, but rather an intrinsic mutuality between a community and its individual members through the relationships that exist between the individual members. This kind of problem is relatively easy to solve in Confucianism since the concept of "family" and "kinship" within the Confucian tradition can help transform society from a weak whole into a community as a strong whole. However, how can the Moist deal with this problem if his community is not family-based? How can the Moist ensure the common good is truly for the benefit of the common whole?

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[14] Libertarian philosophers such as Friedrich Hayek, for instance, protest that to assign a "good" to a group is to assign it to something that does not exist, and suspect that the use of communal language is an excuse for the public pursuit of private gain. This suspicion regarding appeals to the good of the community is well grounded in light of the abuses of state power in the contemporary world. See, for instance, Feser (2006).

Indeed, Mozi is aware of this problem when he points out that many individual *yi*(s) are based on individual value judgments and preferences.[15] The common good then is understood, in the Moist sense, as an *agreement* that unifies those individual and particular *yi*, rather than being a total sum of them. But how can this be achieved? The agreement in Moism is known as "reasonable consent" or "conforming upward" (*songtong*, 尚同).[16] The Chinese word *tong* can be translated as "oneness out of diversity" (*yi*, 異) (Yang 2002, pp. 293). It is also related to unity or unification. For the Moist, rightness (*yi*, 義) is inherently social and shared; otherwise, each individual would have his or her own view about what is morally right, and the differences of moral standards would lead to contention and conflicts. Therefore, the concept of the common good in Moism seems to relate to an incorporation of a wide range of conceptions of the good, that is, the individual particular good (*yi*[s] as a plural noun) into a form of a universalized common good (*Yi*). This also refers to the interplay between identity and difference (*tongyi jiaode*, 同異交得). Yet it is not clear in the *Mozi* whether the idea of "conforming upward" can guarantee that everyone in the given community is voluntarily responsible for the common good.

Meanwhile, Mozi's egalitarian position, exemplified by inclusiveness, attempts to ensure that everyone's particular good is equal, and as such, no individual is awarded special favor. In so doing, the common good becomes not only the independent good but also a particular interdependent good. Moreover, an impartial and objective mechanism that goes beyond the common and the particular is needed to secure the operation of mutuality and reciprocity. According to Moist moral philosophy, it can be accomplished by the power of authority through which a social/institutional contract that functions as a constraint (*yue*, 約) is implemented.[17] Identity and unification are emphasized in Moism because they are the only way to achieve and maintain social, economic, and political order. As Johnston has correctly stated:

> What is being opposed here is a society in which there is a multiplicity of standards or viewpoints—in particular, ethical standards. Such a society would be *ipso facto* fragmented and would function badly (Johnston 2010, pp. xli).

According to Moist ethics, two types of authorities exist: the authority of Heaven and the author of the ruler, or the political authority. On the authority of Heaven, the *Mozi* states:

> The will of Heaven is to me like a compass to a wheelwright or a square to a carpenter. The wheelwright uses his compass to check the roundness of every object in the world, saying, "What matches the line of my compass I say is round. What does not match the line of my compass I say is not round." Therefore he can tell in every case whether a thing is round or not, because he has a standard for roundness. The carpenter uses his square to check the

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[15] Chris Fraser has observed that Mozi sees social disorder as the result of "normative disagreement, not individuals' untrammeled pursuit of their own interests" as Hobbes does (Fraser 2009, p. 144).

[16] Chris Fraser translates *shangtong* as "conforming upward", and Ian Johnston translates it as "exalting unity."

[17] In Moism, the word *yue* means both "contract" and "constraint."

squareness of every object in the world, saying, "What matches my square is square. What does not match my square is not square." Therefore he can tell in every case whether a thing is square or not, because he has a standard for squareness (*Mozi* 26.8).[18]

The authority of Heaven, though not a divine lawgiver in a Judeo-Christian sense, functions symbolically to indicate the objectivity of the common interest. For Mozi, we should promote the common well-being of the world, not necessarily because it happens to be the divine command, but because in doing so we harmonize with the divine force of the *yi*, the moral rightness. Moreover, for Mozi, benefiting the world (i.e., the state and the individual) and following the Will of Heaven are co-extensive: the former indicates the immediate effect, while the latter is the ultimate goal. Since choosing the unified common good can be neither arbitrary nor partial, benefiting the world and the Will of Heaven should work hand in hand to serve its purpose.

The objectivity maintained by Mozi is also an attempt to ensure impartiality of judgment and the openness and transparency of the exercise of the authorial power. While the Confucians tend to emphasize the role of a sage-ruler, the Moists have the principle of impartiality of judgment as an objective measurement to supplement the sage-king modality. The role of the sage-ruler in Moism supports the idea of "agreement" or "consent," and is sometimes understood as an "agreement with the superior," or "conforming upward" that inevitably indicates an authoritarian tone. It seems, however, that Mozi attempts to prevent this from happening by introducing the notion of the "Will of Heaven." Whether this method works or not is another issue. Dennis Ahern, for instance, points out that Moist philosophy is inconsistent in its arguments because it is committed to two incompatible moral criteria, that is, a divine command theory and a utilitarian account.[19] Ahern's doubt has generated a series of debates among scholars, who argue whether Moism is a form of utilitarianism or a form of divine command theory. However, these two models are not entirely incompatible. Indeed, the divine command in Moism seeks to limit the power of the political leader because the Will of Heaven cannot be equal to one individual's will. The principle of utility, on the other hand, is the pragmatic basis employed by the Moists to ascertain whether the envisioned common good is truly "common" and "good." The very reason that these two different principles can be used simultaneously is that the Moist notion of "Heaven" (*tian*, 天) does not have the *a priori* absoluteness such as that which exists within the Judeo-Christian tradition.

However, according to Moist philosophy, political authority is a necessary condition for social order. Therefore, a central concern in Moist thought is to secure moral, social, and political order (*qiuzhi*, 求秩). In Moist political theory, this aim can only be achieved by unifying society's moral norms, so that people will agree to

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[18] Also see Burton Watson's translation of the *Mozi*, the chapter on *Tianzhi* (*The Will of Heaven*) (Watson 2003, pp. 82–83).

[19] See Ahern (1976). Ahern's interpretation is challenged in Vorenkamp (1992), where Vorenkamp argues that Mozi is not inconsistent because he subscribes to a form of rule-utilitarianism. According to this kind of reading, what Mozi means is that, because heaven always wills the benefit of the world, following the will of heaven will lead to the benefit of the world.

their *shi-fei* judgments in terms of "intrinsic to-be-doneness and not-to-be-doneness," thus eliminating any potential reasons for conflict. It is quite clear that concepts such as individual rights, individual autonomy, and individual dignity are not part of Moist discourse, but this does lead to the conclusion that Mozi's theory has no room for individuality. The very fact that Mozi recognizes each individual's self-interest and a wide range of conceptions of the good shows his acknowledgement of individuality in a social community. At least, the individual is the starting point for Moist political thought. In fact, his defense of inclusive care shows his awareness of some specific "interest groups" (such as warriors and artisans) that have been ignored in the Confucian hierarchical structure. Moism is the only early Chinese philosophical school to single out the interest of individuals or particular classes that are distinguishable from those of a political state emphasized by Confucian political philosophy. This is why Mozi's society is sometimes labeled as "the states within the states" (*guozhongzhigui*, 國中之國). However, the egalitarian ideal is a problem within the Moist ethical framework, and the Confucians have correctly pointed out this problem. Indeed, Xunzi (荀子), for example, criticizes Moism, pointing out that Mozi accepts sameness/equality (*qi*, 齊), but fails to recognize differences (*ji*, 畸). For Xunxi, to deny graded differences (*man chadeng*, 僈差等) is to deny human emotions and feelings that are part of human nature. (Cai 1978, pp. 92). Therefore, we have to admit that it is very difficult to come up with a coherent theory to schematize how "inclusive care" for the sake of common good can be evoked into a consensual response and by which strategy the idea of shared goodness will be best put to use.

In his essay on Catholic social teaching and the praxis of subsidiarity, Dennis McCann attempts to answer the question posed by the tension between individual's share of responsibility for the common good through the principle of subsidiarity from the perspective of Catholic moral teaching. He writes, "If each person were to become more conscious of the social location(s) from which he or she approaches the common good, we might learn to become more effective in actually achieving it. In so doing, we might also come to recognize just how counterproductive it would be to wait for the emergence of an essential definition of the common good, with substantive social content recognized by all in a universal moral consensus, before we rededicate ourselves to pursuing it" (McCann 2013). Here McCann seems to suggest that even though a consensus on common good is very difficult to obtain, if not impossible, it should not stop society initiating practical works that aim to pursue the common good. In a sense, the Moist communities seem to take a similar position when they call for help for the poor, the weak, and the lowly.

6.5 Moist Ethics and Their Relevance to China Today

Is it possible to establish a new kind of common good that transcends the binary poles of universality and particularity, of collectivity and individuality? After all, the common good has to be worked out practically. Confucian ethics, especially

its model of families, seems to provide us with an alternative that goes beyond the binary poles between liberalism and collectivism. However, we cannot claim that this model is the right one for China today, without being aware of ethical limitations in the Confucian model in terms of the common good; otherwise, the Moist critique, as well as the critiques from other philosophical schools would be nonsensical.[20] Moism is significant in that it has pointed out existent and potential problems when one places too much emphasis on familial relationships as models for social relationships and societal goods. Moism is equally significant in raising the question concerning the rules of ethical reasoning. The Moist critique is particularly relevant today when we are confronted with so many existent social problems in China associated with "familism," "personalism," and "relationalism" that have often become a facade to cover unhealthy and even corrupt social networks (*guanxi*, 關係).

The family-based society within the Confucian political framework can be viewed in its often cited family metaphor of "state-family" (*guojia*, 國家), according to which "a responsible and productive member of one's family is tantamount to governing the country" (Ames 2011, pp. 167).[21] We cannot say here that the Confucians identify the family with the state and the state with the family, since there is a clear distinction between family and state as is stated in the *Great Learning* (*daxue*, 大學). However, the notion of the family-state does suggest that being a "responsible and productive member of one's family" is a necessary condition to govern the state. It also gives rise to the question of whether a good government should be based on a parental model. The Confucian notion of a leader with its family metaphor in many ways seems to be problematic in a postmodern age because it is limited to familial and familiar relationships. Too much emphasis placed on a parental leader within the family metaphor may open the door to vagueness in legal interpretation, loftiness in social judgment, and ambiguity in moral sentiment. Therefore, it would not be surprising to see more and more people in China today asking for the materialization of an ethical system that serve to standardize moral actions and social behaviors. Those in government administration tend to look for efficiency and normative regulations that will be better positioned to handle a complex set of practical concerns and empirical claims. The argument here points to the question of whether governmental institutions should be service-oriented and utility-based, or parents-oriented and virtue-based.

In a sense, the Moist doubts about Confucian moral philosophy was echoed by the "New Cultural Movement" at the beginning of the twentieth century that generated various critiques against the Confucian value system, particularly its notion of filial piety, seeing it as the obstacle most impeding China's modernization. Influenced by Western liberalism, the intellectuals at that time questioned Confucian

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[20] It should be stressed that the Moist philosophy, with its emphasis on the importance of standards and principles, provides a way within the Chinese tradition for correcting the problems of partiality and favoritism in Confucianism such as the *guanxi* network and the *renqing* ethics that are characterized by moral obligations and emotional attachments in interpersonal relations.

[21] For the discussion of the state-family metaphor, see Lo (2013).

familism, accusing it of leading to familial authoritarianism that "only sees the family but not each individual in the family" (只見家,不見人). One of the representatives of such a critique is depicted in a well-known fictional trilogy entitled *Family* (*jia*, 家) by Ba Jin(巴金, 1904–2005), whereby the author ruthlessly attacks the traditional family, suggesting that the common good, if there were such a thing in Confucianism, becomes something that is "dominant" rather than "inclusive."[22] From today's vantage point, Ba Jin's interpretation of the Confucian family may be too radical and one-sided. Nevertheless, the question raised by Moism and New Cultural Movement intellectuals still remains. Recently, Liu Qingping, a scholar from Mainland China, has also argued that Confucian interpersonal ethics is based on filial piety and as such can be seen as a kind of "consanguineous affection" that is in conflict with individuality and sociality (Liu 2003). This affection within the Confucian framework, according to Liu's reading, is not only the foundation but also the supreme principle of human life involving both individual and social dimensions. As a result, Confucianism is neither collectivism nor individualism, but rather what Liu calls "consanguinitism" (*xueqin zhuyi*, 血親主義). Liu's criticism of Confucian filiality resembles the Moist critique of affectionate sentiments in Confucian moral philosophy. While Liu's critique is largely derived from the Western liberal democratic understanding of human nature and human society, Moism offers an internal critique that is independent from a modern European or post-Enlightenment mentality.

However, we still need to ask whether the Moist inclusiveness of care and the Confucian discrimination of love or consanguinitism are utterly incompatible? Wing-Tsit Chan insists that if the Moist doctrine of inclusive care were adopted, "the whole Confucian system would be destroyed from its very foundation" (Chan 1973, pp. 211). This kind of observation is largely reliant on the assumption that Moism is antagonistic to family and familial relations. However, as I have argued in this chapter, inclusiveness in Moism does not necessarily exclude family and familial relations; rather, it speaks of a more pluralist social form of communities and groups that can be family oriented as well as non-family oriented. The reality is, whether we like it or not, as a result of modernization and globalization over the course of the past three decades, China has become increasingly urbanized. The market economy has grown, and continues to grow rapidly. The "one-child generation" will dominate all aspects of Chinese society over the coming decades, and nuclear families with high social mobility have replaced the extended families of the old, upon which Confucian morality is based. One cannot deny that Confucian teachings that address an agricultural-based and clan-centered society are limited in their ability to answer questions raised by modern life, or solve the moral crisis that China is facing today. If Confucianism is to deal with a modern society in which "casual relationships" or "chance relationships" are common, it must go beyond the idea of treating others as a "relative" or "family member." In other words, treating strangers as family in the context of certain institutions can be problematic. The

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[22] The attack on the Confucian model of family is one of dominant themes in the literary works of the new culture moment. Also see Lo (2013).

example of a business partner whom you love as a brother who ends up stealing from you is not uncommon. Modern society speaks more of the importance of "professionalism" as part of civic culture, that is, the conduct, aims, and qualities that characterize a profession or a professional person. By the same token, "flexibility" used in a family situation would be difficult to apply to public life, which demands more standardized rules and equalized treatment.

Of course, it would be unfair to Confucianism to claim that too much emphasis placed on personal relationship would definitely lead to cronyism. In fact, Confucianism has also acknowledged this potential problem and supports the idea of "appointing people on their merits" (*renren wei xian*, 任人唯賢), not "appointing people on their kinship relations" (*renren weiqin*, 任人唯親), even though in reality that may not always be the case. As people tend to assume that different relationships imply different norms of interaction that require different moral obligations, social interaction is often ruled by the principle of behaving according to relational personalism. Some scholars, including Roger Ames, see more positive aspects of what he describes as "role ethics" in Confucianism. Others see the line between inside/inner and outside/outer in role-based Confucianism as one of the major reasons for its lack of impartial and just principles. Here, the criticism comes from too much emphasis being placed on the extension of the ethical behavior from the inside to the outside, and from the private to the public.[23] This is why we believe that even though family should have a special status in promoting the good for the society, it is not the fundamental source for cultivating justice.

Compared to Confucianism, the Moist moral philosophy speaks of both the societal good and mutual interests and thus is closer to the modern notion of professionalism. In history, Moism addresses moral issues that relate to a different type of social structure, which emphasizes more greatly the trans-familial common good. As A. C. Graham suggests, the Moist movement should be seen as "a confluence of merchants, craftsmen and déclassé nobles, briefly emerging as a power in the cities as the feudal order disintegrates, but soon to be thrust back by the new bureaucratized Empire into the station which it has pleased the Heaven to decree for them…" (Graham 1989, pp. 35). Feng Youlan presents the same argument when he suggests that the Moist School reflects "the demands and aspirations of small private producers and especially artisans" (Lowe 1992, pp. 7). In fact, the Moist notion of "inclusive care" resembles, to a certain degree, the Christian idea of all-embracing love, though the former does not specify whether "inclusive care" includes one's enemies. Nevertheless, the Moist ideal of "inclusive care" transcends the particularity of consanguineous affection so one can enter into meaningful relations outside the immediate family. The concept of inclusiveness is important at a time when China has reached a stage where its civil society abides by the philosophies neither of Confucian familism nor of communist collectivism.

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[23] Some scholars would see the idea that "a good family is paradigm for the state" in the Confucian tradition as a "vice" rather than a "virtue" because they regard family as the root of selfishness. For more detailed discussion on this argument, see Chen (2013).

Civil society (*gomgmin shehui*, 公民社會) in the modern world relates to the formation and development of intermediary forms of associations, between the family and the state. Civil society is normally heterogeneous and pluralistic in the sense that it manifests itself in various forms of voluntary societies: religious communities (or spiritual families), professional associations, craft guilds, trade unions, independent research institutions, NGOs, etc. Although the family-oriented model of Confucianism in a way offers a perspective from which to consider what constitutes a community, common interest, and common goods, Confucian ethics are limited in terms of meeting the challenges of a highly diversified and mobile society at a time when human relationships are no longer defined by the set roles and obligations implicit in a hierarchical society. In addition, family-based ethics have their own weaknesses, which can be detrimental if used improperly. That said, to deny the family's role in the pursuit of common good and societal well-being could be equally one-sided and detrimental.[24] This is perhaps why we need to be cautious when using Moism to criticize family-based ethics.

Another important challenge that Moism presents to Confucianism, as discussed earlier, relates the notion of the extension (*tui*, 推) of a moral sensibility that tends towards a good based on moral emotionalism. While Confucian ethics is correct in its affirmation of the special bond that exists between parents and children, Moists recognize the implausibility of developing kinship *ren*/care towards an all-inclusive *ren*/care. At the same time, Moism insists on a basic incompatibility that exists between rationality/impartiality and emotionality/partiality. This issue is more relevant to a contemporary setting, where rationality or principle (*li*, 理) is often replaced by emotions (*qing*, 情) led by a moral, or even legal consideration. It should be stressed that Moist philosophy, with its emphasis on the importance of normative standards and principles, provides a way, within the matrix of Chinese tradition, to correct the problems of partiality and favoritism that exist in the "corrupted" form of Confucianism that is still at work today. Such problems can be observed in the form of social networks (*guanxi*, 關係) and personalization (*renqing*, 人情), characterized by moral obligations and emotional attachments in interpersonal relations in the model of "face and favor." In the absence of personality and partiality, the Moist conception of the good advocates the rationalistic notion of social justice and fairness. Accordingly, the "common good" should be principle-based rather than role-based. Family priorities, familial love, and family-specific norms, though important, may entail too many emotional configurations and preferential treatments that may undermine the impartiality and fairness required to achieve the common good. This critical insight motivates a self-conscious search for objective moral standards by which Moism attempts to unify the moral

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[24] In his paper, Steven Erickson has rightly pointed out, "Families have the capacity to be quite selfish. As inwardly turned realities, they can be a detriment to their surrounding human environment. At the same time, they have the potential for generative activities that are communally supportive as well as receptive to the kind of support communities and likeminded families can provide. Under appropriate conditions, families can be increasingly motivated to aspire to more inclusive and pervasive levels of outreach, consideration, and concern" (Erickson 2013, p. 45–64).

judgments of all individuals in society, thus eliminating social disorder and ensuring that morality prevails. Unlike the Confucians, the Moists look for ethics through a detachment from the personal and an orientation toward what is conceived to be "the common." It is for this reason that we say that application of Moist rationality and impartiality provides a solution to some of the problems we have mentioned above, if we are pursuing a common good that fits with a contemporary China.

6.6   Concluding Remarks

It is true that, in contemporary Western moral discourse, we see an increasing dissatisfaction with a moral philosophy that regards moral life as a matter of rational decisions conducted in conformity with a table of do's and don'ts. As a result, virtue ethics has re-emerged in the last two decades as a response to the problem. In China, the situation is just the opposite. From the Confucians to Mao, emphasis has been placed on the cultivation of virtues and personalism, while rules and principles are related to a given context or situation. It is in this context that the study of Moist ethics is necessary. Moism, despite its serious limitations, could address some of the issues relating to the communal good that have been ignored in Confucian moral discourse.

In summary, when we engage in a reconstructive project of Confucianism (whether a re-Confucianization or a de-Confucianization) needed to address moral issues in contemporary China, we should be more open-minded. We should also be willing to acknowledge that, historically, many schools of philosophy or religion, including Moism, Daoism, and Buddhism, have all helped to shape the development of Chinese thought and value systems, and will continue to offer philosophical and ethical assets useful for the revitalization of Chinese ethical traditions.

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Chapter 7
The Common Good and Filial Piety: A Confucian Perspective

Jue Wang

7.1 The Crisis of Filial Piety in Mainland China

Support for the elderly in Mainland China is now undergoing a severe crisis. According to a representative report on private life in a typical Chinese village, by the end of the 1990s the living conditions of some elderly parents had worsened and the family status of elders had continued to decline: "Elders trembled to speak of their fate, the middle-aged were worried about their immediate future, and young couples were confused by the storm of complaints from [their] parents and grand-parents" (Yan 2003, pp. 163). Given that 99 % of the Chinese elderly choose family care for one reason or another, the indifference of the younger generation to the needs of their parents' generation has greatly harmed the welfare of the elderly. A shocking fact is that in rural areas of Mainland China, the elderly suicide rate is four and five times higher than the world average. Why does such a high suicide rate occur in a society that used to commit itself to filial piety as a fundamental virtue?

According to Yan's report, one index for the answer to this question is the discrepancy between the opinions of the younger generation and the parents' generation regarding the nature of elderly support, as the above citation suggests. The parents identify themselves with the traditional notion of elderly support, *xiaojing* (孝敬), a compound of filial piety and reverence (Yan 2003, pp. 172). From this point

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of view, the obligation of taking care of one's parents can only be fulfilled through the practice of virtue, accompanied with a unique understanding of the highest good *qua* human beings. However, as Yan observed, in contemporary China, the traditional term, *xiaojing*, has been gradually replaced by another term, *yanglao* (養老), which merely focuses on material support for the elderly. The word *yang* is also used to denote feeding animals or gardening. In *Analects* this confusion is a sign of moral defect: "the filial piety of nowadays means the support of one's parents (i.e., *yang*). But dogs and horses likewise are able to do something in the way of support—without *reverence*, what is there to distinguish the one support given from the other?" (Confucius 1930).

Therefore, the transformation in terms reflects a radical rupture between the modern and the traditional view of elderly support: now elderly support is more and more deprived of moral and emotional significance, just as the parents gradually lose their superior status.[1] Accordingly, the care for the elderly is no longer an activity animated by the search for virtue and the good life, but merely the one chosen by self-interested rational individuals. Young people tend to understand the parent–child relationship in terms of strict reciprocity, which has to be balanced and maintained through *consistent exchange*:

> If the parents do not treat their children well or are otherwise not good parents, then the children have reason to reduce the scope and amount of generosity to [their] parents. The major reason for the current crisis in elderly support, therefore, is the introduction of a new logic in intergenerational exchange (Yan 2003, pp. 178).

However, the notion of strict intergenerational reciprocity in terms of who gets what out of the bargain distorts the parent–child relation and ultimately makes it unsustainable. One disastrous consequence of endorsing this reciprocity rule is that parents are put in a quite vulnerable and unfair situation, because it is impossible for parents to care for their children on the calculation of equal exchange. If raising children is a bargain, it is probable no one will pursue such a high-risk and low-profit business. The economic picture of elderly support directed by strict reciprocity is based on the illusion of self-sufficient individuals and actually ends up exploiting the parents, which partly accounts for the high suicide rate of the elderly in China.

In conclusion, the prevailing notion of *yanglao*, consistent with the modern individualistic position, fails to grasp an essential aspect of human existence—that is, the central place of interdependence as long as humans are limited creatures—and thus makes the societal structure very fragile. It should be noted that by interdependence I refer not to a means like cooperative bargaining, which we need in order to achieve our own goals, but to a value that in its own right constitutes an independent primordial dimension of human flourishing and cannot be fully defined on individual grounds. This means every one inevitably benefits from the network of interdependence *per se* in order to flourish *qua* human, but it cannot be reduced to

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[1] "When parents do not receive the expected return from their children, they are not only upset and disappointed, but also dishonored" (Yan 2003, p. 174).

everyone's own private goods. It suggests that the crisis of elderly support actually bears witness to the decline of the notion of the common good in contemporary China.

Proceeding with this line of thought, my chapter considers the following problems: what kind of common good is involved in the network of interdependence that is central for human flourishing? Why can this kind of common good only be recognized from the perspective of filial piety and sustained only by its practice as a virtue? Furthermore, my chapter will begin with an exposition of the Confucian account of *li*, since any account of the common good entails its own understanding of human nature. Parallel to Aristotle's famous statement that "human beings are by nature political animals," in the Confucian view, human beings are the animals of *li*. I will argue that the doctrine of *li* provides a relational, or social, conception of humanity together with an emphasis on the common good and the virtues, especially filial piety.

7.2   *Li* as the Authentic Mode of Human Existence

The distinctive philosophical insight of the Confucian view of *li* is that its relational character distinguishes human existence. Human beings are the only animals that appeal to one's fellow-men for help, ask for their attention and response, and expect that the others will care for him/her as he/she cares for them. Take handshaking, a typical human ritual gesture, for example.[2] What distinguishes handshaking from other actions is its reciprocity. When I touch the hand of the other, it seeks a response from the other, i.e., it seeks to be touched in return. And the touch, receiving no response, fails to be a touch; in this case, the touching relationship collapses into a kind of being-side-by-side-at-hand, no more than a simple grasp. A monkey is also capable of grasping, but only humans can touch each other in the full sense. In order to accomplish an act of ritual, my gesture must be coordinated harmoniously with yours, which is "the specifically humanizing form of the dynamic relation of man-to-man" (Fingarette 1972, pp. 11).

This primordial communicative relationship between humans permeates human existence to the extent that it is better to say it is a "given" foundation of society, rather than a constituted social institution. Similarly, *li* in the Confucian context is concerned *not so much* with its formal aspect, i.e., a preexistent trans-individual social institution with a history and a code of learnable rules, as with the shaping power immanent in our ritual gesture, which opens and sustains the common space of humanity in the first place.

As Confucius says of ancestor worship, "He sacrificed to the dead, as if they were *present*. He sacrificed to the spirits as if the spirits were *present*." Moreover, "I consider my not being *present* at the sacrifice as if I did not sacrifice" (Confucius

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[2] I borrow this example from Fingarette (1972) and am indebted to him for the following discussion in this section.

1930, pp. 30, 3:12). As Fingarette argues, it is clear that for Confucius the life of *li* lies in the idea that we must be "present" to each other, at least to some minimal extent, in order to create and sustain the common meaning space that holds the living and the dead together (Fingarette 1972, pp. 9). Far from an empty symbol in the ritual, the ancestor is the protagonist around whom family members find their own place in a community by identifying with the ancestor. From a Confucian point of view, the human world amounts to a common space brought forth by *li*, i.e., by the dynamic interpersonal relationships of mutual identification and response.

To borrow Alfred Schutz's terms (Schutz 1962, pp. 202–203), I attempt to conclude that what is special about human action and thus about the human world is a kind of harmonious coordination, which is exactly on what the doctrine of *li* focuses: one addresses the other because he anticipates that the other will understand him, and this implies that the other will be able and willing to *co-perform* by his listening and interpreting activity the single steps in which one builds up the meaning of his message; in other words, one's activity presupposes another one's activity of listening, and *vice versa*. Both seize one another as a co-performing subjectivity. In this way, Schutz recognizes a common space of making music together at the core of human society. It is no accident that Confucius also contends that music (*yue*, 樂) and *li* are intrinsically interrelated.

From the musical nature of the common space embodied in *li*, I get one important conclusion—which is the foundation of my whole argument—that the *unity* of the common space, into which humans are always already involved with others, is *real* yet also *precarious*.

On the one hand, the unity is real insofar as one's actions have been permeated by references to others. We are never born into a totally alien world, but into a set of particular relationships with those who have already accepted and thus are ready to respond to the newborn; even the Hobbesian individual—who is supposed to be at war with all others—needs to be cared for by someone not at war with him in some inevitably dependent situations, such as infancy or childhood (cf. Groenhout 2004, pp. 26). Far from a form of self-assertion, the cry of the infant rather presupposes that someone will hear and respond to it, i.e., a common space of co-performance. If this is right, then the primary move in human life is *towards others*, not *away*; therefore, one's life is not a self-closed realm, but pre-attuned by other persons' actions, i.e., already falls into step with a shared rhythm in the beginning. Confucians maintain that it is an illusion to view the moral agent as a self-contained sovereign individual, before he enters by contract or choice into society.

On the other hand, this communicative unity is precarious because it can only be substantiated through concrete interactions that harmonize the deeds of all relevant persons. Although I always find myself already falling into step with others, my proper reaction to others is not an automatic or mechanical result. There is nothing guaranteeing from the outset that we will reach agreement with other participants, nor that universal substantial rules will predetermine the properness of our reactions. The participant is required to re-discover the proper way of approaching and responding to others on one's own. Thus, the agent virtually adds a *new layer* of depth to the communal world when he joins in the common space of performing

music together, as if contributing a new voice to the chorus. In this way, dissonance is always possible.

It is worth noting that the way notes compose a work of music is sharply different from the way limbs constitute a body. In the latter case, parts are absorbed in the body without their own identities. For example, saying that it is my hands that are typing amounts to saying that it is I, the whole person that is typing. On the contrary, the performance of music is successful on the condition that every note or every set of notes is detectable: when listening to polyphonic music, for example, I perceive two simultaneous fluxes of sounds together *as one single flow* if I am willing to give undivided attention, or, on the other hand, distinguish them if I prefer to divide my attention, but without cutting them in two.[3] In music, a common space is inaugurated in the tension between union and separation. Every note has its identity, with the potential to participate in many different musical relationships. But the note *per se* is not yet music; it is merely sound, sound that has the potential to become music (cf. Fingarette 1983, pp. 340).

Similarly, for Confucians, humanity is sustained exactly by this harmonious co-performance of *li* as a way of making music together. *Li* as the common space of humanity is not "something absolutely one," but "a coherence of multiplicity" or "a unity of order" sustained by a mutual "tuning-in" relationship. If one fails to respond to the other in a proper way, the common space immediately falls apart.

7.3 *Ren* as the Foundation of *Li*

Since the common space of *li* is sustained by concrete context-sensitive interactions, which are inseparable from *particular and irreducible relationships with specific others*, it is natural for the doctrine of *li* to concentrate on the chief social relations that provide the indispensable occasions for one to—and more importantly, learn to—identify with and respond to others. For Confucians, such chief social relations comprise five main groups in general: the parent–child relation, the husband-wife relation, the brother-brother relation, the prince-subject relation, and the friend-friend relation. It is obvious that in this picture of *li* the family is the central focus. Furthermore, among those relationships, the parent–child relation is viewed as the most basic, since my parents are usually the first persons to respond to me, as well as the first ones to whom I respond. Given this background, the following discussion of *ren* will focus on the parent–child relation.

In my opinion, the original sense of *ren* is preserved in a less familiar translation, i.e., "tenderness," especially tenderness to the distress and needs of other people. *Ren* is first and foremost experienced through the affective tie between family members. As the *Lü shih ch'un ch'iu* (juan, 'jingtong') states,

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[3] See Schutz (1962, p. 173), footnote 54.

> Relations of parents to children or children to parents are like two parts of a single body or the same breath/vital energy separately breathed. …even [when] they are in different places, yet they remain linked. Hidden intents reach from one to the other, *they rescue one another from pain or suffering, and they are moved by the other's worries and longings*. …This is called "the closeness of bone and flesh" (Wang 2002).

Given the fact that vulnerability and affliction are central to the human condition, the tendency and capability of taking care of others in dire need *on their behalf* are vital for human flourishing. As Alistair MacIntyre maintains, "each of us achieves our good only if and insofar as *others make our good their good* by helping us through periods of disability" (MacIntyre 1999, pp. 108). Therefore, this is the first reason why *ren* is the foundation of *li*, the foundation of the human world in general.

Another reason foundational status is given to *ren* is related to the Confucian notion of person and self. There are at least two opposed concepts of the self, or personal identity. One is concerned with what remains unchangeable over time, i.e., a pure identity pole. Kantian and Lockean conceptions of personal identity are typical of this first approach. The other approach dispels such self-sufficient illusions and prefers a socially-constituted notion of the self: I form the consciousness of being the author of my acts in the world principally on the occasion of my contacts with others, in a social context. I am no more than a co-author of my life. MacIntyre's narrative concept of the self is an example of this second approach (cf. Zahavi 2005, pp. 104–114). Of course, Confucianism is in accord with the second approach. For example, in the relationship of *ren*, my action to relieve the distress of others is active as well as passive, insofar as I am already caught up in the situation as it is for the other, to the extent that his distress serves as a sufficient reason for my action. What makes me an identifiable person is not any internal essence, such as memory or introspection, but the primordial situation, that I am always there living up to the call of others, especially those others in particular relationships with me.[4]

From this relational perspective, for Confucians, the nature of personality denotes the entire process of being a particular person in a particular relationship with others. As Roger T. Ames, a Confucian scholar, states, "strictly speaking, a person is not a sort of *being*, but first and foremost a *doing* or *making* and only derivatively and retrospectively something done" (Ames 1994, pp. 200). Judged by this notion of personhood, *an individual in isolation* is anything but a person to the full sense, because "it is more like a seed which has not yet been buried in the soil or a sound which has not yet participated in any musical relationship" (Fingarette 1983). In contrast with a true human, Confucius might say, the individual is merely "bare stuff" before falling into a "tuning-in" relationship with others, before joining others in the common space of *li*. As the character of *ren* indicates by its image—it consists of a simple ideogram of a human figure and two horizontal strokes

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[4] Ricoeur (1966, pp. 56–57) has already pointed out that the identity of selfhood must include this ethical dimension as a necessary condition.

suggesting human relations—"where there are not at least two truly human beings, there is not even one" (Fingarette 1983, pp. 340).

This point is best illustrated by the Confucian construction of the parent–child relationship as a *bilateral relationship* of "let the father a father and the son a son" (*Analects* 12:11, trans. Waley), or "the father is father, the son is son" (trans. Legge). Just as Fingarette points out, both translations fail to catch the point of Confucius, because the language they both use involves a misleading connotation that what is at issue is the exemplification of a static property or the possession of a static status (Fingarette 1983, pp. 338). However, as we have seen, to be a father, as to be a person, is an activity, a process without any internal essence. Fatherhood is only actualized in the ongoing, lived relationship in which one properly identifies with and responds to his own child. In turn, the child is also supposed in the same way to care for his parents. If one fails to respond to the other in a proper way, as *ren* requires, the common space of humanity will fall apart, and neither one will be a person in the full sense. More than a biological relationship, the parent–child relation is constructed as a really human space of mutual identification and response, as *a persistent network of mutual caring*. Contrasted with the one-sided reading of the parent–child relation, which may be more familiar to Western readers, Confucianism underlines *mutuality* by establishing it as *a necessary and central part* of the common space of humanity.

More importantly, for Confucians, the mutual network of the parent–child relation is *an initial stage of human communal life*. This is because if one can feel free of his responsibility for his own parents, it will be hard for him to really identify with and respond to other persons: he may easily excuse his indifference to the call of others and will recognize no more than his own immediate desires and impulses. In the Confucian view, such a man is "bare stuff," not yet human, insofar as he is incapable of achieving the "tuning-in" relationships in real human space. In this sense, the parent–child relation is constituted as the foundation of the common space of humanity in Confucian thought.

In short, *li* denotes the common space of humanity, i.e., the ideal order of human society. *Ren* refers to a network of mutual caring, which is viewed as the foundation of *li*. Parents' care for young children and children's support of elderly parents are both paradigm cases of the mutual-caring network. Insofar as *ren* is the foundation of *li*, human communal life must be structured around the network of mutual care; otherwise, the common space of humanity easily falls apart, i.e., the social structure is likely to be less than the human way. In this way, the network of mutual caring plays a role similar to the common good: it constitutes a co-performing space in which all humans should participate in order to be a full person, to flourish *qua* human being.

In this chapter, I focus on *ren* as the common good in a narrow sense. Strictly speaking, however, the *li-ren* structure is the common good in the complete sense. "*Li* and *ren* are two aspects of the same thing" (Fingarette 1972, pp. 42). And just as we will see in the last section, a well-ordered family, in a key way, depends on a well-ordered society.

7.4   *Ren* as the Common Good

Although Confucius does not explicitly propose a doctrine of the common good, he does provide some pertinent ideas. One proof comes from a famous yet puzzling paragraph in the *Analects*: "Man needs *ren* more than water or fire. I have seen man die from treading on water and fire, but I have never seen a man die from treading the course of *ren*" (Confucius 1930, pp. 234, 15:34). These words, although mysterious at first sight, can be clearly understood from the perspective of the common good. Both fire and water are necessary for human flourishing and therefore are both good. However, there is a crucial distinction between what a person sometimes takes to be good for him/her and what is really good for him/her as a human. *Ren* is classified as the latter type, and this is why Confucius says that humans are in more severe need of *ren* than of water or fire. Incautious use of water or fire may cause harm to those who use them, whereas *ren* can never harm people, because *ren* is the highest among all human goods.

According to MacIntyre, our judgments about how it is best for an individual or a community to order the goods in their lives exemplify the highest good—different from the goods as means (such as water or fire) or the goods internal to a certain activity—"one whereby we judge unconditionally about what it is best for individuals or groups to be or do or have not only *qua* agents engaged in this or that form of activity in this or that role or roles, but also *qua* human beings. It is these judgments that are judgments about *human flourishing*" (MacIntyre 1999, pp. 67). In another text, MacIntyre characterizes this kind of highest good as the common good (MacIntyre 1998, pp. 260). In my opinion, *ren* plays a role similar to the common good that MacIntyre defends in the Aristotelian-Thomist tradition.

For two reasons at least, *ren* is among the highest goods for our flourishing *qua* human beings, and goes beyond individual goods insofar as it can never be fully defined at the level of the individual.

Firstly, given humans' vulnerable nature, a network of mutual caring, or a network of giving and receiving,[5] is needed for everyone to be able to flourish. For example, for a newborn, some essentials, such as food and clothing, are no doubt goods, but a caring hand is a more important good for the infant. It is only once the infant has been accepted and supported by a caring relationship that it is possible for him to flourish as a human. In other words, it is not only the various kinds of care provided by the caring network that are basic goods for humans, the sustainability of the network *per se* is also a fundamental, indispensable good for human beings. The former goods can be defined at the level of the individuals, whereas the latter goods make sense only at the interpersonal level. This means we cannot have an adequate understanding of our own good, of our own flourishing, without a flourishing network of mutual caring in which we find our place.

Second, the network of mutual care plays an essential role in the transformation of humans from a dependent infant to an autonomous moral agent. This transformation

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[5] The term is borrowed from MacIntyre (1999).

is vital to human flourishing. We should not imagine that individual autonomy is a natural outcome like that of the growth and maturation of fruit. On the contrary, without interacting with others, a human is more easily a slave of his wild and accidental desires, rather than a truly autonomous agent. Autonomy means self-determination: a truly autonomous man should be in control of his life by reflectively evaluating his own choices, rather than being controlled by outside forces. For a person to critically evaluate one's choices, however, a distance from his original motives is needed. Strikingly, it is exactly the affective relationship with parents that first motivates the child to notice a good outside his own, as we have seen in the discussion of the parent–child relationship. MacIntyre also mentions that a crucial step in human moral development is that "the child will have learned through its experiences of attachment and affection that, in order to satisfy its desires, it must please his mother and other adult figures" (MacIntyre 1999, pp. 84).

In the preceding discussion of why *ren* is the highest good for human beings *qua* human beings, I have touched on the common nature of *ren*. Now I am in a position to distinctively distinguish the common good immanent in *ren* from private goods, public goods, and the utilitarian view of the greatest good for the greatest number.

First, as I have said, by *ren* one is united with the situation of the other as it is for the other. This means I am directly motivated by the needs of others to do something on behalf of an other and for the sake of his flourishing alone, or in MacIntyre's terms, I can take his good as my own good, which cannot be confused with imposing one's own notion of goods on others. Therefore, when taking care, the one-caring is unified with the cared-for to the extent that the goods that one's caring aims at are neither mine-rather-than-others' nor others'-rather-than-mine, but are genuinely common goods.

In this way, *ren* as the network of mutual care involves a unique notion of a common good, which is obscured by the dominant dichotomy of human behaviors in mainstream moral philosophy: self-interested market behavior on the one hand and altruistic, benevolent behavior on the other.[6] In the former case, the agent treats other people as irrelevant. However, in the latter case, the agent treats others as other than oneself. However, the agent animated by *ren* finds himself undividedly united with others. In the following argument I will give reasons why only the agent of *ren* can achieve the common good in its full sense.

In the former case of self-interested agents, the common good is no more than an aggregate of goods pursued by individuals, just as the cooperative bargaining association itself is no more than an external means endorsed by individuals to achieve their own individual goods. As a result, this "common" good is still confined to the realm of private goods, whose consumption is exclusive. Yet as we have said, the network of mutual caring *per se* constitutes a basic good possessed by *all participants*, and one can possess this good without its being diminished by another's possessing it as well.

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[6] See MacIntyre (1999, p. 119). MacIntyre attributes this dichotomy to Adam Smith, and thinks this simple classification of motives as either egoistic or altruistic is misleading, though very influential in modern thought.

If the problem with the former case is that there is no real common good, the difficulty in the case of benevolent agents is that there is no real association at all. With benevolence the receiver is referred to merely as *a generalized Other*—one whose only relationship to us is to provide an occasion for the exercise of our benevolence, of our superiority—in place of *other particular others* with whom we must learn to share common goods, and participate in ongoing relationships (cf. Macintyre 1999, pp. 119). It is difficult to say whether in a relationship of benevolence the giver and the receiver benefit from the relationship in the same way. In this sense, the good is not commonly shared, whatever it is. The same difficulty appears also in Aristotle's account of the magnanimous man. On the one hand, magnanimity makes one person a best friend, insofar as it is more characteristic of a friend to confer than to receive a benefit. But paradoxically, Aristotle also sees self-sufficiency as a characteristic of the magnanimous man who has no need of friends, because he has all the good things he needs. The magnanimous man "is the sort of man to confer benefits, but he is ashamed of receiving them" (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1124b, 9–10). However, the good of the caring network is supposed to benefit equally all the persons involved in the network. And more importantly, what and how much we are able to give depend in part on what and how much we received. The caregiver can be a qualified care-giver as long as he/she has already been accepted into a network of giving and receiving and is cared for by other persons who are related to the agent through vari-ous roles in the network. In the community of *ren*, we are united in sharing our vulnerability and affliction. However, the ideal of magnanimity deemphasizes the importance of interdependence in human life, and thus obscures the common good involved in the persistent network of giving and receiving.[7]

Second, related to the first point, the common good of the caring network is dra-matically different from the utilitarian notion of the greatest good for the greatest number. This utilitarian understanding of the common good is predicated on a reductionistic concept of good: reducing the meaning of "good" to one univocal measure of happiness in units of pleasure or utility. But in the mutual-caring net-work we are concerned with the needs of those who are in particular and irreducible relationships with us. There is no unitary criterion for us to weigh the needs of dif-ferent persons or the different needs of the same person and consequently decide which one should be privileged. For example, regarding the issue of whether abor-tion is permissible when continuing a pregnancy will threaten the life of the mother, Confucians maintain that it is not a matter of rational choice between the mother and the fetus in light of the greatest good for the family, but is rather a matter of agent-based moral responsibility. In this situation, the father, for example, as a moral agent, is supposed to help the family out of the dilemma by simultaneously living up to his commitments to the mother as well as to the fetus. The moral agent must face how *the whole situation* bears on him in this or that specific way, rather than appealing to certain standard options, which are weighed by a unitary measure.

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[7] I am greatly indebted to MacIntyre (1999) for the criticism of magnanimity as a conception of masculine virtue.

From the Confucian perspective, the most important thing for human flourishing is for one to be embedded in a moral community (e.g., a family) from which one can hold a justifiable expectation of care from others, where what constitutes appropriate care is an open issue depending on the context. In this way, *ren* elaborates a "unitary but complex" account of the good that is capable of accommodating the special needs of different people, as well as many valuable ways of life,[8] making it quite different from utilitarianism. As Mencius maintains, "All that is to be expected of a virtuous man is *ren*. Why must they all pursue the same course?"(Mencius 1930, 6b, 6, *translation modified*).

Third, the common good of *ren* is also different from public goods, since the unity of the community embodied in *li* is precarious. Jacques Maritain makes the important distinction between the common good and a public good in his famous paper titled, "The Person and the Common Good." According to Maritain, the notion of the common good and the notion of the person as an autonomous social unit imply one another: everyone partakes of the common good *as a whole* rather than as a mere part of the whole. This is exactly the way everyone benefits from the mutual-caring network, since one's peculiarity must first be recognized in order for others to care for his goods on his behalf; and more importantly, his particular need *per se* suffices to motivate the caring action. In other words, the good of the individual is not subordinated to the good of the community or *vice versa*. However, the public good, such as the good of public security, is "the proper good of a whole which, like the species with respect to its individuals or the hive with respect to its bees, relates the parts to itself alone and sacrifices them to itself" (Maritain 1946, pp. 437). From the perspective of public goods, there are only anonymous unidentifiable individuals, not individual people, just as we might say the hand is absorbed into the whole of the body. In the words of Maritain, "Everyone partakes of the good of the whole but only *as parts of the whole*" (Maritain 1946, pp. 436). Although the good of the whole inevitably benefits the parts—as the healthy body benefits its members—it only does so in a derivative sense: "it is merely in order that the whole itself might subsist and be better served that its parts are kept alive or maintained in good condition" (Maritain 1946, pp. 436).

However, as I emphasized in the first section, *li* is the common space of performing music together, and the way sounds compose music is sharply different from the way parts form a body, i.e., music togetherness never collapses into an absolute oneness. Therefore, a participant in *li* never automatically benefits from the common space of *li*; on the contrary, communal recognition of treating each other as a whole person is necessary for sustaining the common space. This difference draws an ineliminable distinction between the common good and public goods. This is also why we should not confuse the common good immanent in *ren* with any totalitarian notion of good.

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[8] In classical literature, the metaphor of *ren* is usually the root, rather than the *telos*. And Confucianism seems disinterested in providing a substantial teleological notion of humanity. For the difference between "unitary but complex" theories of human good and utilitarian "dominant end" theory, see (Keys 2006, p. 14).

7.5 Filial Piety as the Virtue Required by the Common Good

I have established in the first section that the common space of *li* is sustained by a mutual "tuning-in" relationship without any preexisting unity, whether contracted to or guaranteed by an a priori essence. It follows that, to sustain the mutual-caring network, participants must learn to be properly disposed to feel and respond to the distress and need of the others. Similar to virtue ethics, Confucian moral theory focuses on the character of the agent, and believes that "virtues [*de*, 德] are states of character which human beings must possess if they are to be successful as human beings, i.e., to reach the appropriate *telos* of human life" (Solomon 1997, pp. 166). Virtues provide the only and internal access "to the end of achieving the good for man" (MacIntyre 1981, pp. 139).

For the Confucian view, filial piety is exactly the virtue necessary for sustaining the common good of the mutual-caring network. The term, "filial piety," is a good example of a key Chinese moral concept that does not have a direct translation in Western languages because of the different moral and metaphysical assumptions. Far from Westerners' false impression of filial piety as absolute submission to one's parents—a combination of paternalism and natural affection—in the Confucian literature filial piety is formulated with reference to an elaborated system of virtues, well beyond the range of the one-sided submission of the son to the father. For example, the Confucian tradition requires that parents must also respect (*jing*, 敬) their children in the name of filial piety. "The son was the descendant of the ancestors – could any father dare not to respect him?" (Wang 2001).

Just as there is no proper translation of filial piety in Western languages, it is also hard to find a counterpart for it in conventional Western lists of virtues, *except* "the virtues of acknowledged dependence" that MacIntyre proposes in *Dependent Rational Animals*, which challenges tradition by bringing human vulnerability and dependence to the forefront (MacIntyre 1999, pp. 4). According to MacIntyre, the moral starting point should not be self-sufficient moral agents who regard "the disabled" as a separate class—as other than themselves–as though they were continuously rational, healthy, and untroubled (MacIntyre 1999, pp. 7). Moral experience should start with the fact that we all inevitably need to be cared for at one point in time or another. Therefore, it is not surprising that MacIntyre's account of the virtue of "acknowledged dependence" echoes the Confucian account of filial piety, since Confucius also emphasized the relevance of the agent's fundamental dependence for his moral experience. Once Confucius criticized a student who refused to practice the morning rituals due to utilitarian considerations: "this shows he is deficient in *ren*. It is not till a child is 3 years old that it is allowed to leave the arms of his parents. And the 3 years of mourning is universally observed throughout the empire. Does he also have the 3 years of love to his parents?" (Analects 17:21, my translation).

In the following I will explicate the distinctive features of the virtue of filial piety, working primarily within the framework MacIntyre proposed in *Dependent Rational Animals*.

It is significant that MacIntyre also formulates the virtues of acknowledged dependence by delving deep into the parent–child relationship. In his view, what distinguishes the parent–child relationship from other social relations, such as that of teacher to student, is the unconditional or uncalculating commitment to the good of each other, as if an old pledge proclaims: "However things turn out, I will be there for you." The teacher may give up on his student when the latter is not bright enough to be worth teaching. And one may put an end to a friendship when the other party no longer remains a friend (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1165b). But good parents would never give up on their child no matter what distress befalls the child, no matter how disabled it may be. Parents are supposed to care for their child simply because it is their child to whom and for whom they are uniquely responsible; and more importantly, "it is the needs of the child, and not their own needs in relation to the child that have to be paramount" in directing the caring actions of parents (MacIntyre 1999, pp. 90). All those features of parents' caring for their children involve "a refusal to treat the child in a way that is proportional to its qualities and aptitudes" (MacIntyre 1999, pp. 90). The last point differentiates the parent–child relation distinctively from the idea of Aristotelian friendship as loving another self. It indicates that in order to sustain a well-ordered family, agents need to be capable of deeper and more abiding commitments than Aristotle's notion of friendship allows. Mutual commitment and mutual respect between family members should not be conditional on the contingencies of afflictions. Given human vulnerability, we always "find ourselves placed at some particular point within a network of relationships of giving and receiving in which, generally and characteristically, what and how far we are able to give depends in part on what and how far we received" (MacIntyre 1999, pp. 99).

Now the crucial question arises as follows: what are the qualities of character needed for participating in such a network of giving and receiving?

According to MacIntyre, the answer is *just generosity*, i.e., a twofold virtue of being generous and just at the same time (MacIntyre 1999, pp. 120). From normal understanding, one can be generous without being just and just without being generous. For example, giving more than what is owed is characteristic of generosity. When I act out of benevolence, for example, I give liberally on my own; yet justice in the strict sense means to do what I literally owe to others. By contrast, the network of giving and receiving is based on giving generously as well as being just: it is generous because what is required of this agent is essentially determined by the needs of others; it is just because it requires the agent not only to be sensitive to the needs of the person who is given to one's care, but also to feel the need as *commanding*, i.e., to deem the need *a sufficient reason* for going to one's aid. This state of compulsion in the Confucian literature is characterized as "can-not-bear" (不忍人之心): I cannot bear to see others suffering without doing something to relieve that distress. In other words, the network of *ren* involves a generosity that I feel I owe to those members in dire need.

But how can one be disposed in this way, i.e., to be generous and just at the same time? Another related question is whether the agent acts from natural affection or

from virtues that are *acquired* human qualities[9] and sometimes work against natural human inclinations?

Of course "just generosity" involves affectionate regard for the other as its essential ingredient, since *ren* is first and foremost a form of concern. However, it is not enough to base the whole network of giving and receiving merely on natural affection. One needs a more constant and reliable character, i.e., virtues, to achieve the common good of the network of giving and receiving. For Confucians, filial piety is exactly *the virtue* needed, the virtue of "just generosity."

Actually, Confucianism already draws a definite line between filial piety as a natural affection and filial piety as a virtue. As Mencius points out,

> The desire of the child is towards his father and mother. When he becomes conscious of the attraction of beauty, his desire is towards young and beautiful women. When he comes to have a wife and children, his desire is towards them. … *But* the man of great filial piety, to the end of his life, has his desires to his parents. In the great Shun [a famous saint in Chinese history] I see the case of one whose desire at fifty years was towards them (Mencius 1930, pp. 776, 5a:1).

It is obvious that the great filial piety of which Mencius thinks highly is more than the natural affection one feels when one is closely attached to one's parents. Great filial piety can only be understood as a virtue. Filial piety as a virtue is different though inseparable from filial piety as natural affection, in that it keeps the agent in a constant disposition of *indebtedness to one's parents*. Contrasted with Aristotle's magnanimous man—who "is apt to confer greater benefits in return; for thus the original benefactor besides being paid will incur a debt to him" (Aristotle 1124b10)—the man of "great filial piety" [孝子] is characterized by the virtue of gratitude.

Confucians believe we can never fully repay what our parents give us. Even if one can determine the total financial cost one's parents spent raising him/her, the way in which they cared for him/her is beyond calculation. Confucians would completely agree with MacIntyre in that "it is the parents of the seriously disabled who are the paradigms of good motherhood and fatherhood as such, who provide the model for and the key to the work of all parents" (MacIntyre 1999, pp. 91). Hence the repayment for this kind of care is also endless and limitless. "The debt of gratitude flows from the debt of love, and from the latter *no man should wish to be free*" (Keys 2006, pp. 158). Accordingly, filial piety as a virtue is based on affections, but it is beyond affections because it also involves the cultivation of the disposition to *feel grateful*. Cultivating those dispositions to feel and to act from certain feelings is no doubt a matter of virtue.[10] Furthermore, such grateful feelings puts the agent in a *humble* position of adjusting or subjecting oneself to others: the agent feels himself owing generous care not only to his parents, but also to other members who are related to his parents within a community—which first and foremost takes the form of a family.

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[9] See MacIntyre (1981, p. 178).

[10] Incidentally, the relationship and difference between filial piety as natural affection and as virtue is comparable to that between "natural caring" and "ethical caring" Noddings attempts to explain. See Noddings (2003, pp. 79–80); Tong (1998, pp. 147–148).

So far, we have already established filial piety as the cardinal virtue needed to sustain the network of *ren*, the network of generous giving and grateful receiving. But there are still some puzzles to resolve concerning the applicability of filial piety in everyday life.

It is worth noting that filial piety is not a proper excellence of a certain role (e.g., son)— as silence is said to be a virtue of women—but a more general character that every one should possess in order to participate in *ren*. On the Confucian view, filial piety is the beginning of moral life as well as the highest moral achievement that one can expect. On the one hand, in the Confucian moral system, filial piety enjoys a status comparable to that of magnanimity in Aristotle, i.e., "the crown of the virtues," which presupposes the most independent state of character; on the other hand, filial piety as a "natural motive," which heavily depends on specific social relationships and settings, is also the most dependent state of character. How is it possible to bring these contrasting elements into harmony? In the remainder of this chapter, by resolving some related puzzles I will explicate how one can come to possess the virtue of filial piety.[11]

Let us begin by trying to understand the following important fact: contrary to the Western tradition, Confucian moral doctrine has never proposed the separation of affection from virtue. As von Hildebrand summarizes, in the history of Western philosophy "the entire affective sphere was for the most part subsumed under the heading of passions, and as long as one dealt with it expressly under this title, its irrational and non-spiritual character was emphasized" (von Hildebrand 2009, pp. 4). Aristotle provides a case in point by dividing the soul into three parts: passions, capacities and states of character (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1105b15). Although a virtue is concerned with passions (1106b15), it is not passion in any sense, because passions happen to us without our control, whereas "the virtues are the modes of choice or involves choice" (1106a). More precisely, virtues denote deliberate modes by way of which moral agents stand well with passions, keeping them *under control*. On the contrary, passions are prone to "excesses," and thus to be deleterious to the exercise of practical wisdom, leading the moral agent into a state of inconsistence. Aristotle emphasizes that the inconsistent man has the knowledge as if he did not really have it, "as in the instance of a man asleep, mad or drunk" (1147a10), because under the improper influence of passions he is unable to choose the acts from a firm and unchangeable character (1105a30). In other words, the moral agent in this situation is out of control, carried away, as the term "passion" literally indicates. Since the time of Aristotle, it is safe to say that the tension between reason (which is characterized as active movement directly from the soul and dependent on it alone) and passion (which denotes the capability of being moved) has become one of the primary concerns throughout the history of Western moral thought.[12]

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[11] David Solomon lists this among the three central goals that a virtue ethics will typically have: "(1) to develop and defend some conception of the ideal person; (2) to develop and defend some list of virtues that is necessary for being a person of that type; (3) to defend some view of how people can come to possess the appropriate virtues" (Solomon 1997, p. 166).

[12] In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle has already distinguished "being moved" from "being disposed": "in respect of passions, we said to be moved, but in respect of virtues and vices we are not said to be moved but to be disposed in a particular way" (1106a5).

Thus, a Western reader might be bothered by "the absence of any to-do about the issue of reason versus emotion" in Confucian moral thought (Wong 1991, pp. 31).[13] It is not that Confucian philosophers unjustifiably omit these issues; they simply have a very different moral language and set of moral concerns, which cannot be fully addressed within the typical Western framework of moral language.

For example, *ren*, understood as the tendency and capability of taking care of others on their behalf, is a complicated phenomenon that cannot be reduced to the necessary conditions Aristotle posited for possessing and acting from virtue. In other words, even if a moral agent has the right knowledge about what is good and is capable of rational choice, one may still be unable to take care of others. There is a gap between the point of view of the objective good for me and the point of view of the objective good for another[14]: it is one thing that I have theoretical knowledge of another person's situation, and I can even empathize with them[15]; it is another thing that I am so moved by something being beneficial or harmful to another that I take his good as my own good—I experience all that affects another as if it affected me.[16] It is the latter that constitutes the essence of caring actions. But how is it possible to bridge the gap between my own objective good and that of another person? The answer is by love: only by love can one transcend one's own subjectivity and thus participate in the subjectivity of another person.[17]

More importantly, for Confucians, the transcendence one achieves in love is not merely one aspect of a moral agent's personal life, but essentially a fundamental way of being for the self. Rather than a mere state of mind, in the Confucian context, "emotion" first and foremost denotes a basic way of locating oneself in a possible

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[13] David B. Wong (1991) proposes that there is no clear distinction between reason and emotion in Mencius. David S. Nivison (1996) also claims there is no need to address the issue of "weakness of will" for Confucians. Fingarette maintains that Confucius uses "willing" in a radically different sense, which reveals no explicit doctrine about the process internal to the individual's control of the will: "there is, for example, no reification of a faculty of will, no inner machinery or equilibrium of psychic forces, no inner theater in which a inner drama takes place, no inner community with ruler and ruled" (Fingarette 1979, p. 133).

[14] I borrow this distinction from von Hildebrand (2009, chap. 7). By using the term "objective," von Hildebrand wants to emphasize that what is at stake is not the so-called "subjective" relativism of different perspectives, but the plain fact that I could take no interest in what is good for another, even though I have objective knowledge of it. In other words, the gap exists at the level of motivation for action, rather than knowledge.

[15] For example, when I attend a little girl's funeral, I can understand how sad her parents feel for losing their baby, and I am even affected by the sad atmosphere to the extent that I empathize with them. However, this understanding or these feelings do not necessarily lead to caring actions. I may just leave the funeral to avoid the sight of suffering. In the end, I remain indifferent to other persons.

[16] Care ethics also describes the caring relationship in this way, "I receive the other into myself, and I see and feel with the other. I become a duality…The seeing and feeling are mine, but only partly and temporarily mine, as on loan to me" (Noddings 2003, p. 30).

[17] Von Hildebrand calls this unity formed by love a real marvel (2009, p. 151). I am indebted to him for his insightful explication of the nature of love and the spiritual role it plays in human life.

space of activity. We can see this clearly by comparing different emotions. Some emotions, like envy and hatred, tend to narrow us down, concentrating us on merely what concerns us, and even locks us in self-interest.[18] On the contrary, some emotions tend to open us outwards, like the love of parents for children, filial love, sympathy, and compassion. Through the latter types of emotion, one is actually lifted beyond oneself in sharing the subjectivity of the beloved person. To put it differently, one feels oneself relocated in a newly opened-up space, where one is not only *moved* by what directly affects oneself but also is *moved* by what affects the beloved others. The basic point in the Confucian view of moral action is that each comportment does not simply enter into an indifferent space, but rather is always already in a certain region that is opened through the things and persons with which one is in a relationship, and thus by nature is a *response* to the situation within which the agent has already been involved.

One important consequence of this position is that in the Confucian context we speak of the self of the moral agent as *Acting*, rather than as an *Actor*, as if one embraced inwardly a moral or psychic core that is then expressed in the action.[19] For Confucians, it is hard to distinguish the way a moral agent finds oneself from the way one feels being involved in an undivided situation with others to the extent that one is moved by the good of others. In contrast with a conception of the self as an autonomous controlling center located in one body, Confucians tend to claim that the self denotes a process of *forming one body with other persons*.[20] By "one body," Confucianism does not mean a substantial identity, nor an abortive assimilation, but rather a proximity that is brought forth by *non-indifference*, just as one feels in the bond of "the closeness of bone and flesh." At the same time, Confucianism holds that although we are always capable of sharing in the subjectivity of others by nature, we are likely to disown this existential possibility by failing to respond to others.

Therefore, in the Confucian view, the most important question for morality is neither "what is right or obligatory to do," nor "what is good to pursue," but a kind

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[18] In hating, the agent is much more locked up in himself than even the most insensitive egoist, because he contradicts the "for the sake of the other," and performs a gesture that is very much the opposite of the gesture of love (see von Hildebrand 2009, p. 161). In this case, everything that happens to others can only be experienced from my own perspective, in terms of its being subjectively satisfying/dissatisfying. Such emotions as envy and hatred are the typical type of immersion in one's self.

[19] I borrow this phrasing from Fingarette (1991, p. 199). For more discussion of the Confucian view of the self as moral agent, please see Fingarette (1991), and Ames (1994).

[20] As the eleventh century philosopher Cheng Hao, one of the most important Neo-Confucians, once said:

A book on medicine describes paralysis of the four limbs as absence of *ren*. This is an excellent description. The man of *ren* regards Heaven and Earth and all things as one body. To him there is nothing that is not himself. Since he has recognized all things as himself, can there be any limit to his humanity? If things are not parts of the self, naturally they have nothing to do with it. As in the case of paralysis of the four limbs, the vital force (*qi*) no longer penetrates them, and therefore they are no longer parts of the self (Hao 1963, p. 530).

of existential decision which can be understood in terms of the "either-or" dichotomy of Kierkegaard (cf. Tu 2008, pp. 150).

Following Mencius, we call it a dichotomy between "small body" and "great body." In the case of "small body," one is immersed in oneself, without any concern for the goods of others. Confucianism views this state as the very opposite of *ren*, the absence of *ren*, and compares it to the paralysis of the four limbs. At first glance, the metaphor of paralysis seems very similar to the metaphor of drunkenness. However, there is a subtle yet profound distinction between the two metaphors. The metaphor of drunkenness implies an inward autonomous rational core that is temporarily out of order; on the one hand, the agent knows what one should do but fails to do it because of one's excessive passions; on the other hand, as long as the disturbance is cleared away, the moral agent can recover to normal functioning. The metaphor of paralysis signifies that the moral agent has already been deprived of part of the activity space, which cannot be recovered merely by one's own will. Just as in the case of a muscle cramp or paralysis, the more the mind fixes on it and attempts to forcibly control it, the worse matters become. On the contrary, the better way is for one to relax and wait for the natural sensibility *to awaken* under proper conditions. Accordingly, the centrality of filial piety in Confucian ethics is predicated on the belief that it is filial love that first cracks the "shell" of insensitivity and moves the moral agent beyond the self and into an undivided situation with others.[21] Among various emotions, natural filial love is singled out because it is viewed as the most possible occasion for the agent to find oneself in "non-indifferent" proximity to others and thereby can reclaim the self at a deeper level by forming "one body" (i.e., the great body) with other persons. In this sense, filial piety is called "the root of *ren*."

As the two different metaphors of moral failure indicate, Confucianism would take issue with Aristotelian virtue ethics regarding the question of what it is to possess and act from virtues. In contrast with Aristotle, who maintains that the condition for possessing virtue is that the agent must have knowledge *in the first place*, Mencius would think that the moral agent would not reach full understanding of what is good to pursue until he is attuned to the undivided situation with others and therefore moved by the good of others.[22] In conclusion, for Confucians, the moral life begins with a disposition of being moved at the inter-subjective level, rather than making choices from an inward self-sufficient rational core. Moral action is *not so much active as re-active or responsive.*

We are now in a position to draw some important consequences from the unique Confucian view of possessing and acting from virtue, and can examine them by cross-referencing other essays in this volume.

First, since the practice of filial piety is inseparable from the state of being motivationally affected, the moral agent deeply depends on the specific social relationships and settings to be virtuous and to understand what the good as *telos* is. This

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[21] Fan (2013) also mentions Confucians' own distinctive principle of motivation.

[22] This is why there is no discussion of the issue of "reason versus emotion" in Confucian moral thought.

means that a consensus (or some clear idea) regarding the common good is not a necessary condition for the realization of the common good. On the contrary, we should first live in a specific situation, get involved in an undivided situation with another by love, and then recognize what is genuine, good, and shared in common. Insofar as the content of *ren* as common good is based on rightly-ordered relations among persons, rather than philosophical meditation, I share H.T. Engelhardt's anti-theorist position on the issue of the common good.[23]

This also explains why in public discourse *ren* puts itself not so much in the role of a specific political goal, but in the role of a framing background idea. This is the case because *ren*, as a network of mutual caring, is sustained on the level of intimate communities, and cannot be established as a goal of any social-political campaign. Actually, a real Confucian will resist the idea that the notion of the common good should be open to rational debate—because *ren* is essentially a part of *Dao* rather than a human project—while insisting that political discourses should focus on possible social support for achieving the common good. Although there is a subtle distinction between *ren* as common good and the relative societal structure as its support, Confucian distinctions are better understood as entailing and interdependent correlatives. This is also the case here. On the one hand, proper societal order is the precondition for realizing the common good because whether one can recognize and pursue the common good highly depends on whether one has been involved in specific social relationships and settings; on the other hand, the common good as a network of mutual caring is what animates the whole societal order and invests it with significance. From this perspective, we can also understand the relationship between Ruiping Fan's account of the Confucian notion of the common good and mine. Roughly speaking, Fan's approach is at the macrocosmic level and is concerned with societal structure as a whole (Fan 2013); my approach proceeds at the microcosmic level and is concerned with intimate communities and personal interactions. Taken together, our essays present a complete story of the Confucian notion of the common good. The basic point shared by both our cahpters is that the family should be valued as the foundation and *telos* of the social structure. One major cause of the contemporary crisis of Chinese society is that the Chinese government did not understand the distinction and relation between intimate communities and more general social institutions: it is prone to adopt excessive administrative means and as a result drains the spirit and resources of families.[24] We will return to this problem in the last section.

Second, for Confucians, moral life begins with the disposition of being motivationally affected by the good of others, which means it has already gone beyond the dichotomy of egoism and altruism—which David Solomon (2013) holds to be one

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[23] See Engelhardt (2013) and Solomon (2013).

[24] In this respect, I cannot agree more with Mary Keys (2013) that we should ask whether the pre- and trans-political sources of the appreciation and exercise of mercy and charity still can be preserved and even cultivated in contemporary social and political structure, making it a proper and specifically political issue.

of the two assumptions underlying the current reluctance to the notion of common good—at the moment the moral action is motivated.

This also explains why Mencius is so strongly opposed to the Moist doctrine of "universal love" and "mutual benefit." The main issue in the controversy is neither universal love *per se* as the ultimate goal nor even how it is practiced, but the nature of love. As I have argued, for Confucians, genuine love involves a transcendence of oneself into the subjectivity of other persons to the extent that one is moved by the situation as it is for others. However, as Ellen Zhang has explicated, the moral agent in the Moist context can be motivated either by self-interest (in an inauthentic way[25]) or by response to "universal love" as the ultimate value ordained by the "will of Heaven." In the first case, the moral agent is *selfish*, locked in self-interest. In the second case, the moral agent views "universal love" as an absolute value, which has nothing to do with one's ongoing personal relationships. This is why a Moist can say, "To me love should have no distinctions. But its applications must begin with my parents." Consequently, the moral agent seems more likely to be *selfless* than to show any sharing in the subjectivity of others. For Confucians, however, in order to maintain the network of mutual care, which is central to the human condition, persons should cultivate a kind of love beyond the dualism of selfishness and selflessness. A kind of love that is universal, not in the sense of no-distinction, but in the sense of "no-indifference." In other words, the insight that underlies Confucian criticisms of Moism is that the Moist approach distorts the nature of love and undermines the potential of being human in the full sense.

7.6   Filial Piety and the Issue of Justice

In this section, I defend the moral theory based on filial piety against some possible objections.[26] Since filial piety is a virtue cultivated and sustained in relationships with particular others, it faces two criticisms that are often raised against care ethics. The first is about the risk of self-sacrifice or self-denial in a caring relationship, about the risk of degrading the caring relationship to a kind of self-slavery in the name of "love." The second criticism is that an ethics based on intimate relationships is unable to produce or advocate adequate concern for those who are outside the "circle of care." This criticism is also intertwined with the issue of "justice."

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[25] I agree with Ellen Zhang that reference to self-interest is merely an expediency to persuade common people, not the ultimate goal of Moism.

[26] By this discussion, I also try to respond to a question Dennis McCann posed to me during the conference from which this volume grew: "when filial piety becomes difficult because parents are abusive, etc., what resources does a child have to try to attain *ren*?" I sincerely appreciate the very helpful comments he and other participants and colleagues made when discussing my paper.

I will briefly respond to these two major criticisms, and will try to propose a Confucian theory of justice.[27]

First, even though by filial piety the agent has been put in the humble situation of providing attentive care to the needs of others without further justification,[28] filial piety never means blind submission to others, even to parents. One story Mencius tells about Shun best illustrates this point.

> Wan chang asked Mencius: "How was it that Shun's marriage took place without his informing his parents?" Mencius replied, "if he had informed them, he would not have been able to marry. That male and female should dwell together is the greatest of human relations. If Shun had informed his parents, he must lack the greatest good *qua* human, which results in detriment to the flourishing of the family. On this account, he did not inform them" (Mencius 1930, pp. 777, 5a:2).

For Confucians, submission to the improper intentions of one's parents is really not to act in a filial way at all, but rather to enmesh one's parents in non-rightness, out of a lack of truly emphatic concern for (the good of) the parents. If Shun had followed the order of his parents not to marry, he would have not only deprived himself of a good life, but would have also deprived his parents of the opportunity to be good parents. Confucians will think such a decision shows hidden resentment against one's parents under the mask of submission. In other words, Confucians maintain that real filial piety is rooted in the authentic understanding of the way I am related to others as well as to the notion of the good life. Parents are also assigned, by filial piety towards one's own parents, to provide attentive care for the flourishing of one's own children. In this way, everyone enjoys an irreducible value in the network of *ren*: self-respect and respect for others entail one another.

The point is simply that if one fails to care for oneself for the sake of one's own flourishing, it will also be impossible for one to approach and appropriately take care of others. Selfishness and selflessness are both signs of inadequate moral development.[29] This is why there is no risk of self-denial in practicing filial piety.

As to the second criticism, it is helpful to distinguish between caring-for and caring-about. According to Noddings, "Caring-for is the direct face-to-face attempt to respond to the needs of a cared-for"; "in contrast to caring for, caring-about is characterized by some distance"; "we cannot care-for everyone, but there is a sense in which we can care-about a much wider population" (Noddings 2003, pp. xv). Readers can find a similar distinction in Confucianism.

On the one hand, Confucians emphasize love with gradations. Attentive care is first and foremost practiced towards other members of our own community who are

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[27] In my opinion, Confucianism does share many great insights with care ethics, especially a virtue ethics of care. But it does not mean that Confucianism depends on care ethics or virtue ethics to elucidate its unique moral experience. On the contrary, Confucianism has elaborated a full-fledged and coherent system of morality, which foresees and precludes some difficulties care ethics faces.

[28] MacIntyre has profoundly commented, "To offer or even to request such a justification is itself a sign of defective virtue" (MacIntyre 1999, p. 158).

[29] MacIntyre (1999, p. 160) maintains the same opinion.

related to us by their and our roles. There are two important reasons for this preference.

Firstly, usually the members of my own community are persons who are responsible for most of my needs, so I owe the most to them. If one person satisfies the needs of "outsiders" while ignoring the same needs of those within one's own community, one fails to be grateful. More importantly, if an agent helps distant people one does not know while being indifferent to the distress of those by one's side, Confucians will hold a justifiable suspicion that one is not so much concerned with the interests of the distant people as one is with one's own reputation or moral superiority. Confucians view such motives as a perversion of authentic virtues, because *ren* requires that the agent take the good of those for whom one is responsible as a sufficient reason for action without further reflection.

Furthermore, given limited resources, an agent should be careful about the way one gives in order to make the network of giving and receiving sustainable. All in all, for Confucians, the only reasonable way to give is to start with those who are in particular relations with us, i.e., caring with gradations. This position prevents Confucians from endorsing any formal notion of justice relating to equal individuals.

On the other hand, however, the concept of *ren* involves its own notion of justice. In the Confucian view, justice is indispensable for the network of mutual caring, in which everyone is responded to and included, and no one is left alone in helpless situations. It is one's *due* to be cherished in a caring network. With this notion of justice, Confucianism shows a general concern for humanity, which moves the agent from the closed community of direct responsibility into the wider public space, especially in two important respects.

First, this sense of justice prompts the agent to extend one's attentive care to those whose urgent and dire needs affects one, whether they are within one's own community or not.

Second, this notion of justice is capable of constituting a substantial criterion for the justifiability of government. Confucians maintain that the ideal form of government is one of *ren*. In the Confucian view, any existent government must be judged on whether it cares about its people, which will be further judged by whether it takes effective actions to care for them, and importantly, whether it makes a point of *assisting the sustainability of the mutual-caring network*. In this way, *ren* as the mutual-caring network is not confined to private life, but is always already a political issue. I will return to this problem in the following section.

7.7   The Common Good as a Political Issue

In the first section of this essay, I argued that the decline of filial piety is the immediate reason for the crisis in elderly support. However, in order to solve this crisis, we need to dig deeply into the background of the decline of filial piety. And it is exactly in this point that we will learn why the common good is always already a political issue.

One of the most significant factors responsible for the decline of filial piety is state intervention in private life. As C.K. Yang commented on the collective period of China,

> The present urge toward state collectivism calls upon the individual to sacrifice for a group far different from the family; and whatever its ultimate fate under the Communist regime, individualism has already performed the function of *alienating the individual from family loyalty*" (Yang 1965, pp. 173).

Paradoxically, it is exactly the socialist state that for the most part contributes to the rise of atomic individuals by detaching family members from the communal structure and thus transforming them into bare individuals who are loyal to the state (cf. Yan 2003, pp. 232).

Consequently, since the collapse of the socialist social structure and morality in the 1980s, uncivil individuals have been gradually captivated by ego-centered consumerism. These egoistic and hedonistic individuals only understand a relationship with others on the basis of cooperative bargaining for the sake of their individual interests, which distorts and undermines the common good of the mutual-caring network, as we discussed in the first section.

To make the situation even worse, the government holds self-conflicting ideologies about the issue of elderly support (cf. Yan 2003, pp. 82–84). On the one hand, the state still emphasizes filial piety as a virtue necessary for the common good of the society. On the other hand, the state made the virtue of filial piety expendable by favoring the loyalty of the individual to the state through the *destruction of communal power*. Its powerless and self-conflicting law best illustrates the weakness of governmental policy regarding family care support: "In the 1950 Marriage law and its later versions, elderly support is a legal duty of Chinese citizens….The same law, nevertheless, also emphasizes and promotes equality among family members both across generations and across gender lines" (Yan 2003, pp. 183). But the virtue of filial piety is specifically based on the indebtedness children feel to their parents, rather than abstract equality. In reality, the only effective legal rescue for parent abuse or abandon is to force the children to pay for their parents' living expenses. But as we have seen, the care I owe to my parents is endless and limitless, including moral and emotional as well as material components. Therefore, the result of the stipulation is to indulge the ungrateful individual rather than contribute to the mutual-caring network.

From the above observations, I want to draw two important conclusions.

First, the ethical crisis of elderly support reveals the desperate need of Chinese society, at least in Mainland China, to find a third approach, beyond the collective (or totalitarian) and atomistic approaches, to fill the moral vacuum. If my foregoing arguments are valid, traditional understanding and the pursuit of the common good of *ren* will provide a reliable direction for Chinese society to overcome some contemporary crises and begin a healthy and flourishing future.

Second, the fact that state intervention plays a central role in the decline of filial piety reveals that the common good is already a political issue, although first and foremost it is achieved in small-scale communities, such as families. The point is

that the family is not a distinct and separate unit, but depends on its social environment to flourish. The way family members participate in other social realms beyond the family has great and direct influence on how they recognize and pursue the good of family life. Therefore, if the state really acknowledges the foundational status of the common good achieved by filial piety for society, it is required to take more effective actions to facilitate the mutual-caring network of the family instead of paying it lip service.[30] As I have mentioned, in the Confucian view, the actual effect and extent of the caring-for that the government provides its people is an essential criterion for differentiating a just government from an unjust one, and an abstract appeal to the common good from a real pursuit of the common good.

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[30] In this respect, I agree with McCann that the Chinese government will learn some important lessons if it knows about the principle of subsidiary. See McCann (2013).

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Chapter 8
Common Good and the Ethics of Global Poverty: A Confucian Perspective

Jonathan Chan

8.1

In 2008, a workshop on "Absolute Poverty and Global Justice" was held in Erfurt, Germany. The participants came from different disciplines as well as different countries. They were economists, legal scholars, moral philosophers, development practitioners, political scientists, and theologians. The meeting was focused on absolute poverty and global inequality: their levels, trends, and determinants; their moral assessment; and their eradication through specific policies and structural reforms.[1] The participants argued that absolute poverty in the world is unacceptably large, affecting at least one billion human beings, and that much faster progress against absolute poverty is possible through reductions of national and global inequalities (Mack et al. 2009, pp. xv). However, they also argued that traditional approaches to global poverty alleviation have not worked, and that efforts founded on a well-meaning charitable concern and individual donations in cash and kind, together with a general but neutral public notion of social responsibility reflected in official aid allocations, are not sufficient (Ward 2009, pp. xix). The participants agreed that international agencies as well as the citizens, corporations, and governments of affluent countries bear a moral responsibility to reduce absolute poverty (Mack et al. 2009, pp. xv). The moral position of the participants of the workshop is then clear: it is our moral obligation to help the global poor (i.e., reducing absolute poverty at the global level), if we are capable of providing help to them. It is also the moral position that many people hold. For instance, followers of some great religious or moral traditions, such as the Catholic, the Buddhist, the Daoist, and the Confucian, endorse the moral position in question.

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[1] After the meeting, the participants of the workshop published a manifesto entitled "The Erfurt Manifesto" which is reprinted in (Mack et al. 2009, p. xv).

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However, the question is: do we have any good reasons for holding such a moral position? There are also many people who think that giving to the distant poor is merely an act of charity and, therefore, supererogatory. But if giving to the distant poor is merely an act of charity or supererogatory, it is not ethically impermissible not to do so. Thus, justification for the obligation in question seems to be required if we think that people have such a moral obligation. Moral philosophers have offered different moral approaches to the justification of our moral obligation to help the global poor. Among these moral approaches there are three prominent ones. The first moral approach draws on Rawls' notion of "the Law of Peoples," which is construed by extending the idea of social contract to peoples of different societies, to argue for the importance of establishing cooperative organizations at the global level in order to help enable the poor to improve their living standards (Mack 2009, pp. 8; Rawls 1999, pp. 113–115). The second moral approach draws on Nussbaum's idea of a right to certain human capabilities which are essential to leading a good life, arguing that the right in question accords to all humans the justified claim to a fundamental provision of goods, which in turn justifies some restricted claims of a global bailout (Mack 2009, pp. 9; Nussbaum 2011, pp. 113–122). The third moral approach is sometimes called the cosmopolitan approach, which argues for the moral duties of the world's well-off toward the poor because the existing global order, largely shaped by the world's well-off, is harming their fundamental rights to an existence (Mack 2009, pp. 9–10; Pogge 1992, 1994, 2004). These moral approaches, one way or another, invoke a certain idea of rights in justifying our moral obligation to help the global poor. In my view, it is exactly because they invoke the idea of rights that these approaches fail to convince people to embrace the moral obligation in question. However, in the present chapter I will not explain why they fail to do so. What I am going to do, instead, is explore some other way to justify the moral obligation in question. In this chapter, I shall discuss the moral obligation in question from the ethical perspective of Confucianism. The discussion focuses on the idea of the common good informed by Confucian ethics.

In the next section, I shall examine different understandings of the notion of the common good. The chapter then moves on to discuss the Confucian notion of the common good, giving special attention to its relation to the well-known Confucian ideas of *ren* or humaneness and Grand Union. The discussion focuses on the central tenet of this chapter that, by invoking the ideas of *ren* or humaneness and Grand Union, the Confucian notion of the common good is able to provide a justificatory basis for the moral obligation to help the global poor. Having argued for the above central tenet, this chapter then moves on to discuss Peter Singer's classic argument for the moral position that the affluent have a moral obligation to give a large part of their wealth to those who are suffering for want of basic necessities, even though they live in remote communities, and how the Confucian would respond to the argument. The purpose of the discussion is to shed light on how the Confucian would answer the following question: to what extent are we obligated to help the global poor? It will be argued that it is the moral position of the Confucian

that our moral obligation to help those who are suffering for want of basic necessities should not compromise the conception of the good informed by the Confucian moral tradition.

8.2

One way to justify the moral obligation to help the global poor is to appeal to the idea of the common good.[2] However, the notion is by no means clear and unambiguous. Different people might understand the notion in different ways. In this section, I examine some important ways in which the notion is to be understood, and argue that none of these understandings of the notion can provide an adequate conceptual basis for the justification of the moral obligation to help the global poor.

1. The notion is sometime construed to refer to a certain good common to all of us. The expression "a certain good common to all of us," however, needs clarification. The expression is sometimes used in a way so that it refers to a certain category of things we all value. Money is a case in point. However, there is nothing inconsistent involved if we hold the view that a certain category of things is taken to be valuable by all of us, but whether other people can access that category of things is none of our business. That being the case, it is difficult to see how we can derive a moral obligation to help the needy near or far by appealing to this notion of the common good. So a different understanding of the notion seems to be required if the notion is to be used to derive the moral obligation in question.

2. In *A Theory of Justice*, John Rawls gives the following definition to the notion of the common good: "The common good I think of as certain general conditions that are in an appropriate sense equally to everyone's advantage" (Rawls 1971, pp. 233, 246). What Rawls means is that a certain set of general conditions of society constitutes the common good if and only if the set benefits all members of the society equally. Examples of particular common goods denoted by the above Rawlsian notion of the common good are: a just legal and political system, an efficient economic system, an accessible and affordable public health care system, and so on. A merit of the above notion of the common good, as some liberals might argue, is that it does not depend on any particular substantive conception of the good. No matter what substantive conception of the good individual members of the society hold, it is evident that a just legal and political system is to each individual member's advantage.[3] Using this notion of the common good to justify

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[2] The general argument form of using the notion of the common good to justify the moral obligation in question is as follows: It is our moral obligation to promote the common good or what is required by the common good. Doing x, in this case, helping the global poor, is required by the common good. Thus, it is our moral obligation to help the global poor.

[3] What counts as a just legal and political system depends on our conception of justice. Rawls claims that his conception of justice does not depend on any particular substantive conception of the good. However, many commentators find this claim unwarranted.

our moral obligation to help the global poor, however, is not without difficulty. First of all, there is very little consensus over what general conditions are taken to be to everyone's advantage at the global level. The following are perhaps what people usually take to be to everyone's advantage at the global level: a congenial global climate, safe international transportation routes for the flow of goods and people travelling, clean oceans, and global peace.[4] It is, however, difficult to see how the conditions listed in the above set can generate the moral obligation in question. At least, it is not inconsistent to affirm the importance of those conditions and deny that we have the moral obligation in question.

3. In an interview in 1998, Rawls gives an alternative interpretation of the notion of the common good. He takes the common good to be a single common end, which people are trying to realize:

> You hear that liberalism lacks an idea of the common good, but I think that's a mistake. For example, you might say that, if citizens are acting for the right reasons in a constitutional regime, then regardless of their comprehensive doctrines they want every other citizen to have justice. So you might say they're all working together to do one thing, namely to make sure every citizen has justice. Now that's not the only interest they all have, but it's the single thing they're all trying to do. In my language, they're striving toward one single end, the end of justice for all citizens (Prusak 1998).

For Rawls, liberalism takes justice to be the single common end of a well-ordered society. Citizens of that society, if they are acting for the right reasons, would work together to make sure every citizen has justice. This single common end therefore constitutes the common good of a liberal society. In other places, Rawls makes similar remarks about the common good of well-ordered societies:

> Well-ordered societies with liberal conceptions of political justice also have a common good conception in this sense: namely the common good of achieving political justice for all its citizens over time and preserving the free culture that justice allows (Rawls 1999, pp. 71–72).
>
> [I]n the well-ordered society of justice as fairness citizens do have final ends in common. While it is true that they do not affirm the same comprehensive doctrine, they do affirm the same political conception of justice; and this means that they share one very basic political end, and one that has high priority: namely, the end of supporting just institutions and of giving one another justice accordingly (Rawls 1993, pp. 202).

It is clear from the above that Rawls identifies the common good with the single common end which people of a society are striving to achieve, and the single common end with achieving political justice. This notion of the common good, however, is not appropriate for the purpose of deriving the moral obligation to help the global poor as well. Obviously, a well-ordered society which Rawls' conception of political justice presupposes does not exist at the global level. Even if such a just international order exists, Rawls' conception of political justice does not necessarily require eliminating poverty in underdeveloped nations (Rawls 1999, pp. 113–120).

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[4] Some people might find the list still controversial.

4. To understand the common good as the single common end of a political community is not new. It can be traced back to Aristotle. For Aristotle, a certain form of social and political life is essential for human flourishing and therefore constitutes the common good for all the members of a political community. It is because, according to Aristotle, to flourish is the end of all human persons as rational beings. And it is impossible for human individuals to lead a flourishing life in isolation. Not even family is a sufficient social unit for such a life. To lead a flourishing life, one needs assistance not only from parents, but also from teachers, co-workers, and friends. It also requires social practices such as sports, arts, and market exchanges. In a nutshell, to lead a flourishing life requires one participating in a political community that embodies a certain form of social and political life. The form of social and political life in question then becomes the single common end that all members of a political community want to realize and therefore constitutes the common good of the political community (Aristotle 1946, Book III).

Using this Aristotelian notion of the common good to justify the obligation to help the global poor also encounters certain difficulties. In the first place, so far as the Aristotelian notion of the common good is concerned, the good in question is a restrictive one. Outsiders of a political community could be excluded from enjoying it. For instance, I might want my fellow citizens to have justice and at the same time not care about the injustice imposed on people outside the political community to which I belong. In the same vein, I might have a moral obligation to help eliminate poverty in the community for the sake of the goodness of the community. But it is not inconsistent for me not to care about the poverty in other political communities.

8.3

In the above section, I have examined some important understandings of the notion of the common good, and I argue that none of these understandings of the notion can provide an adequate conceptual basis for the justification of the moral obligation to help the global poor. In what follows, I shall discuss the notion from the Confucian ethical perspective and argue that the Confucian notion of the common good is able to provide an adequate conceptual basis for justifying a moral obligation to help the global poor. The analysis below shows that the Confucian notion of the common good also puts emphasis on a certain single common end that we all ought to achieve.

In *The Analects*, there is a passage that records a conversation between Confucius and his favorite student, Yan Hui: "Yan Hui asked about *ren* or humaneness. Confucius said, "Discipline yourself and return to ritual is what constitutes *ren*. If for a single day people could discipline themselves and return to ritual, all under heaven would return to *ren*"" (*The Analects* 12:1). For Confucius, "all under heaven

returning to *ren*" is an end that should be sought by all of us through the means of disciplining oneself and returning to ritual. However, an end that should be sought by all of us is a good common to all. In that case, from the Confucian point of view, "all under heaven returning to *ren*" constitutes the common good.

In what follows, I shall argue that the above Confucian notion of the common good is able to provide an adequate conceptual basis for the justification of the moral obligation to help the global poor. To see how the obligation can be so derived, we need to characterize the common good in question in more concrete terms. We need to know what the world of all under heaven returning to *ren* is like. In the Confucian classic *Liji* or *The Book of Rites*, there is a chapter entitled "Li Yun," which most Confucian scholars take to represent the ideal world of Confucianism. The picture of this Confucian ideal world sketched by that chapter perhaps can provide us some clue to know what the world of all under heaven returning to *ren* is like.

According to that passage, Confucius walked on the terrace over the Gate of Proclamations, looking sad and sighing. His disciple Yan asked him what he was sighing about. Confucius gave the following reply. "I never saw the practice of the Grand course, and the eminent men of the three dynasties[5]; but I have my object" (in harmony with theirs) ("Li Yun", *Liji* or *The Book of Rites*). He then went on to describe the practice of the Grand course.

> When the Grand course was pursued…men did not love their parents only, nor treat as children only their own sons. A competent provision was secured for the aged till their death, employment for the able-bodied, and the means of growing up to the young. They showed kindness and compassion to widows, orphans, childless men, and those who were disabled by disease, so that they were all sufficiently maintained. Males had their proper work, and females had their homes…In this way (selfish) scheming was repressed and found no development. Robbers, filchers, and rebellious traitors did not show themselves, and hence the outer doors remained open, and were not shut. This was (the period of) what we call the Grand Union ("Li Yun" in *Liji* or *The Book of Rites*).

For the Confucian, the world of the Grand Union (大同世界) is the world in which we all can flourish. In that world, people not only love their own parents and children but also care about the welfare of the people who do not belong to their family or clan. And it is because of people in that world commonly possessing this caring virtue that makes it possible that the weak and the needy near or far will be taken care of. For the Confucian, this caring virtue is the result of the cultivation of the virtue of *ren*, i.e., the result of our returning to *ren*. Thus, the world of the Grand Union can be deemed as being grounded in *ren* and identical to the world of all under heaven returning to *ren*. And it is this world which all persons of *ren* would work together to bring about. Accordingly, this world of the Grand Union is an end that ought to be sought by all of us and, therefore, constitutes a good which is common to all of us. But if the world of the Grand Union is the world we ought to work together to bring about, we ought to help the global poor as well. It is because

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[5] The three dynasties refer to the periods in which the three legendary kings, Yao, Shun and Yu, reigned.

our obligation to bring about that world entails our obligation to care about the welfare of the weak and the needy near or far which in turn entails our obligation to help the global poor.

We may further explain the above entailments by clarifying the meaning of the concept of *ren*. Confucius has given a very brief definition of *ren*: "Fan Ch'ih asked about *ren*. The Master said, 'Love your fellow men'" (The Analects IXII: 22). Thus, we could say that *ren* refers to a certain virtue, namely, the virtue of extending our love to people, including of course the weak and the needy near or far and therefore the global poor. It should, however, be noted that the love of *ren* is of a special kind. For the Confucian, the love in question is a "graduated" love that begins with one's family members and extends by degree out into one's society and the whole world.[6] To give a re-definition of *ren* according to the above understanding, then, we could say:

> A person of *ren* is a person who is capable of a "graduated" love beginning with one's family members and extending by degree out into one's society and finally the whole world.

It should be noted that the capability in question refers not only to a certain natural capacity but also a certain disposition that needs to be acquired or cultivated. And once a person acquires the disposition in question, he "sees" both emotionally and cognitively that he ought to extend his love to people beyond the family network and even to living creatures. In Mencius, there is a passage that describes the virtue of a gentleman. The description matches exactly the above definition of *ren*:

> Mencius said, "In regard to living creatures, a gentleman is sparing with them but not benevolent towards them. In regard to people, he is benevolent towards them but not affectionate to them. He is affectionate to his parents and merely benevolent towards people. He is benevolent towards people and merely sparing with creatures" (Book VII, Part A, 45).

According to the above passage, a person of *ren* is a person who is affectionate to his parents, benevolent toward people, and sparing with creatures. It is also clear from the above passage that the love of *ren* is not a "universal" one. It is not a kind of love that a person ought to extend to all on equal terms. Instead, it is a kind of "graduated" or "differentiated" love that requires a person to extend his love to others by degree. The principle of the "graduated" or "differentiated" love implies that, other things being equal, a person has a greater responsibility to help his family members than his fellow citizens, and his fellow citizens than people of other nations. It should, however, be noted that the principle implies that, as required by the virtue of *ren*, the person has the responsibility to help people of a remote distance, including the global poor, although the responsibility is a lesser one.

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[6] The term *ren* in early Confucian texts is not unequivocal. No one single definition can capture all the meanings of the term. However, in the present context we do not need a definition that captures all the meanings of the term. We only need a partial definition focusing on the aspect of *ren* that is relevant to the present discussion (Hall and Ames 1987, p. 120).

8.4

In the above, I have explained how the obligation to help the global poor can be derived by appealing to the Confucian notion of the common good. In what follows, I shall turn to another question: to what extent is a person obligated to help the global poor? In a classic paper published in 1972, Peter Singer presented an influential argument that the affluent have a moral obligation to give a large part of their wealth to those who are suffering for want of basic necessities, and that the moral obligation of the affluent is not diminished either by the physical distance between rich and poor, or by the fact that there are many other people similarly able to help. Let us call this conclusion C. Singer's argument has two major premises.

> [S]uffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care are bad.
>   If it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it. (Singer 2008, pp. 3)

Premise (1) is a value judgment concerning suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care. Premise (2) is sometimes called "the Principle of Sacrifice." He gives the following remarks on this principle. First, he explains the phrase "without sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance" as meaning not causing anything else comparably bad to happen, or doing something that is wrong in itself, or failing to promote some moral good, comparable in significance to the thing that we can prevent (Singer 2008, pp. 3). For Singer, this premise is as uncontroversial as (1). It is because the principle requires us only to prevent what is bad, and not to promote what is good, and it requires this of us only when we can do it without sacrificing anything that is, from the moral point of view, comparatively important. To strengthen his argument, he puts forward a qualified version of (2) which is as follows: "(2′) If it is in our power to prevent something very bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything morally significant, we ought, morally, to do it" (Singer 2008, pp. 3).

The following is an application of the qualified principle: Suppose you are walking past a shallow pond and see a child drowning in it. You ought to wade in and pull the child out. This will mean getting your clothes muddy, but this is insignificant, while the death of the child would presumably be a very bad thing.

Second, Singer warns us that acting on the principle in question would have drastic implications for our lives, our society, and our world. It is because the scope of the application of the principle is not confined to our local community, society, or country, but the whole world. The person whom we can help can be a person whose name we shall never know and who lives ten thousand miles away from us. It also makes no moral difference whether we are the only person who could give help or we are just one among millions in the same position. Singer's views can, thus, be formulated as follows.

(3) Our moral duty to prevent something very bad from happening does not depend on proximity or distance.

(4) Our moral duty to prevent something very bad from happening does not depend on the number of people who are in the same position as we are.

For Singer, (3) is obvious. It is because the premise is the result of the application of any of the following principles: the principle of impartiality, universalizability, equality, or principles of a similar nature. From the point of view of impartiality, it is, Singer argues, quite arbitrary to discriminate against someone merely because he is far away from us (or we are far away from him).[7] Singer takes the premise (4) to be obvious, too. It is because of the fact that there are millions of other people in the same position, in respect of preventing something very bad from happening, as a person is, does not make the situation significantly different from a situation in which he or she is the only person who can prevent the thing from happening. To see this is so, we only need to see the absurdity of the following view: A person is less obliged to pull the drowning child out of the pond if on looking around he or she sees other people no farther away than he or she is, who have also noticed the child but are doing nothing. It is evident that the view is merely an excuse for inactivity.[8]

It should be noted that from the above premises, i.e., the premises (1), (2′), (3), and (4), it does not follow that we have an obvious moral duty to help the global poor. Whether the derivation succeeds or not depends on the truth of some other empirical claims. In order to derive such an obligation, we need to establish the truth of the following.

(5) In some poor countries, there are a large number of people who suffer and die because of lack of food, shelter, and medical care.
(6) It is in the power of the affluent to prevent these things from happening.
(7) The affluent's preventing these things from happening does not result in sacrificing anything morally significant.

Now in conjunction with the premises (1), (3), (4), (5), (6), and (7), the Principle of Sacrifice, i.e., Premise (2′), seems to imply C, i.e., the conclusion that the affluent have a moral obligation to give a large part of their wealth to those who are suffering for want of basic necessities, and that the moral obligation of the affluent is not diminished either by the physical distance between rich and poor, or by the fact that there are many other people similarly able to help.

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[7] Singer admits that "it is possible that we are in a better position to judge what needs to be done to help a person near to us than one far away, and perhaps also to provide the assistance we judge to be necessary" (Singer 2008, p. 4).

[8] It should be noted that (4) is compatible with the view that whether we are obliged to do something may depend on the actual number of people who have done the same thing. In the case of donating money to refugees dying of famine in a poor country, for instance, if a large number of people have already donated more than enough money to help the refugees, then that can be a strong reason for exempting us from donating some more money to them.

8.5

How would the Confucian respond to Singer's argument? Since (5) and (6) are statements about the empirical world, the truth or falsehood of the statement depends on empirical facts rather than ethical considerations. So a reasonable Confucian would either take the premise to be non-controversial or to consult further empirical study of the empirical facts in question if he or she has doubt about the premises. Then the question becomes: would the Confucian accept Singer's argument, assuming that (5) is true? The premises (1), (2′), (3), (4), and (7) are not statements about empirical facts. Their acceptance depends on our ethical considerations. Then would the Confucian consider all these premises as acceptable? Premise (1) appears to be uncontroversial from the Confucian ethical perspective. Lack of food, shelter, and medical care is a paradigm case of poverty, and the Confucian considers poverty as an undesirable condition for humans.[9] But if poverty is considered to be something which is undesirable, suffering and death from poverty should be considered as even worse. Premise (4) also appears to be uncontroversial from the Confucian ethical perspective. According to the Confucian, if it is our moral responsibility to do a certain thing, we should not yield the responsibility to others.[10] Premise (3) seems to be acceptable from the Confucian ethical perspective, too, if what it means is that we have some obligation to prevent something very bad from happening, even if in remote communities.[11] As we have seen in 8.2, the Confucian notion of the common good implies that as required by the virtue of *ren*, a person has the responsibility to help people at a remote distance, including the global poor, although the responsibility is a lesser one.

Let us now turn to the premise (2′), i.e., the Principle of Sacrifice. Whether or not the Principle of Sacrifice can be regarded as an accurate and plausible description of our duty to save those in peril, near or far, of course depends very much on the plausibility of the principle itself. On the face of it, the principle seems to be an uncontroversial one. As Singer argues, it requires us only to prevent what is bad, and not to promote what is good, and it requires this of us only when we can do it without sacrificing anything that is, from the moral point of view, morally significant. However, that the principle is uncontroversial is only apparent. The closer we look at the principle, the more controversial we find it to be. First, as Singer has admitted,

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[9] "Poverty and low station are what men dislike…" (*The Analects* IV.5).

[10] The Master said, "When faced with the opportunity to practice benevolence do not yield precedence even to your teacher" (*The Analects* XV.36). From the Confucian point of view, preventing something very bad from happening is considered to be practicing benevolence, i.e., *ren*. Then the above saying of Confucius implies that not only our moral duty to prevent something very bad from happening does not depend on the number of people who are in the same position as we are, but that it is also our moral duty to take the initiative to grasp the opportunity to prevent that thing from happening.

[11] However, for the Confucian, the duties and obligations generated by membership in nearer and more intimate communities may take priority over those generated by membership in more remote and impersonal communities.

not many people think that we have a moral duty to give help to the needy. People think that doing so is an act of charity. Few of us, for instance, would condemn those who indulge in luxury instead of giving to famine relief. Second, the principle, together with further premises, leads to the demanding imperative that everyone has a duty not to spend money on luxuries or frills, and to use the savings due to abstinence to help those in dire need (Miller 2010, pp. 10). In consequence, the principle may rule out spending money for the sake of enjoyed consumption on any of the sort that is not needed to avoid deprivation.

In what follows, I shall make some further critical remarks on the controversial nature of Singer's principle. Unpopularity and demanding implication aside, it seems to me that a source of controversy concerning the principle lies in its qualifying phrase, namely, "without thereby sacrificing anything morally significant." The principle itself does not give us any clue as to what counts as "morally significant." Can we use the utilitarian standard to inform people which things are "morally significant" and which things are not? But that would make the principle even more controversial and thereby defeat Singer's purpose of proposing the principle in question. In some cases, we can use our intuition to judge what is "morally significant" and what is not. Just like the case of saving the drowning child, most of us would have the moral intuition that getting your clothes muddy is insignificant when compared with the death of the child. But in many other cases, our intuition cannot take up the job of deciding whether certain things are morally significant or not.

In my view, what counts as "morally significant" depends on what conception of the good we hold. For the utilitarian, what counts as "morally significant" depends on the magnitude of happiness that a thing or an action can bring about. However, for the Confucian, what counts as "morally significant" does not depend on that, but on the conception of the good informed by the Confucian tradition. Consider the following example. Suppose I can find a good enough piano teacher for my child by paying fee of $100 (US dollars) per hour. But if I am willing to pay $5 more, I can find a better piano teacher for my child. For the utilitarian, it would be wrong for me to pay that extra $5 for my child's piano education instead of donating the money to a famine relief fund, assuming that donating that extra money can save a child's life in the poorest African country.[12] However, from the Confucian perspective, it is not wrong for me to pay that extra $5 for my child's piano education. It is because from the Confucian perspective, I have a special duty to my family, say, providing my children as good an education as I can so that they can lead a flourishing life. To put it differently, for the Confucian, our duty to help the needy near or far is not on par

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[12] Singer did not discuss providing better education to one's child. But he has discussed buying new clothes to make one look "well dressed." Singer argues, "When we buy new clothes not to keep ourselves warm but to look 'well dressed', we are not providing for any important need. We would not be sacrificing anything significant if we were to continue to wear our old clothes, and give the money to famine relief" (Singer 2008, p. 7). Singer did not inform us of his standard of moral significance. But from what he said, we may infer that he is using some sort of utilitarian standard to compare the moral significance of things.

with our duty to assist our family members, relatives, or friends to lead a flourishing life. The Confucian gives a higher priority to the latter.

Having made the above remarks, however, I am not saying that the Confucian denies our having a moral duty to prevent something very bad from happening. I am only saying that describing the duty in terms of Singer's principle is not without controversy. I argue that the plausibility of the principle depends on how the qualifying phrase of the principle—"without thereby sacrificing anything morally significant"—is interpreted. I also argue in the above that the qualifying phrase in question must be subject to the interpretation in accordance with the conception of the good informed by the Confucian tradition if the principle is to be acceptable from the Confucian ethical perspective. Similar consideration applies to the acceptability of premise (7). Having made these qualifications, we might come to the tentative conclusion that it is the moral position of the Confucian that the affluent have a moral obligation to give a large part of their wealth to those who are suffering for want of basic necessities, and that the moral obligation of the affluent is not diminished either by the physical distance between rich and poor, or by the fact that there are many other people similarly able to help, assuming that doing so would not compromise the conception of the good informed by the Confucian tradition.

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Chapter 9
Between the Family and the State: The Common Good and the Confucian Habits of the Heart

P.C. Lo

9.1 The Common Good and the American "Habits of the Heart"[1]

There are many ways of approaching the topic of the common good. The approach of Robert N. Bellah and his colleagues is more useful for this chapter because their discourse of the common good is deeply embedded in social analysis. It seems to me that a Sino-American dialogue on the common good will be more focused and less likely to talk past one another if our discussions are equally grounded in social analysis. I am not a sociologist but an observer of China, and I read social scientists' works on China. As a result of the emergence of the global economy and China's increasing integration into this economy, the moral-social symptoms of the diseases of American as well as Chinese societies unsurprisingly overlap in many ways. Hence, America and China can learn from one another in the ways that promote the common good in our respective societies.

This chapter is divided into six parts. In the first section I summarize Bellah and his colleagues in their contribution to the discussion of the common good. In the next section I point out that some obstacles to the promotion of the common good in America are present in China as well. In the third section I explain how the common good was promoted through the all-pervasive family metaphor in traditional China, and in the fourth section I explain how this premodern Confucian metaphor cannot do the work for today's China. In the fifth section I point out, learning from

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[1] I follow Bellah and his colleagues in the use of the phrase "habits of the heart." According to them, it was Alexis de Tocqueville in his book *Democracy in America* who first used this phrase in describing "the mores…of the American people" which "helped to form American character" (Bellah et al. 1985, p. viii).

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Bellah and his colleagues, how some other Confucian resources can help China overcome the obstacles and pursue better the common good. In the final section I argue that between the individual and the state we need a plurality of communities of civic commitment engaging in civil debates. This follows from the Confucian tenet that persons are not atomistic, but are in webs of relationships and bonds.[2] The importance of the family cannot be understated, but family should not be the only intermediate group between an individual and the state. The family metaphor of the nation is also not helpful, because it does not encourage the existence and activities of other groups between the family and the state. Other communities and associations, Confucian and otherwise, have an indispensable role to play in promoting the common good for China.

The sequel to the *Habits of the Heart* by Bellah and his colleagues is titled *The Good Society*. In the light of the title of the second book, the first book can be appropriately regarded as a work on the good life. In fact, the original Preface of the book begins with these questions, "How ought we to live? How do we think about how to live? Who are we, as Americans? What is our character?" (Bellah et al. 1985, pp. vii). The thesis of Bellah and his colleagues is that the good life consists of an integration of private and public life, because these two are not antithetical (Bellah et al. 1985, pp. 163); nay, they are mutually enhancing (Bellah et al. 1985, pp. 162), both are necessary (Bellah et al. 1985, pp. 196). The social reality, however, is that for many Americans the private and the public are incoherent in their character. Some of them are preoccupied by the pursuit of their individual good. For others, when they are engaged in pursing the public/common good, "they have difficulty articulating the richness of their commitments" (Bellah et al. 1985, pp. 20–21). The root problem, according to Bellah and his colleagues, is that individualism is deeply entrenched in the American character, so much so it crowds out the sense of solidarity and public commitment, which is supported also by American cultural traditions, *viz.*, aspects of the biblical religion and the republican tradition of the Founding Fathers (Bellah et al. 1985, pp. 29, 31, 154). Hence, we need to reorganize and renew our moral life in such a way that the "two languages" can be coherent. It is not the case that the public/common good will automatically emerge when each of us vigorously pursues his/her private/individual good. Neither is the case that the public/common good is identical to the summation of private/individual goods (Bellah et al. 1985, pp. 335). Contrarily, the public/common good is to be promoted mainly through our participation in some intermediate groups or communities for common causes (Bellah et al. 1985, pp. 212, 286). As Bellah and his colleagues put it,

> The transformation of our culture and our society would have to happen at a number of levels. If it occurred only in the minds of individuals…it would be powerless. If it came only from the initiative of the state, it would be tyrannical…. But individuals need the nurture of groups that carry a moral tradition reinforcing their own aspiration (Bellah et al. 1985, pp. 286).

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[2] In spite of my indebtedness to Bellah and his colleagues, here lies the difference between my view and their view. The notion of the relational self might be latent in Bellah and his colleagues, but it is explicit in my arguments in this article.

Hence, "communities of memory" are to be renewed and should not be confused with "enclaves of lifestyle" (Bellah et al. 1985, pp. 72, 153, 333).

In the 1996 reprint, the authors provide a newly written, extensive, updated Preface. What is noteworthy for the purpose of this chapter is as follows. The expression "common good" occurs more frequently than before (Bellah et al. 1996, pp. ix, x, xxix, xxxii, xxxiv). The phrase "civic membership" is proposed as a better way than commitment, community, and solidarity to summarize the second American language (Bellah et al. 1996, pp. xi). After 11 years, the authors think that the crisis of civic membership is more acute than before. "What we mean by the crisis of civic membership is that there are, at every level of American life and in every significant group, temptations and pressures to disengage from the larger society" (Bellah et al. 1996, pp. xi). First and foremost, there is the "emergence of a deracinated elite…who know how to use the new technologies and information systems that are transforming the global economy.… Among this powerful elite the crisis of civic membership is expressed in the loss of civic consciousness, of a sense of obligation to the rest of society, which leads to a secession from society into guarded, gated residential enclaves and ultra-modern offices…What is even more disturbing about this knowledge/power elite than its secession from society is its predatory attitude toward the rest of society, its willingness to pursue its own interests without regard to anyone else" (Bellah et al. 1996, pp. xii). As to the middle class, following Robert Reich, they are now known as the "anxious class." "In the anxious class the crisis of civic membership takes the form of disillusion with politics and a sense of uncertainty about the economic future so pervasive that concern for individual survival threatens to replace social solidarity" (Bellah et al. 1996, pp. xv). Besides, the crisis of civic membership can be seen in the "declining social capital," two indices of which are the decline of American associational life and the decline of public trust (in Federal government, in other people) (Bellah et al. 1996, pp. xvi–xvii). To surmount such declines, the authors cite more recent studies and side with "a sophisticated communitarianism or associationalism that argues for a primary emphasis on devolving functions onto lower-level associations (although not avoiding the responsibility of the state)" (Bellah et al. 1996, pp. xxviii). Above all, America urgently needs to have "a fundamental reorientation toward community and solidarity as a kind of conversion…turning away from preoccupation with the self and toward some larger identity" (Bellah et al. 1996, pp. xxxi).

In the sequel, *The Good Society* (1991), the authors provide supplementary prescription to cure this social malaise.

> In *Habits of the Heart* we asked, "How ought we to live? How do we think about how to live?" And we focused on cultural and personal resources for thinking about our common life. In *The Good Society* we are concerned with the same questions, but we are now focusing on the patterned ways Americans have developed for living together, what sociologists call institutions (Bellah et al. 1991, pp. 4).

As "we all live in and through institutions – family, school, community, corporation, church, synagogue, state, and nation – the authors show how we can better understand them, take responsibility within them, and ultimately transform them" (dust

jacket). The most important transformation of all is the "third democratic transformation" (Bellah et al. 1991, pp. 81).

This book also more consciously uses the phrase "the common good." As the authors explain it,

> It is central to our very notion of a good society that it is an open quest, actively involving all its members. As Dennis McCann has put it, the common good is the pursuit of the good in common. As we understand it, pluralism does not contradict the idea of a good society, for the latter would be one that would allow a wide scope for diversity and would draw on resources from its pluralistic communities in discerning those things that are necessarily matters of the good of all (Bellah et al. 1991, pp. 9).

I submit that to pursue the common good is *to pursue goods common to all by participating in communities for common causes*. Although this articulation of the common good does not provide a substantive, content-rich account of human goods, it will be shown to be a merit when we come to China in the last section of this chapter. The merit of this understanding of the common good is that the promotion of the common good should be bottom up as well as top down.

9.2 The Common Weal and Woe in China Today

For Bellah and his colleagues, the greatest obstacle to the promotion of the common good in America is the deeply entrenched individualism. China does not have such a deeply entrenched tradition. On the contrary, pre-modern China, at least in practice if not in philosophy, is well-known for collectivism, so much so that some intellectual leaders introduced Western individualism into China about 90 years ago (known as the May Fourth Movement) as a partial effort to culturally and socially save China.[3] Collectivism intensified drastically after the People's Republic of China was established in 1949. However, the PRC is now being understood as the People's Republic of Capitalism,[4] and that is the source of many moral-social problems in China today.

The government's initiative of "Reform and Openness" started in 1979, and the initiative for economic liberalization accelerated in 1992. A market economy was introduced to serve socialist ends; hence the term "Socialist Market Economy" and the avoidance of the dirty term "capitalism." With China joining the WTO in 2001, the country has sealed its fate with the global neo-capitalist market. It is a widely acknowledged fact that China's economy grew and expanded tremendously in the last 30 years. It was estimated that the average economic growth of these 30 years was more than 9 % annually, which led to the creation of many jobs, much higher pay for many citizens, and more attractive costs for a flourishing export and international trade. It was also observed that in 2010 China had become the second largest

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[3] One famous tenet by Hu Shih, a major public intellectual at that time, is "One should first and foremost strive to be a human being before being a Chinese."

[4] *The People's Republic of Capitalism*, a documentary by Ted Koppel (Discovery Channel, 2008).

economic entity in the whole world. These economic achievements are indisputable, but they came at a very high moral-social cost. First, the country is flirting with Economic Individualism, assuming that there is a natural harmonious order as such

> That a spontaneous economic system, based on private property, the market, and freedom of production, contract and exchange, and on the unfettered self-interest of individuals, tends to be more or less self-adjusting; and that it conduces to the maximum satisfaction of individuals and to (individual and social) progress (Lukes 1973, pp. 89).

Ethical Egoism then emerged. As Deng Xiaoping, the so-called architect of Reform and Openness, famously put it, "Let some of us get rich first, so that they can help everybody to get rich." To focus on promoting one's economic self-interests is not dirty; nay, it actually promotes the common good of shared prosperity. Unconsciously following Bernard Mandeville, people were asked to believe that through the magic of the market, our private vices will be turned into public benefits.[5] The socialist market economy as a result lamentably promoted not only industriousness and creativity, but also corner-cutting in the race to get rich first. Fake products one after another continue to be poured into the market. Contaminated food and drinks are sold nationwide, poisonous toys to USA. The wide-spread baby formula contamination incident in 2008, which shocked the post-Olympic euphoric nation, is but a tip of the iceberg. Many small enterprises are propelled by greed, and big corporations do not pay attention to corporate social responsibilities. Bellah and his colleagues are very worrisome about a section of American business people not only because of its lack of civic consciousness, but also because of its "predatory attitude toward the rest of society, its willingness to pursue its own interests without regard to anyone else" (Bellah et al. 1996, pp. xii). This kind of business people abounds in China as well, from big corporations in big cities to small factories in the countryside.

There are other moral-social casualties as well. Organized corruption among government officials is widespread on all levels and in all branches. The "collusion of government officials and entrepreneurs" (官商勾結, *guanshang goujie*) keeps on stealing wealth from society. Economic exploitation is rampant in this nominally communist country. Social unrest is on the rise. Many young people join the global movement of consumerism; they are trapped in materialism and instant hedonism. The resulting deteriorating moral health of society has been a repeated topic of some books.[6] What is most telling is a government publisher's releasing of another translation of Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* in 2008. The first page of the book quotes then Premier Wen Jiabao five times, on different occasions during 2004–2007, on the same topic: for him *The Wealth of the Nations* and *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* are of equal value. So *The Wealth of the Nations* had long superseded *The Communist Manifesto* as the blueprint of a developing country ruled by the Chinese Communist Party. No wonder so many Chinese have turned

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[5] "Thus every Part was full of Vice, yet the whole Mass a Paradise" (quoted in Lukes 1973, p. 100).
[6] The most noteworthy are Jie (1997, 1998, 2000), and (2003), which deal with the Chinese "habits of the heart," and Mao (2008).

into "exclusively self-interest maximizers" (Bellah et al. 1991, pp. 91) and the worries of Bellah and his colleagues are real not only in the USA, but also in China.

"Declining social capital," which also worries Bellah and his colleagues (Bellah et al. 1996, pp. xvi–xvii), is also happening in China. One index is the decline of public trust in the federal government and in other people. In China, the decline of public trust in the government happens on all levels, and I submit that the decline of public trust in other people is much worse than is the case in America. A notorious incident happened in Nanjing, 2006–07. A young man Peng Yu (彭宇) helped an injured old lady to go to the hospital, but was accused by her policeman son to be the injury-inflictor, judged to be guilty by the court, and sentenced to pay for all her high-priced medical expenses. Since then many people all over the country refrain from Good Samaritanism. To be prudent, one cannot trust a stranger, cannot trust the merchandize one buys, and cannot trust local government announcements. The last distrust was created by the "Southern China tiger incident" in Shaanxi, 2007. To promote tourism, the provincial government asserted that someone took a picture of a rare Southern China tiger in the province. In spite of government's repeated denials, the picture was eventually proven to be a fake, and this incident was voted by Chinese netizens to be the most absurd news of that year. Many more ridiculous stories can be told, but we do not have time for it now. In short, as the saying goes, except swindlers, because everything can be faked in China.[7] The crisis of public trust and the threat to the basic sense of solidarity is gigantic.

The decline of civic commitment has experienced the largest drop among the college students and professors. Before June 1989, following the good model of traditional Chinese intellectuals, college students and professors in China had a deep sense of looking after the common good of the country. In that fateful year they started anti-corruption campaigns and other social movements, publicly expressed distrust in the central government, and demanded more political participation. After these social movements were brutally crushed and their leaders arrested and harshly punished, most college students and professors turned from political idealism to political apathy. The common good of the country nowadays is not high on college students' list of concerns. Instead, they merge with the crowd and have become economic individualists and ethical egoists. They agree with the government that continuing economic development is the most important work for the country, and they are anxious not to lose out in this national movement to maximize one's economic interests. The once-idealistic young generation is now very "pragmatic"; for many of them, all they want is a good job with good pay, and better still with political privilege. They cynically acquiesce that the common good is nothing but the sum of individual goods. In the past, college students and professors were willing to promote the common good that transcends their individual goods. After 1989, college students and professors are still aware of the common good, but they have been converted to the view that the common good is to be pursued largely by

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[7] The information above is from Zeng (2008), pp. 136–137, and can be verified on the internet.

maximizing one's economic, individual goods.[8] Bellah and his colleagues have this worry about the common good,

> Our individualistic heritage taught us that there is no such thing as the common good but only the sum of individual goods. But in our complex, interdependent world, the sum of individual goods, organized only under the tyranny of the market, often produces a common bad that eventually erodes our personal satisfactions as well (Bellah et al. 1991, pp. 95).

China does not have the deeply entrenched tradition of ontological and political individualism. However, as many Chinese are converted to economic individualism, ethical egoism, and the faith in the invisible hand, many people adopt this individualist understanding of the common good (summation of individual goods). As a consequence, the occurrence of "the common bad" is more likely in China than in the USA. This is because here in China we have not only the tyranny of the "free market," but also the tyranny of the pseudo-free market under the "collusion of government officials and entrepreneurs." The symptoms of China's "common bad" include the difficulty of getting quality health care, poor education system in the countryside, poor labor rights (independently formed labor unions are illegal in China), and a rapidly deteriorating natural environment.

9.3 The Family Metaphor: The Traditional Confucian Way of Promoting the Common Good

Traditionally, Chinese culture has a strong sense of the common good, which is not individualistic. Under the strong influence of Confucianism, people are taught to view society as a big family. Our individual lives are thus not only family-embedded, but also nation-embedded.

The family metaphor is not unique in pre-modern China. According to one recent study (Lakoff 1996/2002), American political thought can be analyzed through the model of the family. Lakoff argues that the differences in opinions between liberals and conservatives follow from the fact that they subscribe with different strength to two different metaphors about the relationship of the state to its citizens. Both, he claims, see governance through metaphors of the family. Conservatives would subscribe more strongly and more often to a model that he calls the "strict father model" and has a family structured around a strong, dominant "father" (government), and assumes that the "children" (citizens) need to be disciplined to be made into responsible "adults" (morality, self-financing). Once the "children" are "adults," though, the "father" should not interfere with their lives: the government should stay out of the business of those in society who have proved their responsibility. In contrast, Lakoff argues that liberals place more support in a model of the family, which he calls the "nurturant parent model," based on "nurturant values," where both "mothers" and "fathers" work to keep

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[8] The analysis above is based on both my own observations and the study by Chen (2009), which cites many other social science studies.

the essentially good "children" away from "corrupting influences" (pollution, social injustice, poverty, etc.). Lakoff says that most people have a blend of both metaphors applied at different times, and that political speech works primarily by invoking these metaphors and urging the subscription of one over the other.

Confucian thought explicitly invokes the family metaphor in its political thought in such a way that this metaphor is deeply and pervasively entrenched in our language. The Chinese language works by combining different characters to form terms and phrases. The word *jia* (family) is used frequently to form many terms, which leads to the pervasiveness of the family metaphor. Some examples are as follow. (1) The country is a family writ large, with the head of government and its officers akin to the parents and the ruled resemble the children. Hence in Chinese we have these terms: *guojia* (國家, state-family, i.e., country, state), *junfu* (君父, monarch-father, i.e., fatherly monarch), *fumuguan* (父母官, father-mother-official, i.e., kind-as-parents government officials), *Zimin* (子民, offspring-people, i.e., dependent/obedient-as-children people). (2) The public is deemed family-like. Hence we have these Chinese terms: *dajia* (大家, big-family, i.e., everybody, all), *gongjia* (公家, public-family, i.e., public). (3) A school is akin to a family. Hence we say *shixiong/jie* (師兄/姐, teacher-elder-brother/sister, i.e., senior schoolmates are akin to my elder brothers/sisters), *shifu* (師父, teacher-father, i.e., teacher as my father). (4) Good friends are regarded as siblings. Hence we say *laoxiong* (老兄, hey, brother, i.e., a familiar form of address between male friends), *renxiong* (仁兄, benevolent-brother, i.e., a polite way of addressing "you"), *chengxiong daodi* (稱兄道弟, call one another brother, i.e., take a good friend as a brother), *nanxiong nandi* (難兄難弟, adversity-brothers, i.e., people in the same boat), *jiebai xiongdi/jiemei* (結拜兄弟/姐妹, become sworn brothers or sisters). (5) An acquaintance can be greeted warmly as a brother, hence *xiongdi* (兄弟, elder and younger brother). (6) Even casually, another person can be referred to via the family, hence we say *renjia* (人家, people-family, i.e., another person, other people). (7) Last, the entire world is one big family. Hence we say *tianxia yijia* (天下一家, all under heaven is one family). This pervasiveness of the family metaphor helps Chinese to appreciate the importance of the common good, *viz.*, human life is "not for life in isolation but for the formation of social unity," "the good of each person is bound up with the good of the community" (Hollenbach 1994, pp. 192), and "all persons share mutually in the benefits that come from social advance" (Hollenbach 1994, pp. 193).

These linguistic constructions are certainly the work of Confucianism. For example, there are frequent employments of the family metaphor in viewing the public life in neo-Confucianism, an intellectual movement for more than 600 years. Two most famous teachings are from Zhang Zai (張載, 1020–1077) and Wang Yangming (王陽明, 1472–1529), respectively:

Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother, and even such a small creature as I finds an intimate place in their midst. Therefore that which fills the universe I regard as my body and that which directs the universe I consider as my nature. All people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions (*Inscription on the Western Wall*).[9]

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[9] 《西銘》:"乾稱父,坤稱母;予茲藐焉,乃混然中處。故天地之塞,吾其體;天地之帥,吾其性。民,吾同胞;物,吾與也。"

> The great man regards Heaven and Earth and the myriad things as one body. He regards the world as one family and the country as one person (*Inquiry on the Great Learning*).[10]

Furthermore, if we focus on social-political thought, one major school of Confucian political thought since the Song Dynasty explicitly adopts this family metaphor. It began with Sima Guang (1019–1086),[11] a scholar-statesman who served as the high chancellor for less than a year in the imperial government. His greatest legacy is the monumental *Zizhi tongjian* (《資治通鑒》, *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government*), a general chronicle of Chinese history from 403 BC to AD 959, which is considered one of the finest single historical works in Chinese. He also composed a trilogy of family ethics treatises. The first one is known as *Shu Yi* (《書儀》), which is a ten-chapter manual for the performance of family rituals, *viz.*, capping, marriage, mourning, and offering. The second one is *Jujia Zayi* (《居家雜儀》), which is a set of miscellaneous etiquette for family life. The third one is *Jia Fan* (《家範》), which consists of detailed family role-ethical precepts for each member of the extended family. In the first chapter of the last book he explains the purpose of this treatise by first quoting a key passage from chapter one of the Confucian classic *The Great Learning*:

> The ancients who wished to manifest their clear character to the world would first bring order to their states. Those who wished to bring order to their states would first regulate their families. Those who wished to regulate their families would first cultivate their personal lives. Those who wished to cultivate their personal lives would first rectify their minds. Those who wished to rectify their minds would first make their wills sincere. Those who wished to make their wills sincere would first extend their knowledge. The extension of knowledge consists in the investigation of things. When things are investigated, knowledge is extended, the will becomes sincere; when the will is sincere, the mind is rectified; when the mind is rectified, the personal life is cultivated; when the personal life is cultivated, the family will be regulated; when the family is regulated, the state will be in order; and when the state is in order, there will be peace throughout the world. From the Son of Heaven down to the common people, all must regard cultivation of the personal life as the root or foundation. There is never a case when the root is in disorder and yet the branches are in order. There has never been a case when what is treated with great importance becomes a matter of slight importance or what is treated with slight importance becomes a matter of great importance (Chan 1963, pp. 86–87).[12]

Since the basis of statecraft ("bringing order to the state") is bringing order to family ("bringing order to the state"), Sima Guang then explains that this treatise, *Jia Fan*, is meant not only as an instruction for family-building, but also as an instruction for nation-building.[13] This treatise complements his monumental *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government*, which he had written for the sake of advising emperors in statecraft.

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[10] 《大學問》"大人者,以天地万物为一体者也。其視天下犹一家,中国犹一人焉。"

[11] Wade-Giles Romanization as Ssu-ma Kuang.

[12] "The importance of this little Classic is far greater than its small size would suggest. It gives the Confucian educational, moral, and political programs in a nutshell, neatly summed up in the so-called 'three items'…and in the 'eight steps'" (Chan 1963, p. 86). The quotation above is the explanation of the "eight steps."

[13] "所謂治國必先齊其家者,其家不可教而能教人者,無之。故君子不出家而成教於國。孝者所以事君也,弟者所以事長也,慈愛者所以使眾也。" (Sima 1995, p. 4).

This trilogy of family ethics has had tremendous influence in subsequent times. The influence of the first two has been primarily through Zhu Xi's adopting them in his manual *Family Rituals* (Chu 1991), which has had tremendous social influence for a long time (see Lo 2010). As to the last treatise, it sets the precedence of this genre of writing—family ethics manuals—in subsequent times (cf. Zhou 2005, pp. 8).[14] Zhu Xi's students continue to write treatises of political ethics in the format of family ethics.[15]

This tradition of seeing the country as the family writ large and the family the country writ small is attested by contemporary scholars (Yue 1990; He 1987; Jin and Liu 2008, pp. 75–76). We should note that the family we have been talking about so far is the extended, patriarchal family. In the table below I will outline this family-country correspondence and the implications for the understanding of the common good.

Traditional model: model of extended, patriarchal family

Family	Country
Extended family	One huge extended family
Co-habitation of a large number of kin	Co-habitation of a large number of clans, races
Centralization of power in the elder patriarch who rules with benign authoritarianism	Centralization of power in the emperor who rules with benign authoritarianism
Supreme virtue: obedience (filial obedience 孝順, *xiaoshun*)	Supreme virtue: obedience (loyal obedience, 忠順, *zhongshun*)
Emphasis on familial harmony; with a harmonious family all deeds will succeed (以和為貴,家和萬事興)	Emphasis on harmonious society (和諧社會)
Basis of familial harmony is biological hierarchical order and stability	Basis of harmonious society is social hierarchical order and stability
Family harmony is more important than expressions of individuality	Social/National harmony is more important than exercise of individual rights
For the sake of not disrupting familial harmony, public contentions are discouraged and behind-the-scene mediation is encouraged	For the sake of not disrupting social harmony, public litigations are discouraged and behind-the-scene mediation is encouraged
Family members are urged to sacrifice their small selves for the promotion of the Big Self (the collective good of the extended family)	Country members are urged to sacrifice their small selves for the promotion of the Big Self (the collective good of the country)
The common good of the extended family outweighs the individual goods of its members	The common good of the country outweighs the individual goods of its members

(continued)

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[14] This tradition was inherited by Zhu Xi and some of his disciples. They advised emperors on statecraft by composing treatises on how to bring order to a family.

[15] E.g., Zhen Dexiu (真德秀) and his *Elaborations of the Great Learning* 《大學衍義》.

(continued)

Family	Country
To safeguard the common good of the extended family, members need to have patience, tolerance, understanding, and to make concessions	To safeguard the common good of the country, members need to have patience, tolerance, understanding, and to make concessions
Familial solidarity: all for each and each for all	National solidarity: all for each and each for all
Economic solidarity through common property (no private property among small families and individual members)	Economic solidarity through Imperial ultimate ownership of all land
Abuse of the "common good": good for the family but not good for its members → collectivism and patriarchal totalitarianism	Abuse of the "common good": good for the country but not good for its members → collectivism and patriarchal totalitarianism
Another abuse: order within the extended family is based on trust, not check and balance; hence it is not difficult to steal from the common purse	Another abuse: order within the country is based on trust, not check and balance, hence it is easy to steal from the state treasury

In short, the common good in ancient China, both on the regional and the national levels, is promoted through this model of the extended, patriarchal family.[16] As a recent scholar summarizes,

> Since the individual was thus embedded in a dense network of kinship relations, solidarities developed and the cohesion of society became stronger because other relationships too were modeled on the family ties, which were regulated by the hierarchy of the elders respectively by successive generations. This way the old Confucian values, such as a sense of community, mutuality, harmony, and unity became once again highly appreciated virtues (Linck 2009, pp. 311).

9.4   Old Metaphor and New Alien Reality

Knowing the massive "common bad" and other moral woes of the country, Chinese political leaders launched the vision of "constructing a socialist harmonious society" in 2005. In their political speeches it is not difficult to detect that this vision is an indirect way of reviving the old extended-family model of bringing order to the country.

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[16] One might want to know why these values are Confucian ones. Within the limits of this paper I cannot identify the Confucian sources for each of the items in the table above, which can turn into an independent paper. But it is instructive to take the cue from some contemporary Confucian activists in mainland China, and Kang Xiaoguang (康晓光) is a good example. He designed and conducted a social survey in ten mainland China cities in 2007 on the extent of people's endorsement of Confucian values. According to his resultant analysis, the Confucian values that receive the most social endorsement are, *inter alia*, (1) for the sake of family interests, individuals should put their own interests in second place; (2) for the sake of national interests, individuals should be prepared to sacrifice their own interests; (3) the government should decide what kind of thought is to be discussed in society; (4) interpersonal conflict should not be played out in the public, it should be mediated by someone more senior; (5) government leaders are akin to the leader in the family, we should obey their decisions (Kang 2008, p. 43).

For example, the idiom "with a harmonious family all deeds will succeed" (家和萬事
興) keeps being repeated. In 2009, in preparing for the 60th anniversary celebration of
the founding of the P.R.C., a new song entitled *Guojia* (國家, country-family) was
premiered in February in the Great Hall of the People on the eve of the annual meeting
of the People's Congress. Each line of the lyrics mentions both the country and family
as the objects of our devotion. Some lines go like this:

> People say the country is very big, actually it is only one family… A family is the smallest
> country, and the country is millions of families… Country-*qua*-family lives in our heart,
> country-of-families flourishes in harmony… When the country and the family is aligned,
> we can create the miracle of the world… Only when the country is strong, there will be
> prosperous families… the country is my country, the family is my family; I love my coun-
> try, I love my family; I love my country-family![17]

This attempt to revive the old family model of bringing order to the country is too
blatant to be missed.

I do not think this part of the Confucian cultural resource can address the current
moral crisis of China, and there are three reasons. First and foremost, in the last
100 years there have been a number of significant scholars, all are supportive of the
revival of Confucianism, who have pointed out one fatal flaw of this model. In brief,
this model cannot address the public that is not family-based. Hence, the famous
Hong Kong sociologist Ambrose King sums up:

> Confucians classify the human community into three categories: *chi* [*ji*, 己], the individual;
> *chia* [*jia*, 家], the family; and *chün* [*qun*, 群], the group. For a Confucian, the emphasis is
> on the family, and for this reason Confucian ethics have developed an elaborate role system
> on the family level. Relatively speaking, the Confucian conception of *chün* is the least
> articulate.… *Chün* remains an elusive and shifting concept.… It seems to me that Confucian
> social ethics has failed to provide a "viable linkage" between the individual and *chün*, the
> nonfamilistic group (King 1985, pp. 61–62).

In this essay King appeals to the work of Liang Shuming (梁漱溟), who was hailed
as "the Last Confucian" in modern China (Alito 1986). In his influential study of
traditional Chinese culture (Liang 1987), Liang points out that traditionally Chinese
emphasize only family life, but not extra-familial community life. Hence, tradition-
ally, Chinese do not have a concern for the extra-familial common weal. In other
words, the weakness of the Chinese "habits of the heart" is the weak sense of *gongde*
(公德, regard for the public good, civic virtue).[18] Liang reports that Liang Qichao (
梁啟超), the most influential public intellectual in early twentieth-century China,
has already pointed out this lack, and things have not been getting better since then.

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[17] The Chinese lyrics are as follows.
   "一玉口中国 一瓦顶成家都说国很大 其实一个家一心装满国 一手撑起家家是最小国 国
是千万家在世界的国 在天地的家有了强的国 才有富的家国的家住在心里 家的国以和�矗立
国是荣誉的毅力 家是幸福的洋溢国的每一寸土地 家的每一个足迹国与家连在一起 创造地
球的奇迹一心装满国 一手撑起家家是最小国 国是千万家在世界的国 在天地的家有了强
的国 才有富的家…国是我的国 家是我的家我爱我的国 我爱我的家我爱我………国家!"
   The song can be heard online at: http://www.yue365.com/getgeci/7991/218086.shtml
[18] "公德,就是人類為營團體生活所必需的那些品德。這恰為中國人所缺乏…中國人,於身家
而外漠不關心,素來缺乏於此。" (Liang 1987, pp. 64, 68).

This theme is still being reiterated by today's scholars, e.g., Pan Wei (潘維) of Peking University.[19] In traditional agricultural society, with little population mobility, the flaw of this family metaphor is not acute, because one spends most of one's life with family and clan members, and the contact with a non-familial community is limited. With the population mobility today, one spends much time in a non-familial setting; hence, the flaw of the family metaphor is much more glaring than before.[20] Besides, the traditional model collapses the public with the private, with the consequence of there being no respect of individual privacy and no independent moral norms for the public sphere. Both of them are unacceptable for today's society (Jin and Liu 2008, pp. 76, 210).

Second, this family model has been frequently abused in the past, so much so that Kang Youwei (康有為, 1858–1927) , a famous Confucian political reformer in the late Qing Dynasty, advocates the abolishment of the traditional family![21] A few decades after him, an author with the pen name of Ba Jin (巴金, 1904–2005) attacked the traditional family in his famous trilogy of novels: *Jia* (*The Family*), *Chun* (*Spring*), and *Qiu* (*Autumn*), published in the 1930s and 1940s.

> A prolific writer, he is known primarily for his autobiographical novel *[J]ia* (1931; *The Family*), which traces the lives and varied fortunes of the three sons of a wealthy, powerful family. The book is a revealing portrait of China's oppressive patriarchal society, as well as of the awakening of China's youth to the urgent need for social revolution ("Chinese literature" 2011).

The trilogy have become modern classics, and Ba Jin is the most respected literary author in China after the Cultural Revolution. He has never been known to be "anti-family"; anti-"feudalism" is his life-long cause. For him, the traditional, patriarchal, extended family is but an epitome of society and nation. Authoritarian patriarchalism is all-pervasive, against which one needs to campaign incessantly.

Third, this effort to revive the old family metaphor so as to bring harmonious order to the country relies on the model of the extended family. But this model does not "ring the bell." Very few Chinese now have the experience and training of cohabitation with all members of the extended family. Furthermore, and more importantly, with economic liberalization, the message is loud and clear that all one needs to do is to maximize one's self-interests, and the invisible hand will take care of the rest. We do not need to worry about taking care of other nuclear families. This, I submit, drives the last nail into the coffin of the patriarchal, extended family metaphor as a way of viewing the country.

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[19] "中國傳統社會關於'公共'及'公民'的意識相當淡薄…傳統中國的社會整體觀是非常薄弱的,這也是引入社會整體利益觀的主要原因。" (Pan 2009, pp. 266, 276).

[20] About 50 years ago, clansmen associations (同鄉會) used to be the major voluntary associations in Hong Kong and provided much social support. With the demographic changes in recent decades, their role is entirely marginalized now.

[21] To promote the common good, Kang uses another Confucian cultural resource, viz., the vision of a "comfortably well-off society" and "a society of great harmony" as first articulated in *The Collection of Treatises on the Rules of Propriety or Ceremonial Usages* 1885. Cf. Albert Chen's article (Chen 2013) in this volume.

If one continues to insist on seeing the country as a family writ large, as the Chinese Communist Party does, one will get a very different understanding of the country and the way to advance the common good because of the changes in family structure and family ethics. The table below summarizes the new correspondence.

Recent model: model of nuclear family

Family	Country
Nuclear families; relatives not living nearby	Nation as a huge number of nuclear families
Mind the business of one's own small family; other families to take care of themselves. "One big family" does not entail any moral obligation except for emotional support	Mind the business of one's small circle of *zijiaren* (自家人, our family people); other countrymen and circles of *zijiaren* will take care of themselves. To see the country as "one big family" has little resonance
Social solidarity as familial solidarity.	Social solidarity as "tribal" solidarity.
"All for each and each for all" is confined only to nuclear family members; unlike the past, there is no firm commitment to fellow relatives and clansmen → few opportunities to pursue the public good	"All for each and each for all" is confined only to *zijiaren* (our family people); there is no firm commitment to fellow countrymen → few opportunities, except for joining the Communist Party, to pursue the public good
Economic individualism: encouraging adult children to pursue economic independence; no common purse	Economic individualism: encouraging all citizens to pursue their own economic self-interests; no national purse for "social security"
Common good: pursue your individual good and its success will bring benefits to family members	Common good: pursue one's economic self-interests and its success will trickle down benefits to the rest of the nation

In short, the employing of the pre-modern model of the family to promote the common good for today's society either will be ineffective or will be counterproductive.

A note of explanation of the idea of "our family people" is needed here. As Ambrose King explains,

> Even the term *chia*, which describes the basic social unit, is conceptually unclear. Sometimes it includes only members of a nuclear family, but it may also include all members of a lineage or a clan. Moreover, the common expression *tzu chia jen* ("our family people") can refer to any person one wants to include; the concept of *tzu chia jen* can be contracted or expanded depending upon the circumstances (King 1985, pp. 61).

In this mobile, commercial society today the idea of "our family people" takes on extraordinary significance. One's economic advance needs the support of a group, and support from the family is now replaced by support from "our family people." Via efforts of networking and relationship (關系, *guanxi*) building, one can find

comrades who are one of us and on our side. Accordingly, for an average citizen, the call to see the entire country as one big family is utopian and cognitively alien and one's habits of the heart are not trained for such a huge commitment to strangers. One's commitments and loyalty are trained to reach only as far as "our family people."[22]

9.5   Current Impasse and a Cultural Resource for Breakthrough

There is no equivalent term for "the common good" in Chinese. The closest ones are "the public interests" (公共利益) and "the national interests" (國家/民族利益). While the former is used more often in Hong Kong, the latter is more prevalent in mainland China. Facing the current moral-social crises, Chinese intellectuals recognize that national interests are at stake and there has been plenty of discussion. It has often been analyzed that currently there are three major camps of thought in mainland China, *viz.*, the Liberals, the New Left, and the Cultural Nationalists. The first two camps, in particular, are constantly debating, and they have clearly contrasting positions on a number of social-political issues. The Cultural Nationalists have a deeper passion for traditional Chinese culture (especially Confucianism) and do not have a distinct stance on some of these issues, but they frequently side with the New Left. According to Xu Youyu (徐友漁), a fair-minded philosopher who is in the Liberals camp, the sharp differences between the Liberals and the New Left are revealed in seven social-political issues (Xu 2003, pp. 7–11).[23]

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[22] Following Fei 1985 (費孝通), King observes,

> The Confucian individual knows how he should deal with the other only after he knows what particular relations the other has with him. The uneasiness and discomfort of the Chinese with strangers are widely recognized. This phenomenon can be attributed in part to the fact that 'stranger' as a role category is too ambiguous to be located in any *lun* relations of Confucian ethics. It explains why the intermediary is so widely used by Chinese as a cultural mechanism in the social engineering of relation-building. Through the intermediary, the individual is able to associate strangers on relational terms (King 1985, p. 64). Cf. Yu (2007).

[23] Wang Hui (汪暉), with the halo of Harvard University Press, offers an alternative account of six crucial differences (Wang 2003, pp. 99–115). I find his account lopsided and his characterization of the opponents uncharitable. For example, he refuses the label of "New Left" and prefers to be known as "a critical intellectual," but he labels the Liberals as "the New Right" (Wang 2003, pp. 112–113).

Issues	New left	Liberals
Cause of social injustice	Market economy itself	The market operates under the control of the old system of power and is not appropriately regulated
Globalization and China's entering WTO in 2001	Opposition; this fateful event has brought China into an unjust capitalist world system	Affirmation; benefits outweigh burdens
Internal condition of China	China has become a capitalist society	China is not yet a capitalist society, but its market economy has gone astray because of political corruption
Mao Zedong's heritage	The Great Leap Forward, the People's Communes, and the Cultural Revolution have been over-criticized; the ideal of socialism should be re-appropriated	Critical reflections on The Great Leap Forward, the People's Communes, and the Cultural Revolution have not been thorough enough, because too many documents are still classified and there is no freedom of publication on these topics
May Fourth Movement of 1919, and the Mind Liberation Movement of the 1980s	They were unconditional subordination to Western discourses and should be critically assessed	They were the beginning of national enlightenment; this important process is now in arrest and should be continued
Modernization of China	Modernization leads to re-colonization	Modernity is the correct goal of development
International relations and nationalism	Support the Chinese government in condemning Western "hegemonism"	Affirm the value of human rights and be on guard against radical nationalism

In short, for the Liberals facing the current moral-social crisis, the national interests are best served by promoting reforms of the political institutions, particularly the rule of law, respect for civil rights, liberal justice, and check and balance of government power. For the New Left, the national interests are best served by the government-enforced social egalitarianism, and for the Cultural Nationalists, by de-westernization. In terms of cultural resources, the Liberals are still largely relying on the modern Western liberal traditions. The New Left relies on Marxism and even Maoism (e.g., Gan 2007),[24] and the Cultural Nationalists rely on Classical Confucianism.

To break through this impasse of sometimes acrimonious debates on the national interests, I think Bellah and his colleagues' reflection on the common good is very instructive. First of all, Bellah and his colleagues agree with McCann that the common good is "the pursuit of the good *in* common" (Bellah et al. 1991, pp. 9) rather than the pursuit of the good *of* the common. As McCann and Miller explain, "For Aristotle, the common good was a higher good than that of the individual, and the

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[24] This observation of Bellah and his colleagues is certainly true for China. "Indeed, since the publication of *Habits*, the growth of global inequality has continued its ominous march, and awareness of it is increasing, even to the point where Marxism in some quarters is making a comeback" (Bellah et al. 2008, p. x).

common good was very distinctly to be associated with the polis, with a people or the state" (McCann and Miller 2005, pp. 4). The Chinese debate on the national interests resembles the Aristotelian understanding of the good for the polis, and such debates can be endless. To move forward, one needs to accept pluralism in the search for the national good. To quote Bellah and his colleagues again on this issue:

> It is central to our very notion of a good society that it is an open quest, actively involving all its members. As Dennis McCann has put it, the common good is the pursuit of the good in common. As we understand it, pluralism does not contradict the idea of a good society, for the latter would be one that would allow a wide scope for diversity and would draw on resources from its pluralistic communities in discerning those things that are necessarily matters of the good of all (Bellah et al. 1991, pp. 9).

My paraphrase of Bellah and his colleagues' understanding of the common good is "to pursue goods common to all by participating in communities for common causes." As explained in a footnote in the sequel, "Christopher Lasch in his review of *Habits of the Heart*…pointed out that *Habits* was about public participation and not simply about community in the traditional American sense of that word" (Bellah et al. 1991, pp. 307). Rather than just verbally debating on what is and what is not good for the country, both sides should encourage people to actually participate in working for the common cause. Hence chapter 7 of the *Habits* is entitled "Getting Involved" and chapter 8 "Citizenship."

For Bellah and his colleagues, forms of citizenship include: intermediate groups (family, religious bodies, and associations of all sorts), communities of memory, local communities, voluntary associations, etc.

> Vigorous citizenship depends on the existence of well-established groups and institutions, including everything from families to political parties, on the one hand, and new organizations, movements, and coalitions responsive to particular historical situations, on the other (Bellah et al. 1985, pp. 212).

In other words, in the pursuit for the common good, the process is as important as the goal. Again, as Bellah and his colleagues explain,

> "When citizens are engaged in thinking about the whole, they find their conceptions of their interests broadened, and their commitment to the search for a common good deepens" (Bellah et al. 1991, pp. 212).

The plurality of the communities of public commitments is also stressed by Hollenbach. As he puts it, there are

> Many forms of relationship in which personhood is realized: friendship, families, voluntary associations, civil society, politics, and the relationship with God…. Because of the pluralistic nature of the common good, however, this commitment to the good of all persons is not to be realized in a single, undifferentiated community of the whole human race (Hollenbach 1994, pp. 195).

This analysis is very instructive for China, because traditionally the family is the paradigm for all other communities. The correlation between the family and the country as revived by the current government is not going to be helpful, because there is a plurality of communities between the family and the country. Family as an institution undoubtedly has a crucial role to play in advancing the common good, but it is not the only institution or community to carry out this mission, as Hollenbach

and Bellah and his colleagues all agree. Currently in mainland China these pluralistic communities are repressed by the government, and their contribution to the common good is in check. More and more scholars agree that citizens' participation in these communities for common causes ("civil society," "NGO") is crucial in the promotion of the common good.[25]

China's New Left intellectuals are critical of the modern Western paradigm of democracy and advocate greater democratic participation by all. That is exactly the view of Bellah and his colleagues. They are not happy with democracy American style and are very critical of neocapitalism. Hence, on the one hand, they advocate a "third democratic transformation" beyond ancient city states and the eighteenth-century regime of individual rights and representative government (Bellah et al. 1991, pp. 92). On the other hand, they want to revive the republican tradition of "citizen participation" (Bellah et al. 1985, pp. 31). As explained before, the "*Habits* was about public participation and not simply about community" (Bellah et al. 1991, pp. 307). However, in order to allow room for citizens "to pursue goods common to all by participating in communities for common causes," we need public squares that are free from political suppression. And so China's Liberals are putting their finger on the right issues. As Bellah and his colleagues blatantly put it, "The question for the responsible citizen today is, Are we responsible only for our own good or also for the common good? Even a benevolent tyranny can permit us the former; only a genuine democracy can make possible the latter" (Bellah et al. 1991, pp. 81). I agree with them that the "great promise of modern civilization" is "the mutual emergence of individuality and solidarity in a plurality of activities fostered in a genuine public sphere" (Bellah et al. 1991, pp. 92). Former Premier Wen Jiabao is right in embracing the thought of Adam Smith in its wholeness. Bellah and his colleagues remind us, "although many of his latter-day prophets ignore this, Smith taught that the social benefit of the free market would be realized only in the wider public sphere, with the populace actively debating matters of common concern and expressing its will through the state" (Bellah et al. 1991, pp. 92).

In that case, what cultural resource can we find in Chinese culture to support this pluralistic and communal pursuit of the common good? Are there Chinese resources that can be retrieved for the re-formation of the Chinese "habits of the heart"? I think there is at least one Confucian cultural tradition that is worth reviving, namely, private colleges (書院, *shuyuan*). Private colleges emerged in the Song Dynasty and were led by the most eminent Confucian philosophers of the times. They

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[25] In a similar vein, Max Stackhouse writes on the common good:

A second concern is political: the unit of focus is no longer a classical polis or a modern nation. Both now involve an "us" that is too small to be genuinely common. While these political units remain as basic centers of power, law enforcement, and cultural identity, they are increasingly dependent on various spheres of civil society that have a sovereignty of their own beyond politics. The academic, economic, technological, and religious worlds, for example, have substantially escaped the constraints of any political order, and they shape politics a much as politics shapes them (Stackhouse 2005, p. 281).

encouraged free debate and independent thinking. In addition to academic discussions, they also engaged in social criticism, which eventually led to imperial suppression in the late Ming Dynasty. In the Qing Dynasty, most of them were co-opted by the government and became local state colleges, and the spirit of private colleges vanished.

Huang Zongxi (黃宗羲, 1610–1695), the most famous modern Confucian political philosopher, witnessed the suppression of these private colleges in the late Ming Dynasty. His famous treatise on politics is *The Dawn of Good Politics Awaiting Inquiry* (《明夷待訪錄》 *Mingyi Daifang Lu*), which has been well translated in full into English with introduction and notes.[26] It is a radical treatise on government and politics, attacking autocratic absolutism and the divine rights of emperors with a novel political theory. The most significant part of this treatise for the purpose of this chapter is the chapter on "Schools." In addition to the education function these schools were to take on a "prophetic role." In his own words, Huang says,

> The libationer [rector] of the Imperial College should be chosen from among the great scholars of the day. He should be equal in importance to the prime minister, or else be a retired prime minister himself. On the first day of each month the Son of Heaven should visit the Imperial College, attended by the prime minister, six ministers, and censors. The libationer should face south and conduct the discussion, while the Son of Heaven too sits among the ranks of the students. If there is anything wrong with the administration of the country, the libationer should speak out without reserve (de Bary's translation 1993, pp. 107).[27]
>
> In the various prefectures and districts, on the first and fifteenth of each month, there should be a great assembly of the local elite, licentiates, and certified students in the locality, at which the school superintendent should lead the discussion. The prefectural and district magistrates should sit with the students, facing north and bowing twice. Then the teacher and his pupils should bring up issues and discuss them together. Those [officials] who excuse themselves on the pretext of official business and fail to attend should be punished. If minor malpractices appear in the administration of a prefectural or district magistrate, it should be the school's duty to correct them. If there are serious malpractices, the members of the school should beat the drums and announce it to the people (de Bary 1993, pp. 107).

In these passages, Huang unfolds a very radical public role for Confucian scholars. Rather than lending moral support and be subservient to the regime, the Confucian scholar-officials should boldly wield the religious-moral authority of the Dao to criticize wrong government policies or practices face to face. Huang might be a little too romantic in his vision. According to his vision, the chancellor of the Imperial College, when exercising his duties, is of a higher status than the emperor, because the emperor is to assume the role of a student and to be lectured by the chancellor. The chancellor occupies the seat of authority, *viz.*, a seat in the north

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[26] Under the title of *Waiting for the Dawn: A Plan for the Prince*, trans. Wm. Theodore de Bary (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

[27] A libationer is someone who has the honor of offering the first libation of wine, i.e., a person of the highest respect. Hence, in this context it is a metaphorical title for the Chancellor (de Bary 1993, p. 202).

facing south, whereas the emperor takes up the inferior seat, *viz*., a seat in the south facing north. It was the same arrangement in all localities. This vision is shocking not only for the royalty, but also for the conventional Confucian mind! This model allows Confucian scholars and followers to pursue goods common to all by participating in a community for a common cause.[28] This is one resource in Chinese culture that can re-form our "habits of the heart" and enable Chinese to promote not just the national interests, but the common good. Some scholars call this "a Confucian model of the public sphere," which is a "gentry public sphere" (Jin and Liu 2008, pp. 79). In spite of its limitation, it is at least rooted in Chinese culture. Currently in mainland China there is a handful of private Confucian colleges operating in a very low-key way. May these colleges multiply in the thousands so that this valuable type of "community of memory" can help bring good changes for China![29]

9.6   Pluralistic Shared Goods – Beyond the Family

China's contemporary history reveals that the country's problem is not the absence of the concern for the common good. On the contrary, the vision of the common good was so dominant (*viz*., national liberation) that it led to bloody revolution, protracted civil war, and national class struggle. It brought turmoil to China for half a century. In addition to China's nightmare, similar "nightmares of the common good" can be found in Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union (Keys 2006, pp. 13–14). The lesson to learn is to understand the common good as "an inclusive end" rather than as "a dominant end."[30] In other words, we should talk more of pluralistic "shared goods" (Solomon 2013, pp. 65–82) rather than dominant national interests (such as social stability for economic development). Pluralism is an abiding human condition (Engelhardt 2013, pp. 21–43), and it needs to be guaranteed institutionally (McCann 2013, pp. 261–289). In mainland China at the present time, the sometimes uncivil debates among China's Liberals, New Left, and Cultural Nationalists are alarming. With Bellah and his colleagues' understanding of the common good, there should be ample room for bipartisan efforts to promote the common good. As Bellah and his colleagues remind us,

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[28] Huang made a concession here. The college is not part of civil society; it is established by the government.

[29] The recent online debate on the appropriateness of building a big Gothic church in Qufu, Confucius' birthplace, reveals many Confucian scholars' lament that the Chinese government still would not allow Confucianism to become a legal religion and still deny Confucians the freedom of association.

[30] "By 'an inclusive end' might be meant any end combining or including two or more values or activities or goods; By 'a dominant end' might be meant a monolithic end, an end consisting of just one valued activity or good, or there might be meant that element in an end combining two or more independently valued goods which has a dominant or preponderating or paramount importance" (Ackrill 1980, p. 17).

> The transformation of our culture and our society would have to happen at a number of levels. If it occurred only in the minds of individuals…it would be powerless. If it came only from the initiative of the state, it would be tyrannical…. But individuals need the nurture of groups that carry a moral tradition reinforcing their own aspiration (Bellah et al. 1985, pp. 286).

Here Bellah and his colleagues seem to be echoing the Catholic Principle of Subsidiarity (McCann 2013, pp. 261–289). Indeed, between the individual, who is in a web of inter-personal relationships and bonds, and the state, we need a plurality of communities of civic commitment engaging in civil debates.[31] Among these communities the importance of the family cannot be understated, but family should not be the only intermediate group between and individual and the state. Human selfhood is a "multi-dimensional relational selfhood" (Erickson 2013, pp. 45–64); family relationship is only one of the dimensions, albeit possibly the most important one.[32] The family metaphor of the nation is not helpful also, because it does not encourage the existence and activities of other groups between the family and the state. First and foremost, the existence of Confucian communities and associations to promote Confucian values should be encouraged.[33] This idea is rooted in neo-Confucianism. At the same time, Confucians should also appreciate other competing communities and associations, religious or otherwise, for their role in promoting the common good for China as well. Pluralism of civic institutions, rather than just family, kinship, and clansman associations, would better promote the common good for China.[34]

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[31] "Common goods are shared goods primarily because they emerge from activities that are shared. But typically for activities to be genuinely shared *in a human sense*, institutions and the authoritative norms that constitute such institutional arrangements must structure them" (Solomon 2013, pp. 65–82).

[32] Accordingly, the Moist critique of Confucianism needs to be examined very seriously (cf. Zhang 2013).

[33] They should be part of civil society rather than the state religion, as Jiang Qing, one prominent Confucian, advocates.

[34] It is a common understanding now that civil society consists of all voluntary civic and social organizations/institutions that render society functioning, e.g., academia, activist groups, charities, ethnic and cultural groups, professional associations, religious organizations, trade unions, etc. Hence, I cannot comprehend Ruiping Fan's idea of a family-based civil society. I also do not share his ideas of conceiving common good as a dominant end, the existence of an overlapping consensus in China as he describes it (Fan 2013).

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Chapter 10
A Confucian Notion of the Common Good for Contemporary China

Ruiping Fan

10.1 The Moral Crisis in Current China

While China has become a worldly economic power, a moral crisis has permeated the society. It appears that a great number of Chinese individuals no longer take morality seriously, but are only interested in monetary wealth to satisfy their immediate, hedonistic desires and impulses. Even an outsider is easily acquainted with numerous reports of widespread instances of corruption on the part of Chinese officials, businessmen, and even ordinary residents. In short, while China has accomplished a worldly economic success, it has also encountered a grave moral crisis.

The first feature of this moral crisis is the gradual breach and fragmentation of Confucian tradition in the twentieth century. While Confucian tradition has been dominant in Chinese society for thousands of years, it has been substantially damaged and distorted by a series of radical Chinese revolutions and Communist political movements, including the Republican Revolution (1911), the May Fourth Movement (1919), the Communist Revolution (1949), and the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). The superstructures of Chinese politics and economics have ceased to be Confucian since the early twentieth century, and an officially promoted morality has been communist since 1949. However, Confucian morality still governs a wide range of contemporary Chinese life (as will be indicated in the later sections of this essay), and a substantive "Confucian personality" has continuously informed the social base of Chinese culture and morality and significantly accounted for the motivation behind and strategies adopted for the success of Chinese economic reforms in the recent three decades. Noticeably, as the reforms have gone further in the recent years, there has been an increasingly remarkable disconnection between the officially announced communist morality and the actually operating, although

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damaged and even fragmented, Confucian morality.[1] This disconnection has constituted the second major feature of the Chinese moral crisis and has been accompanied with various defense mechanisms developed as a response to the announced communist morality.

In the first place, many individuals attempt to dissociate themselves from any public moral discourse since it often belies real economic circumstances in recent economic reforms and markets. They do whatever they think necessary, without bothering to talk about morality. Nevertheless, their behavior is still, consciously or unconsciously, regulated by at least a portion of the Confucian moral concerns and commitments. Another part of the people echoes the announced morality in public meetings while practicing the operative Confucian morality in their activities. Their lives are at least partly corrupted by this kind of disingenuousness or hypocrisy functioning in the current special Chinese context. Worse yet, they have become used to such disruptive circumstances and take the disunity between speech and action for granted. Finally, still others have changed to a nihilist and hedonistic view. They have come to lead a life attempting to meet only their immediate desires and impulses, without being able to relegate them to the constraint of a constellation of moral commitments. Importantly, among this type of people, the worst are some governmental officials who actually hold this nihilist and hedonistic view in their minds but still pretend to "educate" other people with the communist morality in public. The cases of their corruption, once disclosed, inevitably erode the people's trust in the government. More individuals are getting lost in a rising individualist and consumerist environment. Ethnic groups are perplexed with the adequacy of maintaining their traditional ways of life. Young women are hesitating between accomplishing a reliable marriage and pursuing a successful career. Parents are facing more and more difficulties in teaching their children the virtue of filial piety. In short, the Chinese have generally gone astray in regarding what a normal and good life is.[2]

The Chinese moral crisis can be understood better in a comparative manner. First, some may want to argue that the Chinese circumstances show a remarkable rise of liberal social-democratic morality: as the market economy has rapidly

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[1] Wang Xiaoying proposes that current China is a moral vacuum which is, according to her view, marked by a gap between Chinese communism on the one hand and a rising egoism or hedonism on the other: "there is 'communist' morality and there is naked self-interest, but nothing in between" (Wang 2002, p. 10). Although I used to favor the term of "moral vacuum" to characterize the Chinese situation, it is necessary to recognize that Wang's account is importantly defective. Although actual Chinese conduct is no longer constrained by the formal communist morality (as Wang rightly points out), it is still mediated and directed by the remnant of Confucian morality (rather than nothing but a moral vacuum). Without this recognition, we would have difficulty to account for the current success of the Chinese economy as well as basic Chinese familial and social relations, rituals, and mechanisms manifested in Chinese lives. I thank David Solomon and Dennis McCann for persuading me to drop the notion of "moral vacuum" in my account of Chinese society.

[2] In chapter 14 of Fan (2010), I provide a detailed account of the Chinese moral crisis in terms of a series of moral and psychological concepts, including the Confucian personality, the communist personality disorder, and the post-communist personality disorder.

developed and the Chinese one-child generation has formed a dense part of the society, more and more Chinese individuals have become autonomous life planners, independently choosing their ends in lives, while, at the same time, the Chinese government has started to build security systems to ensure social welfare. Accordingly, they would conclude, China is becoming a liberal social-democratic society like West Europe. However, this is not the case. For one thing, none of the three main isms functioning in current China, Confucianism, communism, and hedonism, constitutes a dominant moral code for the entire Chinese society: the Confucian morality is significantly damaged, the communist morality is out of date, and the hedonistic morality is only in its early stage of growth. But in West Europe, although traditional Christian morality has collapsed, a liberal social-democratic morality predominates: values such as individual liberty, equality, and dignity have been generally accepted and practiced, and state-guaranteed welfare systems entrenched in the society. For reasons I lay out in this essay, it is unlikely that such liberal values and institutions will be established in China.

Moreover, in comparison with the United States, China is much less morally pluralistic. It is true that diverse moral systems have begun to prevail in current China. For example, while individualist hedonism is rising, traditional moralities related to respective religions such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism are also on their way to being restored. In addition, Christianity has seemed to spread swiftly in some parts of China.[3] Nevertheless, China is by no means a country of moral pluralism like the United States. For one thing, it is difficult for the Chinese to comprehend the religious fundamentalist movements flourishing in the United States, much less taking actions to form such groups. A typical Chinese person, no matter which religion or ideology he believes, has integrated into his personality the basic Confucian traits or virtues, such as *ren* (benevolence), *yi* (appropriateness), *li* (ritual propriety), *zhi* (wisdom), *xin* (fidelity), *xiao* (filial piety), *zhong* (loyalty),

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[3] How many Christian believers there are in current China is up for debate. Some Christian websites claim that there are 100 million Chinese Christians in China. See, e.g., http://blog. beliefnet.com/roddreher/2010/07/china-is-turning-christian.html. Personally, I think the following summary figures offered by the Wikipedia website about the major Chinese religions are close to the reality:

> Nowadays Shenism-Taoism and Buddhism are the largest religions in China with respectively over 30% … and 18-20% of the population adhering to them, thriving throughout the country as the government is allowing them to spread. Almost 10% of the population is composed of those regarded as non-Han ethnicities following their traditional tribal religions. Christians are 3-4% of the population according to various detailed surveys, although American press states there might be more due to the house church movement; Muslims are 1-2%. However, the biggest part of the population, ranging between 60% and 70%, is mostly agnostic or atheist. Various new religious movements, both indigenous and exogenous, are scattered across the country (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_China).

In fact, with certain regional exceptions (especially Tibet where the people are exclusively committed to Tibetan Buddhism and Xinjiang where Uyghur people (accounting for about 40 % of the Xinjiang population) are exclusively committed to Islam), most of the Chinese, no matter whether they are religious or non-religious, have been essentially influenced by and shaped by Confucian morality.

and so on. He typically holds a pragmatic or middle-way (*zhongyong*) attitude towards different religious faiths, willing to tolerate (and even accept) different religions in his social activities and unlikely to become a particularly religious zealot. Concerning political and social issues, he could not appreciate the sharp confrontation of libertarianism and egalitarianism as represented by the two political parties of the United States. Accordingly, while the United States is a morally pluralist society in which the people are often religiously separated, ideologically rigid, and politically polarized, China is a society of moral crisis in which (1) there is a dissociation between the publicly announced (but practically outdated) communist morality and the actually operating (but officially unaccepted) Confucian morality, while (2) the actually operating Confucian morality is substantially damaged, fragmented, and even distorted in one way or another.

This moral crisis erodes the Chinese mind, corrupts Chinese integrity, and stifles Chinese civic life. China cannot have a promising future without overcoming this crisis. But what is a proper way to resolve this crisis? Here I do not agree with the view held by Chinese liberal scholars. For them, China's main problem is the human rights problem—the Chinese government has not granted and protected individual rights as modern Western countries have. They believe that the institution of individual rights and the polity of liberal democracy as exported by modern Western countries to the rest of the world are universal values and should be copied and followed by China.[4] For them, the Chinese government should not only stop voicing the communist morality, but should also refrain from promoting any particular view of the good life (such as the Confucian way of the family-based and family-oriented life). They think the government should only protect individual rights and thereby maintain a neutral attitude towards different or incompatible conceptions of the good life arising in current China. In short, they want China to change to a liberal social-democratic society.

I do not think this is a suitable recipe for the Chinese moral crisis. Although Western political organizations frequently criticize China for violating human rights, such critiques fail to recognize the Chinese condition at a deep level. No doubt, China has human rights problems in terms of modern Western standards. But the complicated features of the Chinese moral crisis indicate that the crisis is much more profound than a mere lack of respect for individual rights. Chinese liberal scholars are correct that the Chinese government should stop voicing the communist morality. But they are mistaken in disregarding or rejecting the relevance of the Confucian view of the good life to the future of China. Due to limited knowledge and experience, Chinese liberal scholars can hardly comprehend the historical background and Christian bearings of modern Western liberalism. For example, although Chinese liberal scholars have taken John Rawls' political liberalism as their favorite and popular liberal theory, many of them have simply taken it as a rights-based theory, ignoring the sophisticated Western intuitive ideas and conceptions that

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[4] See, for example, the famous "Charter 08" signed by Liu Xiaobo, the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize winner, and 302 others: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/10/08/charter_08.

Rawls has included in his account.[5] This is to say, given the historical, cultural, and social differences between the West and China, it is very unlikely that the Chinese moral crisis can be solved by adopting the position of modern Western liberalism that has been proposed, based on modern Western history and culture.[6]

The Chinese moral crisis is a comprehensive crisis. It is first and foremost a severe devastation of the Confucian understanding of the good, the virtuous, and a good society, so that the society is morally disoriented in its new stage of development. Again, this is not to deny the fact that Confucian morality is still partially operating and is significantly accountable for the success of the Chinese economic reforms.[7] Accordingly, it is most reasonable to turn to Confucian morality, to disclose its central concerns and investigate its actual functions in Chinese society, in order to find out proper ways to solve the moral crisis and guide China's further reforms (Fan 2008). The attempt of this essay is to pursue this end by exploring the possibility of establishing a Confucian notion of the common good by reconstructing Confucian morality in order to guide contemporary Chinese society. This attempt, in addition, can be strengthened by recognizing why Rawls' theory of social justice is neither a suitable nor a legitimate notion of the common good to direct China, even if it is suitable and legitimate to direct Western societies. Toward these ends, the next section of this essay summarizes the Confucian view of good humans, the good life, and good society that has been held in the Confucian tradition. Those who are familiar with the Confucian view can skip this section and move to Sect. 10.3, where I explain why it is unsuitable to adopt Rawls' theory to direct China, because China has a quite different historical background from the West. China does not need the Rawlsian liberal form of political life, because it does not have to accommodate a dramatic pluralism, as the West does. This is followed by Sect. 10.4 where I argue that it would be illegitimate to accept Rawls' theory in China, because there is still a shared background view—which is essentially Confucian—about what kind of life is good in contemporary China. This view is demonstrated by means of certain dominant Chinese intuitive ideas about moral and political matters. Based on these resources, in Sect. 9.5 I propose

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[5] As Rawls states clearly, he does not prefer to think of his theory as a right-based view. Instead, he has worked into it "idealized conceptions," namely, "certain fundamental intuitive ideas" that have been the "overlapping consensus" of modern Western democracies (Rawls 1985, p. 236, fn 19).

[6] Francis Fukuyama's change of position is illustrative. In 1990 he announced "the end of history" thesis (hailing the final victory of liberal democracy in human history) after the fall of communism. Today he recognizes that "US democracy has little to teach China," because "there is a deeper problem with the American model that is nowhere close to being solved. …Americans pride themselves on constitutional checks and balances, based on a political culture that distrusts centralised government. This system has ensured individual liberty and a vibrant private sector, but it has now become polarised and ideologically rigid. At present it shows little appetite for dealing with the long-term fiscal challenges the US faces. Democracy in America may have an inherent legitimacy that the Chinese system lacks, but it will not be much of a model to anyone if the government is divided against itself and cannot govern." See online http://www.tehrantimes.com/PDF/11070/11070-15.pdf.

[7] For an account of how the Confucian moral personality shaped by the Confucian morality has motivated and facilitated the Chinese economic reforms, see chapter 14 of Fan (2010).

a reconstructed version of the Confucian morality and argue that it should be adopted to serve as the appropriate notion of the common good to overcome the moral crisis and direct further reforms of China.

10.2   Good Humans, the Good Life, and Good Society in the Confucian View

Good (*shan*, 善 or *hao*, 好), good humans (*shanren*, 善人 or *haoren*, 好人), and virtue (*de*, 德) are the key words of Confucian tradition. Like other traditions, Confucianism distinguishes between good and bad, noble and common, and virtuous and vicious in the crucial concerns of the moral life. Confucianism seeks to produce good humans (*junzi*, 君子) with the good life in society. In fact, the basic character of the Confucian tradition had been shaped far before the work of Master Kong (Confucius, 551–479 BCE). It contained a well-established system of *li* (rituals, 禮) (namely, a series of familial and social behavior patterns, such as ceremonial rites like weddings or funerals as well as minute rituals like the manner of greetings) for the people to learn and perform, in addition to having prohibitive rules (such as "do not murder") to regulate society. From the view of Confucius, one cannot become virtuous only by abiding by prohibitive rules, but one must also learn and exercise rituals. For instance, the fundamental and complete Confucian virtue, *ren* (仁, usually translated into benevolence, humaneness, goodness, or perfect humanity), requires one to love humans both universally and nonegalitarianly—universally in the sense that one should love all humans, but nonegalitarianly in the sense that one must love one's family members more than others. In order words, Confucian virtuous love starts from the family and is practiced in differentiated manners in terms of different relationships. For Confucius, it is precisely through the learning and observing of various Confucian rituals that such universal but differentiated Confucian virtuous love becomes possible (Analects 12.1). By performing the rituals, one comes to grasp the ways in which one can properly respect one's parents, look after one's siblings, and take care of other people.[8] A good man is a *ren* man, embodying the Confucian virtuous character of love by exercising the rituals. In this regard, Confucius encourages humans to learn from each other: "when walking in the company of two other men, I am bound to be able to learn from them. The good qualities of the one I select and follow; the bad qualities of the other I correct and avoid in myself" (Analects 7.22). But he is not naive in believing that everyone can play an equally important role in promoting the good of virtue in society.

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[8] Classical Moists critiqued Confucian love to be less universal and egalitarian than it should. See Ellen Zhang's contribution to this volume. This essay points out that Confucius has offered a ritual-based reply to this challenge. The core of the reply is that it is not only morally tenable for one to love one's family members more than other people, it is also feasible for one to take care of other people while practicing prominent familial love, as long as one observes the proper Confucian rituals in treating other people.

In fact, he emphasizes the crucial role of those in high station in society for producing the good: as he sees it, unless those in high station pursue the good, the common people will not become good (Analects 12.19).

Confucius understands that everyone bears the primary responsibility for acquiring and exercising virtue: "the practice of *ren* depends on oneself alone, and not on others" (Analects 12.1). Indeed, the virtue of *ren* is not something that comes to one by chance. One must return to the observance of the rituals by overcoming one's selfish passions in order to possess and manifest *ren* (12.1). This requires a long-term process of learning, disciplining, and cultivating. A good man must be a virtuous man. However, a virtuous man does not necessarily obtain a good life. Yanhui (顔回) was the most virtuous student Confucius had, but he suffered poverty and illness and died at a young age. Nobody can deny that Yanhui was a good man, but it is hard to say that he had a good life. Confucius recognizes that one must possess some non-virtue goods, such as a caring family, friends, wealth, power, and longevity, in addition to acquiring the virtue, in order to live a good life. Without an adequate supply of these goods, one cannot have a good or flourishing life.[9] If one were childless, friendless, powerless, poor, and weak, one's life would be miserable. This is to say, both virtue and a certain amount of other goods are necessary for the good life.

Humans are naturally motivated by their passions to pursue non-virtue goods, such as survival, wealth, power, honor, and longevity. Confucius understands that such inborn passions should not be suppressed by prohibitive laws, but must be regulated through proper rituals in order for humans to acquire virtue and become good (Analects 12.1). Those who are determined to cultivate virtue may never seek personal benefit by unvirtuous means. As Confucius states, one must think of the virtue of *yi* (righteousness or appropriateness, 義) whenever one finds a chance of gaining benefit (16.10). He himself sees unrighteous wealth or honor as floating clouds (7.15). However, Confucianism is not asceticism. Confucius' moral concern with righteousness by no means implies that individuals should be discouraged from pursuing non-virtue advantages. Rather, Confucius fully understands that things like riches and honors are what everyone desires (4.5), and they are also necessary for one to have the good life. He recognizes that if a society is such that virtuous individuals cannot obtain an adequate amount of advantages so as to have the good life, it will not be a good society. It will even end up in a condition in which fewer and fewer individuals attempt to become good. Perhaps the society in his time—a time of terrible social disturbance in which the rituals had disintegrated due to individuals' unfettered passions for wealth and power—was precisely such a bad society. Indeed, Confucius once sighed that "I have no hopes of meeting a good man" (7.26).

Confucianism recognizes that humans are gregarious animals and must live in society in order to survive and flourish. The Confucian idea of good humans is

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[9] I do not think there is any disagreement between Confucius and Aristotle in this regard. Aristotle even goes further by arguing that if one lacks an adequate supply of external goods, one's virtuous activity will be to some extent diminished or defective (Aristotle 1985,1153b17–19).

intertwined with the Confucian idea of good society. While Confucians do not reject non-virtue benefits, they reject a separation between benefit and virtue. What they seek is the ideal of the unity of good humans and the good life in a good society. In other words, a society will not be good unless it is arranged and governed in ways in which good humans can gain the good life. Of course, this ideal—good humans having the good life in good society—cannot be readily fulfilled. Confucianism places its emphasis on human endeavors to realize good society by establishing a proper societal order. A proper societal order for good society must serve as the common good of all humans so that everyone under the order is hopefully to live the good life by cultivating virtue, observing the rituals, and producing material wealth.

The proper societal order that Confucianism recommends is best summarized in the Confucian classic of the *Great Learning* (*daxue*, 大學):

> Those who wish to illustrate great virtue (*mingde*, 明德) throughout the world, must first govern well their states. Wishing to govern well their states, they first regulate their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivate their persons. …Their persons being cultivated (*xiushen*, 修身), their families can be well regulated (*qijia*, 齊家). Their families being well regulated, their states can be rightly governed (*zhiguo*, 治國). Their states being rightly governed, the whole world can be made peaceful (*pingtianxia*, 平天下). From the Son of Heaven down to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything besides (adapted from Legge 1971, pp. 357–359).

This is to say, the proper societal order consists of four elements: individual virtue cultivation, family regulation, state governance, and the world being made peaceful. The mission of the Confucian learning, as it is put down explicitly in the beginning of the classic, is "to illustrate great virtue, to renovate the people, and to rest in the highest good (*zhishan*, 至善)" (adapted from Legge 1971, p. 356). As I see it, the Confucian notion of the highest good mentioned here can be taken as amounting to the aforementioned Confucian ideal of good humans having the good life in good society. It includes the four-element societal order to serve as the Confucian notion of the common good for all humans, and each of the four elements is indispensable for pursuing the Confucian highest good. For Confucians, this order is not only the very right order that is mandated by Heaven, but it is also the best order that human society can pursue in order to accomplish human flourishing. The more broadly realized this order, the more likely the good life (to be gained by human individuals). If this order is fully realized, every individual will have the good life—every individual will be adequately cultivated, every family appropriately regulated, every state well governed, and the whole world made peaceful.[10]

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[10] Although Confucianism emphasizes human efforts, yet it recognizes that whether this order can be fully realized (or whether an individual can eventually gain the good life) is ultimately determined by Heaven (*tian*, 天): "Life and death are a matter of Destiny (*ming*, 命); wealth and honor depend on Heaven" (Analects 12.5). It is the Confucian religious conviction that the way of humans must follow the dao of Heaven (*tiandao*, 天道), which is disclosed by Confucian sages through the performance of the rituals. Indeed, it is part of the mandate of Heaven (*tianming*, 天命) that humans must make efforts to fulfill the unity of good humans and the good life by pursuing the order of good society. Indeed, if Confucianism is a type of teleology, it differs from Aristotelian teleology, because it is directed towards a final end, the dao of Heaven (*tiandao*, 天道). The dao of

Due to space limits, I will only lay out a few outstanding points involved in this four-element society order. First, Confucianism holds that it is virtues, rather than rights, that are foundational to good society in pursuing human flourishing. This is not to say that Confucianism must exclude the notion of rights from the sphere of its societal order. Rather, when it is necessary to have a notion of rights for today's society, it must be developed from Confucian tradition without contradiction with any fundamental views of the Confucian virtues, such as *ren* (benevolence) and *yi* (righteousness), as the significant human traits or qualities that enable humans to pursue the good life suitable for their nature. At least ever since Mencius (371–289 BCE), most Confucians have been convinced that the Confucian virtues are already potentially invested in the human mind by the mandate of Heaven, so that every human has the potential to become actually virtuous through practice. However, as shown above, Confucian virtue is intertwined with ritual. It is not sufficient for one to participate only in a general practice (such as agriculture, industry, commerce, or arts) to become virtuous. Rather, one must learn and exercise a special type of practice – rituals – to acquire and manifest the virtues. It is nonsensical for one to claim that one has a right to do whatever one thinks fit, no matter whether it conforms to the virtues or rituals.

Confucianism cannot affirm a liberal individualist concept of human rights in the sense that everyone, *qua* human individual, has a set of "natural" rights irrespective of virtue consideration. While for liberals rights are "inborn" entitlements, have an absolute trumping value vis-a-vis the good, and are just worth keeping for individuals, such dramatic individualistic self-asserting features are foundationless or even gratuitous to the Confucian view. Indeed, they are incommensurable with the Confucian understanding of human nature, virtue cultivation, and ritual observation because they fail to make reference to the proper ways of pursuing human flourishing. Accordingly, when it is necessary for Confucian tradition to develop a notion of rights to apply to contemporary society, the notion cannot be a liberal, individualist notion. Instead, Confucians can propose a list of rights as a fallback apparatus to protect certain legitimate individual self-interests when the virtues fail to obtain or people's personal relationships break down (cf. Chan 1999). This fallback notion of rights indicates that rights are conceptually less fundamental than virtues for human flourishing. A list of Confucian rights to be worked out must be in terms of virtue considerations, and will include essential differences from the list of liberal individualist rights.[11]

The second element of the Confucian societal order is family regulation. Evidently, the understanding of humans as familist beings is a distinguishing feature of the Confucian view of human nature. Confucian familism not only keeps the Confucian ethical life far away from what Stephen Erickson succinctly summarizes as Billiard Ball Individualism (Erickson 2013), but it also differs from

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Heaven is the divine and permanent pattern of things that human conduct as well as the order of society must follow through the learning and exercising of the rituals. In his sense, Confucianism is no doubt a religious doctrine, while Aristotelianism is not.

[11] For a more detailed exploration of relevant issues, see Fan (2010, chapter 4).

other versions of so-called communitarianism. For example, while Aristotle understands that men are by nature political animals, possessing a potential to form the polis (as the primary human community), Confucians understand that men are by nature familial animals, with the institution of the family as an eternal institution of the world, mirroring the dao of Heaven.[12] For Confucians, humans are by no means atomistic, discrete, self-serving individuals coming to construct a society through contract. They are rather born and grow in families, and are first and foremost identified by their familial roles that are essentially given, not chosen. In order to pursue authentic human flourishing, a human individual does not have to be a farmer, writer, or entrepreneur, but has to be a man or woman, son or daughter, husband or wife, father or mother, and grandfather or grandmother. In other words, from the Confucian belief, individual human good cannot be isolated from the good of the family. This Confucian religious and metaphysical conviction underlies the character of Confucian virtue ethics in which, as previously mentioned, the fundamental virtue of *ren* is a trait for exercising family-centered, universal, but differentiated love.[13]

Indeed, from the Confucian view, it is more accurate to say that society exists for the family rather than that the family exists for society.[14] Because individuals must pursue human flourishing through the family, families not only constitute the basic, indivisible units of society, but they also constitute a *telos* of society. That is, Confucian society is both family-based (namely, the family constitutes the permanent, primary community of society) and family-oriented (namely, society aims to promote the integrity, continuity, and prosperity of the family). In this case, differing from the liberal-democratic principle that individuals should be treated as equals, the Confucian principle is that individuals should be treated as relatives. The contrast is between the individuals that are emphasized as being free and equal versus the individuals that are emphasized as possessing distinct relations and different degrees of virtues. While liberal democracy aims at a society of free and equal individuals, Confucianism aims at a society of harmonious and caring families. Accordingly, Confucian society must adopt relevant political and economic systems

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[12] Confucian scholars after Confucius have formed a Confucian metaphysics of yin and yang—two fundamental forces of the university—to understand the dao of Heaven and explain the structure and dynamic of myriad things (human individuals included) in the university. As the dao of Heaven is the unity of yin and yang, the way of humans is the bond of man and women. Hence, from this Confucian metaphysics, human flourishing can only be fulfilled through family life, and the family is an eternal institution of the universe as long as humans exist.

[13] Some modern Chinese scholars argue that the family should be abolished for egalitarian love in an ideal society of *ren*. For example, Albert Chen (2013) in his article has shown how Kang Youwei has drawn this conclusion by drawing on mixed thoughts of Confucianism, Buddhism, Communism, utilitarianism, and progressivism. A fatal defect of such dramatic "new" arguments is that they attempt to reinterpret *ren* in separation from the Confucian commitment to the dao of Heaven and relevant rituals, so as to come close to the abyss of nihilism in the name of progressivism.

[14] For a useful argument for the importance of the family to the common good of society in terms of Confucian virtue consideration in general and the virtue of filial piety consideration in particular, see Jue Wang's contribution to this volume (Wang 2013).

to promote the integrity, continuity, and prosperity of families. In these systems, families must be protected and assisted to take care of their members. Confucians respect family-relevant opportunities and care for young and elderly people, even if such opportunities and care generate some unequal consequences in society. They do not support absolute egalitarian opportunities and care imposed by the state, because they conflict with the Confucian *telos* of the family; worse yet, families' autonomous efforts and choices to provide better education for their children or quality care for their elderly will inevitably be damaged by such statist, egalitarian polities.[15]

A well-governed state, for Confucians, must honor the virtuous. Confucianism is not only familism emphasizing the central place of the family in society, but is also elitism emphasizing governance by elites. Familism and elitism together contribute to the Confucian ideal of the harmony between good humans and the good life in society. This ideal is advocated by all Confucians, and is clearly summarized by Xunzi (c. 298–238 BCE) in the following passage:

> No man of virtue shall be left unhonored; no man of ability shall be left unemployed; no man of merit shall be left unrewarded; no man of guilt shall be left unpunished. No man by luck alone shall attain a position at court; no man by luck alone shall make his way among the people. The worthy shall be honored, the able employed, and each shall be assigned to his appropriate position without oversight. The violent shall be repressed, the evil restrained, and punishments shall be meted out without error. The common people will then clearly understand that if they do good at home, they will be rewarded at court; if they do evil in secret, they will suffer punishment in public (Xunzi 9; adapted from Watson 1966, p. 42).

Such Confucian policy is usually termed rule of virtue (*dezhi*, 德治) rather than rule of law (*fazhi*, 法治), although laws are unavoidably supplementary to the rule of virtue in the tradition. The point is not that laws are not important for a good society, but that (1) laws should be formulated according to the spirit of the virtues, and that (2) the rituals, in addition to laws, are crucially important for the good governance of the state. Comparatively, in the name of the rule of law liberals emphasize equal rights in civil and political realms, as well as an equal right to welfare; Confucians, in the name of the rule of virtue, uphold different treatment of individuals based on the "unequal" levels of virtue.

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[15] P.C. Lo (2013) notes that Confucianism may hold a family metaphor of the state in its account; namely, the state is the family *writ large*. In fact, the importance of this metaphor for Confucianism is much diluted if one recognizes that, as indicated in the text of my essay, it is the family, not the state, that is a *telos* of the Confucian way of life. More accurately, the Confucian metaphor is that all-under-Heaven (*tienxia*) is an extended family in which people are all relatives without being separated by the boundaries of states. They are either close or remote relatives, but not strangers or enemies. Accordingly, Confucianism is by no means a type of statism or nationalism. In Chinese history, the family metaphor of the state has been used by the Legalists to repress the power of the family for the power of the state. I agree with Lo that this metaphor is not helpful to address the current moral crisis of China. However, it is important to note that the recent movement of Chinese nationalism that worries Lo gains their motivation and intellectual resources primarily from modern Western social Darwinism as well as traditional Chinese Legalism, not from Confucianism at all, because Confucianism sees the family, not the nation, in the foundational and permanent place of human society.

Finally, peace is a crucial condition for the good life. What would be the best ways for states to seek peace in the world? Confucians are not pacifists. They would not hold that a state should never attack another state, no matter what happens. But they do argue that states should treat each other in virtuous (rather than forcible) ways. As Confucius states, "when remote people are unsubmissive, what should be done is to cultivate one's civil culture and virtue so as to attract them to be so; and when they have been so attracted, they must be made contented and tranquil" (Analects 16.1). Following the same line of virtue consideration, Mencius states that the way of gaining the world is gaining the people; and the way of gaining the people is gaining their sympathy (heart, *xin*, 心) (Mencius 4A.9). Like Confucius, he condemned all the wars recorded in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* as "unjust wars" (7B.2). For him, in order to justify a war of conquest, there must be clear evidence that the local people welcome the conquerors, and the welcome is long-lasting, not just immediate (1B.11; 7B.4). This is a quite heuristic suggestion, for it could be adopted to curb the possibility of using human rights protection as an excuse for aggression against or occupation of another country. Indeed, local people may not want foreign occupation even when their "rights" are violated by the local government. This may be because they are committed to a different religion or culture from the invaders. As a virtue-oriented and ritual-based tradition, Confucianism requires pursuing world peace in the way of respecting the wishes of local people.

In sort, the Confucian tradition holds a virtue-oriented conception of good humans, the good life, and good society in its four-element societal order—individual cultivation, family regulation, state governance, and the world made peaceful. This conception is quite comprehensive, including religious, moral, and political doctrines, aiming for society to accomplish the unity of good humans and the good life. As a result, Confucianism is as much political as it is religious and moral—it has explicit political norms built into its conception of the good life so as to maintain a unity of personal and political views. Is it possible to tease out a notion of the common good from this traditional comprehensive conception to direct contemporary China? This essay intends to provide a positive answer to this question. However, before I turn to that task, it is necessary to obtain a clear meaning of "the common good" as well as to examine whether Rawls' notion of the common good is proper for China, since Rawls' theory has, in recent years, become fashionable among Chinese scholars.

10.3   Rawls' Notion of the Common Good Is Not Suitable for China

To explore a proper notion of the common good to guide China, the real difficulty does not lie in the fact that the Chinese language does not have a traditional phrase for "the common good." As long as a clear and useful meaning of "the common good" is identified, we can easily coin a Chinese phrase, such as *gongshan* (共善),

to denote the meaning. The real issue is (1) what is meant by the common good, and (2) which notion of the common good should be adopted to direct China? This section intends to show that there is a clear sense of the common good that makes this concept useful, but that Rawls' notion of the common good (namely, social justice for modern Western societies) is not suitable for China, because China has a quite different cultural and historical background from the West. The next section will argue further that Rawls' notion is not legitimate for China because the Chinese share a background morality that is quite different from the so-called "overlapping consensus" that Rawls identifies for the contemporary West. These two sections will clear the way for making my Confucian proposal for China in Sect. 10.5.

"The common good" can refer to quite different concepts. First, some goods, such as food, water, and shelter, are commonly required for any individual to stay alive. But these goods should not be termed common goods because human consumption of them has to be exclusive. They cannot be "commonly" shared because, e.g., if a loaf of bread is consumed by me, it is no longer available to you. Accordingly, they are better termed "private goods." Second, utilitarianism holds that a meaningful concept of the common good is the total sum of individual goods or utilities for all individuals in society. But we should not accept this concept of the common good, because it fails to take the distinction between individuals seriously, as Rawls has famously pointed it out. Moreover, the term of the common good is sometimes used in the same meaning as public goods (公共好處), such as national defense, environment protection, and basic health services. Such public goods, as Rawls indicates, have two characteristic features. The first is indivisibility: all individuals want more or less of a public good, but they must each enjoy the same amount. The second is publicness: the production and the financing of a public good need to be worked out by legislation rather than through the market (Rawls 1971, pp. 266–267). Although this concept of public goods is important for society, it is not the concept of the common good we are seeking. There must be a more fundamental concept of the good than that of public goods, that can be used to organize and direct society in every basic respect, including—but not limited to—guiding society to determine the ways in which public goods are to be financed and produced. In short, neither commonly-used private goods, nor utilitarian total goods, nor public goods constitute a proper concept of the common good for which we are looking. Instead, I propose that **the common good of society is a well-established basic societal order in which everyone can benefit and flourish in pursuing the good life**.

Along the line of this concept of the common good, Rawls has offered a liberal notion of the common good for modern Western societies. In his seminal work *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls understands the common good "as certain general conditions that are in an appropriate sense equally to everyone's advantage" (Rawls 1971, pp. 246). This sense of the common good seems to serve only as a means for individuals to pursue good lives. However, in a later dialogue, he articulates the common good clearly as an end:

> Different political views, even if they are all liberal, in the sense of supporting liberal constitutional democracy, undoubtedly have some notion of the common good in the form of the means provided to assure that people can make use of their liberties, and the like.

> …You hear that liberalism lacks an idea of the common good, but I think that is a mistake. …they are all working together to do one thing, namely to make sure every citizen has justice. Now that is not the only interest they all have, but it is the single thing they are all trying to do. In my language, they have striving toward one single end, the end of justice for all citizens (Prusak 1998, pp. 16).

This is to say, Rawls sees the end of justice to be the common good of modern Western society. This notion of the common good is evidently much more primary than the concept of public goods, because it sets down a basic order for society. The order is substantiated in Rawls' liberal principles, including equal liberty, equal opportunity, and the difference principle, that determine the basic structure of society. However, even if this liberal notion of the common good is suitable for Western society,[16] I do not think it is suitable for Chinese society. The reason is as follows.

Rawls has explicitly pointed out that his principles are constructed from the social and historical conditions of modern Western democratic states. As he indicates,

> The social and historical conditions of such a state have their origins in the **Wars of Religion** following the **Reformation** and the subsequent development of the **principle of toleration**, and in the growth of constitutional government and the institutions of large industrial market economies. These conditions profoundly affect the requirements of a workable conception of political justice: such a conception must allow for a diversity of doctrines and the plurality of conflicting, and indeed incommensurable, conceptions of the good affirmed by the members of existing democratic societies (Rawls 1985, pp. 225, emphases added).

However, the social and historical conditions of China have their origins in quite different religious and cultural factors from those of the West. First, although Confucianism has its religious metaphysics of God, the soul, and afterlife,[17] it does not hold anything like the Christian belief that if one fails to turn to the Christian understanding of God, one will go to Hell. Instead, Confucians take a tolerant attitude towards other religions' metaphysical convictions. A spirit of religious toleration has long been present in China due to this Confucian attitude. Second, primary Confucian communities are families rather than anything like Christian churches. But there has been no Confucian association of families that could hold so much authority or power about the Confucian beliefs as the Roman Catholic Church about the Christian faith. Accordingly, anything like the division of church and state or the Reformation that took place in Western history could never have occurred in China. Finally, looking into the history of Chinese cross-religion interactions, especially among the so-called three religions (*sanjiao*, 三教), Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, there has never been a bloody religious war like those in the West. They have certainly had some conflicts with one another, but have been, for most of the time, in peaceful competition and cooperation. This has been due to the tolerant

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[16] Whether Rawls' theory is suitable for modern Western society is evidently a controversial issue. But this issue goes beyond the concern of this essay.

[17] Some may take that the Confucians hold an agnostic view on these matters. That is a misunderstanding that I do not address in this essay.

attitude of Confucianism towards other religions on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to a reasonable position held by other religions towards the Confucian morality and politics: while maintaining their religious faiths, they have accepted an essentially Confucian comprehensive view of the good life in this world, including the view of personal virtue as well as political arrangement.

In short, the historical, cultural, and religious conditions of China dramatically differ from those of the West. Chinese do not need Rawls' liberal social justice to handle a dramatic pluralism as in the West. Accordingly, Rawls' theory is not suitable for China.

10.4 Rawls' Notion of the Common Good Is Not Legitimate for China

Some may think that even if China's historical conditions differ from those of the West, Rawls' notion of social justice is still legitimate for current China to adopt. In their opinion, given that there are already conflicting and incommensurable conceptions of the good affirmed by Chinese individuals in contemporary Chinese society, the notion of the social justice represented by Rawls' principles of equal liberty, equal opportunity, and the difference principle would be the proper notion for contemporary China to follow, regardless of China's past, while the Confucian order of society, as manifested in the ideas of virtue cultivation, family regulation, state governance, and the world being made peaceful (as summarized in Sect. 10.2), is no long legitimate to deal with the conflicting conceptions of the good in China today. However, as Rawls makes clear in his later work, what can be used to justify his theory as legitimate for modern Western societies is not a comprehensive philosophical argument, but a series of reasonable intuitive ideas (or the so-called "overlapping consensus") shared by contemporary Western people, which ideas have been worked up into and underwrite his theory (Rawls 1985, pp. 246–247, 2005). Suffice it to suppose that this strategy of justification is correct for his theory. Then in order to justify this theory as legitimate for application in China, it needs to be supported by the reasonable intuitive ideas shared by the Chinese people. This section will show, however, that Chinese reasonable intuitive ideas are significantly different from those of the modern West, and that they cannot support Rawls' theory to be legitimate for contemporary China.

I am not able to present a thorough case in this regard, but I lay out a few important ideas in comparison with the West to indicate the point. First, in modern Western culture, individualistic ideas are predominant—the individual is taken to be in authority regarding the good, while in Chinese culture it is both the individual and the family that are in authority—the individual and the family need to reach agreement about the good for individual actions. Based on individualist ideas, Rawls' approach begins with a "thin" theory of the good, showing that a list of primary social goods, such as rights and liberties, opportunities and powers, income and wealth, and a sense of one's own worth (Rawls 1971, pp. 92), constitute the universal

prerequisites for any person to carry out one's life plan. For Rawls, these goods are useful, yet neutral means to any full conception of the good life. His principles of justice regarding the distribution of these goods are constructed under the condition of equality, and the principles are expected to provide a societal order that will constitute the common good of all individuals, because in this order every individual can equally pursue one's conception of the good life, whatever it may be. In short, in this Rawlsian societal order supported by the individualistic cultural ideas, what is eventually good for an individual is authoritatively determined by the individual. For example, Rawls invites us to

> imagine someone whose only pleasure is to count blades of grass in various geometrically shaped areas such as park squares and well-trimmed lawns. He is otherwise intelligent and actually possesses unusual skills, since he manages to survive by solving difficult mathematical problems for a fee. The definition of the good forces us to admit that the good for this man is indeed counting blades of grass, or more accurately, his good is determined by a plan that gives an especially prominent place to this activity (Rawls 1971, pp. 432).

While for Rawls and most Western people this individualist and subjectivist understanding of the good is most reasonable for contemporary Western society, Chinese people are still committed to a non-individualist, non-subjectivist Confucian view of the good. As laid out in Sect. 10.2, from the Confucian view, the good for the individual is ultimately determined by the dao of Heaven (*tiandao*, 天道) through the sages' understanding and relevant ritual practices. The cultivation and manifestation of the virtues are indispensable for a life plan to be good. One must be humane (*ren*, 仁) to others, in particular be filial and respectful (xiaojin, 孝敬) to one's parents, kind and responsible (*ciai*, 慈愛) to one's children, courteous and friendly (*youai*, 友愛) to one's siblings, sincere and trustworthy (*chengxin*, 誠信) to strangers, and attempting to do every activity appropriately and righteously (*yi*, 義) in the course of life, in order to live the good life. Whatever else one is engaged in, one must participate in the relevant rituals to acquire and exercise these virtues. This implies that the good for an individual cannot and should not be determined by oneself alone, but by both oneself and those close to oneself—namely, one's family members (see Fan 2010, Appendix)—because one must pursue a good life by performing rituals and exercising virtues together with one's family members. Accordingly, one is not the final source of value claims and cannot exclusively determine the good for oneself.[18] Since this Confucian intersubjectivist understanding of the determination of the good is still dominant in Chinese society, the Chinese would not grant a liberal right to the self-determination of the good for a man who is only interested in counting the blades of grass. They would find it unreasonable to grant him such a robust right or liberty, for his life would definitely be short of the

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[18] In contrast, Rawls contends that the ways in which modern Western citizens view themselves as free include that they take themselves to be "self-originating sources of valid claims" (Rawls 1985, pp. 242–243). Following such ideas, it is not just that we must accept that counting blades of grass is really good for this individual, but also that we may have to support it in some way—even though we disagree with it—because he is the source of such claims. I thank Bryan Pilkington for pointing out this important issue to me.

virtues that are necessary for a real good life. The Chinese would argue that his family should not leave him alone; instead, they should persuade him to conduct real good activities: instead of counting the blades of grass, he should spend more time solving difficult mathematical problems and making more income; he should take care of his parents and make them happy; and he should get married, bear children, and educate them to become virtuous persons.

Another relevant Chinese idea is regarding motivation. A particular Chinese conception of motivation (which I will term the Confucian principle of motivation) has been missing or at least not been emphasized in modern Western culture. Of course, as Rawls understands it, individuals in any culture are generally motivated to pursue the good in a broad sense. A general principle which Rawls terms the Aristotelian principle of motivation is predominant: "other things equal, human beings enjoy the exercise of their realized capacities (their innate or trained abilities), and this enjoyment increases the more the capacity is realized, or the greater its complexity" (Rawls 1971, pp. 426). Indeed, as long as one is capable, complex activities are more enjoyable than simple activities. Even if we do sometimes encounter some individuals who are like the man Rawls describes enjoying counting the blades of grass rather than conducting complicated mathematical work, they are rare in any society. As Rawls notes, complex activities can satisfy the desire for variety and novelty of experience, and leave room for feats of ingenuity and invention. "They also invoke the pleasures of anticipation and surprise, and often the overall form of the activity, its structural development, is fascinating and beautiful" (pp. 427).

However, while the Aristotelian principle applies to individuals with realized capacities to perform complex activities, it does not apply to children who have potentials to learn but have not accomplished such capacities yet—they will have to go through a process of learning and training in order to accomplish them. The process of learning and training, for most children, is not as enjoyable as that of playing easy games or participating in amusing activities. What motivates children in learning "boring" subjects must be different from what motivates adults with sophisticated capacities. As is well-known, Confucians believe that everyone is invested by Heaven with a seed of virtue to be nurtured to become a virtuous person (Mencius 2A6). But Confucians also notice that everyone is equipped with various non-moral, if not immoral, desires in their nature, such as the desires for food, drink, and comfort; a fondness for profit; and even feelings of envy and hate (Xunzi 23; cf. Watson 1966, pp. 157). Importantly, Confucians recognize that children are strongly motivated by their parents' approval or disapproval, praise or blame, and award or penalty as well as by their knowledge regarding how to act to please or displease their parents. They are thus motivated to follow the instruction of their parents to do "moral" things, to learn a strange language, to practice boring arithmetic calculation, or to play a complicated musical instrument. A young boy shares his most favorite toy with a neighbor's child not because he recognizes this is a virtuous thing to do, but to avoid the disapproval of his parents. A little girl keeps reciting the strange words and phrases of a foreign language not because she enjoys doing so, but to please her parents. In short, the Confucians have recognized a principle of motivation that can be supplemented to the Aristotelian principle in the case of

children. The Confucian principle of motivation indicates that, other things being equal, children are motivated to learn knowledge and cultivate their capacities by the approval or disapproval of their parents.[19]

However, due to their individualistic ideas, modern Western parents either fail to recognize or are unwilling to draw on the Confucian principle of motivation to direct their children. As Amy Chua notes,

> What Chinese parents understand is that nothing is fun until you are good at it. To get good at anything you have to work, and children on their own never want to work, which is why it is crucial to override their preference. …The fact is that Chinese parents can do things that would seem unimaginable—even legally actionable—to Westerners. Chinese mothers can say to their daughter, "Hey fatty—lose some weight." By contrast, Western parents have to tiptoe around the issue, talking in terms of "health" and never even mentioning the f-word, and their kids still end up in therapy for eating disorders and negative self-image (Chua 2011).[20]

It is predominant in the West to give priority to individual (child) self-determination without adequately appreciating the motivating role that parents could play in directing their children (Buchanan and Brock 1989). Such "laissez-faire" attitude is upheld by a liberal individualist ethos in the name of best protecting children from the possible abuse of the family. Chinese parents, embracing the Confucian principle of motivation, strongly disagree with this attitude. For them, a liberal ethical and political environment that fails to emphasize the parental role of personally tutoring and interrogating their kids has harmed the kids in ways in which the kids can easily shape self-indulging and self-damaging habits. Certain obvious evils in modern societies, such as early teen sex, homeless vagrancy, drug use, and violence, are the products of a motivation failure: families are restricted from appealing to the Confucian principle of motivation to join the decision-making of their children so as to offer effective assistance in the children's self-cultivation and development.[21]

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[19] There may not have been an explicit expression of this principle in the Confucian literature. However, the principle is implicit in the Confucian teachings of the virtues and the rituals. There are affluent relevant views and arguments entailing this principle from the works of Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi, among others. Moreover, although parents are most effective in this function, other close family members as well as teachers play similar effects. Among contemporary scholars, Alasdair MacIntyre has recognized the Confucian principle of motivation: "The young novice does not act as justice requires because justice requires it, but to avoid the approval or disapproval of parents and teachers… we Aristotelians do have a great deal to learn from Confucians" (MacIntyre 2004, pp. 157–158). Finally, the principle may apply not only to children, but also to adults in relevant contexts.

[20] The essay has inspired intense debate regarding different parenting models. I personally think that she has been too extreme in disciplining her daughters: e.g., they were never allowed to "watch TV or play computer games, get any grade less than an A, not be the No. 1 student in every subject except gym and drama, or play any instrument other than the piano or violin." These demands, I am afraid, are not consistent with the Confucian requirement of the middle way (*zhongyong*, 中庸). However, her point that the Chinese idea of good parenting is dramatically different from that of modern Western people is well made.

[21] I am not saying that only Western societies have such juvenile delinquencies. The point is that the Confucian principle of motivation has been ignored, if not rejected, in modern societies in the

Chinese familist cultural ideas are not limited to the areas of authority and motivation regarding the good for individuals. They are also relevant to the distribution of opportunities and resources in society. The Chinese view of fairness contrasts with that of the modern West as reflected in Rawls' account. The modern Western egalitarian view holds that it is only fair for the state to equalize life prospects for every individual, at least for those with similar natural endowments. For the Chinese, although government should offer help with unfortunate members (who are, from the Confucian understanding, primarily those individuals without complete families, such as widows, orphans, and childless elderly persons) so as to conduct virtuous governance (*renzheng*, 仁政),[22] it is unfair to equalize everyone's welfare through coerced heavy taxation in the name of "natural" rights. Providing for the unfortunate arises out of the providers' obligation of benevolence; such an obligation is derived from the virtue consideration of honoring the human life, rather than out of egalitarian entitlements imposed on the people. Those who receive such kindness should be grateful and seek to pay back the kindness in one way or another. But most resources should be left to families for taking care of their own members. Evidently, families can give their children a great number of benefits, such as a secure home environment, successful role models, private schools, private tutors, and an advantaged peer group. The Chinese think that this kind of "inequality" is reasonably fair, since the Confucian virtue of *ren* takes it for granted that love begins from one's family and is practiced in preferential treatment to one's family members. This is so not because one's family members are more valuable than other people, but because one has more moral obligation to take care of one's family members. Indeed, it is the common Chinese idea that parents should work hard to achieve promising life chances for their children, and children should in turn take good care of their parents when they become elderly. In short, the Chinese idea of social justice accepts the propriety of family-based opportunities provided autonomously by families, rather than an egalitarian right of welfare imposed by the state.

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name of individual rights, domestic justice, or protection of children. Dennis McCann states that "the limitations of family-oriented morality… are not likely to be understood apart from first-hand experience in traditional families where the opportunities of some members for personal self-realization are all-too-often foreclosed for the sake of the family's progress as a whole" (McCann 2013, p. 284, fn 10). I know such problems exist sometimes in traditional families. But one should recognize that if one attempts to solve the problems by forcibly imposing the so-called "domestic justice" or "gender equality" through the aggressive intervention of the state into familial affairs, one would cause even more harm and unfairness to family members than family autonomy. For instance, the Chinese had the tragic experience of the "Great Leap Forward" movement in the late 1950s when centrally planned industrialization and equalization were imposed on Chinese families. Surely human institutions, traditional families included, inevitably make mistakes. Confucianism holds that the family, as the primary and eternal community of human society, could and should be improved, along with other institutions, in the process of the gradual fulfilling of the four-element societal order advocated by Confucianism as the Confucian understanding of the common good of all human beings.

[22] For the Confucian virtue-based consideration of helping the poor, see Jonathan Chan's contribution to this volume (Chan 2013).

In addition to the family-based ideas of benefit, the Chinese also share a virtue-based meritocratic view of social distribution. Modern Western society tends to hold that everyone has an equal entitlement or right to welfare, regardless of one's virtue or work-attitude. Even if one is able but refuses to work, as long as one is poor in terms of the amount of income or wealth, one is automatically entitled to receive welfare from society. For the Chinese, such a person does not deserve receiving welfare, because his/her poor situation is resulted from his/her choosing to be lazy. From the Chinese idea, diligence and hard-work are the merits that deserve respect and reward. It is a deep-rooted Chinese moral conviction that every individual should be cultivated and trained to work hard in order to promote the well-being of one's family and contribute to other people in society. If one offers help not only within one's own family, but also significantly improves the quality of other people's lives, one would be regarded as greatly virtuous, even as sagely. This Chinese work ethic entails that the Chinese do not accept equal entitlements for welfare regardless of consideration of individual virtue or work-attitude. The long-standing Chinese conception of fairness has remained such that the virtuous should be honored, the able should be awarded, the diligent should be praised, the lazy should be blamed, and the evil should be punished. This work ethic has been remarkably responsible for China's economic success achieved in the recent three-decade reforms, in which the communist egalitarian policy has been abandoned and the market mechanism implemented.[23]

Finally, although there are different religions in China, the moral and political ideas of the Chinese people are still more or less Confucian, no matter to which religion they are committed. Influenced by the Confucian ethical position on human interdependence and harmonious relationships, most Chinese have formed a Confucian virtue-based moral attitude towards actual social and political issues. That is, while they want to maintain their particular religious or metaphysical beliefs which may not be Confucian, they tend to accommodate themselves to the Confucian morality in dealing with social and political issues, willingly accepting certain compromising or conciliating strategies whenever necessary. Accordingly, they are not sympathetic to any absolute notion of individual rights or liberty regarding moral and political issues. For example, they never aspire to acquire an absolute right to freedom of speech or expression. They want to have a right to criticize improper governance, but they do not want individuals to have an unlimited right to present irresponsible talks or engage in hate speech. In particular, they cannot accept that individuals have a right to pornography, as liberals contend, although they accept that some forms of pornography should be tolerated in society.

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[23] To emphasize the Confucian values of family-based benefits as well as the meritocratic pattern of distribution does not mean to advocate current Chinese governmental policy in which urban and rural residents are treated in numerous different ways; rural residents and families are unfairly constrained by such policy in pursuit of their happy lives. Such policy is neither familistic nor meritocratic. However, critique of such policy should not tempt one to move to the extreme of the modern Western egalitarian welfarism that demands that everyone have a right to equal welfare regardless of consideration of family and virtue.

Relevantly, Chinese people hold that a good government must be able to promote people's goods, no matter whether the government is directly elected or not. They take it for granted that government should promote a good morality in society so that individuals and their families can be led to lead good lives. Such political ideas have been evidenced clearly in the findings of a recent survey: 90 % of the Chinese people hold that the government has an obligation to promote a good morality in the society; 69 % of the people believe that if government officials are honest and virtuous, they should be trusted to make political decisions; and 53 % of the people accept that a government official is like a head of the family and that the people should follow his decision.[24] This is to say, the Chinese people do not want their government to hold a neutral position among different conceptions of the good life, as liberalism upholds. Rather, they want their government to be honest, upright, and benevolent so as to advance the happiness of the people in society. They are not sure whether modern Western democratic elections are better than traditional Confucian exam systems for selecting good officials. But they are clear about one thing: virtuous leadership is much more important than universal suffrage. They are aware that universal suffrage as a means cannot guarantee the end of establishing virtuous governance.[25]

To sum up. The intuitive ideas of contemporary Chinese society, including the family-oriented ideas of authority and motivation regarding the good for individuals, family-based opportunities and distribution, virtue-relevant welfare consideration, as well as the role of government, are significantly different from those individualist and egalitarian ideas held by modern Western societies. In this case, it would not be pertinent to talk about a Chinese "overlapping consensus" in contrast with that of the West, because, unlike modern Westerners, the Chinese still share a *comprehensive view about the good*, which includes both personal virtue and political arrangement.[26] Even if talking about a Chinese "overlapping consensus" makes sense, its kernel would be both moral and political (i.e., primarily about the good life),

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[24] See Kang (2008, p. 43). The book covers rich materials to demonstrate that contemporary Chinese society remains Confucian in basic moral and political values, although these values are not well organized as a coherent Confucian configuration in a systematic way.

[25] A series of careful research made by late political scientist Shi Tianjian at Duke University shows that the Chinese understanding of "democracy" (*minzhu*, 民主) has been significantly influenced by the Confucian doctrine of *minben* (民本) – the people alone are the basis of the state, so as to be different from that of liberal democracy – the people alone are the master of the state. In particular, while the liberal democracy emphasizes procedural arrangements, the Chinese tend to trust qualified elites by reason of their superior knowledge and virtue; liberal democracy insists on the fair election of a government, but the Chinese care more about the substance and outcomes of its policies; and finally, liberal democracy claims a right to political participation for everyone, while the Chinese give political leaders greater freedom to deviate from public opinion when making policy (Shi and Lu 2010, pp. 125–126). In fact, as Karen Chan (2013) shows in her essay, there is a similar attitude in the Western Thomistic-Aristotelian tradition that ties virtue in a political leader's personal life to success in public office in leading to the common good of the political community. Drawing on the Thomistic-Aristotelian intellectual resources, Chan has persuasively argued that the practical reasoning proper to the political leader presupposes the moral virtues.

[26] I thank P. J. Ivanhoe for making this sensible suggestion.

rather than only political (i.e., primarily about individual rights and liberties) as identified by Rawls for modern Western society. Accordingly, it is not only that Rawls' liberal social justice is not suitable for China, but it is not legitimate for China – it is not supported by the Chinese reasonable comprehensive ideas. If Rawlsian social justice is imposed on Chinese society, it would conflict with the Chinese ideas and values that have not only been held for a long time but are still significantly shared by the Chinese in the present time.

10.5   Appreciating a Confucian Notion of the Common Good

Given the shared Chinese ideas as laid out in the last section, I propose that a Confucian notion of the common good should be reconstructed to direct contemporary China—to effectively guide Chinese political reforms, shape China's public policy, and regulate Chinese administration. The basic content of this notion should be worked out not only from the shared ideas of contemporary Chinese society, but also in reference to the features of the authentic Confucian societal order (of virtue cultivation, family regulation, state governance, and making the world peaceful) as summarized in Sect. 10.2, because the kernel of the shared Chinese ideas is deeply rooted in this Confucian societal order. Although the detailed contents of this notion must be left to future work, its basic orientation and character are crystal clear: a set of Confucian moral virtues should be advocated, relevant family values be promoted, political meritocracy be adopted, and world peace be pursued through virtuous means. Obviously, this notion should not be offered by copying the full-fledged features of the established Confucian societal order in the past, because it is necessary to qualify and develop the traditional features in order to accommodate the Confucian morality with the economic, cultural, and social conditions of contemporary China.

First, the Confucian notion of the common good thus reconstructed will be kept only as a moral notion, not as a religious faith. This limitation is needed because most contemporary Chinese non-Confucian religious believers are not willing to accept any special position of the Confucian religion in the growth of a proper Chinese constitutional government, while they generally accept basic Confucian morality for regulating Chinese society. Second, the Confucian notion of the common good thus reconstructed may not interpret the Confucian virtues precisely as they were interpreted in traditional Chinese society. Instead of keeping their surface requirements as in the past, it is necessary and appropriate to make certain reconstructions, adjustments, and transformations in order to maintain the key values of the virtues for today. Third, although individual rights are not a foundational concept in this Confucian notion of the common good, it is necessary to establish a set of individual rights in light of fundamental virtue considerations so as to serve as a fallback concept to protect primary individual interests in case the virtues fail. Finally, Confucian family values should be promoted through encouraging policies and strategies, such as educational programs and financial incentives. They should

not be imposed on the people through prohibitive or punishing rules. This is to say, non-familist ways of life will be tolerated, although not encouraged or supported in the name of equal rights.

With those qualifications made explicitly, this Confucian notion of the common good will by no means support or possibly create a totalitarian political system in contemporary China. It is true that Mao's communist China was totalitarian. But that totalitarian governance was realized precisely by suppressing and destroying the Confucian virtues and rituals. Under this Confucian notion of the common good, governmental power must be checked and balanced in order to promote the common good. The people will have freedom in religious faith. Individuals will be protected by a set of rights, especially private property rights, including familial rights. Although mass media will be regulated to preserve family values, their right to critique governmental policies or administration will be guaranteed. A family-based and family-oriented civil society will be flourishing.[27]

This Confucian notion of the common good stays in tension not only with the declining communist morality and politics, but also with the Western liberal democratic morality and politics. It entails that China should turn to this notion of the common good to abandon its communist ideology and build a Chinese constitution, but the Chinese constitution should also be different from that of liberal democracy. This notion is qualified to be the Chinese notion of the common good because every Chinese will fairly benefit and hopefully flourish through its guidance. In particular, this notion is not only tenable for the Confucian believers, but is also acceptable to other religious believers. As mentioned, Chinese Daoism and Buddhism have long accommodated themselves to Confucian morality and politics in Chinese history. Although Christianity has had some conflicts with Confucianism in the observance of religious rituals, Chinese Christians have in general supported Confucian moral virtues. When Chinese Daoists, Buddhists, or Christians held different moral emphases or priorities from the Confucians, both sides found reasonable ways to compromise and accomplish reasonable solutions without denying the dominant role of Confucian morality in the society. For instance, Confucians have accepted the existence of Daoist, Buddhist, and Christian monasteries in China, but those religious monks and nuns have conceded that their celibacy is not meant to challenge Confucian family values, but is rather to contribute to family values in unusual ways. Finally, for a region like Tibet where a special religion is predominant and is not fond of Confucian morality, there should be a special arrangement for the people for not accepting this Confucian notion of the common good. The central Chinese government should make such a special arrangement

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[27] Chinese civil society will be family-based in the sense that the family is the primary community of society, and that family associations (like clan charity organizations and family-based community compacts in tradition) will play active roles in guiding and assisting the social and economic lives of the people. Chinese civil society will be family-oriented in the sense that family values will be promoted through educational programs. All civic social organizations or institutions, as long as they are not anti-family in their missions or activities, are publicly supported in the Chinese civil society. In such a civil society, anti-family associations can only be tolerated, not publicly supported.

because it is the basic requirement of the Confucian moral virtues for peaceful and reasonable solutions of conflicts.

Most non-religious Chinese individuals have been shaped by the Confucian morality, so they will find it acceptable to carry out the Confucian notion of the common good in China. Only a small group of non-religious individuals may be hostile to the Confucian morality, and their situations differ from one to another. Some of them think that Confucian morality supports totalitarianism, but this is a misunderstanding to be replaced by the reconstructed Confucian notion of the common good. Some of them are extreme socialist egalitarians demanding to realize a thoroughly equal society through a public or state-owned economic system. But modern Chinese history and numerous academic studies have shown that the consequences of pursuing such thorough equality are bad even for the most unfortunate members of the society. Finally, some individuals may not want to accept the Confucian work ethic to work hard and take care of their family members. But it is fair to push these individuals to learn virtue and not to become lazy; this is beneficial to everyone, including themselves. In short, even to those non-religious individuals who are for various reasons unsympathetic with the Confucian morality, carrying out the Confucian notion of the common good in Chinese society will still be fair and reasonable.

Will this notion of the common good be good for Chinese women, in particular? Obviously, Confucian morality is often critiqued as being unfair to Chinese women, because women were required to stay home to take care of internal familial affairs rather than to go out to participate in social and political activities in traditional Chinese society. Here I have no space to address in detail why Confucianism was not to blame for such a requirement, but it is clear that the central concerns of the Confucian virtues do not entail such a requirement. Surely, Confucian virtue ethics has recognized a moral meaning of the biological distinction between man and woman for the primary place of the family in society. Since mothers play an indispensably important role in nurturing their young children, it is certainly all right (and admirable in many cases) for them to stay home to cultivate their children rather than go out to work in the market. Confucians would support that government formulate proper public policy and offer effective incentives to help mothers to stay with their small children. But this does not mean that women should be required to stay home. It has long been affirmed in Confucianism that the primary Confucian virtues, such as *ren*, *yi*, and *zhi*, are exercisable by both men and women. Today's Chinese women have worked excellently in all kinds of professions, government departments, and numerous institutions of industrial economy. The Confucian notion of the common good for contemporary China is by no means a simple call for women to "return home," but is an attempt to pursue the good of women consistent with the common good of a family-based and family-oriented civil society, without forcibly limiting women's participation in political, economic, and social activities. Hopefully, by discovering feasible policies and measures of strengthening family values (such as the stability and prosperity of the family) under this notion of the common good, most Chinese women will benefit from more reliable and supporting families for their good lives, either staying home or working outside.

10.6   Concluding Remarks

A proper societal order under the Confucian notion of the common good for contemporary China contrasts with the communist utopia of accomplishing a classless egalitarian society by totalitarian and utilitarian strategies. It also contrasts with the Rawlsian liberal order of state neutrality in providing only "thin" goods for individuals to choose. This virtue-based Confucian notion of the common good is worked up around the common set of background moral beliefs that stands in China for what in Rawls is an overlapping consensus of very different comprehensive views of the good in the West. It is hopeful to rely on the direction provided by the Confucian notion of the common good to solve China's moral crisis and move China into a healthy and flourishing future.

A Chinese political system built on this notion of the common good will not be a liberal democracy in which people differ over fundamental moral issues but see the politics of neutrality as offering the best conditions for everyone to pursue their distinct visions of the good. Instead, in the Chinese system people will bring the common set of background moral beliefs up to date and share a common vision of how they should live and organize society, but they will differ in other goals of life (such as eschatology) that do not impinge on the corporeal shared life they live. If the reasons I offer in this essay make sense, Westerners will need to learn to understand the Chinese moral and political way of life, even if it is not meant to accomplish a liberal democracy by following the West. To reward (in the name of promoting world peace) the Chinese liberal intellectuals who are copying the Western standard of human rights and democracy may not really contribute to world peace, although Confucians certainly object to the government's imprisoning social critics. Accepting the Confucian notion of the common good in China is more promising for world peace, because it emphasizes the virtuous way of cherishing and pursuing peace.

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Part IV
The Common Good and Aristotelian/Thomistic Philosophy

Chapter 11
The Common Good and the Virtuous Political Leader

Karen C. Chan

11.1 Introduction

In today's Western political climate, political leaders often depend on the assumption that their personal indiscretions will be forgiven, or at least overlooked, by the general public. More often than not, this assumption holds true; most citizens will dismiss even the most shocking of vices in their political leaders' private affairs with the justification that these private failings have no bearing on their abilities as a political leader. Similarly, most politicians capitalize on the assumption that their "private" beliefs (such as religious views) have no bearing on their duties in public office.

It seems that this Western attitude toward public office starkly contrasts with Eastern outlooks, such as in mainland China. In his chapter in this volume, Ruiping Fan observes that:

> 90 % of the Chinese people hold that the government has an obligation to promote a good morality in the society; 69 % of the people believe that if government officials are honest and virtuous, they should be trusted to make political decisions; and 53 % of the people accept that a government official is like a head of the family and that the people should follow his decision (Fan 2013, pp. 193–218).

According to Fan, the prevailing attitude in mainland China is that the good political leader is not one who simply will promote pluralism, as does the political leader in democratic Western societies. Rather, people expect the virtuous ruler in China to have a concrete vision of the good life according to which he leads his people (while also exercising the Confucian virtue of tolerance for those who disagree). Fan traces this view about the necessity of the political leader to lead both his

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personal and political life with virtue to its Confucian roots, as the Confucian tradition advocates for the sage ruler who virtuously rules his people toward the "common good," which Fan defines as "a well-established basic societal order in which everyone can benefit and flourish in pursuing the good life" (Fan 2013, pp. 193–218). In her chapter discussing China's Moist tradition (an "offshoot of the Confucian school"), Ellen Zhang writes that, similar to the Confucian tradition, Moists seek a leader who will provide the "exemplar of a morally superior person who can be emulated by others" (Zhang 2013, pp. 103–128). A leader who exhibits corruption in his personal life surely would not be ideal.

Despite China's Confucian roots, it is a sad but undeniable fact that today's Chinese political leaders at both local and national levels often suffer from corruption, both political and personal. Fan concedes that there are "numerous reports of widespread instances of corruption on the part of Chinese officials, businessmen, and even ordinary residents" (Fan 2013, pp. 193–218). Instances of such corruption have been documented in the Western media, and undoubtedly many more unreported or undocumented cases exist. Yet, because of the deeply-embedded (even if unacknowledged or suppressed) Confucianism, the people still yearn for a leader whose private affairs are not marred by vice and scandal and whose public life similarly is conducted with virtue. Is there a similar phenomenon in the West? That is, despite current attitudes about the sharp separation of virtue and vice in one's private life from one's public office, is there nonetheless a tradition that holds that this separation is dangerous to good political leadership, if not impossible?

In this chapter, I argue that there is indeed such a tradition—namely, the Thomistic-Aristotelian tradition—that ties virtue in a political leader's personal life to success in public office, leading to the common good of the political community.[1] I argue that the practical reasoning proper to the political leader presupposes the moral virtues. Further, given the strong connection between one's private good and the common good, the political leader who demonstrates an improper understanding of human flourishing in his private life, and thus the private good, will ultimately have a poor conception of the common good, toward which he should be leading his people.

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[1] Whether or not the Thomistic tradition is still viable or relevant in today's pluralistic society is a subject of debate that is much beyond the scope of this present chapter. The present chapter aims only to discuss the narrow question of whether or not there are philosophical roots in the West that tie personal virtue to good political leadership and to explore these roots. However, I tend to agree with David Solomon, who writes in his chapter in this volume that, although the Thomistic political tradition that focuses on the common good has typically been rejected by theorists because of its religious and teleological assumptions, such objections recently have lost ground, making the Thomistic political tradition perhaps more viable than once thought. He sees the contemporary philosophical climate as more open to serious consideration of teleology and the place of religion in practical reasoning, as well as accounts of the common good based on teleology and/or religion.

11.2   The Necessity of Moral Virtue for the Political Leader Qua Man

In the midst of World War II, Charles De Koninck published *On the Primacy of the Common Good against the Personalists* to discuss the nature of the common good and the necessity for the legitimate political community to be directed toward this common good. Here he disagrees that a political leader can be a good political leader while at the same time being a bad man:

> Let us not treat the virtues of the political as accessory complements of the virtues of man as purely man. On the one hand, one pretends that these are more profound and at the same time, on the other hand, would have it that a bad man in his monastic and domestic life can be a good political man. This is a sign of the contempt in which one holds everything that formally regards the common good (De Koninck 2008, pp. 81).

If what De Koninck says is true, the political leader who neglects his family, engages in extra-marital affairs, steals money from his neighbors, lies to his friends, or exhibits other vices that lead to habitual bad action in his "personal" life would be an unfit political leader. But how is it that these vices, which might seem to affect only his private personal life, have any bearing on his public role of political leader? To understand this controversial claim (a claim that is admittedly foreign to the contemporary political scene), it is necessary to return to the philosophical inspiration behind De Koninck's essay: the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas himself writes:

> Therefore, he says first that someone could perhaps say that a particular citizen, in order to be a good one, needs the same virtue as that of a good man. For we do not say that someone is a good ruler unless he should be good by reason of his moral virtues and practical wisdom. And so it is necessary that a statesman (i.e., the ruler of a regime) be practically wise and consequently a good man (*Commentary on Aristotle's Politics* III.3, p. 194).[2]

To say the least, this claim needs to be explained and defended. By appealing to Aquinas' theories of practical reasoning and the common good, I hope to show why deluding oneself into thinking that a leader's personal vices have no bearing on his ability to lead the community is a mistake.

Many arguments can be given as to why the political leader must demonstrate virtue with respect to his private life. In his discussion on the proper reward for a king, Aquinas writes:

> It is implanted in the minds of all who have the use of reason that the reward of virtue is happiness. The virtue of anything whatsoever is explained to be that which makes its possessor good and renders his deed good. Moreover, everyone strives by working well to attain that which is most deeply implanted in desire, namely, to be happy. This, no one is able not to wish. It is therefore fitting to expect as a reward for virtue that which makes man happy (*On Kingship* I.8, pp. 35–6).

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[2] These views are echoed throughout Aquinas' various political works, not just in his commentaries and elaborations of Aristotle's thought.

The rationale here is that in order to reach true happiness, or beatitude, which man desires naturally and necessarily, he must live a life of moral virtue. This holds for all men, including political leaders. Further, according to Aquinas' theological picture, since man's final and supernatural end lies in beatitude (which Aquinas identifies to be eternal union with God), which can only be achieved by living virtuously in this life, the political leader must live virtuously in order to reach his supernatural end.[3] If the political leader acts viciously in his personal life, he draws himself away from his eternal reward of beatitude and merits eternal damnation.

Moreover, the political leader needs to act virtuously in his private life because of the social nature of actions themselves. Aquinas affirms Aristotle's position that man is by nature a political animal.[4] As a result, man's private actions have larger social repercussions, either directly or indirectly. It is obvious how actions that are intended to affect the whole community do so: physicians heal the sick and work for the physical well-being of the community, police officers ensure the physical safety of the community, etc. Mary Keys, in her *Aquinas, Aristotle, and the Promise of the Common Good*, points out that even actions that seem to have a direct impact on only a few individuals often have larger social repercussions. She recounts the example of a teenage boy who risked his own life to save two young girls who had fallen into a frozen lake in southern Michigan:

> Clearly, the direct beneficiaries of this action were the children and their families, who were effusive in expressing their gratitude. But in some way the entire town and even the region of "Michiana" (the local term for the region comprising northwestern Indiana and southern Michigan) were in the teen's debt. The act of fortitude and beneficence was a source of pride to the whole community; the life and health of two of its youngest members were goods appreciated, indeed felt, by many (Keys 2006, pp. 126–7).

Even those actions that are intended to affect only the agent have a wider impact. Keys goes on to elaborate:

> Not every act actually increases a virtue or a vice, which characteristics or habits are too engrained to be easily altered (*ST* I-II 52, 3; cf. 53, 1–3), but each voluntary act of sufficient intensity at least *disposes* a person to progress or decline in virtue or vice. And, since one may be motivated to commit unjust acts by vicious inclinations that are not themselves injustice–cowardice, for instance, or sloth, or vainglory, or intemperance–and conversely, with the other virtues vis-à-vis acts of justice, significant growth in any of the other virtues or vices is likely to affect my ability to live justly as a member of my political society (Keys 2006, pp. 128).

Individual actions, even those that bear on only the individual himself, are habit-forming and dispose the agent toward being a more or less virtuous member

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[3] "It is impossible for any created good to constitute man's happiness. For happiness is the perfect good, which lulls the appetite altogether; else it would not be the last end, if something yet remained to be desired. Now the object of the will, i.e. of man's appetite, is the universal good; just as the object of the intellect is the universal true. Hence it is evident that naught can lull man's will, save the universal good. This is to be found, not in any creature, but in God alone; because every creature has goodness by participation. Wherefore God alone can satisfy the will of man, according to the words of Psalm 102:5: 'Who satisfieth thy desire with good things.' Therefore God alone constitutes man's happiness" (*Summa Theologiae* (hereafter *ST*) I-II q. 2, a.8.).

[4] See, for example, *ST* I-II q. 72, a. 4.

of society. It is difficult, if not impossible, to find actions that do not have a further reach than the individual agent himself. As a result, it is seldom the case that actions (vicious or not) affect only the agent or his private circle. Thus, we should be leery of claims that a politician's private indiscretions have no broader impact (whether direct or indirect) than on his personal life.

A third reason why the political leader should avoid vicious actions in his personal life is to avoid causing scandal to others. Aquinas defines scandal as such:

> In like manner, while going along the spiritual way, a man may be disposed to a spiritual downfall by another's word or deed, in so far, to wit, as one man by his injunction, inducement or example, moves another to sin; and this is scandal properly so called.
>
> Now nothing by its very nature disposes a man to spiritual downfall, except that which has some lack of rectitude, since what is perfectly right, secures man against a fall, instead of conducing to his downfall. Scandal is, therefore, fittingly defined as *something less rightly done or said, that occasions another's spiritual downfall* (*ST* II-II q. 43, a. 1).

Today's pluralistic societies, which do not acknowledge a supernatural end for man, may dismiss Aquinas' definition of scandal because of its invocation of *spiritual* downfall. Nonetheless, the concept of scandal can still be applied to today's secular political communities. As Aquinas points out, any member of the community may cause scandal. Yet, it seems that the political leader needs to be especially wary of causing scandal because he serves as a role model for the citizens and also as the public face of the community. We hope that our political leaders can serve as exemplars of conduct for our children and accordingly we teach our children to respect and admire our political leaders. Further, since our political leaders serve as the public persona of our political community, we do not want our political leaders to reflect poorly on us by engaging in vicious conduct, even in their personal lives. By habitually engaging in vicious conduct, whether it be in public office or in private life, the political leader can scandalize and/or alienate his citizens and the members and leaders of other political communities in explicitly or implicitly condoning these vicious acts and habits.

The arguments rehearsed so far address the need for virtue by the political leader insofar as he is a man living in a community. That is, these arguments point out the need for virtue by the political leader qua man; man (whether political leader or not) needs to act well to reach happiness/final beatitude, because of the social nature of actions, and to avoid causing scandal to others. Yet we still have not addressed the question as to whether or not the political leader can be a bad man but nevertheless be a good ruler.[5] In order to answer this question, we must explore whether there are

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[5] The argument concerning the need to avoid scandal comes the closest to addressing the need for virtue on the part of the political leader qua political leader, because it addresses his special role as the public face of the community. For, if the political leader so scandalizes the citizens of his political community that they no longer respect or trust him and consequently disobey him, the leader will not be able to command the citizens effectively and execute those actions necessary for the common good. However, scandal is the effect of vicious action and the lack of moral virtue on the part of the political leader. I take it that the more interesting and deeper question is whether or not the political leader can be morally vicious and still be a good leader perfected by the relevant virtues if he somehow is able to avoid causing scandal. This is the topic of the present essay.

virtues specific to the political leader that allow him to rule well. If there are, then
we must determine if these virtues that perfect the political leader qua leader can
exist without the virtues that perfect the political leader qua man.

11.3   Reasoning and the Political Leader

Following Aristotle, Aquinas defines different types of political regimes not only
according to the number of rulers in power or according to the basis on which power
is awarded,[6] but also according to whether or not the ruler (or ruling party) is virtu-
ous. In his *Commentary on Aristotle's Politics*, for example, Aquinas summarizes
Aristotle's division of political regimes as such:

> And to evidence the things said here, we should consider that there are six kinds of orga-
> nization of political communities, as he will say later [III, chap. 6, nn. 1–4], since either
> one or few or many rule every political community. If one person rules the political com-
> munity, that one is either a king or a tyrant. He is a king if he should be virtuous, keeping
> as his goal the common benefit of his subjects. And he is a tyrant if he should be evil,
> turning everything to his own advantage and contemning the benefit of subjects. And if a
> few persons should rule the political community, those who look after the good of the
> people will be chosen because of their virtue, and we call such a regime aristocracy (i.e.,
> rule of the virtuous or best citizens). Or a few persons, who will turn everything belonging
> to the community to their own benefit, will be chosen because of their power or wealth, not
> because of their virtue, and we call such a regime oligarchy (i.e., rule of the few). And
> likewise, if many persons should rule the political community, we call such a regime by
> the general name *polity* if many virtuous citizens rule. But there may not be many virtuous
> persons in the political community, except, perhaps, regarding military virtue. Therefore,
> this regime is one in which the men warriors in the political community rule. But if the
> whole people should wish to rule collectively, we call the regime democracy (i.e., rule of
> the people) (II.7, p. 117).

Thus, it stands to reason that there are certain virtues proper to the political leader
qua leader that lead to the distinctions among political regimes. The above passage
reveals that the good political leader is the one who desires the common good,
directing his efforts, the actions of his subjects, and the political community at large
toward this common good.[7] If the leader orders the community to his own private
good, the political regime is a bad one and the leader is vicious. The virtues specific
to the political ruler that allow him to rule well, then, are those that direct him
toward the common good and enable him to direct the community toward this com-
mon good. Since it is by way of the faculty of reason that man is able to order, or
relate, one thing to another, the political leader orders the community towards its
end via the faculty of reason. The virtues of the good political leader are thus those

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[6] See, for example, *ST* I-II q. 95, a. 4.

[7] At this point, I refrain from defining the common good or even from discussing it at length, leav-
ing alone the assumption that the common good is that toward which the virtuous political leader
directs the legitimate political community. I address this issue of defining the common good in
Sect. 11.5.

that enable him to engage in right reasoning with respect to facilitating the common good. To further specify which virtues are needed on the part of the good political leader, we need to establish what type of reasoning is proper to the ruler, speculative or practical.

If leading the people is a matter of having speculative knowledge and exercising theoretical reason (perhaps in the area of political science), then the virtues proper to the political leader would be intellectual virtues such as wisdom, science, and understanding.[8] These habits perfect man in the consideration of speculative truth. This position would make tenable the view that the good leader need not be a good man, since neither do the intellectual virtues presuppose the moral virtues, nor do they rectify man's appetite toward the good.[9] Thus, a man may be a brilliant scientist and discover cures for all sorts of diseases, but because the intellectual virtues do not presuppose the moral virtues, there is no inconsistency if at the same time he is a nasty sort of person who neglects his family, disrespects his colleagues, and/or verbally abuses all those with whom he comes in contact.[10] Further, because the intellectual virtues do not rectify man's appetite, the brilliant scientist may be a bad man by using his knowledge for evil ends. For example, he may withhold his scientific discoveries from certain groups in order to commit genocide or perhaps market the discoveries aggressively and exaggerate their potencies in order to satisfy his hunger for wealth.

However, political leadership is not solely a matter of speculative knowledge or reasoning toward speculative truth. First, the object of the political leader's thought and reasoning is the political community, which can be affected through human action; purely speculative reasoning considers those objects that are not directly affected by human action. Further, political leaders qua political leaders are not scholars locked up in the ivory tower of academia, but are supposed to be active in

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[8] Properly speaking, political science would be considered practical reasoning because it concerns human actions in the community. I nevertheless use political science as an example of speculative reasoning here because political science may be considered speculatively, that is, without an aim towards action in its mode and end. I explain this distinction further below.

[9] "Since every virtue is ordained to some good, as stated above (Q. 55, A. 3); a habit, as we have already observed (Q. 56, A. 3), may be called a virtue for two reasons: first, because it confers aptness in doing good; secondly, because besides aptness, it confers the right use of it. The latter condition, as above stated (*ibid*.), belongs to those habits alone which affect the appetitive part of the soul: since it is the soul's appetitive power that puts all the powers and habits to their respective uses.

Since, then, the habits of the speculative intellect do not perfect the appetitive part, nor affect it in any way, but only the intellective part; they may indeed be called virtues insofar as they confer aptness for a good work, viz., the consideration of truth (since this is the good work of the intellect): yet they are not called virtues in the second way, as though they conferred the right use of a power or habit. For if a man possess a habit of speculative science, it does not follow that he is inclined to make use of it, but he is made able to consider the truth in those matters of which he has scientific knowledge—that he make use of the knowledge which he has, is due to the motion of his will" (*ST* I-II q. 57, a. 1).

[10] The one exception is the intellectual virtue of prudence, which presupposes the moral virtues. This point is explored later in this chapter. See *ST* I-II q. 58, a. 5.

the community, working towards an understanding and achievement of the common good, keeping peace, arbitrating in disagreements, writing legislation, etc. We expect political leaders to bring their knowledge to bear on actual practice.

Having ruled out that political leadership involves primarily speculative reasoning and that the virtues proper to the political leader are not solely the intellectual virtues, we turn our attention to practical reasoning and the virtues thereof.[11] Aquinas identifies two types of practical reasoning—reasoning about things to be made (technical or mechanical reasoning) and reasoning about things to be done (ethical reasoning).[12] Technical reasoning, the virtue of which is art, is concerned with the creation of an object, since "… *making* is an action passing into outward matter, e.g., *to build*, *to saw*, and so forth…" (*ST* I-II q. 57, a. 4). If right technical reasoning is the type of reasoning proper to the political leader, moral virtue and vice would be irrelevant to good political leadership, for much the same reason that the moral virtues are irrelevant to the intellectual virtues:

> Art is nothing else but *the right reason about certain works to be made*. And yet the good of these things depends, not on man's appetitive faculty being affected in this or that way, but on the goodness of the work done. For a craftsman, as such, is commendable, not for the will with which he does a work, but for the quality of the work. And yet it has something in common with the speculative habits: since the quality of the object considered by the latter is a matter of concern to them also, but not how the human appetite may be affected towards the object. For as long as the geometrician demonstrates the truth, it matters not how his appetitive faculty may be affected, whether he be joyful or angry: even as neither does this matter in a craftsman, as we have observed. And so art has the nature of a virtue in the same way as the speculative habits, in so far, to wit, as neither art nor speculative habit makes a good work as regards the use of the habit, which is the property of a virtue that perfects the appetite, but only as regards the aptness to work well (*ST* I-II q. 57, a. 3).

One might be tempted to view the role of the political leader as one of a craftsman who creates and/or sustains a political community, crafts laws and statutes, etc., especially given the following excerpt from Aquinas' *On Kingship* that compares the role of the political leader who founds a new community to a craftsman:

> Of course the founder of a city and kingdom cannot produce anew men, places in which to dwell, and the other necessities of life. He has to make use of those which already exist in nature, just as the other arts derive the material for their work from nature; as, for example, the smith takes iron, the builder wood and stone, to use in their respective arts (II.2, p. 57).

Under this view, the political community is an artifact, with the political leader serving as the master craftsman. However, we see that for Aquinas, the political community is not so much an object that exists above and beyond the citizens to be crafted by a political leader. Rather, the political community is essentially an association of persons. Keys points to Aquinas' consistent usage of the term *communicatio*, translated into English as "association," in the proemium and the first chapter of his *Commentary on Aristotle's Politics*, as direct evidence of this position:

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[11] I do not claim that political leaders engage in no speculative reasoning whatsoever or that speculative truth has no bearing on political leadership. What I will show momentarily, however, is that the political leader engages *primarily* in practical reasoning.

[12] *ST* I-II q. 57, a. 4.

What the proemium reveals even more clearly is that, contrary to some conventional wisdom characterizing ancient and perhaps especially medieval political thought, the political community is not understood by Aquinas as an organism, or a thing, but rather more fundamentally as an association whose unity comes from human action and interaction, and from common action with a view to a common end or ends. Aristotle's and Aquinas's version of constitutive community is constituted not by a shared *identity*, but rather by a conversation and a sharing in actions and in the goods they instantiate and seek: every human association (*communicatio*) is based on certain acts, and "human beings naturally communicate with one another in reference to [the useful and the harmful, the just and the unjust, and other such things]. But communication in reference to these things is what makes a household and city" (*Comm. Pol.* I, I n. 37 [29]) (Keys 2006, pp. 85).

Since the political community is not some artifact that needs to be crafted, we can rule out technical reasoning as the predominant type of reasoning engaged in by the political leader and art as the virtue proper to the political leader.

The type of reasoning that is proper to the political leader, then, must be practical reasoning directed toward action. Aquinas makes this clear in various texts. In his *Prologue* to the *Commentary on Aristotle's Politics*, for example, Aquinas rejects the view that politics involves speculative reasoning or craft reasoning to affirm that it involves practical reasoning about action:

Second, we can understand what kind of science this is. For we distinguish practical from theoretical sciences in that the latter are directed only to the knowledge of truth, while the former are directed to action. Therefore, politics is necessarily included in practical philosophy, since the political community is a whole, and human reason both knows it and acts regarding it. Moreover, reason does some things by making them, by action that extends to external matter, and this belongs strictly to skills called mechanical (e.g., those of craftsmen, shipbuilders, and the like). And reason does other things by action that remains in the one acting (e.g., deliberating, choosing, willing, and the like), and such things belong to moral science. Therefore, it is evident that political science, which considers the direction of human beings, is included in the sciences about human action (i.e., moral sciences) and not in the sciences about making things (i.e., mechanical skills) (*Prologue*, p. 2).

Although Aquinas considers political science to be a practical science that involves practical reasoning, we must note there are different grades of practical reasoning about action. For example, an academic political scientist who is concerned with studying political regimes in order to classify them reasons about human action in a way vastly different from a lawmaker who is concerned with the practical application of his knowledge in crafting just laws. In the former case, practical reasoning is more akin to speculative reasoning, whereas the latter case is an instance of practical reasoning properly speaking, because its goal is to lead to the actual performance of action.

The political leader engages in practical reasoning that is completely practical because his reasoning is practical in its object, its mode (or manner of knowing), and its end. The degrees of practical and speculative knowledge depend on these three criteria:

Some knowledge is speculative only; some is practical only; and some is partly speculative and partly practical. In proof whereof it must be observed that knowledge can be called speculative in three ways: first, on the part of the things known, which are not operable by the knower; such is the knowledge of man about natural or divine things. Secondly, as

regards the manner of knowing—as, for instance, if a builder consider a house by defining and dividing, and considering what belongs to it in general: for this is to consider operable things in a speculative manner, and not as practically operable; for operable means the application of form to matter, and not the resolution of the composite into its universal formal principles. Thirdly, as regards the end; *for the practical intellect differs in its end from the speculative*, as the Philosopher says (*De Anima* iii). For the practical intellect is ordered to the end of the operation; whereas the end of the speculative intellect is the consideration of truth. Hence if a builder should consider how a house can be made, not ordering this to the end of operation, but only to know (how to do it), this would be only a speculative consideration as regards the end, although it concerns an operable thing. Therefore knowledge which is speculative by reason of the thing itself known, is merely speculative. But that which is speculative either in its mode or as to its end is partly speculative and partly practical: and when it is ordained to an operative end it is simply practical (*ST* I q. 14, a. 16).[13]

The political leader reasons about the coordination of human action in the community in order to lead to the common good (object). His mode of reasoning is practical, since he is not concerned with simply defining the political community or understanding the universal principles behind political communities in general, but considers how human action can affect the political community. Further, the end of his reasoning is to coordinate human action toward the common good.

11.4   Right Ethical Reasoning of the Individual Agent

To better understand what virtues are needed by the political leader to perfect practical reasoning with respect to the common good, we first turn our attention to the practical reasoning of the individual agent toward his own private end, or ethical reasoning, since Aquinas compares the leader in directing the political community to the individual agent in ordering his own actions. There is an analogy of governance: while the paradigmatic form of government is the divine ordering of the universe by God, there are two other analogous forms of government found in this world—an individual's rule over his own acts, and the leader's rule over the political community:

> Since, however, man is by nature a social animal living in a multitude, as we have pointed out above, the analogy with the divine government is found in him not only in this way that one man governs himself by reason, but also in that the multitude of men is governed by the reason of one man. This is what first of all constitutes the office of a king (Aquinas, *On Kingship* II.1, p. 54).

Because of this analogy, we can gain knowledge about political practical reasoning by becoming familiar with ethical reasoning. This comparison to the individual agent is fortuitous for our present purposes, because Aquinas speaks much more extensively about ethical reasoning than of the practical reasoning of the political leader.

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[13] For further discussion on this passage, see McInerny (1997, pp. 38–40).

When an agent engages in properly practical reasoning that leads to action, he reasons about what ought to be done in order to achieve a desired end. For practical reasoning to be right and for the resulting action to be good, great coordination of the faculties of will and reason is necessary. His appetite must be directed toward the good, and he must desire those ends that have been presented to him by reason as fitting for a rational agent in his situation. Further, he must pursue these ends via means that have been determined rightly by reason to be fitting and properly ordered to the desired end.

Daniel Westberg elaborates on the extensive coordination of will and reason in practical reasoning in his book, *Right Practical Reason: Aristotle, Action, and Prudence in Aquinas* (Westberg 1994). He identifies four steps of practical reasoning in the process of human action – intention, deliberation, decision, and execution. Each of these stages is composed of an act of intellect and an act of will:

Process of Human Action	
Intellect	Will
Intention	
Apprehension (*Apprehensio*)	Intention (*Intentio*)
Deliberation	
Counsel (*Consilium*)	Consent (*Consensus*)
Decision	
Practical Judgment (*Judicium*)	Choice (*Electio*)
Execution	
Command (*Imperium*)	Use; Application (*Usus, Usus Activus*)

The acts of will and intellect in each stage of human action do not take place sequentially as if, for example, first apprehension takes place and then is followed in time by intention.[14] Rather, the tight connection between will and reason is emphasized when one realizes that an act of the will and an act of reason occur

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[14] Although the dominant tradition in Thomistic studies has been to interpret the acts of the will and intellect as proceeding serially in producing human action, Westberg argues that such a picture distorts Aquinas' theory of practical reasoning. He writes:

That *liberum arbitrium* is still translated as 'free will' and not 'free choice' indicates the truth of the observation that the latter emphasis on will in the scholastic tradition has affected the proper understanding of St. Thomas. The basic underlying error is to conceive the will and intellect to function independently, if not in opposition to each other. When they are pictured as operating sequentially, then it is inevitable that the locus of decision is resolved either by positing a judgment of the intellect followed by an acquiescent will (so that the 'real decision' is made by the intellect), or by an intellectual description of options presented with 'indifference', leaving the will free to make the decision ('free will').
The only way for choice to be the genuine product of both reason and will is for both to be active at the same time, and this is the right way to interpret Thomas. This is explained by a metaphysical distinction between the potencies: intellect and will (as described in Chapters 4 and 5) are different *kinds* of potencies, based on the different ways in which a person relates to an object, and they activate and guide each other (Westberg 1994, p. 82).

simultaneously at each stage of human action, each exercising different modes of causality on the other in order to lead to action.[15] As Aquinas writes in *ST* I-II, q. 9, a. 1, ad 3, the will exercises efficient causality, whereas reason exercises formal causality.[16] Because of this tight connection between will and reason in practical reasoning, both faculties must be rightly ordered in order for practical reasoning to be right. Since the virtues are the habits that enable the faculties to perform their acts well, the will must be perfected by the moral virtues, and reason must be perfected by the intellectual virtue of prudence.

Aquinas defines the virtue of prudence as right reason about action. It is the habit that disposes the human agent correctly in ordaining means to ends:

> And to that which is suitably ordained to the due end man needs to be rightly disposed by a habit in his reason, because counsel and choice, which are about things ordained to the end, are acts of the reason. Consequently an intellectual virtue is needed in the reason, to perfect the reason, and make it suitably affected towards things ordained to the end; and this virtue is prudence. Consequently prudence is a virtue necessary to lead a good life (*ST* I-II q. 57, a. 5).

The observation that both reason and will are tightly connected in ethical reasoning and must be rightly ordered culminates in Aquinas' theory of prudence. For, although prudence is an intellectual virtue, it is distinct from the other intellectual virtues insofar as it presupposes the moral virtues.[17] Since prudence is concerned

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[15] If the acts are not so understood, inevitably either the will is favored or the intellect is favored as having the "final say," thereby leading to a rationalist or voluntarist interpretation of Aquinas. If we privilege the will and skew Aquinas' account of practical reasoning towards a voluntarist position where the will is what makes the final decision about what to do after reason explores the viable options, then we lose a robust sense as to why right reason is necessary. Similarly, if we privilege reason so that Aquinas' position looks more rationalist such that reason makes the final decision, the role of the will is minimized, and thus moral virtue which perfects the will loses its importance.

[16] "The will moves the intellect as to the exercise of its act; since even the true itself which is the perfection of the intellect, is included in the universal good, as a particular good. But as to the determination of the act, which the act derives from the object, the intellect moves the will; since the good itself is apprehended under a special aspect as contained in the universal true. It is therefore evident that the same is not mover and moved in the same respect" (*ST* I-II, q. 9, a. 1, ad 3).

[17] "As we have said above (Q. 55, A. 3), virtue is a habit by which we work well. Now a habit may be directed to a good act in two ways. First, in so far as by the habit a man acquires an aptness to a good act; for instance, by the habit of grammar man has the aptness to speak correctly. But grammar does not make a man always speak correctly: for a grammarian may be guilty of a barbarism or make a solecism: and the case is the same with other sciences and arts. Secondly, a habit may confer not only aptness to act, but also the right use of that aptness: for instance, justice not only gives man the prompt will to do just actions, but also makes him act justly.

And since good, and, in like manner, being, is said of a thing simply, in respect, not of what it is potentially, but of what it is actually: therefore from having habits of the latter sort, man is said simply to do good, and to be good; for instance, because he is just, or temperate; and in like manner as regards other such virtues. And since virtue is that *which makes its possessor good, and his work good likewise*, these latter habits are called virtuous simply; because they make the work to be actually good, and the subject good simply. But the first kind of habits are not called virtues simply: because they do not make the work good except in regard to a certain aptness, nor do they make their possessor good simply. For through being gifted in science or art, a man is said to

with ordering means to desired ends, it presupposes that fitting ends are desired, which in turn depends on perfected appetite.[18] In order for man to reason well about what ought to be done, he must first will those ends that are fitting for human life. Thus, his will must be rectified and perfected by the moral virtues.[19] If his will is not so rectified and the agent desires an apparent good that is not his proper good, even if the agent reasons well about the means most fitting to the desired end, he will not have the virtue of prudence. He will only have false prudence.[20]

11.5   Regnative Prudence and the Political Leader

The analogy between the individual agent and the political leader mentioned above reveals that just as the individual agent must be perfected by prudence and the moral virtues in order to engage in right ethical reasoning and to act well, so the political leader must be analogously perfected. Indeed, Aquinas explains that there is a species of prudence specific to the political leader:

> As stated above (Q. 47, AA. 8, 10), it belongs to prudence to govern and command, so that wherever in human acts we find a special kind of governance and command, there must be a special kind of prudence. Now it is evident that there is a special and perfect kind of governance in one who has to govern not only himself but also the perfect community of a city or kingdom; because a government is the more perfect according as it is more universal, extends to more matters, and attains a higher end (*ST* II-II q. 50, a. 1).

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be good, not simply, but relatively; for instance, a good grammarian, or a good smith. And for this reason science and art are often divided against virtue; while at other times they are called virtues (*Ethic.* vi. 2)....

Hence the subject of a habit which is called a virtue in a relative sense, can be the intellect, and not only the practical intellect, but also the speculative, without any reference to the will… But the subject of a habit which is called a virtue simply, can only be the will, or some power in so far as it is moved by the will" (*ST* I-II q. 56, a. 4). See also *ST* I-II q. 57, a. 1.

[18] "The judgment of prudence is true, not because it is in conformity with the way things are, but because it is in conformity with moral virtue. Only if we are habitually ordered to the good, to the ends of the particular moral virtues, are we free to see how in the here and now these ends can be achieved" (McInerny 1997, p. 101).

[19] "Now in human acts the end is what the principles are in speculative matters, as stated in *Ethic.* vii. 8. Consequently, it is requisite for prudence which is right reason about things to be done that man be well disposed with regard to the ends: and this depends on the rectitude of his appetite. Wherefore, for prudence there is need of a moral virtue, which rectifies the appetite" (*ST* I-II q. 57, a. 4).

[20] "There is a false prudence, which takes its name from its likeness to true prudence. For since a prudent man is one who disposes well of the things that have to be done for a good end, whoever disposes well of such things as are fitting for an evil end, has false prudence, in so far as that which he takes for an end, is good, not in truth but in appearance. Thus a man is called *a good robber*, and in this way we may speak of *a prudent robber*, by way of similarity, because he devises fitting ways of committing robbery. This is the prudence of which the Apostle says (Rom. viii. 6): *The prudence* (Douay, *wisdom*) *of the flesh is death*, because, to wit, it places its ultimate end in the pleasures of the flesh" (*ST* II-II q. 47, 13).

Aquinas names this particular species of prudence that enables the leader to direct the actions and efforts of the citizens in the political community toward the common good "regnative" prudence. We can define regnative prudence as right reason about action directed toward the common good.

We have established that moral virtues are presupposed by simple prudence to rectify an individual's appetite for right practical reasoning; analogously, we may suppose that there are corresponding virtues presupposed by regnative prudence that direct the leader's appetite properly toward the common good. Indeed, Aquinas writes:

> Now just as every moral virtue that is directed to the common good is called *legal* justice, so the prudence that is directed to the common good is called *political* prudence, for the latter stands in the same relation to legal justice, as prudence simply so called to moral virtue (*ST* II-II q. 47, a. 10, ad 1).[21]

As simple prudence presupposes the moral virtues, so does regnative prudence presuppose the virtue of legal justice, which perfects man's will with respect to the common good. As such, legal justice is distinct from the justice that perfects man's will with respect to other individuals.[22]

At this point, one could say that we have the answer to our original question, namely, that the political leader could be a good leader by being perfected by regnative prudence and legal justice, yet still be a bad man who is not perfected by simple prudence and the moral virtues that ordain him toward the private good. However, a closer look at the nature of legal justice will show why this is not the case. Aquinas explains:

> Now it is evident that all who are included in a community, stand in relation to that community as parts to a whole; while a part, as such, belongs to a whole, so that whatever is the good of a part can be directed to the good of the whole. It follows therefore that the good of any virtue, whether such virtue direct man in relation to himself, or in relation to certain other individual persons, is referable to the common good, to which justice directs: so that all acts of virtue can pertain to justice, in so far as it directs man to the common good. It is in this sense that justice is called a general virtue. And since it belongs to the law to direct to the common good, as stated above (I-II, Q. 90, A. 2), it follows that the justice which is in this way styled general, is called *legal justice*, because thereby man is in harmony with the law which directs the act of all the virtues to the common good (*ST* II-II q. 58, a. 5).[23]

In this passage, Aquinas reaffirms that the moral virtues are proximately ordered toward man's private good.[24] However, these virtues may be further directed towards

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[21] Regnative prudence is the species of political prudence that directs the political leader toward the common good: "As stated above, regnative is the most perfect species of prudence, wherefore the prudence of subjects, which falls short of regnative prudence, retains the common name of political prudence, even as in logic a convertible term which does not denote the essence of a thing retains the name of *proper*" (*ST* II-II q. 50, a. 3, ad 1).

[22] "That justice which seeks the common good is another virtue from that which is directed to the private good of an individual…" (*ST* I-II q. 60, a. 3, ad 2).

[23] See also *ST* II-II q. 58, a. 6.

[24] "On the other hand the other virtues perfect man in those matters only which befit him in relation to himself. Accordingly that which is right in the works of the other virtues, and to which the intention

a more universal good, namely, the common good, by legal justice.[25] It is in this way that legal justice is a general, or architectonic, virtue. Legal justice thereby rectifies the will with respect to the common good, such that political prudence can direct the appropriate means toward the end of the common good.

Legal justice, then, presupposes the moral virtues, and by extension, regnative prudence, which presupposes legal justice, also presupposes the perfection of the moral virtues. Thus, if the political leader habitually engages in vicious actions and demonstrates a lack of the moral virtues (of either some or all of the moral virtues) with respect to his private good in his personal life, we have great reason to be concerned about his abilities as a political leader. Without the moral virtues, neither legal justice nor regnative prudence will perfect the political leader. It would therefore be impossible for him to be a good political leader. If he is not properly rectified by the moral virtues and thus exhibits a tendency to allow his appetite to act against reason, then this disorder will manifest itself in the political leader's attempts to order himself and the political community toward the common good. Although he may properly apprehend what goods or actions are necessary to properly promote the common good, if his will has exhibited a tendency to disobey reason with respect to the political leader's private good, this very same volitional faculty of the will not be in conformity with this same faculty of reason with respect to the political leader's judgment of the common good.

Let us explore this position in more concrete detail. Take, as an example, a case wherein the leader is not appropriately perfected by the virtues of fortitude and temperance. Fortitude and temperance, virtues that perfect the sensitive appetite, are defined as such:

> Now the human will is hindered in two ways from following the rectitude of reason. First, through being drawn by some object of pleasure to something other than what the rectitude of reason requires; and this obstacle is removed by the virtue of temperance. Secondly through the will being disinclined to follow that which is in accordance with reason, on account of some difficulty that presents itself. In order to remove this obstacle fortitude of the mind is requisite, whereby to resist the aforesaid difficulty, even as a man, by fortitude of body, overcomes and removes bodily obstacles (*ST* II-II q. 123, a. 1).

It is easy to see how these two virtues are necessary for the political leader. If the political leader is not perfected by the virtue of temperance in his own private life and habitually chooses goods of sensual pleasure (such as excessive food and drink) in ways that are contrary to reason (perhaps pursuing pleasures in excessive amounts, in the wrong circumstances, etc.), we see that his will is weak insofar as it does not follow the dictates of reason. With respect to his public office, then,

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of the virtue tends as to its proper object, depends on its relation to the agent only…" (*ST* II-II q. 58, a. 2, ad 4). Also Aquinas writes: "Man's dealings with himself are sufficiently rectified by the rectification of the passions by the other moral virtues. But his dealings with others need a special rectification, not only in relation to the agent, but also in relation to the person to whom they are directed. Hence about such dealings there is a special virtue, and this is justice" (*ST* II-II q. 57, a. 1).

[25]Aquinas also makes this point at *ST* I-II q. 96, a. 3, ad 3: "There is no virtue whose act is not ordainable to the common good, as stated above, either mediately or immediately."

even if he recognizes that for the sake of the common good he ought to refrain from certain pleasures, since he is not habituated by the virtue of temperance to pursue pleasures moderately, we have reason to fear that he will not be able to so properly serve the common good.

For example, let us consider a man who is prone to drink excessively in his personal life because he cannot overcome the temptations of particularly fine wines. Suppose this man is also a political leader and knows that he ought to refrain from drinking too much for the sake of the common good, lest he scandalize leaders from other countries or bungle a particularly delicate diplomatic situation. We have reason to believe that, because he has shown himself not to be habituated by the virtue of temperance to abstain from excessive drink, he will similarly find it difficult to abstain from excessive drink in his public role, even for the sake of the common good. It may be the case that on occasion he triumphs over his sensitive appetite and refuses more wine, knowing his tendencies to over-indulge. Nonetheless, it is doubtful that he will be able to maintain this temperance habitually for the sake of the common good. Hence, if he is not perfected by temperance with respect to his own private good, legal justice cannot further order acts of temperance toward the common good. Similarly, if the political leader is not perfected by the virtue of fortitude and shies away from pursuing private goods as appointed by reason in the face of duress or hardship, the odds are that his work toward the common good will falter in the face of difficulty. Once again, he may prove himself valiant on occasion, but we can hardly expect him to habitually rise up and defend the common good in the face of difficulty. Far too often do we see instances in which people fail to stand up for the true common good in the face of various pressures.

We have thus far addressed the relation of the moral virtues to regnative prudence. I want to add further that simple prudence, and not only regnative prudence, is crucial for the leader. We also have much cause to worry if the political leader's reason is not right and is unable to order appropriate means to his private good. First, even in the case in which he rightly desires some good that is a true good for him as an individual, if he does not reason rightly about how to achieve this end appropriately, his act is still a bad act. In such a case, he either fails to achieve the desired end altogether or achieves it in an inappropriate manner. Either of these two results would make the act lacking in perfection. Thus, if his reason is not habituated toward finding appropriate means to his own personal ends, we ought to worry, since it is usually much easier to find suitable means to our own private ends than to coordinate the actions of an entire polity toward a more universal end.

My main point in this section is twofold. First, I want to emphasize that the split between the private life and public office of the political leader is not as tenable as most people assume, given that the same faculties of will and reason are involved in both private and political practical reasoning. Thus, we have great reason to suspect that a defect in either the will or reason that manifests in practical reasoning about one's personal life will also manifest in political practical reasoning. Second, because of the nature of the practical reasoning that is proper to the political

leader and because of the nature of the virtues proper to the political leader qua leader, the virtues that are typically recognized as reigning over one's private life are called into play even in political practical reasoning.

11.6   Attempting to Define the Common Good

Thus far, I have refrained from giving a definition of the common good, despite the fact that my arguments about the nature of political leadership in the Thomistic-Aristotelian tradition have identified the role of the political leader as one who directs the political community toward the common good. Unfortunately, I am unable to give a material definition of the common good that specifies precisely what it consists in, what concrete types of social arrangements are necessary, the precise manner in which citizens co-exist and mutually flourish, etc. The reason for this failure is that the nature of the common good eludes such a material definition.[26] We are better served by considering what the common good is not and providing a formal definition of the common good.

First, the common good is not alien to the private good of the individual. Such a good would be a public good, rather than a common good that could be communicated to each member of society. The good of the whole beehive would be an example of a public good that exists in opposition to the good of each individual worker bee, which may at any moment be sacrificed or replaced for the good of the whole.[27] Nor is the common good the same as the private good:

> The common good of the realm and the particular good of the individual differ not only in respect of the *many* and the *few*, but also under a formal aspect. For the aspect of the *common* good differs from the aspect of the *individual* good, even as the aspect of *whole* differs from that of *part*. Wherefore the Philosopher says (*Polit*. i. 1) that *they are wrong who maintain that the State and the home and the like differ only as many and few and not specifically* (*ST* II-II q. 58, a. 7, ad 2).

As Jacques Maritain so eloquently explains, the common good must flow back to the individual: "The terrestrial common good of such a society is, on the one hand, superior to the proper good of each member but flows back upon each" (Maritain 1966, pp. 59).

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[26] There seems to be much agreement among the chapters in this issue that the common good eludes material definition. Fan, for example, defines the common good as a certain arrangement of social goods, but does not indicate *which* arrangement will conduce to the common good. P.C. Lo writes "I submit that to pursue the common good is *to pursue goods common to all by participating in communities for common causes*. Although this articulation of the common good does not provide a substantive, content-rich account of human goods, it will be shown to be a merit when we come to China in the last section of this chapter" (Lo 2013, p. 169–191).

[27] "The common good is common because it is received in persons, each one of whom is as a mirror of the whole. Among the bees, there is a public good, namely, the good functioning of the hive, but not a common good, that is, a good received and communicated" (Maritain 1966, p. 49).

The good of the individual and the common good are not opposed. But, at the same time, the common good is superior to the good of the individual because it is communicable and more universal, and such a good is a more fitting good to the individual man who is, by nature, a political animal.[28] What we have here is a formal definition of the common good—the common good is the mutual and communal flourishing of many persons who live and act virtuously together in a community. The common good of a group or community will vary according to the members of the community, their needs, their goals, etc. Since there is no concrete definition of the common good, there is no set formula for reaching the common good. This is precisely why regnative prudence, which allows the political ruler to weigh the particular situation at hand and to work toward the understanding and the attainment of the common good, is so crucial.

Consider how similar this formal definition of the common good is to the formal definition of *eudaimonia*, or human flourishing. Aristotle, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, also delineates what the human good is *not*, and proceeds to show that the *eudaimon* is one who not only lives a life of virtuous activity in accordance with reason but also needs certain external goods such as wealth, beauty, a good family, etc. How exactly the *eudaimon* instantiates a life of virtuous activity in accord with reason is not spelled out; there are infinite possibilities as to how the *eudaimon* may live out his life—what profession he will choose, what choices he will make, where he will live, etc. Aristotle, and Aquinas following him, wisely is unwilling to characterize concretely the life of *eudaimonia*, or man's end. The countless possibilities for living a good life are what necessitates the virtue of prudence for each individual's search for and the achievement of his own natural (or supernatural) end. Thus, just as *eudaimonia* is defined formally as man's natural end wherein he flourishes, so is the common good defined formally as the natural end of the political community wherein all citizens flourish together.

The link between man's natural end and the political community's natural end is not limited to the parallel structure of their definitions. The two are conceptually linked because the common good is such that it must flow back to benefit and fulfill the individual, that is, contribute also to the individual's flourishing as a member of the community. If the common good must benefit each individual of society and yet the political leader demonstrates that he has incorrectly apprehended what is properly fulfilling of himself as a rational agent by habitually engaging in vicious action, then he will be unable to understand what the common good truly is and its relation

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[28] "The common good is better for each of the particulars that participate in it insofar as it is communicable to the other particulars: communicability is the very reason of its perfection. The particular does not attain the common good under the note itself of common good if it does not attain it as communicable to others. The good of the family is better than the singular good, not because all the members of the family find in it their singular good: the good of the family is better because, for each of its individual members, it is also the good of the others. This does not mean that the others are the reason for the proper lovableness of the common good. On the contrary, under this formal aspect, the others are lovable insofar as they can participate in this good" (De Koninck 2008, p. 75).

to the good of each individual in society. Further, this tight connection between private good and common good leads to the conclusion that a leader's so-called "private" beliefs (such as religious beliefs) about man's final end will influence his views on the common good. The so-called divide between private religion and public persona is mere fiction.

11.7   Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that, similar to China's Confucian roots, the West also has philosophical roots that demonstrate that the divide between private and public virtue and vice does not exist. Aquinas' theory of right practical reasoning and of the role of the good political leader in leading the community to the common good gives us compelling reason not simply to hope, but rather to demand that our political leaders be good men who lead virtuous personal lives with respect to their private good.

Unfortunately, this chapter may be unsatisfying to those looking for concrete answers to quandaries such as whom to elect to office, given a host of candidates who are incompetent or vicious in different ways. Indeed, since humans fall far from perfection and the perfect ruler is all but impossible to find, such guidance would be much appreciated. I do not offer any sort of calculus in this short conclusion about which vices are more serious than others, which private vices should be disregarded in favor of which public virtues, whom to elect to office, etc. Nor do I make any comments about hypothetical situations in which Politician A who is a good man in his personal life but a terrible leader and Politician B who is a vicious man in his personal life but a seemingly good leader are vying for office. Such a situation, though common, would be tragic from the Thomistic-Aristotelian outlook because both of these candidates would be unfit, and citizens would have to demonstrate great prudence in weighing what ought to be done in such a scenario. Indeed, the virtue of prudence is essential in order for the citizen to weigh the needs of the particular state at a particular time in history in voting for a leader, given that all those running for office are inevitably flawed, though in different ways. In refraining from giving concrete advice, I follow the lead of St. Thomas, whose interest in politics was also at the theoretical level:

> A document in which Thomas made a practical application of his political theory would clarify a great deal. Unfortunately, such a document does not exist. Thomas was not a professional politician and therefore not inclined to get involved in specific political activities and issues. This makes his political theory less time-conditioned but more difficult to comprehend in concrete terms: His approach to politics was essentially theoretical. It did not arise from any practical issue. The impact of philosophy was the determining factor. His views on State and government were a deduction from metaphysical premises (Crofts 1973, pp. 155–6).

Nonetheless, the truth is that some vices are more damaging to the leader's direction to the common good than others, and we must take this into consideration when contemplating whom to elect to office. Considered abstractly, we can see how a vice

of intemperance—such as eating and drinking too much—may be less corrosive of one's direction to the common good than vices of injustice that lead a person to disrespect the property and bodies of others.[29] We can also see how vices such as gluttony can be dangerous to the common good. The glutton excessively partakes of the pleasures of food. If in his private life he shows that he finds the pleasure of food to be his greatest good, subordinating all other goods in life to his supreme good of food, we can foresee that the glutton in public office may also take the common good to be subordinate to his gluttonous end.[30]

However, the practical message that I hope this chapter imparts is that we should be leery of claims that personal virtues or vices have no bearing on one's capabilities in political office. I have identified two reasons for this skepticism. First, the nature of practical reasoning is such that will and reason must work in concert. Right practical reasoning requires a will perfected by the moral virtues and reason rectified by prudence. The political leader needs the moral virtues in order to reason rightly about what ought to be done for the good of the political community, and also to "stick to his guns" in the face of hardship and follow through with what he has reasoned to be the best course of action.

Second, I have argued that the connection between the common good and the good of each individual man means that vice in the leader's private life can demonstrate an improper understanding of man's good and/or the will's failure to be properly directed to this good. I suspect that this line of argument that references the common good may not be as persuasive to contemporary Western societies with large and diverse populations that emphasize moral pluralism and individual rights over conceptions of the common good. However, perhaps we can find small political communities—small towns or villages—where it is easier to find general agreement on which character traits count as virtues and vices and also on conceptions of the good for man and the common good. For example, members of small, tight-knit, farming communities likely will have similar conceptions of human flourishing that might involve an honest day's labor, a good family with children who help with the farm work, etc. We might find general agreement that traits like laziness will count as vices and traits like generosity to others (particularly in times of need) will be considered virtues. Further, members of these communities may have somewhat overlapping ideas of how their political community should be set

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[29] To further complicate matters, it is indeed possible that vices of intemperance can be as corrosive of respect for the common good as vices of injustice if, for example, a man is intemperate to such an extent that he takes the pleasures of food and/or drink to be the highest end in life.

[30] All men who are afflicted with the vice of gluttony do not necessarily take food to be their ultimate good. Some gluttonous men may enjoy food to an excessive degree but still recognize that the pleasure of food is a lesser good than the common good. Other gluttonous men may enjoy food to such an excessive degree that food is considered to be a higher good than the common good. Given these two examples, it should be obvious that if we were in the unfortunate and highly contrived situation of being forced to choose one of these men to be our leader, all other things being equal, we ought to choose the former gluttonous man who still recognizes the common good to be a higher good than the pleasures of food.

up so that all will flourish together as a community. Thus, it is within these small communities united by a conception of virtue and vice, the good life, and the common good that my arguments above about the need for virtue on the part of the political leader are most powerful. Indeed, common experience seems to show that the smaller the community, the more shocking and devastating is the revelation when the community leader's private vices come to light.

We have good reason to be troubled when our political leaders show lapses in judgment in their private affairs. We need to demand greater accountability from our political leaders with regard to their own personal lives, and we ought to hold them to a higher moral standard because they are in charge of the well-being of an entire community of persons. Since the common good is the mutual and shared flourishing of the citizens not only as individuals but as members of a community, the political leader's conception of what constitutes the common good will be built on his conception of the nature of the human agent and his individual good. If this is the case, we cannot isolate the political leader's substantive views of the good as only personal matters. These views enter into his deliberations as a political leader. What this means is that a political leader's religious and world views, along with his personal virtues and vices and indiscretions, are not only matters of personal conscience but will affect his political leadership. It is thereby time to be honest about the role that one's character and substantive world views plays in politics so that we may better scrutinize our political leaders and thereby more effectively work toward the common good.

I suspect that this conclusion accords with our great disappointment in political leaders whose personal lives are marred by scandal or who act viciously in their personal lives. However, contemporary emphasis on ethical neutrality and tolerance has left us ill-equipped to articulate why we hold such "vicious" political leaders in contempt. Perhaps a return to the Thomistic-Aristotelian tradition which has undoubtedly influenced Western political thought will provide us with the background necessary to uncover the reasons why the public-private divide with respect to a politician's beliefs and virtues is suspiciously fuzzy.

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Chapter 12
Why Justice Is Not Enough: Mercy, Love-Caritas, and the Common Good

Mary M. Keys

12.1 Introduction

In the Western tradition of political thought at least since Plato and Aristotle wrote in ancient Athens, there has been a tendency to equate the notions of justice and common good. In Aristotle's words, "the political good is justice," which is "the common advantage" (*Politics* III.12). Few would take issue with the analogous but not identical claim that Augustine of Hippo would make centuries later, that where there is no true, common theory and practice of justice or right there can be no real *res publica*, no common-weal or community of shared goods and hence no genuine, lasting peace (see *City of God* IV.4 and XIX) (Augustine 2003). Yet one may still wonder whether justice *suffices* for fully human common goods to subsist and for the persons, families, and other societies sharing in these common goods to flourish. Is attention to the truth of justice and its implications enough? If not, what other important sources and aspects of the common good should be understood, stressed, and supported?

This chapter takes up these questions from the vantage point afforded by the writings of Thomas Aquinas, a medieval Western scholar deeply indebted to both the Aristotelian and Augustinian traditions. Specifically, it will argue for two additional virtues that powerfully assist justice in its trajectory towards the formation

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and sustainment of common goods, namely, the virtues of love-charity (*caritas*) and mercy (*misericordia*).[1] Despite the irreplaceable role of justice in human society, Aquinas demonstrates in his classic work the *Summa Theologiae* (or *Summa Theologica*) that justice cannot suffice for fully human common goods. In varied and important ways justice must be founded, sustained, completed, and transcended by other moral forces, including most prominently mercy and love. In our contemporary globalized, post-traditional societies, it is critical that the sources of *caritas* and mercy be recognized, respected, and reinforced as indispensible educators for and aspects of the common good.

This chapter comprises three sections. The first provides an overview of Aquinas's explication of love, mercy, and justice as divine attributes. In all God's works from creation through the workings of providence in our lives and times, Aquinas argues, love and mercy are even more fundamental than justice. Near the end of the first part of his *Summa* Aquinas explicates the Jewish and Christian teaching, not without its philosophic analogues in the teachings of Plato and Aristotle, that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (see Genesis 1:26–28). We may therefore expect that this priority of love and mercy in the divine works will carry over into human attributes and actions that do (or should) instantiate and contribute to the common good.

The second section of this chapter argues precisely that point, that justice among human beings cannot flourish if there is not a prior experience of and commitment to love-caritas and the openness it entails to compassion and to mercy as a moral virtue. Even were perfect justice possible to achieve in the absence of love and mercy, such justice would constitute merely a partial and ultimately frustrated form of common good for human beings. This argument is developed with reference to the second part of the second volume (the *Secunda secundae*) of Aquinas's *Summa*, specifically those sections that inquire into and explicate *caritas* and *misericordia* as virtues of human beings.

The third section concludes this chapter with reflections on the life and work of William Wilberforce as a modern exemplar of the public benefits that love-caritas and mercy can lead to in modern social, cultural, and political life. Wilberforce's legacy indicates that governments and cultures today will do well to respect and provide appropriate assistance to pre- and trans-political educators in these critical virtues. Mercy and love in their own right fill out important dimensions of the

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[1] In earlier work I have argued for the connection between personal virtue and the common good, drawing especially from Aquinas's studies of the virtues of justice, magnanimity, and humility (see Keys 2006). A review of that book noted that a key flaw was the paucity of consideration of the theological virtues, especially charity, vis-à-vis the common good (see Therrien 2007, pp. 378–379). Although I already intended to work more on charity and the common good, Therrien's thoughtful comment underscored the value of this task. A forthcoming article co-authored with Rachel A. Amiri further addresses the social and civic value of the theological virtues from the vantage point of the writings of Benedict XVI (Joseph Ratzinger): see Amiri and Keys (2012). Working with then-Notre Dame undergraduate Catherine C. Godfrey on her excellent senior thesis on mercy in political philosophy (Godfrey 2008) helped deepen my sense of mercy's import as well, and so helped complete the theme of this chapter.

common good, *and* they inspire work for justice that has too often been hampered by the ascendency of forms of individualism and collectivism in global affairs as well as national politics. In our contemporary world, a compelling, shared understanding of justice and more generous work on behalf of justice may only be possible through the aid of the varied pre-political and trans-political sources of moral formation in charity and mercy such as families, schools, and churches.

12.2 Thomas Aquinas on Love, Mercy, and Justice as Divine Attributes

In the first part of the *Summa Theologiae* [*ST* I] Aquinas argues for the existence of God and for the possibility of an imperfect and partial yet true human understanding of certain divine attributes. This understanding may be obtained to a limited yet important extent through philosophy, but also and especially through Divine Revelation and the assistance it affords human reason in its search for the most important truths, desirable for their own sakes and as sources of wisdom to guide our lives and work (*ST* I 1 and I 12).[2] Three of the most beautiful divine attributes Aquinas identifies and explicates are love, mercy, and justice. These last two attributes are somewhat surprisingly considered in the same question of the *Summa* (*ST* I, 21) on "The Justice and Mercy of God," which immediately follows Aquinas's treatment of God's love (*ST* I 20). I will summarize Aquinas's explication of these attributes, at times quoting at length to render Aquinas's meaning clearer to readers unfamiliar with these texts.

12.2.1 God's Love

That God loves and indeed *is* love (see *ST* I 20, 1, s.c.) becomes intelligible according to Aquinas on account of God's will and of His absolute, perfect goodness.[3]

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[2] Aquinas wrote the *Summa Theologiae* and other works in the Western medieval scholastic genre of the "disputed question" (*quaestio disputata*), a stylized dialogue and debate format. In this chapter all references to passages from the *Summa Theologiae* are given by volume number (in this reference, "I"), followed by question number (in this reference, "1"), and in most cases (although not in this reference) in turn followed by article number, which is at times followed with further indicators for specific sub-sections of that article (e.g., argument [*argumentum*] or objection, "obj."; on the contrary [*sed contra*], "s.c."; reply to argument or objection, "ad 1"). I quote in this chapter from the English translation made by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Aquinas 1981), modifying it occasionally according to my sense of Aquinas's Latin, available on-line in Aquinas, *Opera Omnia* (2000), ed. E. Alarcon.

[3] Aquinas's Latin for "love" in this question is chiefly the most general form, *amor* (cf. Proemium to I 20, "*Primo, utrum in Deo sit amor*," and ff.); but the centrality of charity or love-*caritas* here is also apparent from the outset (cf. I 20, 1, s.c., quoting I John 4 and its famous line "God is love", "*Deus caritas est*"). For recent studies of this central Christian teaching and its social and civic implications, see Benedict XVI (Joseph Ratzinger) (2005) and (2009).

It is proper to will or intellectual desire to love what is good, and in an absolute, transcendent sense only God is perfect goodness; only He is perfectly good. God thus necessarily, according to His essence, loves Himself under the attribute of His goodness (cf. *ST* I 6; I 19; I 20, 1). God needs no other beings to love in order to be perfectly happy, which He is in his own perfection and goodness for all eternity. Yet will and love are free, and God freely out of His goodness and love calls into being the universe of creatures: inanimate, vegetative, sensitive, rational, and intellectual. Whereas we humans are moved to love creatures, persons, and common goods because of some goodness they already possess, God's perfect love is the first *cause* of the goodness of creatures and indeed of their very existence. Love is at the source of our universe; it is the cause and the goal of our personal being and our lives.[4]

> God loves everything that exists, yet not as we love. Because since our will is not the cause of the goodness of things, but is moved by [this goodness] as by its object, our love, whereby we will good to anything, is not the cause of its goodness; but conversely its goodness, whether real or imaginary, calls forth our love by which we will that it should preserve the good it has, and receive besides the good it has not, and to this end we direct our actions: whereas the love of God infuses and creates goodness (*ST* I 20, 2).

After their creation, it is again God's love that sustains these new, finite beings in their existence. In the case of human beings God's love goes farther still, manifesting itself most perfectly in the gift of God's own paternal and friendly love. God calls human beings to converse and dwell with Him already on earth and most perfectly after death in heaven. In other words, God extends *an invitation to us to be and to live as His friends*. This form of love, *amicitia*, is among humans an especially perfect and fulfilling one whereby we long and work for the good of one who is our friend and are in turn enriched by the love and help of that friend. It is our human privilege, as the lone rational, spiritual creatures in material creation, to be friends of God, though again this is possible only on account of God's free gift of His friendly love. God does not need our friendship in any way, but He freely loves us and calls us to be His friends from His goodness and for our happiness.

> Friendship cannot exist except towards rational creatures, who are capable of returning love, and communicating with another in the various works of life, and who may fare well or ill, according to the changes of fortune and happiness; even as to them benevolence is properly speaking exercised. But irrational creatures cannot attain to loving God, or to any share in the intellectual and beatific life that he lives. Strictly speaking, therefore, God does not love irrational creatures with the love of friendship [*amore amicitiae*]; but as it were with the love of desire [*amore quasi concupiscentiae*], in so far as he orders them to rational creatures and even to himself. Yet this is not because he stands in need of them; but only on account of his goodness and the services they render to us. For we can desire a thing for others as well as for ourselves (*ST* I 20, 2, ad 3).

Aquinas goes on to argue that God loves all things "with an act of the will that is one, simple, and always the same," yet also that God loves human beings with far

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[4] Cf. also Aristotle's *Metaphysics* XII.7, 1072b 3–4 (in Aristotle 1984a, p. 1694), and the discussion of this text in Grant 1996, p. 515, for an analogous but not identical claim: that God as the first and unmoved mover causes the motion of and in the universe precisely by *being loved*, by being the object of love.

greater love than He has for other visible creatures, insofar as God wills for humans the perfect happiness of friendship and communion of life with him forever (*ST* I 20, 3).

12.2.2 God's Justice

After explicating God's love, Aquinas continues on to investigate whether there exist also justice and mercy in God and His works. Later in the *Summa* Aquinas will refine traditional definitions of justice as a human virtue to what he deems a more precise formulation:

> justice is a habit [*habitus*, a rational, voluntary perfection of character rather than the impulsive or instinctive, uniform reaction the word often connotes in contemporary English usage] whereby someone renders to each one his right [*ius*] by a constant and perpetual will (*ST* II-II 58, 1).

While justice applies to God in a radically different way (all that creatures have and are, either are, or are on account of, a free gift of God whose being is infinite and transcendent; God is thus not one more agent on a level playing field of justice with human beings), nonetheless it can help us try to understand in some way the perfection of justice in God.

> [I]n divine operations debt [*debitum*, lit. *what is owed*] may be regarded in two ways, as due either to God, or to creatures, and in either way God pays what is due. It is due to God that there should be fulfilled in creatures what his will and wisdom require, and that manifests his goodness. In this respect God's justice regards what befits him; inasmuch as he renders to himself what is due to himself… God [also] exercises justice, when he gives to each thing what is due to it by its nature and condition. This debt however is derived from the former, since what is due to each thing is due to it as ordered to it according to the divine wisdom. And although God in this way pays each thing its due, yet he himself is not the debtor, since he is not directed to other things, but rather other things to him. Justice, therefore, in God is sometimes spoken of as the fitting accompaniment of his goodness; sometimes as the reward of merit. Anselm touches on either view where he says…"When thou dost punish the wicked, it is just, since it agrees with their deserts; and when thou dost spare the wicked, it is also just, since it befits thy goodness" (*ST* I 21, 1, ad 3, quoting Anselm, *Prosologion* 10).

Aquinas concludes in the following article that God's *justice* is suitably referred to as *truth*: the truth God that works and establishes in created beings by His rule, in accord with His wisdom whence all created things exist and are intelligible in truth. Analogously, writes Aquinas, "in human affairs [we also] speak of the truth of justice" (*ST* I 21, 2).

12.2.3 God's Mercy

In the following two articles of the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas prepares and then makes use of one of the most moving and most powerful arguments in the *Summa*, his argument for *the priority and greater power*, to speak in human terms (the only

terms we have available to us and can use), *of mercy vis-à-vis justice* in every work of God, i.e., in all God's actions towards creatures. Aquinas first establishes mercy as a fitting attribute of God.[5] When we speak of human mercy (*misericordia*) we refer, writes Aquinas, to our being "sorrowful at heart (*miserum cor*)…affected with sorrow at the misery of another." While God in His essence is spirit, perfect happiness, and joy, does not feel any passions, and so properly speaking cannot sorrow, He can do what the merciful human being does, and in a way far more perfect than any of us can. He can will to and in fact remedy the defect that is the cause of a human person's misery: "[I]t does most properly belong to [God] to dispel that misery, whatever be the defect we call by that name, [for] defects are not removed except by the perfection of goodness: and the primary source of goodness is God, as shown above [in *ST* I 6, 4]" (*ST* I 21, 3).

Already at this point in the argument Aquinas anticipates perhaps the chief objection to the goodness of mercy, human or divine: that it undoes or obstructs the good of justice. To this concern, here regarding the possibility and justification of mercy as a divine attribute and a sign of the great goodness of God, Aquinas replies that mercy rightly understood does not oppose justice, but instead transcends and in a certain sense fulfills it.

> God acts mercifully, not indeed by going against His justice, but by doing something more than justice; thus a man who pays another two hundred pieces of money, though owing him only one hundred, does nothing against justice, but acts liberally or mercifully. The case is the same with one who pardons an offence committed against him, for in remitting it he may be said to bestow a gift. Hence the Apostle calls remission a forgiving: "Forgive one another, as Christ has forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32). Hence it is clear that mercy does not remove justice, but is in a certain sense the fullness of justice. And thus it is said: "Mercy exalts itself above judgment" (James 2:13) (*ST* I 21, 3, ad 2).

Mercy appears here as a gift that bestows more and better good than was due. It fulfills justice while moving beyond it in freedom and beneficence to turn unhappiness into happiness and lack into fullness without regard for the limit of what is owed, strictly speaking. Mercy's measure, Aquinas argues, is simply *other* than the one proper to justice: as what is needed, and even more, what will bring true happiness and greater fullness of being, whereas justice properly gives what is already someone's own by right, and properly speaking only that. If there are more needs, more misery or sorrow that cannot be remedied merely by rendering to another what one already owes, mercy motivates a person to alleviate that person by giving all that one can, by helping in every way that one can, entering into and sharing the other's lack, his or her suffering.

This conclusion, which Aquinas first draws in justifying the attribution of mercy to God (*ST* I 21, 3), forms the crux of the following and final article of this question (*ST* I 21, 4), treating the existence of justice and mercy in *every* action of God vis-à-vis creatures and especially human beings. Given that the first and most lasting

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[5] For a detailed and very helpful discussion of the Biblical etymology of mercy, especially focusing on *hesed* and *rahamim*, two Old Testament Hebrew words commonly translated as *misericordia* in the Vulgate Latin Bible and as "mercy" in English, see John Paul II *Dives in Misericordia* (1980), note 52.

gift God gives to any creature is its being, where none was or could have been due, mercy emerges as more fundamental and more powerfully present than justice in God's works of creation and providential governance of the universe (cf. *ST* I 44–49 and 103–104). This is especially so in the case of human beings who are capable of happiness properly speaking, by knowing and loving God. As we have seen, their rational nature makes them capable of receiving God's free gift of friendship, His love of caritas; but this capacity in turn depends on the previous, equally free, and unmerited gift of life as a human being. So while Aquinas is adamant that justice is a form of God's goodness and that it exists in all of God's works, including those most obviously merciful (the creation of human beings, for example, and the forgiveness of their sins), he is even more adamant in this final article of the treatment of justice and mercy that justice in God's works toward creatures depends in an absolute sense on God's prior and so to speak even stronger gift of mercy.

> Mercy and truth are necessarily found in all God's works, if mercy be taken to mean the removal of any kind of defect. Not every defect, however, can properly be called a misery; but only defect in a rational nature whose lot is to be happy; for misery is opposed to happiness… God can do nothing that is not in accord with His wisdom and goodness; and it is in this sense, as we have said, that anything is due to God. Likewise, whatever is done by Him in created things is done according to proper order and proportion wherein consists the idea of justice. Thus justice must exist in all God's works. *Now the work of divine justice always presupposes the work of mercy; and is founded thereupon.* For nothing is due to creatures, except for something pre-existing in them, or foreknown. Again, if this is due to a creature, it must be due on account of something that precedes. And since we cannot go on to infinity, *we must come to something that depends only on the goodness of the divine will, which is the ultimate end.* We may say, for instance, that to possess hands is due to man on account of his rational soul; and his rational soul is due to him that he may be man; and his being man is on account of the divine goodness. So *in every work of God, viewed at its primary source, there appears mercy. In all that follows, the power of mercy remains, and works indeed with even greater force*; as the influence of the first cause is more intense than that of second causes. For this reason does God out of the abundance of his goodness bestow upon creatures what is due to them more bountifully than is proportionate to their deserts: since less would suffice for preserving the order of justice than what the divine goodness confers; *because between creatures and God's goodness there can be no proportion* (*ST* I 21, 4; emphasis added).[6]

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[6] In *Rich in Mercy* (John Paul II 1980) John Paul II (Karol Wojtyła) makes this point within the broad context of the Hebrew terms for mercy in the Old Testament, the meaning of which carries over into and is fulfilled in the New:

> *[I]n many cases [divine mercy] is shown to be not only more powerful than [divine] justice but also more profound.* Even the Old Testament teaches that, although justice is an authentic virtue in man, and in God signifies transcendent perfection nevertheless love is "greater" than justice: greater in the sense that it is primary and fundamental. Love, so to speak, conditions justice and, in the final analysis, justice serves love. *The primacy and superiority of love vis-à-vis justice—this is a mark of the whole of revelation—is revealed precisely through mercy.* This seemed so obvious to the psalmists and prophets that the very term justice ended up by meaning the salvation accomplished by the Lord and His mercy. Mercy differs from justice, but is not in opposition to it, if we admit in the history of man—as the Old Testament precisely does—the presence of God, who already as Creator has linked Himself to His creature with a particular love (sec. 4; emphasis added).

12.3 The Priority of Mercy and Charity for Human Beings as "Image and Likeness" of God

As a Christian, Aquinas holds as true what the text of Genesis clearly teaches, that all human beings, male and female, are made in God's "image and likeness." Aquinas argues philosophically as well as theologically that this divine image and likeness are chiefly in the human being's rational soul with its powers of intellect and will. This is not to detract from the human body's tremendous dignity but rather to understand and undergird it aright: since humans are unions of body and soul their bodies also possess a special value apparent in its many traces of the image of God imprinted on the soul "informing" that body (see *ST* I 45, 7, and I 93).[7] Thus, if Aquinas is correct, one would expect that as recipients of God's love-friendship and mercy human beings would reach perfection and benefit other persons and societies especially through love, justice, and mercy, with mercy being even more fundamental and in some respects more excellent than justice in its capacity to express and act upon love-*caritas*. This is in fact what Aquinas argues in some of the first sections of the *Summa Theologiae* II-II, his detailed investigation into the virtues and vices of human beings.

12.3.1 Caritas or Love-Charity

At the heart of the Christian understanding of God is His great love for every human being and his desire to befriend us and bring us into His family as His children. That we can become friends of God, that God condescends in and through Christ and the Holy Spirit to offer us the gift of friendship, was most clearly revealed by Christ at the Last Supper when He told His closest followers, "I will not now call you servants…but my friends" (John 15:15, quoted in *ST* II-II 23, 1, s.c.). In endeavoring to understand in what such friendship could consist, Aquinas refers to perhaps the most influential discussion of friendship in the history of Western philosophy, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII and IX.[8] Aquinas follows Aristotle in highlighting that love can only constitute friendship when it seeks the good of the friend for his or her own sake, and so wishes good to him or her. In other words, friendship requires benevolence, here understood as a mutual and active "well-wishing… founded on some kind of communication." Writes Aquinas,

> Accordingly, since there is a communication between man and God, inasmuch as he communicates his happiness to us, some kind of friendship must needs be based on this same communication, of which it is written (1 Corinthians 1:9): "God is faithful: by whom you are called unto the fellowship of his Son." The love which is based on this communication, is charity: wherefore it is evident that charity is the friendship of man for God (*ST* II-II 23, 1).

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[7] Cf. here Nigel Zimmermann (2009) on the phenomenological-philosophical and theological approaches of Emmanuel Levinas and Karol Wojtyła to "embodied self" and its moral significance.

[8] On this important theme of friendship in ethical-political philosophy, focusing on or including consideration of Aquinas's thought, see Aristotle (1962), Schall (1996) and Schwartz (2007).

As a virtue of human beings, writes Aquinas, the friendship of charity is "founded principally on the goodness of God" rather than on "the virtue of man." This seeming paradox becomes more intelligible when one considers, as had some of the ancient philosophers, that to be a friend beloved by God could only come about as a result of an extraordinary gift, grace, or mercy of an infinitely superior being. In the Christian understanding this takes place by the gift of God's own love in person, the Holy Spirit. Yet charity remains a virtue or excellence of human beings and a genuine form and act of friendship on their part. Humans can love because they have been loved by God, but they must freely choose to accept and return that love. Hence Aquinas's insistence that "charity is [in this sense, primarily] the friendship of man for God" (cited above), both voluntary and meritorious (*ST* II-II 23, 2).

In uniting a person to God, charity simultaneously unites him or her in a real way to all other human beings; for in loving God a person loves all whom he loves, and that is *everyone without exception.* Charity sees each and every "neighbor"—any other human being—as called by God to participate in a personal friendship with Him and so in a "fellowship of everlasting happiness" (*ST* II-II 23, 5). God and His goodness constitute the greatest good and the most common or "communicable" (sharable) among many persons, and the full happiness of human beings, their final end and perfection, is thus to be united with God and so with our fellows in friendship with the Divine Goodness. There are in the essence of love-caritas no grounds for distinctions among persons or exclusion of any of them from this fellowship. Aquinas explains this universal scope of charity by comparing it with honor as a form of good:

> Love regards good in general, whereas honor regards the honored person's own good, for it is given to a person in recognition of his own virtue. Hence *love is not differentiated specifically on account of the various degrees of goodness in various persons, so long as it is referred to one good common to all*, whereas honor is distinguished according to the good belonging to individuals. Consequently, we love all our neighbors with the same love of charity, in so far as they are referred to *one good common to them all, which is God*; whereas we give various honors to various people, according to each one's own virtue, and likewise to God we give the singular honor of *latria* [worship] on account of his singular virtue (*ST* II-II 25, 1, ad 2; emphasis added).

Aquinas argues that charity is, absolutely speaking, the highest virtue of human beings (*ST* II-II 23, 6) and the form of all the other virtues, bringing them to their perfection and eliciting their full meaning by referring them to our final good (*ST* II-II 23, 7 and 8). Charity may powerfully motivate actions of rightly-ordered love of neighbor and even of self, acts of all the moral virtues. For example, out of love for God and thus for one's neighbor, charity may motivate a person to risk his or her life to save another, an act of the virtue of courage but in its deepest form or meaning here an act also of love. Charity might motivate a mother in a country suffering from famine to eat a little less so that her husband and children might eat a little more, or so that she could share what little they had with a neighboring family suffering more dire want. These would be acts of temperance, mercy, and liberality, but in this case their deepest meaning would be love. Or to give a more properly political example to which I will return later in this chapter,

charity did in fact motivate a previously rather vain and superficial, if immensely talented British parliamentarian, William Wilberforce, to work in the eighteenth century for freedom for Africans brought to the British Empire in chains. Wilberforce's labors in and through politics and culture were surely on acts proper to justice as a virtue, but still more so were they acts of love for God and His children. Love even as a passion is a tremendously powerful force in human life, and so Aquinas reflects that charity is the maximum motor of the good life in all its facets. He writes that "Charity is said to be the end [qua perfection or fulfillment] of the other virtues… [Charity] is called the mother of the other virtues, because by commanding them it conceives the acts of the other virtues, by the desire of the last end [the love of God]" (*ST* II-II 23, 8, ad 3). Love-caritas functions in the moral life as a sort of "foundation or root in so far as all other virtues draw their sustenance and nourishment therefrom" (*ST* II-II 23, 8, ad 2).

Charity and benevolence (well-wishing) naturally issue forth in actions of beneficence, well-doing towards everyone whom we are able to benefit (*ST* II-II 32, 1 and 4). Aquinas concedes that, although "as the love of charity extends to all, beneficence also should extend to all" (*ST* II-II 31, 2),

> [a]bsolutely speaking it is impossible [for a human being] to do good to every single [person]: yet it is true of each individual that one may be bound to do good to him in some particular case. Hence charity binds a person, even though not in the act of doing good to someone, to be prepared in mind to do good to anyone if time were available. There is however a good that we can do to all, if not to each individual at least to all in general, as when we pray for all, for unbelievers as well as for the faithful (*ST* II-II 31, 2, ad 1).

Of great importance is the fact that Aquinas sees these acts of loving well-doing as respecting and furthering the order which follows from the nature of human beings as familial, social, and political creatures. Charity reinforces natural, social, and civic bonds and motivates acts of filial piety, parents' care for children, and even military and public service for the common good of one's country.[9] Love-*caritas* does not undo these particular ties but rather strengthens all that is good and true and right in them, even while opening us up to the needs and well-being of all in the human family.

> Grace and virtue imitate the order of nature, which is established by divine wisdom.… Therefore we ought to be most beneficent towards those who are most closely connected with us. Now one human being's connection with another may be measured in reference to the various matters in which human beings are engaged together; thus kinsmen share (*communicant*) in natural matters, fellow-citizens share in civic matters, the faithful share in spiritual matters, and so forth: and various benefits should be conferred in various ways according to these various connections, because we ought in preference to bestow on each one such benefits as pertain to the matter in which, speaking simply, he or she is most closely connected with us. And yet this may vary according to the various requirements

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[9] For a thoughtful study of filial piety and the common good from a contemporary Confucian perspective, see Wang (2013). For a helpful analysis highlighting the importance of care in Aquinas's understanding of justice, see Stump (1997); and for accounts of important rivals to Confucian understandings of care and common good in the history of Chinese thought, see Zhang (2013) on Mozi and Chen (2013) on Kang.

of time, place, or matter in hand: because in certain cases one ought, for instance, to succor a stranger, in extreme necessity, rather than one's own father, if he is not in such urgent need (*ST* II-II 31, 3).

A final note of import for the common good is the connection Aquinas finds between charity and peace, both within a human being and in human society. Peace is, he argues, a direct effect of charity.

> Peace implies a twofold union, as stated above (*ST* II-II 29, 1). The first is the result of one's own appetites [*appetituum*] being directed to one object; while the other results from one's own appetite being united with the appetite of another: *and each of these unions is effected by charity*—the first, in so far as man loves God with his whole heart, by referring all things to Him, so that all his desires tend to one object—the second, in so far as we love our neighbor as ourselves, the result being that we wish to fulfill our neighbor's will as though it were ours: hence it is reckoned a sign of friendship if people "make choice of the same things" (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* IX. 4), and Tully [Marcus Tullius Cicero] says (in *De Amicitia* or *On Friendship*) that "it belongs to friends to want and to refuse the same things" (*ST* II-II 29, 3).

Aquinas describes the human or social common good as attained through, sustained by, and in part comprising the (order of) peace, justice, love, and virtue (see *ST* I-II 99, 5; 100, 8; and 105, 2–3). Concurring with Augustine's argument in his classic work *The City of God*, especially as developed in Book XIX, Aquinas accords peace a central role in his social and political theory. If there is no peace within persons and among them in their social and civic and international relations, there will be no full common good nor any flourishing order of justice and virtue. And if there is not charity, there will not be peace, as now Aquinas boldly argues that charity is even more central to this great good than is justice. Justice causes peace "indirectly," by "remov[ing] obstacles" to its achievement and fulfillment. Charity surpasses justice, however, because "according to its very nature *it causes peace*" and does so "directly" by forging true and good union within and among human beings, and between them and God (*ST* II-II 29, 4, ad 3; emphasis added).

A famous and yet somewhat surprising contemporary exemplar of the social, civic, humanitarian and peace-building efficacy of love-*caritas* is Mother Teresa of Calcutta (Agnesë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu, born in 1910 in Macedonia to parents of Albanian descent). Who would have imagined in the late 1940s when she first picked up a destitute, dying man and cared for him with love until his death, that this soft-spoken, diminutive founder of a Catholic religious community known as the Missionaries of Charity would receive the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize, which she accepted only in the name of the world's poor, and then on her death in 1997 a state funeral from the Indian government, an honor accorded only to Presidents and Prime Ministers, the sole exception to this policy having been Ghandi himself? And yet the consensus from representatives of the world's religions and heads of state was that these honors were eminently deserved; that Mother Teresa's great *charity*, in spite of and perhaps even because it was not specifically political in inspiration, scope, or aim, had made her a very great citizen of her adopted country and of the world (see CNN 1997 and Cooper 1997).

12.3.2   Mercy (Misericordia)

After the ravages of individualism and collectivism that twentieth-century civilization has suffered, it is perhaps not surprising that mercy is often today not a highly valued quality. Mercy, after all, connotes weakness, or pity for the weakness of others; and modern scientific rationalism and the hubris of its technological and social-scientific pretences have no patience with weakness. To rugged, autonomous individuals whose society is meant to maximize their freedom and strengthen their self-sufficiency, or to members of all-encompassing collectives whose strength is found in the historical progress of society and economics, or in presumed racial-ethnic superiority, mercy appears a laughable relic of the past, a memory of both the impotence and the "opium" of the people. How then could mercy truly be an outstanding moral excellence that powerfully conduces to the common good?

None of this, in general (since of course he could not have foreseen the specifics of our recent past), would surprise Aquinas in the least. For while God's pity, His mercy, is "through love alone" (*ST* II-II 30, 2, ad 1) without any defect or any affection or passion (requiring corporality), for us mercy is truly an effect of the misery of another human being on one who likewise suffers or is apt to suffer "deficiency" and limitations. Mercy is a virtue for us because we are beings who long to be happy yet are fallible, finite, and changeable, in short, who suffer and can recognize, empathize with, and respond to the suffering of others (*ST* II-II 30, 1 and 2). And Aquinas views a lack of mercy, and the failure to recognize it as a virtue because it is a matter of grief for the sorrows of others, even though it be regulated by reason and work with the rule of truth and justice, as an indicator of excessive anger, thumotic zeal, or pride. "(*Prov*. 27:4) 'Anger hath no mercy, nor fury when it breaketh forth.' For the same reason the proud are without pity, because they despise others, and think them wicked, so that they account them as suffering deservingly whatever they suffer." Following a Latin Father of the church Gregory the Great, Aquinas argues that this is "the false godliness of the proud," "not compassionate but disdainful" of the misery of others. Contrasted with this is true "godliness" of friends of God who have *received* charity and mercy as free gifts, and so imitate God in love and works of charity and mercy. "Charity likens us to God by uniting us to Him in the bond of love; …mercy likens us to God as regards similarity of works." (*ST* II-II 31, 1). No matter how high we may be placed in positions of authority in the family, town, political community, or spiritual fellowship, so as to be in a position to benefit others who suffer, we can only live virtuous mercy insofar as we remember that we too are humans subject to ill-fortune, pain, and disgrace.[10] Thus Aquinas distinguishes those who are truly "wise," who like the "old" are aware "that they may fall upon evil times, as also feeble and timorous persons," as those "more inclined to pity."

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[10] Here cf. the analogous arguments made by Alasdair MacIntyre (1999) and John O'Callaghan (2003).

Opposed to these are "those who deem themselves happy, and so far powerful as to think themselves in no danger of suffering any hurt," and so "are not inclined to pity." Such persons, parties, or societies live in a dream world; they do not understand or accept the truth of their finite being and contingent condition.[11]

12.4   Wilberforce as Exponent and Exemplar of Mercy and Love-Caritas in Culture and Public Life, and Some Implications for the Common Good Today

Since so far the chief example I have given of the virtues of mercy and charity in public life is Mother Teresa, one might legitimately wonder whether these ideals can also inspire men and women who are inclined to take what Pope Benedict (2009, sec. 7) referred to as "the institutional path—we might call it also the political path—of charity"—working through governmental, business, or cultural institutions and practices to advance justice, having the concerns of mercy and charity close to heart. One example indicating the possibility of this "institutional way" of contributing to culture and political life and powerfully advancing justice and peace is the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British Parliamentarian William Wilberforce. A life-long member of the Church of England influenced by the Methodism of his aunt and uncle with whom he lived for a while after his father's death, Wilberforce's mother apparently worried about his excessive enthusiasm for religion and recalled him home, away from his aunt and uncle's influence. His devotion cooled until as a young MP he was encouraged by a friend and travelling companion to consider the Scriptures open-mindedly, as well as popular and scholarly writings in the Christian tradition. He thereafter experienced a religious conversion and lived this out in evangelical Anglicanism influenced by the Methodism of Wesley.

Wilberforce was adamant that Christianity, if it mean anything, must be not only theoretical but also practical.[12] It must indeed be eminently practical in influencing everything a Christian does or says: every action, every work, and every ideal, even in the difficult sphere of political life. He lamented the Enlightenment tendency

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[11] For a thoughtful analysis of the relationship between moral and legal justice and mercy see Floyd (2009). Floyd elaborates an important truth of Aquinas's understanding of human mercy, its (at times, in *justice*) *obligatory* nature, that I have not been able to elaborate in this chapter. Floyd also provides a helpful review of literature on mercy in contemporary philosophy and religious studies.

[12] Cf. Aquinas's parallel argument regarding the gift of wisdom which "corresponds" to charity: it is speculative *and practical*, able to assist in an eminent way to guide all a person's contemplation and action (*ST* II-II 45, 3). For thoughtful studies connecting Aquinas's virtue theory and especially his virtue of practical wisdom or prudence with the problem of excellent political leadership, see Chan (2013b) and Deutsch (2002).

(or agenda) to circumscribe the range of charity and compassion and all the virtues of the Christian to a fraction of his or her private life. This was to suck the vitality out of religion and love-*caritas* and to put them on the path to indifference, perhaps extinction.

> Though the Heart be its special residence, [true religion] may be said to possess in a degree the ubiquity of its Divine Author. Every endeavour and pursuit must acknowledge its presence, and whatever does not or will not or cannot receive its sacred stamp is to be condemned as inherently defective, and is to be at once abstained from or abandoned (Wilberforce 1996, pp. 88).

Human virtues like benevolence receive tremendous impetus and support from charity; who could reasonably deny this when he or she has experienced it or witnessed its effect in the lives of others? (ibid., pp. 136–137). Love-caritas motivates sacrifice on behalf of the common good and provides increased motivation to persist in difficult efforts for justice and the common good.

Wilberforce himself experienced and exemplified these principles throughout his long struggle versus the slave trade and slavery itself in the British Empire. A sincere but inconstant and timid proponent of abolition some years before his conversion, after his experience of grace and the love it infused he felt a force that sustained him in promoting this cause both in and out of season (see 1 Timothy 4:2) in Parliament. He soon realized that consciences must be touched and morals altered among the public for these measures to carry in the legislature, and he appealed to and encouraged compassion through disseminating information about the slave trade's atrocities and bringing citizens, especially the most influential, into contact with those who had suffered these outrages or witnessed them first-hand in order to motivate many to recognize and support this just cause. He persevered despite chronic ill-health, ridicule, and death threats. And in the end he saw the slave trade outlawed and on his deathbed knew that the Abolition bill was on its way to passage. There were those who complained that this was dangerous meddling of religion in public life, but as in our country's experience with the Civil Rights movement, for instance, few would complain in hindsight about the many salutary results. Moreover, Wilberforce always appealed to reason as well as to faith, to humanistic or moral principles, as well as to religion in his public arguments. His "practical" Christianity was not a form of fideism averse to "giving a reason for the hope that is in [it]" (see 1 Peter 3:15).

Wilberforce's vision and legacy indicate that fully human, true, genuine common good should recognize and value mercy and love, for all human beings need them, and they are allies and aides of the common good of peace and justice. They motivate concern for the just and generous treatment of others and inspire sacrifice on behalf of others, the near and also the far when possible—and this is much more possible today in our global village. Local, national, and international authorities and political institutions should look gratefully on the religious communities, families, schools, and various civic associations where mercy and love-charity are valued, exemplified, and encouraged most closely and most personally, and where future leaders in culture, economy, and politics are formed and inspired, for good or

for ill.[13] Mercy and charity are essential to the common good and yet *they are not properly, specifically political*.[14] Religious freedom and support for the institutions of marriage and family are today, I would argue, essential for the promotion of truly human common goods through politics and culture. If the pre- and trans-political sources of appreciation and exercise of mercy and charity are not despised by economic, cultural, and political power; if they are respected and given freedom to carry out their important tasks, then we may live to see not a utopia but a twenty-first-century common good that approaches more closely to true justice, fellowship, and peace. Some words from Benedict XVI's first encyclical letter, *Deus Caritas Est* (*God Is Love*, 2005, paragraph 28b) seem most apt to conclude these reflections:

> Love—*caritas*—will always prove necessary, even in the most just society. There is no ordering of the State so just that it can eliminate the need for a service of love. Whoever wants to eliminate love is preparing to eliminate man as such. There will always be suffering which cries out for consolation and help. There will always be loneliness. There will always be situations of material need where help in the form of concrete love of neighbor is indispensable. The State which would provide everything, absorbing everything into itself, would ultimately become a mere bureaucracy incapable of guaranteeing the very thing which the suffering person—every person—needs: namely, loving personal concern.

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[13] P.C. Lo (2013) draws a similar conclusion from the perspective of "*Confucian* 'Habits of the Heart'" (my emphasis) and from reflecting on contemporary social and political realities in China today. For another interesting argument, overlapping with Lo's but more confident that Confucianism can serve as the central source of deepened moral and civic formation in China today, see Fan (2013).

[14] Consider here Emperor Julian the Apostate's failed attempt to retain charity in the service of the late Roman Empire's welfare, while rejecting and marginalizing in the public square the Christianity from which, as Julian himself recognized, charity had been born and come into the empire to the great benefit of its people, especially the commoners and the poor. For an argument supporting the Confucian virtue of *ren* as better equipped than contemporary liberal theory to support care for the poor, see Chan (2013a).

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Chapter 13
Who Is Responsible for the Common Good? Catholic Social Teaching and the Praxis of Subsidiarity

Dennis P. McCann

13.1 Why Include Catholic Social Teaching in a Sino-American Dialogue on the Common Good?

If there is an overlapping consensus emerging from our attempt at a dialogue, it is that the common good is both more prominent and more problematic than it may have seemed to previous generations. For a long time I have shared David Solomon's concern over its fragility (Solomon 2013), although I suspect that the arid atmosphere generated by modern analytic philosophy—to which he attributes this fragility—is a reflection of far deeper fault lines in our ideological conflicts and culture wars. My own attitude is closer to that of Lo P.C. (Lo 2013), who regards these same symptoms as an opportunity for mutual learning and renewed efforts at consensus-building, given the uncanny convergences in the ways in which the common good is being rediscovered as well as undermined in both China and the USA. Our hope for further progress in dialogue, apparently, is not shared by Tristram Engelhardt, who believes that the "moral pluralism" that surfaces in any attempt to achieve a common understanding of the common good is intractable, unless we accept a "God's-eye perspective" and obediently conform our own ideas about what is right and good to God's own revealed preferences (Engelhardt 2013). To be sure, invoking a "God's-eye perspective" risks scuttling any possibility of a Sino-American dialogue, for all of our Chinese colleagues who identify with one tradition or another of classical Chinese philosophy are agreed that Judeo-Christian or biblical understandings of God simply do not mean the same as what Chinese traditions mean by gods, or the Great Ultimate, or the will of Heaven.

Nevertheless, Engelhardt's robust insistence on the practical necessity of adopting a "God's-eye perspective," if the conflicting ideologies defining the common good are ever to yield to moral consensus, provides me with an opening for considering

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the case for Catholic social teaching (CST), and its relevance to our dialogue. If one takes Engelhardt's proposal seriously—and I sincerely believe we all should do so—we must quickly come to the question, what would the common good in a "God's-eye perspective" actually look like? Engelhardt gives us few clues at this point, because he apparently believes that once such a perspective is adopted we will soon realize that appeals to the common good are unnecessary. "One is brought to abandoning a focus on the common good in favor of a focus on rightly-ordered relations among persons understood through reference to their relation to a God's-eye perspective" (Engelhardt 2013, pp. 21–43). In short, while one not only may but must seek to live faithfully according to the moral norms enshrined, for example, in the Bible, any elaborate body of social thought constructed along the lines of CST, for example, is at best a distraction. While I trust that I share Engelhardt's commitment to the faith and morals of ecumenical Christianity, at this point we part company. He simply doesn't understand the common good, or why and how dialoging about it remains relevant even in a "God's-eye perspective."

If the common good were to be recast in a "God's-eye perspective," what would it look like? The raises an even deeper question: if there were such a perspective, how would we know? How would we—sincere seekers of the truth about reality, including people like ourselves, scholars intending to think and act as philosophers in the manner of either Socrates or Confucius—distinguish a God's-eye perspective from the myriad of competing perspectives offering advice on ethical questions of one sort or another? Engelhardt is right to emphasize the claim to authority: acknowledging a "God's-eye perspective" would require adopting a "canonical and enforced moral perspective….[capable of trumping] considerations of prudence, and …[providing authorization] for law and morality" (Engelhardt 2013, pp. 21–43). What all is meant by "canonical" is not spelled out by Engelhardt, but clearly it might involve constructing a meta-narrative of Divine revelation (Hebrews 1:1–4) that, for example, would begin with Moses on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1–18), but would also include Jesus' calling of the 12 Apostles, and, perhaps, the designation of Peter as the one who would look after the others once Jesus ascended into heaven (cf. John 21:15–19; Matthew 16:13–19). In addition to the general claim that God actually has revealed His will at various times in our history, the meta-narrative would also make specific claims about the origins of the elements constitutive of the canonical authority of this "God's-eye perspective" and how that authority is interpreted and exercised through the community of disciples, thus, for example, including the formation of the canon of the Scriptures, the emergence of the monarchical episcopacy, as well as the system of patriarchs, synods, and church councils, etc., by which the community is to be governed and kept faithful to God's will.

The Roman Catholic church, particularly in the papal magisterium, has its own version of this meta-narrative that, to be sure, is not shared by all Christians. Nevertheless, its distinct claims need to be understood if CST is to be appreciated as one possible representative of a "God's-eye perspective." One would need to revisit the claims of the papacy as the institutional successor of the Apostle Peter, which has inherited his ministry particularly for safeguarding the orthodoxy of Christian teaching in matters of faith and morals. One would need to give a hearing to Roman

Catholic assertions of the charism of papal infallibility, as a sign of the promised integrity of the community's ongoing process of discerning God's will for humanity. One would also need to understand the history of the emergence of CST as the papal magisterium's current vehicle for reflecting on and communicating its discernment of the common good (and related social questions) within a "God's-eye perspective." One reason to consider all this is that, ironic and perplexing as they may seem, the claims of the Roman Catholic church are precisely what one might reasonably expect if God actually were to communicate His own will on moral and social questions, addressed to the whole world, over the vicissitudes of our increasingly common history.

Of course, Engelhardt's invocation of a "God's-eye perspective" is not the only reason—and possibly not even the best reason—for including CST in this Sino-American dialogue on the common good. My own reasons for studying CST have little to do with the Roman Catholic meta-narrative just outlined, about which I have my own personal reservations. Nevertheless, I continually surprise myself in finding far more truth and goodness in CST than in any other social philosophy. It remains, for me, the most reasonable interpretation of the world in which we live, the one that most deeply resonates with my personal faith and experience, even though I continue to learn and love the wisdom I find in other traditions, particularly those of China. I commend CST particularly to my Chinese colleagues, because I believe it is the Western social philosophy most compatible with Confucian morality.

As many of the chapters presented in this dialogue show, either directly or inadvertently, Confucian moral philosophy cannot be reconciled with what Stephen Erickson has aptly described as the "Billiard-Ball Individualism" (BBI) presupposed in most forms of modern post-Cartesian social philosophy (Erickson 2013, pp. 45–64), whether in its relatively benign (John Rawls) or more corrosive forms (Ayn Rand). Even those ethical systems that have made noteworthy contributions to the social development of the modern Western democracies, e.g., Kantianism and John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism, fail to realize their full potential to the extent that they cannot overcome the intellectual straitjacket imposed by BBI presuppositions. Our Chinese colleagues are acutely aware of these inadequacies. What they apparently are less clear on is that BBI thinking—however dominant in Anglo-American academic circles—does not exhaust the field of modern Western social philosophy. CST deserves to be taken seriously as an alternative Western perspective, one whose opposition to BBI thinking is principled, comprehensive, and constant.

CST provides a vision of the human person and society that is as relationship-oriented as that offered by Confucian moral philosophy. The two traditions also approach consensus in their estimates of the moral significance of the family. Where they differ, the differences are immense. For CST is emphatically theocentric—as one might expect from a "God's-eye perspective"—while Confucianism is anthropocentric, a practical philosophy focused primarily on what human beings might reasonably make of themselves through self-cultivation. Furthermore, as Ruiping Fan well observes in his chapter, Confucian morality envisions a "proper societal order consist[ing] of four major elements: individual virtue cultivation, family regulation, state governance, and the world being made peaceful" (Fan 2013, pp. 193–218). Arguably, CST, in its own way, also comprehends each of these. The similarities and differences between the converging and diverging ways

the two perspectives address these four elements ought to be of great interest in any Sino-American dialogue over our common good.

When one turns, then, to consider what CST actually says about the common good, one is confronted by a paradox. While CST has had much to say about the common good over the past century or more, apparently there is no essential definition of it. The meanings disclosed in the ways that term is put to use in the major documents of CST suggest that the common good is aspirational. It is, as I once argued, "the good to be pursued in common" (McCann 1987, pp. 263–291). The term has no essential social content, no minimal list of non-negotiable rights and responsibilities. Instead, it serves to mark off an important arena for political debate or, if you will, ideological controversy. Initially, we may find the absence of an essential definition perplexing. After all, wouldn't a "God's-eye perspective" convey canonical definitions that could faithfully, consistently, and rigorously be applied in our moral struggles throughout history? Maybe not! If the "God's-eye perspective" is a living tradition, it is not likely to function like a Cartesian set of deductions from clear and distinct ideas of what one ought and ought not to do. It would be no less authoritative, but it would rely on the tacit understandings already taken for granted by previous generations, clarifying their meaning only as needed to resolve practical disputes as they arise within the tradition. If such is the case, we might search in vain for essential definitions in a "God's-eye perspective," and might learn to shift our inquiry to more modest but more fruitful strategies of understanding, as proposed, for example in Ludwig Wittgenstein's theory of language.[1] Given more modest expectations, CST's lack of substance, to me, at least, is no longer surprising or embarrassing. The want of an essential definition of the common good is not the result of carelessness or a lack of intellectual rigor. It does suggest that the meaning of the common good—as Wittgenstein might have observed—is to be found in its use or, more accurately, in its range of uses. With this clue in hand, I tried to map CST's uses of the common good in the major statements

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[1] Specifically relevant for understanding CST's perspectives on the common good is Wittgenstein's theory of "family resemblances," articulated in his posthumously published *Philosophical Investigations* (Wittgenstein 1953). The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy provides this clarification of family resemblances:

> There is no reason to look, as we have done traditionally—and dogmatically—for one, essential core in which the meaning of a word is located and which is, therefore, common to all uses of that word. We should, instead, travel with the word's uses through "a complicated network of similarities, overlapping and criss-crossing" (*PI* 66). Family resemblance also serves to exhibit the lack of boundaries and the distance from exactness that characterize different uses of the same concept. Such boundaries and exactness are the definitive traits of form—be it Platonic form, Aristotelian form, or the general form of a proposition adumbrated in the *Tractatus*. It is from such forms that applications of concepts can be deduced, but this is precisely what Wittgenstein now eschews in favor of appeal to similarity of a kind with family resemblance (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2009).

In my previous research on the common good, I deliberately set aside the quest or an essential definition in order to explore the "complicated network of similarities, overlapping and criss-crossing" evident in CST's use of the term. To be sure, within this approach, CST is properly regarded as a "language-game," a Wittgensteinian formulation that, in my view, helps us to understand the actual content of any living tradition.

marking its history.[2] Part One of this chapter summarizes the meanings that actually appear, once the quest for an essential definition is abandoned.

But our inquiry here must go further. The range of meanings ("family resemblances") opened up and sometimes quietly set aside in the history of CST's appeals to the common good cannot be retrieved without also investigating the cluster of related terms which enable it to become practical. The most important of these, I argue in 13.2, is the so-called "principle of subsidiarity," which in an astonishingly off-hand way lays down how and why the common good ought to be implemented. Subsidiarity, as we will see, first surfaced in Pope Pius XI's bold—but highly problematic—attempt to distinguish the church's understanding of the social order from Italian fascism. His encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno* (Pius XI 1931), invoked this principle in order to distance the church's vision of social justice from Statism, that is, from the mistaken assumption that enacting the common good inevitably involves an expansion of State power over all other social institutions. That was not the case then, nor is it the case now. Thus, after a brief recollection of the history of the principle of subsidiarity, in 13.3 I attempt to clarify its meaning and relevance today by investigating its use in Pope Benedict XVI's recent social encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate* (Benedict XVI 2009).

13.2   Meaning from Use: The Common Good in CST

If one insists on an essential definition of the common good in CST, one gets no closer than this often-cited statement from Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Vatican Council II 1965a):

> Everyday human interdependence grows more tightly drawn and spreads by degrees over the whole world. As a result *the common good, that is, the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment*, today takes on an increasingly universal complexion and consequently involves rights and duties with respect to the whole race. Every social group must take account of the needs and legitimate aspirations of other groups, and even of the general welfare of the entire human family (Vatican Council II 1965a, par. 26, italics added).

Although the common good is explained as "the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment," strangely enough, it appears in a more or less casual aside, in a large chapter, "The Community of Mankind," purporting to discern the ultimate significance of certain "signs of the times," in this case, the fact of social interdependence and the aspiration toward global solidarity carried within it. The footnote given with this explanation refers the reader back to Pope John XXIII's encyclical letter, *Mater et Magistra* (John XXIII 1961), where

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[2] In a previous essay on the common good in CST (McCann 2005), I attempted to create such a map, and suggested that the diversity of concerns highlighted by that term were intelligible as representing phases in the Roman Catholic church's ongoing struggle with modernization. If this explanation is valid, it ought to reinforce the interest in CST among Chinese moral philosophers, who are acutely aware of the challenges that modernization has meant for the current and future status of Confucianism in China.

we find similar language in the context of a discussion of the responsibilities of public authorities.

The lack of a tight conceptual definition of the common good does not warrant the conclusion that it is marginal to CST. On the contrary, the common good's importance seems generally presupposed in CST and is explicitly reasserted, for example, in the United States Catholic bishops' pastoral letter, *Economic Justice for All* (U.S. Catholic Bishops 1986). Here the bishops recall the words of Pius XI's encyclical, *Divini redemptoris* that "It is of the very essence of social justice to demand from each individual all that is necessary for the common good" (U.S. Catholic Bishops 1986, par. 71; Pius XI 1937a, par. 51). In what specifically the common good consists remains unexplained or, alternatively, it consists of so many different proposals at different points in the development of the tradition that it would be misleading, I think, to attempt a conceptual *tour de force* to reduce these to a single, timeless essence.

When we abandon the quest for an essential definition and investigate CST's range of uses of the term, it becomes clear that the common good serves to confer a papal blessing on a range of social desiderata, beginning with Leo XIII's endorsement of workingmen's associations, and culminating most recently in Benedict XVI's invitation to participate in creating a global civil society. Conversely, the social evils that are the object of papal concern are denounced as, one way or another, contrary to the common good. When select proposals for social change are endorsed as what the common good requires, usually they turn out to be remarkably light on specifics—particularly, when economic and political questions are addressed—as if they were intended to provoke creative thinking and innovative social action movements, without preempting such efforts by being too detailed.

Viewed historically, then, CST's uses of the common good reflect the vicissitudes of Roman Catholicism's ongoing struggle with modernization. The papal magisterium—the Vatican's institutional embodiment of the pope's teaching mission which claims to exercise the authority that Jesus conferred on Peter among the twelve Apostles—has responded to modernization in three, possibly four phases: (1) Resistance (1830–1907); (2) Critical Engagement (1891–1959); (3) Accommodation (1959–1978); and (4) the current regime of Pope John Paul II and his successor Benedict XVI, which combines elements of all three (1978–). Within this scheme, the common good is best understood pragmatically as an important marker for mapping roughly how the church's struggle with modernization seems to be going. Thus, it is to be expected that what the common good means specifically in the period of Resistance is significantly different—at least, with reference to its substantive political and social content—from what it means later in the period of Accommodation. Let me attempt briefly to illustrate the range of uses evident in each of these periods.

During the period of Resistance (1830–1907), CST had not yet become conscious of itself as a tradition. Nevertheless, with the collapse of the post-Napoleonic restoration of the *ancien regime*, even in Italy it was clear that Christendom was either dead or mortally wounded. Neither the Papal States nor the pope's role as the "Arbiter of (Western) Europe" could be sustained. The era, not surprisingly, was marked by an increasingly strident—as well as ineffectual—defense of the papacy's claim to

moral and political authority, culminating in the formal definition of papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council (1869–70), followed closely by Pius IX's (1846–1878) self-imposed exile as "the Prisoner of the Vatican." By the end of that period, however, thanks primarily to the generally positive reception given Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (Leo XIII 1891), the Vatican had managed a public relations make-over that enabled it once more to offer meaningful contributions to the social questions of the day.

What the common good meant in this formative period may be judged by examining the uses of the term in Leo XIII's *Libertas* (Leo XIII 1888), as well as *Rerum Novarum*. While the meaning of "common good" seems assumed to be so obvious as to need no further explanation, Leo XIII does invoke it to make certain points. *Libertas* first appeals to the common good as a justification for Leo's speaking out on social questions, since civil society remains just as threatened by certain "modern liberties"—including religious freedom, freedom of the press, academic freedom, etc.—as they had been when Pius IX condemned these in the *Syllabus Errorum* (Pius IX 1864). Although *Libertas* throughout implies that protecting the common good is the basic task of the State, it uses the term to reassert the church's own responsibilities and her desire for active engagement with the State.[3] Regardless of what form of government is adopted by a given civil society, "the Church approves of every one devoting his services to the common good, and doing all that he can for the defense, preservation, and prosperity of his country" (Leo XIII 1888, par. 44). *Libertas* thus indicates that resistance to modernity does not mean that Catholics should withdraw from public life, however disheartening the social and political trends of the moment. The common good is too important to be left unattended.

Despite its allegedly progressive character, there is no reason to suppose that *Rerum Novarum* marks a departure from Leo's earlier teachings about the church's social mission. Although this encyclical is rightly praised for its focus on questions of economic justice, it continues to assert that "the end of civil society is centered in the common good" (Leo XIII 1891, par. 71). Considerations of economic justice

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[3] Under Leo XIII, CST regarded both the State and the Church as "perfect societies," in the sense that both possessed everything necessary within themselves to accomplish their institutional mission, unlike the family and other forms of association, which—though natural—were "imperfect" in the sense that they were dependent on both Church and State to fulfill their purposes. Thus understood, the common good refers to the good that only perfect societies can achieve, with the difference that the State was charged with enacting the common good in "temporal" or worldly matters, while the Church attended to it in "spiritual" matters. Given the Church's basic claim to moral authority, it thus asserted the priority of the spiritual over the temporal, and thus regarded as normal the situation in which the State enacts and enforces laws that are consistent with the Church's teaching—again, as one might expect in a "God's-eye perspective." *Libertas*, however, was struggling with the abnormal situation of post-revolutionary Western Europe, where Christendom—or, if you will, the traditional "Alliance of Throne and Altar"—had been destroyed, and where states no longer looked to the Pope for wise counsel about the common good. Thus, *Libertas* acknowledges the need for compromise, or continued engagement in public life, thus ending the church's unilateral abdication of its responsibilities for the common good. *Libertas'* argument for continued engagement even in a public life regarded as compromised and compromising is crucial for understanding what Leo XIII actually meant and did not mean to accomplish with *Rerum Novarum*, which would later be hailed as the point of departure for modern CST.

link the question of labor with the common good. "Equity therefore commands that public authority show proper concern for the worker so that from what he contributes to the common good he may receive what will enable him, housed, clothed, and secure, to live his life without hardship" (Leo XIII 1891, par. 51). Thus, the common good is not simply a political concept, but refers to an aggregate of economic and social goods realized through human labor. The individual laborer's contribution to the common good entitles him or her to a fair share defined as what is needed to live a "life without hardship."

Rather than providing a systematic clarification of the common good, *Rerum Novarum* uses it to map out those aspects of what equity demands—namely, a recognition of the rights and responsibilities of the working classes—that specifically concern the legitimacy of private property, the responsibilities of the State for protecting these rights and fostering those responsibilities, and the limits the State must observe in their exercise. Leo XIII, like a statue of the Roman god, Janus, thus stands at the threshold of the tradition of CST. Although his writings share the characteristics of the initial phase of Resistance to modernization, especially in their commitment to a hierarchical and authoritarian view of civil society in which the church should continue to enjoy its traditional privileges as the supreme moral authority, they also anticipate the second phase of Critical Engagement by providing a reasoned defense of CST and demonstrating its continued relevance through the innovative application of key ideas like the common good to the social evils specifically generated in the processes of modernization.

The period of "Critical Engagement" (1891–1959) is best represented by Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno* (Pius XI 1931), published on the fortieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*. It attempts to honor Leo XIII by offering a more systematic statement of CST's vision of the social order, in light of the specific challenges for social reform emerging in the Great Depression. The common good is understood as analogical in character, involving responsibilities of various members of civil society for achieving it:

> Because order, as St. Thomas well explains, is unity arising from the harmonious arrangement of many objects, a true, genuine social order demands that the various members of a society be united together by some strong bond. This unifying force is present not only in the producing of goods or the rendering of services—in which the employers and employees of an identical Industry or Profession collaborate jointly—but also in that common good, to achieve which all Industries and Professions together ought, each to the best of its ability, to cooperate amicably (Pius XI 1931, par. 84).

Civil society thus is conceived analogically with all levels or members contributing to the realization of the common good. The common good thus is equated with the "strong bond" uniting the various institutions of society.[4]

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[4] The conception of the social order outlined in QA may serve as a basis for comparison with current discussions in China concerning of the ideal of a "harmonious society," as observed in Albert Chen's essay (Chen 2013, 85–102). Clearly, QA, like RN, emphasizes amicable cooperation, based on the "strong bond" provided by a common understanding of the common good, achieved through social harmony rather than juridical imposition. CST is opposed in principle to the Marxist ideology of class conflict, denying both its historic inevitability and its revolutionary efficacy as in the praxis of class struggle. CST believes that the Marxist ideological error here is rooted in the deeper problem of its deliberate misrepresentation and rejection of the reality of God.

Quadragesimo Anno's most interesting innovation, however, is the introduction of a social theory not to be found in *Rerum Novarum*. Instead of the relatively simple polarity described by Leo XIII, according to which the church must resist both laissez-faire Liberalism and radical Socialism, Pius XI sees himself trying to differentiate CST from at least four competing options. In addition to the two condemned by Leo, *Quadragesimo Anno* specifically recognizes the development of Communism, now concretely represented in the Soviet Union, and a moderate Socialism that is nonviolent and gradualist in its conception of the changes needed to achieve social justice. In opposition to these, the encyclical is cautiously optimistic about the "inauguration of a special system of syndicates and corporations" directed by the State in order to ensure the peaceful relations in industry between labor and management. "Strikes and lock-outs are forbidden; if the parties cannot settle their dispute, public authority intervenes" (Pius XI 1931, par. 94).

Faced with the emergence of a moderate Socialism and the kind of syndicalist or corporatist order espoused by Italian fascism, Pius XI unequivocally condemns the former insofar as it remains truly Socialist, "because its concept of society itself is utterly foreign to Christian truth" (Pius XI 1931, par. 117), but offers only muted criticism of the latter. Catholics are urged towards a constructive engagement, so to speak, with the new system. Despite the fears of some that the State will overextend itself, the Pope recommends that everyone with the expertise to do so should work to achieve the common good within it. His hope is that full Catholic participation in the fascist project will allow the spirit of Catholic Action to deflect the problematic tendencies and minimize the risks involved (Pius XI 1931, pars. 95–96).[5]

Although the statement reflects the Vatican's anxieties over losing its social and political influence over Italian Catholics, Pius XI clearly regarded

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[5] Because it is important to understand Pius XI's ambivalence, as of 1931, about fascism, here is the relevant statement in QA quoted in full:

> We are compelled to say that to Our certain knowledge there are not wanting some who fear that the State, instead of confining itself as it ought to the furnishing of necessary and adequate assistance, is substituting itself for free activity; that the new syndical and corporative order savors too much of an involved and political system of administration; and that (in spite of those more general advantages mentioned above, which are of course fully admitted) it rather serves particular political ends than leads to the reconstruction and promotion of a better social order.
>
> To achieve this latter lofty aim, and in particular to promote the common good truly and permanently, We hold it is first and above everything wholly necessary that God bless it and, secondly, that all men of good will work with united effort toward that end. We are further convinced, as a necessary consequence, that this end will be attained the more certainly the larger the number of those ready to contribute toward it their technical, occupational, and social knowledge and experience; and also, what is more important, the greater the contribution made thereto of Catholic principles and their application, not indeed by Catholic Action (which excludes strictly syndical or political activities from its scope) but by those sons of Ours whom Catholic Action imbues with Catholic principles and trains for carrying on an apostolate under the leadership and teaching guidance of the Church (Pius XI 1931, pars. 95–96).

Clearly, QA's reasoning is consistent with the acknowledgement of the legitimacy of compromise outlined by Leo XIII in *Libertas*.

constructive engagement with fascism as preferable to the other political alternatives. The pope hoped that fascism actually could deliver on its promise of greater social harmony, and that the church's moral and spiritual authority would be respected, consistent with the terms of the Lateran Pact (1928) recently signed with Mussolini that guaranteed the church's position in Italian society. Perhaps, even as late as 1931, one could not yet discern clearly the totalitarian tendencies lurking in the fascist program of social reconstruction. But as the 1930s wore on, Mussolini would launch a frontal assault on Catholic Action and seek to curtail the church's influence over education and virtually all phases of Italian public life. Eventually, World War II would see the church completely turn away from fascism, as Pius XII (1939–1958) shifted the focus of critical engagement to the formation of the Christian Democratic parties of Italy, Western Europe, and Latin America.

Given *Quadragesimo Anno*'s commitment to corporatist social theory, and its vision of the role of the State in negotiating a social harmony that approximates the common good, it is not surprising that this encyclical contributes two innovations that will shape CST beyond the period of Critical Engagement. The first of these is the identification of the common good with social justice. Social justice is meant to define a third species of justice beyond the traditional Aristotelian-Thomistic distinction of commutative and distributive justice. Social justice differs from both of these, insofar as it focuses not directly on specific benefits and burdens, but on the overall integrity of the system of organizations or institutions by which these outcomes are routinely arranged. Thus, although the issues that Pius XI raises are similar to those that moved Leo XIII to publish *Rerum Novarum*—for example, the sufferings of the exploited working classes—the invocation of social justice is meant to open up solutions well beyond those envisioned by his predecessor. Consider, for example, the following:

> To each, therefore, must be given his own share of goods, and the distribution of created goods, which, as every discerning person knows, is laboring today under the gravest evils due to the huge disparity between the few exceedingly rich and the unnumbered propertyless, must be effectively called back to and brought into conformity with the norms of the common good, that is, social justice (Pius XI 1931, par. 58).

Similarly:

> Hence it is contrary to social justice when, for the sake of personal gain and without regard for the common good, wages and salaries are excessively lowered or raised; and this same social justice demands that wages and salaries be so managed, through agreement of plans and wills, in so far as can be done, as to offer to the greatest possible number the opportunity of getting work and obtaining suitable means of livelihood (Pius XI 1931, Par. 74).

More clearly than Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum*, Pius XI recognizes that the goals of neither distributive justice nor commutative justice—in this instance, full employment and wages sufficient to support a family—can be achieved without addressing the systemic issues symbolized by social justice. How social justice could be

achieved without succumbing to Statism, Pius XI would attempt to clarify further on in this encyclical by introducing the principle of subsidiarity. We will return to that question in the next section.

History has not been kind to Pius XI. The intent of *Quadragesimo Anno* was to reassert the importance of improving the condition of the working classes for achieving the common good. But in order to do so, the pope and his advisors gambled on syndicalist or corporatist social theory and lost. The papal version of corporatism envisioned a social order in which the church's moral authority was paramount, where the State would work to implement CST and the policy guidelines implicit in it, and thus create a society that was genuinely different from either the liberal democracies of the West or the socialist experiments of the East. Its chief distinguishing feature was its authoritarianism, but one in which self-restraint—stemming from society's recognition of the ultimacy of God's authority as represented on earth by the Papacy—would guarantee that the State did not cross the line between fostering the common good and usurping the contributions of a civil society that is and ought to remain independent of it. While history disappointed the Pope's hopes for reconstructing the social order along syndicalist lines, the concepts forged in that crisis, namely, social justice and the principle of subsidiarity, as we shall see further on, remain indispensable for understanding what the range of meanings is that CST expresses as the common good.

After World War II, CST was quietly transformed. Without issuing major encyclicals on the social order, beginning with his Christmas radio addresses during the war, Pius XII aligned CST with the Allied forces and the ideals of democracy and human rights that were invoked to justify their struggle against fascism. Politically, this meant lending institutional support to movements for "Christian Democracy" that by the 1960s would become dominant in Italy, Germany, and some parts of Latin America. Such movements served as an incubator of new ideas that would transform CST's understanding of the common good, and thus usher in a new period in its development.

One crucial indication of the ensuing phase, which I have characterized as "Accommodation," is that for the first time something like a definition of the common good is forthcoming. As quoted earlier in this essay, the common good was explained at Vatican II (1962–1965) as "the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment" (Vatican Council II 1965a, par. 26; see also par. 74). The very fact that something approaching a definition was offered at all suggests the extent to which CST, or at least the Council *periti* who drafted *Gaudium et Spes*, were aware that the meanings of the common good as well as other key concepts in the tradition could no longer be regarded as self-evident. Arguably, this is a crucial accommodation because it tacitly concedes that the church no longer enjoys a monopoly on moral discourse, as if its "*philosophia perennis*" actually were still the common framework for thinking about the social order and its

transformations. "Dialogue" in a context characterized by accommodation—or respect for the pluralism of religious faith traditions, ideologies, and social philosophies—became the new order of the day.

Gaudium et Spes illuminates another pattern that is characteristic of the period of "Accommodation," namely, the tendency to define the common good in terms of other moral aspirations and imperatives, which come to be regarded as concrete, historical, and partial realizations of the common good, which itself remains more comprehensive, transcendent, and abstract. In *Gaudium et Spes* the common good is defined teleologically. It is what contributes to a universal human *telos*, a "fulfillment" or "perfection" understood both personally and collectively. Although "the political community exists… for the sake of the common good" (Vatican Council II 1965a, par. 74), given the religious ultimacy inherent in this *telos*, interpreting the common good and mobilizing social cooperation in order to implement it continue to be a part of the church's own mission in the world (Vatican Council II 1965a, par. 42). Later on, *Gaudium et Spes* will make clear that the exercise of the church's responsibilities toward the common good no longer requires that it be granted a privileged status within the political community, such as the Lateran Pact or the system of concordats by which the Vatican sought legal sanctions to protect her social influence in various nations (Vatican Council II 1965a, par. 76).[6]

As to what the common good concretely demands in the modern world, *Gaudium et Spes* follows the new direction initially laid down in Pope John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris* (John XXIII 1963) by making a top priority of the protection of human rights. Here is what was said in *Pacem in Terris*:

> It is agreed that in our time the common good is chiefly guaranteed when personal rights and duties are maintained. The chief concern of civil authorities must therefore be to ensure that these rights are acknowledged, respected, coordinated with other rights, defended and promoted, so that in this way each one may more easily carry out his duties. For "to safeguard the inviolable rights of the human person, and to facilitate the fulfillment of his duties, should be the chief duty of every public authority" (John XXIII 1963, par. 60).

In light of the growing realization of the fact of global "interdependence," the common good in the modern world requires an acknowledgement of the basic

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[6] It is almost impossible to overstate the practical importance of *Gaudium et Spes'* specific pledges regarding the role the Roman Catholic church seeks to claim for itself in civil society as a whole. Coupled with Vatican II's *Declaration on Religious Freedom* (Vatican Council II 1965b), the chapter on "The Life of the Political Community" (Vatican Council II 1965a, pars. 73–76) means not only that the Vatican has quietly withdrawn its traditional claims regarding its privileged role in society and politics, but also that, in principle, the church is committed to assisting the State and the institutions of civil society rather than directing them toward the common good. While the Vatican's subsequent policies have not always been consistent with these pledges—for example, in the struggle over the Polish constitution after the collapse of the Jaruzelski government in 1990—Chinese as well as Western scholars concerned about the basis for a possible reconciliation between the Vatican and the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association (中国天主教爱国会) need to understand these pledges, their historical context, and their relevance for establishing a *modus vivendi* that respects both the integrity of the church's spiritual and moral mission and the legitimate security interests of the PRC government.

equality of all men and women, including equality in the recognition and enforcement of their "fundamental rights" and an end to all unjust forms of discrimination (Vatican Council II 1965a, par. 29). Linking such "fundamental rights" with the common good thus also expands the social content of the common good so that it includes "cultural benefits," the absence of which keep "very many…from cooperating in the promotion of the common good in a truly human manner" (Vatican Council II 1965a, par. 60). This and similar passages in *Gaudium et Spes* bear striking testimony regarding the extent to which the Council meant to embrace "the joys and hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted" (Vatican Council II 1965a, par. 1). As a result of this identification with ordinary people, the common good is now focused on a set of "conditions"—moral aspirations and imperatives—that had often been regarded with deep suspicion within the tradition of CST, and its prior commitment to a tacitly hierarchical understanding of the social order. For the first time, *Gaudium et Spes* specifically embraces the hope of a "universal common good" (1965a, pars. 68 and 84), more or less synonymous with the aspirations of an emerging global society.

One thing that did not change in the period of Accommodation is the Vatican's caution about endorsing particular social theories in order to give specific meaning to CST's vision of social justice and the common good. While it is true that human rights advocacy and campaigns for human development have remained characteristic of post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism, these hardly exhaust the meaning of the common good. For a time, the Vatican seemed poised to endorse some theory and praxis of "liberation" as a concept for conveying what the common good requires in the world today. But even when "liberation theology" seemed to be the wave of the future—arguably, the logical outcome of CST's own development—the Vatican remained skeptical, warning against too close an identification with ideologies and social movements that did not share the church's own substantive vision of the common good. In light of the Papacy's previous experience with syndicalism or corporatism, the Vatican's response seems hardly surprising. Given the ultimately theological premises undergirding CST, it is likely that even in a period of Accommodation there would be no easy or uncritical identification of the common good with any existing political or social movement, regardless of how benevolent its basic intentions may appear to be.

In the current phase of CST's development—marked by the papacies of John Paul II and Benedict XVI—the previous trends noted in the use of "common good" have persisted. The common good continues to symbolize a cluster of social aspirations and imperatives that may better be understood or more readily implemented in piecemeal fashion. *Solicitudo Rei Socialis* (John Paul II 1987), for example, suggests that the universal common good is transcendent, and thus increasingly elusive:

> [I]n a different world, ruled by concern for the common good of all humanity, or by concern for the "spiritual and human development of all" instead of by the quest for individual profit, peace would be possible as the result of a "more perfect justice among people" (John Paul II 1987, par. 10).

Indicative of the increasingly transcendental character of the common good is John Paul II's attempt to link it negatively with his theological understanding of "the structures of sin" in the world. These structures are defined as "the sum total of negative factors working against a true awareness of the universal common good":

> It is important to note therefore that a world which is divided into blocs, sustained by rigid ideologies, and in which instead of interdependence and solidarity different forms of imperialism hold sway, can only be a world subject to structures of sin. The sum total of the negative factors working against a true awareness of the universal common good, and the need to further it, gives the impression of creating, in persons and institutions, an obstacle which is difficult to overcome.… "Sin" and "structures of sin" are categories which are seldom applied to the situation of the contemporary world. However, one cannot easily gain a profound understanding of the reality that confronts us unless we give a name to the root of the evils which afflict us (John Paul II 1987, par. 36).

Placing the common good in this theological horizon effectively renders it an eschatological concept. The common good in its fullness is transcendent, and will always remain at least partially unrealized, at least this side of the *parousia* or, if you will, the End of the World as we know it. The practical implication of such an eschatological concept of the common good is, arguably, to warrant CST's increasingly clear preference for reformist rather than revolutionary or utopian programs seeking economic and social justice.[7]

If the common good is ultimately an eschatological notion whose concrete social and political content can never be determined exhaustively, then the search for what I have called "synonyms" or concrete aspirations that partially fulfill its promise is precisely what is needed if the common good is to have any social relevance. Just as *Solicitudo Rei Socialis* (John Paul II 1987) contributed to the search for appropriate substitutes by linking the common good with "integral human development," so *Laborem Exercens* (John Paul II 1981) made its chief contribution by linking the common good directly to the Pope's emphatically teleological notion of human work. Once that connection is made, the common good highlights once more the moral framework in which the State and organized Labor must collaborate harmoniously.

John Paul II's chief contribution to CST, *Centesimus Annus* (John Paul II 1991)—released to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (Leo XIII 1891)—extends the common good to contemporary concerns for preserving and enhancing the natural and social environment. In the following passage,

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[7] The emerging eschatological character of CST's notion of the common good with its reformist practical implications makes it possible to pursue comparisons with Albert Chen's provocative analysis (Chen 2013) of Kang Youwei's philosophy of history, in which a utopian interpretation of "Datong" sustains a conservative approach to social and political reform in China. There are, of course, major differences between Christian eschatological perspectives and Kang Youwei's utopian thinking. For one, CST's biblically-oriented theology of history does not remember any Golden Age, and the expectation of the Parousia or the coming of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:1–27) marks the end of history as we know it, rather than the inauguration of a "Datong" as a new phase of history. Nevertheless, both visions serve to sustain commitment to the common good, while moderating excessive hopes about its complete realization in the current era, however it is characterized.

note how priorities in achieving the common good are expected to shift as the processes of modernization continue to unfold in what the Pope now refers to as "the new capitalism":

> It is the task of the State to provide for the defense and preservation of common goods such as the natural and human environments, which cannot be safeguarded simply by market forces. Just as in the time of primitive capitalism the State had the duty of defending the basic rights of workers, so now, with the new capitalism, the State and all of society have the duty of defending those collective goods which, among others, constitute the essential framework for the legitimate pursuit of personal goals on the part of each individual (John Paul II 1991, par. 40).

Indeed, the common good, now increasingly thought of in universal terms, is also to be the guiding principle for "orienting" the processes of "globalization." In light of those processes, which the Pope regards as furthering "the internationalization of the economy," the universal common good requires the development of "effective international agencies which will oversee and direct the economy to the common good, something that an individual state, even if it were the most powerful on earth, would not be in a position to do"[8] (John Paul II 1991, par. 58). However innovative these recent uses of the common good in CST, they also reveal a deep continuity in its understanding of political economy. Market forces alone, left to their own devices, are not likely to achieve the common good, even as an unintended benefit. Strong institutional coordination—call it, if you will, government regulation—is necessary even for any partial realization of the common good in this world. The question, of course, remains just how much government regulation is necessary, if progress is to be made on that basis.

Among the most important tendencies in the expansion of the common good in the encyclicals of John Paul II is his linkage of the common good with his understanding of what it means to be "pro-life." The universality of the common good must include not only a concern for integral human development on a global scale, as well as stewardship over the natural environment, but also a concern for preserving prenatal human life. His 1995 encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae* (John Paul II 1995), must be regarded as an integral contribution to CST and not just as an unrelated treatise in biomedical ethics. In it he explicitly links the common good with his increasingly critical reservations against capital punishment and his uncompromising resistance to abortion:

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[8] Notice that globalization has thus also rendered obsolete CST's traditional understanding of the State as a perfect society, as described previously in footnote six. If particular states cannot effectively oversee and direct their national economies without the assistance of "effective international agencies," they cannot be regarded as "perfect societies" in the traditional sense. CST's recognition of a universal common good thus logically requires the advancement of such agencies, and in fact is realized in the Vatican's wholehearted support for the United Nations and the expansion of its authority in international relations. CST's specific statements in support of the United Nations are evident beginning with John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris* (John XXIII 1963, pars. 142–145), where the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights is explicitly and warmly endorsed. Cf. also *Centesimus Annus* (John Paul II 1991, par. 21) and *Caritas in Veritate* (Benedict XVI 2009, par. 67).

The Gospel of life is for the whole of human society. To be actively pro-life is to contribute to the *renewal of society* through the promotion of the common good. It is impossible to further the common good without acknowledging and defending the right to life, upon which all the other inalienable rights of individuals are founded and from which they develop. A society lacks solid foundations when, on the one hand, it asserts values such as the dignity of the person, justice and peace, but then, on the other hand, radically acts to the contrary by allowing or tolerating a variety of ways in which human life is devalued and violated, especially where it is weak or marginalized. Only respect for life can be the foundation and guarantee of the most precious and essential goods of society, such as democracy and peace (John Paul II 1995, par. 101).

Here John Paul II appeals to those social activists who regard themselves as already committed to achieving the common good, but whose understanding of the circle of persons and moral concerns included in it is, in his view, much too restricted. The universality of the common good, he argues, is not simply a spatial metaphor encompassing the processes of globalization, it is also temporal, and must serve to remind everyone of their responsibilities for all generations, past, present, and future. In light of the history of CST, this, too, must be regarded as yet one more innovation.

The understanding of the common good that emerges from this review of the four phases of CST's development over the past century and a half provides reasons for accepting all or some of the following conclusions:

- The common good resists essential definition for two reasons: first, because CST is a living tradition within a living community of Christian faith and not a series of axioms whose corollaries are produced through an exercise in deductive logic; second, because, in CST at least, the common good ultimately serves as an eschatological notion or, if you will, a limit-concept. It represents a *Telos* that is not expected to be fully realized in history as we know it.
- Although the common good is ultimately eschatological, it has practical implications for how the social order is to be understood as to its purpose, and the roles that various primary institutions and secondary associations can and ought to play in achieving that purpose. It is, in short, a limit-concept for orienting politics, including the general applications of political economy.
- Within CST's evolving vision of the social order, the common good serves as a limit-concept for ordering priorities among a number of aspirations and imperatives that give it concrete meaning and resonance. These aspirations and imperative emerge as "synonyms" that give focus to the common good in differing historical and social contexts. We have seen within the relatively brief history of CST the common good thus identified with public order, the rights of working men and their families, social justice, human rights, integral human development, a preferential love (or option) for the poor, concern for the natural environment, and the sanctity of prenatal human life.
- Trying to understand the common good in terms of what CST finds in these synonyms forces one to confront the profoundly conservative nature of CST's common good discourse, and the extent to which its distinctive conceptual logic as a living tradition indirectly and inadvertently testifies to the fragility of the common good, even among those who seek to assert it. In a world, such as Latin Christendom before the Reformation is imagined to have been, there may have

been very little need to explain the meaning of the common good. Such may have been, for Catholics, at least, the world of Leo XIII; it is no longer our world today.

- Acknowledging the profoundly conservative nature of the common good should by no means be interpreted as a dismissal of it. Conservative thought, left to its own devices, may inspire any of the following political responses—reactionary, radical, and reformist—and sometimes an uneasy mixture of all three. While all three have their representatives in the development of CST, it should be clear that the current direction of CST's basic conservatism seems to be reformist. Whether that is a useful basis for dialogue and collaboration, given the interdependent crises we face today, remains to be seen.

13.3 The Principle of Subsidiarity and the Uses of Meaning

The history of the Principle of Subsidiarity in CST is deceptively simple. As we have already seen, it first is mentioned explicitly in Pius XI's Encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno* (Pius XI 1931, par. 79). Later it is developed by John XXIII in both *Mater et Magistra* (John XXIII 1961, par. 53), and *Pacem in Terris* (John XXIII 1963, par. 140), and recently reaffirmed by John Paul II in *Centesimus Annus* (John Paul II 1991, par. 48). The principle was also invoked once, and very briefly, in Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes* (Vatican Council II 1965a, par. 86), and was discussed extensively in eight different passages in the U.S. Catholic Bishops' pastoral letter, *Economic Justice for All: Catholic Social Thought and the US Economy* (U.S. Catholic Bishops 1986, pars. 19, 99, 101, 124, 297, 308, 314, and 323). All of these citations refer in one way or another to the social order and the role of the government in it.

So much for the simple part. What makes this simplicity deceptive is that in its original formulation in *Quadragesimo Anno* the principle is described as "a fundamental principle of social philosophy, fixed and unchangeable," and yet Pius XI's encyclical marks its first formal appearance in the history of CST! The gist of it, arguably, is implicit in the idealized version of the social order of Latin Christendom envisioned as still a live option in Leo XIII's encyclicals. Here, however, is the famous citation from *Quadragesimo Anno* in which the principle of subsidiarity is first formally introduced:

> Nevertheless, it is a fundamental principle of social philosophy, fixed and unchangeable, that one should not withdraw from individuals and commit to the community what they can accomplish by their own enterprise and industry. So, too, it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and a disturbance of right order, to transfer to the larger and higher collectivity functions which can be performed and provided for by lesser and subordinate bodies. Inasmuch as every social activity should, by its very nature, prove a help to members of the social body, it should never destroy or absorb them (Pius XI 1931, par. 79).

As we have seen, the principle of subsidiarity first surfaced in the context of Pius XI's struggle to distinguish the social order envisioned by CST from the syndicalist or corporatist ideology of Italian fascism. Subsidiarity was originally invoked to

define the limits appropriate to State intervention in the social order, by establishing the priority of primary institutions—like the family—which, as occasion warrants, are to be provided assistance in fulfilling their own distinctive purposes.

> The supreme authority of the State ought, therefore, to let subordinate groups handle matters and concerns of lesser importance, which would otherwise dissipate its efforts greatly. Thereby the State will more freely, powerfully, and effectively do all those things that belong to it alone because it alone can do them: directing, watching, urging, restraining, as occasion requires and necessity demands. Therefore, those in power should be sure that the more perfectly a graduated order is kept among the various associations, in observance of the principle of "subsidiary function," the stronger social authority and effectiveness will be the happier and more prosperous the condition of the State (Pius XI 1931, par. 80).

Although *Quadragesimo Anno* characteristically formulates the principle in hierarchical terms—what might be called "vertical subsidiarity"—involving the assistance that the "greater or higher association" can and ought to provide to "lesser and subordinate organizations," nevertheless, the intent should be clear. The State will fulfill its own distinct responsibility for the common good, if it respects the integrity of the various organizations that constitute civil society, and makes sure that its assistance to them does not effectively subvert their own capacity to carry out their own distinctive responsibilities.

The Vatican's most pressing concern at the moment involved the moral education of the children of Italy. While the Italian fascist State's interventions in the economy were welcome to the extent that they provided employment, wages, and benefits sufficient to support a family, the State was not to overextend its assistance into the area of education where the Roman Catholic church—or so believed the Vatican— was still working quite well with Italian families to meet this need. To be sure, as the principle took root in CST, it was found useful more broadly for clarifying the limits to any form of State intervention in civil society.

The most illuminating illustration of the uses to which CST puts the principle of subsidiarity remains the U.S. Catholic bishops' pastoral letter, *Economic Justice for All: Catholic Social Teaching and the US Economy* (U.S. Catholic Bishops 1986), because no other official document, prior to Benedict XVI's *Caritas in Veritate*, comments so extensively on the principle. Contrary to the demands of their neoconservative critics, the American bishops used the principle to frame guidelines—certain "moral priorities for the nation"—for implementing their interpretation of CST's so-called "preferential option for the poor." The bishops quote Pius XI's statement of the principle in full, an unusual degree of emphasis, as they invite the collaboration of persons situated in different institutional settings with respect to the economy.

As *Economic Justice for All* reminds its readers, "This principle guarantees institutional pluralism. It provides space for freedom, initiative, and creativity on the part of many social agents. At the same time, it insists that all these agents should work in ways that help build up the social body" (U.S. Catholic Bishops 1986, par. 51). When the bishops turn specifically to the role of "citizens and government," once again subsidiarity helps spell out the limits of public policy intervention with respect to the moral priorities they've outlined: "…government should

undertake only those initiatives which exceed the capacities of individuals or private groups acting independently." Lest Americans miss the nuances implicit here, the bishops go on:

> This does not mean, however, that the government that governs least governs best. Rather it defines good government intervention as that which truly "helps" other social groups contribute to the common good by directing, urging, restraining, and regulating economic activity as "the occasion requires and necessity demands" (U.S. Catholic Bishops 1986, par. 62).

Here the bishops are commenting directly on *Quadragesimo Anno* (Pius XI 1931, par. 79), and doing so in terms that pointedly contrast the principle with one of the most favored shibboleths of the Reagan era, when their pastoral letter was written.

A less conventional, though highly promising application of the principle of subsidiarity emerges further on in the pastoral letter's groundbreaking chapter, "A New American Experiment: Partnership for the Public Good." Here *Economic Justice for All* proposes an "experiment" in public-private partnerships for the sake of promoting economic and social development. The bishops' rationale is that such partnerships would be a constructive extension of the principle of subsidiarity in order to "make economic decisions more accountable to the common good" (U.S. Catholic Bishops 1986, par. 297):

> The principle of subsidiarity calls for government intervention when small or intermediate groups in society are unable or unwilling to take the steps needed to promote basic justice. Pope John XXIII observed that the growth of more complex relations of interdependence among citizens has led to an increased role for government in modern societies. This role is to work in partnership with the many other groups in society, helping them fulfill their tasks and responsibilities more effectively, not replacing or destroying them. The challenge of today is to move beyond abstract disputes about whether more or less government intervention is needed, to consideration of creative ways of enabling government and private groups to work together effectively (U.S. Catholic Bishops 1986, par. 314).

To be sure, such an "experiment" means that the State must play a leadership role in "'overall planning' in the economic domain, just as John Paul II had recommended" (John Paul II 1981, par. 18). The bishops, nevertheless, go on to describe a model of economic planning that is consistent with the principle of subsidiarity, precisely in order to distinguish it from Statist models of centralized economic planning. Consistent with the pope's proposal, the bishops endorse "a 'just and rational coordination' of the endeavors of the many economic actors [in order] to seek creative new partnership[s] and forms of participation in shaping national policies."[9]

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[9] In order to reassure their readers still further, the bishops cite a list of then-innovative works on policy planning and management that they believe are consistent with the principle of subsidiarity (U.S. Catholic Bishops 1986, ch. 4, fn. 22). To be sure, this list would have to be updated in light of contemporary concerns for the common good; nevertheless, it ought to make clear that *Economic Justice for All* attempts a very detailed and innovative interpretation of the Principle of Subsidiarity that is meant both to enable the State to carry out its proper responsibilities for the common good

Further discussion of the principle of subsidiarity in *Economic Justice for All* extends its range of application to the international level. (U.S. Catholic Bishops 1986, pars. 308, 314, and 323) The focus thus shifts from limiting government intervention, as in *Quadragesimo Anno*, to identifying and nurturing the range of private, professional, and non-governmental organizations that are capable of entering into non-adversarial patterns of collaboration with governments, both nationally and internationally. The role envisioned for such mediating structures, with reference to both economic development and the institutionalization of moral responsibility, does seem to represent a fresh application of this "fixed and unchangeable" principle.

13.4   Common Good and Subsidiarity in Benedict XVI's *Caritas in Veritate*

Caritas in Veritate, or "Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth," is the first major contribution of Pope Benedict XVI to CST (2009). It continues the Benedict's programmatic emphasis on "charity" or "love," as announced in the first encyclical of his papacy, *Deus Caritas Est* or "God is Love" (Benedict XVI 2005). Although *Deus Caritas Est* admirably provides a systematic statement of Benedict's understanding of Catholic theology overall, it is also practical insofar as it outlines the meaning of the church's mission in the world, in light of this affirmation of the centrality of love. Both the common good and the principle of subsidiarity are mentioned twice in Part Two: "The Practice of Love by the Church as a 'Community of Love'" (Benedict XVI 2005, pars. 19–39). What Benedict sought to clarify in this first encyclical is the relationship of justice and love, as these are expressed in the distinct yet overlapping responsibilities of both the State and the church.

Consistent with the overall posture of CST, *Deus Caritas Est* reaffirms the common good in terms of the State's distinctive responsibility for establishing and maintaining "a just ordering of society" (Benedict XVI 2005, par. 28). Even though this ordering is and must be "the achievement of politics," the church remains concerned about justice in its own distinctive way:

> The Church cannot and must not take upon herself the political battle to bring about the most just society possible. She cannot and must not replace the State. Yet at the same time she cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice. She has to play her part through rational argument and she has to reawaken the spiritual energy without which justice, which always demands sacrifice, cannot prevail and prosper. A just society must be the achievement of politics, not of the Church. Yet the promotion of justice through efforts

and to ensure that it does not become "Statist" by overstepping the limits inherent in these responsibilities. The website containing this text (http://www.osjspm.org/catholic_social_teaching.aspx) was developed by the Office of Social Justice of St. Paul and Minneapolis. It is the single most convenient online source for all the major documents in the tradition of CST.

to bring about openness of mind and will to the demands of the common good is something which concerns the Church deeply (Benedict XVI 2005, par. 28).

As justice cannot be achieved without love, so the State's own responsibilities cannot be realized without the active assistance of the church. Any attempt on the part of the State to achieve justice exclusively on its own terms is likely to be counter-productive: "The State which would provide everything, absorbing everything into itself, would ultimately become a mere bureaucracy incapable of guaranteeing the very thing which the suffering person—every person—needs: namely, loving personal concern." Given the complexities of the relationship of Church and State in fulfilling their distinctive responsibilities for the common good, the principle of subsidiarity is a necessary means for minimizing the potential conflict and enhancing the opportunities for effective collaboration in the pursuit of both justice and love.[10]

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[10] The point made here is substantively the same as that first articulated by Leo XIII in his conception of Church-State relations: both the church and the State have their own distinct responsibilities for the common good. But note CST's shift from juridical to personalist rhetoric: the concept of a perfect society no longer guides the thinking here, with a distinction between the spiritual and temporal orders; instead, the language of love comes to the foreground. Here is the passage in full so that readers may appreciate the difference:

We do not need a State which regulates and controls everything, but a State which, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, generously acknowledges and supports initiatives arising from the different social forces and combines spontaneity with closeness to those in need. The Church is one of those living forces: she is alive with the love enkindled by the Spirit of Christ. This love does not simply offer people material help, but refreshment and care for their souls, something which often is even more necessary than material support. In the end, the claim that just social structures would make works of charity superfluous masks a materialist conception of man: the mistaken notion that man can live "by bread alone" (*Mt* 4:4; cf. *Dt* 8:3)—a conviction that demeans man and ultimately disregards all that is specifically human (Benedict XVI 2005, par. 28).

Here the traditional assertion of full partnership between Church and State is quietly withdrawn in favor of a more modest recognition of the realities of institutional pluralism characteristic of fully modernized societies. The church is described as "one of those living forces," just one, but one whose assistance may be indispensable for fostering the spiritual development without which the pursuit of the common good becomes impossible. This more modest claim is consistent with Vatican II's pledge regarding the role of the church in politics and society (cf. fn. 9's discussion of Vatican Council II 1965a, pars. 73–76). Benedict's elaboration of the meaning of "charity" in both encyclical letters provides the basis for dialogue, not only over the significance of Christian spirituality for the common good ably developed for us in Mary Keys' essay (Keys 2013), but also over the differing ways in which love is understood and enacted in Confucian and Moist thought, as developed in Ellen Zhang's essay (2013). Coupled with Albert Chen's interpretation of Kang Youwei's critique of Confucian familism (Chen 2013), Zhang's reconstruction of Mozi's "inclusive care" suggests that the ongoing development of Chinese social thought is sure to recognize the need to go beyond any view of morality that finds its highest expression in the family. Those schooled in the traditions of CST, who like myself have been raised in Catholic families not all that dissimilar from traditional Chinese families, are likely to be sympathetic to both Chen and Zhang in their awareness of the limitations of family-oriented morality. Those limits are not likely to be understood apart from first-hand experience in traditional families where the opportunities of

Caritas in Veritate (Benedict XVI 2009), then, is an attempt to move beyond these generalities to the pope's understanding of the specific challenges emerging in an era of globalization or, if you will, increasing social and economic interdependence. Just as "caritas" or Christian love thus animates the church's mission as a whole, so CST itself is defined by Benedict as "*caritas in veritate in re sociali*: the proclamation of the truth of Christ's love in society" (Benedict XVI 2009, par. 5). Within this theological horizon, the common good is redescribed as "*a requirement of justice and charity*" (italics in the original text). Seeking the common good, then, "is the institutional path—we might also call it the political path—of charity, no less excellent and effective than the kind of charity which encounters the neighbour directly, outside the institutional mediation of the *pólis*" (Benedict XVI 2009, par. 7). In light of the conceptual linkage between the common good and charity as well as justice, the church's interest in it becomes more obvious and compelling.

Similarly, when Benedict discusses the principle of subsidiarity, he underscores its close affiliation with both charity and justice, so construed. The principle itself reflects a "fruitful dialogue between faith and reason" that will "render the work of charity more effective within society." After repeating the understanding of the principle handed down from Pius XI, Benedict makes his own contribution by describing it as "an expression of inalienable human freedom."[11] The assistance offered to people through institutional exercises of subsidiarity is

> always designed to achieve their emancipation, because it fosters freedom and participation through assumption of responsibility. Subsidiarity respects personal dignity by recognizing in the person a subject who is always capable of giving something to others. By considering reciprocity as the heart of what it is to be a human being, subsidiarity is the most effective antidote against any form of all-encompassing welfare state (Benedict XVI 2009, par. 57).

Subsidiarity thus echoes the great traditions of Western and Chinese moral philosophy in "considering reciprocity as the heart of what it is to be a human being."[12]

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some members for personal self-realization are all too often foreclosed for the sake of the family's progress as a whole. Sometimes, familial appeals to love may condone, if not actually mask, injustices that cannot be fully appreciated simply by intensifying one's personal cultivation of filial piety.

[11] Benedict's association of subsidiarity with human freedom is reminiscent of the discussion of both these concepts in the essay on "Freedom" in *The Encyclopedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi* (Mueller and Rahner 2004). In his philosophical analysis of freedom, Mueller characterizes the subsidiarity as the overriding "principle which regulates the mode of realization of freedom" (Mueller and Rahner 2004, p. 539). Mueller's discussion of freedom also makes it clear—if it isn't clear already—that the understanding of the freedom and dignity of the human person understood in Roman Catholic theology and ethics is strikingly different from the post-Cartesian "Billiard-Ball Individualism" (BBI) criticized in Stephen Erickson's essay.

[12] Since reciprocity or the so-called "Golden Rule" is common to the moral teachings of Jesus and Confucius, Benedict's linkage of it to CST's principle of subsidiarity may be useful in trying to renew "a fruitful dialogue of faith and reason" between this Catholic tradition and Chinese moral philosophy on the nature of the social order, and humanity's responsibilities within it. The challenges involved in reconstructing an ethic of "charity" or "inclusive care" in which reciprocity is both an observable fact and a moral expectation is well illustrated by Ellen Zhang (2013). The various contemporary criticisms launched against Mozi's moral philosophy find their parallels in mod-

But its potential as an ordering principle for institutional relationships is never far from Benedict's mind. As such, the principle of subsidiarity is to be commended as the most promising way forward for addressing the challenges of globalization:

> Globalization certainly requires authority, insofar as it poses the problem of a global common good that needs to be pursued. This authority, however, must be organized in a subsidiary and stratified way, if it is not to infringe upon freedom and if it is to yield effective results in practice (Benedict XVI 2009, par. 57).

In order to justify his optimism about the relevance of this principle, Benedict cites two pressing social problems, both of which are symptomatic of the challenges of globalization. One of these is welfare reform; the other is reform of the United Nations. His remarks on welfare reform are informed by a global perspective. The current economic crisis has exacerbated the increasingly difficult problem of development assistance flowing from so-called rich countries to poor countries. Instead of regarding such assistance as a zero-sum game, Benedict asserts that it must be "*considered a valid means of creating wealth for all*." Assistance, in short, should be regarded as a form of social investment. The credibility of such a proposal depends on initiating serious efforts at welfare reform in the countries that are both the providers and the recipients of international assistance:

> One way of doing so is by reviewing their internal social assistance and welfare policies, applying the principle of subsidiarity and creating better integrated welfare systems, with the active participation of private individuals and civil society. In this way, it is actually possible to improve social services and welfare programmes, and at the same time to save resources—by eliminating waste and rejecting fraudulent claims—which could then be allocated to international solidarity (Benedict XVI 2009, par. 60).

Reciprocity is implicit in this approach to reforming international development assistance. Nations providing development aid can more readily find the resources required by rigorously applying the principle of subsidiarity to their own welfare programs. In turn, the nations receiving such aid would rigorously apply the principle of subsidiarity in order to restructure their own welfare agencies, thus "eliminating waste and rejecting fraudulent claims." While waste and fraud may be little more than euphemisms for massive governmental corruption, the direction of the pope's proposal, however vague in details, should be clear to anyone who has attempted to consider the issues involved.[13]

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ern analytic perspectives on Jesus' teaching on love as central to Christian ethics. (Cf., for example, Frankena 1973).

[13] Left unanswered, however, are questions concerning just how the reforms envisioned by Benedict may differ from the already controversial, and often counter-productive efforts of the IMF and the World Bank, who are routinely accused of imposing a Western model of international capitalism upon nations that are culturally and philosophically opposed to it, ostensibly in the interest of greater transparency and accountability in the struggle against corruption. Even more basic, in light of the papers given in this dialogue by our Chinese colleagues, Jue Wang (2013), Ruiping Fan (2013), and Jonathan Chan (2013), is the question whether Benedict's approach to welfare reform has lost the critical edge that it should have received from the principle of subsidiarity. After all, welfare reform is primarily assistance provided by the State to families, particularly meant to help

As a touchstone for reforming the United Nations Organization (UN) and other international agencies in the context of the challenges of globalization, Benedict uses the principle of subsidiarity to urge an expansion of UN authority so that "the concept of the family of nations can acquire real teeth" (Benedict XVI 2009, par. 67). In marked contrast to the thinking of some American neoconservatives who have tried to invoke subsidiarity to undermine the UN—claiming that an expansion of its powers threatens to erode the normal prerogatives of national sovereignty—the pope means to encourage a structural reform of the UN that would enable it to implement "the principle of the *responsibility to protect and of giving poorer nations an effective voice in shared decision-making*," in short, the principle of subsidiarity:

> To manage the global economy; to revive economies hit by the crisis; to avoid any deterio-*ration of the present crisis and the greater imbalances that would result; to bring about integral and timely disarmament, food security and peace; to guarantee the protection of the environment and to regulate migration: for all this, there is urgent need of a true world political authority*, as my predecessor Blessed John XXIII indicated some years ago. Such an authority would need to be regulated by law, to observe consistently the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity, to seek to establish the common good, and *to make a commit-ment to securing authentic integral human development inspired by the values of charity in truth*. Furthermore, such an authority would need to be universally recognized and to be vested with the effective power to ensure security for all, regard for justice, and respect for rights (Benedict XVI 2009, par. 67; italics in the original text).

Participation in the global community of nations, based on principles of reciprocity and mutual accountability, would no longer be optional, as if nations were free to ignore the UN's directives whenever they feared that compliance might jeopardize the national interest. This pope, consistent with the past 50 years of pronouncements from his predecessors, not only supports the UN, but also calls for the expansion of its authority so that it might at last fulfill its originally intended mission. What before was a noble aspiration has now, in an era of globalization, given the need for "the establishment of a greater degree of international ordering," has become a political necessity.

Benedict's optimism about the prospects for institutional reform in an era of globalization should not be dismissed as the predictable soft-heartedness that results from trying to approach social problems on the assumption that "love" is all you need to solve them. Anyone familiar with Benedict's governance style—first, as

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families cope with the needs of dependent children and the elderly. If welfare reform were truly guided by the principle of subsidiarity, it would have to focus, first of all, on whether such programs actually empower families or undermine them. There is ample evidence that welfare reform in the USA has often tended to undermine families, even to the point of breaking them up in order to qualify for assistance (cf. McCann 1984, where I discuss this problem in relation to the US Catholic bishops' attempt to formulate their pastoral letter, *Economic Justice for All*). The strong defense of Confucian familism by Fan and filial piety by Wang should challenge promoters of CST, like myself, to be equally clear about precisely how the principle of subsidiarity would apply in proposals for welfare reform to ensure that these proposals do not unnecessarily expand opportunities for State agencies to intervene in ways that usurp the role of families in caring for their own children and aged parents.

Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Doctrine of the Faith (formerly known as the Holy Office of the Inquisition), and later as pope—should recognize that this is no Pollyanna with whom they are dealing. The main difference between Benedict's understanding of love and justice and that of other religious and social neoconservatives is that he does not assume that solving social problems inevitably entails harsh trade-offs, as if the social order were a zero-sum game, in which for every winner there must be a loser. If social reality is zero-sum, then it makes sense to resist any change that threatens to diminish one's personal and institutional power and interest. But what is his alternative to zero-sum thinking about society and the economy?

This, in my opinion, highlights what is distinctive in his contribution to CST's ongoing understanding of the common good. Commemorating the teachings of his predecessor, Paul VI (1967), Benedict notes that the meaning of development is not reducible to economic growth. He warns, predictably, that the pursuit of profit "by improper means and without the common good as its ultimate end…risks destroying wealth and creating poverty" (Benedict XVI 2009, par. 21). Understandably, he argues, the church remains skeptical "about the capacity of a purely technological society to set realistic goals and to make good use of the instruments at its disposal" (Benedict XVI 2009, par. 21). In order to overcome the inherent limits of a technocratic approach to development, he calls for "new efforts of holistic understanding and a *new humanistic synthesis*."[14] The common good properly understood as a call to "integral human development," in the current moment of crisis caused by the collapse of the international financial system, makes it possible to

> re-plan our journey, to set ourselves new rules and to discover new forms of commitment, to build on positive experiences and to reject negative ones. The crisis thus becomes *an opportunity for discernment, in which to shape a new vision for the future*. In this spirit, with confidence rather than resignation, it is appropriate to address the difficulties of the present time (Benedict XVI 2009, par. 21).

Benedict believes that CST has more to offer than simply exhorting us to imagine "a new vision of the future." *Caritas in Veritate* offers a comprehensive social theory that specifies the meaning of the common good for our times. In continuity with the teachings of John Paul II, Benedict understands society as "a system with three subjects: the *market*, the *State* and *civil society*." Each of these fields is

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[14] Benedict's eagerness to reconstruct CST as a contribution to "a new humanistic synthesis" once again confirms the relevance of CST to our Sino-American dialogue. Given the degree of overlapping consensus between CST and Confucian moral philosophy, one might be tempted to accept Ruiping Fan's suggestion that Confucian morality be regarded as the common starting point for such an effort, with the differences among Chinese perspectives being marginalized as differences in merely "metaphysical" presuppositions. This detailed account of how CST conceives of the common good and the principle of subsidiarity, however, ought to suggest that differences in "metaphysics" are very important, and themselves need to be the subject of dialogue. For it is impossible to detach CST's practical perspectives—as this paper shows—from the Christian theocentric presuppositions, its claim as a "God's-eye view," if you will. The differences apparent at that "metaphysical" level, however, are hardly intractable, if one takes into account the diverse history of Christian theology as well as the diversity of Chinese philosophical perspectives already represented in our Sino-American dialogue.

differentiated according to its own inner "logic"—the market, by economic logic; the State, by political logic, and civil society, by the logic of "unconditional gift." All three of these, in his view, are and ought to be oriented to the achievement of the common good. "Economic life," for example, "undoubtedly requires contracts, in order to regulate relations of exchange between goods of equivalent value. But it also needs just laws and forms of redistribution governed by politics, and what is more, it needs works redolent of the spirit of gift"[15] (Benedict XVI 2009, par. 37). Understanding the ideal relationship among the three fields allows Benedict to diagnose the basic cause of the current economic crisis as resulting from an imbalance among the three in which both the State and civil society have been eclipsed by the marketplace. His triadic understanding of society allows him to see opportunities for correcting this imbalance through the proper development of the institutions of civil society. *Caritas in Veritate* claims that such a diagnosis is both more promising and more realistic that proposals stemming from the "continuing hegemony of the binary model of market-plus-State" (Benedict XVI 2009, par. 41), which can only yield increasingly polarized policies either for deregulating the markets or for increased State intervention. His proposed alternative is not only a truer picture of social reality, but also one that enables a more complex and fruitful understanding of the interplay of core values, such as love and justice, in each of the fields of social endeavor.

The practical consequence of Benedict's triadic understanding of society is that the common good realistically is pursued by an ever-expanding number of participants—persons and institutions—working in social locations as diverse as business corporations, professional associations, civic organizations, churches and educational institutions, etc., throughout the world. This thicker description of how the common good may be envisioned and enacted, to be sure, requires something like the principle of subsidiarity to regulate, orchestrate, or, if you will, harmonize, the various activities in pursuit of the common good. With so much social activity now not only recognized but also encouraged, it is not unrealistic to be cautiously optimistic about the world's chances of successfully addressing today's problems of globalization. It is hard to see how such optimism could be sustained if the basic situation were as rigid and impoverished as it seems to be in the zero-sum policy disputes typically generated by thinking within "the binary model of market-plus-State."

The promise of Benedict's new social encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, is not that he has singlehandedly conceived a breakthrough in social theory. Many theorists, faced with the institutional pluralism emergent in modernized societies, have abandoned the binary model and formulated a theory of the social "spheres" and

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[15]What Benedict means by introducing the concept of a "gift economy" to interpret the distinctive contribution of civil society to both the State and the marketplace requires further clarification. Generally, he sees civil society as the indispensable generator of an indispensable form of social capital, namely, trust and the social virtues in which it is rooted, without which in fact both the marketplace and governments must fail to make their own distinctive contributions to the common good. I have attempted to clarify this point in McCann (2011).

their interaction.[16] Benedict's own contribution is to clarify the relationship between the common good and these institutional fields, on the one hand, and to propose the principle of subsidiarity as a promising guide for exploring the ways in which they may be coordinated for the sake of the common good.

13.5   Conclusion

By rethinking the principle of subsidiarity within the context afforded by a triadic theory of society, Benedict's *Caritas in Veritate* advances CST's perspective on the common good by enabling it to achieve greater clarity on the practical question with which we began this inquiry: Who is responsible for the common good? Clearly, throughout its history, CST has contended that, if the common good is truly common, then everyone must ultimately be responsible for it. However inspiring we may regard this answer, we must be realistic about the moral hazard lurking within it. If everyone is responsible for the common good, then, in effect, no one is responsible for it. In practice, such thinking risks encouraging Statism in spite of itself. If no one is either willing or able to accept his or her share of responsibility for the common good, eventually the State will surely do so by default, and on its own terms. Such a risk can be minimized, however, by allowing the principle of subsidiarity to guide our attempts to address social problems responsibly. As we have seen, this principle tends to limit the role not only of the State but of all institutions—like business corporations, and the various private voluntary organizations that constitute civil society—whose activities might usurp rather than support the persons and their families that ostensibly they mean to serve.

Each person must bear his or her own share of responsibility for the common good, but by the same token each person's attempt to exercise that responsibility will be effective only to the extent that the principle of subsidiarity is allowed to guide his or her actions. Benedict's adoption of a triadic theory of society enables anyone who follows it to have a better sense of where his or her actions—unfolding as they do within the various social roles and relationships that constitute our lives—fit into the bigger picture of how in practice our various efforts contribute to the common good. If each person were to become more conscious of the social location(s) from which he or she approaches the common good, we might learn to become more effective in actually achieving it. In so doing, we might also come to recognize just how counterproductive it would be to wait for the emergence of an essential definition of the common good, with substantive social content recognized by all in a universal moral consensus, before we rededicate ourselves to pursuing it. A sober consideration of the history of CST, for example, ought to suggest that for very good reasons even a "God's-eye perspective" may not be able

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[16] One immediately calls to mind the pioneering work of Abraham Kuyper, a Dutch Calvinist, and the contemporary reflections of Michael Walzer, an American Jewish philosopher, as well as the various studies on "mediating structures" presented by Peter Berger and Richard John Neuhaus.

to deliver such a consensus. It may also give us reason to hope that achieving such a consensus is not necessary for people to begin to work together in good faith to achieve the common good.

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