

On place, time and roots of confucianism

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Abstract We need places as symbols of differences and individual local cultures for enrichment of life, but we also need to go beyond places to hidden and unseen levels in our reconstruction of reality and onto-cosmology. We must realize that any place has an origin just like human beings have an origin. Places are developed historically and transferred to us with its values just like our own life comes to us in the development of our histories and cultures. This leads to the idea of a place as not separable from other places nor separable from time. Turning to Confucianism, I argue that shallow roots of Confucianism cannot be separated from its deep roots, and if indeed separated, it cannot be genuinely and whole-heartedly Confucian.

Keywords Confucianism · Deep roots · Shallow roots · Onto-cosmology · Place

Confucianism in different places

How was Confucianism generated and spread is an interesting philosophical question. Bob Neville suggested an idea of shallow roots in places.¹ The idea of shallow roots suggests that Confucianism could take roots shallowly and thus like a shallow root plant can catch on easily in sand or rock. If one studies how certain plants grow even in unfriendly places, one would notice that these plants have a strong life power which could endure. But the question is whether it is a matter of the place which needs no deep plowing for planting the Confucianism seeds or a

¹ See his paper “On the Confucian Virtue of Shallow Roots”, in collection of papers at this Conference.

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matter of the Confucian seeds which have been deeply rooted in the nature of people who are naturally attracted to some ideas of Confucius.

As we shall see, Confucianism may take what is on surface as a sign of the inner depth, depending how we evaluate our own lives in a changing universe. Mencius speaks of human nature (*xing* 性) as having self-creativity and speaks of human destiny (*ming* 命) as determination imposed by conditions of life. But then there is creativity in determination as there is determination in creativity. This means that we need an overall ultimate cosmic understanding of the formation and transformation of life and nature in terms of environment and actual circumstances.

Similarly, the contrast of shallow roots vs deep roots needs not to be confined to a learning of one virtue such as the *li* (禮 ritual action), but must extend to that between the objective and the subjective, the outer and the inner, the environment and the self; the objective such as space or any place of it can accommodate many forms of life in so far as that thing has an inner life which can catch on. By the subjective I have in mind that can bring out the same or similar identity of itself in any place in so far as it has accommodated it. I cannot but conceive life in this manner: Imagine we have an original planet in which life seeds have been developed but the place may become unlivable and life seeds have to emigrate to other places, it is clear that if there is any place which is like the original place, there is no reason why the life seeds of that planet could not find its new home in the new planet. Our challenge on earth is to find and locate such a place like earth and find a way to get to the place as contemporary scientists have tried to do.

The seeds of life may have shallow roots in this sense perhaps as intended by Neville: the seeds could easily move to another place and thus root in another soil to grow. We could see that life is not tied to this soil of yours or mine, it is free to move to another similar and friendly planet like ours. The key words are “similar” and “friendly”. But this does not cancel out the possibility that a certain form of life may be able to flourish under certain special conditions but may develop another form of life in an environment which may appear to be the same or similar to its home. The seeds of life may have to have a deep root beyond a form which makes form possible, and so is Confucianism.

Further we must mind the importance of time, for time is even more open than space and place in allowing anything to happen if anything could happen at all, for anything it has to happen in time in order to happen in a space or a place which is made available by time. Our roots in time are both shallow and deep, for our life is limited by our finitude in time and hence we do not go to other times even we wish to do so, but in another sense our life’s roots in time could be deep, because we were born of time and draw our life from a process of time.

As myself and others may share or may not share some views to a degree, it seems clear that human selves could share general ideas and feelings in so far as they are made from the same or similar sources. We may inquire whether there are general or even universal elements to be shared by myself and other selves so that they can be identified as an agency for transferring or transforming ideas across lands and find its place of growth and flourish in any place of the world. In fact, our question is how could we conceive the generalities across boundaries of our selves?

The answer is that people may have similar nature which could be expressed differently in different places. Confucius has said: “Peoples are proximate in nature and yet apart in customs.” (Lunyu 17–2). Of course, it is the places which make the differences among peoples in their customs and cultures and yet they have like natures which make them to share or appreciate ideas and values in an original and learned sense. This also suggests that there are degrees of generality in a space or place which make it possible to assimilate ideas from different places of different peoples. At least we can conceive such a possibility. A father has the same place or similar place in kinship relationships as another father in relation to their respective offsprings, namely they are fathers. Different fathers could have different contexts for relating to their offsprings who are different from each other, but there is still the same or similar relationship between father and sons even though there are different social arrangements or irregularities out the conventions.

By the same token, an idea which captures a relation or potential action could be easily worked out or taken over by another person in similar or dissimilar contexts.

Given this understanding it is clear that deep roots in two different persons presumably may present themselves in similar postures to the eyes of a third party and the objective observer. Their deep roots are parts of their natures, unlike the shallow roots which are externally related to soils or places. The third party as the objective observer would naturally come to identify the situation as one of similar responses as he would expect to do. If there is any divergence from what he would expect, he would register a sentiment of surprise and perhaps look for an explanation of why this is different because he should share the same nature and deep roots like the two persons he is observing. One can imagine that an observer watches from a distant TV how two nearby passers-by would respond to a child about to be crushed by a coming car. He would become disturbed if he sees one or the two would not respond to the critical situation as if nothing happened. Certainly Mencius would.

It is useful to explore how contemporary Confucian scholars have migrated to other places from their native homes. Wheresoever they go, they carry their seeds of thought or mind and they could find their ways of presenting them in learning or articulating, in action or in forms of responses. They receive echoes from their places, but they have to habituate themselves in new places and become effective agents for spreading the ideas of Confucianism, one way or another, on one level or another. The interesting question is how they act out themselves and how they fit into the places so that they could cast seeds without thinking of roots or the soil. It is a matter of natural fitting and a matter of exchange in the form of give and take, feeling and response to feeling. At this point we may consider how Confucius comes to initiate his idea of *ren* (仁 benevolence) which later catch on in various places because it has caught on in different peoples. We can speak of other ideas of Confucius, but we must recognize the centrality of the idea of *ren* in Confucius.²

² Confucius thinks of *li* a lot in his early days but he come to *ren* as the central idea of his philosophy. He did not abandon *li*, instead he put *li* on the basis of *ren*. This seems to be the common understanding of Confucianism. What needs to be pointed out is that *li* is changeable and variable whereas *ren* is constant and standing. Both have manifestation of place and time and yet one cannot but feel that *li* is more a matter of place and would be subject to changes in time even in place. It is binding and abiding in place and is remembered as belonging to a place and to people in such a place whereas *ren* must be cultivated to

Perhaps we can speak of two forms of language: one to do with roots and other to do with seeds. We can also speak of two sorts of environments, the place and the time in order to explore question of roots and seeds. First, let us speculate about the place.

Deep meaning and philosophy of space and place

We may reflect on our idea of place and elaborate on it in light of our philosophical understanding in reference to some classical writings for illustration, particularly, in terms of an onto-cosmological philosophy such as Yijing and Whitehead.

Although we speak of “place” all the time, we are not quite aware of the deep meaning of “place” in connection with space, time, things, environment, people, culture, knowledge and spirit. We can sensibly speak of people in a place and environment of a place and even the spirit of place. It is clear that a place is a concrete something and nothing qualifies as a place if we have nothing concrete and particular to talk about. We do speak of a place in history or in a system of ideas in speaking of a person and his idea. The place is not materially concrete but is a concrete position which suggests metaphorically a sense of place and location. Place therefore can be metaphorically referred to and this is because we can metaphorically refer to a space of mind in our imagination in which places could be identified as parts in relation to other parts of the mental space in an orderly system of orientations of above and below, right and left, conceivably with a middle point in the center. This way of imagination of a place suggests our need to coordinate and order things according to our general experience of standing point's place which can reach out in different symmetric directions.

The question arises as to how places come into existence. Clearly, to identify place we have to identify the space in which the space concretizes as places. As space is conceived as empty, can we speak of empty places as well? The fact is that in becoming places we come to see how space is not so empty: to become places is to become more actual than original. What makes places fully actualized is what make the space the space of something or the world. It has to do with our experience and idea of space and time as well. If we have an empty space, then we would have an empty place even though our intention is to identify something significant in regard to our possible actions in a place of the space. If we have a space to locate ourselves or other things, we have a place or a possible place in reference to our space like we can designate a place for our library in our design picture of a university.

Despite it is difficult to identify a place in a space, place can be invisible among all things which are substantial in the space because we can conceive something among all given things even we may not see that something. Perhaps we could

Footnote 2 continued

reveal its depth and its inward generality if not universality. *Li* is therefore a principle of difference due to place and thus a principle of place and *ren* is a principle of identity due to time and thus a principle of time and timely practice.

envison a place as an area where a concrete thing emerges and becomes active. Leibniz has the idea of a plenitude of being in which particular beings are active and leave no emptiness for space for our imagination. This does not mean that places in space are fixed structures for it is not but something to be identified relative to a system of conceptual or perceptual understanding.

It must be noted that although we could conceive space and time in many things according to history of western philosophy, one simpler way is to see them as some implicit actualization of the creative void in terms of rise of beings. In the Yijing it is said that there is movement and rest of the ultimate which leads to presentation of two aspects of the world, the hidden and the manifest (called yin and yang). The ultimate is no doubt the *dao* which is equally recognized by the DDJ. But in the Yijing the *dao* (道) has its creativity in the formation of the world of difference and that of difference of difference in an open space.

In a symbolic form it is formulated as the formation of a transformative system of six positions (six *yao*'s or six lines of transformation) which are actually places where events could take place for better or for worse. We need to stick to these six positions as we may reduce them or increase them in relation to the representations of the *gua* (symbolic forms). For example, we could have 3 positions for a trigram system and four positions for a tetragram of Yang Xiong 's Taixuan Jing (太玄经). Each position (位 *wei*) gives rise to a place for happening of events. Here the cosmological point is that in the Yijing hexagram six places are generated in a cosmological process in a timely manner (六位时成) in which they serve as platforms for happenings of things and events in the world.

There is of course the underlying cosmology of original harmony and creativity of harmonization in the philosophy of the *Yi* (易). Places emerge in the process as differentiating situations in which realization becomes a challenge to human actions. In short, places are indeterminate in the ultimate, but become determinate or determinable once things and events become taking places therein. There are no fixed positions of creativity just as there is no fixed pattern in an evolving open world.

In short, there is no absolute place just as there is no absolute time and no absolute space. What is important is that any place belongs to a system of places which share together the same space and same origin from the ultimate. There is no isolated place just as there is no isolated space or isolated time. As a place always belong a whole of places in a space, we might wish to say that all places are intrinsically related and are geometrically interchangeable. Once places are identified with things and lives, they are geometrically interchangeable but they may still remain equipotent to each other in an ontological and onto-generative sense are although they must be differentiated according different frameworks of perceptual and conceptual understanding. In Einstein's General Relativity Theory there is the fundamental postulate of covariance of spaces yet it is also clear that each space has its own space curvatures due to gravitational pull of objects.

As we must see a place as emerging creatively from a source from which things are generated, we must recognize a major second trait of place in that it is a location where things are to inhere, or to gather and to grow or prosper together. Whether we have things in a place and what sort of things we have in a place is a matter not to be

decided a priori. We have to find them out in experience and in our thinking out a model. Yet it is when we must see places as concrete locations we can identify things and activities therein.³

Or alternatively, we must create a place in order for collusion of particles to take place. Since we can always address to a place which is ready for producing or supporting existence of things, there is no actual place in space in which something cannot be found. Perhaps, we can also say: unless we have a space which is being occupied by a thing, there is no way to identify an actual place. This means that places are more than geometric locations or mathematical projections. We may have geometric and mathematical models to locate a place for whatever objects to be found, but they are not places in our experiences in this universe. In other words, places must be conceived in a cosmological scheme in which actual things are taking place. Insofar we cannot speak of empty absolute space or time, there is no way to speak of an absolute place in a empty space or time.

Similarly, as we cannot speak of place without reference to the whole to which it belongs and that any whole things is formed in time, we have to see that there is an temporal aspect of places which could make a difference to the nature of the place. In so far as we take into consideration of time, we have to see that it is not space but also time which makes a difference to places. Besides, there is also our sense of development and transformation, it is difficult to conceive changes in a place without conceiving time just as it is hard to speak of spatial differences in place without time which makes a difference to both places and things in place. There is also the change within a place and change among places due to time. Hence we must consider time and temporal change as essential parts of nature of space and place in which things accrue.

Next, we have to observe our world as the place where life begins and passes on and that there are special places which provide special environments for different life species to be produced and grow. What is important to see is that not only there are unlimited number of places, places show different things in the places and basically there represent differences of places. We have therefore to treat place as a principle of difference and a principle of differentiation of natural species of nature. In fact, as space becomes em-placed, place would have to become en-livened so that time could enable the place to develop life or to fume the place with seeds of life.⁴

In light of this phenomenon we may perhaps speak of place in an ecological location where life has to evolve. It is quite possible to have the original universe as a space without anything, and for that matter a place of no space or space of no actual place. Then we come to see how things and life eventually emerge and develop on the basis of micro physical changes of stellar dusts. In this sense we have the primordial universe of *yin* and *yang* in terms of which all things would come and thus we have all kinds of places for all kinds of things. Following the *Yijing*, we

³ This is a fundamental understanding of root or *ben* 本 as a source or origin. In *tis* sense Confucius speaks of “本立而道生” (Lunyu 1–2). The 本 can be shallow and it can be deep. If the *dao* is to spread far and wide, it must be deep and deeply rooted and thus deeply sourced.

⁴ This is an early concept of Buddhist cosmology where individuated consciousness is conceived to be born of fumigation of seeds where seeds as the fundamental source of life is a matter originating in space-place or emplacement of space.

may say eventually we have the framework of heaven and earth where heaven is the space for celestial objects and earth is for territorial things including lives.

Based on this vision of cosmic genealogy and ecology, we must see place as containing creativity of its own or as containing supporting conditions for the evolution of life. It is not just a matter of evolution of things but a matter of evolution of human beings according to the philosophy of *Yi* 易. It is this evolution which has formed places and transform the them into grounds for things and life. (#see first chapter of the *Yizhuan*, comparable to first part of Genesis of the Bible).

Ecologically, we now see places as grounds for evolution for life, it is no reason why we could not see them as grounds for evolution of human culture and civilization. As we can see, our human civilization begins in great places on earth which are near great rivers. Thus we see how Persian and Jewish civilization and religions starts in the region of two rivers Tigris and Euphrates. We see how Egypt starts its civilization in Nile area where Indian civilization and Chinese civilization starts in their respective river regions. The time also counts in so far we could see the concentration of civilizational flourish in what is called the Axial Age by Karl Jaspers. This could also hold for happening of transcendent religion of God, by which places for human creativity are almost guaranteed, for God is a place creator so that he could create life, especially human life in a place. In this sense place is an index for existence of things and life.⁵

With regard to the conceptual understanding of the God as a place-creator, it is not difficult to see how religions and other cultural objects and activities could have a place in a system of ideas and beliefs which have their legitimate places in both the biological and cultural histories of human beings.

To conclude, this speculative thinking about the cosmological and ecological meaning of place which I call the "deep meaning" of place, we must consider place as principle of individuation of life and activities in which difference and peculiarities will be displayed. We have come to see a place of thing as the soil and source of natural life which could create a place as a ground for spiritual life of a human being. It is in light of this principle we have to speak of places for the origination of human civilizations and human activities of creation, invention and culture. The essential message for this is that the name place has a deep significance in relating to whole space and time of the creativity of life. We may generalize over the deep meaning of place as involving the principle of whole-part, the principle of concretization and individualization, the principle of germination and generation; the principle of communication and interaction, the principle of regeneration and transformation, and finally the principle of consummation and return.

⁵ What then is a place? We can see from what we have said that It is a mistake to think that Confucianism simply belong to one place or China or must have deep roots tied to a place. This is not quite Confucian thinking. Besides we must see that Confucius is promoting something beyond one place which is the nature of a human person and this means that one must transcend a place to realize the inward virtue of a person: Confucius says: "The moral person thinks of virtues whereas the small man thinks of land." ("君子怀德, 小人怀土" Lunyu 4-11). Because the Confucian truth is in the human person, Confucius even speaks of going to any barbarous and uncivilized place without difficulty: "文言忠信, 虽蛮貊之邦行矣" (to have speech of culture and virtues of faithfulness and integrity one would even prevail in barbarous and uncivilized places." (Lunyu 15-5).

With these principles of place, we can expect a place to be generative of values and cultures and relate them to the development of humanity. It is starting from a void of creative possibilities which lead to the whole space of the universe. It eventually could become a place from where we could come to have hope for the future. One thing however should be made clear in this connection, namely, insofar as we speak of the germinating function or capability of a place, we need to take the background time seriously: for it is the background time which makes the place grow or change or even bring out its intrinsic power of production and nourishing.

What we have presented is what has been embodied in the cosmology and cosmogony of the *Yijing* where Qian or heaven plays the role of originating where Kun or earth plays the role of nourishing or supporting. Hence the place has to have a place in an underlying system of the yin-yang co-creativity in order to acquire its strength or potentiality of co-creation and co-development of man. In contrast Nishida speaks of relative nothingness as place which is devoid and transcendent of time. From our own experience with this lively universe, we have to see this dynamic and time-oriented approach to places and things in their places as closer to our deeper experience of life and observed cosmos.

Axial age and the creative theory of places

Given the above creative understanding of place, we can point to the flourishing of human civilizations in what is labeled as the “axial age” as examples regarding how places have played important roles in the civilizational developments of the four ancient peoples: the Jewish, the Greek, the Indian and the Chinese. It is apparent that there are civilizational advancement and religious breakthrough in those areas in the period between 8th and 2nd centuries BCE. Although there is no full theory for explosive new development of human civilization in these unrelated areas, it is a fact that such civilizational breakthrough did occur as a historical fact. The fact is basically that there is large and serious disturbance of social change and upheaval of old system of ritual and control so that a movement and campaign for political and cultural value reconstruction has been enacted.

The break-down of the old order and the search for new values led to various revolutionary changes in social organizations and formation of new sense of religion and ethics or value. Advocates of the Axial Age theory generally believe that this drive to new order leads to establishment of transcendental religion in Persia and Palestine, the emergence of science and philosophy in Greece, the formation of negative religions like Brahmanism, Jainism and Buddhism in India, and the development of Daoist naturalism and Confucian ethics of self-cultivation and transformation in China.

It is apparent that these four places have experienced tremendous changes because of turmoil of internal forces in four different areas. It is not the land or place itself which causes this change, it is the people and the states which made this tremendous change possible in their place. But we can still claim that the development of land, for example, in agriculture and political system, is made by the people in the land in the right time. Hence we cannot however ignore two

important factors for the cause of the actual changes: namely people and the time or age.

To take the Chinese development in the classical period for example, Confucius in the middle of sixth century started to worry about the loss of the Zhou culture and ritual and eventually made assertion of teaching of *ren* and related virtues. The reason why Confucius speaks of *ren* is not simply that one needs a hearty feeling foundation for one's behavior roles but because he genuinely feel that one should develop the code of behavior in terms of our feelings for both ourselves and other feelings and this he called the *de* (virtues). Once we do not have this empathetic feeling-reason base, all ritual behavior only serves an external purpose of political and social control, but no intrinsic end of humanity. He is a philosopher who is strongly conscious and worry about the meaning and value of human conduct, not simply essence of humanity. That is why he defines *ren* as awareness of "do not do to others what you would not wish others do to you" and also as the good will "to help others to achieve what they wish to achieve just like you would like to achieve what you wish for yourself".

Our virtues always have a source in ourselves which can be attributed to heaven and earth and it has a purpose or end to serve for the consolidation of a community. It is not mere to serve the community only at the expense of oneself nor to use community in some shadow-fencing technique for the real purpose of the self. The social trouble at the time of Confucius which we would call the "breakdown of rites and music" is one in which one is not openly grasping but clandestinely conspires to achieve self-profiting goals and has no shame about it.

Sometimes one can be very subtle and even righteous in making their demands in the disguise of a genuine gentlemen or a man well versed in *li* and music. Such a man of course has virtuosity and skills of human relations. Confucius calls such a man "xiangyuan" (countryside gentlemen), or strictly speaking just "hypocrites", who insinuates to authorities to gain access and make earnest ventures to seize opportunities all for his private and selfish interests, sometimes even in the form and in the name of doing the right thing with the right ritual. He may simply plays the roles of a Confucian gentlemen and takes advantage of situations and opportunities to make himself rich and famous at the expense of others without others knowing or having any suspicion.

A man of virtues could suffer from such artful gentlemen because he is not smart nor pragmatically oriented and is constrained by his modesty or incapacity of speaking smoothly for lacking art of speech. The artful xiangyuan gentleman is therefore able to make his case in front of an innocent community and becomes a hero enjoying the fruits derived from friendliness and care of sincere and truthful man of *ren*. That is why Confucius called the xiangyuan 乡愿 "the thief of the *de*" ("德之贼也" who has artful language and pleasing countenance (qiaoyan lingse 巧言令色), in contrast with the man of genuine character who would appear to be "firm, persevering and difficult in linguistic articulation" 刚毅木讷近于仁.

However the visions of the man of *ren* opens a new future and inspires the generation for a change of time and thus we have the seeds of change ploughed in the axial age of time. One has to see how Confucius worked his way of care for

humanity and people for 14 years on the road and come to settle in his old age in his hometown Qufu to complete his work on interpretations of the *Yijing*.

As we see from the *Yizhuan*, it is clear that Confucius finally realized the meaning of *tianming* (天命) and the heavenly source of virtues⁶ and inspired his students to produce the first onto-hermeneutic interpretation of the a text which makes its insights lasting ever. In this sense the change Confucius seeks is achieved in a long term and his teaching reached far and wide. It is not simply the rites or rituals but the doctrines and teachings of humanity, deep roots of humanity and creative source of humanity in reference to which rituals and social customs draws their significance and relevance.

Before we continue this theme of Confucian creativity on humanity in a later section, it is also important to bring the importance of time, temporality and timelines to bear on the change in a place in the Axial age. In the case of the development of the axial classical philosophy we see the fall of the authority of the Zhou Kingdom which only retains the power of name and formality in terms of the *li* by the end of eight century BCE. The Zhou Kings simply cannot consolidate its own power against the invading barbarians and depend on the feudal lords for defense. From 770 to 474 the period is called the period of Spring and Autumn in which rise of feudal lords is still constrained by political rituals of ranks, but in the following period of Warring States there is a chaotic and confusion of political struggle and society began to lose its morality. Confucius has witnessed the rivalry between *qi* and *lu* and wish to see the rise of genuine sagely king but to his great disappointment no such a sage-king like Yao and Shun is forthcoming. But he did not see what his followers Mencius and Xunzi come to see. Mencius see many bad cases of self-profiting lords who called themselves kings who has no sense of humanity nor even compassion for suffering of people.

Within a hundred years Xunzi would see a far worse situation and his coming to assertion of the badness of human nature is no surprise. The problem is not that man has selfish desires and likes at the beginning of their birth, but in following their unchecked instincts without any constraints of reason and ritual he would come to be ruthless bigot or intriguing tyrants.

As a fifth generation Confucian philosopher Xunzi holds his position to the effect that we need a political system of *li* control to be instituted and administered by a sage-king. But his sage-king is not simply a benevolent ruler but one has intelligence to create the right institutions and design rules of conduct which would preserve the order political and the social values of Confucian tradition. His emphasis is on use of clear snf unbiased reason and the necessity of learning, both of which he takes to be native to the nature of man.

With reason for the public and long term good and with learning and education, Xunzi hopes to rebuild a society for benevolence and justice on the basis of *li* (礼) under the protection of *zhi* (智) (intelligence). He is sophisticated and realistic and even pragmatic, but he is still protective of the Confucian virtues and follow through Confucian ideas of *ren* as self-control and practicing the *li*. (克己复礼为仁).

⁶ In the listing of nine virtues in *Xicixia* 7, we see the hexagram *fu* 复 is called the root of virtue 德之本也。

Although he is in strong disagreement with Mencius, he cannot deny that his idea of a sage must have all the elements of goodness of nature in the Mencian sense. Therefore as my early teacher Chen T'a-chi said in his book on Menzi and Xunzi that there is no conflict between Mencius and Xunzi.

Again before I get to the point of reestablishing or spreading Confucianism in the world in this age, I like to assert that the change of a time presupposes or requires conditions of change among people in a place: specifically, it requires an enlightenment on some basic method or approach to resolving problems and ills of the time. From Confucius to Xunzi via Zisi and Mencius we see a gradual enlightenment on reason and the Way (truth of the *dao*). What is important for Xunzi is not *tian* (天), not *ming* (命), not even *ren* (仁), or *yi* (义), but reason or *li* (理) which he called the *dali* (大理 great reason). On the basis of *dali*, we are to design a system of *li* (礼 rules of order, action and conduct) for society to follow with their educated minds and learning heart. Confucianism would have a new meaning and a new structure as it were in the writings of his 33 chapters. As we actually see from history, Xun has also fulfilled a role of transformation of the society and the time, he influenced two students, Han Fei and Li Si who are eventually responsible for the unification of China under legalist measures by the first Emperor Yinzheng.

Now we see how people and time (which means rising consciousness of need for change toward a direction) come eventually to prevail to change a place or in an implicit way to make the place of change. This is how great civilizational traditions in the Axial Age come to have a change: it is a time in which human persons come to be self-conscious and know both the world and themselves in a new light. It is the first enlightenment of humanity capable of heralding enlightenment in later times and the future.

What is amazing is that the four great civilizational traditions each with its own distinction and glorious past come to share such an axial self-consciousness. Suggesting a great leap-forward of humanity and reason in ethics and religion, and even in knowledge and technology, they do not know each other, and there is no communication among them. Nevertheless, each of them achieves a level of enlightenment which is comparable and communicable, and thus mutually accessible and mutually enriching. They have different forms provided by the localities of their respective places. To the modern man, we can see them as having reached some sharable enlightenment because they have the deep roots in humanity and reason.

This sense of enlightenment has dawned in modern Europe since beginning of 16th century when Jesuits went to China for a mission of converting the Chinese. But they also discovered how Chinese Confucians may share a view on heaven like God in West. The Jesuits sent information of Confucianism to the West, consequently causing strong influence and response in modern Europe, causing the development of an Enlighten Age. Here we see enlightenment as awakened to independent thinking and reflective belief-making.

Back to shallow roots and deep seeds

It is interesting to see how one understands the question of spreading of Confucian doctrine as a truth worthy of belief. If the doctrine is deeply rooted in its native place, it is hard to move the doctrine to other places, because it is hard to get off its original place, and it is also hard to get it planted in another place because we have to dig deep in a different place. Because of this, in order to spread Confucianism, Neville suggest that in order to spread Confucianism, we Confucians “need to put down salient and nourishing roots quickly”, so that we can plant Confucianism in soils which could be radically different from its original soils. This implies that we can adopt from Confucianism what suits us and used those desirable parts for our purpose. For example, we could graft what we consider useful on our social relationships or politics and let it grow to be a part of us.

“Grafting” no doubt is biologically possible as we have seen many examples in plant grafting and even genetic engineering. The technique we have developed has enabled us to develop new species and improve our local products. Given this metaphor and actual practice of grafting, the question is whether it is easy to make adoption of a part rather than a whole without changing the nature of the part. On the other hand, it is true that we could use a part from another species to improve our own native condition, it is still right to call the benefited species the name of the whole from which the part was taken.

The fact could be that Confucianism has something great to offer and there is no difficulty in making this offering. The result is good, but then does this imply that we now have Confucianism in the new species? Does this imply that this ability to move around with shortened roots would make Confucianism more genuine or make it less than what it is? Does this imply that Confucianism which has parts to offer (like a stem cell or organ) should maintain its own integrity and claim its legitimacy or orthodoxy independent of its part even though parts of it come to flourish in a new vital form in a different place? Does this imply that we should not explore other ways of implantation of the Confucian tree and make it grow in a new form derived from the new soil?

All in all, do we cut short any religion or ethics simply for the purpose of grafting or transportation or transplantation? Or do we bring out the religion as a whole and make it grow and glow in a new land, just like British Puritans who can to New England to practice puritan Christianity? Besides, we may raise questions as to whether we should explore ways of integrating two traditions in a more open way in that they may organically meet on some common ground and grow like gifted children from parents of different traditions. We may also consider what Gadamer has called “fusion of horizons” through dialogues which could take a longer time for transformation of an idea such as happened in European Enlightenment in which Confucian autonomy of reason was envisioned. There are indeed many ways of mixing and cut down deep roots to let go for shallow roots use so that they are easy to transfer to in other places.

I take the position that any doctrine or ethico-religious belief system may have useful parts for others, and yet it is still important to see it as whole. If we explore

the meaning of belief, we shall discover its deep roots for explaining and also for reinforcing its vitality even in a new land. Then we should see how religious and ethical beliefs have to make their own difference. We also should see how different systems of beliefs could influence each other to cause the transformation of each other. It could eventually solve the problem of sharing different ethical and religious traditions in a large community of communities such as the world community.

Given the above understanding, to speak of “the Confucian virtue of shallow roots” is either a promotion of some new form of Confucianism or it is a contradiction in terms. For the latter, perhaps the trouble comes from our double meaning of “deep root”, we may see the Confucian ethics as practiced in some habitual way and it is difficult to remove the habits or customs without any thing to do with the philosophical sense of roots. In the philosophical sense we have in mind the spiritual and conceptual understanding of a reality undergirding human being, giving rise to human nature and heart –mind. Hence we can speak of the unity of heaven and man as the deep root of being human.

This is to say that man is rooted in heaven or heaven and earth. As Confucius has said that “the Heaven has given birth of de in me” (天生德于予, Lunyu 7–23). This sense of deep root is also found in Zongyong “The nature of man is endowed with determination of heaven” (天命之谓性). Mencius speaks of knowing heaven based on knowing nature and fulfilling one’s heart.” Even in Xunzi, one speaks of knowing the dao in human mind which could function rationally with sagely wisdom in designing norms and rituals for the coherence of a community.

From this we see a deeper side of man which we call the deep root of humanity and this deep root is the source of human moral feelings and the origin and center for ethical and political visions and decisions as we see in Xunzi. Of course, people do not have to worry about this deep side as they can follow rules in their conduct to others in order to maintain a conventional morality for the peace and order of community.

Apart from the deeper sides of heaven and man, there is also the deep side of inner and outer which Zhongyong speaks of. The inner side is the deeper side while the outer side is the shallow side. With this, again, we need not to worry about our nature and mind, but concentrate on our behavior and action. We may seek correct action and right behavior, and yet we may not have the conscience and moral feelings which Mencius talks about. People can no doubt learn to do things correct in an outward way, yet he may not be able to meet deeper demands of life which requires attention of one’s inner heart.

There is finally the distinction and contrast of knowledge with action, both of which are attended to by Confucians from Confucius to Wang Yangming (1472–1529). Even WYM wishes to see a very close relationship between the knowledge and action, it is clear that knowledge represents a deeper side or deeper root of the human mind whereas action may have a shallow root due to likes and dislikes. But again the point is not to separate them, but to see each needs the other so that human feelings and human action must stand together, and one cannot function with one and without the other.

With these explanations, we conclude that we cannot simply have the shallow and outer roots without the deep and inner roots, for one needs the other and there is an unity between the two.

The net outcome of this discussion is to show that there cannot be roles –playing without a heart-mind of virtues and there cannot a Confucian role ethics without a Confucian virtue ethics. To separate the two makes either one less than Confucianism. Depending on what we could mean by roles or role ethics, there are many possibilities in treating the relationship between the roles and virtues. For example, we can start virtues without paying attention to roles, or we can start roles-playing without paying attention to virtues. Thus we can separate them and use them alternatively on different occasions, or we may have both and derive them from a common root –source for the development of both. One could explore these possibilities once we have a clear understanding of virtues and roles.

First, it is good to point out that there are roles to play among people because there are relationships to maintain and because there are goals to reach and functions to satisfy. It is important to recognize this in contemporary practical ethics philosophy of management and organization in various enterprises or businesses. I have myself recognized in my C theory as a philosophy of management and governance based on mutual support and balance relationships among basic agents such as the five agencies or natural powers. It is clear that there are no roles to play if there are no agents organized in certain relationships.

In nature we have natural agents such as earth, metal, water, wood and fire as early Chinese cosmologists have pointed out. In the world of man we have also the five types of relationships derived from five types of human positions or statuses, namely father and son, husband and wife, brothers and sisters, political rulers and leaders, social friends. Among these five positions we see them basically have to do with ethical and political needs of man.

Why a father should be like a father? If a biological father does not do his duties and virtues as a father, not only he cannot be a good father, but cannot even qualify as a father. Similarly, this logic holds for other relationships. As to why natural functions should become ethical and even political, the answer is that as humans, we have to live in groups and organize ourselves for higher purposes of life and spirit. These obviously require us to transform our natural abilities to moral and ethical virtues and even political powers in highly organized ways. Once we speak of such positions and relationships, we are expected as it were that we will transform our natural abilities into virtues and duties in light of our understanding these relationships and positions.

How to transform and how to develop our abilities into virtues and duties is precisely the matter of what Confucians have called self-cultivation (*xiushen* 修身, *xiuji* 修己). With self-cultivation we would have to develop our natural abilities into virtues or potential powers for doing the right thing. We can no doubt consider proper roles to play in consciousness of our relationships and positions. Hence we have the following embedded three stages of development each of which need not to cancel out the earlier stages of development and their standing functions. This means that to play role does not need to cancel out virtues but in fact should relate to a potential power of doing the right action (virtues). Nor would the latter cancel out

our natural abilities to act in many ways required by circumstances such as giving a helping hand to a drowning sister-in-law, as pointed out by Mencius. We could indeed conceive the three layers of our ethical responses:

Natural abilities → virtues and duties → role actions

The embedding of the three should be observed for their validity: Namely role actions should presuppose virtues and duties and virtues and duties should presuppose natural abilities. For x to presuppose y is not to reduce x to y but to use y as a condition for elevating x to a higher level of performance as needed in the human relationship and organization. This is possible that human nature has the ability to think, to be aware of others, to aspire and to plan for the future and to have a purpose of life or a high ideal of humanity. This I take to be the intended meaning of “*xiusheng*” (cultivation of one’s person) in the Daxue 大学 (The Great Learning).

Self-cultivation and virtue ethics

In the Daxue, it is said that one need to investigate things for extension of knowledge which would be the basis for making true (sincere) one’s intentions and having a correct mental attitude toward others. In other words, one needs to relate to the world of things correctly and to relate to other people correctly. This I take to be the basis and source for developing one’s sincere intentions and correct attitudes and action to one’s family and then move on to large circle of people in society. Eventually, one is capable of achieving good governance and leadership in the state and among states.

In order to achieve these goals on different levels, one must have one’s capability developed in proper skills and know-how and even artistry in performing one’s actions aiming at proper ends. It is clear that in order to do so, one must have potential abilities developed from one’s capabilities and these abilities are supported by desires to pursue values and to reach ends by following rules of proper constraint. This is then what we mean by *de* (virtue), The idea of virtue is a complex concept which combines a state of mind and a state of orientation of attitudes and intentions with rules and norms for realization values such as harmony and cooperation. It further leads to feelings of support and trust.

In this sense virtue is not an ideal state of reason or performance but actual actions and doings. When Confucius says that 克己复礼为仁 (to discipline oneself and perform the ritual is benevolence) (Lunyu 12–1), he has in mind precisely a state of mind disposed toward restraining one’s arbitrary desires for the purpose of correct actions toward others. *Ren* (仁) is no doubt a virtue and in fact the arch-virtue for all the virtues, why? Because it requires a proper attitude and desire in observance of the rule: “Do not do to others what you would not want others to do to you” (己所不欲勿施于人 Lunyu 15–23) This goes for all other Confucian virtues.

My point about restating what is a Confucian virtue is to make it clear that doing virtues involves and necessitate performance of right action which would require knowledge and skill. There is indeed the playing of roles for achieving one’s life

purpose. But does this presuppose skills and role play artistry? Yes, yet this does not mean that one's rule-playing and able use of skills for such should or could substitute what is required of a person as a moral person (*junzi* 君子) or sage.

Since playing roles is considered as requiring virtues as a presupposition in the Confucian ethics, or put this way, since in having virtues and doing virtuous action one has to learn the right skills and arts of performing actions, is it therefore possible or better to separate the two? The answer seems to be an obviously no. But supporters of Confucian roles does not seem wish to make this presupposition or requires this virtuous base. Hence we have the role ethical position according to which we simply perform roles of human relationship with skillful actions and artful performance without a theory of virtues as its sustainable frame. Neville even has this to say: "For Confucianism, Ames says, it is the cultivation of skills, capacities and the arts of playing roles relative to other people. The Confucian exemplary person does not have humaneness, righteousness, and propriety in general, but always as involved in roles, such as those of filiality, husband or wife, neighborliness in economic and social life, responsibility and subordination in political life, roles of friend to friend." (quoted from Neville's paper on Page 4, second paragraph). It is clear from this quote that a role ethics agent would not need to have virtues in so far he could play well the rules aiming at human relationships.

This statement may very well be a statement of actual fact to which I can recognize, for in fact we do see many and perhaps far many people who do well in role playing and only pay lip-service to virtues. But we should not forget that we wish to inquire into the sources and origins of human moral conventions, nor should we forget that we are arguing whether Confucian ethics is merely role ethics or role ethics plus virtue ethics. As I have made clear, we have to make roles based on virtues in order to give legitimacy to roles and thus to justify and provide substance and validity to roles playing based from virtues. The key point of Confucian virtues ethics in Daxue and Zhongyong is to require of each member of humanity and society self-cultivation of virtues so that one can play roles properly but not independently of virtues.

As I have pointed out above, Confucius has specifically made clear his worry about the case of countryside gentlemen (*xiangyuan* 乡愿) who can perform his roles well and yet does not have virtues, nor care for one's virtues. In Mencius, it is specially advocated that one should not just do *ren* and *yi*, but do it from the virtues of *ren* and *yi*. (*"fei xing renyi, you renyi xing 非行仁义, 由仁义行也" in Mengzi Lilou xia 18). Both Confucius and Mencius understood the problem of separating virtues and roles and worry about losing virtues in play roles alone.

I am not aware there being any valid argument for invalidating virtues in Confucianism. One may suggest that as the Confucian virtues is different from the Greek or the Aristotelian idea of virtues, it is improper and confusing to identify Confucian ethics with virtue ethics. There may involve a question of understanding virtues in Confucian philosophy or in Chinese language. But to all appearance, the idea of *de* 德 whether in Confucianism or/and in Daoism is best understood as virtue as power or potential agency in a large sense and as moral power and moral potential agency in a narrow sense.

The Daoist may take *de* more neutrally than the Confucian who has identify the *de* as the power of doing good to oneself and others, namely moral power. But this sense of *de* does not make *de* either metaphysical or merely a function of the *dao*. It does not require that one exercise one's *de* perfectly so that we can be said to be in possession of the *de*. There may be awkwardness or ambiguity in exercising one's *de*, but this does not mean that the person who does this have no virtues but only that he has not practiced well. In contrast with the Greek idea of *arete* which means excellence in one's performance of a moral ability, the Confucian idea of *de* does not mean excellence in performance, but it does mean genuineness and truthfulness (*cheng*) in one's actions. However this does not justify withdrawing the label of virtues ethics from attributing to Confucianism.

The Neo-Confucian idea of *gongfu* (efforts 功夫) however is intended to suggest how our practice of virtues could be refined, more refined or less refined in comparing with others. But then I do not see how the idea of role-playing must relate to *gongfu*, for the latter seems to have inner dimension of exercising our heart-mind than simply perfecting a skill in performing a role. I suspect that the role playing idea seems to derive come from the dramatic stage performance of actors. It is in reference to actors in shows or movies we are able to see how roles could be played well and lively. But actors however are not the original persons even though they could play their roles better and more appealing than the original persons. To identify Confucian ethics should not reduce Confucian virtues to merely role playing and then to reduce Confucian ethics to some Confucian artfulness or artistic virtuosity.

To play well a role sometimes one has to forget one's genuine self just like an actor. This no doubt makes a caricature of the Confucian identity as a human being in the cosmos and thus to substitute the appearance or mask for the true face. This is what the role ethics could become: a drama without true identity. This view is of course consistent with some contemporary view on Confucian human self as a bundle of human relationships. But again there is no substantial ground for attributing this view to the Confucian self.⁷ Without getting into details, this conception of relational self as attributed to Confucian ethics is a problem which does not match Confucians own understanding of human self.

For Confucius, there is the idea of a watching oneself in solitude. Although self-relation is a relationship, there is however the sense of the subject and the sense of an independent and free self as the idea of self-criticism and self-reflection. The philosophical point is that we could interpret an ancient text artfully but we still have to respect what the text have suggested otherwise.

In summary, from the above we have seen that roles and actions must come from a source based on self-cultivation of virtues in one's self. Without virtues, apart from the question of sustainability there could be a question of split of human personality if one still has one's true identity.

⁷ Confer David Wong 's paper On Relational and Autonomous Selves (Journal of Chinese Philosophy,... 2015),...

Right action versus ritual action

However, we have to see how Neville has provided us a clear and useful argument for a realistic, but not just a pragmatic importance of role playing without addressing virtues. Neville's argument is this (see his pages 6–7); Confucian virtues must be cultivated in different situations which constitute the living contexts in which a Confucian person must act out himself. In order to live well and act smoothly one must learn how to act skillfully, that is, to do the right move and adapt to situational demands involved with relationship and positions of many people.

How to act well, not just act right, is often an art which one must practice in all times. With this being said, a person who act well and right according to situations could survive well as well for he plays his role not only correctly but pleasantly. His personality and character are to be shaped thus according to the contexts of life, and there is no other thing really mattering for him than living well by acting right and acting well according to his role and in light of the relationships he is confronted with. Apparently, this is also the way to preserve or establish one's identify as he can be identified by his roles played by him in ritual actions.

Neville is aware that we could be subject to vicious rules of behavior or ritual rules which lead to bad habits and oppressive practices such as discrimination against women and children in various places. But in essence he seems to hold the belief that man must be fully shaped by his circumstances so that he would not get hurt.

On reflection, as far as I can see, this account may ignore two important facts concerning human character: First, although we can be shaped by our exposure to places and people, we can still take initial in developing our own talent and capability to do our own projects for transformation of reality, even within limits of accessibility and mutuality. Hence we should not lose sight that we could influence our environments, our times and other people by taking our own initiatives. One may maintain one could do this according to our roles or within limits of one's roles, but the question is that we may have to change our roles and develop new roles on the basis of considerations of virtues and duties or rights relative to a given situation. Roles do not determine all the factors in our moral action.

Second, as suggested by Neville himself, we could have "specially cultivated virtues of discernment and habits of attention and analysis" so that we could make our role playing and ritual observing more suitable and fitting in new situations so that "the playing of rituals in an exemplary fashion involves changing and improving the rituals themselves." But the question often is how much the practitioner of rituals could transcend himself in inventing new roles. He may have the virtues of benevolence, justice and intelligence or may not to make efforts for changing, if he does have those qualities, then role ethics is not role ethics anymore, but something to do with virtues ethics. If he does not have any of these virtues, then he would not be able to make those changes. Here the point is to bring out the narrowness and rigidity of treating Confucianism as the role ethics.

The point of my worry is actually mentioned by Confucius himself: He says: "知及之，仁不能守之；雖得之，必失之。知及之，仁能守之。不莊以涖之，則民不

敬。知及之，仁能守之，莊以涖之 動之不以禮，未善也。」(Lunyu 15–33)
 “One can reach for some good result by knowledge, but if he could not abide by it with benevolence, he would lose it even though he has already gotten it. If one could succeed in abiding by it, but do not face the situation with serious-mindedness, then people would not respect what you have gotten. If, on the other hand, your intelligence has reached it, and you abide by it with benevolence, and furthermore regard the situation with seriousness of mind, but if I do not move others by li, it is still not good” (translation mine).

Here Confucius has separated knowledge (what and how) from virtues such as benevolence on the one hand, and separate virtues and attitudes from li to be conceived as institutional recognizance on the other. From this distinction, one can use one’s role playing for achieving certain results, but has no virtues to support it, one is doomed to lose it. This is what could have happened to a *xiangyuan* (乡愿). On the other hand, one has virtues to hold what he got from his role playing, whether what he got has lasting and ultimate justification is still open question, for the idea of *li* (rituals and rules of properness) is different from simply a matter of ritual playing. It raises questions about what constitutes a ritual and questions about what means by “playing” a ritual. Again this involves a matter of questions of sincerity and genuineness and effective communication. Unfortunately It involves also issues of self-deceptiveness.

Perhaps, Neville would not object to make roles playing a part of the virtues ethics of Confucianism because it has been ignored in the Mencius’ s understanding of Confucius instead of rejecting virtue ethics as a more appropriate characterization of the Confucian ethics.⁸ But it seems clear that ritual action has to become right action, not that right action has to become ritual action.⁹

The very purpose of instituting *li* for Xunzi precisely is to make it possible that right action can become ritual action because it is right, not because it is merely li. But it is li which gets eventually to become intelligent and smart and virtuous as we go along with learning. I do not oppose Xunzi to Mencius as I see them as essentially complementary and mutually enhancing despite Xunzi argument against Mencius on questions of nature of humans.¹⁰

⁸ The three points of Confucian continuity are well made and I have no worry about agreement. The question may very well become how to properly label Confucian ethics, virtues, roles, or virtues roles.

⁹ Here I have some remarks related to Boston Confucianism and Global Confucianism: I have invited Bob Neville to address the issue of American Confucianism or Confucianism in America as early as early eighties. He has since then developed his version of American Confucianism as Boston Confucianism to which I contributed my analysis of the idea of li or ritual action and deep support from ISCP. Now I think that we are speaking of global Confucianism based on a global–local ethics in the sense of diversification of places for Confucianism, and Confucianism can be thus differentiated to serve the purpose of particularization of cultures. In this process of diversification, I would regard *ren* as the Confucian essence and *li* as its manifestation in light of Zhu Xi’s doctrine of one principle and many manifestations 理一分殊. Confer my article on 理一分殊....

¹⁰ We have to see Xunzi as a systematic philosopher who has developed his idea of heaven as Natural Force and human mind as capable of knowing the nature of Nature: See my article “Xunzi as a Systematic Philosopher” in Vincent Shen, editor, Classical Confucianism, Springer.....

Modernization and re-rooting

Confucianism has been a social ethics for China through 2000 years from the time of Confucius. But it loses itself creativity and survivability in modern Chinese history: one great drawback is that it has ignored other civilizations and has not interacted to upgrade its system of knowledge and its system of ways of action. It has the form of li (禮 rules of proper action) which is conducted smoothly among human relations as it thrives in human relations and play rituals. It has lost its essential vitality and become quite dexterous in playing ritual rules even to this very day. The defeat and loss of modern meaning is obvious to many intellectual Chinese and that is why the system of li has been rejected in at least two historical social campaigns, the May Fourth and the Great Cultural Revolution.¹¹

What resulted from these two campaigns is that not only the deep roots of ren is uprooted but the shallow roots of li is also uprooted. The rise and development of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism is an conscientious and self-awakening movement among intellectual thoughtful Chinese scholars who has their roots of life in Confucian moral tradition and who are exposed to modern Western enlightenment culture and harbored genuine wish to revive creativity and vitality of Confucianism from deep understanding of humanity and the world.

That is why Xiong Shili (1885–1968) as the leading force of such awakening has appealed to creativity of heaven and earth as a refreshing spirit for moral action of man. It is interesting to see that the new neo-Confucians do not elaborate the philosophy of li (禮) or virtuosity of playing ritual rites, for in view of history it is the li which has created a closure of human mind and produces ignorance and rigidity of values. What concerns them is how to regenerate the Confucian humanity and find a new form of expression which is modern and lively and useful.

In light of this reminding of Chinese experience in the world, Neville's criticism of modern Confucianism seems to lose its sharpness or even relevance. Whose li and what justification? What is clear is that unless the core of Confucian thinking is refreshed no external li has any real significance. In fact, Neville's recommendation that modern Confucians better free themselves from their soil and take a shallow roots approach and therefore make Confucianism more spread and acceptable must presuppose a deep commitment to the central Confucian values and at the same time having a versatile practical understanding of how to adapt to modern western society.

To many Confucian scholars it is not clear what this could mean in a philosophical context for it has assumed a vision of Confucian ethics as mere display and play of roles in human relationships. This is for many precisely where the trouble resides. What Neville recommends is perhaps more a matter of keeping one's deep roots of values and let people follow a new form of li according different cultural environments and places. This perhaps can be seen as indeed viable in two different senses as follows.

¹¹ In saying this I do not mean to endorse these two social and cultural movements. In fact, in analysis I deplore that intellectual ignorance has caused the first movement whereas the blind ideology caused the other.

In one sense one keep one's inner roots of values which amounts to keeping the virtues and adopt a new system of expressions and actions according to local cultures in local places, be it Boston or Mecca or Jerusalem. In this case a Confucian would be Bostonian Confucian or a Meccaine Confucian as we have to assume that he is still Confucian in heart- mind with Confucian virtues as its goal of life, and yet he has to appear to interact with the local people in playing roles as dictated by local people. He is Bostonian in form or ritual action perhaps as defined by some Christian principles or Meccaine in form or ritual action as defined by some Muslim religious doctrines.

Interesting enough, there is second case, namely, a Confucian may eventually lose its Confucian values and converted himself in religious beliefs into Christianity like a few Confucian scholars do (more non scholars Chinese become Christians even though they retain the Chinese form of life). But in order to maintain their cultural identity many of them live a life of Chinese li concentrating in playing their roles of ritual actions. This kind of people can be called Confucian Christians or Confucian Muslims. They have indeed taken a deep identity of another tradition and yet have maintained the shallow roots of li and role playing in their lives.

Given these two types contemporary Confucian variants, it is not clear which type could be more satisfying according to Neville's recommendation or advocacy of Confucian role ethics. I must confess that I cannot see either as genuine Confucians as they have lost either their inner identity or their outer identity which may be regarded as shallow. It is because Confucian ethics is a matter of a creative unity of the inner and outer in such a way that the outer must draw its life from its inner and its inner must have its expression in the outer. There is no cutting apart of the two. If one does make this cutting apart, we will then have two other cases of what Confucius would call *xiangyuan* (乡愿 hypocrite) Confucianism.

First, the Confucian exterior as playing of roles has no inner life or vitality, it is a matter of attracting others or serving a purpose of one's own. Or second, it may have no inner life of virtues nor real meaning for role playing as he is not reality interested even in role playing or role playing as a consistent code. Instead he is using role playing for whatever pragmatic purpose he may have in mind in a context which he sees fit.

The *ars contextus* becomes an art of using tools to enhance his own benefit in social ladder climbing and has no other meaning other than that. For he could play one role in one context and another in another context and as modern life has it, there are numerous contexts (such as panels or meetings or dinner parties) in which one can play well one's roles as one needed. Here I am thinking of a vulgar pragmatist, not the pragmatist in the sense of Perice or James or even Dewey when their names can be invoked.

One could not but think what Kierkegaard has thought about: we could have debonair happy-go-around who has cultivated best the arts of human relationships and use them at the most opportune times, but there is nothing in him, absolutely nothings. Because there is no sincerity and there is no real morality and no real care for others and humanity. He has what Confucius has said: a smart tongue and a pleasant face (*qiaoyan lingse* 巧言令色).

However I do not think that Neville is talking about such a radical type xiangyuan Confucian, even when he says that “Confucian rootedness needs to go just so deep as to resource the going and shifting rituals of what constitute flourishing civilized life.” (p. 9) The question is that the Confucian rootedness has to be deep like any significant philosophical or religious doctrine, For Confucius it has gone into ontology and cosmology of the dao and heaven as we see in the writings of Yizhuan.¹²

Even the Yijing as the book of changes deals with change, it also deals with non-changes or for that matter non-change in change and change in non-change. Whether Confucianism could resolve tribal conflicts or not like a universalistic religion, it is not a universalist religion but a sincere enlightened understanding on human needs for love, respect, justice and also orderly behavior as coming from inside life and humanity. It is not a matter only of ritual playing without confronting heaven, earth and man both in oneself and in others.

Concluding remarks

This paper starts with question of understanding the meaning of place for humanity and human development. To understand place as the birthplace of life and humanity is essential to understanding of what is a place as a place has to link to other places and to the whole space as totality of places. We have to make one place to be interlinked with other places, which means that it is possible for human beings to be related and even share a common ground for communication and understanding. In this sense places will provide resources for development of humanity which require our exploration, and yet at the same time could function as cultural enclosures which requires us to break down.

We need places as symbols of differences and individual local cultures for enrichment of life, but we also need to go beyond places to hidden and unseen levels in our reconstruction of reality and onto-cosmology. We must realize that any place has an origin just like human beings have an origin.

Places are developed historically and transferred to us with its values just like our own life comes to us in the development of our histories and cultures. This leads to the idea of a place as not separable from other places nor separable from time. I have only addressed time to some extent in this paper, but I have brought time as an essential part of our defining characterization of humanity and its resources. We are products of time just as we are products of places. Today humankind for its globalization project is engaged in consolidating places just it is engaged in integrating times, the past, the present, the future and even the future of the future. It is a challenging task indeed.

This then leads to our deep understanding of humanity as the creative product of time and space and derived from a common life origin. Because of this origin which

¹² As I have argued we have to understand Confucius in terms of his understanding of the Yijing as revealed in the Ten Commentaries of the Yijing as well recently excavated materials such as Guodian manuscripts.

we may call creativity, a human being is essentially creative and this means that he has to be engaged in creative changes and transformations so that he could fulfill himself and refining himself. To act creatively is to act morally, truthfully, and artistically, and this means to act from heart of place and time.

I have touched on the complex issue of deep roots and shallow roots of Confucianism, first in my original consideration, and later in light of inspirations from Bob Neville who has genuine interest and engagement with Confucianism, not as simply a scholar but also as truly a practitioner. I am proud of knowing him for a long time as a personal friend and as a Confucian colleague. He has raised important questions of shallow roots of Confucians. I have shown that shallow roots of Confucianism cannot be separated from its deep roots, and if indeed separated, it cannot be genuinely and whole-heartedly Confucian. I have given my analysis and reasons for this worry.

As we know, one half Confucian is not a whole Confucian, not to say a skin deep Confucian in playing roles only. Confucianism may be doomed to be a rare species but playing roles to become popular only hastened bad name of the Confucian species. However, I do believe whole-heartedly in whole-hearted Confucianism and argued for its globalization while encouraged its modernization or even post-modernization for half a century.

Reference

- Wong, David B. 2015. Relational and Autonomous Selves. *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 31 (4): 419–432.