

emphasizes the radical difference between Nagarjuna and Derrida, claiming that opposition and irreconcilable tensions, basically aporia, are exactly what Nagarjuna is denying. He explains:

Nagarjuna's project seems for its part to point to the deduction that all moral dualisms can only lead to a kind of ethical paralysis that weakens one's ability to move from attachment to justice. Nagarjuna's equation of samsara and nirvana lays aside any possible distinction between purely pure and purely impure acts, and along with these any need to posit an aporetic character to human goodness. (p. 55)

Edelglass notes a similar difference, writing that Santideva's denial of an absolute division between self and other would appear to Lévinas as a totalization and violent appropriation of the Other, while Lévinas' preservation of the Other would appear to Santideva as a reification and absolutism (p. 154).

From the broader perspective of comparative or intercultural philosophy, what is most interesting in this volume is how a similar pattern of undermining but not rejecting ethical norms recurs in such different contexts. Even though the tight focus of the collection on the European version of the pattern tends to obscure these differences, the collection is remarkably successful in retaining sensitivity to cultural difference while bringing about a fruitful conversation.

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The Ethics of Confucius and Aristotle: Mirrors of Virtue. By Jiyuan Yu. (New York and London: Routledge, 2007. xii, 276 Pp. Hardback, ISBN 0-415-95647-1, 987-0-415-95647-5.)

In a letter to a critic of his comparative sociology, Max Weber replied sarcastically: "Some may well sneer [that] dilettantes compare." While this may be an apt remark for some who attempt to do comparative philosophy, it definitely does not apply to Jijuan Yu in his groundbreaking comparison of Confucius and Aristotle. Yu, a well-established Aristotle scholar, is thoroughly trained in both European and Asian philosophy.

The successful comparative philosopher must offer a methodology that goes beyond superficial juxtapositions of texts and ideas. Yu proposes that Aristotle's concept of a friend as a mirror and a second self can serve as a key to unlock hitherto unrecognized insights that would escape those who study the Greeks and the Chinese apart from

one another. Just as people require friends to know themselves better, so Aristotle will, with the help of a comparative philosopher, need Confucius as a friend to know himself and vice versa. In the course of his study Yu finds ambiguities and inconsistencies in Aristotle and Confucius that, in the mutual reflection of mirroring, help him solve hermeneutical problems in each. This method also avoids the tendency to take European philosophical categories as the norms by which Asian thought is evaluated.

Even if we use the European criterion that good philosophy must offer arguments, Yu offers some interesting observations. With regard to the question of human nature, the Confucian tradition actually has a fairly sophisticated theoretical discussion complete with arguments, which Yu summarizes (pp. 57–71). Yu also praises Mencius for his “rich discussion of courage” and criticizes Aristotle’s coverage of virtue as “not easy to understand” (p. 161). Furthermore, Aristotle’s belief that rationality is what is unique to human nature is “poorly justified” (p. 68). Yu reminds us that in general the *Nicomachean Ethics* “is not a paradigm of rigorous argumentation, logical consistency, and definitional clarity” (p. 12).

Both Aristotle and Confucius reject the Socratic thesis that virtue alone is sufficient for happiness, and while they would agree that happiness comes about by a process of self-examination, they would not favor cross-examination, at least not the sometimes brutal Socratic *elenchus*. Yu states: “In contrast to Socrates’ hostility towards tradition, Confucius is characterized by his deep respect and affection for the rich cultural past” (p. 50). For both Aristotle and Confucius, habituation, ritualization, and emulating virtuous persons is essential for the good life.

Yu’s third chapter “Virtue, the Mean, and Disposition” is a tour de force of comparative philosophy and etymological analysis. It is an excellent example of how Yu’s methodology of mirroring demonstrates the power of comparative philosophy to provide new philosophical insights. Yu distinguishes between an inner and outer mean that he finds expressed in both the Aristotelian and Confucian texts. “The inner mean manifests itself by hitting the outer mean” with the former defined as an “inner state of character” and latter defined as an “outer expression of virtue in feelings and emotion” (pp. 80 and 81).

The Aristotelian and Confucian doctrine of the mean is not, as conventional wisdom has it, a call for general moderation in all things; it “is not a notion of quantity or proportionality, but is identified with what is right” (p. 79). Yu gives the example of Yen Hui’s death. Confucius’ disciples thought that his grief was extreme, but Yu contends that Confucius, given what Yen Hui meant to him, “did not think that a moderate response in this circumstance was appropriate”

(p. 80). Confucius' mean is just as relative as Aristotle's, according to which actions refer "to the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, for the right reason . . ."¹

For over a century, translations of the crucial Confucian term *yi*, particularly James Legge's "righteousness," completely obscured its meaning. Starting with Ames and Hall in *Thinking Through Confucius* and now Yu, the translation of *yi* as "appropriateness" leads Yu to make this essential clarification:

Ren [human excellence] is neither a matter of mechanically following and applying what the social rites determine nor a matter of blind love, but rather involves an intellectual aspect of understanding and judging. (p. 94)

Taking *yi* to mean a personal appropriation of *li* (social customs) allows Aristotle's practical wisdom (*phronesis*) and *yi* to mirror each other in instructive ways. *Yi* and *phronesis* are functionally equivalent; they enable people to choose the right person, the right reason, the right time, the right extent, and the right way to act. Expanding the parallel analysis, Yu proposes that *ren* as human excellence is a dialectical unity of *li*, the moral feelings of *ren* in its narrower sense of benevolence, and *yi*, and there is a similar dynamic among Aristotle's *ethos*, feelings, and *phronesis*. Yu's fifth chapter, "Practical Wisdom and Appropriateness," unpacks and justifies the details of the tripartite parallel structure.

In the last two chapters, Yu discusses the relationship between virtue and the highest good. He notes that Aristotle believes that the highest good is not a virtue; rather, it is *eudaimonia*, the state, literally, of having a good soul. Yu takes on the age-old challenge of reconciling this view of the middle books of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and Book X, where contemplation (*theoria*) and blessedness (*makrios*) take the place of a *eudaimonia* produced by *phronesis*. Yu's solution is to call *theoria* "primary happiness" and "the life of practical reason is secondary" (p. 169). There is simply no space here for the details of Yu's ingenious solution to this knotty problem, which involves the issue of external goods and a distinction between a contemplative life versus contemplative activity.

Yu's choice of the highest good in Confucianism is, next to his discussion of the mean, the second most creative contribution of his book. Outside of the Chinese logicians, there is nothing comparable to *theoria* in Chinese thought, and this lack of a distinction between the theoretical and the practical is the strongest contrast between European and Confucian thinking. Yu chooses the virtue *cheng* as the highest good. As in the case of *yi*, previous translations of *cheng* have obscured its meaning and therefore a proper appreciation of this virtue. Yu translates the term as "self-completion," which "is the

highest manifestation of human excellence (*ren*)” (p. 177). Yu is then ready to propose the parallel structure: “Just as *cheng* involves the unity between human beings and Heaven, contemplation involves the unity between human beings and God” (p. 170).

It is significant to note that only Confucius’ highest good is moral, because there is no moral content in pure rational activity. At their highest state Aristotle believes human beings are basking in divine intelligence, while the Confucian sages have perfected the virtue that Heaven has given them. I find it ironic that a comparativist methodology based on Aristotelian friendship tells us that it is the Confucian sage, not the Greek philosopher, who will look for friends.

Yu’s book is the best book on comparative philosophy I have ever read. He has proposed a very creative methodology and he applies his expert knowledge of Greek and Chinese philosophy with great care and insight. I recommend this book without reservation.

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ENDNOTE

1. Martin Ostwald, trans., *Nicomachean Ethics* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962).

Democracy’s Dharma: Religious Renaissance and Political Development in Taiwan. By Richard Madsen. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007. xxvi, 217 Pp. Paperback, ISBN 978-052025228-8. Hardback, ISBN 978-0-520-25227-1.)

In *Democracy’s Dharma*, a deeply personal, yet objective, and often fascinating book, Richard Madsen explores Taiwan’s postwar religious renaissance and discusses the links between the primarily Buddhist spiritual reflowering in an industrializing and modernizing nation, and the process of Taiwan’s democratization.

In the preface, Madsen tells us that in order to write this book, he had to return to Taiwan, a place that he had learned to know well during his years as a Maryknoll missionary. In his three years of missionary service, he was frustrated by his failure to make converts to Catholicism and left the Order. He then embarked on a career in scholarship, studying at Harvard and becoming a sociologist and China hand. He has had a long and successful academic career and is today a member of the faculty of the University of California, San