

An Attempt to Elucidate Notions of Lifelong Learning: *Analects*-Based Analysis of Confucius' Ideas about Learning

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This study attempts to examine Confucius' ideas about learning and seeks also to elucidate notions of lifelong learning. The examination will be focused on Confucius' ideas concerning learning as revealed in the *Analects*. Confucius' notion of learning offers an alternative perspective to overcome the idea of competition-directed lifelong learning. According to Confucius, learners should be oriented to learn for the sake of the "self" not "others." Confucius' notion of "self-realizing" learning holds that the self, being a part of interdependent relationships with others in society, attempts to utilize reflective learning to realize a unity of self and the society. However, if learners are oriented to learn 'for the sake of others,' their learning efforts are rooted in selfishness-based competition, which threatens the interdependent nature of the human world. Confucius' perspective of learning makes it clear that learning should be directed toward attaining a unity of self and the world. This unity is possible when a learner makes the effort of will to sincerely learn for the sake of the self and learns to attain an insightful understanding about interdependent life.

Key Words: lifelong learning, Confucius' ideas about learning

In this paper, I shall examine Confucius' ideas about learning with an attempt to clarify notions of lifelong learning. Learning, when understood in connection with schooling, tends to imply book learning. Confucius stressed that learning cannot be limited to book learning but should be oriented to life itself. For Confucius, learning is a lifelong effort of aiming for forging a morally excellent life and of becoming a virtuous person.

As society increasingly becomes a 'knowledge-based society,' notions of learning rooted in schooling are being reconsidered and lifelong learning are becoming increasingly emphasized. However, what lifelong learning implies in the 'knowledge-based society' requires serious discussion. As information and knowledge become the center of our society,

we tend to connect notions of lifelong learning to one's effort of enhancing one's capabilities to compete in a rapidly changing society. In other words, notions of lifelong learning are considered in connection with learning for 'survival' or 'competition' frameworks. It is problematic if lifelong learning is limited to the notions of 'learning for competition' for the reason that we will ignore other notions of learning such as 'learning for togetherness' or 'learning for making a humanized society.' We should consciously explore alternative notions of lifelong learning. I will argue that Confucius' ideas about learning will help us in exploring alternative notions of lifelong learning. Confucius' notions of learning, I will argue, encourage us to reexamine and elucidate notions of lifelong learning.

My examination will be focused on Confucius' ideas concerning learning as revealed in the *Analects*, leaving out the differing and often conflicting ideas of the numerous "Confucianist" schools. The English word *analects* means "a selection" while the original Chinese title *lunyu* means "discursive words." Confucius' discursive words were

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compiled posthumously by later followers of successive eras (Bloom, 1999, p. 42). For this analysis, I have used Chu Hsi's translation as the text and made necessary modifications in consultation with other translations.ⁱ

It will start with Confucius' idea of "learning for the sake of the self" as a learning orientation. This will be followed by the analysis and identification of the nature of the Confucian learning. However, it would be appropriate first to present a comparative philosophical background in order thereby to lay down the necessary framework for my discussion.

Comparative Understanding

"The Truth" versus "The Humanistic Way".

In Western philosophy, the question of "What is the Truth?" has taken centre stage. However, to the Confucian cultures this question does not occupy as central a position. Rather, the question of "Where is the Way" is more important in the Confucian cultures (Graham, 1989; Hall & Ames, 1998). The Western "What" question usually involves the questions of "What is the world made of?" "What kinds of things exist there?" "What is this?" These questions are raised with a purpose to attain facts and principles about the world. The Confucian "Where" question, on the other hand, raises the question of the need to "search for the right path, the appropriate models of conduct to lead one along the path, the 'way' that life is to be lived, and where to stand" (Hall & Ames, 1998, p. 103).

The concept of truth is understood differently between the Western and the Confucian world. In the West, truth is knowledge of reality, basically representations of the world. In the Confucian cultures, truth is performative and participatory. Confucian "truth" is knowledge about the humanistic way, how to live as a person in an interdependent community. The Confucian sense of truth as knowing to live to become a harmonious, integrated person within a community is contrasted with the Western notion of truth as attaining corresponding knowledge of reality.

The Western conception of truth involves two assumptions: "the existence of a single-ordered world and a distinction between reality and appearance" (Hall & Ames, 1998, p. 122). The former assumption is connected to an emphasis upon truth as coherence while the latter to an emphasis upon a correspondence notion of truth. Truth defined in terms of a conformation of appearance with reality, presupposes a distinction between things as they are and the things as they appear. The notion of truth as coherence

assumes that general ideas consist of a logical, coherent, necessary system whose truth is dependent on the coherence of the propositions.

Compared to correspondence and coherence notions of truth, the notions of "appropriateness or fitness" and "harmony" are emphasized as truth notions in Confucian cultures. What is important in truth notions, for Confucian cultures, is learning to act appropriately and to live harmoniously with others in the community. Learning and knowing to act, and to live, appropriately and harmoniously requires persons to have a contextual understanding. However, the contexts that Confucianists have in mind are not complete contexts such as referenced by "the Laws of Nature," "the Absolute Mind," "the Eternal Idea," or "the Mind of God." The contexts that Confucianists have in mind are immanent, not transcendent, open-ended not completed, which I will discuss next.

Transcendence versus Immanence

The notion of transcendence, which is essential in understanding ontological, epistemological, moral and cultural matters in Western philosophy, is absent in Confucian thought. Rather, Confucian understandings of rules, principles, and norms are grounded in immanent human contexts.

Even though Western notions of transcendence can be traced from various traditions, the religious and philosophical traditions are the ones that illuminate the notions best. According to Judeo-Christian tradition, God transcends the world but the world does not transcend God. In this sense, transcendence implies self-sufficiency: God transcends the world because God is independent of it, but the world cannot transcend the world because it is dependent upon God. In the Greek, especially in the Platonic and Aristotelian traditions, the notion of transcendence is clearly articulated. The Platonic, 'the Eternal Idea' is independent of the world and provides the models in accordance with which the worlds are made. The Aristotle's 'Unmoved Mover' is the primary substance, which accounts for all change and motion and grounds our understanding of the world. Whether it is theological or philosophical, the notion of transcendence encompasses certain common tendencies: to seek the unchanging, essential, substantive, universal foundation.

The Confucian understanding of the world, on the other hand, is not transcendence based. While the Western tradition attempts to ground ontological, epistemological, moral efforts by resorting to transcendent principles, rules, and norms, the Confucianists put more effort to develop appropriate, fitting,

and righteous actions, which can be possible through attaining immanent contextual understandings. Hall and Ames (1987, 1998) refers to this thought as “Ars Contextualis”—the art of contextualization, which requires aesthetic understandings of the mutuality or interdependence of all things within particular contexts defined by social roles and functions.

These two different worldviews understand the concepts of ‘self’ and ‘thinking’ differently. If the concept of self is discerned by recourse to a transcendent principle, then it is that principle which defines the essential nature of the person. The Confucian concept of self, on the other hand, in place of considering the essential nature of self based on abstract moral principles, is explicated by the activities of specific persons in particular contexts (Hall & Ames, 1998, pp. 14-15). The notion of transcendence absorbs dualistic thinking because a fundamentally nondependent principle or rule is posited as determining the essential meaning and order of the world. Dualism involves a separation between the transcendent, nondependent source and the determined, dependent object. Moreover, dualistic explanations of relationship presupposes an essentialistic viewpoint, in which the elements of the world are characterized by discretion and independence.

Unlike the dualistic polarity, one is a transcending, nondependent one and the other is determined, dependent one. The Confucian concept of polarity indicates a relationship which requires the other as a necessary condition for being what it is. The distinguishing feature of Confucian polarity is that each pole can be explicated by reference to the other: “up” requires “down,” “right” requires “left,” and “self” requires “other.” According to Confucian thinking, there is no element or aspect that transcends the rest. Every element in the world is relative to every other: all elements are correlative. This correlative explication requires a contextualist interpretation of the world in which events and elements are interdependent. According to Confucian correlative thinking, body and mind are not regarded as essentially different kinds of existence, as the West tends to view the two. The explication of how the world or society should be ordered is distinguished between transcendence-based worldviews and immanence-rooted worldviews, which will be discussed next.

Rational or Logical versus Aesthetic

According to Hall and Ames (1987, 1998), there can be two understandings of order: one is “rational” or “logical” order and the other is an aesthetic order. “Rational” or

“logical” order is achieved by applying to a given situation an antecedent pattern. Aesthetic order is achieved by creating novel patterns, thereby, by contributing a new aspect to a given context. Logical order is realized by the imposition or instantiation of principles derived from the transcendent laws of nature or of a society. Aesthetic order is a consequence of the contribution to a given context of a particular aspect or element, which both shapes and is shaped by the context. In this sense, “logical order involves the act of closure; aesthetic order is grounded in disclosure” (Hall & Ames, 1987, p. 16).

The concepts of “propriety” or “ritual practice” and penal law are good examples that illustrate these two contrasting understandings regarding social order. The Confucian tradition places more emphasis on “propriety” or “ritual action” than law in establishing interpersonal and sociopolitical orders. With regard to this matter, Confucius says.

Confucius said, “Lead the people with governmental measures and regulate them by law and punishment, and they will avoid wrongdoing but will have no sense of honor and shame. Lead them with virtue and regulate them by the rules of propriety, they will have a sense of shame and moreover, set themselves right. (2:3; Chan, 1970, p. 22)

According to Confucius, the order of a community is established better when it is constituted by ritual actions or propriety than when imposed or ruled by penal law. What has this Confucian saying to do with aesthetic order? To answer this question, I need to uncover the meaning of “propriety” or “ritual practice.”

“Ritual practice” or “propriety” is not composed simply of given standards or rules of action but has a creative dimension. Even though rituals inform the participants of what proper actions are, it is the participants who actually appropriate the rituals through performing them. When performing rituals, participants reformulate rituals to accommodate uniqueness and quality of the participants: the participants personalize the rituals. Rituals, on the one hand, inform the participants of the shared set of values. On the other hand, rituals offer persons the opportunity to contribute novel meaning to the community and thereby to be integrated in a way enriching to the community. Confucius put emphasis on the function of ritual practice as to effect social harmony, “In the usages of ritual it is harmony that is prized” (1:12; Waley, 1989, p. 86)

For Confucius, harmony is predicated on the premise that persons are unique. Therefore, achieving harmony requires expression of the uniqueness of persons. According to

Confucius, ritual without this commitment is hollow, meaningless, and even antisocial. On the other hand, rituals that coordinate the uniqueness of the participants is a source of social cohesion and harmony (Hall & Ames, 1998, p. 272). In a ritual-ordered or harmonized community, according to Confucius, interpersonal or sociopolitical relationships are defined by creative self-articulation of rituals rather than power-based domination.

Learning Orientation: 'Learning for the Sake of the Self'

Discourse about learning tends to focus on the matter of "learning how" in the Western tradition, where the contents of learning are pretty much predefined. Learners, in the transcendence-based tradition, do not need to worry about the "why" of learning because transcending principles already entail definitions of the "why" and "what" of learning for the learners. This is not the case for the Confucian tradition where the notion of transcendence is absent. In the Confucian tradition, what learners should be clear about learning first of all, is to determine their learning orientation. For Confucius, learning should be for the sake of self. This notion of "learning for the sake of self" is crucial in understanding Confucian idea of learning orientation.

This notion is hard to understand for persons who are accustomed to the Western psychological or dualistic concept of self. In an attempt to understand what Confucius would like to elucidate by the notion of "learning for the sake of self," I will begin with Confucius' sayings, "In ancient times learning was for the sake of oneself, whereas now learning is for the sake of others" (1:16; Bloom, 1999, p. 58). Confucius, by contrasting two notions of "Learning for the sake of self" and "learning for the sake of others," helps clarify the notion of learning orientation. For Confucius, learning should be oriented to understand and fulfill one's true self rather than directed to win recognition from others. The former orientation is illustrated by the notion of "Learning for the sake of self" and the latter by the notion of "learning for the sake of others."

Why should learning be for the sake of oneself not others? Or why must learning be oriented to fulfill one's true self? According to Chung(1995) I, who is considered one of the most prominent and respected scholars in the Neo-Confucian tradition, "learning for the sake of self" leads a learner to be integrated with others within the community, while "learning for the sake of others" drives a learner to lose oneself as well as others (Jung, 2000, p. 356). In the *Analects*,

in his emphasis on the notion of "learning for the sake of self," Confucius says, "A man of humanity, wishing to establish his own character, also establishes the character of others, and wishing to be prominent himself, also helps others to be prominent" (6:27; Chan, 1970. p. 31). Clearly, "learning for the sake of self" is not rooted in self-love nor limited to oneself but is oriented to cultivate true self so as to reach out to, and to be integrated with others. However, "learning for the sake of others," for Confucius, leads to the destruction of the self as well as others, thereby, resulting in disjunctions among people.

According to Confucius, if a learner is oriented to learn for the sake of self, that person has good grounding upon which to become a noble or superior person. On the other hand, if a learner is oriented to learn for the sake of others, then that person is sure to fall to the category of a greatly reduced individual. In my attempt to explicate the notion of "learning for the sake of self" as a Confucian idea of learning orientation, I will begin with the notion of "self-fulfilling or self-realizing" learning. Next, I will attempt to elucidate some attributes of self-fulfilled or self-realized persons. Finally, I will contrast some characteristics between self-fulfilled (noble or superior) persons and reduced persons.

Learning as self-fulfilling or self-realizing

Understanding Confucius' idea about "self-fulfilling or self-realizing learning" requires examination of contrasting notions of "self" between Confucius and Western perspectives. The notion of "self" from Confucius' perspective is ethical while the Western notion of "self" is metaphysical, epistemological, and psychological (de Bary, 1983; Fingarette, 1972; Yao, 1996). The Confucian self is perceived as a constructive and growing organism, and the development of self is rooted in interdependent human contexts. Unlike the Western concept of self as a thinking entity, the Confucian self embodies an active process of a human becoming mature physically, psychically as well as morally. For Confucius, self is understood as interdependent relationship formed and reformed through one's engagement in communities rather than in isolation from or in contrast to its surroundings. Unlike the static substance based self, which can be identifiable once and for all, Confucius' self entails continuous and lifelong growth (Kim, 2000; Yao, 1996).

For Confucius, interdependency is the character of human existence. Within this existence, the self is growing and becoming, formed and reformed through relationships in a community. What underlies Confucius' understanding of self

is that the self is learning and growing to attain a unity between self and others, nature, community, society, cosmos, or heaven. This unity is possible only when a person makes conscious efforts to be true to oneself, which requires continuous, reflective cultivation of self. Self-fulfilling or self-realizing learning efforts from a standpoint of "learning for the sake of self" notion implies that the self's orientation to learn for the sake of self, who understands interdependent the human condition, is fulfilled and realized when a learner is able to attain a unity of self and the world.

The Analects begins with the book by Confucius' saying: "To learn, and at due times to practice what one has learned, is that not also a pleasure? To have friends come from afar, is that not also a joy? To go unrecognized, yet without being embittered, is that not also to be a noble person?" (1:1; Bloom, 1999, p. 45). In this saying, Confucius attempts to articulate how enjoyable it is to learn for the sake of self and to seek self-fulfillment. According to Confucius, learning can be enjoyable when a learner has a chance to practice what he or she learns: learners' having a chance to practice learning enhances personalization of the learning. Learning will be more fulfilling when a learner has a chance to share what one understands with a friend who has a similar orientation toward learning. Furthermore, a person who is oriented to learn for the sake of self does not suffer despair or disappointment for not being recognized by others.

Nevertheless, it's not easy to set one's mind to learn for the sake of self and to make the will sufficient sincere so as not to be affected by external success-oriented conditions or expectations. Confucius even pointed out the contradictory character of a person who would like to assume that he or she is oriented to learn for the sake of self but desires to attain the opposite goals. Confucius says, "There is no point in seeking the views of a gentleman who, though he sets his heart on the Way, is ashamed of poor food and clothes" (4:9; Lau, 1979, p. 73). For Confucius, being able to be comfortable for, and enjoy the learning for the sake of self is a higher dimension of learning. The following conversation between Confucius' disciple and Confucius illustrates this point: "Zigong said, 'What do you think of the saying 'Poor but not inferior; rich but not superior'?' The Master replied, 'Not bad, but not as good as 'Poor but enjoying the way; rich but loving ritual propriety'" (1:15; Ames & Rosemont, 1998, p. 75).

Some attributes of a self-fulfilled person

In this section, I will attempt to elucidate some attributes of a self-fulfilled person. The first attribute of self-fulfilled

persons, I think, is that they are concerned with seeking the Way as their priority in living. With regard to this point, Confucius says, "The superior man seeks the Way and not a mere living. There may be starvation in farming, and there may be riches in the pursuit of studies. The superior man worries about the Way and not about poverty" (15:31; Chan, 1970, p. 44).

A person who seeks the humanistic Way and is oriented to learn for the sake of self, for Confucius, is not distracted by the attainment of external success but makes a conscious effort to practice the Way in every moment of living. With regard to this point, Confucius says the following:

The Master said, "Wealth and honor are what people desire, but one should not abide in them if it cannot be done in accordance with the Way. Poverty and lowliness are what people dislike, but one should not avoid them if it cannot be done in accordance with the Way. If the noble person rejects humaneness, how can he fulfill the name? The noble person does not abandon humaneness for so much as the space of a meal. Even when hard-pressed he is bound to it, bound to it even in time of danger." (4:5; Bloom, 1999, p. 48)

The second attribute of self-fulfilled persons, I think, is their being able to discern goodness from badness and their firm will to fulfill the goodness in their community. Confucius says, "Only the man of humanity knows how to love people and hate people" (4:3; Chan, 1970, p. 25). This is an interesting point. We tend to consider that a good person is a person who can love all. With regard to this matter, let's examine further what Confucius says.

Tzu-kung asked, "*All in the village like him*. What do you think of that?" The Master said, "That is not enough. *All in the village dislike him*. What do you think of that?" The Master said, "That is not enough either. *Those in his village who are good like him and those who are bad dislike him*. That would be better." (13:24; Lau, 1979, p.122)

Persons who seek the humanistic Way and who seek self-fulfillment, are truly concerned with attaining goodness. Because they are sincere and firm about attaining and practicing goodness, they dislike those who destroy goodness. However, persons who are not serious about self-fulfillment but more concerned to attain fame and recognition, are not capable of discerning and fulfilling goodness. For these people, goodness is not their primary concern and value in their life. Their primary concern is to succeed by attaining

fame and prestige.

The third attribute of self-fulfilled persons is that they place an emphasis on living up to one's word in human relationships. When one of Confucius' disciples asking about a characteristic of self-fulfilled persons, Confucius says, "They first accomplish what they are going to say, and only then say it" (2:13; Ames & Rosemont, 1998, p. 79). Confucius further mentions how self-fulfilled persons regard the matter of living up to one's word: "The superior man wants to be slow in work but diligent in action" (4:24; Chan, 1970, p. 28); "Exemplary persons would feel shame if their words were better than deeds" (14:29; Ames & Rosemont, 1998, p. 178).

Contrasting characteristics between the self-fulfilled person and the other-oriented person

As mentioned before, for Confucius, if a learner is oriented to learn for the sake of self, that person is oriented to become a noble or superior person. On the other hand, if a learner is oriented to learn for the sake of others, then that person is sure to fall into the category of a greatly reduced person. According to Confucius, nobility or superiority of persons is not rooted in blood but in moral character. Confucius elucidates contrasting characteristics between the self-fulfilled (noble, superior or exemplary) persons and other-oriented (inferior, or petty) persons. I will attempt to explicate their differences based on Confucius' sayings in the Analects.

I will begin with the first contrast: what self-fulfilled persons are interested to know or understand can be contrasted with that of other-oriented persons. Confucius says, "The superior man understands righteousness; the inferior man understands profit" (4:16; Chan, 1970, p. 28); "The superior man understands the higher things (moral principles); the inferior man understands the lower things (profit)" (14:24; Chan, 1970, p. 42). Their different interests in their pursuit of knowing and understanding entails their different value orientations about life. Confucius says, "Exemplary persons cherish their excellence; petty persons cherish their land. Exemplary persons cherish fairness; petty persons cherish the thought of gain" (4:11; Ames & Rosemont, 1998, p. 91).

Another contrast is related to how different characters of the two affect other persons in the community. Whereas self-fulfilled persons bring goodness to others, other-oriented persons bring the opposite. Confucius says, "The superior man brings the good things of others to completion and does not bring the bad things of others to completion. The inferior man does just the opposite" (12:16; Chan, 1970, p. 39).

Moreover, what self-fulfilled persons seek in human relationships is different from other-oriented persons.

The Master said, "Exemplary persons are easy to serve but difficult to please. If one tries to please them with conduct that is not consistent with the way, they will not be pleased. In employing others, they use them according to their abilities. Petty persons are difficult to serve but easy to please. If one tries to please them with conduct that is not consistent with the way, they will be pleased anyway. But in employing others, they expect them to be good at everything." (13:25; Ames & Rosemont, 1998, p. 169)

I have attempted to illuminate Confucius' emphasis on learning orientation by the notion of "learning for the sake of the self." Confucius, by contrasting two notions of "Learning for the sake of self" and "learning for the sake of others," reveals two learning orientations: the former is unity of self and a community-oriented one and the latter is an external success-directed one. For Confucius, interdependency is the character of human existence. What underlies Confucius' understanding of self-fulfilling learning is that the self's orientation to learn for the sake of self, who understands the interdependent human condition, is fulfilled and realized when a learner is able to attain a unity of self and the world.

The Nature of Confucian Learning

The notion of learning in the Confucian tradition is life oriented. Rather than being concerned to know the truth about the world, Confucian learning is oriented toward understanding how to develop and create a good and beautiful way of living in the interdependent human community. What is crucial in Confucian learning, therefore, is to understand the human way so as to plot appropriate and productive ways of living as a human being. Then, the issue becomes how to develop appropriateness and propriety in living within the community. Aesthetic efforts are required in developing appropriateness in living. Aesthetic development is rooted in concrete, actual life situations not in abstract principles. Through learning and reflection, persons can achieve aesthetic development. Below I will attempt to explicate the nature of Confucian learning.

Confucian learning is humanistic; a conscious reflection upon one's life

One characteristic of Confucian learning can be found in its humanistic nature. In explicating this humanistic nature, I

will begin with Confucius' saying, "It is man that can make the Way great, and not the Way that can make man great" (15:28; Chan, 1970, p. 44). This saying implies that people make and remake appropriate ways of living: There is no predetermined, transcendental way of living for Confucius. Appropriateness and propriety of human living is created by persons' conscious efforts. This is the reason why Confucian learning is humanistic. However, not all human beings make conscious efforts to live appropriately as human beings. Because of this, Confucius says, "By nature men are alike. Through practice they have become far apart" (17:2; Chan, 1970, p. 45).

For Confucius, making a good living is up to a learner, not something dependent upon others. The following conversation between Confucius' disciple and Confucius offers a good example.

Yen Yuan asked about humanity. Confucius said, "To master oneself and return to propriety is humanity. If a man (the ruler) can for one day master himself and return to propriety, all under heaven will return to humanity. To practice humanity depends on oneself. Does it depend on others?" (12:1; Chan, 1970, p. 38).

A learner can go forward or backward in one's life. However, it is the learner who is responsible for this. Confucius says, "As in the case of making a mound, if, before the very last basketful, I stop, then I shall have stopped. As in the case of leveling the ground, if, though tipping only one basketful, I am going forward, then I shall be making progress" (9:18; Lau, 1979, pp. 98-99). For Confucius, it is up to a learner's mind whether or not to seek the human way. Confucius says, "Is humanity far away? As soon as I want it, there it is right by me" (7:29; Chan, 1970, p. 33).

For Confucius, learning is both a conscious reflection upon one's life and one's manner of living and a search for gradual improvement of both. In *Analects*, a number of conversations between Confucius and his disciples regarding this matter can be found. For example, when asked about humanity (which is interpreted as benevolence, love, having a warm heart, and authoritative conduct), Confucius says, "Be respectful in private life, be serious in handling affairs, and be loyal in dealing with others. Even if you are living amidst barbarians, these principles may never be forsaken" (13:19; Chan, 1970, p. 41).

When asked about proper conduct, Confucius offers the following response.

"If you do your utmost to make good on your word, and you

are earnest and respectful in your conduct, even though you are living in the barbarian states of Man, your conduct will be proper. If, on the other hand, you do not do your utmost to make good on your word, and you are not earnest and respectful in your conduct, even if you never leave your own neighborhood, how can your conduct be proper? When standing, see these words—'do your utmost to make good on your word, be earnest and respectful in your conduct'—in front of you, and when riding in your carriage, see them propped against the stanchion. Only then will your conduct be proper." (15:5; Ames & Rosemont, 1998, p. 185)

Confucius placed emphasis on the notion of deference (some interpret altruism) as a practical way to learn to fulfill one's humanity. The following conversations are all related to the notion of deference.

Tzu-kung asked, "Is there one word which can serve as the guiding principle for conduct throughout life?" Confucius said, "It is the word altruism. Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you." (15:23; Chan, 1970, p. 44)

The Master said, "Zeng, my friend! My way is bound together with one continuous strand." Master Zeng replied, "Indeed." When the Master had left, the disciples asked, "What was he referring to?" Master Zeng said, "The way of the Master is doing one's utmost and putting oneself in the other's place, nothing more." (4:15 Ames & Rosemont, 1998, p. 92)

Why does Confucius emphasize this notion of deference as a guiding principle to fulfill one's humanity? I think this emphasis is related to Confucius' understanding of what he saw as our interdependent human existence. Humanity, according to Confucius, is rooted in acknowledging this interdependent human condition. The notion of deference, I think, plays key role to connect and to unify the interdependency between persons.

For Confucius, learning is to become a good person and to develop good habits of living, by performing and constituting goodness within interdependent human contexts. Certainly, there are people whose learning efforts are oriented toward realizing this humanistic way and fulfilling goodness in human society. On the other hand, there are also people whose learning is oriented toward the opposite direction, destroying interdependency and goodness. The notion of "learning for the sake of others," for Confucius, is rooted in one's selfishness. However, the learners who are "learning for the sake of others" make efforts to hide their selfish interests through pretentious outlook or talk. Confucius abhors these pretentious efforts or attitudes because they hurt and hinder

humanistic learning. With regard to this matter, Confucius says as follows.

“Clever talk and a pretentious manner are seldom found in the Good.” (1:3; Waley, 1989, p. 84)

“The village paragon is the thief of virtue.” (17:13; Bloom, 1999, p. 62)

“I detest purple for displacing vermilion. I detest the tunes of Cheng for corrupting classical music. I detest clever talkers who overturn states and noble families.” (17:18; Lau, 1979, p. 146)

Learning and reflection as concrete methodology leading towards aesthetic development

For Confucius, learning is directed toward development of good habits of living with others in a society. Good habits of living, according to Confucius, are possible when a person is enabled to act appropriately and properly in human society. A person needs to learn that the humanistic way is transmitted from this tradition in order to be able to act properly. However, learning cultural traditions is not sufficient for a person to develop good habits of living. Through reflection on what a person learns through this tradition-based humanistic way, a learner is able to learn how to act properly, thereby, to develop good habits of living. For Confucius, learning and reflection is the basis for a learner to attain aesthetic development, which leads a learner to be able to perform with appropriateness and to add novel meaning to human society. Below I will attempt to explicate Confucius’ notion of learning and reflection as a concrete methodology which can lead to greater aesthetic development.

For Confucius, learning and reflection correlatively depend upon each other: learning without reflection and reflection without learning is an incomplete learning effort. Confucius says, “He who learns but does not think is lost; he who thinks but does not learn is in danger” (2:15; Chan, 1970, p. 24). Confucius further points out that thinking without learning is of no use: “I have spent an entire day without eating, and an entire night without sleeping, so as to think. It was of no use. It is better to learn” (15:30; Bloom, 1999, p. 60). On the other hand, in a conversation with his disciple, Confucius placed stress upon conscious and reflective learning efforts in developing good habits of living.

Confucius said, “Yu (Tzu;-u), have you heard about the six virtues and the six obscurations?” Tzu-lu replied, “I have not.”

Confucius said, “Sit down, then. I will tell you. One who loves humanity but not learning will be obscured by ignorance. One who loves wisdom but not learning will be obscured by lack of principles. One who loves faithfulness but not learning will be obscured by heartlessness. One who loves uprightness but not learning will be obscured by violence. One who loves strength of character but not learning will be obscured by recklessness.” (17:8; Chan, 1970, p. 47)

For Confucius, learning and reflection is a basic human attitude of living. The following saying offers a good example of this attitude, “To study extensively, to be steadfast in one’s purpose, to inquire earnestly, and to reflect on what is at hand (that is, what one can put into practice)—humanity consists in these” (19:6; Chan, 1970, p. 48).

The meaning of learning and reflection is to be found in its connection with seeking a proper and appropriate way of living as a human being. Let us look what Confucius says:

“When a man’s knowledge is sufficient for him to attain (his position) but his humanity is not sufficient for him to hold it, he will lose it again. When his knowledge is sufficient for him to attain it and his humanity is sufficient for him to hold it, if he does not approach the people with dignity, the people will not respect him. If his knowledge is sufficient for him to attain it, his humanity sufficient for him to hold it, and he approaches the people with dignity, yet does not influence them with principle of propriety, it is still not good.” (15:31; Chan, 1970, p. 44)

Appropriate living as a human being is possible through integrating efforts of learning with reflection, of developing moral character, and of being able to act properly according to propriety.

Developing appropriateness and propriety in human living, which I refer to as aesthetic development, requires a unity of learning and reflection. Let us examine what Confucius says regarding this matter. Confucius says, “One who reanimates the old so as to understand the new may become a teacher” (2:11; Bloom, 1999, p. 47). Aesthetic development is not possible without learning the given cultural tradition. On the other hand, just learning what is transmitted is not sufficient either: it requires both learning and reflection on what is learned. Only through reflection on what is transmitted can a learner participate and contribute to enriching a cultural tradition.

For Confucius, learning without reflection cannot contribute to developing propriety in living: “Those who repeat whatever they hear in the streets and alleyways are at odds with excellence” (17:14; Ames & Rosemont, 1998, p.

207). Confucius' sayings in a conversation with his disciple illustrate that his consistent, reflective learning efforts lead him to develop an insightful understanding of life. "Tzu (Tzu-kung), do you suppose that I am one who learns a great deal and remember it?" Tzu-kung replied, "Yes. Is that not true?" Confucius said, "No. I have a thread that runs through it all" (15:2; Chan, 1970, p. 43). Confucius' insightful understanding, which is referred to 'a thread that runs through all' could be attained by his consistent, reflective learning.

Conclusion

Understanding Confucius' ideas on learning can help us to reconsider notions of lifelong learning. Learning, from a Confucian perspective, cannot be separated from actual living but ought to be integrated into life. For Confucius, learning and living are not separate matters: Learning is life and life is learning. Learning, for Confucius, cannot end with books and formal schooling but should be continuous for one's entire life, because learning is a lifelong effort to become a good person and to develop a morally excellent life within society. Confucius' perspective of learning requires a unity of learning and living, knowledge and action, theory and practice.

Confucius' notion of learning offers an alternative perspective to the current dominant notions of survival in a competition-directed lifelong learning process. According to Confucius, learners should be oriented to learn for the sake of "self" not "others": learning should be an effort aimed at "self-realization. Confucius' notion of "self-realization" learning underlies that the self, being part of interdependent relationships with others in society, makes continuous efforts aimed at reflective learning in order to realize a unity of self and the society.

However, if learners are oriented to learn 'for the sake of others,' their learning efforts are rooted in selfishness-based competition, which fragments the interdependency of the human world. Learners' self-realizing learning efforts cannot be fulfilled if learners are not sensitive to this interdependent human condition. Learners' insightful understanding of the interdependency of the human world leads the learners to make conscious, reflective efforts to attain a unity of self and the world. Confucius' perspective of learning makes it clear that learning should be directed toward attaining a unity of self and the world, which Confucius considers the highest stage of learning. This unity is possible when a learner adopts an attitude of sincerity to learn for the sake of self and learns to attain an insightful understanding about the interdependent nature of life.

However, Confucius' perspective of learning is not without limitations. Confucius' perspective can be criticized by its sense of elitism and sexist perspectives. The following sayings of Confucius are considered to be problematic.

Confucius said, "the common people may be made to follow it (the Way) but may not be made to understand it" (8:9; Chan, 1970, p. 33).

Confucius said, "Women and servants are most difficult to deal with. If you are familiar with them, they cease to be humble. If you keep a distance from them, they resent it." (17:25; Chan, 1970, p. 47)

Obviously, Confucius does not consider common people, women, and servants as equal beings to learn and to work together. For Confucius, it does not require a conscious effort to understand them and to be understood by them: they are considered as beings to be managed.

Confucius stresses that social relationships should be based on harmony. Confucius distinguishes harmony from sameness: whereas sameness demands assimilation, harmony calls for expression of individuality. With regard to the distinction of harmony and sameness, Confucius says, "Exemplary (noble, or superior) persons seek harmony not sameness; petty (small or inferior) persons, then, are the opposite" (13:23; Ames & Rosemont, 1998, p. 169). For Confucius, a person's nobility or superiority is not rooted in blood but in moral excellence. Nevertheless, Confucius does not seem to perceive women, servants, and common people as persons capable of achieving moral excellence. According to this perception, women, servants, and common people are better assimilated since they are not beings capable of developing harmonious relationships.

For Confucius, it is natural for common people, women, and servants to follow as their leaders lead them: "the character of a ruler is like the wind and that of the people is like the grass. In whatever direction the wind blows, the grass always bends" (12:19; Chan, 1970, p. 40). Often, this saying can be distorted to legitimize authoritarianism. For Confucius, not all rulers are noble and superior in a moral sense. A person's position or power does not give moral authority to lead people unless one achieves moral excellence by developing sincerity in one's learning for the sake of self and makes conscious, reflective efforts to understand the interdependent human world and to attain a unity of self and the world. Likewise, not all aged males are superior to women and the young in a moral sense. This is something which Confucius did not consider, and it results in a weakening of

his humanizing notion of learning and change. By including perspectives of women and the young, Confucius' ideas about learning can help us to elucidate his humanizing notion of lifelong learning.

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Notes

1. Chu Hsi had compiled and translated *Analects*. It is titled, "Nonoue Jipju" in Korean. A great number of Korean scholars have translated these works. I have referred to these Korean translations. For English translations, I have referred to James Legge, Wing-tsit Chan, Arthur Waley, Roger Ames & Henry Rosemont, Irene Bloom, Raymond Dawson, D. C. Lau's translations.

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