Discussion of Dr. Wurmsers’s Paper:
The Question of Conflict in Chinese Thought,
Especially in Confucius - Some Psychoanalytic Considerations

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In accordance with Dr. W’s thesis most part, I will expand the theme of “hidden inner conflict” or “intrinsic cracks” such way that we could have a glimpse of how Confucius and his disciples struggled to deal with them.

Let me start with the issue of the absence of sexual desire and sensuality as a theme in Confucius’ writing with is, as Dr. W thought, subsumed under the letter desire Yü (欲). Actually sensuality and sexuality were subsumed under the category of human nature called Xing (性) (Sometimes letter colore (色) denotes eroticism). However we could trace how Confucius had dealt with the conflict and impulses through various conversations he held with his disciples. What is the model of Confucius’ idea of the human mind? Confucius said “At forty I no longer had doubts. (四

十而不惑)” and Mencius also said: “At forty I had achieved the unmoved mind.” It has to do with the way of managing two constituent elements in man. Will and Qi (氣). At forty both Confucius and Mencius had arrived at the certain point where they achieved a certain balance of these two elements of mind without conflict. Here Will meant conflated ego and superego and Qi meant breath, vapor or passion-nature which invested in the body and charged it with living energy. Confucius believed in the
Myunghee Kim

subordination of Qi under the Will and that this relationship must be strictly preserved; neither element should be allowed to disturb the other, that Qi should not be repressed by Will but fostering, not forcing, of its natural growth (E Herbert: A Confucius notebook). Qi seems to resonate Id drive elements. Here the balance should be maintained by middle way which was elaborated in the book called Doctrine of Mean (中庸). Mencius practiced the cultivation of Qi through the inhalation of the night air. I believe both Kong Zi and Mang Zi took the path of asceticism to achieve a so-called state of “no doubt” or “unmoved mind”. Both Confucius and Mencius left their wives before their forties and also Confucius’ grand son Zi Si (子思) who wrote the Doctorine of the mean, left his wife to pursue the Confucian school (Book of Rite (禮記 應經上篇 第28節 第4節)).¹ Before he decided to leave his wife, when Mancius was struggling between sexual desire for his wife and the lofty path of Confucius, he described his struggle: “Fish is the one I desire and the bear’s palm is the one I desire, too,” and then he said “since I couldn’t take both I dicard the fish and choose the bears’s palm² (魚我所欲也 慾掌亦所欲也 二者不可得兼捨魚而取 慾掌)” (from Mencius). Here he compared the fish with a living thing—his wife—and bear’s palm with righteousness. It is self evident that the bear’s palm is of higher rank than fish.

In the Analects there is a passage called “the secret self” in which Kong Zi examined his conscience daily to guard against self deception in his motives and conduct. He said that to think twice before acting is enough (三思而後行 再思可也). Also in the book the Great Learning³ (大學) Kong Zi said that a gentleman should keep watch over himself when he is alone (慎獨). The basic idea is this: If his motives are not tested in private, a man

¹) 荀子：解蔽篇 孟子是 負子 聲耳 妻爾 儀做了
HSÜN TSH: By Burton Watson, Columbia Univ Press., 133. Mencius was shocked at his wife behavior and turned her out of house.

2) 孟子: 告子 上篇 第十章

Discussion of Dr. Wurmsber's Paper

is likely to deceive himself, imagining his conduct to be genuine when it is not. Also in the same book there is a similar passage in the form of an inference from the paradox that "nothing is clearer than what is concealed, nothing is more manifest than what is minute". Here stress was laid on the value of introspective study of the secret self (Herbert). In other word in Confucius tradition introspection into the conflicted self was expressed as the concealed self and kept strictly in a private domain of self. Here already one can see budding trace of self analysis. How then do Confucius minded Asian people deal with their desire and aggression without bending their moral standard? There is a trick and deception that they pursue their desire and express their aggression under the name of parents or family, clan or emperor and ultimately one's country. Since the scholars are more tuned into the tradition of the introspection, they end up most of the time either ascetic or very poor.

To illustrate the inner conflict of man in the Confucian tradition I would like to present two different schools of Confucius disciples in regarding the model of the human mind. Meng Xi (born B.C. 373) divided human psychic functions into two parts, Heart and Organ. (Guan 〔官〕): The part of heart has the intellectual functions of thinking and judgement, and the sensual and drive elements are located in the Organ-part which is made of Eye and Ear Organs-the sexual organ is missing. The Heart is made of four parts; heart for pity, shame, deference, discrimination of right and wrong. Man is born with heart and each heart could develop into its polarization, namely heart of pity to benoverture, shame to righteousness, deference to rituals and discrimination of right and wrong to wisdom. If a person expands these four hearts by the right education naturally, he is able to acquire the four virtues of benoverture, righteousness, rituals and wisdom. Man's desires are only aroused by external stimulation through the organ of eye and ear. If his heart is lost or disturbed and does not function properly, desire takes over the person. So the task is how to restore, the heart which had gone astray. As one can
easily see the aspect of aggression is missing. Since man is born with elements which could develop into desirable virtues, Mencius's theory is called "The fundamental goodness of man's nature (性善説)". His theory seems to be like a combination of Hartment's autonomous ego function and Kohut's restoration of self.

Another school called "The fundamental badness of human nature (性惡説)" was created by Xun Zi (荀子) (born ca 312 B.C.). He believed that human desire manifests as soon as the human being is born. Since man has desire, he is always looking for something. If every man were given full rein of his desires, the result would be, according to his theory, that conflict is inevitable, which leads to fights, war and a state of affairs which is bad. Thus human nature is bad. He believed the ancient sage invented morality as a way out of the human predicament; that morality is a possible solution to the problem of human conflict, but morality is a possible solution of the problem of human conflict, but morality does not forms a part of human nature. He claimed that ancient sage arrived at solution of the problem in two ways: The first one is by the regimentation of desire not by suppressing desire but by providing man's needs or desire within a reasonable degree according to social structure (acknowledgement of entitlement) and setting limits on his desire. The second one is by means of habituation, that man can be trained in a way which is contrary to his nature. Habit can become second nature through the function of heart. His psychology echoes the flavor of the Kleinean and Adlerain schools of psychoanalysis. He also postulates the acquisition of the defensive function of ego, a secondary ego function. He draws a distinction between the psychic function of desire for a thing and the positive action of going after it, a kind of separation of wish and action. Heart has certain control over action, though not desire. To achieve such control over the innate evil of human nature, man could be conditioned to be moral being against nature through the pursuit of learning, the avoidance of obsession, and constant attention to the rituals in all areas of life.
Discussion of Dr. Wurmser's Paper

Regarding to Dr. W's observation that in contrast to the Western mind, in the Confucian tradition there is no task of bearing a human predicament as the consequence of a tragic choice. I think it is not that they don't see the tragic existential predicament in the human condition but that a tragic sense lies somewhere else. It lies in a passive fatalistic acceptance that human beings are preordained by Heaven. Tragedy occurs not by result of choice but by a lack of education or the following of a wrong leader due to moral obligation or man lacked something to be born with not every one can reach decree of Heaven however one tries. There is a story that only once Kong Zi lost his emotional control when his beloved disciple Yen Hui died. He wailed without restraint "Alas, Heaven has berft me!, Heaven has berft me!". ("Heaven made me fail" might be better translation (天表子)). One's failing is often taken as punishment from Heaven. Death of a child, the premature death of parents or husband are considered as a punishment of the Heaven, and the highest crime is cutting the family lineage by not providing offspring, at least a son.

Chinese culture consists of three major philosophical ideas, Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. Among the three, Confucianism is the first established original ideological body of knowledge which has become the basic philosophical and political structure of many rulers in China, Korea and Japan until westernization took over at the turn of the 20th century.

There is a story called "The three sages' vinegar tasting": One day Kong Zi, Lao Tzu and Budda sit together in front of a jar of vinegar. First Kong Zi put his finger into the jar and said it was sour, then Lao Tzu said sweet and Budda said bitter. The story denotes a metaphor of their Weltanschauung. Kong Zi's doctrine is built upon the motivation of the establishment of Patriarchal feudal society with the suppression of women and the common class. The doctrine really was designed for the maintenance of an elite class of scholar-gentleman and their rulers. It was a generally accepted idea that the transformation of matriarchal society to patriarch-
chial society occurred with the establishment of the feudal society around Zhou Dynasty (1122BC–255BC) and it became consolidated by Confucius doctrine during Han Dynasty (206BC–25AD) (Guo Moru and Van Gulik). Prior to Zhou Dynasty, there were many trace of the matriarchal social structure (Van Gulik: Sexual life in ancient China). Incest, homosexuality and sexual immorality were rampant and there were many incidents of ruler's wife's familiis became so powerful that they meddled in the countries' affairs and caused continual social disordor, war among the states, rebellion and civil war. Confucius was looking for an ideal Kingdom which represented with ideal father and family he could never have. His strong need to oppress women in order to establish the patriarchal feudal society is seen in following poem: Disasters are not sent down from heaven. They originated in wives. These two can neither be taught nor led; wives and eunuched (from Book of Odes). Confucius believed that the family is conceived of as a state in miniature and if the family is in good order throughout filial piety and brotheraly duty then the state could be also in good order. All other emotional matters would follow from this. However, there is the hierarchical structure in his doctrine and if the state is not right, the people can not become right. It reminds me that psychoanalysis couldn't work under a dictatorship. Unfortunately Confucius believed in identification of himself with the disordered state, oppression of the female sex to maintain a clean and ideal moral society (against his own unresolved feminine identification possibly due to loss of his father at age of three and young mother who was 15 when he was born). He said "Woman and people of lowly station are difficult to deal with. If one is too friendly with them, they become obstreperous, and if one keeps them at distance, they become resentful" (from Analects). He could never have foreseen how his doctrine would be exploited by lots of Asian dictators for almost two thousand years.

Because of its hierarchical structure, Confucius' doctrine could not provide for the emotional needs not only of women or men of lowly
Discussion of Dr. Wurmser's Paper

stations but also their own elite class. So how did people in such culture solve their conflict and meet their emotional needs? My idea is this: From early ancient time Chinese people believed in a dual cosmic force that perpetuate the universe in an unending chain of permutation. Ying and Yang, male, female, inside and outside, high and low and other such dual concepts derive from this basic thinking. What developed was that people practiced Confucianism for the maintenance of social order, as a guardian of the family system and ethical code for interpersonal relationships, and Taoism for individual inner emotional needs. These were it he two ways of thought which together have moulded the Chinese mind and behavior. A person has distinctly different codes of behaviors in and out of one's house. A good example could be seen in portrait paintings of emperor Quien Lung who is the paradigm of Confucian emperor during the Qing Dynasty. In official portrait he appear fully garbed in utmost Confucian style and in another portrait he is relaxed in his imperial garden clad in the style of a Taoistic hermit. Confucianism is still alive and very strong in Asian society, especially in the inner structure of business company.

Dr. W's insightful scholarly paper gave me an impetus to re-examine the Confucius ideas with different perspectives. I am sure he will show us more interesting analytic observations on Taoism which is more in touch with the inner life of the Asian mind.

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