Ethics in Early China

An Anthology

Edited by

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Introduction

Early Chinese ethics has attracted increasing attention in recent years, both within and outside the academy.[1] Western moral philosophers have begun to devote more attention to ethical traditions other than their own, and the virtue ethics movement has sparked interest in Confucianism and Daoism. In China, both academics and the general public have been self-consciously looking to their own early ethical tradition for resources on which to draw in shaping China's twenty-first-century ethical and political culture.

Despite this growing interest, however, many features of early Chinese ethics remain unclear or controversial, and many aspects of its significance for contemporary moral philosophy remain unexplored. Moreover, as Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr. emphasize in their contribution to this volume, interpretations of early Chinese ethics have often been molded by Western concepts and assumptions, sometimes altering distinctive concepts from the Chinese tradition to fit the familiar categories of Western ethical theory.[2] There are indeed important similarities between many Chinese concepts and the Western concepts to which they are compared. Yet the philosophical interest of Chinese concepts and theories may lie as much in how they diverge from Western analogues as in how they resemble them, and mapping these divergences requires care and sensitivity.

Consider, for instance, the concepts of *rén* 仁 (roughly, moral goodness, goodwill, beneficence) and *dé* 德 (roughly, power, charisma, virtuosity, virtue), two candidates for Chinese counterparts to a notion of virtue. *Rén* is central to the ethics of the Confucian *Analects*, which depicts it as among the distinctive traits of the *jūnzǐ* 君子 (gentleman), for Confucians, the morally exemplary person. The *Mencius* contends that to deny or fail to fulfill one's capacity for *rén* is in effect to deny one's humanity. *Dé* is the feature of individual agents that provides the basis for moral conduct and is a distinctive characteristic of the morally exemplary sovereign. The Confucian emphasis on such concepts has understandably prompted comparisons with the role of the virtues in Aristotelian ethics (see, for example, Sim 2007 and Yu 2007), and some writers have labeled Confucianism a form of virtue ethics (for example, Van Norden 2007). Without question, there are intriguing parallels between aspects of Confucian and Aristotelian ethics, or virtue ethics more broadly. Yet, as several of our contributors argue, there are also important differences — differences deep and significant enough to call into question whether "virtue ethics" is an apt label for Confucianism. The precise nature of early Chinese ethical concepts such as *rén* and *dé* and their similarities to and differences from familiar conceptions of virtue clearly call for further exploration.

Analogous questions can be raised about many other aspects of early Chinese ethics; here we will mention just three. Consequentialist reasoning has a prominent role in the ethics of both the *Mòzǐ* 墨子 and the *Xúnzǐ* 荀子. Yet the Mohist and Xunzian ethical theories seem distinct from familiar Western forms of consequentialism, such as Mill's utilitarianism, partly because the basic goods they posit are distinct — both theories emphasize collective goods, not individual happiness — and partly because these Chinese theories are structured not in terms of acts or rules but distinctive Chinese concepts such as *fǎ* 法 (models) in Mohism and *lǐ* 禮 (ceremonial propriety) in Xúnzǐ. The theoretical roles of *fǎ* and *lǐ* overlap in some respects with those of moral rules or principles, but they are importantly distinct, since they refer to exemplary types or patterns of activity, rather than general, abstract imperatives.

Arguably, the central theoretical concept in early Chinese ethics is that of *dào* 道 (way, path, course, channel). The focus on *dào* distinguishes early Chinese ethics from ethical discourses centered on acts, rules, or character, suggesting again an interest in patterns of activity rather than particular actions or general moral principles. It also hints at a conception of moral perception and action as forms of competence and of morality as akin to a harmonious response to natural structures or patterns. Yet the nature of *dào* and its implications for ethical theory and practice remain underexamined.

A complementary set of issues concerns early Chinese conceptions of action, motivation, and practical reasoning. Ethical theories couched in principles are typically paired with a conception of action as guided by reasoning from principles. Principles serve as reasons that justify actions, their role in practical reasoning usually being spelled out roughly along the lines of Aristotle's practical syllogism. Just as early Chinese ethical theories are not structured around general principles, early Chinese conceptions of action and practical reasoning are not structured around a conception of reason or a syllogism-like form of argument. Instead, they focus on models, analogies, discrimination of similar from dissimilar kinds of things, and the performance of repeated, norm-governed patterns of conduct such as rituals and skills. On these points, as with the preceding, a deeper understanding is needed of the concepts and theories at work in early Chinese ethics and their theoretical and practical implications. Such an understanding could provide a basis for new areas of engagement between early Chinese thought and contemporary ethical discourse.

Issues such as those we have been considering motivate the guiding themes of both parts of this anthology. The theme of Part One is "new readings" of early sources; the essays in this part seek to deepen our understanding of important concepts, issues, and views in pre-Qín ethical texts. The theme of Part Two is "new departures"; two of these essays explore methodological issues bearing on the relevance of early Chinese ethics to contemporary ethical discourse, while the others undertake original projects relating early Chinese ethics to broader ethical topics.

As explained in the Preface, the volume celebrates the work of Chad Hansen, professor emeritus of Chinese philosophy at the University of Hong Kong, by presenting a collection of new contributions to a field that ranks among his main interests. Most of the fourteen essays that follow do not focus specifically on Hansen's work, but each touches on issues that have played a prominent role in his publications. In the remainder of this Introduction, we will sketch the central themes of each essay and indicate briefly how they relate to Hansen's oeuvre.

A perennial issue facing interpreters of the Confucian *Analects* is to explain the interplay between two of the text's core ethical concepts, *rén* 仁 (moral goodness, goodwill), Confucius's central term of approbation for the morally admirable person, and *lǐ* 禮 (ceremonial propriety), a body of concrete guidelines for action in various contexts. In his influential 1992 study, Hansen proposed an interpretation of *rén* as a form of intuitive moral competence in playing social roles, which he suggested were structured by the norms of conduct embodied in *lǐ* (1992, 62, 68). In the first essay in Part One, "Were the Early Confucians Virtuous?", Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr. present their own distinctive, role-centered account of Confucian ethics. Arguing against recent interpretations of Confucianism as a variety of virtue ethics, they contend that it is better understood as a role ethics, coupled with a relational conception of persons as constituted by the social roles they live. On their reading of Confucianism, lived social roles — especially family roles — serve as normative standards, and the family feeling associated with these roles is the starting point for moral competence. People become good by living their social roles well, beginning with the family and extending outward to the community. Ames and Rosemont contend that the Confucian conception of the person — and *a fortiori* the morally excellent person — is fundamentally different from the conceptions that ground either Aristotelian or various contemporary forms of virtue ethics. They find a deep contrast between a notion of virtues as character traits of a discrete, excellent individual, independent of his or her relations with others, and a Confucian conception of family-based relational virtuosity, which can be characterized only through reference to relationships with others. Indeed, taking a position that converges partly with Hansen's, they argue that *rén* is not aptly characterized as a virtue, in the sense of a specific, fixed character trait. Rather, it is a generic virtuosity in interacting with others appropriately in particular roles and situations according to *lǐ*, a communal grammar ultimately derived from family relations.

Manyul Im's "Mencius as Consequentialist" also takes issue with interpretations of Confucianism as a form of virtue ethics, in this case focusing on Mencius. Rather than a virtue ethicist, Im argues that Mencius is best interpreted as an implicit consequentialist, who systematically evaluates the responses and actions of the *jūnzǐ*, or gentleman, according to whether they produce better or worse consequences than alternatives. Im does not claim that Mencius presents an explicitly consequentialist normative theory, but that when making normative arguments, the justifications he offers are systematically consequentialist in structure. A gentleman should act from benevolence and propriety, for instance, because doing so yields good consequences. Moreover, Mencius's brand of consequentialism is distinctive, Im explains, in including among the goods to be promoted certain intrinsic moral values, such as benevolence and filial piety. A potential objection to this line of interpretation is that Mencius apparently regards Mòzǐ, an explicit advocate of consequentialism, as his arch-opponent. But Im contends that Mencius's arguments in fact never reject consequentialism as a justification for motivation or conduct; they reject only the Mohist doctrine of impartial concern and the general strategy of acting so as to produce greater benefit, rather than from other motives. In reading Mencius as consequentialist, Im is to some extent developing Hansen's earlier observations (1992, 178) about Mencius's consequentialist tendencies, and in particular Hansen's suggestion that, in Mencius's view, consequentialism is "self-effacing," in the sense that guiding action directly by appeal to consequentialist criteria might actually produce suboptimal consequences (1992, 170). At the same time, however, Im suggests that his account of Mencius's normative views indicates that Hansen's criticism (1992, 179–83) of them is too quick.

In “No Need for Hemlock: Mencius’s Defense of Tradition,” Franklin Perkins also responds to Hansen’s critique of Mencius, arguing that Mencius’s attempt to defend Confucianism by evading, rather than rebutting, the challenge of the Mohists’ normative arguments is more defensible than it might seem. Perkins follows Hansen (1992, 172) in distinguishing between a “strong” interpretation of Mencius’s appeal to people’s nature (*xìng* 性), on which we have an innate tendency to conform to specifically Confucian moral norms and practices, and a “weak” interpretation, on which our innate tendencies merely lead us to acquire some form of morality, though not necessarily a Confucian one. The strong position could in principle justify Confucian morality but is implausible; the weak position is plausible but, according to Hansen, would not justify Confucianism over the Mohist alternative. Against Hansen, Perkins argues that the weak interpretation both better explains Mencius’s position and introduces considerations that undermine the Mohist challenge to traditional Confucian practices. On the weak position, Mencius can contend that we are unable to settle on any reasonably simple criterion of the good — such as the one the Mohists propose — and that our ability to determine what practices will actually have the best consequences is quite limited. More likely than not, the traditions that generations of our ancestors gradually refined and passed down to us are fairly effective in meeting human needs and thus are justified on the Mohists’ own consequentialist grounds. Such a Mencian defense of traditional Confucianism cannot claim to yield knowledge that Confucian practices are justified, Perkins observes. But it can claim that there is even less reason to think a Mohist alternative would be more justified.

One of Hansen’s important contributions has been to clarify the various respects in which Mohist thought shaped the theoretical framework of early Chinese philosophical discourse. Central to his interpretive proposals was the insight that the Mohists employ a conception of ethics and action structured around concepts such as *dào* (way), *zhī* 知 (know-how), and *biàn* 辯 (discrimination), rather than rules or principles, reasoning, and desire (1992, 138–43). In “Mohism and Motivation,” Chris Fraser employs this insight to develop a detailed account of Mohist moral psychology aimed at rebutting the widespread view that Mohism lacks a plausible understanding of human motivation. He contends that the *Mòzǐ* presents a rich, nuanced picture of a variety of sources of moral and prudential motivation that the Mohists can reasonably view as sufficient to guide people to practice core tenets of their ethics. Fraser suggests that the Mohist account is distinctive in focusing on neither beliefs nor desires as motivating states but on *shì-fēi* 是非 (right/wrong, this/not-this) attitudes. The result is an intriguing approach to motivation and action that is neither Humean nor Kantian in structure. Fraser’s discussion prompts an obvious question: If the Mohists indeed have a plausible approach to motivation, why is their ethics commonly thought to face severe motivational obstacles? Impediments to practicing the Mohists' *dào*, he suggests, stem not from the inadequacy of their understanding of motivation but from weaknesses in their normative arguments.

For most of the twentieth century, the dominant view of philosophical Daoism was that its use of the term "*dco*" (way) constituted a radical break with the term's meaning in other early Chinese schools of thought. For some scholars, this supposed divergence constituted an interpretive puzzle: as Benjamin Schwartz put it in an important 1985 study, how could "a term which seems to refer in Confucianism mainly to social and natural *order* come to refer to a mystic reality?" (1985, 194, original italics). A cornerstone of Hansen's interpretation of Daoism has been his rejection of any such radical discontinuity between the use of "*dào*" in Daoist texts and in Confucian or Mohist texts. He has argued that the concept of *dào* in Daoist thought can intelligibly be construed only as an extension or development of its normal role in the broader discourse and that Daoist reflection on the metaphysics of *dào* is in effect reflection on the metaphysical status of normativity.[3] Dan Robins's essay, "It Goes beyond Skill," develops these ideas of Hansen while seeking to answer a version of Schwartz's question. Robins identifies two basic uses of the term "*dào*" in early texts: most often, it refers to a norm-governed way of doing something, but in certain passages in Daoist texts it unmistakably refers to something that exists prior to and generates the cosmos. Robins explores the significance of the two uses at length and then attempts to explain how they relate: What might it mean for a way of acting to exist prior to and give rise to the cosmos? He proposes that a crucial aspect of following a normative *dào* or following the *dào* presented by a particular context is exercising the capacity to "go beyond skill"; that is, to adapt to particular circumstances in a way that transcends any specific pattern of action one has previously mastered. Such spontaneously appropriate action, he proposes, constitutes *dào* of the same general sort as the cosmogonic *dào* by which things arise. As to *dào* considered as a thing that exists prior to and generates everything else, Robins suggests that this notion is a reification of *dào* into a thing that determines the course of the cosmogonic *dào*. The resulting use of "*dào*" shifts the term's meaning from its use to refer to a way of acting, but this shift is an intelligible one, involving no radical break from previous usage.

A prominent thesis of Hansen's first book, *Language and Logic in Ancient China* (1983a), was that, by contrast with most Western thinkers, early Chinese philosophers emphasized the action-guiding functions of language over the descriptive or fact-reporting functions: the use of language in commands and instructions captured their attention at least as much as, and probably more than, its use in descriptions and reports. This view of language helps to explain the distinctive role in classical Chinese ethical and political thought of the doctrine of "correcting names" (*zhèngmíng* 正名). For language to fill its action-guiding role efficiently and effectively, all members of a political community must use the "names" for things — especially those implicated in job titles and duties — according to unified norms, such that their use of names accords with norms of conduct and their conduct accords with the proper use of names. In "The Sounds of *Zhèngmíng*: Setting Names Straight in Early Chinese Texts," Jane Geaney presents a novel interpretation of the concept of *zhèngmíng* grounded in early Chinese ideas about the effects on listeners of speech, music, and sound in general. Geaney argues that, in early Chinese culture, discursive speech, like music, was regarded as possessing a transformative power because of its capacity to travel on air or wind and penetrate the body through the auditory and olfactory organs. Against the background of such beliefs, correcting or "straightening out" the use of discursive sounds would have been regarded as a potent means of prompting responses from listeners. Spoken instructions that penetrate the body through air would have been seen as a gentle yet inexorable force, much like the wind itself. Geaney suggests that, as a political doctrine, *zhèngmíng* can be understood as an integral part of the ideal of ruling, not through active coercion but through harmonious "influences of air" — songs, winds, and *dé* 德 (virtue, charisma) — that penetrate human subjects through hearing and smelling.

A core element of Hansen's account of early Chinese philosophical psychology is his view that ancient Chinese thinkers saw action as guided spontaneously by trained intuition, understood as "a dispositional faculty realized in our actual physical structures," whose output is "the appropriate performance . . . in the circumstances" (1992, 74). This "dispositional faculty" is akin to a "skill structure" within the agent, which Hansen suggests can be regarded as the agent's *dé* (virtue, virtuosity) (1992, 300). On this psychological model, then, the development of knowledge or virtue for early Chinese thinkers involves psychophysical cultivation similar to training in physical skills. Hansen's model dovetails well with Lisa Raphals's findings in her contribution, "Embodied Virtue, Self-Cultivation, and Ethics." Raphals draws on a wide range of ancient Chinese ethical, ritual, and medical texts — some newly excavated — to articulate early Chinese conceptions of physically cultivated and realized virtue. She considers both Chinese athletic performances, which she argues were based on notions of virtue and self-cultivation, and the broader "embodied virtue" traditions of which such conceptions of athletics were a part. As she explains, these traditions reflect a culture of physical self-cultivation whose concepts and practices structured much of early Chinese medical theory, ethics, and metaphysics. At its core were the ideas that mind and body form a continuum and that physical cultivation can transform a person's *qì* 氣 —

the dynamic, elemental stuff of which all things are formed — and thus the person's character. Raphals's chapter is explicitly comparative, examining the relation between athletics or physical cultivation and ethics in both the ancient Greek and Chinese contexts. She argues that, despite the differences between Greek and Chinese epistemology and metaphysics, particularly Greek mind-body dualism, the role of physical cultivation practices in the two traditions is similar in many respects. Indeed, she suggests that comparison with the Chinese case might prompt us to reconsider the conventional view that Greek thought embraces a profound mind-body dualism, since a mainstream expectation in both China and Greece was that moral virtue would be manifested through the body.

We turn now to Part Two of the volume. Whereas Part One focuses on new interpretations of early Chinese ethical thought, the chapters in Part Two, "New Departures," concern the development and application of ideas from the early Chinese tradition.

Hansen has long been interested in the questions of whether and how the study of diverse ethical traditions can be relevant to one's own moral thinking. One of his major claims has been that its relevance is limited in two fundamental ways. First, only moral traditions that qualify for "normative respect" warrant serious consideration. Second, learning about such traditions need not justify wholesale moral relativism or skepticism. It may do no more than "mildly destabilize" our confidence in our own reflective equilibrium, thus prompting openness to moral reform, either by drawing insights from other traditions or by synthesizing their insights with those of our own (Hansen 2004, 79–81). Beyond justifying respect for another tradition, and perhaps mild skepticism toward aspects of our own, Hansen argues, the *normative* relevance of comparative ethics is exhausted, and "normal, first-order moral discourse must take over" (82).

Two of the essays in Part Two address Hansen's views on these and related points. In "Moral Tradition Respect," Philip J. Ivanhoe examines Hansen's conception of normative respect for another moral tradition and his view of how such respect sheds light on what comparative ethics can contribute to contemporary moral theory. Ivanhoe discusses three possible construals of Hansen's conception of "moral tradition respect," concluding that it is a normative, ethical attitude stemming from a conditional, all-things-considered judgment about the moral value of a given tradition of moral inquiry, such as that the tradition in question is at least somewhat successful in getting things right (and, indirectly, that it might be of value in helping us better understand what is good or right). He then raises several questions about the role in comparative ethics of such a conception of respect for other moral traditions. Such respect may indeed sometimes play the roles that Hansen identifies, Ivanhoe argues, but often it does not. For instance, whereas Hansen suggests that respect for other traditions tends to mildly undermine our own moral beliefs, Ivanhoe points out that the precedence may also go the other way: people may first lose confidence in their home tradition and only later, perhaps as a result, come to respect an alternative one. Or, one might learn from ideas or ideals in another tradition that build on aspects of one's own tradition without thereby undermining one's original ethical beliefs. Ivanhoe surmises that, like Alasdair MacIntyre, Hansen implicitly sees comparative ethics as directed at a grand moral synthesis of traditions and ultimately a single, unified moral order. In response, he questions whether there is any reason to expect such an outcome and whether it is even desirable. An equally or more valuable contribution of comparative ethics might instead be to help us understand the variety of defensible, appealing, yet distinct forms of ethical life.

In "Piecemeal Progress: Moral Traditions, Modern Confucianism, and Comparative Philosophy," Stephen C. Angle argues for an approach to cross-tradition inquiry that contrasts with Hansen's in emphasizing both holistic and piecemeal perspectives and in assigning a more active role to comparative philosophy. Angle concurs with Hansen's suggestion that something akin to "moral tradition respect" — with its potentially destabilizing effect on our reflective equilibrium — is needed for an alternative moral discourse to qualify as relevant today. In answer to Hansen's doubts, he argues that contemporary Confucianism is sufficiently rich, reflective, and open to cross-tradition engagement to merit such respect. Comparing Hansen's methodological reflections on comparative philosophy with those of Alasdair MacIntyre and Thomas Metzger, however, Angle finds in all three a questionable focus on wholesale comparisons between entire traditions or discourses rather than between individual ideas or theories within such discourses. While acknowledging the importance of holistic approaches — especially in determining the meaning of the terms employed in a discourse — Angle argues that an overemphasis on holism misrepresents the nature of cross-tradition philosophical learning and tends to prevent us from recognizing differences within a single discourse, similarities between distinct discourses, and changes within a discourse. In his view, philosophical development in response to stimulus from a distinct tradition typically occurs through a process of provisionally "disaggregating" selected concepts or values from some of their native discursive entailments, thus allowing philosophers to explore their significance in novel, comparative contexts. Rather than issuing from wholesale comparative evaluations of entire discourses, such development proceeds on a piecemeal, bottom-up basis, an insight Angle credits to Hansen. Unlike Hansen, however, Angle holds that comparative inquiry has an important role to play in facilitating such piecemeal progress. Once the holistic project of justifying moral tradition respect is completed, much room remains for comparative work from a piecemeal or “disaggregated” perspective. Arguably, each of the remaining essays in this part, including Hansen’s, undertakes such work.

For Hansen, a constructive outcome of comparative ethics is that it may jostle our confidence in our own ethical views, prompting us to discover insights our home tradition has missed or to synthesize insights from the conflux of traditions. Angle urges us to seek such insights through a balance between holistic interpretation and “disaggregated” exploration of the significance for one tradition of ideas from another. In “*Agon* and *Hé*: Contest and Harmony,” David B. Wong engages in precisely the sort of balanced comparative study Angle proposes, reaching conclusions that integrate ideas from the classical Greek and Chinese traditions in just the way Hansen envisions. Wong marshals a variety of Western and Chinese sources to examine the role in each tradition of two values that might initially appear incompatible: *agon*, or contest, a central value of ancient Greek culture, and *hé* 和, or harmony, a central value of ancient Chinese culture. He contends that, though the Greek and Chinese moral traditions differ in the prominence they give to these values, in fact contest and harmony coexist in both traditions. Despite the obvious tension between them, the two also mutually implicate each other. On the one hand, harmony is involved in *agon*, insofar as part of the point of contest is to join the interests of the competitors in striving for excellence that in some way contributes to the common good. On the other, as Wong reconstructs it, the concept of harmony in early Confucian texts entails reconciliation of different parties’ potentially competing interests. Moreover, Wong argues, given that morality functions to facilitate social cooperation, contest and harmony must be balanced appropriately in order to integrate individuals’ self-regarding and competitive motivations with shared ends of the group. Both the Chinese and Western traditions, he suggests, can learn from how the two values are related in the other — without our assuming that either has the uniquely right answer about how to resolve conflicts between them. Wong’s work itself exemplifies the value of learning from other traditions, as his approach explicitly draws on ideas from the *Zhuāngzǐ* 莊子 concerning the benefits of acquiring insights from distinct perspectives and the plurality of ways to satisfy basic needs.

Hansen has suggested that one role of ritual, or *lǐ* 禮, in classical Confucianism is to provide models by which agents learn concrete patterns of social interaction, thus acquiring complex dispositions that transform and shape their character (1992, 71–74). This interpretation is intertwined with a distinctive view of early Chinese folk psychology. Confucius assumes neither an inner, private, subjective conception of the mind, nor a belief-desire model of action, Hansen argues. Instead, his implicit psychology concerns a range of human inclinations, capacities, and dispositions, along with the skill-like social practices, such as rituals, in which these are exercised and cultivated (1992, 75–78). Training in rituals and other practices, Hansen suggests, leads us to develop the intuitive abilities needed to perform such practices with virtuosity (73–74). In "Confucianism and Moral Intuition," William A. Haines develops a related line of inquiry concerning ritual and intuition. Haines proposes that early Confucianism may be deeply instructive in helping us to understand the mechanisms underlying intuitive knowledge, both in morality and more generally. Drawing on Charles Peirce's theory of signs, he presents a novel account of how Confucian ritual practices function to improve one's sensibility about the world, specifically concerning moral relations and proper conduct. He argues that ritual functions as a system of signs that allow practitioners to obtain knowledge through nonverbal, projective processes, rather than, for instance, deliberate verbal reasoning. Haines explains how early Confucian self-cultivation practices can be viewed as a body of procedures for extending the range of one's affective sensibility, especially in morally relevant ways. For early Confucians, he suggests, the resulting cultivation of sensibility was an important means of disseminating and acquiring moral knowledge. He offers intriguing suggestions on the role of ritual and intuition in promoting the virtues and in guiding action even within a non-Confucian normative framework, such as utilitarianism.

A central emphasis of Hansen's interpretation of the Daoist classic *Dàodéjīng* 道德經 is that the text presents a philosophical critique of positive, explicit conceptions of the *dào* — that is, of social, conventional forms of prescriptive discourse aimed at guiding conduct (1992, 203). Jiwei Ci's contribution, "Chapter 38 of the *Dàodéjīng* as an Imaginary Genealogy of Morals," examines one of the key textual sources for this critique of conventional morality, treating it as an exercise in conceptual genealogy that locates the grounds for the Daoist view in a set of observations about moral psychology. Ci identifies two key claims from this chapter. One is that moral states fall into a hierarchical spectrum — from the natural, non-moral orderliness of directly following the *dào* 道 to the spontaneous moral goodness of *rén* 仁 down to the artificial, cultivated propriety of *lǐ* 禮 — along which the lower states are characterized by their lacking the distinctive features of the states above them. The other is that the role of moral consciousness — a conscious concern with virtue —is essentially remedial, as it arises in response to a perceived lack of some moral quality. From these two theses, Ci develops two provocative conclusions: any attempt to promote moral qualities or virtues by relying on motivational resources belonging to a higher morality is practically self-contradictory, and the cultivation of any moral state must draw on motivational resources both different from and lower than those associated with it. He argues that these points have the intriguing consequence that the process of developing moral virtues will always be one in which people must draw on motives other than, and lower than, those associated with the virtues themselves, while also to some extent misunderstanding their own motives. He concludes with a series of reflections on the consequences of these points for traditional Chinese approaches to morality and politics.

The early Chinese text that has had the greatest influence on Hansen's work is the *Zhuāngzǐ*. In considering the ethical implications of Zhuangist thought, Hansen has focused mainly on the text's justification for tolerance toward others' *dào*, its open-mindedness toward novel directions in which we might modify our own *dào*, and the personal fulfillment that results from a life of virtuoso performance of skilled, world-guided activities.[4] In "Poetic Language: Zhuāngzǐ and Dù Fǔ's Confucian Ideals," Lee H. Yearley undertakes a novel approach to exploring the potential conflicts that may arise from pursuing this latter type of Zhuangist fulfillment. Through his reading of a famous poem by the Táng 唐 poet Dù Fǔ 杜甫, Yearley examines the implicit tensions between personal spiritual aims, such as the Zhuangist life of "free and easy wandering," and other ethical concerns that define the human situation, such as one's responsibility to family, service to the larger community, and participation in other projects (in Dù's case, the arts). Yearley suggests that Dù adeptly employs poetic language to articulate these enduring tensions, which in his view Zhuāngzǐ resolves in less convincing ways. Yearley finds that, because of how he affirms basic ethical and spiritual concerns while acknowledging the tensions between them, Dù Fǔ's poem expresses a considerably darker, yet more convincing, picture of the world's possibilities than Zhuāngzǐ does.

In recent work (2003b), Hansen has explored ways in which the Chinese concept of *dào* and its associated metaphysics might shed light on ethical naturalism, the view that ethical normativity is in some sense a feature of the natural world. In our final essay, "*Dào* as a Naturalistic Focus," he continues this line of inquiry. Applying Shelly Kagan's (1992) conceptual apparatus for taxonomizing ethical theories,[5] Hansen argues that a *dào* can be regarded as a distinct kind of evaluative focal point that presents an alternative to more familiar foci, such as actions, rules, motives, or character traits. *Dào*s may possess an inherent normativity, he suggests, although the character of this normativity is that of an invitation or a recommendation, not an obligation or imperative. Hansen proposes that adopting *dào* as a normative focal point helps to dispel the "queerness" that John Mackie (1977) famously associated with ethical naturalism, since, unlike moral rules or principles, *dào*s — in the form of ways, paths, or courses — can quite plausibly be considered part of the natural world. He sketches an account of how normative *dào*s might emerge from purely natural ones, such as a path of light, a riverbed, or the evolved patterns of behavior that contribute to an organism's or a community of organisms' survival. To be sure, such natural normativity stops short of distinctively *moral* normativity. But, Hansen contends, for creatures such as humans, the advent of language can prompt the invention of social practices or *dào*s in which participants challenge each other to justify their conduct, in what Wilfrid Sellars (1956) called the "game of giving and asking for reasons." The norms of such justificatory *dào*s may evolve such that appeals to the mere social acceptance of a practice are considered inadequate reasons. Such norms would have evolutionary value, because they facilitate reforming and adapting cooperative practices, and they could easily inspire a conception of what is good *simpliciter*, rather than by the norms of any particular practice. Hansen suggests that morality expresses an ideal implicit in the *dào* of language itself: it is in effect an extension of a *dào* of giving and asking for reasons — a second-order *dào* of how we use various natural *dào*. This intriguing proposal about how a core concept of Chinese thought may be relevant to contemporary metaethics is a fitting capstone to the other essays and a testament to the depth and lasting value of Hansen's philosophical contributions.

NOTES

1. For the purposes of this volume, early Chinese ethics comprises the ethical thought of the classical, pre-Qín 先秦, or Warring States era, running from the fifth century BCE to 221 BCE, when the Qín Dynasty completed its conquest of the other warring states.
2. See chapter 1 "Were the Early Confucians Virtuous?". Ames and Rosemont cite an unpublished conference paper by Kwong-loi Shun commenting on the persistent asymmetry in discourse on Chinese thought, in which Western concepts are applied to interpret Chinese concepts and doctrines but not vice versa.
3. On the relation between "*dào*" in Daoism and in the wider discourse, see Hansen (1983b, 24; 1992, 207). On Daoism as examining the grounds of normativity, see Hansen (2003b) and his essay in this volume.
4. See Hansen (1992, 284, 297, 302; 2003a, 145, 150–51).
5. Kagan distinguishes ethical theories according to three types of features: the *factors* the theories identify as determining moral status, the *focal points* of normative evaluation, and the *foundational* accounts that explain the significance of the factors identified.

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