

Linking Ancient and Contemporary

Continuities and Discontinuities in Chinese Literature

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Measuring Human Relations Continuities and Discontinuities in the Reading of the *Lunyu*

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Abstract In Chinese literature the *locus classicus* of what in the West has been called «the Golden Rule» is traditionally considered a passage from the *Lunyu* (Analects) in which Zigong, one of Confucius' favourite disciples, asks his Master for a principle that can guide man's behaviour. In the sentence «What you don't want done to yourself, do not do to others», the Master defined *shu*, a character variably translated as 'reciprocity', 'empathy', 'consideration of others' or 'do unto others as you would have others do unto you'. *Shu* is one of the most widely debated and controversial assertions of Confucian ethics, not only because of the alleged analogy with the biblical «golden rule», but also because of its semantic richness, as we discover from reading the *Analects* and other writings. However, *shu* alone does not fully express the Chinese notion of concern and love for others. *Shu*, *zhong* and *ren* are concepts which recur in *Lunyu* and concur to define our perception of the Chinese golden rule in Confucian thought.

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1 Introduction

In Matthew 22,35-40 we read:

«Master, which is the greatest commandment in the law?» Jesus answers: «*Love thy Lord as your God, with all your soul, and with all your mind*». That is the greatest commandment. It comes first. The second is similar to it: «*Love your neighbour as yourself*». Everything in the Law and the prophets hangs on these two commandments.

In the Old Testament, two fundamental passages deal with the Golden Rule. One is Tobias 4,15: «Do not do to others what you do not like for yourself», the other is «You will not revenge or feel resentment against

your people's sons, but will love your people as yourself» (Leviticus 19,18). The first passage, the most recent of the two, is a clear negative formulation of the golden rule, whereas the second explicitly quotes the golden rule in its positive formulation: «[You] will love your people as yourself».¹

In Chinese literature, what can be considered the *locus classicus* of what in the West has been called «the golden rule», in its negative formulation, is a passage from the *Lunyu* 論語 (Analects) in which Zigong 子貢, one of Confucius's favourite disciples, asks his Master about a principle that can guide man's behaviour:

子貢問曰：「有一言而可以終身行之者？」子曰：「其恕乎！」己所不欲，勿施於人。」

Zigong asked: «Is there an adage that can guide us throughout our life?» The Master said: «It is *shu*! What you don't want done to yourself, do not do to others». (*Lunyu* 15,24)

Confucius considered *shu* a basic requirement for a virtuous life, in conformity with the *mores* of the Sages of ancient times. *Shu* recurs again in *Lunyu* 4.15, where it is associated with another key concept of Confucian ethics: *zhong* 忠.

子曰：「參乎！吾道一以貫之。」曾子曰：「唯！」子出，門人問曰：「何謂也？」曾子曰：「夫子之道，忠恕而已矣。」

The Master said: «Shen! In my Way there is one thread binding all together». Zengzi said: «Indeed!». When the Master had left, the disciples asked: «What did he mean?» Zengzi [Shen] replied: «The Master's Way consists of *zhong* and *shu* and that's all».

Starting from these two passages from the *Lunyu*, is it really possible to draw an analogy with the Christian golden rule?

Herbette Fingarette suggests an interesting but controversial interpretation of the relation between the «Confucian golden rule» and the Biblical golden rule. He maintains that *zhong* corresponds to what is expressed in the first commandment, «*Love thy Lord as your God, with all your soul, and with all your mind*», whereas *shu* corresponds to the second, «*Love your neighbor as yourself*». The scholar's interpretation is based on his reading of the *Lunyu* 4,15 and, in particular, on the com-

1 On the golden rule in the Judeo-Christian world, see Sandona 2005; Vigna, Zanardo 2005. On the Chinese golden rule, see Fung Yulan 1948; Fingarette 1979; Allinson 1982, 1985; Hall, Ames 1987; Ivanhoe 1990; Nivison 1996, 2003; Roetz 1993; Wang Qingjie 1999; Sin Yee Chan 2000; Van Norden 2002; Bo Mou 2004; Lippiello 2010; Zhang Zhigang 2014.

ments of Song scholars who interpreted *zhong* as «the way of Heaven» and *shu* as «the way of man»:

忠者天道，恕者人道

Zhong is the way of Heaven, *shu* is the way of man. (Zhu Xi 1983, p. 73)

Fingarette claims that, just as in the teachings of Jesus, where the golden rule is the result of two components, the love of God and the love of one's neighbour, in a similar way, in the teachings of Confucius «the unifying principle» is made up of *zhong*, «loyalty», «absolute dedication to a transcendent principle», and *shu*, «love of one's fellow man» (Fingarette 1979).

In fact, the Chinese golden rule, although it is expressed in negative and positive terms as in other traditions, cannot be compared to the biblical golden rule – at least in its earliest formulation – as there is no mention or reference whatsoever to a deity. It is man and his relation to the self and to others which is at the centre of the Chinese golden rule.

As we shall see, there is no transcendental principle in the Chinese golden rule: absolute dedication is meant as true devotion to oneself in relation to the other and, ultimately, to the *dao*.

2 *Zhong* 忠 and *Shu* 恕: to Give Full Realization to One's Self and to Be Empathetic

Xu Shen 許慎 (ca. 55-ca. 149) in the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 reads *zhong* 忠 as *jing* 敬 (respect, reverence), and he adds that «to give full realization to one's heart is what is meant by *zhong*» (*jinxin wei zhong* 盡心為忠; Duan Yucai 1984, 10B, p. 25b).

We find an explanation of *jinxin* 盡心 also in *Mengzi* 孟子. *Jinxin* is the title of *Mengzi* 7 A,1. The incipit of the chapter reads:

孟子曰：「盡其心者，知其性，則知天矣。」

Mengzi said: «For a man to give full realization to his heart is to understand his own natural tendencies, and to understand his own natural tendencies means to understand Heaven».²

2 *Jinxin* 盡心 («to give full realization to one's heart-and-mind») is the title of *Mengzi*, 7A,1. See also Lau 1970, p. 265 and Van Norden 2008, p. 171.

Wang Bi 王弼 (226-249) reads it as to «fully realize one's feelings/emotions» (*qing zhi jin ye* 情之盡也).

Commenting on *Lunyu* 4, 15, Huang Kan 皇侃 (488-545) interpreted *zhong* as «to fully focus on one's heart» (*jin zhong xin ye* 盡中心也). Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) followed the *Shuowen jiezi* and added: «To give full realization to one's heart is what is meant by *zhong*» (*jinxin wei zhong* 盡心為忠). He also used the locution «to do one's best, to exhaust oneself» (*jiejin* 竭盡), meaning that he who is *zhong* performs his tasks with absolute devotion, dedicating the whole of himself.

As for *shu*, Xu Shen defines it as *ren* 仁 (humanity, benevolence) explaining that to extend one's feelings, attitudes, thoughts to others is the way to search *ren*.

Shu is an original principle of *ren* and apparently is not a natural attitude; in fact, Zigong had not yet attained *shu* and therefore the Master said: «Zigong, you have not yet reached this point!» (*fei er suo ji* 非爾所己).³

Speaking of *shu*, Mengzi (*Mengzi*, 7 A, 4) is clear, as he maintains that it is the way to attain *ren*:

強恕而行，求仁莫近焉。

Strengthen your empathy and you will find that this is the shortest way to humanity.

Wang Bi comments that *shu* implies that one should reflect on one's feeling in order to understand other people's feelings:

恕反情以同物也

To reflect on one's feelings in order to have sympathy with other beings.

Huang Kan and Xing Bing 邢昺 (931-1010) interpreted *shu* in a similar way, saying that it implies «Contemplating oneself in order to measure others» (*cun wo yi du yu ren ye* 忖我以度於人也 / *cun wo yi du yu wu ye* 忖我以度於物也; *Lunyu zhushu* 1989, vol. 8, ch. 4, p. 4).

Zhu Xi described *shu* as *tuiji* 推己 («to extend oneself»), in the sense of being empathetic to others.

3 「恕，仁也。」如己之心，以推諸仁，此求仁之道，故「恕」亦訓仁。恕，仁本一理，子貢未能至恕，故夫子以為非爾所己。(Duan Yucai 1984, ch. 10B, p. 28a).

Liu Baonan 劉寶楠 (1791-1855) commented that to take one's inner self and extend it to others is the way to search humanity, therefore the practice of empathy trains one to humanity.⁴

One day, Confucius explained to Ji Kangzi 季康子 (d. 469 BC), the head of the three most influential families of Lu, how a ruler should behave with the people in order to obtain respect (*jing* 敬), dedication, loyalty (*zhong* 忠) and zeal (*qin* 勤). He said:

「臨之以莊，則敬；孝慈，則忠；舉善而教不能，則勤。」

Regard them with dignity, and they will be respectful. Be filial to your elders and caring to your juniors, and they will be loyal. Raise the good and instruct those who are unable, and they will be zealous. (*Lunyu* 2,20)

Respect, loyalty, zeal and commitment is what a ruler obtains if he treats his people with dignity, filial piety and care. In the sentence «What you don't want done to yourself, do not do to others» (*ji suo bu yu, wu shi yu ren* 己所不欲，勿施於人), Confucius described *shu* 恕, a character variably translated as «empathy», «reciprocity», «consideration of others» or «do unto others as you would have others do unto you», as the embodiment of virtuous behaviour towards peers or subordinates. We can find *shu* associated with *zhong* also in *Zhongyong* 中庸 (On the practice of the mean): here, again, it is Confucius who describes the negative formulation of the golden rule:

忠恕違道不遠，施諸己而不願，亦勿施於人。

One who is *zhong* and *shu* will never stray from the Way. What he does not wish done to him he does not do to others. (*Zhongyong*, 13)

Zhong basically means «loyalty» to one's superior, absolute dedication which transcends all individualism, the purely personal and encourages one to achieve completeness, moral integrity, authenticity. *Zhong* is not intended as a blind obedience to a superior or to one's peer, but as an absolute commitment to preserving the integrity of one's life, of one's social role. *Zhong* is «the essence of benevolence» (*zhong, ren zhi shi ye* 忠，仁之實也), we read in the Guodian manuscript entitled *Zhongxin zhi dao* 忠信之道 (The Way of Loyalty and Truthfulness).⁵

4 如己之心，以推諸人，此求仁之道，故「恕」亦訓仁。恕、仁本一理，子貢未能至恕，故夫子以為非爾所及。他日問終身行之，又告以恕，皆此教也 (Liu Baonan 1990).

5 *Zhongxin zhi dao* 忠信之道, slip 8 (*Guodian Chumu zhujian* 1998, p. 163); see Li Ling 2002, p. 100; Lippiello 2010, p. 78.

Fingarette interprets *zhong* as «loyalty-fidelity» (*zhong-xin* 中信), meant as loyalty-fidelity to moral rules, to principles of justice dictated by Heaven, which he associates with God. Moreover, he emphasizes the role of *zhong* and *shu* as criteria for judging what is just and appropriate. His reading is probably suggested by a passage in the *Daxue* 大學 which defines «the Golden Rule» in terms of «measuring square» (*xieju* 絜矩), i.e. the rule to govern human relations:

所惡於上，毋以使下；所惡於下，毋以事上；所惡於前，毋以先後；所惡於後，毋以從前；所惡於右，毋以交於左；所惡於左，毋以交於右：此之謂絜矩之道。

What you dislike in your superior, do not use in treating your inferior; what you dislike in your inferior, do not use in serving your superior; what you dislike in the one who precedes you, do not use in dealing with the one who comes after you; what you dislike in the one who comes after you, do not use in dealing with the one who precedes you. This is what is called the method of the «measuring square». (Zhu Xi 1983, ch. 10, p. 10; Nivison 1996, p. 64, slightly modified)

Zhu Xi explains that the measuring square is the carpenter's square, i.e. the heart. His argument is that, in general, what man wishes corresponds to what other men wish, therefore the man of noble character knows that his heart is similar to the heart of others and consequently behaves in a way respectful of his and other people's feelings and expectations. In his words:

所謂絜矩者，矩者，心也，我心之所欲，即他人之所欲也。我欲孝弟而慈，必欲他人皆如我之孝弟而慈。[...] 是以君子見人之心與己之心同，故必以己度人之心，使皆得其平。

What is called «measuring square» is [the carpenter's] square, that is the heart. What my heart wishes corresponds to what others wish. If I wish to show filial and brotherly love and be caring to the young, I will wish that others, like me, show filial and brotherly love and be caring to the young [...] Therefore the man of noble character perceives that the heart of others and his own are similar. Hence he always uses his own heart to measure the heart of others, so that all will obtain tranquillity. (Zhu Xi 1983, ch. 10, p. 10; Li Jingde 1985, ch. 16, p. 361; Lippiello 2010, p. 84).

This theory was developed in the 18th century by Dai Zhen 戴震 (1724-1777), based on of the concept of the original goodness of human nature formulated by the *Mengzi*. Dai Zhen stated that the ethical principle (*li* 理) belongs to the Sage and coincides with his desires and expectations. The Sage is guided by a kind of moral intuition (*Mengzi ziyi shuzheng* 2002, ch. 1, pp. 21-22).

3 But *ren* 仁 Is More Difficult to Achieve

H. Fingarette provides the following explanation for *shu*:

Shu is intended to cause me to have concern for you, not to impose my tastes and inclinations on you. Therefore, to assess the situation appropriately in declining what I want, I must not imagine being in your place, I must do this in such a way as to see it *through your eyes*. To put it in a nutshell, I must not imagine myself being in your situation; I must imagine *being you*. (Fingarette 1979, p. 383)

Shu implies to have concern for others, not to impose our tastes and inclinations, but rather to understand and follow their tastes and inclinations. As we have seen, *shu* is explained in *Lunyu*, 15.24 with the formula «What you don't want done to yourself, do not do to others». But *ren* is more difficult to achieve, it implies to be able to help others to succeed. It implies what Confucius defined *wuwo* 無我 (no self):

子絕四，毋意，毋必，毋固，毋我。

The Master avoided four things: no wish, no will, no set, no self. (*Lunyu*, 9.4)

There are different renderings of this passage, here I have adopted the Brooks and Taoeko's translation, which seems to me more literal, but Lionel Giles' rendering is also fascinating: «There were four words of which the Master barred the use: 'He would have no «shall's», no «must's», no «certainly's», no «I's'». What the Master intends to stress here is that personal intention, preconceptions, predeterminations, certainties and egotism are to be avoided, eliminated. This means that the only certainty should derive from the relation to the other, from which humanity derives. The process involves the awareness of the self, the relation to the other, the perfection of the self in terms of generosity toward the other.

Confucius had explained to the disciple Zigong how arduous it was to be generous and help people, in fact even Yao and Shun would find it difficult:

子貢曰：「如有博施於民而能濟眾，如何？可謂仁乎？」子曰：「何事於仁！必也聖乎！堯，舜其猶病諸！」

Zigong asked: «What about him who is broadly generous with the people and is able to help the multitudes? Can we define this benevolence?». The Master said: «Why stop at benevolence? Such a person should surely be called a Sage! Even Yao and Shun would find such a task arduous!». (*Lunyu*, 6.30; Gardner 2007; Lippiello 2010, pp. 82-83)

Ren is a central concept in Confucian thought, it appears 109 times in the *Lunyu*. *Ren*, as noticed by D. Gardner, who renders it with «true goodness», is described in many ways, such as: «to be slow or moderate in speech» (仁者，其言也訥, *Lunyu* 12, 3), «to be resolute and firm, genuine and reticent to speak is to be close to *ren*» (剛，毅，木，訥近仁, *Lunyu* 13,27), «to be possessed of courage» (仁者必有勇, *Lunyu* 14,4), «to be free from worry» (仁者不憂, *Lunyu* 9,29), «to delight in mountains» (仁者樂山, *Lunyu* 6,23); «to subdue the self and return to the rites» (克己復禮, *Lunyu* 12,1); «to be respectful, tolerant, trustworthy, diligent, and kind» (恭，寬，信，敏，惠, *Lunyu* 17,6); «and to love others» (愛人, *Lunyu* 12,22). «In this way», he states, «Confucius gives his followers – and readers – glimpses of various dimensions of true goodness» (Gardner 2007, p. 53).

Thus, an individual endowed with *ren* is courageous and firm but at the same time he is modest, reticent to speak, respectful, tolerant, trustworthy, diligent and, above all, he loves and is capable of subduing the self for the benefit of others. These were all attitudes and behaviours that concurred at the fulfilment of *ren*: true goodness, benevolence, generosity, love, the virtues *par excellence* described in the *Lunyu*.

Lunyu 6,30, mentioning *ren*, clarified the meaning of the four attitudes to avoid: a man pursuing *ren* is able to avoid establishing himself in order to help others to establish themselves.

仁者，己欲立而立人，己欲達而達人。能近取譬，可謂仁之方也已。

The term *ren* means that when you desire to establish yourself, you help others to establish; and when you desire success for yourself you help others to succeed. The ability to take as analogy what is near at hand can simply be called the method of attaining humanity *ren*. (*Lunyu* 6,30; Gardner 2007, p. 55)

This amounts to saying that you long for the other what you long for yourself and that you exert yourself to achieve for the other what you would like to achieve for yourself. This is the highest expression of *ren*, meant as «to love others» (*airen* 愛人) and as «to subdue the self and return to the rites or norms of social conduct» (*keji fuli* 克己復禮).⁶

But how should you acquire this ability to subdue the self and achieve for others what you would like for yourself?

6 According to Zhang Dainian (1987, pp. 159-161) the interpretation of *ren* as «to love others» (*airen*) and its explanation as «to subdue the self and return to the rites/social norms» date back to Confucius. Zhang Dainian 1987, pp. 159-161). See also Zhang Zhigang 2014, p. 8.

Zhu Xi, commenting on *Lunyu* 15,24, suggested:

推己及物，其施不窮，故可以終身行之。尹氏曰：「學貴於知要。子貢之問，可謂知要矣。孔子告以求仁之方也。推而極之，雖聖人之無我，不出乎此。終身行之，不亦宜乎？」

Extend yourself to others, and what you do unto them will be inexhaustible. As a consequence, you will be able to practice it [empathy] for the whole of your life. Mr. Yin [Tun] said: «In learning, we value knowing the essentials. Zigong's query can be said to be about knowing the essentials. Confucius told him the way to pursue humanity, (*ren*). Extend yourself, and bring [empathy] to perfection so that even the selflessness of the Sages does not surpass it. Wouldn't it make good sense to practice this for the whole of your life?». (Zhu Xi 1983, p. 166; Gardner 2003, pp. 88-89)

It is interesting to note that Zhu Xi mentions the «selflessness of the sages» (*shengren zhi wuwo* 聖人之無我) as a paradigm of humanity and explains empathy as a way to pursue humanity.

Selflessness is a prerogative of the Sage, who attains and practices *ren* naturally, without effort.

Confucius had explained to the disciple Zigong how arduous it was to attain *ren*; in fact, even Yao and Shun had found it difficult to achieve: *ren* means to do for others what you would like done for yourself. But for the disciple Zigong, even attaining *shu* was difficult. In fact, when he said to the Master that he did not intend to do to others what he did not want for himself, the Master replied:

賜也，非爾所及也。

«Zigong, you have not yet reached this point!».⁷

The different aspects of *ren* were commented on and elaborated through the ages, particularly by the Song scholars Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032-1085) and Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033-1107) and finally Zhu Xi, who made a synthesis of their theories.⁸ A devoted student of their teachings, Zhu Xi preferred the interpretations of Cheng Yi. The teachings of the three masters became known as Cheng-Zhu school of *Daoxue*, known as Neoconfucianism.⁹

7 子貢曰：「我不欲人之加諸我也，吾亦欲無加諸人。」子曰：「賜也，非爾所及也。」*Lunyu*, 5.12.

8 For a recent and exhaustive study on *ren*, see Chen Lai 2014.

9 Zhao Shunsun (1972, p. 4a) remarked that Zhu Xi, a student of both Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi, considered the teachings of the Cheng brothers similar and, therefore, in citing them

The Masters Cheng distinguish *ren* from *shu* in commenting on *Lunyu* 4,15:

以己及物，仁也；推己及物，恕也

Moving from oneself to reach others is humanity (*ren*); extending yourself to others is empathy (*shu*). (Gardner 2007)

Zhu Xi comments that considering the self in order to understand others is the natural behaviour of the person endowed with *ren*. It means reflecting on oneself and consequently trying to understand others and act in consideration of their expectations and needs:

以己及人，仁者之心也。於此觀之，可以見天理之周流而無間矣。狀仁之體，莫切於此。

Moving from oneself to reach others is the natural intention of the person endowed with humanity. Looking at it from this point of view, we can see that the heavenly principle is all-pervasive. To sketch the substance of humanity, nothing comes closer than this. (Zhu Xi 1983, 4.15)

Master Cheng (Cheng Hao) is more exhaustive in explaining why it is so difficult to attain *ren*. Quoting *Lunyu* 6,30, he writes:

仁至難言，故止曰：「己欲立而立人，己欲達而達人，能近取譬，可謂仁之方也已。」欲令如是觀仁，可以得仁之體。

Ren is extremely difficult to talk about, and so here it merely says, 'that when you desire to establish yourself, you help others to establish themselves; and when you desire success for yourself you help others to succeed. The ability to take as analogy what is near at hand can simply be called the method of attaining humanity *ren*.' He (Confucius) wished to have us understand *ren* in this way so that we could understand its substance. (Gardner 2003, p. 59)

Moreover, he uses the metaphor of a healthy body to express the idea of a man endowed with *ren*, who embodies heaven, earth and the myriad things in himself: numbness of the hands and legs implies that he does not consider them as part of his body, and therefore he has no concern for them. Consequently the *qi* does not penetrate them, they lose *ren* and no longer belong to the self. The limbs are like the multitude: helping them are the achievements of the Sage and the fulfilment of *ren*:

in his commentary on the Four Books, he did not feel it necessary to distinguish between them and, therefore, used the collective «The Masters Cheng». See Gardner 2007, p. 19.

醫書以手足痿痺為不仁，此言最善名狀。仁者以天地萬物為一體，莫非己也。認得為己，何所不至；若不屬己，自與己不相干。如手足之不仁，氣己不貫，皆不屬己。故博施濟眾，乃聖人之功用。

A book on medicine considers numbness of the hands and legs to be the absence of *ren* [true goodness]. This is an excellent description. A person of *ren* regards heaven, earth, and the myriad things as one body. They all are his own self. If he acknowledges them as the self, where does he not reach? But if they do not belong to the self, then naturally they are of no concern to the self – which is like the absence of *ren* in the hands and legs. If one's *qi* no longer penetrates them, none of them belongs to the self. It is for this reason that widely bestowing benefits on and bringing relief to the multitude are the achievements of the Sage. (Wang Xiaoyu 2011, p. 15; Chen Lai 2014, pp. 260-261; Gardner 2003, pp. 58-59)

Master Cheng continues:

論語言「堯舜其猶病諸」者二。夫博施者，豈非聖人之所欲？然必五十乃衣帛，七十乃食肉。聖人之心，非不欲少者亦衣帛食肉也，顧其養有所不贍爾，此病其施之不博也。濟眾者，豈非聖人之所欲。

The *Analects* on two occasions says: «Even Yao and Shun would find this difficult». Now to bestow benefits widely is indeed what a man desires. And yet [Mengzi 1A.3 says that] people must be fifty to wear silk, and seventy to eat meat. In his heart, a Sage would surely want the young as well to wear silk and eat meat and would look upon such care [i.e. that advocated in Mengzi] as inadequate. He would find it difficult that his benefits had not been bestowed widely. Bringing relief to the multitude is indeed what a sage desires. (Wang Xiaoyu 2011, p. 15; Chen Lai 2014, pp. 260-261; Gardner 2003, pp. 58-59)

Song scholars considered *shu* a method or technique to achieve *ren*. Zigong applied himself to *shu*, but it was out of his reach; in fact, when he expressed to the Master his intention of not doing to the others what he did not want for himself, Confucius said: «Zigong, you have not yet reached this point!» Kongzi thought that Zigong had not yet attained a natural «empathy». If he was not yet able to be empathetic, how could he attain *ren*? Master Cheng thus commented this passage:

恕則子貢或能勉之。仁則非所及矣。

As for empathy, Zigong is perhaps capable of applying himself to its practice; as for humanity, it is not something he is capable of.

Zhu Xi interpreted Master Cheng's statement by saying that the fundamental difference between what is affirmed in *Lunyu* 5,12 (*wu jia zhuren* 無加諸人) and in *Lunyu* 15,24 (*wu shi yuren* 勿施於人) lies in the two negations *wu* 無 and *wu* 勿: the first negation, as expressed in *Lunyu* 5,12, by Zigong, implies Zigong's intention not to do to others what he does not wish for himself, whereas the second implies an injunction, it is the Master who exhorts his disciple Zigong not to do what he does not wish for himself.

In other words, *shu* corresponds to a rule, whereas *ren* implies a spontaneous generosity towards others, a virtue of the Sage, far from Zigong's reach.

愚謂無者自然而然，勿者禁止之謂，此所以為仁恕之別。

In my view, *wu* [not, as in «wish not»] is to be so naturally; *wu* [do not, as in «do not do unto others»] is a term of prohibition. This is the distinction between humanity and empathy. (Gardner 2003, p. 55)

Zigong put all his efforts into being empathetic to others, however he did not attain *ren*, since *ren* is a state of being one attains naturally, as in Gardner's words: «In sum, for Zhu Xi, a person is truly good when he *naturally* does not wish to treat others inappropriately. In contrast, he is empathetic when he consciously follows rules not to treat others inappropriately» (Gardner 2003, p. 56).

Zhu Xi explains that empathy is a way to attain humanity; in fact, empathy and humanity stem from the same principle, as we read in *Shuowen jiezi*; Zigong could not attain humanity and therefore the Master thought that he could exert himself to reach empathy but humanity was beyond his capabilities.

As we have seen, Fingarette, starting from the statement, «What you don't want done to yourself, do not do to others» (*ji suo bu yu, wu shi yu ren* 己所不欲，勿施於人) interpreted *shu* as the negative formula of the golden rule, whereas *zhong*, in his opinion, should represent the positive formula. In Confucian texts we can find other concepts which remind us of the golden rule. One such passage is found in the *Daxue* 大學, one of the four canonical books of the Song dynasty: here *xin* 心 is described as a measuring square (*xieju* 絜矩; Zhu Xi 1983, ch. 10, p. 10.), which corresponds to the formula «What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others». It is worth noting the use of terms such as «the measuring square», denoting the need to regulate human relations in search of harmony with the self, with others and with the cosmos.

In brief, in *Lunyu* 6,30 we can find the positive formulation of the golden rule expressed by *ren*, and in fact it is suggested that bestowing benefits on and bringing relief to the people are prerogatives of the Sage. The ability to take as analogy what is near at hand is the way to attain *ren*.

What is the meaning of «The ability to take as analogy what is near at hand» (*neng jin qu pi* 能進取譬; *Lunyu* 6,30)? It means, as Fingarette puts it, «to be able, from what is close, i.e. *yourself*, to grasp analogy with the other person, and in that light to treat him as you would like to be treated. You must imagine being in the other person's place; then, in that state, you are to ask yourself what you want or do not want done» (Fingarette 1979). This presupposes a mental exercise which is familiar to everybody: you imagine yourself in the other's shoes and become one with the other; you can see things as the other sees them, you can perceive things as the other perceives them.

However, I believe that when Fingarette equates the Chinese golden rule to the Biblical golden rule he does not consider the fundamental difference between the Christian and the Chinese message. The scholar claims that, just as in the teachings of Jesus the golden rule is made up of two essential components – the love of God and the love of one's neighbour – in a similar way in the teaching of Confucius «the unifying principle» is made up of *zhong*, loyalty, absolute dedication to a principle (the *dao*), and *shu*, love of one's fellow man. The basic difference between the Confucian precept and the biblical one lies in the identity of the transcendent principle. Probably Fingarette was inspired by Zhu Xi's interpretation, who considered *zhong* the Way of Heaven.

忠恕一以貫之：「忠者天道，恕者人道；忠者無妄，恕者所以行乎忠也。忠者體，恕者用，大本達道也。」

Zhong and *shu* are pervaded by a single unifying principle. *Zhong* is the Way of Heaven, *shu* is the Way of man. *Zhong* means absence of hypocrisy, *shu* is how to put *zhong* into practice. *Zhong* is substance, *shu* is function. These are the great root and the realized Way. (Zhu Xi 1983, pp. 72-73)

Thus what we may consider the Chinese golden rule cannot be simplified in the formulation found in *Lunyu* 15,24 and *Lunyu* 4,15, for it is more articulate. According to Zhang Zhigang the highest expression of the golden rule in Chinese thought is found in *Lunyu* 6,30, where the Master says that *ren* implies attaining for others what you desire for yourself, such as social position and success.¹⁰

¹⁰ Zhang Zhigang quotes the reading of this passage by Yang Bojun 杨伯峻, Qian Mu 钱穆 and Zhang Dainian 张岱年, who consider *li* 立 the conquest of social position and *da* 达 the achievement of a goal. In this sense *ren* is to renounce to the self for the sake of others and, therefore, it is the highest expression of ancient humaneness (Zhang Zhigang 2014, pp. 7-9).

4 *Cheng* 誠 (Authenticity): When the Ten Thousand Things are Complete in Ourselves We Can Attain *ren*

There is another passage where Mengzi somehow anticipates the thesis of Song scholars: the first object of knowledge and reflection is the self and not the external world. Then, in order to attain *ren* one has to strengthen *shu*.

孟子曰：「萬物皆備於我也。反身而誠，樂莫大焉。強恕而行，求仁莫近焉。」

Mengzi said: «The ten thousand things are all brought to completion in me. There is no greater joy for me than to find, on self-examination, that I am authentic. Strengthen your empathy and you will find that this is the shortest way to benevolence».

This passage, partly quoted above (see p. 26), is found in the chapter *Jinxin* of *Mengzi* 7 A, 4. Zhu Xi defines *cheng* 誠 as 實 (reality, sincerity, authenticity, genuineness; Zhu Xi 1983, ch. 13, p. 350; Lau 1970, p. 265; Van Norden 2008, p. 172). Mencius emphasizes the inner sphere, he thought that *shu* was innate in us, we should only cultivate it in order to attain *ren*. Also, he says that the ten thousand things (*wanwu* 萬物) are all in us.

Thus the individual has to look in himself (*fan shen* 反身) and he will find his authenticity (*cheng*); he has to strengthen his empathy (*qiang shu* 強恕) and he will attain humanity (*ren* 仁).

Cheng (authenticity) seems to be a condition necessary to attaining empathy and humanity. We can find a clear description in the *Zhongyong* 22:

唯天下至誠，為能盡其性；能盡其性，則能盡人之性。能盡人之性，則能盡物之性；能盡物之性，則可以贊天地之化育；可以贊天地之化育，則可以與天地參矣。

None but those who have attained the highest degree of authenticity in the entire world have the capacity to fully realize their natural tendencies. One who is able to fully realize his natural tendencies can thereby bring to full realization the natural tendencies of other people; one who is able to bring to full realization the natural tendencies of others is thereby able to bring to full realization the natural tendencies of all living things; and one who is able to bring to full realization the natural tendencies of all living things can partake thereby in the transformative and generative processes of Heaven and Earth. He who can partake in the transformative and generative processes of Heaven and Earth can stand with them in the cosmic continuum. (Plaks 2003, p. 44, slightly modified)

Cheng in this context implies the knowledge of the self, consequently of others and ultimately of the cosmos. Here the *Zhongyong* introduces an element which was very much appreciated by Song scholars and later also by the Jesuits: man's relation to heaven, to the cosmos.

誠者，天之道也。誠之者，人之道也。誠者，不勉而中，不思而得，從容中道：聖人也。誠之者，擇善而固執之者也。

Authenticity is the Way of Heaven; the process of making oneself authentic is the Way of man. Authenticity is a state of centred balance requiring no striving, complete attainment requiring no mental effort. This is a prerogative of the Sage. The process of 'making oneself authentic', by contrast, requires choosing the good and holding fast to it with all one's strength. (*Zhongyong*, 20; Plaks 2003, p. 121)

Cheng means authenticity, being true to our endowment of human nature, to the virtues embodied therein. For the ordinary person it is necessary to strive (*mian* 勉) in order to become authentic, true to himself and to others. The Sage, due to his virtue, attains this condition without any effort. Only those who centre the Way by exerting themselves have to constantly hold fast to it.¹¹

The *Zhongyong* 25 continues by exhorting to cultivate our self and to bring to perfection all things in the phenomenal world. The fulfilment of our authenticity results in the fulfilment of our humanity, the fulfilment of others' authenticity results in the fulfilment of our wisdom.

誠者非自成己而已也，所以成物。成己，仁也；成物，知也。性之德也，合外內之道也。

Authenticity is not merely the process of making oneself complete and nothing more; rather, it constitutes the foundation for bringing to completion all things [with which one interacts in the phenomenal world]. Making authentic the individual self is the substance of man's essential humanity, just as the completion of all other things constitutes the foundation of wisdom. This is the moral force inherent in one's inborn nature, the Way that unites the external and the internal aspects of being. (*Zhongyong*, 25; Plaks 2003, pp. 44-45, slightly modified)¹²

11 誠者，真實無妄之謂，天理之本然也。誠之者，未能真實無妄，而欲其真實無妄之謂，人事之當然也。聖人之德，渾然天理，真實無妄，不待思勉而從容中道，則亦天之道也。未至欲聖，則不能無人欲之私，而其為德不能皆實。故未能不思而得，則必擇善，然後可以明善；未能不勉而中，則必固執，然後可以誠身，此則所謂人之道也。

12 See also Gardner 2007, p. 126.

When the individual becomes true to himself and complete, he is able to bring others to perfection. Thus *cheng* may also be considered another expression of the golden rule.

Zhu Xi remarks that, although *cheng* originates from the completion or perfection of the self, it belongs to human nature, it develops spontaneously and spontaneously can be extended to other beings. *Ren* is equated to «substance» (*ti* 體) whereas *zhi* 知 (knowledge, wisdom) to «function» (*yong* 用).¹³

Du Weiming describes *cheng* as a paradigm of humanity, arguing that the realization of humanity goes through the actualization of the way of man, of one's identity. In his words:

The person who embodies *cheng* to the utmost is also a genuine human being. It is in this sense that he completely realizes his own nature. The person who realizes his own nature to the full becomes a paradigm of authentic humanity. What he realizes, then, signifies not only his personal humaneness but humanity as such and as a whole. (Tu Weiming 1989, pp. 77-78)

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13 誠雖所以成己，然既有以自成；則自然及物，而道亦行於彼矣。仁者，體之存，知者用之發，是皆吾性之固有，而無內外之殊。既得於己，則見於事者，以時措之，而皆得其宜也 (Zhu Xi 1983, p. 34).

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