

# The Chinese Dragon as a Confucian Myth: A Semiological Approach<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Drawing on Roland Barthes's theory of myth, this article argues that the Chinese dragon can be read as a mythical signification deeply entwined with Confucianism, the dominant ideology in traditional China. It is not fortuitous that the dragon, rather than the t'ao-t'ieh, became an enduring emblem of imperial power in feudal China. The Chinese dragon as a powerful, capricious, but basically beneficent divine creature lends itself to a perfect analogy with the ideal Confucian ruler who practiced *jen* (benevolence) and *li* (rites). The emperor, who was supposed to treat his subjects kindly while maintaining the existing sociopolitical hierarchy, and who combined favors and graces with power and authority, was equated with the dragon. Dragon worship is in essence a form of authority worship, which is responsible for many serious defects in the Chinese national character.

This article also proposes that traditional Chinese society was also a privileged field of mythical signification, semiologically comparable to modern bourgeois society in the West, where bourgeois norms assume a "natural" and "rational" form. Both *jen* and *li*, according to Confucianism, may be traced to the "natural" human emotions that the individual experiences in the family. In addition, Confucianism also appeals to a pragmatic rationalism based on the individual's intuitive judgments and experiential knowledge.

The dragon is a complex sign in Chinese culture, susceptible to appropriation by various political and cultural forces in contemporary China. But so long as feudal practices still linger in Chinese society, one must not embrace this sign uncritically.

## KEY WORDS

semiology

dragon

Confucianism

*jen* (benevolence)*li* (rites)

myth

t'ao-t'ieh

emperor

power

Chinese national character

Since the late 1970s there has been a renewed interest in the dragon in the Chinese mainland. In 1988, the Year of the Dragon, this interest reached a peak when China was swept by what Yen Chia-ch'i 嚴家其 called *lungchüanfeng* 龍捲風,<sup>2</sup> the tornado-like outburst of a nation-wide craze for the dragon motif in decorative art and in daily life. Everywhere in mainland China one saw or heard about the "dragon-lantern festival" 龍燈會, "the dragon-boat race" 龍舟賽, and songs about the dragon, the best-known being, of course, Hou Te-chien's (候德健) *Lung te Ch'uan-jen* 龍的傳人 ("We, the Descendants of the Dragon"). A whole range of things or activities were named with the character *lung* 龍 (dragon) put on as a sort of fashionable topping, such as the "Dragon Cup" 龍杯獎 in sports, "dragon-feast" 龍宴, "dragon-dish" 龍菜, and what not. In tourist hotels, glaring dragons with wide-open mouths twisted around pillars or soared in the lobby or on the roof and, enhanced by flashing lights at night, they made a serious attempt to impress guests with Chinese culture, with which they seem inseparable.<sup>3</sup> Accompanying this popular enthusiasm was a spate of articles in newspapers and journals, scholarly or otherwise, that discussed the origin, history, and cultural meanings of the dragon motif.

This resurgent dragon cult in contemporary Chinese society can be explained in many ways: for example, as an attempt to continue the traditional culture disrupted by the Communist Party's "leftist" policy, which culminated in the Cultural Revolution; or as an attempt to reassert nationalism, which is perhaps the only nonpartisan rallying call available for the unification of the Chinese people. In this paper, drawing on Roland Barthes's theory of myth, I choose to focus on the Chinese dragon as a mythical signification deeply entwined with Confucianism, the ruling ideology in traditional China. Without attempting a comprehensive discussion of the dragon motif as a cultural sign in contemporary Chinese society, my paper will nevertheless contribute to such a discussion by explicating the dragon's link with Confucianism, a legacy with which the contemporary Chinese are still grappling in one way or another.

As a point of departure, I shall first discuss the *t'ao-t'ieh* 饕餮, which was probably a symbol of dynastic power in early Chinese history, far predating the dragon as such.<sup>4</sup> The *t'ao-t'ieh* is an awesome, mythical monster engraved on the ritual bronze vessels and implements belonging to the Shang dynasty (18th-12th century BC) and the early Chou dynasty (1111-900 BC). Its prototype has been found on jade vessels dating back to the Lungshan 龍山 culture (c. 30th-21st century BC). The typical features

of the *t'ao-t'ieh* include "large, protuberant eyes; stylized depictions of eyebrows, horns, nose crest, ears, and two peripheral legs; and a line of a curled upper lip with exposed fangs and no lower jaw."<sup>5</sup> The origin of the *t'ao-t'ieh* has been traced to various animals, such as the bull, the sheep, the tiger, and the deer, with the bull being the most likely source. In legend, this monster has been related to Ch'ih Yu 蚩尤, leader of a primitive people who fought and lost a bloody war with the Yellow Emperor 黃帝 in the Yellow River Valley in the 28th century BC. That the *t'ao-t'ieh* originated from the bull and that the bull was probably the totem of Ch'ih Yu's people may be corroborated by a custom observed by the Taiyuan 太原 people, which enjoined them from using the bull's head when offering sacrifices to Ch'ih Yu.<sup>6</sup>

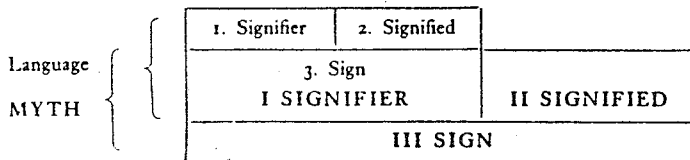
Whatever its origin, there is little doubt that the *t'ao-t'ieh* was a symbol of the awesome dignity, strength, and willpower of the Shang and the early Chou rulers. The bronze sacrificial vessels of the Shang-Chou periods were mostly dedicated to the memory of the rulers' heroic ancestors or to their own victorious conquests. Like ancient civilizations elsewhere in the world, early Chinese civilization was born of protracted, bloody wars among various tribes and early peoples. The violent, savage forces that brought about triumphant conquests and crushed internal rebellions became the pride and glory of the ruling dynasty. Li Tsehou 李澤厚 sees in this "a perfect standard sign for that era," when large-scale slaughter and even eating of captives in war were the order of the day.<sup>7</sup> To the enemy or outsider, the mysterious and ferocious *t'ao-t'ieh* served as a sign of intimidation and deterrence; to those who belonged to the same group, it functioned as a mascot.<sup>8</sup> The *t'ao-t'ieh* is a monument to the immense historical forces that helped to give birth to early Chinese civilization and nurtured it; it is also a mythical sign through which the Shang and early Chou rulers identified themselves with these historical forces. The *t'ao-t'ieh*'s flaunting of brutal power and horror agreed with the ideological foundation of these slave-owning early dynasties.

This undisguised, almost innocent, self-indulgence in sheer power and horror, characteristic of the era in which the motif of *t'ao-t'ieh* flourished, offers an interesting contrast to the later era when the dragon became the symbol of imperial power. The dragon was officially adopted in the 2nd century BC by Liu Pang 劉邦, the founder of the Han dynasty (206 BC-220 AD), as an emblem of the emperor and imperial power, and this tradition was continued until 1911, when the Ch'ing dynasty was overthrown by

the revolution led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen. According to the legend, Liu Pang's mother became pregnant after copulating with a dragon in a dream and Liu was subsequently born of this divine union. By that time, to be sure, there had already developed a dragon lore which, among other things, deified the Yellow Emperor, the legendary founding father of the Chinese people, by picturing him as riding a dragon to Heaven. But since Liu Pang, the dragon's association with the emperor and dynastic power had become systematic. The dragon became synonymous with the emperor, who was called a *chen-lung tien-tzu* 真龍天子 ("Son of Heaven who was a true dragon"), and things associated with him or his power took on the character 龍 *lung* (dragon) as a way of designation. For example, the emperor's face was termed "dragon face," (*lung-yen* 龍顏), and his posture, "dragon posture" (*lung-tzu* 龍姿). The robe he wore was the "dragon robe" (*lung-p'ao* 龍袍); the bed he slept in was the "dragon bed" (*lung-ch'uang* 龍牀). His throne was called the "dragon seat" (*lung-tzo* 龍座); the vehicle he rode in was the "dragon coach" (*lung-ch'e* 龍車). Recently, scientists have discovered that the Forbidden City in Peking, built in the 15th century, actually assumes the shape of a dragon when viewed from the air; it seems to have been originally designed as an architectural embodiment of the dragon.<sup>9</sup>

That the dragon flourished as a symbol of imperial power for more than two thousand years in Chinese history cannot be simply considered a fortuitous phenomenon. In fact, what was used apparently as a way to prove Liu Pang's divine origin, hence the legitimacy of his regime, had in the course of history taken on complicated ideological meanings. The dragon as a symbol of imperial power was in time endowed with the Confucian notion of the ideal ruler. It was not an innocent piece of fanciful ornamentation for Chinese emperors. It was a Confucian myth.

Myth is defined by Roland Barthes in his essay "Myth Today" as a complex structure composed of two conjoined semiological chains, each with its own signifier, signified, and sign.<sup>10</sup> The following is a diagram he uses to illustrate myth as a semiological system:



What is peculiar about the structure of myth is that the first chain as a whole becomes a signifier in the second chain. Barthes calls the first chain "language" and the second chain "metalanguage," which is myth. According to Barthes, the sign in the first chain becomes a signifier, a mere form, to be appropriated by the signified in the second chain. Myth (the second chain) turns "the language object" (the first chain) into "a tamed richness" for the myth to use.<sup>11</sup> The language object is "rich" in the sense that all its meanings are available as nourishment for the myth. It is "tamed" because it no longer has an independent life of its own; all its meanings are ready for the myth to "call and dismiss" as it pleases.<sup>12</sup> Barthes defines myth as "a type of speech chosen by history," for "it cannot possibly evolve from the 'nature' of things";<sup>13</sup> rather myth is always motivated by an ideological intention. Barthes also calls myth "speech *stolen and restored*."<sup>14</sup> As if by a sleight of hand, myth first appropriates "the language object" and then injects its own ideological content into the latter. Because of the partial analogy between "the language object" and myth, the latter is "able to hide" its ideological content in the former."<sup>15</sup> In this sense, myth is considered "depoliticized speech."<sup>16</sup>

One example of myth given by Barthes is a picture on the cover of a copy of *Paris-Match* of a young Negro in a French uniform saluting the tricolor. Built on the "literal meaning" of the picture ("a black soldier saluting the French national flag") is a larger signification ("all the sons of France, regardless of their colors, serve faithfully under her flag"), which is the real message of the picture. As a myth, Barthes explains, the Negro's personal history is bracketed out, so that it could be made into a mere gesture or form to accommodate the meaning of French imperialism. What is deceptive about this picture is that the concept of French imperialism appears natural and convincing in the saluting black soldier.<sup>17</sup>

Applying Barthes' theory to the Chinese imperial dragon, we can see that it is also a mythical structure composed of two semiological chains. In the first chain, the description, either verbal or pictorial, of a serpentine, scaly monster soaring above the clouds signifies a mythical creature capable of destruction but generally well disposed to humankind. The description of this particular nature of the dragon, i.e., the first signified, forms the signifier for the second chain, where the signified is the Chinese emperor as a Confucian ruler.

What then is an ideal ruler according to Confucianism? The core of Confucius's ethico-political thought was *jen* 仁 and *li* 禮. *Jen* had a wealth

of meanings. It suggested, among other things, such qualities as "gentility, magnanimity, humility, goodness of character, and benevolence."<sup>18</sup> But the essential meaning of *jen* was humanity, that quality which made humankind human. When asked what was *jen* by one of his disciples, Confucius said: "To love mankind" (愛人也)<sup>19</sup>. A good monarch, Confucius held, should practice the rule of *jen*, i.e., benevolent government.<sup>20</sup> *Li*, on the other hand, referred to rites and rituals in general. Crucial to *li* was the concept of propriety, by which an individual would know his or her place in ritual ceremonies and society and know how to behave appropriately in each situation. In other words, *li* in traditional China helped to consolidate the existing sociopolitical hierarchy, as this Confucian teaching can testify: "Let the ruler be a ruler, the subject a subject, the father a father, the son a son" (君君臣臣父父子子).<sup>21</sup> Taken together, *jen* and *li* required that the emperor rule his subjects benevolently while making sure that the sociopolitical hierarchy headed by him would remain intact. At its best Confucianism was a mixture of humanism and paternalism; Confucian government, a benevolent autocracy.

There are many theories that purport to explain why Confucianism remained the official ideology of feudal China for two millenia. One important reason no doubt had to do with the theory of the mandate of Heaven (t'ien-ming 天命). According to this theory, the emperor was not the ultimate authority; he received the mandate to rule from Heaven. The theory of the mandate of Heaven could work in several ways. For the ruling monarch, it was both a seal of legitimacy for his regime and a constant reminder that his rule was contingent upon the approval of Heaven, that is, upon his continued practice of *jen*. (In "radical" Confucian thinkers like Mencius, *tien-ming*—translated into English as "the will of Heaven" or "the mandate of Heaven," depending on the context—could be read in popular feelings towards the government, a view that did not go well with some feudal rulers.<sup>22</sup>) For the rebels and revolutionaries determined to overthrow the old dynasty, it could justify their revolt by the argument that through its misrule the old regime had lost the mandate of Heaven, which was now being passed on to them. Curiously, by claiming that the old regime had "run out of its destined tenure" (氣數已盡) and by calling himself a "true Son of Heaven" (真命天子), a rival to the throne could challenge the authority of the emperor who was now judged to be out of favor with Heaven, while still subscribing to Confucianism. Obviously, what must be changed was an individual ruler now disqualified to rule; the *tao-t'ung* 道統, i.e., the (Confucian)

Tao, should remain intact. The enduring dominance of Confucianism in feudal China in turn made possible the long life of the dragon as a Confucian myth.

Now let us see what features of the dragon in legend and folklore the imperial dragon would draw on to create the Confucian myth of an ideal ruler. First, the supernatural character of the fabulous dragon appropriately illustrates the alleged divine source of the emperor's authority or even the emperor's own supposed divine origin. Wasn't he called the Son of Heaven? Naturally, this would put him on top of all that was under the sun. The clouds that usually appear in a dragon motif reinforce the impression of the dragon-emperor's exalted position.

Secondly, the largely benevolent nature of the Chinese dragon would serve the notion of the rule of *jen* very well. Unlike its Western counterpart, which was typically portrayed as greedy, ferocious, and evil, the Chinese dragon was generally well disposed towards humankind.<sup>23</sup> It was credited with making rain and regulating rivers and lakes, bringing to human beings life-giving water. The vital importance of timely and ample but not excessive rainfall as well as water resources in general could not be overemphasized in a pre-modern agricultural society as existed in traditional China. No wonder Chinese expressions describing favors bestowed by the emperor are metaphorically related to water. For example, *en-tze* 恩澤, meaning "great favor," contains the character *tze* 澤, meaning "lake"; *huang-en hao-tang* 皇恩浩蕩 was a formulaic expression of adulation literally meaning: "The imperial favor is like a vast expanse of water." Thus, a Confucian ruler inclined towards and capable of benefiting his people would make a perfect analogy to the Chinese dragon on whose favor the survival of humankind was thought to depend.

Finally, the enormous supernatural force the dragon represented and its propensity as a capricious and hard-to-please creature also has a role to play in the myth in question. The political power a Chinese emperor wielded ultimately rested on the elaborately organized state apparatus backed by armed forces. Without such a power of destruction and deterrence, he could not maintain his rule against his enemies, potential or present, both inside and outside the empire. But unlike during the Shang-Chou periods, from the Han dynasty on, sheer violence without at least a claim to the "rule of *jen*" would not support any regime very long. Therefore, even the most despotic rulers in post-Ch'in Chinese history would at least pay lip service to Confucianism. Nevertheless, it was the absolute power a Chinese emperor

had at his disposal that inspired awe and fear in his subjects. The Chinese saying that "to wait upon a monarch is like waiting upon a tiger" (*ts'u-chün ju ts'u-hu* 伺君如同虎) captures the sense of helplessness and insecurity of those closely associated with the emperor. In feudal China, the people were at the mercy of their emperors, just as they were at the mercy of the dragon as a personified force of Nature. To them the favors they received from their ruler or from the dragon depended on how faithfully they served the power over them and how well they pleased it, whether it was the emperor or the dragon. Their obsequious kowtow to the emperor was comparable to their grovelling in awe at the temple of the dragon king (*lung-wang-miao* 龍王廟); often human sacrifices were made to appease the dragon and to beg for its favors. Thus, the absolute social power the emperor commanded emulated the supreme natural force embodied in the dragon. The emperor was the dragon.

Dragon worship in feudal China was a form of authority worship. The role prescribed by a Confucian society for the individual was reflected in the latter's basic social attitude. Confucius said, "There are three things that a gentleman fears: he fears the will of Heaven, he fears great men, he fears the words of divine sages" (君子有三畏:畏天命、畏大人、畏聖人之言).<sup>24</sup> The will of Heaven manifested itself in many ways: Heaven may show its pleasure or displeasure by providing favorable climatic conditions for or inflicting natural calamities on farmers, but, most importantly, by approving or disapproving the existing sociopolitical order headed by the emperor. If the emperor was thought to rule with the mandate of Heaven, to fear the will of Heaven meant to fear the emperor, who was able to bestow favors on his subjects or mete out penalty to them as he pleased. Then to fear great men meant to fear the whole ruling apparatus headed by the emperor, who was regarded as the greatest of all great men in a Confucian society. And to fear the words of the divine sages often amounted to fearing the canonized ideology, which was dominated by Confucianism. One could easily imagine how these fears found a "natural" expression in dragon worship. Molded by Confucianism, which was practically a tool of feudalism, through the centuries, the Chinese developed an acute awareness of hierarchy and an obsequious attitude to authority at the tremendous expense of their initiative, enterprise, self-assertion, and their sense of civil responsibility. These serious defects in the Chinese national character are still visible today, and they are obstacles to the modernization and democratization of Chinese society.

Indeed, the connection between the Chinese emperor as a Confucian

ruler and the mythical dragon is in a sense forced; the former, so to speak, press-ganged the latter into its service. On the other hand, the semantic link between the two is never totally arbitrary. The dragon as a powerful, capricious, but basically beneficent divine creature lent itself to a perfect analogy with the ideal Confucian ruler who practiced *jen* and *li*, combining (promises of) favors and graces with (display of) power and authority, a dualist practice known in Chinese as *en-wei ping-yung* 恩威并用. (It can be argued that the Chinese emperor ruled by a combination of Confucianism and Legalism, the best-known exponent of which was Han Fei Tzu 韓非子 [d. 233 BC].<sup>25</sup> But Legalism never attained a position comparable to that occupied by Confucianism in official ideology after the collapse of the Ch'in dynasty.) The Chinese dragon motif thus "naturally" accommodated the Confucian notion of benevolent government, which almost all Chinese emperors professed to subscribe to, and the emperors' absolute autocratic power at the same time. Historically, the worship of the dragon as a personified force of Nature preexisted the worship of the dragon-emperor as a Confucian ruler. Confucianism appropriated this time-honored cultural belief and made its proposition about the ideal ruler appear natural and eternal in the dragon, now reduced to a mere "language object." As the dragon—rather than the *t'ao-t'ieh*—apparently offered itself as a "natural" analogy to the Chinese emperor as a Confucian ruler,<sup>26</sup> it bridged, in a sense, the gap between nature (or supemature) and history. Indeed, as Barthes points out, the very principle of myth is that "it transforms history into nature."<sup>27</sup>

At this point it is necessary to consider the question whether Barthes's theory of myth, derived from his study of contemporary Western society, can be borrowed to study a cultural sign developed in Confucian China. Since semiology is "a science of forms" that "studies significations apart from their content,"<sup>28</sup> there is no reason why the rules derived from the study of myth in modern Western society cannot be applied to myth in Confucian China, if those rules are convincingly established. Indeed, all the basic features of myth described by Barthes, e.g., myth as "a type of speech chosen by history," as "speech stolen and restored," and as "depoliticized speech," can be borne out by the dragon as a Confucian myth.

Here I would like to take the matter a step further to argue that traditional Chinese society was also a "privileged field of mythical significations,"<sup>29</sup> semiologically comparable to modern Western society. Barthes argues that the pervasiveness of bourgeois ideology and the anonymity of the

bourgeoisie in modern Western society allow "bourgeois norms [to be] experienced as the evident laws of a natural order."<sup>30</sup> The bourgeois philosophers "subjected all things to an idea of the rational, and decreed that they were meant for man."<sup>31</sup> These and other conditions make it easy for the bourgeoisie to transform "the reality of the world into an image of the world, History into Nature."<sup>32</sup> Although Confucian China differs greatly from modern Western society, it nevertheless had comparable ideological conditions to facilitate mythical significations. The ethico-political order proposed by Confucianism also had the air of a natural law: *jen* and *li* were first experienced by individuals at home as natural embodiments of such basic human emotions as love between relations and respect for the elders; the rule of *jen* and *li* was seen as a "natural" extension of such fundamental *human* practices on a national scale. Confucianism also had its secular rationalism, although this rationalism appealed to the individual's intuitive judgment and experiential knowledge, rather than to science and logic as Reason in the West does. In short, Confucianism offered an ethico-political system of thought which it claimed to be eternally valid for humankind. That many of the best minds of today are engaged in salvaging such "eternal" insights from the feudal poison with which Confucianism is thought to have been tainted, proved that Confucian claims to Truth were no simple gesture of self-importance. Clearly, a Confucian myth grounded on such a plausible basis of human nature and reason can be a patent myth.

The dragon is a complex sign in Chinese culture. It probably started as the totem of the ancient Wu-Yueh 吳越 people in the lower reaches of the Yangtzu River and came to be accepted as the totem of the tribal alliance which was to become the core of the early Chinese nation.<sup>33</sup> For two thousand years after Liu Pang, it served as an exclusive emblem of the imperial house. In modern China, amid political strife and national division, the dragon is being revived as a national symbol, a symbol of national pride, unity, and aspirations for a rich and powerful modern China. Hou Te-chien's "We, the Descendants of the Dragon," one of the best-known songs on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, expresses this national sentiment. Surely the dragon can be claimed by various political and cultural forces in contemporary China, including the popular need for a national mythology. But, so long as feudal practices still linger on in Chinese society, the dragon as a Confucian myth will die hard. As Yen Chia-ch'i rightly points out in "China is a Dragon No More," an uncritical embracing of the dragon as a cultural

sign, which seems to encourage authority worship, can only hamper the democratization process in the Chinese mainland. It is hoped that the semiological reading of the dragon as a Confucian myth offered in this paper will contribute to a better understanding of the dragon as a sign in Chinese culture.

## Notes

1. An early version of this paper was first read at the Ninth International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts (IAFA), held in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, March 16-20, 1988.
2. Yen Chiach'i, "Chungkuo pu chai shih lung" 中國不再是龍 ("China is a Dragon No More"), *People's Daily (Overseas Ed.)*, 24 May 1988.
3. Ibid.
4. The *t'ao-t'ieh* 饕餮 was apparently distinct from the dragon during the Shang and Chou periods. A bronze bell of the late Chou in the Minneapolis Institute of Arts collection is thought to be decorated with both dragon and *t'ao-t'ieh* motifs (Anthony Christie, *Chinese Mythology* [London, New York, etc.: Hamlyn, 1968] 130). However, as the dragon became the favored imperial emblem and dragon lore grew more elaborate, the *t'ao-t'ieh* came to be seen as a variety of dragon (see C. A. S. Williams, *Outlines of Chinese Symbolism*, 1931 [Taipei: Ch'eng Wen, 1973] 112) or even regarded as the rain dragon (see Christie 13). Whether an expanded family of dragons subsumed the *t'ao-t'ieh* or the dragon motif drew on the *t'ao-t'ieh* motif, the two should not be confused.
5. *The New Encyclopedia Britanica* (1988), Vol. 11, 551.
6. *Shu yi chi* 述異記 (*The Record of Wonders*) remarks that "people in Taiyuan do not use ox heads when sacrificing to Ch'ih Yu" (qtd. in Yuan K'e 袁珂, *Shenhua lunwen chi* 神話論集 [*Essays on Mythology*] [Shanghai: Shanghai kuchi ch'upanshe, 1982] 67).
7. Li Tsehau, *Mei te lich'eng* 美的歷程 (*A History of Beauty*) (Peking: Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Press, 1984) 46.
8. Ibid.
9. *The People's Daily (Overseas Ed.)*, 18 October 1987.
10. Roland Barthes, "Myth Today," in *Mythology*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill & Wang, 1972), 109-59.
11. Barthes, 118.
12. Ibid.
13. Barthes, 110.
14. Barthes, 125.
15. Barthes, 118.
16. Barthes, 142.
17. Barthes, 116-19.
18. Frank N. Magill, ed., *Masterpieces of World Philosophy in Summary Form* (New York: Harper, 1961) 6.
19. Confucius, the *Analects* 論語 (various editions), XII.22. My translation.
20. In the *Analects*, XVII.6, Confucius proposes what may be called the five principles of benevolent government:

There are five things and whoever is capable of putting them into practice in the Empire is certainly "benevolent" . . . They are respectfulness, tolerance, trustworthiness in word, quickness and generosity. (D. C. Lau's translation [Penguin, 1979]). 能行五者於天下爲仁矣！……曰“恭、寬、信、敏、惠”。

21. Confucius, XII.11. Translated by D. C. Lau.
22. William Theodore de Barry et al: "It is this championship of the common people and their right of revolution that has caused the *Mencius* to be regarded by some rulers as a 'dangerous' book" (*Sources of Chinese Tradition* vol. 1 [New York & London: Columbia UP, 1960] 87).
23. In the West, although the ancient Greeks and Romans at times conceived the dragon as beneficent powers, the evil reputation of the mythical creature, derived from the Middle Eastern source, outlived the other tradition. "In Christian art, the dragon came to be symbolic of sin and paganism and, as such, was depicted prostrate beneath the heels of saints and martyrs." By contrast, the dragon in the Far East "managed to retain its prestige and is known as a beneficent creature." See *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* (1988) Vol. 11, 209. Kakuzo Okakura also points out: "The Eastern dragon is not the gruesome monster of medieval imagination [in the West], but the genius of strength and goodness. He is the spirit of change, therefore of life itself" (*The Awakening of Japan* [New York: Century, 1904] 77).
24. Confucius, XVI.8. Translated by Arthur Waley, *The Analects of Confucius* (New York: Random, 1938).
25. For an introduction to Legalism and Han Fei Tzu's thought, the reader may consult de Barry 1: 122-44.
26. The canonization of the dragon as a favored mythical creature for Confucian rulers involved a negative reinterpretation and judgment of the *t'ao-t'ieh*. For instance, it was believed that the *t'ao-t'ieh* "lost its body as a punishment for eating human beings and was known as 'the glutton'" (see Christie 12). In modern Chinese the word *t'ao-t'ieh* is still used as a synonym of "glutton" or "gourmand."
27. Barthes, 129.
28. Barthes, 111.
29. Barthes, 137.
30. Barthes, 140.
31. Barthes, 142.
32. Barthes, 141.
33. See Yu Jenchieh 余仁傑, "Chinglung yuan yu Wu-Yueh" ("Dragon Worship Originated in Wu-Yueh") *People's Daily (Overseas Ed.)* 10 December 1987.

