

# Comparing *The Four Books* and *An Essay on Man*: A Thematic Study

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*The Four Books* and *An Essay on Man* belong to that body of literature distinguished for philosophical teachings, their literary merits often outshone by the brilliance of their moral contents.<sup>1</sup> Both deal with the metaphysical question of man's place in the universe, and both endeavor to map out ways for man to make the best of his life on earth. The present paper proposes to compare and contrast the major themes expounded in these works, in hopes of attaining a better understanding of the more important concepts in each work around which the themes are built. Section I delineates the general themes, as this writer sees them, in the two works. Section II contrasts the Confucian idea of *T'ien* with the Popian idea of God, the two concepts basic to each work. Sections III and IV put *jen* and self-love, *yi* and reason side by side, taking note of their functional similarities as well as inherent differences.

## I. General Observations

The *Four Books*—*Confucian Analects* (*Lun Yü* 論語), *The Works of Mencius* (*Mencius* 孟子), *The Great Learning* (*Ta Hsueh* 大學), and *The Doctrine of the Mean* (*Chung Yung* 中庸)<sup>2</sup>—written in ancient China from the fifth century to the third century before Christ, were edited by Chu Hsi 朱熹 (1130–1200), the great neo-Confucianist philosopher of the Sung Dynasty. Among the tenets extolled in the *Confucian Analects*,<sup>3</sup> the most basic are *jen* 仁 and *yi* 義. Since there are no English words to render exactly these concepts, we will simply use the Chinese terms. *Jen*, in Chinese writing, is a combination of the characters for “two” and “man,” indicating the ideal relationship between two men. It is both a generative virtue assimilating all other virtues and a particular virtue denoting the love of man for

his fellow man. In practice, *jen* is primarily achieved through *chung* 忠 and *shu* 恕. The combination of "heart" and "center," *chung* means to be true to oneself and to others. Similarly, *shu*, the combination of "heart" and "alike," is to revert "to a personal test of how would you feel"<sup>4</sup> if you were in someone else's shoes. As for *yi*, it is best summarized in *The Doctrine of the Mean* as "the recognition of what is right and proper" (20).

The other three books are based in the main on the same principles. *The Great Learning* treats educational and moral programs. It suggests that, to attain world order and peace, man must bring his good nature into full play,<sup>5</sup> love and renovate people, and dwell in the ultimate good. It offers an eight-act program as follows: to investigate things so as to extend knowledge, to be sincere in thought, to rectify the mind, and thereby to cultivate personal life, to regulate one's county (*chia* 家),<sup>6</sup> to put the country in order, and eventually to make peaceful and happy the whole world. These eight acts, says Wing-tsit Chan, are "the blueprints for translating *jen* into actual living, carefully maintaining the balance and harmony of the individual on the one side and society on the other."<sup>7</sup>

The major subjects of *The Doctrine of the Mean* are human nature, the golden mean, and sincerity (*ch'eng* 誠). Ch'eng I 程頤 (1033–1107) expounds *chung* as "the correct path of the world" and *yung* as "the definite principle of the world;"<sup>8</sup> Wing-tsit Chan further observes that, "taken together, *chung yung* means that there is harmony in human nature and that harmony underlies our moral being and prevails throughout the universe. In short, man and Nature [or *t'ien*] form a unity."<sup>9</sup> And the mediator between man and *t'ien* is *ch'eng* (sincerity):

Sincerity is the principle of *T'ien*. To be sincere is the principle of man. The one who is sincere is one who hits upon what is right without effort and apprehends without thinking. He is naturally and easily in harmony with the truth. (*The Doctrine of the Mean*, 20)

The entire theory of Mencius (372–289 B. C.) rests on his belief that man is by nature good. Since man is originally good, what he has to do is constantly to preserve, to nurture his good nature and to develop his innate knowledge and ability, and, if he has lost it, to make serious efforts to recover his original nature. *Jen* and *yi* are thus inborn moral qualities. Because the moral sense is innate, everyone has the potential to be a sage: everyone is

equal. His egalitarianism is unconventional in a society composed of distinct classes. And yet, at the same time, he never essentially deviates from the main stream of Confucianism, which favors a hierarchical society.

From the Confucian *Four Books* we now turn to Alexander Pope's (1688–1744) *An Essay on Man*, the first book of the projected four *Moral Essays*.<sup>10</sup> Like that of *The Four Books*, its emphasis is on man, on how to make the worthy man; but, as we shall see, there remain important distinctions.

The whole *Essay on Man* being a vindication of the ways of God to man,<sup>11</sup> its first epistle points out man's proper place in the universe and the rationale of the vast, complex cosmos. The universe is a hierarchical "vast chain of being" with its "strong connections, nice dependencies, gradations just" (I, 30–31). Man is placed in the middle, being the link between the angels above and the beasts below. Everything in the cosmos has a function and a proper place; "all are but parts of one stupendous whole,/ Whose body Nature is, and God the soul" (I, 267–68). Pope blames "presumptuous man" for striving to reach higher than his assigned place in the vast chain of being; he asserts that man must "submit," accepting his blindness and weakness.

This stands in sharp contrast to the cardinal Confucian idea that places equal importance on *t'ien*, earth, and man. Man, according to Confucianism, is capable of knowing the nature of other men, of other creatures, and of the universal order (the Way of *t'ien*)—by first exerting his mind to the utmost so that he can know his own nature. *The Doctrine of the Mean* makes this abundantly clear:

Only those who are absolutely sincere can fully develop their nature. If they can fully develop their nature, they can then fully develop the nature of others. If they can fully develop the nature of others, they can then fully develop the nature of things. If they can fully develop the nature of things, they can then assist in the transforming and nourishing process of *t'ien* and earth. (20)

The second epistle of the *Essay* lays emphasis on "scanning" the constitution of human nature. Passions, "modes of self-love," are to Pope the impelling force in man's action, whereas "reason" is the regulative force. Their relation to and dependency on each other are described as follows:

Self-love, the spring of motion, acts the soul;  
Reason's comparing balance rules the whole.  
Man, but for that, no action could attend,  
And, but for this, were active to no end. (II, 59-62)

Self-love as such is intrinsically neither good nor bad, and reason assumes the responsibility of grafting the passions on man's better nature.

The two principles—self-love, which urges, and reason, which restrains—bear some resemblances to the Confucian central ideas of *jen*—particularly that aspect called *shu*—and *yi*, discussed in such detail in *The Four Books*. As *yi* is the recognition of what is right and proper, so reason is a “guard” of “Nature’s road.” As the Confucianists advocate working for love of man instead of for one’s own profit, so Pope extols self-love in the sense of benevolence rather than of self-interest. As *shu* means not to do unto others what you would not have others do unto you, so self-love transcends itself to a level where man measures others’ wants by his own. As *shu* is a way unto *jen* or true manhood,<sup>12</sup> so true self-love is a staircase to “self-fulfillment.” Moreover, as self-cultivation is a pre-requisite for the establishment of harmonious human relationships, of ideal government, and of a perfected union of man and *t’ien*, so the proper co-operation between self-love and reason is the cornerstone of harmonious social relationships, “true polity,” and of the ideal relationship between God and man.

The third epistle presents a detailed account of the universe connected by the “chain of love.” In this God-ruled state of Nature, man obeys God’s words to copy the social fellowship of ants and bees, their organization, with a view to establishing blameless patriarchal societies and government. A harmonious state has been spoiled by tyranny and superstition, and the sacred duty of a poet and a patriot is to restore the faith, morals, and golden state of Nature, to “re-lume” her ancient light. Here, the duties, the process, and the ideals of Pope’s thinking find their counterparts in the Confucian *Four Books*, *jen* and *yi* being the guiding principles of a benevolent government in *The Works of Mencius*, and *The Great Learning* propounding the final ideal of peace, harmony, and happiness of the whole world.

The fourth epistle deals with man’s end and aim: happiness. True happiness, “the soul’s calm sun-shine, and the heart-felt joy” (IV, 168), cannot be obtained from riches, greatness, or fame; it is “virtue’s prize.” This epistle, therefore, celebrates virtue. More specifically, it is transcendent self-love that it is extolling. Man is to extend his good will to friends, neigh-

bors, even enemies, grasping "the whole worlds of Reason, Life and Sense,/ In one close system of Benevolence" (IV, 357-58). Experiencing this complex unity achieved by transcendent self-love, man becomes truly the image of God. For God is the first and almighty cause of creating and sustaining what Maynard Mack terms "the complex unity of existents" in the vast cosmos.<sup>13</sup>

To the Confucian mind, happiness is likewise closely allied with virtue. The virtuous are the happiest. As adumbrated in *The Four Books*, for the average individual there is no greater joy than to examine himself and find that he has completed all the pre-requisites for being a true man. But to the humanistic Confucianists, happiness means something more: the highest state of happiness is to be found in the perfect union between man and *t'ien*.

## II. *T'ien* versus God

The Confucians are preoccupied with an ideal social order; their perfect government is envisioned in this famous injunction: "Let the ruler be ruler, the minister minister, the father father, and the son son" (*Analects*, 12:11). Furthermore, "A ruler who governs his state by virtue is like the polar star, which remains in its place while all the other stars revolve around it" (*Analects*, 2:1).<sup>14</sup> Moral cultivation is thus linked with the preservation of the hierarchical order, one of the main concerns of the Confucians. Reminiscent of the Confucian notion is the Popian concept of society as a "constituted *order*—reflecting a larger cosmic order in its hierarchical structure and in its classes circulating planet-like around a focal monarch."<sup>15</sup>

The hierarchical structure in *An Essay on Man* is in fact the great chain of being

... which from God began,  
Natures aethereal, human, angel, man,  
Beast, bird, fish, insect! what no eye can see,  
No glass can reach! from Infinite to thee,  
From thee to Nothing! (I, 237-41)

Though their mutual relations are not those of equal beings, they all nevertheless share God's care and are equal in the eyes of one

Who sees with equal eye, as God of all,  
A hero perish, or a sparrow fall,  
Atoms or systems into ruin hurl'd,  
And now a bubble burst, and now a world. (I, 87-90)

Since any slight violation of the hierarchy will result in cosmic ruin and is "morally wrong,"<sup>16</sup> it is important for man to keep his assigned place in the universe. Creatures find their origins in God; "Faith, Law, Morals, all began, / All end, in Love of God, and Love of Man" (IV, 339-40). Like the Confucian *t'ien*, Pope's God gives rise to a whole system of ethics.

God in *An Essay on Man* assumes the supreme role in the world of man as well as in the universe. From Him all creatures derive their being. It is He who "in the nature of each being founds/Its proper bliss, and sets its proper bounds" (III, 109-10). From Him the "vast chain of being" began; from Him the great chain of love has its origin. To embrace the universe as an ordered whole and to meet Him is "The first, last purpose of the human soul" (IV, 338).

Such a God finds his counterpart in the *t'ien* of *The Four Books*, whose implications vary throughout the work. According to Fung Yu-lan 馮友蘭,<sup>17</sup> there is, first, "a ruling or presiding *T'ien*," who, to use Wing-tsit Chan's phrase, "is purposive and is the master of all things. . . understood in an anthropomorphic sense."<sup>18</sup> Secondly, there is "a fatalistic *T'ien*, equivalent to the concept of Fate (*ming* 命), a term applied to all those events in human life over which man himself has no control." Thirdly, there is "an ethical *T'ien*, one that exhibits a moral principle, the highest primordial principle of the universe." It would be instructive to put alongside each of the three aspects of the Confucian *t'ien* the Popian notion of God.

#### A. The Ruling or Presiding *T'ien*

The Confucians' regard of *t'ien* as purposive creator and intelligent master is evidenced in their use of allusions. Mencius quotes from *The Book of Odes*, "*T'ien* gives birth to the teeming people, fixing a norm upon the nature of everything" (*Mencius*, 6A:6).<sup>19</sup> This idea underscores not only man's concept of *t'ien* as intelligent supreme being but his relation to *t'ien*. Such an idea finds its residuary influence a dozen centuries later in the words of Confucius and Mencius. For in *The Doctrine of the Mean*, Confucius says,

"T'ien in giving life to all created things is surely bountiful to them according to their qualities" (17).<sup>20</sup> Mencius goes even further to assert that,

When [*t'ien*] is about to confer a great responsibility on any man, it will exercise his mind with suffering, subject his sinews and bones to hard work, expose his body to hunger, put him to poverty, place obstacles in the paths of his deeds, so as to stimulate his mind, harden his nature, and improve wherever he is incompetent. (*Mencius*, 6B: 15)<sup>21</sup>

Strict discipline no less than this, so the ancients believed, is essential to any accomplishment in courting *t'ien*'s favor. Illustrating the direct relation between *t'ien* and the rulers, Confucius quotes from *The Book of Odes*, "The admirable, amiable virtuous man, with his excellent virtue, putting his people and officers in concord, will receive emolument from *t'ien*. It will protect him, assist him, appoint him to be kind, and bless him over and over again" (*The Doctrine of the Mean*, 17).

The other side of the concept of *t'ien* immediately becomes clear, endowed with a humanistic implication: the favor of *t'ien* is *earned*, not given gratis; man has to cultivate his virtue. When the ruler ceases to nurture his virtue, *t'ien* may pick another to replace him. The mandate of *t'ien* is identified with the will of the people. Mencius remarks upon Yao's 堯 giving his empire to Shun 舜, "It was [*t'ien*] that gave the empire to him. It was the people that gave the empire to him" (*Mencius*, 5A:5).<sup>22</sup> For support, he quotes from "*T'ai Shih*" 泰誓 the following: "*T'ien* sees as my people see; *t'ien* hears as my people hear" (*Mencius*, 5A:5).<sup>23</sup>

Pope's God, too, is the omnipotent and omniscient creator. He created all beings out of nothing and linked them with the vast chain of being, where all creatures are "in exact proportion to the state" (I, 183) and are set with "proper bounds" (III, 110). A relation between God and man similar to what we just saw in *The Four Books* is also present in *An Essay on Man*, this time more intimate, more immediate, and more harmonious. God is a true friend in good or ill: "Nor God alone in the still calm we find, / He mounts the storm, and walks upon the wind" (II, 109-10). He is a wise teacher, who "hides the book of Fate" (I, 77) and lets the students enjoy their lives and display their potential. He is a responsible director, who bids man to "Learn each small People's genius, policies," such as "The Ant's republic, and the realm of Bees" (III, 183-84), so as to build societies. On government, He said, "let the wiser make the rest obey" (III, 196). What comes of such a relationship

is, as illustrated by the ancient people who trod in the paths of pleasure to virtue, that loving "all the faith," they "understood/A sov'reign being but a sov'reign good" (III, 235, 237-38).

At this juncture, a distinction must be made between Pope's God and the Confucian *t'ien*. For Pope, God is benevolent and loves not only man but all his creatures. His love permeates the entire cosmos, each creature sharing his care and finding happiness in Him. The Confucian *t'ien* is a more abstract being, basically indifferent towards creation although it has established a set of rules and mandates that man must follow to live it right. In this regard the *t'ien* seems more closely related to the deist notion of God.<sup>24</sup> Because of the vague role of *t'ien*, man in the Confucian perspective tends to rely more on himself rather than on help from above. The emphasis on man in *The Four Books* is a feature which marks them as distinctly humanistic.

#### B. The Fatalistic *T'ien*

A variant of the ruling *t'ien* is the fatalistic *t'ien*, sometimes used in conjunction with *ming*. Sage as he is, Confucius, when in distress, is tempted to put at least part of the blame on fate. Thus he says,

If my principles are to prevail, it is *ming*.

If they fail to prevail, it is *ming*.

What can Kung-po Liao do against *ming*? (*Analects*, 14:38)

Obviously, *ming* here means the irrevocable will of *t'ien*: in this world, man is helplessly at the mercy of fate. That *ming* may be identified with *t'ien* is demonstrated by the following two examples. Consoling his fellow student Ssu-ma Niu over the death of his brothers, Tzu-hsia 子夏 observes,

I have heard this saying: "Death and life belong to *ming*; riches and honors depend on *t'ien*." (*Analects*, 12:5)

On another occasion, Mencius makes this comment:

That one has a good son or not is from *t'ien*; man can do nothing about it. That which is done without man's doing is from *t'ien*. That which happens without man's causing is from *ming*. (*Mencius*, 5A:6)

It reminds us of what Pope writes in *An Essay on Man*:

Order is Heav'n's first law; and this confest,  
Some are, and must be, greater than the rest,  
More rich, more wise; . . . (IV, 49-51)

The fatalistic tone is also evident elsewhere in the work. But *An Essay on Man* is written largely from God's viewpoint; *The Four Books*, from man's. Thus Pope declares that "On mutual wants built mutual Happiness" (III, 112) and that "All Nature's difference keeps all Nature's peace" (IV, 56). In this light, the best thing for man to do is to "follow nature." The Confucians, however, seem less submissive. Tzu-hsia, for instance, puts much emphasis on what man, as man, can do to his own fate. While leaving a great deal to *ming*, man nevertheless should strive for happiness by cultivating his own virtue. Thus Tzu-hsia goes on to console Ssu-ma Niu by saying:

If a virtuous man never fails to behave reverentially, is ever respectful in dealing with others, and follows the rules of propriety, then all within the four seas are brothers. Why does the virtuous man have to worry about having no brothers? (*Analects*, 12:5)

This distinctively humanistic note, it seems to me, is a key to Confucian teachings. Perhaps the best interpretation of the Confucian *ming* is found, again, in Mencius:

Nothing is beyond the pale of *ming*, but it is for man to receive his *ming* which is proper to him. Therefore, he who has the true idea of *ming* will not stand beneath a precipitous wall. He who devotes all his energy till death to do what is right knows how to receive *ming* properly. He who dies under handcuffs and fetters does not know how to receive *ming* properly. (*Mencius*, 7A: 2)

If Pope is saying that "man proposes, God disposes," the Confucians say: though it is for *t'ien* to dispose, it is for man to propose.

### C. The Ethical *T'ien*

It is not surprising, then, to find that to Confucius, the worship of and sacrifice to gods and ghosts are always something more than religious rites. As Hsu Fu-kuan observes,

Confucius thought that the object of worship should be mainly one's ancestral spirits, for the act of worship was in reality an extension of filial piety as well as an extension of love. Confucius hoped that the act of worship might further become an act to remind the people of their own coming into existence, to extol virtue and gratitude . . . rather than to satisfy their own selfish intentions.<sup>25</sup>

Oftener than not, the traditional rites don humanistic and ethical clothes. Confucius deliberately avoids talking about spirits and ghosts *per se*: "Not yet able to serve man, how can we serve spiritual beings?" and "Not knowing about life, how can we know about death" (*Analects*, 11:11)? This seems to be also the drift of Pope's lines:

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;  
The proper study of Mankind is Man. (II, 1-2)

When Mencius declares that

When truth prevails, the feudal princes of little virtue are submissive to those of great, and those of little worth to those of great. When violence prevails, princes of small power are submissive to those of great, and the weak to the strong. Both cases are what must be in reason. Those who follow the principle of the ethical *t'ien* shall survive, and those who go against the principle of the ethical *t'ien* shall die. (4A:7)

he is elaborating on Confucius' observation of the virtuous standing in awe of *t'ien ming* . . . and the vulgar, ignorant of it, standing aloof (*Analects*, 16:8).

Here, *t'ien ming* does not mean so much the fatalistic *t'ien* as the moral principle conferred by the ethical *t'ien*. The transmutation and humanization of the meaning of *t'ien ming* or *ming* is best illustrated by the following examples. Vindicating the charge against Confucius' having lodged with unworthy Yung Chü 雍疽 and Chi Huan 瘠環, Mencius argues:

Confucius went into office according to propriety, and resigned from it according to *yi*. In regard to his obtaining office or not obtaining it, he said, "This is *ming*." But if he had lodged with Yung Chü and the attendant Chi Huan, that would neither have been according to *yi*, nor according to *ming*. (*Mencius*, 5A:8)

T'ang Chün-yi 唐君毅 comments on the passage by observing that "wherever *yi* is, is *ming*."<sup>26</sup> The association of *ming* with *yi* or moral principles is also discernable in *The Book of Odes*, quoted by Mencius in one of his lectures on self-cultivation:

When one does not, by what one does, realize what one desires, one has to turn inwards and examine oneself in every point. By doing so, one naturally becomes a righteous man and the people under heaven will accordingly submit to him. As has been said in *The Book of Odes*, "Be always in accordance with *ming*, and you will obtain much happiness." (*Mencius*, 4A:4)

Such a close relation between moral principles and *ming* is reminiscent of Pope's comment on the "unvary'd laws":

Mark what unvary'd laws preserve each state,  
Laws wise as Nature, and as fix'd as Fate.  
In vain thy Reason finer webs shall draw  
Entangle Justice in her net of Law. (III, 189–92)

Indeed, "Wherever *yi* is, is *ming*" may be deemed as just another way of saying, "whatever is, is right" (I, 294).

#### D. The Union of *T'ien* with Man

With its humanistic touch, the ethical *t'ien* maintains an intimate relation with man. *The Doctrine of the Mean* opens with the statement, "What [*t'ien*] imparts to man is called human nature."<sup>27</sup> It also says, "Wishing to know man, one must not fail to know *t'ien*" (*The Doctrine of the Mean*, 20). The reverse is true, too. Mencius notes that "He who exerts his mind to the utmost knows his nature. He who knows his nature knows [*t'ien*]" (*Mencius*, 7A:1).<sup>28</sup> The knowledge of one's self is equated with that of *t'ien*. This again finds striking counterpart in Pope's *Essay on Man*. Pope holds not only that "all our knowledge is, ourselves to know" (IV, 398) but, furthermore, that only by knowing himself can man expect to know God:

Say first, of God above, or Man below,  
What can we reason, but from what we know?  
.....  
'Tis ours to trace him only in our own. (I, 17–18; 22)

When the self-love in one's nature, in consonance with reason, courts noble aims, one may hope to come near God. In terms strikingly resembling Pope's, Ch'en Ta-ch'i 陳大齊 describes the Confucian notion of man in union with *t'ien* as "a state where all ones passions are rationalized, and reason passionized. . . . It is a perfect union of passion and reason."<sup>29</sup> It is a state where "all one's thoughts and actions are in perfect harmony with the general moral law—the ethical *t'ien*."<sup>30</sup> Both *An Essay on Man* and *The Four Books* find man's ultimate goal in the union with a superior being—be it God or *t'ien*.

In neither work is man expected to be *t'ien* or God. But to the Confucians, man in his perfect state comes close to godhead. When Mencius says, "When a sage is beyond our knowledge, he is called god" (*Mencius* 7B:25), he is perhaps being metaphorical,<sup>31</sup> for man can never be God. Yet the implication is clear: man, at his best, can be as significant as *t'ien*. Says *The Doctrine of the Mean*: "Those who are worthy to help *t'ien* and earth in growing and sustaining life are the equals of *t'ien* and earth" (*The Doctrine of the Mean*, 22). In *The Four Books*, man has not aspired to be *t'ien*—nor is there any need to do so. All that Confucians advocate is to develop fully one's nature, to bring about a social order and thereby to fulfill one's manhood and be a true "man." Pope's man can at best hope to be an "image" of God. He has to stay in his "proper place" in the vast chain of being; the distance between him and God can never be shortened. Perhaps it is this dire prospect that leads the "Presumptuous Man" (I, 35) to wish "to invert the laws of Order" (I, 129–30) and to be one of the "Angels," thence to be God. Alarmed by this, Pope asserts, characteristically, that "Order is Heav'n's first law" (IV, 49), and that "to reason right is to submit" (I, 164).

Earlier we have seen that, for the Confucianist to attain union with *t'ien*, he has to cultivate his inborn *jen* and *yi*, since what *t'ien* imparts is human nature in which *jen* and *yi* take root.<sup>32</sup> Pope, on the other hand, believes that self-love and reason co-exist in human nature; to be reunited with God in Heaven, to be a true "image" of God, one has to balance self-love with reason. The rest of this paper attempts to examine the nature, function and mutual relationship of the two pairs—*jen* and self-love, *yi* and reason.

### III. *Jen* versus Self-love

In its most comprehensive sense, *jen* embraces all virtues; in its most concise, it means one's love for one's fellow men. The definition of *jen* in *The Doctrine of the Mean* is at once concise and comprehensive:

Humanity (*jen*) is [the distinguishing characteristic of] (*sic*) man, and the greatest application of it is in being affectionate toward relatives. (20)<sup>33</sup>

In other words, it is the virtue *jen* that makes a man a man. To come close to being a true man in its ideal sense, one has no other choice than to cultivate and practice this virtue. *Jen* therefore becomes a substitute term for an ideal personality.

Tseng-tzu 曾子 explains Confucius' *jen* in terms of *chung* and *shu*: "The central doctrine of our master is none other than *chung* and *shu*" (*Analects*, 4:15). *Chung* and *shu* are not only the ways to put *jen* into practice but also the guides to the real understanding of its meaning. *Chung*, according to Chu Hsi, is the full development of one's originally good mind while *shu* means the extension of that mind to others.<sup>34</sup> Or as Tseng Yueh-nung 曾約農 puts it, *chung* is to be true to one's conscience, to one's nature conferred by the ethical *t'ien*.<sup>35</sup> Only by being true to oneself can one be expected to be true to others. It is the same with the love for man. To practice *jen*, one starts out from oneself. "Should it be started from others?" Confucius once asks rhetorically (*Analects*, 12:1). If one is true to oneself, one can truly love oneself. To be *chung* is only half way to *jen*, which can be rounded out only when *shu* is also put into practice. As Mencius observes in his *Works*:

All things needed to be a true man are already complete in me. There is no greater joy than to examine myself and be conscious of my oneness of reality with appearance. After this I may vigorously exercise *shu* and find that *jen* is not far-off but right by me. (7A:4)

Having passed the test of *shu*, one true to oneself may be expected to do things purely for the benefit of others.

Self-introspection—hence self-restraint—and love for others are the one-two step of *jen*. Sage as he is, Confucius never ceases to turn inwards and scrutinize himself. Once he remarks, "When we see men of worth, we

should think of emulating them; when we see men of a contrary character, we should turn inwards and examine ourselves" (*Analects*, 4:17). By doing so, one not only gives a constant push to the development of the true self conferred by *t'ien*, but restrains the mean self. As Confucius puts it, "*Jen* is to subdue one's self and return to *li*." When asked how to return to *li*, Confucius answers negatively: "Look not at what is contrary to *li* [the natural law]; listen not to what is contrary to *li*; speak not what is contrary to *li*; make no movement which is contrary to *li*" (*Analects*, 12:1). Natural law, one's innate goodness, and things as they ought to be are all aspects of *li*—natural law makes man naturally good, that is, able to live as he ought to. The emphasis, clearly, is on self-restraint.

Having restrained one's mean self and developed one's true self, the next step forward is to seek one's union with one's kind. Negatively, the concept of *shu* can mean merely not to disturb or hurt any one: "Do not do unto others what you would not want others to do unto you" (*Analects*, 15:23). Positively, it means to bring happiness to others: "A man of *jen* is one that, while wishing to establish his own character, tries to establish the character of others, and while wishing to attain an ideal state, tries also to help others to attain the ideal state" (*Analects*, 6:28). In both cases, love for other men is the driving force. Thus observes Mencius: "The feeling of commiseration is the beginning of *jen*" (*Mencius*, 2A:6). In fact, he makes love the whole content of *jen*: "A man of *jen* loves all" (*Mencius*, 4B:28) and "A man of *jen* cannot but love all" (*Mencius*, 7A:46). As such it embraces all the possible virtues one should have. The concept is succinctly expounded by Ch'ü Wan-li 屈萬里 as follows:

*Jen* is the ideal guiding principle for man's conduct. Regarding oneself, one has to be virtuous, prudent, sincere, cautious in speech, and persevering. Regarding one's relatives, one has to honor one's parents, respect one's brothers, elders, and be kind to all. To others, one has to be reverent, courteous, forgiving, and faithful. To one's country, one has to be loyal and dutiful. Regarding mankind as a whole, one has to confer benefit extensively on the people and bring them salvation. One has to establish the character of others while wishing to establish one's own; one has to help others to attain the ideal state while wishing oneself to attain it. Its object is always centered on man, but never on things. Therefore, its major concern is how to be a true man, how to treat others, how to make better men of others; it never cares for creature comforts. It starts from the love for one's kins and ends with the love for mankind.<sup>36</sup>

Those various virtues are not mutually exclusive; they overlap and influence one another.

To the same degree that the concept of *jen* figures in *The Four Books*, self-love is stressed in Pope's *Essay on Man*. It is the dominating principle in human nature. But unlike the positively virtuous *jen*, it is dangerous in so far as the passions are entirely motivated by the love of the self. Abundant in strength but meager in moral discernment, this self-love, "meteor-like," is very likely to "flame lawless thro' the void, / Destroying others, by himself destroy'd" (II, 65–66). On the other hand, however, it may be employed to great advantage. As "the spring of motion" (II, 59), "it prompts, impels, inspires" (II, 68), bringing life, satisfaction, and happiness to himself as well as to others.

Self-love becomes most meaningful and powerful when it is combined with social love; that is, in Douglas White's words, when "there is no conflict between actions done for the good of the self and those done for the good of society (or perhaps even the system) of which the creature is a part."<sup>37</sup> Linked by the great chain of love, self-love is bound up with benevolence in such a way that "in doing good for themselves men do good for their fellow men."<sup>38</sup> Concerning this fellowship, Pope writes:

Heav'n forming each on other to depend,  
A master, or a servant, or a friend,  
Bids each on other for assistance call,  
'Till one Man's weakness grows the strength of all.  
Wants, frailties, passions, closer still ally  
The common int'rest, or endear the tie:  
To these we owe true friendship, love sincere,  
Each home-felt joy that life inherits here. (II, 249–56)

Therefore, White continues to observe, "The benevolence itself would belong to God because it is He who created the universe so that man would find the good of other men to his advantage."<sup>39</sup> By loving, giving service to one another, and fulfilling mutual wants, mutual happiness is obtained.

In any event, it is God who disposes; it is futile to act contrary to virtue, to God:

For, Vice or Virtue, Self directs it still;  
 Each individual seeks a s'veral goal;  
 But Heav'n's great view is One, and that the Whole:  
 That counter-works each folly and caprice;  
 That disappoints th'effect of ev'ry vice:  
 That happy frailties to all ranks apply'd. (II, 236-41)

These "happy frailties" teach man that he is weak and needs mutual help "like the gen'rous vine, supported lives; / The strength he gains is from th'embrace he gives" (III, 311-12) and "The same Self-love, in all, becomes the cause / Of what restrains him" (III, 271-72). In this manner, Pope not only checks the ruling passion but reconciles it with God's benevolent creation.<sup>40</sup> Under God's plan self-love and social love become one. Self-love's sole purpose is to seek pleasure, but "Virtue alone is Happiness below" (IV, 310), and "common int'rest plac'd the sway in one, / 'Twas Virtue only" (III, 210-11). Virtue finds its highest expression in "Charity," and "All must be false that thwart this One great End" (III, 309). Just as *chung* and *shu* bring man happiness, so charity provides him with bliss:

The only point where human bliss stands still,  
 And tastes the good without the fall to ill;  
 Where only Merit constant pay receives,  
 Is blest in what it takes, and what it gives;  
 The joy unequal'd, if its end it gain,  
 And if it lose, attended with no pain:  
 Without satiety, tho' e'er so blest, . . . (IV, 311-17)

To realize all these, to find "the private in the public good" (III, 282), to make possible the unification of self-love and social love, self-restraint is the first step. Since man is essentially a self-loving creature, no matter how he exercises self-restraint or performs virtuous actions, personal reward will never fall out of his consideration. In one place Pope observes that "[Man's] safety must his liberty restrain" (III, 277); in another, he sees that one is forced "into virtues thus by Self-defence" (III, 279). To Pope, virtue means the result of an action rather than its motivation.<sup>41</sup>

The second step would be to extend a man's self-love so that others might be included in it:

Even mean self-love becomes, by force divine,  
The scale to measure others wants by thine. (II, 291–92)

As a man keeps developing along this line, he will find himself so intimate with others that he would “Never feel elated, while one man’s oppress’d; / Never feel dejected, while another’s bless’d” (IV, 323–24). He will even find that the love for self and the love for others are like two companion inner forces: “So two consistent motions act the Soul; / And one regards Itself, and one the Whole” (III, 315–16). In this vein, a benevolent whole takes shape; man is

Happier as kinder, in what ’ver degree,  
And height of Bliss but height of Charity. (IV, 359–60)

The above delineations of *jen* and self-love also point to a basic difference between the two. Whereas *jen*, being a virtue itself, does good things for goodness’ sake, the amoral self-love cares for personal reward. *Jen* is so pure and noble a virtue that any deviation from its normal path will affect its sublimity. But its counterpart in Pope is the ruling passion that takes command of passions both good and bad. Moreover, *jen*, in Confucian thought, covers a much larger scope than does self-love in Pope.

Yet this distinction should not obscure the fact that the function of self-love is essentially the same as that of *jen*. At its best, self-love can help man attain the state of union with his kind just as *jen* is supposed to achieve. In spite of their differences in nature and scope, *jen* and self-love bear close resemblances in their function to harmonize human relations. Furthermore, when put into practice, *jen* and self-love generate similar effects. That aspect of *jen* called *chung* lays emphasis on self-examination and self-restraint in its development of one’s true self. Self-love, with the aid of reason as restrainer and guard, also unfolds and strengthens its good aspect. That part of *jen* called *shu* means not do unto others what one would not have done to oneself. True self-love likewise means to measure others’ wants by one’s own.

#### IV. Yi versus Reason

Mencius defines *yi* as "one's straight path" (*Mencius*, 4A:10). As such, it is naturally a virtue, being the path everyone should follow regardless of the consequences. It is also a moral standard, for *The Doctrine of the Mean* (20) declares that "Yi is the recognition of what is right and proper." The comprehensive definition gives rise to various interpretations. Ch'en Ta-ch'i, for instance, discerns in the term several facets of meaning.<sup>42</sup> First, in relation to others, *yi* is the correct attitude towards one's seniors and superiors. It is essential in the relationship between ruler and minister ("There has never been one with *yi* who made his sovereign an after consideration" [*Mencius*, 1A:1]) or between brothers ("Yi springs from obeying one's elder brothers" [*Mencius*, 4A:27]). In this sense, *yi* effects public good under all conditions. Secondly, to oneself, *yi* is the morality of self-restraint; for example, "to take other people's property is an act contrary to *yi*" (*Mencius*, 7A:33). On the other hand, if one does not exercise self-restraint, even the virtue one owns may prove to be harmful: "If a virtuous man has courage but neglects *yi*, he becomes turbulent. If a vulgar man has courage but neglects *yi*, he becomes a robber" (*Analects*, 17:23).<sup>43</sup> Like a safety valve or a fuse to shelter virtues, *yi* keeps at a distance the danger of moral depravity.<sup>44</sup> In this sense, *yi* functions as a restrainer. Thirdly, in relation to all other things, *yi* is the ultimate criterion: In dealing with the world a virtuous man simply follows *yi* as the standard (*Analects*, 4:10). In this sense, *yi* functions as a guide to what is right and proper for man to do.

Being such a comprehensive virtue, *yi* becomes a general principle that governs all man's action. That is why "a scholar, though poor, won't let go his *yi*" (*Mencius*, 7A:9). It is also why one has to practice *yi* always so that one may carry out one's ideal (*Analects*, 16:11).

The counterpart of *yi* in *An Essay on Man* is reason:

Two Principles in human nature reign;  
Self-love, to urge, and Reason, to restrain;  
Nor this a good, nor that a bad we call  
Each works its end, to move or govern all:  
And to their proper operation still,  
Ascribe all Good; to their improper, Ill. (II, 53-58)

Both seem to function primarily as restrainer governing human behavior. But basic differences remain. While *yi*, as has been shown in the previous paragraphs, almost always carries moral import, reason in itself is largely inactive and amoral. It "Cares not for service, or but serves when prest, / Stays 'till we call, and then not often near" (III, 86–87). What is more, it is fallible. Instead of standing at its post "to check, delib'rate, and advise" (II, 70) self-love, it often neglects its duty and sides with the ruling passion. Being amoral, self-love and reason "to one end aspire, / Pain their aversion, Pleasure their desire" (II, 87–88). On the surface at least, reason seems to aim at seeking pleasure and avoiding pain.<sup>45</sup> But there is really no need for alarm, since

Reason's whole pleasure, all the joys of Sense  
Lie in three words, Health, Peace and Competence (IV, 79–80)

and since

Health consists with Temperance alone,  
And Peace, or Virtue! (IV, 81–82)

That is to say, to follow nature and the calls of conscience becomes the guiding principle of reason.<sup>46</sup> Thus guided and moralized, reason functions as a restrainer, a "card" (compass) and a "guard," as *yi* does.

As a restrainer, reason's first mission is to "discover the creature's natural limits and demonstrate the urgency of operating within them."<sup>47</sup> Since man's sole aim is to obtain happiness and avoid pain, and since man's proper bliss can only be found in his proper bounds, Pope thus concludes: "In vain thy Reason finer webs shall draw / Entangle Justice in her net of Law" (III, 191–92). For reason itself is so limited that "Whether he thinks too little, or too much," man remains a "Chaos of Thought and Passion, all confus'd" (II, 12–13).

Hence, instead of exalting reason for its own sake, Pope advocates its ethical application. He has discovered that the primary function of reason is to restrain and keep the impetuous self-love to its proper track. But even in this respect, reason finds itself insufficient:

In this weak queen, some fav'rite still obey,  
Ah! if she lend not arms, as well as rules,

What can she more than tell us we are fools?  
Teach us to mourn our Nature, not to mend,  
A sharp accuser, but a helpless friend!  
Or from a judge turn pleader, to persuade  
The choice we make, or justify it made. (II, 150-56)

This explains why Pope, some seventy lines earlier, enlisted the assistance of "Attention, habit, and experience" (II, 79) to strengthen reason and restrain self-love, so as to bring them closer to their "proper operation." For only under this restraint is it possible for social love to equal self-love in Pope's system of benevolence.

Not only is reason insufficient as restrainer, it is passive as counselor. Though supposed to be a pilot, reason serves as a compass which only makes use of the given reality and regulates the direction already mapped out by the ruling passion. In White's words, reason "does not provide motivation; it finds out ways to accomplish the motivation provided by the passions and predicts the outcome of individual actions so that self-love will have an accurate awareness of what will reward it and what will not."<sup>48</sup> Yet, however sedately and quietly reason may rule, without it, all would be swallowed up in the sea of passions. Besides, weak and passive though it is, reason still can exert its influence over life by following the guidance of "The God within the mind."<sup>49</sup>

Another inner guidance reason must follow is nature. Time and again Pope urges people to "Take Nature's path" (IV, 29), for "Nature's road must ever be prefer'd" (II, 161). Reason is only a "guard." It has to "keep to Nature's road" (II, 115), to subject and compound the passions so as to follow nature and God. It has to distinguish seeming good from real. Since man's virtue is "nearest to our vice ally'd" (II, 196), as a guard, reason has to "deliberate," to identify each passion, and, when that passion is found to be fair, to take care of it.

To conclude, both *yi* and reason work for the public good, both function as restrainer and guide. But they are not equally valued. While *yi*, like *jen*, is a virtue, reason itself, like self-love, remains amoral and primarily intellectual. Since *yi* is sure to bring happiness to man, it is highly extolled by the Confucianist: in *The Four Books* it plays an active and powerful role in restraining, guiding, and shaping man's behavior. On the other hand, precisely because of its tendency to rationalize, reason was suppressed and belittled by Pope and his contemporaries so as to check man's

pride. Unlike *yi*, which is active, reason serves as a passive compass coming into service only when demanded. Unlike *yi*, which is itself the straight way, reason is only a guard or nature's path. Unlike *yi*, which shares equal importance with *jen* in molding one's character, reason is the "weak queen" to the dominant self-love.

Nevertheless, reason in its ideal cooperation with self-love functions just in the same way as *yi* does in relation to *jen*:

His safety must his liberty restrain :  
All join to guard what each desires to gain.  
Forc'd into virtue thus by Self-defence,  
Ev'n Kings learn'd justice and benevolence :  
Self-love forsook the path it first pursu'd,  
And found the private in the public good. (III, 277—82)

The message is clear. To check man's pride, Pope tends to suppress the rational aspect of reason. To help man obtain happiness, Pope elevates and enhances the moral aspect of reason. The moral reason, yes, which resembles *yi*, is the major concern of Pope here. While *jen* and self-love set the goal, *yi* and reason provide the way to that goal. The relationship between *jen* and *yi* is much the same as that between self-love and reason. When *jen* and *yi* or self-love and reason are unified in harmony, the perfect state of human relations is attained.

## Notes

1. The literary features of *The Four Books* and *An Essay on Man* will be the subject of another paper, a sequel to the present one.
2. Since *The Great Learning* and *The Doctrine of the Mean* were selected by Chu Hsi from *The Book of Rites* (*Li Chi* 禮記), controversy has been centered on their dates and authorships. While many scholars believe, with Chu Hsi, that *The Great Learning* was written by Tseng-tzu 曾子, a disciple of Confucius, and *The Doctrine of the Mean* by Tzu-ssu 子思, a grandson of Confucius', others disagree; some judge from the style and date these two works to the Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C.—9 A.D.).

Unless otherwise noted, the translations of Chinese texts in this paper are my own—with the invaluable help, of course, of the following established classics:

Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (rpt. Taipei: Caves Book

Co., 1969).

James Legge, *The Four Books* (rpt. Taipei: Yi-shih ch'u-pan she, 1971).

Lin Yutang, *The Wisdom of Confucius* (New York: Random House, 1938).

Arthur Waley, *The Analects of Confucius* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1938).

James R. Ware, *The Sayings of Confucius* 論語 (Taipei: Wen-chih ch'u-pan she, 1969).

For references to the *Confucian Analects*, numerals (in parentheses following each quotation) on the left of the colon indicate the book number and those on the right indicate the chapter: thus, (15:28) means Book XV, Chapter 28. Similarly, for *The Works of Mencius*, composed of seven books, each having two parts, a numeral and a capitalized letter on the left of the colon indicate the book number; the number on the right indicates the chapter number: thus, (7B:14) means Book VII, Part II, Chapter 14. *The Doctrine of the Mean* and *The Great Learning* are not sub-divided into Books; only chapter number is given.

3. *Confucian Analects* was generally believed to be written and compiled by the disciples of Confucius' disciples, most notably the disciples of Tseng-tzu. The work in its present form was probably edited from texts compiled sometime in the Period of Warring States (475–221 B.C.).
4. James Legge, trans., *The Four Books* (Rpt. Taipei: Yi-shih ch'u-pan she, 1971), p. 137.
5. Ch'en Ta-ch'i 陳大齊, *K'ung-tzu hsueh-shuo lun-chi* 孔子學說論集 (Taipei: Cheng-chung, 1958), p. 57.
6. Chia 家 in *The Great Learning* is a political district rather than a family. *Ts'u-hai* 辭海 gives the meaning of "the domain of a *tai-fu* 大夫."
7. Chan, *A Source Book*, p. 84.
8. Chan's translation, in *A Source Book*, p. 97.
9. Chan, *A Source Book*, p. 96.
10. Maynard Mack, ed., *An Essay on Man* (London: Methuen, 1950), "Introduction," p. xi. Subsequent quotations of *An Essay on Man* are from this edition.
11. However, "justification seems to come in almost as an afterthought to other concerns: 'Laugh where we must, be candid . . . ; / But vindicate . . .'"—Reuben Arther Brower, *Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 208.
12. See Lin, *The Wisdom of Confucius*, p. 19.
13. Mack, ed., *An Essay on Man*, p. lxii.
14. Chan's translation, in *A Source Book*, p. 22.
15. Maynard Mack, *English Masterpieces: The Augustans*, Vol. 5 (N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1950), p. 3.
16. Rebecca Price Parkin, *The Poetic Workmanship of Alexander Pope* (New York: Octagon Books, 1966), p. 82.
17. Fung Yu-lan 馮友蘭, *A History of Chinese Philosophy* [中國哲學史], trans. Derk Bodd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), p. 31. Cited here are

three of the "five different meanings" Fung recommends.

18. Chan, *A Source Book*, p. 16.
19. John C. H. Wu's translation, in Paul K. T. Sih, ed., *Chinese Humanism and Christian Spirituality: Essays of John C. H. Wu* (New York: St. John's University Press, 1965), p. 19.
20. Ku Hung-ming's translation, quoted from Lin, *The Wisdom*, p. 112.
21. Chan's translation, in *A Source Book*, p. 78.
22. Chan's translation, *ibid.*
23. Chan's translation, *ibid.*
24. Related issues, such as 18th-century European Deism and the influence of Confucianism on the 18th-century Enlightenment, have been amply documented elsewhere. For the influence of Confucianism on the 18th-century English literature, see Fang Chung 方重, "Shih-pa-shih-chi te Ying-kuo-wen-hsueh ho Chung-kuo" 十八世紀的英國文學和中國, in his *Ying-kuo hsiao-p'in-wen te yen-chin yü yi-shu* 英國小品文的演進與藝術 (Taipei: Hsueh-sheng shu-chü, 1971), pp. 151-200. Fang mentions the relationship between Pope and Confucianism on pp. 162-163, quoting a Popian couplet from "Temple of Fame":

Superior, and alone, Confucius stood,  
Who taught that useful science, to be good. (ll. 107-8)

25. Hsu Fu-kuan 徐復觀, "K'ung-tzu te hsing yü t'ien-tao-jen-hsing-lun te chien-li-che" 孔子的性與天道—人性論的建立者, in *Min-chu p'ing-lun* 民主評論, 11, No. 23 (December 1960), 6.
26. T'ang Chün-yi 唐君毅, *Chung-kuo che-hsueh yuan-lun* 中國哲學原論 (Hong Kong: Jen-sheng ch'u-pan-she, 1966), p. 517.
27. Chan's translation, in *A Source Book*, p. 98.
28. Chan's translation, in *A Source Book*, p. 78.
29. Ch'en Ta-ch'i 陳大齊, "T'ien-jen-ho-yi te ching-chieh" 天人合一的境界, *Central Daily News* (中央日報), April, 19, 1955, p. 2.
30. Wang Su 王甦, "T'ien-jen-ho-yi che-hsueh-ssu-hsiang fa-wei" 天人合一哲學思想發微, in *Tamkang Journal* 淡江學報, No. 8 (November 1969), 156.
31. But then it may be more than metaphorical. The abundant existence of the so-called "human-god," such as Ma-tsu 媽祖 (Lin Mo-niang 林默娘) and Kuan Kung 關公 (Kuan Yü 關羽), bespeaks the Chinese tendency to deify the sage or perfect man.
32. Hsu Fu-kuan, "Ku-tai jen-hsing-lun te wan-ch'eng" 古代人性論的完成, in *Min-chu p'ing-lun*, XI, No. 24 (December 1960), 3. Cf. also *The Works of Mencius*, "In doing everything [he] followed the calls of the inborn jen and yi" (4B:19).
33. Chan's translation, in *A Source Book*, p. 104.
34. Chan, *A Source Book*, p. 27.
35. Tseng Yueh-nung 曾約農, "Yuan jen" 原仁 in *K'ung-Meng Hsueh-pao* 孔孟學報, No. 4 (September 1962), 5.
36. Ch'ü Wan-li 屈萬里, "Jen-tzu han-yi chih shih-te-kuan-ch'a" 仁字涵義之史的觀察,

- Min-chu p'ing-lun*, 5, No. 23 (December 1954), 25.
37. Douglas H. White, *Pope and the Context of Controversy: The Manipulation of Ideas in An Essay on Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 187.
  38. White, *Pope and the Context*, p. 179.
  39. White, *Pope and the Context*, p. 177.
  40. *Ibid.*
  41. *Ibid.*
  42. Ch'en Ta-ch'i, "Meng-tzu-hsueh-shuo chung te jen-yü-yi" 孟子學說中的仁與義, *National Chengchi University Studies* 國立政治大學學報, No. 4 (December 1961), 11-17.
  43. Ch'en, "Meng-tzu-hsueh-shuo," p. 14. Cf. *The Works of Mencius*, 2A:6, 4B:8, and 6A:10.
  44. Ch'en, *K'ung-tzu-hsueh-shuo*, p. 53.
  45. White, *Pope and the Context*, p. 100.
  46. White, *Pope and the Context*, p. 106 and p. 103.
  47. White, *Pope and the Context*, p. 108.
  48. White, *Pope and the Context*, p. 142.
  49. In Douglas White's opinion, "Pope has given a fair clue to the meaning of 'The God within the mind' by later using the words 'ask your own heart.' In the latter case he appears to be thinking about some form of conscience and, if this is the case, one can assume that 'The God within the mind' is the same thing." See White, *Pope and the Context*, p. 104.