

CONFUCIAN VIEWS ON SUICIDE  
AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR EUTHANASIA

I. INTRODUCTION

On June 2, 1927, a famous professor of Qing Hua University, Wang Guowei, drowned himself in a lake of the former imperial garden in Beijing. His suicide proved extremely controversial and evoked much discussion.<sup>1</sup> His colleague and famous intellectual, Liang Qichao, wrote several eulogies in his honor. In one of these eulogies Liang reminded his colleagues and students, who lived in a culture which had just entered the modern age and was under heavy western influence, not to use western perspectives to evaluate Wang's suicide. Europeans, Liang asserted, used to regard suicide as an act of cowardice, and Christianity made it a sin. In ancient China, however, notwithstanding some petty suicides committed by common people, many eminent figures used suicide to express their counter-cultural aspirations. These were praiseworthy suicides, Liang concluded, and should by no means be rashly reproached by alien European values (Liang, 1927, p.75).

I think the main idea of Liang's observation is largely correct. Traditional Chinese ethical perspectives on suicide differ significantly from their western counterparts, with the possible exception of Stoic Rome. Just as western views on suicide have been strongly influenced by the ancient Greek philosophers (Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle) and Augustinian Christianity, the Chinese views, especially among the educated people, have been largely influenced by classical Confucianism. Hence, in this paper I shall try to provide a comprehensive, analytical survey of the Confucian ethics of suicide.

Some distinction among suicides is necessary for an in-depth ethical analysis because not all suicides are morally equivalent.<sup>2</sup> Emile Durkheim's three-fold typology of egoistic, altruistic, and anomic suicide is well known (Durkheim, 1951, Book Two, esp. pp.209, 221, 258). This paper, however, is not a study on the social causes of suicide, and hence cannot adopt his classification. For my purpose in this paper, I shall classify suicide into two types, viz., suicides committed for self-regarding reasons (to be abbreviated as self-regarding suicides below) and suicides

committed for other-regarding reasons (to be abbreviated as other-regarding suicides below).<sup>3</sup> Two explanations are in order before I proceed forward. First, in other-regarding suicides the reference of “other” can range from one individual to the entire country. Second, the meaning of “other-regarding suicide” is wider than that of “altruistic suicide” because altruism is consequence-oriented, viz., the promotion of others’ interests. An other-regarding suicide can be consequence-oriented, but not necessarily so; it can be a suicide for the sake of manifesting one’s total dedication to another person or persons.

I submit that in the premodern West (Europe before the Enlightenment), the focus of the relevant moral debate was largely, though not exclusively, on self-regarding suicide. And this debate led to a predominantly negative moral judgement of this type of suicide.<sup>4</sup> To approve of suicide morally had the burden of apology, and famous defenses of the right to suicide were largely concerned with self-regarding suicide (e.g., Seneca, 1920; Hume, 1965). The major moral issue was, accordingly, “Is it morally permissible to commit suicide, especially suicide for one’s own sake?”

In premodern China (China before 1911), most self-regarding suicides were also generally regarded as wrong, but unlike the premodern West there was virtually no defense of an individual’s right to suicide. There were some discussions on a special kind of self-regarding suicide, i.e., suicide for the sake of preserving dignity. However, most of the moral disputations were focused on other-regarding suicide, which was not uncommon in ancient China. From ancient Chinese perspectives, such a suicide was never deemed wrong and needed no apology; those who thought otherwise, however, had the burden of proof. Famous suicide-related apologies were defenses for the moral right not to commit suicide, and they were largely pleas for exemption from the moral demand of committing an other-regarding suicide in certain situations (e.g., the defense for Guan Zhong, see Section VI below). The major moral issue was, accordingly, “Is it morally permissible not to commit suicide in certain situations, especially suicide for others’ sake?”<sup>5</sup>

## II. THE VIEW OF EARLY CONFUCIANISM AND ITS INFLUENCE

A distinct emphasis in early Confucian ethics is that biological life is not of the highest value. Confucius (c.551-479 BC) says:

For gentlemen of purpose and men of *ren* (benevolence or supreme virtue) while it is inconceivable that they should seek to stay alive at the expense of *ren*, it may happen that they have to accept death in order to have *ren* accomplished (*Analects*, 15:9, Lau (trans.) modified).

Likewise, Mencius (c.372 - 289 BC), the second most famous Confucian after Confucius,<sup>6</sup> also explains this in this famous passage on fish and bear's palm.

Fish is what I want; bear's palm is also what I want. If I cannot have both, I would rather take bear's palm than fish. Life is what I want; *yi*" (justice or dutifulness) is also what I want. If I cannot have both, I would rather take *yi*<sup>a</sup> than life. On the one hand, though life is what I want, there is something I want more than life. That is why I do not cling to life at all cost. On the other hand, though death is what I loathe, there is something I loathe more than death. That is why there are dangers I do not avoid... Yet there are ways of remaining alive and ways of avoiding death to which a man will not resort. In other words, there are things a man wants more than life and there are also things he loathes more than death. This is an attitude not confined to the moral person but common to all persons. The moral person simply never loses it (*Mencius*, 6A: 10, Lau (trans.) modified).

These two discourses together became the *locus classicus* of the classical Confucian view on the value of human life, and have been tremendously influential down through the ages. According to this classical view, the preservation of our biological life is a good, but not the supreme good; death is an evil, but not the supreme evil. Since the cardinal moral values of *ren* and *yi*<sup>a</sup> (benevolence and justice) are the supreme good, it is morally wrong for one to preserve one's own life at the expense of ignoring *ren* and *yi*<sup>a</sup>. Rather, one should sacrifice one's life, either passively or actively, in order to uphold *ren* and *yi*<sup>a</sup> (as to be explained later, in the form of upholding some important interpersonal values such as filial piety or loyalty to the emperor, discharging the related moral duties, and cultivating one's virtue or moral character). The failure to follow *ren* and *yi*<sup>a</sup> is ethically worse than death. Hence suicide is morally permissible, and even praiseworthy, if it is committed for the sake of *ren* and *yi*<sup>a</sup>. In some circumstances, furthermore, committing suicide is more than supererogatory; it is even obligatory. There is a doctrine of the sanctity of moral values, but not a doctrine of the sanctity of human life. Sheer living has no intrinsic moral value; living as a

virtuous person does. There is no unconditional duty to preserve and continue life, but there is an unconditional duty to uphold *ren* and *yi*<sup>a</sup>. In English the phrase “matters of life and death” carries the connotation of urgency and utmost importance. According to classical Confucian ethical thought, however, though “matters of life and death” are by no means trivial, they are not of paramount importance; “matters of *ren* and *yi*<sup>a</sup>” are. For the sake of convenience, I shall summarize this classical Confucian view as Confucian Thesis I:

**Confucian Thesis I: One should give up one’s life if necessary, either passively or actively, for the sake of upholding the cardinal moral values of *ren* and *yi*<sup>a</sup>.**

The meaning of this thesis can be further elaborated by studying the thought of Wen Tianxiang (1236-1282). When the Mongols invaded China in the thirteenth century and were about to conquer the entire land of the Southern Song Dynasty, many generals preferred suicide to surrender. The most famous example among them was Wen Tianxiang, who kept a suicide note in his pocket at all times during his capture, which began: “Confucius says that one should fulfil *ren*, and Mencius says that one should adhere to *yi*<sup>a</sup>.” In a short poem he also wrote, “Who does not have to die (in one way or another) since time immemorial? (The preferable way of dying is) that my heart of pure loyalty may leave a page in the annals” (*Songshi*, Biography 177). This saying became immensely popular in subsequent times, known by most Chinese, and remains so even today.

Wen’s point is that since everyone has to die, one should not try to avoid or delay death by all means. Longevity is not good in itself; rather, what is desirable in itself is a life of *ren* and *yi*<sup>a</sup>, a life that will be remembered, respected, and honored in history. If, in some circumstances, staying alive would be contrary to the requirements of *ren* and *yi*<sup>a</sup> (in Wen’s case, to stay alive would mean to surrender to the Mongols, which is contrary to the virtue of loyalty to the Southern Song Dynasty), it would follow that one could lead a life of *ren* and *yi*<sup>a</sup> only by committing suicide. If one has to die one way or another, one should die in such a way that can render one’s life meaningful or honorable. In other words, though death is the termination of life, dying is still a part of life. “How one dies” is part of “how one lives.” Hence, dying should serve life. To take charge of one’s life implies to take charge of one’s dying. To secure a noble and honorable life implies that one should secure a noble

and honorable death. To live meaningfully implies to manage the time and circumstances of one's death in such a way that one can also die meaningfully. To live out one's life to its natural limit is not in itself desirable. What matters is not life's quantity (its length), but its quality, to be defined morally with reference to *ren* and *yi*. In order to secure a high quality of life, in some circumstances one has to be prepared to die, lest what is going to transpire in one's prolonged life will decrease the quality of life (i.e., to violate *ren* and *yi*).

A large number of sayings in premodern China reflect this classical Confucian view. For example:

“A *junzi* (person of noble character) does not drag on his life indiscriminately, nor does he terminate his life indiscriminately”;

“To go to die while one should remain alive is to treat one's life too lightly; to live on while one should die is to treat one's life too weightily” (Li Bai);

“A crooked life is not enjoyable; an upright death is not lamentable” (Han Yu);

“A death of *yi* (righteousness) is not fearsome, and a fortunate and surprising survival is not honorable” (Han Yu);

“A death of *yia* (righteousness) is to be preferred to a dragged out, ignoble existence” (Ouyang Xiu);

“Rather to lose one's life while preserving one's moral integrity than to preserve one's life while losing one's moral integrity” (from an obscure ancient novel);

“A brave general does not barely manage to survive out of fear for death; a heroic warrior does not seek staying alive at the expense of moral integrity” (Guan Yu, in *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*). <sup>7</sup>

All these sayings express the view that one should aspire to live a moral life, and that there are states of biological existence that should be avoided even by seeking death. The quality of moral life is much more important than the length of biological life.

In short, this Confucian teaching of “to die to achieve *ren* (*shashen chengren*)” and “to lay down one's life for a cause of *yi* (*shesheng quyì*)” not only has inspired countless Chinese to risk their lives for noble causes, but also has motivated many Chinese to commit suicide for noble

causes. When people thus committed suicide, they were not condemned; rather, they were praised for their aspiration and dedication to *ren* and *yi*. This is the case even as late as in the early twentieth century. The suicides of two intellectuals, Liang Juchuan (d. 1918) and Wang Guowei (d. 1927), were eulogized for exhibiting *ren* and *yi* (in Luo, 1995, pp.54, 63). Even Chinese Buddhist biographers repeatedly quoted the Confucian *locus classicus* to justify acts of self-immolation of Buddhist monks in ancient China (Jan, 1964, p.260; see also Section IV below).

There is one other articulated view on life and death in ancient China that has also been immensely influential. Though the one who expressed this view, Sima Qian (c.145—19BC), the Grand Historian, has not been known as a Confucian, his admiration of Confucius is obvious in his *Shiji* (*Records of the Historian*). In his famous *Bao Ren An Shu* (*Letter to Ren An*), which is a confession of a soul tormented by the thought of suicide, he makes the memorable statement, "Everyone has to die sooner or later. Whether the death is weightier than Mount Tai or lighter than swan's down depends on its circumstance" (Sima, trans. mine).<sup>8</sup> In other words, everyone has to die; that is the same for all. The value of their death, however, is not the same. Some deaths are good, while some are of no value, or even bad. The degree of value depends on the circumstances of the death. If committing suicide in a particular circumstance would be of significant value (i.e., weightier than Mount Tai), one should do it. One should not commit a suicide that would have little significance (i.e., lighter than swan's down). In other words, according to Sima Qian, death is not a bare biological event, at least as far as human beings are concerned. The time and circumstances of one's death have ethical significance. The moral issue is not whether one can commit suicide for there is no strict prohibition against it, i.e., suicide is not intrinsically wrong. Rather, the issue is for what kind of reason (trivial or substantial) the suicide is committed, and what kind of impact it will produce. In strictly Confucian terms, suicide committed for the sake of *ren* and *yi* would be a death weightier than Mount Tai. (More on Sima Qian will be discussed in the next section.)

The obvious and important questions, then, are: What is the content of *ren* and *yi*? How are these cardinal values embodied in concrete actions? What suicides can be counted as suicide for the sake of *ren* and *yi*?

Both *ren* and *yi* have a narrow and a wide sense. In the narrow sense, as the first two of the four cardinal virtues, *ren* means benevolence and *yi* means justice. In the wide sense however, both words, especially

when they are used together, can mean supreme virtue or morality (cf. Nivison, 1987, pp.566-567). In the context of “to die to achieve *ren*” and “to lay down one’s life for a cause of *yi*,” *ren* and *yi* were usually understood in the wide sense. One should note however that since the Han Dynasty morality, or *ren* and *yi*, has been conceived of manifesting itself in particular human relationships, rather than in a universal and general way. In other words, *ren* and *yi* were understood not through universal love or duty to society in general, but through interpersonal commitments such as loyalty (in the emperor-subject relationship), filial piety (parents-children relationship), chastity (husband-wife relationship), and faithfulness (friendship). In other words, *ren* and *yi* are concerned with other-regarding morality and are mediated through concrete familial, social, and political relationships.

Accordingly, all other-regarding suicides, when the “other” is a particular object rather than human beings in general, are deemed suicides for the sake of *ren* and *yi*. They were admired, praised, and honored. Among the more important instances are:

- suicide for the sake of the country (dynasty) and/or emperor;
- suicide for the sake of the husband, who just passed away;
- suicide for the sake of the master;
- suicide for the sake of the benefactor, as a token of gratitude;
- suicide for the sake of a friend, especially those with whom one has entered into a pact of brotherhood;
- suicide for the sake of keeping a secret for somebody;
- suicide for the sake of saving other lives;
- suicide for the sake of avenging one’s parents, husband, or master.’

It should be noted that these other-regarding suicides can be divided into two ethical types, viz., consequence-based and non-consequence-based. An example of a consequence-based other-regarding (or altruistic) suicide is that of a public official who commits suicide in order to awaken and admonish a self-indulgent emperor. An example of a non-consequence-based other-regarding suicide is that of a public official who follows the emperor even unto death or that of a widow who chooses to die with her deceased husband. Total dedication, devotion, and commitment to the other person leads one to live and die with the other person, even though such a suicide is not intended to benefit anyone. Either way, such other-regarding suicides were expressions of utterly

other-centered commitments, even at the expense of one's life. Such self-sacrificial acts, understandably, were highly praiseworthy.<sup>10</sup>

All these suicides were considered suicides of *ren* and *yi*. Furthermore, terminologically speaking these acts were not called "suicide" in the pejorative sense of "self-destruction" or "self-slaughter."<sup>11</sup> A different set of phrases, usually a combination of another word with *xun* (sacrifice)<sup>12</sup> or *jie* (moral integrity)<sup>13</sup> with a connotation of praiseworthiness, was used instead. Tang Jungyi, a contemporary neo-Confucian, compares such death of *xun* and *jie* to the death of martyrs in early Christianity. Just as the Christian martyrs were prepared to endure anything, even death, for the sake of upholding their faith, the Confucian men and women of integrity (*qijie*) were also prepared to endure anything, even death, for the sake of upholding *ren* and *yi*. Tang Jungyi therefore adds that the religiosity (absolute devotion, unconditional dedication, ultimate commitment) of these men and women could not be denied (Tang, 1974, p.144).

In addition to the detailed examples to be discussed in the other sections of this article, I shall cite two more illustrations of praiseworthy suicides here. First, during the Yuan Dynasty (1279 - 1368) there was a famous opera entitled *The Orphan of Zhao* (for a complete English translation, see Chi, 1972), whose plot was based on accounts in historical books. (In other words, many Chinese before the Yuan Dynasty knew the story as well.) The Jesuit missionaries in China later brought this opera to Europe, where it was immensely popular and translated into English, French, and German (cf. Hsia, 1988). Voltaire not only rendered it into a drama, with the name changed to *L'Orphelin de la Chine*, but also staged it successfully in Paris. The German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer also mentioned this play with admiration in his essay "On Suicide" (Schopenhauer, 1962, p.99). The story is about a family of nobility being persecuted by its political enemies, and everybody in the family is killed except a baby. Some friends of the family try their best to save the life of this orphan. In the process, all the noble characters who take part in this saving effort commit suicide, mostly for the reason of ensuring the rescue effort will be successful. These are all altruistic suicides. At the end of the story, after the rescued orphan has grown up and avenged his father, the architect of the rescue and vengeance, Cheng Ying, also commits suicide for the reason of going to the underworld to tell all those who committed suicide for the orphan that their deaths were worthwhile.

The second illustration is taken from recent Chinese history. On the eve, and during the birth, of modern China there were a number of suicides that produced an impact on and evoked much discussion among many intellectuals. Liang Juchuan (d.1918), Wan Guowei (d.1927), both self-confessed Confucians, were two of them.<sup>14</sup> However, I want to discuss the suicide of Chen Tianhua (1875-1905) because his life and detailed suicide note provide a clear exposition of Confucian Thesis I.

Toward the end of the Qing Dynasty some Chinese, both inside China and overseas, plotted to start a revolution to overthrow the Manchu rule. Chen Tianhua was an enthusiastic supporter of this movement and composed many tracts and pamphlets to spread the idea of the necessity of revolution. During his brief study in Japan he was convinced that Chinese students studying overseas were the only hope to save the motherland from the threat of imperialism. However, he was subsequently overwhelmed by the realization that a number of Chinese students in Japan were involved in scandalous behavior, to the extent that they were widely criticized by Japanese newspapers. Chen was deeply grieved, and wrote a long suicide note (*"jueming ci"*) before drowning himself in the sea.

In this suicide note he explains clearly his reasons for this shocking act. (1) He considered himself a man of mediocre ability; he would be unable to accomplish great deeds for the country even if he was to live a long life. (2) His future life could have two possible directions: either to continue to write as a doomsday prophet, warning people that if they would not pull themselves together China would perish, or to die if the right circumstance was to arise. (3) He seriously considered the latter possibility because, even though his speeches and writings were quite influential among the Chinese students in Japan, he did not want to be one of those who is stirring in words but seldom matches these words with practice. (4) He was fully determined to spend his life striving to save the country, and he needed to deliberate carefully which course of life would be most effective to achieve this goal. (5) Given the current situation in Japan, viz., the Chinese students were lax in their conduct and did not show intense zeal for the country's cause, Chen Tianhua concluded that he could contribute more to the cause of saving China by committing an admonishing suicide. By choosing to die Chen wanted to admonish the eight thousand Chinese students in Japan to pull themselves together, to dedicate their lives to the country's cause. (6) Chen reiterated that he was not a man of outstanding ability, and he therefore could

accomplish more by dying than by living a long life. Those who had better talents should not follow his example (T. Chen, 1982, pp.234-236).<sup>5</sup>

Though there is no hard evidence that Chen Tianhua was a self-confessed Confucian, I think his duty-bound death was a clear exposition of Confucian Thesis I. *Ren* and *yi* in his particular case were concretized as saving the country from perishing. He was so dedicated to this cause that he was willing both to live and to die for it. In other words, the same patriotic life goal can call him to stay alive or call him to die. His decision to commit suicide did not reflect a change of his values, but depended entirely on the empirical circumstances. The time and circumstances of one's death was considered a part of life and important to its goal. Biological life is not intrinsically valuable or an end in itself, but only instrumentally valuable and a means to serve a moral cause. Hence suicide is not intrinsically wrong. If terminating biological life can better serve this moral cause, one should die rather than stay alive. Chen's suicide was not an act of self-destruction; rather, it was an act of moral construction.

There were, of course, many suicides in premodern China that were not deemed suicides for the sake of *ren* and *yi*. Most self-regarding suicides were not so evaluated, e.g., suicide as a result of being tired of life, suicide as a solution to one's financial or marital troubles and failures, suicide as a solution to chronic depression, suicide as an expiation of one's wrongdoing, suicide out of a fear of punishment or public mockery, etc. They were pitied and deplored. These suicides were evaluated as "self-destruction" or "self-slaughter," and many of them were deemed wrong primarily because of another important Confucian value, viz., *xiao* or filial piety. Committing suicide was deemed contrary to filial piety not because of the trivial reason that it would cause grief to one's parents.<sup>16</sup> For one thing, Confucian filial piety requires that sons and daughters should attend to the parents' daily needs all life long. Terminating one's life would render one unable to fulfil this important filial duty. For another, Confucian literature on filial piety argues that children are permanently indebted to parents because children do not exist on their own, but owe their existence to the parents. If one is not the author of one's biological life, how can one have the autonomy to dispose it as one wishes? Suicide is then understood as usurping the authority of parents.<sup>17</sup> In short, unless filial piety is outweighed by another moral

value such as *ren* or *yi*, the former is usually a moral reason strong enough to forbid suicide.

### III. DEATH WITH DIGNITY

Most self-regarding suicides, as explained in the last paragraph, were generally regarded as morally wrong in ancient China, and nobody felt the need to discuss them further. There was one kind of self-regarding suicide, however, that did evoke some discussion, and it can be conveniently called with a modern idiom, “death with dignity.” In the Former Han Dynasty (206 BC - 8 AD) Confucianism was elevated to the role of the established ideology of the empire. The Confucian who was instrumental in making this happen was Dong Zhongshu (c.179 - c.104 BC). Though modern Chinese philosophers often consider him of minor philosophical significance, historically he was of utmost importance. The imperial policy of establishing the supremacy of Confucianism to the exclusion of other schools of thought, which was advocated by Dong, was adopted in 136 BC and was continued until 1905 AD (i.e., this policy of establishing Confucianism was in effect for a little more than two thousand years).<sup>18</sup>

One should note that it was not the original classical Confucianism that was honored in the Han Dynasty, but Dong’s creative synthesis of various streams of Confucianism together with other schools of thought. Dong’s masterpiece was entitled *Chunqiu Fanlu* (*Exuberant Dew of the Spring and Autumn*), which was an exposition of the thought of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the author of which was said to be Confucius. Dong regarded the *Spring and Autumn Annals* as the primary text within the Confucian canon. In his *Exuberant Dew of the Spring and Autumn* Dong eloquently elaborates on a variation of Confucian Thesis I, which was shared by other Confucian writings around the same time in the early Han Dynasty.

In Chapter 8 (“Zhulin”) of the *Exuberant Dew of the Spring and Autumn* Dong discusses a certain king and his adviser who lived several hundred years before his time. King Qing of Qi was in a battle with his enemies, and lost. The enemies surrounded his armies and it became highly likely that he would be captured and killed. His adviser Choufu happened to look like King Qing and therefore offered to exchange clothing with him so that he could escape unnoticed. The strategy

succeeded. King Qing escaped back to his kingdom in civilian clothing while Choufu was mistaken to be the king, and was captured and killed.

Dong Zhongshu, rather than praising Choufu's ingenuity, dedication, and sacrifice, condemned his action. To get a king to dress as an ordinary citizen and escape surreptitiously, according to Dong, was to subject a dignitary to an undignified treatment. Such humiliation should not be tolerated, even if it could save life. This is because, Dong argues, "to survive through accepting a great humiliation is joyless, thus wise people refrain from doing it ... A person who has a sense of shame does not live in dishonor." He also quotes from other Confucian writings of the early Han Dynasty, implying that his ethics of suicide was derived from the Confucian canon. "If a dishonor is avoidable, avoid it; if it is unavoidable, *junzi* (a man of noble character) sees death as his destiny (i.e., embraces death with courage) ... A *ru* (Confucian) prefers death to humiliation."<sup>19</sup>

Dong therefore argues that the morally right thing for Choufu to do then would be to tell King Qing, "To bear humiliation and yet refuse to commit suicide is shameless. I shall therefore commit suicide with you." At that moment, for both of them, death would be better than staying alive as "a *junzi* (man of noble character) should prefer dying in honor to surviving in dishonor."

In short, according to Confucianism of the early Han Dynasty, biological life is valuable, but there are self-regarding states of affairs more valuable than biological life, viz., a life with honor and dignity. Death is undesirable, but there are self-regarding states of affairs more undesirable than death, viz., to suffer disgrace, dishonor, and humiliation in life; such a life is not worth living because it is such an affront to one's dignity. One should choose death for the sake of preventing one's dignity from being violated, and it is honorable, and even obligatory, to make such a choice. This view is a variation and elaboration of Confucian Thesis I, with the focus shifted from other-regarding concerns to self-regarding concerns. For the sake of convenience, I shall call it Confucian Thesis II:

**Confucian Thesis 11: One should actively terminate one's life for the sake of avoiding humiliation or upholding one's dignity.**

In the light of Confucian Thesis II, I suggest that we can use the phrase "death with dignity" to describe this view of committing suicide in order to preserve one's dignity, i.e., voluntary death as a means to maintain one's dignity. In other words, "death with dignity" in this sense is not to

counter a death without dignity, but to preclude a life that is deprived of its usual dignity. Death is chosen for the sake of preventing one's dignity from being violated, and it is an honorable and moral duty to make such a choice.

Such "death with dignity" was quite common in ancient China and many examples could be found in the *Records of the Historian (Shiji)* by Sima Qian (145-90 BC), the greatest historian of ancient China and a younger contemporary of Dong Zhongshu. In the *Records of the Historian* many suicides were recorded, and often with approval. Among these suicides two types are particularly noteworthy for our purpose.

(I) One commits suicide when death is unavoidable in the near future.

- a. One hears or predicts that one will be executed by the government, and so commits suicide.
- b. One commits suicide after a military defeat (otherwise the defeated general will be killed by his conqueror).
- c. One commits suicide after a failed *coup d'état* attempt (which means that execution is merely waiting for the rebel).

What is common in all these three cases is that the fate of execution is considered a humiliation, a dishonor, and a disgrace. Hence it is better to kill oneself than to be killed by others. Committing suicide is therefore a means of preserving one's dignity.

(II) One commits suicide when there is no known threat to life.

- a. A Confucian public official commits suicide in order to avoid the indignity of being tried in court, regardless of whether he is guilty or innocent.
- b. A Confucian public official commits suicide in order to avoid the indignity of imprisonment.

These Confucian public officials firmly believe that to be tried in court and/or to be imprisoned, even if one is innocent, is a humiliation, a dishonor, and a disgrace. Hence it is better to kill oneself than to suffer such an undignified treatment. Committing suicide is therefore a means of preserving one's dignity. In short, both types of suicide can be considered a "death with dignity," and they suggest that Confucian Thesis II was widely accepted in Chinese antiquity.

It is noteworthy that Confucian Thesis II was even accepted by some contemporary intellectuals in China. During the Cultural Revolution

(1966-1976) many university professors and men and women of culture were publicly tortured, brutalized, and humiliated. Many of them committed suicide (e.g., Fu Lei, Lao She).<sup>20</sup> Some could not stand the physical and emotional suffering, while some simply would not accept this humiliation. A famous senior philosophy professor at Peking University told me in 1993 that he knew a colleague who used to take these purges calmly. One morning, however, he discovered an accusation poster posted on his front door that was written by his students. He was deeply hurt. He left a note stating that “a man of integrity prefers death to humiliation,” then he committed suicide. This shows that Confucian Thesis II is also accepted by some contemporary Chinese.<sup>21</sup>

To commit suicide for the sake of preserving personal dignity, though self-regarding rather than other-regarding, was usually met with approval and even admiration. This mainstream view, however, was also countered by a dissenting view. For example, Sima Qian, who approved of many “death with dignity” suicides in his *Records of the Historian*, rejected this option when he himself was put in the predicament of receiving extremely undignified treatment, viz., he suffered castration in prison. This happened because Sima Qian once defended a general who surrendered to the “barbarians” after a military defeat. The subsequent development of events convinced the emperor that this general was a traitor and punished all those who once pleaded for him. Sima Qian was therefore imprisoned and castrated. Sima Qian considered this punishment a humiliation to the umpteenth degree, and understood that his peers expected him to commit suicide in order to avoid this undignified treatment. Sima Qian, however, after many struggles, refused to commit suicide not because he did not care about his dignity but because he decided to bear this unbearable indignity in order to complete his half-finished masterpiece, the *Shiji*. He understood very well that he had a duty to commit suicide, but he considered it more important to discharge his weightier duty of writing a grand historical book. His *A Letter to Ren An* can be read as the account of a tormented soul urging his contemporaries to excuse him for not committing suicide.

In short, in the midst of undignified treatment, death with dignity is not the only option. One can continue to live on with dignity by fulfilling one’s vocation rather than just dragging on. There are many historical examples of this nature, as Sima Qian also noted in the *Letter*. Sima Qian’s decision of not committing suicide has also been very influential

in the subsequent development of Chinese thought. His view can be summarized as Antithesis II, in sharp contrast to Confucian Thesis II:

**Antithesis II: When there is no threat to one's life, and when the calling in life is clear, one should live on to fulfill one's vocation in spite of personal tragedy and undignified treatment.**

#### IV. THE INFLUENCE OF DAOISM AND BUDDHISM

The Confucian ethics of suicide was, of course, not uncontested in ancient China. To understand the distinctiveness of the Confucian perspective, it is best to contrast it with the Daoist and Buddhist perspectives.

In Daoist philosophy, both Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi (c.369-286 BC) were critical of Confucian ethics. Zhuang Zi, in particular, criticized the Confucian view on suicide for the sake of *ren* and *yi*<sup>a</sup> in chapter eight (“*piunmu*,” or “Webbed Toes”) of his writings (Chuang Tzu, 1964). According to him, the morality of *ren* and *yi*<sup>a</sup> is external to human nature; it is artificial, not natural. To die for *ren* and *yi*<sup>a</sup>, therefore, is to blight one's inborn nature, which is equivalent to dying for profit or reputation. One should, instead, preserve one's inborn nature; life is an end in itself, not a means to morality. (As I shall explain in the next section, Jia Yi used this Daoist argument to lament the suicide of Qu Yuan.)

The Daoist religion is even more adamant in its negative attitude to all kinds of suicide because its religious goal is to attain immortality of life. To end one's life intentionally shows one's ignorance of the supreme goal of life. In short, both Daoist philosophy and religion consider suicide intrinsically wrong (Zheng, 1994).

Buddhism, on the other hand, is not as unsympathetic to suicide as Daoism. This is because, according to the Buddhist worldview, death is only a transitional point in *samsara*, a transition between different forms of karmic existence. Hence the crucial issue is not when one dies, but how one dies - whether the manner of death will cause merits or demerits in the next form of life. Suicide is therefore to be evaluated according to its motive (De La Vallee Poussin, 1908).

Consequently, even though early Buddhism in India once strictly forbade suicide, altruistic suicide was highly praised in Indian Mahayana Buddhism when suicide was committed for the sake of almsgiving (e.g., to kill oneself to feed a hungry tigress, lest she will devour her baby

cubs). Such almsgiving (*dana*) of the body was a manifestation of supreme compassion (*karuna*) to all living beings (Dayal, 1932, pp.178-188). In China, Mahayana Buddhist other-regarding suicide took on a new form, viz., to burn oneself to death as incense offered to the Buddha. Quite a number of eminent monks committed suicide this way, and found the inspiration from chapter twenty-two of the *Lotus Sutra*. (*Biographies of Eminent Monks, More Biographies of Eminent Monks, and Biographies of Eminent Monks in Song Dynasty* all contain a section of monks who died in this manner.)<sup>22</sup>

## V. QU YUAN

Confucianism, of course, has not been monolithic. Even among the premodern Confucians, there were debates on the moral evaluation of certain suicides. Qu Yuan's suicide and Guan Zhong's refusal to commit suicide, in particular, engendered a long history of debate. I shall discuss the former in this section, and the latter in the next section.

The only national festival that commemorates a person in ancient and contemporary Chinese society is the Duan Wu Festival (Dragon Boat Festival). It commemorates the death of Qu Yuan (c.339-c.278 BC), who died by drowning himself in a river. The fact that he committed suicide not only did not lead to a stigmatization, but on the contrary it earned him great moral fame.<sup>23</sup>

According to tradition, two different reasons were advanced to explain his suicide. First, it was said that he hoped to use his sudden death to awaken the Chu king to realize that the country was in a crisis and to launch the badly needed political and military reforms. Second, it was said that he believed that his country was on the verge of conquest by the Qin kingdom, and therefore he wanted to die with his motherland. Either way, his suicide was other-regarding and a manifestation of his patriotism, and so it was deemed a suicide for the sake of *ren* and *yi*, an illustration of Confucian Thesis I. In the course of Chinese history, many people followed his example. For instance, Wang Guowei's drowning, mentioned at the beginning of this paper, was often regarded as an imitation of Qu Yuan (see Luo, 1995, pp.56-57,63,67,70, SO).

Throughout Chinese history, though the mainstream opinion has been to praise Qu Yuan for his death, there has also been a stream of dissenting opinion that does not regard his suicide as praiseworthy. Two different

kinds of reasons have been advanced. First, there is a Daoist argument which considers suicide, even other-regarding suicide, a harm to one's inborn nature; it violates the imperative to preserve one's life. For example, the Han writer Jia Yi (200-168 BC) expresses this opinion in his *Diao Qu Yuan Fu (Elegy to Qu Yuan)*. A phoenix flies away when there is danger so as to preserve its life. A dragon, in treasuring its own worth, continues to stay in the bottom of a deep pool; it emerges and flies into the sky only if there is cloud in which to make its abode. Likewise, given his talents and noble character, Jia Yi argues that Qu Yuan should cherish and preserve his own life. Second, there is a cost-and-benefit argument which claims that had Qu Yuan stayed alive he could have made much more significant social, political, and cultural contribution, either to Chu or to another Chinese kingdom. To die for a fatuous king is not worthwhile. For example, the Han thinker Yang Xiong (53-18 BC) expresses this view in his *Fan Li Sao (Antithesis to The Lament)*. He points out that though Confucius also had the aspiration to be a successful politician in his home country Lu, he did not cling to Lu. When circumstances did not allow him to carry out his ideal Confucius left Lu and traveled to the neighboring kingdoms to look for a ruler who would appreciate his ability. Qu Yuan should have done likewise, according to Yang Xiong. Even Zhu Xi, the greatest Confucian philosopher in medieval China, had misgivings on Qu Yuan's suicide. In his critical comments on Yang Xiong's *Fan Li Sao* (in his *Chuci jizhu, or Collected Commentaries on Chu Poetry*) Zhu nonetheless concedes that Qu Yuan's suicide was an act of excessive loyalty. Zhu concludes that although Qu Yuan's general integrity was perfect, there was a flaw in his particular deeds, viz., his excessive loyalty was contrary to the Confucian Doctrine of the Mean.

In other words, throughout Chinese history the death of Qu Yuan has been a topic of debate (see Huang, 1987). The majority opinion, under the influence of Confucian Thesis I, considers his other-regarding suicide praiseworthy. The minority opinion argues that either there is no duty to die in that situation, or that the duty is overridden by other duties; hence it pleads that such a suicide should not be elevated to a moral height. (This divergence of moral evaluation can be further ethically analyzed by making use of different schools of Confucianism, and of the "Three Forms of Immortality," to be explained below.)

## VI. GUAN ZHONG

Another long debate centered on Guan Zhong (?-645 BC), a distinguished ancient statesman. Qi was a vassal state during the Spring and Autumn Period. There were two brothers who contended to succeed the throne of their father. Guan Zhong and Shao Hu assisted Prince Jiu, whereas Bao Shuya assisted Prince Xiaobai. The latter prince managed to succeed his father and came to be known as Duke Huan of Qi. He ordered the death of his brother, Prince Jiu, and Shao Hu followed his master to death by committing suicide. Guan Zhong not only did not commit suicide as Shao Hu did, but also switched allegiance to serve as the adviser to Duke Huan. He proved himself to be an exceptional statesman and helped Qi to dominate other vassal states and stabilize the Eastern Zhou Dynasty.

There is an interesting discussion of Guan Zhong in the *Analects* between Confucius and his two outstanding disciples, Zi Lu and Zi Gong.

Zi Lu said, "When Duke Huan had Prince Jiu killed, Shaohu died for the Prince but Guan Zhong failed to do so." He added, "In that case, did he fall short of *ren*?" The Master said, "It was due to Guan Zhong that Duke Huan was able, without a show of force, to assemble the feudal lords nine times. Such was his *ren*."

Zi Gong said, "I don't suppose Guan Zhong was a man of *ren*. Not only did he not die for Prince Jiu, but he lived to help Huan who had the Prince killed." The Master said, "Guan Zhong helped Duke Huan to become the leader of the feudal lords and to save the Empire from collapse. To this day, the common people still enjoy the benefit of his acts. Had it not been for Guan Zhong, we might well be wearing our hair down and folding our robes to the left, Surely his was not the petty faithfulness of the common man or woman who commits suicide in a ditch without anyone taking any notice" (*Analects* 14:16-17, Lau (trans.) modified).

In other words, both disciples felt that Guan Zhong's conduct was contrary to *ren* because he not only did not die with his master as his colleague did, he even served the murderer of his master. They considered him an obvious example of "staying alive at the expense of *ren*"; he should have committed suicide in order to preserve *ren*, which was required by Confucian Thesis I. Confucius, however, defended Guan Zhong as a man of *ren* because (1) he brought about a peaceful coexistence of all the vassal lords and prevented warfare among them, (2)

by helping Duke Huan to become the leader of the vassal lords he saved the Empire from collapse, and so prevented the imminent invasion and conquest of the barbarians, and (3) in virtue of his enormous contribution to national interests he should be exempted from the petty morality of the common people.

Confucius' apparent exemption of Guan Zhong from the requirement of Confucian Thesis I is intriguing. In spite of his moral authority, many subsequent followers of Confucius still could not appreciate Guan Zhong and found his refusal to die with his master a serious character flaw. In the history of interpretation of the *Analects*, one can find that though many commentators appreciated Confucius' defense of Guan Zhong, many others were confused by their Master. They therefore developed an ingenious exegesis so as to understand Confucius as either not appreciating Guan Zhong at all, or have mixed feelings about Guan Zhong's moral merit.<sup>24</sup> For example, the eminent neo-Confucian philosopher Cheng I(1033-1107) changed the birth order of the brothers. He opined that Duke Huan must be the elder brother and Prince Jiu the younger one. Accordingly, it was legitimate for the former Prince Xiaobai to succeed his father as the Duke of Qi (i.e., Duke Huan). Though the failure to die with his master was still morally wrong, Guan Zhong's assistance of Duke Huan, who was supposed to be the legitimate heir to the throne, was morally excusable. Were it the other way round, i.e., Duke Huan was the younger brother, and he had violated the order of succession by usurping the throne, it would be extremely immoral for Guan Zhong to assist him; he would have no choice but to commit suicide. However, as many subsequent commentators pointed out, Cheng I's version of birth order was entirely wrong; the reality was just the opposite. Cheng I changed the birth order because this was the only way he could make any sense out of Confucius' defense of Guan Zhong. This shows how strongly many Confucians felt that Guan Zhong should have committed suicide.

One way to understand ethically this debate on Guan Zhong's refusal to commit suicide is to note that there have been divergent understandings of the proper manifestation of *ren*. Some understood it narrowly as a norm in personal ethics only, and considered the lack of total dedication to one's master a hallmark of the violation of *ren*. Furthermore, they thought that serious character flaws such as this one could not be compensated by achievement, no matter how large, in the social-political world. This was the mainstream moral thinking of Confucianism. In the

Song Dynasty, however, there was another stream of neo-Confucianism that was known as the “Utilitarian” school, whose major representatives were Chen Liang and Ye Shi (for a helpful discussion of the former in English, see Tillman, 1982). They criticized the mainstream neo-Confucianism for over-emphasizing personal morality and neglecting social-political achievements. For them, to promote the social-political good was also a manifestation of *ren*. Chen Liang, for example, appreciated Confucius’ defense of Guan Zhong very much, whereas Zhu Xi, with whom he had an extensive debate through correspondence, still had mixed feelings about Guan Zhong.<sup>25</sup> For Chen Liang, Guan Zhong did not stay alive in spite of Confucian Thesis I; he did so in virtue of Thesis I. *Ren* in the wider sense required him not to die, but to live. To put the point another way, one can say that those who thought that both Qu Yuan and Guan Zhong should not commit suicide subscribed to Antithesis I as follows:

**Antithesis I: One should broaden the scope of one’s commitment; instead of dying for a rather limited cause, one should live and die for an object of a higher order.**

This antithesis does not rule out other-regarding suicide in principle, but limits it to a more restricted number of circumstances.

The most eloquent exposition of Antithesis I can be found in the Confucianism of the early Qing Dynasty, especially in the ethics of the so-called “Three Great Confucians of the late Ming and the early Qing,” viz., Huang Zongxi (1610-1695), Gu Yanwu (1613-1682), Wang Fuzhi (or Wang Chuanshan, 1619-1692). All three of them, in their youth, witnessed the downfall of the Ming Dynasty and the invasion of the Manchu people. They all joined the armed resistance movement in the attempt to expel the Manchus and restore the Ming Dynasty, not out of the unswerving loyalty to the royal house of Ming, but out of the mission to keep China from the domination by a foreign people and its “barbarian” culture. Their resistance was in vain and the Manchus swiftly occupied the entire China. It was an age of total chaos, and Huang Zongxi described it as “an age of the falling apart of both the heaven and the earth.” Many patriotic Chinese, under the influence of Confucian Thesis I, committed suicide. These three Confucians not only did not commit suicide, but also articulated a new ethics of suicide which was an important breakthrough in Confucianism.

Both Gu Yanwu and Wang Fuzhi were deeply appreciative of Guan Zhong's career. Like Chen Liang in the Song Dynasty, they defended Guan Zhong's refusal to commit suicide and his serving Duke Huan. However, unlike Chen Liang, they did not defend him on utilitarian ground. According to them, Guan Zhong's decision to stay alive was justified by a weightier moral duty, viz., the duty to keep China free from foreign and barbarian domination. Though Guan Zhong did not discharge the duty to die with Prince Jiu, it was because this duty was "trumped" by the much more important duty to defend China and its civilization. Accordingly, even if we understand *ren* narrowly as a norm in personal ethics, *ren* manifests itself not merely as dedication to one's master, but more importantly as dedication to one's country. Though Guan Zhong did not commit a suicide of *ren* and *yi*<sup>a</sup>, he stayed alive for a greater *ren* and *yi*<sup>a</sup>. Or to put it differently, though *ren* requires one to die with the object of ultimate dedication, Prince Jiu was not such an object and so *ren* did not require Guan Zhong to die with him. (Gu, 1990, p.317; Wang, 1975, pp.412-415). Hence Gu and Wang found Guan Zhong's deeds inspiring for them. Though the Ming Dynasty perished and the Manchu political domination was a *fait accompli*, they opted against dying together with Ming. They had to stay alive to defend Chinese civilization so that the Manchu conquest of China would remain only in the military and political aspects.<sup>26</sup>

Though Huang Zongxi did not write on this topic as much as Gu and Wang did, his view can be traced through an essay by Chen Que (1604-1677), whose view he fully shared. In the essay "On Dying for Integrity" (*Sijie Lun*) Chen argued that many people in the past have misapplied Confucian Thesis I, that "many people, out of the desire for fame, committed suicide through drowning, hanging, taking lethal drug, and cutting one's throat. They aspired to die with no regret. Innumerable sons followed their fathers to death, wives followed their husbands, and educated persons (*shi*) followed their friends. They just wanted to commit suicide without proper regard of its propriety. There were even unwed girls who died for men they secretly admired, and educated persons who died for someone unacquainted. The uneducated people reinforced this ethos through giving favorable publicity to each other's suicide. There is nothing more harmful to the customs of society than this... Since 1644 [the year the Ming Dynasty fell and the Manchus occupied the capital, Beijing] many people committed suicide as well. People say these were suicides for the sake of *yi*<sup>a</sup>. But it is not the right *yi*<sup>a</sup> to die for and a

person of stature should not do it. Furthermore, whether a person is virtuous or not can be seen through his or her entire course of life... Now the focus of moral evaluation has been shifted to the manner of death, hence adulterers, robbers, actresses, and prostitutes can all be counted virtuous persons. No value has been so confusing as that in dying for integrity. How distressing it is!" (Chen, 1979, pp.153-154, trans. mine).

Huang Zongxi fully shared Chen Que's deploring of the epidemic of suicide in the name of *ren* and *yi*, especially those that took place immediately after the fall of the Ming Dynasty. In the long epitaph he composed for Chen, Huang quoted approvingly a section of Chen's essay "On Dying for Integrity" and made the comment that Chen's view was beneficial to social morals (Huang, in Chen, 1979, p.8). It is noteworthy that Chen Que and Huang Zongxi were fellow-students of Liu Zongzhou (1578-1645), an eminent late Ming Confucian philosopher who died for integrity after the fall of the Ming Dynasty. Chen and Huang not only did not follow the example of their teacher, whom they admired greatly in other respects, but also deplored the excess of dying for integrity in society. This was an important breakthrough.<sup>27</sup>

It should be noted that these three Confucians did not reject dying for integrity altogether. They only intended to modify Confucian Thesis I by broadening the object of dedication from an emperor, a royal house, and a dynasty to the entire country. They resolved to stay alive as long as they could still contribute to China in some way (e.g., to preserve her civilization) and to commit suicide only if they were compelled to do otherwise. (Hence Gu threatened to commit suicide when the Qing central government repeatedly asked him to enter public life and serve the Manchu regime.) Their ethics of suicide is the best exposition of Confucian Antithesis I.

Another way to analyze ethically the divergent evaluations of the suicide of Qu Yuan and the refusal to commit suicide of Guan Zhong is to make use of the idea of *san buxian*, i.e., "Three Forms of Immortality," viz., to establish virtue in personal morality, to establish successful public service, and to establish speech/writing (*Zuo Zhuan*, or *Zuo Qiuming's Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*, Twenty-fourth year of Duke Xiang). If one can establish one of the three lasting influences, even if one died, one would be immortal. The knowledge of these "three forms of immortality" was widespread in ancient China. To commit an other-regarding suicide, as Qu Yuan did and Guan Zhong should have, is to establish virtue in personal morality. To refuse to commit suicide, as

Guan Zhong did and Qu Yuan should have, is to establish successful public service. For those people who think the first form of immortality is of the utmost importance, they will commend other-regarding suicide, and so praise Qu Yuan and condemn Guan Zhong. For those who think the second form of immortality is at least of equal importance, however, they will commend a refusal to commit suicide so that one can provide successful public service to the country; they will commend Guan Zhong and lament over Qu Yuan. (Accordingly, Sima Qian's decision of refusing suicide can be understood as an attempt to establish speech/writing over personal virtue.) In other words, the first form of immortality is consonant with Confucian Thesis I and II, which are more favorable to suicide. The second and third forms of immortality, however, are more consonant with Antithesis 11, which is less favorable to suicide. How are we to weigh these three forms of immortality in case they come in conflict? This is an issue that contemporary Chinese ethics should address.

## VII. IMPLICATIONS FOR EUTHANASIA

How do the ancient Confucian ethical views on suicide bear on the contemporary bioethical issue of euthanasia?<sup>28</sup> I have seven brief observations.

First, "euthanasia" in the etymological sense of "good death" is agreeable with Confucian Thesis I. Sima Qian's point in distinguishing deaths that are weightier than Mount Tai from deaths lighter than swan's down is precisely to distinguish good deaths from bad or valueless deaths. Wen Tianxiang's poem also points out that one should choose a preferable way of dying. Confucianism never had a doctrine of the sanctity of human life, and never deemed suicide intrinsically wrong. In some circumstances, death by suicide is a better death than a "natural" death. However, we should also note that a "good death" in Confucianism does not mean a dying process which is swift, peaceful, and free of pain, but a death for the sake of *ren* and *yi*, a death that can render service to others, or a death that expresses abiding dedication to others. In short, a "good death" in Confucianism is good for other-regarding reasons, rather than for self-regarding reasons as contemporary proponents of euthanasia understand it.

Second, Confucian Thesis I justifies altruistic suicides. Can we therefore infer that it also justifies altruistic euthanasia, i.e., to request euthanasia for the sake of relieving the burden (emotional, financial, and otherwise) to others (family and society)? It is not clear to me that Confucian Thesis I would apply in these circumstances. This is because altruistic suicides in ancient China were usually intended to render a positive benefit to others. Altruistic suicides in the form of negatively removing the “burden” to one’s family and to society were not encouraged.<sup>29</sup> This is because according to the Confucian social vision, the good society is one in which, through an extensive support network, “widows, widowers, orphans, the childless, the disabled, and the sick are to be well taken care of.”<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, the elderly were highly esteemed in ancient China; they were considered “senior citizens” in the literal and positive sense. Hence the sick elderly were not allowed to be seen as “burden” to anyone. If altruistic suicide for the sake of relieving the burdens of others was to be discouraged, altruistic euthanasia for the same reason would be discouraged as well.

Third, Confucian Thesis II seems to endorse euthanasia. Both have to do with terminating life for a self-regarding reason, and both can be characterized as “death with dignity.” Indeed, there are certain parallels between the ancient Chinese understanding of death with dignity and the contemporary bioethical understanding of death with dignity. Regarding type I of death with dignity in ancient China (see Section III above), the parallels between the Chinese and the contemporary understandings are as follows:

- (1) Death is imminent.
- (2) The manner of death is highly likely to be undignified because of external factors. For example, (a) in ancient China it is a humiliating death to be executed by one’s enemies, by the emperor, or by the government; (b) in contemporary bioethics it is impersonal or excessive medical intervention that can lead to an undignified death, e.g., machines, tubes, and an over-zealous medical staff. (“[A] medicalization and institutionalization of the end of life that robs the old and the incurable of most of their autonomy and dignity: Intubated and electrified, with bizarre mechanical companions, confined and immobile, helpless and regimented, once proud and independent people find themselves cast in the role of passive, obedient, highly disciplined children” (Kass, 1991, p. 132).)

- (3) Suicide is committed as a way of escape from undignified treatment and a way to preserve one's dignity.

Such parallels notwithstanding, it seems to me that there are also certain dissimilarities between these two understandings.

- (1) The assault on human dignity in the Chinese understanding is entirely external (from enemies, emperor, government) and also not universal (restricted largely to warriors, rebellious generals, and government officials). The assault on human dignity in the issue of euthanasia is partly internal (disease, old age, bodily and mental decay all stem from our mortal and corruptible body) and is a universal human phenomenon.
- (2) In the Chinese understanding, captivity is unavoidable and so is the subsequent humiliation; one's destiny is controlled by hostile forces, and nobody can help one to ameliorate one's expected suffering. In the issue of active, voluntary euthanasia, one's suffering, at least in some cases as it was argued, can be reduced by palliative care; we are not captured and isolated in a maleficent environment, but are surrounded by health care professionals who are, supposedly, there to help us.

Regarding type II of death with dignity in ancient China, there are also parallels and dissimilarities between the two understandings. The parallels are:

- (1) Death is not imminent. Though one's life is not threatened, one decides that one is better off dead than alive.
- (2) Suicide is committed as a way of avoiding humiliation and thus preserving one's dignity. In the Chinese understanding the indignity stems from the trial in court and/or the imprisonment; in the issue of euthanasia the indignity stems from an incurable illness.

And there is also one dissimilarity: In the Chinese understanding the source of indignity is external and circumstantial (viz., a legal system), whereas in the issue of euthanasia the source of indignity is intrinsic to our mortal embodied life. Hence for the latter, the indignity is part of the human condition; the same thing, however, cannot be said of the former. In short, the contemporary understanding of death with dignity, viz., active, voluntary euthanasia, in most cases is not a close analogue of death with dignity in ancient China.

My fourth observation is related to the third. Just as Confucian Thesis II was countered by Antithesis 11, likewise, euthanasia, at least in the non-terminal context, will be opposed by Antithesis 11. This is because, according to this antithesis, in spite of personal tragedy and living in undignified circumstances, one should embark on or continue one's project in life so as to make the most out of this life. Sima Qian went through excruciating anguish and tormenting mental distress, but he resisted the invitation to die.<sup>31</sup>

Fifth, in a terminal context, what about suicide and euthanasia for the sake of relieving one's own intractable and end-of-life suffering? When there is no more time and energy for one to engage in a project, what is the purpose of enduring the intractable pain? Is euthanasia in this context morally permissible according to Confucian values? I do not think there is an obvious answer to this question. For one thing, historically Confucianism has been more concerned with teaching people to cultivate one's quality of moral life than with teaching people to maintain the quality of biological life. For another, as Mencius argues, compassion is the germ of *ren* or benevolence (*Mencius*, 2A:6), and so we cannot be indifferent to others' intense suffering. Compassion dictates that we should devote more resources to palliative medicine and make hospice care more easily available. If, however, all palliative treatments fail, and terminating one's life immediately is the only way of relieving one's dragged out suffering, I do not see how euthanasia is opposed by *ren*. In short, compassion and benevolence can be expressed in different ways, depending on the variation of empirical factors such as the availability and effectiveness of palliative treatments.

Sixth, for many contemporary proponents, euthanasia has more to do with individual autonomy than with the relief of pain. As an article in the *New York Times* (August 14, 1991, A19) puts it, "Pain management and hospice care are better than ever before. But for some people they are simply the trees. The forest is that they no longer want to live, and they believe the decision to die belongs to them alone" (quoted from New York State Task Force on Life and the Law, 1994, p.87). Confucianism is not unsympathetic to the idea that a moral agent should have some control over the time and circumstance of his or her death. Confucian Theses I and II certainly grant, and even encourage, individual autonomy in deciding the time and circumstance of one's death. This favorable inclination notwithstanding, Confucianism does not regard such autonomy as open-ended. The Confucian freedom to die is not without

boundary (i.e., to do as one wishes), but is to be guided by *ren* and *yi*<sup>a</sup> (i.e., to do as one ought to). The Confucian freedom to die is not valuable in itself, but only as a means to serve a moral cause. “I do not want to live in this condition, period” is not an acceptable Confucian reason for euthanasia. Consequently, autonomy in dying is not a private or strictly personal issue, none of others’ business. On the contrary, if autonomy in dying is to be guided by *ren* and *yi*<sup>a</sup>, it is a moral and public issue - a matter of public concern, though not necessarily of public interference.

Seventh, this paper is limited to an analysis of the Confucian moral evaluation of suicide, and does not touch on public policy issues. Hence the *moral* conclusions above do not have a direct bearing on *legal* issues such as the legalization of euthanasia and of physician assisted suicide, which involve issues not examined in this article, e.g., the role and responsibilities of physicians, probable societal consequences (intended and unintended) of such changes in law, potential for abuse, etc.<sup>32</sup>

*Department of Religion and Philosophy, and  
Center for Applied Ethics  
Hong Kong Baptist University  
Kowloon Tong, Hong Kong*

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Most of the debates on his suicide, with a span of more than sixty years, are now conveniently collected in Luo, 1995. For a brief account in English of the circumstances of Wang’s suicide, see Bonner, 1986, pp.206-215.
- <sup>2</sup> For an ethical discussion on the difference between human acts and bare events, see Donagan, 1977, pp.37-52.
- <sup>3</sup> For more detailed discussions on various types of suicide in ancient China, see Eberhard, 1967; Guo, 1989; He, 1993; Hsieh and Spence, 1981; Huang and Wu, 1992; Lau, 1989; Lin, 1990; Lin, 1992; Maclagan, 1908; T’ien, 1988; Zhang, 1993.
- <sup>4</sup> Altruistic or other-regarding suicide was relatively rare in the West; hence Durkheim says that it is frequent only in “lower societies” (Durkheim, 1951, p.217).
- <sup>5</sup> Formally speaking, the major moral issue in the premodern West and in premodern China was the same, viz., “Is it morally permissible not to perform a particular duty?” The issue was different only substantively. In the premodern West, the duty in question was the duty not to commit suicide, whereas in premodern China, the duty in question was the duty to commit suicide.
- <sup>6</sup> Mencius is to Confucius what Paul is to Jesus in Christianity.
- <sup>7</sup> I found these sayings in G. Chen, 1990, pp.559-564, under the heading of “To lay down one’s life for a cause of *yi*<sup>a</sup>.”

- <sup>8</sup> Mount Tai was a sacred and famous mountain in ancient China in the Shandong province.
- <sup>9</sup> The sources of my information are from *Shiji (Records of the Historian)* and some collections of Chinese novels in the Ming Dynasty. The former contains the biographies of many celebrities in ancient China whereas the latter narrates the stories and legends of many ordinary people in medieval China.
- <sup>10</sup> It seems to me that the western philosopher that comes closest to this classical Confucian view is Immanuel Kant. In his lecture on suicide he emphasizes repeatedly that “life is not to be highly regarded for its own sake. I should endeavour to preserve my own life only so far as I am worthy to live ... Yet there is much in the world far more important than life. To observe morality is far more important. It is better to sacrifice one’s life than one’s morality. To live is not a necessity; but to live honourably while life lasts is a necessity” (Kant, 1930, pp.150-152). Accordingly, though Kant firmly opposes suicide in the sense of self-destruction, he commends self-sacrifice highly. Risking one’s life and willing to be killed for the sake of others’ good are praiseworthy. Furthermore, altruistic suicide, i.e., actively to kill oneself for others’ sake, is also noble, as in the example of Cato the Younger (95-46 BC), who “knew that the entire Roman nation relied upon him in their resistance to Caesar, but he found that he could not prevent himself from falling into Caesar’s hands. What was he to do? If he, the champion of freedom, submitted, every one would say, ‘If Cato himself submits, what else can we do? If, on the other hand, he killed himself, his death might spur on the Romans to fight to the bitter end in defense of their freedom. So he killed himself. He thought that it was necessary for him to die. He thought that if he could not go on living as Cato, he could not go on living at all. It must certainly be admitted that in a case such as this, where suicide is a virtue, appearances are in its favour” (Kant, 1930, p.149). This high regard for altruistic suicide notwithstanding, one should not overlook that immediately after the aforementioned passage, Kant cautions, “But this is the only example which has given the world the opportunity of defending suicide. It is the only example of its kind and there has been no similar case *since*” (*ibid.*).
- <sup>11</sup> As in *zijin, zicai, zijing, ziqiang, qingsheng*
- <sup>12</sup> As in *xunguo, xunjun, xunzhu, xunfu, xunjie, xunqing, xunzang, xunsi, xundao.*
- <sup>13</sup> As in *sijie, qijie, shijie, xunjie, jielie, jiecao.*
- <sup>14</sup> For an assessment of the suicide of the former, see Lin, 1976; for debates on the suicide of the latter, see Luo, 1995.
- <sup>15</sup> Chen’s suicide is an admonishing suicide (*sijian*), which has a long history in China, dated back to Qu Yuan (see section V below). It can be compared to suicide as social protest in the West (cf. Battin, 1996, pp.92-93).
- <sup>16</sup> Cf. Battin, 1996, pp.67-68.
- <sup>17</sup> As a famous line from chapter one of *Xiaojing (Book of Xiao)* goes, “Our body, limbs, hair, and skin all originated from our parents. We should hold them in respect and guard them against injury. This is the beginning of filial piety.”
- <sup>18</sup> It should be noted that though Daoism and Buddhism were not established religions, they flourished in Chinese society. The persecution of non-established religions and ideologies occurred only infrequently in China.
- <sup>19</sup> These two passages are taken from *Liji (The Book of Rites)*.
- <sup>20</sup> For stimulating discussions on the suicide of these two intellectuals, see Huang, 1989; Wang, 1986; Chen, 1986; Su, 1986.
- <sup>21</sup> Again, Kant’s idea on self-regarding duty comes very close to Confucian Thesis II. “We are in duty bound to take care of our life; but in this connexion it must be remarked that life, in

and for itself, is not the greatest of the gifts entrusted to our keeping and of which we must take care. There are duties which are far greater than life and which can often be fulfilled only by sacrificing life ... If a man cannot preserve his life except by dishonouring his humanity, he ought rather to sacrifice it; ... It is not his life that he loses, but only the prolongation of his years, for nature has already decreed that he must die at some time; what matters is that, so long as he lives, man should live honourably and should not disgrace the dignity of humanity ... If, then, I cannot preserve my life except by disgraceful conduct, virtue relieves me of this duty because a higher duty here comes into play and commands me to sacrifice my life” (Kant, 1930, pp.154-157). Accordingly, Kant thinks that in the case of an innocent man wrongly accused of treachery, if he is given the choice of death or penal servitude for life, he should choose the former. Similarly, a woman should prefer to be killed to being violated by a man. Kant, however, stops short of recommending suicide in order to avoid such dishonor. Battin therefore points out, correctly, that Kant is inconsistent here. If our self-regarding duty of avoiding moral degradation is of such paramount importance, “and if death - the only possibility for nondegradation - is the only morally acceptable alternative, the only way to achieve this alternative would be to take death upon oneself” (Battin, 1996, p.109). In other words, as an eminent contemporary Kantian scholar argues, the spirit of Kant’s ethics should permit some self-regarding suicides (Hill, 1983).

- <sup>22</sup> For the Chinese texts, see D. Shi, H. Shi, Z. Shi; for a helpful general discussion, see Jan, 1964.
- <sup>23</sup> For a general account of Qu Yuan’s life and significance in English, see Schneider, 1980.
- <sup>24</sup> For an extensive samplings of such imaginative exegesis, see Cheng, 1990, pp.981-996.
- <sup>25</sup> The correspondence between Chen Liang and Zhu Xi were all collected in *Chen Liang Ji*, or *Writings of Chen Liang*, 1987, pp.332-76.
- <sup>26</sup> It should be noted that this broader notion of loyalty and suicide for its sake was advanced outside Confucianism a long time ago. Since Guan Zhong was such a legendary hero, and was widely referred to in the literature of late Waning States period, shortly after his death there was an oral tradition of thought that was dedicated to him. This stream of thought was subsequently crystallized in a collection of writings that bore his name, viz., *Guan Zi*. In Chapter XVIII of this work (“Dakuang”) Guan Zhong was supposed to have said, “As an official to the monarch, I shall carry out the mandate of the monarch, to serve the state and the ancestral shrine of the ruling house. How can I die just for Prince Jiu alone? If the state perishes, the ancestral shrine of the ruling house is destroyed, sacrificial offering stops, I shall then follow to death. I shall stay alive for any disaster short of these three. As long as I am alive, Qi will be benefited; if I die, it will be a loss to Qi” (trans. mine).
- <sup>27</sup> Wang Fuzhi, in his commentary on chapter eight of the writings of Zhuang Zi, also expressed his agreement to a large extent of the Daoist critique of suicide for the sake of *ren* and *yi*” (see Wang, 1977, pp.76-81).
- <sup>28</sup> In this section the term “euthanasia” is confined to voluntary, active euthanasia only.
- <sup>29</sup> For a helpful discussion on the distinction between negative and positive altruistic suicide, see Battin, 1996, pp.84-93.
- <sup>30</sup> This is a famous passage from chapter 9 (“Liyun”) of *Liji* (*The Book of Rites*), an important Han Confucian canon.
- <sup>31</sup> As a very famous passage from *Mencius* (6B:15, Lau (trans.) modified) goes, “That is why Heaven, when it is about to place a great task on a man, always first tests his resolution, exhausts his frame and makes him suffer starvation and hardship, frustrates his efforts so as to shake him from his mental lassitude, toughen his nature and make good his deficiencies.”

32

Subsequent to the writing of this article, I have elaborated some parts of this article into two lengthy papers; one is already published and the other is forthcoming: (1) "Confucian Values of Life and Death & Euthanasia" (in Chinese), *Chinese and International Philosophy of Medicine* 1:1 (Feb 1998):35-73; (2) "Confucian Ethic of Death with Dignity and Its Contemporary Relevance," *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*, volume 19 (1999): forthcoming. The research for these two papers and the present article was funded by Hong Kong Baptist University Faculty Research Grant (FRG/94-95-II-04) and by Research Grants Council of Hong Kong 1995-1996 Earmarked Research Grant (RGC/95-96/26), and was assisted by Miss Lee Wing Yi. The present author is grateful to them for their respective contribution.

## REFERENCES

- Battin, M. P.: 1996, *The Death Debate: Ethical Issues in Suicide*, Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.
- Bonner, J.: 1986, *Wang Kuo-wei: An Intellectual Biography*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Chen, C.: 1986, 'Si: gei "wenge" (Death: For the 'Cultural revolution'),' *Shanghai wenxue (Literature in Shanghai)* 9: 4-11.
- Chen, G., et al.: 1990, *Zhongguo gudai mingju cidian (Dictionary of Famous Sayings in Ancient China)*, Shanghai cishu Press & Wanli shudian, Shanghai.
- Chen, L.: 1987, *Chen Liang Ji (Writings of Chen Liang)*, Zhonghua Press, Beijing.
- Chen, Q.: 1979, 'Sijie Lun (On Dying for Integrity)', in *Chen Que Ji (Works of Chen Que)*. Two volumes. Zhonghua Press, Beijing, pp.152-155.
- Chen, T.: 1982, 'Jueming Ci (Suicide Note)', in Liu Qingpo and Peng Guoxin (eds.), *Chen Tianhua Ji (Works of Chen Tianhua)*, Hunan renmin Press, Changsha.
- Cheng, S.: 1990, *Lunyu Jishi (Collected Commentaries on the Analects)*, Four volumes, Zhonghua Press, Beijing.
- Chi, C.: 1972, 'The Orphan of Chao,' in Liu Jung-en (trans.), *Six Yuan Plays*, Penguin Books, New York, pp.41-81.
- Chuang, T.: 1964, *Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings*, Burton Watson (trans.), Columbia University Press, New York.
- Confucius: 1992, *Analects*, D. C. Lau (trans.), second edition, Chinese University Press, Hong Kong.
- Dayal, H.: 1932, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.
- De La Vallee Poussin, L.: 1908, 'Suicide (Buddhist)' in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, James Hastings (eds.), volume 12, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, pp.24-26.
- Donagan, A.: 1977, *The Theory of Morality*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Dong, Z.: *Chunqiu Fanlu (Exuberant Dew of the Spring and Autumn)*, many editions.
- Durkheim, E.: 1951, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology: A Study in Sociology*, John A. Spaulding and George Simpson (trans.), Free Press, New York.
- Eberhard, W.: 1967, 'Suicide in short stories,' in *Guilt and Sin in Traditional China*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Gu, Y.: 1990, *Rizilu (Daily Additions to Knowledge)*, in Huang, R.:1990.

- Guan Zi (Master Guan)*, many editions.
- Guo, D.: 1989, *Dongfang siwang lun (Eastern Views on Death)*, Liaoning Jiaoyu Press, Shenyang.
- He, X.: 1993, *Zhongguoren de siwang xintai (The Chinese Mentality of Death)*, Shanghai Wenhua Press, Shanghai.
- Hill, T. E.: 1983, 'Self-regarding suicide: A modified Kantian view,' in *Suicide and Ethics: A Special Issue of Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, Margaret P. Battin and Ronald W. Maris (eds.), Human Sciences Press, New York, pp.254-275.
- Hsia, A.: 1988, 'The Orphan of the House Zhao in French, English, German, and Hong Kong Literature,' *Comparative Literature Studies*, 25:4, 335-351.
- Hsieh, A. C. K. and Spence, J. D.: 1981, 'Suicide and the family in pre-modern Chinese society,' in *Normal and Abnormal Behavior in Chinese Culture*, Arthur Kleinman (eds.), Holland Boston:U. S. A., Dordrecht, pp.29-46.
- Huang, J. and Wu, G.: 1992, 'Gudai zhongguoren de jiazhi guan: jiazhi quxiang de chongtu ji qi jixiao (Ancient Chinese Values: Conflict and Resolution of Value Orientation),' in *Zhongguoren de jiazhi guan guoji yantaohui lunwenji (Proceedings of International Conference on Chinese Values)*, Hanxue yanjiu zhongxin (eds.), Hanxue yanjiu zhongxin, Taipei.
- Huang, R.: 1990, *Rizhili Jishi (Collected Commentaries on Daily Additions to Knowledge)*, Two volumes, Huashan wenyi Press, Shijiazhuang.
- Huang, Z.: 1987, *Quyuan wenti lunzheng shigao (A History of Debate on Qu Yuan)*, Shiyue wenyi Press, Beijing.
- Huang, Z.: 1989, 'Qiangu jiannan wei yisi: tan jibu xie Lao She, Fu Lei zhi si de xiaoshuo (Death as a Difficult Task since Time Immemorial: On Some Novels on the Death of Lao She and Fu Lei),' *Dushu (Reading)* 4 (April), 53-63.
- Huang, Z.: 1979, 'Chen Qianchu xiansheng muzhiming (Epitaph for Master Chen Qianchu [i.e., Chen Que]),' in Chen, Q.:1979, pp.4-9.
- Hume, D.: 1965, 'Of suicide,' in *Hume's Ethical Writings*, Alasdair MacIntyre (eds.), Collier Books, London, pp.297-306.
- Jan, Y.: 1964, 'Buddhist self-immolation in medieval China,' in *History of Religions*. 4:2, 243-268.
- Jia, Y.: *Diao Qu Yuanfu (Elegy to Qu Yuan)*, in *Shiji*, by Sima Qian, Biography number 84.
- Kant, I.: 1930, *Lectures on Ethics*, Louis Infield (trans.), Methuen & Co., London.
- Kass, L.: 1991, 'Death with dignity and the sanctity of life,' in *A Time to be Born and a Time to Die*, Barry S. Kogan (eds.), Aldine de Gruyter, New York, pp.117-145.
- Lau, J. S. M.: 1988-1989, 'The courage to be: Suicide as self-fulfillment in Chinese history and literature,' *Tamkang Review*, 19:1-4 (Autumn 1988- Summer 1989), 715-734.
- Liang, Q.: 1927, 'Wang Jingan xiansheng muqian daoci (A Memorial Speech at the Grave of Mr. Wang Jingan [Wang Guowei]),' reprinted in Luo, J., 1995.
- Liji, (Book of Rites)*, many editions.
- Lin, Y.: 1976, 'The suicide of Liang Chi: An ambiguous case of moral conservation,' in *The Limit of Change: Essays on conservative Alternatives in Republican China*, Charlotte Furth (eds.), Harvard University Press, Cambridge, pp.151-168.
- Lin, Y.: 1990, *The Weight of Mt. Tai: Patterns of Suicide in Traditional Chinese History and Culture*, Ph. D. Dissertation, University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, Michigan.
- Lin, Y.: 1992, 'Maishen maide qiannianming - lun zhongguoren de zisha yu minyu (To Acquire Immortal Fame at the cost of One's Life - On Chinese Suicide and the Longing for Fame),'

- Zhongguo wenzhe yanju jikan (Research Journal on Chinese Literature and Philosophy)*, 2 (Feb): 423-451.
- Luo, J.(ed.): 1995, *Wang Guowei zhi si (On the Death of Wang Guowei)*, Qiling Press, Taipei.
- Maclagan, P. J.: 1908, 'Suicide (Chinese)' in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, James Hastings (eds.), volume 12, T & T Clark, Edinburgh.
- Mencius: 1984, *Mencius*, two volumes, D.C. Lau (trans.), Chinese University Press, Hong Kong.
- New York State Task Force on Life and the Law: 1994, *When Death is Sought: Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia in the Medical Context*, New York State Task Force on Life and the Law, New York.
- Nivison, D. S.: 1987, 'Jen and I,' in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Micea Eliade (eds.), volume 7, Macmillan, New York.
- Schneider, L. A.: 1980, *A Madman of Ch'u: The Chinese Myth of Loyalty and Dissent*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Schopenhauer, A.: 1962, 'On suicide,' *The Essential Schopenhauer* (English selections of *Paralipomena*), Allen & Unwin, London, pp.97-101.
- Seneca: 1920, *The Epistles of Seneca*, William Heinemann, London, pp.56-73.
- Shi, D.: *Xu gaoseng zhuan (More Biographies of Eminent Monks)*, *yishen pian* number 7, in *Dazheng xinxu dazangjing (Taisho Edition of the Tripitaka in Chinese)*, number 2060, pp.678-684.
- Shi, H.: 1986, 'Lun fojiao de zishaguan (Buddist Views on Suicide),' *Taida zhexue lunping (Philosophical Review of National Taiwan University)* 9(Jan), 181-196.
- Shi, H.: *Gaoseng zhuan (Biographies of Eminent Monks)*, *wangshen pian* number 6. in *Dazheng xinxu dazangjing (Taisho Edition of the Tripitaka in Chinese)*, number 2059, pp.403-406.
- Shi, Z.: *Song gaoseng zhuan (Biographies of Eminent Monks in Song Dynasty)*, *yishen pian* number 7, in *Dazheng xinxu dazangjing (Taisho Edition of the Tripitaka in Chinese)*, number 2061, pp.855-862.
- Sima, Q.: 1965, 'Bao Ren An Shu (Letter to Ren An),' For a free translation, see *Anthology of Chinese Literature: From Early Times to the Fourteenth Century*, Cyril Birch(eds.), Grove Press, New York, pp.95-102.
- Sima, Q.: 1961, *Shiji, (Records of the Historian)*, many editions, for an abridged translation, see *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, two volumes, Burton Watson (trans), Columbia University Press, New York.
- Song S. (History of Song Dynasty)*, Biography number 177, many editions.
- Su, S.: 1986, 'Lao She zhi si (Death of Lao She),' *Renmin wenxue (People's Literature)* 8:22-34.
- T'ien, J.: 1988, *Male Anxiety and Female Chastity: A Comparative Study of Chinese Ethical Values in Ming-ch'ing Times*, E. J. Brill, Leiden.
- Tang, J.: 1974, 'Zhongguo wenhua yu shijie (A Manifesto for a Re-appraisal of Sinology and Reconstruction of Chinese Culture),' *Shuo zhonghua minzu zhi huaguo piaoling (On the Diaspora of the Chinese)*, Sanmin Press, Taipei.
- Tillman, H. C.: 1982, *Utilitarian Confucianism: Cheng Liang's Challenge to Chu Hsi*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Wang, F.: 1975, *Du sishu dachuan shuo (Discussions After Reading the Great Collection of Commentaries on the Four Books)*, Two volumes, Zhonghua, Beijing.
- : 1977, *Zhuang Zi Jie (An Interpretation of Zhuang Zi)*, Zhonghua Press, Hong Kong.
- Wang, Z.: 1986, 'Bayue jiaoyang (Bright Sunshine in August),' *Renmin wenxue (People's Literature)* 9:17-21.
- Xiaojing (Book of Filial Piety)*, many editions.

- Yang, X.: *Fan Li Sao*, (*Antithesis to The Lament*), in Zhu Xi, *Chucijizhu*.
- Zhang, S.: 1993, *Siwang zhi si yu siwang zhishi* (*Thoughts and Poems on Death*), Huazhong Ligong University Press, Wuchang.
- Zheng, X.: 1994, *Zhongguo siwang zhihui* (*Chinese Wisdom on Death*), Dongda Press, Taipei.
- Zhu, X.: *Chucijizhu* (*Collected Commentaries on Chu Poetry*), many editions.
- Zuo, Q.: *Zuo Chuan* (*Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*), many editions.