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The Evolution of the Confucian Concept Jên

THE CONCEPT of *jên* (pronounced *ren*) is one of the most important in Chinese thought. The very fact that "*jên*" has been translated into many English terms—benevolence, love, altruism, kindness, charity, compassion, magnanimity, perfect virtue, goodness, true manhood, manhood at its best, human-heartedness, humaneness, humanity, "hominity," man-to-manness—shows that it is an exceedingly complicated concept. Not only is it the backbone of Confucianism, but it also ranks very high in the Buddhist and Taoist scales of value. In Buddhism, the word "*jên*" has long been used as an honorific for the Buddha, a worthy person, a temple, or a pagoda. It is true that in ancient Taoist classics *jên* is severely denounced as hypocrisy,¹ but eventually the leading philosopher of religious Taoism, Ko Hung 葛洪 (253–333?) incorporated it into the Taoist ethical system as a cardinal virtue.²

But *jên* is essentially a Confucian concept, and it was Confucius (551–479) who made it really significant. The word "*jên*" is not found in the oracle bones.³ It is mentioned only occasionally in pre-Confucian texts, and in all these cases it denotes the particular virtue of kindness, more especially the kindness of a ruler to his subjects. We are not sure of the pre-Confucian status of *jên*, for the authenticity of those pre-Confucian Classics in which any pre-Confucian doctrine of *jên* is to be detected is still a debatable question. However, it is safe to follow Juan Yüan 阮元 (1764–1849), who has pointed out that the word "*jên*" does not appear in the earlier portions of the ancient Classics, namely, the Books of Yu, Hsia, and Shang of the *Book*

¹ *Lao Tzu* (*Tao-té ching*) XVIII, XXXVIII. For an English translation, see Arthur Waley, *The Way and Its Power* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1934). Also *Chuang Tzu* IV, VI, VIII, XIII, XVI. See Herbert A. Giles, trans., *Chuang Tzu, Mystic, Moralist, and Social Reformer* (2nd ed., rev., Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1926), pp. 39, 89, 99–105, 163–167, 175–176.

² Ko Hung, *Pao-p'u Tzu* 抱朴子 ("The Philosopher Who Embraces Simplicity"), Chap. 22. This chapter is not translated by Tenney L. Davis and Ch'ên Kuo-fu, "The Inner Chapters of Pao-p'u-tzu," in *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. LXXIV (1941), pp. 297–325; or in Eugene Feifel, "Pao-p'u tzü, Nei-p'ien," *Monumenta Serica*, Vol. VI (1941), pp. 113–211; Vol. IX (1944), pp. 1–33; Vol. XI (1946), pp. 1–32.

³ Tung Tso-pin 董作賓, "The Word 'Jên' in Archaic Script" (in Chinese), *Academic Review*, II, No. 1 (September, 1953), 18.

of *History*, the three Eulogies (Part IV) of the *Book of Poetry*, and the text of the *Book of Changes*.⁴ It occurs only three times in the later portions.⁵ Originally it was written 人, meaning man but also pronounced *jên*. There are several instances of such usage in the Classics.⁶ In all these cases, whether the word is written 仁 or 人, it means kindness shown by rulers to their subjects. For this reason Chinese scholars agree that *jên* in the ancient Classics connotes a particular virtue, namely, kindness of a ruler to his people.

In Confucius, however, all of this is radically changed. In the first place, Confucius made *jên* the central theme of his conversations. In the *Analects*,⁷ 58 of the 499 chapters are devoted to the discussion of *jên*, and the word appears 105 times. No other subject, not even filial piety, engaged so much of the attention of the Master and his disciples. This fact makes the often-quoted passage that "Confucius seldom talked about profit and fate and *jên*" (*Analects* IX. 1) most puzzling. In their attempts to remove the apparent inconsistency Chinese commentators in the last 1800 years have offered many ingenious theories either to explain away the passage or to alter its established meaning. Scholars have suggested that Confucius seldom talked about *jên* because it was a difficult subject; because he did not want to discuss such an important subject lightly; because the subject was abstruse; because he felt that *jên* was not an easy ideal to realize either by himself or by others; because he did not want to associate *jên* with profit in his discussions; or because he thought that ordinary people could seldom reach the three ideals of *jên*, the Mandate of Heaven, and Heaven's way of benefiting all things (here the word "利" 利 is understood not as profit but as

⁴ Juan Yüan, "Lun-yü lun-jên lun" 論語論仁論 ("A Treatise on *Jên* in the *Analects*"), in his *Yen-ching-shih chi* 堯經室集, Part I, *chüan* 8, p. 4b. Actually the word appears twice in the present "Book of Shang" of the *Book of History*: "Rightly liberal and rightly kind"; "They cherish only him who is kind." 克寬克仁; 懷于有仁. See James Legge, trans., *The Shoo King*, The Chinese Classics, Vol. III (London: Henry Frowde, 1863), pp. 180, 209. But originally the word was written 人 (*jên*, man).

⁵ "Truly admirable and kind" 洵美且仁, in the *Book of Poetry*, Part I, Bk. VII, Ode 3 (the earliest occurrence, according to Juan Yüan, *op. cit.*, p. 4b); "The Master is admirable and kind" 其人美且仁, *ibid.*, Part I, Bk. VIII, Ode 8; see James Legge, trans., *The Shoo King*, The Chinese Classics, Vol. IV (London: Henry Frowde, 1871). "Although he has his nearest relatives with him, they are not like my virtuous men" 雖有周親不如仁人, in "Book of Chu" in the *Book of History*. See Legge, trans., *The Shoo King*, p. 292. It occurs eight times in the *Book of Changes*, James Legge, trans., *Yi King* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1882), pp. 354, 356 [three times], 391, 408, 416, 423), but these are in the Appendices, which were written much later and should not be considered as ancient Classics.

⁶ *Book of Poetry*, Part II, Bk. V, Ode 10. "Were not my forefathers kind?" 先祖匪人. Also the two instances given in footnote 4.

⁷ The number of chapters in the *Analects* varies with different editions. According to the *Ching-tien shih-wên* 經正釋文 ("Explanation of Terms in the Classics") by Lu Tê-ming 陸德明 (556-627), there were 492. In the arrangement of Chu Hsi 朱熹 (1130-1200), there are 482 chapters, one of which is divided into eighteen sections. Translators like James Legge, *Confucian Analects*, in *The Chinese Classics*, Vol. I (2nd ed., rev., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893), and Arthur Waley, trans., *The Analects of Confucius* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1938) take these divisions as chapters, making the total of 499.

benefit). Others, contending that the word "yü" 與 means not "and" but "follow," "praise," or "give forth," have insisted that, while Confucius seldom talked about profit, he did follow (or praise, or give forth) fate and *jên*. One commentator wants us to believe that Confucius talked extensively about all three subjects, for the word "*han*" 罕, he says, is not "seldom" but an alternate for "*hsien*" 軒, "elucidation." Another has even gone so far as to say that Confucius seldom talked about the three subjects "by himself" but did discuss them frequently with others.⁸ Needless to say, all these explanations are purely speculative. James Legge, Arthur Waley, William E. Soothill, and other translators, like most Chinese commentators, prefer to leave the contradiction alone.⁹ Derk Bodde, however, follows Shih Shêng-tsu 史繩祖 (thirteenth century) in interpreting "yü" not as "and" but as "give forth," and supports this view by saying that the conjunction "and" between subjects is "in general avoided in Chinese, both in the written and spoken languages."¹⁰ This, of course, is not true. In the *Analects*, "yü" is used as the conjunction "and" between subjects several times, notably in IV. 5; V. 12; VII. 33; and XI. 23. Unless better evidence is discovered, we had better leave the contradiction unsolved. Whatever the reason for the inconsistency, the fact remains that Confucius was the first to make *jên* the chief topic of conversation.

Furthermore, instead of perpetuating the ancient understanding of *jên* as a particular virtue, he transformed it into what Legge very appropriately translated as "perfect virtue" and Waley as "Goodness." To be sure, in a few cases *jên* is still used by Confucius as a particular virtue. For example, in *Analects* IV. 2; VI. 21; IX. 28 (repeated in XIV. 30); XV. 32; and XVII. 8, *jên* is contrasted with knowledge, wisdom, courage, or propriety. In this narrow sense, *jên* is best translated as "benevolence," as Legge has done. In all other cases, however, *jên* connotes the general meaning of moral life at its best. It includes filial piety (XVII. 21), wisdom (V. 18), propriety (XII. 1), courage (XIV. 5), and loyalty to government (V. 18; XVIII. 1); it requires the practice of "earnestness, liberality, truthfulness,

⁸ For a convenient reference to names of commentators and other works presenting these theories, see Ch'êng Shu-tê 程樹德, *Lun-yü chi-shih* 論語集釋 ("Collected Commentaries on the *Analects*") (Peking: Kuo-li Hua-pei P'ien-i Kuan, 1943), pp. 489-492; and Liu Pao-nan 劉寶楠 (1791-1855), *Lun-yü chêng-i* 論語典義 ("Correct Meanings of the *Analects*"), *chüan* 10, Chap. 1.

⁹ James R. Ware, *The Best of Confucius* (Garden City, N.Y.: Halcyon House, 1950), renders the sentence this way: "The Master rarely spoke of profit; his attachment was for fate; it was for mankind at its best." B. Laufer, "Lun Yü IX, 1," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, LIV (1934), 83, thinks it should be read: "The Master rarely discussed material gains compared with the will of Heaven and compared with humaneness" or "The Master discussed material gains more rarely than the will of Heaven and humaneness."

¹⁰ Derk Bodde, "A Perplexing Passage in the Confucian *Analects*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, LIII (1933), 350.

diligence, and generosity" (XVII. 6); it is more than the "refraining from love of superiority, boasting, resentment, and covetousness" (XIV. 2); and it underlies ceremonies and music (III. 3). It consists in "mastering oneself and returning to propriety" (XII. 1). One who is "strong, resolute, simple, and slow in speech is near to" but still falls short of *jên* (XIII. 27). A man of *jên* is respectful in private life, earnest in handling affairs, and loyal in his association with people" (XIII. 19), "serves the most worthy among the great officers and makes friends of the most virtuous among scholars" (XV. 9), and is cautious and slow in speech (XII. 3). On the other hand, "a man with clever words and an ingratiating appearance seldom possesses *jên*" (I. 3). One who "keeps his jewel in his bosom and leaves his country to confusion" cannot be called a man of *jên* (XVII. 1). "Those without *jên* cannot abide long either in a condition of poverty and hardship or in a condition of enjoyment" (IV. 2). In short, *jên* precludes all evil and underlies as well as embraces all possible virtues, so much so that "if you set your mind on *jên*, you will be free from evil" (IV. 4). In other words, a man of *jên* is a perfect man. "He alone knows how to love others and to hate others" (IV. 3). He seeks *jên* so eagerly that "when it comes to *jên*, he will compete even with his teacher" (XV. 35). He cherishes *jên* so highly that he "will never seek to live at the expense of *jên* and would rather sacrifice his life in order to realize it" (XV. 8). When he has fully realized *jên*, he becomes a sage (VI. 28; VII. 33).¹¹

It is clear, therefore, that except in a few instances Confucius understood *jên* not as a particular virtue but as a general one. In this respect, Ts'ai Yüan-p'ei 蔡元培 (1867–1940) is fundamentally correct in interpreting the Confucian *jên* as "perfect personality embracing all virtues,"¹² and Hu Shih 胡適 (1891—) is sound in calling it "the general principle of conduct."¹³ Ever since Confucius, *jên* has been taken by Chinese philosophers, Confucian or not, to mean virtue in its inclusiveness.¹⁴

As the general virtue, *jên* is no longer a special moral characteristic of

¹¹ Juan Yüan has correctly stated that Confucius considered the sage as the highest type of human being, the man of *jên* the next, followed by the man of wisdom. *Op. cit.*, pp. 3a, 5a.

¹² *Chung-kuo lun-li-hsüeh shih* 中國倫理學史 ("History of Chinese Ethics") (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1910), p. 18.

¹³ *Chung-kuo ché-hsüeh-shih ta-kang* 中國哲學史大綱 ("An Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy") (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1919), p. 113.

¹⁴ For example, in the *Chuang Tzu* XVI, it is said, "There is no virtue outside of *jên*." See Herbert Giles, *op. cit.*, p. 195. The *Li chi* (*Book of Propriety*) says, "Gentleness and goodness are the roots of *jên*; respect and attention are the ground on which it stands; generosity and large-mindedness are the manifestations of it; humility and courtesy are the ability of it; rules of ceremony are the demonstration of it." See James Legge, trans., *The Li Ki*, in *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vols. XXVII, XXVIII (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), p. 409; Tso's commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, Duke Hsiang, 7th year, Sect. 6, says, "The three [goodness, correctness, and uprightness] in harmony constitute *jên*." See James Legge, trans., *The Ch'uen T'sew, with the Tso Chuen*, in *The Chinese Classics*, Vol. V (London: Henry Frowde, 1871), p. 432.

rulers but a quality applicable to all human beings. This is another important contribution Confucius made to the evolution of the concept of *jên*. It is amazing that, although many of Confucius' conversations with his disciples concern government, yet in no instance did he use the word *jên* as a special quality of rulers.¹⁵ On the contrary, it denotes a quality of man as such. Whenever he discussed *jên*, he referred to it in relation to man as man. There are only a few sayings in which *jên* specifically concerns rulers (V. 7; VI. 28; XII. 20; XVII. 6), and in none of these does *jên* carry the idea of kindness from a superior. Instead, the emphasis is that *jên* is a virtue particularly difficult for a ruler to achieve. All this amounts to an ethical revolution, for a moral quality that formerly belonged to aristocrats now belongs to all men.

But what is this general virtue in concrete terms? Confucius offered neither a precise definition nor a comprehensive description. However, when a pupil asked him about *jên*, he replied, "It is to love man" (XII. 22). We have here the key word to the Confucian doctrine, namely "*ai*" 愛, love. It is on the basis of this meaning, no doubt, that the standard Chinese dictionary, the *Shuo-wên* 說文 (A.D. 100), defines *jên* as "affection" (*ch'in* 親). It is also on this basis that ancient Chinese philosophers, whether Confucian, Taoist, Moist, or Legalist, and practically all Han Confucianists have equated *jên* with love.¹⁶

As to the extent of this love, two questions arise. The first is whether it can be called the Golden Rule. It is often contended in the West that the Confucian doctrine of love is negative because it taught "Do not do to others what you do not want others to do to you" (XII. 2; XV. 23; the *Doctrine of the Mean*, 13). But followers of Confucius have never understood it as negative. Mencius (371–289?), who should have understood Confucius, quoting the Confucian phrase "Not to do to others," included both the negative and positive aspects in his elaboration. He said, "There

¹⁵ Huang K'an 皇侃 (448–545) in his *Lun-yü i-chêng* 論語義疏 ("Textual Commentary of the *Analects*") arbitrarily identified *jên* in VIII. 2 as kindness from above 恩 (*en*).

¹⁶ For example, the *Li chi*, "*Jên* is to love," Legge, *op. cit.*, p. 98; the *Hsün Tzŭ*, "*Jên* is love," Chap. 27 (the chapter not translated in Homer H. Dubs, *The Works of Hsüntze*, London: Arthur Probsthain, 1928); the *Mo Tzŭ*, "*Jên* is to embody love," Chap. 40, and "*Jên* is to love . . .," Chap. 42 (neither chapter is translated by Y. P. Mei, *The Ethical and Political Works of Motse*, London: Arthur Probsthain, 1929); the *Chuang Tzŭ*, "To love people and benefit things is called *jên*," Chap. 12, Giles, *op. cit.*, p. 137; the *Han Fei Tzŭ*, "*Jên* means that in one's heart one joyously loves others," Chap. 20, W. K. Liao, trans., *The Complete Works of Han Fei Tzŭ*, Vol. I (London: Arthur Probsthain, 1939), p. 171; Tung Chung-shu 董仲舒 (179–104 B.C.), *Ch'un-ch'iu fan-lu* 春秋繁露 ("Luxuriant Crown Gems of the Spring and Autumn Annals"), Chap. 29. "*Jên* means love in man," and Chap. 30, "*Jên* is to love mankind"; Yang Hsiung 揚雄 (53 B.C.–A.D. 18), *T'ai-hsüan ching* 太玄經 ("Great Mystery Classic"), Chap. 9, "*Jên* is to see and love" and "To love universally is called *jên*"; Wang Pi 王弼 (226–249), *Lun-yü shih-i* 論語釋疑 ("Explanation of the *Analects*") I, "*Jên* is to extend one's love to all creatures"; Chou Tun-i, *T'ung-shu* (see note 62), Chap. 3, "Love is called *jên*."

is a way to win their [the people's] hearts. It is to give them and keep for them what is liked and not to do to them what is not liked."¹⁷ Commentators on the *Analects* in the last eighteen centuries have never understood the Golden Rule to be negative. In his *Lun-yü chêng-i* 論語正義 ("Correct Meanings of the *Analects*"), for example, Liu Pao-nan 劉寶楠 (1791–1855) made this comment: "Do not do to others what you do not want others to do to you. Then by necessity we must do to others what we want them to do to us."

Thus we see that the Golden Rule of Confucius has both a negative and a positive aspect. This positive aspect is by no means merely an implication but a clear and unmistakable expression of Confucius. "There are four things in the moral life of a man," he said, "no one of which I have been able to carry out in my life. To serve my father as I would expect my son to serve me: that I have not been able to do. To serve my sovereign as I would expect a minister under me to serve me. . . . To act toward my elder brother as I would expect my younger brother to act toward me. . . . To be the first to behave toward friends as I would expect them to behave toward me. . . ." (the *Doctrine of the Mean*, 13).¹⁸ Or, to quote the *Analects*, "The man of *jên*, wishing to establish his own character, also seeks to establish the character of others. Wishing to succeed, he also seeks to help others succeed. To be able to judge of others by what is near in ourselves, this may be the method of achieving *jên*" (VI. 28).

The other question concerning *jên* as love is the very controversial and grossly misunderstood Confucian doctrine of love with distinctions (*ai yü ch'a-iêng* 愛有差等). In a recent article on Confucian altruism, the first in a Western language to view the development of Confucian altruism in the entire course of its history, Homer H. Dubs used this doctrine as the turning point.¹⁹ The doctrine began with Confucius himself, in his saying that "filial piety and brotherly respect are the root of *jên*" (I. 2). It developed in the *Doctrine of the Mean* (fifth or fourth century B.C.), in which it is said that for *jên* "the important thing is to be affectionate to relatives" (chap. 20). And it reached the climax in Mencius when he vigorously attacked the Moist doctrine of universal love (*chien-ai* 兼愛). Mo Tzŭ

¹⁷*Book of Mencius*, IVA. 9. See James Legge, trans., *The Works of Mencius*, in *The Chinese Classics*, Vol. II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895).

¹⁸For an English translation, see James Legge, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, in *The Chinese Classics*, Vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893), pp. 392–434. Although the date of the *Doctrine of the Mean* is in question, there is no reason why its quotations from Confucius, or those in the *Book of Mencius*, are not authentic.

¹⁹Homer H. Dubs, "The Development of Altruism in Confucianism," *Philosophy East and West*, I, No. 1 (April, 1951), 48–55. Also in W. R. Inge et al., eds., *Radhakrishnan. Comparative Studies in Philosophy Presented in Honour of his Sixtieth Birthday* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1951), pp. 267–275.

(fl. 479–438) urged people to “Treat other peoples’ countries . . . families . . . persons as your own.”²⁰ To such a doctrine Mencius was diametrically opposed, saying, “Mo’s doctrine of universal love means that no peculiar affection is due a father. To acknowledge . . . no father is to be a beast” (*Book of Mencius* IIIB. 9).

What is the real issue in the controversy between Mencius and the Moists? It is not universal love *per se*. Confucius definitely said, “Love all men comprehensively” (I. 6). Mencius himself said, “The man of *jên* embraces all in his love” (VIIA. 46), and this theme runs throughout the *Book of Mencius*. This clearly shows that the idea of universal love is not peculiar to Moism. The issue, rather, is whether in the application of love there should be clear and definite order, gradation, or distinctions. The Moists insisted on love without such distinctions. The Confucianists, being more practical and realistic, insisted that there must be distinctions. To them, it would be both unnatural and impracticable for everyone to treat all others exactly as he treats those near to him, say, supporting everyone else to the same degree and at the same time as he supports his parents. Not that one should not love all, but that there must be a relativity of importance. As Mencius put it, “The man of *jên* embraces all in his love, but what they consider of the greatest importance is to cultivate an earnest affection for the virtuous” (VIIA. 46). In the Confucian view, the application of love necessarily varies according to one’s relationship, and it is only natural that love should start with those nearest. This is why Confucius’ pupil stated, “Filial piety and brotherly respect are the root of *jên*” (I. 2). This is also why it is said in the *Doctrine of the Mean*, 20 that “Love is the characteristic element of man, and the great exercise of it is in showing affection for relatives.” This is also the reason Mencius said, “The essence of love lies in serving one’s parents” (IVA. 27), and, again, “To show affection toward relatives is love” (VIB. 3; VIIA. 15). While the application of love necessarily starts with parents, such love is by nature contagious, and by the Confucian process of “judging of others by what is near in ourselves” all people will eventually be similarly affected. In the words of Mencius, “Treat with respect the elders in my family, and then, by extension, also the elders in other families. Treat with tenderness the young in my own family, and then, by extension, also the young in other families” (IA. 7). But there must be an order, a gradation, or distinction, starting with filial piety. Even Moists had to bow to this practical and natural way of practicing love. The Moist follower I Tzū 夷子 admitted “to me love should have no distinctions

²⁰ *Mo Tzū*, Chap. 15. See *op. cit.*, p. 82.

but its applications must begin with our parents" (*Mencius* IIIA. 5).²¹

Eventually the Moist doctrine of universal love declined. It did so, not because the Chinese people failed to take the high ideal of universal love seriously but because the Moist doctrine, in assuming that a person in actual practice could treat *all* people alike, to the same degree and at the same time, was unreasonable, impracticable, and therefore defective. Another reason for its decline may have been that its motive was utilitarian. Mo Tzŭ always said, "Mutually love and benefit each other."²² Thus "*chien-ai*" is better translated as "mutual love." In Mo Tzŭ, the expectation of love in return was always present. "Those who love others," he said, "will be loved by others."²³ As a matter of fact, love and benefit were usually mentioned together. Such an equal emphasis on benefits was completely rejected by Confucius and Mencius as immoral.²⁴

It was against benefit that Mencius usually mentioned love and righteousness 仁義 (*jên i*) together. In this respect, he went beyond Confucius, who did not associate the two.²⁵ Why did Mencius do this? It was precisely because he wanted to attach equal importance to the nature and the application of *jên*. It was not that love is internal whereas righteousness is external. That theory, held by an adversary, was totally discarded by Mencius (VIA. 4-5), who insisted on only "one root" for the moral life (IIIA. 5) and refused to bifurcate life as internal and external. Under the influence of the *Doctrine of the Mean* he was concerned with the nature of *jên*, but, faithful to the spirit of Confucius, he was equally concerned with its practice. Hence he said, "Love is man's mind, and righteousness is man's path" (VIA. 11), and also, "Love is the tranquil habitation of man, and righteousness is his straight path" (IVA. 10). Obviously a path involves an order of procedure, and an order implies relativity of importance or a gradation. This is what is meant by distinctions. It is love that embraces all relations, but it is righteousness that distinguishes them. In other words, in the Confucian pattern of *jên* both universality and particularity are to be stressed.

It is only in the light of the stress on particularity that we can understand certain apparent contradictions in Confucian sayings. *Jên* is sometimes regarded as very easy (IV. 6; VI. 28; VII. 29) but sometimes very difficult to achieve (XIV. 2). In some cases, the sacrifice of one's life is considered *jên* (VII. 14; XV. 8); in others, not sacrificing one's life is so considered

²¹ For an excellent discussion on the subject, see Fung Yu-lan, *The Spirit of Chinese Philosophy*, E. R. Hughes, trans. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., 1947), pp. 37-40.

²² Mei, *op. cit.*, pp. 82, 92.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 83, 84, 95.

²⁴ *Analects* IV. 16; *Mencius* IA. 1.

²⁵ The sentence "*Jên* and righteousness are established as the Way of Man" in the *Book of Changes* (Legge, *op. cit.*, p. 423) is erroneously attributed to Confucius.

(XIV. 17–18). Not to remonstrate one's superior is *jên*, but to remonstrate even unto death is also *jên* (XVIII. 1). To one pupil *jên* is cultivation of the inner life, but to another its value consists in proper external conduct (XII. 1–2).

However, such apparent contradictions are not difficult to understand if one remembers that Confucius was not interested in abstract concepts. He was not concerned with the reality or nature of *jên*; he was interested primarily in its application. Since individuals and circumstances differ, its exemplification naturally takes different or even opposite forms. Thus, to six different pupils who asked about *jên* he gave six different answers, each according to the pupil's temperament, capability, or environment (XII. 1, 2, 3, 22; XV. 9; XVII. 6). Generally speaking, however, there can be no doubt that *jên* is love for all.

It may be asked: If the Confucian doctrine of *jên* was love for all, why was it necessary for Han Yü 韓愈 (768–824) in his defense of the Confucian Way to make a new declaration that "universal love 博愛 (*po-ai*) constitutes *jên*?"²⁶ Is it not true that he felt the Confucian principle of love with distinctions was limited in concept and defective as the highest good, and that under the influence of either Moist universal love or Buddhist universal compassion, he had to lift Confucian graded love to the level of universality?

Dubs's answer is affirmative.²⁷ On the contrary, it would seem that the issue Han Yü faced was not the one that Mencius faced—between universal love and love with distinctions. That issue had been settled long before. It was generally agreed that in its nature love embraces all men but that in application there must be distinctions. Even Buddhists and Taoists accepted this position and promoted filial piety as did Confucianists. Rather, the issue was whether the Confucian Way (*Tao*) or the Buddhist Way should prevail. As Han Yü protested, the Buddhist and Taoist Way consisted of "doing away with the process of giving life to and supporting one another and reducing life to silence and annihilation." It was the way of "having no activity." The Confucian Way, on the contrary, consists of "giving life to and supporting one another" and "ordering the state and regulating the family." It was the way of "having activity." In short, the Buddhist and Taoist Way was nothing but an empty state of mind and inactivity. In the Confucian Way, on the other hand, "Universal love constitutes *jên* and to practice it in the proper way constitutes righteousness." It is the way of

²⁶ "Yüan-tao" 原道 ("An Inquiry on the Way"). See Herbert A. Giles, trans., *Gems of Chinese Literature: Prose* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1923), p. 115, and French translation by George Margouliès in his *Le Kou-Wen chinois* (Paris: Geuthner, 1926), p. 177.

²⁷ Dubs, *op. cit.*, pp. 52–53.

love covering all men but also a way of action guided by what is proper. Only such a way can lead to "giving life to and supporting one another," whereas Buddhist nihilism and Taoist quietism will inevitably result in dehumanizing man. Hence he said, "Make them [Buddhist and Taoist] human beings again."²⁸ As Han Yü saw it, this was the central issue between Confucianism and heterodoxy. It had nothing to do with the question of love with distinctions.

Why is it, then, that Han Yü used the new term "universal love" (*po-ai*)? Was it not because of Moist influence? No, it was not. In his celebrated essay upholding the Confucian Way, Han Yü attacked the Moists along with the Buddhists and Taoists. Significantly, he avoided the Moist term "mutual love" (*chien-ai*) and used, instead, the term "*po-ai*." The term first appeared in Wei Chao's 韋昭 commentary on the *Kuo-yü* 國語 ("Conversations of States") and then in the *Filial Piety Classic* and was used by Hsü Kan 徐幹 (171–218) to describe *jên*.²⁹ The idea of *po* had been well understood all along, and the very word appears in *Analects* VI. 28. Han Yü did not have to coin it or to borrow it. However, he did render a great service to Confucianism by reaffirming the orthodox tradition and saving it from imminent degeneration into Buddhist nihilism and Taoist quietism. The idea of love with distinctions continued thereafter to be accepted by Confucianists and was not challenged by Taoists or Buddhists.

In the eyes of Confucianists, universal love of the Moist type was both unnatural and impracticable. These two points have been emphasized by many Confucianists, but most strongly by Wang Yang-ming 王陽明 (Wang Shou-jên 守仁, 1472–1529). Love should start with filial piety toward parents, he said, just as a tree should start with a sprout. This, he contended, is where Confucianism is superior to Moism, for in the universal love of Moism there is no central point for the seed to sprout.³⁰ This argument is no sheer analogy, but is based on the law of nature. For anything to grow, it must have a starting point, and, given the ideal conditions, the growth will extend to the limit. Therefore, he said, "Show affection to my parents, then to other people's parents, and then to the parents of all people in the world. Only then does my *jên* form one body with all parents."³¹

²⁸For these quotations, see Giles, *Gems of Chinese Literature: Prose*, pp. 115, 118, 121.

²⁹*Kuo-yü* 國語, Chap. 3, *Ssü-pu ts'ung-k'an* (SPTK) edition (1929), 3/3b. See French translation by C. de Harlez, "*Koué-yü* (Discours des Royaumes)," *Journal Asiatique*, IX, No. 2 (1893), 373–419; IX, No. 3 (1894), 5–91; *Classic of Filial Piety*, Chap. 7; see James Legge, trans., *Hsiao King*, in *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. III (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), pp. 464–488. Hsü Kan employed the term in his *Chung lun* 中論 ("A Treatise on the Mean"), ch. 9, *Ssü-pu ts'ung-k'an* edition, 1929, 1/34a.

³⁰*Yang-ming ch'üan-shu* 陽明全書 ("Complete Works of Wang Yang-ming"), *Ssü-pu pei-yao* (SPPY) edition (1934), 1/19b; cf. Frederick Goodrich Henke, trans., *The Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming* (Chicago: Open Court, 1916), p. 107.

But it is not only natural that love should start with one's parents; it is also a matter of practical necessity. He said, "We love both our nearest relatives and strangers. Nevertheless, when there is only little food, so that with it we will survive and without it we will perish, and we cannot save both relatives and strangers, under such circumstances we will have to save our nearest relatives. . . . What the *Great Learning* calls relative importance is, in our native knowledge, a natural order of procedure."³²

But the support of the doctrine of love with distinctions is not confined to these practical considerations. There is also a metaphysical basis, which was provided by Chang Tsai 張載 (Chang Hêng-ch'ü 橫渠, 1020–1077). This is not to say that Chang was the first to treat the subject of *jên* metaphysically. In a sense, that point was reached as early as the *Doctrine of the Mean* and the *Book of Mencius*. In the *Doctrine of the Mean*, 20 it is declared that "*Jên* (love) is *jên* (man)." This is more than a pun or an echo of the ancient usage of 人 (*jên*, man) for 仁 (*jên*, love). Rather, for the first time in history, it carries the concept to a metaphysical level, from which Confucius kept himself at a safe distance. By identifying *jên* with human nature, however, the *Doctrine of the Mean* opens a new chapter in the evolution of the *jên* doctrine. When *jên* is viewed thus, Western translations such as "humanity," "humaneness," "true manhood" (Lin Yutang), "manhood at its best" (Ware), and "hominity" (Boodberg) are particularly appropriate.

Mencius went a step further, not only by strengthening the metaphysical trend with the repetition of the sentence "*Jên* is *jên*" (VIIB. 16), but also by providing a psychological explanation, saying, "*Jên* is man's mind" (VIA. 11). He says further, "The sense of commiseration is the beginning of *jên*" (IIA. 6), by which he means that "all men have a mind that cannot bear [to see the suffering of] others" (IIA. 6; VIIB. 31). He also said, "The sense of commiseration is *jên*" (VIA. 6). In this sense of *jên* as the human mind or heart, it is most correctly rendered by Lucius Porter as "human-heartedness."

The metaphysical trend, having started in the *Doctrine of the Mean* and Mencius, was reinforced by the theory that *jên* is man's nature, while love is his feeling. The *Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall* 白虎通 (*Po-hu t'ung*) of the first century states, "In man's nature there is *jên*."³³ Han Yü made the distinction even clearer, saying, "What constitutes

³²*Ibid.*, 26/2a; cf. Henke, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

³³*Ibid.*, 3/14a; cf. Henke *op. cit.*, p. 169.

³⁴*Po-hu-t'ung* 白虎通, Chap. 8. See Tjan Tjoe Som, trans., *Po Hu T'ung, The Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall*, 2 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1949, 1952), p. 565.

man's nature consists of five [virtues]: namely, *jên*, propriety, good faith, righteousness, and wisdom. And man's feelings consist of these seven, namely, joy, anger, sorrow, fear, love, hate, and desire."³⁴ Because of such distinction, the Neo-Confucian philosopher Ch'êng I 程頤 (Ch'êng I-ch'uan 伊川, 1033–1107) refused to regard *jên* and love as synonymous. He said, "Since Mencius said that the sense of commiseration is *jên*, scholars have considered love as *jên*. But love is man's feeling, whereas *jên* is man's nature. . . . The sense of commiseration is only the beginning of *jên*. . . . It is incorrect to equate universal love with *jên*."³⁵ To him, as to other Neo-Confucianists, *jên* is a reality, while love is a function. In making such a distinction, these philosophers made two contributions at the same time, namely, treating *jên* as a metaphysical reality and distinguishing it from love.

However, the credit for providing a metaphysical explanation for the doctrine of love with distinctions goes to Chang Tsai. In his famous *Western Inscription*, he declares, "Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother, and such a small creature as I find an intimate place in their midst. . . . All people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions."³⁶ Although the inscription is very short, it exercised tremendous influence on the thinking of Chinese philosophers at his time and has ever since. Its primary purpose, as Yang Kuei-shan 楊龜山 (1053–1135) pointed out, was to urge the student to seek *jên*.³⁷ Here is an important development, namely, that *jên* not only means the love of all people but the love of all things as well. In other words, love is truly universalized.

Is this universalization of *jên* an extension of the Moist universal love? From the fact that Chang employed the term "*chien-ai*," universal or mutual love,³⁸ a term which the Moists repeatedly used but which no other Confucianist had ever employed, one is tempted to surmise that philosopher Chang was under Moist influence. Such, however, is not the case. The term "*chien-ai*" was not confined to Moist writing. It was also used by non-Moists;

³⁴"Yüan Hsing" 原性 ("An Inquiry on Human Nature"). Cf. James Legge, trans., in *The Chinese Classics*, Vol. II (2d. ed. rev., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893), p. 89.

³⁵*I-shu* 遺書 ("Literary Remains"), 18/1a, of the *Er-Ch'êng ch'üan-shu* 二程全書 ("Complete Works of the Two Ch'êngs"), SPPY edition (1933).

³⁶*Hsi-ming* 西銘 ("Western Inscription"). Cf. German translation by Werner Eichhorn, "Die Westinschrift des Chang Tsai, ein Beitrag zur Geistesgeschichte der Nördlichen Sung," *Abhandlungen für die Kunde Des Morgenlandes*, XXII (1937), 33–73; French translation by Ch. de Harlez, "Le Si-ming, Traité philosophique de Tschang-tze, avec un double Commentaire," in *Actes du Congrès International des Orientalistes* (1889), pp. 35–52; English translation by P. C. Hsü, *Ethical Realism in Neo-Confucian Thought* (Peiping: privately published, 1933), Appendix, pp. xi–xii.

³⁷*Kuei-shan yü-lu* 龜山語錄 ("Recorded Conversations of Yang Kuei-shan"), SPTK edition, 1934, 2/18b, 3/28a.

³⁸*Chêng-mêng* 正蒙 ("Correct Discipline for Beginners"), Chap. 6, *Chang Hêng-ch'ü chi* 張橫渠集 ("Collected Works of Chang Hêng-ch'ü") in the *Chêng-i-t'ang ch'üan-shu* (CITCS) edition, 3/4a.

Yang Hsiung 揚雄 (53 B.C.–A.D. 18), the Confucian-Taoist, for example.³⁹ Furthermore, the chapter in which the term occurs in Chang's work, as Chu Hsi noted in his commentary, is devoted particularly to a discussion of Chang's basic idea that "the Principle (*li* 理) is differentiated into distinctions and gradations." This refers to the epoch-making theory formulated by Chang, namely, the theory of *li-i fên-shu* 理一分殊, that is, the Principle is one but its function is differentiated into the many. As Chang Tsai said, "The Great Vacuity is the essence of the Material Force. . . . It is in reality one. When the active and passive Material Forces are disintegrated, they become the many."⁴⁰ This is not an undifferentiated continuum, but a unity full of clear distinctions. "The Great Harmony is called the Way (*Tao*, Moral Law)," he said. "It embraces the nature which underlies all counter processes of floating and sinking, rising and falling, and motion and rest. It is the origin of the process of fusion and intermingling, of overcoming and being overcome, and of expansion and contraction."⁴¹ While he asserts that "nothing stands isolated,"⁴² he at the same time maintains that "no two of the products of creation are alike."⁴³ This doctrine that "the Principle is one but its function is differentiated into the many" has become a keynote in the entire course of Confucianism during the last eight hundred years.

When this doctrine is applied to *jên*, the harmony of universal love and love with distinctions is clear. In his commentary on the *Western Inscription*, Chu Hsi 朱熹 (1130–1200) had this to say:

There is nothing in the entire realm of creatures that does not regard Heaven as the father and Earth as the mother. This means that the Principle is one. . . . Each regards his parents as his own parents and his son as his own son. This being the case, how can the Principle not be differentiated into the many? . . . When the intense affection for parents is extended to broaden the impartiality that knows no ego, and when sincerity in serving one's parents leads to the understanding of the way to serve Heaven, then everywhere there is the operation that "the Principle is one but its function is differentiated into the many."

This is the metaphysical basis for the Confucian doctrine of love with distinctions, which Mencius so vigorously defended. As Yang Kuei-shan observed, "As we know, the Principle is one, and that is why there is love. The functions are many, and that is why there is righteousness. . . . Since functions are different, the applications [of love] cannot be without distinctions."⁴⁴

³⁹ Yang Hsiung, *op cit.* (see note 16), Chap. 9.

⁴⁰ *Chêng-mêng*, Chap. 17, in *Chang Hêng-ch'ü chi*, 4/27b.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Chap. 1, (2/2b).

⁴² *Ibid.*, Chap. 1, (2/10b).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Chap. 5, (3/2a).

⁴⁴ *Kuei-shan yü-lu*, 2/18b.

Because Chang and later Neo-Confucianists all maintained that *jên*, like existence in general, is a synthesis of universality and particularity, it is hard to agree with F. S. C. Northrop, who considers *jên* to be "the basic *tao* of Taoism,"⁴⁵ describes *jên* as "indeterminate,"⁴⁶ repeatedly speaks of *jên* together with *Tao*, *Nirvāṇa*, and *Brahman*, and states, "It appears that *jên* in Confucianism, *Tao* in Taoism, *Nirvāṇa* in Buddhism, and *Brahman* or *Ātman* or *Chit* in Hinduism and Jainism are all to be identified with the immediately apprehended aesthetic component in the nature of things, and with this in its all-embracing indeterminateness, after all sensed distinctions are abstracted."⁴⁷ He later uses the phrase "the source of *jên*" as equivalent to *Brahman*, *Ātman*, *Nirvāṇa*, and *Tao*.⁴⁸ Whatever he may have in mind, he ignores the glaring fact that the Confucian *jên*, which includes particulars and determinateness, is different from *Nirvāṇa*, *Tao*, *Brahman*, etc., where differences completely disappear.

The amazing thing about Chang Tsai's concept of *jên* is that, while love, because of the principle of the many, cannot be without distinctions, at the same time, by virtue of the principle of the one, love is extended to encompass the entire universe. With this he started a whole current of thought that was to characterize Neo-Confucianism thereafter.

There is no doubt that this idea reflects Buddhist influence, for hitherto Confucian love had been confined largely to the mundane world, whereas the object of moral consciousness in Buddhism is the entire universe. Yang Kuei-shan thinks that Chang Tsai's doctrine comes from Mencius' saying, "The superior man is affectionate to his parents and is *jên* toward all people. He is *jên* toward all people and loves (*ai*) all things."⁴⁹ But "things" in the quotation refers only to living beings, whereas Chang extends *jên* to cover the whole realm of existence. The upshot of this extension is the all-important doctrine of "forming one body with the universe."

This doctrine received strong impetus in the Ch'êng brothers (Ch'êng Hao 程顥, also called Ch'êng Ming-tao 明道, 1032–1085, and his younger brother, Ch'êng I). In his celebrated treatise on *jên*, the *Shih-jên p'ien* 識仁篇 ("On Understanding the Nature of *Jên*"), which has been a *vade mecum* of many a Chinese scholar, Ch'êng Hao begins, "The student must first of all understand the nature of *jên*. The man of *jên* forms one body

⁴⁵ Filmer S. C. Northrop, *The Meeting of East and West* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1946), p. 329.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 338.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 374. See also pp. 372, 382, 386, 396, 447, 448.

⁴⁸ Northrop, "Methodology and Epistemology, Oriental and Occidental," in Charles A. Moore, ed., *Essays in East-West Philosophy: An Attempt at World Philosophical Synthesis* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1951), p. 159.

⁴⁹ *Mencius* VIIA. 45; *Kuei-shan yü-lu*, 2/18b.

with all things comprehensively."⁵⁰ Elsewhere he says, "The man of *jên* regards the universe and all things as one body."⁵¹ Ch'êng I said, "The man of *jên* regards Heaven and Earth and all things as one body."⁵² Their utterances have become so familiar that they, rather than Chang Tsai, have come to be regarded as the originators of the doctrine.

From the time of Chang Tsai, all Neo-Confucianists have elaborated or at least repeated the idea. Among them, Wang Yang-ming has been generally recognized as the strongest champion of the doctrine. He said, "The great man regards Heaven and Earth and the myriad things as one body. He regards the world as one family and the country as one person. As for those who make a cleavage between objects and distinguish between the self and others, they are small men. That the great man can regard Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things as one body is not because he deliberately wants to do so, but it is natural with the loving nature of his mind that he forms a unity with Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things."⁵³ In our own day this doctrine is advocated both by Fung Yu-lan 馮友蘭 (1895—), who before his submission to Communism was considered the leader of the Rationalistic wing of twentieth-century Neo-Confucianism,⁵⁴ and by Hsiung Shih-li 熊十力 (1885—), leader of twentieth-century Neo-Confucian Idealism.⁵⁵

It is to be noted that the extension of *jên* to cover the entire universe is in no sense a metaphysical flight or escape from the human world. The Confucian unity with the universe is quite different from Taoist unity with the universe, especially in Chuang Tzŭ.⁵⁶ Taoist unity is strictly individualistic and completely quietistic. It is, on the one hand, a personal affair and, on the other, a state of mind, whereas Confucian *jên*, whether applied to human beings or to things, is essentially social and active. These two qualities—sociality and activity—are its outstanding characteristics, and they can be traced back to Confucius. For the sage and his followers, *jên* finds its real meaning only in practical application. *Jên* is first and foremost an activity, not a state of mind. An overwhelming portion of Confucian aphorisms on *jên* deal with what to *do* and how to *act*. As will be shown later, Confucianists have repeatedly rejected the theory that *jên* is only or predominantly a state of mind. They have insisted that *jên* is not a virtue to be contemplated

⁵⁰ *I-shu* 2A/3a.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 2A/2a.

⁵² *Ts'ui-yen* 粹言 ("Pure Words"), in the *Er-Ch'êng ch'üan-shu*, 1/7b.

⁵³ *Yang-ming ch'üan-shu*, 26/1b; cf. Henke, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

⁵⁴ See Fung Yu-lan, *Hsin Li-bsüeh* 新理學 ("New Rational Philosophy") (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1938), p. 304.

⁵⁵ *Hsin wei-shih lun* 新唯識論 ("New Idealism") (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1944), p. 261.

⁵⁶ *Chuang Tzŭ* II; Giles, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

on but a principle to be carried out. In view of this, it is difficult to accept Waley's assertion that "*jên* is a mystic entity not merely analogous to but in certain sayings practically identical with the Tao of the Quietists."⁵⁷ Only one Confucian saying indicates that "the man of *jên* is quiet" (VI. 21). In contrast to this, the man of *jên*, "after having performed his moral duties, employs his time and energy in cultural studies" (I. 6); in selecting a residence, he fixes on one where *jên* prevails (IV. 1); he "applies his strength to *jên*" (IV. 6); and he confers benefits upon and assists all (VI. 28). If, on the strength of VII. 29 ("Is *jên* remote? As soon as I want, it is right by me"), IV. 5 ("A superior man does not, even for the space of a single meal, violate *jên*"), or VI. 5 ("For as long as three months Hui's mind does not violate *jên*"), one is to conclude that *jên* is mystical, one would be going too far indeed, for neither eagerness nor attentiveness is the monopoly of a *yogin*.

Being an activity, *jên* naturally has the quality of strength. Boodberg, on the contrary, believes that *jên* possesses the inherent quality of weakness. Pointing out that the word "*jên*" belongs to a group of Chinese written characters with a somewhat peculiar initial *j*, most of which convey the notion of softness, weakness, pliancy, patience, etc., he concludes that the notion of gentleness as softness is inherent in *jên*. To support his view he cites the fact that Confucius unreservedly conceded the virtue of *jên* to a few worthies of antiquity whose common character seems to have been a capacity for renunciation.⁵⁸ His linguistic argument is strong, for the proportion of words having the initial *j* with the notions he suggests is really impressive. There are exceptions, however, such as "*ju*" 銳, sharpness, and "*jung*" 戎, warlike. May "*jên*" not be one of these? From Confucius' descriptions of *jên*, it would seem to be so. Let a few quotations suffice: "A man who is strong, resolute, simple, and slow to speak is near to *jên*" (XIII. 27). "*Jên* can be attained only after overcoming difficulties. This may be called *jên*" (VI. 20). "A man of *jên* surely has courage" (XIV. 5; see also XV. 35 and VII. 33). And Confucius' pupil said that a man of *jên* "considers a heavy burden and a long course as his own. . . . Only with death does his course stop" (VIII. 7). On the basis of these and similar Confucian sayings as well as other historical evidence Hu Shih presented the thesis that Confucius created a new type of scholar-gentleman (*ju* 儒) by rejecting the old concept that to be a *ju* was to be weak, and by substituting for this view the idea that a true scholar-gentleman is one of courage and

⁵⁷ Waley, *The Analects of Confucius*, p. 28.

⁵⁸ Peter A. Boodberg, "The Semasiology of Some Primary Confucian Concepts," *Philosophy East and West*, II, No. 4 (January, 1953), 328-330.

strength.⁵⁹ As to ancient worthies, it is true that Confucius conceded *jên* to recluses (VII. 14; XVIII. 1), but he also conceded it to an active prime minister (XIV. 18) and to a vigorous official who remonstrated with his superior (XVIII. 1).

The other characteristic of *jên*, its sociality, has far-reaching significance and is directly opposed to an isolated individual state of being. While Confucius was an arch champion of individual perfection, he did not think of an individual as isolated from his fellow beings. In the Confucian scheme of things, not only does an individual necessarily exist in society, but his perfection cannot be achieved except within society. There are few Confucian aphorisms which can be construed as referring to the individual in isolation. One might turn to IV. 2 ("The man of *jên* is naturally at home with *jên*"); VII. 6 ("Set your mind on the Way, hold fast to virtue, follow the principle of *jên*, and seek enjoyment in the arts"); and IX. 28 ("The man of *jên* has no worry"—repeated in XIV. 30), as well as some sayings already quoted, notably IV. 4, 5; VI. 5, 21; VII. 29; and his pupil's saying in XIX. 6. But in the first place there is nothing in any of these utterances to prevent *jên* from being applied to man in society. In the second place, all other sayings on the subject concern one's relation with other men. Significantly, the word "*jên*" 仁 is written in two parts, 亻 and 二, or man + two (meaning plural).⁶⁰ Thus *jên* becomes meaningless unless it is involved in actual human relationships. This is the reason Chêng Hsüan 鄭玄 (127–200) defined it as "people living together" (*jên-hsiang-ou* 人相耦).⁶¹

Since the nature of *jên* can be fully realized only in society, any attempt to conceive of it as a state of mind would be Buddhistic and Taoistic and utterly un-Confucian. For this reason, Chou Tun-i's substitute of impartiality (*kung* 公) for *jên* and Hsieh Liang-tso's theory of *jên* as consciousness were both rejected by their fellow Neo-Confucianists. Chou Tun-i 周敦頤 (Chou Lien-ch'i 濂溪, 1017–73), who may be considered the founder of the Neo-Confucian movement, said, "The Way of the sage is nothing other than absolute impartiality."⁶² Again, he said, "Whoever is impartial toward himself will be impartial toward others. There has never been a person

⁵⁹ Hu Shih, *Hu Shih lun-hsüeh chin-chu* 胡適論學近著 ("Recent Sinological Treatises by Hu Shih") (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1935), pp. 59–60.

⁶⁰ Some have interpreted the two horizontal lines as meaning Heaven and Earth or as parents. As Tung Tso-pin has pointed out, this is most arbitrary, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁶¹ Commentary on the *Doctrine of the Mean*, Chap. 20.

⁶² *T'ung-shu* 通書 ("An Interpretation of the *Book of Changes*"), Chap. 37. See German translation by Wilhelm Grube, *Ein Beitrag zur Kenntniss des chinesischen Philosophie T'ung-Su des Ceu-tsi, mit Cu-hi's Kommentare* (Vienna, 1880; Leipzig, 1881), completed by Werner Eichhorn in *Asia Major*, VIII (1932), 23–104; partial French translation by Ch. de Harlez, "L'école philosophique moderne de la Chine ou système de la nature (Sing-li)," *Mémoires de L'Académie Royale des Sciences des Lettres et des Beaux-Arts de Belgique*, XLIX (1890), 25–32; partial English translation by P. C. Hsü, *Ethical Realism in Neo-Confucian Thought*, Appendix, pp. i–vi.

who is partial toward himself and yet can be impartial toward others."⁶³ *Jên* as the cardinal virtue is now replaced by impartiality. To Chou Tun-i, impartiality is not only an ethical quality, that of equal consideration for the self and others. It also has a metaphysical overtone, for it means the non-distinction of the internal and the external, and of the refined and the gross. The Buddhist influence here is obvious. Chou went even further and said that to be impartial one must be "without desire."⁶⁴ This is clearly quietistic, devoid of the dynamic and active qualities of Confucian love. Further, it is an individual state of mind, devoid of actual social relations. Such a Buddhistic virtue was utterly intolerable to the Confucianists. It had to be either repudiated or reconstructed. The latter course was chosen and was pursued by Ch'êng I, who said,

Essentially speaking, the way of *jên* may be expressed in one word, namely, impartiality. However, impartiality is but the principle of *jên*; it should not be equated with *jên* itself. When man puts impartiality into practice, that is *jên*. Because of impartiality, one can accommodate both others and himself. Therefore, a man of *jên* is a man of both altruism and love. Altruism is the application of *jên*, while love is its function.⁶⁵

The importance of the passage is not only that it distinguishes impartiality and *jên* by saying that "impartiality is the principle of *jên*" but also that it insists that impartiality must be practiced or embodied in action (*t'i-chih* 體之). Only when that is done does it become *jên*. The point of practice makes the whole difference between transcendental and quietistic Buddhism, on the one hand, and active and humanistic Confucianism, on the other. A real virtue must be *demonstrated*. Fung Yu-lan is wrong in taking *t'i-chih* to mean *t'i-tieh* 體貼, that is, sympathetic feeling toward others' feelings.⁶⁶ Such an interpretation makes it no less individualistic and quietistic and therefore Buddhistic. Ch'êng I explicitly talked about the "application of *jên*" and the "function of *jên*." The weight is on actual demonstration in society. Chu Hsi commented on the above passage, "All the work to be done lies in the word 'man.'"⁶⁷

Similar objections were raised against Hsieh Liang-tso's description of *jên* as consciousness. Hsieh 謝良佐 (1050–1103) says:

⁶³ *Ibid.*, Chap. 21.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, Chap. 20.

⁶⁵ *I-shu*, 15/8b.

⁶⁶ *Hsin yüan-jên* 新原人 ("A New Treatise on the Nature of Man") (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1942), p. 80.

⁶⁷ *Yü-lei* 語類 ("Classified Conversations"), 95/39b.

What is *jên*? That which is alive is *jên* and that which is dead is not *jên*. We call paralysis of the body and the unconsciousness of feeling the absence of *jên*. . . . Those Buddhists who understand this claim that they have thus discovered their true nature and there is nothing more to do. Hence, they finally result in falsehood and absurdities. Students of the Confucian school, on the other hand, having observed such things, will make a special effort.⁶⁸

Hsieh was explicitly anti-Buddhist, and in his insistence on making an effort he was a true Confucianist. But he also pronounced a new theory in these words: "When there is the consciousness of pain in case of illness, we call it *jên*."⁶⁹ In other words, Hsieh unmistakably identified *jên* with consciousness, which is a new departure in Confucianism. Other Neo-Confucianists had reduced *jên* to a state of mind, but none had regarded *jên* as consciousness itself. In this respect, he spoke like a Buddhist. As a matter of fact, he actually used the Buddhist term *chiao* 覺, consciousness, and definitely identified it with *jên*. "*Jên* is the awareness of pain [in case of illness]. The Confucianists call it *jên*, while the Buddhists call it consciousness."⁷⁰ Such a Buddhist doctrine could hardly be attractive to Neo-Confucianists. In criticism of it, Ch'êng I said, "One who is not *jên* is not conscious of anything. But it is incorrect to consider consciousness as *jên*."⁷¹ Later Chu Hsi frankly stated, "In over-emphasizing the concept of consciousness, Hsieh Liang-tso seems to be expounding the doctrines of the Buddhist Meditation School."⁷²

When Hsieh used the analogy of paralysis, he was paraphrasing Ch'êng Hao, who was the first to use it and make it famous. This is what Ch'êng said:

Books on medicine describe paralysis of the four limbs as absence of *jên*. This is an excellent description. . . . If things are not parts of the self, naturally they have nothing to do with it. As in the case of paralysis of the four limbs, the vital force no longer penetrates them, and therefore they are no longer parts of myself. Therefore, to be charitable and to assist all things is the function of the sage. . . . Therefore, Confucius merely said that the man of *jên*, "wishing to establish his own character, also seeks to establish the character of others, and, wishing to succeed, also seeks to help others succeed."⁷³

The analogy may sound naïve, but it contains a tremendously significant idea that led to a new development in the evolution of *jên*, namely,

⁶⁸ *Shang-ts'ai yü-lu* 上蔡語錄 ("Recorded Conversations of Hsieh Liang-tso"), CITCS edition, Part I, 2a-b.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, Part I, 11a-b.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, Part II, 1a.

⁷¹ *Ts'ui-yen*, 1/4a.

⁷² *Chu Tzū ch'üan-shu* 朱子全書 ("Complete Works of Master Chu"), Palace edition (1713), 47/7b.

⁷³ *I-shu*, 2A/2a.

life force. If *jên* were merely something comparable to the feeling of pain in the case of illness, it would be nothing more than a state of mind. But what is in operation is not merely feeling, but the vital force, the dynamic element behind all life and production.

This idea of life or production (*shêng* 生) goes back to the *Book of Changes*, where it is declared, "The great virtue of Heaven and Earth is production."⁷⁴ In the *Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall*, productivity is ascribed even to *jên*. "The man of *jên* loves production," it says.⁷⁵ But to make *jên* and production synonymous was definitely an innovation of the Neo-Confucianists. Chou Tun-i said, "To grow things is *jên*."⁷⁶ To Ch'êng Hao, "The will to grow in all things is most impressive. . . . This is *jên*."⁷⁷ And according to his brother, Ch'êng I, "The mind is like seeds. Their characteristic of growth is *jên*."⁷⁸ Even Hsieh Liang-tso said, "The seeds of peaches and apricots that can grow are called *jên*. It means that there is the will to grow. If we infer from this, we will understand what *jên* is."⁷⁹ Such are the simple but direct expressions of the germinal idea which makes Confucian *jên* vital, dynamic, and life-giving. It is the exact antithesis of Buddhism and Taoism.

From the foregoing survey, we have seen that the concept of *jên* has gone through many stages of evolution and has grown more and more complex in meaning. From the original idea of *jên* as (1) kindness from above, it was broadened to mean (2) benevolence, still a particular virtue but no longer restricted to rulers, and further extended to connote (3) perfect virtue, which includes all particular virtues and applies to all men. In its application it was understood as (4) love, and, more specifically, (5) affection and, more emphatically, (6) universal love. On the psychological level, it is (7) man or (8) man's mind. Under the influence of Buddhism, it became (9) impartiality, which was in danger of becoming merely a state of mind, as was *jên* in terms of (10) consciousness, and so it was quickly modified as (11) impartiality embodied in the action of man. Finally, it was expanded to the limit to become (12) one body with the universe and the generative force of all things, namely, (13) process of production.

The time was not ripe for a synthesis of these various doctrines, or most of them, into a systematic theory. This was the rôle played by Chu Hsi; in his *Jên-shuo* 仁說 ("A Treatise on Love") he said:

⁷⁴ *Book of Changes*. See Legge, *op. cit.*, p. 381.

⁷⁵ *Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall*, Chap. 8; cf. Tjan, *op. cit.*, p. 567.

⁷⁶ *T'ung-shu*, Chap. 11.

⁷⁷ *I-shu* 11/3a-b.

⁷⁸ *Ts'ui-yen*, 1/4b.

⁷⁹ *Shang-ts'ai yü-lu*, Part I, 2b.

[The Ch'êng brothers said,] "The Mind of Heaven and Earth is to produce things."⁸⁰ [They also said,] "In the production of man and things, they receive the Mind of Heaven and Earth as their mind."⁸¹ These sayings describe the moral qualities of the mind in a most comprehensive and penetrative manner and leave nothing to be desired. Nevertheless, one word will cover all, namely, love. . . . In discussing the excellence of man's mind, it is said [in the *Book of Mencius*, VIA. 11], "Love is man's mind." Both reality and function of the four moral qualities [of love, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom] are thus fully presented without mentioning them. For love as constituting the Moral Law (*Tao*) consists of the fact that the Mind of Heaven and Earth to produce things is present in everything. Before feelings are aroused this reality is already existent in its completeness. After feelings are aroused, its function is infinite. If we can truly practice love and preserve it, then we have in it the spring of all virtues and the root of all good deeds. . . . What mind is this? In Heaven and Earth it is the mind to produce things infinitely. In man it is the mind to love people gently and to benefit things. . . . What Master Ch'êng criticized was the application of the term *jên* to the outflow of love. What I maintain is that the term should be applied to the principle of love. . . . From what they call the unity of all things and the self, it can be seen that *jên* involves love for all, but unity is not the essence which makes *jên* a reality. From what they call the mind's possession of consciousness, it can be seen that *jên* includes wisdom, but that is not the real reason why *jên* is so called. . . . Furthermore, to talk about *jên* in general terms of the unity of things and the self will lead people to be vague, confused, neglectful, and make no effort to be alert. . . . The bad effect—and there has been such—may be as much as to consider other things as oneself. To talk about *jên* in specific terms of consciousness will lead people to be nervous, irascible, and devoid of any quality of depth. The bad effect—and there has been such—may be as much as to consider desire as principle."⁸²

This is both a criticism of certain theories and the incorporation of others into a harmonious whole. The central point is the synthesis of reality and function. In ignoring the nature of *jên* and confining his teachings only to its practice, Confucius taught only the function of *jên*. In a way Mencius was the first to stress both reality and function when he laid equal emphasis on *jên* and righteousness. In interpreting *jên* as love, Han Confucianists viewed it almost exclusively from the point of function. Early Neo-Confucianists, on the other hand, whether in their doctrines of *jên* as impartiality, as forming one body with Heaven and Earth, or as consciousness, viewed *jên* almost exclusively from the point of reality. For Chu Hsi, however, both reality and function must be given equal importance. The result of the synthesis is neatly put in a short phrase: *jên* is "the character of the

⁸⁰ *Wai-shu* 外書 ("Additional Works"), (in the *Erh-Ch'êng ch'üan-shu*), 3/1a.

⁸¹ This saying is not found in the existing works of the Ch'êng brothers.

⁸² *Chu Tzû ch'üan-shu*, 47/22a-24b; cf. J. Percy Bruce, trans., *The Philosophy of Human Nature*, by Chu Hsi (London: Arthur Probsthain, 1922), pp. 351-355.

mind and the principle of love."⁸³ This has become a Neo-Confucian idiom. It means that, as reality, *jên* is the character of man's mind, and, as function, it is the principle of love. Chu Hsi said,

Jên as the character of the mind is comparable to wetness being the character of water and hotness being the character of fire, and *jên* as the principle of love is comparable to the root of a tree and the spring of water.⁸⁴

He further said,

Principle is one but its function differentiates into the many. There are distinctions in love. It is propriety that regulates differentiations and distinctions and it is righteousness that causes all applications to be proper. Righteousness, propriety, and wisdom are all *jên*.⁸⁵

In other words, *jên* is in the nature of every man, and, as such universal nature, it includes wisdom, propriety, and righteousness. The reason it is so inclusive, according to Chu Hsi, is its generative character. As he said, "Wherever *jên* is in operation the idea of righteousness becomes the reality of righteousness. . . . It is like the will to grow, like the seeds of peaches and apricots."⁸⁶

In short, *jên* as reality is the universal nature of the human mind, but when it functions it generates all virtues, including righteousness, propriety, and wisdom. Put differently, *jên* as a general virtue is not merely the sum total of all virtues, but the generative force that makes virtues real, social, and dynamic. In the broadest sense, it is the process of production itself.

Historically speaking, Chu Hsi represents the summit of development in the theory of *jên*. This does not mean, of course, that the story of *jên* ends with him. Since his time, there have been two new tendencies along with the unbroken continuation of the major traditions of *jên*, such as *jên* as love, love for all, love with distinctions, love as unity with the universe, and love as production. One tendency is the emphasis on the practical side of *jên*; the other is theoretical.

With reference to the practical side, as is well known, the dominant spirit of Chinese thought since the seventeenth century has been strongly in opposition to speculation and in favor of a return to practical living. So far as *jên* is concerned, the climax of this practical emphasis was reached in Juan Yüan, who brought into focus the original Confucian idea of *jên* as human beings living together in society. He emphasized this point more

⁸³ *Lun-yü chi-chu* 論語集注 ("Collected Commentaries on the Analects"), I. 2. For a refutation of the theory that these phrases were borrowed from a Buddhist work, see Yamaguchi Satsujō 山口 泰常, *Jin no kenkyū* 仁の研究 ("An Investigation on *Jên*") (Tokyo: Iwanami Book Store, 1936), pp. 370-372.

⁸⁴ *Cbu Tzū ch'üan-shu*, 47/37a.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 47/33a.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 47/3a.

than anyone else, saying, "To explain the word 'jên' it is unnecessary to employ many terms or offer many examples. It is sufficient to cite the passage in Chapter 54 of the *Book of Propriety of the Elder Tai* 大戴禮記 which says the 'jên' denotes people dealing with one another, like boats and carriages helping people to reach their destination. . . . and to give Chêng Hsüan's definition that 'jên' is people living together."⁸⁷

The theoretical tendency is found in the development of Chinese philosophy during the last several decades. This tendency arose partly because of the impact of Western science and philosophy and partly because of recent Chinese efforts to reconstruct traditional Chinese philosophy on a metaphysical basis.⁸⁸ Fascinated by modern physics, T'an Ssü-t'ung 譚嗣同 (1865–1898), a famous pupil of K'ang Yu-wei 康有爲 (1858–1927), identified *jên* with ether, electricity, the "energy of mind," and the origin of all things. To him, *jên* in reality is neither produced nor annihilated. When aroused it penetrates and saturates all existence but in itself it contains no conflicts or contradictions. It makes all things equal. Here are Wang Yang-ming, the *Book of Changes*, Buddhism, and modern physics combined.⁸⁹

In a no less metaphysical but more psychological vein, Liang Sou-ming 梁漱溟 (1893—) describes the universe in terms of "absolute quiet" and "being aroused" in the *Book of Changes*. The former is the reality, while the latter is the function. When this pattern is applied to *jên*, it is, on the one hand, absolute quiet, that is, "peaceful, tranquil, and silently breathing life," and, on the other, "being aroused," that is, "being sharp, responsive, and strong," so as to "enable man to be correct in all his conduct." To him, this "sharp intuition" is *jên*. It is its reality, while the sharp and keen reaction is its function.

His characterization of *jên* as intuition is not surprising in view of the fact that at Liang's time Bergson was an idol to young Chinese philosophers. To Liang, however, intuition is not merely a process of cognition. Rather, it is the very means by which things are aroused and by which the reaction penetrates the whole realm of existence. *Jên* is, therefore, a fundamental principle in the unceasing transformation of the universe and is identical with Central Harmony (*chung* 中), according to which the universe becomes an order.⁹⁰

One can readily detect the Neo-Confucian heritage in Liang. However,

⁸⁷ Juan Yüan, *op. cit.*, 1a-b; *Ta-tai li-chi*, SPTK edition (1929), 5/2a.

⁸⁸ Ku-t'ung 孤桐 (Chang Shih-chao 章士釗) in *Miscellany*, XXVI (1929), No. 13, 77, suggested that *jên* means sexual love, a far-fetched theory unsupported by evidence.

⁸⁹ *Jên-hsüeh* 仁學 ("A Treatise on *Jên*"), Part I, 1a, 2a, T'an Liu-yang *ch'üan-chi* edition.

⁹⁰ *Tung-hsi wên-hua chi ch'i ch'üan-chi* 東西文化及其哲學 ("Eastern and Western Civilizations and Their Philosophies") (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1922), pp. 128–130.

he was more interested in a comparison of Eastern and Western civilizations and their philosophies than in reconstructing Neo-Confucianism. This latter task was assumed by Fung Yu-lan and Hsiung Shih-li. Their ideas of *jên* closely follow those of the Neo-Confucianists. Like Hsieh Liang-tso, Fung understands *jên* as the feeling of pain (in case of illness) or sympathy.⁹¹ Like Ch'êng I, he equates *jên* with "impartiality practiced by man."⁹² Like Chu Hsi, he defines *jên* as the principle of love, and, like all of them, he describes *jên* as forming one body with Heaven and Earth and all things.⁹³ But he claims that this state is a higher existence because it is a "spiritual attitude." In this higher realm the self is transcended, and there is no longer any distinction between the self and the Great Whole. This, he said, is *jên*.⁹⁴

So far, Fung is not essentially different from the Neo-Confucianists. However, in his philosophy four realms of existence are distinguished, namely, the natural, the utilitarian, the moral, and that of Heaven and Earth. In the realm of Heaven and Earth, one's conduct is to "serve Heaven." *Jên* means to look at all things from the point of view of Heaven, so that one's sympathy is extended to include Heaven and Earth and all things. This is Great *Jên*, he says. According to him, it is a quality above the moral realm, because in "serving Heaven" it belongs to the realm of Heaven and Earth.⁹⁵ It is clear that there is in Fung a deliberate effort to go beyond the Neo-Confucianists by making *jên* more metaphysical. But in placing *jên* above the moral realm he virtually betrays Confucianism and surrenders to Buddhism and Taoism.

Hsiung Shih-li also tries to make *jên* more metaphysical. He has done so by regarding *jên* as the "original mind." *Jên* is to him the *jên* of Mencius, which is the "beginning" of all moral consciousness, and it is also Wang Yang-ming's intuition. To him *jên* "is the source of all transformations and the foundation of all existence. Its reality is such that it cannot be sought externally."⁹⁶ It is the "essence of man's nature" and the "spirit of his mind."⁹⁷ Obviously Hsiung goes beyond the ancient doctrine that *jên* is man's mind. The danger of going to such metaphysical depth is that *jên* may degenerate into Buddhist quietism and nihilism. However, Hsiung quickly adds that *jên* is not pure contemplation but is applied to human relations. It is not consciousness, because consciousness belongs to the "mind of habits," whereas *jên* is the "original mind."⁹⁸

⁹¹ *Hsin yüan-tao* 新原道. Cf. *The Spirit of Chinese Philosophy*, trans. by Hughes, pp. 16-17.

⁹² *Hsin yüan-jên* 新原人 ("A New Treatise on the Nature of Man") (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1942), p. 80.

⁹³ *Hsin li-bsüeh*, p. 305.

⁹⁴ *Hsin li-bsüeh*, p. 310.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

⁹⁶ Cf. *The Spirit of Chinese Philosophy*, p. 180.

⁹⁷ *Hsin wei-shih lun*, p. 261.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 260-261, 267.

On the surface, these modern philosophers seem to regard *jên* as pure metaphysical reality. But at bottom they all remain true to the Confucian spirit, for to them reality can be seen only in function. Thus, in spite of their metaphysical excursion, they never forget the Confucian emphasis on the active relationship in human society. To all of them *jên* is essentially social, active, and dynamic. The spirit of Confucius has never been lost.

To sum up the story of the evolution of the concept of *jên*:

- (1) Confucius was the first to regard *jên* as the general virtue and to make it the foundation of ethics.
- (2) Throughout the ages many theories of *jên* have been developed, interpreting *jên* as affection, love, consciousness, impartiality, unity with the universe, etc.
- (3) The most persistent tradition, however, is that *jên* is love.
- (4) This love is universal in nature, but there must be distinctions, that is, an order or gradation in application, beginning with the love of parents.
- (5) It is extended not only to include all human beings but the universe in its totality, man and the universe thus forming one body.
- (6) It is not merely an attitude or consciousness but an active, dynamic relationship between men and all things.
- (7) It is the foundation of all goodness, the "mind of man," and the source of all productions in the universe.
- (8) As such, *jên* is both ethical and metaphysical.
- (9) There has been a persistent effort in recent decades to make *jên* more and more transcendental, but the Confucian emphasis of active and social relations has always remained dominant.