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# THE INCEPTION

# AND DISPLACEMENT OF CONFUCIANISM

## FROM HISTORY AS THE BASE OF CULTURE

## TO HISTORICISM AND SHIFTING SANDS

### 1. DIALECTICAL CHANGE—THE TRADITIONALIST AS INNOVATOR

The problem of leaders and followers is a famous one in intellectual history. Marx once remarked wryly that he was not a Marxist. Dostoevski and Kierkegaard, in mordant moments, saw Christians severed from Jesus. What was the relation between Confucius (551-479 B.C.), an ineffective political adviser in a disintegrating feudal society, and the enormously influential Confucianists in the later highly organized bureaucratic imperial regimes?

These regimes were characteristically autocratic, while Confucius (together with followers like Mencius, of a later but still pre-"Confucianist" generation) taught the duty of sovereigns to satisfy the needs of their people. Should we identify Confucius,

then, as essentially a popular champion, whose democratic message was distorted by Confucianists?

Many moderns have found this view agreeable, since it colors the central Chinese sage with a celebrated modern value. But this very agreeableness suggests a possible anachronism, the selection of ancient data by modern criteria. After all, why should subsequent thinkers, the Confucianists, have felt it so important to claim Confucius as their sage, if the ideas they really preferred were not Confucius' at all? His ideas, if unacceptable, presumably fitted him for obscurity. As long as we see the problem of Confucius in the light of a modern concern with a democratic-autocratic dichotomy, we face ourselves with this conundrum, this discontinuity between leader and follower. But if the pieces will fall into a simple picture, we ought to prefer it to a complicated one; and Confucius and the Confucianists seem better aligned when we see that *traditionalism*, not democracy, was Confucius' master theme. A traditionalist spirit, in a multitude of ways, was peculiarly appropriate to the post-Confucius imperium, which was the haven of Confucianists.

Yet, we have just begun to probe. Surely it is unsatisfying to label Confucius' teaching as simply traditionalism. For one thing, traditionalism is so familiar a conception, common to so many times and places, that we seem left with the puzzle of greatness. Can Confucius be no more than this, a respectable thinker but almost banal? And for another thing, as a traditionalist, why should it have been he who left that tremendous mark on the historical record? Why should it not have been someone behind him, in the past which he himself revered and commended over his own day to future generations?

There is an answer (extended below) to each of these reservations: (a) While in some minds traditionalism may indeed be only a sentimental preference for other times and other manners, Confucius made it a rich philosophical world-view, an all-pervasive commitment to stability over change; it is an ideal sufficiently complex to include his "democratic" recommendations as really just one implication of traditionalism. (b) In elaborating this traditionalism, although it genuinely reflected a reverence for the past, Confucius himself was creative. There

are times in history, and this was one of them, when to discredit the present in terms of the past is to herald a future like neither. And a disposition to revere the past can be an innovation in a society's intellectual life—something the past itself had scarcely known.

(a) *The traditionalist*

As a cure for the ills of his own society, Confucius urged the "rectification" of names: "a father should be a father, a minister should be a minister, a king should be a king." Confucius, we might say, is circular in his definitions: man is human, a son is filial. There is no true predicate.

This is characteristic of thinking in essences. One cannot say that a son has murdered his father, because it is essential that a son respect his father: *essential*, not in the sense that filial piety is binding on a son, but in the sense that he *is* not (he does not have the essence of) a son without it. A king does not starve or slaughter his people, because it is of the essence of kingship that a king brings harmony to the realm. If one fails in this and yet is called a king, that name must be "rectified." Confucius, speaking of Tsou (the last ruler of the Shang dynasty, a legendary monster of evil), said that he knew no monarch, Tsou—only a villain, Tsou.

Now, an attribute of essence is eternity; *being* is by definition different from *becoming.* Kings may change, but then they become "kings," usurpers of the name. What Confucius sees is a world ideally of stasis, not process, for process, change, would be deviation from the original norm, the "Way," the *Tao.* The *Tao* is what is authentic and for all time; guiltymen are inauthentic, wanderers from the Way. And one must not wander, must not move, for harmony, concord, the "real" state of the cosmos and society, is intrinsically the state of rest, and what dissolves rest into movement is discord. When Confucius, as a moralist, deplores the discord of his own times and the inauthentic men who inspire it, he is disparaging movement and by implication the values of novelty or originality, for standards are fixed; if the present is wrong, then rightness must be in the past. The past provides man's good examples.

It also provides his bad examples. History, indeed (and history becomes the core of Confucianists' intellectual life), is conceived largely as a record of right and wrong conduct and their respective consequences. The historical emphasis is not on process but on incident. The historian searches for eternal, archetypical situations; the *pastness* of the past (the sense that it is not present) and the *becomingness* of the past (the sense that it is constantly dissolving into the present) are not prominently savored. Confucius establishes this feeling for the paradigm in history, beyond time, since his genius is for moral judgment, a type of absolute, and it necessarily resists the relativities of passing time and change in the human condition. His "Spring and Autumn Annals of the State of Lu" (the Classic, *Ch'un-ch'iu*) has always been taken in Confucian circles as a historical framework for moral and philosophical ideas. And the "Spring and Autumn" is at the bottom of the whole subsequent Confucian historiographical enterprise. Ssu-ma Ch'ien's "Records of the Historian" (*Shih Chi*, first century B.C.) was the prototype of the great "Dynastic Histories" that cover the dynasties from Han to Ch'ing; in the last chapter Ssu-ma declared that the aim of his work was the same as that of the "Spring and Autumn." In the eleventh century Ssu-ma Kuang launched his significantly entitled "A Throughout Mirror for Politics" (*Tzu-chih t'ung-chien*, one of the most famous historical works of all time) with the hope, redolent of the "Spring and Autumn," that "virtues might become examples and evils warnings." In the seventeenth century another great scholar, Ku Yen-wu, spoke of "using the Hsia and transforming barbarians," i.e., invoking examples from a classical past as still vital correctives for contemplary life. The reverence for history as a storehouse of precedent and the interpretation of history from a standpoint of permanence (rather than process) come together.

So much (for the moment) for history. If it is a treasury of moral examples, this is only an aspect of the fundamental Confucian injunction (traditionalist to the core) to "rule by example." As Confucius said in the "Analects" (*Lun-yü*): "Let your evinced desires be for what is good, and the people will be good. The relation between superiors and inferiors is like

that between the wind and the grass. The grass must bend, when the wind blows across it."

Rule by example is traditionalist because it appeals (and this is the heart of Confucian moralism) to the inner quality of virtue, not to an outer system of laws and institutions. If men live under a system of impersonal laws they may, when things go badly, just change the system. But if virtue rules, one must change oneself, rectify oneself, and visible, outer change, the solvent of tradition, is discountenanced. At almost the end of Confucian history, in the 1890's, traditionalists accused the "Reformers" of that day of meaning to change the system (*fa*, the "laws:" the compound for "reform" is *pien-fa*), thus violating the eternal Confucian injunction to look within to one's virtue (*te*) if the times demand correcting. As George Orwell remarked (on the implications of the social thought of Dickens), a recommendation of change of heart is a classic move by conservatives to defend the *status quo*. Certainly the Chinese Confucian literati, who became the most prominent group in the Empire, with a natural stake thereafter in resisting social change, found Confucius' emphasis on "virtue" (on *te-chih* over *fa-chih*, rule of virtue over rule of law) an appropriate commitment.

(b) *The innovator*

"Virtue" enshrined the old, then, not only in the sense that the virtuous sages were ancient and that moral decay implied the existence of primordial moral perfection, but also in the sense that "virtue" smothered the new: outer, visible tampering with the state of things, potentially novel action, was supposed to yield to inner self-correction and the consequent correction of the world by sympathy. *Nei sheng wai wang*, ran the Confucian formula—inside, sage; outside, king. The moral example of the harmonious soul commands the existence of harmony out in society.

But "old" is the opposite not only of "new" but of "young;" and Confucius' emphasis on virtue was a very significant counter to the values associated with youth. For Confucius, wisdom is very important, and one grows wise as one grows old. "The Master said, At fifteen I set my heart upon learning. At thirty,

I had planted my feet firm upon the ground. At forty, I no longer suffered from perplexities. At fifty, I knew what were the biddings of Heaven. At sixty, I heard them with docile ear. At seventy, I could follow the dictates of my own heart; for what I desired no longer overstepped the boundaries of right." (*Analects*, tr. Arthur Waley).

Compare this with the tone of *The Scholars*, by William Butler Yeats:

> Bald heads forgetful of their sins
> Old, learned, respectable bald heads
> Edit and annotate the lines
> That young men, tossing on their beds,
> Rhymed out in love's despair
> To flatter beauty's ignorant ear...

Not Confucius, nor any Confucianist on duty (who might well be spending his respectable days editing and annotating), could have written this. It comes from another culture. The accent in Confucius' culture is on sobriety, not passion. There is little room for romanticism when youth is submerged by age.

That is why even poems from the Chou collection, the "Book of Odes" (*Shih-ching*), which Confucius made a Classic—poems which to the modern non-Confucian eye are often transparently poems of youthful love—were encrusted over with sober, didactic interpretations in the Confucian tradition. What Arthur Waley renders as

> Out in the bushlands a creeper grows,
> The falling dew lies thick upon it.
> There was a man so lovely,
> Clear brow well rounded.
> By chance I came across him,
> And he let me have my will.

a Hen dynasty Confucian text (second century B.C.) uses as a parable to hammer home the prosy point (allegedly in Confucius' words, tr. James Robert Hightower), "When a person does not transgress the boundary line in the great virtues, he may pass it and repass it in the small virtues." And for

Confucius, who supposedly arranged this anthology, the "Book of Odes" as a whole was not what it seems to moderns, an outpouring of the popular muse. It was, instead, a political morality tale, expressions of emotion in such an order as to match the dynasty's fever-chart—joy (for the early virtue), through gloom, to despair as virtue dims and the dynasty trembles. The poetry is history, good Confucian praise-and-blame history, concerned with process just to the extent that dynasties pass from light to dark, wax and wane, and set the stage for recurrence. The high seriousness of Confucianism converts the raptures of youth into the sage dicta of ancients.

What does this overshadowing of youth by age portend? We know that Confucius, being a traditionalist, has to look back and praise the feudal system of early Chou, and this sounds, in our modern parlance, reactionary. Yet, it is precisely here, in his traditionalism, that Confucius shines forth as the innovator. When traditionalism implies this exaltation of age over youth, do we not find some of the crucial values of feudalism denied? Confucius defended feudalism, but he did so in terms which denied a basis of the feudal order: leadership through strength.

A preference for age over youth means a preference for wisdom over brute martial vigor; war is mainly for the young. If the Confucian taste does not encompass the romance of youthful passion, neither does it encompass the romance of soldierly courage, a feudal value. As Max Weber noted, something important to the Chinese spirit was marked in the "Spring and Autumn" when a prince was censured for listening to warriors, to youth, and not turning to the elders. It meant the virtual suppression of the epic strain in Confucian (the dominant) literature, for the courage of an epic's hero was not the quality Confucianists preferred. In the "Book of History" (*Shu-ching*) as edited by Confucius, when a king wins out he is good and his foes are evil—there is none of the moral neutrality of the epic genre, where the generous recognition of an enemy's courage (transcending desire for long life) blurs the grey, essentially elderly judgements of moral right and wrong. Hector and Turnus, dying at the hands of Achilles and Aeneas in the greatest of Greek and Roman epics, are heroes,

even though on the "wrong" side from the standpoint of the authors. By the values of medieval European chivalry, with its magnifying of feudal heroes to epic stature, the Muslim Saladin is a fair counterpart of Richard the Lionhearted. But Confucius and the Confucian tradition, very far from such feudal values, never allowed such equivocation or moral ambiguity to invade their accounts of men and events.

Confucius, then, was a figure of grand paradox, an innovating traditionalist, harbinger of a future age which would clash with the past he ostensibly sought to revive. He was a Janus-headed figure, looking backward and forward: backward, because ideally, in the early Chou, behind feudal disintegration, lay unity and stability—forward, because the only possible unity and stability for traditional China lay ahead of him, in the new post-feudal empire of Ch'in and Han. His admiration for a past feudal order proved not so much an effectively positive attitude as a symbol of opposition to the present feudal disorder. For there can be more than one negation of any affirmation; and when he condemned contemporary chaos in the name of an antecedent order, he did so in the interests of a subsequent order, not the timelessly ideal but the historically possible one. It was a dialectical situation, like that of the men of the Renaissance and Reformation in Europe, who appealed respectively to ancient hellenism and Gospel Christianity as preferred alternatives to their medieval inheritance, and in so doing heralded modern diversions from medieval values instead of reviving the old.

The old for Confucius was present in his words: *chün-tzu*, for example, a term from the feudal hierarchy, is ubiquitous in the *Analects*. But the new is present, too, the innovation in the traditional term. For Confucius characteristically moralized the term; its metaphorically new significance, as "princely man," "superior man," recalled the feudal order, but now suggested virtue and learning—both of them irrelevant to the feudal form of hierarchy.

In short, when Confucius conjured up a splendid historical past, he was making a trenchant criticism of his own day and its inadequate ideas. His thought had a low content of romantic antiquarian dreaming. There was no brooding about decay in any passive escapist fashion, no refuge in nostalgia. He never

conveyed the pathos of a Quixote. Confucius traditionalism was rather a philosophical principle than a psychological resting place—intellectually adaptable to a burgeoning society with a high degree of stability, not emotionally diversionary from his own society that was crumbling into ruin.

## 2. DISPUTATION AND VITALITY

When Confucius, several centuries after his own time, finally became the sage *par excellence* of the Chinese intelligence, he testified to the intellectual vitality of late-Chou society, which had nurtured his genius. Did he testify also to a failure of vitality, Han and after, when his eminence, the very acknowledgment of his genius, presumably precluded any vigorous intellectual challenge? First, we must note that the presumption is shaky: Taoism and (later) Buddhism openly, Legalism more covertly (i.e., without organization, without a coherent body of believers) continued to challenge Confucianism (as well as to affect it), and Confucianism itself developed various expressions. The presumption dates in China from the beginning of the twentieth century, when the "idea of progress" had entered the Chinese world and when Social Darwinism, conceiving of progress as the fruit of struggle, become a very important influence. Still, whatever the modern anti-Confucian responsibility for this oversimplification of Confucian history, even from the standpoint of post-Classical Confucianists themselves late-Chou China was set apart, as an intellectual mother-country, where their principles rose superior to strong alternatives in an atmosphere of polemical intensity.

What is the relation of disputation to vitality? Is it simply tautological to suggest any relation at all; are we just saying that where there is action there is life, and that disputation is action? Or do we see vitality precisely in the *result* of disputation, the fact that the late-Chou controversy among the "Hundred Schools" established Confucianism's title to a long-sustained acceptance? Confucianism owed its long life to its character, and owed its character to the original conditions of combat.

Confucianism, in intellectual character, was a "middle way." Confucianists—principally that intelligentsia which became so

intimately associated with bureaucracy in the Han and post-Han dynastic state—were, in social character, poised midway between aristocracy and autocracy. We may well assume that the "middle" quality of Confucianism made it peculiarly fit for perpetuation, made it *vital*, in the impending long-lived bureaucratic society; and what was "middle" about Confucianism clearly emerges when we see it framed by sets of its late-Chou rivals.

All roads in Taoism pointed to egoism: the self was the Taoist's great concern—or, more literally, the banishment of self, the liberation and salvation of the ego from the fatal, death-directed consciousness of self. This banishment of self was not the Mohist (the Mo-tzu school's) banishment of self by the dictates of universal love; the latter was altruist, not egoist. Between these two lay Confucianism, with its injuction to "graded love," its feeling for specific, delimited human relationships which countered both the Mohist undiscriminating orientation out to all society and the Taoist quietist transcendence of any social attachments. Confucianism stood for the "near," midway between the Taoist individual "here" and the Mohist universal "far." It is in this sense that both Chinese family solidarity and Chinese cultural discrimination (not self, not world, but *family* and *culture*) became intimate parts of the typically Confucian world-view. But, more than Mohism, Legalism was the "outer," social extreme which paired with Taoism, the "inner," antisocial extreme, to set off Confucianism, the "inner-outer" (*nei sheng wai want*), compromising middle? The "Great Learning" (*Ta-hsüeh*), a part of the Confucian Classic, the "Collected Ritual" (*Li-chi*), inextricably linked the concepts *hsiu-shen* (self-cultivation) and *p'ing t'ien-hsia* (world-pacification); virtue of the individual and government of the collective. The Confucian ideal was establishment of social order among the governed by radiation of virtue from the governor. The Legalists, however, came down one-sidedly for "world-pacification" (without the Confucian matching concern for self-cultivation) and for a social order, then, which owed everything to despotic power, exercised or menacingly held in reserve, and nothing to virtue, to a rule neither by force nor law but by example. And the Taoists, as philosophical anarchists, came down on the other side, against government, against social

order, for the primal virtue of a self tampered with neither by Legalist despotic manipulators nor by Confucian dispensers of that contrived, denaturing, *social* influence, education.

For the Taoists nature, and, *a fortiori*, human nature, was good; hence education, an artificial gloss from the outside, could only be a blight on the natural. For the Legalists human nature was evil; hence only force could control it. But, for the Confucianists human nature was good (the "Mencius" strain) and therefore *amenable* to education; or it was evil (the "Hsün-tzu" strain) and therefore *in need of* education. Either way, this Confucian ambiguity (corresponding to the inner-outer ambiguity, between Taoist "inner" and Legalist "outer") was yet another mediant affirmation, with education standing between the Taoists' blissful emptiness of mind and the Legalists' trust in force instead of learning.

The Taoist and Legalist poles have sometimes been said to come together, and in a sense they did, in their common egoism—despotic egoism of the solitary ruler (the one in the state) and anarchic egoism of the solitary hermit (the one in nature). And this common egoism made for a common revulsion from the Confucian social and intellectual discipline, which was a restraint equally on anarchy and despotism. Whereas history was the perennial Confucian study and the appeal to history the favorite Confucian polemical device, Taoism and Legalism, straddling Confucianism, spurned history equally. For the Taoists, partisans of *wu-wei* ("non-activity"), history was the weary story of action, man's impairment of the state of nature; for the Legalists, the appeal to history, i.e., to precedent, was an unwelcome curb (as any curb would be unwelcome) on power, an impairment of the perfection of the ruler's freedom of action.

Indeed, the Legalist prescriptions were predominantly political, while the Taoist prescriptions, so thoroughly anti-political, had, as a *constructive* force, predominantly cultural implications (though Taoism could lend itself to political destructiveness). Confucianism was the golden mean in the sense that only Confucianism was oecumenical. Its ideas pervaded both the realm of government (as the Legalist did) and the realm of the imagination (as the Taoist did). Confucianism and Legalism

together made political China in the bureaucratic-imperial post-classical regimes, and Confucianism and Taoism together (with Buddhism still to come) made cultural China. The common term, the middle way, the fulcrum for the balance that stability implies, was *Confucianism.*

What was stability but the power to survive, that power which is vitality? It seems rather a romantic foible of historians to attribute "health" to the period of quest and struggle, with achievement and victory written off as fatal infections. For Confucian China, the really fatal infection came late, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and from a foreign body.

When Confucianism finally passed into history, it was because history had passed out of Confucianism. Intrinsic classical learning, the exercise of divining from canonical historical records how man should make history for all time, lapsed. Extrinsic classical learning came in, divining how a certain people made history at a certain stage of a master-process. Confucianism became an object of intellectual inquiry (instead of the condition of it), or else an object of emotional attachment, a historical monument, eliciting (instead of inculcating) a piety towards the past. It was in encounter with the modern Western industrial world that Chinese were either shaken quite clear of traditionalism, the Confucian *sine qua non*, or confirmed indeed as traditionalists, but of an untraditional sort.

## 3. ANTI-CONFUCIANISM AND PSEUDO-CONFUCIANISM: THE CHANGE IN HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Confucianism ceased to have the virtue, the vitality, of centrality when China ceased, even in Chinese eyes, to be the centre of the world, the Middle Kingdom—or ceased, rather, to be the world. As a nation, China faced the world instead of containing it, even faced the prospect of being contained. The great modern change in Chinese civilization, the change (which was the attrition of Confucianism) in historical consciousness, coincided with a growing awareness of the spectre announced by Ranke, the "spirit of the Occident subduing the world." For the spirit of Ranke was subduing the Occident as history seemed to be confirming his inference, that the West had gained for itself a

position from which world history and European history could be considered a corporate unity. There was a Chinese correlative to this conclusion: China had lost the position from which it could consider world history and Chinese history as a corporate unity, the *T'ien-hsia* (all-under-Heaven)—denoting "the Empire" and the world.

The confrontation was stark. In European history we find the Christian transcendental sense of divinity and evolutionary sense of history, then the modern secularized messianisms with their visions (like Ranke's) of progress in time, in Europe, culminating in progress in space, outwards from Europe. In Chinese history we find Confucius, for whom "Heaven does not speak" but rather reflects a cosmic harmony as a model to society, and a model once clothed in ancient historical fact. Against the transcendental and the evolutionary, we must set Confucian immanence and orientation to the past. Nothing repelled the normative Confucianist more than messianic goals and eschatological structures, Christian, Buddhist (Maitreya cult) or popular Taoist. The meaning of history was not in the end-stage of culture but in sage-antiquity.

Modern Chinese syncretisms of Western and Confucian ideas finally yielded to the full force of the Western oecumenical drive, and there came to be a readiness, in radical circles, to listen to foreign voices without concern for their legitimacy by any Confucian standards. Then, when the environment was no longer a Confucian world but a Chinese nation, when the innovators were contemners of Confucian authority instead of syncretizers invoking it, the anti-iconoclasts commended Confucius in a new way: he and his doctrine represented "national essence," not supra-national truth. Traditionalism became relativistic, the values it protected were relative to a single organic history. "Confucianism," shielded by a romantic appeal to history in its aspect of uniqueness, was a far cry from the rationalistic Confucianism which wielded history as philosophy by example. The name was hopelessly unrectified.

But the traditionalists were not alone in their defensiveness, nor in their relativism. A simple Chinese anti-traditionalism proved emotionally expensive, for the West was too intrusive. In the iconoclastic "May Fourth" (1919) compulsion to clear

the field of the dead destroyers, Lu Hsün's "eaters of men," all the Confucian idols, pangs of self-destruction mingled with the pangs of creativity. This is one great reason why, once the absolute disparagers had carried off the assault, Marxist historical relativism could plausibly claim the field—to heal the wounds of the action. Passionate, disturbing excoriation of the old (the Chinese self) may have seemed necessary, but for most Chinese intellectuals it was not sufficient; some kind of rehabilitation of the self had to be made. And Marxist historicism came to the fore, enabling intellectuals to dispatch the old values as live options, but to do so relatively cooly and undisturbed, without the passion of the pioneer iconoclasts, who felt they faced a living infamy. Perhaps that is why Marxist revolutionaries in power could appear more tender with the Chinese past than May Fourth revolutionaries, non- or pro-Marxist and out of power, could be to the past in their generation. Communists could try to have it both ways, killing the past for their own day, yet relativistically fitting it into history, and a history China owned, not a history flowing into the West's. And when revolution had shattered the traditional whole, pieces could be salvaged for present contemplation, selections made from a past so truly laid, as *history* (in the sense of superseded), that it could hardly resist dissection.

The new Chinese historical consciousness, in its ravaging of Confucianism, menaced the sense of Chinese historical continuity: this was the menace that China faced while *Western* historical continuity seemed to offer the world its modern intellectual constructs. But this historical consciousness, in all its disruptiveness, knitted up, in its two ways, the ravelled continuity. On its radical side, it laid down lines to the Chinese past through a supposedly universal (not exclusively Western) sequence of historical stages. And on its conservative side, it read into Chinese history a special soul, hopefully impervious to just such corruption as this very reading exemplified.

What we have, then, in twentieth-century China, is a complicated response to a situation of European expansion and expansiveness. The response takes place in a new matrix for intellectual controversy. For to say that modern Chinese traditionalists and iconoclasts are all new men, bound together and

severed from the old predominant Confucianism by their relativism, is to see them in Herder's categories: one, as Herder's vision was one in its anti-rationalism—but bifurcated, like Herder's historicism, which had forked out into conservative and revolutionary branches.

The centrality of Herder is established in his contention that every nation and every age holds the center of its happiness within itself. What Herder combines, *nation* and *age* as having their individual geniuses, romantic conservatives and Marxist revolutionaries put asunder. The former emphasize the genius of the nation and thus confirm their own traditionalism; this would be impossible if they granted equal title to the genius of the age, for then moderns could not be committed (as the Chinese modern traditionalists were) to defense of the "national essence," something distilled from the history of the past. Marxists, for their part, acknowledge the genius (or the "mode of production") of the age, and hence their mode of historical thinking is evolutionary, anti-traditionalist. Appropriately, they reject in its fullest romantic flavor the genius of the nation; nations are assumed to share the prospects of passing time.

Herder lives in both these camps of related antagonists, now Chinese as well as European. The Confucianists, anti-relativist to the core, were alien to both. When the world (as seen from China) was a Chinese world Confucian civilization was civilization in the abstract, not *a* civilization in a world with others. But when the world (even as seen from China) seemed a European world (for which read "modern:" i.e., Europe as historically *progressive*), then Confucianism's chances lay with the Chinese "national essence," a romantic, non-Confucian conception.

Why should Confucianism have withered into this anomaly? Why should it be Europe and not China that has been able to sustain its self-image as a history-maker culturally coterminous with the world, regardless of political recession?

My own suggestion, as a partial answer, is that Confucian civilization was the apotheosis of the amateur, while the genius of the modern age (evil or not) is for specialization. In the modern world, the "middle" character of Confucianism was lost; it was no longer a mean among alternatives, but a peri-

pheral opposite to a new spirit from a new center of power. Confucian education, perhaps supreme in the world for anti-vocational classicism, sought to create a non-professional free man (*pace* Hegel) of high culture, free of impersonal involvement in a merely manipulative system. Accordingly the mandarin bureaucracy, taking its special lustre as a reflection from the essentially aesthetic, ends-not-means, cultural content of the literati-official examinations, inhibited development in the direction of expertise. Under these circumstances, the Confucian deprecation of specialization implied a deprecation (and deprivation) of science, rationalized and abstractly legalistic economic networks, and the idea of historical progress, all of these bound in the West to specialization in a subtle web, and bringing the West subversively to China. From the time that the Han disciples of Confucius, the traditionalist, made good his achievement as innovator, no authentic Confucianist ever had to fight precisely Jonathan Swift's battle for the ancient against the modern books. When the issue arose in China it was post-Confucian, forced in China at last because it had come to the test in Europe first, and Swift had lost.