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On the Religiosity of Confucianism

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Outline

- 1. What Religion Is**
- 2. What Confucianism Is**
- 3. Confucianism as Religious**

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Abstract

Religion is the business of and with the beyond. In Confucianism, the beyond as elan to holism beyond the individual person co-resonants with a personal-experiential thrust. In the Confucian tradition, man experiences the pervading elan within the person beyond the person. This is a personal experience of transcendence from within which may be called “transcendence in immanence.” The Confucian transcendent holism has two features—in time and in space. Temporal holistic transcendence is an organic complex, in personal educative-hortatory admiration-determination to follow the sages, the tradition, in a word, history. Spatial holistic transcendence is shown in the personal experience of interaction-interpenetration between the innate-depths of the self and the cosmic breath-power throughout the Heaven and Earth. All this can be summed up in one word, personal-communal “reverence” that is religious, that renders a religion truly religious. Thus Confucianism is religious through and through.

Key words : Confucianism, Religiosity, Religion

The Chinese scholarship in twentieth century, benefited from the influx of Western tradition of self-reflection, reflects on whether Confucianism is a religion in its own right. Recognizing the intensely historical-pragmatic, sociopolitical, and socio-ethical character of Confucianism, the staple opinion of the majority of scholars, both in China and abroad, has been that Confucianism is not a religion which is the human business dealing with the otherworldly. This essay reexamines the issue along three major themes: (1) what religion is, (2) what Confucianism is, and (3) the analogy between them. This essay concludes that Confucianism is *religious*, though perhaps waging less than a religion.

1. What Religion Is

First, we must define religion. “Religion” usually means a human enterprise dealing with the transcendent and beyond, which could be nirvanic Vacuity (空, k’ung) or transcendent Love. This trans-mundane character typifies “religion” in a strong sense. Religion could mean something weaker in sense, however, that is, any *holistic and pervasive* ethos, both personal and public, contemporary and historical, cultural and sociopolitical.¹ Paul Tillich’s (1886-1965) celebrated definition of “religion” as “our ultimate concern” belongs here. It is a modern translation of Friedrich Schleiermacher’s (1768-1834) “our feeling of absolute dependence” and Rudolf Otto’s (1869-1937) “the numinous.”² A whiff of the Beyond is felt here in *our* sense of awe and reverence, but the emphasis is always on *our* feeling here, not on the Beyond. Such a stance tends to stress infusion of religious sentiment—awe, respect, and reverence—into the worldly socio-ethical, socio-cultural and sociopolitical praxis in the mundane-trans-mundane *continuity*.³ This continuity can only be characterized as an organic interfusion between the whole of the universe and its various parts, interpenetrating, inter-influencing, and inter-causing. This is also what the Buddhist “*yin-yüan*, 因緣” (causal origination,

dependent co-arising) is all about, and such relation to this Chinese sentiment is probably what is responsible for the Chinese acceptance of Buddhism.

For convenience's sake, we shall name the strong sense of religion, "religion," a noun, to designate the Object of our religious transaction, and the weak sense of religion, "religious," an adjective, to describe the subjective human feature. Such a thrust toward being religious actually *pervades* ethics, convention, sociopolitics, ecology, and history.⁴ *Ultimately*, pervasion and holism interfuse and co-imply. "Pervasion" completes itself only when it pervades to totality, from the depths of our human nature to the Heaven and earth, and "holism" can only be fulfilled as such only in total pervasion. Thus pervasion and holism are really descriptions of "ultimacy" that typifies the "religious." In Confucianism, as in China and indeed everywhere in the world, Tillich's "ultimate concern" is equivalent to "awe" and "reverence."

Our conclusion is that Confucianism is *religious*.⁵ We must demonstrate how this is so. We first (in section 2) describe what Confucianism is, then (in section 3) show how it matches our second narrower definition of religion as "being religious" demonstrated above.

2. What Confucianism Is

We must now describe what Confucianism is, as pervasively holistic and reverential. Confucianism as an interfusing of two organic complexes that stands out to claim our attention in the context of its religious backdrop. These complexes form the meaning-context that renders all Confucian passages both meaningful and significant. These complexes are *organic*, not mechanical. Each "mechanical" part remains itself without interacting with other parts of a machine. In contrast, the Confucian complexes are "organic" in that their inner components

are radically interdependent. Each component cannot exist without the others, and sustains and prospers its “life” by interacting with the others. And each organic complex is a “complex” in that its integrity as such depends on and manifests in an interweaving⁶ of its various parts, layers, and levels, which are inter-penetrating, inter-influential, inter-causal.⁷

(1) The first organic complex resides in time, an enormous education-self-cultivation-historical continuity. (2) The second organic complex is in space, a vast ritualization-ethics-sociopolitics-cosmos continuum. (3) Finally, our understanding of “organic complex” naturally leads us to see how these two complexes inter-weave to form a vast cosmic-historical meta-complex, in awe and reverence, which is yet firmly based and initiated in individual personal experience, transcending itself. This meta-complex is called “Confucianism” that is religious through and through.

1) To begin with, we consider the self-transcending complex, *in time*, among self-cultivation, education, and history. China traditionally had until the latter days of Ch’ing Dynasty (1644-1911) a temple-education (*miao-hsüeh*, 廟學) system. As Kao Ming-shih (高明士) pointed out,⁸ lecture halls are usually centered around the Temples of Confucius since the Western Han (206B.C.-A.D.8) period. After Emperor T’ ai Tsung (太宗, 626-649) of T’ ang Dynasty (618-907), this temple-centered education spread from the highest Imperial Academy (*Kuo-tzu chien*, 國子監) in the central government and provincial schools (*chou hsüeh*, 州學) to rural districts and counties (*hsien*, 縣).

The fact that education was built upon a temple system shows that education is attended with three points: a heartfelt (a) reverence for and admiration of the historical sages, and (b) self-dedication to emulate them for (c) cultivation of students. These three points make religious reverence. Pervasive in China and Taiwan is people’s deep sense of the overwhelming importance of education, much

more than its utilitarian benefit, the sense deeper and awe-filled than in other parts of the world. Confucianism is inextricably bound up with reverential ethos, continually looking up to education that infuses the historic sages of venerated tradition—best concentrate of Chinese culture—into the promotion of each person to higher levels of life. In his typical understatement, Confucius deeply sighed for the Duke of Chou, whom Arthur Waley called “the Chinese Nestor.” As Waley translates it, Confucius sighed, “How utterly have things gone to the bad with me! It is long now indeed since I dreamed that I saw the Duke of Chou.”⁹ This reverential confession reveals the very source and root of Confucius’ vitality—the tradition, the sage, the history that run through him as his blood. Similarly, Mencius’ life and thinking are so dipped in history, reverently appealing at every step to historical precedents and reflecting on them, that D. C. Lau begins his instructive essay titled “Ancient History as Understood by Mencius,”¹⁰ as follows:

Chinese thinkers were in the habit of appealing to examples in history, and... [f]or the Confucians these were Yao and Shun, Yü, T’ ang, King Wen and King Wu. Its [history’ s] significance is twofold. First, ancient personages were made concrete embodiments of... virtue... and... wickedness... Second, [they] are envisaged in actual situations and... discussed in detail... This serves the same purpose as the artificially contrived examples some Western philosophers use... Thus... ancient history is... a general background... without which the work [of Mencius, say] would be unintelligible.

We can see that to learn of this history and to transmit it - that is, “education” - consumed the totality of Mencius’ passionate devotion.

Similarly, history, education, and personal cultivation form a trinitarian complex in time that claimed the utmost devotion of Confucians. In education, Confucianism has the organic complex in time, begun at oneself now, to go beyond

oneself in heartfelt experiential elevation and promotion toward the tradition and the sages, thus loftily connecting oneself to history. But isn't it that each person devotes oneself to learning from the historical great sages? This question leads us to the second organic complex.

2) Therefore, we now consider the second complex in space, the vast continuum among the depths of our nature, socio-politics, and the Heaven and earth. Confucius, for instance, appealed to Heaven (*T'ien*, 天) and its Way (*Tao*, 道) in his moments of ultimate concern and desperation. When a military officer in the state of Sung, Huan T'ui, tried to fell a tree to kill Confucius, Confucius said, "Heaven begot virtue in me. What can Huan T'ui do to me?"¹¹ This was when Confucius was 59. He confessed, at over 70 years of age, that "at fifty I knew the Heavenly Mandate,"¹² where "knew" (*chih*, 知) is no mere bookish knowledge but a realization and conviction enlightened by the Heavenly. He took personal maturity to be a heartfelt awareness of interpenetration with Heavenly Will and Mission, and "heaven" is clearly a term of reverence for the totality of All That Is, the Heaven-and-Earth. Such sentiment is clearly felt by the later commentators of this passage. Mencius first hit the sentiment, saying,¹³

For a man to give full realization to his mind-heart is for him to understand his own nature, and a man who knows his nature will know Heaven. By retaining his heart and nurturing his nature he is serving Heaven. Whether he is going to die young or to live to a ripe old age makes no difference to his steadfastness of purpose. It is through awaiting whatever is to befall him with a perfected character that he stands firm on his proper Destiny.

盡其心者，知其性也。知其性，則知天命矣。存其心，養其性，所以事天也。殀壽不貳，修身以俟之，所以立命也。

Yen Jo-ch'ü (閻若璩, 1636-1704) followed suit, quoting Ch'en Chi-t'ing (陳幾亭), saying, "What 'mandate' (*ming*, 命) says is really whatever penetrates through

the heaven, i.e., all the principle. Specifically to mention ‘mandate’ shows predestination” This was quoted by Ch’eng Shu-te (程樹德, 1877-1944).¹⁴ As Liu Pao-nan (劉寶楠, 1791-1855), Ch’eng understood to “know heavenly mandate” to mean as follows:¹⁵

(The sage’s virtue was) one with heaven, so his deeds were not against heaven, thereby capable of knowing heavenly mandate. To know heavenly mandate then means to know that one has been mandated by heaven, not born in vain. For the Master’s time was when Chou dynasty was in decline, long deprived of the sages.... As [Confucius] reached the age of fifty, having studied and understood the *I Ching* (the Classic of Changes), he humbly said he had had few great mistakes, and then knew that heaven had begotten and mandated him, himself owing heaven nothing, thereby he took the heavenly mandate upon himself.... [This was to] elucidate that his own heartmind and the heaven’s heartmind interpenetrated.

能合天，斯為不負天命；不負天命，斯可云知天命，知天命者，知己為天所命，非虛生也。蓋夫子當衰周之時，聖賢不作久矣。及年至五十，得易學之，知其有得，而自謙言「無大過」。則知天之所以生己，所以命己，與己之不負乎天，故以天知命自任。「命」者，立之於己而受之於天，聖人所不敢辭也。他日桓魋之難，夫子言「天生德於予」，天之所生，是為天命矣。惟知天命，故又言「知我者其天」，明天心與己心得相通也。

Liu Shu-hsien also said,¹⁶

We must reach the mature age of fifty to existentially experience the verity of destined limits of the limited life of an individual entity. To borrow from the Sung Confucian jargon, we must embody both Li Ming (what heavenly mandate endowed) and Ch’i Ming (external destiny) before we can be said to “know heavenly mandate.”

All these interpretations amount to an understanding of Confucius' saying quoted above that reverential interpenetration between personal experience and cosmic vitality as a whole is absolutely possible. This point was fully and explicitly developed later by various Confucians. To begin with, the superficially subjective notion of "sincerity" (*ch'eng*, 誠) gained a cosmological weight when Chou Tun-yi (周敦頤, 1017-1073) said in his *T'ung Shu* (通書):¹⁷

"Great is the Ch'ien the originator! All things obtain their beginning from it." It is the source of sincerity. "The way of Ch'ien is to change and transform so that everything will obtain its correct nature and destiny.
誠者，聖人之本。「大哉乾元，萬物資始」，誠之源也。「乾道變化，各正性命」，誠斯立焉。

And in his *T'ai-chi T'u Shuo* (太極圖說):¹⁸

[As a result, t]he sage settles these affairs by the principles of the Mean, correctness, humanity, and righteousness (for the way of the sage is none other than these four), regarding tranquility as fundamental. (Having no desire, there will therefore be tranquility.) Thus he establishes himself as the ultimate standard for man. Hence the character of the sage is identified with that of the Heaven and Earth; his brilliancy is identified with sun and moon; his order is identified with that of the four seasons; and his good and evil fortunes are identified with those of spiritual beings.
聖人定之以中正仁義（聖人之道不外四者），而主靜（無欲故靜），立人極焉。故聖人與天地合其德，日月合其明，四時合其序，鬼神合其吉凶。

Reading these, we are reminded that Chou was following and developing the *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Chung Yung*, 中庸) and the *Great Learning* (*Ta Hsiieh*, 大學). After Chou, it is rare for writers not to begin their theses with cosmology, or advance them in such cosmological context. We remember Chu Hsi (朱熹,

Hui-an 晦庵, 1130-1200), Wang Yang-ming (王陽明, 1472-1529), Lu Hsiang-shan (陸象山, 1139-1193), Chang Tsai (張載, 1020-1077), and even K'ang Yu-wei (康有為, 1858-1927) whose revolutionary vision of the Great Unity (*ta t'ung*, 大同) is distinctly Confucian. Chan said,¹⁹

The philosophical bases for this utopia are two, namely, his theory of historical progress and his interpretation of the central Confucian... humanity. He equates this with what Mencius called "The mind that cannot bear [to see the suffering of] others."... In the traditional Confucian theory of love, one proceeds from affection for one's parents to being humane to all people, and finally to kindness in all creatures. The Age of Great Unity is the logical culmination of this gradual extension. K'ang was certainly revolutionary in both vision and action, but in this as in other respects he remained within the main stream of Confucianism.

This fact that Confucianists' reverence made inter-subjective notions of morality—humanity, fidelity, righteousness, sincerity, etc.—absolutely cosmological, shows that Confucianism departs from the Western sense of subjective religiosity and arrives at a co-resonance between the heavenly and the human. Confucianism turns Schleiermacher's subjective "feeling of absolute dependence" into a vigorous source and legitimation of intensive sociopolitical activities, serving as royal and popular "political ideology," and most if not all Confucians have been fervid political activists, some even died martyrs to their Confucian principles. Such is a Confucian description of holistic organic complex in space, extending from one's heartfelt innate feeling for others, via families, to the world all over.

We have briefly rehearsed a history of great historic learners from Confucius to K'ang Yu-wei. By doing so, we have learned about the Confucian cosmic complex through a Confucian historical complex. This amounts to an integration of a historical complex into the cosmic complex, an organic holistic complex in

time into an organic holistic complex in space. Such a meta-complex composed of the two complexes we call “Confucianism.” To this fascinating theme we now turn.

3) We come to reflecting on how these two organic self-transcending complexes, in time and in space, interweave to compose a meta-complex that goes *beyond* itself toward both tradition and history, *and* the Heaven and Earth.

To see how this meta-complex is composed, let us consider the question, “Why do we today, on the eve of the twenty-first century, have to care at all about such “old moldy stuff” as the ancient Confucian texts?” Let us merely ask ourselves how we gain the sparkling and inspiring insights into the self-cosmos complex continuum, and the obvious answer is, “We learn all this from those historic Great.” Far from being backward-looking and antiquated, we go deep into history to the Confucian ethos that connects history with the Heaven and Earth, in self-transcending reverence. And such heartfelt cosmic reverence is eternally fresh, forever invigorating all around.

We ourselves are, by studying history, at the center of this connection by thus studying history, to realize and bring to fruition the vast history-cosmos connection, this heart-soaring interpenetrative holism. Our historical tradition of ancient sages are “great” precisely because they are our primary resources and inspiration, our fount of excitement and funds of enthusiasm, to assiduously work toward the immense person-cosmos organic complex. This person-history-cosmos continuum is what stirs the depths of our mind-hearts, our nature, to an unbearable degree, and spurs us on to devote our whole lives to sociopolitical reform to achieve that Utopia that lies beyond us today in the Golden Ages of the legendary Three Dynasties far back. We strive and work toward the awe-filled Day of Culmination of our passionate historic vision that was also Confucius’ ardent dream, dreaming the Duke of Chou.²⁰

3. Confucianism as Religious

1) Someone may say that the Confucianism described above concerns its sociopolitical and metaphysical dimensions, not its religiosity. Confucianism may indeed be personal-educative-historical and ethical-sociopolitical-cosmic. But these two features concern the *this-worldly*. They are not “religious,” much less features of a “religion,” both of which have trans-mundane significance.

Our response to such challenge is as follows. The holistic definition of the “religious” sentiment implies its transcendent dimension. Holism implicates ultimacy of our concern, for here there exists no more to be relative to. And to mention our ultimate concern is to intimate *what* is ultimately concerned—but leaves “what it is” open. We can be humanly and decently satisfied with such reverent open-endedness with no religiously iconoclastic connotation.

As Wing-tsit Chan translates it,²¹ “Confucius never discussed strange phenomena, physical exploits, disorder, or spiritual beings.” His silence on these extra-ordinary matters can be seen as a sign more of his self-humbling reverence in self-imposed ignorance of them, than of his casual denial of them. For, after all, reverence connotes self-distancing awe before the spiritual beings, “venerating them, and keeping distance from them,”²² precisely at the moment when we admiringly feel the spirits at our sacrifice to them.²³ This deference goes with our yearning adoration toward the spiritual Beyond. Confucius was great in reverence that combines yearning self-transcendence and awe-filled self-distancing. This Confucian sentiment demonstrates “religiosity” Rudolf Otto typified as the “idea of the holy,” as the “numinous” composed of the daunting self-distancing united with the infinitely attractive. Religious “numen” implicates agnostic silence of Confucius’ reverence. Such reverence toward the ancient ancestors unifies his reverence with his silence, in devotion to history in constant education, both of himself and of others.

Thus this Confucian Attitude toward the awesome August Heaven is not this-worldly utilitarianism which is religiously empty, as many would have us believe, but has definite designates, Heaven and *Tao*. The Confucians have the “Heavenly Mandate” to which we so express reverence as to devote ourselves to implementing its “*Tao*.” When asked about “knowledge” (*chih*, 知), Confucius pointed to taking “respectful distance” toward spiritual beings. This is a reverent knowledge-of-ignorance that issues in “devoting oneself to popular duties,” concrete agenda for socio-political praxis.²⁴

What H. D. Lewis said back in 1967 on the Chinese idea of “Heaven and earth relationship” remains typical of Confucianism:²⁵

What this [idea] implies is that there is some character of reality beyond what we find in the world around us but which cannot be explicitly defined or grasped. We can know it in its requirements and in the sense of some kind of justice operative in the universe at large. The “beyondness” of the power which works for righteousness in this way... could only be known from within. But this is itself a very significant fact, and the elusiveness of the influence to which our lives are subject in this way is no mean indication of the subtleness of their philosophical and religious insights. It has indeed sometimes led to the view that Chinese religion, and especially Confucianism, is moral or religious system. That impression could easily be derived from *The Analects* of Confucius... Confucianism is in fact extensively determined and overlaid by notions like that of a heaven and earth relationship... the shrewd sense that the nature of what lies beyond the present existence and gives it meaning is best discerned by following a Way or path. The goal is... best discerned for us in the way it is to be attained.... [I]t is a significant pointer to it [the whole truth].

In other words, as the test of a pie is in its eating, so the knowledge of the Beyond (*t'ien*, 天) is in practicing its Way (*Tao*, 道). It is this *manner* of life that unifies depth-morality, cosmic socio-politics, and absolute conviction, with the Beyond. And “this manner” describes how *religious* Confucianism is. In yoking the unknown *T'ien* (Heaven) with the known *Tao* (way) is the religiosity of Confucianism. It is in confident praxis of how humanely we behave—in line with our innate nature as human—that we discern the ultimate religiosity deeply pervasive everywhere in the universe. The very socio-ethical thrust as reverently cosmic is constitutive of Confucianism, and in this manner, the devoted thrust compellingly bespeaks Confucianism as clearly religious.

2) Someone may still object, “The Chinese mentality, however you interpret it, remains after all concerned with *this* world, not with the divine beyond. Mencius, for example, thought and talked about nothing but human nature, human behavior in ethical, historical, social and political spheres, and perhaps physical nature such as sky and earth. Where is God? Where are spirits?”

This objection barks up the wrong tree. Religion is not just a matter of religious *object*. Many people give their cognitive assent to the divine beyond this world, but without reverence appropriate thereto. The Pharisees and the scribes we remember were a tragic target of Jesus’ lamentation. Religion can die in merely correct doctrines on things beyond. In contrast, we must always bear in mind that crucial fact, that our sense of awe is the absolutely essential basis that renders any correct doctrines *properly* religious, that reverence is the indispensable matrix legitimating the doctrines as correctly “religious.” Without awe and reverence—being religious—correct doctrines turn irreligious, souring us into hypocrites to crucify religion itself. Without correct doctrines, we can with reverence learn to grow by and by in the world of proper religion, for “religion” consists in being religious.

In this sense, the Confucians are amply religious in that they make the secular as ultimate in their sacred concern. After all, there is nothing wrong in taking the secular as sacred, that is, being reverently pragmatic more than being just utilitarian. They have never reduced the secular to *merely* mundane, taking the social as purely managerial, making the ethical merely private, or the cosmic as merely physical and worldly, as some modern men are inclined to do. We must note that it is not mere secular matters that are religious. It is our subjective attitude of reverence, that ultimacy of our concern, toward the secular, that turns the secular sacred.

Mencius was quite reverently intent on the innateness of our unbearable sensitivity to people, those four natal buddings of humaneness, connecting the human to the vast breath-power (*ch'i* 氣) that floods the entire cosmos, so much so that we flow in with the flow of the Heaven and Earth. The Confucians have been so intent on their reverence toward the sages that temples were built to venerate Confucius and other ancient Greats, precisely in the “secular” business of education. They treasure their “secular” history and tradition with utter religious seriousness.

In fact, common folks were used to take socio-politics with ultimate devotion, connecting the all-too-important filiality with loyalty to rulership, that Mencius foresaw their dangerous tendency to crouch abjectly under the ruler’s abuse of power, politicizing the Confucian piety toward socio-politics to the royal selfish gains. Mencius sternly claimed that the rulers must subject themselves to the Heaven’s Dictate and Mandate. Mencius had to deepen their religious sentiment toward the rulers by firmly subsuming politics under cosmological reverence, appealing them to heed the ancient dictum, “The *Heaven* sees and hears as my people see and hear.”

Here, to quibble over the meaning of “heaven,” caviling about how incapable the mere starry skies are of “seeing” and “hearing,” is again to bark up the wrong tree. Mencius was actually admonishing the rulers with ultimate solemnity that

they were under the heavenly authority not to lose their reverence to the world at large, that they had better keep their political concerns ultimate, tending popular welfare beyond their own private advantage, never facilely disregarding their own sacred sentiment of other-regard innate in them—deep in the rulers themselves—that connects itself to the Heaven. Mencius told the rulers that in loving their people they enhance themselves cosmically! Taken this way, the whole matter of politics is religiously serious indeed.

3) To make a long story short, what we have claimed is as follows. Religion is the business of and with the beyond. In Confucianism, the beyond as elan to holism beyond the individual person co-resonants with a personal-experiential thrust. Each of us experiences the pervading elan within the person beyond the person. This is a personal experience of transcendence from within which may be called “transcendence in immanence.” The Confucian transcendent holism has two features—in time and in space. Temporal holistic transcendence is an organic complex, in personal educative-hortatory admiration-determination to follow the sages, the tradition, in a word, history. Spatial holistic transcendence is shown in the personal experience of interaction-interpenetration between the innate-depths of the self and the cosmic breath-power throughout the Heaven and Earth. All this can be summed up in one word, personal-communal “reverence” that is religious, that renders a religion truly religious. Thus Confucianism is religious through and through.

In short, their ultimate concern makes whatever the Confucians consider and deal with glow with sacred ultimacy, so much so that the entire Confucianism takes on deep religiosity. Sigmund Freud said, “Our psyche is replete with unseemly complexes.” The Confucians respond, “Our subconscious has in its depths the subtle shine of the cosmic sacred.” Ludwig Feuerbach proclaimed, “Theology has its secret in anthropology”. The Confucians reply, “Humanism has its secret in

religiosity.” Reverence is here in historic Confucianism, and everywhere in the Heaven and Earth.

What is the significance of all the arguments? In the analysis above, we see that such religiosity is what makes Confucianism unique and distinctive. Confucianism is resolutely pragmatic in all its aspects, without any trace of mysterious spirituality. Yet, in all its calculative meticulousness for details of daily ethical decencies and socio-politics, it is anything but cheaply utilitarian. The Confucian pragmatics has reverential depths in human innermost nature, in venerative love for the historical tradition, and in sacred heights throughout the Heaven and Earth. Such is the distinctive religiosity of Confucianism in Chinese culture that lingers on even today.

NOTES

- 1 Sociology of religion belongs here, as initiated by Emile Durkheim in, e.g., his *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1915, and NY: The Free Press, 1965).
- 2 Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Volumes 1- 3 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951-1963), *Dynamics of Faith* (NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1957). Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, translated by H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh, 1948); Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, translated by J. Harvey (NY: Oxford University Press, 1926).
- 3 Yü Ying-shih claims this to characterize Chinese religiosity, in “Ts’ ung Chia-chih Hsi-t’ ung K’ an Chung- kuo Wen-hua tih Hsien-tai Yi-yi 從價值系統看中國文化的現代意義,” in *Chung-kuo Ssu-hsiang Ch’ uan-t’ ung tih Hsien-tai Ch’ üan-shih 中國思想傳統的現代詮釋* (Taipei: Lien-ching Ch’ u-pan Kung-ssu, 1987), p. 10.
- 4 Interestingly, among the nine definitions of religion culled by William P. Alston apparently according to the principle of maximum distribution in time and in the diversity of interest, the former four concern “religion,” while the latter five concern

the “religious.” See his article, “Religion.” in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Paul Edwards (NY: The Macmillan Co., 1967), VII: 140.

- 5 Liu Shu-hsien also noted the affinity between Confucianism and “ultimate concern” as proposed by Tillich. See Liu Shu-hsien, “The Religious Impor of Confucian Philosophy: Its Traditional Outlook and Contemporary Significance,” *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (April 1971), pp. 157-175. This essay reflects and develops the affinity in our own way.
- 6 “Complex” is “complectere, an interweaving, contexture,” says *The Oxford English Dictionary*.
- 7 See Chun-chieh Huang, “Ch’uan-t’ung Chung-kuo ti Ssu-wei Fang-shih chi ch’i Chia-chih Kuan 傳統中國的思維方式及其價值觀,” *Pun-t’u Hsin-li-hsüeh Yen-chiu*, No.11 (June, 1999), pp. 129-152.
- 8 Kao, Ming-shih, “Ch’uan-t’ung Chung-kuo Chiao-yü tih Li-hsiang yü Chih-chi tui Hsien-tai T’ung-shih Chiao-yü tih Yi-yi 傳統中國教育的理想及其對現代通識教育的意義,” in “Ch’uan-t’ung Chung-kuo Chiao-yü yü Hsian-tai Ta-hsüeh T’ung-shih Chiao-yü” *Yen-t’ao Hui Lun-wen Chi* 傳統中國教育與現代大學通識教育研討會論文集, Taipei: T’ai-ta Li-shih Hsi (history department, National Taiwan University), 1995, esp. p. 22.
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論儒學的宗教性

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摘要

二十世紀中國學者討論儒學之內涵，一般都認儒學不是宗教。近年來國內外學者對此一問題提出各種不同之看法。本文重新探討儒學的宗教性，作者強調儒學也許不是個組織型的宗教，但卻具有宗教性，這種宗教性可以用「超越的內在性」一語表達。超越的內在性同時在時間與空間的兩種向度上，表現出有機的整體性特色。就時間的向度而言，個人與傳統結合在一起，並以聖人為效法對象。就空間面向而言，個人不斷與天地人神交感，所以儒家具有徹底的宗教性。

關鍵詞：儒學、宗教性、宗教

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