

# Moral peace and moral pleasure in the *Analects*

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*ABSTRACT:* This article examines Confucius' ideas of moral peace (an 安) and moral pleasure (le 樂) in the *Analects*. It argues that an and le are two correlated aspects of a self-cultivated state of being (jing-jie 境界) that is grounded on practising benevolence or human-heartedness (ren 仁) and on following the Way (dao 道). The state of an-le involves not only one's reason (i.e., knowing ren and dao) and one's will (i.e., willing ren and dao), but also one's love or 'emotional liking' (hao 好) with respect to the practice of ren and dao. It is a state that resembles Kant's idea of intellectual contentment but, pace Philip Ivanhoe's recent interpretation of Confucius, it is different from Aristotle's concepts of pleasure and eudaimonia.

*RÉSUMÉ :* Cet article examine les idées de Confucius sur la paix morale (an 安) et le plaisir moral (le 樂) dans les *Analectes*. Je soutiens que an et le sont deux aspects corrélés d'un état d'être autocultivé (jing-jie 境界) fondé sur la pratique de la bienveillance ou de l'humanité du cœur (ren 仁) et sur le fait de suivre la Voie (dao 道). L'état d'an-le implique non seulement la raison (à savoir la connaissance du ren et du dao) et la volonté (c'est-à-dire la volonté de pratiquer le ren et de suivre le dao), mais aussi l'amour ou le « goût émotionnel » (hao 好) par rapport à la pratique du ren et au dao. C'est un état qui ressemble à l'idée kantienne de contentement intellectuel mais, pace l'interprétation récente de Confucius par Philip Ivanhoe, différent du concept aristotélicien de plaisir et d'eudaimonia.

**Keywords:** moral peace, moral pleasure, intellectual contentment, eudaimonia, intellectual and emotional likings, Confucius, Kant

*Dialogue* 60 (2021), 145–168

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doi:10.1017/S001221732100007X

## I. Introduction

This article examines Confucius' ideas of moral peace or feeling-at-home (*an* 安) and moral pleasure (*le* 樂) in the *Analects*. *An* and *le* are two correlated aspects of a self-cultivated state of being (*jing-jie* 境界) that is grounded on the practice of human-heartedness (*ren* 仁),<sup>1</sup> i.e., be true to oneself and be benevolent to others, and on the following of the Way (*dao* 道),<sup>2</sup> i.e., walking on the right path of life. Moral peace and moral pleasure involve not only one's reason (i.e., knowing *ren* and *dao*) and one's will (i.e., willing *ren* and *dao*), but also one's love or 'emotional liking' (*hao* 好) with respect to the practice of *ren* and *dao*. Once reached, this state of being is autonomous (rather than heteronomous), self-fulfilling, and without moral anxiety or guilty conscience; nor is it interrupted by ordinary feelings of worry (*you* 憂 and *huan* 患). The uniqueness of Confucius' ethical state can be shown by distinguishing it from physical pleasure or mental happiness (pleasure, *kuai-le* 快樂; happiness, *xing-fu* 幸福), likening it to Kant's idea of intellectual contentment in respecting the moral law, and *pace* Philip Ivanhoe's recent interpretation of Confucius, contrasting it with Aristotle's concepts of pleasure and *eudaimonia*.

## II. Moral peace: Feeling-at-home (*an* 安)

The Chinese word *an* appears in the *Analects* 15 times in nine different sections,<sup>3</sup> but the most philosophically significant use of it occurs in several passages (2:10, 4:2, 17:21) where *an* indicates a state of feeling-at-home that closely relates to Confucius' understanding of ethical cultivation. At 2:10, Confucius suggests that where people feel at home in their actions and choices is where one would observe their true personalities: "The Master said, 'Watch

<sup>1</sup> In the *Analects*, practising human-heartedness means mainly practising loyalty to one's duty, *zhong* 忠, and extending sympathetic understanding to others, *shu* 恕 (4:15), as well as following the golden rule (6:30; 12:2, 15:24).

<sup>2</sup> The three major meanings for the word *dao* 道 in the *Analects* are: Confucius' Way or Confucius' teachings, moral exemplary (*junzi*'s) Way in personal cultivation, and what Confucius sees as the right Way to rule a state.

<sup>3</sup> Etymologically, the word *an* is written as 安 in oracle bone script, symbolizing a woman or a bride 女 safely dwelling in a home, 宀, and meaning 'safe,' 'calm,' 'settled,' or 'peaceful.' A bride under the roof signifies a marriage, which helps both the bride and the groom to live a settled and peaceful life. In the *Analects*, *an* has multiple uses: as an interrogative word, 'where' and/or 'how' (11:26); as a verb, 'to settle' (*an-dun* 安頓) or 'to welcome and accommodate' immigrants (16:1), 'to take care of seniors and offer them a comfortable life at the end' (5:26), 'to heed to ordinary people's wellbeing' (*an-ding* 安定) (14:42), and 'to live at ease and comfortably' (*an-yi* 安逸) (1:14); as a dispositional description, 'calm and kind' (*an-xiang* 安詳) (7:38) or 'being satisfied with one's social-economic situation' (*an-fen* 安分) (16:1).

what people do, observe what they follow, examine in what they feel at ease (*suo-an* 所安). How can they conceal? How can they conceal?”<sup>4</sup> People may feel at ease in *what*? According to QIAN Mu’s (錢穆, 1895–1990) commentary on 2:10, they may feel at ease in doing things out of their own will that also makes them feel settled and pleasant:

Where it is that one feels at home: feeling settled (*an-ding* 安定) and feeling peaceful and pleasant (*an-le* 安樂). If one is forced to do something, one does not feel settled or pleasant, and one is prone to change from what one is forced to do. In contrast, if one feels pleasure in doing something, never feels tired of doing it, one feels settled and does not want to change. ‘Feeling-at-ease’ here refers to a mode and bearing of behavior. (QIAN, 2006, p. 36, my translation)

On the surface, “feeling-at-ease” (home) here seems merely a psychological state, not directly or explicitly linked to ethics. But this does not mean that it is only psychological in the *Analects*, for at 17:21 the same state is understood as internally linked to ethical cultivation. Confucius discusses with his student ZAI Wo whether the latter feels at home and should feel at home with eating sweet rice and wearing brocade gowns after the first year of mourning for his parent, given that the conventional mourning ritual was three years. When ZAI Wo said he felt at home doing so, Confucius first responded with a go-ahead, but then blamed him for lacking human-heartedness (*ren* 仁). Confucius implies that an authentic feeling-at-home, without moral anxiety or guilty conscience, must be grounded on human-heartedness, and that ZAI Wo’s self-claimed feeling-at-home would not be counted as authentic feeling-at-home (see LI, 2017).

The ethical nature of feeling-at-home becomes even more evident at 4:2 where Confucius explicitly grounds it on human-heartedness:

The Master said, “Those who are not human-hearted can neither stay long in privation [*yue* 約], nor stay long in enjoyment [*le* 樂]. Those who are human-hearted are at ease [*an* 安] with human-heartedness, and those who are wise profit from human-heartedness.”

It is significant that being “at ease” here is discussed in connection with both *le* 樂 and human-heartedness. The word *le* appears ambiguous and may be

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<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the English translation of the quotes from the *Analects* in this article comes from NI Peimin, 2017. Note: in the Chinese language, a person’s family name comes first (e.g., NI), then the given name (e.g., Peimin). In this article, I follow this order with Chinese names, yet also by capitalizing all the letters in a last name (e.g., NI), I hope to remind my English readers that in the English conventional place for the first name is actually the last name, according to the Chinese convention.

understood as a moral pleasure or as an ordinary pleasure or enjoyment — due to being well-off as opposed to being in want (*yue* 約).<sup>5</sup> On the latter understanding, those without human-heartedness would not enjoy ordinary pleasure for long, because lacking moral standards, they would quickly destroy whatever pleasure was available to them. (For example, without following proper social order, even the pleasure of eating is not possible: 12:11.) On the former understanding, those without human-heartedness would not be able to constantly stay in moral pleasure while facing adversity, in contrast with those who, like YAN Hui, practise human-heartedness and stay in moral pleasure without change — even in dire poverty (6:11) (More on this in Section III.)

Thus, for Confucius, an authentic feeling-at-home (*an* 安) must be anchored in human-heartedness (*an-ren* 安仁). At 2:10, Confucius suggests that a good way to know the true character of a person is to examine where he feels at home, which seems to imply that one might feel at home in doing different things or in pursuing different goals. However, at 17:21 and 4:2, he makes it clear that, regardless of occupations or activities, there is only one way to feel at home, that is, to feel it in practising human-heartedness. Indeed, it is very doubtful that he would count any other way of feeling at home as being authentic (for example, a possible ‘feeling-at-home’ with glib speech or superficial appearance, would be seen by him as signs of not being human-hearted. see 1:3). As stated above, at 17:21, Confucius blames ZAI Wo’s self-claimed ‘feeling-at-home’ because it is not based on human-heartedness and thus not the authentic feeling-at-home he envisions.<sup>6</sup>

### III. Moral pleasure (*le* 樂)

The word *le* occurs 21 times in 14 different passages in the *Analects*,<sup>7</sup> but Confucius’ signature use of it appears in 6:11 and 7:16, where he discusses

<sup>5</sup> The state of *le* 樂 at 4:2 has been interpreted as referring to some favourable external material conditions or circumstances by Arthur Waley (“prosperity,” 1989, p. 102), Edward Slingerland (“happiness,” 2003, p. 29), Roger Ames and Henry Rosemond Jr. (“happy circumstances,” 1999, p. 89), and LI Zehou (“secure and pleasant environment,” 2015, p. 69). All these translations lean toward what I call a ‘heteronomous reading’ of *le* at 4:2. In contrast, I argue that *le* at 4:2 can be also (actually, better) read as referring to an autonomous, ethically self-sufficient state of being when we consider 4:2 in conjunction with 6:11, 6:23, and 7:16.

<sup>6</sup> See more on inauthentic *an-le* in the *Mengzi* 6B15. For *Mengzi*, only human-heartedness is our genuine, authentic “peaceful abode” (*an-zhai* 安宅, 4A10). However, besides using the word *le* 樂 in the sense of no guilty conscience, he also uses it in the sense of taking delight in being put in, or doing things based on, favourable external conditions (7A20).

<sup>7</sup> Etymologically, *le* 樂 is written as 𠂔 in oracle bone script, depicting a musical instrument with strings attached to a wooden frame. It is pronounced as two heteronyms

his and his student YAN Hui's experience of a special kind of pleasure<sup>8</sup> in which one is not disturbed or bothered by poverty.

The Master said, "Worthy indeed was Hui [YAN Hui]! With a bamboo holder of food, a gourd ladle of drink, and living in a narrow alley, while others could not endure the distress, he did not allow his pleasure (*le* 樂) to be affected by it. Worthy indeed was Hui!" (6:11)

The Master said, "With coarse food to eat, plain water to drink, and my bended arms for a pillow, joy [*le*] can be found in the midst of these. Wealth and prestige acquired in inappropriate ways are no more than floating clouds to me." (7:16)

At 6:11, YAN Hui, Confucius' cherished disciple, does not take pleasure in living in a narrow alley with a bamboo holder of food, a gourd ladle of drink. He does not intentionally choose to live in such a condition, nor does he believe it to be in any way optimal. Similarly, at 7:16, Confucius' pleasure is not literally eating coarse food and drinking plain water, having his bended arms as a pillow. If possible, both YAN Hui and Confucius would prefer to live under better conditions. What Confucius wishes to avoid is the improper attainment of "wealth and prestige,"<sup>9</sup> which, in his view, disrupts his

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*yue* and *le*. The word 樂 signifies one's pleasant and harmonious feelings (*le*) while singing along to a piece of music (*yue*). The multiple uses of 樂 in the *Analects* include: a) both as a verb and a noun, meaning 'indulging oneself and being extravagant with respect to wandering about and feasting' (16:5); b) as an adjective, meaning 'moderately pleasant or enthusiastic in one's pursuits and habits' (3:20); c) as a verb or noun, meaning 'feeling pleasure or excitement' (1:1, 11:13, 13:15, 14:13, 17:21); d) as a verb or a noun, meaning 'that one enjoys to be modulated by rituals and music, or that one enjoys speaking about the goodness of others as well as the company of virtuous friends' (16:5).

<sup>8</sup> In order to capture the distinction between *le* used in 16:5 (in the negative sense of 'indulging in') and used in 6:11 and 7:16 (in the positive sense of 'having pleasure'), I translate *le* in the latter case as 'moral pleasure,' which is autonomous, and the word 'pleasure' refers to ordinary pleasures that are heteronomous. Regarding *le* 樂 in early Chinese texts, Michael Nylan distinguishes "relatively direct experiential pleasures" from "relational pleasures" and takes Confucius/YAN Hui's *le* in 6:11 and 7:16 as an example of the latter (Nylan, 2001, p. 75). I think "relational pleasure" may unintentionally suggest external dependence. For a general discussion of *le*, in contrast with pleasure, joy, and happiness, see Nylan (2018, pp. 34–40).

<sup>9</sup> Confucius does encourage *properly seeking* "wealth and eminence" (see 1:15, 7:12, 8:13).

pleasure.<sup>10</sup> What disrupts this pleasure also disrupts the corresponding peace (feeling-at-home, *an*), because the states of *an* and *le* understood in the *Analects* are two sides of the same coin.<sup>11</sup> They are not two temporarily separate states, one prior to another, nor are they causally linked. In putting *an-le* together, I do not treat it as a compound with a modifier (*an*) and the modified (*le*); rather I interpret them to express equivalent ideas but with different emphases. *An* stresses an optimal moral state of being (involving both actions and emotions), feeling-at-home, the absence of moral anxiety or moral perturbation (9:29, 14:28, 12:4), and *le* highlights the moral pleasure, the self-contentment in doing what is right, analogous to the harmony with one's self, rather than an obtainment of something outside oneself. The lack of moral anxiety, however, does not mean a care-free, indifferent, or apathetic attitude toward virtues, the Way, or others, but rather it clears up the ground for these genuine moral concerns (7:3, 15:32, 4:21, 17:21).

What exactly is the nature of Confucius' (or YAN Hui's) pleasure that is possible even in poor and challenging conditions? According to LI Zehou's comments on *le* at 7:19, "the primordial source of Confucius' pleasure lies in shaman mystical experiences, i.e., the ecstasy one enjoys when one is in total enchantment with everything in the world" (LI, 2015, p. 137, my translation). This interpretation, as plausible as it may sound, seems vague and even un-Confucius-like. Confucius' pleasure might be traced back to some shamanic mystical experiences, but we may have to ask what "total enchantment" consists in — practically or morally — for Confucius and YAN Hui. After all, Confucius and YAN Hui at 6:11 and 7:16 were not engaging in any form of shamanic trance. If so, that would be against Confucius' general rational and keep-it-at-a-respectful-distance attitude toward gods, spirit, and praying (6:22, 11:12, 7:35). Thus, in order to clarify this special pleasure, we must examine the (non-shamanic) ground on which it is based (which will take up the rest of this section) and study its concrete manifestations.

One way to understand this pleasure is to base it on the practice of human-heartedness. This is clear in the general connection between pleasure and human-heartedness at 4:2 discussed above, but also evident at 6:7 particularly regarding YAN Hui's pleasure, which manifests itself in his not straying away from human-heartedness for a relatively long period.

<sup>10</sup> Confucius' use of *an* (moral peace) as a corresponding aspect of *le* (moral pleasure) is different from the use of *an* (physical security) as a precondition for *le* (pleasure) (see Nylan, 2015, p. 201).

<sup>11</sup> It is worth noting that *an-le* is not used as a compound in the *Analects* itself, but as one in both *Mengzi* (*Mencius*) (6B35) and *Xunzi* (9:17); however, in both books, the compound is used in the sense of a life with ease and pleasure, not in either of the sense of moral peace (*an*) nor moral pleasure (*le*) that is used in the *Analects*.

The Master said, “Hui (YAN Hui) is able to maintain his heart-mind not to deviate from human-heartedness for three months. The others are only able to maintain this for days or a month.” (6:7)

Such steadfastness in holding onto human-heartedness explains YAN Hui’s ability to remain constant in adversity and thereby enjoy enduring pleasure (6:11).

Another way to understand Confucius’ pleasure is to link it to the following of the Way. “The Master said, ‘To like something is better than to merely know about it, and to take pleasure in (doing) it is better than to merely like (*hào* 好) it’” (6:20, my translation). Here the word “it” is commonly interpreted as referring to “the Confucian Way” (see Edward Slingerland’s comment added to his translation of the passage, Slingerland, 2003, p. 59; also see LI, 2015, p. 116), but it can equally refer to human-heartedness. Notice that to “know about it” does not imply a motivation to act on it; to “like (*hào* 好) it” indicates a motive or desire but does not necessarily lead to an action.<sup>12</sup> Only when one “take[s] pleasure in (doing) it” can he or she synthesize to “know about it” and to “like it” and *realize* both in practising it.

Despite the apparent distinction between grounding this pleasure on human-heartedness at 6:7 and grounding it on the Way at 6:20, there is strong evidence in the *Analects* that these two groundings are compatible and indeed interpenetrating. They belong to the same ethical endeavour, albeit with different emphases. The Way is the way to practise human-heartedness and human-heartedness must be practised by walking on the Way, the only difference being that human-heartedness highlights the inner (subjective, spontaneous) basis and the Way stresses its outer (intersubjective, regulative) manifestations. At 7:6, “The Master said, ‘To aspire after the Way (*dao* 道), hold firm to virtue (*de* 德), lean upon human-heartedness (*ren* 仁), and wander (*you* 游) in the arts (*yi* 藝).’” The expression “to aspire after the Way” aims at a goal and the way toward it. The expression “lean upon human-heartedness” presupposes a base of an internal, autonomous nature,<sup>13</sup> i.e., carrying out all things with a good

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<sup>12</sup> For Confucius, merely liking (*hào* 好) something is ethically not good enough. Those who like human-heartedness but lack proper learning and practising will result in foolishness, and those who like knowledge but lack proper learning and practising will result in dissipation (17:8).

<sup>13</sup> As far as *an* and *le* are concerned, I argue that Confucius believes in a version of moral autonomy that is similar to Kant’s moral autonomy (“autonomy of the will”) in one sense, but also different from it in another sense. Confucius would agree with Kant that, for an autonomous agent, external forces or factors should not determine his or her actions. However, he would also disagree with Kant: Kantian autonomy relies exclusively on the will (reason) of a rational being — inclinations and emotions are either excluded altogether or put in a subordinate position

will (*zhi* 志) (see 4:4). The interpenetrating nature of human-heartedness and the Way is echoed again at 4:5:

The Master said, “Wealth and prestige are what people desire. If they are not obtained in the proper way (*dao* 道), they should not be held. Poverty and low status are what people dislike. If they are not avoided (*de* 得) in the proper way, they should not be avoided (*qu* 去). If exemplary persons abandon human-heartedness (*ren* 仁), how can they deserve that name? Exemplary persons do not, even for the space of a single meal, go against human-heartedness. In moments of haste, they are with it. In times of distress, they are with it.”

Never for a moment should an exemplary person go against human-heartedness, nor for a moment should he or she walk away from the Way. All choices and actions, whether about things we want, for example, wealth and prestige, or about things we hope to avoid, such as poverty and low status, must be based on the higher standards of human-heartedness and of the proper Way.<sup>14</sup> Thus, for Confucius, practising human-heartedness and following the Way are what make humans distinctively human; they constitute the very purpose of authentic human life. Those who sincerely seek human-heartedness would go even so far as sacrifice their lives to accomplish it (15:9). The point is powerfully echoed by Mengzi when he states that to abandon human-heartedness and the Way is to do violence to one’s very self and to throw one’s *person* away, namely, to fail to live up to how one ought to live:

With those who do violence to themselves, one cannot speak, nor can one interact with those who throw themselves away. To deny propriety and rightness in one’s speech is what is called “doing violence to oneself.” To say, “I am unable to abide in humanness or to follow rightness” is what is called “throwing oneself away.” For human

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compared with the rational will, whereas Confucius’ autonomy consists in both a rational will (with situated decisions as well as the golden (6:30) and silver rules (12:2, 15:24) rather than Kant’s versions of the categorical imperative) and certain natural or cultivated emotions. Thus, Confucius’ conception of autonomy is better characterized not as “an autonomy of the will,” but as a personal autonomy where one tries one’s best to live according to “an authentic self-conception” and “possess the requisite competency conditions effectively to express that self-conception ... [even if there is a lack of] the contingent socio-relational conditions that allow for the expression of that authentic self” (Piper, n.d.).

<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, CHENG Yi (程頤, 1033–1107) was mistaken in holding that YAN Hui’s pleasure lies exclusively on human-heartedness, not on the Way — which was seen by CHENG Yi as external (CHENG, 2004, p. 352). For Confucius, however, the Way is never an external one that is separated from the inner human-heartedness.

beings, humaneness is the peaceful dwelling, and rightness is the correct path. To abandon the peaceful dwelling and not abide in it and to reject the right road and not follow it — how lamentable! (The *Mengzi*, 4A10, also see 7A33, Irene Bloom's translation, 2009)

In aspiring after the Way and leaning upon human-heartedness, one's life becomes purpose-driven and is grounded on a solid foundation. The purpose is not an external one imposed from the above (God) nor from the external (the state), but flows from one's own base and efforts (15:29). This purpose-driven life is a harmonious operation where one knows what one ought to do, where one wills to do it at all costs and with no regrets (7:15, 4:8), and where one takes pleasure in doing it. The pleasure contains both an intellectual aspect — an intellectual liking, being content with doing what one ought to do — and a dispositional aspect, i.e., an emotional liking, *hào* 好, as if one is being naturally attracted to it. The emotional engagement here is very important, because just as the authenticity of mourning lies in the genuine emotion of sorrow (*ai* 哀) (3:26), the authenticity of the purpose-driven life also resides in a genuine moral pleasure (*le* 樂).<sup>15</sup> In QIAN Mu's words quoted above, one would “enjoy doing something, never feel tired of doing it” and “feel settled and not want to change,” despite adverse conditions and negative consequences.<sup>16</sup> In Confucius' words, one would be as “tranquil” as “mountains” (6:23).<sup>17</sup>

#### IV. Concrete expressions of Confucius' pleasure

What is it like to have Confucius' pleasure? To begin with, those who have this pleasure do not have moral anxiety,<sup>18</sup> i.e., they do not suffer from a guilty

<sup>15</sup> Curie Virág also noticed the emotional aspect of *le* in the *Analects* when she argues that 6:11 and 7:19 “suggest that Confucius not only thought it was important to care about the right things — things whose value he does not question — but also that he placed utmost value in being emotionally engaged. It was this engagement, rather than a matching of one's emotions to some predetermined idea of a virtue or right practice, that was the ultimate criterion of what is meant to be a perfected individual” (Virág, 2017, p. 45).

<sup>16</sup> For further developments of this idea of self-fulfilling seeking in the Confucian tradition, see *The doctrine of the mean* 中庸, Chapter 14 (personal integrity or self-realization, *zi-de* 自得) and the *Mengzi* on the idea that seeking implies attaining (7A3) and on the connection between walking in the Way and self-contentment (4B14).

<sup>17</sup> Compare a similar idea by Kant: “The true strength of virtue is a *tranquil mind* with a considered and firm resolution to put the law of virtue into practice” (Kant, 1797/1996, 6:409).

<sup>18</sup> The intimate connection of *le* 樂 and *bu-you* 不憂 can be traced up to the idea of “be joyful with what you are endowed from Heaven and with your mission, you will thus

conscience. “The Master said, ‘The wise are free from perplexity, the human-hearted are free from anxiety [*bu-you* 不憂], and the courageous are free from fear’” (9:29). Here the word “anxiety” (*you* 憂, together with perplexity, *huo* 惑 and fear, *ju* 懼) is used as an intransitive verb. *Bu-you* does not have a specific object about which the human-hearted do not have anxiety.<sup>19</sup> The idea is further elaborated at 12:4: upon reflection the human-hearted realize that they have inner peace (feeling-at-home) and they have no moral regrets and no guilty conscience.

Sima Niu asked about being an exemplary person. The Master said, “An exemplary person is free from anxiety and fear.” Sima Niu said, “Being free from anxiety and fear — does this constitute an exemplary person?” The Master said, “If upon internal reflection you find nothing to regret [*bu-jiu* 不疚], what is there to be anxious about or to be afraid of?” (12:4)

For Confucius, there is only one thing that exemplary persons should feel anxiety about or be afraid of,<sup>20</sup> and that is if they hold their own *person* and keep it intact — or more specifically, if they practise human-heartedness and follow the Way (15:32). This is why Confucius believed that BO Yi and SHU Qi<sup>21</sup> would have no regret: they pursued human-heartedness and they attained it (7:15). When exemplary persons have no ethical regret, there is nothing about which they should be ethically anxious about or afraid of. External challenges and hardship may test them, disturb them, and frustrate them, but would not count *for them* as (ethical) suffering; this is why Confucius was not bitter toward Heaven nor did he blame others when no one seemed to understand him (14:35). No external conditions or contingencies can reduce the value of their *person*, nor

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not have anxiety” (樂天知命故不憂) in *the Book of changes* 易經 (Xi Ci 繫辭上), and traced down to the idea of “joy and without anxiety” (樂且不憂) in ZHANG Zai’s (1020–1077) “Western Inscriptions.”

<sup>19</sup> The Chinese Daoist Zhuangzi speaks of the Daoist sage who does not have worry (*wu-you*, 無憂, see *Zhuangzi*, Inner Chapters, Chapter 6), but what he means by *wu-you* differs radically from what Confucius means by *bu-you* 不憂. The latter means ‘free of anxiety’ or ‘not having guilty conscience’ whereas the former means ‘having no mental attachment to the bodily or to the superficial’ (see *Zhuangzi*, External Chapters, Chapter 11).

<sup>20</sup> The word ‘fear’ (*ju* 懼) here refers to the kind of inner fear — fear of doing something ethically wrong. By contrast, the same word at 4:21 refers to a fear about a foreseeable external situation.

<sup>21</sup> They were two sons of the Ruling Lord of the state of Guzhu (in modern Hebei province), a vassal state of the Shang dynasty; both practised moral uprightness even though doing so led their deaths by starvation.

can these reduce their pleasure in practising human-heartedness and following the Way,<sup>22</sup> but can rather give them opportunities to prove it and elevate it (also see Olberding, 2013, pp. 434–435). This is why — and LI Zehou is after all right in his comments quoted above on Confucius’ pleasure at 7:19 — they can be at peace with themselves and with everything around them. In Confucius’ case, even facing the impending end (final years) of his life does not register in his consciousness. So immersed in the pleasure was he in the pursuit of the Way that he even often forgot to eat (7:19).

To further illustrate the point, let’s look at the idea that Confucian exemplary persons do not worry about being deprived of brothers.

Sima Niu lamented, “Everyone else has brothers. I alone have none.”<sup>23</sup> Zixia said to him, “I have heard that ‘Death and life lie in destiny (*ming* 命), wealth and honor depend upon heaven.’ Exemplary persons are reverent and not careless, and they treat others with respect and observe ritual propriety. All within the four seas are their brothers. Why does an exemplary person have to worry about having no brothers?” (12:5)

To treat others with respect and to observe ritual propriety is to practise human-heartedness and to follow the Way. Thus, what exemplary persons ethically ought to do is done. The fact that they may have no biological brothers or even if they have but none live close by is no reason for them to worry, since in holding their *person*, in practising human-heartedness and following the Way, they turn all within the four seas into their brothers.

It is important to stress, however, that Confucius’ pleasure does not come as a natural endowment without effort, nor is no effort needed in order to treat everyone within the four seas as one’s brothers. It all comes from a conscious resolution to practise human-heartedness (including the respect of others, etc.), to follow the Way, so that one can turn the external conditions around rather than being turned around by them.<sup>24</sup> It all comes from doing what one can do and should do in a life-long commitment (12:1, 8:7).

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<sup>22</sup> However, this pleasure is not concern-free or care-free where one’s heart-mind is like “dead ashes” as in the Daoist Zhuangzi’s thought (see the beginning of Chapter 2, Inner Chapters, in the *Zhuangzi*). Confucius does not deny that the exemplary person should exercise the right kind of care — worry and fear (*you* 憂, or *ju* 懼) regarding parents (see 2:6 and 4:21), and the right kind of social management concerns (*huan* 患) about unfair distribution of goods (see 16:1).

<sup>23</sup> SIMA Niu actually had four brothers, but they were either disowned by him or were nowhere near him in the state of Lu (see NI, 2017, p. 284).

<sup>24</sup> For more on this idea of not worrying about unfavourable conditions but only caring about one’s own ethical cultivation, see 1:16, 4:14, 9:14, 14:30, and 17:15. This idea probably inspired both Tang dynasty poet LIU Yuxi’s (劉禹錫, 772–842) essay

## V. Confucius' peace-pleasure (*an-le*) vs. Kant's intellectual contentment

To further clarify Confucius' peace-pleasure, let's put it in a cross-cultural context with comparable ideas to be found in Aristotle and Kant; the latter, I argue, is closer to Confucius in terms of maintaining the autonomous nature of ethics. The present section compares Confucius' peace-pleasure with Kant's idea of intellectual contentment in respecting the moral law, and the next section contrasts it with Aristotle's pleasure and *eudaimonia*.

According to Confucius, people in a state of peace-pleasure do not have feelings of moral guilt or self-reproach, despite the challenges and frustrations they may experience in doing what is right. This focus on the absence of feelings of guilt and self-reproach may lead some to the conclusion that Confucius construed peace-pleasure only in negative terms. However, this would be a hasty conclusion, in that Confucius also viewed peace-pleasure in positive terms as part and parcel of a purpose-driven, self-fulfilling process of doing what one ought to do. It is an ethical ideal that — regardless of all other contingencies in life — everyone ought to pursue and can pursue. And the pursuit itself consists positively in a state of contentment with one's very existence, and as such it is self-rewarding. In this sense, it is comparable to what Kant calls "intellectual contentment" or "self-contentment," an ethical state arrived at when one respects the moral law, which is in one sense negative but in another sense positive.

Have we not, however, a word which does not express enjoyment, as happiness [which is heteronomous] does, but indicates a satisfaction in one's existence, an analogue of the happiness which must necessarily accompany the consciousness of virtue? Yes! this word is *self-contentment*, which in its proper signification always designates only a negative satisfaction in one's existence, in which one is conscious of needing nothing. Freedom and the consciousness of it as a faculty of following the moral law with unyielding resolution is *independence on inclinations*, at least as motives determining (though not as *affecting*) our desire, and so far as I am conscious of this freedom in following my moral maxims, it is the only source of an unaltered contentment which is necessarily connected with it and rests on no special feeling. This may be called intellectual contentment. (Kant, 1788/1889, p. 148)

Here Kant stresses that in following the moral law one reaches a special form of self-contentment. It is a kind of satisfaction that is both negative and positive. It

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(continued)

"Simple room mottos" (*Lou shi ming* 陋室銘) where one's ethical cultivation is praised despite living in a simple dwelling and Song dynasty neo-Confucian philosopher ZHOU Dunyi's (周敦頤, 1017–1073) essay "On appreciating lotus" (*Ai lian shuo* 愛蓮說) where the virtue of lotus' keeping pure and beautiful is applauded despite being in the midst of filth.

is negative because it is a “satisfaction in one’s existence, in which one is conscious of needing nothing” — not depending on anything external; it is positive because it is “an analogue of the happiness which must necessarily accompany the consciousness of virtue.”

Kant clarifies the negative sense of the self-contentment by contrasting it with “the sensible contentment” (Kant, 1788/1889, p. 148). First, unlike this negative satisfaction in which “one is conscious of needing nothing,” “the sensible contentment” will eventually leave us unsatisfied, because it “rests on the satisfaction of the inclinations. ... For the inclinations change, they grow with the indulgence shown them, and always leave behind a still greater void than we had thought to fill” (Kant, 1788/1889, p. 148). Second, unlike this negative satisfaction, the satisfaction of inclinations is either self-love (selfishness) or self-conceit (self-satisfaction) — both oppose the moral law and must be checked by it (see Kant, 1788/1889, p. 120). Third, the origins of these two kinds of satisfaction are different: one from inclinations being satisfied and the other from respecting the moral law — actions are done *from* duty, not just *in accordance with* duty, as a result of pleasant feelings (see Kant, 1788/1889, p. 147). Finally, these two kinds of satisfaction do not stand on the same level; the satisfaction of respecting the moral law is more foundational. Kant states in sympathy with Epicurus that

indeed the upright man cannot be happy if he is not first conscious of his uprightness; since with such a character the reproach that his habit of thought would oblige him to make against himself in case of transgression, and his moral self-condemnation would rob him of all enjoyment of the pleasantness which his condition might otherwise contain. (Kant, 1788/1889, p. 147)

However, he immediately adds that, for him, in order for such an uprightness to be possible, “[t]he moral disposition of mind” must be “combined with a consciousness that the will is determined directly by the [moral] law” (Kant, 1788/1889, p. 147).

Kant clarifies the notion that intellectual contentment is independent of inclinations by going on to say that this contentment does not lie in an intellectual vacuum completely detached from inclinations and wants. Rather, it is simply “free from their influence”:

Freedom itself becomes in this way (namely indirectly) capable of an enjoyment which cannot be called happiness, because it does not depend on the positive concurrence of a feeling, nor is it, strictly speaking, *bliss*, since it does not include complete independence on inclinations and wants, but it resembles bliss in so far as the determination of one’s will at least can hold itself free from their influence. (Kant, 1788/1889, p. 148)

On the other hand, Kant elaborates on the positive sense of self-contentment later in *The metaphysics of morals* by stating that it is “a moral pleasure that goes beyond mere contentment with oneself (which can be merely negative) and which is celebrated in the saying that, through consciousness of this pleasure, virtue is its own reward” (Kant, 1797/1996, 6:391). It is “feel[ing] happy in the mere consciousness of [one’s] rectitude” (Kant, 1797/1996, 6:388). This feeling is not a sensible feeling, but a moral one, “a feeling of the effect that the lawgiving will within the human being exercises on his capacity to act in accordance with his will” (Kant, 1797/1996, 6:387). It can also be called ‘moral happiness’ (though Kant dislikes the term) “which consists in satisfaction with one’s person and one’s own moral conduct, and so with what one does” (Kant, 1797/1996, 6:388).

Confucius’ peace-pleasure — despite its grounding on human-heartedness and the Way, rather than on what Kant calls the “moral law” — shares precisely these characteristics of Kant’s intellectual or self-contentment. (a) Confucius’ peace-pleasure is a satisfaction in one’s existence. It is a satisfaction based on practicing human-heartedness and following the Way, without which no authentic satisfaction or contentment is possible. It is also self-rewarding and self-fulfilling. (b) It is free from the influence of material conditions, inclinations, and wants (6:11, 7:16). It does not depend on the positive concurrence of an empirical feeling, but it is still a kind of peace-pleasure in the midst of different feelings. A Confucian exemplary person may be in a period of mourning but still be at peace with himself, that is, free from moral guilt (17:21).<sup>25</sup> Being “free from [inclinations’] influence,” however, for both Confucius and Kant, does not mean destroying or wiping out all inclinations. Rather, it means that inclinations must be checked, regulated, and ruled by ethical concerns.

Now the comparison between Confucius’ peace-pleasure and Kant’s intellectual contentment can be summarized as follows:

Confucius	Kant
Peace-pleasure ( <i>an-le</i> 安樂) (negative sense + positive sense)	Intellectual (self) contentment (negative sense + positive sense)
Practising human-heartedness ( <i>ren</i> 仁) / and following the Way ( <i>dao</i> 道)	Respecting the moral law

It is worth noting, however, that compared with Kant’s more realistic view of inclinations in their influence on our ethical lives, Confucius’ view is more optimistic. While Kant stresses reason’s constant *fight* against inclinations and

<sup>25</sup> See Kant on a similar idea of a negative “relief from preceding anxiety,” a “rejoicing at having escaped the danger of being found punishable” (Kant, 1797/1996, 6:440).

feelings (Kant, 1797/1996, 6:408), Confucius emphasizes that we work with inclinations and feelings, through cultivation (*xi*, learning-practising, 1:1, 1:4, 17:2; *xiu*, cultivation, 7:3, 12:21, 14:42; and *ke*, overcoming inclinations, 12:1), and that one's inclinations and feelings can be tamed.<sup>26</sup> For Confucius, the process of cultivation does not have to always be a fierce battle between morality and inclinations; rather, it is like the working of bone, ivory, or jade. Sometimes heavy-handed cutting and carving are required, and other times mild and gentle polishing or grinding are (1:15). It is even possible for Confucius that practising human-heartedness and following the Way eventually becomes spontaneous and habitual (2:4). But, for Kant, "if the practice of virtue were to become a habit the subject would suffer loss to that *freedom* in adopting his maxims which distinguishes an action done from duty" (Kant, 1797/1996, 6:409); that is, if the practice of virtue becomes a habit and makes no choices between acting from one's maxims and acting from duty, then it should no longer be regarded as a practice of virtue.

Moreover, with regard to Confucius' human-heartedness and the Way and its counterpart in Kant, the moral law, there lies an important difference. While both Confucius' human-heartedness and the Way on the one hand and Kant's moral law on the other speak of the idea of duty, what Kant stresses is our *respect* for the moral law as well as our falling short in *completely* acting out of respect for it. Kant worries more about those who with a good heart (compassion) may still act against the moral law; he is less worried about those who act out of the moral law even though without a proper disposition (see Kant, 1785/2011, 4:398). Confucius, in contrast, tends to believe or assume (perhaps too optimistically) that those with a good heart would normally do the right thing, and that at least without a good heart, the reluctant following of bitter duty does not mean much ethically speaking.

Furthermore, Kant says, "It [virtue] is always in progress because, considered *objectively*, it is an ideal and unattainable, while yet constant approximation to it is a duty" (Kant, 1797/1996, 6:409). In contrast, what Confucius focuses on is trusting our ability to actually act from human-heartedness and to follow the Way. In other words, for Kant, there is always a vertical (qualitative) gap between a moral agent and the moral law, and, for Confucius, there is no vertical gap between the practice of a moral agent on the one hand and human-heartedness and the Way on the other hand (7:30) — there is only a temporal, a horizontal, quantitative distance to cover; that is, one must constantly practise human-heartedness and follow the Way till the end of his or her life (4:5, 8:7).

Finally, another difference between Confucius' peace-pleasure and Kant's intellectual contentment is that, while Confucius' peace-pleasure implies and

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<sup>26</sup> Despite the fact that Confucius said that he had never seen a person who (constantly or always) loved virtues as (spontaneously as) he loved physical beauty or lovely sight (9:18, 15:13).

includes a “liking” disposition, an emotional engagement, Kant separated such a disposition from his idea of intellectual contentment, and takes it to be a disposition (rather than part of pure practical reason) for which we can only strive:

[I]t is not within the power of any human being to love someone merely on command. It is, therefore, only *practical love* that is understood in that kernel of all laws. To love God means, in this sense, to do what He commands *gladly*; to love one’s neighbor means to practice all duties toward him *gladly*. But the command that makes this a rule cannot command us to *have* this disposition in dutiful actions but only to *strive* for it. For, a command that one should do something gladly is in itself contradictory because if we already know of ourselves what it is incumbent upon us to do and, moreover, were conscious of liking to do it, a command about it would be quite unnecessary; and if we did it without liking to do it but only from respect for the law, a command that makes this respect the incentive of our maxim would direct counteract the disposition commanded. (Kant, 1788/1996, 5:83)

Kant makes several points in this passage. First, love from inclinations or dispositions, or what Kant calls “pathological love” (Kant, 1788/1996, 5:83; Kant 1785/2011, 4:399) cannot be on command. One cannot be commanded to love another, just as one cannot be commanded to have a genuine smile. Second, to love God or to love one’s neighbour, as practical (moral) love, is respectively to do what God commands and to practise all duties toward him — *gladly*. Third, however, this *glad* disposition should not be taken as readily there in us, for otherwise there would be no need for a command. If I am already *gladly* practising all duties toward my neighbour, then there is no need to command me to do so.<sup>27</sup> Nor should this *glad* disposition be seen as practically or morally irrelevant, such that — as long as I rationally do my duty — I do not need to care about my disposition of liking to do my duty — even when my disposition would go against the command. For example, consider a scenario where one has the disposition of dislike even though one is rationally following the moral command by visiting one’s hospitalized friend, reluctantly and begrudgingly. Fourth, rather, one should do one’s duty but also “strive” (perhaps involving overcoming or cultivating one’s desires and inclinations, but presumably having nothing to do with pretending or faking) for a disposition of liking to do it, in an

<sup>27</sup> See a comparable point in *Analects* 2:4: if one spontaneously follows his true heart-mind without violating the order of things, then the order of things, as it were, does not exist *for him*. In such a case, Kant would say, there will be neither moral command nor virtue, that is, no conflict, no drama (see Kant, 1785/2011, 4:398); one simply “subjectively” passes into “holiness” (Kant, 1788/1996, 5:84; also see Kant, 1797/1996, 6:405). Kant believes that it is not possible to reach a complete “contentment (*acquiescentia*)” either in terms of morality or of practicality (see Kant, 1798/2007, 7: 234–235).

“uninterrupted but endless process” after “the archetype” of “thoroughly liking to fulfill all moral laws” (Kant, 1788/1996, 5:83).<sup>28</sup>

Kant later calls this kind of “liking” “the *subjective* ground of actions” that is an “indispensable complement to the imperfection of human nature,” and he argues that without it the command of duty “is not very much to be counted on” because “what one does not do with liking he does in ... a niggardly fashion — also probably with sophisticated evasions from the command of duty” (Kant, 1794/1998, 8:338).

Here Kant talks about not only “the representation of the duty” (knowing what one ought to do), “following duty” (the execution of duty, willingness to do it), but also about the subjective ground (“liking”) in following duty (gladly doing it) (Kant, 1794/1998, 8:338). These seem to correspond to Confucius’ discussion of knowing what is human-heartedness and the Way, willing to practise them, and taking pleasure (liking) in doing them — which is *not just an intellectual contentment, but also a dispositional liking*.

However, there is also a significant difference between Kant and Confucius here. For Confucius, in the genuine (ideal or optimal) practising of human-heartedness and the following of the Way, the three threads of “knowing,” “willing,” and “having pleasure” can be optimistically and actually braided into a unified cord (6:11 and 7:15). By contrast, Kant, both in his discourse about following duty and in his realistic judgement of human conditions, stresses the actual separation of the three threads of “representing,” “willing,” and “liking” with regard to the moral law. He takes the “liking” disposition as only an archetype one should strive for, a perfection not completely realizable for us in this life.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Regarding Kant’s view that “the assurance of the reality and *constancy* of a disposition that always advances in goodness (and never falters from it),” see Kant, 1793/1998, 6:67; also see 6:75, p. 91.

<sup>29</sup> Krista Karbowski Thomason tries to reconcile Kant’s commonly held dualistic view of reason and emotions, and argues that Kant allows emotions to be an incentive or even a surrogate of reason in a person’s early moral development until reason takes over as a moral motive (see Thomason, 2017). On the other hand, Janelle Dewitt argues that Kant “was attempting to merge the motivational aspect of emotion with the objectivity of pure reason” (Dewitt, 2014, p. 33), because “[r]eason becomes practical by becoming emotional” (Dewitt, 2014, p. 35). I argue that, for Kant, the ‘liking’ disposition or emotion (contrary to Dewitt, who only focuses on the rational, *a priori* emotion), though *not* deductible as a duty from practical reason *per se*, is nonetheless an indispensable subjective condition that one should *always* (contrary to Thomason, who only stresses its importance in a person’s early moral development) strive to have and to cultivate for the actual execution of the moral law.

## VI. Confucius' *le* 樂 (pleasure and moral pleasure) versus Aristotle's pleasure and *eudaimonia*

As noted above, Confucius uses the word *le* in multiple ways, a major one of which being 'pleasure' (in modern Chinese, *kuai-le* 快樂), and his signature one being moral pleasure. We shall see below that in using the word *le* to mean 'pleasure,' Confucius' view resembles Aristotle's view of pleasure, albeit with substantial differences. We shall also see that in using the word *le* to mean Confucius' moral pleasure, there is no counterpart for Aristotle. Moreover, Aristotle's idea of *eudaimonia*<sup>30</sup> is usually translated as 'happiness' in English, which in turn is translated as *xing-fu* 幸福 in Chinese (unwittingly treated as an equivalent to 'satisfaction,' *man-yi* 滿意), which again is often inappropriately and without qualification taken to be a translation of Confucius' moral pleasure (*le*) or peace-pleasure (*an-le*).<sup>31</sup> Thus, we see a series

<sup>30</sup> In Herodotus' time, *eudaimonia*, comprising the Greek *eu* (good) and *daimon* (god, spirit, demon), "contains within it a notion of fortune — for to have a good *daimon* on your side, a guiding spirit, is to be lucky — and a notion of divinity, for a *daimon* is an emissary of the gods who watches over each of us, acting invisibly on the Olympians' behalf" (McMahon, 2006, pp. 3–4). In this sense, *eudaimonia* is very close to the Chinese phrase *xing-fu* 幸福. In Aristotle's appropriation of *eudaimonia*, acting well is much stressed, although good luck is also a necessary condition for *eudaimonia* (see Aristotle, n.d./2002, 1099a33-b8). The English word 'happy' (or 'happiness') was first used in late 14<sup>th</sup> century, meaning "'lucky, favored by fortune, being in advantageous circumstances, prosperous; of events, 'turning out well.'" The word comes from 'hap' (chance, fortune) (<https://www.etymonline.com/word/happy>).

<sup>31</sup> Peace-pleasure (*an-le* 安樂) is not the same as happiness (*xing-fu* 幸福). Etymologically, neither *an* 安 (peace) nor *le* 樂 (pleasure), nor their conjunction *an-le*, means the same as *xing* 幸 (fortunate), or *fu* 福 (blessing), or their conjunction, *xing-fu* — the common Chinese equivalent of the word 'happiness.' The original form for the Chinese word *xing* on the oracle script is 𠄎, which contains two parts, one representing a shackle on the neck 𠄎 and the other an anklet 𠄎 on the feet. As a whole, the word means 'to lock up a convict awaiting execution.' However, it was later used to mean the opposite of its original meaning: instead of meaning 'to lock up,' it came to mean 'to release,' 'to pardon,' or 'to remit (a punishment)' by the rulers. The word *fu* in oracle bone script took the form of 𠄎, in which 𠄎 means to sacrifice to the gods, 𠄎 represents the gesture of a shaman, and 𠄎 depicts a wine jug, held up by two hands 𠄎. As a whole, the word means 'praying to the gods for a good life with the sacrifice of wine.' Thus, *xing* indicates getting external help (pardon) from the rulers, and *fu* indicates receiving external help (being blessed with plenty, wealth, and health) from the gods. In the *Analecets*, Confucius uses the word *xing* several times to talk about situations that are *not* fortunate (see 6:3, 11:7 on his cherished disciple YAN Hui's premature death) and

of rough equivalents in the literature: *eudaimonia*  $\rightleftharpoons$  happiness  $\rightleftharpoons$  *xing-fu* 幸福 ( $\rightleftharpoons$ satisfaction, *man-yi* 滿意)  $\rightleftharpoons$  *le* 樂. These equivalences are careless and probably misleading; in any case, they do not prove that *eudaimonia* is the same as or similar to Confucius' *le*.

While Confucius and Aristotle are both interested in examining the experiences of pleasure or pleasant feelings, Confucius only lays out instances of *le* (pleasure, or moral pleasure) in particular life occasions (1:1, 3:20, 11:13, 14:13, 13:15, 16:5, 17:21), whereas Aristotle clearly attempts a general theory of pleasure. Aristotle not only tries to describe general features of pleasure (Aristotle, n.d./2002, 1175b, 1174b, 1173b), to classify kinds of pleasure (Aristotle, n.d./2002, 1173b-1174a, 1175a-1176a), to rank them in a hierarchy (Aristotle, n.d./2002, 1176a), but also tries to provide a general definition of pleasure: whatever completes and blesses a human being is pleasure in its primary sense (Aristotle, n.d./2002, 1176a).

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(continued)

situations that are subject to contingencies (see 6:19, 7:31). His general attitude toward contingences is that they are to be acknowledged but not to be counted on. As much as he loved YAN Hui, he did not pray to the gods to save YAN Hui's life. It is significant that the word *fu* never appeared in the *Analects* at all, and that a disciple of Confucius went so far as to say that wealth and social status (*fu-gui* 富貴) are dependent upon Heaven (12:5). Regarding wealth and social status, Confucius himself focuses exclusively on how they are to be morally sought and how those who have these blessings should conduct themselves (4:5, 7:12, 7:16, 8:13, 11:17, 20:1; 1:15, 14:10). Neither *an* (peace) nor *le* (pleasure) — as used by Confucius, relating to moral cultivation — means a state of being that relies on external help; rather, both peace and pleasure are autonomous, internally self-sufficient. In the eyes of Confucius, everyone is capable of reaching such a state of being from *within*, provided he or she chooses to anchor in human-heartedness and to follow the Way. (Despite all the differences between Confucius' use of *an* and *le* and that of the Daoists Laozi's and of Zhuangzi's — where Zhuangzi used them as synonyms and as a conjunction but Laozi did not — there is one similarity that all three share: none of them identified *an* or *le* with *xing* or *fu*, or their conjunction *xing-fu*, and none of them equated *an* or *le* with what 'happiness' normally means.) Moreover, neither *an* nor *le* nor their conjunction in Confucius' use means the same as how the word 'happiness' is used in contemporary research on happiness. To the contemporary researchers on happiness, Confucius' peace-pleasure may be too elusive to be studied or measured objectively. At the same time, the factors examined in the happiness reports no doubt miss out on an important inner standard or precondition for life contentment. Aristotle may applaud the positive study of happiness in the World Happiness Report, but he may also object to the fact that it does not include what he sees as a key element of human flourishing — contemplation.

The differences between Confucius' moral pleasure and Aristotle's *eudaimonia* can be shown in two ways. First, the highest form of *eudaimonia*, according to Aristotle, is contemplation (Aristotle, n.d./2002, 1177a12ff, 1177b30ff), which is completely absent, as well as alien, to Confucius. Confucius is very sceptical about what any speculation outside the context of concrete learning and practical everyday life can accomplish: "The Master said, 'I once engaged in thought for an entire day without eating and an entire night without sleeping, but it did no good. It would have been better for me to have spent that time in learning'" (15:31). Moreover, the idea of *zhi* 知 (to know, to be wise) in the *Analects* has to do with knowing right and wrong, what is appropriate or not, in concrete situations, but has nothing to do with theoretical thinking. For Confucius, "to think" and "to know" are practical or pragmatic. In general, according to LI Zehou's widely accepted view, the ancient Chinese tradition subscribes to practical or pragmatic reason (*shi yong li xing* 實用理性) rather than to pure, theoretical reason (*chun cui ling xing* 純粹理性 or *li lun li xing* 理論理性). The subjects of Aristotle's contemplation are divinity, God, and immortality. The subjects of Confucius' thinking and knowing, by contrast, are rituals, virtues, human-heartedness, the Way, and how to achieve peace-pleasure. Aristotle's contemplation is thinking for its own sake; Confucius' thinking (*si*) and knowing (*zhi*) are always situated in a practical human context. For Aristotle, the divine character in human beings, the best possible way of being human, is their capacity for contemplation. For Confucius, by contrast, the best way to be human is to practise human-heartedness and to follow the Way.

Second, Confucius' moral pleasure does not rely on, throughout an entire life, enjoying external goods, such as good birth, friends, children, wealth, looks, health, strength, as Aristotle's *eudaimonia* does (Aristotle, n.d./2002, 1099a32-1099b7, 1101a14-16, 1100a8-9). In other words, one can have Confucius' moral pleasure even in a simple material life and even without, as Confucius puts it, having brothers. This pleasure is a state of being that focuses on inner harmony, grounded on human-heartedness and the Way, and its nature stays the same whether one lives a long life (as did Confucius himself, see 7:19) or not (as was the case with YAN Hui, see 6:3, 11:7). Practising human-heartedness and following the Way *is* sufficient to make one worthy of this moral pleasure. But, for Aristotle, one who lives a short life cannot be considered to have achieved *eudaimonia* — in the sense of "living well," as opposed to "acting well" (see YU, 2007, pp. 172-176). In short, Confucius' moral pleasure focuses on the positive state of a moral agent from the subjective side, from "within" (see 1:14, 15:32), that is, deontological (also see LEE, 2013, pp. 47-55). However, Aristotle's *eudaimonia* incorporates both virtues and external luck. Even when Aristotle talks about virtues, he never addresses them in the first person, i.e., from the subjective perspective. Thus there seems nothing in his *eudaimonia* that is like Confucius' moral pleasure or Kant's "intellectual contentment." While I do not deny that there are a number

of widely accepted affinities between Aristotle's ethics and Confucius' — for example, on practical wisdom and appropriateness (*yi* 義), on the mean or the middle way, and on virtue or *de* 德 — nonetheless, Confucius' moral pleasure and Aristotle's conceptions of pleasure and of *eudaimonia* are quite different.

In a recent book, Philip Ivanhoe interprets Confucius as holding a conception of happiness that is “akin to *eudaimonia*'s sense of being favored by the gods” (Ivanhoe, 2017, p. 131). But this interpretation is problematic in several ways. First, it is baseless for Ivanhoe to attribute the word “happiness” (understood in Chinese as *xing-fu* 幸福, given the equivalences mentioned above) to Confucius. Second, it confuses rather than clarifies Confucius' views on moral pleasure to use “happiness” (*xing-fu* 幸福) and “joy” (*le* 樂) interchangeably, as Ivanhoe does: “for Kongzi [Confucius] happiness or joy is the feeling that one is living well. ... This experience and sensation is the core of Confucian happiness or joy” (Ivanhoe, 2017, p. 136). Moreover, Ivanhoe's interchangeable use of “happiness” (*xing-fu*) and “joy” (*le*) seems to be at direct odds with his own distinction between what he calls “a fully happy life”<sup>32</sup> and “true happiness”<sup>33</sup> for Confucius where only the latter is treated as equivalent to joy (*le*). Thus, readers may wonder if they should understand Ivanhoe as treating “happiness” (*xing-fu*) and “joy” (*le*) as equivalents or understand him as treating them to be different.

According to Ivanhoe, Confucius holds both that “the ethical life of following the Dao is the *only* source of true *joy* [presumably, “true happiness” too as Ivanhoe uses “joy” and “true happiness” interchangeably]. ...” (Ivanhoe, 2017, p. 133, fn. 12, my emphasis and addition) and that in order to live a happy life it is not enough to just follow the *dao*: “Following the Dao is the necessary condition for enjoying these other goods, and to a certain extent, though *not completely*, it is sufficient for a *happy life*” (Ivanhoe, 2017, p. 132, my emphasis). What could it mean to say ‘A is sufficient for B, but not completely?’ If A is not completely sufficient for B, then it is *not* sufficient for B. Wittingly or unwittingly, Ivanhoe has blended two understandings of “a happy life”: one life — like YAN Hui's and Confucius' — is joyful and *self-sufficient* in following the *dao* and in practising human-heartedness (regardless of whether they obtain other goods in life, and Confucius is certainly not against obtaining these goods), and the other life in which one not only follows the *dao* but also luckily and deservedly (though the idea of desert seems under development in Confucius' *Analects*) obtains other goods — a life that Aristotle

<sup>32</sup> As Ivanhoe states: “a fully happy life requires a reasonable level of properly acquired material goods” (Ivanhoe, 2017, p. 132, fn. 11).

<sup>33</sup> As Ivanhoe states: “The joy and true happiness of the highly cultivated person was found in being one with the Dao; in such a state, personal pleasure, wealth, power, or honor gave way to the joy of living in complete and spontaneous accord with the Way” (Ivanhoe, 2017, p. 143).

would embrace. Thus, by misreading Aristotle's happy life into Confucius' joy (*le 樂*, I prefer to translate it as moral pleasure) of following the *dao*, Ivanhoe has missed the important point in Confucius' view that external goods are *not* part of the self-sufficient idea of moral pleasure itself (also see Olberding, 2013, p. 429). Confucius' disciple YAN Hui's life was not fortunate as a life, but neither Confucius nor Confucians ever denied the value of YAN Hui's pleasure in practising human-heartedness and following the Way. For Confucius, 'living well' means exactly (no more and no less) 'acting well' all throughout one's life (4:5, 8:7); for Aristotle, 'living well' is more than 'acting well,' since the former depends on luck whereas the latter does not. In terms of this sense of pleasure, *Confucius is a Kantian, not an Aristotelian*. Admittedly, Confucius did believe that practising human-heartedness and following the Way may (very likely) have objective effects. If you respect others, then all are likely to be your brothers (12:5), and exemplary persons' moral practice *can* naturally have influence on others as the wind can bend the grass (12:19). But, for Confucius, *such objective effects do not form a necessary part of or necessary condition for moral pleasure*. He did not argue for a separate notion of 'a happy life' (as Ivanhoe has attributed to him) construed as a combination of the feeling of joy and the attainment of other external goods, i.e., 'a happy life' seen from an *objective* perspective. Therefore, this so-called conception of 'a happy life' is wrongly attributed to Confucius.

## VII. Conclusion

Confucius' peace-pleasure indicates an ethically optimal state of being that one can reach only by acting from human-heartedness and by walking on the Way, even though in reality no one seems to constantly and for a whole life acts thus (6:7). Acting from human-heartedness and walking on the Way does not mean one must sacrifice the maximum one has — either in terms of material goods or of one's very life — on all occasions (15:9, 15:35). Nor does it imply a highly ascetic moral life (4:5, 8:13). It is not contingent upon external conditions, and it is a state of authentic living that fulfills the very purpose of authentic human life. This state differs from Aristotle's *eudaimonia* because it does not include or depend upon external conditions. In this regard, Confucius' peace-pleasure purports to be completely autonomous and remarkably similar to Kant's idea of "intellectual contentment," that is, the state arrived at when one respects the moral law and acts out of duty.

## Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments, suggestions and criticisms, and to Jill Flohil and Arthur Ling for their generous editorial help. I also want to thank Kwantlen Polytechnic University for offering me one course release toward the writing of this article, and to thank LU Yinghua and Patrick Moran for their helpful suggestions and comments on earlier

versions of this article. Last but not least my thanks go to Michael Hunter for tuning the English of the article and for preparing the Abstract in French.

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