

## THE GLOBAL INTELLECTUAL AND SELF WORTH: A CRITERION FOR THE CULTURAL SCIENCES

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**Abstract.** *On the occasion of scholar and teacher, Algis Mickunas' 80th birthday, I wish to recognize his particular essay, "The Global Intellectual and Self Worth," by expanding on his insights. I have chosen to expand this article by selecting another teacher and his student, Confucius and Yan Hui. The examined situation of the grief suffered by Confucius upon the death of Yan Hui provides context to the meaning of life as self-worth and life worth living.*

**Key words:** *Confucius, Yan Hui, ur-modal, kinaesthetic, Mickunas, Context*

### Introduction

Throughout the *analects*, Confucius describes the capacity for bereavement as an ethically valuable trait. Here Confucius' own display of at the premature death of his beloved student Yan Hui is investigated as a model of meaning and significance

in a flourishing life. This display provides a valuable portrait, *in situ*, of the specific species of bereavement that Confucius sanctions and encourages. It likewise makes clear what role vulnerability to injury plays in the articulation of self-worth.

The model of philosophy evident in the *analects* is oriented toward offering practical instruction for daily life and its emphasis is upon making one's way, negotiating a path. In this regard, Confucius functions as a wayfarer his counsel aimed at mapping a safe and efficacious passage through a variety of prosaic human experiences. Among these experiences, perhaps one of the most prominent is bereavement. To suffer the death of loved one, Confucius suggests, is a uniquely perilous area in the landscape of human life. To navigate this area requires a robust and careful understanding of bereavement and its significance in a life well-lived. In what follows, I wish to focus upon the counsel Confucius offers regarding loss and the way in which Confucius valorizes this emotional expression as a constituent of a flourishing life.

Part of what makes a marker useful is its distinctiveness. While what is distinctive will often depend upon circumstance, there are some landmarks that, owing to their less transitory and less common character, function as substantially stable (not to say permanent) points of orientation. In Confucius' lexicon, these are models of individuals who serve a dual function as both markers and examples of those who have reached their destination. They are akin to a city's lights at night-visible from great distance and remarkable in their clarity and prominence on the horizon. Both Yan Hui and Confucius himself cut such a figure in the *analects*. In the case of Yan Hui this is evident from the way in which Confucius describes Yan Hui's character as, above all, reliable. His constancy in pursuing self-cultivation serves to provide a model that, unlike the model of Zilu, for instance, can be counted on to provide reliable instruction. The model that is of most relevance here, however, is Confucius himself.

Compiled by Confucius' students, the text of the *analects* is, in large measure, a vivid and descriptive account of the character of Confucius. In addition to recording the words of Confucius, it offers superficially incidental details about his comportment and behavior in a variety of circumstances. It describes Confucius' habits while dining<sup>1</sup>: his gait in the presence of mourners (e.g., *an.* 9.10, 10.25), and his physical

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1 The text that is often considered our most reliable source for Confucius' thought, the *Analects*, will be my focus in what follows. Though perhaps more dependable than other sources using the voice of Confucius, the *Analects* itself is not, however, without problems. A collection of what are ostensibly Confucius' statements, his conversations with his students, and, in part, simply a record of his activities and comportment, it contains many passages that scholars identify as problematic and that are suspected to be later interpolations. There is, at present, little consensus about these textual issues. Though I will be sensitive to these concerns, I propose to treat the *Analects* as a narrative and discuss the Confucius who emerges as the protagonist of this narrative. I will thus be less concerned with assessing the historical authenticity of the received text of the *Analects* and the image of Confucius it offers than with discerning whether a consistent and coherent therapy for the sorrow of bereavement may be discovered there.

-- Because many of Confucius' claims are given as responses to particular interlocutors, understanding them requires that they be treated as assertions informed by the context

posture in a variety of contexts (e.g., *an.* 10.19, 10.24, 10.26). The text thus functions as both philosophy and something of a biography of Confucius. Yet the biographical, the display of Confucius' persona, is philosophical, for it does what Confucius' pronouncements alone cannot. Such details, are meant to be not understood but savored for such details do not simply breathe life into the ideas that Confucius offers. Rather, they display the ideas incarnate and, in so doing, marginalize the importance of ideas *qua* ideas in favor of the enjoyment of an atmosphere. The theme to which they insistently return the reader is that of wisdom as dynamic and evolving, an activity that resists sedimentation into abstract truth. The *personae* of individuals such as Yan Hui and particularly Confucius thus represent a way of being displayed does no and cannot serve, once and for all, to map a course. The deployment of models serves, rather, as "acts of evocation."<sup>2</sup> They instruct by manifesting, pointing rather than articulating. In this manner, they do not command intellectual assent, but lie on the horizon inviting appropriation and emulation.

## Understanding Life

While Confucius' reaction to Yan Hui's death is embedded in the characters of each man and the relationship between them, there are features of Yan Hui's death that permit a scope beyond this particular circumstance. There are, in short, psyche disposition towards death that Confucius brings to this encounter with loss that inform his reaction. While understanding Confucius' response to Yan Hui's death is

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in which they are given. To the degree that the text of the *Analects* permits, knowing the characters of Confucius' interlocutors is necessary for a hermeneutically responsible reading. For Confucius' replies are often measured. The message is not fixed but weighted against what the capabilities and character of the interlocutor will permit. Thus Confucius does not, for instance, settle upon singular definitions of terms but instead offers a variety of meanings, none of them exhaustive but each responding to a particular need and circumstance. It is for this reason that Confucius' claims are best described as "suggestive." Any apparent inconsistency between claims is resolved if they are treated not as attempts to hit a fixed target or establish a truth once and for all, but as deliberate and methodical efforts to indicate a direction for further inquiry. As such, they deploy a strategic ambiguity of sorts, inviting the reader to entertain a complex variety of meanings.

- As Confucius' practice of citing models from his own immediate acquaintance suggests, there is no permanent pantheon of unchanging models. To accept Confucius' counsel is thus not to accept wholesale only those models he offers. For such an acceptance would neglect the way in which Confucius' counsel resists reduction to a formula. To tread the path he describes would, rather, entail that, like Confucius, I look for models among those in my own immediate context and cultural framework. A vital "Confucianism" would be one that does not stop with the models of the *Analects*.
- See, for example, *Analects* 10.8, 10.10, and 10.11. All references to the *Analects* (*Lunyu*) give chapter and passage number as they appear in the *Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series No. 16: A Concordance to the Analects* (and cited with *an.*)

2 Hall, D. L., Ames, R.T., *Thinking Through Confucius*, SUNY Press, 1987, p. 304.

not reducible to a summary of attitudes, neither can his response be comprehended independently of them. Thus a brief examination of these suppositions is necessary before turning to the unique aspects of Yan Hui's death and Confucius' resultant grief upon the death of Yan Hui shares three important features with the death of Bo Niu, another of Confucius' students.<sup>3</sup> These features and Confucius' grief at both of these deaths in turn reveal something of loss more broadly conceived. However it does point to what is a life worth living. The comparative may be that the unexamined life is not worth living, the un-lived life is not worth examining. Confucius is clearly troubled in both cases, yet there are circumstances here that demarcate and delimit grief. It is not loss *qua* loss that troubles Confucius, but specific sorts of loss in particular contexts. Thus Confucius' distress in each of these cases, results not from a "lack of nerve" in Confucius as he immediately and concretely encounters loss, but from the presence of specific circumstances that lend these deaths in particular a tragic character.<sup>4</sup> Confucius does not conceive death, in a generic, abstract sense, to be tragic. It is, rather, a predictable and familiar aspect of natural and generational processes. While death itself is not tragic, however, particular deaths can be tragic insofar as they are waste. The sorrow of Confucius at the deaths of Yan Hui and Bo Niu is, in part, attributable to the way in which these deaths are wasteful. The waste of these deaths derives from the confluence of three principal features that they share. Both Yan Hui and Bo Niu are relatively young. They are also good people, leading lives in accordance with the *Dao*. Finally, both men died of illness rather than from any calamity resulting from their philosophical and virtuous practices. They did not, in short, give their lives for some higher aim.

While many insist that reconciliation to death requires an acceptance of its capacity to come when unexpected and strike with an indifference to age, Confucius' reactions to the deaths of Yan Hui and Bo Niu imply a modified sense of this acceptance. While Confucius would accept the prudence of recognizing death's capacity to take even the young, he does not equate reconciliation to death with a readiness to count the age of the dead a matter of indifference. The notion that a life can, no matter what its span, be "complete" is wholly alien to the Confucian worldview, a worldview in which the development of one's character must, in some ways, be measured according to the opportunities that life affords. While one can, by dint of effort, achieve considerable successes regardless of station and stage in life,<sup>5</sup> there are certain aspects of human experience that are only afforded to those who have reached a certain age. Thus, though one may flourish whatever one's allotted span, longevity is to be prized not for its own sake but for the way in which it permits

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3 Philip J. Ivanhoe, "Death and Dying in the *Analects*," in *Confucian Spirituality*. ed. Tu Weiming, *forthcoming*.

4 *Ibid.*

5 See, for example, *Analects* 4.8, in which Confucius claims that if one hears the *dao* in the morning, one may die gladly in the evening.

maturation of understanding and the expression of virtue across a full spectrum of possibilities that human life can offer. Time and experience are elements that permit enrichment otherwise unavailable. A commitment to pursue a life of cultivation and virtue is, in Confucius' view, like the commitment to marriage. It presupposes not *stasis* but enriching change and, while one's commitment to virtue may be accomplished in a moment, its fullest expression can only be afforded given time and opportunity. Because both Yan Hui and Bo Niu died young and as students, there were opportunities that they were unambiguously denied. The world would know them only as students and never as the teachers they might have become. They would never be husbands in long-lived marriages, grandfathers, or elders in their communities. The tragedy of their deaths and Confucius' grief regarding their loss is thus in part attributable to the way in which the brevity of their lives represents possibilities unrealized.

Persistence in life to no good end is not, clearly, the avoidance of tragedy. Being long-lived is only of value if those to whom time is granted make it so through their efforts. That Yan Hui and Bo Niu had characters that promised such effort makes their ends a sorrow and a waste of possibility.

While our modern idiom of death with dignity has great currency today, Confucius never used the term dignity, rather the term was also in the negative in the he would use indignity, humiliation, dishonor. Therefore, the idiom with a Confucius framework is death to prevent indignity. The ethic of death with dignity is summarized in ancient and modern China as "rather be shattered vessel of jade rather than an unbroken piece of pottery" which means better to die in glory or dignity than to live or survive in disgust. In fact this is close to Kant's idea on self-regard duty. We are in duty bound to take care of our life in and for itself, is not the greatest gift entrusted to our keeping and of which we must take care.. There are duties far greater than life and which can often be fulfilled only by sacrificing life if a man cannot preserve his life except by dishonoring his humanity; he ought rather to sacrifice it. (Lectures on ethics, 154–157) "Ren" and "yi" were not understood in Confucius but are manifest through types of relationship not through a universal duty but in general through interpersonal commitment, filial piety faithfulness in friendship. Yet, "Ren" and "yili" are realized by virtues of other regarding mortality, through concrete familial, social and political relationships. Confucius' understanding of life is at once prosaic and profound. In affirming the sorrow we endure lives apparently cut short, Confucius implies that there is a certain justice in the rather commonplace tendency to view "untimely" deaths as a special sorrow. This sensibility is elevated beyond the merely commonplace by the way in which Confucius embeds it in the affirmation of specific values. Grief here is not blind outrage at the caprice of fate taking the young before their time. It is not, that is, rooted in the perception that fate has dealt with us *unfairly*. Rather, grief painfully consummates human values. Insofar as one recognizes one's place in the world as intimately bound up in one's relationships with others, insofar as the quality of one's life is described according to the defining

character of these human intimacies, grief will emerge spontaneously as befitting the meaning of spontaneity or no action as the response to the loss of a relationship. Our desire to see those we love afforded a fullness of time and to be afforded a fullness of time in our relationships with them cannot but leave us vulnerable. However, to insulate ourselves against this vulnerability is to insulate ourselves from those aspects of life that most enrich. Grief is thus but an intensification of the values that invest human life with significance and meaning.

Confucius likens Yan Hui to a son and often recommends him as a model for emulation. When Yan Hui dies, Confucius' reaction displays a sorrow so intense that even his students--presumably Yan Hui's companions and friends--are taken aback. After Yan Hui's death, Confucius refers to him in a way that suggests a persistent and abiding melancholy that exceeds simple nostalgia. The differences evident in the *analects'* portrayal of Confucius' reactions to the two deaths thus suggest that the appropriate response to loss resists summary in an account of rather abstract and general circumstances such as age, goodness, or manner of death. They suggest that, insofar as the reaction to loss is shaped according to circumstance, a more robust notion of "circumstance" than readily abstractable features is warranted. While general observations about timing and character provide a context for understanding, there is much here that they cannot explain. The nature of Confucius' grief for Yan Hui seems rooted in something both more immediate and more elusive than an appeal to factual circumstances can capture. It is not a *class* of death that Confucius rues but the death of one man in particular.

### The Stupid/ Dull – Bland/ Colorless Man

Because Confucius' dramatic reaction to Yan Hui's death is situated in the relation that the two men enjoyed, the first step in entering into the atmosphere of Confucius' grief is to investigate Yan Hui himself. Who is Yan Hui? Given the relative wealth of passages in the *analects* that concern or describe Yan Hui, this question is surprisingly difficult to answer. For Yan Hui, an individual whose death seemingly had the power to elicit Confucius' greatest display of grief, often appears in the *analects* to be, frankly, remarkably unremarkable. Yan Hui, it is quite clear, is a good man. Yet relative to the dynamic, challenging, and even entertaining figures cut by many of Confucius' other students, his very goodness apparently conspires to make him colorless, his personality tightly circumscribed by the moral lessons to which his activities and attitudes give rise. Indeed, goodness here seems to exercise a sort of tyranny over personality, obliterating any features or peculiarities of character that might compete for notice. Were it the case that the other students who people the *analects* were equally featureless, this might simply be attributed to the literary style of the text. However, this is not the case. Neither while the personalities and idiosyncratic characters of other students appear prominently, Yan Hui, it seems neither is unique nor only in being a rare species of good, but also in being somewhat insipid.

To read the characterizations of Yan Hui in the *analects* as descriptions that, in some measure, mirror the man is to conclude that Yan Hui was often notable for what he, in contrast to Confucius' other students, lacked. He had none of Zilu's impetuosity, displaying instead a remarkable constancy (*an.* 6.7). Unlike Zigong, who was given to measuring and ranking others (*an.* 14.29), Yan Hui focuses on his own progress and shortcomings (although, notably, none of these shortcomings are specifically identified) (*an.* 14.29). He is resolute and energetically pursues learning, showing none of the laziness of Zaiwo, a student who often merited Confucius' censure and whom Confucius once described as both "rotted wood" and "dried excrement" (*an.* 5.10). These are but a few examples of the many contrasts that the *analects* implicitly draw between Yan Hui and his peers. These contrasts mark Yan Hui as a kind of exception to the human foibles to which Confucius' students are prey.

The picture of the relationship between Confucius and his students that emerges in the *analects* is one that manifests features recognizable to anyone who has spent much time teaching. It is a relationship that affords moments of great affection and reward yet these are equally matched by moments of frustration, challenge, and conflict. Yan Hui is an exception in this regard as well. For, by Confucius' own account, Yan Hui never disagrees with him: "Hui is of no help to me, for he does not disagree with anything I say" (*an.* 11.4). If he frustrates Confucius – it seems that he may if Confucius' claim that Yan Hui is of "no help" is any indication – it is a comparably mild sort of frustration. Insofar as the descriptions of Yan Hui in the *analects* are comparable in function to the descriptions of other students, that is, insofar as they at least partially serve a biographical function, the view that Yan Hui's is a countenance without much color is borne out.

Confucius makes a few remarks regarding Yan Hui that both confirm certain dullness in Yan Hui's personality and begin to reconcile that dullness with the exalted position in Confucius' affections that Yan Hui holds. Perhaps the most telling passage is one in which Confucius describes his own curiosity regarding Yan Hui's mild mien:

The master said: "I can talk to Hui all day and, as though he were stupid, he will not disagree with me. Yet when he withdraws from my presence and I witness his private actions, [I see that] he manifests what I have been saying. Hui is clearly not stupid" (*an.* 2.9).

This passage is extraordinary on a number of counts. It shows a rarely seen side of Confucius. Here he is bemused, the skill with which he typically "reads" the character of others having apparently failed him. He has clearly entertained doubts about Yan Hui's abilities, yet whatever these doubts, they are matched by a suspicion that something has eluded him. Thus Confucius observes Yan Hui in secret in order to see what an unguarded Yan Hui is like. That Confucius is drawn to watch his student, acting with what one must imagine as a degree of stealth, likewise indicates another side of Yan Hui's own character: he is, in some way, mysterious, even to his

teacher. That his teacher sees fit to report his secret observations furthermore suggests that the suspicion that Yan Hui is stupid is not limited to Confucius alone. Were it only Confucius who found Yan Hui puzzling, one would not expect Confucius to feel a need to report his findings to others. This passage thus reveals a seemingly paradoxical conclusion regarding Yan Hui's character and personality: he is both what he seems and *more* than what he seems. He is an insipid figure and yet in his very lack of flavor resides a skillfulness and colorfulness that is at once consistent with Confucius' counsel and mysterious. To resolve some of this mystery, it is necessary to return to the attribute of Yan Hui's character, his goodness, which the *analects* most clearly define.

### The Empty Man

Yan Hui is dull and he is also good. That he is both, however, is more than a simple coincidence. In a study on the "Chinese notion of 'blandness,'" François Jullien argues that blandness – whether it be manifest in art, food, or individual human beings – is a "virtue." Regarding the rich potential of the bland, it is possible not only to reconcile Yan Hui's dull character with his goodness, but to show how his comparable plainness makes his goodness possible and, by extension, show just why he so endears himself to Confucius.

It is at this point we need to take a detour into the cosmology of taste in order to grasp the notion of blandness in the deeper meaning in the Chinese Confucian tradition. The Chinese tradition has a lot of fives: five tones, five colors, five direction, five elements, and five flavors, five virtues. The model of the five elements is one of the unchanging laws that bring s order to the manifestation of life. The elements found in cuisine that balances the five flavors, in paintings that incorporate the five associated colors, and in the system of music embodied in the five note scale. These ideas were used to govern and infuse political process with wisdom. The five elements allow the medical practitioner to diagnose and treat the respiratory chi.

Essentially, the five elements describe interrelationship of nature. The circular arrange is a creative cycle wood creates fire, fire created metal creates water, and water creates wood. The cycle is also known as a mother child relationship, a critical understanding of the rank of the Confucius paternal hierarchy of relation, father-son, etc. There is another system in the elements known as k'o or control cycle. This is a pattern of polar balance in which wood controls earth, earth controls water, water controls fire, fire controls metal and metal controls wood without the control the harmony movement of elements may be come excessive and overflow, k'o keeps of the balance of yin/yang. The movement of the elements: wood is expanding movement, fire, upward movement, earth downward movement, metal inward movement and water downward movement. The principal involved in these patterns and are inextricable from life in particularly seasonal and plant life these patterns are observed and the cycles manifests the symbolic meaning of the changes in the



cosmology respiratory of chi, hence the state model of the elements to a dynamic model. There are times of growth which an upward movement and a upsurge of activity as living things unfold according the shi, the power, the potency, the more of the inherent measure of the plants solar economy (A. Lingus), their markers of closing and storing, rest travel downward into depths, stillness, and transitions and upsurges. It is with these rhythms of life space time movement cycle that are taken symbolically with all its diffusion and suffusion with its contextual variants.

The Chinese live close to the soil as the Greek agricultural observe the patterns the cycle is self-perpetuating resulting an unceasing transformation of life as the rhythms of the vegetative show itself in terms of the appearance and withdrawal of the vegetative life force. We find an expansion of light (yang) spring/summer and a contraction of light with the rising of the dark yin into autumn and coming to rest in winters.

The elements are given birth through the yin/yang and their flavors associate with each element, wood/sour, fire/bitter, earth/sweet, metal/pungent, water/salty. It would seem without too much work one can see the synesthetic dimension, the kinesthetic and perhaps even Heidegger was inspired. However, with the specter of Prometheus/Heidegger only gives us ontology of perspiration rather than a truly different order of thought produced from respiration / perspiration. As the associative symbols of China show that one of task of the elements was caring for earth.

As Confucius' covert observations of Yan Hui demonstrate, the bland has about it an air of mystery. It appears to conceal as much as it reveals. Unlike Confucius' other students who are readily known by their words and responses to events, knowing Yan Hui requires a resort to other measures for he displays no marked features. This absence of display is itself, however, what uniquely marks Yan Hui. He is, one who is "full yet appears to be empty" (*an.* 8.5). Being bland in character is, in some measure, to withhold oneself and be modestly sparing in personality.

As a harmonious relationship between diverse qualities or capabilities, blandness expresses an optimal and discrete equilibrium in which no one quality manifests itself in such a way as to exclude another – and so where all qualities may coexist simultaneously and manifest themselves appropriately according to the diversity of the circumstances.<sup>6</sup>

I should note that while Jullien has developed insight he seems somewhat paralyzed by the French semiotic who wish to regard China/ eat as having non-mutually understood or any cross fertilization. In fact he continues the myth or absolute otherness. Clearly one example that should be noted among many others is Adam Smith's notion of sympathy, used to name the Confucius character for relationship as sympathy. Smith, a student of Quetelet who was known as the

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6 Jullien, F.; Parkes, G. The Chinese Notion of "Blandness" as a Virtue: A Preliminary Outline. *Philosophy East and West*.43.1 (Jan 1, 1993): 108.

Confucius of Europe, on the other hand *lassie faire* was interpreted as non-action. To be bland, and I think the word *mute* better illuminates what Jullien was getting at, is not to lack personality but to assiduously hold oneself in balance. It is to be insipid not for want of a defining character, but as a means to assert a character that invites determination.

The virtue of the bland rests in its capacity to lie open, to be both adaptive and opportunistic. Seen in this manner, the contrast between Yan Hui's dullness and the colorful foibles of Confucius' other students assume a significance beyond a contrast in personalities. The reactions and behaviors of Confucius' other students are, in many ways, predictable. Owing to the color of their characters, their ability to succeed in a variety of endeavors can be anticipated with some confidence.

In Confucian tradition, etiquette or propriety (*li*) are the specific practices that regulate behaviors, but it originates from the emotions of human heart. When asked about etiquette, Confucius explained, it is the business of laying on the colors (the preparation of) the plain ground." When asked what the meaning of this passage is – the pretty dimples in her artful smile the well-defined black and white of her eye.

The master said the business of laying on the colors follows the plain ground ceremonies then are a subsequent thing. "The master said it is *shang* who can bring out my meaning. Now I can begin to talk about the odes with him." This passage gives us additional insight into the Confucian Chinese traditions. The odes serve to stimulate the mind for purposes of self-cultivation, and teaching the art of companionship; how to moderate the feeling and furthering one's duty to one's father and to the prince.

Jullien defines blandness or the plain ground as the moment at which to elements stands not in opposition, but rather, abide within the plentitude, as the undifferentiated foundation of all things. In order to find an apt comparative with today's global world we should point to architecture is the visible aesthetic of sociology. Virillo indicates that architecture will continue to exist, but in the state of disappearance, where disappearance does not mean eliminated. This allows for the continuous and bland as it relates to the Chinese thought and aesthetic of "dan" meaning, dull, stupid, insipid, which is a translation of Jullien concept of *fadeur* – fade.

All landscapes blend together and assimilate each other. Architecture opens up the possibility for transformation and operation, again, as clearing. In describing the Nordic environment, Christian Norberg-Schultz distinguishes landscapes as incomprehensible and classical clearings over a comprehensive Euclidean whole, noting an incompleteness that suffuses into landforms. While open repetition manifest the environment as given. The clearing complements that which is missing – seriality and repetition within a neutral, but not pure, material field which allow the displacement and evaluation accepted conditions of connecting, seaming, and jointing. Within any contextual situation there is the potential for supplementation/augmentation promoting a quivering stability ultimately coalescing in a state of blandness. A dynamic and oscillating equilibrium is achieved through pure potentiality embodied in this process augmentation. Inherent to such processes

of design production there is inexhaustible potential to promote appropriation in unpredictable and dynamic ways.

Within the Western civilization way, blandness is understood as a lack, an undesirable absence of particular differentiated things. Positive in the East in Daoism and Confucian blandness/ muteness comprises balance and the unnamable union of all potential values. Is this integrated difference of the phenomenological ur-modal? (Mickunas).

Etiquette is just like the color white in service of other colors to become prominent. Etiquette if understood as drawing/ or drawing out is then it colorless (not a color in Chinese phrasing). White and colors emerge for real beauty to emerge. Etiquette is used to express the emotions and feelings appropriately. Therefore Confucian regulation of emotions of ups and downs is the use of etiquette on exterior forms and it also controls emotions by transforming interior feelings by a process of reflection.

It is important to note that Confucius viewed the “cause” of emotions are external things, objects, or persons. Confucius explains: “all the modulations of the voice arise from the mind, and the various affections of the mind are produced by things. The affections thus produced are manifested in the sounds that are uttered (li ji, yue ji). For Confucius, music is not merely a human art but a common speech for all intelligence in the universe. Therefore Confucius indicates that ceremonies become the eyes of men as a delicate graceful and expressive mode of communication. The visible is in the ceremonies and the music is the invisible spiritual agency (liki, bk xvii, sect. v, 19).

Yan Hui shows that muteness is both a part of emotional restraint and comparable to the Tao, as a translucent white, subtly of taste which comprise an undifferentiating plainness allowing the unfolding of the colorful, flavorful and tonal manifesting through human activity in terms of things within the environment. This is of utmost importance to Confucius and an important element for us to understand the depth and mystery of Yan Hui. Music is the hidden side of affective orientation, the silent vectors of forces of rhythm, a feeling of pulsation. For Confucius the pulses are a myriad of sound and vibration. The silent vectors are embodied in the universe in the concrete world of elemental cosmology endowed with their own tempo. (This is not the vitalism of the West, nor the vital élan of Bergson.

Because of his dull aspect, Yan Hui is a character at once obvious and mysterious, and there is a sense in which he must ever remain unknown. What he might have been lies on an unreachable horizon of possibilities only dimly glimpsed. That the loss of Yan Hui strikes Confucius with such force is bound up with both the obvious and the mysterious. He sees Yan Hui’s skill and, in that sense, knows and appreciates the character of the companion he has lost. Yet the nature of Yan Hui’s skill is such that it is too easy to simply attribute Confucius’ grief to the loss of a known and beloved student. Yan Hui is not, or not simply, a young man whose character promised great achievements. His death represents, for Confucius, possibilities unrealized, but these are no ordinary possibilities. For what makes Yan Hui unique and his death uniquely painful is not that he is known but that he is unknown. What he offers is unfamiliar

and unpredictable, even to the sage Confucius. Unlike that of his other students, Yan Hui's character promises to show Confucius something he has never seen before. Thus Confucius rues not what he knew Yan Hui would become but that he could not know what Yan Hui would become. And Yan Hui's death ensured that he would never know. It may be of value to understand that Yan Hui's name, pictographically may be interpreted as the ability to see both the past and future with discernment. Perhaps the uniqueness of Yan Hui offering the unfamiliar and unpredictable is based on facing the unfamiliar and unpredictable. Whereas Confucius looks to past as his only counsel, it might serve us well to understand the body schema of Chinese and reverse their temporal orientation compared to the West. The front is the past and the future is behind.

### The Confucius Who Never Was

To say that identity is constructed in the patterns and interactions of relations with others is to acknowledge that who I am and can be is always embedded in a set of circumstances that are changeable. The death of Yan Hui serves as a dramatic and final rupture in the relation between Yan Hui and Confucius. Confucius claims to be destroyed by it and, in a very real sense, he is correct. For insofar as his relation with Yan Hui defines and circumscribes the character of Confucius, there is a certain "Confucius" who can no longer be. It is in this sense, Confucius' expressions of grief are indicative of one who has lost his wits. Confucius' behavior following Yan Hui's death makes no sense, coming as it does from a man remarkable in his ability to navigate his way, resiliently and resolutely, in the chaotic landscape of his time. To claim that Confucius' expressions of grief make no sense is not, however, to say that there is no sense to be made here. For in their lack of sense, there is significance.

Confucius' wailing and protestations in part function to force the recognition that immediate grief is, in many ways, unspeakable. The "language" of grief mirrors its source. Rooted in loss and privation, grief's most fitting expression is *aphasia*. Just as the habitual and familiar patterns of relation are ruptured by death, so too do the habitual and familiar patterns of speech abandon the bereaved. One's tongue is caught and the language in which one lives cannot match the raw facticity of death. Confucius weeps and, pressed to explain, he seems to suggest that this is all he *can do* given the circumstance. His absence of self-awareness, evident in his asking, "Am I?" bespeaks confusion. His response to his students' tacit query bespeaks a defiant refusal of explanation. "What is there to explain? In what language would I explain it? *Yan Hui is dead,*" he seems to say. Confucius' reaction to this loss appears to be, "unpremeditated" and "largely ungoverned by any ordinary awareness of the purposiveness and meaning attached to actions."<sup>7</sup> It is reaction unmediated by a

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7 Jullien, F.; Parkes, G. The Chinese Notion of "Blandness" as a Virtue: A Preliminary Outline. *Philosophy East and West*.43.1 (Jan 1, 1993): 108.

cognitive process by which it could be justified or adequately explained. Its language is as significant for what it cannot say as for what it does. Confucius does not speak in his usual manner because he cannot. For Confucius the colorless /colorful binary is shrouded in a type of silence or mystery. Words fail him. The rupture blocks his respiration and he cannot breathe into the word, he has lost his way /orientation.

Yan Hui is, Confucius claims, the only student who “listens with persistent attention” (*an.* 9.20) and he is the only one whom Confucius will describe as “eager for learning” (*an.* 6.3). While these are features that would presumably please any teacher, there is a sense in which they only add to the mystery of Yan Hui’s character. For Yan Hui’s manner of engaging his teacher is apparently to adopt a posture of placid receptivity. He does not disagree and thus he does not explicitly challenge. Yet in his agreeable attention resides an implicit challenge.

As a student, Yan Hui is, a “paradox.”<sup>8</sup> He is of no help and appears to be stupid because he denies Confucius “the incitement that a less talented disciple, such as Zigong (*an.* 3.8) offers by his repeated questions.”<sup>9</sup> Yan Hui listens and *heeds*. Indeed, he requires but the “barest indication” of Confucius’ meaning in order to appropriate and exploit what he is offered.<sup>10</sup> Confucius observes this and recognizes its power. When Zigong is loath to compare himself to Yan Hui because Yan Hui “is able to hear one thing and understand ten,” Confucius matter-of-factly sympathizes (*an.* 5.9). “You are not as good as he,” Confucius says, “neither you nor I are as good as he.” The challenge that Yan Hui poses is, like his character, an admixture of the obvious and the subtle. He will not disagree nor will he engage Confucius in agonistic dialogue. Instead, he will absorb and he will instantiate, his open and passive demeanor an implicit challenge to Confucius not to defend or clarify his teachings but to teach *more*.

The Confucius who teaches Yan Hui cannot be the same Confucius who teaches Zigong and the other students. With Yan Hui, Confucius is called to be both more and less than he is with his other students. He must be more, for Yan Hui’s skill places the relation beyond ready predictability. What Yan Hui does or will do with Confucius’ instruction admits a mystery not evident in Confucius’ relationships with his other pupils. Thus it is the teacher as well as the student who is faced with the unfamiliar and novel, who is called to respond fruitfully to the circumstances offered by a new terrain. However, Confucius is also less in this relationship. He and Yan Hui enjoy the repose of an easy communication in which an excess of words is unnecessary. Yan Hui’s skill as a student and Confucius’ skill as a teacher conspire to produce a mutual understanding “so complete,” “that it suppresses the dialogue.”<sup>11</sup> The vocabulary of instruction so vital to Confucius’ activity with others can here give

8 Jullien, F.; Parkes, G. The Chinese Notion of “Blandness” as a Virtue: A Preliminary Outline. *Philosophy East and West*.43.1 (Jan 1, 1993): 108.

9 *Ibid.*

10 *Ibid.*

11 *Ibid.*

way to an appreciative and pregnant silence in which “teacher” and “student” dissolve into Confucius and Yan Hui, each enjoying the vista that their companionship and collaboration opens up.

Confucius is, thus, in this relationship something he cannot otherwise be. The Confucius here displayed is at his most efficacious as a teacher. He may instruct with a confidence that he is understood. He may speak sparingly and trust that his words are sufficient. Above all, he can enjoy his own bemusement in the mystery of Yan Hui and the way in which Yan Hui’s character imbues Confucius himself with mystery. What might a teacher with such a student become? What might their collaboration produce in the world? Confucius is confident of the path he traverses and he is confident in Yan Hui’s skill, but these are questions he cannot answer for he does not and cannot know. They lie on a horizon of possibility that can only be accessed by Confucius and Yan Hui together. With Yan Hui’s death, this horizon, dimly glimpsed, recedes from view and the Confucius who could travel there is destroyed.

When Confucius grieves, he appears to his students to have abandoned his usual self-command, but that Confucius is “not himself” is unsurprising. Yan Hui’s death opens a rupture in Confucius’ identity. He cannot, in this circumstance, be who he was. His response is uncharacteristic because it cannot be otherwise. He is as a man on a landscape suddenly bereft of a marker by which he defines his course. He is disoriented, unsure of his position, lost. That he should weep without restraint indicates that he appreciates the significance of what he has lost.

The grief that results from loss in this context cannot be counted a failure of will or of understanding. To care for another in the way that Confucius suggests and to admit another formative function in the construction of my identity entails a tacit rejection of the notion that every individual will and must die alone. It is to pledge myself and my well-being to another by saying, in essence, “you will take me out when you go.” Yet Confucius’ counsel is not an endorsement of unquestioning or untutored sorrow, for it also requires that we combat an ordinary species of vulnerability. It requires a valorized vulnerability in which I stand ready to consummate the value of my relations to others by being open to injury. To stand thus is to know the potential cost of my affections and deem them *worth* it. It is to self-consciously bare my neck to the stinging blade of loss.

Confucius even after Yan Hui death still held closely to the notion, the expression of enjoyment with being licentious, and of grief without being hurtfully excessive. The notion that when joy anger, sorrow and pleasure have not yet arisen, it is called change, equilibrium, centrality, meaning when they arise in an appropriate levels, it is called harmony and offers happiness brings pleasure to the body, grief sharpened the mind.

The rupture in his loss of control and his speechless is a trauma .a new style a new opportunity for Confucius. The coherent deformation opens the a style just as the calligrapher point his brush over the flat surface and in one movement makes a continuous line without lifting from the surface This is the spontaneous, the “wu-

wei of action” (of no action). The very movement of the calligraphy requires breath control while exhaling, the point of the brush initiates its explosive destiny.

The dead body lacks in its primal motility. The dead are excluded from the community. In the Husserlian sense breathing is part of the I can, even when I am not voluntarily controlling my breath it is simply an allowing to breathe freely. The kinesthetic breathing is more than the respiratory but allows the torso to respond to the world in a certain way in which the pulsation of one’s motility and the pulsation of things couples with body movement. This pulsation named (*shi*) potential is the disposition (the more) of all living between and in-between the impulse of pure transitions.

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