Confucianism and Its Modern Relevance: A Dialogue with the West

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Abstract

As the Four Mini-Dragons have joined Japan in modernizing East Asia, and the Dragon -- mainland China -- seems to begin to awake, the Japanese "economic miracle" turns out to be an East Asian cultural shock. Samuel P. Huntington's idea of "civilizational clash" (1993) is only a postponed conception of the political mood of the post-Cold-War West in face of East Asian modernity (among other persisting and evolving civilizations). Meanwhile, East Asia watchers generally relate the modern development of East Asia to, among other factors, the Confucian tradition -- a common cultural heritage of East Asian societies, hence the "post-Confucian hypothesis." Therefore, partly in response to Huntington's conception, and partly as a reflection of the "post-Confucian hypothesis," this thesis attempts to explore how the Confucian tradition is comparable to the mentality of Western modernity -- mainly but not exclusively the Enlightenment spirit, and how the Confucian or post-Confucian values have been shaping the distinction of East Asian modernity. The main assumptions or conclusions of this thesis are: First, in theoretical terms, the Confucian tradition is relevant to East
Asian modernity, because on the one hand, Confucianism, for all its peculiarity in contrast with its counterpart(s) in the modern West, is essentially a rationalist and humanist tradition; and on the other, despite the religious tolerance of and religious elements in Confucianism, its ultimate concern is the secular world or the life-world. Second, the surviving Confucian tradition, embedded in the fabric of modern East Asian societies, functions as a key part of their economic culture (personalism, groupism), political culture (paternalism, meritocracy), and everyday life (family values). In substantiating these conclusions, this thesis also tries to demonstrate that as far as its cultural dimension is concerned, East Asian modernity is, far from being exclusively Confucian, a cultural mosaic in which the Confucian tradition coexists and mingle with other -- indigenous and Western -- traditions, and together they constitute the modern mentality in East Asia.
Many people helped me in the process of completing this thesis. I would like to thank, first of all, my supervisor Irving M. Zeitlin, whose prompt and sharp feedback to each chapter was a rich source of stimulation and inspiration. Moreover, I benefitted from his fine personality and unfailing kindness as much as from his rigorous scholarship. The other two members of my supervision committee, Julia Ching and Wsevolod W. Isaijw, were extraordinarily supportive. Despite her heavy commitments in her own department, Professor Ching carefully read and reread my chapters and provided me with insightful suggestions. On the other hand, Professor Isaijw was always amiable, gracious and caring, and his trust in my writing only made me write with more prudence. My communication with Anthony Giddens in the past several years was both intellectually rewarding and spiritually encouraging. He was kind enough to reply to my every letter, and his responses were more thought-provoking than simply courteous. He played an informal but key part in the formation of my thesis. Jerome Chen, Stephen Endicott, Timothy Brook, and Wei-ming Tu read different parts of early drafts of my thesis and shared their worthwhile ideas with me on various occasions. I am also grateful to Gregory Baum, John Simpson, and Richard Guisso for their enlightening participation in my oral defense. Their questions and comments made me rethink many issues explored in my thesis from a much broader perspective.

The completion of my thesis brings my doctoral program to its end. I would like to thank Bonnie Fox
and Roger O'Toole for their patience with my underdeveloped spoken English when I took their courses in the first year of my program. Liz MacNamara, a former employee of the department and an extremely warmhearted woman, substantially improved my computer skills as well as my written English when both were still very foreign to me. Professor Michael Bodemann introduced me to the editorial work of the *Critical Sociology* collective, keeping me critical in spirit in one way or another. Charles Jones, Graduate Coordinator of the department, has been not only remarkably responsible but sympathetically responsive. A number of graduate students of the department, such as Andrew Kim, Fan Li, Valerie Zawilski, Meir Amor, Boxu Yang, Dimitrina Dimitrova — to name a few, have been willing to help whenever there is a need. Last but not least, I am particularly indebted to Jeannette Wright, who is amicably approachable, and whose wise advice has assisted me to overcome many unexpected mishaps.

I have learned much of the English Language and Western culture from my English tutor, Marion Moses, with whom I became acquainted shortly after I came to Toronto. In addition, her family’s Canadian hospitality has often made me feel at home in my diaspora.

My emotional partnership with Deng Yu has been indispensable to the development of my thesis and of my program. Her love, her commonsense wisdom, and her wonderful sense of humor have made me face each day with passion, reason, and laughter.
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1. Introduction: A Second Model of Modernity and the Relevance of Culture

At this point of history it seems safe to say that the twentieth century is to be closed by two events: the end of the Cold War or the collapse of the Soviet empire, and the rise of East Asia -- or, to be more specific, the Asia-Pacific Rim -- as a second model of modernity. The former puts a period to the antagonism between two major modern political ideologies and systems, while the latter signifies the differentiation of cultural traditions and values in an increasingly globalizing world. Therefore, on the one hand, the controversy over Fukuyama’s recasting of “the end of ideology” and “the end of history,” which corresponds to the first event, has not yet subsided, and on the other, Huntington’s article “The Clash of Civilizations,” a reflection of the second, is setting off another upsurge of fin-de-siècle debate. As the lack of mutual understanding between the West and the rest of the world is as striking as ever, it is in high demand to reexamine our perceptions and develop our knowledge of each other.

Apparently, a key factor to the rise of East Asia or the Asia-Pacific Rim and to possible civilizational clashes is culture. To understand a region, a nation, or an ethnic group that is different from one’s own, one must understand its culture. However, culture is relevant not just in an anthropological or epistemological sense. Culture or cultural idiosyncrasy lies in the very heart of modernity and can make a sociological difference: Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of cultural “distinction” and its political
economy may apply to a much more general scene, for there are not only class cultures, but also
regional, national, and ethnic cultures; there are not only cultural tastes, but also cultural norms and
values; moreover, in the sense that culture is socially relevant, there are economic culture, political
culture, and culture in everyday life or private life. Indeed, culture functions in a substantial way to
distinguish human beings among themselves: the so-called "global village" is less a political village
than an economic one, and is still less a cultural one than a political one -- the economic integration
and political truce at a global level in this high-tech and post-Cold-War age seem not to necessitate
the emergence of a cultural "global village," but to expose the distance among various cultural units.
Needless to say, "information explosion" without conceptual clarity and logical consistency merely
causes information disorder, and ideological predisposition of various kinds readily produces
theoretical fallacies out of this chaos and may therefore perhaps lead to disastrous confrontation.

This study -- without expecting a magical emergence of a utopian cultural "global village," yet in the
hope that people of different cultures may learn to coexist with one another while reasonably facing
their differences -- is intended to probe the relevance of culture to modernity by critically examining
the Confucian tradition and its modern relevance in East Asia from a comparative perspective.

In this study, unless otherwise specified, culture is narrowly defined as a set of shared norms, values
and corresponding behavioral patterns that characterize a society. A preliminary assumption of this
study is that the Confucian tradition, particularly Confucian familism, is embedded in the social fabric
of East Asian modernity, functioning as a key part of the economic culture, political culture and
everyday life in modern East Asia, in which the Asia-Pacific Rim is located. Thus, this study will
focus on how Confucianism is comparable to the modern mentality in the West (mainly but not exclusively the Enlightenment spirit), and how the surviving Confucian tradition has been defining the distinction of East Asian modernity.

Though by no means united or unified, East Asia is commonly regarded as a cultural entity, a sinicized world (or “the Chinese culture area” -- Fairbank et al, 1989: 1; or the “Sinic world” -- Tu 1993: XII). In the sense that the Confucian tradition is central to Chinese/East Asian culture, East Asia can be considered a Confucian world. The rapid and steady economic growth of East Asia, pioneered by Japan since the Meiji Restoration in 1868, especially after World War II, expanded to South Korea, Taiwan, Hongkong, and Singapore (the so-called Four Mini-Dragons) from the 1960s on, and finally joined by mainland China (particularly its coastal areas) via its economic reform in the late 1970s, has been significantly reshaping the landscape of world affairs. To East Asia watchers, there are two things about this Sinic world that are remarkable: First, in East Asian societies, the Chinese tradition, to which Confucianism is central, having more or less survived the vicissitudes of modern times, still holds as far as some of its core values are concerned; second, East Asian societies, especially in the Pacific Rim, are reaching a level of economy comparable to that of the West (in terms of per capita GNP, industrialization, urbanization, etc.), but they differ from the West in their social and, perhaps to a lesser extent, political life in some fundamental ways. Actually, the cultural continuity and social development in modern East Asia, compared to the rest of the world, are so phenomenal and so characteristic that it is conceptualized by some as a “second case of industrial capitalism” or a “second modernity” (Berger 1986; Berger et al 1988; also see Kahn 1979; Vogel 1979, 1991; MacFarquhar 1980; Hofheinz & Calder 1982; de Bary 1988; Tai 1989; Redding 1990;
Clegg & Redding 1990; Tu 1992, 1994, 1996). Of course, it is still too early to say that China, the homeland of Confucianism, has already become part of this second model of modernity. However, given the fact that, despite its domestic political turmoils and ideological uncertainties and a sometimes inhospitable international climate, China has been the fastest-growing economy in the world and has maintained a double-digit growth rate for nearly two decades, few would doubt her potential. Indeed, a closer look at China's recent development tells us that in many ways the current situation in China is reminiscent of the early stage of the rise of her East Asian neighbours.

The East Asian model of modernity historically falsifies some conventional wisdom. The theme of the discontinuity or dichotomy between tradition and modernity has dominated sociology since its birth and modern social theory in general. In Durkheim's theory, for example, there is a clear-cut line between mechanical solidarity of traditional society and organic solidarity of industrial society. Similarly, Tönnies's oft-quoted distinction between Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft defines the watershed between traditional society and modernity. In addition, Weber's typology of social actions and his elaboration of formal as opposed to substantive rationality contrasts modern Western society with traditional/non-Western societies. The tradition/modernity division also exists in Spencer's conception of human evolution from military to industrial society, in Comte's periodization of theological, metaphysical, and positive stages of human society, and in Marx's distinguishing capitalism (and inevitably communism) from precapitalist social development. This classical dualistic approach to history (tradition/modernity) was reformulated in the postwar period by the once-dominant sociologist Parsons into some "pattern variables," among which are, corresponding to the change from traditional to modern societies, affective versus affectively-neutral relationships,
particularism versus universalism, collective orientation versus self-orientation, ascription versus achievement, and functionally diffuse versus functionally specific relationships (Parsons 1951; Parsons and Shils 1951). Moreover, in contemporary social research, the split between tradition and modernity is seen from various angles: industrialization, urbanization, democratization, and secularization, are all among those big words ("indicators") that are often used to identify modern society as the negation of tradition. There is certainly much truth in this convention where Western experience of modernization is concerned. And, if properly modified, it may also shed some light on social changes in modern East Asia. Nevertheless, the coexistence of cultural continuity and social development or the juxtaposition of traditional values and modernity in East Asia appears to be an embarrassing surprise, for which the conventional conception of the tradition/modernity dichotomy and some mainstream social theories justifying or relying on this conception prove inadequate.

As a matter of fact, even in the Western context tradition is not simply an antithesis of modernity. In this regard the differences among Britain, France, and Germany in their evolution to modernity are an example usually ignored. One might consider the diverse patterns of democratization, a key variable of Western modernity, in these countries to appreciate the role of tradition in the progression toward modernity. Immersed in the same Enlightenment spirit (the mentality of modernity), they differ significantly from one another in their political transformation toward liberal democracy: In Britain, democracy was born and grew up in its monarchy and has not been detached from the monarchy till this day. On the other hand, the French had to vacillate between monarchy and republic for a long time before it embraced democracy in its present form. Moreover, in Germany, democracy had to be produced and reproduced in the ashes of the First and Second World Wars (and the Cold War).
Pondering these differences, Tu observes that "The Western democratic experience itself has been significantly shaped by traditions of pragmatism, empiricism, scepticism, and gradualism as in the English case; anticlericalism, rationalism, culturalism, and the revolutionary spirit as in the French case; and romanticism, nationalism, and ethnic pride as in the German case" (1996: 345). Thus, the universalism of the Enlightenment spirit is not purely "universal" and post-traditional even within the West itself, and everywhere, because of the effect of tradition, it has to be localized. America is another example of how tradition is relevant in the conditions of modernity: It is true that America is a country with no state religion or national church, but it is also true that America is the most religious country in the West, and its political agenda is always affected by religion. It is true that America is a country without a feudal past and a landed aristocracy, but it is also true that in this country slavery, which is more "traditional" than feudalism by some standard, lasted for almost the first half of its history, and its social life is still coloured by the black-white conflicts. The very existence of powerful religious fundamentalism and profound ethnic conflicts, two primordial or "traditional" phenomena, in America, the most advanced/modern country, provides additional evidence of the relevance of tradition to modernity. Therefore, even exclusively from Western experiences of modernity one may conclude that to dichotomize tradition(s) and modernity and to confuse the Western with the modern are both oversimplified and misleading. Speaking of Western modernity, Giddens points out that "For most of its history, modernity has rebuilt tradition as it has dissolved it" (1994a: 56). And he rightly observes that "the continuing influence of tradition within modernity remained obscure so long as 'modern' meant 'Western'" (ibid.: 57). In a certain sense the emergence of East Asian modernity, hence a non-Western modernity, makes the obscure obvious.
The East Asian model of modernity also challenges some central ideas of development theories, including colonization theory (or imperialism theory), modernization theory, dependency theory, and world-system theory, which are the principal theoretical efforts explaining the development of the non-Western world in the conditions of Western modernity (So, 1990; Giddens 1993: 539-42). Colonization theory is related mainly to the Marxian tradition, which envisions no cultural barriers (no "Chinese walls," according to Communist Manifesto) in the expansion of capitalism throughout the world, and for which both the development and underdevelopment of non-Western countries can be attributed, undesirably, to Western colonialism or imperialism. On the other hand, modernization theory, articulated in the liberal tradition, positively and sanguinely sees the future of the non-Western world as Westernized. In other words, from the perspective of this theory, the transformation of non-Western countries from tradition to modernity is simply a process of westernization. Thus, grounded on opposite ideologies, both colonization and modernization theories maintain that modernity is a Western invention as well as a globalizing force; therefore, when the West leads the way in the project of modernity, the rest of the world will either be forced to or deliberately choose to follow the path of the West. Dependency theory relates the underdevelopment of the third world to its dependence on the West, to the development of Western capitalism, and it appeals to socialist revolution (as happened in Cuba and China) for the hope of the third world. Contrary to dependency theory, world-system theory does see the possibility for the development of the third world in a world system of capitalist economy, hence the possibility for the transition from "periphery" to "semiperiphery" and even to "core" (and vice versa). However, like dependency theory and the other two development theories, world-system theory perceives the development of non-Western countries
(and world history) essentially as an economic process, treats political factors as epiphenomena, and has nothing to say about culture (cf. Giddens 1993: 542). These development theories are perhaps valid if applied to some specific periods or regions, but in general they leave little room for a second model of modernity, be it erstwhile socialist Eastern Europe or newborn/newly-discovered industrial Confucian East Asia.

East Asia has, completely or partly, gone through almost all kinds of “development” described or prescribed by the various development theories. Yet, eventually the East Asian model of modernity provides an exception to these theories and yet a rule of its own. Among six East Asian countries or regions, for some periods of their history, four have been colonized (Korea by Japan from 1910 to 1945, Taiwan by Japan from 1895 to 1945, Hongkong by Britain since the mid-19th century, and Singapore by Britain from 1819 to 1959 respectively), China’s relatively developed areas (costal cities) were semi-colonized (by different Western powers and Japan from the Opium War to 1945), and Japan was occupied (by the United States in the first few postwar years). Nevertheless, perhaps except for Hongkong’s economic liberalization and Japan’s political democratization, little of East Asia’s development can be attributed to colonization or occupation. Many Hongkong studies relate Hongkong’s prosperity to British colonialism. But these studies cannot explain why Hongkong under British colonial rule, like India, had for so long been a region of underdevelopment until the 1960s, when Hongkong began to become more and more economically internationalized and when Hongkong, together with other three Little Dragons, started developing unprecedentedly. It could be argued that Hongkong’s development has resulted from decolonization (globalization) more than from colonization (an exclusively British rule). The British recent and overdue concern over
Hongkong's political democratization is just another example of how irrelevant the colonial rule is to Hongkong's development (of course, one must acknowledge that in Hongkong, people enjoy -- in a very unique way -- political freedom without democracy under the British rule). Japan's democracy, on the other hand, was indeed a direct result of the American occupation. But the Japanese were able to keep their monarchy even under the occupation, and there is no doubt the Japanese monarchy is of central importance to Japan's national identity and collective consciousness. Moreover, the Japanese, like the Germans, seem to be economically capable with or without democracy. Needless to say, the rest of the picture of East Asian development directly contradicts colonization theory. In comparison, modernization theory appears to fit the East Asian model of modernity better. In their early contacts with Westerners, the Chinese, Japanese and Koreans sooner or later found that they had much to learn from the West in order to modernize their nations. However, they were selective about what to learn from the West and they consciously avoided "wholesale Westernization." Also significantly, it was Japan, a non-Western nation which obviously learned most from the West, that talked about "Asia for Asians" and tried to establish the notorious "Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere" (Ironically and interestingly, in premodern times, insofar as the official status of Confucianism is concerned, Japan was the least Confucian country in East Asia). Therefore, there is only limited truth in modernization (Westernization) theory as far as East Asian experience is concerned. China's Maoist socialist revolution was a favourite example of dependency theory. Still, the achievements of Chinese socialism have to be evaluated historically. Modern China enjoyed her golden years under socialism from 1949 to 1957, when economic prosperity, political tolerance, social development and cultural confidence were shaping a new China. From the late 1950s to the late 1970s this new China seems to have been disoriented: the esprit de corps was highly mobilized, but the effect was
devastating — first the Great Leap Forward, then the Cultural Revolution. As the esprit de corps was eventually exhausted, Chinese socialism almost went into an impasse. The economic reform since 1978 has been functioning as a new engine for China’s development. Deng Xiaoping termed this engine “socialism with Chinese characteristics,” whereas the reality might suggest that it is capitalism with Chinese characteristics (or perhaps both). In light of this observation of Chinese socialism, dependency theory is far from a satisfactory interpretation of China’s development. To the rest of East Asia, dependency theory hardly has any relevance. Finally, world-system theory also seems unable to explain East Asian modernity. In the core-semiperiphery-periphery triad of the capitalist world-economy perceived by this theory, there is hardly any room for a second model, a second “core,” of modernity, let alone that with different political structures and cultural values.

Thus, East Asian modernity provides a case to which neither the tradition/modernity dichotomy, a central theme of modern Western social thinking, nor various development theories that attempt to explain the non-Western development in a “Western” or “Westernized” or “to-be-Westernized” world, can apply. Of course, there are post-traditional and/or universal elements in modernity, and historically some of its key elements (such as the nation-state, capitalism, modern science and industrialization) originated in the West. This is perhaps why the conflict between the West and the rest of the world sometimes deceptively appears to be the contradiction between modernity and tradition, and vice versa, or why colonization, modernization and Westernization are used by some interchangeably. However, even these elements are not Platonic universal ideas which exist above and beyond particulars, or Kantian a priori forms and concepts which by themselves have universal validity. These elements are invented from particular traditions, or they were invented traditions; and,
if modernity is to proceed, they have to be and can be localized — whether in the West or elsewhere. In other words, modernity is a double and two-way process: it is a negotiation between tradition and the post-traditional, and meanwhile it is a balancing between globalization and localization. In this process lies the possibility as well as the reality of different models of modernity. As a result, modernity is both unique and plural. Apparently the key to this concept of modernity is culture, or rather, the relevance of culture to modernity, for it is the function of culture to be traditional or to invent tradition, on the one hand; and, on the other, to be local or to localize the universal. Therefore, a theorizing of the relevance of culture to modernity should be a matter of prime importance. From this point of view, the rise of East Asia directly highlights the anemia of modern social theory in the field of East Asian studies, which contrasts sharply with the rich experience of East Asian societies in integrating the post-traditional with tradition and the global with the local in their march toward modernity. This explains, perhaps, why the word "miracle" (read "from nowhere") becomes a rhetorical and indeed magic term among Westerners who pay attention to and try to explain the development in East Asia, why "fundamentalism" (read "back to the cultural roots") becomes an overarching concept denoting all current tradition-oriented or anti-modern social movements, especially those in the third world, and why Huntington, realizing that "In the politics of civilizations, the peoples and governments of non-Western civilizations no longer remain the objects of history as targets of Western colonialism but join the West as movers and shapers of history," calls for "a more profound understanding of the basic religious and philosophical assumptions underlying other civilizations and the ways in which people in these civilizations see their interests" (Huntington 1993a: 23, 49).
Under the dominance of the tradition/modernity dichotomy and various culture-blind development theories in modern Western social thinking, many believe that culture is synonymous with tradition and therefore irrelevant to modernity, or modernity would make culture irrelevant. When Marx and Engels wrote that “All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned” (1992: 6), when Durkheim associated social anomie with utilitarian egoism in modern industrial capitalism, when Weber described “the last stage of this cultural development” as “Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart” (1976: 182), and when Nietzsche announced that “God is dead,” they not only characterized the social modernity of their own times, but also anticipated the looming postmodern mood. Therefore, it is no accident at all that culture has long been a subfield of anthropology, archaeology, or history in modern Western academia. In other words, culture is reduced to something surviving in the non-Western world or existing in the premodern West. Moreover, some who pay attention to the cultural dimension of modernity (culture as modern social norms and values) tend to treat culture as an epiphenomenon or to politicize culture. For them culture means social conformity (normally) or social control (abnormally). On the other hand, there are some schools of cultural sociology in the postwar period (their roots can be traced to prewar years), such as symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology and, in between, Goffman’s sociology, but these schools, while fruitful in one way or another, are by and large restricted to the cultural process at the level of everyday life (hence micro-sociology), and have little to say about the culture at the macro level, i.e. the mentality of modernity. In addition, various modernist cultural movements sought cultural autonomy in the ivory tower of “high culture” (i.e. aesthetic and formalistic literature and arts), and were generally antagonistic or indifferent to culture as modern social norms and values (or ideology).
In recent years, culture seems to gain currency among postmodernists. But a scrutiny of its usage would reveal that in the postmodern fog, on the one hand, the wall between "high culture" and society has collapsed—"high culture" is vulgarized and trivialized (commercialized); and on the other, culture as social norms and values (metanarratives) is prefixed with "post-" or "the end of" or is conceived as something to be deconstructed. Partly due to these misconceptions, mistreatments and disciplinary limitations, how culture—as defined as social norms and values—is relevant to modernity, or the relevance of culture to modernity as a general topic of sociological and cultural studies, has been a poorly explored or deliberately forgotten area.

Given the underdevelopment of the study of the cultural dimension of modernity, it would not be a surprise that as soon as one relates culture to modernity and attempts to interpret the relevance of culture to modernity in East Asia versus in the West, one will inevitably encounter or be labelled as cultural determinism, cultural conservatism, and/or cultural relativism. Thus, it seems necessary to clarify how this study would locate itself in the complex of these isms before moving into any concrete and in-depth analysis.

Cultural determinism is essentially a sociological variant of philosophical idealism, which was initially theorized by Plato and gained its modern expression in German Idealism (especially in Hegel's philosophy). However, philosophical idealism already lost its edge when it was carried into areas of history and society via some Neo-Kantianists, who emphasized the distinctiveness of "cultural studies" vis-à-vis natural sciences, without presuming Idea or Reason to be the determining factor of all natural and cultural phenomena. Since in the sphere of sociology, culture (narrowly defined) is
further distinguished from other dimensions of the social world (broadly defined), the question of how culture is related to these dimensions (material forces and social institutions -- in Marxian terms; or social system and personality system -- according to Parsons) is vital to sociological thinking. The influence of Neo-Kantianism on sociology was first evident in Weber's writings. Nevertheless, Weber is not a cultural determinist as usually thought: in his writings on the Protestant ethic and the capitalist spirit he was, as he explicitly claimed, not suggesting an exclusive causality between them; instead, he was only trying to identify the significant role of a cultural factor (the Puritan sects of the Protestant movement), among other factors, in the formation of modern capitalism (Weber 1976: 57-8, 91, 174; also cf. Zeitlin 1997). In his self-knowledge, Weber is against any kind of determinism. According to Schluchter, Weber “rejected not only a merely materialist or idealist construction of history but also a merely institutionalist or mentalist one” (1996: 252). Still, Weber is a cultural determinist in a negative sense, i.e., in the sense that his typology of social actions and his historical-comparative study of “religions” conclude that other major cultural traditions (Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, etc.) played a decisive part in inhibiting the development of modern capitalism in the non-Western world (see, for example, Weber 1963: 269; 1981: 314), and apparently further imply that if modern capitalism was to develop in the non-Western world, those traditions would have no future in corresponding societies. It should be noted that in his work on “the Protestant ethic,” Weber was mainly concerned with a specific historical question -- namely, why industrial capitalism emerged in the Protestant West (cf. Tu 1996: 4), and elsewhere he definitely stated that “In the long run, no religious-ethical conviction is capable of barring the way to the entry of capitalism, when it stands in full armor before the gate” (1981: 381, n. 4; also cf. Zeitlin 1997: 237). However, it is also simple and clear that in Weber’s reasoning, the marriage between the Protestant ethic and modern capitalism
was doomed to a divorce (the Protestant ethic was to perish in the spiritless capitalist "iron cage"), and a combination of Confucianism (among other non-Western indigenous "religions") and modern capitalism would be out of the question. In this sense Weber's assertion that "the impediments to the development of capitalism must be sought primarily in the domain of religion" (1963: 269) would, in his context, apply to all non-Western religions and eventually, in the later development of capitalism, to the Protestant ethic per se. In Weber's vision, it is capitalism that would win its war over the spiritual world in the final analysis. There is no doubt that cultural determinism in sociology has its roots in the half misunderstood and half unquestioned Weber. How Weber misinterpreted Chinese traditions (Confucianism and Taoism), and how some dogmatic Weberians awkwardly explained the modern development of East Asia will be examined in the next chapter. Suffice it here to say that culture always coexists and interacts with other elements of society, and it may be more or less transformed to adapt to, hence to survive, historical changes. Interestingly and ironically, in some contemporary studies of modern East Asian development, cultural determinism has revived in a certain way, but now it goes to another extreme: Chinese traditions, Confucianism in particular, are often said to be the key to the miraculous success of East Asia, and even to be possibly superior to its Western counterparts in the pursuit of modernization (cf. Kahn 1979: 120-5). This new wave of "culturism" has been challenged by some "institutionalist" and other explanations, which underscore the role of other factors in fostering East Asian modernity, such as state policy, particular timing, foreign capital, and cheap labor (see, for example, Appelbaum 1992; Chowdhury & Islam 1993; Abegglen 1994). Needless to say, credit should be given to both cultural and institutional factors, but a proper understanding of East Asian development exists in a balance and combination of culturist and institutionalist explanations, for culture and institution(s) are two sides of one coin. Moreover, to
this balance and combination one should add another fundamental factor, i.e., material needs or motives — the desire to improve living conditions and the pursuit of economic wealth, which, as observed by Weber, has its place in all societies, and the modern conception of which by Marx has remained unchallenged.

Cultural conservatism is theorized in sociological parlance mainly by the functionalist tradition. When Durkheim identified Society with God and vice versa, he actually perceived Society as a cultural/moral entity. A pivotal idea of his theory was that culture (collective representation or conscience collective or common value system) functions to sustain order (social solidarity), and there will be social disorder (anomie) if culture becomes dysfunctional or deteriorates. In the same logic, Parsons's conceptions of socialization (internalization of social values) and institutionalization (routinization of interaction patterns), and his general scheme of structural-functional imperativism (the requisites for a social system to exist) clearly presumed the centrality of culture to the integration of social and personality systems, hence to the equilibrium of the social system. This functionalist tradition anticipated what Habermas (1987) called “American neoconservatism,” which was evident in the writings of some sociologists, such as, most noticeably, Peter Berger and Daniel Bell. Mourning over the death of God in modern Western capitalism, Berger endeavoured to find a position for Christian values, especially family values, in capitalist society. In his notion of “capitalist revolution,” traditional culture seems not an anachronism but a sociomoral necessity. It is in this context that his enthusiasm for modern East Asian development and for economic culture in general might be properly understood. Bell, echoing Berger from a different perspective, tried to integrate cultural conservatism with political liberalism and economic socialism. His profound disappointment in the
devastating expansion of modernist and postmodernist culture (or anticulture) in capitalist society resulted in his half-nostalgic, half-utopian longing for a new religion. In the recent two decades, owing partly to the efforts by religious fundamentalism, cultural conservatism has become entangled with what is known as the New Right politics (hence moralist politics) in the West, which, paradoxically, attempts to link political-economic liberalism to traditional social morality. It should be noted that cultural conservatism is not by definition politically conservative. Durkheim’s cultural conservatism, for example, did not prevent him from criticize the “forced” and “anomic” division of labour in capitalist/industrial society and from being a social reformist who called for social justice based on the “discontinuance” of the institution of inheritance. In Parsons’s case, on the other hand, cultural conservatism was a reflection of social conformism in the postwar period -- conforming to the capitalist patriarchal family, to the modern educational system, to liberal democracy and the welfare state (“the postwar consensus”), etc. In the wake of the cultural revolution and social movements of the 1960s, cultural conservatism itself has also become radicalized -- it has strived, in the form of fundamentalism, to defend traditional values and rebuild social solidarity. Clearly, the central theme of cultural conservatism in the West has been the moral foundation of social order in modern times, and in searching that foundation it has constantly resorted to tradition. In the sense that tradition “represents not only what ‘is’ done in a society but what ‘should be’ done” (Giddens 1994a: 65), cultural conservatism is not simply an effort to conserve tradition. It is both order and the normative content behind order that concern cultural conservatism. Therefore, cultural conservatism itself is modern, by or against which modernity is justified, and the political content of cultural conservatism must be understood in its social context. In light of this reasoning, Neo-Confucianism (or, as called by some, the New Confucian Thought), an East Asian variety of cultural
conservatism, could be appreciated as part of East Asian modernity. Indeed, the history of Neo-
Confucianism from Kang Youwei, a representative of earliest Confucian reformists engaged in
modernizing Confucianism or Confucianizing modernity, to Tu Weiming, a Harvard-based professor
who has been striving to reconstruct and conserve Confucianism in an increasingly globalized context
and in a language reminiscent of, some would say, postmodernism, provides another crucial clue
through which to identify cultural conservatism in the conditions of modernity.

Cultural relativism (or moral relativism) is certainly not a modern innovation, yet as a recent
intellectual trend it is mainly articulated by the deconstructionist (poststructuralist) philosophy in
particular and postmodernism in general. The key idea of contemporary cultural relativism is
decentralization. Derrida's antiphonocentric/antilogocentric "grammatology" reads the world as
infinite Text, in which the meaning of the present is relational or relative to the absent, and there is no
absolute centre. Thus, everything in this textualized world is subject to the principle of differ\'ance
("deferred difference," or trace or writing), and the approach to this world is deconstruction (playing
what is deferred). Similarly, Baudrillard contends that we are living in the third order of simulacra in
history, an order of cybernetic control, digital codes and TV images -- an order of hyperreality. In
this order the distinction between representations and objects, ideas and things can no longer be
sustained, because there remain only codes or images that have lost their original model and can only
simulate each other. On the other hand, Foucault's "archaeology" discovers that man as both the
subject and object of knowledge is a modern invention and invents modern human sciences (hence the
centrality of man), and his "historiography" and "genealogy" further reveal how modern human
sciences become embedded in various modern institutions (hence the knowledge/power affinity). In
his view the development of some “counter sciences,” such as psychoanalysis, ethnology and linguistics, would lead to the death of this modern man. He also perceives the connection between the death of man and the death of God. Moreover, Lyotard dismisses the relevance of metanarratives (God, Reason, Revolution, Progress, etc.) to the postmodern condition: “This is what the postmodern world is all about. Most people have lost the nostalgia for the lost narrative. It in no way follows that they are reduced to barbarity. What saves them from it is their knowledge that legitimation can only spring from their linguistic practice and communication interaction” (1984: 41). Or to put it in another way: “There is no reason, only reasons” (cf. van Reijen and Veerman 1988). The trend of cultural relativism implied in these deconstructionist and postmodernist theorists is generally characterized by a narcissistic self-negation of Western civilization, especially Western modernity. The positive side of cultural relativism is that it might lend theoretical support to those who pay attention to what have long been repressed or ignored in Western society, such as emotional life (sexual life in particular), self-identity, minority rights, women’s movement, ecological issues, and the non-Western world. Indeed, in the context of Western modernity these belong to the culturally silent or culturally marginal zone, and to a certain extent contemporary cultural relativism does shed light on this zone. Nevertheless, to deconstruct is no solution, if it is not followed by reconstruction; and to be postmodern is no exit from modernity, when modernity is still on the way. There is no doubt that some fundamental problems of Western modernity cannot be explained away by the “de-” or “post-” terminology. For example, the problem with modern life lies in both the excessive development of its rational dimension and the underdevelopment of its emotional dimension, and therefore it cannot be settled simply by appealing to the emotional dimension. On the other hand, while self-identity always needs to be defined or redefined in the context of modernity, collective
identity is also a problem domestically as well as internationally. It seems that the key of the former exists in the latter more than the other way around. By the same token, while majority rights are as problematic as minority rights (the recent development of Canada provides a good example for this), the reform of the former is as important as the construction of the latter. In addition, women who are liberated from the patriarchal family will find that what is waiting for them is a patriarchal society and a world in which women are not immune to the same modern social diseases threatening men. Furthermore, those who are obsessed with some "green nostalgia" without scientific-technological civilization should realize that both the way to and out of ecological crisis exist in our scientific-technological civilization *per se* (cf. Giddens 1994b). In brief, (Western) modernity — perhaps not as a project of Enlightenment any more, but as a project of total humanity — is a problematic and paradoxical project, yet it is not a dead one; It is as dynamic as ever, with many dreams but without a final destination. The key to some problems of Western modernity might lie elsewhere — in the past of Western history, in East Asia's modern experience; Yet eventually these problems would need to be dealt with in the context of Western modernity. A logical conclusion of this reasoning is that East Asian modernity is not the future or the negation of its Western counterpart, just as Western modernity does not imply the Westernization of the non-Western world. It would be misleading to conceive the formation of East Asian modernity as a proof of cultural relativism. And it would be dangerous, on the ground of cultural relativism, to envision clashes of civilizations simply because of the emergence of a different model of modernity. There are significant differences between Western and East Asian modernity, but there are also fundamental problems and values shared by them. To compare these two models of modernity is a necessary step toward a better comprehension and a healthier development of both.
Cultural determinism, cultural conservatism, and cultural relativism accentuate one element or aspect of the relation of culture to modernity at the cost of others: cultural determinism sees how culture might foster social change, cultural conservatism sees how culture is essential to social order, and cultural relativism sees what is different from the dominant culture or how its dominance is relative, but they are all blind respectively to the rest of the picture. To appreciate the whole picture, a synthesis of these different approaches seems indispensable. With such a synthesis in mind, this study will attempt to reach a general theorizing of the relevance of culture to East Asian modernity versus Western modernity from a critical perspective. In this study culture will be identified with tradition in the sense that tradition is both endurable and changeable: once invented in a specific social context, tradition may last and function to maintain its social solidarity; but when the social context or its larger environment changes, tradition can be transformed and accommodate to new conditions or even to promote further changes. In this sense modernity is a process of inventing and reinventing tradition/culture. However, this study will not consider culture simply as a determining factor (idealism, culturism, or cultural determinism), or a conforming tool (functionalism, institutionalism, or cultural conservatism). The cultural dimension of modernity is to be understood only in its interdependence and interplay with the economic and political dimensions in society, and so are the economic and political dimensions. How the interdependence and interplay occur is historically contingent: sometimes culture plays a prominent role, sometimes other factors take the upper hand, but history is never a monodrama. Given the unfolded and unfolding complicity of human affairs in the conditions of modernity, it is high time to transcend any one-dimensional, linear and simplistic approach to the social world. On the other hand, like cultural relativism, this study will stress the
difference between two cultures -- Western and Chinese, and how they relate to modernity differently.

Yet, unlike cultural relativism, it will not seek difference for difference's sake, and it will not join the postmodern "politics of difference." Indeed, the secret of relativism is to play what is different (the unconsciousness, the absent, the other, the unspoken or the unheard, etc.) without comparison, induction and synthesis. Logically what results from relativism is at best pluralism and at worst nihilism. Or, to put it strongly, relativism is pluralism without principle and nihilism in principle. In other words, it justifies everything and therefore nothing. A half-hearted relativist is superficial, while a thoroughgoing one is destructive. In opposition to relativism, this study will resort to universal values to identify cultural differences and their relevance to modernity.

Another related issue this study has to deal with is cultural ethnocentrism (cf. Schluchter 1989: 115). Cultural ethnocentrism has its roots in and still relates to anthropocentrism, which implies the belief that human beings are the most significant or perhaps the only meaningful entity of the universe. Human civilization functions to identify or idealize the position of human existence in the universe, and it is only too natural that human beings -- as all humanity, nations, groups or individuals -- would ontologically centralize their position. In this sense anthropocentrism, represented in different forms (different languages and different philosophies), is an essential part of human civilization in general. Since the human world was by and large geographically divided and in consequence culturally separated before modern times, anthropocentrism, if seen on a global scale, was only potentially ethnocentric in that part of history; and as the racial and social differences among human beings became visible to each other in modern times, this potential has developed and has been, unfortunately, associated with imperialism, chauvinism, racism, xenophobia, etc. The European
edition of ethnocentrism, Eurocentrism, needs no interpretation. Of course, Europe is not alone in being “self-centred.” Mencius, the second most influential Confucian thinker in Chinese history, was speaking for all Chinese when he wrote: “I have heard of the Chinese converting barbarians to their ways, but not of their being converted to barbarian ways” (*Mencius*: 3A.4). As a matter of fact, Ching’s remark that “For thousands of years, Europe and China each thought of itself as the centre of its known and inhabited world” (1993: 1) can perhaps be extended to other regions or peoples in the world. Human beings should be able to learn more than enough from the first half of this century about how far ethnocentrism, once politically mobilized, could go in an inhuman direction: in the two world wars ethnocentrism was translated from geographically limited human wisdom to politically excessive human absurdity, and from local cultural self-affirmation to global violent self-destruction. (One does not have to be reminded of the Nazi holocaust to understand this. On the other hand, one should not forget that it was tragically ironical that Confucianism was used by the Japanese war apparatus to justify its holocaust in China.) In the peaceful postwar period, blatant political ethnocentrism seems to be officially dead or under control, and nationalism as a universal rule paradoxically functions both to retain and to constrain latent political ethnocentrism. Nevertheless, cultural ethnocentrism certainly persists and prevails, and political ethnocentrism readily avails itself of cultural ethnocentricism. Edward Said’s conception of “Orientalism” reveals how cultural ethnocentrism is “by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of tastes, texts, values), power
moral; (as with ideas about what ‘we’ do and what ‘they’ cannot do or understand as ‘we’ do)" (1979: 12; also cf. Turner 1978). Given the existence of nationalism and the nation-state as the entity of economic interest and political organization, as well as, in correspondence, the existence of the cultural differences among nations or regions, cultural ethnocentrism has to be, to paraphrase Derrida, deconstructed before it could be politicized or before “civilizational clash” could escalate to military conflict in this nuclear and hi-tech age. Needless to say, it would be naive to believe that the differences between human beings, as defined by nations or cultures, is to be bridged easily in a half scientifically fictionized and half technologically real “global village,” or to disappear in the “purely discursive pluralism [multi-centrism]” of the postmodern “politics of difference” (cf. Schwartz, 1995). Human differences (at the macro and micro level alike), naturally conditioned or artificially constructed, justly constructed or unjustly enforced, are part of human existence. It is indeed a fundamental human dilemma to live with these differences while developing social equalities. Ideally, therefore, human beings should make naturally conditioned differences irrelevant to social inequalities and in the meantime link artificially constructed differences to social justice. There is no doubt that cultural ethnocentrism at the macro level, like self-centred narcissism at the micro level, is impedimental to the realization of this ideal. A theoretical alternative of cultural ethnocentrism is “dialogic democracy” (Giddens 1994b) or democratic dialogue, which should apply to not only interpersonal and intergroup relationships, but also international and cross-cultural relationships, and in which lies the possibility of effective communication, mutual understanding, and basic value universalism. This is the final thing to keep in mind throughout our analysis of the modern relevance of Confucianism in East Asia.
The above being said, this study is to be unfolded as follows. The succeeding two chapters, chapters 2 and 3, will compare Confucian rationalism and humanism with their modern Western counterparts: Western rationalism will be located in the spheres of epistemology and social philosophy, while Western humanism will be divided into individualistic humanism and humanitarian humanism, thus constituting a framework of reference via which Confucian rationalism and humanism are to be identified and interpreted. Chapter 4 will examine the religious and irreligious elements in the Confucian tradition, as well as how the Confucian tradition interacted with other East Asian -- largely religious -- traditions, such as Buddhism, Taoism, Shintoism, shamanism, etc, with a focus on how secularization in the Confucian world is comparable to that in the West. Chapter 5 will present the basic contents of Confucianism as the social ideology of Chinese/East Asian familism. This chapter will redefine familism in the Confucian context, and will further explain the theoretical rationale of familistic values and norms as well as their institutionalization in the Confucian world. Chapter 6 will discuss how Weber's *The Religion of China* and his general theoretical framework exclude the possible relevance of Confucianism to modernity, and how, in relation to the Weberian cultural approach, the "post-Confucian hypothesis," a central theme of current East Asian studies, conceptualizes "post-Confucian values" in the context of modern East Asia. Chapter 7 will analyze how the surviving Confucian tradition, particularly Confucian familism, functions as a defining factor of the economic culture, the political culture, and the culture of everyday life in modern East Asia -- in other words, how Confucianism is relevant to East Asian modernity. Finally, the concluding chapter will return to Huntington's thesis: the clash of civilizations. This chapter, based on a generalization of the comparisons and analyses in previous chapters, will touch upon some theoretical
issues that might have global significance or consequence.

Before proceeding to the rest of this thesis, there are some "rules" that need to be spelled out to preclude some conceivable misunderstandings that might occur to this study (these "rules" might be repeated and elaborated later if required in the context). First, this study will not be involved in the endless yet not very productive discussion of why modern capitalism did not originate in East Asia, as it did in the West: no matter where it was invented, modern capitalism is by definition a global and globalizing phenomenon. Second, this study, instead of seeking to explain the reasons for the economic "miracle" or industrial capitalism of East Asia, will focus on how East Asian modernity is different (from its Western counterpart) and how this is related to Confucianism, a cultural tradition shared by all East Asian societies. Third, this study does not identify Confucianism as the sole cultural tradition shaping modern East Asia: Confucianism mingles with some other -- indigenous and Western -- cultural elements, and together they constitute the modern mentality in East Asia. Fourth, this study assigns no determining or determined role to Confucianism or East Asian culture in general in the social development of modern East Asia: institutional, geopolitical and some other factors, as demonstrated by many studies, also play their part, and the interrelation between these factors is not governed by causality in the form of mathematical rules or Newtonian laws. Fifth, this study does not, explicitly or implicitly, presuppose any superiority or inferiority of Confucianism or any other culture, but it will confront and analyze cultural differences and their possible consequences. Sixth, this study does not assume Confucianism to be a fixed tradition immune to modern social changes: just as Confucianism contextualizes East Asian modernity, so modernity also transforms and re-forms the Confucian tradition. Seventh, this study will not isolate the cultural distinction of modern East
Asia from the general scene of modernity and will not ignore the similarity between East Asian and Western modernity; as a matter of fact, this study will try to expose the general by examining the particular and to locate the particular in its relation to the general. And, last but not least, the theoretical analysis in this study, while open to whatever theory is applicable, will not be confined or attached to any existing theoretical frameworks: after all, the absolute theoretical authority is the real world; and the real world, together with various theories floating in it, should be always subject to rational critique for the sake of perfecting humanity. The implication of these rules will perhaps become clear with the development of this thesis.
2. Rationalism and Confucian Rationalism

Rationalism and humanism are the two interlinked -- largely overlapping but sometimes contradictory -- spiritual pillars of the Enlightenment and of Western modernity. In the sense that Confucianism is essentially a rationalist and humanist doctrine, which few Sinologists would dispute, Confucianism is by definition modern in Western terms, or Confucianism has the potential to be modern in theory. Indeed, one does not have to delve into the recent development of East Asia to comprehend the modern relevance of Confucianism. In the 17th and 18th centuries, Confucianism and other Chinese traditions were introduced -- principally and ironically through Jesuits of the China mission -- to Europe, resulting in Sinophilism among the learned community of Europe in general and some major Enlightenment thinkers in particular (Lach & Van Kley 1993; Ching & Oxtoby 1992). A brief refreshing of the memory of this well-documented yet nearly forgotten event of modern European history would perhaps provide a clue to the modern relevance of Confucianism. According to Walter W. Davis, in that particular period, Neo-Confucianism, a much developed version of Confucianism, "appeared to be the ideal prototype for a deistic ethical system espoused by many European intellectuals" (1992: 1). As a matter of fact, the influence of Confucianism on the Enlightenment was evident in the writings of the philosophes in France (Voltaire and Francois Quesnay in particular), of Leibniz and Christian Wolff in Germany, and of Matthew Tindal in England. They "extolled China's antiquity, glorified Confucius's teachings for their rationality and lack of superstition, and praised
Chinese government by enlightened rulers and sage officials. Dissenters were notable, but few in number" (Mungello 1992: 81). To these Enlightenment thinkers, Confucianism (and Neo-Confucianism) "was a philosophy of reason and common sense, of tolerance and virtue -- a proof that morality is fundamentally independent of theology" (Ching & Oxtoby 1992: xxv). The Enlightenment Sinophilism began to decline in the wake of the French Revolution, but its effects have quietly persisted, from which an important practical derivation was "the system of civil service examination adopted by Western nations in the 19th and 20th centuries" (Davis 1992: 23). Indeed, the prevailing intellectual enthusiasm of Enlightenment Europe for Confucian China seems stunning and puzzling from today's point of view. There is no doubt that Enlightenment thinkers, based on limited and not always accurate information on China and hoping for radical changes in the West, idealized traditional Chinese society and culture in one way or another. Nevertheless, they did not fabricate a Confucian world -- "China provided the only living prototype of deistic ethics" known to them (Davis 1992: 23), and certainly there was "a curious affinity between certain modes of Chinese thought and certain strands of eighteenth-century Western Enlightenment thought" (Schwartz 1996: 77). After the French Revolution, however, this prototype was replaced by that of Oriental despotism, which was first identified by Montesquieu, also a major Enlightenment intellectual, in his classification of societies (republic, monarchy, despotism, etc.), and finally stereotyped by Hegel (and Marx and the West in general, in the cultural format of "Orientalism") as a "static, unchanging society" (cf. Turner 1978; Ch'en 1979: chapter 1; Ching and Oxtoby 1992). It should be noted that the influence of Chinese culture on Westerners did not disappear completely even after Western modernity became full-fledged and began to expand to the Confucian world. According to the German philosopher Karl Jaspers, for instance, "In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it was not rare for Protestant and
missionaries in China to be so overwhelmed by the profundity of Chinese thought that they would reverse their role and return to the West, so to speak, as ‘Chinese missionaries’” (1963: 143-44).

History does repeat itself. When the Confucian world was, willy-nilly, exposed to the largely reified Enlightenment spirit in the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, the majority of the erstwhile or otherwise Confucian *literati* initially demonstrated similar fervour for the West. However, notwithstanding an influential and radical group of intellectuals urging “wholesale Westernization,” some others quickly became more critical than zealous in their reaction to the Enlightenment mentality and to Western modernity in general. Soon an overarching and consistent pattern of thinking was formed across China, Japan, and Korea: “Chinese learning for the essential principles; Western learning for the practical applications [*zhongti xiyong* 中体西用]” in China, “Eastern ethics and Western science” in Japan, and “Eastern morality and Western technology” in Korea (Craig 1979: 109; Hofheinz & Calder 1982: 47; Fairbank et al 1989: 629). Strange as it might appear, when this pattern of thinking was put into effect by various social reforms in that dramatically changing period, the three countries differed. Once again it should be mentioned that it was Japan that first successfully and ominously integrated the “Eastern” and “Western” in its Meiji Restoration in 1868 and after, becoming part of the capitalist world and the imperialist club. Similar reform movements in China and Korea some thirty years later were not only too late but also too weak: China was spiritually disoriented by conflicting ideologies (Chinese and Western, liberal and radical) and physically fragmented by various military forces (domestic warlords and foreign -- eventually, Japanese -- imperialists) until the end of the Second World War; in the meantime Korea was colonized by Japan and, after this, Korea, traditionally a “model Confucian society” (Fairbank et al
1989: ch. 12), was most ironically divided by two Western ideologies in the aftermath of the Korean War and has been so till this day. History did give Korea (South Korea), among other Mini-Dragons, chances in the postwar period to catch up. And China, having worshipped and practiced Marxism -- a Western (read "socialist") doctrine that is anti-Western (read "capitalist") -- for so many years, finally decided to follow its economically prosperous East Asian neighbours and, tacitly, to seek inspiration from the recipe *zhongti xiyong* (Chinese learning for the essential principles; Western learning for the practical applications), articulated by the Confucian reformists before Marxism was known to China (it is interesting that during the Tiananmen protests of 1989, Mao’s famous quotation “Only socialism can save China” was cynically reversed by a Peking University student as “Only China can save socialism”). Apparently, the response of the Confucian world to the modern West, like the transformation of the Confucian tradition in modern East Asia, has been tortuous and complicated. However, as it turns out, while East Asia has been consciously and pragmatically assimilating whatever elements of Western modernity are applicable, it has, often unconsciously and sometimes unwillingly, conserved its Confucian “learning.” In other words, the old reformist recipe has not expired yet.

Retrospectively, it was no historical coincidence that the existence of Chinese civilization, in which this-worldly Confucianism had been the political and intellectual orthodoxy for over two thousand years, appeared enlightening to Enlightenment thinkers, who were trying to free the West from the political dominance of Christian theocracy and the cultural hegemony of Christian theology. On the other hand, it was almost a historical necessity that the aggressive presence of the West in East Asia, as the economically wealthier and militarily stronger with a different cultural and institutional
background, would seem a threatening challenge to the Confucian world, leaving East Asian societies no option but to learn from Western nations, as Enlightenment Europe did from Confucianism. Of course, there are, as Schwartz observed, “profound differences” between Confucianism and the Enlightenment thought (1996: 77). Still, curiously enough, what made the Enlightenment enthusiasm for Confucianism disappear has hardly been explored. The French Revolution, which embodied the spirit of Enlightenment rationalism in a radical way, was certainly the historical turning point where the Enlightenment mentality departed from Confucianism. However, the root of this split lies deeper: this can only be properly appreciated when a full cycle of interaction and interchange between the two sides is completed, as it has been in modern East Asia. Clearly, the difference between the Enlightenment mentality and Confucianism is not simply that between Enlightenment Sinophilism and the Montesquieu-Hegelian distaste for “Oriental despotism.”

Granted that rationalism and humanism are central to both the Enlightenment mentality and the Confucian tradition, one may wonder: as rationalism and humanism are presumably universalistic, how is it possible for the coexistence of two types of rationalism and humanism? Or perhaps there is no significant discrepancy between the two sides: if this were the case, there would be no need to reflect on how the distinction of East Asian modernity is related to Confucianism. Thus, a theoretical examination of how Western rationalism and humanism are comparable to their Confucian counterparts seems to be a pressing task. This chapter will explore why and where Western rationalism and Confucian rationalism converge and diverge. And the next chapter will compare Western humanism and its Confucian counterpart.
In the Western context, modern rationalism involves a mixture of intellectual trends, which can be identified mainly in 1) the specific sphere of epistemology, and 2) the mainstream social philosophy. (Traditional metaphysics has generally declined in modern times – Hegel’s pan-rationalism was a major but vain attempt against this tendency. Nevertheless, a specific kind of metaphysics, the ontology of human existence, was separated or reborn from the dying metaphysics and has existed in modern social thoughts.) The key variable in Western rationalism is reason, commonly defined as *logical or mathematical inference based on self-evident truths*. An immediate question might be: what is a self-evident truth? The answer seems simple: a self-evident truth is a truth that is clear enough to human intelligence and needs no proof or explanation. However, one should be aware that, as it happens too often, there are “truths” that are self-evident just because they are presumed or instilled as true in the first place, and sometimes “the mirror of nature” may appear more self-evident than “nature” itself. Bacon’s enumeration of what he calls “idols,” Hume’s philosophic conception of custom, Kant’s distinction between phenomenon and things-in-themselves, and, of course, Plato’s famous simile of the “cave,” suggest how self-evident truths might be self-made or self-deceiving. Indeed, the idea of “self-evident truth” is very problematic -- this is perhaps why reason is often implicitly further reduced to logical or mathematical inference without necessarily being based on “self-evident” truths (we will return to this when we discuss the Western idea of natural law and its Chinese counterpart). Then, how is the role of reason theorized in Western rationalism? And in what sense is Confucianism rationalistic?
2.1. Epistemology: The Knowledge of Nature vs. Humans

Epistemology is a specific philosophic area pertaining to the object, the standard, and the origin of knowledge. In its early days modern Western epistemology (mainly Continental rationalism and British empiricism) generally assumed nature as the object of knowledge, and the social world as part of nature or something natural. Its underlying metaphysical assumption was that nature and the social world were governed by the same laws or laws of the same objectivity and universality (or rationality). The implication of this assumption was typically carried out in the modern reformulation of the conception of natural law -- the law of the social world. In the sense that the laws (including laws of nature and the natural law) are intelligible to rational human beings, nature (including the social world) and reason are identical. A significant challenge to this naturalist or positivist approach to the social world came from Neo-Kantianism, which stressed the distinction of the social world (from nature) and therefore of historical and cultural studies (Vico's earlier call for "New Science" had been hardly heard before the appearance of Neo-Kantianism). The modern rationalist tradition seems to have survived this kind of challenge, but not so while intact -- it has redefined its territory (or the object of knowledge): the mainstream Western epistemology in this century from "the Vienna Circle" to the postwar philosophy of science has restricted itself to the so-called "rational reconstruction" of science (natural science), while rejecting metaphysics as meaningless (read "unscientific") and conceiving the rest of knowledge (humanities and social sciences) as quasi-metaphysical. This narrowly-focused rationalistic approach is, of course, a reflection of the fact that
on the one hand, natural science, physics in particular, has largely liberated itself from traditional metaphysics, and, on the other, modern humanities and social sciences have always, as ever, been conditioned by their metaphysical presumptions (ontology of human existence or social philosophy). Nevertheless, although it is true that modern science -- natural science -- has been much more independent of metaphysics, the conception of a metaphysics-free science is questionable: facts cannot be reduced to ideas, and knowledge does not simply consist of psychological customs; rational/logical metaphysics might be impossible or meaningless, but knowledge necessarily implies (relative) objectivity and external foundation. On the other hand, the mainstream epistemology seems blind to the fact that modern knowledge of the social world has been far from confined to metaphysical/ontological imaginations -- traditional or otherwise. In fact, as the object of knowledge, the social world -- like nature -- has been divided into different spheres and, correspondingly, various disciplines have been established (linguistics, psychoanalysis, economics, anthropology, political science, sociology, etc. -- to name just a few). Not surprisingly, whereas these social/human sciences are in the final analysis subject to certain metaphysical -- or, to use a term more familiar to students in these fields, ideological -- presuppositions, they, modeled on (natural) science and/or forming their models, have significantly developed their scientific/objective aspects, which sometimes even contradict their own metaphysical presuppositions. Of course, there is no systematic epistemology for modern social/human sciences comparable to that for (natural) science (Mannheim's sociology of knowledge and Foucault's conception of episteme are noteworthy but exceptional efforts in constructing social epistemology). Students in social/human sciences would generally disagree on the "object" or goal of knowledge -- is it the laws in society, or the meanings of the life-world? Sociology ("social physics") perhaps best exemplifies this dilemma: positive sociology and
interpretative sociology represent respectively naturalist and culturalist approaches in this sphere, while critical sociology, though also committed to the principle of "objectivity," deliberately appeal to values or value judgements. However, the uniqueness of social/human sciences has not been forgotten: almost unnoticed by the mainstream epistemology, twentieth-century hermeneutics, a successor of Neo-Kantianism, has burgeoned in the midst of a variety of European philosophical movements before and after World War Two (such as phenomenology, existentialism, structuralism, poststructuralism, etc.), which seems not to fit into the conventional rationalistic or irrationalistic framework easily. Therefore, corresponding to the split of the knowledge of nature and that of the social world in the modern West, there is a gap between epistemology and hermeneutics. Richard Rorty is surely correct when he indicates that the vacuum left by the "demise of foundational epistemology" is not to be filled by hermeneutics (1979: 315). Apparently, the attempts to bridge the gap between epistemology and hermeneutics from both sides by philosophers such as Rorty himself (epistemology) and Paul Ricoeur (hermeneutics) has been provocative but not very fruitful.

How is the object of knowledge defined in Confucianism? Confucius's renowned answer to the question "What is knowledge?" is: "It is to know man" (Analects, 12.22). In other words, the object of knowledge is the social world. What about nature? To answer this, one must locate Confucianism in the general context of Chinese culture. In this regard, Needham made the following observation: "The Taoists, thought profoundly interested in Nature, distrusted reason and logic. The Mohists and the Logicians fully believed in reason and logic, but if they were interested in Nature it was only for practical purposes. The Legalists and Confucians were not interested in Nature at all" (1956: 580). This observation is insightful, but it should be read with some revision as far as the Confucians are
concerned. In fact, sometimes Confucians did consider nature as part of the object of knowledge. For instance, Xunzi, the Confucian Aristotle in both the historical and intellectual sense (cf. Feng, Needham, 1956; Knobelck, 1994), proposed to "control Heaven's seasons and Earth's resources, and utilize them" (Xunzi: 17; also cf. Feng 1952: 284-88). Moreover, Confucianism had constantly reflected on the progress of natural science, which is evident particularly in the Neo-Confucianism of the Song dynasty (960-1279). In Needham's own explanation, "the Neo-Confucian view of the world was one extremely congruent with that of the natural sciences" (1956: 493). De Bary makes this clear in his "Introduction" to the book, Principle and Practicality: Essays in Neo-Confucianism and Practical Learning: "The great Neo-Confucian Chu Hsi [Zhu Xi] had indeed pursued learning which 'helped man to follow his moral Way' but he had also affirmed the reality of the external world as a manifestation and confirmation of that Way" (1979: 2). Of course, Confucians themselves were seldom natural scientists, and their intellectual interest was consistently centred on human social life. Since the idea of laws or rules is supposedly the precondition of rationalistic thinking, one cannot help ask: was there a Confucian counterpart of the Western idea of law? Yes, there was, yet with some difference. This counterpart was the Confucian/Chinese idea of Tao and/or its Neo-Confucian derivative Li (principle, pattern, or organisation -- cf. Needham 1956: 472-75). Like Western rationalists, Confucians did believe in the universal existence of Tao or Li (Tao and Li are "roughly the same" in Confucianism -- see Needham 1956: 565-66), by which order or harmony is formed and maintained. However, the Confucian idea of Tao or Li was more philosophical than scientific: Tao or Li "runs through all things in the universe" and "the universe is orderly, and, in a sense, rational." But not therefore intelligible in the scientific as opposed to the philosophical sense, and not necessarily following rules capable of being formulated in a precise and
abstract way by man” (ibid.: 569, italics added; also cf. 579). Moreover, as the *Tao* or *Li* varies (“*Li* is one, and it partition plural” — cf. Feng 1953: 534-42), *Tao* or *Li* in the social world is human nature. Thus, to know the social world means to know the *Tao* and *Li* in the social world or human nature, particularly rules of propriety — the institutionalized form of human nature. In the Confucian teaching, human nature or the *Tao/Li* in the social world is the primary, if not the only, object of knowledge, and by knowing human nature we may perhaps know the *Tao* and *Li* of the universe (This will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. Suffice it here to explain how the Confucians, in comparison with their Western counterparts, defined the object of knowledge).

The issue of the standard of knowledge in the West initially arose from the modern protest against Christianity as the authority of truth. The historian of philosophy Frank Thilly wrote: “If by rationalism we mean the attitude which makes reason instead of revelation or authority the standard of knowledge, all modern systems of philosophy are rationalistic; indeed, it is this characteristic which enables us to classify them as modern” (1963: 282, italics added). This observation applies to the early period of modern epistemology, dominated by Continental rationalism and British empiricism, both belonging to the rationalistic camp in a broad sense. However, again as explained by Thilly, Continental rationalism and British empiricism differed as to what is the origin of knowledge: the former believed that genuine knowledge cannot come from sense perception or experience, and must have its foundation in thought or reason; while the latter argued that all knowledge springs from sense perception or experience, and hence so-called necessary propositions yield only *probable* knowledge (ibid.: 282-83, italics original). The dispute between Continental rationalism and British empiricism was *temporarily* solved by Kant’s theory, according to which, our experience provides the contents
of knowledge, while *a priori* forms and categories in our mind arrange them in a rational way. However, in Kant's view, our knowledge is limited to the empirical world (phenomenon) and cannot extend to things-in-themselves. Thus, in Kant, the issue of the standard of knowledge and that of the origin of knowledge are indistinguishable, and a synthesis was reached between Continental rationalism and British empiricism. In the wave of certain epoch-making advances in science (physics in particular) in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the issue of the standard of knowledge once again became salient; hence the development of the philosophy of science in logical positivism (the Vienna Circle), logical empiricism, and, in between, Popper's "falsification" theory. Philosophers in this development were technically sophisticated in theorizing the verification or falsification of science, but in general they agree (among themselves and with earlier epistemologists) that science essentially consists of logic (reason) and facts (experience) and therefore it can be rationally reconstructed. Clearly, implied in their theories is a fixed methodology which relies heavily, if not solely, on an idea of invariant, universal, and *a priori* reason -- the idea principally formulated by René Descartes (*cogito*). In the 1960s, Kuhn's theory of "paradigms" reoriented the philosophy of science by examining science in history or the history of science (hence the relevance of sociology, psychology, etc.). From Kuhn's perspective, a scientific paradigm imposes order on a research community, through which scientists confront reality; in other words, there are non-rational, authoritarian factors in the social acceptance of the paradigm (reminiscent of Foucault's knowledge/power conception). Therefore, revolution in the history of science cannot be rationally assessed, and different paradigms are incommensurable. Kuhn's effort was joined by Paul Feyerabend and Imre Lakatos, among others, in somewhat different directions, who argued that cognitive activities are not always rational, and other psychological processes, such as intuition, analogy,
conjecture, and even magic or superstition, together with reason (narrowly defined), may all play some role under certain circumstances ("Anything goes"). It should be noted that Kuhn's theory (and that of Feyerabend, Lakatos, etc.) does not necessarily lead to irrationalism or relativism; rather, it does shed light on the limit of ahistoric rationalism, which has haunted modern Western epistemology since its beginning. In the end, "pure reason" is contextualized in history and society, and rationalist methodology is fused into methodological pluralism. Thus, the mainstream epistemology is theoretically open to hermeneutics, although they by no means converge.

How would Confucianism respond to modern Western epistemology as well as its recent rivals, as far as the standard (or justification) and the origin (or formation) of knowledge are concerned? Was there a Confucian methodology in an epistemological sense? If there was, what was the position of reason in it? Since the Confucian conception of the object of knowledge is, as explained before, fundamentally different from that defined in modern Western epistemology, it might not be proper to compare Confucianism with modern Western epistemology directly in terms of how they differ as to what are the standard and origin of knowledge. For example, although Confucians had developed a theory of "the ladder of souls" (cf. Needham 1956: 21-26), they -- understandably, given the fact that they were mainly interested in human affairs -- did not perceive the tension between reason and sense perception in the cognitive process, and they naturally resorted to human thinking (rational or not) and textual learning (classical studies) rather than sense perception (or experience) in acquiring knowledge. Meanwhile, from the Confucian perspective, as the object of knowledge was mainly the social world, there was no absolute line between the knowing subject and to-be-known object -- they were both human beings, and therefore knowledge was essentially identical with human beings' self-
cultivation ("All things are complete within us. There is no greater delight than to realize this through self-cultivation" — Mencius: 7A.1), and learning with practice ("Is it a pleasure, having learned something, to try it out at due intervals" — Analects: 1.1). Moreover, the antagonism between reason (Descartes) and history (Kuhn) would not make much sense in the Confucian context, for there was no way for reason, however defined in Confucian terms, to be ahistorical — the Confucian reason was not only psychologically but also socially embedded. For these reasons, Confucianism and modern Western epistemology are, to paraphrase Kuhn, "incommensurable."

Nevertheless, regardless of such obvious obstacles, one can still compare Confucianism with modern Western epistemology at a purely methodological level. At this level, it seems that whereas modern Western epistemology points to formal logic and mathematical reasoning, Confucianism is featured by intuition (immediate apprehension) and analogy (correlative thinking). There was doubtless a connection between the Confucian/Chinese vision of the world, i.e. organic naturalism -- as suggested by Needham (this will be discussed in the following section), and the dominance of intuition and analogy (particularly the latter) in the Confucian and generally the Chinese way of thinking, which has long been noticed by Sinologists and Chinese scholars alike (e.g. Hansen 1983; Graham 1989; Feng 1958; Liang 1988; Henderson 1984). Therefore, the comparison between modern Western epistemology (as far as its mainstream is concerned) and Confucianism at a methodological level can be actually reduced to that between the Western logical-mathematical reasoning and the Confucian intuitive-analogical thinking. Whether or not intuition and analogy are rational is an issue in dispute even in the West. One may consider them irrational because they seldom follow logical or mathematical rules, or rational because they do not always contradict these rules. Rational or not,
they certainly play an important and sometimes crucial role in human beings' cognitive process, including that in natural science. Indeed, does the boundary of reason, as conventionally defined, really matter here? Or, if it does, how? It seems that a strictly delineated boundary of reason (limited to logic and mathematics) can hardly cope with the large picture of the psychology of human beings' knowing or reasoning mechanism, while a loosely defined one, which includes intuition and analogy, tells little about the subtlety and complexity of this picture. Perhaps it would be more reasonable and accurate to say that intuition and analogy are not by themselves rational or irrational, and whether they are rational or irrational is circumstantial. As a matter of fact, logic-mathematical reasoning and intuitional-analogical thinking do not mutually exclude each other, just as they are not always in accordance with each other: there are mathematical intuition and logical analogy, on the one hand; and, on the other, there are aesthetic intuition and romantic analogy. To be more specific, it could be argued that intuition and analogy are rational when they are not in conflict with logic and facts, and irrational when they are. Those who identify reason exclusively with logic and mathematics often have little to say about rational intuition and analogy; And those who tend to provide a flexible definition of reason, which would include intuition and analogy, often fail to face the diversity of intuition and analogy. Thus, it seems misleading either to reduce Confucianism to romanticism and aestheticism without seeing the rational side of Confucian intuition and analogy, or to conflate Confucian rationalism with Western rationalism while ignoring their difference. The intuitional and analogical thinking in Confucianism did contain romantic and aesthetic values, but Confucianism did not exclude and would accord with logical and mathematical reasoning. Essentially, therefore, Confucianism is a rationalistic doctrine mingled with irrational elements. It should be noted that intuitive-analogical thinking (hence organism or holism) is not uniquely Confucian or Chinese. In the
West, it has featured in, for example, Leibniz’s philosophy of pre-established harmony and Einstein's scientific theory of relativity (cf. Needham 1956: 496-505), in 19th-century positivist sociology and evolutionist theory, and in Plato’s conception of “ideal society.” Still, it is Chinese in the sense that Confucians applied this kind of thinking to the social world and made it the defining character of Chinese/East Asian social life, just as rationalistic thinking is Western in a parallel sense.

It seems now clear that modern Western epistemology differs in some fundamental ways from the Confucian epistemology. (The term “epistemology” is repeated only for the sake of wording consistency. One could also say the Confucian “hermeneutics,” etc.) In modern Western epistemology, the object of knowledge is nature, which would include the social world in the natural-law philosophy and would exclude the social world after its distinction was pointed out by, among others, Neo-Kantianists. On the other hand, in Confucianism, the object of knowledge is primarily, if not exclusively, the social world, and nature is conceived as, if relevant, something analogous to the social world (hence the organismic vision of the world). Moreover, the rationalist tradition of modern Western epistemology is distinctively defined by its emphasis on reason (formal logic and mathematics) as the standard of knowledge, if not at the same time as its origin; and it appeals to logic (and facts) in its rational reconstruction of science. In contrast, the Confucian tradition has not been bothered so much by the issue of the standard and origin of knowledge, and at the methodological level it relies much more on intuition and analogy than on formal logic. However, despite these differences, there are also significant similarities between the two sides: both modern Western epistemology and Confucianism presuppose some kind of order in the world -- law and natural law in the former, and Tao/Li and rules of propriety in the latter; in addition, both believe that
the order of the world is knowable to human beings -- rational in the former, and, if not rational, at least intelligible in the latter. One should also keep in mind that the Confucian intuitive-analogical thinking does not necessarily constitute an antithesis of Western logical-mathematical reasoning, and there is no theoretical barrier in Confucianism for Confucians to be rational or logical in the strict sense of reason (e.g. Xunzi).

2.2. Social Philosophy: Natural Law vs. Rules of Propriety

Rationalism is certainly a key factor in modern Western social thinking. Rationalist social thinking in the modern West was first evident in modern natural-law philosophy, and then embraced by various social theories, including those against natural-law philosophy. Natural-law philosophy, of course, has generally declined in theory in the post-Enlightenment West, despite the revival of interest in it among some contemporary law philosophers and political theorists (see, for example, d'Entrèves 1970; Crowe 1977; Weinreb 1987; Covell 1992; Simon 1992). However, as an essential part of the Enlightenment mentality, natural-law philosophy has been institutionalized in the social life of the modern West and, in this sense, it is very much alive in reality. Therefore, it is no exaggeration to say that modern natural-law philosophy, its theoretical and political opponents notwithstanding, has been a defining ideology of Western modernity. The Confucian counterpart of the Western natural law is \( Li \) (Another phonetically cognate and semantically related Chinese term was \( Li \))
理，which, as mentioned earlier, means “principle” or “pattern” or “organization” and is a Neo-Confucian derivative or equivalent of Tao — cf. Needham 1956: 558f, 565f; Graham 1989: 286; Feng 1952-53. To distinguish the two terms in this text, Li, a capitalized spelling, will be used hereafter to refer to “principle,” etc., while li to “rules of propriety.” When li has to be capitalized in the beginning of a sentence, or when it might be confused with Li, its meaning will be explained in brackets. In the Confucian context, Li is more general than li and includes li: Li is universal, and li, as part of human nature, is the Tao or Li in the social world). In a substantial sense the Confucian vision of the social world is a world of li. According to Needham, in the Chinese context “there could hardly be a jus gentium, for owing to the ‘isolation’ of Chinese civilization there was no other gentes from whose practices an actual universal law of nations could be deduced, but there was certainly a natural law, namely that body of customs which the sage-kings and the people had always accepted, i.e. what the Confucians called li” (1956: 521).

In the Western context, natural law is “natural” in the same sense that the law of nature is natural: the social world and nature are governed by universal laws intelligible to human reason; in other words, “natural” means “rational.” This idea was, as is generally acknowledged, rooted in the Hellenic rationalist cosmology and was first systematized by the Stoic school (cf. e.g. Crowe 1977). (It is interesting to note that in the Hellenic rationalist cosmology, reason and justice were identical, or they implied each other — this was theorized particularly in Plato’s philosophy.) The Stoic natural-law philosophy was preserved intact in the Roman doctrine of natural law, which in turn constituted the foundation of Roman law. Cicero’s definition interpreted this Greco-Roman conception of natural law only too well: “True law is right reason in agreement with Nature; it is of universal application,
unchanging and everlasting; it summons to duty by its commands, and averts from wrong-doing by its prohibitions” (quoted from d’ Entrèves 1970: 25). The Christianization of the Roman empire did not change the natural-law tradition — as d’Entrèves indicated, “As far as the ‘formal’ continuity of the notion is concerned, there is no doubt that medieval natural law is the progeny of the Greeks and the Romans” (ibid.: 38). Nevertheless, a difference was made: now God became the divine lawgiver (a Hebrew conception), and the Scriptures the source of natural law: “Reason and faith go hand in hand, but reason is the handmaid” (ibid.: 48). Hugo Grotius’s famous dictum that natural law would retain its validity even if God did not exist inspired and initiated a theoretical revolution perhaps unexpected by himself, hence modern or Enlightenment natural-law philosophy (ibid.: 53-56). Of course, this philosophy was not simply a renaissance of Greco-Roman conception of natural law. In modern natural-law philosophy, not only God, but also the divine Logos, were rendered theoretically unnecessary, if still remembered for other reasons; more important, many significant notions were formulated or reformulated under the general idea of natural law, and the centrality of human beings both as the lawgiver and as the lawful was highlighted. In Mannheim’s summarization (1971: 174-5), the content of modern natural-law philosophy includes:

1) The doctrine of the “state of nature.”

2) The doctrine of the social contract.

3) The doctrine of popular sovereignty.

4) The doctrine of the inalienable Rights of Man (life, liberty, property, the right to resist tyranny, etc.).
And its methodological characteristics are:

1) Rationalism as a method of solving problems.

2) Deductive procedure from one general principle to the particular cases.

3) A claim to *universal validity* for every individual (italics original).

4) A claim to universal applicability of all laws to all historical and social units.

5) Atomism and mechanism: collective units (the state, the law, etc.) are constructed out of isolated individuals or factors.

6) Static thinking (right reason conceived as a self-sufficient, autonomous sphere unaffected by history).

Therefore, in the paradigm of modern natural-law philosophy, the natural/rational was identified with the human (vs. the divine), and the human the individual. Apparently, in the Enlightenment thinking, the idea of “natural law” is far more than juristic. It refers to the laws in the social world and the likeness between the social laws and the laws of nature (in the sense of the natural sciences). In fact, for modern natural-law philosophers, the distinction between human beings and natural things and between the social world and nature seem not much relevant as far as the idea of the transcendent (law or order) is concerned: human rights are natural rights, and social laws are natural laws. Thus, modern natural-law philosophy is essentially a naturalistic/rationalistic social philosophy, which conceives society and nature as ruled by laws of the same nature or universal validity, if not by the same laws, and which appeals to the universality of reason to achieve the unity of laws and humanity.
Locke, though an empiricist in epistemological terms, unambiguously identified natural law with the law of reason: the existence of “a Supreme Beings, infinite in power, goodness and wisdom, whose workmanship we are and on whom we depend; and the idea of ourselves as understanding rational beings being such as are clear in us, would, I suppose, if duly considered and pursued, afford such foundations of our duty and rules of action as might place amongst the sciences capable of demonstration” (quoted from Crowe 1977: 241, italics added). Montesquieu himself is not a proponent of natural-law philosophy, but his definition of law would comfort this philosophy in general: “Laws, taken in the broadest meaning, are the necessary relations deriving from the nature of things; and in this sense, all beings have their laws: the divinity has its laws, the material world has its laws, the intelligences superior to man have their laws, the beasts have their laws, man has his laws” (1989: 3). And when Montesquieu relates laws to reason -- human or divine (ibid.), he virtually sides with natural-law philosophy.

Although Enlightenment rationalists were not necessarily atheistic, all of them would agree that human affairs are governed by laws -- laws that can be known, laid down, and followed by human reason or rational human beings. In other words, to Enlightenment thinkers, human reason can be on its own with or without the existence of God. Moreover, notwithstanding a few exceptions (e.g. Hobbes), most Enlightenment thinkers would conceive a positive connection between reason and freedom: freedom is not to be identified with the spontaneity of impulses, appetites or selfish desires; and the gap between necessity (laws) and freedom is to be bridged by reason. Therefore, in the Enlightenment minds, reason is to stand firmly to exorcize or rationalize transcendentental existence, and to resist or regulate human unconsciousness. This is the spirit of Enlightenment rationalism that was
first testified by the English Revolution in a mild way and further carried out violently in the French Revolution. Some significant changes have happened to this spirit afterwards. Within the tradition of modern Western rationalism, two major revisions occurred to natural-law philosophy:

First, Kant, who is considered "the most forceful exponent of natural law theory in modern days" (d'Entrèves 1970: 110), proposed to set the limit of knowledge in order to make room for rational faith and endeavoured to seek a reunion of God and humanity, necessity and freedom in "pure" and "practical" reason — thus, he actually reconceptualized the idea of natural law as "moral law." Of course, there was nothing new in Kant's identifying law with morality: this had been at the very core of the tradition of natural-law philosophy. D'Entrèves confirmed that "Perhaps the best description of natural law is that it provides a name for the point of intersection between law and morals. Whether such a point of intersection exists is therefore the ultimate test of the validity of all natural law thinking" (ibid.: 111). What was new in Kant is that the moral/social world and nature were now theoretically separated, corresponding to the gap between things-in-themselves (God, freedom, immortality, etc.) and the empirical world (nature), and that between pure/practical reason and cognitive or knowing reason. In other words, reason was fragmented: the reason that was both the standard and origin of knowledge or science (the law of nature) would no longer serve to justify and produce natural law or moral law for the social world, and natural law based on pure/practical reason was found to be a misnomer of moral/social law or the law of human (vs. natural) condition, hence Neo-Kantianism.
Second, positivist sociology and evolutionist theory introduced a holistic, organic and historical paradigm to confront the atomistic, mechanic and ahistorical paradigm of Enlightenment natural-law philosophy. In the natural-law tradition, the distinction between divine order and natural law is more historical than theoretical. Theoretically, they can be and have been mutually translated into each other: the divine order is the personalized universe (God, Zeus), and the natural law is the universalized cogito. In both cases, the transcendent is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and eternal, and it is the law as well as the law-giver. Thus, modern (vs. medieval and Greco-Roman) natural-law philosophy was in effect a Cartesian revolution: the divine was replaced by the individual (human being), whose reason is simultaneously individualistic and universalistic. The Cartesian cogito, however, was questioned by the holistic, organic and historical paradigm developed by those who would reject the idea of natural law and therefore appealed to some sort of social and historical reason. Hegel’s philosophy was in a certain sense a theorizing of this conception of reason. On the other hand, Hegel’s pan-rationalist dictum, “What is rational is real and what is real is rational,” put a theoretical period to modern rationalism, its natural-law philosophy in particular (cf. d’Entrèves 1970: 72-74). (For Hegel, Rousseau’s idea of “general will” might appear theoretically too weak and practically too radical.)

Moreover, in relation but not confined to the tradition of modern rationalism, there have been other challenges to natural-law philosophy. In political terms Enlightenment rationalism was the philosophy of the liberal or liberal democratic tradition, which has turned out to be the mainstream social thinking and political process in the West, especially after the Second World War. The conservative reaction to liberalism from the right since Burke and the radical reaction to it from the left since Marx
represent two major criticisms on Enlightenment rationalism and the liberal tradition, but few would consider Burke and Marx irrationalistic (or rationalistic): Burke tried to reintroduce traditional values into the modern world not to re-enchant the world but to balance unconstrained reason, and Marx created a secular eschatology not to abandon modern rationality but to make it more rational and more human. Thus, a moderate version of conservatism or socialism would be able to coexist with a modified liberalism, hence the "postwar consensus" among the right, liberalism, and the left in the West (the welfare state in earlier years and the Neo-Right politics in recent years). In addition, there have also been some modern irrationalist movements since the late 19th century, in which the concepts of will to life, will to power, unconsciousness, existence, sexuality, etc. are explored in depth, pointing to the other side of humanity — irrationality, and how it would be linked to the rational side (one may readily name some influential figures or schools in these movements). But these movements, while mingled with the discourse as well as the reality of modernity, seem unable to constitute threats to the rule of reason over the social world in general: their theory is often philosophically penetrating and culturally critical, yet their practical influence on the existing social structure seems to have been limited — the postmodern politics has been so far purely discursive.

Thanks to the above new developments — rationalistic or not, the simplistic natural-law philosophy of the Enlightenment might no longer hold in its original form, yet the rationalist spirit thus acquired in the West has been as vigorous and dynamic as ever — its horizon broadened, its rationale complicated, and its hegemony persisting. In this sense there is much truth in Habermas's declaration that the project of the Enlightenment is yet to be completed, and the fin-de-siècle triumph of liberal democracy in Western politics, if not in a wider sphere, is to a great extent a historical affirmation of
Enlightenment natural-law philosophy. Therefore, when one compares the rationalist social philosophy in the modern West with that in the Confucian tradition, one should keep in mind that modern natural-law philosophy is only part, a key part though, of the mentality of Western modernity.

The Confucian counterpart of natural law is *li* 礼 or rules of propriety. Just as the idea of natural law in the West implies some universal order (natural, divine, or human) or is part of the laws in general, so the Confucian idea of *li* is based on the Chinese/Confucian conception of Tao and *Li* 理 or, as said earlier, is the *Tao* and *Li* in the social world. The Enlightenment thinkers described Confucianism as deistic, hence rationalistic; but this only tells part of the story of Confucian rationalism, a very limited part indeed. In the Chinese context, *Tao*, which was articulated mainly by the Taoist philosophy and shared by Confucians and other schools in the classical period, and which was systematically developed into the Neo-Confucian concept of *Li*, does mean something eternal and universal. Laozi described the "ineffable *Tao" as follows: "There is a thing, formless yet complete. Before Heaven and Earth it existed. Without sound, without substance, it stands alone without changing. It is all pervading and unfailing. One may think of it as the mother of all beneath Heaven. We do not know its name, but we term it *Tao*. Forced to give an appellation to it, I should say it was Great" (*Laozi*: ch. 25). Moreover, *Tao* is spontaneous: "Man's standard is Earth. Earth's standard is Heaven. Heaven's standard is *Tao*. *Tao*’s standard is the spontaneous" (ibid.). To put this in another way, "*Tao* never does, yet through it all things are done" (*Laozi*: ch. 37). The Neo-Confucian conception of *Li* by Zhu Xi (and some others) would sound only too familiar to Laozi: "There is Principle (*Li*) before there can be the Either (*Qi* 气). But it is only when there is the Either, that Principle has a place to rest. This fact applies to the coming into existence of all (things), whether as large as Heaven
and Earth, or as tiny as the cricket or ant.... If we are to pin down the word Principle, neither ‘existence’ nor ‘non-existence’ may be attributed to it. For before Heaven and Earth ‘existed,’ it already was as it is” (quoted from Feng, 1953: 539). However, there was a significant revision: in Neo-Confucianism Li was no longer too abstract to be “ineffable” -- Li was now both general and particular. In Zhu Xi’s words, “When a certain thing is made, there is in it a particular Principle (Li). For all things created in the universe, there is in each a particular Principle” (quoted from Feng 1953: 535). And in general, “the Principle of all the myriad things within the universe, brought into one whole, constitute the Supreme Ultimate” (ibid.: 537). This revision made it possible for Neo-Confucians to stress, as the classical Confucians did, the distinction of the Tao or Li in the social world, i.e. human nature, li (rules of propriety) in particular, without sacrificing the grand picture of Tao and Li. In other words, the Taoist cosmology was Confucianized and reformulated, while the centrality of the Confucian tradition continued. According to Zhu Xi, “In man the principles of humanity, righteousness, [rules of] propriety, and wisdom belong to the nature [human nature]. They are principles [Tao and Li] only” (quoted from Feng 1958: 302, translation modified -- cf. Feng 1985: 347). Particularly, “li (rules of propriety) is nothing but Li” (quoted from Shi et al 1992: 779).

Apparently, Tao or Li does not refer to a divine order in the Hellenic sense (Logos) or in the Judeo-Christian sense (God); Neither is it the natural law conceived by the Stoic and modern natural-law philosophy. In fact, the idea of a personal and universal God had no place in Chinese culture, whereas polytheism or pantheism in East Asia prevailed mainly in folk religions and was never theorized, as it was in the Hellenic culture. It is true that Confucius occasionally related his life to Destiny and Heaven, but the Chinese term Destiny (ming 命) is no equivalent of Moira in ancient
Greece, which governs functionally diverse gods (hence the Hellenic polytheism); while Heaven itself is subject to Tao or Li and is by no means a law-giver. On the other hand, the Chinese idea of Tao or Li differs from the Western idea of natural law, which was presumed to have the same scientific and mathematical quality or accuracy as the laws of Nature. In his detailed discussion of “human law and the laws of Nature” in China and the West, Needham described how the Chinese conception of order (Tao or Li) contrasts with its Western counterpart: From the Chinese perspective, “Universal harmony comes about not by the celestial fiat of some King of Kings, but by the spontaneous cooperation of all beings in the universe brought about by their following the internal necessities of their own nature” (1956: 562, italics original). Therefore, in the Chinese context, the universe, instead of being divine, is rational enough to be naturally orderly, but it is not a Newtonian/Cartesian one following mechanic rules. This philosophy of the universe and of the social world is, as perceived by Needham, organismic — “In this philosophy of organism all things in the universe were included; Heaven, Earth and Man have the same Li” (ibid.: 568).

Two factors in this organismic thinking are fundamental to the Chinese/Confucian vision of the social world. First, unlike the personalized Judeo-Christian God, or a Platonic form (or a Hellenic god), or universalized human reason (natural law), which exists beyond and above the empirical world in their own right, the transcendent in the Chinese context, Tao and Li, is something embedded in reality, particularly in the human world, and therefore is knowable and achievable. In other words, the transcendent is also immanent (cf. Ching 1993: 4-8; also see Tu 1989a; Tang 1991; Yu 1992). In the very beginning of its first chapter, Doctrine of the Mean (one of major Confucian classics) says: “What Heaven imparts to man is called human nature. To follow our nature is called the Way [Tao].
Cultivating the Way is called culture [or instruction in the truth]." Moreover, "The Way is something that may not be departed from even for one instant. If it could be departed from, it would not be the Way" (cf. de Bary 1960: 132; Chan 1963: 98). This same attitude toward the transcendent was reflected differently in Mencius and Xunzi (cf. Feng 1958: 144-45). According to Mencius, by developing one's mind to the utmost, one knows one's nature, and by knowing one's nature, one knows Heaven. Xunzi went further and considers Heaven irrelevant: "It is only the sage who does not seek to know Heaven." Moreover, "If we neglect what man can do and think about Heaven, we failed to understand the nature of things." In other words, to have complete knowledge about Heaven is impossible and unnecessary. Thus, from somewhat conflicting perspectives they both reach this conclusion: it is virtually possible for every man to become a sage. Confucius himself seldom talked about "man's nature and the Tao of Heaven" (Analects: 5.13), but he seemed to be sure that ren 仁 (humanity, or the Tao of man) is with human beings: "Is ren indeed far off? I crave for ren, and lo! Ren is at hand" (Analects: 7.30. For the English translation of ren, see Chan 1963: 788-89). In Neo-Confucian terms, "Among these three things -- the mind-and-heart [xīn 心], human nature [xìng 性], and principle [Li]: when you grasp one of them, you will also see the rest" (quoted from Tang, 1991: 8). In comparing Western thinking with its Chinese counterpart, Graham correctly observed that "while in the West a scientific law of nature, just as much as a divine command or a Platonic form, loses its authority if not declared transcendent," Confucius knows no obstacle to recognising that principles "have their source in the human, social contacts which they serve" (1992: 30). In other words, what is transcendent in the West is related to the world beyond; but in Chinese culture it exists or can be obtained in this world. Therefore, in the West the pantheon is a temple of all the gods, whereas in China it would be full of sages and men of virtue; in the West the church tries
to bridge this world and the world beyond, human beings and God, while in China it is through education and cultivation that the human Tao is acquired; and in the West reason is to replace or to be identified with God or gods and to become transcendent, yet in China reason is only part of human nature -- it is transcendental only because it exists in or applies to all humanity.

Second, in the Confucian organismic thinking, everything is relational, hence the Confucian holistic vision of the social world. In contrast with the atomism and individualism of Enlightenment rationalism, which presumes the autonomy of the individual and conceives society (or social institutions) as contractual, Confucianism views the true self as "a center of relationships rather than an isolated individual" (Tu 1989a: 110; also cf. Schwartz 1985: 74). It would be a mistake to suppose that there is no position for the self or the individual in Confucianism. In fact, self-cultivation and self-development are of central importance to Confucian teachings (cf. de Bary 1983, 1985, 1991; also see Schwartz 1996 esp. ch. 10). Nevertheless, from the Confucian perspective, the self is to be located in its social relationships, and both the self and its social relationships are ontologically real. Indeed, the dichotomy between social nominalism and social realism, which is fundamental to Western social thinking, makes no sense in the Chinese context. Of course the Confucians are not alone in this regard. At an abstract level, Marx's conception that "The individual is the social being" (1961: 105, italics original) and his remark that the human essence "is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations" (1975: 423) would flatter conservatives in the West and Confucians in East Asia alike. In fashionable terms, the Confucian picture of the social world is a network, in which individuals are the knots and their relationships the cords. Of course, the Confucian reasoning with regard to this individual-relationship complex is
philosophically unique. The core idea of this reasoning is *ren* (humanity, or the *Tao* of man), which defines the content of *li* (rules of propriety)—the social form of *ren* (how *ren* and *li* are linked will be discussed in the next chapter). According to Feng, *ren* consists of *zhong* 忠 and *shu* 忍 (Feng, 1958: 43-44): *Zhong* is the positive side, meaning “conscientiousness to others” (“Do to others what you wish yourself”), and *shu* the negative, referring to “altruism” (“Do not do to others what you do not wish yourself”). Moreover, the idea of *ren* connotes not only moral but methodological implications: “To be able from one’s own self to draw a parallel for the treatment of others; that may be called the way to practise *ren*” (*Analects*: 6.30, italics added). Thus, *Doctrine of the Mean* says, “*Zhong* and *shu* are not far from the *Tao*.... Serve your father as you would require your son to serve you.... Serve your ruler as you would require your subordinate to serve you.... Serve your elder brother as you would require your younger brother to serve you.... Set the example in behaving to your friends as you would require them to behave to you....” (quoted from Feng 1958: 44). Therefore, the existence of the self and that of its social relationships presuppose and condition each other, and for this reason there is no need for an idealized “natural man” and an artificial social contract, two key conceptions of Enlightenment rationalism (the two classical Confucians after Confucius did develop two kinds of conceptions of human nature, but there was no theory of the “natural state,” let alone of the social contract). To the famous opening phrase of Rousseau’s *Social Contract* (1950) – “Man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains” -- Confucians would respond that human beings are born familial/social beings, and there is no limit to their self-cultivation and self-perfection.

A related question is: do Heaven's *Tao* and *Li* imply a moral order, or are *Tao* and *Li* morally relevant only when they exist as *li* (rules of propriety) -- the *Tao* and *Li* in the social world? To this, the
Taoist's answer was explicitly negative: "Heaven and Earth are ruthless [un-ren]; they treat the myriad things as straw dogs" (Laozi: ch. 5), thus denying "Heaven's ethical and idealistic significance altogether" (Feng 1952: 177; also cf. Schwartz 1985: 201; Graham 1989: 231). Classic Confucians disagreed among themselves on whether the Tao and Li in the non-human world are also moral: Confucius was ambivalent, Mencius spoke of an ethical Heaven, and Xunzi's attitude was close to that of the Taoist (cf. Feng 1952: 284, 286; Schwartz 1985: 62-63; Graham 1989: 15-18). The Neo-Confucianist Zhu Xi adopted Mencius’s Platonic idea: “The Supreme Ultimate is simply an utterly excellent and supremely good normative Principle.... [it] is an appellation for all that is good in Heaven and Earth, and among men and things” (quoted from Feng 1953: 537). In general, however, there was in the Confucian tradition no systematic theory of the trinity of universal law, reason and justice, or of God's (or gods’, or the Heavenly Tao’s) omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence and highest good. On the other hand, Confucianism (including Neo-Confucianism) consistently centralized the ideas of ren (humanity, benevolence) and yi (righteousness, justice) and related them, through zhi (wisdom, knowledge), to li (rules of propriety). When contrasting the Western conception with its Chinese counterpart in this regard, Needham wrote: “The former saw justice and law at all levels ['cosmos, human society and individual body'], closely associated with personalised beings, enacting laws or administrating them. The latter saw only that righteousness embodied in good custom represented the harmony necessary for the existence and function of the social organism” (1956: 528).

Another remaining question is: who is the lawgiver or li-maker from the Confucian perspective? The Chinese/Confucians generally believed that the ancient sagely kings, particularly the Duke of Zhou,
were the first *li*-maker. According to Feng, "it was not until the Chou [Zhou] dynasty [B.C. 1030?-221] that Chinese civilization assumed a definite shape, and while the dynasty's literary records and institutions were probably not entirely the work of its founders, King Wen and the Duke of Chou [Zhou], these two men were nevertheless the most important creators of the Chou [Zhou] culture" (1952: 54). The Zhou culture was often referred to by Confucians as the Zhou *li*, which makes perfect sense -- given the importance of *li* in the Chinese society. Confucius, who lived in the late Spring and Autumn period (B.C. 770-476) of the Zhou dynasty, was known for his knowledge and love of Zhou culture or Zhou *li*, and he claimed to be "a believer in and lover of antiquity [the Zhou culture], a transmitter and not an innovator" (*Analects*: 7.1; cf. Feng 1952: 56). However, it is commonly acknowledged that Confucius himself was also an innovator. For instance, Schwartz argues that "A good case can thus be made that it is, above all, in his focus on the concept of *jen* [*ren*] that Confucius is an innovator rather than a transmitter" (1985: 76). Or, in Feng's words, "in transmitting, he originated something new" (1958: 41). Moreover, "This spirit of originating through transmitting was perpetuated by the followers of Confucius" (ibid.). In this sense, Confucians themselves (and the ancient sagely kings) were the *li*-maker. As a matter of fact, in the Confucian world, there were no equivalents of gods or God (as lawgiver), of Scriptures (as the only source of law or *li*), and of the idealized "natural state" of human beings to explain the origin of society in history: real human beings in the real world were the *li*-maker. Therefore, the rationalism in the Confucian social philosophy presupposed Confucian humanism (which will be the topic of the next chapter).
In conclusion, as far as their social philosophy is concerned, both Confucian and Western rationalists believe in the existence of some universal order in the social world \((li \text{ vs. natural law})\) -- if not the world beyond, both identify this order with social -- if not simultaneously divine or natural -- justice or morality, and both assume that rational human beings are able to know, to generate, and to practice \(li\) or natural law (and other derivative laws), and therefore to be moral beings. Indeed, it was this general rationalist spirit that made it possible for Confucianism and modern Western rationalism to converge during the Enlightenment. Nevertheless, there are also significant differences between the Confucian social philosophy and its modern Western counterpart (or rather, the mainstream modern Western social philosophy): the universal social order is immanently transcendent for the former, while impersonally (and, for some, divinely or naturally) transcendent for the latter; it is holistic and organismic (hence interpersonal) for the former, whereas atomistic and mechanic (hence individualistic) for the latter; and it is rational in order to be moral for the former, but rational and therefore moral for the latter. These differences may perhaps partly explain the intellectual divergence of Confucianism and the Enlightenment after the French revolution. It should be noted that the comparison between the Confucian social philosophy and its (mainstream) modern Western counterpart, just like that between the Confucian theory of knowledge and modern Western (rationalist) epistemology, has already been done in the modern West in the sense that various rivals of the mainstream modern Western rationalism within the West, as mentioned in the foregoing discussion, would readily find their supporters or sympathizers in the Confucian world.

After all, natural law or \(li\) -- which is more rationalistic? Or, regardless of the methodological differences between the two sides, which is more “self-evident”? An underlying assumption of the
mainstream modern Western rationalism is: the more “natural,” the more rational. However, one should always keep Pascal’s aphorism in mind: “nature” is but a “first custom,” as custom is a “second nature” (cf. d’Entrèves 1970: 16). Thus, while being rational in the social world does not necessarily imply being “natural,” the “natural” or the rational of human beings is always artificial. In response to this reasoning, the rationalist social thinking in the modern West would have to redefine, as it did, its central concept, i.e. reason. On the other hand, the artificial nature of social reason (or rationality in the social world) is not to be understood as something arbitrary -- there is still a line between the interpersonal/intersubjective and the personal/subjective, just like that between the impersonal/external and the interpersonal/intersubjective. Theoretically, Confucianism identifies social reason (or *li*) in the interpersonal (social relationships) rather than impersonal, but practically the line between the impersonal and personal often becomes blurred in the Confucian world.
Like rationalism, humanism is essential to the mentality of both the Confucian world and Western modernity. In general, humanism can be roughly defined as a doctrine that theorizes the centrality of human beings in the universe (hence anthropocentrism) or, to be more specific, human beings' dignity and worth and capacity for self-realization. This definition is the overlapping part between Western and Confucian humanism, and therefore is a common ground on which the two types of humanism are to be compared. On the other hand, of course, substantial discrepancies exist between Western and Confucian humanism, which unambiguously indicate two different sets of conceptions of human interests and values.

In both the Confucian world and the modern West, humanism is closely related to rationalism. In the West, the rationalist tradition became modern only after it was integrated with humanism: in this integration human reason was believed to be intelligent enough to replace supernatural or divine reason, conceived by Hellenic polytheism or Christian theology, and divine reason turned out to be virtually unnecessary or irrelevant to human affairs. In effect, Aristotle's classical definition of man as rational, which applies to both rationalism and humanism in their early modern forms, has been eventually translated into the social definition of human beings in modern times. However, whereas in the early stage of Western modernity rationalism and humanism advanced hand in hand and were
hardly distinguishable, eventually humanism began to see the irrational side of humanity (or of human nature -- if this phrase remains meaningful today), and to be critical of the dehumanizing effects of (social) reason on this side. Daniel Bell’s following observation provides a clue of how rationalism and humanism diverge from each other or, in his own words, how culture contradicts social structure in the modern West: “[W]hat I find striking today is the radical disjunction between the social structure (the techno-economic order) and the culture. The former is ruled by an economic principle defined in terms of efficiency and functional rationality, the organization of production through the ordering of things. The latter is prodigal, promiscuous, dominated by an anti-rational, anti-intellectual temper in which the self is taken as the touchstone of cultural judgements, and the effect on the self is the measure of the aesthetic worth of experience. The character structure inherited from the nineteenth century, with its emphasis on self-discipline, delayed gratification, and restraint, is still relevant to the demands of the techno-economic structure; but it clashes sharply with the culture, where such bourgeois values have been completely rejected -- in part, paradoxically, because of the workings of the capitalist economic system itself” (1979: 37). This observation, regardless of Bell’s own ideological inclination, tellingly reveals the tension between rationalism and humanism. Indeed, it is in the spirit of humanism that vehement criticisms on the excessive development of formal rationality -- or, as it is often called, instrumental rationality -- in society have been germinated. Therefore, although an accurate and coherent theorizing of Western humanism is yet to be achieved or perhaps impossible, the horizon of Western humanism has proved not to be confined by the rationalist understanding of human nature in the West. Consequently, the conflict between rationalism and irrationalism within the Western humanistic tradition, as observed by Karl Popper, “has become the most important intellectual, and perhaps even moral, issue of our time” (1995: 454).
Freud well exemplifies this paradox: "Though Freud himself (consistently or otherwise) was no kind of irrationalist, his ideas constitute one of the most powerful, perhaps the most powerful, irrationalistic currents in the contemporary world" (Gellner 1992: 90).

On the other hand, in the Confucian world, humanism cannot be reduced to rationalism; neither can rationalism be separated from humanism. As a matter of fact, in the Confucian context, reason or being rational (by which to acquire zhi 智 -- wisdom or knowledge) is, as will be explained in following discussions, only part of human nature, interwoven with other elements of it, i.e. ren 仁 (humanity or benevolence), yi 义 (righteousness, justice), and li 礼 (rules of propriety). Therefore, reason in the Confucian context is considered necessary yet instrumental to the development of humanity, and Confucian rationalism is part of and conditioned by Confucian humanism (in the modern West, in contrast, reason is conceived by the rationalist doctrine as absolute and external, and instrumental rationality is found, while itself under no control, to be in control of the life-world). In this sense, Confucian rationalism, or rationalism in the Confucian world, unlike that in the modern West, would not be -- at least theoretically -- too rationalistic to be humanistic. Indeed, the Freudian tension between the unconscious and conscious hardly makes any sense in the Confucian context, for in the Confucian context instinct and reason, individual and society would be always in a dialectical relationship (this perhaps explains why psychoanalysis or psychotherapy, unlike many other spheres of modern Western knowledge, has not been well received and widely practiced in modern East Asian societies). Even in contemporary East Asia, Bell's theory of "the cultural contradictions of capitalism" (or the contradictions between the social structure and the culture) is not much relevant.

In effect, as will be explained in Chapters 6 and 7 of this thesis, the rational "iron cage" of capitalism
melts to a significant extent in humanistic -- in the Confucian sense -- interpersonal relationships, which in turn accommodate themselves to the East Asian development of capitalism, among other modern Western inventions.

Nevertheless, in both the Western and Confucian context, regardless of the relation of rationalism to humanism, the theme of humanism is the human subject rather than reason or rationality. Thus, in both cases, humanism -- rationalistic or not -- constitutes another source of intellectual discourse in its own right. Keeping this in mind, we will examine and compare the rationales of modern Western humanism and its Confucian counterpart.

3.1. Western Humanism: Individualism and Humanitarianism

Western scholarship on humanism is too rich to be surveyed in detail here. However, a brief review of the conceptual development of Western humanism may provide a clue by which to locate Confucian humanism and to make it comprehensible in the Western context.

The roots of Western humanism can be traced back to the Hellenic civilization or even earlier, but its full-blown formation or institutionalization has occurred in modern times, especially since the Enlightenment. The basic presumption of Western humanism is the centrality of the human subject
vis-à-vis God/gods and nature: first, human beings are considered part of nature or something natural in relation to the divine (hence naturalism), and then they, perhaps still being part of nature or something natural, become the master of nature and of themselves. Under this presumption two major forms of humanistic thinking can be discerned: One is the doctrine of human rights or individualism, to which the idea of individuality or autonomy is fundamental, and the other is that of universal love or humanitarianism, which emphasizes the welfare and solidarity of all human beings.

Historically, individualism is related mainly to the liberal tradition (economic liberalism and political liberalism, or capitalism plus democracy) in and after the Enlightenment, to philosophical or cultural existentialism, especially existentialism in the postwar period, to some left-wing politics (e.g. the New Left -- to a certain extent), and to certain feminist and postmodernist movements in recent years (these movements are themselves multifarious: there are liberal, socialist, and postmodern/cultural feminisms -- it is the postmodern/cultural feminism that is in fashion in recent years; and there are postmodern literature and arts, philosophies, as well as social movements -- e.g. communitarianism).

Humanitarianism, on the other hand, is associated with socialist movements (including Utopian socialism, Marxist socialism, and democratic socialism), with modern Christian humanism (emphasizing Christian values such as love, peace and tolerance in the context of Western modernity), and with some civil or voluntary movements (such as peace movements, ecological movements, and NGO -- Non-Governmental Organization -- movements in both developing and developed countries, which are centred on the themes of development and empowerment -- developing economy and empowering the people).
Ideally individualism and humanitarianism could to a certain extent converge, for in theory both individualism and humanitarianism are eligible to, as they actually do, claim to be universalistic: the individualistic conception of human nature pertains to each and every individual human being, while humanitarianism treats humanity as a whole consisting of all human beings. The slogan of the French Revolution — “liberty, equality, fraternity” — exemplified only too well how far it might go for these two forms of humanism to be united to fight for the sake of human beings (as individuals and as an entity). Nevertheless, it could be argued that individualism may also be extremely particularistic: in the context of the modern West, a crucial part of human rights is property rights, and therefore individuality necessarily implies self-interest and selfishness, hence the contradiction between the individual (the particular) and society (the universal). On the other hand, it is quite possible for humanitarianism, in various forms of collectivism, to lend itself to authoritarian or even totalitarian politics in the name of common or communal happiness: in that case humanitarianism would become an ideological tool legitimating a highly centralized power at the cost of the freedom of the majority of individual human beings. With the evolution of Western modernity, it seems to become evident that humanity (read what is human) in the individual (individualism) and humanity as a whole (humanitarianism) are not necessarily identical and are actually often in conflict with each other. Apparently, as it turns out, it is the individualistic humanism that has been chosen — particularly at this stage of history — as the dominant institutional form of social life in the modern West, whereas humanitarian humanism, while far less institutionalized at the political level and largely being part of civil society, remains intellectually stimulating and morally inspiring. To put this in plain, political terms, individualistic humanism is like the party in office, while humanitarian humanism the party not in office.
The line between individualistic and humanitarian humanism has not always been clear from the very beginning of modern times. Marx, for instance, was a child of the Enlightenment and yet a sharp critic of capitalism (and its democracy) legitimated by the Enlightenment spirit. He would consider both individualism and humanitarianism under capitalism as "false consciousness," yet he would embrace some basic Enlightenment values (freedom, equality, perfectibility of human beings) under communism. Another example is existentialism, which is both a protest against artificial (vs. divine or natural) constraints encroaching on human freedom and an affirmation of the sociability of human beings (responsibility, intersubjectivity). The individual existence (Being) is a key concept of existential philosophy in general, but there are also both Christian and Marxist existentialism. Moreover, in the real world, although liberal democracy is more -- much more indeed -- liberal (individualistic) than democratic (humanitarian), the welfare state, which corresponds to the latter, seems to have been firmly established, notwithstanding its own problems. Therefore, the relationship between the two forms of Western humanism, individualism and humanitarianism, is more complicated than simply being either agreeable to each other or antithetical.

In fact, individualistic humanism and humanitarian humanism constitute a fundamental dilemma which lies at the heart of Western modernity. In sociopolitical terms, this dilemma is manifest in the paradoxical relation between freedom and equality, mainly in the form of the tension between civil/political rights and social/economic rights. There is no doubt that freedom and equality are the two cardinal ideas of modern Western politics (one cannot help noticing that the idea of fraternity was dissociated from that of liberty and equality, and virtually disappeared in the mainstream Western
political thought after the French Revolution, which is understandable in the sense that the idea of fraternity, while consistent with that of equality broadly defined — i.e. equality not simple in political terms, directly contradicts liberty envisioned by the liberal tradition or individualism — unless in circumstances of social revolution). This is, of course, no place to review the Western conceptions of freedom and equality in modern times, since numerous publications, various schools and many sophisticated minds have dwelled on these two ideas. However, a preliminary delineation of how freedom and equality are theoretically linked seems necessary in order to compare Western humanism with its Confucian counterpart.

Theoretically, as far as its relation to equality is concerned, freedom connotes the liberation from the restraining power of others or the absence of coercion by others in choice or action. Therefore, freedom necessarily imply political equality: nobody is to impose his or her own will on others, and everybody is equally autonomous. Once institutionalized, however, the equal rights to be free are immediately and legitimately translated into the freedom to be unequal. The individual is, after all, not a "natural man" or natural woman armed only with equal "reason" — he or she also has private property, among other personal possessions, which is presumably the very foundation of individual freedom (hence possessive or egoistic individualism). As the amount of private property varies, individuals are classified into different groups, which are analytically simplified by Marx and Engels as the capitalist class or the propertied class and the working class or the propertyless class (the emergence of the middle class has been conceptualized by many others after them, such as Weber). Thus, it is only too natural that one's class status will affect, if not determine, one's political position (not to mention one's access to other socially desirable goals, such as education): as a matter of fact,
under capitalism, the liberal politics of “one person-one vote” has partly become the politics of “one dollar-one vote,” and in this way economic inequalities lead to political inequalities; on the other hand, liberal politics, assuming the contractual individuals as purely free — rational and voluntary -- agents, functions not to interfere with but to protect the institutions in civil society (the capitalist company in particular) and, by implication, the power hierarchy and social inequality within these institutions (cf. eg. Schwartz 1995: 17-18). In the end, freedom is socioeconomically differentiated; in this sense, as far as the social life of a substantial part of the citizens is concerned, freedom goes to its opposite -- it results in and legitimate social restrictions to even political freedom.

A similar paradox exits in the political process toward social equality, which includes but not is not confined to political equality. Political equality cannot be achieved without institutionalized freedom.

Nevertheless, equality has never been exclusively political — whether in the thinking of those early Enlightenment thinkers (the equality in education, for example, was emphasized by many Enlightenment thinkers), or in socialist movements inspired by Marx and Engels, among other proponents of socialism. In fact, more often than not, equality connotes social rather than political equality, hence the issues of class relationship, gender relationship, ethnic relationship, etc. under liberal democracy. In a democratic politics, all these issues would be, as they are in one way or another, politicized either be directly placed on the campaign agenda of the parties concerned or reflected in the legislations initiated by various social movements. Consequently, the war between citizenship and class, as formulated by T. H. Marshall, also happens between citizenship and women, between citizenship and ethnic groups, as well as between citizenship and homosexuals/lesbians. A significant result of these wars is the welfare state, which existed in various forms in the prewar
period, mainly devised to solve economic problems (employment, etc.) or economically-related social problems (class conflicts) under capitalism, and has now become an all-purpose and overloaded bureaucratic apparatus. Thus, it is no surprise that Hayek, a liberal and a neoliberal, deliberately distinguishes liberalism from democracy and claims to be no democrat insofar as democracy means "the unrestricted will of the majority" (1982, quoted from Held 1987: 248): one readily recalls that earlier he discerned from this will "the road to serfdom" (1944). Of course, sometimes the majority/minority tension also goes the other way round in democracy, i.e. favourable in the liberal direction. In both ways, equality contradicts freedom and therefore (political) equality.

One does not have to be a Marxist, or to follow Hayek, to perceive how freedom and equality are in conflict with each other and with themselves. It is often forgotten that Adam Smith never fully trusted the autonomous and rational individuals coordinated by an "invisible hand" (or, in natural-law philosophy, the natural state of capitalism) — he was first of all and consistently a moralist. In this sense there is nothing new in the neoliberalism or the New Right, which tries to combine liberal economy with moralist politics. Nevertheless, given the existence of a laissez-faire market and an autonomous civil society, how certain social morals are to be politically institutionalized would be, as always, problematic, if possible. Therefore, the "sexual revolution" in the 1960s and afterwards, which has significantly changed the Western concept of sexuality, hence morality (sexuality has begun to be linked to intimacy and pleasure, in addition to marriage and propagation), has been virtually a revolution without legitimate enemies or a revolution to be legitimated. Also it is often forgotten that Rousseau, whose theory of the "general will" is representative of modern political ideal of egalitarianism, placed little hope on modern democracy -- actually, he favored the establishment of a
small society on the model of the city-state in ancient Greece (Durkheim 1960: 120; cf. Zeitlin 1997: ch. 3). Thus, some postmodern communitarians still seek inspirations from Rousseau’s philosophy. Rousseau and his followers would certainly believe that a truly democratic process is a process to which each and every citizen can participate, hence participatory democracy. However, the universal form of modern democracy is representative democracy, in which the involvement of the common people is largely symbolic and very limited. Moreover, no one needs to be reminded that Marx and Lenin’s vision of the withering away of the state and of a stateless society (hence communism) was used or misused to justify an authoritarian and totalitarian polity, and the “proletarian dictatorship” which was supposed to be transient in their theory was almost perpetuated in the form of a party dictatorship in practice. There is no doubt that the critique by Marx, Lenin and many others on formal democracy (formal freedom, formal equality, etc.) under capitalism remains theoretically valid, but the attempts inspired by their theories to achieve substantive democracy (economic egalitarianism and participatory politics, among other things) seems to have been invalidated in the collapse of Soviet socialism. On the other hand, Hitler’s Nazism was actually composed of two parts: socialism (for the German people) and nationalism (against Germany’s neighbours), dramatically demonstrating how modern universalistic values could be manipulated and destroyed by particularism. In a general sense, the nation-state, a particularistic establishment from the global perspective, has been the conventional form of modern body politic, and in consequence democracy (socialist or liberal), a universal ideal in theory, is prearranged to marry the nation-state. The conflict between the nation-state and democracy is sometimes blatant, sometimes latent, but always existent as long as the marriage stays. The Jewish problem in Europe before and under the Third Reich, for instance, is not a problem that completely vanished with the perishing of the Third Reich: in this increasingly
globalizing world, citizenship and nationality are ironically indivisible, and global immigration is and will be a constant and challenging test for Western democracy — will Western ideas of freedom and equality apply to immigrants and would-be immigrants, who are no less human than the Westerners or whose human rights are no less “natural” than that of the Westerners? Obviously, without the border of the nation-state and the ideology of nationalism, modern ideas of freedom and equality (not to mention fraternity) would seem only too universalistic to be politically feasible under Western democracy.

All these observations clearly point to the tension between individualistic humanism and humanitarian humanism in the modern West, as it is manifested in the paradoxical relation between freedom and equality -- between civil society (economic organizations in particular) and the state, participatory and representative democracy, formal and substantive democracy, democracy and the nation-state, political freedom and social equality, etc. The political imagination of the modern West is largely defined and confined by this dilemma, just as in practice modern Western democracy is conditioned by capitalism and the nation-state. There seems to be no exit from this dilemma: the radical impulse to transcend liberal democracy or to eliminate this tension from both the left (communism) and the right (Nazism) has proved practically devastating and eventually fruitless. Indeed, as far as the evolution of Western politics is concerned, we seem to have reached what Fukuyama (and some others before him) called “the end of ideology” and “the end of history” — history ends up with liberal democracy in political terms (cf. Fukuyama 1992). Thus conceived, modern Western humanism, individualistic or humanitarian, is either theoretically exhausted, or too theoretical -- too idealistic -- to be fully practiced.
Have Confucians developed the same humanism as that of Western humanism? The answer is “Yes” in the sense that the centrality of human beings (vis-à-vis God/gods and nature) is the very foundation of humanism, but “No” in the sense that both individualistic humanism and humanitarian humanism can hardly fit into the theoretical framework of Confucianism or *vice versa*.

### 3.2. Confucian Humanism: Humanized Heaven and Graded Love

In terms of how human beings are related to the nonhuman world (God/gods and nature, or, in the Chinese context, spirits, ghosts, Heaven, etc.) and how they are related to one another, it seems that the Chinese already experienced their “Enlightenment” or disenchantment in ancient times, or, in Chinese terms, in the pre-Qin period — the period before the emergence of the Qin dynasty (221-207 B.C.). According to Feng, during the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.) the belief in supernatural spirits and in the so-called “Tao of Heaven” began to decline. Thus, it is recorded that in year 662 B.C., someone named Zichan said: “It is when a state is about to flourish that (its ruler) listens to his people; when it is about to perish, he listens to the spirits.” And in 524 B.C., Zhongji said: “The Tao of Heaven is distant, while that of man is near. We cannot reach to the former; what means have we of knowing it?” (cf. Feng 1952: 31-32). Some also attempted to provide a secular interpretation of various social institutions, suggesting that these institutions were established by
human beings and for their own benefit (ibid.: 33-42; also cf. Feng 1935: 57-65). It was in this enlightening milieu that Confucian humanism was first decisively spelled out by Confucius (551-479 B.C.) himself and soon elaborated by his two great followers, i.e. Mencius (371?-289? B.C.) and Xunzi (298-238 B.C.). These classical Confucians were still reflecting upon Heaven and Heaven's Tao, but they dismissed the relevance of spirits/ghosts and focused their theorizing on the human world.

At first glance, the Chinese conception of the other world (spirits, ghosts, Heaven) and its relation to the human world might seem perplexing. In reading Confucius, one has to confront an apparent contradiction. On the one hand, more often than not Confucius talked about human life in this world and was indifferent to the world beyond. Thus, when asked about the dead, Confucius said, “You do not yet know about the living, how can you know about the dead.” And when asked about serving the ghosts and spirits, he answered, “While you are not yet able to serve men, how can you serve ghosts?” Moreover, according to Analects, the subjects on which Confucius “never talked were: extraordinary things (natural prodigies), unnatural strength, disorders (in Nature) and spiritual beings” (Analects: 11.12, 7.21; cf. Needham 1956: 13-14). On the other hand, Confucius did occasionally yet explicitly relate his mission to Heaven (and Destiny) and had no doubt of Heaven's existence and power. When he and his disciples were threatened by an official named Huantui, he calmed their fear by saying that “Heaven begat the virtue that is in me. What can Huantui do to me” (Analects: 7.23). And when in personal danger in the state of Kuang, he said, “If it is the will of Heaven that this culture should not perish, what can the people of Kuang do to me?” (ibid.: 9.5). On another occasion when he was explaining to his disciples why he did not wish to speak, he asked in reply, “Does
Heaven speak? The four seasons proceed by it, the hundred things are generated by it. Does Heaven speak?" (ibid.: 17.19). The question is, therefore, if Confucius really had no interest in the world beyond or in things unintelligible, how could he be so sure about the existence and power of Heaven?

It seems that Confucius's attitude toward the world beyond is a reflection of his idea of knowledge: “To say that you know when you do know and say that you do not know when you do not know -- that is knowledge” (ibid.: 2.17). This remark is, as discussed in the last chapter, reminiscent of Kant’s epistemology, in which a distinction is made between the knowable (phenomenon) and unknowable (things-in-themselves). Furthermore, in comparing Confucius with Kant, one would readily find a fundamental similarity between them: both, while taking an agnostic attitude toward the world beyond, presume its metaphysical existence. It is well known that in Kant’s philosophy, rational metaphysics (e.g. rational cosmology, rational theology) is assumed to be indispensable: in its pure form, reason (intellectual intuition) has to presuppose the existence of things-in-themselves, for what we know by our sense perception and conceptual understanding is simply what things-in-themselves appear to us (phenomena); meanwhile, in its practical form, reason has to embrace the truths about God, freedom, immortality, which “are necessary implications of the rational moral law within us” (cf. Thilly 1963: 441-45, italics added). Therefore, Kant’s philosophy is essentially a rationalistic humanism: things-in-themselves (the essence of the phenomenal world, God, freedom, immortality, etc., hence moral law) are epistemologically unknowable yet metaphysically meaningful -- they are the unconditioned condition of the phenomenal world and of our moral/social life. Kant’s rationalistic metaphysics (rational presupposition of the existence of things-in-themselves) provides a clue through which Confucius’s idea of Heaven can be grasped in the Western context. (Interestingly, in the West,
despite the importance of Kant's philosophy in general, his rational metaphysics is poorly received.) With Kant's conception of things-in-themselves in mind, one would perhaps be able to see that the position of Heaven in Confucius's vision of the world is roughly the same as that of things-in-themselves in Kant's philosophy: the existence of Heaven, though not being an object of knowledge, is presumed by human reason as indispensable, functioning as the ultimate and absolute condition of human/moral law and of the knowable world. It is based on this rational belief in the existence of Heaven that the Confucian tradition of humanism is firmly established (cf. Needham 1956: 580-81).

It was, however, not until the unfolding of Confucius's teaching in Mencius and Xunzi that Confucian rationalistic humanism acquired its systematically theorized presentation. In Confucius's Analects, the term Heaven sometimes refers to a ruling or moral being ("Heaven begat the virtue that is in me,..." "If it is the will of Heaven that this culture should not perish,..." etc.), and sometimes something impersonal or naturalistic ("Does Heaven speak? The four seasons proceed by it, the hundred things are generated by it. Does Heaven speak?"). Both Mencius and Xunzi continued pondering Heaven and its relation to the human world, and they, in different ways, further sought to humanize Heaven.

The Heaven of Mencius is mainly a ruling or moral being -- an absolute moral existence (cf. Feng 1952: 129), and the way in which to humanize Heaven is to achieve a spiritual as well as practical unity between Heaven and mankind in the human world, or to be moral. Kant, as we may recall, links the human free will to practical reason, to categorical imperatives, hence to God and moral law; similarly, Mencius attributes human nature to Heaven and vice versa. Apparently, Mencius was ambivalent about the origin of human nature: On the one hand, ren (humanity, benevolence), yi
(righteousness, justice), *li* (rules of propriety) and *zhi* (wisdom, knowledge), the four constant virtues of human nature, are “not fused from without. We originally are possessed of them.” On the other, human nature is “what Heaven has given to us” (ibid.: 127, 129). This suggests that Heaven and human nature are initially identical, which is, of course, the metaphysical ground for the unity of Heaven and mankind in the future. Thus, self-cultivation leads to the spiritual unity of Heaven and mankind: “He who exerts his mind to the utmost knows his nature. He who knows his nature knows Heaven. To preserve one’s mind and to nourish one’s nature is the way to serve Heaven. Not to allow any double-mindedness regardless of longevity or brevity of life, but to cultivate one’s person and wait for [destiny to take its own course] is the way to fulfil one’s destiny.” Moreover, in the pursuit and practice of humanity lies the unity of Heaven and mankind: “Whenever the superior man passes through, transformation follows. Wherever he abides, there is a spiritualizing influence. This forms the same current above and below as that of Heaven and Earth....” In this way “All things are already complete in oneself” (*Mencius*: 7A.1, 7A.4, 7A.13. Cf. Chan 1963: 78-80; Feng 1952: 129-30). In Kant’s philosophy, this oneself is God; In Mencius’s teaching, it is a human being -- a sagely human being which all human beings are capable of and which some succeed in becoming (Lau 1970: 19; Feng 1952: 125).

Xunzi’s idea of Heaven is naturalistic (Feng 1952: 284), and for him to humanize Heaven is, as it is for the rationalistic humanism in the West, to utilize nature for human beings’ own sake. Heaven for Xunzi, again like things-in-themselves for Kant, is unknowable in its essence: “The constellations follow their revolutions; the sun and moon alternatively shine, the four seasons present themselves in succession,... The results of all these changes are known, but we do not know the invisible source:
this is what is called Heaven. Only the sage acts not seeking to know Heaven” (Xunzi: 17.2b; cf. Feng 1952: 285). Thus, the first step in humanizing Heaven is to comprehend the distinction between Heaven and mankind: “Heaven’s course is constant: it does not prevail because of a sage like Yao; it does not cease to prevail because of a tyrant like Jie.... Therefore, he who can distinguish between Heaven and man is worthy to be called the highest type of man....” (Xunzi: 17.1; cf. Feng 1952: 285).

Hence the dictum: “Heaven has its seasons; Earth its resources; and Man his government” (17.2b). However, human beings are not naturally passive. As the “noblest of earthly beings” (cf. Watson, 1967: 45; Needham 1956: 23), they are able to form a trinity with Heaven and Earth (Feng 1952: 285), and to make use of them: “How can exalting Heaven and contemplating it, be as good as tending its creatures and regulating them? How can obeying Heaven and praising it, be better than adapting Heaven's decree and putting it in use? How can watching for the season and awaiting what it brings, be as good as responding to the season and exploiting it? How can depending on things to increase naturally, be better than developing their natural capacities so as to transform them?...” (Xunzi: 17.10; cf. Feng 1952: 285-86; Graham 1989: 240). In brief, “Those versed in [the principles of] Heaven will certainly support them with evidences from the human world” (Xunzi: 23.3b; cf. Chan 1963: 132). Thus conceived, Heaven is either irrelevant or to be humanized.

Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi's conception of Heaven and their discussions on how it is related to the human world constituted a theoretical background within which the basic ideas of Confucian humanism are articulated. The interest of Confucian humanism is, after all, in the human world. When Confucius states that “It is man that can make the Tao great, not the Tao that can make man great” (Analects: 15.29), he eventually distinguishes himself from his religious, Mohist and Taoist
contemporaries, and announces the centrality of human beings in their relation to the world beyond and their perfectibility in the human world.

From the perspective of Confucian humanism, the perfectibility of human beings (in their individual existence or as a whole) does not lie in the individuality conceived by Western individualism, or in the universal love advocated by Western humanitarianism, but in the interpersonal social relationships among themselves. The core ideas of the Confucian humanism are ren (humanity, benevolence), yi (righteousness, justice), li (rules of propriety) and zhi (wisdom, knowledge). All of these four ideas were already stamped with their Confucian brand in the loosely organized yet theoretically sophisticated *Analects* of Confucius, and were substantively and sufficiently conceptualized in the classical period -- the formation stage -- of Confucianism: ren was central to the teachings of Confucius himself and also, to a lesser extent, of Mencius and Xunzi; the idea of yi (and its relation to ren) was first developed by Mencius; the elaboration of li (and its relation to ren) was mainly a contribution of Xunzi and some of his younger contemporaries; finally, zhi (and its relation to ren, yi and li) was emphasized by all of the three founding fathers of Confucianism.

3.2.1. Humanity: Human Beings as Loving and Social Beings

If there is one single term that is the most characteristic of Confucian humanism, it must be ren. In etymological terms, ren means human beings in society, as the Chinese character for ren “consists of both the word for man and the word for two (signifying a group)” (cf. Chan 1963: 788-89). A simple
and proper English translation of *ren* might be humanity, which in turn implies love, benevolence, human-heartedness, perfect virtue, etc., depending on its context (ibid.).

When asked what is humanity, Confucius replied: “It is to love man” (*Analects*: 12.22). Then, who is there to love, and in what way? Here is the answer offered by Confucius: On the one hand, “A man of humanity, wishing to establish himself, also establish others, and wishing to develop himself, also develop others” (ibid.: 6.30). On the other hand, “Do not do to others what you do not wish ourselves...” (ibid.: 12.2). These are, as mentioned earlier, the two basic aspects of humanity, i.e. *zhong* 忠 (loyalty, conscientiousness to others) and *shu* 恕 (forbearance, altruism). This conception of humanity indeed says little about human nature explicitly, but it does imply that in the condition of humanity, human beings relate to each other by loving each other, or human beings are loving and social beings. Confucius did not identify the humane with the human, or humanity (read: love) with human nature. However, he made it clear that “There are two kinds of Tao: humanity and inhumanity” (*Mencius*: 4A.2, original translation modified; cf. Chan 1963: 81). And his own Tao pertains to “none other than *zhong* and *shu*,” that is, humanity (*Analects*: 4.15).

Confucius’s conception of humanity is reformulated as that of human nature in Mencius and Xunzi. In fact, humanity was part of inborn human nature for Mencius and of acquired human nature for Xunzi. Mencius directly defined humanity as human or the human Tao: “Humanity is [the distinguishing character of] man. When embodied in man’s conduct, it is the *Tao*” (*Mencius*: 7B.16; cf. Chan, 1963: 81). For him humanity, originated in the feeling of commiseration, is one of the four constant virtues characterizing human nature (the other three are righteousness, propriety,
wisdom/knowledge: cf. *Mencius*: 2A.6, 6A.6). Mencius was certainly not blind to the inhumane or inhuman side of human beings, and he actually realized that there is perhaps too much inhumanity in human beings: “Slight is the difference between man and animal. The common man loses this distinguishing feature, while the superior man retains it” (*Mencius*: 4B.19). This inhumane side was conceived by Xunzi as human beings’ inborn nature. According to him, “where the sage is identical to and not different from common people, it is his inborn nature. Where he differs from them and exceeds them, it is his acquired nature” (*Xunzi*: 23.2a). In his view, “the sage by transforming his original nature develops his acquired nature” (ibid.). However, Xunzi would have to, as he did, accept the capability to know, hence wisdom/knowledge (one of the four constant virtues), as part of human beings’ inborn nature, in order to explain how it is possible for the sage to acquire humanity (as well as righteousness and propriety). Under this tacit agreement, Xunzi reached a conclusion against Mencius: “Human nature is evil; any good in humans is acquired by conscious exertion” (ibid.: 23.1a). Therefore, the difference between Mencius and Xunzi in their definitions of human nature is that, as Lau correctly observed, “Mencius was looking for what is distinctive while Xunzi was looking for what forms the inseparable part of it” (Lau 1970: 21). Of course, as far as humanity is concerned, the similarity between them is more significant: they both believed that humanity (together with other virtues), inborn or acquired, natural or artificial, is achievable for ordinary human beings (cf. *Mencius*: 6B.2; *Xunzi*: 23.5a; Feng 1958: 145), and they both, like Confucius, perceived humanity as something unique to human beings, or superior/sagely, if not all, human beings.

Thus, in Confucian humanism, humanity is a condition under which human beings are loving and therefore social beings. This conception of humanity is at the core of Confucian humanism (it is often
said that Confucianism is a doctrine of humanity). The full meaning of humanity in the Confucian context must be understood in its relations to other key ideas of Confucianism, particularly righteousness, propriety, and knowledge. However, from the above explanation of the conception of humanity, it is already clear enough that there is a line between Confucian humanism and the mainstream Western social philosophy in modern times, i.e. rationalistic/individualistic humanism, which, as discussed earlier, views human beings as rational, hence social, beings -- rational enough to make contracts with one another. Of course, Confucian humanism does not ignore the rational side of human beings at all, just as Western humanism does not exclude the humane side of human beings. But the distinction is obvious and significant: Confucian humanism emphasizes humanity in human beings and identifies their sociality with their humanity, whereas its Western counterpart emphasizes rationality in human beings and links their sociality to their rationality. This distinction will become even more recognizable and more complicated when humanity is understood in its relations to righteousness, propriety and knowledge.

3.2.2. Righteousness and Humanity: Between Individuality and Universal Love

Confucius himself did not elaborate the idea of yi (righteousness, justice, or moral duty -- cf. Lau 1970; Knoblock 1994), but he did consider it essential: “The superior man has righteousness [yi] as his basic stuff. He practices it according to the rules of propriety. He brings it forth with modesty. And he carries it to its completion sincerely. Such is a superior man indeed” (Analects: 15.18). Moreover, he implicitly indicated the relevance of righteousness to humanity. His statement that
“Only the man of humanity knows how to love people and hate people” (ibid.: 4.3) suggested that humanity may include both love and hate, which would be hardly intelligible in the context of Western humanism.

It is Mencius who decisively clarified this intricacy. According to him, righteousness, originating in the “sense of shame and dislike” (Mencius: 6A.6), is a virtue next to and interwoven with humanity. Thus, “To say that one cannot abide by humanity and follow righteousness is to throw oneself away. Humanity is the peaceful abode of man and righteousness is his straight path” (ibid.: 4A.10; cf. 6A.11). Chan observes that Mencius often juxtaposed humanity and righteousness – in Mencius’s interpretation, humanity is necessary to bind people together and righteousness is necessary to make distinctions (1963: 50). In other words, because of the function of righteousness, love varies with the object to be loved: “In regard to [inferior] creatures, the superior man loves them but is not humane to them (that is, showing them the feeling due human beings). In regard to people generally, he is humane to them but not affectionate. He is affectionate to his parents and humane to all people. He is humane to all people and feels love for all” (Mencius: 7A.45; cf. Chan 1963: 80-81). To be more specific, in the human world, “According to the Tao of man,... between father and son, there should be affection; between sovereign and subject, there should be moral duty; between husband and wife, there should be attention to their separate functions; between old and young, there should be a proper order; and between friends there should be faithfulness” (Mencius: 3A.4; cf. Chan 1963: 69-70). Hence the five constant social relationships, which represent major types of interpersonal relationships in Chinese society. There is also another way, a “quantitative” way, to look at social relationships, i.e. in terms of how close a relationship is. There was a passage by a Confucianist reported in Mozi:
“I cannot practice all-embracing love. I love the men of Zhou [a nearby state] better than I love those of Yue [a distant state]. I love the men of my Lu [his own state] better than I love those of Zhou. I love the men of my own district better than I love those of Lu. I love the members of my own clan better than I love those of my district. I love my parents better than I love the men of my clan. And I love myself better than I love my parents” (cf. Feng 1958: 71). Feng points out that except for its last sentence, which contradicts the Confucian emphasis on filial piety, this statement is in general agreement with the Confucian spirit. “For according to the Confucianists, there should be degrees in love” (ibid.).

Therefore, a natural combination of humanity and righteousness results in circumstantially graded love. Equipped with this conception of graded love, Mencius was able to refute both Yangzhu’s principle of ‘each one for himself’ and Mozi’s principle of ‘all-embracing love,’ the two fashionable doctrines in his time and the Chinese editions of Western individualistic and humanitarian humanism, which, in his words, “mislead the people and block the way of humanity and righteousness” (Mencius: 3B.9; cf. Feng 1958: 70-71). Thus, the Confucian conception of graded love further distinguishes Confucian humanism from modern Western humanism in both its individualistic and humanitarian forms: in individualism love or humanity is virtually irrelevant, and righteousness or justice means equality (equal rights to be free or equals as contractors) among individuals; while in humanitarianism love is not to be graded — human beings are equal before universal love and no distinction is to be made among them on the basis of righteousness or justice or whatsoever principles. Interestingly, the distance between Confucianism and Western humanism (in both individualistic and humanitarian forms) is not as far as that between the two forms of Western humanism per se: Confucian humanism,
defined by graded love or the combination of humanity and righteousness, stands right in the middle between the individualistic and humanitarian humanism of the modern West.

3.2.3. Propriety and Humanity: The Secular as Sacred

The Chinese term ‘li’ actually applies to both the macro and micro level -- it means rites, _mores_ in formal or public circumstances (macro) and rules of propriety in everyday social interaction (micro). While in the Chinese context the content of ‘li’ is manifold (cf. _Book of Rites: ‘Introduction’_), the English word “propriety” (hence “rules of propriety,” moral codes, rites, etc.) is often used as its translation. Mencius directly defined ‘li’ or propriety as deduced from the sense of modesty, yielding, respect and reverence (Mencius: 2A.6, 6A.6; also cf. Feng 1953: 558-59). To be more specific, the Confucian conception of propriety explains the origin, function, and substance of propriety.

With regard to the origin of propriety, Xunzi wrote: “Man is born with desires. When his desires are not satisfied, he cannot but seek their satisfaction. When this seeking for satisfaction is without measure or limit, there can only be contention. From contention comes disorder and from disorder comes exhaustion. The ancient kings hated disorder, and therefore they established rules of propriety so as to set limits to this confusion, to satisfy men’s desires, and to provide for their satisfaction, in order that desires should not overextend the means for their satisfaction, and material goods should not fall short of what was desired; that both these two should mutually support one another and so continue to exist. This is how propriety originated” (Xunzi: 19.1a. Cf. Feng 1952: 297; Watson
1967: 89). This is, of course, a Hobbesian explanation, save for the absence of "ancient kings" in Hobbes and the lack of social contract in Xunzi. To be fair to Mencius, the Chinese Locke (save for...), one could argue that, in the logic of Mencius, propriety resulted from the spontaneous development or manifestation of human nature (cf. Feng 1952: 339). Despite the difference between them, Xunzi and Mencius would, and actually did, agree (with Confucius) that propriety functions both to "regulate" and to "refine": to regulate the desires in human beings, and to refine the expression of human emotions (Feng 1952: 297-98, 338-39). The reason for regulating seems obvious, but why is there any need to "refine"? If there is no propriety, Confucius said, "courtesy will become laboured bustle; caution, timidity; boldness, insubordination; and straightforwardness, rudeness" (Analects: 8.2).

As far as the substance of propriety is concerned, the Confucian view is that "without rules of propriety, there would be no means of distinguishing the positions of ruler and subject, superior and inferior, old and young, of differentiating the relations between man and woman, father and son, elder and younger brother, and of conducting the intercourse between the contracting families in a marriage, and of regulating the frequency of infrequency [of the reciprocities between friends]" (Book of Rites: 24.1; cf. Feng 1952: 339). Thus, propriety pertains to social relationships or order, or propriety embodies righteousness and humanity. In other words, the substance of propriety is righteousness and humanity. According to Confucius, "To subdue one's self and return to propriety is humanity. Once a man can subdue himself and return to propriety, all under Heaven will ascribe humanity to him" (Analects: 12.1). "If a man is without humanity," Confucius asked, "what has he to do with propriety?" (ibid.: 3.3). From the Confucian perspective, a ritualistic and formalistic
understanding or performance of propriety would go astray (cf. Schwartz 1985: 72-73). It should be noted that historically the formation of \textit{li} (reads: rules of propriety) as the Chinese counterpart (but not equivalent) of Western natural law occurred long before Confucius's times, yet it was Confucius (and Mencius and Xunzi) who theoretically substantialized \textit{li} with humanity and righteousness.

It would be wrong to assume that the Confucian conception of propriety is simply an ideological justification of social hierarchy. It is that, but it also emphasizes, as Schwartz indicates, reciprocity in human relationships: The child owes his parents filial piety and the parents owe their children parental love; The subject owes the ruler loyalty and the ruler, in dealing with his subjects, “should be guided by the rules of propriety” (\textit{Analects}: 3.19; cf. Schwartz 1985: 71; also see Küng and Ching 1989: 69). According to the \textit{Book of Rites}, reciprocity is “what the rules of propriety value” (1A.I.23). In this sense, the spirit of propriety--hierarchy and yet reciprocity--is also the spirit of harmony: “In the usages of propriety, it is harmony which is of value” (\textit{Analects}: 1.12). A humane and righteous order governed by rules of propriety: this is the vision of the human world in Confucian humanism. Fingarette perceives sacredness in this secular humanity: “Explicitly Holy Rite [Propriety] is thus a luminous point of concentration in the greater and ideally all-inclusive ceremonial harmony of the perfectly humane civilization of the Tao, or ideal Way. Human life in its entirety finally appears as one vast, spontaneous and holy Rite [Propriety]: the community of man. This, for Confucius, was indeed an ‘ultimate concern’,…” (1972: 17). Under the condition that society represents humanity and righteousness, Confucians would accept Durkheim's theory that what is social is also sacred.
3.2.4. Knowledge and Humanity: Rationalistic Humanism

Another vital feature of Confucian humanism is that it is rationalistic: it perceives a necessary connection between morality (humanity, righteousness, propriety) and knowledge (or wisdom). We now return to this topic because Confucian humanism cannot be fully appreciated without examining its rationalistic aspect: in the Confucian context, knowledge is part of human nature, and is about human nature. Thus, when Fanchi, a disciple of Confucius, asked about humanity, Confucius said, “It is to love men.” And about knowledge, “It is to know man.” (Analects: 12.22.) At another occasion, Confucius said: “The man of humanity is naturally at ease with humanity. The man of wisdom finds humanity to his own advantage” (ibid.: 4.2). For Confucius, without knowledge one cannot acquire humanity, and the superior man reaches the utmost of the human Tao or humanity by learning (ibid.: 5.19, 19.7). Indeed, knowledge is so essential that the learning process itself may be regarded as humane: “Learning extensively, being steadfast in one’s purpose, inquiring with earnestness, and reflecting with self-application -- humanity is in such a course” (ibid.: 19.6). In Mencius, knowledge or wisdom is, as said before, one of the “four constant virtues” of human nature, hence the importance of knowledge to the development of humanity; Xunzi made the role of knowledge even more crucial: it bridges the gap between the inborn human nature and the acquired human nature (cf. Feng 1952: 119-127, 284-297; Schwartz 1985: 263-269, 291-299). In history, this Confucian emphasis on knowledge/wisdom and its relation to humanity was transformed into a uniquely Chinese tradition of intellectualism, which has been featured by the famous scholar-official phenomenon, and by a democratic attitude toward education in Chinese history.
Theoretically, the Confucian doctrine of the “Rectification of Names” is a key to the rationalistic aspect of Confucian humanism. According to this doctrine, things in actual fact should be made to conform to the implication attached to them by names. The meaning of the rectification of names was so obvious for Confucius: “If names are not rectified, then language will not be in accord with truth, then things cannot be carried on to success, then propriety and music will not flourish, then punishment will not be just, and then the people will not know how to move hand or foot. Therefore the superior man considers it necessary that the names he uses may be spoken appropriately, and also what he speaks may be carried out appropriately ....” Thus, the rectification of names is the first thing to be done (Analects: 13.3). Apparently, rectifying names is an epistemological matter, which necessitates a process from the real world to the world of ideas, or from experience to theory. In fact, Confucius’s idea of the rectification of names was developed by Xunzi into a systematic epistemology, in which the role of sense organs and the mind in the knowing process as well as the application of logic to naming or conceptualizing (classification) were explored (Xunzi: 22. Cf. Feng 1952: 302-11; Needham 1956: 21-23; Knoblock 1994). However, the primary interest of the Confucian doctrine of rectifying names was ethical/political rather than epistemological: rectifying names means, as Chan points out, “not only that a name must correspond to its actuality, but also that ranks, duties and functions must be clearly defined and fully translated into action” (1963: 40-41; also cf. Needham 1956: 27-29). In other words, rectifying names (defining, among other things, social positions and relations) is necessary for achieving propriety, righteousness and humanity.

As discussed earlier, knowledge for Confucians means, first of all, the knowledge of human affairs. Confucius made it clear that without learning, one would be deluded and all the virtues characterizing
a good human being, such as humanity, wisdom, sincerity, uprightness, bravery, firmness, would go wrong (Analects, 17.8). As a matter of fact, self-cultivation through learning and education was fundamental to Confucian teachings. In The Great Learning, "the investigation of things" and "the extension of knowledge" were considered the first step toward the highest good or full humanity (cf. de Bary 1983: 129). Moreover, in the Confucian tradition knowledge was considered a privilege of all human beings and not to be restricted to sagely kings or superior men. Confucius was truly a democratic rationalist when he says that "In education there are no class distinctions" (Analects: 15.38). Democracy in education (and, in relation to this, the system of civil service examination) implies an idea of the universality of human reason, or of the basic equality of intelligence among human beings. Indeed, learning, and learning for everyone -- it is from this Confucian tradition of intellectualism that the Chinese rational agnosticism toward the world beyond and rational affirmation of this world result. Of course, in the Confucian context, knowledge (knowledge of human affairs) is not for knowledge's sake -- it is for the sake of morality, hence rational humanism.

Confucian rationalistic humanism contrasts sharply with the mainstream Western social philosophy, particularly modern rationalist individualism. In the West, the Socratic maxim that "Knowledge is virtue" and Plato's conception that the highest kind of knowledge (philosophy) pertains to the highest good (social justice) were in a certain way close to their Confucian counterpart. However, the Socratic/Platonic conception of knowledge/wisdom was associated with a religious order articulated in Greek polytheism and is too idealistic or universalistic. This is perhaps why it was, via Neoplatonism, integrated into the Christian theology. It was Aristotle's definition that human beings are rational beings, along with his other definition -- human beings are political/social animals, that
was duly revived in modern times, but now knowledge was reduced to science (the knowledge of nature), social reason was identified mainly with natural-law philosophy (hence rationalistic individualism), and virtue or good became largely irrelevant: as a result, the virtue/knowledge relationship was replaced by the power/knowledge relationship. The Western rationalist tradition has certainly followed the Greek saying, "Know thyself," but in modern rationalist individualism this saying actually refers to, if anything, human reason's self-consciousness in the sense that human beings are defined as rational (vs. moral) beings and their sociality is attributed to their rationality (vs. humanity).

From the foregoing discussion, it may be concluded that the four core interrelated ideas of Confucian humanism, *ren* (humanity, benevolence), *yi* (righteousness, justice), *li* (rules of propriety) and *zhi* (wisdom, knowledge), constitute a relatively coherent theoretical system: because of righteousness, humanity is interpersonally embedded, hence graded love; however, righteousness makes humanity only more reasonable and practical but no less relevant and extensive; moreover, humanity and righteousness define the substance of rules of propriety, which in turn are the social or institutional form of humanity and righteousness; finally, knowledge, itself a process of self-cultivation, and itself pertaining to the human world, is to bridge humanity and righteousness on the one hand, and rules of propriety on the other -- by "investigating things" and "rectifying names," knowledge identifies the form (rules of propriety) with the substance (humanity and righteousness). This theoretical system was firmly established in the classical period of the Confucian tradition and readily became the official ideology in the end of this period, i.e. the early Han dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) (cf. Feng 1958: ch. 18). Since then the Confucian tradition before modern times had experienced many changes, the most
significant of which was perhaps -- in intellectual terms -- the formation and development of Neo-
Confucianism in the Song (960-1279) and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties. However, the core of
Confucianism has remained by and large intact.

Does the theoretical framework of Confucianism completely exclude individual autonomy and
universal love? The answer is “No.” Apparently, individual autonomy is part of the personality of
Confucius himself. His famous remarks that “Having heard the Tao in the morning, one may die
content in the evening” (Analects: 4.8) and that “If the Tao is not followed [in the human world], one
may raft on the sea [where no one lives]” (ibid.: 5.7) suggested to what extent one could be
independent of one’s “social relationships,” which was also verified by his biography. In theory,
according to Confucianism, social relationships could mean both harmony and disorder, and both
humanity and inhumanity, and one should not conform oneself to one’s social relationships (the ruler-
subject relationship in particular) if there is no humane and righteous harmony in these relationships.
Moreover, Mencius’s idea that “All things are complete in me” (Mencius: 7A.4) and the Neo-
Confucianist Wang Yang-ming’s elaboration of this idea (cf. e.g. Feng 1958: ch. 26; also see Ching
1976) pointed to the ontological foundation of individual autonomy, i.e. the Heaven-man unity
fulfilled in man, hence immanent transcendence (for detailed discussion on the Confucian conception
of self-cultivation and moral autonomy, see de Bary, 1983, 1991; Schwartz, 1996: ch. 6 & 10). With
regard to universal love, it was Mencius -- the Confucianist who linked humanity to righteousness --
that advocated that “Treat the aged in your family as they should be treated, and extend this treatment
to the aged of other people’s families. Treat the young in your family as they should be treated, and
extend this treatment to the young of other people’s families” (Mencius: 1A.7). Thus, graded love
does not contradict universal love. In Feng’s explanation, it is “based on the principle of graded love” that one extends one’s love to include others, hence universal love (1958: 72). In light of this spirit, it is no coincidence that the Chinese saying “All within the four seas (the world) are brothers” originally came out of a dialogue between two direct disciples of Confucius (Analects: 12.5). Actually, the Confucian conception of humanity – “Do to others what you wish yourself” and “Do not do to others what you do not wish yourself” (the Chinese counterpart of the Western “Golden Rule”) – would imply that humanity applies to everyone.

Nevertheless, the Confucian idea of individual autonomy has not resulted in individualism; neither has the Confucian idea of universal love been developed into humanitarianism. Confucianism is after all a doctrine of “centrality and commonality” – it sees the extremes but it stays at the centre (cf. e.g. Tu 1989b; also see Schwartz 1996: ch. 7, for his discussion of the absence of reductionism in Chinese thought). Therefore, freedom and equality, conceptualized in the mainstream social philosophy of the modern West, would hardly fit into the theoretical framework of Confucian humanism, just as the Confucian ideas of humanity and righteousness would have no proper place in the context of Western humanism (individualism and humanitarianism). Indeed, there are, besides the overlapping part, substantial disparities between Confucian humanism and Western humanism.

In the traditional Confucian world, individual autonomy was mainly a spiritual process (i.e. self-cultivation, immanent transcendence); in practice, it was often associated with the life of recluses, most of whom either never succeeded in the civil-service examinations or were removed by the emperor from office, and who had been a major source of Chinese literature and arts. In other words,
individual autonomy was not politicized or institutionalized — as it is in the modern West in the form of political and civil rights. On the other hand, universal love was more directly linked to other Chinese traditions, such as Taoist religion, Chinese Buddhism, and particularly Mohism, which advocated “all-embracing love” [jianai 兼爱] (as embodied in itinerant knights), than to Confucianism. Thus, although it widely existed in society, the practice of universal love in the traditional Confucian world -- unlike Western humanitarianism -- had little impact on politics (which might partly explain the relative underdevelopment of the welfare state in modern East Asian societies).
4. Confucianism and Other East Asian Traditions: Between the Secular and the Sacred

In the West, a sociological consequence of the development of rationalism and humanism in modern times is secularization. The roots of secularization can be traced back to, as demonstrated by Weber, the disenchantment process in ancient Judaism (cf. e.g. Zeitlin 1997: ch. 17), but secularization as a defining indicator of social life is essentially a modern phenomenon in the Western context. Indeed, "being modern" and "being secular" are largely synonymous in sociological terms. In this regard the modern West contrasts sharply with the Confucian world. It seems odd enough that Confucianism, as the dominant ideology in China and implanted in the rest of East Asia, and as an intellectual tradition of rationalism and humanism, historically coexisted with other East Asian traditions, most of which were religious: in China, there were Chinese Buddhism, religious Taoism, and a variety of folk religions; in Korea, Buddhism, Taoism, and shamanism; and in Japan, Buddhism, Taoism, and Shintoism. These religions, waxing and waning in the vicissitudes of East Asian societies, have played their part in shaping the spirituality of East Asians. Therefore, indeed curiously, "Many Chinese have professed themselves to be Taoists, Buddhists, even Christians, but seldom have they ceased at the same time to be Confucianists" (de Bary 1960: 17). The same is true of shamanistic Koreans, Shintoistic Japanese, etc. In fact, the normally harmonious coexistence of the irreligious and the religious (and of different religions) in East Asian societies constitutes a significant phenomenon, which distinguishes East Asia from the West, where an either-or attitude is usually adopted by both
parties of the religious and the irreligious, and by different religions. How this coexistence is possible in East Asia must be explained from the nature of both Confucianism and East Asian religions and from their relationships.

4.1. The Religious and Irreligious in the Confucian Tradition

Whether Confucianism is a religion has been an issue in dispute (cf. Chan 1953: 11-20; Ching 1977: 8-9; Yang 1967: 3-6). There seems little doubt that theoretically a line can be drawn between a religion and a rationalistic/humanistic tradition. Therefore, granted that Confucianism is, as discussed in the last two chapters, fundamentally rationalistic and humanistic, it would be only logical to conclude that Confucianism is not a religion. However, regardless of the indefinite situation in defining religion, has the line between the religious and the irreligious always been clear and absolute in the real world and in sophisticated minds? Thoughtful theists are often rationalistic and humanistic, just as rationalists and humanists frequently appeal to religious thinking (e.g. Thomas Aquinas and Kant, two representatives of each camp); moreover, the two sides can sometimes be mutually transformed into each other in one way or another (e.g. Christianity in the form of Protestantism and Marxism practiced under Soviet socialism). Thus, instead of wondering whether Confucianism is a religion or not, one should explore whether there is anything religious in Confucianism and, if there is, how this is to be understood in the rationalistic and humanistic framework of Confucianism, and,
furthermore, what consequences this might have had.

There are certainly religious elements in Confucianism, which is evident in the fact that some religious activities, such as the worship of Heaven and ancestor worship, were directly and positively related to the Confucian tradition since the formation of Confucianism (there had been, of course, a long history of the worship of Heaven and ancestor worship in China before Confucius). Meanwhile, there are also theoretical reasons for the development of religiosity within the Confucian tradition as well as without, at least for some periods in history -- in other words, there must be some room for religiosity in the theoretical framework of Confucianism.

The worship of Heaven and ancestor worship existed long before the formation of Confucianism in Chinese history (cf. Kūng and Ching 1989; Ching 1993), but it was in Confucianism that they became theoretically approved or justified. As explained before, the conception of Heaven in the teachings of Confucius, Mencius and Xunzi, the three founding fathers of Confucianism, corresponds to that of things-in-themselves/God in Kant's philosophy: Heaven in a naturalistic sense is not knowable in its essence, but it can be humanized or utilized by human beings for their own sake as long as they follow its laws (Xunzi); on the other hand, as the highest or absolute moral existence, Heaven is the unconditioned condition for the social life of human beings (Mencius). From this conception, the existence of Heaven is a hypothetical necessity, and the unity of Heaven and human beings would be an ideal for human beings to pursue. However, this unity is not to be achieved by Heaven or in Heaven: again, what is transcendent is immanent — intrinsic in the human world. According to the Confucian doctrine, there are two ways by which to achieve this unity, i.e. neisheng 内圣 (sageliness
within) and *waiwang* 外王 (kingliness without). The former is to be achieved by individual human beings through their self-cultivation and practicing humanity in their personal life, while the latter, by sagely kings in their humane and effective governing over society. The former is in effect the unity between Heaven and *individual* human beings, whereas the latter, that between Heaven and the human world (human beings as a whole). Moreover, the former does not necessarily require or imply the latter, but the latter must combine sageliness within and kingliness without. It is in the latter that the worship of Heaven has a role to play: the worship of Heaven symbolizes the connection between Heaven and the human world in an official/social ceremony. This ceremony, with all its ritualistic solemnity and splendour, functions in a certain way to legitimate the rule of the monarch: for those who combine sageliness within and kingliness without, this ceremony symbolically assures their people that the human world is on the right track or is following the human Tao (humanity); for those who govern in a way that is not (completely) sagely or humane, as happens so often in history, this ceremony could create an ideological/religious illusion: i.e. there is nothing wrong with their rule, for it is associated with or guaranteed by Heaven; and, therefore, for both, the worship of Heaven is a positive and necessary plus to political power. Naturally, the performance of rituals in the worship of Heaven is, as explained by Yang, a privilege of the monarch and not to be shared by others (Yang 1967: 183-85). In this sense, it remained unchanged in the traditional Confucian world that the monarch/the emperor was “the paradigmatic priest and shaman as well as the political ruler and military leader” (Küng and Ching 1989: 25). On the other hand, when ordinary people call the monarch “the son of Heaven,” they are, consciously or not, in a *de facto* religious spirituality. (Interestingly, a similar situation can be found in Christianity: in light of the New Testament, Jesus Christ is the only way by which to access God, and Jesus Christ is believed to be the son of God. The
difference is that Jesus Christ is not a political ruler.) It should be noted that theoretically Confucianism would see no relevance of an inhumane government to the worship of Heaven, and it would consider the worship of Heaven under this government instrumental rather than spiritual. In fact, the distinction between the government of a sage-king (wangdao 王道, or rule with humanity) and that of a military lord (badao 霸道, or rule by force) has, as indicated by Feng, always been maintained in the Confucian tradition (Feng 1958: 74-76). Thus, from the Confucian perspective, the worship of Heaven is meaningful if and only if the monarch combines sageliness within and kingsliness without or, to put it in another way, if and only if the government is humane and moral. Confucius points out that a man, in this case the monarch, without humanity has nothing to do with propriety (as embodied in rituals) and music (Analects: 3.3). However, it seems that while bearing Confucius' teachings in mind, the dynastic rulers would generally care more about political power and social order than about humanity, hence more about the form of the worship of Heaven than about its substance. Thus, the Neo-Confucianist Zhu Xi (1130-1200) sadly and somewhat hyperbolically announces that “During (the past) fifteen hundred years,... the Tao that had (previously) been transmitted by (the sage rulers) Yao and Shun, the Three Kings (who founded the first three dynasties), the Duke of Chou [Zhou], and Confucius, has never for one day been permitted in the world” (quoted from Feng 1953: 563).

Ancestor worship is the “essential religion” in the Chinese culture (Yang 1967: 53; cf. Ching 1993: 17-22). Therefore, it is only natural that ancestor worship be closely related to and fully rationalized by Confucianism. As a specific kind of religious rites, ancestor worship is “composed of two major parts, namely mortuary rites which immediately followed death, and sacrificial rites which maintained
the long-term relationship between the dead and the living” (Yang 1967: 30-31). Undoubtedly how the living is related to the dead is of eternal and universal significance, but how this issue is dealt with varies historically and culturally. Funeral rites, while different in their details of performance, are practiced all the time and everywhere — in other words, a mourning ceremony is necessary for the immediately deceased. On the other hand, whereas sacrificial rites pertaining to those who died in remote times prevailed in almost all primitive cultures, they have continued till this day only in very few cultures, among which the Chinese culture is representative. Strictly speaking, funeral rites do not fall under the definition of ancestor worship, but in the Confucian context, funeral rites and sacrificial rites are often mentioned in the same breath. For instance, Zengzi, a disciple of Confucius, said: “Treating the immediately deceased with carefulness (in funeral rites) and cherishing the memory of distant ancestors (by sacrificial rites) would cause an abundant restoration of the people’s morals” (Analects: 1.9, translation modified). The Book of Rites also says: “Funeral and sacrificial rites serve to inculcate humanity and love” (cf. Feng 1952: 354). Thus, in the Chinese culture, both funeral and sacrificial rites are forms of ancestor worship, carrying the same religious meanings: through these rites the living spiritually transcend their own lives (this world) and relate to the dead (the world beyond). Here is how Xunzi interpreted these rites: “Funeral rites are for the living to give beautiful ceremonial to the dead; to send off the dead as if they were living; to render the same service to the dead as to the living, to the absent as to the present; and to make the end be the same as the beginning....” Similarly, “Sacrificial rites are the expression of man's affectionate longings. They represent the highest of loyalty, faithfulness, love and reverence. They represent the completion of propriety and refinement” (cf. ibid.: 349, 351). It is interesting to note that in the early seventeenth century, when European missionaries were hesitant in reacting to ancestor worship in China, the
Popes in Rome, Clement XI and Benedict XIV, decided to oppose it: "ancestral rites were illicit because they were offered to spirits of ancestors and so involved idolatry and superstition" (cf. Ching 1993: 193-94). Nevertheless, Confucians would see no contradiction between Chinese ancestor worship and Christianity, and they would, to the surprise of the two Popes, agree with them in opposing idolatry and superstition. Indeed, Confucians would perceive no idolatry and superstition in funeral and sacrificial rites. According to Xunzi: "Among Superior Men it [ancestor worship] is considered to be a human practice; among the common people it is considered to be a serving of the spirit." And "the Superior man looks upon it as a fine gloss put over the matter, while the common people consider it supernatural" (cf. Feng 1952: 351, 352). Thus, in ancestor worship, as in the worship of Heaven, rites are meaningful only in the sense that they express human feelings and symbolize or inculcate humanity. In other words, the ritual aspect of ancestor worship should always be understood in terms of its human/secular relevance. In this Confucian conception, ancestor worship is both atheistic and religious: atheistic, because it excludes spirits, ghosts or gods; religious, because it translates the human and secular into the ultimate and transcendent. In his explanation of primitive Australian totemism, Durkheim writes: "... in addition to this physical aspect, they [the sacred totemic beings] also have a moral character. When someone asks a native why he observes his rites, he replies that his ancestors always have observed them, and he ought to follow their example. So if he acts in a certain way towards the totemic beings, it is not because the forces resident in them are physically redoubtable but because he feels himself morally obliged to act thus" (1961: 218). Obviously, save for the "physical aspect," Durkheim's observation is close to the Confucian understanding of rites in general. Of course, just as the worship of Heaven is constantly used/misused by the ruler as an ideological tool to idealize and legitimate his rule, so ancestor worship is often
misunderstood by the common people as necessary for exempting them from fear and satisfying their personal desires.

The Confucian interpretation or justification of the worship of Heaven and ancestor worship is the main reason for which Confucianism is considered religious. However, the unique relation of Confucianism to the worship of Heaven and ancestor worship does not make Confucianism itself a religion. After all, Confucianism is mainly not a doctrine about the worship of Heaven and ancestor worship, although it does provide a theoretical framework within which the meaning of the two types of worship can be rationally understood. Because of the importance of *li* (rites or rules of propriety, including rites in the worship of Heaven and ancestor worship) in the Confucian tradition, Confucianism “also became known as the ritual religion” (Ching 1993: 60). But *li* in the Confucian world mainly refers to, as explained earlier, rules or norms regulating human beings’ social behaviour and interpersonal relationships, whereas worship rites constitute only a small, though indispensable, part of *li*. Moreover, the Confucian understanding of worship rites, like that of *li* in general, is neither ritualistic nor theistic -- it perceives the aesthetic in human rationality, and the transcendent in secular humanity. Confucius himself offered perhaps the best interpretation of worship rites: “Sacrifice (to the ancestors) *as if* they were present. Sacrifice to the gods *as if* they were present” (*Analects*: 3.12; italics added). In other words, it is the moral imaginations stimulated by worship rites, rather than the physical forms of these rites, that are relevant. From this perspective, worship rites are instrumental to the “restoration of people’s morals” (*Analects*: 1.9).
In a very specific sense one may still conceive Confucianism as a religion, i.e. Confucianism, like all other religions, "includes a consciousness of a dimension of transcendence" (Küng and Ching 1989: 89). Even in this sense, however, one should keep in mind that what is transcedent in the Confucian/Chinese context, unlike that in other religions, is -- as discussed in the last two chapters -- immanent as well, or transcendence is self-transcendence (self-cultivation, self-perfection).

There is also another way, a theoretical weak point indeed, by which religious thinking might insinuate itself into the Confucian theory, that is, Confucianism had not developed its own systematic metaphysics and meta-psychology until the formation of Neo-Confucianism. Confucius’s general attitude toward metaphysics is reflected in his well-known remark that “To devote one’s self earnestly to the duties due to men, and to respect spiritual beings but keep aloof from them, may be called wisdom” (Analects: 6.22). Also, according to his disciples, Confucius’s views on human nature and the Tao of Heaven were hardly heard among themselves, and the subjects on which Confucius never talked were: “extraordinary phenomena, physical exploits, disorder, and spiritual beings” (ibid.: 5.13, 7.21). To defend Confucius’s teachings in the theoretical chaos of their times, Mencius and Xunzi had to elaborate Confucian conceptions of Heaven and of human nature. In this development they laid the foundation for a Confucian metaphysics and meta-psychology (e.g. Xunzi’s theory of Heaven and Mencius’s theory of spiritual cultivation), but they, like Confucius, were still too anthropocentric and focused too much on intersubjectivity and the life-world to construct a systematic metaphysics and meta-psychology. In consequence, the underdevelopment of metaphysics and meta-psychology in the Confucian tradition (before Neo-Confucianism) left some room for the deifying tendency within the Confucian tradition, which was also echoed by the religious movements without.
An effort to deify Confucius and Confucianism was historically made by Dong Zhongshu (c.179-c.104 B.C.), who, in his memorial presented to the famous Emperor Wu (reigning from 140 to 87 B.C.), recommended making Confucianism the state doctrine at the expense of other schools of thoughts. The effort was ironically and significantly successful: ironically, because what Dong did would in some fundamental ways contradict classical Confucianism formulated by Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi, among others; significantly, because it was by Dong's effort that Confucianism was once and for all established as the orthodoxy of Chinese culture and Chinese society. Dong's theoretical contribution, or some would say, damage, to Confucianism is that, by integrating the Yin-Yang school and the Five-Element theory, two fashionable cosmological systems before and in his time (cf. Needham 1956: 232-53), into the Confucian framework, he reformulated the philosophy of the interaction or correlation between Heaven and man. In this theory, man is a replica of Heaven, and therefore human nature, social relationships, moral norms and historical evolution all correspond to the "numerical categories" of Heaven. For instance, Dong argues that the relationships between sovereign and subject, father and son, and husband and wife, which he terms as the "three bonds," are all derived from the principles of the Yin and Yang. On the other hand, the "five constants," humanity, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and faithfulness, respectively resemble the "Five Elements," i.e. Wood, Metal, Fire, Water, and Soil. Moreover, the succession of dynasties accords with a sequence of what he calls the "Three Reigns." They are the Black, White, and Red Reigns: "Each has its own system of government and each dynasty represents one Reign" (cf. Feng 1958: 199). And in this logic, "it was Confucius who received the Mandate of Heaven to succeed the Zhou and to represent the Black Reign. He was not a king *de facto*, but *one de jure*" (ibid.: 201). Dong's
theory represented an intellectual trend of his time, in which Confucius was deified and Confucianism became apocalyptic (ibid.: 204-07). However, this trend did not last long. In Feng's explanation, soon afterwards, "Confucianists of a more realistic and rationalistic way of thinking protested against these 'extraordinary and strange views' about Confucius and Confucianism. According to them, Confucius was neither a god nor a king. He neither foresaw the coming of the Han Dynasty, nor did he institute laws for any dynasty. He simply inherited the cultural legacy of the great tradition of the past, to which he gave a new spirit and transmitted for all ages" (ibid.: 207; also see Needham 1956: ch. 14). To do justice to Dong, one should acknowledge that he remained a faithful Confucianist. In fact, if Dong's religious garb were taken off, one would find that his theory is much the same as that of Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi. And more important, he substantially expanded the influence of Confucianism by proposing to institutionalize the Confucian classics as the ideological basis of the empire (cf. Feng 1958: 191-92). His statement that "the king of a new dynasty has the reputation of changing his institutions, but does not as a matter of fact alter the basic principles" seems also to apply to himself (cf. ibid.: 200). Thus conceived, Dong's reformulation of Confucianism is Confucian in content and religious in form (cf. Yang 1967: 109-10, 139-40).

The cosmological elements used by Dong and others to deify the Confucian tradition were purged away in subsequent development of Confucianism. According to Feng, these elements were further mingled with Taoism, resulting in the Taoist religion (ibid.: 211). As a result, the blending of Confucianism and religiosity by Dong in theory was dissolved into the juxtaposition of Confucianism and the Taoist religion in reality. Meanwhile, Buddhism was introduced into China and, in its dialogue with Confucianism and especially with the Taoist religion, was gradually transformed into
Chinese Buddhism. The mainstream Chinese Buddhism was the Chan school (cf. Fang 1988: 79-88), which was in essence a meta-psychology, a theory of the mind and how it is related to self-cultivation. Therefore, while Confucianism somewhat quietly continued to be the state doctrine, the Taoist religion and the Chan Buddhism respectively constructed a metaphysics and meta-psychology, hence the unique cultural triad of Confucianism-Buddhism-Taoism. This triad was finally turned into a trinity within Song-Ming (960-1644) Neo-Confucianism, in which the religiosity of the Taoist religion and Chan Buddhism was thoroughly philosophized. In other words, Neo-Confucianism incorporated the metaphysical and meta-psychological elements of the two religions without being converted into a new religion or without being religious. Buddhism and Taoism did not vanish after the formation of Neo-Confucianism, but theoretically they would no longer be able to constitute any substantial threat to the Confucian tradition. Their influence persisted, but primarily at the level of folk religions.

In the early days of modern China, there was another movement, the so-called “movement for a Confucian religion,” which was initiated by, among others, the famous Confucian reformer Kang Youwei, who attempted to reshape Chinese tradition in order to resist Western influences. Inspired by the (misconceived) role of religion in the West, Kang’s program echoed Dong’s effort two thousand years ago, only in a much more radical way. However, Kang was opposed by some conservative Confucians and many non-Confucian liberals alike, and the movement eventually failed (cf. Chan 1953: Ch. 1; Feng 1958: 322-25).

After all, the image of Confucius remains that of a social philosopher, a private teacher, a noble person and, for most of his lifetime, an unsuccessful political activist, while Confucianism proves to
be a secular — rationalistic and humanistic — doctrine with transcendent and ultimate concerns. The ephemeral success of Dong in deifying Confucius and theologizing Confucianism did reveal the need for the Confucian tradition to embrace some metaphysical and meta-psychological thinking, but it did not make Confucius a god and Confucianism a religion. The immediate failure of Kang further demonstrated that when that need was satisfied, there would be little hope for a Confucian religion. Moreover, the theoretical advantage of the Taoist religion and Chinese Buddhism over Confucianism in the areas of metaphysics and meta-psychology before the formation of Neo-Confucianism certainly lent support to the development of these two religions (and other religions). However, with or without this advantage, Taoism and Buddhism had, as explained below, to compromise with the Confucian politics as well as the Confucian morality in the secular world to legitimize their religiosity; and when this advantage vanished with the appearance of Neo-Confucianism, metaphysics and meta-psychology began functioning to justify the rationalistic and humanistic vision of society articulated by classical Confucianism.

Therefore, the worship of Heaven and ancestor worship in the Chinese world were religious activities rationalized by Confucianism (or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that they were endowed with moral values by Confucianism), while the lack of a systematic Confucian metaphysics and meta-psychology before the advent of Neo-Confucianism constituted part of the reason for the religious development both within and without the Confucian tradition. Another, perhaps more important reason for the coexistence of Confucianism and Chinese/East Asian religions is that these religions, while always resorting to the world beyond (like other religions), were seldom been critical or independent of secular power and values, and in fact they themselves had been in a substantial way
4.2. Confucianization/Secularization in East Asian Religions

A basic fact about the social life of East Asian people is that historically Confucianism represented fundamental ethical values and, for the most part, was the dominant political philosophy of East Asian societies. Moreover, whether in power or not, Confucianism always provided, and to a certain extent still provides, moral norms governing the social behaviour of East Asians. In other words, Confucianism is a moral doctrine more than it is a political one, and its political relevance is rooted in its moral strength. Indeed, it happened too often that political power had to rely on Confucianism for its legitimacy and stability. Domestic dynastic changes and successful foreign invasions had little effect on the status of Confucianism as the doctrine defining the social morality of East Asia: with no exception, rebelling peasants or perpetrators of coups d'etat, once coming to the throne, surrendered to the Confucian ideology; on the other hand, military conquerors, notably the Mongols and Manchurians, were conquered by the Chinese culture after (and even before) they entered the Confucian world. De Bary keenly observed that “Confucianism was less dependent on the state for survival than the state on it” (1988: 110). Thus, institutionalized in the power structure of East Asian societies, the Confucian system of ethical values represented the moral consensus or, in the Durkheimian terminology, the social conscience of East Asia. The moral/political dominance of
Confucianism was consequential for other East Asian traditions. As a matter of fact, according to Yang, "New moral values that harmonized with Confucian values were easily absorbed into the traditional social code, but those in conflict with them had great difficulty in being assimilated" (1967: 279). This characterized the cultural milieu in which East Asian religions, such as naturalized Buddhism, religious Taoism, shamanism, Shintoism, etc. were located and interacted with each other and with Confucianism. In this general circumstance, it would be hardly possible for these religions to formulate different ethical systems "comparable to Confucianism in comprehensiveness and in systematic adaptation to the characteristics of the indigenous social structure" (ibid.: 280), and it would be more likely that they, as they did, concede to the Confucian morality.

As a result, East Asian religions, unlike Christianity, Islam, and Indian Buddhism or Hinduism after Buddhism, have never been transformed from theology to theocracy. In East Asian history, particularly in Chinese history, there were some emperors who were genuine converts to Buddhism and Taoism, and there were more emperors who politically patronized some religions or allowed their expansion, but no emperors had (successfully) tried to turn any religion a state religion. On the other hand, if religious development became too threatening, that is, economically affecting the national well-being, politically too involved or rebelling, and culturally in conflict with basic social values, it would be ruthlessly suppressed by those in power. In effect, religions in East Asian societies were much less ideological than instrumental to the ruling class, and therefore they never became the disciplining authority against the violation of moral rules in larger society. The case of Shintoism demands some explanation. An important step of the Meiji regime to modernize Japan was to replace Confucianism with Shintoism as the state doctrine. However, as Kitagawa points out, the Meiji
Regime, "in creating a new religion of ethnocentrism called State Shinto, appropriated Confucian ethics for its moral basis,..." (1987: 168). In fact, Shintoism without Confucianism would be simply a folk religion, as it used to be before the Meiji Restoration. To put it another way, the Shintoism in power was the Shintoism Confucianized. In this sense, Shintoism was an exception proving the rule. As a rule, therefore, East Asian religions had to make peace with Confucianism -- they had to modify their own teachings to adapt to the Confucian reality in society, justify their relevance to society in the spirit of Confucianism, and, more often than not, play the role of supernatural agent enforcing or promoting the Confucian morality (cf. Yang 1967: 278).

Among East Asian religions, the case of Buddhism and Taoism (especially Buddhism) is particularly interesting, as far as their relation to Confucianism is concerned: both religions reached a level of theoretical sophistication comparable to that of Confucianism, and both had their distinctive ideas and principles, but in the end both became considerably Confucianized.

In its original form, (Indian) Buddhism was a doctrine of other-worldly mysticism, and had its own system of ethical values, which was in consonance with Confucianism in some ways (e.g. their common emphasis on love or humanity) but otherwise largely different from it. In its naturalization in China (hence the rest of East Asia), however, the other-worldly mysticism of Buddhism was substantially attenuated, if not completely abolished, as evident in the Chan school, the most influential in Chinese Buddhism. According to the teaching of the Chan school, the highest knowledge is the knowledge that is non-knowledge, and the method of cultivation is also cultivation of non-cultivation. Dunwu 顿悟 (sudden enlightenment) is the climax of cultivation, but sudden
enlightenment is purely a state of psychological awareness, which does not entail the attainment of anything further. In this state, the Buddhist does what everyone else does, but he has no attachment to anything: “To eat all day and yet not swallow a single grain; to wear clothes all day and yet not touch a single thread” (cf. Feng 1958: ch. 22). Thus, the mysticism of Buddhism was mingled with, or dissolved into secular life: “In carrying water and chopping firewood: therein lies the wonderful Tao” (ibid.: 264). In the logic of this reasoning, it is only natural that the Chan school would not put itself into a position against the Confucian reality. As a matter of fact, a strategic step taken by the Chan school, and Chinese Buddhism in general, was to reinterpret Confucianism in a Buddhist context (or vice versa). For instance, in an essay titled “On the Disrespect of Buddhists for the Emperor,” Huiyuan (334-416) argued that a Buddhist, whose virtue and accomplishment extend over all his relatives and all in the world, will be helpful to the emperor. Thus, the Buddhist seems to depart from family relationships, but actually follows the ethics of filial piety; he seems to be respectful to the emperor, yet is in effect on the side of the emperor (Fang 1988: 266-67; Department of Philosophy, Peking University 1980: 293-94). Moreover, there were also Chinese Buddhists who adopted Confucian values, especially filial piety, in their own moral system. In the beginning of his volume On Filial Piety, the renowned Song Buddhist Qisong stated that “Filial piety is esteemed by all teachings, and it is more so by Buddhism than by other teachings.” He insisted that there is no contradiction between monastic life and filial piety, and he even declared that the Buddhist filial piety is higher than the Confucian filial piety (Fang 1988: 269-76, 283-85). Therefore, the line between Buddhism and Confucianism blurred and Buddhism embraced Confucianism. This convergence seems obvious even from the Confucian perspective. Commenting on the Chan School, Feng, a Confucianist in modern times, indicates that if there is “the wonderful Tao” in carrying water and
chopping firewood, "does not the wonderful Tao also lie in serving one's family and the state? If we were to draw the logical conclusion from the Ch'an [Chan] doctrines..., we should be forced to answer yes. The Ch'an Masters themselves, however, did not give the logical answer. It was reserved for the Neo-Confucianists,..." (Feng 1958: 265).

The relation of Taoism to Confucianism is similar to the relation of Chinese Buddhism to Confucianism. There were philosophical Taoism and religious Taoism. Religious Taoism is a mixture of philosophical Taoism and some elements in the Yin-Yang school, the Five-Elements (wuxing 五行) theory, and shamanism (cf. Feng 1958: 211; Needham 1956: 162). The key idea to both forms of Taoism is nature or naturalness, but they differ as to how human beings are to be related to nature. According to Feng, philosophical Taoism teaches the doctrine of following nature, while religious Taoism teaches the doctrine of working against nature (Feng 1958: 3). However, as far as their relation to Confucianism is concerned, philosophical Taoism and religious Taoism are in the same camp: their common interest in nature distinguishes them from Confucianism, which focuses on the social world; on the other hand, they share the same ambiguous attitude toward Confucianism.

As a matter of fact, the difference between Taoism (whether as a philosophy or a religion) and Confucianism seems to imply a relationship between them that is more complementary than contradictory. Yanhui, Confucius's most gifted disciple, is a favourite figure for both Confucianism and Taoism. According to the Analects, "Living in a mean dwelling on a bowlful of rice and a ladleful of water is a hardship most men would find intolerable, but Hui [Yanhui] does not allow this to affect his joy" (6.11). In Yanhui's personality, Confucians see something moral, while Taoists see something natural. Historically, soon after Confucianism became the state doctrine, a Confucianizing
tendency was already evident in philosophical Taoism. Thus, there were Taoist philosophers who considered Confucius and Yanhui to be even greater than Laozi and Zhuangzi: the former do not have the desire for no desire, while the latter retain a desire to be without desire; the former forget that they forget, whereas the latter cannot forget that they forget; therefore, the mind of the former is perfectly empty, yet that of the latter is only partially so (cf. Feng 1958: 218-19; Feng 1953: 168-75).

There were also Taoist philosophers who argued that in mingjiao 名教 (morals and institutions), as in ziran 自然 (spontaneity and naturalness), “there is fundamentally room for happiness” (cf. Feng 1958: 240), reminiscent of the idea of “the wonderful Tao” in the Chan School. On the other hand, religious Taoism went further in Confucianizing itself. The formation of religious Taoism was initially an indigenous reaction to the growth of Buddhism in China: it borrowed some Buddhist institutions, rituals and even scriptures to develop itself into an organized religion (cf. Feng 1958: 211), but meanwhile it competed with Buddhism partly by Confucianizing itself. Like philosophical Taoists, religious Taoists counted sages in the Confucian tradition, such as Confucius and Yanhui, as deities in the divine order of the Taoist genealogy. Moreover, they regarded both Taoist and Confucian classics as their scriptures, and they integrated some core ideas of Confucianism (filial piety, humanity, etc.) into their own moral creed (cf. Ge 1987: 58, 241; also Yang 1967: 281-81). In consequence, religious Taoism, like philosophic Taoism and Chinese Buddhism, was in no position opposing the Confucian morality and the Confucian politics.

As two major forms of theorized and institutionalized religions in the Confucian world, Buddhism and Taoism had to “convert” the Confucian emperors and literati in order to convert the people. In other words, they had to be useful to the emperors politically (as they seldom failed to be), to please the
literati intellectually (as they did before the Neo-Confucian synthesis), and to identify with Confucian morals and values in general. In this sense, Chinese Buddhism and religious Taoism converged toward Confucianism by different routes. It should be noted that the common people, having little political interest, lacking sufficient intellectual taste, and yet governed by the same social norms and moral values, did not make meaningful distinction between the two religions. Consequently, these two religions meant virtually the same thing to the common people (cf. Ge 1987: 166, 324). This is interesting especially when seen comparatively: in the Confucian world, similar connections with Confucianism made two theoretically different religions, Buddhism and Taoism (and other East Asian religions) indistinguishable to the common people; while in the West, the same Christian faith was divided into three diverse mainstreams: Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism (not to mention miscellaneous branches within each, particularly within Protestantism), which historically split the people culturally as well as politically. History is often dramatic but seems to be fair: in their later development, some theoretical elements of Chinese Buddhism and Religious Taoism were absorbed into the Confucian tradition, resulting in Neo-Confucianism. However, Neo-Confucianism, while remaining united as a moral system, further disintegrated into the school of Principle (lixue 理学) and the school of Mind (xinxue 心学), respectively corresponding to the different interests or ideas of Taoism and Buddhism (cf. Feng 1958: 281, 321): in this way different religions outside the Confucian tradition were partly transformed into different denominations within it. On the other hand, in the West, the distance between various forms of Christianity became relatively insignificant in the context of modern democracy -- Christian fundamentalists from different Christian backgrounds have been united spiritually, if not physically, to fight against modernist culture in recent decades.
Therefore, in the Confucian world, both Chinese Buddhism and religious Taoism (as well as other Chinese/East Asian religions) functioned to enforce and promote the Confucian morality in society. Nonetheless, being a supernatural moral agent was not the only thing, or not even the primary goal, on the agenda of these religions. Moral life was just one aspect of human life. There were times of political chaos, economic misery and natural disaster at the social level, and there are moments of intellectual bewilderment, emotional anxiety, and physical illness at the personal level: to these problems Confucianism provided no (immediate) solutions, leaving much room for the existence and development of religions. Indeed, it is in dealing with these problems that East Asian religions were relatively independent of the Confucian orthodoxy and penetrated deeply into the superstructure and grassroots of society. Moreover, in dealing with these problems, Buddhism and Taoism mingled with folk religions, constituting a magical and -- one should add at once -- sometimes scientific garden under the moral empire of Confucianism. Thus, “entrance into the Buddhist priesthood was at once a spiritual consolation, a magical protection, and a material relief...” (Yang 1967: 121). This remark may also apply, with some modifications, to Taoism and other religions. On the other hand, there seems to be some tacit division of labour among these religions. In other words, they were functionally diversified. In China, for instance, “a common man could worship a Buddhist god for the general happiness of himself and his family, pray to a Taoist deity for the return of his health, and at the same time practice Confucian morality” (ibid.: 283). In Japan, it is common “to have Shinto weddings..., but to turn to Buddhism in times of bereavement and for funeral services” (Küng and Ching 1989: 219; also cf. Reader 1991). Indeed, given the diverse aspects of human life and the limitations of human reason or rationality, a world without any religiosity or religions would be simply
a scientific fiction, although rationalization or disenchantment seems also to be an irresistible social-historical impulse.

It is interesting to note that the Confucian dominance was evident sometimes even in the labour division of religious activities. For example, in Korea, shamanism was conceived as a morally inferior and suspect religion/superstition of placating the gods, while ancestor worship, a Confucian cult, was regarded as a morally prestigious and correct duty of caring for the dead. Therefore, as observed by Wolf and Smith, “the Korean social world appears to be divided into two realms. On the one hand, there is the male, moral, and orderly realm, primarily concerned with ancestors and performance of ordained rites; on the other, there is the female, amoral, and disorderly realm, primarily concerned with the gods and the performance of practical rites” (1987: 194). This division of labour reflects the Confucian patriarchy in general in East Asian societies, which will be examined in the next chapter.

In fact, the penetration of Confucian values into East Asian religions is pervasive. In religious organizations, such as Buddhist and Taoist temples, the interpersonal relationships — the relationships between the masters and disciples as well as among disciples — are also governed, to a substantial extent, by Confucian morals or rules of propriety. For instance, there is some kind of seniority rule within the temples, according to which, the disciples not only literally call their direct master “master-father” [shifu 师父] (and their master’s master “master-grandfather” [shizufu 师祖父]), but also actually treat him as they treat their own father (and grandfather) — hence “master-mother,” “master-grandmother,” “master-uncle,” “master-aunt,” etc. Horizontally, disciples of the same generation and the same master address one another “(younger or elder) brothers of the same master” and treat one another correspondingly, hence “master-brother,” and “master-sister.” This is different from the
situation in a Christian church, where there would be only the “godfather” (not “master-father”) and no god-grandfather, and the rest are simply “brothers” and “sisters” and definitely not “uncles” and “aunts” — regardless of the possible age differentiation among them — in other words, there is no seniority rule whatsoever.

Thus, the coexistence of Confucianism and East Asian religions is not that of different ideologies: Confucianism was the only — explicitly or implicitly — official doctrine that provided guiding principles and regulating rules for social life in traditional East Asia, and other doctrines or religions were there to help sanction or ritualize Confucian values. On the other hand, East Asian religions offered real or illusory solutions to all kinds of problems that are beyond the sphere of moral life or are not directly related to the Confucian morality and the Confucian politics, satisfying, restraining or explaining away different layers or aspects of human needs. Consequently, while the process of disenchantment in China started and finished with the formation of Confucianism in ancient times, East Asia has preserved its “magic garden” till this day. Hence the generally and normally peaceful coexistence of rationalistic and humanistic Confucianism with various religious traditions. This also constitutes the context in which the development of Christianity in East Asian societies of modern times is to be understood.
5. Confucianism as the Ideology of Chinese/East Asian Familism

Stripped of its philosophical reasoning and religious relevance, Confucianism is simply an idealist formulation, or rather, the social ideology, of Chinese familism. Thus conceived, Confucianism and Chinese familism are identical. As a matter of fact, it is no exaggeration to say that the secret of Confucianism -- its rationalism, its humanism, and its secular morality with ultimate concern -- largely lies in Chinese familism.

The importance of familism to the social morality in East Asia and the relation of familism to Confucianism have been widely noticed in East Asian studies. Nevertheless, from the existing literature on East Asian familism and the Confucian tradition, it is not clear what familism exactly means in East Asian societies and how familism is theorized in Confucianism. In general, one may define familism in terms of how the family is linked to the individual (or individual family members): in this sense familism can be described as a social pattern in which the family assumes a position of ascendance over individual interests, or family values are emphasized over individual values (cf. the tenth edition of *Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*). Familism thus defined is not a distinctively Chinese/East Asian phenomenon and therefore not uniquely Confucian; it was/is part of the Christian tradition as well as of Victorianism (hence the campaign of the New Right to restore family values), and it is part of or essential to all other traditions in the world. This definition of
familism is indeed plain enough and needs no further elaboration. In fact, in the Western context familism in this sense is even more intelligible than the term family itself, given the disorganization and reorganization of families (perhaps not the family any more) in recent years. This definition seems also to be the working definition in many East Asian studies. However, familism in the Chinese/East Asian context cannot be simply defined in terms of how the family is linked to the individual; it must also be understood in terms of how the family is linked to society. Of course, Chinese familism is first of all about the family, and family values remain at the core of the Confucian morality; but Chinese familism is far from confined to the family, or to the lineage -- the enlarged family. It further presupposes the familistic nature of social relationships and delineates the relation or analogy of the family (family relationships and family values) to society at large -- it pertains to the rationality and morality of social relationships. It is this aspect of Chinese familism that makes it uniquely Confucian. And it is this aspect of Chinese familism that personalism, paternalism, groupism, communalism, authoritarianism, etc. in East Asian social -- economic and political -- life are deeply rooted. Therefore, a complete picture of Chinese familism should include both aspects: the family in relation to the individual, and the family in relation to society.

As the social ideology of Chinese familism, Confucianism, like any other ideology, can be examined from two levels, i.e. the level of values/norms and the level of institutions. At the level of values/norms, Confucianism provides a framework in which the Five Relationships -- the Confucian simplification of social relationships -- are conceptualized and idealized; at the level of institutions, the Confucian understanding of the relation between li 礼 (rules of propriety) and fa 法 (the law) is the theoretical key to the institutionalization of Chinese familism.
5.1. Five Relationships and Familistic Values

In the Confucian tradition, social relationships are theoretically reduced to the so-called Five Relationships, which are: the ruler-subject, father-son, husband-wife, brother-brother, and friend-friend relationships. Apparently, among these relationships, three are familial relationships (father-son, husband-wife, brother-brother), and the other two are conceived as analogous to familial relationships (ruler-subject to father-son, and friend-friend to brother-brother). Therefore, all these relationships are familial or familistic. Moreover, in the Confucian context, three relationships, i.e. the ruler-subject, father-son and husband-wife relationships, are also sometimes referred to as *sangang* 三纲 (literally, three bonds), seemingly suggesting that they are more important (than the other two) to the stability of social order. It is by defining these Five Relationships that the familistic values are articulated in Confucianism.

While in the historical order of the real world the husband-wife relationship (or, prior to the emergence of the family, the male-female relationship) would be the first among the five relationships, it is the father-son relationship and, as its extension, the ruler-subject relationship, that have theoretical priority in Confucianism. The key idea or virtue in the father-son relationship is filial piety. (It should be immediately noted that in the actual wording of Confucian texts, filial piety is frequently referred to as that toward both father and mother, and therefore the father-son relationship mostly implies the parent-child relationship.)
Filial piety can be narrowly as well as broadly defined. In a narrow sense, filial piety means serving one's parents and having posterity. Serving the parents consists of two parts, i.e. serving them when they are alive and “serving” them when they are dead. When the parents are alive, serving them would include three kinds of obligations. First, one should take care of one's parents physically and providing them with material support: “A filial son, in nourishing his aged, (seek to) make them pleased with what they hear and what they see, to promote their comfort in their bed-chambers and the whole house, and with loyal heart to supply them with their food and drink” (*Book of Rites*: 10B2, original translation modified). Second, one should respect and obey the parents. Confucius made this clear: “Filial piety nowadays means to be able to support one’s parents. But we support even dogs and horses. If there is no feeling of reverence, wherein lies the difference?” (*Analects*: 2.7). And “When sons and their wives are ordered by their parents to do anything, they should immediately respond and reverently proceed to do it” (*Book of Rites*: 10A.11, A13). And third, one should admonish one's parents tirelessly when they have a fault: “If a parent [the father] have a fault, (the son) should, with bated breath, and bland aspect, and gentle voice, admonish him. If the admonition does not take effect, he [the son] will be more reverential and more filial; and when the father seems pleased, he will repeat the admonition...” (*Book of Rites*: 10A.15; also cf. *Analects*: 4.18). On the other hand, when one's parents are dead, filial piety means 1) burying them and sacrificing to them “according to the rules of propriety” (*Analects*: 2.5), and 2) transmitting the good names of one’s parents and, for the son, not changing the way of his father (*Book of Rites*, 10A.17; *Analects*: 1.11).

In addition to serving the parents, another main aspect of filial piety is to have posterity, especially at least one male descendant. To have at least one male descendent and therefore to continue the family
line was and to a certain extent still is extremely important in East Asian societies, just as they are in other traditional societies. Actually, according to Mencius, "There are three things that are unfilial, and to have no posterity is the greatest of them" (Mencius: 4A.26). In Feng’s explanation, "for the Confucians, the chief function of marriage is to produce offspring. Through marriage which produces children, a new self is created to replace the old self, in this way ensuring biological immortality" (Feng, 1952: 357).

In its broad sense, filial piety has different levels of meaning, corresponding to different social strata. Thus, for the common people (and all human beings), filial piety means, as explained above, serving the parents; for ordinary officials (shi 士), "fulfilling their public duties" and "keeping the sacrificial rites;" for ministers (qingdahu 卿大夫), "following the law" and "maintaining the ancestral temples;" for princes (zhuhou 诸侯), "preserving the altars of the land and grain" and "harmonizing the people;" and for the ruler, the son of Heaven, "making the cultivation of virtues prevail among the human race and establishing laws of punishment and penalty everywhere" (Classics of Filial Piety: ch. 2-6; also cf. Book of Rites: 14). For the ruler, of course, filial piety also involves worshipping Heaven and offering "united sacrifice to all ancestors" (Book of Rites: e.g. 14.1, 28.59). Therefore, filial piety is rooted in one’s relation to the parents and applies to society at large: "From the affection for parents came the honouring of ancestors; from the honouring of ancestors came the respect and attention shown to the Heads (of the lineage); by that respect and attention to those Heads all the members of the lineage were kept together; through their togetherness came the dignity of the ancestral temple; from the dignity arose the importance attached to the altars of the land and grain; from the importance there ensued the love of all the people; from that love came the right administration of punishments.
and penalties...." (Book of Rites: 14.19, original translation modified). The most significant part of the broadly defined filial piety is loyalty -- the loyalty to the ruler. Confucians generally believe that a filial son would also be loyal to his ruler, and loyal subjects are from filial sons (cf. Yue, 1989a: 130; also see Analects: 1.2). Thus, there is "a fundamental agreement between a loyal subject of his ruler and a filial son in the service of his parents" (Book of Rites: 22.2). Nevertheless, loyalty is not absolutely unconditional: as in the case of the father-son relationship, the subject should try to stop the ruler from doing wrong things, only with more frankness and courage: "In serving his ruler, (a minister) should remonstrate with him openly and strongly (about his faults), and make no concealment (of them)" (Book of Rites: 2A.2; also cf. Analects: 14.22). Obviously, in this broad conception of filial piety, filial piety, originally part of family values, is extended far beyond the family and becomes politicized. According to the Classic of Filial Piety, "ancient wise kings relied on filial piety to govern all under Heaven" (ch. 8).

Indeed, from the Confucian perspective, filial piety is a general and fundamental virtue: "If a man in his own house and privacy be not grave, he is not filial; if in serving his ruler he be not loyal, he is not filial; if in discharging the duties of office he be not reverent, he is not filial; if on the field of battle he be not brave, he is not filial; if with friends he be not sincere, he is not filial. If he fail in these five things, the evil (of disgrace) will reflect on his parents...." (Book of Rites: 21B.11; cf. Feng 1952: 360). In the Classic of Filial Piety, Confucius was quoted as saying: "Now filial piety is the root of all virtue, and that from which all teaching comes.... It commences with the service of parents; it proceeds to the service of the ruler; it is completed by the establishment of one's own personality.... Yes, filial piety is the way of Heaven, the principle of Earth, and the practical duty of man. Heaven
and Earth invariably pursue this course, and the people take it as their pattern" (*Classic of Filial Piety*: ch. 1 & 7; cf. Feng 1952: 361).

Of course, both the father-son and ruler-subject relationships are not unidirectional. Filial piety to the parents and loyalty to the ruler are only one side of these relationships. In the logic of the Confucian rationale of reciprocity, the parents should treat the children and the ruler his subjects accordingly, i.e. love respectively their children and subjects. Thus, even “When sons and their wives have not been filial and reverential, (the parents) should not be angry and resentful with them, but endeavour to instruct them. If they will not receive instruction, they should then be angry with them...” (*Book of Rites*: 10A.14). On the other hand, with regard to how the ruler should treat his ministers, just as the ministers should serve their ruler with loyalty, so “A ruler should employ his ministers according to the rules of propriety” (*Analects*: 3.19). And to the people in general, the ruler should “practice a humane government” and should “share his enjoyment with the people” – “He who delights and worries on account of all under Heaven is certainly to become a true king” (cf. *Mencius*: 1A, 1B).

In comparison with the father-son and ruler-subject relationships, the relationship between brothers and, as its extension, that between friends are much less discussed in the Confucian literature, but it is clear enough in Confucianism that these two relationships, like the father-son and ruler-subject relationships, are governed by virtues of fundamental importance. In general, the brother-brother and friend-friend relationships are also reciprocal: the elder should be kind to the younger, and the younger should respect the elder. However, as in the case of the father-son and ruler-subject relationships, it is how the younger of the brothers and the friends should treat the elder that is more
emphasized by the Confucian tradition. In Confucius’s words, “Young men should be filial when at home and respectful to their elders [elder friends] when away from home” (*Analects*: 1.6). For Confucians, the analogy of the brother-brother to friend-friend relationship seems natural. For instance, in a dialogue between two disciples of Confucius (ibid.: 12.5), one of them, Simanju, worrying, said, “All people have brothers but I have none.” The other, Zixia, replied, “I have heard [from Confucius] this saying: ‘Life and death are determined by Fate; wealth and honor depend on Heaven. If a superior man is reverential without fail, and is respectful in dealing with others and follows the rules of propriety, then all within the four seas [in the world] are brothers.’ What does the superior man may have to worry about having no brothers?” In this understanding, brotherhood and friendship can be mutually translated into each other. Moreover, in the friend-friend relationship, faithfulness or trustworthiness is a fundamental virtue (*Analects*: 1.4, 1.7; also cf. *Mencius*: 3A.4). (Confucians did not explicitly link this virtue to the brother-brother relationship, perhaps because for them there should be no question about it, or perhaps because they believed that brotherly respect and love already imply it.) It should be noted that faithfulness is also considered by Confucians a general social virtue. Confucius, for instance, argued that without people’s faithfulness, there can be no government (*Analects*: 12.7). In Dong Zhongshu’s time (Dong was the Confucian scholar who proposed to make Confucianism the state doctrine in 136 B.C.), faithfulness was added to the four virtues conceptualized by Mencius, i.e. humanity, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom, hence the *wuchang 五常* (Five Constant Virtues) of Confucianism (cf. Feng 1958: 197). This was a significant development in the Confucian tradition in the sense that faithfulness in the friend-friend relationship implies the possibility or rationality of an equal, secular, universal and horizontal relationship among human beings.
The Confucian conception of the husband-wife relationship seems more complicated than that of the rest of the Five Relationships. In the Confucian tradition, as in almost all other patriarchal traditions, woman is absent in theory except as a wife (daughter-in-law and mother) or a future wife. Therefore, the husband-wife relationship is simply the sociologically reduced form of the man-woman relationship. Still, in the Confucian world, the status of the wife is ambiguous. On the one hand, she is an equal of the husband: “Husband and wife ate together of the same victim [in a ceremony], -- thus declaring that they were of the same rank. Hence while the wife had (herself) no rank, she was held to be of the rank of her husband and she took her seat according to the position belonging to him” (Book of Rites: 9C.11). According to the Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall, a Confucian classic compiled by some of Dong Zhongshu’s contemporaries, “The wife is by definition equal to the husband and they form a unity: this principle applies to the Son of Heaven (the ruler) as well as to the common people” (quoted from Tao and Ming 1994: 150). Therefore, the husband should have reverence and affection for the wife (Book of Rites: 9C.11), and certainly they both enjoy the same filial piety from their children. On the other hand, however, “The woman follows (and obeys) the man: in her youth, she follows her father and elder brother; when married, she follows her husband; when her husband is dead, she follows her son. ‘Man’ denotes supporter. A man by his wisdom should (be able to) lead others” (Book of Rites: 9C.10). Moreover, “As far as the Family is concerned, the woman’s proper place is inside it, and the man’s proper place is outside it. Male and female should keep to their proper places; this is the fundamental concept expressed by Heaven and Earth” (The Classic of Changes: Hexagram 37; also cf. Book of Rites: 10B.13-14). In addition, from the Confucian perspective, the most important virtue for a woman is zhen 贞, meaning faithfulness,
constancy and fidelity: "Faithfulness is requisite in all service of others, and it is (especially) the virtue of a wife. Once mated with her husband, all her life she will not change (her feeling of duty to him), and hence, when the husband dies she will not marry (again)" (Book of Rites: 9C.7). This is also uttered by The Classic of Changes in a mysterious tone: "Constancy... is right, auspicious for a wife (for to the end she should follow one man), inauspicious for a husband (because, as the man should take charge and act according to moral principles, for him to behave like an obedient woman would mean misfortune)" (Hexagram 32). Obviously, governed by these values, the husband-wife relationship in the Confucian tradition, while leaving some room for equality and affection between the two parties, constitutes an essentially patriarchal hierarchy.

The Five Relationships, while not entailing every social relationship in the real world, represent ideally all types of social relationships -- vertical and horizontal; in other words, all non-family relationships, like the ruler-subject and friend-friend relationships, have their prototypes in family relationships. Thus, the father-son relationship (and the ruler-subject relationship) may also extend to the relationships between teacher and disciple, master and apprentice, higher and lower authorities, the old and the young, employer and employee, etc; while the brother-brother relationship (and the friend-friend relationship), to the relationships between neighbours, colleagues, schoolmates, and other kinds of geographically or otherwise based acquaintances. Indeed, as far as interpersonal relationships are concerned, it is only too natural for one to find that in Confucian societies, there is an analogy between various non-family social organizations -- be they villages, guilds, schools, temples, the state, or even secret societies -- and the family. In the Confucian vision of the human world, social relationships are reduced to the Five Relationships, hence to family relationships. As a
result, family values are also social values, family virtues are also social virtues, and society is the family writ large: “Love on the part of the father, and filial piety on that of the son; gentleness on the part of the elder brother, and obedience on that of the younger; righteousness on the part of the husband, and submission on that of the wife; kindness on the part of the elders, and deference on that of juniors; humanity on the part of the ruler, and loyalty on that of the subjects; -- these ten are the things which are considered to be right for human beings” (Book of Rites: 7B.19, original translation modified). Therefore, family life and social life are governed by the same familistic morality, and in this sense there is no clear-cut line between the family and society. In explaining why he was not engaged in the government, Confucius said, “Be filial to your parents; be brotherly to your brothers -- these virtues can be extended to the government. Why then must one take part in the government in order to discharge its duties?” (Analects: 2.21).

Historically, the doctrine that filial piety (and other family virtues) is the source of all virtues, as Feng indicates, “must have arisen comparatively late” (1952: 361). In the three founding fathers of Confucianism -- Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi, ren 仁 (humanity, benevolence), yi 义 (righteousness, justice), li 礼 (rules of propriety) and zhi 智 (knowledge/wisdom) were already conceptualized as the four fundamental (and interconnected) social virtues (Again for the sake of conceptual clarity, it should be noted that li or rules of propriety do not by themselves constitute a virtue--they are the social or institutional form of ren and yi; but when li are observed, the observation of li becomes a virtue -- just as abiding by law is considered a virtue in the Western context. By the same token, zhi or knowledge/wisdom itself is, strictly speaking, only a necessary condition of ren, yi and li; it becomes a virtue when it is accordingly translated into practice).
However, all these classical Confucians related filial piety to social virtues. According to Confucius, for instance, “Filial piety and brotherly respect are the root of humanity” (Analects: 1.2). In Mencius’s words, “No man of humanity neglects his parents” (Mencius: 1A.1). Moreover, Xunzi directly attributed filial piety (and other virtues) to li (Xunzi: 23.1e). Thus, it was only natural that the doctrine of filial piety would be an important part of Confucianism in later development of the Confucian tradition, and the Classic of Filial Piety, edited by Zengzi (a direct disciple of Confucius) and/or Zengzi’s disciples, would become a Confucian classic. In fact, the theme of the Classic of Filial Piety is that filial piety narrowly defined is a family virtue, and broadly defined a social virtue (loyalty in particular) -- this reasoning applies, as discussed above, to other family virtues as well.

In comparison with the individual in the Western context, or in the context of modern Western rationalistic individualism, the family in the Chinese context is less a hypothetical abstraction than a historical reality, and it is more like a miniature of society than a cell of social organism. The family and familism are the secret of East Asian societies not only in the sense that family values constitute an essential part in the life of East Asians, but also because East Asian societies are essentially familistic. Therefore, the Confucian vision of the social world is neither a community of blood nor a community of faith; rather, it is a community of morality, familistic morality. The following statement by Aristotle makes him closer to Confucius than usually thought: “The friendship between husband and wife appears to be natural instinct; since man is by nature a pairing creature even more than he is a political creature, inasmuch as the family is an earlier and more fundamental institution than the State, and the procreation of offspring a more general characteristic of the animal creation” (quoted from Zeitlin 1993: 123, italics added). Nevertheless, Confucians would, before reaching the
Aristotelian conclusion that human beings are rational and political animals, define human beings as familial animals, and they would further extend the rationality of family life to society and identify the rational and the political with the familial, hence Chinese familism. Indeed, it was this familistic morality that was to be institutionalized in the Confucian world and to shape and define the mentality of its people for centuries to come.

5.2. Chinese Familism Institutionalized

As the ideology of Chinese familism -- familialistic relationships and familialistic morality, Confucianism was institutionalized through 里 (rites or rules of propriety) and 法 (the law or laws) in the social life of the Confucian world.

A proper understanding of the relation between 里 and 法 seems necessary before examining how Confucian values or virtues were institutionalized. As a matter of fact, the relation between 里 and 法 was a central theme of the Confucian tradition (cf. e.g. Ching 1996). Another relevant concept is 刑, which means both punishments (or penal statutes) and the law in general (cf. Yu, Rong-geng 1992: 14-15, 107-09, 193). Actually, in the Confucian context, 法 is also referred to as 刑, and the two terms are sometimes juxtaposed and interchangeable. Thus, the relation between 里 and 刑 is identical to or part of that between 里 and 法.
In early times of Chinese history, the relation between *li* and *fa* was simply that between the general and the particular. According to the *Book of Rites*, "Without *li*, *Dao* 道德仁义 (Tao, humanity, and righteousness) cannot be carried out; nor are training and oral lessons for the rectification of manners complete; nor can decisions be made regarding quarrels and litigations in dispute; nor can (the duties between) ruler and minister, high and low, father and son, elder brother and younger, be determined; nor can students for office and (other) learners, in serving their masters, have an attachment for them; nor can majesty and dignity be shown in assigning the different places at court, in the government of the armies, and in discharging the duties of office so as to enforce the law; nor can there be the (proper) sincerity and gravity in presenting the offsprings to spiritual beings on occasions of supplication, thanksgiving, and various sacrifices" (1A.5, original translation modified). In light of this description, the term *li* represented what was institutionalized in society, which of course included *fa*, and *li* pervaded every aspect of social life. It is in this sense that Confucius referred to the civilization of the Xia, Yin and Zhou dynasties (Xia and Yin were the two dynasties preceding Zhou, and Confucius lived in the late Zhou) as the *li* of Xia, Yin, Zhou (*Analects*: 3.9; cf. Feng, 1952: 55). Therefore, *fa* was only part of *li*, and there was no *fa* outside *li*, hence no confusion and no contradiction between them (cf. Yu, Rong-geng 1992: 101-09). The *li-*fa relation became a salient issue in the period in which Confucius lived. In that period, with the expansion of the influence of princes, the feudal states, united under the king of Zhou, were turned into the warring states among themselves, resulting in the collapse of the *li* of Zhou. With regard to this change, Confucius said, "When the Tao prevails in the world, propriety, music, and punitive expeditions are initiated by the Son of Heaven (the king). When the Tao fails, propriety, music and punitive
expeditions proceed from the feudal lords" (*Analects*: 16.2). In a world of political disorder, the role of *fa* would naturally receive much attention, and this was what concerned Confucius. Confucius and his followers (e.g. Mencius and Xunzi) endeavoured to preserve and restore the *li* of Zhou (and previous dynasties), while warning against the excessive exploitation of *fa* by feudal lords. Theoretically, what these classical Confucians did was to substantiate the *li* of Zhou with the idea of *ren* (humanity), a conceptual generalization of familistic values and virtues, hence the Confucian doctrine of humanity. In this doctrine, both *li* and *fa* should embody the spirit of humanity: humanity is the substance, whereas *li* and *fa* are its forms. However, the voice of these Confucians had not be widely heard until, thanks to the effort of their opposite (the school of Legalists), *fa* was fully used and misused in the ephemeral Qin dynasty, the first united Chinese empire (221-207 B.C.). In the succeeding Han dynasty, after a few decades of practicing "the Huang-Lao art" (*huanglaozhishu* 黄老之术, the Taoist principle of non-action), a new ruler of the dynasty, the Hanwu emperor, finally -- at the suggestion of Dong Zhongshu -- decided to adopt Confucianism as the official ideology. As a result, both *li* and *fa* were redefined and reoriented in the spirit of Confucianism, or of humanity. Now, the role of *fa* (or *xing*) became relatively independent and was still emphasized, but *li* returned to its former position of dominance, and both *fa* and *li* were integrated into the Confucian teaching of humanity: this was conceived in Chinese history as the convergence of *li* and *fa* or the Confucianization of *li* and *fa*.

Given the dominance of *li* in the Confucian world, *fa* had never achieved the same status as that of law in the West and it was by and large confined to a purely penal purpose (Needham, 1956: 519). From a comparative perspective, the law in the Confucian world was *ethical law* (*lunlifa* 伦理法).
rather than natural law (cf. Yu, Rong-geng 1992: 45-59, 130-50). In Needham’s explanation, “This is the Confucian view, that law cannot exist without demonstrable ethical sanction” (1956: 545). It should be noted that natural law in the West certainly and necessarily connotes moral implications (hence Kant’s conception of moral law), but it differs from its Confucian counterpart in the sense that it is independent of and higher than moral rules. Unlike the law or natural law in the West, fa was not related to a personal God, a divine order, or universal reason, and therefore it was not absolute. To the contrary, it was sometimes arbitrary, often circumstantial, and always conditioned by li. In reference to this, E. Escarra was quoted by Needham as saying that “In the West the law has always been revered as something more or less sacrosanct, the queen of gods and men, imposing itself on everyone like a categorical imperative, defining and regulating, in an abstract way, the effects and conditions of all forms of social activity.... But as one passes to the East, this picture fades away. At the other end of Asia, China has felt able to give to law and jurisprudence but an inferior place in that powerful body of spiritual and moral values which she created and for so long diffused over so many neighbouring cultures, such as those of Korea, Japan,...” (Needham 1956: 521). In fact, an order of li was always preferred by Confucians to that of fa. Confucius said, “If the people were governed by zheng 政 (political power) and levelled by xing 刑, they would be kept from wrong-doing but have no sense of shame for wrong-doing; while if they were governed by de 德 (moral virtues) and levelled by li 礼, they would have a sense of shame and emulate what is good” (Analects: 2.3, original translation modified). On the other hand, the common people often appealed to li to resolve disputes and conflicts among themselves before crimes could ever occur, and to be involved in a lawsuit would be humiliating and was the last thing they would want to do. As the saying has it, “Rather be starved to death than be a thief alive; rather be wronged to death than go to law to be righted.” In explaining
the overwhelming importance of *li* vis-à-vis *fa* in the social life of the Confucian world, Needham observes that “the fluidity of *li* retained for centuries so much of its original social prestige, and was so much more in accord with the general trend of Chinese philosophy than the rigidity of *fa*, that even after bureaucratism had long been solidly established, the former dominated over the latter” (1956: 531). Therefore, the relation between *li* and *fa* in the Confucian world does not correspond to the relation between morals or customs and the law, or between civil law and penal code in the West. *Li* had the absolute and final jurisdiction, while *fa* was ethical law subject to *li*. For instance, the famous *Tangli Shui* (*The Tang Code*) claimed that the standard by which to form the penal code of the Tang dynasty was “no more than *li.*” This would also apply to laws of all dynasties in the Confucian world (cf. Yu, Rong-geng 1992: 585; Yue 1989: 12). Thus, to Aristotle’s “vexed question whether the best law or the best man should rule” (cf. Chai and Chai 1967: xxxix), Confucians would reply that it is neither the best law nor the best man — it is *li* or, in a deeper sense, humanity and righteousness, that should rule. In this sense there is much truth in the expression that Confucianism is a doctrine of *li* (*lijiao* 礼教).

However, the omnipresence of *li* did not exclude the existence of *fa* in the Confucian world. As a matter of fact, in its long history *fa* had developed into a highly complicated system which proved necessary and important for the functioning of *li*, hence of society. Thus, *li* and *fa* were functionally differentiated yet substantively identical — they were “mutually supplementary in keeping social order and cultivating personal virtues” (Chai & Chai 1967: xxxix). To be more specific, “*Li* serves to prevent what will happen, whereas *fa* serves to punish what has already happened” (ibid.; also cf. Yu, Rong-geng 1992: 108-09). And “He who leaves *li* will fall into *xing*” or “He who violates *li* will be
penalized by *xing*” (Yu, Rong-geng ibid.). In other words, *li* shaped the positive side whereas *fa* constrained the negative side, and *fa* would be there where *li* failed in governing social relationships. Therefore, *li* and *fa* had their different roles to play but were closely linked to each other, functioning to inculcate the same Confucian values and to maintain the same Confucian order. As said by Chen Chong in 94 A.D., “*Li* and *xing* are like the outer surface and the lining of the same garment” (cf. ibid.: 121; also see Needham 1956: 531). Of course, the functional differentiation between *li* and *fa/xing* or, in Western terms, between morals and the law, is not unique to the Confucian world. In interpreting the theorists of natural law, d’Entrèves writes: “The discrimination between morals and law they sought not in the precepts themselves but in their working. Good laws must be obeyed ‘for conscience’s sake.’ It is, therefore, only to evil men that law can appear merely as compulsion” (1970: 89-90). The difference is that in the Confucian world *li* plays a much more important role, and *fa* would be the last thing to appeal to in maintaining social order; whereas in the West the opposite seems to be true. A famous yet controversial expression regarding the functional differentiation between *li* and *fa* is the dictum: “*Li* (rules of propriety) do not reach down to the common people; *xing* (punishments, or penal statutes) do not reach up to the great officers” (*Books of Rites*: 1C.10; also cf. Needham 1956: 531). This dictum is often misunderstood as implying that the distinction between *li* and *xing* corresponds to that between the great officers and the common people. However, the meaning of this dictum is contextual. According to Yu, in its context *li* means rites or ceremonials in some specific sacrificial circumstances, while *xing* refers to corporal punishments (but not including death penalty when a capital crime was committed by an officer). Therefore, the dictum should be read as: the common people do not participate in some rites or ceremonials (for they cannot afford to prepare sacrifices for these rites or ceremonials), whereas the great officers, when they
commit a crime, will be exempted from ordinary corporal punishments, except in the case of death penalty (Yu, Rong-geng 1992: 114-121). As a matter of fact, in their ordinary life, the common people were governed by rules of propriety (li) as much as the great officers were, while the great officers, like the common people, would be punished by the law (fa/xing) whenever they committed a crime -- usually they would be simply removed from office or reduced to a lower rank, and then no longer enjoy their privileges.

Therefore, the relation between li and fa may be summarized as follows. First, humanity and, by implication, righteousness were the essence of both li and fa: li referred to moral rules, and fa to ethically grounded law -- in other words, the Confucian morality was the final Judge. Second, li played a much more important part than fa: li, directly and positively representing the Confucian morality, were omnipresent in social life, while fa was related to the Confucian morality by defending li, and was conditioned by as well as based on li. And third, li and fa were functionally differentiated and complementary: li functioned to cultivate and shape positive or good human behaviors, whereas fa punished the deviant. It was in this li-fa complex that the Confucian familism was to be institutionalized.

Bearing these complexities in mind, one may examine the institutionalization of Chinese familism from its different aspects. First of all, in political terms, loyalty and filial piety, two fundamental Confucian values, were embodied in the ruler’s power over the state and the father’s power over the family, which corresponded to two juristic systems, i.e. the state law (guo fa 国法) and the family/lineage regulations (jia fa 家法 or zugui 族规). Ideally, the power of the ruler should not be absolute, and the
ruler's authority should be based on his personal virtue. According to Confucius, "Shun (a legendary sage-king in ancient times) was perhaps the one man who successfully carried out the principle of non-government. Then what did he do? A ruler needs only to be earnest in his personal conduct and to behave in a manner worthy of his position" (Analects: 15.4, italics added). Moreover, in general, "If a man (the ruler) is really upright in his personal conduct, he will be served without even taking the trouble to give orders. But if a man is not upright in his personal conduct, though he may give orders, they will not be obeyed" (ibid.: 13.6, 13.13, italics added). Thus, in essence, the concept of power is not much relevant: Confucius's idea of (the ruler's) power presumed the Taoist principle of non-action, which was also a common ground of all ancient schools of thought in China (Needham, 1956: 562-63), as well as the Confucian li (rules of propriety), by which the principle of non-action became possible in political terms. In reality, however, it was the loyalty of the subjects and the power of the ruler that were emphasized and institutionalized, while who was to judge the behavior of the ruler remained a theoretically unsolved problem in the Confucian tradition. In the Qin dynasty (221-207 B.C.), the first united Chinese empire, "all matters, great or small, were determined by the emperor," and this was more or less carried on by succeeding rulers. Thus, administration, legislation, and jurisdiction were all centralized in the ruler (cf. Yue 1989b: 22-27). On the other hand, the situation of the father in the family (or the head of the lineage) was similar. The father had the privilege to worship the family ancestors and the power to make or change the family rules (to worship Heaven and the common ancestors and to make or change the state law, in the case of the emperor). The power of the father also included: 1) selling his children in time of economic hardship, 2) making the decision on the children's marriage, 3) managing the family property, 4) punishing his children when they made mistakes, and 5) sending his children to the government for punishment
when they committed crimes (cf. Tao and Ming 1994: 133-41; Yue 1989b: 16-20). The father’s power was legitimated by the family/lineage regulations (jiafa or zugui), which mainly consisted of moral codes, but could be as juridic as the state law (guofa). Of course, normally the power of the ruler and the father was less than coercive, for the subjects’ loyalty and children’s filial piety often made coercion unnecessary. Moreover, disloyalty (rebellion, treason, etc.) and lack of filial piety were defined as most serious crimes (in the Tang Code, for instance, they were listed among the Ten Abominations), and therefore were usually prevented. The parallel existence of the ruler’s power and the father’s power, or of the subjects’ loyalty and the children’s filial piety, constituted a dual structure -- a duality of li and fa, maintaining the social order of the Confucian world.

What if the power of the ruler and that of the father, or the subjects’ loyalty and the children’s filial piety, contradicted one another? In general the two systems were in harmony and mutually complementary, but there were indeed circumstances in which they might be in conflict. For example, the human resources for the state’s corvée and military service mostly consisted in young men, who should nevertheless be with and serve their parents. In that case, it was the father who was to mediate the contradiction: he would transfer his sons’ filial piety toward the parents to the family’s loyalty toward the state by sending his sons to serve the state. Moreover, when a parent of an official died, the official should immediately suspend himself from his public duties to participate in the funeral and mourn the parent for three years. Failing to do this would be considered a crime, and then the official would be punished — be removed from his post or reduced to a lower rank, plus some other penalties. If a father committed a crime, should his family members report it to the government? Confucius’s answer was that it would be truly upright “for a father to be silent
regarding the misdeed of his son and for a son to be silent concerning the misdeed of his father” (*Analects*: 13.18). And Mencius reasoned that if Shun’s father murdered somebody and was imprisoned (Shun was an ancient sagely king), Shun would discard his throne like a pair of worn-out shoes, steal his father from prison, and serve his father with the rest of his life in a place no one would know (*Mencius*: 7A.35). In fact, the law stipulated that the parents could hide their children from the government if they committed any crimes and that anyone who reported his/her parents’ crimes would be punished! This was specified in Article 46 of the *Tang Code*, “Dwelling Together and Mutual Concealment.” But there were exceptions: if the crime is plotting treason or more, this article is not applicable; and should family members kill each other, the ordinary article is applicable (*The Tang Code*: 246-48, 251. Also cf. Feng 1994: 385-85; Yu, Rong-geng 1992: 267-69, 286-90; Tao & Ming 1994: 309-27).

The second aspect of institutionalized Confucian familism was economic familial communism. It is widely believed that communism was a universal phenomenon in primitive societies, i.e. before the emergence of private ownership, which was historically related to the family. Thus, it seems only natural that the family should be conceived as incompatible with communism. In fact, this has been so at least since Plato coined the term communism: Plato himself assigned communism and the family to different classes to solve the contradiction between them; Western civilization after him (including, of course, a large part of capitalism) mostly favoured the family over communism; Marx and Engel’s idea of the future of the family under communism was mysteriously ambiguous; and for some of the recent social movements in the West, both the family and communism are perhaps undesirable. In China, however, an essential element of primitive communism, assuming that it existed, had been
retained for thousands of years to come in the form of familial communism, or communism within the family — it was familism in economic terms and excluded Plato’s “communism of wives.” The principle of Chinese familial communism was “tongcaigongju” 同财共居 (“dwelling together and sharing property”), which must be understood in the context of the relation between the state, the lineage and the family. The Chinese translation of the term “state” consists of two Chinese words, guo 国 and jia 家, hence guojia 国家. On the other hand, in the Chinese context, the word guo itself also means the state, and jia the family. Therefore, the etymology of guojia points to the fact that in ancient times the state and the family were indistinguishable. This was again reflected in an Chinese expression jiatianxia 家天下; tianxia 天下 literally means “all under Heaven” or the world, and jiatianxia refers to the familial or familistic world (like some other peoples, the ancient Chinese thought that where they lived was, if not the world per se, the centre of the world). The identity of the family with the state/the world was doubtless ideally true and perhaps historically real up till the Western Zhou dynasty (? 11th century-771 B.C.). The poem that “All land under Heave belongs to the king; all people on the earth are his subjects” well interpreted the content of this identity. Actually, the king (regarded as the son of Heaven) was the head of both the family and the state, and the princes (the king’s direct or indirect family members) were in charge of different parts of the state. Later on, the state and the family were differentiated – “The son of Heaven established guo (the state), and the princes instituted jia (the family/families)” (Zuozhuan, quoted from Yue 1989a: 55). As the power of the king gradually weakened, the princes became increasingly autonomous. This was perceived by Confucius as the “collapse of propriety and decay of music,” implying the decline of the Zhou civilization. Consequently, the Zhou dynasty, after a period of vacillation (771-476 B.C., the so-called the Spring and Autumn Period), finally fell apart and ended up with what is termed as the
Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.): now the state/the world was often mentioned as "all under Heaven," the princes' "families" developed into "states," and the term *jia* was specifically used to denote the family, including the lineage in a broad sense (or the extended family) and the family in a narrow sense (the house, where people dwell together). In this process, the boundary of the family shrunk, identical first with the state/the world, then with the feuds/the states, and eventually with the lineage and the family; correspondingly, the property (mainly land) ownership was successively related to the king (the state/the world), the princes (the feuds/the states), and the family (the lineage and the family). The warring states were unified or disappeared under the Qin dynasty, which abolished feudalism as well as the hereditary system in local government and established the system of prefectures and counties; therefore, local officials were appointed by the central government, and the physical differentiation between the state and the family was finally completed (cf. Zhang 1993: 59-61). From then on, despite some major dynastic changes and a few interrupting separations, the imperial system persisted until the overthrow of its last dynasty (the Qing dynasty) in 1911.

Under the imperial system, there existed three levels of land ownership, i.e. that of the state, the lineage, and the family in its narrow sense (lineage property ownership always existed, but it was only since the Song dynasty (960-1297) that it became clearly defined and stabilized). In this triad of land ownership, state ownership was of course public ownership, family ownership -- looked at from outside -- was private, while lineage ownership was ambiguous -- it was private vis-à-vis state ownership, and public vis-à-vis family ownership. There is no doubt that in their relation to the family, both state ownership and lineage ownership were of a communal nature (on the one hand, there had been major governmental efforts to distribute the state-owned land to the people according
to the population of their family members; on the other hand, the income from the lineage-owned land was utilized to serve the public interest of families within the lineage, such as worshipping their common ancestors, supporting young people's education, and helping the poor and needy, etc. — cf. Feng et al, 1993: 209-27). But as family ownership was and is private ownership everywhere in the world, why did it have anything to do with communism in China? Familial communism in China has to be understood from within the family. In the Chinese context, the family was (and is) a house where family members “dwell together and share property” — this defines the essence of the family. Thus, while li (rules of propriety) always encouraged familial communism (Book of Rites: 1B.4, 10A.19; cf. Yue 1989a: 202-03), fa (the law), particularly that since the Tang dynasty (618-907), prohibited the sons of a family from dividing up family property and living apart from their parents unless they were asked by the parents to do so (cf. Tao & Ming 1994: 135-36, 328-34; Yue 1989a: 73-76, 1989b: 13-14; Feng 1994: 370-73, 394). Consequently, nobody, not even the father, was the owner of family property. According to Commentaries of the Ming Law, for example, “Those dwelling together are to share their property. As the property belongs to all, the youth may utilize it but must not appropriate it, and the elder may manage it but must not privatize it” (quoted from Tao and Ming 1994: 331). Therefore, whereas the actual size of the family fluctuated, the family, rich or poor, remained the final component of society in economic terms, hence a unit of economic communism. As observed by Lin, “Every family in China is really a communistic unit, with the principle of ‘do what you can and take what you need’ guiding its functions” (1956: 172).

The third aspect of institutionalized Chinese familism was the inheritance, which, corresponding to political authoritarianism/paternalism and economic familial communism, involved the inheritance of
status and that of property. In a broad sense, the inheritance of status included the system of throne heredity, which was initially formed in the Xia dynasty (? 21-16 century B.C.) and henceforth lasted until 1911. In this sense the dynastic changes (which was not the inheritance of the throne within a specific dynasty) in Chinese history were actually substitutions of one imperial family (a family with a different family name) for another, and these changes were exceptions to the rule of throne heredity -- normally the throne was, as everywhere else, inherited by someone (the eldest son) from the next generation of the same family. This rule of inheritance, however, did not extend to the positions of any other governmental officials. For these positions, the rule was that of “selecting those of virtue and ability,” which was first institutionalized in the form of governmental bureaucracy as early as perhaps in Confucius's times or definitely no later than the Warring States period (475-221 B.C.), and eventually developed into the famous examination system of civil service in the Sui and Tang dynasties (581-907 A.D.). In some dynasties the emperor did granted some honorific titles to the descendants of former officials, but these titles were just symbolic and bore little political importance (cf. Tao and Ming, 1994: 338-341). (Feudalism and aristocracy existed in China prior to the collapse of the Zhou civilization, which occurred before and in Confucius’s times. Since then the owner-peasant [zigengnong 自耕农] economy gradually became dominant in economic life, while aristocracy was replaced by bureaucracy.) Parallel to throne heredity was the family-head (and lineage-head) heredity system, which stipulated who was to inherit the position of family head and hence to preserve the family line. In this system, when the husband had more than one son with the wife, it was the eldest son who was to become the heir of the family; when the husband had sons with the wife and his concubine(s), it was the eldest son of the wife who was to be the heir (though he might be younger than the eldest son of the concubines); and when the husband had no sons with the wife
but had sons with his concubine(s), it was the eldest of the sons who was to be the heir. (This general rule also applied to the throne-heredity system.) It was the privilege of the heir/head of the family to represent the family to offer sacrifices to the ancestors of the family. This privilege was of course not simply symbolic. It would imply, as discussed earlier, the power of family head over the family (cf. Tao and Ming 1994: 296-300; Yue 1989b: 45-47; Zhu 1987: 47-51). Therefore, while throne heredity embodied political authoritarianism in the continuity of the empire, family-head heredity was related to patriarchal paternalism within the family.

On the other hand, however, the inheritance of property was consistent with economic familial communism. The essence of property inheritance in China was what was called “the system of multiple inheritance and equal partition among the sons” (zhuzijunfenzhi 子均分制), which had taken effect since the Warring States Period (Feng 1994: 90-91, 386-90; also cf. Zhu 1987: 47-51). In some dynasties, equal partition existed only among dizzy 嫡子, i.e. the sons born of the husband and the wife. In Yuan dynasty (1271-1368), for example, dizzy would receive the same portion; but shuzi 庶子, sons of the husband and his concubine(s), would get three fourths of dizzy’s part, and illegitimate sons, those from the husband and other women (e.g. servant-girls), one fourth. Nevertheless, in the law since the Tang dynasty (618- ), with the exception of the Yuan dynasty 1271-1368 and, for some part of China, the Jin dynasty (1115-1234), dizzy and shuzi were treated equally as far as property inheritance is concerned (cf. Yue 1989a: 207-08; Tao and Ming 1994: 334-48).

Another basic aspect of institutionalized Confucian familism was the patriarchal relationship between men and women, which was by and large reduced to that between husband and wife. In Chinese
tradition, life was conceived as an organic whole consisting of generations from the same ancestor(s), and it was believed that the family/lineage line was carried on by the paternal side or male posterity. This general outlook of life had two logical implications, which largely defined family functions and gender relations: first, the continuity of the family/lineage line was of fundamental and primary significance; and second, males were superior than females. Needless to say, patriarchy was (and to a certain extent is) a universal phenomenon. In the Chinese context, however, it had some peculiar and far-reaching sociological consequences. For instance, it was almost compulsory for the family to have at least one male descendant, which resulted in the coexistence of monogamy and concubinage. Originally, concubinage was a privilege of officials, and the number of concubines an official might have was positively related to his rank—officials of higher rank were allowed to have more concubines. The reason for this was perhaps that in early times the state and the family were identical or, if not, closely linked, as in the pre-Chin period. With the differentiation of the state and the family as well as the multiplication of the family on the basis of the lineage, concubinage became a necessary supplement to monogamy in the wider society when the monogamous husband and wife failed to procreate a son. According to the Ming law, for example, a man from an aristocratic family or the imperial family might have two concubines if he was twenty five and had not yet begotten a male descendant with his wife, and three concubines when he remained so at thirty. Moreover, when a man from an ordinary family did not have a son, he could and must have a concubine for the purpose of fathering one, otherwise he would be penalized by the law! (cf. Tao and Ming 1994: 236-243; Yue 1989b: 45-50).
Would women have any property ownership? A woman who was to be married would have a dowry, and daughters could inherit family property when there were no sons in the family; a widowed woman would be supported by her children, and, if she had no children, would inherit family property; a divorced woman would regain her dowry in early times—at least before the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368), but would not since Yuan unless under some particular circumstances. However, a married woman, like any other member of the family, had no private property; and she, like the children in the family, had no right to manage family property (cf. Yue 1989a: 208-10; Feng 1994: 90-91; Tao and Ming 1994: 277-78).

In traditional China, in contrast to medieval Europe, divorce was possible. But it was rare in general and, if initiated by the husband, was regulated by the rule of so-called the “seven reasons to divorce the wife” and “three reasons for which the wife could not be divorced.” The seven reasons for divorce were: disobeying the parents-in-law, not bearing a son, adultery, jealousy, incurable sickness, excessive talkativeness and theft on the part of the wife. The three reasons disallowing divorce were: after the wife had observed three years’ mourning over the departed parent(s)-in-law, when the husband became an official or became wealthy after his marriage, and when the wife, if divorced, had nowhere to go — could not financially support herself or would not be supported. The “three reasons” would apply even if any of the “seven reasons,” except for adultery and incurable sickness, existed (Tao and Ming 1994: 254-263; also see Chen 1990: 606-640). Could a divorced or widowed woman remarry? Remarriage was generally not encouraged by *li* (rules of propriety), but, at least for the common people, it was definitely not prohibited by *fa* (the law). As for the widowed wives of officials, remarriage was not permitted even by the law (ibid.: 248-51). Therefore, while women had
certain rights, they were socially defined as inferior to men.

Given this socially defined inferiority of women, what would be the norms or rules governing women’s behavior? Like all other cultures, Chinese culture had developed a certain conception of femininity. There were numerous books elaborating this conception, of which one of the earliest and most influential was Ban Zhao’s *Admonitions for Women*. According to Ban Zhao, a virtuous woman does not need to possess outstanding intelligence, but she should be quiet, chaste, observant of decorum, with a sense of modesty or shame; She does not have to be an articulate debater, but she should be careful with words when speaking and not bore others by being long-winded and not shock them with bad language; She does not need to possess external beauty, but she should have a high standard of personal cleanliness; She does not even have to excel in skills associated with her gender, but she should concentrate on her work when spinning and weaving (at home), be able to serve the household and its guests, and not be fond of giggling or laughter (Meng et al 1992: 104-06; Xu 1992: 442; also cf. Ching 1994). These laws and rules of propriety functioned to institutionalize or routinize Chinese patriarchy, a key aspect of Chinese familism.

In conclusion, there were four interlinked aspects in institutionalized Confucianism or Confucian familism: the ruler’s power over the state and the father’s power over the family, economic familial communism, the inheritance, and the patriarchal gender relationship. These four aspects were all related to Confucian virtues or values in one way or another: the ruler’s power was based on the Confucian ideas of loyalty (on the part of the subjects) and humanity (on the part of the ruler), the father’s power logically resulted from the children's filial piety (and the father’s humanity), economic
familial communism actualized the Confucian emphasis on righteousness (and humanity) over utility or benefit, the institution of inheritance was devised to continue political authoritarianism/paternalism and economic familial communism, and, finally, the patriarchal gender relationship not only provided the precondition of the inheritance but also reflected the Confucian conception of femininity. These four aspects were the main components of the Chinese *li-fa* complex, and therefore constituted a relatively stable framework for the social life in the Confucian world.

It should be noted that in its expansion into other East Asian societies, the institutionalized Confucian tradition and Confucian familism was in one way or another localized. For instance, the system of civil service examination in China embodied the Confucian democratic principle that “In teaching or education there should be no class distinction” (*Analects*: 15.38): at least in theory there was no restriction as to who was eligible to participate in the examination, hence possibly to become part of the literati-official stratum. In Korea, however, only members of the Yangban (persons of noble birth) were qualified for the examination and official positions: a hereditary system was balanced with limited educational democracy (even within the Yangban, the descendants of the husband and his concubines were forbidden from taking state examination). Japan, on the other hand, did not adopt the Chinese or Korean type of examination system and civil service, although Confucian classics served as the basic texts of elementary and intermediate instruction (cf. de Bary 1988: 62; Lum 1969: 204; Kim 1982). Another example is that of the inheritance. Whereas China, Korea and Japan were similar to one another in their systems of *status inheritance*, they differed in their systems of *property inheritance*. In Korea, the system of equal succession to property by legitimate sons and *daughters* continued until the mid-17th century (the descendants of the husband and his concubines never
enjoyed equal rights to inheritance); later on, however, discrimination developed, and the preferential treatment of the eldest son over other children and of sons over daughters gradually became generalized (Choi 1982: 26-27). In Japan, primogeniture was or eventually became the rule, but the Japanese primogeniture was not a strict one, for the heir was not necessarily the eldest son – "any son, natural or adopted, could be designated as full heir" as long as he was capable enough to manage family property and to develop the family economy (Beckmann 1962: 90-91, 97-98, 626; also cf. Yue 1989a: 210-11). These and other similarities and differences among China, Korea and Japan naturally have their historical consequences: to a certain extent they were to define the general nature of East Asian modernity and the discrepancy within it, which will be discussed in the next two chapters.
6. Weber vs. Sinology: Confucianism Misrepresented and Rediscovered

If Confucianism is essentially a rationalist and humanist tradition, and it represents a secular spirit with some ultimate concern, then it is only too natural that Confucianism and modernity would to a substantial extent embrace each other. Nevertheless, how the Confucian tradition is relevant to modernity, particularly modern capitalism, has been an issue in dispute. Max Weber, the only sociologist who comprehensively examined various belief systems in the world, including Chinese culture, in relation to modern capitalism, naturally comes to the fore in the thriving enterprise of East Asian studies. Indeed, in explaining the modern development of East Asia, current East Asian studies necessarily involve a dialogue with Weber. Nearly twenty years ago, when Chinese socialism was still highly regarded in the international community, Thomas A. Metzger sharply pointed out that “While Weber had to explain China’s failure, we have to explain its success, but paradoxically our answer, like Weber’s, emphasizes the role of indigenous ethos” (1977: 235; also cf. Metzger 1990). Needless to say, this remark would be more adequate in describing the situation of China in the recent two decades and of the rest of East Asia.
6.1. Weber's Study on China and His Theoretical Framework

Weber's sociology is known as interpretative sociology or cultural sociology. Insofar as the relevance of culture to modernity is concerned, the main theoretical assumptions or conclusions of Weber's historical and comparative studies can be summarized, at the risk of oversimplification, as follows: First, ascetic Protestantism was a historically contingent and comparatively unique phenomenon which coexisted and coincided with the earliest modern entrepreneurs' mentality or "attitudes" and therefore facilitated the early development of modern Western capitalism; Second, formal (as opposed to substantive) rationality became the defining feature of modern capitalist culture in the West after it had been stripped of its religious import (the Protestant ethic); And third, the absence of similar religious values or formal rationality caused the failure of capitalism to appear in the rest of the world. Therefore, as part of his overall project, Weber's study of Chinese society and culture tried to demonstrate, as described by C. K. Yang in his "Introduction" to Weber's The Religion of China, Confucianism and Taoism:

1) Chinese social structure contained a mixture of elements both favorable and unfavorable to capitalistic economy and the spirit of capitalism. Thus, the structural characteristics could not be a decisive factor in China's failure to develop capitalism. 2) Confucianism, the dominant system of ultimate values, was consistently traditionalistic, enjoining adaptation to the given world and not the transformation of it. 3) Taoism, the leading heterodoxy, was unable to alter the Confucian traditionalist trend because of its otherworldly mysticism and its own magical
tradition. The consequence was that Confucian traditionalism was left in its dominant position which, together with the literati's lack of interest in economic production enterprises, inhibited socioeconomic innovation in the direction of Western capitalism. (Yang 1964: xxxvi.)

The final chapter of Weber’s book, titled “Conclusions: Confucianism and Puritanism,” drew a clear line between Confucianism and Puritanism (or Ascetic Protestantism), thus contextualizing his study of traditional China in his general scheme.

Weber’s relation to East Asian studies seems perplexing. For a long time his work on China, as observed by Yang, “represented the lone example of systematic characterization of Chinese society and its dominant value system by a great Western intellectual of the modern age” (1964: xiii). Unfortunately, until the late 1970s when the role of the Confucian tradition in modern East Asia began to receive international attention, the “lone example” was also the lone authority in the sociological understanding of Chinese society and culture in the West: Weber’s work on “Chinese religion” was frequently reiterated (cf. e.g. Parsons 1991), yet its scholarship was, unlike that of his thesis on the “Protestant ethic” and his general sociological theory, seldom disputed among sociologists. On the other hand, regardless of the current enthusiasm of East Asia watchers for the “economic miracle” in modern East Asia, there were of course well-founded -- direct or indirect -- critiques by Sinologists on Weber’s interpretation of the Confucian tradition (for a summarization of these critiques, cf. Schluchter 1989: 115-16; also cf. Sivin 1995a, b), but these critiques are, indeed curiously, hardly heard or consequential among mainstream sociologists (Schluchter himself is a rare and delayed exception). Obviously, there is a gap between sociology and Sinology.
An early attempt to bridge this gap was made by Robert Bellah in his *Tokugawa Religion: The Values of Pre-industrial Japan* (1957), which tried to find the functional equivalent of the Protestant ethic in Japanese Confucianism, Buddhism and Shintoism in the Tokugawa period. But this approach, while perhaps able to reveal some real similarities between the Protestant ethic and the Confucian or other non-Western traditions (such as Chinese and Japanese Buddhism), seems to have forgotten that in his work on the Protestant ethic, Weber was mainly concerned with a specific historical question, namely, why modern capitalism first emerged in the Protestant West (cf. Giddens 1976; Metzger 1977: 234; Tu 1996: 4). Moreover, this approach simply could not confront Weber’s generalization that non-Western traditions are inhibitive to the modernizing process initiated in the West (cf. e.g. Weber 1981: 314), which further implies that, if the non-Western world were to be modernized, the existence of non-Western traditions would be impossible. In addition, this approach would have to deal with the theoretical implication of Weber’s assumption that the Protestant ethic per se, let alone other cultural traditions, would be rendered irrelevant in the started capitalist machine (“iron cage”). Commenting on this Weberian approach to East Asia, Tu states that “the method of finding the functional equivalent of the Protestant ethic in the ‘modernized’ or ‘vulgarized’ Confucian ethic is too facile, simpleminded, and mechanistic to merit serious attention” (1996: 3). Schwartz also points out that “Confucianism as a total outlook did not provide such an equivalent but... certain deeply ingrained attitudes and habits often associated with Confucianism did prove highly favorable to the enterprise of modernization once it was underway” (1996: 136).
Paradoxically, recent discussions on the relation of East Asian traditions (Confucianism in particular) to the modern development (especially the economic success) in the Asia-Pacific Rim, are both Weberian and anti-Weberian: Weberian, because the cultural/interpretative approach advocated by Weber in explaining modern capitalism seems still very much relevant to our sociological understanding of East Asian modernity; anti-Weberian, because the affinity between the surviving Confucian tradition or “post-Confucian values” and modern capitalism in the Asia-Pacific Rim cannot be explained both from Weber’s study on “the religion of China” and within his general framework. Given the limited Sinological sources known to Weber and the incomplete unfolding of modernity in Weber’s times, Weber’s interpretation of Chinese “religion” and his conception of modern capitalism were to a certain extent historically circumstantial. However, Weber’s cultural sociology is perhaps more sophisticated than usually acknowledged in current East Asian studies, and Weber’s “ultimate concern” over the future of humanity under modern capitalism certainly has trans-historical values. Thus, in explaining the relation of post-Confucian values to modern capitalism in the Asia-Pacific Rim, one must do justice to Weber in both scientific and normative terms as well as in both historical and trans-historical terms.

It is no surprise that Weber has become a common target, a straw man, for scholars in East Asian studies in recent years. Apparently, as Berger and many others point out, Weber was wrong: the coexistence of industrial capitalism and Confucian or post-Confucian values in East Asian societies directly contradicts Weber’s conclusion that the Confucian tradition, among other non-Protestant or non-Western cultures, is in principle impedimental to modern capitalism. Given the limited Sinological sources known to Weber and the incomplete unfolding of modernity in Weber’s times,
Weber's mistake was to a certain extent historically circumstantial. However, there are some fundamental questions that remain to be answered: What exactly was wrong with Weber - was he wrong in his understanding of Confucianism (and Taoism), or in his conception of modern capitalism, or in both? And, how was Weber's representation of the Confucian world linked to his general scheme of the belief systems in the world and his theoretical presuppositions of social actions?

It would be misleading to assume that in Weber's sociology capitalism is identified as a uniquely modern/Western phenomenon. In fact, Weber was well aware that in premodern times "there were various forms of capitalist activity (for example, speculative, commercial, adventurous, political) which were known... in the West and East alike" (Zeitlin 1997: 202). In The Sociology of Religion, he made it clear that capitalism "existed among all these [non-Western] religions, even those religions of the type known in Occidental antiquity and the medieval period.... to assume that the Hindu, Chinese, or Muslim merchant, trader, artisan, or coolie was animated by a weaker 'acquisitive drive' than the ascetic Protestant is to fly in the face of the facts" (1963: 269). Indeed, there is nothing new or unique in modern Western capitalism as far as the existence of private property and "acquisitive drive" is concerned.

Weber was wrong not because his characterization of modern capitalism was competely inadequate. Actually, his idea of formal or instrumental rationality in modern capitalism simply reconstructed classical political economy and modern utilitarian theory in a sociological context, and therefore was in a fundamental way consistent with Marx's analysis of capitalist commodity production. Weber's sociology of modern capitalism and these other -- liberal and utilitarian -- social theories differ not in
their perceptions of the distinction of modern capitalism, but in their ideological outlooks, or in how they relate modern capitalism to humanity and human values. Meanwhile, Weber's idea of formal rationality pertains to not only the economic sphere (capitalism) but also to the political sphere (bureaucracy) and other factors of modernity — it was his generalization of the cultural feature of modern society.

Moreover, Weber was wrong not because he failed to see or foresee the coming of modern capitalism in East Asia. Somewhere in *General Economic History* he mentioned how Japanese capitalism had developed out of the "impoverished" samurai class (1981: 96). And in *The Religion of China* he even argued that "The Chinese in all probability would be quite capable, probably more capable than the Japanese, of assimilating capitalism which has technically and economically been fully developed in the modern culture area" (1964: 248, italics added). As a matter of fact, Weber, like Marx, had an almost fatalistic vision of the expansion of modern capitalism in the world: "In the long run, no religious-ethical conviction is capable of barring the way to the entry of capitalism, when it stands in full armor before the gate" (1981: 381, n. 4). This remark would sound too familiar to the authors of *The Communist Manifesto*, which says that the capitalist mode of production "batters down all Chinese walls" — "All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned" (1992: 21-22). Weber did not explain why it was possible for modern capitalism to appear or develop in East Asia, and definitely he could not explain it in terms of Chinese culture. The only possible explanation Weber might provide is that the machine of capitalism, once set in motion, would become a sweeping power over the individuals and societies everywhere: "The Puritan wanted to work in a calling; we are forced to do so" (Weber 1976: 181). In this "iron cage," ascetic Puritanism or any other cultural
traditions became irrelevant: "This order is now bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production which to-day determine the lives of all individuals who are born into this machine, not only those directly concerned with economic acquisition, with irresistible force. Perhaps it will determine them until the last ton of fossilized coal is burnt" (ibid.). Undoubtedly "the last ton of fossilized coal" is that of the earth, not of the West. In this explanation, it is not the East Asian societies that were to assimilate capitalism; it is capitalism that was to "assimilate" East Asia.

This "iron cage" is characterized by formal rationality, to which efficiency, effectiveness and immediate utility are of central importance. Actually, in Weber's understanding, formal rationality, now stripped of "its religious and ethic meaning," became the defining factor of modern capitalism (or modernity): "Since asceticism undertook to remodel the world and to work out its ideals in the world, material goods have gained an increasing and finally an inexorable power over the lives of men as at no previous period in history.... But victorious capitalism, since it rests on mechanical foundations, needs its support no more.... [T]he pursuit of wealth, stripped of its religious and ethical meaning, tends to become associated with purely mundane passions,..." (1976: 181-83). Weber was exceedingly pessimistic about the effect of the dominating formal rationality on human existence in modern capitalism: "For of the latest stage of this cultural development, it might well be truly said: 'Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved'.... [T]his brings us to the world of judgements of value and of faith..." (ibid.: 182). Weber himself did not articulate his "judgements" on modern capitalism in a similar way as Marx and, to a lesser extent, Durkheim did, but the philosophical humanism underlying his metaphor of "iron cage" is as profound as that in Marx and Durkheim's theory.
Of course, while Weber's (and as well as Marx and Durkheim's) deep concern over human existence under modern capitalism should be always kept in mind, our "purely historical discussion" of modern capitalism in East Asia, as Weber advised, "need not be burdened (with the world of judgements of value and of faith)" (ibid.). There is no doubt that Weber's conception of the "iron cage" is philosophically or ideologically relevant to our study of modern capitalism in East Asia, but this conception, when applied to the history of modern East Asia, seems problematic in the scientific or empirical sense. Indeed, if we turned our attention to the development of modern capitalism in the Asia-Pacific Rim, we would readily find that there is much room for substantive rationality (and for other cultures) in the "iron cage" of modern capitalism, which is certainly beyond Weber's vision. As will be explained in the following chapter, formal rationality, as defined by Weber, remains a key factor in the capitalist economies of East Asian societies, but it is contextualized or conditioned by Confucian values, which in Weber's terminology is characterized by substantive rationality. In fact, the line between formal and substantive rationality is not clear at all in these societies -- "capital" often exists in the forms of "human capital" and "social capital."

Weber's mistake is that he explicitly excluded the affinity between "the religion of China" (among other non-Western traditions) and modern capitalism. Indigenous "religion" or culture in the non-Western world was singled out by Weber as the "only" or primary factor impeding rationalist capitalism even after it was "imported" from the West: "At the present time, all these [non-Western] peoples import economic rationalism as the most important product of the Occident, and their capitalistic development is impeded only by the presence of rigid traditions,... The impediments to the
development of capitalism must be sought primarily in the domain of religion,...” (Weber 1963: 269, italics added. It should be noted that the word “import” in this paragraph is a false expression for the expansion of capitalism in the world). Particularly in the Chinese case, “For the economic mentality, the personalist principle was undoubtedly as great a barrier to impersonal rationalization as it was generally to impersonal matter-of-factness... This barrier was intimately connected with the nature of Chinese religion,...” (1964: 237, italics added. Weber's term “Chinese religion” includes Confucianism and Taoism). Of course, it does not make any sense to hypothesize whether indigenous modern capitalism would eventually develop in the non-Western world or in China without the globalization of modern Western capitalism (history has left no possibility to test this hypothesis -- for possible explanations of the absence of indigenous modern capitalism in China, cf. Eastman, 1988: 149-57). However, the East Asian experience in modern times does demonstrate that the Confucian tradition may coexist with modern capitalism and foster its development. According to Tu, “It seems that the social and cultural capital that has sustained the economic dynamism of Japan and the Four Mini-Dragons has been at least commensurate with Confucian ethics, if not thoroughly Confucian in nature. Even if Weber was correct in assuming that Confucianism had impeded the development of modern industrial capitalism in traditional East Asia, the thesis that the Confucian ethic is incompatible with the spirit of capitalism is untenable” (1996: 10).

Weber excluded the possible affinity between “the religion of China” and modern capitalism partly because he misread Chinese culture. Despite the insights throughout his book on traditional China (cf. Yang, 1964), much of Weber’s characterization of Confucianism and its relation to Taoism, among other things, underestimated the complexity and flexibility of the Confucian tradition. In
Weber's explanation, for instance, Confucianism is "a rational ethic which reduced tension with the world to an absolute minimum" (1964: 227) or an ethic of "unconditional affirmation of and adjustment to the world" (ibid.: 229). There is no doubt that (orderly) harmony or unity is central to Confucianism, but Confucians seldom, as misconceived by Weber, consider the world as "the best of all possible worlds" (ibid.) and unconditionally accept it. Weber would be surprised to learn that it was Zhu Xi (1130-1200), one of the most important Confucianists in history, who declared that "During a period of fifteen hundred years, the Tao [the principle of government], as handed down by Yao and Shun [two traditional sage-kings]... and Confucius, has never been put into practice for even a single day in the world" (quoted from Feng 1958: 303). Actually, as Metzger keenly observed, the tension between "good" and "bad" or between ideals and the status quo "was central to Neo-Confucianism, a point misunderstood by Max Weber and often overlooked by scholars focused on the theme of 'harmony'" (1977: 108). This observation may certainly apply to Confucianism in general. Thus, a Confucian might be a conservative, a reformer, or a revolutionist, depending on how the Confucian judged the situation of the real world in terms of Confucian values and ideals. Frequently, Confucians, unsatisfied with the real world, proposed and endeavoured either to restore (ancient ways) or to reform (for a better future): Confucius himself paradoxically embodied both tendencies. And the reformist tradition passed on from the classical stage of the Confucian tradition, when the fragmented Chinese society was in a turmoil, through the development of Neo-Confucianism in the Song-Ming dynasties (960-1644), which responded to both political and cultural crises in that period, to the time of the Confucian reformer Kang Youwei and his followers, when Western influences poured into the country (Teng & Fairbank with others 1973; Metzger 1977). Lloyd E. Eastman is surely right when he points out that "the parameters of Confucianism were actually exceedingly
elastic" and "Confucianism may not have been wholly antagonistic to modern change" (1988: 149-57). Or, according to Metzger, in Confucianism there is "the traditional impulse to transform tradition" (1977: 211-14). Therefore, in the early period of modern East Asia, there was a consistent pattern of thinking in the reformist movements in China, Japan and Korea, which, initiated mainly by some Confucians, proposed to integrate Confucian morality with modern Western science and technology and even institutional inventions, hence "Chinese learning for the essential principles; Western learning for the practical applications [zhongti xiyong 中体西用]" in China, "East ethics and Western science" in Japan, and "Eastern morality and Western technology" in Korea (Craig 1979: 109; Hofheinz & Calder 1982: 47; Fairbank et al 1989: 629). There is no doubt that the Confucian reform movements in East Asian societies in the late 19th century, successful (in Japan) or otherwise (in China and Korea), indicate that there was much room for the Confucian tradition to accommodate itself to social change both in theory and in practice. In other words, Confucianism per se was not necessarily, as Weber alleged, traditionalistic.

Weber's interpretation of the relationship between Confucianism and Taoism (and Buddhism) is also problematic. How religious Taoism was related to the development of science in ancient China is an issue in dispute (cf. eg. Needham 1956; Nakayama & Sivin eds. 1973; Sivin 1995a, b). There was, as Weber observed, doubtless a strong and ardent propensity in religious Taoism for magic -- a magical world view and magical praxis. Moreover, Weber was surely right when he indicated that Confucian literati tolerated and occasionally even encouraged the development of Taoism (and Buddhism), and they themselves sometimes practiced or converted to Taoism and/or Buddhism. Nevertheless, the Confucian literati left untouched the Taoist "magic garden" or the Buddhist otherworldliness only
religious Taoism and naturalized Buddhism were rational or realistic enough to respect, embrace or even support the fundamental Confucian values, family values in particular (cf. Ching 1993; Küng and Ching 1989; de Bary 1988). On the other hand, the penetration of religious Taoism and naturalized Buddhism into the social and political life of the Confucian world did not make either Taoism or Buddhism the state religion, and they never even attempted to challenge the orthodox status of Confucianism. The generally peaceful co-existence of Confucianism and Taoism (and Buddhism) in traditional China was, as discussed in earlier, essentially a cultural division of labour among themselves defined by their social functions: Confucianism was the only -- explicitly or implicitly -- official doctrine that provided moral principles for sociopolitical life in the Confucian world, and other doctrines or religions, while helping sanction Confucian morality, pertained to matters beyond the sphere of moral issues. In Schluchter’s words, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism “had taken on different functions within the same overall framework” (1989: 109). Therefore, despite the prevalent existence of Taoism and Buddhism in traditional China, and despite the somewhat ambiguous attitudes of the Confucian literati toward Taoism and Buddhism, Weber’s “claim concerning magic in China remains exaggerated” (Schluchter 1989: 113). This exaggeration “led Weber to misjudge Chinese ethical development. He ultimately extended his claim on magic to cover the Confucian ethic” (ibid.: 114). This exaggeration also “causes problems for the internal consistency of Weber’s own work. Since his own analysis demonstrates that the Confucian ethic is located on the level of a cultural religion, it cannot be ultimately grounded in magic” (ibid.). When the Chinese say “the three isms [Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism] are one,” this one is defined neither by the “Taoist magic garden” nor by other heterodoxies, but by the Confucian tradition, or Neo-Confucianism since the Song dynasty (960-1279). In other words, there were indeed Taoist
“magic gardens” and (Buddhist temples) everywhere in the Confucian world, but the Confucian world was not a Taoist magic garden -- it is first of all and in the final analysis a world of Confucian morality.

Upon careful reading, Weber’s misreading of Confucianism and its relation to Taoism seems to result from his misconception of Tao. In Weber’s explanation, Tao as a common idea of Confucianism and Taoism “means the eternal order of the cosmos” and “is the one unchangeable element and therefore it is the absolute value” (1964: 181). However, this is just one side of Tao. Another side, to which Weber was blind, is that in the Chinese context Tao also means “to change.” According to Laozi, a classic about Tao and the power of Tao, “Reversing is the movement of the Tao” (ch. 40), and “The Tao generates the One, the One two, the two three, the three the myriad things” (ch. 42). In Graham’s interpretation, “the most characteristic gesture of Laozi to overturn accepted descriptions is the reversal of priorities in chains of oppositions” (1989: 223). In Laozi, one would readily find various oppositional categories, such as: something and nothing, doing something and doing nothing, knowledge and ignorance, male and female, full and empty, above and below, before and behind, moving and still, big and small, strong and weak, hard and soft, straight and bent, etc. And the central theme of Laozi is the reversal of the two poles of these chains, or the movement of Tao (cf. ibid.: 223-31). Xunzi, a Confucian strongly influenced by Taoism, also states that “the Way [Tao] itself is constant in its form yet capable of embracing all changes” (Xunzi: 21.4). Weber was unable to understand the dialectical nature of the Chinese idea of Tao -- he actually identified the idea of Tao with a metaphysics “which lacks a thorough dialectical structure” (1964: 181). Moreover, Weber failed to discern the difference between Confucianism and Taoism with regard to how Tao is related
to human beings. In his understanding, "Tao was the same and was equally valid for both Confucius and Laozi" (ibid.: 182). However, there is a fundamental difference between Confucianism and Taoism with regard to the relation of human beings to Tao: from a Confucian perspective human beings can expand Tao (*Analects*: 15.29), while (philosophical) Taoists advocate non-action, i.e. to follow Tao naturally or passively; and Confucians focus on the Tao of humans but do not exclude the Tao of Heaven, whereas Taoists are preoccupied with the Tao of Heaven and have little to say about the distinction of the Tao of humans. Xunzi was actually contrasting Confucianism with Taoism when he described that "Zhuangzi [the second most important Taoist in history] saw no farther than Heaven and did not know man" (*Xunzi*: 21.22). Indeed, it could be argued that it was from their different conceptions of Tao that Confucians and Taoists developed their respective political and social philosophies. Unaware of the subtlety of the Chinese idea of Tao, Weber somehow conflated Confucianism with the Taoist philosophy, and reduced the Taoist religion to magical therapy. Inevitably, therefore, for him both Confucianism and Taoism are traditionalist: while Confucianism is a rational affirmation of and adjustment to this world (hence Confucian rationalism), Taoism is irrational (mysticism).

Weber's work on China "can be fully appreciated only if one views it in terms of his overall project" (Schluchter 1989: 115). However, his "overall project" (his general historical and comparative scheme) must be also subject to theoretical scrutiny. Apparently, this project is based on Weber's typology of social actions in different cultures and the Weberian dichotomy between formal and substantive rationality: formal rationality characterizing modern capitalism or Western modernity distinguishes the modern from the "traditional" and the Western from the non-Western. Nevertheless,
the line drawn by Weber between substantive and formal rationality is in effect not as clear as it appears. Apparently, in Weber's definition, formal rationality pertains to means ("quantitative calculation"), while substantive rationality involves ends ("ultimate values"). But Weber himself was not always so sure about this distinction. The concept of "substantive rationality," he admitted, "is full of ambiguities. It conveys only one element common to all 'substantive' analysis: namely, that they do not restrict themselves to note the purely formal and (relatively) unambiguous fact that action is based on 'goal-oriented' rational calculation with the technically most adequate available methods, but apply certain criteria of ultimate ends, whether they be ethical, political, utilitarian, hedonistic, feudal, egalitarian, or whatever, and measure the results of the economic action, however formally 'rational' in the sense of correct calculation they may be, against these scales of 'value rationality' or 'substantive goal rationality.' There is an infinite number of possible value scales for this type of rationality,... In this context the concept 'substantive' is itself in a certain sense 'formal;' that is, it is an abstract, generic concept" (1968: 85-6). In this explanation, the distinction between formal and substantive rationality seems to be blurred: formal rationality is, after all, "goal-oriented," with an emphasis on the calculability of the means; substantive rationality, on the other hand, is also oriented to some ultimate ends or values, yet not necessarily excluding "correct calculation" in the means to those ends or values. Actually, this explanation unambiguously suggests that the substantive goal (the ultimate ends or values) does not have to be religious or philosophical -- it may also be political, utilitarian, hedonistic, etc; and calculability does not have to be particular to formal rationality -- it may also, as the means, be part of substantive rationality. Therefore, formal rationality, defined by a utilitarian goal and calculable means, is simply a specific kind of substantive rationality. Theoretically, a human action always involves a goal (or goals) and means to the goal: there might be
failed goal-means combinations in practice, but there are no isolated goal and means in theory. Thus conceived, the Weberian distinction of formal rationality in modern Western society and substantive rationality in other societies is only a distinction between different sorts of substantive rationality (or formal rationality). Moreover, there is no reason why calculable means have to be combined with some specific utilitarian goal rather than with others, even under modern capitalism. It is quite plausible that someone, supposedly a capitalistic individual, may work for some utilitarian goal (such as one's immediate satisfaction), for God's grace (in the case of the Protestant ethic), for the glory of one's nation (in the case of the British Empire), or for the prosperity of one's family (in the case of the overseas Chinese all over the world). As a matter of fact, if Weber's concept of formal rationality were to be strictly taken as he explicitly defined, there would be immediately a logical problem in his argument: he was perhaps right in indicating that in the capitalist market money becomes both the means and end of social action (1968: 86, 90-94); however, the sameness of means and end does not imply that the end (money as an direct end) does not exist. Thus, formal rationality as the defining character of modern Western capitalism necessarily involves substantive rationality, at least that in a utilitarian sense. Or, capitalism is both capital (money as means) and ism (money as the end) -- it is, as conceptualized by Marx, commodity fetishism.

Interestingly, Weber himself was clearly aware that formal rationality cannot exist by itself in the real world when he talked about the "substantive conditions" of modern formal rationality in a section of *Economy and Society* (1968: 107-09 -- the section was in fact titled "Substantive Conditions of Formal Rationality in a Money Economy"): for him it is clear that "the formal rationality of money calculation is dependent on certain quite specific substantive conditions" (1968: 107). The following
paragraph by Weber seems perplexing: “Formal and substantive rationality, no matter by what standard the latter is measured, are always in principle separate things, no matter that in many (and under certain artificial assumptions even in all) cases they may coincide empirically (ibid.: 108, italics added). A possible explanation, in consistency with the above reading of Weber’s conception of formal and substantive rationality, is that for the sake of conceptual clarity, formal rationality is to be analytically (“in principle”) separated from substantive rationality, but in reality (“empirically”) they coexist and “coincide.” This is perhaps why Weber insisted that “it nevertheless holds true under all circumstances that formal rationality itself does not tell us anything about real want satisfaction unless it is combined with an analysis of the distribution of income” (ibid.: 109). Thus, even in Weber’s own theory, formal rationality does not exist in a vacuum and is actually “dependent on” some sort of substantive rationality. (This corresponds to Durkheim’s observation that in modern society there are noncontractual or sociomoral elements in a contract. Regrettably Weber failed to elaborate how formal rationality would be conditioned by post-Protestant substantive rationality in the modern West.) Of course, in the sense that the idea of formal rationality characterizes the distinction of modern capitalism, rather than modern capitalism as a whole, there is still much conceptual validity in this idea. Nevertheless, while the Protestant ethic might become largely irrelevant in the modern West, modern capitalism without substantive rationality or with pure formal rationality, as implied in the Weberian metaphor of “iron cage,” would be impossible in any case.

Therefore, Weber’s dichotomy of formal and substantive rationality (formal rationality goes hand in hand with substantive irrationality, and formal irrationality with substantive rationality) is after all a false conceptual construction: On the one hand, under modern capitalism, formal rationality is related
to or conditioned by at least some sort of substantive rationality (e.g. substantive rationality at the utilitarian level), and therefore modern capitalism cannot be reduced to formal rationality; On the other, from this understanding, the conflict between formal and substantive rationality is not, as Weber suggested, a necessity, and what is more likely to happen is the conflict or differentiation between different kinds of substantive rationality idealized in different cultures or subcultures. Keeping this revision of Weber's concept of rationality in mind, one would readily accept that it is not formal rationality that distinguishes Western modernity from other civilizations; rather, it is to what extent formal rationality (calculation or calculability of means) is developed and what is substantively rationalized (ethical, political, utilitarian, or hedonistic ends — to requote Weber) that make the distinction. Thus, just as modern capitalism might be combined with the Protestant ethic, with modern liberal ideology, and with the welfare state, so there might be modern capitalism with Confucian values. This conceptual flexibility allows not only different models of modernity in the world, but also variations of Western modernity within the West. For example, when East Asian modernity is compared with Western modernity, it is clear that the overlap of traditional Confucian rationalism and Western modern rationalism makes East Asian and Western modernity both converge and diverge: converge, because Chinese culture is sophisticated enough to assimilate basic elements of formal rationality developed in the modern West (science and technology, economic institution, and to a certain extent, political system); diverge, because some uniquely East Asian values and norms (substantive rationality) in Chinese and other East Asian cultures can be and have been transformed into part of East Asian modernity and therefore make a difference.
Culture or cultural sociology did not die in the Weberian "iron cage," or the Durkheimian "social anomie," or the "icy water of egotistical calculation" in modern capitalism, as described by Marx and Engels (1992: 20). According to Steward R. Clegg and S. Gordon Redding, "outside of the aesthetic mainstream and the representations of the world which expressed its concerns, there was an undercurrent of solid industrial anthropology in both Europe and North America which was less inclined to accept the modernist prognosis of cultural denudation than were the 'normal science' heirs of Weberian rationalism" (1990: 2, italics added). The key word of this "industrial anthropology" is what Berger conceptualized as "economic culture," which explains capitalism from a cultural perspective (1986: 7-8. Berger was, as he professed, inspired by the concept of 'political culture,' widely used in political science, to create this neologism. Actually the phrase economic culture had already, in different expressions such as "business culture," "social capital," etc., gained some currency when Berger invented it -- cf. Clegg and Redding 1990: 1-5). In the East Asian case, this cultural explanation, to quote Clegg, Higgins and Spybey, "has come increasingly to be made in terms of what has been called the 'post-Confucian hypothesis'" (1990: 37).

Some main points of the "post-Confucian hypothesis" are: First, East Asia has developed a model of industrial capitalism or modernity that is different from its Western counterpart; Second, the surviving Confucian tradition or a set of post-Confucian value-clusters has played a crucial role in shaping modern East Asia; And third, East Asian modernity, some hold (see, for example, Kahn 1979: 117),
provides a better version of modern capitalism. Although the social effect of the Confucian tradition in modern East Asia can hardly be measured in quantitative terms, few would doubt the authenticity of these generalizations (perhaps with some qualifications, and with the exception of the third point, for it involves value judgement, which always depends on one's ideological perspective). Obviously, this “post-Confucian hypothesis” is both Weberian and anti-Weberian: Weberian, because it attempts to identify some capitalist spirit in modern East Asia; anti-Weberian, because it traces the roots of this spirit in the Confucian tradition, a tradition contrasting sharply with “the Protestant ethic” and therefore, in Weber's theory, would be irrelevant to modern capitalism. Schluchter was certainly right when he pointed out that “Weber expounded a very complex argument. . . . it is an argument the value of which cannot be measured simply by its historical accuracy in terms of today's standards. It is much more an argument establishing a direction of investigation, a specific perspective, and even more, a research program” (1989: 116). In a broad sense, the “Post-Confucian hypothesis” is part of this program. To have a sense of the theme of the hypothesis, one only need to peruse the titles of some recent publications, such as: “The Post-Confucian Challenge” (MacFarquhar 1980), The Eastasia Edge (Hofheinz & Calder 1982), In Search of an East Asian Development Model (Berger and Hsiao 1988), Confucianism and Economic Development: An Oriental Alternatives? (Tai ed. 1989), Capitalism in Contrasting Cultures (Clegg, & Redding eds. 1990), The Spirit of Chinese Capitalism (Redding 1990), “The Search of Roots in Industrial Asia: The Case of the Confucian Revival” (Tu 1991), Confucian Traditions in East Asian Modernity (Tu ed. 1996), etc. There are, of course, also numerous publications which discuss the same phenomenon without using such highly suggestive titles as these.
Of course, the cultural approach derived from the post-Confucian hypothesis can only tell part of the story of modern development in East Asia. As a matter of fact, there are a few vexing questions about East Asian modernity that this cultural explanation has to answer. For instance, why was Japan historically far ahead of its East Asian neighbours in the process of modernization? Why did the Four Mini-Dragons have to wait until the 1960s to join Japan in making the East Asian economic miracle? Why is China, the homeland of Confucianism, still part of the third world more than that of the Confucian world, and why are the overseas Chinese/Japanese/Koreans, to paraphrase Kahn (1979: 119), able to “industrialize under any and all circumstances”? On the other hand, why does the official attitude of East Asian societies toward Confucianism vary both historically and geographically? Why, for a large part of the history and the space of modern East Asia, was Confucianism unwelcome or even attacked by the state ideological machine, why has there been only a small group of East Asian intellectuals engaged in reformulating and therefore defending Confucianism in modern times, and how do these intellectuals react to the mentality of Western modernity? Moreover, what are the other factors that might have been fostering the modern development of East Asia, and how do these factors interact with the Confucian tradition, and is the Confucian tradition the only factor that is distinctively East Asian in this dynamic complex of factors?

Last but not least, what exactly are those post-Confucian elements that are functioning in modern East Asia, how do they function? Why are these elements selected and preserved in the vicissitudes of modern times? And are there really significant differences between Chinese, Japanese and Korean Confucianism as far as their modern relevance is concerned? Some of these questions have to be answered by historical studies, or by studies on institutional, geographical and other material
Indeed, in some cultural explanations, the existence of the surviving Confucian tradition in modern East Asia is simply taken for granted, and no other factors are taken into account, as if Confucianism would exist and function in an autonomous way. Meanwhile, there are some East Asian studies (e.g. Chowdhury & Islam 1993: 32-35, 40-41; Abegglen 1994, esp. p. 194; Rohwer 1995, esp. ch. 16; Hobday 1995; Campos and Root 1996), which go to another extreme, ignoring or dismissing any relevance of Confucianism or any cultural factors to the modern development of East Asia, and focusing exclusively on the role of institutional factors. These studies have perhaps forgotten that Weber explicitly rejects both "one-sided spiritualistic" and "one-sided materialistic" causal interpretation of history (Weber 1976: 183). (It should be noted that Weber himself is not always a good example of methodological synthesis or pluralism: his rigid conception of "iron cage" is in a certain way very close to the economic determinism of vulgarised Marxism – in the "iron cage" there would be no room for substantive rationality, while economic determinism reduces social structure to its economic dimension.) Needless to say, the dynamism of (East Asian) modernity consists of not only multiple factors, but also their interactions. To approach this dynamism from a cultural perspective does not necessarily exclude the efficacy of other approaches and vice versa.

There is no doubt that while there are universal material and spiritual elements shared by Western and East Asian modernity, the distinction of industrial capitalism in East Asia is substantially defined by the surviving Confucian tradition or "post-Confucian" values (see, for example, Kahn 1979: 117-23; Berger 1988: 7; Tu 1990, 1991). Nevertheless, Confucianism, like other cultural traditions in East Asia, is not to be understood as something static and autonomous: just as the Confucian tradition shapes the distinction of East Asian modernity, so modernity selectively conserves and re-forms the
Confucian tradition. As an essential part of the cultural dimension of East Asian modernity, the Confucian tradition is transformed in its dialogue and interaction with the economic and political dimensions and with Western modernity in general. In this process lies the "reflexivity" of modernity or the "collaboration between modernity and tradition" (Giddens 1994a). And it is in this process that the Confucian tradition is to be rediscovered, and its modern relevance understood.

Confucianism as a complex of cultural tradition has changed all the time (cf. de Bary 1988), but it was since the presence of Western modernity in East Asia that Confucianism has been experiencing unprecedentedly fundamental changes. The actual existence of Confucianism in its traditional form can be divided into three levels, i.e., Confucianism as a state ideology, as an intellectual discourse, and as the social psychology of common people. As a state ideology, Confucianism was historically related to the imperial system in China and the monarchy in Korea, as well as, to a lesser extent, to the monarchy in Japan -- the Japanese monarchy was and is directly legitimated or mythicized by Shintoism. (It should be noted that meritocratic bureaucracy, an essential element of the political life in the Confucian world, is not uniquely Confucian in the sense that it has become universalized in modern times or has been translated into part of formal rationality in modern politics -- cf. e.g. Davis 1992: 23). In modern East Asia, the political fate of Confucianism has varied both diachronically and synchronically. In China, the bourgeois revolution led by Sun Zhongshan [Sun Yet-sen] was a revolution both against the traditional power legitimated by the Confucian tradition and against the Manchu rule (the Qing dynasty). However, the revolution did intend to conserve Confucianism as part of the national culture. In fact, Confucianism, together with democracy, was integrated into Sun's "Three Principles of the People," which was intended to be the ideology for modern China.
Sun's successor Jiang Jieshi [Chiang Kai-shek] inherited Sun's ideology in theory, but the civil wars and the Sino-Japan War made it virtually impossible for the ideology to be socially testified. As Mao eventually came into power, Confucianism became officially dead in the Mainland; furthermore, in the national anti-Confucian campaign launched during the Cultural Revolution it was vehemently attacked. Thanks to this development, mainland China, the homeland of Confucianism, became perhaps the least Confucian in the Confucian world. In the post-Mao period, the attitude of the Chinese Communist Party toward Confucianism has been ambiguous (hence the notable thriving of intellectual Confucianism). On the other hand, the Taiwan politics under Jiang was largely a by-product of the Cold War: the government was traditionalistic domestically and yet open to the West (the US), including its modern thoughts (except Marxism, of course), in international affairs. Since Jiang's death Taiwan has been witnessing some remarkable political liberalization, but there is no doubt that Confucianism, as part of the "Three Principles of the People," will remain alive for a good while (cf. King and Gold's essays in Tu ed. 1996). In Japan, despite the fact that Confucianism had never been the only dominant official teaching in premodern times (Shintoism and sometimes Buddhism were apparently more important in political terms), the Confucian tradition, particularly that formulated in Neo-Confucianism, had constituted a major source of social morality and rational thinking in Japanese society (Ching 1993; Kitagawa 1987; Ryōen 1979). Moreover, the intimate relationships between Confucianism and politics was not interrupted by the Meiji Restoration at all, and the government had conspicuously patronized Confucianism until the American occupation. The sudden official indifference in Japan to Confucianism in the early postwar years seems to have resulted partly from the fact that during the war, Confucianism was misused by the Japanese government in its political propaganda. Nevertheless, in the 1980s, the former prime minister
Yasuhiro Nakasone proposed to re-incorporate Confucian ethics into the school curriculum, echoing similar actions taken by Singapore (cf. Küng and Ching 1989: 85; also see Hiroshi, Yamashita and Smith's essays in Tu ed. 1996). (It should be noted that the famous Japanese "Imperial Rescript on Education," which accentuated Confucian virtues, has never ceased to be "a source of inspiration for Japanese moral education since it was formed in 1890" — see Tu 1991: 756; Tu et al 1992: 33.) The Korean case is even more dramatic: before the Japanese colonization, Korea was a conservative Confucian country in ideological terms (traditionally it was even more Confucian than Confucian China); during the colonization, Confucianism, together with colonialism, became the target of liberal and nationalist movements (with the support of Korean Christians). In the postwar period, Confucianism officially disappeared as the state ideology in both South and North Korea, although the Confucian values have, in one way or another, underlain the political life on both sides (cf. Koh and Kim's essays in Tu ed. 1996). Singapore provides the most intriguing experimental site for testing the vitality and viability of Confucianism in a multiethnic society open to global influences. It is interesting to note that Confucian ethics has been advocated by the Singaporean government in its moral movement "against the less desirable aspects of Western culture" (cf. Wong and Kuo's essays in Tu ed. 1996), reminiscent of some early reactions of East Asian countries (e.g. China, Japan, Korea) to the Western influence. Finally, in Hongkong, on the other hand, because of British colonialism, Confucianism has been officially irrelevant. In general, Confucianism might still be relevant to East Asian politics in one way or another: it could be integrated into some nationalist agenda (in fact it was so in Taiwan under Jiang, and probably it will be so in China in the future); and it could be, directly or indirectly, promoted by East Asian governments as part of moral education in their societies (as in Singapore and Japan in recent years, not to mention Taiwan since Jiang moved
there). In any case, the history of Confucianism as a state ideology in its traditional sense -- in the sense that it legitimated an imperial or monarchic system -- seems to be ended for good.

Reflecting on the vitality of the Confucian tradition, de Bary wrote: "... it is probably to the Confucian ethos and Confucian scholarship that the Chinese dynastic state owed much of its stability and bureaucratic continuity,... Yet the reverse was not equally true; Confucianism was less dependent on the state for survival than the state on it. Even though affected by the rise and fall of dynasties, Confucianism found ways to survive" (1988: 110). This observation may partly explain the continuity of intellectual Confucianism (Confucianism as a theoretical discourse) and, in relation to it, Confucian intellectualism (Confucianism emphasizing education and learning) in East Asia. As a scholarly pursuit, the Confucian tradition was mainly related to the system of civil service examination (in China and Korea). Since the disappearance of this examination system (thanks to the collapse of the traditional polity and the introduction of Western-style modern education) in the early twentieth century, intellectual Confucianism has substantially declined. However, intellectual Confucianism has not been confined to the examination system either in premodern or in modern times: there were Confucians before the formation of the examination system (e.g. in Confucius's time), there were Confucians where the examination system did not exist (in Japan), and there were numerous Confucians who studied Confucianism simply for the purpose of self-cultivation, or, engaged in "learning for one's self" (cf. de Bary 1983, 1991, 1996). The surviving form of intellectual Confucianism in the modern world, or the New Confucian Thought, is characterized by Tu as "the third epoch of Confucianism" (1993: 141-160; also cf. Liu's essay in Tu ed. 1996), which can actually be further divided into several generations from Kang Youwei to Tu himself. Given the dominance of
modern Western social thinking (liberal, radical, etc.) among modern East Asian intellectuals, the early New Confucian Thought was naturally linked to conservatism in their societies. In general, however, the New Confucian Thought as an intellectual discourse is "a deliberate response to the modern West" (Tu 1996: 19) and has been increasingly engaged in identifying itself in its dialogue with Western culture and other world civilizations. Not surprisingly, with the rise of East Asia as a second model of modernity, the surviving and functioning part of the Confucian tradition becomes exposed to the wider world, captivating some sophisticated minds of East Asia and the West alike, and another wave of the New Confucian Thought is certainly on the way, in which not only some Western Sinologists (notably de Bary, Schwartz, Redding, etc.) and overseas Chinese scholars, but also many intellectuals in Mainland China are involved. Tu affirms that contemporary Confucian thinkers, "with profound self-reflectiveness, already created a cultural space and an authentic possibility for the creative transformation of Confucian humanism as a living tradition in modern East Asia" (ibid.).

The above-quoted observation by de Bary seems even more suitable for the endurance of the Confucian tradition as the social psychology of East Asian people, or at least an essential part of it, which is the most stable and meaningful existence of Confucianism in modern East Asia and among the overseas Chinese. What is fascinating about this part of Confucianism is that it is relatively independent of Confucianism both as the state ideology and as an intellectual discourse. In other words, it exists with or without the promotion of the state (for ideological purpose) and regardless of the direction of intellectual trends among the cultural elites. China itself is a good example: despite the ideological hostility of the Communist Party toward the Confucian tradition and the socialist
practice in China for such a long time, and despite two major radical iconoclastic movements against Confucianism in modern history (the New Cultural Movement in the 1910s and 1920s and the anti-Confucian campaign during the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s), Confucianism has not ceased to exist in the "collective consciousness" of the society. "On the contrary," writes Tu, "recent anthropological, sociological, and political surveys all point to the pervasive presence of Confucian ethics in belief, attitude, and behavior across all strata throughout China" (1996: 259). The basic bearer of Confucian ethics in East Asia is the family: "Strong family consciousness has been the core of Confucianism, and this survives" (Koh 1996: 195). Indeed, if Confucianism could be considered a religion, every family in the Confucian world would be a church. Moreover, since family relationships are, in the logic of Confucian rationality, to be extended to all social relationships (vertical and horizontal), various organizations, such as the school, the company, the government, or even Taoist and Buddhist temples, all become familistic, carrying Confucian ethics in one way or another. Therefore, Confucian ethics is embedded in the social fabric of East Asia and functions as the "practical reason" (Kant) or the "communicative rationality" (Habermas) -- perhaps not in the strict sense of the two terms -- in East Asian societies and overseas Chinese communities. In this sense Robert Smith's perception of "the Japanese (Confucian) family" as "the tradition from the bottom up" and his remark that "Confucian is as Confucian does" (see his essay in Tu ed. 1996) also applies to the Chinese and Korean family; and Kim Kwang-ok's statement that "Confucian culture is still at work in the everyday lives of the Korean people, and it is now being renovated or reproduced" may suit other East Asian peoples as well (1996: 203).
Thus, the transformation of Confucianism has highlighted the relatively stable elements of the Confucian tradition, especially Confucian familism (its rationale of familial and familistic relationships). Indeed, Confucian familism (paternalism, personalism, authoritarianism, groupism, communitarianism, family values, etc.) is, as always, the secret of the economic culture, political culture and everyday life in modern East Asian societies. The Confucian state or state Confucianism was simply a political extension of Confucian familism, which turns out to be anachronistic and unnecessary under modern conditions; and intellectual Confucianism is, after all, a theoretical justification and refinement of Confucian familism prevailing and pervasive in society. The distinction of East Asian modernity is, as the next chapter will try to demonstrate, largely defined by the surviving Confucian tradition, or post-Confucian values, Confucian familism in particular.
7. The Modern Relevance of Confucianism in East Asia

Recent East Asian studies are reminiscent of earlier Japanese studies in two ways: first, while correctly relating the economic “miracle” of the Asia-Pacific Rim to local cultural factors (post-Confucian values, among other things), these studies lack in-depth analysis of how these values are rationalized in the Confucian context; and second, these studies focus on the economic development in modern East Asia and leave other aspects of East Asian modernity largely untouched, as if economy was the only thing relevant or economy would explain everything else. Thus, to understand the post-Confucian values in the Confucian context, chapters 2-5 of this thesis revisited the basics of the Confucian tradition at a theoretical level, by comparing them with, when applicable, their modern Western counterparts and by examining how Confucian familism, the core of the Confucian tradition, is theoretically formulated in history. This chapter will explore how the surviving Confucian tradition, or the post-Confucian values, might function to shape the distinction of East Asian modernity in general, including its economic dimension.

Of course, to refer to the modern relevance of the Confucian tradition does not imply that East Asian modernity is exactly something envisioned by those Confucian intellectuals in early modern days of East Asia, just as Western modernity is not completely a “project of the Enlightenment” or of any post-Enlightenment thought. Apparently, modernity -- Western or East Asian -- seems to have
embraced various contradicting ideological as well as institutional factors, and many outcomes of modernity are perhaps beyond the imagination of perhaps the most sophisticated minds in the modern world. On the other hand, however, it is no exaggeration to argue that the surviving Confucian tradition does make East Asian modernity differ, to a considerable extent, from its Western counterpart, and the distinction of East Asian modernity thus formed is evident not only in its economic sphere, but also in its political sphere and its everyday life. The Japanese are not just "economic animals" and miracle-makers; they are also political animals and rational animals. And so are the rest of East Asians (and of human beings).

7.1. Confucianism and Industrial Capitalism: The Spirit of Confucian Capitalism

It seems that capitalism finally won the peaceful economic competition with socialism/communism in East Asia -- as it did elsewhere, except for some yet-to-be-reached spots. The East Asian part of the "iron curtain" virtually collapsed in 1978 when Deng Xiaoping initiated the "reform and opening to the world" policy, if not earlier in 1972 when Mao Zedong invited President Nixon to Beijing. Thus, in economic terms, the modern relevance of Confucianism actually means the relevance of Confucianism to capitalism. It should be noted that in socialist China, the impact of the Confucian tradition on its economic life is also discernable. As a matter of fact, the so-called "Socialism with Chinese characteristic" was started by Mao Zedong and continued by Deng Xiaoping. Referring to
socialist China, Hofheinz and Calder observed that “East asian society is rooted in strong families....

Even the Communist regimes of Eastasia have been unable to shake this basic building block. Family consciousness makes Chinese factories reserve places for sons [and daughters] of retiring workers” (1982: 43). In fact, the danwei 単位 (unit) system in socialist China was (and is) in many ways familistic: those who worked in a state-owned danwei enjoy lifetime employment and full health care, they lived in the danwei and they could eat either in the danwei or at home, and their children went to school in the danwei -- in brief, communism and familism converged in the danwei. There are still many economic “units” in China now, constituting a large portion of the national economy. It remains to be seen, with the development of capitalism-oriented economic reform, how these units will be reorganized or, if they are to be privatized, whether they will continue to be family-like in one way or another. The rest of China,s economy (the booming township and village enterprises as well as joint and foreign adventures), like the rest of East Asian economy (except the North Korean part), is already on the track of capitalism, hence the affinity between capitalism and Confucianism.

Capitalism is an economic system characterized by private ownership, commodity production, and the free market. In Saunders’s words, “These three factors together -- private ownership of property, production for profit, and a system of exchange based upon market prices -- add up to a working definition of what capitalism is and how it differs from other systems such as feudalism and socialism” (1995: 9). While its crude forms existed in pre-modern history, capitalism is largely a modern phenomenon, and some key institutional elements of capitalism (e.g. free labour, industrial organization, bank, etc.) are distinctively modern. As such, capitalism is interconnected with industrialism -- the technological foundation of modern capitalism, with the nation-state -- the
political guardian of modern capitalism, and with an interminable tendency of globalization. This general description applies to capitalism in general.

Among the three factors, the free market is the only factor to which culture is perhaps irrelevant: the free market can be neither Western nor Confucian -- it is a universal and universalizing factor. While there is no pure or absolute free market (in other words, there is always some kind of trade protectionism at the international level and market monopoly at the domestic level), in principle and largely in reality the free market acknowledges no personalities, no nationalities, and no cultural distinctions: the "invisible hand" is simply the relation between supply and demand, and it is so everywhere. Therefore, it is the other two factors, i.e. private ownership and commodity production, particularly the latter, that may culturally vary.

A seemingly tautological question is: who are exactly the owners of private property? Many would readily identify private ownership with individual ownership (cf. Ingram 1994: ch. 2, for his discussion of "self-ownership"). However, individual ownership is just the logically irreducible form of private ownership. In reality, there are four levels of private ownership under modern capitalism. First, there are individual owners, including individual workers (they possess their own "human capital" or labour power), individual capitalists (they possess, besides their own "human capital," capital), and self-employed individuals (they own relatively limited capital). Second, there are family owners: family ownership was and still is the basic form of private ownership, and it is indistinguishable from individual ownership when women's/wives' property status is not legally defined. The third level is corporate ownership, i.e. the ownership of business groups or stock
holders, which is a major form of large business organizations. Finally, in the sense that national interests are always particularistic in international trade or global market, nation-states are also subjects of private ownership; indeed, the economic dimension of nationalism or the nation-state is often forgotten (in domestic affairs, nation-states are “structures;” but in international relations, they are “actors” or “agents” -- cf. Giddens 1991: 15). How is Confucianism relevant as far as private ownership is concerned?

Some, like Francis Fukuyama, may argue that the difference between Chinese “family business” in East Asia (and elsewhere) and Western (and Japanese) business is that between early and late stages of capitalism; and, if culture has any relevance, it is Confucian familism that has hindered Chinese business from becoming “professionalised,” and the absence of this tradition in Japan, Germany and the US allows them to establish corporate ownership and professional management (cf. Fukuyama, 1995). This argument is misleading at least in two ways. First, what underlies this argument, as in Fukuyama's case, is a misconception of Confucian familism, which reduces Confucian familism to an ideal simply pertaining to family values and blood relationships. Actually, Confucianism implies, as explained earlier, not only family/lineage-based familism, but also community/society-inclusive familism. The absolute size of large Chinese companies might be smaller than that of their Japanese counterparts, but they are large enough to exceed the limits of family or lineage and to incorporate modern socioeconomic norms. Second, this argument is based on a wrong connection between family ownership and family management, and an artificial dichotomy between family business and professional business. In the real world, family business in Chinese or any other societies may be integrated with professional management and develop into gigantic organizations, and professional
business may be small in size and they -- small or large -- may cultivate some kind of familistic spirit by mobilizing existing cultural resources (typically in Japan). Therefore, as far as the relation of family ownership to professional management is concerned, there is no significant difference between Chinese "family business" and other "professional business": a self-growing billionaire "family business" in Chinese societies is as professional as a government-supported "family business" in South Korea, or a cross-shareholding company in Japan, or a cartel in Germany, or any kinds of large business organizations in the US and anywhere else in the West (among which many are also family-owned or even individual-owned). For instance, as noted by Fukuyama himself, the Hongkong-based Li Ka-shing empire, "has successfully incorporated a large number of professional managers" (1995: 74). Indeed, there are so many business empires like this in Chinese business communities that they can be safely considered as a rule rather than exceptions. Moreover, small business groups (usually the family-owned and family-managed business) everywhere in the world, like those large ones, also have to be professionalised in one way or another to accommodate themselves to the ever-changing yet culturally neutral market. In other words, the form of ownership, family-based or otherwise, large or small, does not necessarily make corresponding business more or less professional, and culture does not dictate what form of ownership to be adopted in order for business to be professionalised. Again, it is the free market that "professionalises" the majority of whatever prospective business organizations, and it is the free market that locates business organizations of different sizes.

However, in a specific sense, the Confucian tradition is relevant as far as private ownership is concerned -- in the sense that in the Confucian world, the family, instead of the individual, is ideally and by and large practically the irreducible owner of private property. This is not to say that the law
in modern East Asian societies (including China under socialism) and in the host countries of Chinese immigrants does not recognize individual ownership; nor does this imply that there are not any forms of individual ownership in East Asian societies. Nevertheless, in the context of the Confucian world, particularly in economic terms, the individual -- be it the father, the wife, or any of the children -- is considered part of his or her family, and normally the family is a unit not to be economically divided. An individual might be a free labourer in the market or an employee in a company, but his/her spending is part of family spending, and his/her income family income. According to Koh, for instance, in South Korea, “Although the revised civil code of 1977 recognizes the separate property rights of conjugal partners, in reality the concept of communal family property still prevails. It is customary for unmarried female workers to send their meagre wages back to their family in the rural areas to support their parents or to help their male siblings receive an advanced education” (1996: 195). A similar phenomenon in Hongkong is confirmed by Janet Salaff in her Working daughters of Hong Kong: Filial piety or Power in the Family (1995). In China, there are numerous men and women from the rural areas who -- because of the reform policy -- are able to leave their village and, if they are lucky enough, find whatever jobs available in an urban area (they become marketable free labour in a certain sense). Still, they cannot be, economically or otherwise, separated from or independent of their family: those who can earn more than their living expenses in their frugal life would save their extra money and send it back to their family, and those who are extraordinarily successful in their urban adventure would seek their family reunion or establish their own family in their place of employment. Indeed, in East Asian societies, economic familial communism -- as part of Confucian familism -- remains an essential part of social morality, under which individual ownership detached from the family is strongly discouraged, if not explicitly inhibited. Economic
familial communism is practiced differently when it comes to inheritance, as in old days: "[In South Korea,] the eldest son gets the lion's share, but the remaining sons and daughters received graduated shares, unlike in Japan, where primogeniture prevails, and in China, where the equal division of property among the sons is the rule" (Koh 1996: 195; also cf. Fukuyama 1995). Nevertheless, this difference does not affect economic familial communism in the succeeding generation: at the time when inheritance occurs, normally the children would have already started their own families, within which communal property continues. Therefore, it is economic familial communism that eventually distinguishes the Confucian world from the modern West: in the West, in the wave of the change of family life in general and the reform of divorce law in particular (cf. Jocob, 1988; Fineman, 1995), the actual existence of individual property ownership has rapidly increased especially since the 1960s (in theory the individual was defined as the owner of private property in the very beginning of Western modernity); in contrast, in modern East Asia, although various modern Western laws, including property law and divorce law, have been introduced and more or less adopted, it is the tradition of Confucian familism -- familial communism -- that sets the bottom line of property ownership. The divide between the modern West and the Confucian world with regard to private ownership is clear enough at one point, i.e. the ownership of the individual's body: in the modern West, the individual owns at least his or her own body (cf. eg. Saunders 1995: 4), if nothing else; while in the Confucian world, one's own body, among other things, "is something bequeathed to one by one's parents" (Feng 1952: 358). Of course, the significance of the issue of body ownership is far from confined to the economic sphere (the body as human capital); the development of what is now called "body politics" (cf. eg. Butler 1993) in the contemporary West, which, rooted in the modern Western conception of individuality or autonomy, fostered in cultural feminism (among other social
movements), is also a sign that might point to the cultural difference between the modern West and the Confucian world (cultural feminism will be discussed later in this chapter).

Another sphere to which the Confucian tradition is relevant in the economic life of modern East Asia is, as said earlier, commodity production or, to be more specific, the management and process of commodity production. The core spirit of this sphere is, of course, utilitarianism (the philosophy of maximizing utility, or rather, maximizing profit), which applies to modern East Asia as well as the modern West and the rest of capitalist world. This raises the question of whether Confucianism is utilitarian. The answer is both no and yes. It is no secret that Confucianism makes a clear distinction between yi 义 (morality or righteousness) and li 利 (utility or profit), and it emphasizes the former over the latter. According to the Analects, Confucius “seldom spoke of what was profitable” (9.1). And when speaking of it, he said, “The superior man understands what is moral, and the inferior man understands what is profitable” (4.16). Mencius expressed the same attitude when visiting a king. “You have come all this distance,” the king asked, “You must surely have some way of profiting my state.” Mencius answered, “What is the point of referring to the word ‘profit’? All that matters is that there should be humanity and righteousness” (Mencius: 1A.1). On the other hand, however, it could be argued that Confucians did not go to another extreme, i.e. focus on morality and ignore utility altogether. Thus, the Analects records (13.9):

When Confucius went to the state Wei, Ranyou drove for him. Confucius said, “What a flourishing population!” Ranyou asked, “When the population is flourishing, what further can one add?” Confucius answered, “Enrich them.” “When the people have become rich, what
further can one add?” “Educate them.”

This idea was reaffirmed and elaborated by Mencius: “... when determining what means of livelihood the people should have, a wise ruler ensures that these are sufficient, on the one hand, for the care of parents, and, on the other, for the support of wife and children... [If] simply to survive takes more energy than the people have, what time can they spare for learning about propriety and righteousness?” (Mencius: 1A.7; cf. Feng 1952: 111-19). Therefore, while morality is more important, material well-being is a necessity. The apparently ambivalent attitude of Confucius and Mencius toward utility was reformulated by the Song Confucianist Chen Liang (1143-1194), a contemporary of Zhu Xi, as follows: “When social results are achieved, there is virtue. When success is attained, there is principle” (cf. Tillman 1982: 133). This is obviously a utilitarian interpretation of the Confucian theory on morality and utility. This interpretation might not please orthodox Confucianism, as evident in the debate between Chen Liang and Zhu Xi (cf. Tillman 1982, for detailed discussions of that dispute). Actually, a more plausible interpretation was implied in a remark of Confucius himself: “Wealth and high station are what men desire, but unless I got them in the right way I would not remain in them... If the superior man forsakes humanity, in what way can he make a name for himself?” (Analects: 4.5). In other words, wealth and high station are not only desirable, but also acquirable in the right way; and as long as one acquires them in the right way, one remains a superior man or a man of humanity. From this reasoning, Confucianism is neither anti-utilitarian nor utilitarian, and it sees no contradiction between morality and economy (cf. Tai 1989: 18).
Then, in what “right” way do the East Asians acquire material wealth under modern capitalism? Or, to put this plainly, how do they run their businesses? The answer is, in a familistic way. As a matter of fact, Confucian familism is a defining factor of the economic culture or business culture of East Asian capitalism. It explains not only why overseas Chinese business (including that in Taiwan, Hongkong, and Singapore) is mainly family business or family-based business, but also why the giant Japanese companies are family-like or familistic. In the same spirit, Korean companies, combining kinship network and large size into “imagined” families (cf. Kim 1996: 220), are perhaps even more familistic than their Chinese and Japanese counterparts. Moreover, the formation of post-commune collectivism in many village/township enterprises in mainland China also has its roots in the surviving Confucian familism.

In the modern West, the institution of contract, rationalized by the philosophy of individualism, is the key to the formation of social relationships, particularly the labor-capital relationship. Another related organizational principle, as Weber conceptualized it, is formal rationality, which embodies the essence of utilitarianism (the principle of maximizing utility or profit). According to Weber’s theory and Western sociology in general, there would be little room for personalism in a formal contractual relationship; and substantive rationality, which concerns ultimate values (or ends), would vanish if formal rationality, which pertains to the efficiency of means, were to prevail. From this perspective, the affinity between Confucian familism and modern capitalism seems impossible. In the concluding chapter of _The Religion of China_, Weber writes that “For the economic mentality, the personalist principle was undoubtedly as great a barrier to impersonal rationalization as it was generally to
impersonal matter-of-factness.... This barrier was intimately connected with the nature of Chinese religion,...” (1964: 237). Moreover, “The decisive factor was that the ‘cultural man’ (gentleman) was ‘not a tool’; that is, in his adjustment to the world and in his self-perfection he was an end unto himself, not a means for any functional end. This core of Confucian ethics rejected professional specialization, modern expert bureaucracy, and special training; above all, it rejected training in economic activities for the pursuit of profit” (ibid.: 246). Weber’s conceptual framework is perhaps too rigid when applied to modern East Asia, where the “personalist principle” goes hand in hand with professional management. In the context of Confucian familism, contractual relationships are translated into personal relationships, and formal rationalitymingles with substantive rationality. As suggested by Yamamoto Schichihei in his The Spirit of Japanese Capitalism (1992), the contract is in principle effective, but it would be the last thing to appeal to; there are definitely rules and regulations devised to maximize profit (formal rationality), but other factors (e.g. the welfare of the employees) have to be considered as well (substantive rationality).

The power structure or management pattern in East Asian business organizations is also characterized by Confucian familism. S. Gordon Redding points out that “The essential problem for management... is the justification of its authority. This is challenged ideologically in many countries and practically by organized labor.” However, he continues, “Among the overseas Chinese the legitimacy of an owner's power is not a matter for debate. Paternalism is accepted as normal, and so long as behavior is responsible and benevolent, cooperation is a natural reaction. This force serves to stabilize organizations and reduce the difficulty of coping with change” (1996: 322). Furthermore, paternalism does not necessarily contradict modern management norms: “A number of large indigenous
companies are visible in the overseas Chinese economies, and although there is much variety here, they commonly display a mixture of paternalism based on local ownership and systems of organization and technology brought in from the West" (ibid.). Redding's conclusion is also true for Japanese and Korean companies. Of course, Japanese companies, especially the large ones, unlike their Chinese or, to a lesser extent, Korean counterparts, are not based mainly on kinship relationships and regional ties. Nevertheless, upon a closer look, Japanese companies have actually transformed Confucian familism into company groupism or workplace solidarity, thus creating a familistic business culture. In Francis L. K. Hsu's explanation, "they [the Japanese] can create large, strong economic and social organizations patterned after the family without always placing family-related individuals into a leadership position. Unrelated individuals, on the other hand, can be absorbed into these organizations and be treated as if they were family members" (cf. Tai 1989: 16). In traditional East Asia, it was part of the Confucian teaching that norms regulating family relationships were to be extended to social relationships. Thus, familistic norms applied to both real and imagined familial relationships in the Confucian world. In this sense, modern Japanese companies, like their Chinese and Korean counterparts, are also familistic (Tai 1989: 16-21).

Consensus, ideological or not, implies the readiness to cooperate and the legitimacy of authority, which are crucial to the operation of any organization, including the capitalist company. Naturally an organization functions better when its consensus is achieved voluntarily and internally. In East Asian societies and overseas Chinese communities, Confucian familism provides some fundamental norms or, in Confucian terms, rules of propriety, such as loyalty, benevolence, trust, reciprocity, etc., on which cooperation and authority can be formed. These norms do not render formal rules
unnecessary, and they do not necessarily invalidate utilitarian goals. However, they do make formal rules less important and less coercive, and they effectively relate utilitarian goals to moral concerns. In this way, Confucian familism often facilitates the efficiency of performance in East Asian business organizations (cf. Redding and Whitley 1990; Hamilton et al. 1990). In conceptualizing the “spirit of Chinese capitalism,” Redding indicates that in Chinese business communities, “The fact remains that a traditional form of control is retained, and a particular form of legitimacy seen as appropriate.... Just as the West, stimulated by the example of Japan, has been recently rediscovering the significance of organizational culture, so may there be some lessons from the Overseas Chinese about paternalism, flexibility, and networking. Theory Z may be joined by Theory C” (1990: 4). Insofar, then, as Confucian familism pertains not only to family values but also to social relationships, Confucian familism is essential to both “Theory Z” and “Theory C” and therefore to the economic or business culture in modern East Asian societies in general.

In conclusion, in East Asian societies, Confucianism or Confucian familism defines modern capitalism mainly in two ways: first, normally it is the family, rather than the individual, that is the irreducible unit of private ownership, from which other higher forms of private ownership might be derived; and second, some familistic principles, such as personalism and paternalism, are indispensable to the management of business organizations in the Confucian world. Thus, according to Berger, the East Asian experience seems to suggest that a “communal capitalism” is possible: “The Societies of East Asia have succeeded for a long time in modernizing under capitalist conditions without undergoing individuation along Western lines” (1986: 170 italics original). Corresponding phenomena are discernable in the political life in modern East Asia.
7.2. Confucianism and Liberal Democracy: How Are Human Rights Relevant?

In his book *Asia Rising*, Jim Rohwer observes that “probably the world’s biggest intellectual gulf among highly educated people lay between Westerners and Asians on the subject of democracy” (1995: 322). Democracy is indeed a problematic issue: not long ago the word “Asians” in this remark might have been replaced by “Russians” (ironically, during the Cold War, whether East Asian societies were democratic or not was -- from the Western/American perspective -- irrelevant; what was relevant was whether they were communist or not). Of course, as indicated by Rohwer himself, a black-and-white perception of democracy “is wrong” (ibid.). There are both differences and similarities between the modern West and East Asian societies in their understanding of politics -- democratic or not, and in their actual political life.

Democracy, genetically originated in ancient Athens, appears to be the modern God in the West. What makes modern democracy different from Christianity is that for Christianity there were denominations inside and pagans outside, while in the modern West there are only “denominations” of democracy. Stalin, a modern Satan, could speak glowingly of democracy and its dialectical relation to dictatorship; Hitler, another Satan, would appreciate democratic election for its generous support for his ascent to power. Between these two extremes, socialists (the Left), liberals (the Centre), and conservatives (the Right) generally claim to be democratic. Indeed, all too often is democracy used and misused to label and justify various kinds of politics, as if it were the panacea for all the problems of human society. Apparently, the mainstream form of modern Western democracy has been liberal
democracy, which is also the only functioning form of democratic politics or politics in the West today (It should be noted that the widely used phrase “liberal democracy” is somewhat deceiving: in the real world, contemporary Western democracy is not purely “liberal” in the classical sense of the term, which refers to the distinction of liberalism in contrast with the Left and the Right; it has integrated into itself elements from both the Left, hence the welfare state in the postwar period, and the right, hence the New Right politics in recent years. In this sense one might say “the end of ideology” occurs in liberal democracy). In its essence, liberal democracy is the institutionalized form of modern Western conception of human rights. Therefore, corresponding to the paradoxical relationship between civil/political rights and social/economic rights (or, to put it in another way, between freedom and equality, as discussed in chapter 4), there are contradictions between procedural and substantive democracy, between the public and the private sphere, between the state and civil society, etc. In general, under liberal democracy, while civil/political rights are indispensable and therefore absolute, social/economic rights are negotiable and relative.

In modern East Asia, democratization is only a recent phenomenon. There were surely democratic thoughts in East Asian traditions. For instance, Mencius was in a way close to Rousseau when said that “The People are the most important element (in a state); the state is secondary; and the sovereign is the least” (Mencius: 7B.14). On the other hand, the Confucian ideal of *dezhi* 德治 (governing by virtues of the ruler) or *lizhi* 礼治 (governing by rules of propriety), which implied the principle of non-government (non-action, or *wuweierzhi* 无为而治 [governing without action]), would justify modern liberalism or even anarchism. However, these ideals were not substantiated in social institutions in ancient China. In modern times, although both *dexiansheng* 德先生 (Mr. Democracy)
and saixiansheng 賽先生 (Mr. Science) of the modern West were welcome and worshipped by many intellectuals in the early twentieth century, particularly during the New Cultural Movement (which happened around the time of the May 4th Movement in 1919), China eventually chose socialism; moreover, despite unanimous criticisms from the West of its human rights record after the June 4th movement in 1989, China has stubbornly rejected the Western idea of human rights as that of “bourgeois rights.” Taiwan has been open to the West, particularly the US, since the end of World War Two, but its first democratic election occurred only a few months ago, with the missiles of the Chinese Armed Forces flying overhead and the US Seventh Fleet cruising nearby. In Hongkong, democracy seems to be as much irrelevant in the future as in the past, notwithstanding its unique long-term relationship with Britain, a major democracy in modern Western history. On the other hand, Japanese democracy, emerging directly from the American occupation, has been generally accepted as a full-fledged democracy. Still, the peculiar one-and-a-half-party system in Japan and the Liberal Democratic Party’s almost uninterrupted stay in power would cause some to ask: Just how democratic is Japan (Huntington considers the Japanese model of dominant-party democracy as the prototype of East Asian democracy -- cf. Huntington 1991: 304). The South Korean case seems both encouraging and frustrating: recently a former democratically-elected president was brought to a trial by the current democratically-elected president, which raises the question of the legitimacy of democracy per se under certain circumstances. Finally, Singapore provides perhaps the most intriguing example for modern East Asian politics: its government is democratic in the sense that it is elected; however, it is also socialist and Confucian -- it practices what is called “soft authoritarianism” (cf. Rohwer 1995: 333). The Confucian part of the Singaporean politics is actually shared in one way or another by other East Asian societies. Thus, when Lee Kuan Yew said that “culture is destiny”
(ibid.: 328), he was speaking not only for his own small city-state, but for East Asia in general. There are certainly good reasons for Huntington to believe that "Confucian democracy may be a contradiction in terms, but democracy in a Confucian society need not be" (1991: 310). But what is essential is how the surviving Confucian tradition interacts with modern democracy and therefore how this tradition shapes the distinctiveness of East Asian politics — democratic or not.

Indeed, if one defines democracy as what it is in the West (i.e., the institutionalized form of human rights, a two- or multi-party system, the welfare state, neoliberalism, etc.), one will surely conclude that East Asian politics in general is still in an early stage of development toward (Western) democracy, and in many ways East Asian politics differs from or even contradicts Western democracy. This is also how democracy or politics in East Asia is usually conceived in the West. In the West, in contrast, "democracy is generally thought to be the only form of government by which a civilized society should consider running itself. A few diplomats and academicians will muse quietly, and in private, about the failures of representative democracy and the availability of alternatives, but the topic is essentially taboo" (Rohwer 1995: 322). Apparently, as far as the progress of democracy is concerned, there is a political gap between the West and East Asia. In the modern West, human rights are considered "natural rights," and the fundamental part of the law is called "natural law." As discussed earlier (ch. 3), the ideas of human rights as natural rights and social law as natural law constitute the ideological context of modern Western democracy. In the traditional Confucian world, in contrast, politics was conditioned or defined by natural order in its real sense, i.e. familial and familistic relationships, and Confucian politics functioned to institutionalize this order. According to Confucius, for instance, it was only too natural that when any of them commit a crime, "fathers cover
up for their sons, and sons covers up for their fathers” (*Analects*: 13.18). Actually, mutual covering up among family members -- unless in some extreme cases, such as treason -- became legalized (and failing to do so would be illegal!) in history. This “is indicative of the priority of natural relationships over artificial or contractual ones” in Confucian politics (cf. Ching 1996: 3). Of course, there is no absolute line between the “natural” and the “artificial” in the human world (and in politics). In a deeper sense, human beings are both natural and artificial, and in this sense it is pointless to argue which order is more natural. There are, however, significant differences between modern Western democracy and traditional Confucian politics. As the Confucian world has more or less become part of what Huntington (1991) called “the third wave of democratization,” it remains to be seen how the Western ideas of “natural rights” and “natural law” would mingle with the “natural order” of the Confucian world.

Politics can be examined from the standpoint of its form (or the formal realm of politics) and from the standpoint of its substance (the “informal” realm). Of course, the form of politics and the substance of politics are not necessarily mutually exclusive and contradictory -- formal rights (civil, political rights) can to a certain extent be translated into “substantive” (economic, social rights) in due political process under democracy. However, as explained earlier, the theoretical (and largely practical) distinction between the formal realm and informal realm lies in the very heart of modern Western democracy. As democracy in the modern West is primarily formal -- procedural or representative -- democracy, which is, by design, based on natural law and institutionalizes natural rights, to compare Western politics and East Asian politics in terms of how democratic they are is to compare their “forms.” If one sees beyond the issue of “whether East Asian politics is democratic or not” and
examines the political life in modern East Asia in terms of its social effects, one may compare it with its Western counterpart from a different perspective; indeed, if one “brackets” the ideologies of liberal democracy and human rights (to paraphrase Husserl) and examines modern politics as a particular sphere in the social world, one may acquire a different understanding of modern politics in the Confucian world. As a matter of fact, like its modern Western counterpart, politics in modern East Asian societies is first of all political economy. Moreover, it is a bureaucratic system characterized by meritocracy or technocracy, an intellectualist authority promoting educational democracy, and a state apparatus that has its roots in and is conditioned by civil society. In all these aspects, modern East Asian politics is in line with, if not reproduced by, the Confucian tradition.

The paternalistic or interventionist role of East Asian governments (again except in Hongkong) in accommodating themselves to the development of their national economy in the capitalist world has been widely noticed -- in fact, they are conceptualized by some as “soft authoritarianism” or “the developmental states” (cf. Appelbaum & Henderson 1992; Chowdhury & Islam 1993; Pye 1988; White 1988). It seems that East Asian governments have never been bothered by the old dogmatic dichotomy between market economy and planned economy in the West (even China, after so many years of practicing planned economy, has developed its own formula of “planned socialist market economy,” which, seemingly functioning well in the context of China since 1978, would not be subject to easy definition in Western terms). Ideally, as elaborated earlier, as far as the principle of government is concerned, the Confucianist is a Taoist (or a liberal) -- the principle of government is the principle of non-government (non-action). A virtuous ruler does not rule -- he will be followed without giving orders; or if he rules, he rules by li (rules of propriety). However, Confucians know
very well that the principle of non-government is too good to be true. Hence the Confucian conception of *neisheng* 内圣 (sageliness within) and *waiwang* 外王 (kingliness without): the former, as explained earlier, refers to the personal virtues of the ruler, while the latter is to be achieved by sagely kings in their humane and effective governing over society. Therefore, the government should not only exemplify social virtues, but also govern or serve society. In other words, government, besides being virtuous, is expected to manifest paternalistic concern for the people and be responsive to their needs (cf. Pye, 1988). Since the ruler’s (and the officers’) personal virtues are hardly visible to the common people (unless he is immoral and/or weak enough to be betrayed by his subjects and abandoned by the people), the legitimacy of the government lies mainly in its management of society and their responsiveness to the people, which, in the modern context, is linked to economic prosperity, among other things. Thus, it is only natural for the government in East Asian societies to be economically involved. In Pye’s words, “The new mandarins had to be schooled in the wisdom of Western economic theories and practices” (1988: 86). Of course, there is a significant difference between modern East Asian governments and their Western counterparts: in the West, government -- in economic terms -- functions to provide the institutional or legal environment for the economic life of civil society (the liberal state) and/or to deal with economically related social problems, giving rise to the welfare state; in East Asia, the government plays a much more active role in economic life, functioning as the patrons, sponsors, and protectors. Hence we see a close government-business relationship in general and the institutional cooperation between the government and business conglomerates in particular. It should be noted that stressing the active role of the government in East Asian economies should not lead to an underestimation of the self-governing capability of business organizations themselves. There are numerous Chinese business groups in
Southeast Asia, North America, and elsewhere in the world. These groups, like those in Hongkong, develop autonomously without a paternalistic or developmental state (cf. Hamilton 1996). It should also be noted that the paternalistic government in East Asia, like everywhere else, is sometimes related to economic corruption: the recent South Korean trials of former political leaders of the country are reminiscent of what happened in Japan years ago, when Japan was rapidly becoming an economic superpower; and the current government in the People's Republic of China is also threatened by its own corruption -- the June 4th movement clearly indicated the seriousness of the problem. Of course, corruption is not necessarily the price to be paid for economic growth under an authoritarian government: Singapore and, to a lesser extent, Taiwan seem to have a better record in this regard.

Meritocracy or, in modern times, technocracy, is another factor that defines the political system in East Asian societies. Meritocracy was part of the Confucian ideal. According to the description of the world of Datong 大同 (great unity) -- the Confucian Utopia -- in the Book of Rites, "When the great Tao was in practice, everything under the Heaven was common to all; *men of talents, virtue and ability were selected;* sincerity was emphasized and harmony was cultivated...." (Book VII, italics added; cf. Feng 1958: 202-03). This ideal was institutionalized mainly in the system of civil service examination, by which "men of talents, virtue and ability were selected." There were also other institutional measures by which to organize bureaucracy, such as the system of triennial rotation of official posts, the prohibition of holding office in one's home province, and the full removability of the official by central command, etc. (cf. Yang 1964: xxiii). There is no doubt that the traditional Chinese bureaucratic system was rationally designed, although its actually operation might be far from ideal.
In Pye’s observation, “The concept of professional service, based on competitive entrance examinations, regularized evaluations, and systematic promotions, was possibly China’s greatest contribution to the modern world. While European states were still relying on ancestry, aristocracy, and patronage, the Chinese had refined several times their competitive and merit-based civil service. When the American and the British governments felt the time had arrived to professionalize their services, they looked into Chinese practice” (1994: 67). Of course, in ancient/agricultural Chinese society, the social division of labour was much simpler, there was much less involvement of bureaucracy in social life, and therefore the primary function of the bureaucracy was to maintain sociomoral order: “The Confucian bureaucrat, selected on the basis of merit, had a sense of responsibility for the overall social order, including the overall moral tone of the society. The guidelines for proper exercise of his role gave less attention to the technical rules for his position than in many Western societies and more attention to how his behavior and decisions affected the moral order” (Vogel 1991: 93). The knowledge required for and taught by the Confucian literati was basically that of the humanities (literature, history, philosophy, etc.), to which the Confucian moral teachings were central. Therefore, the selected officials were those who had acquired proper knowledge of the Confucian morality. As East Asia entered its modern age, the rationalist spirit of its bureaucratic system proved to be universal, but the knowledge of the officials had to be updated and their social functions changed: “The role of the bureaucrat became increasingly specialized, and within each speciality, bureaucrats became well informed about how Western bureaucrats perform similar roles. East Asian bureaucrats began to see the course of history not as cyclical but as progressive, and they began to measure their success by their contribution to their society’s economic and technological advancement. A far larger proportion of them specialized in economic matters than
ever before" (ibid.: 94). The only exception to the meritocratic politics of modern East Asia was socialist China under Mao, particularly during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-76), when bureaucrats, particularly intellectual bureaucrats, were attacked by the Red Guards at a national level and were subjected to re-education by the *gongnongbing* 工农兵 (workers, peasants, and soldiers). In recent years, however, China has restored the system of entrance examination both for high education and for civil service.

In relation to the meritocratic politics in the Confucian world, equality or democracy in education and the emphasis on education also characterizes East Asian societies (perhaps to a certain extent with the exception of mainland China: notwithstanding the fact that China restored its examination system for university admission -- which embodies democracy in education -- immediately after Mao's death, the progress of education is hardly comparable to the economic development since then; in general, education in China remains far less developed in comparison with that in its East Asian neighbours). Equality in education is a rationalistic ideal in the sense that it assumes the equality of human beings as rational/intelligent animals, and it is surely a necessary step toward other social equalities. In the West, equality of opportunity in education is doubtless one of the most significant ideals of modern democracy. The Confucian world did not have to wait for the coming of modern times to realize the importance of education and to practice educational democracy. Confucius himself "was the first man in China to make teaching his profession, and thus popularize culture and education" (Feng 1952: 48). And it was Confucius who declared that "In education there are no class distinctions" (*Analects*: 15.38). Hence the Confucian tradition of equality in education. It is noteworthy that in ancient China/East Asia, education was principally a private matter -- it had been organized by private
teachers in private schools, as it was in Confucius's times. The government had no role to play in this regard except to hold different levels of examination and to stipulate the general content of examination. Of course, in line with equality in education, the government practiced equality in examination — in principle, examination was open to everyone. (In Korea, as explained earlier, the examination system was somewhat different — only those from aristocracy were eligible to participate in the examination; in Japan, on the other hand, there was no examination system at all. Nevertheless, equality of access to education was, in one way or another, widely practiced in ancient East Asian societies.) In modern times, the spirit of educational democracy persists in the Confucian world, but many important changes have taken place. First, East Asian governments have decisively joined the private efforts to promote equality in education: "Today all East Asian societies have rushed to invest heavily in human resources. Parents, teachers, and students treat education almost like a national religion, and government and society devote considerable resources to a frantic expansion of schools and classes" (Tai 1989: 25). Moreover, while moral education remains crucial, Western knowledge (science, technology, and social science) has become a major part of the curricula; and, in addition to self-cultivation and political career, economic success has constituted another, more extensive, if not more important, goal motivating people to pursue higher or better education. Therefore, it is no coincidence that "virtually all East Asian states now have analogous examination systems for university admission. The phenomenon, which is manifest in mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Japan, may be unique to East Asia" (Tu 1992: 6). Naturally, in modern conditions, educational democracy has much more far-reaching social consequences: it relates to social equality in a more direct and general way, tending to produce economic equality, among other things. In Tai's words, "diffusion of education opportunities correlates with equality of income. This is the case in all
five East Asian countries as seen in the statistics on income distribution and on educational development of these countries..." (1989: 26; also cf. Vogel 1991: 96-98).

Last but not least, the development of civil society in modern East Asia and its relation to the Confucian tradition is also a fundamental factor of the political dimension of East Asian modernity. “Civil society” is not always a self-explanatory concept. In White’s summarization, civil society denotes two categories of meaning (1994: 195-96). First, it refers to “political society” in the sense that it “describes a particular type of political relationship between state and society based on the principles of citizenship, rights, representation and the rule of law.” And second, it means “intermediate social organizations,” which in turn can refer to “all social organizations,” “bourgeois society,” and “mass organizations.” These two categories, however, are in effect hardly distinguishable from each other in the modern West, for the idea of civil society is simultaneously a political and sociological concept: civil society consists of organized citizens or social organizations, which can always be politicized, and therefore influence, through legislation, the policy-making of the government. On the one hand, individual citizens are autonomous in relation to civil society, and civil society is autonomous in relation to the state; on the other, the state is civil society institutionalized, and civil society involves the organized individual citizens. Therefore, civil society and liberal democracy are inseparable. In this sense civil society had been foreign to East Asian societies before liberal democracy appeared in the Confucian world. Shils is certainly right when he claims that “All of those elements of civil society which are present in our modern idea of a liberal democratic national society are almost totally absent from the Analects [or, the Confucian world]” (1996: 71). Nevertheless, there were Confucian counterparts (not equivalents) of “citizens” and “social
organizations" which might be readily transformed into components of civil society in modern East Asia. Again as Shils observes, "when we turn to the obligation of the highly educated to serve society through civil service, Confucius emerges as a point of departure for a Chinese tradition that is indispensable to civil society.... his interest lay preponderantly in the genuinely civil virtues -- the civility -- of the gentleman-scholar. In this limited but crucial respect, Confucius can be regarded as an ancestor of the idea of civil society" (ibid.). Actually, the Confucian conception of civility also applied to the common people in the Confucian world. When someone asked, "Why do you not take part in government?" Confucius answered, "The Book of History says, ‘Oh! Simply by being a filial son and friendly to his brothers a man can exert an influence upon government.’ In so doing a man is, in fact, taking part in government. Why does he have to ‘take part in government’?" (Analects: 2.21). Thus, both intellectuals and laymen can, by possessing and manifesting civil virtues or civility, be a part of politics. Of course, as far as the potential for civil society is concerned, the most interesting part in the Confucian world before modern times is perhaps the existence of various self-governing social organizations. These organizations were usually far more autonomous in relation to the state than the individuals in relation to these organizations. For instance, the lineage system was well organized -- in line with the li (rules of propriety) and fa (law) of the state, it had its own rules and regulations (cf. eg. Liu 1959). In explaining the autonomy of these organizations, Pye indicates, "It was possible to have so few officials as contacts between government and people because Chinese society had built in powerful forces for self-regulation. The traditions of the family and clan and other associations and occupational groupings made government intervention to maintain routine order rare.... When a crime occurred,... the government had only to identify the community or the family to which the criminal belonged and then hold the group responsible" (1994: 72). In modern East Asia,
or to be more specific, in the capitalist section of the Confucian world, it is only logical that the Confucian civility has been partly transformed into a Confucian entrepreneurial spirit among the business elites, and, correspondingly, the old social organizations have in one way or another developed into business organizations, thus constituting an essential part of civil society -- a Confucian market economy. On the other hand, there are also many intellectuals who, in the spirit of Confucian civility, have engaged themselves in serving society through civil service and/or social criticism -- their relative lack of vested interest and their privileged access to modern Western social thoughts making them (some of them) a major social force calling for democratic reforms (or, historically, socialist revolutions). There are therefore two forces in the development of civil society in modern East Asia, which paradoxically coexist with the state: one is a Confucian market economy, the other, democratic factors. The question for the state is this: in interacting with civil society, will it become democratized politically while remaining paternalistic economically? Or, in Tu’s words, “Having endured and flourished in a market economy, the Confucian persuasion will face the real test of its survivability in the democratic polity” (1996: 189). The answer seems positive in light of recent political occurrence in Taiwan, which actually exemplifies the general pattern in East Asia: with the exception of North Korea and the PRC (and Hongkong), all East Asian societies are characterized by a state polity that has, as Tu observes (ibid.: 343-49), become democratic as far as basic civil/political rights are concerned, and yet has been paternalistic in the sphere of economic life. China’s (and hence Hongkong's) political future is uncertain, but no one needs to be reminded of the existence of its expanding civil society in both economic and political terms (cf. White 1988, 1994). In North Korea’s case, it is quite doubtful that the existing power would be able to sustain its rule very long without making substantial economic progress (in an international market-economy environment).
Therefore, at first glance, the political dimension of modern East Asia, like its economic dimension, appears to be a mixture of the Confucian tradition and Western influences. However, the very fact that the Confucian tradition can mingle with Western influences indicates that Confucianism is both traditional and modern politically as well as economically. The paternalistic state in the economic life of East Asian societies, proves to be significant, if not indispensable, to economic development in modern East Asia. On the other hand, meritocratic bureaucracy is part of the Confucian tradition universalized in modern times, which naturally updates itself with Western knowledge, modern economics in particular (of course, bureaucratic rationality in the modern West also has its own intellectual and institutional sources). Moreover, equality or democracy in education in modern East Asia is directly linked to the Confucian tradition, and coincides with modern liberal democracy, and it functions -- with or without the democratic state -- in the Confucian world to create economic and other social equalities. Finally, the growth of civil society in modern East Asia also has its roots in Confucian civility and in the well-developed social organizations of premodern East Asia. Hence we find a Confucian market economy coexisting with an increasingly democratized and yet paternalistic polity. It remains to be seen whether democracy in East Asian societies will be understood and practiced in the same way as it is in the West.

7.3. Familism vs. Feminism: A Case of Local Culture in the Modern Context
The most stable and visible part of culture is perhaps the culture in everyday life (in a broad sense, everyday life means life itself, including public life — in this sense the term “everyday” is redundant; here “everyday life” simply refers to private life, or life beyond work). In the Confucian world, the major portion of everyday life -- in both qualitative and quantitative terms -- is family life, which pertains to, needless to say, family values, the core of Confucian familism. In this regard, the Confucian world considerably differs from the West since the 1960s, where the family or family life has undergone some fundamental changes or -- some would say -- family revolution. Family revolution in the West is part of the general anti-establishment movement, and its theoretical background is extremely complicated. Obviously, a direct and principal ideology for this revolution is feminism or, to be more specific, cultural feminism. Hence the disparity between familism in the Confucian world and feminism in the contemporary West. Of course, to contrast East Asian familism with Western feminism does not imply that feminism does not exist in modern East Asia or family values have vanished in the contemporary West. Feminism does exist in modern East Asia, and it does improve women’s status in both public and private life, but it does not constitute a substantial challenge to the family as the basic component of society; on the other hand, family values still dominate everyday life among a large part of the population in the West, and there are also many non-feminist women, but family crisis is so serious that family values have to be debated in public. In the final analysis, the disparity between familism in the Confucian world and feminism in the contemporary West is rooted in respective cultures, or is the disparity between cultural familism and cultural feminism -- in fact, some recent feminist movements in the West, such as radical feminism and
essential feminism, are duly termed as "cultural feminism." In this sense both familism and feminism are local cultures in the modern context.

Feminism in the West has not been an internally consistent theory at all. In historical order there have appeared liberal feminism, socialist feminism, and now cultural feminism, roughly corresponding to the development of liberalism, socialism, and postmodernism. These different feminist movements, like their (male) counterparts, are juxtaposed in the contemporary theoretical discourse — the diachronic becomes synchronic. Strange as it might be, liberalism, which believes that human beings are born free and equal, does not necessarily imply liberal feminism. Although liberals would generally keep their distance from Rousseau's radical egalitarianism, the majority of them shared his view of the divergent nature of the sexes: "The man should be strong and active; the woman should be weak and passive; the one must have the power and will; it is enough that the other should offer little resistance.... I grant you this is not the law of love, but it is the law of nature, which is older than love itself" (1986: 322; cf. Zeitlin 1997: ch. 4; also cf. Ross 1994: 191-93). The underlying assumption of this view is some sort of what is now called biological determinism or sociobiology, which had been a theoretical convention in the West since ancient times (Plato was indeed a curious exception to this convention). It was only too natural that most modern liberals did not extend their objection of social hierarchy to "biological difference" (they would perhaps also suggest that biological difference is, via inheritance, linked to economic difference) — in fact, their understanding of social hierarchy was confined to political inequality. Nevertheless, there were liberals, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill, who argued that gender relation is socially constructed. According to Wollstonecraft, "not only the virtue but also the knowledge of the
two sexes should be the same in nature, if not in degree” (1986: 124, italics original; cf. Zeitlin 1997: ch. 5), explicitly rejecting the biological basis of gender inequality. Mr. Mill further confirmed that “What is now called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing -- the result of forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others” (1983: 38-39). Moreover, in answering the question “why the existence of one-half the species should be merely ancillary to that of the other,” Mrs. Mill flatly said, “the only reason which can be given is, that men like it” (1983: 23-24). Liberal feminism would demand nothing more and nothing less for women than liberalism did for men or for human beings, i.e. political equality. In other words, universal suffrage was the primary, if not the sole, goal of liberal feminism, which was achieved in the early twentieth century in most Western nations as far as women are concerned. Therefore, it seems only logical for Wollstonecraft to claim that women’s “first duty is to themselves as rational creatures, and the next, in point of importance, as citizens, is that, which includes so many, of a mother” (1986: 257-58). At this point, she actually agreed with Rousseau’s concept of femininity (cf. Zeitlin 1997: 42).

Just as socialism was not confined by liberalism, socialist feminists went beyond what their liberal sisters had achieved. Socialist feminists would agree with liberal feminists on their critique of biological determinism: “We are born female and male, biological sexes, but we are created woman and man, socially recognized genders” (Hartmann 1981: 16). Nevertheless, they appealed to Marxism to understand how gender relation is socially constructed. On the other hand, however, socialist feminists were not satisfied with Marxism with reference to women. As Hartmann pointed out, “Marxist categories, like capital itself, are sex-blind” (ibid.: 10-11). She observed that “a healthy and strong partnership exists between patriarchy and capital” (ibid.: 19). As a result, the patriarchal
structure dominates both the private life and the public realm: parallel to the division of labour at home, there is a sex segregation in the labor market — "Women's jobs were lower paid, considered less skilled, and often involved less exercise of authority and control" (Hartmann 1982: 152). Conditioned by this segregation, the participation of women in the labor force does not necessarily lead to their emancipation. In Hartmann's explanation, capitalists are always interested in keeping job segregation: "If they can supersede experienced men with cheaper women, so much the better; if they can weaken labor by threatening to do so, that's good too; or, if failing that, they can use those status differences to reward men, and by their allegiance to capitalism with patriarchal benefits, that's okay too" (ibid.: 166). Moreover, male workers, when it comes to whether please their proletarian wives or to stand with their homogenous capitalists, are more concerned with their gender status than with their class condition. In fact, they have even tried to exclude women from union membership and labor force, and the main reason for them to keep high wage job or to raise their wage is "family wage" — "they argue for wages sufficient for their labor alone to support their family" (Hartmann 1981: 12-27). Thus, men and capitalists go hand in hand, patriarchy and capitalism adjust to each other, and women under patriarchal capitalism are oppressed both within and without the family.

Alison M. Jaggar made it clear that "On the socialist analysis, capitalism, male dominance, racism and imperialism are intertwined so inextricably that they are inseparable; consequently the abolition of any of these systems of dominance requires the end of all of them" (1983: 124). However, this would seem too much for socialist feminism to achieve. Hartmann admitted that "It is not clear... that the socialism being struggled for is the same for both men and women" (ibid.: 27). Still, apparently socialist feminists, with the assistance of their liberal sisters, have been gradually approaching some specific social goals, such as equal pay for equal work. Meanwhile, the welfare state, although much
blamed for — among other things — its being positively related to the patriarchal family, does makes women (at least single mothers) much less dependent on men economically.

Cultural feminists believe that there are some features particular to women, and they want to essentialize these features (essential feminism); moreover, they perceive the hitherto existing human civilization as men’s civilization, and they seek to transcend this civilization to create a world for women or a gender-neutral world (radical feminism). From the perspective of cultural feminism, in the world of men, woman is considered an imperfect man, an incidental being, and less than rational or less rational. In this men’s world, women, biologically “inferior to” men, sociologically dominated by men, are culturally absent, silent or misrepresented — women are the other. Cultural feminism distinguishes itself from traditional feminisms, including liberal and socialist feminisms. According to cultural feminism, liberal and socialist feminisms are based on “male-biased” doctrines in theory, and seek an androgynous future in practice; in other words, what they see in the past and hope for the future are both a world of men. Therefore, cultural feminism has emerged as both a challenge to the phallocentric human civilization and a criticism on the traditional woman-less feminism. It strives to make the absent be present, the silent start speaking, and the other become the subject. Ironically, in conceptualizing its idea of women, cultural feminism first relies on biological factors, i.e. women’s body and sexuality: “Woman has sexual organs just about everywhere. She experiences pleasure almost everywhere. Even without speaking of the hysterization of her entire body, one can say that the geography of her pleasure is much more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than is imagined....” (Irigaray, 1980: 103). Thus, to escape from the misogynist discourse and to identify women’s distinction, some cultural feminists resort to what they
called feminine writing: “It is by writing, from and for women, and by taking up the challenge of speech which has been governed by the phallus, that women will confirm women in a place other than which is reserved in and by the symbolic, that is, in a place other than silence” (Cixous, 1980: 251).

How do women write? “Women must write with their bodies,... Women are body. More body, hence more writing” (ibid.: 256-57). “Listen to a woman speaking at a public gathering.... She doesn’t ‘speak,’ she throw her trembling body forward; her flesh speaks true; she signifies it with her body. In a certain way she inscribes what she’s saying,...” (ibid.: 251). What do they write? “Almost everything that is yet to be written by women about femininity: about their sexuality, that is, its infinite and mobile complexity, about their eroticization, sudden turn-ons of a certain minuscule-immense area of their bodies;...” (ibid.: 256). Therefore, “feminine writing” appears to be the aestheticism of women’s body and sexuality. Shulamith Firestone is also a cultural feminist in a somewhat different sense. She would accept the conception of women’s essence articulated in the “feminine writing” theory, but she reads this essence in its social context. Paraphrasing historical materialism, she writes (1970: 13-14),

All past history [note that we can now eliminate “with the exception of primitive stages”] was the history of class struggle. These warring classes of society are always the product of the modes of organization of the biological family unite for reproduction of the species, as well as of the strictly economic modes of production and exchange of goods and services. The sexual-reproductive organization of society always furnishes the real basis, starting from which alone we can work out the ultimate explanation of the whole superstructure of
economic, juridical, and political institutions as well as the religious, philosophical, and other ideas of a given historical period.

Moreover, she envisions a socially-conditioned feminist revolution (ibid.: 11-12, italics altered):

So that just as to assure elimination of economic classes require the revolt of underclass (proletariat) and, in a contemporary dictatorship, their seizure of the means of production, so to assure the elimination of sexual classes requires the revolt of the underclass (women) and the seizure of control of reproduction: *the restoration of their own bodies, as well as feminine control of human fertility, including both the new technology and all social institutions of childbearing and childrearing.* And just as the end of socialist revolution was not only the elimination of the economic class privilege but of the economic class distinction itself, so the end goal of feminist revolution must be, unlike that of the first feminist movement, *not just the elimination of male privilege, but of the sex distinction itself:* genital differences between human beings would no longer matter *culturally.*

Obviously, cultural feminists have not, as they promised, completely dissociated themselves from their liberal and socialist sisters: those who advocate “feminine writing” would not be able to reject the central idea of liberalism, i.e. individual freedom, and Firestone, on the other hand, has to elaborate her theory in the Marxist framework of historical materialism, especially of social revolution. Nevertheless, cultural feminists differ from their liberal and socialist sisters in a substantial way: for cultural feminists, political equality is not the ultimate goal but the minimum condition to be achieved;
furthermore, they would not only separate the family from capitalism, but also emancipate women from the family. In this sense, cultural feminism, as part of postmodernism, is indeed questioning the history of human or -- in the terminology of cultural feminism -- phallocentric civilization in general; and it has a different vision of future civilization for women, if not for all human beings, which centres on genderless female sexuality or gender-neutral human sexuality. Martha A. Fineman is virtually a cultural feminist when she proposes to abolish marriage as a legal category and to allow voluntary sexual relationships between adults to be unregulated (1995: 298-30). It should be noted that the vision of cultural feminism is not a totally utopian fantasy: in the contemporary West, increasingly, there are many women (and men) who are not homeless but family-less, there are many lesbians (just as there are many homosexuals), there are many mother-child(ren) families, and there are also many women who seek male partners only for the sake of sexual pleasure. Undoubtedly, cultural feminism has provided a theoretical interpretation, if not ideological guidance, for these women. The national debate on the issues of abortion, homosexuality, and family values in the US is another example of the influence of the catchword of feminism, cultural feminism in particular, that is: the personal is political (indeed, in the feminist reasoning, one can also say, the personal is economic and cultural). Margaret Thatcher succinctly expresses neoliberal/neoconservative philosophy in her famous phrase -- “there is no such thing as society, only individuals and their families” (quoted from Twine, 1994: 10). However, in light of what has happened to “individuals and their families” in recent years in the West, perhaps Mrs. Thatcher should revise the phrase as follows: “there is no such thing as society, only individuals and families,” and she should also consider the diversity of families. Generally, of course, mainstream feminist movements are still associated primarily with liberal and socialist feminism, and cultural familism is largely limited to the theoretical level and its influence is much less significant.
What is the situation of family life and women in East Asia? It seems safe to say that in East Asia, despite many significant changes, the family remains an institution to which most members of society belong, and family values continue to function well in everyday life. East Asian women would accept feminism in its liberal and socialist forms, but there are hardly any substantial evidences suggesting significant impacts of cultural feminism in East Asia. Take Japan as an example, which is among the most modernised countries in the world. In Japan, women's suffrage was finally approved at the end of 1945, but Japanese women did not wait for the coming of General Douglas MacArthur to fight for their right to vote. In fact, the campaign for women's suffrage in Japan started in the late 1870s and early 1880s. Therefore, after the Second World War was over, “It was possible to organize a sizable group [to campaign for women's suffrage] in a short time because of women's history of struggle in the prewar period and the existence of the former network” (Kaneko, 1995: 10). On the other hand, with the enactment of the 1947 Civil Law, the old family system was abolished, the conjugal relationship became the cornerstone of the family, and legal equality of wife and husband was recognized. Also in 1947, educational equality and coeducation of all levels were legalized by the Fundamental Law of Education. Moreover, the Labor Standard Law of 1947 and the Equal Employment Opportunity Law of 1985 stipulated equal treatment for women in the workplace, and the Child Care Leave Law of 1991 further required companies to grant unpaid leave to either parent until the child reaches the age of one. With the new legislation, Japanese women became increasingly visible in areas other than family life, i.e., politics, education, and employment (cf. Fujimura-Fanselow 1995; Robins-Mowry 1983). However, in all these areas real equality between women and men is far from achieved -- the main reason is family life and familism. For instance, as Fujimura-Fanselow...
points out, "while access to both educational and employment opportunities has rapidly increased, education has not been fully translated into career advancement for Japanese women, due largely to the limited employment opportunities for married women, especially those seeking to reenter the labor market after having left it because of household and child care responsibilities" (1995: xxxv). Behind this is familism: "The kinds of obstacles to women's attainment of greater equality and opportunity are, to an important degree, sustained and buttressed by norms, values, attitudes, and expectations pertaining to gender roles which persist in the consciousness of many Japanese, including women. Moreover, those norms and values continue to be reproduced and passed on to the younger generation of Japanese in the home and through school and the mass media" (ibid.: xxiv). Given the strong existence of familism, it is only natural that "A Japanese wife and husband are expected to act more as parents than as a couple, or, in other words, to place priority on their role as parents rather than as a couple." This together with women's low position in the labor market together tend to maintain "a relatively low divorce rate in Japan" (Yoshizumi 1995: 192). For the same reason, the birth rate of children of unwed couples is very low — just one percent (ibid.: 194), which implies that as far as children are concerned, formal marriage and family life are the dominant form of partnership between their parents. Tanaka makes the following general observation: "Japanese society is largely organized based on a rigid gender division of labor. Thus, it is difficult for women to have both career and family. Men are expected to devote, and are accustomed to doing so, their time and energy to the workplace. Long working hours have not been reduced much. Wives are supposed to take the primary responsibility for family affairs and cannot expect husbands to share in the household tasks and child care" (1995: 306). Therefore, in contemporary Japan, a happy marriage still exists between the patriarchal family and capitalism, if not simultaneously between the
wife and the husband.

Socialist China provides a different form of the dominance of familism in everyday life. A milestone in the history of women’s movement in modern China is the enactment of the Marriage Law in 1950. According to “Article 1” of the code, “The feudal marriage system based on arbitrary and compulsory arrangements and the supremacy of man over woman, and in disregard of the interests of the children, is abolished. The new democratic marriage system, which is based on the free choice of partners, on monogamy, on equal rights for both sexes, and on the protection of the lawful interests of women and children, is put into effect” (quoted from “Appendix: The 1950 Marriage Law,” in Stacey 1983). There is no doubt that the general spirit of this code is revolutionary and democratic, especially in view of the well-established and long-existing traditional family system in the Confucian world. However, a closer examination reveals that some basic Confucian values pertaining to family life were carefully preserved in the code. For instance, “Article 8” states: “Husband and wife are in duty bound to love, respect, assist and look after each other, to live in harmony, to engage in productive work, to care for their children, and to strive jointly for the welfare of the family and for the building of the new country.” In this article the emotional equality, intimacy, and harmony between the spouses, as well as the welfare of the family, particularly that of the children in the family, are emphasized as part of the Confucian ideal of the family. In addition, “Article 13” says, “Parents have the duty to rear and to educate their children; the children have the duty to support and to assist their parents. Neither the parents nor the children shall maltreat or desert one another.” This is but a modern legalized version of Confucian virtues of humanity or benevolence on the part of parents, and filial piety on the part of children. Moreover, with reference to divorce, “Article 17” stipulates that “Divorce is granted when
husband and wife both desire it. In the event that the husband or wife alone insists upon divorce, it may be granted only when mediation by the district [local] people's government and the judicial organ has failed to bring about a reconciliation.” This article should not be simply understood as implying that the code allows politics to interfere with the individual freedom. For the article embodies two important aspects of the Confucian tradition: the priority of the family over the individual (at least when the family is still important to one of the spouses), and the solution of civil conflicts (family disputes, in this case) by settling them through a middleman’s mediation, instead of by perpetuating them via the law. The 1950 Marriage Law was only the beginning of the women’s movement under the new government. The Constitution of the People’s Republic of China of 1954 further provided a legal basis for the equality between women and men in social life. Thus, “Article 96” reads: Women in the People’s Republic of China enjoy equal rights with men in their political, economic, cultural, social, and family life” (quoted from Xie 1992: 84). Nevertheless, the application of the Marriage Law and the Constitution (the content regarding women) has varied substantially from urban to rural areas. (Socialist China has been divided not only geographically but also by the state policy into urban and rural areas: “Since the late 1950s, the government, seeking to stem the growth of urban areas and maintain the urban/rural ratio at about 20 percent to 80 percent, has more or less frozen the population in place and sought to pursue the modernization and development of the countryside in ways that do not create geographic mobility” (cf. Johnson 1983: 217; also see Cohen 1993). This urban/rural duality has experienced significant changes since 1978, partly as a result of the economic reform in the rural area, which makes it possible for a large part of rural population to rush into cities; correspondingly, the related policy has undergone reevaluation and modification.) Thus, in urban areas, equality or democracy between husband and wife in family life has become a universal rule, just
as equal rights between men and women in political participation, education and employment have been largely realized. Men are not “company men” and women are not “professional wives,” as in Japan. Preschool children are for most of the time taken care of by a variety of government-run daycare or weekday-care centres or by their retired grandparents. Unemployed women are rare, and men share housework responsibilities with their wives. In rural areas, the population of which account for at least 80 per cent of the national population, things are quite different. There, the implementation of the Marriage Law met “popular resistance and organizational neglect” in the early 1950s (cf. Johnson 1983; Stacey 1983). Bigamy, concubinage, child betrothal and interference in the remarriage of widows are effectively prohibited, but mercenary marriages and arranged marriages have tacitly continued to prevail. The traditional family system (particularly the lineage organization) has been abolished -- partly as a result of the movement of organizing communes, but the nuclear family has remained male-centred. As women and men are both much less educated than their urban counterparts, the equality of education does not mean much in rural areas. Women have joined men in the work force, but this has only made women work more than men, since they are chiefly responsible for housework. So, the effect of the women’s movement is much less evident in rural than in urban areas. A recent example for this is the practice of the one-child policy in China: in urban areas, few families (hence women) have more than one child -- male or female, and boys and girls are equally treated; while in rural areas, despite the harsh state policy, it is common that a young couple would manage to have a male child even after they already have one (or more) female child, and a woman who gives birth to a female child would often be left out in the cold for a while. In general, therefore, the situation of the family and women in rural areas contrasts sharply with that in urban areas, but familism continues to govern everyday life in both areas, and in both it is rooted in the
Thus, the evidence in both modern Japan and socialist China, regardless of their political and economic differences, and despite the distinction between urban and rural China, points to the strong existence of familism in everyday life. Other modern East Asian societies are similar to Japan and China in this regard: South Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan, where economic life and family life are inseparable, can be located somewhere between Japan and rural China; and Singapore, where the building of the nation-state is directly linked to the welfare of the family (cf. Salaff 1988), is somewhere between Japan and urban China. Therefore, although feminist movements in modern East Asia have changed the lives of many East Asian women (and men), these movements, largely confined within the vision of liberal and socialist feminisms in theory, have been integrated into the family and family life in practice. Cultural feminism might appear freshening and inspiring for female university students, yet its influence would be very unlikely to last for the rest of their lives or to penetrate into the wider society. Thus, as far as everyday life is concerned, the real gap between East Asia and the West is a cultural gap -- it lies between Confucian familism in East Asia and cultural feminism in the West. In this sense, both Confucian familism and cultural feminism are local cultures.

In a deeper sense, the gap between Confucian familism in East Asia and cultural feminism in the West reflects different attitudes toward human existence and its social condition. In sociological parlance, people in the Confucian world are social realists, and they believe that the family is the first and basic social reality; on the other hand, people in the West, particularly in the contemporary West, are social nominalists, and they believe in individuality and autonomy. In East Asia, the success of an individual
is always linked to and part of the prosperity of his or her family; in the West, parents nurture their child so that, in Eastman's word, “he or she can become an independent and self-fulfilling adult” (1988: 17). In East Asia, the family is a source of political sheltering, economic security, and psychological health; in the West, the family, like other social institutions or social contracts, is to be victimized when its function can be replaced (by the welfare state), or when it becomes an obstacle to individual freedom. Thus conceived, Confucian familism simply depicts for East Asians a precondition of human existence in the social world, while cultural feminism logically completes another half of cultural individualism in the modern West.

The following observation by Lee Kuan Yew, in an interview, indicates the basic cultural differences and policy discrepancies between the Confucian world and the modern West with regard to family life:

... Our divorce rates have gone up, too, but what is the total? We are slowing down the process at every stage. And people don't shack up together; it's unacceptable. And we can't have single mothers. It's totally unacceptable, and we keep it unacceptable.

We reinforce [?] it with social sanctions and economic sanctions. It is disapproved of. If you want to have a quiet affair, that's your business; it's always going on. But this flagrant disregard of social norms is unacceptable because we think it will lead to the disintegration of the family, which supports and nurtures the children.

I am not saying that we are unchanging and unchangeable. But I do say that we will do everything possible not to allow this building brick of society to disintegrate. Without this we
are no different from animals. You cannot bring up children in institutions, whether day school or boarding school or whatever. It is not possible. They can supplement what values are transmitted in the home, but they cannot be a substitute for the home.

We should not substitute the state for the parents or the family. If you bring a child into the world in the West, the state caters for him. That’s dangerous. If you bring a child into Asia, that’s your personal responsibility. (Quoted from Rohwer 1995: 339-40.)

On the ground of the foregoing discussion, one may imagine how a Westerner, say, a cultural feminist, would respond to this observation. Of course, the difference between the Confucian world, as emphasized by Mr. Lee, should not blind us to the possible coexistence of familism and feminism as well as to the familistic and feminist values shared by the two sides.
8. Epilogue: The Clash of Civilizations?

It seems safe to conclude that it is no historical coincidence that Confucianism has been a defining cultural factor of modern East Asia. Theoretically, Confucianism is a rationalistic and humanistic tradition; therefore when it was first introduced in a relatively systematic way into the West in early modern times, it was, with some revisions, duly integrated into the Enlightenment mentality in Europe, and eventually -- after a century of political and intellectual vicissitudes -- its remains have become manifest in the "economic miracle" in modern East Asia. The ultimate concern of Confucianism is the social world or the life-world: it perceives the transcendent in the immanent, the sacred in the secular, and the meaning of life in everyday life; in this general spirit, Confucianism provides a set of moral principles that are flexible and reasonable enough to coexist with various religious and irreligious teachings -- traditional or modern -- in an internally coherent way. The main surviving element of the Confucian tradition in modern times is Confucian familism, which functions as an essential factor in the organization of economic and political life and as the moral foundation of everyday life. Therefore, the East Asian model of modernity cannot be adequately understood without appreciating the fundamental role of Confucianism and Confucian familism.

In the introductory chapter of this thesis, culture is defined as "a set of shared norms, values and corresponding behavioral patterns that characterize a society." Culture so defined is the core part of
culture in general. And, as such, it persists. Culture persists by the retention or rediscovery of ethnic identities in a multiethnic context, by the invention and reinvention of national traditions in an international and globalizing world, and by the association of countries or societies that share certain cultural traditions. The conspicuous existence of the Confucian tradition or the surviving Confucian tradition as an ethnic phenomenon, a national tradition and a regional civilization vividly exemplifies the persistence of culture in modern times. However, in an open society, culture persists not only, in some cases, in the form of religious fundamentalism (Giddens 1995), but also, generally, in a process of deconstruction and reconstruction (Isajiw 1993). Thus, in the conditions of modernity, cultural traditions are traditional but not necessarily traditionalistic, they are local but not immune to global and cross-cultural influences, and they account for the distinctiveness of the modern experience of the corresponding societies — but not without being themselves transformed and re-formed in the process. Hence the relevance of culture or tradition to modernity.

Do cultures or civilizations clash, as Huntington envisioned? (Of course, strictly speaking, culture and civilization are two overlapping yet different terms, but the difference in their meanings is not much relevant here.) Cultures themselves do not clash, unless they are — and somehow they always are — politically mobilized for the sake of vested or desired interests. The modern West and East Asia, among other parts of the world, have been exposed to each other for a long enough time to test whether the two different cultures clash. When various Western forces, particularly the Eight-Power Allied Forces (baguolianjun 八国联军), poured into China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they were not there as the Crusades and they were not clashing with the Confucian tradition — they were actually fighting each other in China and in the rest of the world; therefore, at the end of
the First World War, China, nearly fragmented by Western colonialism, was surprisingly included among the list of the victorious nations of the First World War. In the Second World War, when Japan, in the name of Confucianism or regional culture, expelled the whites in East and Southeast Asia and combated with the US on the Pacific Ocean, it was also fighting the rest of the Confucian world (It should be mentioned that on other hand, Nazism was economic racism more than cultural racism, and it was racism against the Jewish people and some other peoples but it was modern nationalism and imperialism against other nations). In the postwar period, it is true that China was involved, to different degrees, in two major wars against the military existence of the US in Asia, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, but those two wars were part of the Cold War or, in Huntington's words, ideological conflicts and had little to do with the Confucian tradition. It is often said that North America is a “melting pot” of various ethnic groups or a multicultural(ist) society, which has certainly exhibited the possibility of coexistence rather than conflict among different cultures in a modern context, including the Confucian tradition and other East Asian traditions. It is, however, often forgotten that modern (and traditional) East Asia is also a land rich in multicultural and cross-cultural experiences: Christianity, modern spirituality, and even postmodern movements from the West, not to mention Buddhism from India and Islam from the Middle East, are all in one way or another integrated into the mentality of modern East Asia. Thus, a question for Huntington is: if civilizations were to clash, why only after the Cold War?

Interests do clash, and when they do, they appeal to armed forces, diplomatic means as well as ideological/cultural justifications. In other words, they often appear as political and cultural confrontations. In the capitalist world, interests are organized mainly along the lines of class and the
nation-state. From the Marxist perspective, national interests/conflicts can be reduced to class interests/conflicts, but in the real world, obviously, both, while interwoven, have also existed in their own right. Moreover, in the West, class conflicts have been largely muted or institutionalized by the formation of the middle class, by the development of the welfare state, and -- last but not least -- by the happening of ending of the Cold War. Indeed, Western leftist movements in recent decades have been more and more linked to social concerns other than economic interests. In East Asia, class conflicts have been substantially “mediated” or dissolved by, among other factors, familistic social relationships. It is hardly surprising that in both socialist China and capitalist Japan, trade unions are organized mainly on the basis of work units (China) or companies (Japan) instead of professions. Therefore, in both the West and East Asia, the format of “the end of ideology” (the end of the ideology of class interests/conflicts) does capture a historically significant social phenomenon. Hence the salience of the issue of national interests -- in comparison with that of class interests. When it comes to this issue, the cultural distinction of the modern West and of modern East Asia (as regional civilizations) becomes irrelevant or at least not relevant directly -- what is relevant is “national culture” or nationalist ideology, which is in fact a modern invention (Eric Hobsbawm should perhaps resume his study on the nation-state and nationalism after he published The Age of Extremes).

Gellner’s following observation is insightful: “the mutual relationship of a modern culture and state is something quite new, and springs, inevitably, from the requirement of a modern economy” (1983: 140; also cf. Gellner 1994: 199. In Gellner’s context, modern culture refers to nationalism). Indeed, under modern capitalism, nationalism per se constitutes an ideology or a culture: it functions with or without other ideologies or cultural traditions -- more often than not nationalism wears the mask of traditions, but it can also directly appeal to national interest (is American nationalism related to any
specific premodern cultural traditions?) or even to racism (as in the Third Reich). Therefore, the clash of civilizations is a wrong expression for the clash of nations or national interests.

Nations or nation-states are major institutionalized agents in the modern capitalist world. National interests can make ideological discrepancy irrelevant: apparently, for instance, Western nations are much more attracted by the huge potential market in China than they are resented by China's human-rights record in recent years. National interests can also make civilizational gaps disappear: during the Gulf war, Iraq was surrounded not only by Western nations, but also by its Islamic neighbours. Thus, a historian of trade war would be unlikely to find any clue or pattern of cultural relevance to trade relation among nations. Of course, national interests seldom fail to avail themselves to traditional cultural resources or modern ideological inventions — when these are available. A question to be raised is: How might Confucianism be related to national interests and nationalism? Confucianism as such is not a nationalist ideology: the vision of Confucianism is, in the final analysis, universalistic — it embraces tianxia 天下 (all under Heaven) and it advocates datong 大同 (the great unity); on the other hand, Confucian familism, the Confucian tradition in action, is hardly conducive to nationalism. Still, Confucianism, just like any other traditions or ideologies, could be used, as it was by Japan during the Second World War, as a cultural force to mobilize nationalist emotions and movements, yet in that case the result would be Confucian nationalism rather than nationalist Confucianism.

The key to the clashes of nations/nation-states or international clashes is the relationship between capitalism and nationalism (rather than the differences of civilizations/cultures). This relationship is,
upon theoretical scrutiny, really a modern puzzle: does the capitalist class care about national interests, or to what extent does it? The same question can be asked to the working class. A further question is: are there real national interests, or aren’t national interests just conventional or expedient representation of familial and individual interests in this capitalist world? Remember Mrs. Thatcher’s plain but sharp statement: “There is no such thing as society, only individuals and their families” (quoted from Twine 1994: 10). There is no doubt that Saint-Simon’s perception of nationalism -- nationalism is a form of egoism (cf. Zeitlin 1997: ch. 8) -- is still revealing when applied to today’s situation. His ideal of internationalism, however, remains a utopia, despite -- as he expected -- the tremendous industrial advances and the ever-unfolding globalizing process in modern times. The capitalist class is indeed, according to Marx and Engels, an international class, but it is so without internationalism, for the dynamism of this class lies in egoism -- in the form of individualism or familism. The nation-state and nationalism (and “civilizational clashes”) cannot be properly understood without taking the nature of the capitalist class into account. On the other hand, the nation-state and nationalism provide real and ideological links by which the capitalist class and the working class and, of course, the middle class are organized (or divided) along geographical and/or cultural lines in the capitalist world. Of course, it should be noted that within the confine of the nation-state, modern capitalism has been subject to revision and localization: the development of the welfare state as well as the New Right politics in the West, and the integration of Confucian values into modern capitalism in East Asia, have demonstrated that modern capitalism is, after all, not a fixed machine or an “iron cage” -- it is a historically conditioned, socially contingent and culturally contextualized human invention.
As various critical theories have pointed out, modern capitalism is in many ways an evil: it -- via the institution of contract -- creates legitimate dictators and their administrations in economic organizations, which are beyond the formal realm of liberal democracy but ironically under its direct supervision or protection; it institutionalizes the nation-state, industrializes the means of violence, and consequently makes large-scale war a constant threat, if not indispensable, to modern life; it bases the continuity of human existence on the discontinuity of ecological cycle.... Notwithstanding all these, modern capitalism seems to have proved that it succeeds in at least one thing: satisfying immediate human needs or interests (in this regard no other hitherto existent social systems have provided better alternatives). Therefore, modern capitalism makes humanity sophisticatedly shallow, rationally absurd, and tragically epicurean, and, in the final analysis, modern capitalism is at best a necessary evil. In this sense, given the globalizing effects of modern capitalism, human beings -- regardless of their ideological orientations and cultural backgrounds -- are not so much different from one another, and they -- however they differ -- are in the same boat. Thus conceived, the internal conflicts among human beings should not blind them to their common good, and the theme of civilizational clash no longer makes any sense.
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