

Book Review 【書評】

Chun-chieh Huang,
Humanism in East Asian Confucian Contexts
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Philip J. IVANHOE*

There are very few scholars in the world today capable of writing informed and sophisticated work on East Asian Confucianism as found in its many expressions through history and across the cultures of China, Korea, and Japan, and none who can do so with the authority and insight of Professor Huang Chun-chieh. *Humanism in East Asian Confucian Contexts* collects, refines, and extends a set of essays and themes representing Huang's research in recent years and focuses these through the lens of seeking to define a distinctive East Asian Confucian form of humanism. One of the greatest virtues of this work is Huang's ability to paint in both broad strokes and fine detail: he makes and defends large claims about the nature of East Asian Confucianism and how it differs from other forms of humanism, but he also provides precise and elegant detail that both offers evidence for and elaborates upon the larger claims he makes. In presenting his case, Huang draws upon a magisterial command of original sources and secondary literature in Chinese, Korean, and Japanese as well as secondary sources in English. While he pays careful attention to historical detail and offers a number of fascinating observations about the nature of East Asian historical writing, this book is a synthetic and constructive piece of scholarship: he fashions a particular conception of what East Asian Confucian humanism is or can be. My

* Reader-Professor of Philosophy, City University of Hong Kong.

remarks take the view he offers as a contemporary interpretation of Confucianism that draws upon and together a broad variety of different expressions of the tradition and defends a set of characteristic themes, concerns, and values as the core features of a distinctive form of East Asian humanism. I will review the general structure of Huang's presentation and explore several of his key claims in more detail. Along the way, I will offer critical appraisal and additional comments or suggestions on parts of Huang's analysis.

Huang opens his work by noting that East Asian Confucianism is expressed in a variety of sophisticated, powerful, and subtle forms and yet he seeks to bring into focus and relief "a common core value: the perfectibility of the human person" (p. 12). In addition, he argues this core value "exhibits four salient aspects: a continuum between mind and body, harmony between oneself and others, the unity of heaven and humanity, and a deep historical consciousness" (p. 13). These four aspects of the East Asian Confucian conception of human perfectibility provide the titles and guiding themes for the core chapters of Huang's work, and we shall discuss each of them below in more detail. Before turning to the individual chapters, though, I would like to note two general characteristics of East Asian Confucianism that Huang identifies in chapter one, his Introduction. Both of these strike me as extremely insightful observations that help us understand distinctive features of Huang's interpretation of East Asian Confucianism; they are especially helpful for distinguishing East Asian Confucian humanism from prominent forms of Western humanism.

The first general characteristic is described in the following way,

According to East Asian Confucianisms, people with a humanistic outlook had a certain loftiness and depth; they were not one-dimensional *homo economicus* or *homo politicus*; rather they were a sort of *homo culturus* or *homo historien*, grown over the long-term, incubated and steeped in their surrounding cultures. (p. 21)

I take this passage as having two primary points. First, it claims that in East Asian Confucian cultures ideal human beings are very much creatures of culture and history who see themselves as connected with, embedded within, and products of these larger, temporally extended phenomena and not unencumbered individuals who, through a series of particular moments of choice, seek to realize their own, largely material, good. Second, this Confucian ideal differs fundamentally from a Western ideal for individuals, which largely consists of the "unencumbered individual" alternative described above. As a general claim about Western cultures, the implied contrast with Western views of human beings we find here and elsewhere should be questioned and qualified, for even as far back as Aristotle, the particular culture within which one was raised, along with its history and mythology, were thought to contribute in critical ways to who and what one was. For example, Aristotle insisted that young men (sic) be brought up in the proper way—this was a prerequisite for the study of philosophy—and by this he meant they needed to be raised according to and inculcated with the norms and practices of Athenian culture. Members of any of the three monotheistic faiths one finds in the West would also object to the implied contrast, for their self-conception and scheme of value is inextricably connected with a particular salvation narrative possessing both historical and supernatural dimensions. The contrast Huang draws is revealing if we take him to be comparing *modern* Western society (or at least influential ideals within it) and *traditional* Confucian societies; it is less plausible if we take him to be describing modern Western and East Asian societies. It is not at all clear that contemporary Chinese, Korean, and Japanese people are best understood on the model of *homo culturus* or *homo historien*, any more so than the people of most Western lands. Huang's contrast is more appropriate as a description of *traditional* versus *modern* societies in general; it can be most helpful if understood in this way and may well serve to highlight the greater degree to which a specific culture and history played roles in the self-conception of traditional East Asian Confucians. It surely is true that from the very beginning of the Confucian tradition, the notion

of "this culture" (*si wen* 斯文) played a critical role in shaping the self-understanding and values of Confucians. The idea of being embedded within and committed to a particular cultural tradition, seeing oneself as shaped by, and an advocate and defender of such a cultural legacy is an important feature of East Asian Confucianism. Moreover, these characteristics distinguish the tradition from *modern* views of the self, East or West. The contrasting models of economic or political individuals—if we take the latter to mean roughly a secular, liberal political point of view—offer a stark contrast. On this "Western" model, the self tends to be much more autonomous and isolated and purportedly makes episodic "rational choices" aimed at maximizing individual, largely material self-interest. Regardless of whether we take Huang's contrasting ideals as describing a difference between East and West or between tradition and modernity, these themes are important for understanding critical features of East Asian Confucianism.

The second general characteristic is described in the following way:

The world of East Asian Confucian thought is characterized by keywords such as "continuity" rather than "rupture" or "dichotomy" and "harmony" rather than "conflict" or "stress." These keywords reflect the fact that East Asian civilization did not produce a creation myth, as was common in the Middle East and West. (p. 27)

This is a large and interesting claim and in the course of his work, Huang argues for various expressions of this general commitment to "continuity and harmony" in contrast to "rupture and conflict." One example of what is perhaps the clearest manifestation of this difference is mentioned in the quote: the lack of a creation myth. Now of course there are creation myths in East Asian cultures—there is Pangu in China, Dangun in Korea, and Izanagi in Japan—but none of these describes anything resembling creation *ex nihilo* as is common in Western

monotheism. There is more "continuity" and less "rupture" between the period in which the world, as we know it, did not exist and the period in which it came into being. East Asian myths describe more of a process through which the world *took shape* or coalesced out of a prior more amorphous or chaotic condition. In general, there does appear to be greater cosmic continuity and less rupture in East Asia. This underwrites and contributes to a stronger sense of "harmony" and less "conflict" as well. Since humans are in a sense more at home in the world there is a tendency to see them as naturally more in harmony than in conflict with their surroundings or at least working toward a state in which greater harmony is attained; different, fundamental opposing forces in the universe are taken as given and the goal of balancing or harmonizing them, rather than having one conquer and eliminate the other, is more the norm. So, Huang goes on to argue, people in East Asian cultures tend to see greater continuity between self and society, humans and Nature, the secular and sacred, etc.

It would be good to note that there are exceptions to this general claim. For example, people in the Shang dynasty tended to see the natural and spiritual worlds as quite unpredictable, dangerous, and often hostile to human concerns (a view that still can be found in many forms of popular religion in East Asia). Early Confucian accounts of how civilization first arose also diverge a bit from the ideal of a continuous and harmonious relationship between humans and Nature. As we shall see below, they present the state of nature as dangerous and chaotic; Nature itself had to await the work of world-ordering sages before it could attain its proper pattern and structure. Nevertheless, as Huang suggests, what the sages did is to *arrange* the various parts of the natural and social worlds in appropriate ways: there was greater continuity with the earlier state and the aim was harmony. With these brief comments setting the stage, let us now turn to the four core chapters of the work.

Chapter two takes up the first of the four characteristic aspects of East Asian Confucian humanism mentioned above: *the unity of mind and body*. As Huang

makes clear, this aspect really consists of two related claims: the first concerns the relationship between the mental and the physical parts of the self and the second the relationship between individual human bodies and the universe. These two subsidiary claims are related to one another roughly as microcosm and macrocosm and further linked by a view that cultivating the former (the self) leads to the harmonious ordering of the second (the universe). As he does throughout this book, Huang draws on a range of Confucian thinkers, from different cultures and times to support and construct the account he offers. Those parts of Confucianism explicitly devoted to developing Mencius' strand of the tradition play a greater role in the story Huang tells, but he regularly brings in Xunzi and later thinkers inspired by Xunzi's teachings in his effort to fashion a more unified and consistent "Confucian" point of view.

In regard to the unity between the mental and physical parts of the self, Huang notes that the "mind-heart" (*xin* 心) is a *physical* part of the body, one organ among several. The point here is that the mind-heart is *not* conceived of as being some kind of un-extended, thinking substance or immaterial, divine soul. While it has a particular *function*—reflection or thinking—it is not different in kind but rather a part of the physical self. One might add that the mind-heart is not oriented toward desecrating abstract truths or even primarily at discerning the underlying structure of the world: the mind-heart's primary function is to order the different parts of the self and to guide the self through the world. It is easy to see how such a view lends itself to developing theories of self-cultivation, for if the mind-heart's primary function is ordering and guiding the self, it seems natural to focus on methods and practices aimed at developing the mind-heart in ways that enable it to shape and lead the self to a state of flourishing. Moreover, given the intimate relationship between the mind-heart and the other parts of the self, the Confucian concern with bodily regimens or what falls under the broad category of "rituals" (*li* 禮) becomes a natural concern. The mental and psychological aspects of the self, embodied in the mind-heart but oriented toward ordering and guiding the body as a whole, not only influence but also are

influenced by the other parts of the self; there is unity between the mental and physical parts of the self.

If the self is microcosm, the world or universe is macrocosm and the unity between the mental (embodied in the self) and the physical (the things and processes of the universe) continues and is played out on a grander scale. This idea is seen in early works in the notion that the cultivation of the self is the source of order and harmony in the family, state, and world at large. Through proper cultivation, the individual self can influence and be extended throughout the universe. This notion takes various forms in the course of the Confucian tradition, but Huang argues persuasively that it constitutes a single thread running through and uniting a diverse range of Confucian thinkers. In pre-Qin texts, this idea tends to be expressed most often in terms of the influence cultivated individuals can have on those around them. In the Han, other early expressions of this idea come to the fore and develop into correlative cosmologies, which maintain that cultivated individuals can exert direct and causal influences upon other living creatures as well as natural things and processes. Neo-Confucian thinkers take this line of thought to its logical extreme by claiming that all things in the universe share a common "mind-heart" and so are in a deep and fundamental sense "one body" (*yiti* 一體). The implications of such a view, in all its forms, are many and diverse, but among them is a profound and intimate sense of responsibility for the welfare of every part of the world. Here we see how Confucian beliefs about the unity of mind and body yield characteristically ethical concerns directed toward self, family, state, and world.

Chapter three describes and explores the *interaction and integration of the 'self' with 'others'* (p. 47), which begins by asserting such inter-personal connection and concern is another manifestation of cosmic "continuity" and "harmony" as opposed to "rupture" and "conflict": "Humanism in East Asian Confucian traditions was not an outgrowth of humanity's fight against the mandate of the gods but rather emerged from sensitive human interactions and from the

integration of the 'self' with 'others'" (p. 47). This interpersonal orientation focused attention and energy in different directions and brought human intellect, imagination, and emotions to bear on problems concerning the self and its relationship to other human beings. Huang presents this aspect of East Asian humanism in terms of various "tensions" between different aspects of the self and how these shaped and informed reflection and action among East Asian Confucians. One such tension arises under certain circumstances between the political and cultural conceptions of one's self. Huang illustrates this phenomenon with a splendid example from the life and writings of the Japanese Neo-Confucian Yamazaki Ansai, who posed the following hypothetical challenge to his students: What would you do if Confucius and Mencius were to lead an army to attack Japan? Such a scenario pitted the *political self* of these young Confucians (i.e. their loyalty to Japan) against their *cultural self* (their fidelity to Confucius and Mencius). When the students humbly declined to answer and sought their teacher's opinion, Yamazaki replied, "Caught in this quandary, we would steel ourselves and keep our wits to do battle with them—and capture Confucius and Mencius for our country. This, indeed, would be the Way of Confucius and Mencius" (p. 49).

A different kind of tension was sometimes felt between the 'cultural self' and the 'cultural other.' The idea here is that Confucian scholars in places like Korea and Japan had a dual cultural identity: they felt fidelity to both their home cultures and the 'other' culture of China. This generated a range of tensions, many of which stemmed from the idea that Chinese Confucians, from Confucius onward, regularly distinguished "this culture" (i.e. Han Chinese culture) from that of various "barbarian" people. One obvious implication of such a distinction is that those living outside of cultural China—in places like Korea and Japan—were barbarians, but interpretation can make the obvious less so and imaginative readings can transform the obvious into the wholly untenable. A number of prominent Japanese Confucians interpreted classical discussions of "culture" as referring to "rituals and propriety" and not to any historical society or specific

geographic area. They came to understand the term *zhongguo* 中國 itself in ethical rather than geographic terms: i.e. not the "Central State" (i.e. China) but the "State of the Mean" (i.e. the country which practiced the Way).

The tensions between cultural self and other gave rise to additional deep, inner conflicts as well. Huang cites Ishida Baigen as one dramatic example. Ishida, who was an avid advocate of the unity of the three teachings (i.e. Confucianism, Buddhism, and Shinto), noted that in Japan, the gods "prefer that people be near them rather than distant" (p. 56). His point was that in Shinto, people appeal directly to the gods and encounter them everywhere throughout the natural world, but such a view conflicts with the famous line in *Analects* 6.22, which teaches people to "Revere ghosts and spirits but keep distant from them." Ishida went on to say, "This is a great disparity. Viewing it in this way, good Confucian scholars turn their backs on our court's Shinto; they can be called 'traitors'" (p. 56).

Huang explores other tensions as well: between "political self" and "political other" and "cultural other" and "political other," which are no less revealing and fascinating but concludes with the theme of how the four tensions he identifies could be and often were resolved from the perspective of East Asian Confucian humanism. The key to such resolutions was the commanding role the ethical played and continues to play within the Confucian tradition. Those who follow the Way are united and regarded with equal esteem by true Confucian followers; they form a community of the virtuous. Country of origin or geographic place is irrelevant when it comes to realizing the Dao; "All within the four seas are brothers" (四海之内皆兄弟 *sihai zhi nei jie xiongdi*) (*Analects* 12.5). Such a perspective led Zhu Shunshui, after the fall of the Ming dynasty, to take delight in discovering that Confucianism flourished in the Tokugawa court. Such an attitude contributed to a strong and distinctive form of cosmopolitanism, with profound, though at times, naive results. For example, after reading the works of Ogyū Sorai and Dazai Shundai, the great 19th century Korean Confucian Jeong

Da-san was convinced that "Japan would not be so belligerent as to invade Korea since Japan had brilliant Confucian scholars" (p. 64). Huang's central point remains clear and well-attested: East Asian Confucian humanism was worked out within a specific temporal and cultural arena and engaged a distinctive set of concerns. It had little to do with establishing human worth and dignity apart from the value ascribed by God and much to do with the interaction and integration of the 'self with 'others.'

Chapter four describes and argues for the third characteristic aspect of East Asian Confucian humanism: *harmony between humanity and nature*. Huang begins the chapter by claiming "In the East Asian Confucian worldview, humanity lives in concord with nature" (p. 67). This, of course, is more a normative than descriptive claim: the thought is that a harmonious relationship between human beings and Nature is the proper state of affairs. This is an important and uncontested view about East Asian Confucianism and about East Asian philosophy in general. One might interpret this as an expression of and further evidence for Huang's earlier observation about East Asian Confucianism generally favoring "continuity" over "rupture" and "harmony" rather than "conflict." Here the continuity is between humans and the rest of Nature or society and the natural world; in either case, the aim is attaining a sustainable balance between the two. This seems right, and Huang notes some interesting and important implications of such a view. One example is that "... traditional Chinese people tended to extrapolate significance from natural phenomena to the cultural world" (p. 70). One can find many examples of this phenomenon, which takes a variety of forms. Huang notes how Confucius "read in the natural conditions of mountains and rivers the human virtues of humaneness and wisdom" (p. 70) and how Mencius saw in water, flowing from a spring, a moral lesson about the need to fill out and complete a "beautiful pattern" (p. 70) and, one might add, ground one's behavior in natural, affective responses. One can easily multiply illustrations of such human/nature analogies. For example, Mencius likened our innate moral sensibilities to budding sprouts; he warned us

not to try to force the growth of our moral inclinations as the foolish farmer of Song did when he pulled on and damaged his sprouts of grain. Instead, we are to tend our nascent moral sensibilities as a good and patient farmer tends the tender shoots of his crops: providing them with nourishment and weeding out bad influences, assisting but not hurrying a natural process of maturity, leading to the blossoming of full virtue.

Here we see an example of the claim made earlier concerning Huang's tendency to favor Mencius' strand of the Confucian tradition: that version of Confucianism which sees morality as directly grounded in nascent moral tendencies. Such a preference fits in and more directly supports the theme of this chapter: *harmony between humanity and nature*, for Mencius believes morality is not something "welded on to me from outside" (*Mencius* 6A6) or the result of fundamentally altering or violating nature, as when we "make cups and bowls from the wood of the willow tree" (*Mencius* 6A1). Nevertheless, as was also noted earlier, Huang does not ignore other parts of the Confucian tradition, such as Xunzi's competing interpretation, which had profound and enduring influence on later Confucians throughout East Asia as well. He notes that Xunzi differs from Mencius and departs from the general themes of "continuity" over "rupture" and "harmony" rather than "conflict" when it comes to the relationship between human beings and the natural world, saying "Xunzi emphasized the need for 'culture' to overcome and remold 'nature' (p. 76) and "In Xunzi's hands, this continuity (between humans and Nature) was splintered" (p. 76). I would like to suggest that on the issue of the *harmony between humanity and nature*, Huang gives too much credit to Mencius and too little to Xunzi. Moreover, there is some ambiguity concerning whether we are taking harmony between humanity and nature as a *normative* goal or offering it as a *description* of how things stand in the world prior to human reflection and action. To preview my friendly amendment to Huang's position: if we take harmony between humanity and nature as a normative ideal Xunzi supports this goal as strongly as Mencius; if we take it as a description of how things stand in the world prior to human reflection

and action, there is more discontinuity and conflict in Mencius' position than Huang implies.

As we have seen, Mengzi clearly does regard harmony between humanity and nature as a normative ideal, but so does Xunzi. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to say that Xunzi is the *first* environmental ethicist in human history. In the *Xunzi* we find an explicit and very interesting environmental ethic, a view I have referred to as Xunzi's "happy symmetry."¹ Xunzi believed that the form of life described by the ancient sages shows human beings the way to regulate and develop their own needs and desires and to *harmonize* these with the patterns and processes of Nature. This is the meaning of his teaching that the cultivated person "forms a triad with heaven and earth" (*can yu tian di* 參於天地). This is more than a call for prudence. Xunzi was not just arguing for the need to preserve the source of the goods that satisfy us (though the Way accomplishes this goal as well). He argued that the Way enables us to take our proper place and fulfill our destiny in a universal scheme. Given this aspect of Xunzi's view, his thought is not anthropocentric, in the strong ethical sense of the term, since he accords considerable value to other animals, plants, and inorganic things *qua* parts of the Dao.

Xunzi's view is anthropocentric in the weaker sense that, even when he talks about the well-being of other creatures and things, he tends to describe their interests in terms of how they relate to human beings. This is seen clearly in his claim that there is some kind of inherent deficiency in all things in the world prior to the coming of the sages. Xunzi says, "All creatures of the universe, all who belong to the species of man, must await the sage before they can attain their proper places."² On this issue, though, Xunzi is no different than his rival

1 See "A Happy Symmetry: Xunzi's Ethical Thought," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 59, 2 (Summer, 1991), pp. 309-322. Revised version to be reprinted in Justin Tiwald and T. C. Kline, III (eds.), *Ritual and Religion in the Xunzi* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, Forthcoming, 2012).

2 Burton Watson (tr.), *Hsün Tzu: Basic Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963),: 103

Mencius. The *Mencius* contains a remarkable story about the origin of civilization that bears similarities and even more significant differences with the creation myth and other stories found in the *Book of Genesis*. In *Mencius* 3A4, we are told that "In the time of Yao, before peace had been brought to the world, the flood waters still raged [...] plants grew thickly [...] the five grains did not ripen [...] birds and beasts encroached upon men [...]" A series of sage-heroes came forth and worked to realize a harmonious ordering of the world: driving off the beasts with fire, controlling the flood, and bringing the land under settled cultivation. Unlike the story in *Genesis* and consistent with other things Huang claims, in this primordial Confucian myth, God does not create the world out of nothing (*ex nihilo*), nor are human beings given "dominion" over it (however one might interpret that). Nevertheless, this story shows that Mencius clearly agrees with Xunzi in holding that the natural world itself needed the wisdom and efforts of the sages before it could attain order and balance. Like Xunzi, Mencius is anthropocentric, in the weak sense described above.

Huang is correct to maintain that Mencius differs from Xunzi in holding that *in the state of nature* there is more continuity and harmony between distinctively human values and the natural world. Mencius' account of human nature entails the view that even before civilization was established and the world brought to order, natural human inclinations guided people toward the way. We see examples of this in the stories Mencius tells that are aimed at explaining the origins of Confucian ritual practice (e.g. *Mencius* 3A5). Nevertheless, here too we must recognize that Mencius does not argue humans *naturally and without effort* simply fall into harmony with the natural world. It took a great deal of work and considerable time for a series of sage-heroes to wrest humanity out of the chaos of the state of nature and teach them the rudimentary behaviors, models, and practices that would keep them and the natural world in good order. This struggle continues in the ongoing work of self-cultivation needed to keep human beings from falling back into the wild and unruly state of nature. The good and patient farmers that serve as Mencius' ideal models for moral self-

cultivation work long and hard to support and facilitate a natural process of growth; they are engaged in the difficult and demanding vocation of agriculture, which is a distinctively *human* endeavor.

To review, I have argued that we need to distinguish *harmony between humanity and nature* as a normative ideal and *harmony between humanity and nature* as a description of how things stand in the natural world. Mengzi does differ from Xunzi in seeing more natural harmony between humans and nature in the pre-social state of nature, but he agrees with Xunzi that a great deal of hard work is needed to establish civilized human life and that Nature itself needed the wisdom and effort of a series of sage-heroes in order to attain its proper state of order and peace. Mencius and Xunzi do not disagree when it comes to harmony between humanity and nature as a normative ideal. They equally endorse and advocate such an ideal and this is an important part of what makes them Confucians. Seen in this light, the alternative reading of these aspects of the *Mencius* and *Xunzi* I have suggested offer a more complicated account but overall stronger evidence for Huang's claim about the general Confucian tendency to favor "continuity" over "rupture" and "harmony" over "conflict" when it comes to the relationship between human beings and the natural world.

In chapter five, Huang provides a rich and stimulating analysis of the fourth and final aspect of East Asian Confucian humanism he singles out for analysis: its characteristic *deep historical consciousness*. History plays a critical role in East Asian humanism and Huang begins by claiming that at least the Chinese strand "was an outgrowth of the creative dialogue between past and present" (p. 81). Huang presents his account of this creative dialogue by describing in outline Qian Mu's view of Chinese history. In particular, Huang focuses on three characteristic features of Chinese history prominent in Qian Mu's analysis: *history as a national epic*, *history as a method of humanity*, and *history as a library for today*.

In self-conscious contrast to one influential modern Western conception of history, which tends to see history roughly on the model of an objective social science aimed at discovering and conveying truths about past human activity, Qian Mu insisted that Chinese history has been and must remain a "national epic" designed to "instill an affection and respect for the Chinese tradition in the reader" (p. 83). Huang recognizes that Qian Mu's *therapeutic* approach to history was "done in order to heal and restore the loss of national self-confidence prevalent at the time" (p. 91), but he seems to endorse something like this approach as the distinctive character of East Asian Confucian conceptions of history. There certainly are reasons to accept *something* like this as a description of a dominant feature of East Asian historiography; historians in East Asia have tended to understand history as a grand narrative aimed at revealing human virtue and vice and serving as both inspiration and warning to future generations. This general conception of history is seen in the remaining two features Huang describes as well.

The second characteristic feature of Qian Mu's approach to Chinese history is to take *history as a method of humanity*. There is some ambiguity here about how adequate history alone might be for an understanding of humanity, but there is no doubt that the study of history is at least *necessary* for an understanding of humanity. Huang describes this as a "revolutionary" view of history, but there were people in the West—e.g. Giambattista Vico and R. G. Collingwood—as well as in China—e.g. Zhang Xuecheng—who held similar views about the critical value of history for an understanding of humanity. In fact, Zhang explicitly held a very strong version of this claim arguing that history is *the* method for understanding the Dao, and Zhang's views on history had a direct and significant impact on Qian Mu's thinking on this topic.³ Perhaps Huang intends

3 For an exploration of this aspect of Zhang's philosophy of history, see my "Whose Confucius? Which Analects? Diversity in the Confucian Commentarial Tradition," in Bryan W. Van Norden (ed.), *Confucius and the Analects: New Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 119-133. For a selection of translations of Zhang's essays, including "On the Dao," in which he puts forth this view, see my *The Essays and Letters of Zhang Xuecheng (1738-1801)* (Stanford,

to highlight other aspects of Qian Mu's view, for example, his insistence that we understand the past by posing questions from the present and using the answers this process offers up as guides on how to live. Both Collingwood and Zhang, in different ways, thought that we can only understand the past through imaginative acts of sympathy—something Huang discusses in a revealing way in regard to Collingwood—but neither of them incorporated this approach into what I am calling the therapeutic method of national history that Qian Mu advocated.

The idea of *history as a method of humanity* is connected to and to some extent implies the third and final feature of Qian Mu's account: *history as a library for today*. The thought here is that for the Chinese, history has been and must continue to be a vital resource for contemporary living. For traditional Chinese people "history represented their own vital life, extending from their forefathers toward the living actualities of today's world" (p. 93). This feature completes the picture of the "deep historical consciousness" of the Chinese and the conclusion makes clear that this quality represents not only East Asian humanism but humanity as a whole, "In Qian Mu's world of thought, the human being was not merely *homo politicus* or *homo economicus* [but] also *homo historien*, both shaping and being shaped by history, like spiders working a web of history that crisscrosses the globe" (p. 95).

It is quite plausible to claim that variations on the scheme that Qian Mu presents influenced and informed conceptions of history and the role history plays in people's self-conception in other East Asian cultures as well. Huang notes that the notion of "national history" (*guoshi* 國史) originally came to China from Japan in the early part of the 20th century. Nevertheless, this chapter is focused almost exclusively on an analysis of a particular modern account of *Chinese* history and in this respect it differs quite markedly from the earlier three chapters, which sought to support their central claims by drawing much more

extensively on sources from Korea and Japan as well as China. I agree that a deep historical consciousness pervades East Asian Confucian humanism, and I think it a splendid normative ideal that such a self-understanding be revived or strengthened throughout East Asian cultures. I also accept and wholeheartedly endorse the idea that broad and sensitive historical understanding should be part of *every* human being's self-conception and worry that many in the modern world lack such knowledge and the wisdom that can come with it. For these reasons, I believe thinkers like Zhang Xuecheng have profound things to say to us today, things that are perhaps even more critically important to hear in this age than in ages past. I am, though, decidedly less enthusiastic about the suggestion that national history should be designed "in order to heal and restore the loss of national self-confidence." For example, as an American, I find many parts of my national history deeply disturbing and shameful: the way white settlers stole from and eradicated native civilizations, the legacy of slavery, the exploitation and suppression of women, our spasms of imperialism, and our tendency toward arrogance and provincialism are all things I am not at all proud of. These exist alongside many features and qualities of my country and its people of which I feel rightly proud and avidly defend; the point is that *history* should be devoted to both—the shameful as well as the glorious—and not succumb to concocting sugar coated accounts of a nation aimed at building confidence and self-esteem among its citizens. Such "history" is not really national history but *nationalistic history*. Moreover, such "history" does not represent the dominant conception of history one finds in traditional China, which was alluded to above. The traditional view was not aimed at building confidence or self-esteem but in assigning "praise and blame": it sought to describe things as they truly were with the aim of both inspiring and warning people about human virtue and vice. This traditional Chinese conception of history is quite distinctive and very different from the discipline of history as currently practiced in the West; it strikes me as offering a more solid and appealing foundation for East Asian Confucian humanism.

I cannot hope to convey all the richness, sophistication, and subtlety to be found between the covers of this slim but powerful volume or the insight and delight of the details spread throughout it and drawn from all three major East Asian Confucian cultures. Huang pursues large and lofty aims and succeeds to a remarkable degree in arguing for the various claims he puts forth. He also succeeds in another perhaps unintended way, as his work is as much an example or illustration of East Asian Confucian humanism as it is an academic study of this topic. His command of so much material from so many traditions—East and West—and his impressive ability to synthesize so many diverse expressions of Confucianism into a modern vision of East Asian humanism is a testament to the power and sophistication of the tradition he seeks so eloquently to describe and defend.⁴

4 Thanks to Erin M. Cline, Kim Sungmoon, Michael R. Slater, and Justin Tiwald for comments and suggestions on an earlier draft of this review.