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Confucius as a Cosmopolitan: *Thought and Practice*

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Abstract

This article, based on the *Analects* and other texts related to Confucius, uses the concept of "cosmopolitanism," which has a long history in Western cultural traditions, as a point of reference. Through an examination of both Confucius' thoughts and practices, it argues that Confucius was a cosmopolitan. On this basis, it further identifies the characteristics and significance of Confucius' "rooted cosmopolitanism," which not only embodies the core consensus of all forms of cosmopolitanism—transcending regional and ethnic boundaries—but also centers on universal human values. It avoids the issues of extreme cosmopolitanism, which can become abstract, generalized, and detached, by maintaining a balance between "one principle" and "many manifestations."

Keywords: Confucius, cosmopolitanism, thought, practice, rooted-cosmopolitanism

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I. Introduction

"Cosmopolitanism" is a concept with a long history that can be traced back to Greece in the fourth century BCE. Diogenes, who lived at the time, is considered the first documented cosmopolitan in ancient Greece. According to historical records, whenever Diogenes was asked where he was from, he answered "I am a citizen of the world."

In Greece in the fourth century BCE, people's identities were either the city-states in which they grew up, or the groups of people they belonged to and who relied on a common language and culture to maintain their identity. The former is a region, the latter is an ethnic group. The concept of "citizen of the world" proposed by Diogenes means that a person's identity can neither lie in a certain city-state nor in a group of people defined by a certain language and culture. It transcends both geographical and ethnic groups. This has since become a classic attribute and characteristic of cosmopolitanism.

Diogenes was a Stoic, and Stoic thought had a huge and extensive influence throughout the Hellenistic period and even the Roman Empire. Therefore, in ancient Greece and Rome, it was not just Diogenes who used the concept of cosmopolitanism; there was an intellectual circle, in which cosmopolitanism was widely used. For example, Marcus Aurelius, emperor of ancient Rome and a philosopher, inherited the concept of treating people as "citizens of the world." In the last paragraph of his master piece, *Meditations*, he claimed that "Man, you have been a citizen of this great World-City!" (2002, book 12, 142.36). Thereafter, there were advocates of cosmopolitanism in the West at different times. For example, Erasmus (1466–1536), a humanist theologian and a priest during the Renaissance, was born in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, but lived there only for four years, after which he traveled all over Europe and never returned to Rotterdam until his death. He also once called himself a "citizen of the world." Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), who is known as the founding father of international law, and Samuel Pufendorf (1632–1694), who inherited and promoted the thought of natural law, also reflected the orientation of cosmopolitanism in his legal thought. Shortly after them, Kant, a great philosopher, never left his hometown of Königsberg throughout

his life, with his wisdom of "knowing the world without leaving the house; seeing the way of heaven without peeping into the world" (cf. *Dao de jing*, ch. 47) in his famous *Toward Perpetual Peace* (Zum ewigen Frieden) expressed the concept of cosmopolitanism from the perspective of political philosophy and international political theory. Fougeret de Montbron of France published an autobiographical work named *Cosmopolitanism* (*Le Cosmopolite*) in 1753, in which he called himself a cosmopolitan and described how he traveled around without being limited to any place. His famous quote is "I treat all countries equally," claiming that he can change his residence as he pleases. In modern times, cosmopolitanism has attracted the attention of many scholars and gained new interpretations. Philosophers such as Martha C. Nussbaum, Kwame Anthony Appiah, and others are outstanding representatives who advocate cosmopolitanism today.[1]

So, cosmopolitanism has a long history in the West, and the cosmopolitanisms advocated by different scholars have their own perspectives and emphases (See Brown and Held 2010). However, if we want to summarize the basic characteristics and central ideas of cosmopolitanism, there are two points that are interrelated and mutually supportive: First, the understanding of selfhood is not limited to a specific ethnic group that includes primordial ties such as mother tongue and race, but pays attention to the universal connotation of human nature reflected by different ethnic groups; second, the recognition of value is not limited to specific regions such as place of birth and country of nationality, but is based on the common and core values of human beings. These two points can be said to be the "overlapping consensus" of almost all cosmopolitans.

Although cosmopolitanism is a concept that originated in the West, its reference is not exclusive to Western culture and history. In Chinese culture and history, there is also thought about, as well as practice of, cosmopolitanism. In fact, the above-mentioned two features of cosmopolitanism were fully embodied in Confucius. In this

[1] Martha C. Nussbaum's view of cosmopolitanism underwent a process of development. About her early view, see her "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism" and "Reply" in Nussbaum (1996, 2–20, 131–44). For her later view, see Nussbaum (2019). As for the cosmopolitanism of Appiah, see Appiah (2006).

regard, Confucius is entirely a cosmopolitan. Unfortunately, it has been relatively rare for work on Confucius to be seen from the perspective of cosmopolitanism. This article aims to argue that Confucius was a cosmopolitan by analyzing his thought and observing his practice. On the one hand, we will explore if there is a cosmopolitanism in his thought; on the other, we will see how he practiced his cosmopolitanism.

II. The Cosmopolitan Thought of Confucius

As for the cosmopolitanism in Confucius' thought, let's begin with the *Analects* first and then move to other relevant texts.

Confucius said in the *Analects* that "a noble person pays attention to virtue whereas a small person pays attention to his/her native land" (君子懷德, 小人懷土) (4.11).[2] We know that the noble person is the ideal personality that not only Confucius himself pursued but also all later Confucians also aspired to. So, for Confucius, what a noble person cares for should be his/her virtue rather than his/her native land. This thought in the *Analects* is expressed elsewhere as well. For instance, Confucius also said, "a scholar who cherishes his/her native land is not fit to be a scholar" (士而懷居, 不足以為士矣) (14.2). Here, the tone of Confucius is even stronger.

Both passages have common point. That is, in Confucius' mind, one should aspire to become a noble person rather than remain confined to a particular locality. This view had a far-reaching influence in later days. For example, there is the following passage in the "Xiuwen 修文" (Cultivating Refinement) chapter of *Shuoyuan* 說苑 (Garden of Persuasions): "a person who is attached to his/her native land and not willing to go to other places is only a commoner, and will not become a scholar" (安故重遷, 謂之眾庶). Obviously, the idea expressed here is in line with the thought of Confucius as expressed in the passages quoted above. In fact, that Confucius travelled around so many principalities

[2] All translations of passages from the *Analects* and other source books quoted in this article are mine.

is proof of his thought expressed in those two passages. This will be discussed in detail later in this article.

Because Confucius did not believe that becoming a noble person is necessarily limited to a certain geographical place, in addition to the two sayings quoted above, he also said in the *Analects* that "if my ideal cannot be practiced, I prefer to drift on the sea by taking a raft" (道不行, 乘桴浮於海) (5.7).

Living in the chaotic Spring and Autumn period, Confucius' life-long pursuit was to reconstruct a well-ordered society, but his pursuit was not limited to the Lu Kingdom where he was born and grew up. So, Confucius left the Lu Kingdom without hesitation when he was politically marginalized and realized his political and social ideal could not be achieved. Instead, Confucius started his journey to other kingdoms in order to realize his political and social ideal.

There is a story of Confucius' encounter with hermits recorded in the *Analects* (18.6).[3] Unlike those hermits who chose to escape from the secular and chaotic world, Confucius deliberately chose a different way, which aimed to transform the world into a well-ordered one. Although Confucius appreciated those hermits in his heart, he still said, "It is impossible to be with birds and beasts, as if they were the same with us. If not with fellow human beings, whom should I be together with? If the right way were to prevail in the world, there would be no need for me to change the world" (鳥獸不可與同群, 吾非斯人之徒與而誰與？天下有道, 丘不與易也) (18.6). This expression clearly indicated one of the defining

[3] Chang Ju and Jie Ni were at work in the field together. When Confucius passed by and sent Zilu to ask for the ferry, Chang Ju said, "Who is the guy holding the reins in the carriage there?" Zilu replied, "It is Kong Qiu." "Is it not Kong Qiu of Lu?" asked Chang Ju. "Yes," Zi Lu replied again. "Then he will know where the ferry is," Chang Ju continued. Zilu then asked Jie Ni, who said to him, "Who are you, sir?" He answered, "I am Zhong You." "Are you not the disciple of Kong Qiu of Lu?" Jie Ni asked again. "I am," replied Zi Lu. Jie Ni then said to him, "Disorder, like a swelling flood, is spreading over the whole world, who will change it? Rather than follow one who merely avoids bad people, why don't you follow those who have withdrawn from the world?" With this he sowed seed, covering then with soil. Zi Lu went and reported their remarks to Confucius. Confucius observed with a sigh, "It is impossible to be with birds and beasts, as if they were the same with us. If not with fellow human beings, whom should I be together with? If the right way were to prevail in the world, there would be no need for me to change the world."

characteristics of the Confucian tradition pioneered by Confucius, namely, a steadfast awareness of one's responsibility to fight for a well-ordered society and enlightened politics. In the view of Confucius, a *junzi* 君子 or a *shi* 士 must be a person with political and social identity. In other words, only those who try to improve politics and serve society from within rather than to escape from this world, like those hermits, could be called *junzi* or *shi*.

People usually think Confucius' statement that "if my ideal cannot be practiced, I prefer to drift on the sea by taking a raft" is probably an expression of depression after he had traveled among various kingdoms but failed to make his political and social ideals prevail. Indeed, the idea of "drifting on the sea by taking a raft" could be the result of Confucius' disappointment in being unable to get support from any of the kingdoms he had visited. On the other hand, we should note that this statement does not necessarily mean that Confucius gave up his ideal and endeavor. "Drifting on the sea" (浮海) does not necessarily mean a negative escapism. It can mean a positive pioneering and searching for new possibilities. For Confucius, how could you know there is no such a place on the sea or overseas where he could fulfil his ideals? The key to understanding the saying, "if my ideal cannot be practiced, I prefer to drift on the sea by taking a raft," is that Confucius did not confine his ideals to one kingdom or one place, or even China.

This mentality of Confucius that goes beyond a certain locality is also evident in a dialogue between Confucius and his disciples. When Confucius showed his willingness to live in a remote place, one of his disciples said, "It is underdeveloped; How can one do [such a thing]?" and Confucius replied, "As long as you are virtuous, does the underdeveloped circumstance matter?" Obviously, the rhetorical question Confucius asked means that it is the inner spiritual life, not outer material conditions, that is more important for Confucius, or for a virtuous person. But the willingness to live in a remote place above all suggests that the thinking of Confucius goes beyond the restriction of locality.

Given that Confucius had such a mindset, which was recorded more than one time in the *Analects*, it is easily understandable that those disciples who lived with Confucius were influenced by this thought.

So, when Zixia 子夏, one of Confucius' disciples, tried to console Sima Niu 司馬牛, another disciple of Confucius, by saying that "all within the four seas are brothers" (四海之內, 皆兄弟也), we can not only discern the mindset that goes beyond a certain locality conveyed in this saying but also can infer that Confucius must have often expressed this mindset in his daily life. Only acknowledging the cosmopolitanism of Confucius, can we understand how Zixia could use "all within the four seas are brothers" as a condolence.

According to the above in the *Analects*, we can already discern the cosmopolitanism of Confucius that goes beyond the limitation of locality. Now, let us move to some other sources that also reflect the cosmopolitanism of Confucius.

There is a story recorded in the "Haosheng 好生" (Fondness of Life) chapter of *Kongzi jiayu* 孔子家語 (Family Sayings of Confucius), compiled by Wang Su 王肅 (195–256), as below:

> The King of Chu Kingdom went out hunting and lost his bow named *wuhao*. When his retinue asked if they could look for it, the King of Chu Kingdom said, "Stop. Although the King of Chu lost his bow, why do we need to look for it if it is picked up by a person from Chu?" Confucius heard this and said, "It's a pity that the King is not great enough. Why did he not say 'Someone has lost a bow and someone will find it'? Why did he insist that it has to be picked up by someone from Chu?"[4]

This record contains three parts: 1) The event that the King of Chu lost his bow; 2) The reaction of the King of Chu to this event; and 3) The comment Confucius made about the reaction of the King of Chu. Of these three parts, the event itself is simple. What deserves to be analyzed are the reaction of the King of Chu and the comment made by Confucius.

Even if what the King of Chu said was only a gesture to show his love to his people as a king, or even to show his generosity, his reaction was worthy of recognition. Confucius, however, still thought the King of Chu was not great. Why? By contrasting what Confucius said and

[4] "楚恭王出遊, 亡烏嗥之弓, 左右請求之. 王曰: '止. 楚王失弓, 楚人得之, 又何求之?' 孔子聞之: '惜乎其不大也! 不曰: '人遺弓< 人得之而已'< 何必楚也!'"

what the King of Chu said, we can right away recognize the difference. The key to the difference is that Confucius replaced "the people of Chu" (楚人) with "the people" (人). Obviously, for Confucius, what the King of Chu said still evidenced a parochialism that was limited to the Kingdom of Chu. We can imagine that if the bow were to have been picked up by someone from another kingdom, according to what the King of Chu said, he might not have been so relaxed to stop his retinue and say "Why do we need to look for it?" By contrast, by replacing "someone from Chu" with "someone" clearly indicates that Confucius' standpoint was a cosmopolitanism that goes beyond parochialism.

The story above is not only recorded in *Kongzi jiayu* but also in various source books such as *Shuoyuan* and *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (Master Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals). Although there are some slight differences in the wording of the texts, the records of the comment Confucius made about the King of Chu are the same. This suggests that the cosmopolitanism embodied in what Confucius said subsequently received wide attention from the Warring States period until at least the Han dynasty.

There is a self-description of Confucius recorded in at least three different source books including *Kongzi jiayu*, *Liji*, and *Hanshu* but highly overlooked: "Qiu is a man from east, west, south, and north" (丘也, 東西南北之人). Obviously, this expression has a strong resonance with Diogenes's saying "I am a citizen of the world" and is even earlier. More important, both "a man from east, west, south, and north" and "a citizen of the world" concisely articulate a central idea of cosmopolitanism: a broad-minded thinking and mentality that go beyond parochialism.

III. The Cosmopolitan Practice of Confucius

As a man who walks his talk, Confucius practiced his cosmopolitanism. Now let us have a look at his cosmopolitan practice. The sources we rely on are also the *Analects* first and then others. The thought, discussed above, is about what he said. The practice part will discuss what he did.

The most convincing cosmopolitan practice of Confucius was his travel among those kingdoms or principalities. I mentioned Erasmus, the famous cosmopolitan of the Renaissance, who left Rotterdam where he was born, travelled around Europe, and never went back. Unlike Erasmus, Confucius eventually went back to his motherland, the Kingdom of Lu, in his old age. But Confucius stayed outside of the Kingdom of Lu for 14 years. He left the Kingdom of Lu when he was already 55 years old and did not return until he was 69.

The territory of China in the Spring and Autumn period was not vast. But it was divided into many principalities or kingdoms. It's difficult to showcase how many principalities and kingdoms there were altogether. This is not only due to different records in different historical books but also because of the decreasing number of principalities and kingdoms caused by wars of annexation. By the late Spring and Autumn period, there were only some 20 principalities and kingdoms left. It is difficult to figure out how many principalities and kingdoms there were in Confucius' time. According to existing historical records, Confucius visited quite a few principalities and kingdoms except for Qin and Jin in the west, Wu and Yue in the south, and Yan 燕 in the north.

How many principalities and kingdoms did Confucius visit? Different documents provide different answers. For example, in *Shiji*, *Shuoyuan*, and *Lunheng* 論衡 (Discourses Weighed in the Balance), Confucius visited more than 70 principalities and kingdoms. But this must be an exaggeration, and some early scholars already questioned these numbers. For instance, the historian Sima Zhen 司馬貞 (679–732) of the Tang dynasty, pointed out in his *Shiji suoyin* 史記索隱 that the number of more than 70 could not be correct. So far, it is acknowledged that the principalities and kingdoms Confucius did visit include Wei, Chen, Song, Cao, Zheng, Cai, and Chu. But the time Confucius spent in these principalities and kingdoms varied. For example, the longest period was in Wei. Confucius visited it four times and stayed there about four years altogether. The shortest was Chu. Confucius only stayed briefly at its border.

It is meaningful and significant to investigate which principalities and kingdoms Confucius visited, in what order, and what Confucius did

in these different principalities and kingdoms. Previous studies of these events recorded in history, however, have usually ignored an important perspective that is key to the understanding of the cosmopolitan practice of Confucius. When we consider Confucius' travels today, we can say the scope of his travels was limited to the central part of China, mainly in the area of Henan Province in today's China. Now, however, it is usually overlooked that traveling in China in Confucius' time was fundamentally different from traveling in China after the Qin empire was established, let alone traveling in China today. We should remember, before the Qin established a united China by annexing other principalities and kingdoms, both written and spoken languages, currencies, weights, and measures, and even clothing differed among those principalities and kingdoms.[5] Confucius would immediately have been faced with the challenge of these differences in addition to the inconvenience of transportation when he travelled. In this sense, Confucius' travel between those principalities and kingdoms was truly transnational.

If we take note of Confucius' travels and then consider his words we quoted previously, such as "a noble person pays attention to virtue whereas a small person pays attention to his/her native land" (君子懷德, 小人懷土) (4.11) and "a scholar who cherishes his/her native land is not fit to be a scholar" (士而懷居, 不足以為士矣) (14.2), we will realize what he did was totally consistent with what he said. What he did was precisely to put this thought into practice.

Why did Confucius leave his motherland for other lands? Because the ideals Confucius pursued were universal rather than local. In his view, people of other lands are just like people of his motherland; all the people around the world, not only the people of one place,

[5] In the time of Confucius, there was a common language called Yayan 雅言. It was created by the Zhou royal family for communications between peoples of different principalities and kingdoms. With the decline of the Zhou royal family and the limited means of education and transmission, there were only a few people who could speak Yayan. In addition, given the limited conditions, Yayan could not be normalized and popularized like today's common language did. Even though Confucius mastered Yayan and taught in Yayan, not everybody he encountered during his international travels could speak Yayan. So, the first challenge Confucius had to face once he left the kingdom of Lu might well have been language.

should be equally treated and respected. Only taking this standpoint, could Confucius remark about the King of Chu—"Why did he not say 'Someone has lost a bow and someone will find it'? Why did he insist that it has to be picked up by someone from Chu?"—be understandable.

There is a well-known story about what happened to Confucius during his travels, which was recorded in various historical books such as *Shiji*, *Kongzi jiayu*, *Baihu tong* 白虎通 (Comprehensive Discussion in the White Tiger Hall), and *Lunheng*. *Shiji* records the following account:

> When Confucius visited the principality of Zheng, he got separated from his disciples and stood alone near the east gate of the city. Some local people told Zigong, who was looking for Confucius, that "there is a man near the east gate. His forehead is like Yao's 堯; his neck is like Gao Tao's 皋陶; his shoulders are like Zichan's 子產; but he is three inches shorter than Yu from the waist down. Overall, he looks worn out like a homeless dog." When Zigong informed Confucius all that he heard, Confucius smiled and said, "It's not true that parts of my body look like those of the old sages and worthies, but it is indeed true to say that I look like a homeless dog. Indeed."[6] ("Kongxi *shijia* 孔子世家" chapter, 25)

The conventional interpretation of this story is to stress how modest, humorous, and optimistic Confucius is, especially in a harsh environment. This interpretation is tenable. However, why did Confucius gladly accept to be described as a homeless dog but rejected the depiction of being physically like sages and worthies? In my view, in addition to the modesty, humor, and optimism of Confucius conveyed in Confucius' response to Zigong's paraphrase, it is only by being interpreted from the perspective of cosmopolitanism that the significance of the image of the homeless dog can be properly understood.

A dog who has lost its home is not necessarily always frustrated, disappointed, and hopeless. "Homelessness" can be a result of active self-choice. Leaving a place where his ambition could not be achieved

[6] "孔子適鄭, 與弟子相失, 孔子獨立郭東門. 鄭人或謂子貢曰: '東門有人, 其顙似堯, 其項類皋陶, 其肩類子產, 然自要以下不及禹三寸. 累累若喪家之狗.' 子貢以實告孔子.孔子欣然笑曰: '形狀, 末也. 而謂似喪家之狗, 然哉! 然哉!'"

to go other places where more possibilities and chances could be embraced is what Confucius did. He left the Kingdom of Lu because his ideals could not be realized there. Consequently, other principalities and kingdoms that Confucius visited became the platforms where Confucius was able to continue to pursue his ideals. In short, only by giving up somewhere as his home, was it possible for Confucius to have everywhere as his home. So, the reason that Confucius gladly described himself as a homeless dog is just because only a homeless dog can get rid of the limitations of one place to have more and bigger spaces. Interestingly, the thought and practice of Diogenes also had something to do with dogs. The Chinese translation of "cynicism" that Diogenes pioneered is "*Quanru zhuyi* 犬儒主義." "*Quan* 犬" here means "dog" in Chinese. In the birthplace of Diogenes, which is now in Turkey, there is a statue of Diogenes together with a dog. This is another example of universality between the East and the West.

Somebody might argue that even though Confucius left the Kingdom of Lu for many other principalities and kingdoms and stayed outside of the Kingdom of Lu for 14 years, he never found a king to promote and realize his ideals, did he? As far as the political practice of Confucius is concerned, this observation is not wrong. Not only Confucius, almost all the authentic Confucians in Chinese history were politically marginalized. For instance, the widely acknowledged Confucian masters of the Song and Ming dynasties, such as Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107), Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), and Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529), were not only all politically marginalized but also all had the experience of being persecuted as advocates of *weixue* 偽學, or "fake learnings." Even Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 BCE), who once got a chance to advise the emperor, did not obtain access to the center of power but rather was persecuted. In fact, the life of Confucius as a homeless dog could be regarded as an epitome of the political lives of almost all Confucian figures in history. But what makes Confucius "Confucius" and what makes Confucians "Confucians" is nothing but the principle that values discerning right from wrong, not success or failure in politics. It is exactly this principle that differentiates Dong Zhongshu, who advocated "to do what is just without pursuing benefit and illuminating the way without consideration of being credited" (正其

義不謀其利, 明其道不計其功) ("Rulin chuan 儒林傳" 27, in the *Book of Han*), from Gongsun Hong 公孫弘 (199–121 BCE), who "twisted his learning to flatter the people in power" (*qu xue e shi* 曲學阿世) and became a symbol of a sycophant in Chinese history. The principle that "the way is higher than power" (*dao gao yu shi* 道高於勢) and "follow the way rather than follow the emperor" (*cong dao bu cong jun* 從道不從君) were not only embodied by those authentic Confucians in Chinese history, generation by generation, but also inspired the most brilliant minds in the history of East Asia.

We can imagine that it was only because of his having a cosmopolitan mind, firmly believing in his heavenly bestowed calling, believing that his political and social ideals would eventually be realized in the world rather than at one place and one time, could Confucius still indefatigably travel around the principalities and kingdoms for 14 years in such a chaotic world to pursue the realization of his ideals, still keep enough courage and inner peace to face various hardships and even the threat of death.

IV. A Rooted Cosmopolitanism: The Features of the Confucian Cosmopolitanism

In another work (Peng 2019), I have already defined Confucianism as a rooted cosmopolitanism in my discussion on cosmopolitanism, nationalism, and patriotism by focusing on three themes: *ren* 仁 ("humanity"), *ziwo* 自我 ("selfhood"), and *tianxia* 天下 ("all under heaven").[7] As for the features and significance of Confucius' cosmo-

[7] In the English-speaking world, Appiah is probably one of the best-known scholars to have discussed the concept of "rooted cosmopolitanism." In addition to Appiah (2006), Appiah's discussion on cosmopolitanism is also in Appiah (2005, 213–72). Appiah, however, seems not to have been the first scholar to have discussed this concept. Although understandings of cosmopolitanism can vary, Mitchell Cohen already published an article entitled "Rooted Cosmopolitanism" in *Dissent* in 1992. Two years later, Bruce Ackerman published an article also entitled "Rooted Cosmopolitanism" in *Ethics*. There are also some publications on Confucianism and cosmopolitanism in general, for example, see Ivanhoe (2014), Tan (2015), and Chen (2020).

politanism, however, there remains something I would like to probe further here.

As a matter of fact, not very long after Confucius passed away, somebody already noticed Confucius' cosmopolitanism. In *Shuoyuan*, edited by Liu Xiang 劉向 (77–7 BCE) in the Western Han dynasty, there is the following observation and comment on Confucius:

> Confucius was born in a chaotic world, in which no [ruler] accepted [his ideas]. So, only if his words were put into practice by a king and his beneficence extended to the people, would it have been proper to take office. Otherwise, it would not. Confucius harbored ambitions as vast as [the lands] covered by Heaven and the virtues of the humane sage. He was concerned with the foul mores of the age and pained by the corruption of social norms. He then took on the heavy burden of responsibility and went far, traveled around the world to look for a post. He waited for good fortune to be bestowed on him in order to put his way into practice and look after the people. But none of the feudal princes were able to appoint him. As a result, Confucius' virtue accumulated but was not on display; the great way was suppressed and could not be promoted; and people in the world did not receive his teachings nor did they feel his affection. That is why Confucius sighed, "If someone were to appoint me, I would reconstruct the way of the King Wen of Zhou in the east."[8] So, Confucius' teachings and practices were not because he wanted to exercise his virtue in a single kingdom, but because he wanted them to spread out to the whole world and establish them among the people.[9] ("Zhi gong 至公" chapter, 10)

The finishing touch of this paragraph is the last sentence: "Confucius' teachings and practices were not because he wanted to exercise his virtue in a single kingdom, but because he wanted them to spread out to the whole world and establish them among the people." Whether this comment was from Liu Xiang, the editor, or from others, it clearly

[8] This quote is from the Analects (17.5).

[9] "孔子生於亂世, 莫之能容也. 故言行於君, 澤加於民, 然後仕. 言不行於君, 澤不加於民, 則處. 孔子懷天覆之心, 挾仁聖之德, 憫時俗之污泥, 傷紀綱之廢壞; 服重曆遠, 周流應聘. 乃俟幸施道, 以子百姓, 而當世諸侯, 莫能任用. 是以德積而不肆, 大道屈而不伸, 海內不蒙其化, 群生不被其恩。故喟然歎曰: '而有用我者, 則吾其為東周乎?' 故孔子行說, 非欲私身運德於一城, 將舒之於天下, 而建之於群生者耳."

indicates that, in the view of the commentator, Confucius is no doubt a cosmopolitan in terms of both thought and practice. The contrast between *yicheng* 一城 ("a kingdom"), *tianxia* 天下 ("the world, all under heaven"), and *qunsheng* 群生 ("people of the world"), if expressed in modern language, is exactly the reflection of two different standpoints and value orientations: localism/parochialism versus universality, or nationalism versus cosmopolitanism.

Of course, cosmopolitanism is not without its own problems. From the beginning, cosmopolitanism and its criticisms have gone hand in hand. The book *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism* not only reflects the cosmopolitanism advocated by Martha C. Nussbaum but also contains questions and criticism raised by a cluster of the most brilliant minds in the contemporary West about the problems possibly caused by cosmopolitanism. It will help us to deepen our understanding if we think through those questions and criticisms, taking the possible problems seriously, then carefully considering the Confucius' cosmopolitanism.

The most fundamental and common critique of cosmopolitanism holds that cosmopolitanism ignores the specific, the concrete, and the near at hand. As American conservative Rich Lowry pointed out in his recently published article, "The Treason of the Elites," "cosmopolitanism has always been open to the charge that—whatever its broad-mindedness or idealism—it cultivates a contempt for what's near, immediate, and tangible, in favor of what's far away" (2019). Probably influenced by Appiah (See Appiah 2005, 221–22), Rich Lowry also took Mrs. Jellyby, a role created by Charles Dickens in his *Bleak House*, as an example of cosmopolitanism. He argues that, as a cosmopolitan, Mrs. Jellyby was "so consumed with a humanitarian project in Africa that she neglected all around her, including her own children." Lowry even quotes Rousseau's critique of those cosmopolitans, who "boast that they love everyone, to have the right to love no one" (See Gourevitch 1997, 158).

In fairness, what Rousseau criticized was using cosmopolitanism as a pretext or pretended cosmopolitanism, not cosmopolitanism per se. But paying too much attention to something universal, abstract, and far away at the expense of the specific, concrete, and near at hand, is

indeed an undesirable consequence of radical cosmopolitanism, which has real and painful experiences and lessons in human history. Because of this, in *For Love of Country*, the critiques from scholars, such as Hilary Putnam, Charles Taylor, and Michael Walzer, of the cosmopolitanism represented by Martha C. Nussbaum, although varied, focus on the ignorance of the specific, concrete, and near at hand that was possibly caused by cosmopolitanism.

By contrast, the rooted cosmopolitanism of Confucius could avoid the ignorance of the specific, concrete, and near at hand. This is an important feature of the cosmopolitanism of Confucianism. One of the most fundamental claims of Confucianism, and of Confucius in particular, is that the realization of any universal ideal must follow two principles: One is from near to far; from oneself to others; the other is situation-oriented or time/space-based. There are two articulations of the first principle in the *Analects*, one negative and the other positive: "Do not do to others if you do not want others do to you" (己所不欲勿施於人) (12.2) and "If you want to establish yourself, also seek to establish others; if you want to enlarge yourself, also seek to enlarge others" (己欲立而立人, 己欲達而達人) (6.30). Both sayings emphasize that every motivation to do things should be from near to far and from oneself to others. If we know that these two sayings were used by Confucius to describe the highest value, *ren* 仁 ("humanity"), we can tell how important the principle of "from near to far and from oneself to others" was for Confucius in dealing with people and things. Later, in the *Mencius*, the noted expression, "to treat the elders in your own family with reverence and then extend this treatment to the elders in the families of others; to treat the youth in your own family with kindness and then extend this treatment to the youth in the families of others,"[10] was also an example that followed the principle.

As for the second principle, the situation-oriented one, the most demonstrative examples were the answers Confucius made to the question "What is *ren*?" raised by his disciples. Confucius did not provide a single definition of "*ren*" but gave his different answers according to different contexts of the questions and even to the

[10] "老吾老以及人之老, 幼吾幼以及人之幼"(1.7).

different characters of the questioners. For example, when Yan Yuan 顏淵 asked about "*ren*," Confucius replied: "To control yourself and return to ritual" (克己復禮) (12.1). When Zhonggong 仲弓 asked about "*ren*," Confucius replied: "When you go abroad, to behave to others as if you were receiving great guests; to employ the people as if you were assisting at a great sacrifice; do not to do others if you do not want others to do [the same] to you; to have no resentment against you in the country or the family."[11] When Sima Niu asked about "*ren*," the reply was: "A person of *ren* speaks cautiously and slowly" (仁者其言也訒) (12.3).

Even when the same disciple asked about "*ren*" on different occasions, Confucius' answers changed. In the *Analects*, Fan Chi, a disciple of Confucius, asked about "*ren*" three times. Confucius gave him three different answers: the first was "to overcome the difficulties first and only after that consider success" (先難而後獲) (6.22), the second was "to love people" (爱人) (12.22), and the third was "to be grave in retirement; to be attentive in management; to be sincere with others" (居處恭, 執事敬, 與人忠) (13.19). In light of this, although "*ren*" for Confucius was a universal principle, he always put his explanation of what *ren* is in concrete contexts and situations, and *ren* thereby avoided becoming a universal but abstract and hollow concept, out of reach.

These two principles, from oneself to others and the situation-oriented, enable Confucius' thought and practice to avoid the undifferentiated application of universal principles, the misunderstanding of universal principles as abstract ideas, and eventually the undesirable consequences easily caused by cosmopolitanism. These two principles are also consistent in the Confucian tradition. Let us take Mencius and Cheng Yi, two leading figures of the classical period and Neo-Confucian period, respectively, as further examples to make an elaboration.

It is well-known that criticizing Yang Zhu 楊朱 and Mo Di 墨翟, or "*pi Yang Mo* 辟楊墨," constitutes an important part of Mencius' thought. In modern terms, Mo Di's claim of *jian ai* 兼愛, or an "undifferentiated love," was precisely a reflection of radical cosmopolitanism. Mencius' severe criticism of *jian ai*, so-called "no father and no king" (*wu fu*

[11] "出門如見大賓, 使民如承大祭. 己所不欲, 勿施於人. 在邦無怨, 在家無怨"(12.2).

wu jun 無父無君), clearly indicates that Mencius, who inherited Confucius' thought, was very much opposed to universality without differentiation. Mencius' claim that "to treat the elders in your own family with reverence and then extend this treatment to the elders in the families of others; to treat the youth in your own family with kindness and then extend this treatment to the youth in the families of others" did not limit the practice of reverence and kindness only to one's own family. Rather, Mencius also required us to extend reverence and kindness to the families of others. This was no different from what Mo Di claimed. Mencius, however, profoundly realized that, if the natural differentiation of feelings for family members and feelings for strangers were ignored, and an undifferentiated love was advocated from the very beginning, then perhaps this would not only lead to strangers not being treated as family members, but also to family members being treated as strangers. By contrast, if one could take the natural differentiation of feelings seriously and take one's natural feelings for one's own family as a starting point, Mencius' goal of extending reverence and kindness could be easily realized, because in this way it would have the most authentic empirical basis.

Cheng Yi's "Reply to Yang Shi's Letter on the *Western Inscription*" (與楊時論西銘書) is an important and well-known text in Neo-Confucianism (See Chan 1963, 550-51). As is well known, the central idea of Zhang Zai's 張載 (1020–1077) *Western Inscription* is "forming one body with the myriad things" (*wanwu yiti* 萬物一體). Yang Shi 楊時 (1053–1135) had criticized this idea as being the equivalent of Mo Di's undifferentiated love. In his reply, Cheng Yi not only rectified Yang's misunderstanding but also clarified the fundamental difference between the Confucian idea of "forming one body with the myriad things" and Mo Di's undifferentiated love by introducing an important concept: *li yi fen shu* 理一分殊, or "one principle and many manifestations." In Cheng Yi's view, the idea of "forming one body with the myriad things" of course needs "*ren*," or universal love, as its basis, otherwise it cannot be extended from oneself to others. On the other hand, "*ren*" as universal love needs to be expressed in different ways depending on the recipient and the specific relationship with the recipient. For instance, the principles that should be implemented in the Five Relationships

(*wulun* 五倫)—affinity in the relationship between parents and children, order in the relationship between old and young, differentiation in the relationship between husband and wife, justice in the relationship between king and minister, and trust in the relationship between friends—in the final analysis are manifestations of *ren* as universal love. But because parents and children, old and young, husband and wife, king and minister, and friend and friend are, after all, five different relationships, the realization of *ren* as universal love and the highest value in these specific relationships naturally needs to be manifested as affinity, order, differentiation, justice, and trust—five different yet more concrete values.

In the concept of "one principle and many manifestations" (*li yi fen shu* 理一分殊), "*yi*" refers to the universality of *ren*; "*fen shu*" refers to those specific values that manifest *ren* in certain situations. If only "*fen shu*" is considered and universal value is ignored, human society would disintegrate. A healthy pluralism in human society would degenerate into a radical relativism, such as that described by Laozi: "They grow old and die without ever having had any interaction with one another" (老死不相往來). On the other hand, if we focus solely on "*yi*" or "one principle" without taking into account concrete situations, the differences, and diversity in human histories and cultures, we risk falling into abstraction, fantasy, and even hypocrisy. The "*jian ai*" of Mohism, criticized by Cheng Yi as "undifferentiated love without propriety," is exactly a case in point.

There is a strong resonance between the Confucian critique of the "undifferentiated love" advocated by Mohism and Hilary Putnam's critique of the "universal reason" advocated by Martha C. Nussbaum (Putnam 1996, 94–95). From this, it can be seen that the rooted cosmopolitanism of Confucius, which pays sufficient attention to both "one" and "many," maintains a good balance between universality and particularity, the abstract and the concrete, and the far and the near. Mencius' critique of "undifferentiated love," especially Cheng Yi's clarification of "forming one body with the myriad things" and introduction to "one principle and many manifestations," reflects the difference between the rooted cosmopolitanism of Confucius and the cosmopolitanism starting from general and abstract ideas.

People like Hilary Putnam probably do not oppose cosmopolitanism to deny the existence of universality. Putnam does, however, stress that "actual reasoning is necessarily always situated within one or another historical tradition. . . . We all have to live and judge from within our particular inheritances while remaining open to insights and criticisms from outside" (1996, 97). The rooted cosmopolitanism of Confucius was also conscious of this, and did not ignore it in the slightest. As a matter of fact, Confucius' emphasis on historical and cultural tradition is well-known. But how does Confucius' rooted cosmopolitanism place its emphasis on historical and cultural tradition? Let's make this clear by examining the following passage in the book of Mencius (10.1):

> When Confucius was leaving Qi, with his hand he strained off the water in which his rice was being rinsed, took the rice, and went away. When he left Lu, he said, "I will set out by-and-by. It was the right way to leave the motherland." When it was proper to go away quickly, he did so; when it was proper to delay, he did so.[12]

This passage describes the different ways that Confucius left Qi and Lu. But how should we understand these two different attitudes Confucius took? The same leaving and two different ways are also reflections of the rooted cosmopolitanism of Confucius. On the one hand, this story describes the "leaving" of Confucius. In both Lu and Qi, once Confucius realized that his ideals and ambitions could not be practiced there, he chose to leave. This means that parochialism did not work for Confucius, and reminds us of the fundamental feature of cosmopolitanism in general. On the other hand, because Lu is where Confucius was born and grew up, he had a primordial tie to its language, history, and culture. In other words, Confucius had a natural affection for Lu. For Confucius, Lu is closer than Qi. This natural feeling does not need to be deliberately emphasized. So, although Confucius was not limited to parochialism and chose to leave Lu, he still showed some nostalgia when he left Lu. So, the same "leaving" and two different ways of leaving, show precisely that Confucius did not pay

12 "孔子之去齊, 接淅而行; 去魯, 曰: '遲遲吾行也, 父母國之道也. '可以速而速, 可以久而久, 可以處而處."

attention only to the "one" but also took "many" into consideration. His rooted cosmopolitanism is vividly illustrated by this story recorded in *Mencius*.

It is reasonable to emphasize the importance of the historical and cultural traditions that each person has inherited, as scholars like Hilary Putnam have done. A cosmopolitanism that ignores the "many" should take this point seriously. In real life, a cosmopolitan might face two different encounters: to be a stranger forever and everywhere or to go with flow and to "do as the Romans do." Wherever a cosmopolitan goes, as long as there is a root of history, culture, and value in his/her heart, he/she can live a life of *zide* 自得, or "self-content." As Thomas Mann said, "Wherever I am, there is Germany." But now we have an extremely important question to ask. For Confucius, in his rooted cosmopolitanism, what is the root?

Putnam's critique of Nussbaum does not apply to Confucius since the emphasis on historical and cultural tradition is an important part of what Confucius advocated. But the "root" in the rooted cosmopolitanism of Confucius is not historical and cultural tradition per se. It goes beyond tradition and touches the root of human heart-nature. In this regard, the rooted cosmopolitanism of Confucius is different from that of Appiah's. Although also taking the standpoint of cosmopolitanism—trying to make a balance between universality and particularity—, Appiah's root, which is based on his unique life experience and embedded in today's global encounters, is quite different from the root of Confucius, which is a value based on human heart-nature.

Each person has his/her own historical and cultural tradition. For a practitioner of cosmopolitanism, the historical and cultural tradition he/she inherited is not always a burden but can or even must constitute an indispensable resource to implement his/her cosmopolitan ideals. Appiah noted this point in his rooted cosmopolitanism. In the view of Confucius, however, no historical and cultural tradition is a given structure; rather, all are a result of the creative activity of the moral heart-mind that is "*ren*." If *li* 禮, or "ritual," represents historical and cultural tradition, then one of Confucius' greatest contributions was to argue that *ren*, or "humanity," should be the source and foundation

of "*li*." Confucius asked rhetorically, "If a man lost his humanity, then what has he to do with ritual?" (人而不仁, 如禮何?) (3.3) and "Are gems and silk the meaning of ritual?" (禮云禮云, 玉帛云乎哉?) (17.11). In his view, only by remaining rooted in *ren*, as moral heart-mind, can *li*, as historical and cultural tradition, avoid degenerating into pretentious ceremony or even a shackle that imprisons the mind and inner freedom, to renew itself ceaselessly and keep vibrant. As far as this is concerned, the root in the rooted cosmopolitanism of Confucius is "*ren*," which, as the moral heart-mind, is the most important concept in the thought of Confucius. As the unity of reason and feeling, "*ren*" is a concrete universal. It is this concrete universal that enabled the thought and practice of the cosmopolitanism of Confucius not only to go beyond parochialism but also to avoid being ignorant of people and things that are concrete, near at hand, and specific. This is the greatest feature and significance of Confucius' rooted cosmopolitanism.

Appiah might not accept that "*ren*" constitutes the root of cosmopolitanism. He thinks that "what makes the cosmopolitan experience possible for us, whether as readers or as travelers, is not that we share beliefs and values because of our common capacity for reason" (2005, 257). The complex and diverse modern world where Appiah lives, the rich and colorful personal experiences including various ethnicities he has encountered and transcontinental places he has lived—all these are hard to imagine for Confucius who lived some 2,500 years ago. In this sense, the rooted cosmopolitanism of Appiah should be more subtle and sophisticated than that of Confucius, although the former is primarily embedded in the context of Western tradition and does not cover enough Eastern, and especially Chinese, intellectual resources. In any case, the distinctive feature and significance of Confucius' rooted cosmopolitanism lies in that, as a thought and practice that emerged 2,500 years ago, it already went beyond parochialism and achieved balance between universality and particularity.

V. Epilogue

At the end of this article, I would like to express two points, so as not

to cause misunderstanding among readers. First, although the research in this paper contains some Chinese and Western ideas that I want to compare, the comparison of Chinese and Western thought itself is not the object and task of this article. As already pointed out in the introduction, the introduction and involvement of Western thought in this article is meaningful only if it helps to clarify the relevant thoughts of Confucius. Second, the approach and nature of this research lies in description rather than evaluation. It is precisely in this sense that in the Chinese version of this article I deliberately used "*shijie zhuyi* 世界主義" rather than "*tianxia zhuyi* 天下主義" as the counterpart of "cosmopolitanism" in the Chinese context. One of the reasons for this is that the word "*tianxia*" has been misused or even abused. More important, in my view, far from being in a highly integrated global world with various games being played out among the nation-states, the ancient Chinese concept of "*tianxia*," is not enough to explain the various complex issues that modern Western cosmopolitanism seeks to address. If we can neither respect the connotation of the term "*tianxia*" in Chinese historical and cultural tradition, nor make a creative interpretation of its theoretical connotation that is truly based on the Confucian tradition and is sufficient to deal with the current world situation, only taking "Confucianism" and "*tianxia*" as labels for a "conceptual game" is worthless and meaningless.

In short, the main purpose of this article is to demonstrate the thought and practice of Confucius as a cosmopolitan through solid textual analysis and historical research, and on this basis point out the characteristics and significance of Confucius' rooted cosmopolitanism. It does not aim to compare Confucius' rooted cosmopolitanism with Western cosmopolitanism and discuss their merits and demerits, let alone it maintain that Confucius' cosmopolitanism is enough to deal with the related complicated issues in today's world. In fact, in my opinion, if Confucius' rooted cosmopolitanism is to not only serve as a general principle in today's world but also be sufficient to explain complex situations and problems, it must assimilate and digest the nutrients of Western cosmopolitanism to the greatest extent. Only then could it be truly developed and innovated. This is what I want to emphasize in the end.

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