

Qur'ānic Morality between Reason and Emotions

Hussein Abdulsater
University of Notre Dame

The Qur'ān constitutes the most authoritative source of Islamic morality. It consistently condemns passions (*hawā*) as a detrimental force that undermines both thought and behavior. The Qur'ān also praises the act of reasoning (*‘aql*) as a counterweight to passions and as the source of good judgment, though various intellectual traditions within Islam later elaborated divergent conceptions of rationality. Moreover, the Qur'ān extols the love (*ḥubb*) of God, stating that the condition for such love is emulating the Prophet. Because Islamic morality is mainly expressed through observing the sharia, and because such observance is modelled after the Prophet's example, it follows that Islamic morality is based on the love of God, which was mostly celebrated by Sufis within the Islamic tradition. Thus, both reason and emotions are constitutive elements within Qur'ānic morality: the former curbs the negative influence of passions, whereas the latter motivates believers to adhere to religious teachings. I will examine various Qur'ānic pronouncements on both elements to offer an integrated view of Islamic morality as reflected in the Quran.

"'Genuine Knowing' as 'Perfect Emotion'? Affective Knowing in Wang Yangming's Philosophy"

Stephen Angle

Wang Yangming (1472-1529) has provoked controversy from his day to our own with his teachings about varieties of knowing (*zhi* 知). A notable dimension of Wang's theoretical philosophy is his repeated insistence that the inherent reality of both the heartmind itself, and of knowing, is deeply affective in nature. While scholars have often noticed Wang's emphasis on affect, my co-author and I argue that affect is more basic to Wang's view than almost any previous interpretation has recognized. In this presentation I explore the various dimensions of affect—including fear, joy, and sorrow—that jointly characterize this inherent reality, which as a unified whole I label “primordial joy.” On this basis, I unpack Wang's innovative notion of *liangzhi* 良知, which is the heartmind's primordial joy as viewed through the lens of its responsiveness to the myriad things in the world.

Irrepressible Desires and the Powerlessness of Morality: Ritual and Sexuality in Classical Confucian Thought

Liang Cai
University of Notre Dame

Different from anti-sexualism in the West—from Western religion and Kantian philosophy to the modern radical feminist movement—classical Confucianism has a strikingly more positive understanding of the power of romance and sex, especially female sexual prowess. The Confucian canons praised romance and sexual desire when they were expressed in a proper way; their sincerity was regarded not only as beautiful but also as fundamental, eternal, and

sublime. Confucians also recognized that sexual prowess could help women transcend gender-biased politics, exercising tremendous power in shaping historical trajectories.

On the other hand, Confucian philosophers realized that sexual desire, if untamed or undisciplined, could evolve into malicious behavior and become a destructive force. Interestingly, although Confucians advocated the transformative power of a leader's morality and virtue, they consistently held that virtue or moral consciousness alone was powerless to control irrepressible sexual desire. Therefore, instead of demanding that people use imperative moral codes to discipline their sexual desires, they emphasized strict rituals—rituals that employ the segregation of space to prevent the emergence of improper sexual desires.

We Know How You Feel: Emotions and Canonicity in Classical Chinese Philosophy Abstract

Paul R. Goldin

Classical Chinese texts tend to postulate a finite and relatively small number of emotions, typically six, though some sources list five or seven. These emotions are sometimes placed within cosmological frameworks such as the Five Phases (*wuxing* 五行) or the six directions. Such systems were often conceptualized as closed canons. For example, the divinatory method called “field allocation” (*fenye* 分野) associated regions of the sky with regions of China, based on the twenty-eight astronomical mansions (*xiu* 宿) or a 3x3 grid. Similarly, the textual canon was seen as comprehensive and complete, embodying all the knowledge necessary to understand the Way (*dao* 道). This is how Xunzi 荀子 could imply that the *Odes* (*Shi* 詩) contain all the emotions that human beings will ever need to express.

A question arises: there are dozens of Classical Chinese words that denote emotions—how can there be a viable theory postulating just five, six, or at most seven? *Xunzi* does not consider the problem, but *Sunzi* 孫子 suggests an answer: there are five tones, five colors, and five tastes, but they can be combined to form a limitless variety of melodies, images, and flavors. Some modern theories of taste and emotion make similar propositions.

The Self-Other Merging in Contemporary Moral Psychology and the One Body in Neo-Confucianism: Is the Empathy-Induced Helping Behavior Egoistic, Altruistic, Both, or Neither?

Yong Huang
Fudan University

An empathic agent is motivated to help a suffering other. One of the persistent debates in contemporary moral psychology is whether such an empathy-induced helping behavior is egoistic or altruistic. Daniel Batson and his team have conducted a large number of psychological experiments to prove their empathy-altruism hypothesis: an empathic person helps not because (for example) they want to relieve themselves of suffering caused by their experiencing the other's suffering, or to avoid the guilt feeling for not helping, or to reap praises for their helping, but, simply, to relieve others of their suffering. Robert Cialdini and his team

argue that there is something called self-other merging taking place in empathy: the self and other become identical. While not physical identity, they argue that such an identity is real. Michael Slote further explains that it is not numerical identity: two persons become one, but qualitative identity: what one person thinks, feels, and desires is identical to what the other person thinks, feels, and desires. Due to such an identity, perceived by the empathic person, Cialdini et al argue that the empathy-induced helping behavior is egoistic or at least not altruistic: one helps another person only when one can identify that person as oneself, and in this sense one is helping oneself. Daniel Batson et al argue that the self-other merging, unless in a metaphorical or even mystic sense, cannot take place in empathy, since empathy and the empathy-induced helping behavior assume the distinctiveness between oneself and the other, as otherwise the empathic person will be confused: helping oneself instead of the other due to such a perception of identity.

It is in the context of this debate that I shall introduce the neo-Confucian interpretation, especially by Cheng Mingdao in Song dynasty and Wang Yangming in Ming dynasty, of the Confucian *ren* (humanness) as feeling to be in one body with ten thousand things. It has now been generally agreed that, thus understood, *ren* contains, though being broader than, the idea of empathy. Moreover, being in one body with another thing is obviously a kind of the self-other merging. What distinguishes them, however, is that, the neo-Confucians understand the one body in terms of connection, instead of identity. When one feels to be in one body with another, one feels the other as part of one's (extended) body. While these different parts form one body, they are distinct rather than identical parts of the same body, just as one's hands and feet are distinct rather than identical parts of one's body. Such an understanding can accommodate what Batson considers to be the necessary condition for empathy: the self and other distinctiveness, though here it should be understood as the distinctiveness of different parts of the same body. When an empathy induced helping behavior takes place, one uses one part of the body ("self") to help another part of the body ("other"). Since both belong to the same body, such a helping behavior is neither egoistic nor altruistic, since egoism and altruism both assume the separateness of the self and other.

Negative Emotions and Well-Being in Early Confucianism

Richard Kim

Contemporary theories of well-being typically treat negative emotions as prudential costs: painful experiences to be minimized or outweighed by positive goods. Hedonist accounts make this explicit: since grief, shame, and anger are painful, they are intrinsically bad for us. This paper draws on early Confucian sources to develop an alternative view, according to which negative emotions are not obstacles to flourishing but can be constitutive of it when properly cultivated and expressed.

Early Confucian texts treat emotions such as joy, anger, sorrow, and fear as basic elements of human nature. The task is not to eliminate negative emotions but to give them appropriate form. The *Liji* describes harmony (*he* 和) as the state in which emotions are realized to their proper measure. Mencius identifies shame as a foundational moral sprout without which one is not fully human. Xunzi's account of the three-year mourning ritual shows how grief is not

to be suppressed but channeled—given structure through sustained ritual practice that honors the dead and expresses the depth of filial love. Drawing on these sources, I argue that grief and other negative emotions can be non-instrumentally good for us. They constitute forms of evaluative engagement through which we recognize the worth of others, deepen self-understanding, and exercise distinctively human capacities for attachment and loss. The Confucian tradition thus offers resources for rethinking the place of suffering in a flourishing life.

Virtue and Pragmatic Resolution: Joy as Ethical Commitment in the *Analects* and Ecclesiastes

Zhanya Xiang

This paper examines the ethical role of emotion through a comparative reading of the *Analects* (*Lunyu*) and Ecclesiastes (Qohelet), focusing on the experience of joy. Both texts associate joy with scenes of modest, everyday living. In the *Analects*, sayings such as “eating coarse food and drinking water... yet joy is found therein” (7.15) and the portrayal of Yan Hui 顏回 who remains joyful in poverty (6.9) present joy as the affective expression of a moral orientation toward life. Similarly, Ecclesiastes repeatedly commends enjoyment in ordinary activities, urging individuals to embrace eating, drinking, and taking pleasure amid their toil as the portion granted by God in the brief span of life (2:24; 3:12–13; 5:18; 8:15; 9:7). Drawing on philosophical theories that understand emotions as evaluative judgments, this paper argues that joy in the *Analects* presupposes an ethical cognition that recognizes the meaningfulness of a simple life within a framework of virtue ethics. By contrast, Qohelet’s advocacy of enjoyment emerges from the acknowledgement that stable causal relations between effort, reward, and fulfillment cannot be secured. The comparison thus reveals two distinct ethical functions of emotion: joy as the expression of virtue, and joy as a pragmatic strategy for living under existential uncertainty.

“The Seen and the Unseen: A Mencian Theory of Compassion”

Michael Zhao

Human beings typically care more about the suffering of those we can see than about the suffering of those we cannot see. Many will donate to the family of a child whose plight is broadcast on television, but ignore the countless unseen children who they know are equally in need of help. According to ordinary wisdom, this phenomenon, *the identifiable victim effect*, is a serious flaw in human moral motivation. This talk argues against the ordinary wisdom. Drawing on ideas about compassion in Mencius, I argue that it is typically more *morally worthy* to be moved by the suffering of a seen (or otherwise identifiable) victim than by that of an unseen (or unidentifiable) victim.