

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF 'EXISTENTIAL DESTITUTION' IN PRE-QIN CHINESE
PHILOSOPHY AND KARL JASPERS IN THE CONTEXT OF HOMELESSNESS IN
HAWAI'I

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By

Sydney M. Morrow

Dissertation Committee:

Tamara Albertini, Chairperson

Roger Ames, Co-Chairperson

Masato Ishida

George Tsai

David McCraw

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For my parents, Suzzanne and Roy.

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Abstract

This dissertation outlines comparative philosophical approaches to understanding the contemporary problem of homelessness in Hawai‘i. It also offers a methodology for an applied comparative philosophical project. I provide examples of specific contributors to the problem of homelessness and bring in various Chinese and Western sources that contribute ways of understanding and contextualizing this issue. I build the themes successively from the necessity of constitutive interpersonal relationships, to the supportive and nurturing relationships among people and their natural surroundings, to the psychological response necessary to promote sympathy and solidarity, to a broad and inclusive awareness of the world. At each stage, I bring in my formulation of existential destitution to define and describe how these types of flourishing may fail to come about.

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Chapter One. The Problem of Homelessness in Hawai‘i

In *People of the Abyss*, Jack London describes his experiences living in the East End, the poorest district in London, at the beginning of the 20th century. The story begins as he hires a carriage and instructs the driver to take him to the East End. The driver pauses, incredulous of this well-dressed foreigner, but he eventually agrees to the fare. London describes the sloping changes he sees outside the carriage, and on arriving he immediately seeks more fitting, that is, stained and itchy, clothes. He slept rough for months among the destitutes and drunks, though he occasionally crossed back over into more prosperous neighborhoods to bathe and eat a warm, prepared meal. The world of the East End, as he described it, was intentionally distanced from the world of functioning, thriving London. The people there knew little else about the city than the ubiquitous squalor, cold, hunger, disease, and death that framed their lives. They'd been left buried in the grime of the Industrial Revolution and relegated to the lesser class of human beast. They were out of sight, swept with the day's trash into a vast gutter at the end of the city.

A little over a century later, such stark, geographical boundaries that separate homeless populations from the rest are less rigid. Homelessness now dots all areas, rural, urban, and suburban, in a way that is difficult to make invisible. While poverty continues to proliferate in historically poor areas, a clear indication of its genealogical inherence, it is increasingly visible irrespective of social geography. The reality of homelessness remains just as unintelligible from the perspective of those who are housed. Proximity has done little to facilitate compassion or understanding. Instead, the question of what to do with them now that they are here is a divisive political question asked and answered primarily by those who ignored, imprisoned, and dehumanized them in the first place.

Homelessness in Hawai‘i

Homelessness is a global problem.¹ Although the number of unsheltered individuals has decreased nationwide,² the number of unsheltered individuals is growing in urban Hawai‘i,³ which now has the highest per capita percentage of homelessness of any state in the United States.⁴ There is no universally applicable protocol for alleviating homelessness. What is needed are local solutions.⁵ In the United States, the trend has been to follow federally mandated agendas with seemingly little awareness of the types of persons comprising local homeless populations, for example, whether they are primarily indigenous peoples, religious or racial minorities, veterans, or felons, and the unique problems they each face. The proliferation of people experiencing homelessness whose lives are unwittingly public has instead induced the redoubling of efforts to help, house, or hide the roughly half-million of them in the United States.

¹ “Homelessness is a global human rights crisis that demands an urgent global response.” United Nations General Assembly Human Rights Council Thirty-first session “Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context.” Accessed on 4/22/2016 <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Housing/Pages/AnnualReports.aspx>

² The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Community Planning and Development “2015 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress.” November 2015. Accessed on 4/22/2016 <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2015-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

³ “City and County of Honolulu Homeless Point-in-time Count 2015.” submitted to The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in April 2015. Accessed on 4/22/2016 <http://humanservices.hawaii.gov/bessd/files/2012/12/PIT-Oahu-2015-PIT-Report-Rev-4.18.15.pdf>

⁴ This data relies on the HUD assessment, which is based on the state’s point-in-time count, and the United States Census Bureau count of individuals residing in Hawaii. It is unlikely that this count includes homeless individuals, though a small percentage who temporarily reside with family, friends, and acquaintances at the time of census might be counted.

⁵ This viewpoint is significantly influenced by Zygmunt Bauman, especially *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts* (Polity: Oxford, 2004).

Hawai‘i currently has a rate of 465 homeless individuals per 100,000 people,⁶ and even with efforts to reduce their numbers and millions of dollars spent, the number of unsheltered individuals has increased over the last five years. But this increase is difficult to quantify because homelessness metrics rely on non-comprehensive factors. The number of homeless individuals is an amalgam figure of the number of people who request services from providers such as the Institute for Human Services (IHS), those who visit the islands’ shelters for meals and/or accommodations, those included in the annual point-in-time count, and those who can produce no home address when cited by law enforcement officers or completing hospital emergency room paperwork. Getting an accurate count is not possible without communication and cohesiveness among service providers, but as Hawai‘i continues to mold its policies surrounding homelessness, which depend largely on yearly allotted budgets, the solidification of purpose and strategy has been slow to materialize.

There are three basic, non-exclusive ways to address homelessness from the policy level in the United States today: fund programs that aim to end homeless by providing resources, education, or housing; provide aid for daily needs such as food, water, and basic medical care; and employ punitive measures to deter unsheltered individuals from inhabiting certain areas or from undesirable, antisocial behaviors. Citizens’ and taxpayers’ opinions and beliefs regarding the unsheltered tend to polarize around the issue of whether and how much material aid ought to be provided. One pole is characterized by the liberal, Protestant, capitalist ethic of meaningful, gainful employment, personal responsibility and repentance for one’s own shortcomings, which

⁶ The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Community Planning and Development “2015 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress.” November 2015. Accessed on 4/22/2016 <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2015-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

tends toward conservatism on the modern U.S. political spectrum in its preference for liberty.⁷

The other pole is a socially-oriented, post-Darwinian view that forefronts equality and empathy in constructing a modern society, which characterizes the modern progressive tack and its preference for justice.⁸ Progressive agendas tend to favor more public spending for programs that support those suffering from poverty and homelessness, and conservative agendas push for creating jobs and incentivizing labor, which often leads to support of punitive measures against what is seen as an unproductive and unmotivated segment of the population.

The implementation of policies from either side of this ideological spectrum is snarled by the intersectional diversity of homelessness. Homeless individuals form a complex group. Unsheltered individuals are those who do not have a protected, secure dwelling for daily life activities or restful sleep. Homeless, sheltered individuals reside within emergency shelters or transitional housing. According to the point-in-time counts, which are performed on one night in January by volunteer workers who physically count homeless individuals, sheltered and

⁷ 2012 Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney at the first Presidential Debate, October 2, 2012: “My plan is not like anything that’s been tried before. My plan is to bring down rates but also bring down deductions and exemptions and credits at the same time, so the revenue stays in, but that we bring down rates to get more people working. My priority is putting people back to work in America.” Cutting spending often refers to government entitlement programs. A severe example is the phasing out of Medicaid, which covers or supplements medical costs for the lowest-income Americans, in the Republican-authored American Health Care Act of 2017. For the House bill: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/1628>.

⁸ 2016 Democrat presidential candidate Bernie Sanders, by all accounts the loudest voice in progressive politics in the U.S., at the 2016 Democratic National Convention: “Election days come and go. But the struggle of the people to create a government which represents all of us and not just the one percent - a government based on the principles of economic, social, racial and environmental justice - that struggle continues.”

unsheltered homeless individuals each comprise about half of the total.⁹ This number, however, does not include those considered housed but who are at risk of becoming homeless, including individuals and families living temporarily with friends, family, members of a religious community, or in motels and hostels. Those who are considered chronically homeless are defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development as homeless for at least one year or at least four separate occasions in the last three years where the combined length of time homeless in those occasions is at least twelve months and have a disability.¹⁰ They are eligible for different types of services than those who are not considered chronically homeless, as will be discussed later. Hawai‘i is unique among the United States because those who identify as Hawaiian and Pacific Islander comprise the majority of homeless individuals.¹¹ Hawai‘i also has a relatively high number of homeless families and a relatively low number of homeless veterans. These

⁹ “HUD Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Programs Homeless Populations and Subpopulations” Point-in-time count for Hawai‘i: 2015, 2016.

¹⁰ From the HUD “ Notice for Housing Inventory Count (HIC) and Point-in-Time (PIT) Data Collection for Continuum of Care (CoC) Program and the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program,” issued November 18, 2015. <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Notice-CPD-15-010-2016-HIC-PIT-Data-Collection-Notice.pdf> accessed 7/22/17.

¹¹ The point-in-time count presents that data as follows: 3,374 Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders and 1,948 Multiple Races. Researchers at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa utilize a more specific ethnicity classification code that accounts for part-Hawaiians and mixed Pacific Islander, and their findings indicate that the population of Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders ought to be closer to 60% of the total homeless population in Honolulu. See Tai Dunson-Strane and Sarah Soakai, “The Effects of City Sweeps and Sit-Lie Policies on Honolulu’s Homeless,” Curriculum Project for PLAN 604: Qualitative Methods, Instructor: Professor Karen Umemoto, Ph.D. Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (June 2015).

factors complicate the responses to homelessness in the state, which are typically aimed at individuals experiencing homelessness and have been favorable to veterans.¹²

For those living in Honolulu, the capital and largest city, the experience of homelessness is a part of everyday life, whether lived or encountered. Hawai‘i has received millions in U.S. federal aid to address the myriad issues that result in and sustain homelessness, but the number of unsheltered individuals continues to rise.¹³ I hope to show that the primary reason that the policies have not had satisfying results is that they often do not take into consideration the aspects that are unique to Hawai‘i. These concerns stem from the elements of Hawaiian culture that differ from contemporary American ways of living: the effects of enforced American laws and standards that legislate public as well as private life and the distrust and enmity toward not only American people but also those seen as assimilating American behaviors.¹⁴

Contributing Factors to Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders Experiencing Homelessness

How do we talk about the issues that Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders face and how these issues contribute to their overrepresentation among the homeless population in

¹² President Barack Obama (term: 2008-2016) made veteran homelessness a priority, and the Veterans Administration began its program in 2009 to end veteran homelessness. A handful of states, including Utah and Virginia, and cities such as Houston and New Orleans, claimed to have ended veteran homelessness as a result of these policies and national awareness.

¹³ Whether the increase speaks to more people becoming unsheltered, more unsheltered individuals arriving in Honolulu with few or no resources, or more unsheltered individuals being counted due to more comprehensive census techniques is contested among entities serving the unsheltered, local government officials, and local news media, as well as residents and tourists in Honolulu.

¹⁴ William C. Rezendes III, *Ka Lama Kukui: Hawaiian Psychology: An Introduction* (‘A‘ali‘i Books: Honolulu, 1996), 77.

Hawai‘i? The typical American stereotypes of unsheltered people as lazy and apathetic are more sharply toothed for populations still reeling from colonialism’s powerful effect on Pacific Island cultures, people, ecologies, and environments. William Rezentes, a practicing psychologist in Hawai‘i, has novel diagnoses and techniques for treating Native Hawaiian patients that focus on the difficulties and hardships they encounter in the transition to American ways of living. The Kaumaha Syndrome describes a feeling of being tired and weighed down, symptomatically similar to Western diagnoses of depression, that is “rooted in a collective sadness and moral outrage felt by many Hawaiians” who “were coerced into submitting to foreign institutions, laws, and cultures and forced to either give up or be punished for practicing their traditional culture.”¹⁵ Not only were their cultural practices discouraged or even banned since the U.S. annexed Hawai‘i as a trust territory at the end of the 19th century,¹⁶ the shame they were made to feel has been internalized and preserved through generations, “leading to disease, poverty, homelessness, imprisonment, and cultural and spiritual disintegration.”¹⁷ The organic ties between psychology, history, and culture are kept intact in this diagnosis. Culturally, Native Hawaiians emphasize the supportive cohesiveness of the community in maintaining individual wellbeing, so treatments that are designed to treat individual, private maladies are not as effective. I think the same is true

¹⁵ Rezentes, *Ka Lama Kukui*, 37. According to the Hawaiian Dictionary *Nā Puke Wehewehe Ōlelo Hawai‘i*, the literal meaning of kaumaha is a weight, heavy, or heaviness, and its figurative meaning relates to wretchedness, troubled, depressed, tragic, etc. The dictionary may be accessed at www.wehewehe.org.

¹⁶ For example, the most charitable institution serving Native Hawaiians, the Bishop Estate, initially banned hula on all campuses of Kamehameha Schools. Roth and King’s *Broken Trust: Greed, Mismanagement & Political Manipulation at America’s Largest Charitable Trust* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006).

¹⁷ Rezentes, *Ka Lama Kukui*, 37.

of policies that aim to decrease homelessness in Hawai‘i. Many policies in the US emphasize the treatment of individuals, and understandings of homeless issues that inform directives are not based in community interconnectedness. In order to address the hardships of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders that result in homelessness, one must realize that situations that result in solitariness are already deeply troubled and that improvement of individual circumstances will likely require the repair of community dynamics.

Kaumaha syndrome does more than describe a psychological condition. It addresses the structural problems that have negatively affected Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders. It acknowledges the limitations they encounter and the devaluation of the richness of their culture by powerful political, economic, and social forces. It also suggests that for these reasons, those who suffer from this condition can be destructive and disruptive. According to Rezentes, those with psychological problems should be guided to “become more aware of their Hawaiian-ness and enhancing their self-identity through recognition of Hawaiian values.”¹⁸ The realization they will come to is that colonial powers buried the seeds of self-resentment in the minds of Hawaiians that have sprouted into psychiatric limitations that add to issues surrounding economic poverty.

Rezentes gives an appraisal of the psychological contributors to conditions including homelessness among Native Hawaiians. He repeatedly reminds his readers and his clients that

¹⁸ These pivotal aspects of Hawaiian identity include *inoa*, the meaning of one’s name, which is a powerful signifier of one’s character; *‘ohana*, one’s family and genealogy, which determines the connections among people and to Hawaiian culture; *‘āina*, the land to which Hawaiians are rooted for nutritional and spiritual nourishment; *lōkahi*, the natural balance and harmony of the world; and *aloha*, literally “the sharing of one’s inner self through one’s breath.” *Aloha* is the opening up of oneself to others that promotes unity and cohesiveness in the community. Rezentes, pp. 89-93.

much of the suffering he sees in his clients is caused by the discord between Hawaiian and American self-understanding. This ought to have an impact on how homelessness is addressed from the policy level, given the overrepresentation of Native Hawaiians, but the views and biases of policy-makers and voters in many cases seem to favor Western approaches. This comes as no surprise because American politics are grounded significantly in Western, European political thought. Philosophers like Kant, Locke, Hobbes, Rawls, and the early American philosopher-politicians Jefferson and Franklin, emphasized individuality and liberty, rationality and justice. These views have been used to justify imperial expansionism and racism, which have contributed to the overrepresentation of indigenous Americans and people of color in prisons, in poverty, unsheltered, and suffering from psychological and drug addiction disorders. Native Hawaiians have a difficult decision to make. Do they insulate themselves inside culturally homogenous Hawaiian communities with little chance for self-governance and material self-sufficiency as long as they are living under U.S. laws and economic structures? If not, how far are they willing to assimilate into American cultures and norms, and at what cost? I suggest something more radical. In this dissertation, I will consider a different philosophical tradition to frame new perspectives and approaches, rather than searching for better strategies among the Western conceptual structures that girded the policies which created these problems in the first place.

Using Chinese Philosophical Approaches to Understand Homelessness Among Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders

The understanding of self as located within family and community nexus in specific and significant places in the Chinese philosophical tradition has notable similarities to Hawaiian

epistemologies and social arrangements. They each emphasize relationality and the importance of traditional understandings and rituals. I will use Chinese philosophical perspectives to mediate the differences permeating United States and Hawaiian relations. I choose this approach for several reasons. First, concern for navigating the vicissitudes of alternately brackish and clear disclosures of fate permeates Chinese philosophy, where the world is conceived as neither fixed nor conducive to altogether new beginnings. The world unfolds in ways that disclose opportunity as well as calamity. Creativity, then, is not creation *ex nihilo* but adaptivity and awareness. A life well-lived is both scripted and responsive, like tango dancing or surfing. There are learned ways of moving and reacting, but the prescience bestowed by ingrained habits goes beyond what is scripted to become spontaneous and unbidden. In Hawaiian epistemology, this understanding has a counterpart in *he 'e nalu* “ocean knowing.” The relationship between Native Hawaiians, or Kānaka Maoli, and the ocean provides productive metaphors of endless change and the “unseen yet present” that give context to the human lives inextricable from her boundaries.¹⁹ Karin Amimoto Ingersoll writes:

Seascape epistemology engages a discourse about place that recognizes the ocean’s transient and dynamic composition; waves are constantly formed and broken, sucked up from the very body that gave it life. No part of this liquid body is ever stable. Yet something does endure within this space and time: relationships that draw together the sea’s collective components through an engagement such as

¹⁹ The phrase “unseen yet present” is attributed to Keoni James Kuoha in Karen Amimoto Ingersoll, *Waves of Knowing: A Seascape Epistemology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 22.

he'e nalu. Seascape epistemology is movement's sound, its taste and color, and it is the fluctuation of a process that joins the world together.²⁰

The suitability for comparison with Chinese philosophy is clear. They both privilege process, relationships, and embodied knowing. But as to why I think mediating Hawaiian and dominant United States discourses about poverty and homelessness is necessary or preferred, my main concern in writing about these issues is to preserve complexity in the face of dominant reductionist, binary mindsets of Western ethical and economic orientations. As long as the U.S. is able to 'other' Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, just as, Ingersoll argues, they have 'othered' the sea,²¹ and exclude the middle ground where empathy and compassion may find their footing, any policy failings can be attributed to irresolvable differences and, likely, dispirited efforts on behalf of a colonized people to properly assimilate. The binary interaction between the colonizer and colonized, which takes place in a graveyard of identities and promises on once-sacred land, necessitates a mediator. And in the face of power and historical inertia, it is only right that this mediator be biased, slanting the ground so that waves pound the shore with the force to shift the sand.

The plight of Kānaka Maoli is bared in the black and white of U.S. government reports as well as the houseless people settled on the sidewalks and parks like hunks of dead coral tossed by waves onto the beach. Each is dissolved from the collectivities that sustained them, and the forces that rendered this result inevitable are both varied and uniform. While Western modes of understanding and arguing depend on distinctions and oppositions, definitions and some degree

²⁰ Ingersoll, *Waves of Knowing*, 20.

²¹ Ingersoll, in *Waves of Knowing*, writes, "The ocean was perceived as Other, justifying Westerners' desire to control and colonize both the seascape and those encountered within the seascape." 144.

of objectivity, which all contribute to the binary of one and many, Hawaiian and Chinese perspectives do not seek to distinguish the primacy of one or many. The result is a folding of difference into diverse unities, the broadening of knowledge to include connections among seemingly disparate events, and an emphasis and respect for the not-yet-disclosed. So, contemporary discussions about the houseless and unsheltered in Hawai‘i ought also to preserve the complex, non-reducible, lived experiences of those experiencing it. Homelessness is both an immense, unwieldy problem and a quantum assortment of discrete but knotted issues.

Additionally, the Chinese philosophies I refer to frame a nuanced discussion about poverty that has no counterpart in Hawaiian mythology or pre-contact history.²² Contact with American missionaries and businessmen planted a seed, which like most invasive species flourished and destroyed the delicate balance of the islands’ sustainable ecosystems. The ravaging of Hawai‘i included the introduction of extreme poverty, with its concomitant lack of efficacy and choice. Polynesian cultures were known to be culturally homogenous, self-sufficient, and governed by a sacred ruling class and through ritual. Poverty in this historical context can be described as the condition of all of the common folk in the lowest class, but this undermines the importance of political and spiritual hierarchy in Polynesian cultures and arrogantly applies contemporary, Western conception of poverty as a lack of material resources. One could say that those who lacked spiritual connectedness to others, the ancestors, or the land

²² Chinese philosophy is not a monolith. Rather, there is a discourse that orients different philosophies to speak to common themes. Hence the plural, Chinese philosophies, is used to indicate the different perspectives and contexts for approaching philosophical problems.

were poor because they lacked what Polynesians value.²³ But attempting to locate dysfunctional inequality in a cultural history that emphasizes pre-contact harmony leaves little room for discussions of poverty that are not themselves harmful to contemporary Polynesian identities. However, the Chinese philosophical tradition has never shied from discussing poverty and has even glorified it at various times throughout its long history. Early Chinese philosophy lends a nuanced definition of poverty, in terms of both economic and existential limitation, that will be fruitful in discussing poverty and homelessness in Hawai‘i today.

Chinese philosophy and Human Limitation: The Character *qiong* 窮

I rely heavily in this dissertation on the Chinese character *qiong* 窮, which contributes two sets of ideas. The first set combines economic and existential poverty. The result is a crushing maelstrom of external forces and cannot be fully attributed to personal, individual choices, or reduced to discrete social, political, or economic systems. Much like the Kaumaha Syndrome discussed above, when suffering from this kind of poverty, one feels like one is at a dead end and has nowhere to turn. I believe much of the public discourse surrounding homelessness has focused on economic poverty and psychological conditions that sabotage economic self-sufficiency with little regard for existential needs.

²³ This value is illustrated in the Hawaiian concept of *pono*. *Pono* is one of the central themes for describing morality in Hawaiian culture. It is described as “the integration of self with your environment, in the way you relate to people.” And this practice “conveys the meaning of goodness, purity, wellness, integrity, righteousness, perfection and success.” This according to educators interviewed in Manulani Aluli Meyer’s book *Ho‘oulu: Our Time of Becoming: Hawaiian Epistemology and Early Writings* (Honolulu: ‘Ai Pōhaku Press, 2004), 153, 200. They affirm that this way of life was disrupted by the arrival of Western colonists, who banned many Hawaiian practices as well as the Hawaiian language, and that this disharmony is yet to be remedied.

The second set of meanings of the character *qiong* relates the positive and negative connotations of the relationship between humans and limits. One may encounter a limit that prevents one from going further, which is the imminent danger of poverty, but one may also reach the limit of what is possible, or the full expression of one's actions and desires. *Qiong* in this sense describes a person who probes the world with a pinnacle of acuity and discernment, a sage in the Confucian tradition. A sage does not encounter limitation, or perhaps does not consider shortages of economic resources and social capital limiting. According to the *Xunzi*, the encompassing (*qiong*) knowledge of the sage is spread among the people when things are as they should be (天下正), but when no one is listening to the sage, these aspects of perfection are hidden (*ming qiong* 冥窮).²⁴

The meaning of *qiong* may be translated most simply as “exhaust.”²⁵ The sages exhaust the inexhaustible (*qiong wuqiong* 窮無窮), while those who are not sages but are exemplary or distinguished, the *junzi* 君子, will exhaust themselves striving for such a lofty goal. The *Xunzi* advises that one set attainable goals by recognizing one's limits to avoid being an “unwitting plodder” (不識步道者).²⁶ In addition to heeding the limit of what one is capable of achieving,

²⁴ *Xunzi*, 正名: 說行則天下正, 說不行則白道而冥窮。

²⁵ There are several facets to the meaning reflecting the component radicals of its construction, its placement as a complementary-opposite pair, its grammatical function, and the time-period of the texts it appears in.

²⁶ Burton Watson trans. *Xunzi: Basic Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 29.

one must continue to self-cultivate even when they are in poverty (*qiong*).²⁷ There is the hope that one's personal limitations (*qiong*) are not exacerbated or perpetuated by hard times (*qiong*) that prevent one from reaching (*qiong*) one's goals. To maintain this hope, all that needs to be done, according to the *Xunzi*, is to do appropriate and responsible things like respect the old and win the respect of the old and young alike, do not "press those who are already hard pressed (*buqiong qiong*不窮窮),"²⁸ and win the favor of the poor and rich alike, and do not be prideful or boastful, and the sages and regular folk will rally round.²⁹ This may not prevent falling on hard times, but it prescribes a way of life that is beneficial for everyone if put into practice. This is the message of Confucian self-cultivation also included in the *Mengzi* chapter 7A9, which describes the upstanding scholar/bureaucrats (*shi* 士) who when poor better themselves in private and when successful put their efforts into bettering the world.³⁰ This way of speaking about poverty contributes to its understanding as a systemic problem, rather than an isolated occurrence. It also indicates the difficulty of achieving exemplary moral consistency while living in dire straits. The contribution of these insights to contemporary understandings of homelessness and poverty

²⁷ *Xunzi* 修身：故良農不為水旱不耕，良賈不為折閱不市，士君子不為貧窮怠乎道。ICS *Concordance to the Xunzi*. (Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 2006) 14.18/74/27. A good farmer does not give up plowing just because of flood or drought; a good merchant does not stop doing business just because of occasional losses; a gentleman (*junzi*) does not neglect the Way just because of poverty and hardship. Watson, *Xunzi*, 28.

²⁸ Watson, *Xunzi*, 32.

²⁹ *Xunzi* 修身：老老而壯者歸焉，不窮窮而通者積焉，行乎冥冥而施乎無報，而賢不肖一焉。ICS *Concordance to the Xunzi*.

³⁰ *Mengzi* 盡心上：窮則獨善其身，達則兼善天下。ICS *Concordance to the Mengzi*. v. 15. (Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 2006) 14.18/74/27.

benefits from the understanding of issues as interconnected and complex. When considering these issues in localized and specific circumstances, as I do in my attempt to present the issues surrounding and contributing to homelessness in Hawai‘i, one must resist the urge to simplify and generalize these knotty social issues.

Issues Contributing to the Prevalence of Homelessness in Hawai‘i

Pre-Qin and Han Dynasty Chinese philosophy presumes inviolable connections between the state, each person, and the world. This holistic political ecology affects each person’s ability to thrive. Applying the lessons of Chinese philosophy to contemporary issues is useful because the myriad causes of poverty are kept intact, rather than being reduced to primary causes. In the current political climate in the United States, for example, it is not uncommon for poor and unsheltered individuals to be blamed for their plight because of laziness and poor decisions.³¹ This gross oversimplification ignores the many factors that result in increasing numbers of unsheltered individuals. In this chapter, I describe three issues that must be considered in order to understand the problem of homelessness in Hawai‘i and come up with effective solutions.

The issues I discuss are 1) the sit-lie ordinance, a measure passed by the City and County of Honolulu that criminalizes sitting or lying down on public sidewalks during certain times; 2) the Housing First initiative, which allocates state and federal funding toward programs that connect those experiencing homelessness directly to housing opportunities and rental assistance programs. This implementation of this program has clashed with the lack of affordable housing

³¹ This is shown to be especially true among Protestant Christian communities in the US. See for example “Christians are more than twice as likely to blame a person’s poverty on lack of effort,” Julie Zauzmer, *The Washington Post*, 08/03/2017.

and the high cost of living in urban areas of Honolulu; and 3) the impact of the Compacts of Free Association, which allow for the free movement of citizens from the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau to the United States. I believe that the issues I have chosen to address indicate the uniqueness of the state of affairs in Hawai‘i and may serve to explain the high number of unsheltered individuals. Applying the lessons of Chinese philosophy requires that the complexity of this situation be held intact, which means that everyone is culpable for the injustices and imbalances in the society and world we share. Chinese philosophy directs us to consider both internal and external circumstances in assessing social ills. This chapter discusses the external, socially and broadly enforced laws and expectations while occasionally dwelling on philosophical perspectives of these issues. In later chapters, I address the internal, psychological circumstances that prevent self-improvement and success as well as comparative interpretations of the social realities that have given way to visible and unsustainable homelessness in Hawai‘i.

The Sit-Lie Ordinances

Over 8,600,000 tourists visited Hawai‘i in 2015.³² Its relative isolation and consistent trade winds contribute to high air quality, the tides to clear beach waters, and its balmy year-round temperatures and reputation for hospitality make for a relatively care-free holiday for these visitors. The mid-Pacific location of the islands draws significant numbers of tourists from Japan, China, and Australia, in addition to those from the United States. This enormous transient

³² Annual Visitor Report. Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism Visitor Statistics, Accessed 2/2/2017, <http://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/visitor/visitor-research/2015-annual-visitor.pdf>

population of folks on-island who do not participate in local politics but demand a homelessness-free vacation experience contributed to the first unique aspect homelessness in of Hawai‘i that I will discuss.

In the district of Waikīkī, the tourist hub on the south shore of Oahu, unsheltered individuals clash unsettlingly with denizens of the high-end fashion outlets, hotels, and faux-tiki eateries dotting the shore. Tourism is the primary driver of the urban island economy with spending of about \$15 billion annually.³³ The desk of Honolulu Mayor Kirk Caldwell, who took office in January 2013 and was reelected in 2016, is purportedly littered with personalized letters from visitors expressing their dismay at the presence of unsheltered individuals in Waikīkī.³⁴ These letters describe frightening and violent encounters, and there are several reasons for these occurrences. Unsheltered individuals who do not utilize shelter services are more likely to suffer from mental disorders and drug dependency disorders.³⁵ Most of the shelters in Hawai‘i have strict policies about drug use and mental health treatment, and those who are not accommodated by or who have no choice but to refuse these services frequent populated areas so that they can ask for money and search for redeemable recyclables. This combined with the closures of public rest areas on public beaches, especially in the evening, has created a malodorous, roving, raving

³³ Annual Visitor Report. Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism Visitor Statistics, Accessed 2/2/2017, <http://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/visitor/visitor-research/2015-annual-visitor.pdf>

³⁴ “Dear Mayor: Complaints about the Homeless Pour Into Caldwell’s Office.” Sophie Cocke. *The Civil Beat*, Accessed 2/2/2017, <http://www.civilbeat.org/2014/11/dear-mayor-complaints-about-the-homeless-pour-into-caldwells-office/>

³⁵ According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, “In January 2014, one in five people experiencing homelessness have a serious mental illness, and a similar percentage had a chronic substance abuse disorder,” Accessed 2/2/2017, <https://www.samhsa.gov/homelessness-housing>

population of underserved individuals inhabiting the center of a district created to deliver the paradise experience.

In September 2014, the Mayor approved three bills for ordinances aimed at decreasing the number of unsheltered individuals in Waikīkī. Two made the act of urinating or defecating in public illegal in Waikīkī and public areas. The other prohibited sitting and lying on the sidewalks in Waikīkī except from eleven p.m. to five a.m., when people are allowed to rest on the sidewalk. Under this ordinance, anyone reclining on the sidewalk will be asked to move or receive a warning or citation from a law enforcement officer and potentially charged with a petty misdemeanor.³⁶ These city ordinances cite the need for safe public sidewalks that are free from obstructions for all citizens and especially children and the elderly. They also express the need for unfettered access to all businesses whose main entry abuts the public sidewalks. In December 2014, the law was expanded to ban sitting and lying on public sidewalks in most of Honolulu's districts extending westward to Hawai'i Kai, as well as the windward towns of Waimanalo, Kailua, and Kaneohe, and the central island town of Wahiawa.³⁷ The Mayor dug in his heels and vetoed an expansion on this ordinance that would include more areas in Honolulu as well as update the ordinance to include areas near public sidewalks, termed the "extended sidewalk area."³⁸ But on June 3, 2015, the City Council voted to approve Bill 6 to ban sitting and lying in the areas surrounding public sidewalks and increased the number of sites affected by the

³⁶ City and County of Honolulu Bill for Ordinance 14-26, Accessed 2/18/2016, <http://www4.honolulu.gov/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-152425/ORD14-26.PDF>

³⁷ City and County of Honolulu Bill for Ordinance 14-35, Accessed 2/18/2016, [http://www4.honolulu.gov/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-153805/DOC002%20\(45\).PDF](http://www4.honolulu.gov/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-153805/DOC002%20(45).PDF)

³⁸ City and County of Honolulu Bill for Ordinance 15-14, Accessed 2/18/2016, [http://www4.honolulu.gov/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-166012/DOC002%20\(19\).PDF](http://www4.honolulu.gov/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-166012/DOC002%20(19).PDF)

ordinance. In early 2015, Mayor Caldwell signed another bill to extend the ban to select public malls and open outdoor pedestrian areas in downtown Honolulu and Chinatown.³⁹ Yet, when a new bill was put forward relating to this ordinance that would increase the number of outdoor malls where the ban would be enforced, the Mayor vetoed it. His statement included the following:

Rather than attempting to expand the sit-lie laws, we should focus our collective energies and attention to working together to find, create, and provide affordable housing for all the people of the City, so that those less fortunate persons who live on the public rights-of-way have other options than simply moving into different public rights-of-way as more laws are passed.⁴⁰

The ordinances did not include predictions or hopes for the fate of those forced to vacate the areas where the sit-lie ban was enforced, so it is not possible to say whether the results have been a success. By all counts, the number of unsheltered individuals has gone up, even though their presence has been all but erased in the areas most frequented by visiting tourists to the islands. It was concerning to watch them being driven from the most heavily populated areas of Honolulu to nowhere in particular. The neighborhoods they migrated into were understandably frustrated as they were forced to absorb the increasingly beleaguered lot. This was of course aggravated by the size of the Hawaiian islands and their geographical isolation. It was as if there was no place for them within the current state of island politics and development.

³⁹ City and County of Honolulu Bill for Ordinance 15-1, Accessed 2/18/2016, <http://www4.honolulu.gov/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-161745/dspage07500950716899260828.pdf>

⁴⁰ Office of the Mayor letter to City Council August 19, 2015, Accessed 2/18/2016, http://www.honolulu.gov/rep/site/csd/Bill_44_Letter_8-19-15.pdf

The most prominent effect of the ban was visual, that is, there were no or few temporary structures, personal belongings, or people occupying the extended sidewalk area in many of the city's tourist areas. Yet, in sections of Honolulu where the ban was not in effect, there was an increase in the number of visibly unsheltered individuals. The most publicized area was Kaka'ako, which is between Waikīkī and the downtown business district that includes Chinatown. In 2016 it was the site of large, informal tent city, which swelled to as many as 300 individuals before it too was swept, the order coming swiftly under the state of emergency declared as a result of increasing homelessness figures. This sweep put the sit-lie ban in the spotlight because it seemed to have been carried out under different circumstances than those in the tourist and business areas. Kaka'ako was an industrial area near the port that had recently become the site of construction for high-end, high-occupancy condominiums and shopping centers. The swelling numbers of unhoused individuals carrying on in the shadows cast by these enormous, sleek new buildings advertising multi-million dollar dwellings made the divide between the haves and the have-nots very clear. It also eerily fit into the area's history.

The land reform policy enacted in 1848 by the Hawaiian government, the Great Māhele, divided the land into three equal parts for the king and the chiefs, both private, and the rest was held in a public trust. In order to gain access to the land, Native Hawaiians had to pay a surveying cost and fill out paperwork. Many did not have the money or, because Hawaiians traditionally did not believe in land ownership, they did not heed the advice to acquire parcels, especially the ones crossed with streams.⁴¹ Many non-Hawaiians came to own public lands, and

⁴¹ "Breach of Trust? Native Hawaiian Homelands: A summary of the proceedings of a public forum sponsored by the Hawaii Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission of Civil Rights," Hawaii Advisory Committee (University of Michigan Library: October, 1980).

subsequent attempts to provide the land to Native Hawaiians have been marred by inefficiency and corruption.⁴² Around the time that Hawai‘i became a U.S. territory in 1898, many Hawaiians who were formerly subsistence farmers came to Honolulu for work. They built semi-permanent dwellings from discarded materials from the port in what is now Kaka‘ako, but then it was called Squattersville. The settlement was home to over 700 Hawaiians and part-Hawaiians who even requested that the city recognize them as a part of the municipality. Their request was denied and their encampment demolished by the city in 1926.⁴³ This event began Kaka‘ako’s troubled history of Hawaiian homelessness.

This history seems to have been repeated under a new guise. In 2016, the City and County deployed law enforcement and sanitation workers to remove, or “sweep” the encampment in Kaka‘ako. It was framed by the city as an impetus for unsheltered individuals to seek institutional assistance. The concern voiced by the city council was that the relative permanence of the tent-city lessened motivation to seek housing, employment, and health and wellness care. But this did not address the disproportionate numbers of Hawaiians as well as Pacific Islanders residing there, as will be discussed further in the section about the Compacts of Free Association.

The public response to the sit-lie ordinances shows the polarizing nature of the problem, as well as the danger that these individuals are increasingly vilified, gradually forgotten, or both,

⁴² There were three land acts at the turn of the 20th century. Only one was not abruptly canceled. Until the formation of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (HHCA), there was no ethnicity requirement, so Hawaiians did not proportionally benefit from the sale of lands from the public trust. Even the HHCA has been found negligent in their duties to the interests of Hawaiians (Breach of Trust, 1980).

⁴³ Adele Balderston, "Voices of Kaka‘ako: A Narrative Atlas of Participatory Placemaking in Urban Honolulu" (M.A. Thesis, 2016), CUNY Academic Works, http://academicworks.cuny.edu/hc_sas_etds/99

as they disappear from view in the most bustling areas of Hawai‘i. A significant experience of mine was when I happened upon a smattering of tents with jewelry, arts and crafts, food and beverages, and a small band performing the lilting rhythms of commercial Hawaiian music in the Waikīkī-proximal Kapi‘olani Park. Events like these can be found most weekends on these expansive grounds. They leave ample room for soccer, kite-flying, picnicking, but also the less acceptable activities of unsheltered individuals, namely, public intoxication, psychotic behavior, and clustered and cluttered habitation of the much-desired shaded picnic table areas in this public park. This area is considered a part of Waikīkī, the first area affected by the sit-lie ban, so there are no unsheltered individuals along the paths. Rather, they are in the shadows of the immense banyan trees, to which No Camping signs were affixed, then removed. On a sunny day in Honolulu, one might be able to overlook them. Most of those who wander out of the end of Waikīkī onto the park’s swaths of mowed grass do not see them, and many are unaware that they are standing on a shifting battleground where the unsheltered and the public safety officials who remove them play out a daily tragic drama. I eat fresh papaya and, thinking this, watch the people meander about the shell necklaces and tropical candles. The event organizer steps on the stage to announce that they are there to promote homelessness awareness.

Now, there might have been a small table among the tents offering copied pamphlets about homelessness that I did not see, but there was nothing about the event that seemed promotional or supportive. I was struck by the distance between the awareness of the problem of homelessness and the awareness of the unsheltered people and the myriad problems that led to their suffering from homelessness. These people, of course, had all been removed, and there was space to raise awareness without their discomfiting presence. This, I think is potentially the most

destructive aspect of this ban. Those living in Hawai‘i agree that homelessness is an extraordinarily pressing issue, but moving unsheltered individuals out of sight risks a drop in the momentum of societal change. It also forms them into a haggard unity devoid of particularizing and humanizing histories.

The enforcement of the sit-lie ban increased public distaste for the presence of unsheltered individuals and their belongings. Efforts to remove them were gallantly taken up by civilians as well as civil servants. Most notably, in 2013, State Representative Tom Brower from the Waikīkī district took a sledgehammer to the wheels of about 30 stolen shopping carts that were being used by unsheltered individuals so that they could no longer be pushed, and no charges were pressed against him.⁴⁴ Some lauded his choice to take care of his constituents’ needs outside of the serene lawmaking chambers. This condoning of violent and abusive behavior certainly colors the perception of the individuals affected by his armed rampage. It allows the unsheltered to be made into criminals undeserving of even the few belongings they carry from one inhospitable place to another.

There was one tack that led into a less morally turbulent area, and it is based on a phrase attributed to Mayor Kirk Caldwell. He calls the enforcement of the sit-lie ban, though hopefully he means on the part of law enforcement, an act of “compassionate disruption.”⁴⁵ The warnings and citations handed out by officers are framed as reminders that living rough is an unsustainable way of life. The hope is that disrupting the daily activities and habits of chronically unsheltered

⁴⁴ “Off The Beat: What Laws Did Hawaii Rep. Tom Brower Break?” Honolulu Civil Beat, Accessed 3/18/2016, <http://www.civilbeat.com/2013/11/20487-off-the-beat-what-laws-did-hawaii-rep-tom-brower-break/>

⁴⁵ See coverage provided by the Honolulu Star Advertiser, for example, “Mayor Claims Win Over Honolulu Crisis” pub. 2/1/2016 by Dan Nakaso.

individuals will spur their desire to attain city and state-provided shelter and its concomitant services. The state-recognized advocacy group that regularly advises on issues of policy and programs that affect the homeless, Protecting Hawaii's Ohana Children Underserved Elderly and Disabled (PHOCUSED), offered their official comments to the city council members in regard to the bills expanding the sit-lie ban on June 15, 2015. The group provided figures that showed no significant change in the number of shelter vacancies before and after the sit-lie ban was enforced.⁴⁶ Yet, when interviewed by a local news outlet regarding the ban in Waikīkī, Connie Mitchel, Executive Director for the Institute for Human Services, indicated that there had been an influx of guests who had been roused from the sidewalks of Waikīkī.⁴⁷

I will grant that there are those for whom this approach works, but it will not work for everyone. It works for those who are willing and capable of imagining a future for themselves that is different, better, than the present. There are many factors that may blind an individual from a view of their life from the perspective necessary to better it, and these factors are concentrated among unsheltered individuals. Immense amounts of physical and emotional stress and trauma, as well as physical and mental disorders and disabilities, limit life to days and dangerous nights preoccupied with survival. The availability of choice to leave this lifestyle is not one easily conjured for reasons as varied as the unsheltered population itself.

⁴⁶ From Scott Morishige, Executive Director PHOCUSED to Councilmember Ikaika Anderson, Chair, Councilmember Trevor Ozawa, Vice Chair, and Members, Committee on Zoning & Planning. Hearing: Monday, June 15, 2015 at 9:00 a.m. Submitting comments relating to Bills 43, 44, 46, 47, 48. Accessed 2/24/2016, <http://www4.honolulu.gov/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-166380/dspage09175064739941899694.pdf>

⁴⁷ Hawaii News Now. Lynn Kawano. "IHS: Sit-Lie Ban is Working in Waikīkī" published Tuesday, February 10, 2015, at 4:19 p.m. HST. Accessed 2/24/2106, <http://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/story/28077207/ihs-sit-lie-ban-is-working-in-waikiki>

Dwelling in Philosophy: Phenomenological Experience of Homelessness

Is it possible for the sheltered--those more capable and acceptable for political and social involvement--to see this absence of choice? If the individuals are made invisible by political and social policy as well as habit, then a view of their exercise of freedom is likely also occluded. The sometimes emotional, strange, and violent encounters with unsheltered individuals do little to bridge reciprocal awareness of their diminished freedom. Instead of sameness, it is tempting to assert absolute difference in the face of an unsheltered person. This phenomenological experience of the other behind the eyes of a person suffering from homelessness is almost like that described by Hegel, Levinas, and Sartre, but often without the recognition of oneself in them. I think that Sartre's ontology provides the most accurate description of the willingness to be indifferent to the visibly unsheltered while simultaneously being profoundly affected by them.

Jean-Paul Sartre, in *Being and Nothingness*, describes the potential for an ontological relationship between *moi même et L'autre* as a complex and devastating give and take that occurs when I recognize ontological self-sameness encased in difference. This recognition brings about the realization that just as one's own life is more than the sum of appearances and choices, the void of potentiality and the unknown at the center of my self-understanding must also be present in the Other. This void is the precursor of freedom, or the ability to assert oneself in the world in a way that is gratifyingly representative of the way one wishes to be seen. The realization that I view others in any way I please is like a mirror suddenly turned, and now my gaze freely explores and objectifies my own product of individual freedom. I imagine how others see me, but it has no verifiable relationship to how I am actually seen. There is an existential danger in all

human interaction of ceding to another's freedom and losing the ballast stabilizing my reality as well as and the capability I have to change it. No longer would *I* be what holds at the center of reality as a void ontologically affiliated with the future. I fear that I will give myself up as a mere object among many, to which the future simply befalls. I allow myself to be cast in the light of another stage, someone else's Grand Ole Opry blinding the view of the paltry, rough-hewn and shrinking plank on which the I, now a trite sideshow, am standing. Ashamed, I suddenly hope to disappear completely. Freedom is the ability not only to define the contours of own-most existence but to maintain this existence in the experience of otherness. A relationship, as defined by this context, will perpetually be subject to the woes of anxiety, abuse, and reciprocal freedom-theft. One can never know the feeling that another person feels or their held hopes and expectations of the future, and this is more pronounced where there is more dissimilarity.

The discomfort of trusting a stranger to understand you, and to risk the loss of your self-determining freedom, may be a compelling reason to ignore them. Sartre writes from the perspective of a person who would live in such bad faith:

I scarcely notice them; I act as if I were alone in the world. I brush against "people" as I brush against a wall; I avoid them as I avoid obstacles. Their freedom-as-object is for me only their "coefficient of adversity." I do not even imagine that they can *look* at me.⁴⁸

Although Sartre is describing an interaction with any given person, and an unsustainable one at that, I think this can describe the interaction many people have in encounters with visibly

⁴⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1984), 495.

unsheltered individuals. We are made pointedly aware of our complicity in an unequal society and may hope for a moment that they do not see us and that they do not ask for more than we are willing to give. In this situation, I do not want them to see that I am free to ignore them and that my actions in their eyes have an effect on who I am.

In this way, one can be made homeless, without a place to be in the void of changing and dynamic self-making. In being cast as a solid, lifeless object, the project of continually choosing to be oneself is foregone. Like a statue moldering in the garden, however human its contours, its place is not within the dwelling of humanity, and as its perspective is non-threatening to those inside the house, it is not seen. One might wonder why they do not change their circumstances so that they can join everyone inside. A common refrain in Hawai‘i is that they must not want to be housed. But, as Sartre writes, it is not easy for those in misery to turn their lives around, not because he “is accustomed to it,” but “because he apprehends it in its plenitude of being and because he cannot even imagine that he can exist in it otherwise.”⁴⁹ Unless a person can concretely imagine ways in which things could be different, Sartre affirms that they will not act.⁵⁰ Speaking of the dispossessed factory worker, “to suffer and to *be* are one and the same for him. His suffering is the pure affective tenor of his non-positional consciousness, but he does not contemplate it.”⁵¹ This is in keeping with Simone Weil’s understanding, drawing from her experience working in a factory, that the workers are “no longer able to pursue any good but that

⁴⁹ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 561.

⁵⁰ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 561.

⁵¹ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 562.

of existing.”⁵² Only with reflective distance from the situation is change possible, and misery leaves little space for openness and change.

Now I will turn to the implementation of Housing First in Hawai‘i. This program aims to permanently house chronically unsheltered individuals. Its less tangible goal is to reintegrate these individuals, many of whom have not lived as a housed individual, with the concomitant desires for privacy and economic self-sufficiency, into the fabric of American society. The program must be adapted to fit Hawai‘i’s unique needs, as I show.

Housing First in Hawai‘i

Housing First is a strategy and set of policy suggestions written by New York-based psychologist Sam Tsemberis that has been adopted in many major U.S. cities. It is novel and irreconcilable with the dominant approach to treating homelessness. It has necessitated not only a shift in how money is allocated for infrastructure and personnel but also an ideological shift in how taxpayers and policymakers conceive of homeless individuals. Traditional programs support a gradual transition from homeless to housed that incentivizes positive changes on behalf of the individual by gradually allowing more independence and freedom. This system is also called the linear continuum or staircase approach. It starts with “low demand and low service provision (such as in an emergency shelter, safe haven, or drop-in center) and ascend[s] through increasing demands and more services... The staircase’s top step is the attainment of one’s own housing and

⁵² Simone Weil, *Late Philosophical Writings*. ed. Eric O. Springsted, trans. Eric O. Springsted and Lawrence E. Schmidt (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015), 132.

a minimum of services required to maintain independent living.”⁵³ These programs are designed to measure “housing readiness” in a strict, supervisory setting. Critics say that this system divides the homeless population into the “deserving” and “undeserving” according to their willingness to abide by shelter rules, which may include maintaining sobriety, agreeing to psychiatric treatment, giving up personal property, restricting contact with friends and family, and rehoming pets. The traditional model intended to provide a gradual transition from street to shelter, but it has been shown to be riddled with trap-doors and dead-ends. For many, the staircase of increasing expectations itself becomes a way of life as one complies (in order to maintain a life considered suitable by people who will likely never live it), gradually meets benchmarks, but then relapses or breaks the rules, goes back to living rough, and then eventually returns to the beginning of the process again. Housing First turns the division of deserving and undeserving on its head by focusing on housing those considered chronically service-averse with few strings attached. This model puts chronically homeless individuals directly into permanent housing while promoting harm-reduction instead of requiring treatment.

A common refrain from communities, primarily the housed, is that these individuals are being rewarded for being noncompliant and unwilling to work. This is how ideologically deep the deserving/undeserving distinction has been hammered in by years of neoliberal pandering as well as the semantic shift from “benefits” to “entitlements.” President Nixon’s fictional and entitled “welfare queen” and President Clinton’s promise to put all of the poor to work normalized the image of the poor as lazy and undeserving. This attitude has more or less carried

⁵³ Deborah K. Padgett, Benjamin F. Henwood, and Sam Tsemberis, *Housing First: Ending Homelessness, Transforming Systems, and Changing Lives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 7.

through the intervening years among the general population, even as the theory and practice of Housing First were taking hold among homeless advocates and upper administration, including Paul Mangano of the G.W. Bush administration, the appointed head of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness.⁵⁴ But realistically, individuals who are typically deemed “undeserving” by the transitional system receive more public benefits in the form of emergency and public safety expenditures than their “deserving” counterparts get in public assistance.⁵⁵ They are transported in police cars and ambulances to emergency rooms and jails when they are intoxicated, suffering withdrawal, in need of psychiatric intervention, fighting, bleeding, bruised, confused, and a number of other things forbidden on the public lawns and sidewalks where they live their lives. The cost of these services is more than the cost of renting an apartment, potentially even in the sky-high housing market of Hawai‘i, and the housed citizenry will see tax dollars dedicated to these individuals either way. Referencing a study released by the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, The Honolulu Star Advertiser reported that of those placed into permanent housing, the vast majority remain housed, visited emergency rooms much less frequently, got arrested much less frequently, and 96% of those who participated in the study reported that they were involved in community groups.⁵⁶ I take this to indicate a willingness to be a part of the

⁵⁴ Though one might argue that this progressive agenda was tarnished by extreme tax cuts for the wealthy and deep cuts to programs that help the poor, such as Section 8 housing assistance.

⁵⁵ One particularly convincing source for this statement in my opinion, although many studies have shown this trend, is Paul Guerin and Anne Minssen’s “City of Albuquerque Heading Home Initiative Cost Study Report Final,” May 2016, Accessible at http://www.cabq.gov/family/documents/cabq_ahhcoststudy_finalreport_v3_wappendices_06272016.pdf

⁵⁶ “Homeless improve under city’s Housing First program, study says,” Dan Nakaso, 06/11/2017. <http://www.staradvertiser.com/2017/06/11/hawaii-news/homeless-improve-under-citys-housing-first-program-study-says/>

larger society, which is nurtured by being housed. These statistics show the dual benefits of the Housing First approach to homelessness: improving the lives of unsheltered individuals so that they can make choices that are beneficial and future-oriented, and saving city and county, state, and federal dollars that would be spent on public assistance, such as emergency medical care. In a similar fashion, a recently proposed bill in the Hawai‘i state legislature illustrates the overlap between poor health outcomes and being unsheltered. Citing an instance in Honolulu, Hawai‘i of one unsheltered patient who accrued over \$5,000,000 in medical costs per year and had no resources to pay. Senate Bill 7, introduced to the Hawai‘i State Legislature in 2017, suggested that Medicaid funding could be used to cover housing costs. The bill states,

By recognizing the importance of housing stability within the practice of health care for homeless individuals, and exploring creative and innovative solutions to address homeless individuals' health care needs through housing stability from traditional and non-traditional resources, the State may be able to recover the costs that homeless individuals incur over their lifetime.⁵⁷

Allowing state and federal subsidized healthcare money to be allocated toward housing takes a step toward understanding the specific circumstances of unsheltered life. Living outdoors creates more potential for infected wounds and dangerous encounters, in addition to the deteriorating effects of sleep deprivation and stress on overall health. The personhood of this problem must be addressed.

⁵⁷ Senate Bill 7, Senate Draft 2. 29th Legislature, 2017. The State of Hawaii. Accessed 9/4/2017, http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2017/bills/SB7_SD2_.pdf. The bill was deferred at the close of the 2017 legislative session.

Dwelling in Philosophy: The Capabilities Approach

Recognition of the connection between housing, healthcare, and optimum public spending for those who lack both requires a shift in how the unsheltered are factored into the social equation. Public spending cannot be seen as a zero-sum game, where money spent on those who do not contribute labor or resources to the market is chalked up as a loss. Martha Nussbaum challenges the focus on the centrality of economic concerns in public and political decisions. She and many others note that living in a wealthy country does not necessarily equate to a high quality of life. Gross Domestic Product, though often taken as a benchmark of human flourishing when comparing nations, does little to account for imbalances and disparities of distribution. She suggests a new measure for discussing quality of life that is based on Amartya Sen's proposal: the Capabilities Approach.⁵⁸ The prevalence and accessibility of liquid assets in a nation do not account for each individual's ability to access and utilize them. It matters more what people are able to do to help themselves and others. In order to choose what to do and how to act, every person must be assured opportunities to be able to make decisions freely. The circumstances of one's life must match up to the abilities one has to succeed in order for a desired effect to come about. Capabilities "are not just abilities residing inside a person but also the freedoms or opportunities created by a combination of personal abilities and the political,

⁵⁸ While Martha Nussbaum contributes a nuanced consideration of what humans require to thrive, there is one element that is out of line with a larger point I intend to make. The components on her list are meant to apply only to individuals, rather than families (p. 35). This is a stipulation that does not jibe with the centeredness of community in both the Chinese and Hawaiian conceptions of self I will reference in what follows. But I feel it is important to bring up an approach to measure flourishing that is opposed to the use of economic factors like GDP for characterizing prosperity. I use it to make a point about contemporary conceptions of poverty, generally.

social, and economic environment.”⁵⁹ Nussbaum’s list of ten essential capabilities includes three that especially apply to the discussion and necessity of housing solutions for the unsheltered: bodily health, or “Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.”;⁶⁰ control over one’s environment, including “Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), and having property rights on an equal basis with others.”;⁶¹ and affiliation, including “Having the social basis of self-respect and nonhumiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others.”⁶² These, along with the other seven capabilities: life; bodily integrity; senses, imagination, and thought; emotions; practical reason; other species; and, play, are all distinct but connected. Nussbaum writes:

The irreducible heterogeneity of the Central Capabilities is extremely important.

A nation cannot satisfy the need for one capability by giving people a large amount of another, or even by giving them some money. All are distinctive, and all need to be secured and protected in distinctive ways.⁶³

This approach assumes that national governments should promote forms of justice and systems of laws that guarantee the happiness, dignity, and security of their citizens. It also recognizes the particularity of individual circumstances and how these circumstances may contribute to a lack of personal freedom, as well as the role of historical disparity in navigating the contemporary

⁵⁹ Martha Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 20.

⁶⁰ Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities*, 34

⁶¹ Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities*, 34

⁶² Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities*, 34

⁶³ Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities*, 35.

landscape of available opportunities and hidden obstacles. In the context of this discussion about access to housing and the effects of being unhoused on health and well-being, the Capabilities Approach shows the true depth of the divide between housed and unhoused. The number of capabilities that the unsheltered do not have, which according to Nussbaum are required to be able to fully function as a human being in today's societies, should make housing the homeless imperative. Characterizing homelessness as a health issue is unproblematic here. Thinking to the contrary is to refuse to accept the gross reality of unsheltered life for the individuals experiencing it as well as the history of unsheltered states of existence.

The ultimately exploitative relationship between the sheltered and unsheltered, variously knotted by factors contingent upon context as well as the unlike circumstances that shape each type of life, renders the possibility of their spontaneous coalescence slim. Plausibly, homelessness is a product of the United States' capitalistic enterprise in its once insatiable need for unanchored, seasonal labor for harvests and large infrastructure projects, as well as the indignities perpetrated against indigenous populations in the name of various destinies. But now, the social and political factors surrounding unsheltered populations have eliminated their place in a civilized world. Money alone cannot bridge these worlds of the sheltered and unsheltered.

There are two ways to approach the integration of the unsheltered and the sheltered: 1) Focus on the factors, economic, political, societal, etc., that precipitate unsheltered states of existence and comprise the circumstances that limit the availability of choices to facilitate change. 2) Focus on the individual experiencing the factors above in an existential way, or as this reality is lived. Of course, these two approaches are not mutually exclusive, but nor can one be subsumed under the other. It is likely that 2) is consistently the handmaiden of 1) in terms of

policy in the United States, though this should come as no surprise in a capitalist, liberal, secular society.

Attempting to understand the ways in which unsheltered and sheltered existences are different realities, that one structures the other, and that freedom and choice do not have the same buying power in each, is formative for the public perception of unsheltered life. Hopefully, this will prevent the blaming of unsheltered individuals for their poor circumstances. The alternative is to view the unsheltered as a homogenous group rather than individuals experiencing certain issues in common. The urge to simplify a problem is tied to the hope for a simple solution, and in practice, this motivation has blurred the identities and needs of unsheltered populations. For example, focusing on the issue of affordable housing as a solution for homelessness assumes that sheltered reality, simply by creating space, can accommodate the unsheltered, but without regard for how their experience of being sheltered is different. For those who live in public spaces, private realms come with rules, curfews, isolation, reprisals, dismissals, expectations, and disappointments. This is not how the sheltered view private space. So although approaches that consider the perpetuating circumstances of unsheltered existence are well-meaning and allow for moderate complexity, they conjure a hypothetical individual who would behave just as a sheltered individual would if presented with the same set of privileges and choices. Transgressing against the expectations that come with privilege and choice invigorates distinctions among deserving and undeserving and also motivates the faulty conclusion that these individuals do not want help or are not capable of being included in civilized society.

This is where Housing First programs introduce a paradigm shift in how unsheltered individuals can become sheltered without incurring the social debt of accepting handouts that

come with what, for many, are unmeetable and unpredictable expectations. It also promotes the same values as the Capabilities Approach. Housing First advises that we begin by giving the unsheltered a place to live, for free and with no limit on their stay. There is something salient in the prediction if you give someone a place to live, they can learn to get by in our predominantly sheltered society. This learning, though, is more successful if facilitated by care professionals, especially social workers, who are trained experts in outreach and support of unsheltered individuals. And in fact, supportive services are an integral part of the success of the Housing First approach.

Housing First focuses on the existential reality of unsheltered existence in a way that avoids dealing blame and shame, and it is also personal. In many cities, including Hawai‘i, where Housing First has been adopted, the social worker is the liaison between client and landlord, employer, treatment provider, etc., and this personal connection is often the basis of many subsequent connections. Isolation is a notable contributor to being and becoming unsheltered. Isolation of one individual from the family, whether by choice in order to avoid domestic abuse, or by force in response to changing one’s gender identity, for example, can limit one’s ability to become integrated into society as it is defined and delimited by sheltered existence. Further, isolation of family from clan or native society, as seen in the influx of people from Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau to Hawai‘i who do not have the economic resources or cultural similitude to create stability, undermines relationships within the family and prevents the formation of new relationships. Undoubtedly, the stress and lack of trust that often accompany unsheltered states of existence contribute to the inability to form healthy and lasting relationships with estranged

family, as well as old and new friends and partners. Fortifying and constituting relationships, which make you who you are, cannot be taken for granted, and in order to become and stay sheltered, individuals must cultivate such relationships.

It may seem strange to praise Housing First, which in its original formulation focuses on housing individuals in one-bedroom apartments, as a way to discourage isolation. Loneliness is an issue among people living alone regardless of housing history. I argue that the ability to form types of connections that are healthy and beneficial in a primarily housed society requires that one have a home. Using these connections, residents form profitable human and economic networks. From the comfort of a stable dwelling, one realizes one's potential. The next section is dedicated to a discussion of these formative relationships.

Dwelling in Philosophy: Confucian Role Ethics

There are a number of philosophical contexts in which it is appropriate to begin the search for inclusion and communication, and indeed the search for morals and ethics generally, from the unit of a relationship rather than a solitary individual. Giving up or never beginning the conquest of the own most, innermost, replicable and rational, autonomous self, these philosophies root themselves in the ability to be someone, a good upstanding someone, to, with, and around others.

Confucian Role Ethics brings into conversation American pragmatism and pre-Qin Ruist Chinese philosophy. I see this project of Roger Ames and Henry Rosemont as post-comparative, meaning that not only are two traditions compared, but also they are put into conversation to speak to the pressing issues of life. I think that this kind of project is appropriate because the

ideas and perspectives found in the ancient texts must be reimagined and reoriented in order to speak to modern predicaments. It would be disingenuous, I think, to take the recorded words of Confucius, for example, and rehearse them in the direction of policy-makers in Hawai‘i right now, and also, it would be handily disregarded. This would be the result, no doubt, of many presumptions about race, politics, economics, and so on, but philosophically, and most interestingly, the reason is that Chinese philosophy is oriented toward the past, the wonders of Yao and Shun, and underscores its claims with historical references. We, let us say Anglophones, tend to be future-oriented, moving toward better technology, higher-paying and more plentiful jobs, and increasingly inclusive types of societies. Confucian Role Ethics (CRE) adds a dialogical dimension not explicit in the ancient texts, that is, how concern for incremental and expansive bettering of oneself, that is, imagining oneself becoming consummate in the future, can align with being as good as the sages of the past. CRE does this without recourse to teleology, and without saying that the ideal future will be like the past. It emphasizes the peculiarly contextualized state of person, lives and experiences are never repeated. This allows for the emphasis on creativity and imaginative incorporation of cultural roles into one’s individual striving as the driving force of human becoming, which is the open-ended formulation of ‘human being’.⁶⁴ These roles require at least two actors—one cannot be a friend to no one—and the relationships among persons are constitutive, that is, they make a person who they are. They are external relationships that become internal as they develop. Focusing on ‘being a good friend to someone’ forefronts the relationship between two individuals as being more primary

⁶⁴ This phrasing is developed in Roger Ames and David Hall, *Confucian Role Ethics*.

than the individuals themselves. Networks of constituting relationships lend expansiveness to individual human projects and, ideally, responsibility for maintaining these relationships.

The Confucian relationships, enumerated in the Mencius, are ruler to ruled, father to son, husband to wife, elder brother to younger brother, and friend to friend. These are the primary relationships on which other relationships can be modeled. It is immediately obvious to me that this needs a little remediation. What about daughters, mothers, citizens, and colleagues?

Confucian Role Ethics abstracts from these primary relationships to make the point that the fecundity of relationships given rise by the primary ones, as well as the possibility of forming new and meaningful connections, is the culmination of the relationally-constituted person. The ability to cultivate relationships is imaginative, as there is no template for relationships that develop in particular circumstances over time. Imagination and empathy go hand in hand with this relationally driven, expansive morality. Ames writes:

The Confucian project begins from a recognition of the wholeness of experience and the constitutive nature of relationality that is entailed by it. Moreover, because each person and event is constituted by an interdependent web of relations, what affects one thing affects all things in some degree or other. Meaningful relations within this family make the entire cosmos more meaningful; barren relations detract from it.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Roger Ames, *Confucian Role Ethics: A Vocabulary* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2011), 71.

Confucian role ethics contributes two themes to this discussion. First, it illustrates the necessity of forming relationships for activating individual potential. Underscoring the first theme, it also implicates everyone doing their part to guide this coalescence of value and care.

Returning to the myriad causes and catalysts of unsheltered existence with an awareness of relational, role-centered ethics brings an acute issue to the fore. The lack of constituting relationships, the lack of a supportive network in which one plays an integral part, and the disintegration of a person from society seem to preclude the ability to achieve anything remotely consummatory. Is it possible to speak about role ethics in this context? Role ethics assumes that radical inclusivity is possible, and in fact what it is to be human. Is there in it a danger of labeling those who are not integrated as self-undermining, and would that be acceptable in this context? Perhaps most importantly, is it possible on this model to build sustaining relationships if none of the primary bonds are intact, or if they are dysfunctional and corrosive? Assuming that the possibility of recuperation among family members is unlikely, there seems to be little recourse in the concentric view of relationships inspired by pre-Qin Chinese philosophy. The assertion that relationships are integral to human flourishing is relevant if we hope to make our society and culture more inclusive. There must be a way to create formative and sustaining relationships outside of the family and potentially outside of the clan. Skipping over these two intimate levels of relationship education and development does not fit the ideal model in Ruist thought, but it is accommodated by the flexible and imagination-centered account in CRE, though certainly it is not the majority or preferred scenario. I would like to consider one relationship, in particular, the one between client and social worker, as one that might fit the model of a primary relationship. In this relationship, the social worker may be at times maternal, at other times paternal. They

may be encouraging like an older brother or empathetic like a friend. These relationships are often formed and dissolved on the basis of state or federal mandated requirements. But that does not disqualify them from being true relationships and, as I will argue, ones on which unsheltered individuals who have found themselves with few relationships may take as a model for other relationships that they form as they integrate into supportive communities.

Both the traditional step model and Housing First models for permanently sheltering the unsheltered depend on a robust social care network. Social workers provide valuable advice for navigating the bureaucracy, and when many unsheltered individuals have no form of identification, this can be incredibly daunting and demotivating. They also empathically promote self-control, self-awareness, and coping skills among their clients. These strategies for dealing with everyday life are not in the purview of psychiatric care, at least not for unsheltered clients, and so the social worker must be keenly aware of the history and context of each client's life as well as the triggers that may cause them to manifest destructive behaviors. Social workers not only hear about and see the wretchedness that may afflict human beings, but they also see them make choices to return to and reenact scenarios that contribute to their destitution. Compounding the empathic response to the trauma their clients have experienced, which may result in trauma on behalf of the social worker, is the disappointment the care worker feels when a client relapses, lashes out, or disappears, ostensibly to return to an unsheltered and familiar life. The social workers, by virtue of their relationships with clients, hope to alter their behavior, to recuperate their ability to maintain relationships intimately and among strangers.

In order for individuals to move from shelters and streets into spaces where they feel secure and have real choices to continue to improve their lives, caring and communicative

relational networks must form. Clearly, there is no appropriate role, in the role ethics context, for the client and recipient of such care because there is little risk of losing the relationship, little chance of it developing into a self-sustaining friendship, and little responsibility on behalf of the client to achieve the expectations of the social worker. The client's potential for self-improvement is significantly affected by their relationship with the social worker. I suggest that the relationships between social workers and clients can be thought of as an imaginative exercise of relating in a meaningful and constituting way. But this shared situation is often one-sided, and while social workers find satisfaction in their contribution to the well-being and representation of clients as they put their lives together make ways toward successful futures, the power differential of this professional relationship, coupled with the emphasis on client self-determination and freedom—even to cycle back into destructive behaviors—may detract from the social worker's ability to tend to their own self-fulfillment and renewal.

This particular type of relationship is motivated by concerns for social justice and equitable living standards on one side and self-improvement and reintegration on the other. The conditions of the relationship may resemble those shared between friends, siblings, or parents. Even though the relationship is constrained by its institutional context, there is a propensity for it to become emotionally disruptive for the social worker. In the psychological literature, this is called compassion fatigue, and it was developed in 1995 by Charles Figley. It is defined as the “the formal caregiver's reduced capacity or interest in being empathetic or ‘bearing the suffering of clients’ and is ‘the natural consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowing about a

traumatizing event experienced or suffered by a person.”⁶⁶ Prolonged exposure to these conditions may result in “emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment.” This condition, which is focused on the second-order trauma experienced by care workers in empathic response to another person’s lived trauma, is definitionally similar to post-traumatic stress disorder. Because the relationship between social worker and client can have deleterious effects on the social worker, the psychological literature suggests that they take care to maintain a robust social and caring network around themselves. The support network needs a support network, and this concentricity is a fecund comparative space for Confucian role ethics.

This might seem tedious, seeing whether this peculiar type of interaction counts as a constituting relationship in the Confucian role ethics sense. But it is a necessary line of inquiry given the importance of public employees and civil servants in determining the meting of collective resources. The reason why I have focused in on the relationship between client and social worker is that it spans the landscape of difference between sheltered and unsheltered populations. This is the boundary of inclusivity as well as imaginative relational potential. The sheltered cannot put themselves in the place of the unsheltered and see their world, because it does not shape their daily lives. What may be possible, and what I hope to do, is to illustrate that the world of the sheltered can be made more inclusive by extending the webbing of social networks of supportive and sustaining relationships to include more people. Social workers are integral to facilitating this connectivity.

⁶⁶ C. R. Figley, “Compassion fatigue as secondary traumatic stress disorder: An overview,” Compassion fatigue: Coping with secondary traumatic stress disorder in those who treat the traumatized, ed. C. R. Figley (New York: Routledge, 1995), 7.

I suggest that there are two ways to go about addressing the problem of homelessness, and both are necessary. The first is to address the structural inequalities that have resulted in extreme poverty and homelessness that have little to do with individual choices. According to Ames and Rosemont, it is the championing of individual, autonomous selves over relational and communal aspects of society that have fueled contemporary inequalities.⁶⁷ Within the individualist paradigm, the poor are blamed for their suffering. They are blamed because of the poor decisions they make rather than the poor choices they are offered. This view of society as a composition of discrete individuals justifies the abnegation of its responsibility to those experiencing hardship, often by appealing to character traits associated with failure. And with little in place in terms of extended systems of community-centered care and continued and robust investment in the so-called free market ideals, the road to change seems long. As long as things remain the way that they are, the realities of those that experience the comfort and security of shelter and a quality of life well above being at risk of hunger, preventable disease, and exhaustion, and those that do not have these things are not shared. Those who live in poverty in America in this time of unparalleled wealth and prosperity cannot make the decision to no longer live in this world. Those choices are few and almost always require sacrifices, preeminently the desertion of one's homeless community.

There is little that can be done on behalf of social workers and care providers that can change the circumstances that precipitate the dire and limiting circumstances of the unsheltered. The difference between these realities is not manipulable by good intentions. And the assertion

⁶⁷ Roger Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr., *Confucian Role Ethics: A Moral Vision for the 21st Century?* (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2011), 10-12.

that the reality that structures the experience of poverty should not exist risks the further devaluing of those that experience it, which in the US are predominantly people of color and indigenous populations. The answer is not absorbing one world into the other, but a gradual and consistent depopulation of one by integrating or reintegrating the individuals who exist in a landscape barren of opportunity. Forming the types of relationships described in Confucian role ethics as “vital” and “consummate” does not erase or paint over the identity of either party. The imaginative ability to form expansive and comprehensive webs of relationships across fields of diversity is what makes us human. Bringing the character *qiong* 窮 back into my analysis, we can begin to see both sides of its meaning. Those that Housing First policies hope to help, the chronically homeless, are no doubt destitute, at a dead end, and have little recourse to achievable and desirable ways to getting their lives on track. They stand to benefit the most from such an intervention, and each study that comes about the effectiveness of this program in the cities where it has been implemented indicate that it is working.

In the next section, I shift to another aspect of homelessness in Hawai‘i that may benefit from an appraisal from the perspective of Chinese philosophy. As before, I will introduce the topic and discuss the applications, comparisons, and justifications of bringing early Chinese thought into discussions about the contemporary issue of homelessness, as it arises from the real circumstances of life in Hawai‘i.

The Compact of Free Association

In this section, I will discuss the third issue I have chosen to frame the discussion of homelessness in Hawai‘i. As discussed previously, the composition of the unsheltered population in Hawai‘i is indicative of a systemic, social imbalance that disfavors Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders. Native Hawaiians have been negatively affected by land reform, spiritual incongruity between conceptions of Hawaiian selves and those of American, Christian selves, and a lack of wealth that hinders the advancement of generations of Hawaiians. The commodification of Hawaiian culture also devalues Native Hawaiian experiential, ritual meaning and the residual, psychological effects of forced assimilation into U.S. political and social structures. It may be tempting to assume that peoples of other Pacific Islands have suffered a similar fate, and that the explanatory measures taken to contextualize the post-colonial struggles of Native Hawaiians may apply to them as well. But this reduction risks missing another set of crucial factors that have affected Pacific Islanders, especially those residing in the former United States Trust Territories that were acquired in the wake of the Second World War: the Republic of Palau (ROP), the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI). These countries have an agreement with the United States outlined in the Compacts of Free Association (COFA). These Compacts, signed into law in 1986 for FSM and RMI and 1994 for ROP, dictate what aid the U.S. is obliged to provide to these countries and what rights the residents of these islands hold.

The result of the COFA agreements has been an immense migration of Micronesians, as people from these islands are commonly referred (though they share only general Polynesian traits in common and cultivate their identities along lines of difference from other Islanders).

They leave their islands to pursue economic and educational opportunities, to seek healthcare, and out of necessity as many islands are experiencing the effects of human-caused climate change in the forms of rising sea levels, severe droughts, and powerful storms. Most, approximately 94%, travel to Hawai‘i and Guam, according to the 2008 census.⁶⁸ As much as 30% of the population has emigrated, and about 15,000 people from the COFA nations have made a home in Hawai‘i. And, as reported by the Honolulu Civil Beat independent newspaper, there is little in place for dealing with the economic burden of this burgeoning population.⁶⁹ Many travel to Honolulu, and this has put a moderate amount of strain on the social safety net and medical care providers in the state as they arrive with few economic resources or solid plans or expectations for achieving the success they hope for. The result of this migration has been a series of fraught attempts to obtain the social benefits associated with American ways of living, which have been denied to these individuals and families even though their lives have been shaped by American interests.

A History of the United States’ Interests in the South Pacific

During the Pacific Theater of World War II, in the years following the attack on Pearl Harbor in Honolulu on December 7, 1941, the United States fought the Japanese forces for control of vast swaths of territory in the islands dotting the Pacific Ocean. After the Japanese

⁶⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, “2008 Estimates of Compact of Free Association (COFA) migrants” (Washington DC: United States Department of Commerce, 2009). Accessible at <http://commerce.gov/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/COFA2008.pdf>

⁶⁹ Chad Blair, “An Untold Story of American Immigration,” *Honolulu Civil Beat*. One of a seven-part series “The Micronesians.” Published October 14, 2015 and accessible at <http://www.civilbeat.org/projects/the-micronesians/>.

surrender aboard the USS *Missouri* on September 2, 1945, in Tokyo Bay, several islands and island chains invaded and occupied by the Allied Forces were turned over to the United States as Trust Territories. While stewards of their Pacific Isles, from 1946 to 1958, the U.S. proceeded to test 67 nuclear weapons, which decimated several islands and displaced hundreds of people. During the testing on Bikini Atoll, comprised of 25 of the roughly 1,200 islands and islets referred to as the Marshall Islands, the poorly-placed detonation of Bravo, a 15 megaton nuclear bomb, over 1000 times more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, blew several tons of radioactive coral ash into the air. Although the nearby islands were evacuated, a fallout cloud drifted to populated islands in Rongelap Atoll, about 125 miles away, and beyond, where it coated everything like snow. Under-informed, the island residents had prolonged contact with the irradiated debris. Many experienced immediate, severe burns, but the long-term effects, notably metastatic cancers and severe congenital disabilities, still plague Micronesian populations. Many of the details of the nuclear testing are still classified, though there is evidence to suggest that, regardless of the initial intent, medical knowledge of radiation exposure benefited from the prolonged contact facilitated by perceived bureaucratic lag.⁷⁰

During the trusteeship period, the United States also had control of the Islands' economies. The United States created bureaucratic and military centers throughout the islands, which quickly became the primary economic drivers. It surpassed the production of the coconut palm product, copra, as well as the selling of scrap metal from the destroyed war machines that were never removed after the Japanese surrender. The generosity and benevolence on behalf of

⁷⁰ Jane Dibbin. *Day of Two Suns: U.S. Nuclear Testing and the Pacific Islanders* (New York: New Amsterdam Books, 1990).

the United States “with that essentially American bouquet, a fistful of money,”⁷¹ was bestowed for the purpose of wooing the people of Micronesia to pursue a permanent relationship. For decades, the U.S. ladled money into their Pacific Island Trusts, to the tune of \$600 a year per person, clearing away a sustainable lifestyle built around family ties and barter with a turbid river of American capital.⁷² This river flowed, with little oversight and no direction, into the low-lying pockets of the Islands. It created a new class and a new way of life for those lucky or well-positioned enough to be the beneficiaries. The population of the Islands surged into the cities, abandoning millennia-old ways of living as well as the sick, aged, and young, in pursuit of fabled modernity. The results of this exodus and the loss of cultural ways of knowing on Pacific Islanders psyches and futures are inestimable.

The United States also undertook building schools in the cities to educate the populace, an American imperial motivation aligned with the Japanese who came before them. This education was sold as a ticket to prosperity, but the U.S. took no measures to provide a venue for economic advancement. The second class of graduating seniors found themselves on the outside of a constricted, inhospitable job market. Educated and unemployed, they kicked around in the cities, more joining them after each graduation, and many fell into alcoholism and depression. Their unreal expectations obliterated any desire to return to their traditional island lives. David Nevin, in his assessment of education in Micronesia, wrote:

To put it starkly, expectations in Micronesia have risen so far beyond the possibility of satisfying them as to destroy hope, and hope destroyed is the root of

⁷¹ David Nevin, *The American Touch in Micronesia* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1977), 23.

⁷² Nevin, *The American Touch*, 25.

social misery. Thus grows the potential disaster which now faces America on these idyllic islands on the other side of the world, this angry, sullen, frightened paradise in the western Pacific.⁷³

Even with prescient warnings and the disastrous consequences of American influence, the RMI and FSM voted to become a sovereign territory of the United States by signing the Compact of Free Association (COFA) in 1986. In return for continued and unhindered U.S. military residence, training, and weapons testing, the U.S. agreed to compensate the citizens for the damages resulting from the nuclear testing program and to provide grants for public infrastructure, education, healthcare, and environmental projects. The U.S. also extended conditional citizenship to the inhabitants of these islands that allowed for unfettered travel to and from these territories and the U.S. and access to healthcare and education. The agreement stipulated that although COFA residents would pay taxes, they would not have voting rights or political representation at the federal level. The Republic of Palau followed suit, signing a separate COFA agreement with the U.S. in 1994.

Whether the U.S. has been a good steward of these territories is a debated topic. In her testimony before the U.S. Senate regarding the effectiveness and accountability of U.S. COFA negotiations in 2001, Susan S. Westin of the U.S. General Accounting Office indicated that the millions of dollars distributed to the FSM and the RMI, which comprised the majority of their liquid economies, were not having the effect that was intended. The local governments expanded and government wages rose, hobbling capital, labor, and entrepreneurship in the private sector. “Moreover,” Westin wrote, “Compact-funded business ventures have generally failed due to poor

⁷³ Nevin, *The American Touch*, 28.

planning, inadequate construction and maintenance, or misuse of funds.”⁷⁴ At the intersection of low accountability and fraud at the local level, and disagreement and indifference among U.S. elected officials/custodians, millions of dollars fluttered into the tropical breeze.

The vacuum created by the influx of U.S. cash, the destabilization of local economies, and the deterioration of traditional lifestyles forced many of the islands’ residents to seek opportunities in the U.S., especially the territories of Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and Hawai‘i.⁷⁵ This migration necessitated that additional federal funds be distributed to these places to stem state government funding shortfalls, especially in the health and education sectors.⁷⁶ Many of those who came from COFA nations did not have the skills or experience to be hired for anything other than low-skill, low-wage, temporary employment, and as a result state and federal safety-net type social expenditures were stretched beyond funding expectations based on pre-COFA migration benchmarks.

The Issue of Healthcare for COFA Migrants

Hawai‘i has struggled with the necessity of providing healthcare to the residents of the COFA nations, especially those who were exposed to high levels of radiation as a result of U.S.

⁷⁴ Susan S. Westin, Managing Director, International Affairs and Trade, “Compact of Free Association: Negotiations Should Address Aid Effectiveness and Accountability and Migrants’ Impact on U.S. Areas,” Testimony Before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, U.S. Senate (Washington, D.C.: United States General Accountability Office, 2001), 3-4. Accessible at <https://www.gao.gov/new.items/d02270t.pdf>

⁷⁵ Westin, “Compact of Free Association: Negotiations Should Address Aid Effectiveness and Accountability and Migrants’ Impact on U.S. Areas,” 4.

⁷⁶ Westin, “Compact of Free Association: Negotiations Should Address Aid Effectiveness and Accountability and Migrants’ Impact on U.S. Areas,” 5.

nuclear weapons testing. The deleterious effects of exposure to radiation are both immediate and, coded in mutated DNA, prolonged through generations. The result is an increased occurrence of metastatic cancers and congenital disabilities. Additionally, changes in the Islanders' diets and lifestyles resulted in a drastic increase in type two diabetes to a rate higher than 400% of the national, U.S. average.⁷⁷ The confluence of several factors, namely the lack of adequate healthcare options for these types of illnesses in the Compact nations, the lack of economic resources, language skills, and education to achieve sufficient employment in the U.S., and, most dauntingly, a rise in racist, anti-immigration sentiments in Hawai'i directed squarely at the COFA migrants created a quandary as to whether and which rights they are entitled to. COFA migrants are considered by many to be lazy and an unfair burden on society.⁷⁸

It is no wonder that COFA migrants are overrepresented among Hawai'i's homeless populations. The adjectives used to describe them are the same as those bandied at unsheltered populations in Hawai'i, the U.S., and many other liberal and capitalist nations. Their status as a colonized citizenry invokes the opposite of compassion, where many do not feel that the U.S. should support these individuals. This attitude was evinced in the disenrollment of thousands of COFA migrants from Med-QUEST, the state-level medical insurance provider for those who cannot afford private insurance in Hawai'i, in 2009. This move was fueled by a new Department of Human Services provision that stated that all recipients must show sufficient means of

⁷⁷ Pearl Anna McElfish and Rachel S. Purvis, et al., "Interpretive policy analysis: Marshallese COFA migrants and the Affordable Care Act," *International Journal for Equity in Health* (2016) 15:91.

⁷⁸ Hawaii Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice, "Broken Promises, Shattered Lives: The Case for Justice for Micronesians in Hawaii," Honolulu, HI. December 14, 2011. Accessible at https://evols.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/bitstream/10524/23158/1/CaseForJustice_MicronesiansInHawaii.pdf

supporting themselves in Hawai‘i. In response, attorneys supporting the Micronesian community wrote:

Callously referring to them in public testimony as deportable commodities that should be grateful for their mere continued presence in Hawaii de-humanizes these individuals, diminishes public discourse on a complex subject and evinces a shocking lack of sensitivity on the part of DHS.⁷⁹

The migration from the U.S.-held Pacific islands to Hawai‘i, as well as Guam and the Commonwealth of the Mariana Islands, and the poverty of opportunity that met them there have many non-reducible components.

I argue that differing conceptions of whether Pacific Islanders are deserving of social benefits may be at the heart of the resistance of Hawai‘i’s unconditional U.S. citizens to COFA migrants having the same rights and access to social belonging. These factors contribute, I think, to the conversation about the prevalence of homelessness among COFA migrants, and contribute to my broader efforts to understand homelessness in Hawai‘i.

It seems that the citizens and governing bodies in Hawai‘i are having a difficult time deciding who counts as deserving of social inclusion. The issues that contextualize the presence and reception of COFA migrants in Hawai‘i can be reduced quite simply to racism. This should come as no surprise given the volume of the voices evincing distaste for their presence and the United States’ treatment of indigenous peoples, generally. The mistreatment of people of color has a long history that includes the implementation of the founding ideals and philosophies of the

⁷⁹ Dina Shek and Seiji Yamada, “Health Care for Micronesians and Constitutional Rights,” *Hawaii Medical Journal* 70:11 (November 2011), Supplement 2., 5.

United States of America. A cornerstone of democratic identity is rational autonomy, which can be traced back through the pens of various men to Immanuel Kant.

Dwelling in Philosophy: Immanuel Kant and the Framing of ‘Who Counts’ in Modern Democracies

This exposition is fundamental to understanding the basis of ‘who counts’ in Western societal and political arrangements, especially those historically rooted in the Enlightenment, as well as how we can reconcile these ideals with the incredible diversity of modern, urban communities.

The events surrounding the treatment of Micronesians by the U.S. over the course of the last seventy years are cause for concern that their fight for the barest cover of civil rights has not been sufficient to prevent poverty at home and homelessness abroad. As a result, many of them find themselves shuffled outside of the bounds of a prevailing, increasingly homogenized society ordered by justice and enriched by liberty. Without these rights, they are treated as something less than human, undeserving of basic necessities as well as the tools for intellectual and material flourishing. They are blamed for their own failures and, at worst, considered a threat to those safely inside the lines drawn around inclusive communities. They are troublesome pieces that do not fit into the social puzzle.

Those of us who see this as disastrous must ask ourselves how to assess and accommodate cultural diversity and find ways to diagnose and remove the racism that prevents us from improving the conditions of those most in need of social reform. The history of many of the world’s philosophies are not exactly the best places to look. The search for inclusive theories,

especially in Greco-Roman-Euro-North Afri-Canad-Austral-American—let’s just say Western—traditions, uncovers many moldy old ideas about race, sex, and class, and, more sinisterly, the deep impact they had on so-called pure, universal, objective, and pragmatic ideas. The mycelia of racism and bigotry extend through millennia of philosophical explorations and explanations, and the excavation of this massive, interconnected fungus among us uproots many pivotal nodes of Western thought. We are working to appraise how deeply racial and sexist biases extend into our most coveted abstract ideas. Immanuel Kant is ubiquitously represented among the faculty of Philosophy departments in the U.S., Europe, and Australia, and the problems given rise by contemporary, critical interpretations of the high ideals of Reason and Rationality in nations with colonialist and imperialist histories and make him a fulsome target.

Describing the inherent shortcomings of people based on their race was Kant’s unique and major contribution to the area of “Physical Geography.” For Kant, the study of geography included the study of the characteristics of the people who inhabited a place. And he saw himself as studying them with the same detached and disinterested eye of a horticulturist. Physical characteristics, like skin color and inherent laziness, cataloged geographically, were studied from the perspective of moral character in his works in “anthropology,” geography’s “twin science.”⁸⁰ In these lectures, he was not subtle about the moral deficiencies of certain races, and even included a handy hierarchical chart in his “On the Different Races of Man.” In his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Kant describes the prerequisite of reason in the presence of

⁸⁰ Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, “‘Race’ in Kant’s Anthropology,” *Anthropology and the German Enlightenment: Perspectives on Humanity*, ed. Katherin M. Faull (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Press, 1995), 203.

“moral character” and implies that it is something that not all people have or something that is present in various degrees depending on race.

As the highest maxim, uninhibited internal truthfulness toward oneself, as well as in the behavior toward everyone else, is the only proof of a person's consciousness of having character. And since having character is the minimum requirement that can be expected of a rational person, and at the same time also the maximum of his inner value (of human dignity), then being a man of principle (having a certain character) must be possible for the most ordinary human mind that can thereby be superior to the greatest talent, thanks to dignity.⁸¹

In his description of moral character as a prerequisite for rational ideas, I get the sense that he does not think that everyone has such a character. Otherwise, why would Kant speak of a minimum requirement? Charitably, one might point toward other passages where Kant indicates that character is a matter of personal striving and discipline, but I counter that the message was delivered only to those he thought would be capable of such mastery. And he indicated in many of his works that he did not think that people of color could develop themselves enough to enjoy dignity. In his essay “‘Race’ in Kant’s Anthropology,” Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze comments on one particularly disagreeable line from Kant’s *Observation on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*:

Kant’s position on the importance of skin color not only as encoding but as *proof* of the codification of rational superiority or inferiority is evident in a comment he

⁸¹ Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 207.

made on the subject of the reasoning capacity of a “black” person. When he evaluated a statement made by an African, Kant dismissed the statement with the comment: “this fellow was quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid.” It cannot, therefore, be argued that skin color for Kant was merely a physical characteristic. It is, rather, evidence of an unchanging and unchangeable moral quality. ‘Race,’ then, in Kant’s view, is based upon an ahistorical principle of reason and moral law.⁸²

It may be said that Kant’s racism is reducible to a symptom of the times or merely a part of his troublesome empiricism. Contemporary Kant specialists typically stick to the *Critiques*.⁸³ I have two responses to this tacit acceptance of Kant’s racism: 1) Kant taught his versions of geography and anthropology, which were gleaned through the testimonies of sailors and missionaries and any reading material, fictional and factual, as seen through the lens of colonial expansionism, that happened to come through the port of his beloved city, more often than any other course, including metaphysics and moral philosophy. It was probably not a hobby but central to his scholastic work. 2) Because of 1), we must take the idea seriously that even his pure philosophy conceals racist tendencies. Merely saying that it does not is not enough.

There is still the question of whether Kant’s “pure” philosophy harbors traces of his racist anthropology. How big of a disservice do we do to attempt to decolonize our world if we still

⁸² Eze, “‘Race’ in Kant’s Anthropology,” 218-9. Eze includes the following citation for the quotation: Quoted in Richard Popkin, “Hume’s Racism,” *The Philosophical Forum* 9, nos. 2-3 (Winter-Spring 1977-78): 218. *OFBS* University of Berkeley Press, 113.

⁸³ One of the major reasons for targeting Kant is the prevalence of Kant specialists among U.S. Philosophy Departments. This statistical fact means that a large number of people engage with Kantian philosophy, but by my experience in a limited and charitable way.

treat Kant's ethics and metaphysics as unquestionably pure? First, there is legitimate evidence for the possibility of a person without a developed faculty of reason, (OFBS "The Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling." p. 110). We must consider the implications of positing a person who only has the functioning faculties of understanding and imagination with which to make sense of the world. This would preclude the possibility of freedom. If we accept the possibility that Kant thought there were living humans who lacked a fully functional faculty of reason, then they would be essentially trapped in a world of mere empirical understanding. They would not have the ability to free themselves from the strict causality of nature. Their lives would be limited to the synthesis of ideas by the concepts of understanding (and maybe beauty, for what that's worth).

It is in the implication of the absence of reason that we begin to see a darker side to all of this, so to speak. What happens if we do not keep intact the inclusive language, the implicit 'we,' of Kant's philosophy? If we then take his writings as a whole, we may find that reason is not necessarily a universal faculty, and in describing a "higher vocation", he is referring to the socially-mediated moral character of a respectable European man. We occasionally find in the *Critiques* a reference to an uncultured person who is precluded from sweeping ideas of reason, for example in the *Critique of Judgment*:

It is a fact that what is called sublime by us, having been prepared through culture, comes across as merely repellent to a person who is uncultured and lacking in the development of moral ideas.

But the fact that a judgment about the sublime in nature requires culture still in no way implies that it was initially produced by culture and then introduced to

society by way of (say) mere convention. Rather, it has its foundation in human nature... namely, the predisposition to the feeling for (practical) ideas, i.e., to moral feeling.⁸⁴

On my reading, Kant posited the possibility of a person with deformed reason or none at all in his works on geography and anthropology.⁸⁵ If we carry this into his theoretical work and construct the possibility of a mind without reason, then we can imagine a person who cannot conceive of their own freedom, someone who is limited merely to the stepwise progression of experience given through time. Can they be trusted as subjects in the Kingdom of Ends?

There are many aspects of Kant's work that are bearing the brunt of racist critiques. Notable, his "topical" works of geography and anthropology and his call for political republicanism and cosmopolitanism, where he implores all international hosts to be polite and for people never to permanently depart from the land they are from. Even if one attempts to distill Kant's racism from his pure philosophy, there is still the problem of carrying through the implication of a person without Reason, who would not be able to realize their supreme vocation as rational men. To say this is not important, that Kant intended an implicit "we all" at least in the *Critiques*, is to assume that Kant was racist in some situations but not in others, and this is not likely. At worst, a person without reason would not be able to give themselves the moral law, and they must be made to do the work that they cannot choose. This is among the worst features of European Enlightenment thought that taint the attempted humanism of modern liberalism. It is

⁸⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1987), 265-6.

⁸⁵ Perhaps this is a remnant of Aristotle's idea of "natural slavery." There are some whose lives are not their own.

not inclusive, and it is a scaffolding on which to mount a supremacist edifice to exclude those peoples and cultures that do not hold Reason and Rationality as sacred. What ought we do to raze the racist monument of man's supreme vocation? There are concerns we must address in order to understand the homelessness situation in Hawai'i, where clearly Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders are being excluded from social benefits and public concern. I will discuss the cultural differences that orient ways of social cooperation in later chapters.

Conclusion

We must halt the simplification of society into an increasingly concentrated "Us," because most of us are not those. But if, most unfortunately, rights are disintegrated and discrimination cements boundaries among the deserving and the undeserving, we will turn to find that the world on the other side is already populated. When one's existence is deemed troublesome and unnecessary, the world becomes a fundamentally different and inhospitable place. One quickly realizes that being seen as human is necessary for protection against hunger and violence. Those without homes or shelter who are living in Hawai'i, especially underserved Native Hawaiians and COFA migrants, already struggle to be recognized as humanity. In this chapter, I have given attention to three of what I feel are the largest factors in assessing and remedying homelessness in Hawai'i and three corresponding excursions to orient this issue in a philosophical context.

As philosophers, what is our responsibility to those experiencing homelessness and hardship? How has our work failed them? We have failed them because our contemporary Western conceptions of ethics are consistently narrowly defined. They either aim for the mean, a

remnant of their Greco-European heritage, or celebrate the personal strength to vanquish obstacles and create a good life for oneself on an open vista of possibility, or a mixture of both. In the first instance, ethical concerns focus on prevalent social identities and the accompanying privileges of these groups. Notwithstanding the obvious classicism of Aristotle's ideal polis, even Kant's universal reason is not a natural inhabitant of all minds. Rather, it is invited by those with 'moral character.' These philosophies create a boundary between those who have the faculties necessary to earn rights and those who do not. These abstract ideals operate at the center of policies such as the sit-lie ban, which targets a behavior relatively unique to homeless populations: occupying a certain piece of public property for extended, uninterrupted periods of time. In a society shaped as it is by the intersection of the Capitalist and Protestant ideals of hard work and earned prosperity, this behavior is seen as unreasonable and unrespectable. I reference Max Weber critical analysis of religio-cultural rhetoric, "To *want* to be poor, it was often argued, was the same as wanting to be ill; it was to be condemned as seeking justification by works, detrimental to the glory of God. Most of all, begging by one who is capable of work is not only sinful sloth, but is also, as the apostle said, contrary to charity."⁸⁶

Although what might be called pragmatist or individualist ethics, on the other hand, do not depend on universal, rational precursors, they may exclude those who desire a good life but cannot attain it. These philosophies ascribe nimbleness to an open mind that allows one to avoid and subvert obstacles. But they do not lend much force to external circumstances that might limit one's ability to pursue what is in their best interest. On my view, this is deeply and

⁸⁶ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism and Other Writings*, trans. Talcott Perkins (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 110.

problematically ingrained, especially in American imaginaries. It is encapsulated in the biased double-conditional ‘If one finds oneself in hardship it is temporary as long as one works hard and utilizes what is at hand most cleverly and prosperously, but if others are in hardship it is because they are not working hard enough or that they are holding themselves back with their own choices.’ This sentiment charges the debate surrounding the funding and implementation of Housing First initiatives in Hawai‘i. Can those who have failed to successfully navigate their own frontiers be trusted with such a weighty show of societal goodwill?

My experimental reading in the final section of this chapter considers those lacking a developed faculty of reason, whose existence is confirmed in Kant’s works on race, who would never be able to unify their experience of the world in a way that confirms the supreme vocation of the moral. They would never experience the sublimity of their own power over the causality of nature, so their experience of the world would be one of quantity and the series of causes extending backward into the past. Their future would not promise the opportunity for self-betterment, simply more synthesis that pulls the present from the past.

Those on the margins, the poor and the disenfranchised, probably experience a life more like a slave of the Kingdom of Ends than a subject. At worst, the circumstances of their lives limit their choices to survival and labor. They are not counted among those who may exercise their causally-creative freedom. They are trapped in the infinite never completed, shuffled forward by a necessity they have no control over into a future that is as dangerous as it is empty.

Looking Forward

In the following chapters, I will continue to focus on elements of the human experience that bring limitation and obstruction with the intent of applying philosophical products to the contemporary issue of homelessness, especially as it occurs in Hawai‘i. My aim for this dissertation is to embark on a methodology for applied philosophy that makes use of diverse philosophical contributions. Pre-Qin and Han Dynasty Chinese Confucianism is a rich philosophical tradition from which to approach the topic of human limitation. It has a firmly social basis for understanding and describing the world as well as an intensely felt motivation to channel the best intentions, best actions, and best outcomes into the uninterrupted stream of an ideally lived life. Chapter two lays out this context and uses it to build a distinction between economic and existential poverty. The former is a temporary hardship that ought not to deter one’s behavior or the consistent activity of self-improvement, but the latter is a lingering danger invited by the first, which threatens to undermine one’s ability to navigate successful pathways into the future. Using these resources, I will return to the issue of Housing First strategies in Hawai‘i in an attempt to steer the conversation away from the prevailing, inhospitable mindset spurred by what Max Weber terms the ‘calling’ of post-Reformation modern Protestants to the ‘spirit of Capitalism’ which ties together piety and economic success into a neat bow of revelatory prosperity. This is tidily summed up with “God helps those that help themselves.”⁸⁷ and the idea that to mishandle the gift of prosperity is a mark on the intellect of a Christian person. This understanding of wealth, as well as rationality, has led to immense inequality as

⁸⁷ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 79.

well as an explanation of poverty handily branded on the American brain: ‘You just aren’t working hard enough.’ This chapter seeks other ways to speak about and understand poverty.

Chapter three picks up on the theme that those who are homeless and living in poverty have the least control over their circumstances. I source Pre-Qin and Han Dynasty Chinese philosophy to characterize the lack of individual autonomy and power among the ‘common folk’ in terms of bad rulership and environmental devastation. In this context, those hardest hit by such unpropitious changes in fortune were the subsistence farmers comprising the agrarian clans of ancient China, but, I claim, their hardships can be mapped onto those whose cultures privilege subsistence and who ascribe spiritual significance to the land on which they reside. I bring in Fei Xiaotong’s anthropological research on China’s agrarianism and the Western mode of individual organization to shine a light on American modes of social association, and how they exclude other ways belonging and conceptions of selfhood. I end this chapter with a reflection on the status of Native Hawaiians in Hawai‘i, and how the devaluing and destabilizing of their cultural traditions have contributed their overrepresentation among Hawai‘i’s homeless populations.

Chapter four considers what it will take to shift the boundaries of human experience to include and nourish those experiencing homelessness. Here, I bring in the contronymic aspect of the Chinese character *qiong* 窮 in texts where it means ‘to reach the limit of what is possible’ rather than ‘dead end’. I look to the *Zhuangzi* and the *Xunzi* to develop the theme of penetrating (*qiong* 窮) awareness that allows a person to encounter changes in fortune without tripping over obstacles. I develop the term ‘transformative awareness’ to connect the concepts of boundless (*wuqiong* 無窮) knowing and innovative interaction with one’s circumstances. By honing our

ability to incorporate diversity through broadened knowing, we become more able to tolerate difference as well as troubling times.

I connect the idea of transformative awareness to the philosophizing of Karl Jaspers. Here, the movement of *Existenz*, or the ability that each person has to communicate with what is radically other, motivates one to engage things that are difficult to understand. I characterize homelessness as a boundary situation on which our understanding founders and is unable to integrate it into the circumstances of our lives and hoped-for possibilities. We must deal authentically, openly, and continually with the reality of protracted human suffering because, according to Jaspers, the setting in of guilt opens us up to existential communication. Once we make ourselves available to communicate, we will cultivate the solidarity needed to seed compassion and culpability.

I end with a reflection on our ability to understand ourselves as a diverse, inclusive, and never-complete human community that is subjected to the pendulum of fraught and fortunate circumstances. Perhaps when we seek broad understanding rather than simple solutions to our largest social problems, then we can do the work of innovating harmonious futures.

Chapter Two. Existential Destitution and Cycles of Failure and Success

In this chapter, I will begin framing a new perspective, using resources from Pre-Qin and Han Dynasty Chinese philosophy, to consider the experience of poverty and destitution among people experiencing homelessness in Hawai‘i. In this chapter, I will introduce and define the term ‘existential destitution,’ which plays a pivotal role in my analysis of the damning effects of poverty that extend beyond a lack of money. Chinese philosophical traditions have much to say about the experience of poverty. They draw attention to the cosmic, cyclical forces that shape the human experience of failure and success that make hardship all but unavoidable. Many Confucian texts, as well as syncretist texts from the Han Dynasty that incorporated elements from Daoism and other schools, counsel that when the ways that things unfold offer few opportunities for success, one should continue to strive for self-optimization through self-cultivation. Though this may do nothing to deter difficulty, I will show that it sets up a distinction between different types of poverty, so that one may find comfort in being economically but not existentially destitute.

Bringing the distinction between economic and existential poverty to bear on the problem of homelessness, I will discuss the Housing First and affordable housing initiatives in Hawai‘i. Proponents of these measures claim that many people suffering from homelessness simply need homes and that once they have achieved the stability and safety of a residence, they can begin to put the rest of their lives together. Opponents of these initiatives do not believe that homeless individuals are being helped appropriately without the demonstrations of personal responsibility necessary for success on the transitional housing model, characterized by incremental movement from shelters to independent living. I make the argument that offering housing is an effective

way to address states of existential poverty that hamper one's ability to lay and achieve plans for prosperous futures.

Distinguishing Economic and Existential Poverty

In this section, I will lay the groundwork for what I term 'existential destitution' in Classical Chinese philosophical texts. My reading picks up on a theme that there is something more troubling than economic poverty at stake in the many stories about poverty in this tradition. To begin, I will relate a story from the *Shiji* history of the Kong family, about Confucius's response to the news that a member of Duke Ai of Lu's hunting party killed a *lin*. This animal, described as a shimmering, deerlike or goatlike unicorn, was an immensely auspicious, rare sight. The sighting is interpreted as a metaphor for a change in the times, heralding a world where Confucius's advice would be heeded, and his intellect celebrated. The following was the exchange between Confucius and Zilu when he heard that a *lin* had been killed during a hunt in the West.

「吾道窮矣！」喟然嘆曰：「莫知我夫！」子貢曰：「何為莫知子？」子曰：

「不怨天，不尤人，下學而上達，知我者其天乎！」⁸⁸

“My way is exhausted!” He sighed, then cried out, “No one understands me!”

Zigong asked, “Why does no one understand you?” “I do not resent Heaven, and I

⁸⁸ *Shiji* 史記, Compiled by Sima Qian 司馬遷 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959). Translation based on Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Readings in Han Chinese Thought* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2006).

do not blame anyone. I study those around me and understand what is happening above me. Only Heaven truly knows me!”⁸⁹

The first sentence of this exchange is striking because of its existential and spiritual implications.⁹⁰ According to the Ruist canon, *dao*道 is a path that leads toward constitutive fulfillment and optimized living, and it is likely the most important ethical and cosmological concept. And Confucius laments that his has been cut off! There is a deep rift between the way things are and the way that he would have them be. The destruction of a symbolic, auspicious animal compels him to say that there is nothing more that he can do. He has failed. Michael D.K. Ing points out the ironic quality of Confucius’ inability to bring into effect his vision. While

⁸⁹ I have chosen to translate *tian*天 as Heaven, as it is most often translated into English, following the early translations of ancient Chinese works by missionaries, most famously James Legge. The Anglophonic study of Chinese philosophy acknowledges the problematic nature of allowing Christian interpretations and metaphors to penetrate the understanding of Chinese texts, but by my estimation has not achieved the consensus necessary to formulate another translation. Another method has been to leave this nuanced character untranslated, writing the pinyin, *tian*, instead of attempting to fit English into the ill-fitting conceptual mold. But this may assume too much about the reader, and actually forfeits the subtlety the concept conveys.

In an essay included in his translation of the *Xunzi*, John Knoblock provides a brief history of the concept of *tian*天. “The ancient belief was that an anthropomorphic sky god, or Heaven, directed the affairs of the world and listened to the prayers of men. It was a directive moral force. Thus Heaven might “send down” illness, death destruction, floods, or droughts in response to what men, particularly rulers, might do.” Later, the concept became more metaphysical and abstract. It was considered an “impersonal Nature operating by knowable processes and principles that were certain and constant.” See John Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*, v. I (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 67-69.

⁹⁰ *Analects* 9.9 conveys a similar sentiment. 子曰：「鳳鳥不至，河不出圖，吾已矣夫！」 The Ames and Rosemont translation reads, “The auspicious phoenix does not appear; the Yellow River does no yield up to its magical chart. All is lost with me!”

Confucius knows the deep significance of the appearance of the *lin* 麟, he has no way to disclose it or share it with others. He has a visceral sense of what is meaningful but is unable to “render himself meaningful” in a way that connects the meaning of the omen to the contemporary state of affairs. “In his own words, no one recognizes him; only *Tian* 天 understands him. He lacks the kind of deep companionship that allows for full self-disclosure.”⁹¹ Failure is not only not getting to the place one would like to get to, but it is also the feeling of being unable to convince others that one’s perceived failure is ill-gotten and misplaced. This isolation prevents others from valuing one’s desires and anxieties, which in other circumstances would motivate them to assist in bringing about a mutually better state of affairs. This is a foundational component of existential poverty.

I begin with this passage because it illustrates the pervasiveness of concern for failure and success that begins very early in the Chinese philosophical tradition. The main metaphor for success is traveling with ease and failure, obstruction. The connection to *dao* 道 is clear, as it may be translated as path, way, and also follow, lead, as well as speak. These terms connote unhindered movement and clarity. The characters *tong* 通 and *da* 達 are usually translated as success, as well as ‘passing through’ and ‘arriving.’ Conversely, *qiong* 窮 generally is the opposite, meaning ‘blocked,’ ‘at a dead end,’ ‘obstructed,’ or being unable to smoothly and efficiently move toward one’s goals. To stray from the path, on this metaphor, is not adventurous

⁹¹ Michael D.K. Ing, *The Vulnerability of Integrity in Early Confucian Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 99.

or exciting, but a sure sign of ‘alienation and sorrow, diminishment and befuddlement.’⁹² There are many other examples that pivot around this metaphor of the unobstructed path. In Chinese medicine, the purpose of acupuncture and moxibustion is to open up communicative channels in the body, and the five senses are also called *wulu* 五路, the five roads. The metaphors of movement and obstruction are pivotal for understanding the ancient Chinese existential *milieu*. Here, broadening one’s knowledge and broadening one’s impact on the world are tied together, so the ideas of movement and travel are essentially, and aesthetically, moral. For example, the character *xing* 行 may mean simply ‘to travel’ or ‘to go,’ but in some instances, it indicates a preferable or appropriate course of action. The constant movement of the cosmos is inhospitable to what remains still. Stagnation, the unwillingness or inability to move through a swirling world, bespeaks ignorance and onerous inflexibility. Obstruction, in this existential metaphor, can be self or externally-imposed limitation of one’s path of moral discovery. At its worst, the dead end, the world discloses a stultifying stillness.

In pre-Qin philosophical texts and the philosophical traditions that followed, *qiong* 窮 indicated being stalled, stagnated, stranded, and prevented from smooth travel as a metaphor for failure and limitation. In modern Mandarin Chinese, *qiong* 窮 is synonymous with poverty and the poor. My interpretation is that over time the existential import of this character declined and what was formerly the intersection of existential and economic poverty was impoverished of its psychological implications and favored a money-centered interpretation as China became more

⁹² Michael Nylan, “Highway Networks in China’s Classical Era (323 BCE - 316 CE): Regulations, Metaphors, Rituals, and Deities,” *Highways, Byways, and Road Systems in the Pre-Modern World*. ed. Susan E. Alcock, John Bodel, and Richard J.A. Talbert (UK: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2012).

mercantilized and commodified. It is interesting that in this dissertation, as the spotlight is turned onto the myriad causes of poverty in hopes of finding lasting solutions for homelessness, the two types of poverty are found to be inextricably woven together, privileging the historic reading of the character *qiong*窮. Economic poverty cannot be purified of the effects it has on a person, or the conditions of a person's psychological proclivity for self-undermining behaviors, voluntary and involuntary, on economic self-sufficiency. I think that, for these reasons, considerations about the predicament of homelessness will benefit from including the concept of *qiong*窮 in the discourse.

Concern for rhyme scheme, pun, and intertextual references complicate etymological studies that focus on just one word. *Qiong*窮 is a general word and part of a closely knit word family formed around the central metaphor of obstruction. Other words that mean limitation, limit, poverty, and exhaustion I take to be thematic for expressions of existential destitution in ancient Chinese texts. For example, the *Shanmu* chapter of the *Zhuangzi* includes this account of Zhuang Zhou that differentiates between being poor (*pin*貧) and being existentially destitute (*bei*憊), which I've translated here as 'in distress.'

莊子集釋：「莊子衣大布而補之，正屨係履而過魏王。魏王曰：「何先生之憊邪？」莊子曰：「貧也，非憊也。士有道德不能行，憊也。衣弊履穿，貧也，非憊也，此所謂非遭時也。王獨不見夫騰猿乎？其得柁、梓、豫、章也，攬蔓其枝，而王長其間，雖羿、蓬蒙不能眇睨也。及其得柘、棘、枳、枸之間也，危行側視，振動悼慄，此筋骨非有加急而不柔也，處勢不便，未足以逞其能也。今處昏上亂相之間，而欲無憊，奚可得邪？此比干之見剖心，徵也夫！」」⁹³

⁹³ Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series. Supplement no. 20. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 53/20/45-50. Based on *Guo Qing Fan's Zhuangzi jishi*, English translations in this chapter are my own unless otherwise indicated.

Zhuangzi, wearing patched and coarse clothes and shoes tied up with strings, passed by the King of Wei. The King said, “How have you come to this state of distress?” Zhuangzi replied, “I am poor, not in distress. When a member of the scholarly class possesses a suitable path and the power to walk it but is prevented from doing so, they are not in distress. My tattered clothes and busted shoes are signs of poverty, not being in distress. It is what they call meeting with unpropitious times. Has Your Majesty not seen swinging gibbons up in the trees? Among the cedars, catalpas, and camphor trees they grasp and swing from the branches, soaring between the trees. Even the great hunters Yi and Peng would not be able to even take aim at them. But when the gibbons encounter spiny mulberries, brambles, hawthorns, and citrons, they move warily, leaning awkwardly to one side, trembling, wincing and fearful. This has nothing to do with the muscles and bones. Their abilities are not depleted. Because it is dwelling in unsuitable conditions, the gibbon cannot express its abilities. Just the same, if a person is dwelling among a muddled upper class and confused and chaotic government ministers and hopes to avoid being in distress, how long do you think they can keep that up? Was not Bi Gan having his heart cut out a litmus test of this disorder?”

This selection is identified as a work of the “School of Zhuangzi.”⁹⁴ They glorify a Zhuangzi living in poverty that may not be historically accurate, maybe conflating his disdain for forms of control that limit self-expression with avoidance of compensatory government posts. The glorification of poverty in the Chinese philosophical tradition will be the topic of a later section, but I wish next to cement the distinction between economic and existential poverty and to show that it is probable that where one is found, so too will the other. I relate this distinction to modern research on poverty and homelessness. Just like in this story from the *Zhuangzi* where the King comments on his dire state with a perhaps questionable authenticity, even jokingly, those who are unsheltered are treated as if their distress is beyond the scope of compassionate concern.

Contemporary Perspectives on Existential Poverty

It seems that although we readily accept that there are basic human needs and we can discriminate when someone is not having theirs met, a common reaction is disdain. In the *Zhuangzi*, the King of Wei, who had the best that money and power could buy, saw Zhuang Zhou, disheveled and drawn, and his response was a casual ‘How did you get so low?’ The implication is that the King did not respond with concern, but with a mocking surprise. Was the King mocking him because he was wearing the clothing of a pauper (economic poverty) or because his current state was caused by his inability to further his own course in life (existential poverty)? In this section, I will explore the indications that people may feel justified to judge

⁹⁴ A.C. Graham, *Chuang-Tzu: The Inner Chapters* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2001), 120. While it is unlikely that this story was written by Zhuang Zhou or any of his contemporaries, there was probably a network of disciples and disciples of disciples who carefully preserved writings originating within this intellectual community.

someone as undeserving if they are somehow to blame for their poverty, because of their own poor choices.

According to Naomi Zack, there is a fundamental distinction that drives a judgmental psychological response to poverty: basic-need materialism versus value-materialism.⁹⁵ In cultures that have monetized all goods, including those which satisfy the most basic human needs, water, food, and shelter, there is also a tendency for the consumer that has no problem purchasing these basic items to desire more valuable products, for example, electrolyte-enhanced bottled water instead of tap water. The former is desired precisely because it is a status symbol. Having these choices allows one to identify with a certain lifestyle, and some are even morally justified. Buying local, organic products is a moderately pricey alternative, a luxury that not everyone can afford, that may also have a positive impact on the environment. In this sense, not everyone can *afford* to live a moral life.

Zack goes on to say that value-materialism creates a dissonance with regard to the basic-needs goods that results in the denial of their necessity. She writes, “Everyone needs the materials of water, food, and shelter but the focus on the non-material values of objects providing them (for the sake of status and prestige), can contribute to a delusion that one’s basic needs are psychological and social only and not at all physical.”⁹⁶ If one makes the decision to buy organic or vegan, two alternatives that tend to be costly off the shelf and time-consuming to prepare, there will be a number of aisles at a commercial chain grocery store one will not venture down or

⁹⁵ Naomi Zack, “Denial of Universal Human Material Needs and Aversion to the Homeless,” Delivered at the “What is Materialism?” Conference at the University of Oklahoma in May, 2014. Accessible at <https://cpb-us-east-1-juc1ugur1qwqqo4.stackpathdns.com/blogs.uoregon.edu/dist/9/6716/files/2014/02/Denial-of-Universal-Human-Material-Needs-and-Aversion-to-Homelessness-1wcmac7.pdf>

⁹⁶ Zack, “Denial of Universal Human Material Needs,” 1.

even stores that one will avoid altogether. One may encourage the people close to them to accommodate their choices and consider making the same decision for themselves. Inexpensive and easily prepared—processed—food items, including those eligible for purchase with government assistance are associated with unreflective and unattractive lifestyle choices. Zack writes, “If one dismisses and contemns cheap food and lodging, it is a small extension of the attitude toward those things to look down on those who have to make do with them.”⁹⁷

George Tsai brings this discussion a step forward with his discussion of conversational disgust. A person with the means to eat healthy fresh foods may eye the drive-thru line at McDonald’s with disgust, and turning to a like-minded friend, she might say, “Ugh, gross. That food is so bad for you! Have you heard about pink slime?” At root, the reason that a McDonald’s cheeseburger is considered disgusting is that it is cheap, and this refers to the ingredients and mass-processing as well. It is also an available product, with many locations and long operating hours, fast, high in protein, and filling. So for people living in poverty, it is an attractive option. They may have few options for choosing a healthier lifestyle. But, in conversation, the choice is moralized, and judgment is rendered not on an economic basis but on a psychological one. What Tsai shows is that conveying disgust of the poor as a conversational act can “oppress by enacting permissibility facts that make it appropriate for individuals to say and do oppressive things to poor people.”⁹⁸ He mentions “disgust contagion” as the result of socially acceptable forms of derision against populations that are considered disgusting based on the things they buy. The lives they lead cannot possibly be desired, and perhaps without being fully aware of the

⁹⁷ Zack, “Denial of Universal Human Material Needs,” 2.

⁹⁸ George Tsai, “Expressives as Oppressive Speech: The Case of Conversational Disgust,” Delivered at the Uehiro Graduate Philosophy Conference at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa in March 2016.

consequences, we affirm that they themselves are undesirable for living this way. Although we are aware that they have limited choices, what they buy is not valuable, and by virtue of the social domino effect of oppressive speech, they are not considered valuable. An interesting point of comparison is the way basic need items like nutritious food are treated in other places and cultures, for example, Taiwan. Here, ready to eat, fresh, inexpensive food is available in small stores and stalls along the narrow lanes off of the main streets. By contrast, McDonald's costs about the same as in the U.S., making it far more expensive than the local handmade street food. Food from McDonald's is purchased ironically as a display of American fetishism by those who can afford it. Although the dynamic is different than in America, it is not reversed. Street food in Taiwan does not come with stigma. It is celebrated as a cultural icon. This even in a place where the price of items that suit value-materialist tendencies is comparable to the U.S. if not more rampant. In the streets of urban Taipei, iPhones and Nike shoes are ostentatiously ubiquitous, and brand loyalty, much like sports team loyalty in the U.S., is a trait of character rather than a mere preference. This might be an instance where Zack's fomenting distinction between basic needs-materialism and value-materialism does not reduce all the way down to disdain and disgust. Where cheap, fresh foods are available, and widely considered delicious, the choice of the poor is not necessarily less socially valuable than the choice of those better off. Though it must be said that as the intersection of eating, environmentalism, pop-health movements, and Western concerns about organic and genetic modification becomes more trafficked in urban Asian cities, Zack's distinction may lodge itself between two slightly different notions of value choice. While the U.S. context that Zack addresses is driven by scientific advancements in large-scale but low-quality food production, the dismissal of traditional street foods in favor of modern, Western

styles of production and valuation brings in that element of dismissing the old to embrace the new.

I think that Zack is accurate in her diagnosis of value-materialism in the United States and the psychology of devaluing individuals who can only afford the lowest tier of basic needs products. Their inability to choose what others find inherently valuable challenges the way we view the world and the response of many individuals is to ignore their plight. The psychological din of value-materialism effectively mutes that of basic-needs materialism. The disgust and apathy widely felt about poor individuals create an imbalance that is not merely economical. Those who do not struggle to attain basic needs have a psychological reaction, but, from their perspective, those whom they are judging do not. They are reduced to their choices, which really do not amount to choices at all as they are made out of necessity with few or no options. They are diagnosed as lacking something fundamental and socially shared, something not simply monetary. At its most intensified, they lack humanity.

Simone Weil's *Le Malheur* and Existential Poverty

Simone Weil (1909-1943) wrote about a lack of humanity that transcends the categories of good and evil as well as innocence and shame, which she termed *le malheur*. It might be translated as affliction or woe, but the implication of this type of suffering is much deeper. People experiencing *le malheur* lack something fundamental, which she describes in her early work as the inability to think of themselves as an 'I'. She contrasts this loss of the 'I' to the clearing of the ego to make room for God. In *malheur*, the 'I' is destroyed from the outside while in redemption, the 'I' is destroyed from inside to allow the ideas of God, most notably grace, to

expand. *Malheur* is a metaphysical and irreversible erasing of the potential for grace and redemption. Weil writes:

Quasi-enfer sur terre. Le déracinement extrême dans le malheur.

L'injustice humaine fabrique généralement non pas des martyrs, mais des quasi-damnés. Les êtres tombés dans le quasi-enfer sont comme l'homme dépouillé et blessé par des voleurs. Ils ont perdu le vêtement du caractère.

La plus grande souffrance qui laisse subsister des racines est encore à une distance infinie du quasi-enfer.⁹⁹

It is near-hell on earth. The extreme uprooting in *malheur*.

Human injustice generally produces not martyrs but the near-damned. Those who have fallen into the hellish place are like those stripped and wounded by thieves.

They have lost the clothing of character.

The greatest suffering that leaves one's roots intact is still at an infinite distance from this near-hell.

This is what ultimate poverty, the combination of existential and economic poverties, looks like. The depth of this lack of personhood can only be accurately described using metaphysical language because there is no other way for us to conceive the rootless, cursed existence of those whose self has been crushed by forces beyond their control. It is impossible to relate across this infinite distance. Weil describes what today may be a common feeling among those who reach out to help only to have their hands batted away.

⁹⁹ Simone Weil, *Le pesantier et la grâce* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1988), 35.

Quand on rend service à des êtres ainsi déracinés et qu'on reçoit en échange des mauvais procédés, de l'ingratitude, de la trahison, on subit simplement une faible part de leur malheur. On a le devoir de s'y exposer, dans une mesure limitée, comme on a le pouvoir de s'exposer au malheur. Quand cela se produit, on doit le supporter comme on supporte le malheur, sans rattacher cela à des personnes déterminées, car cela ne s'y rattache pas. Il y a quelque chose d'impersonnel dans le malheur quasi infernal comme dans la perfection.¹⁰⁰

When we extend a service to beings thus uprooted and we receive in exchange bad behavior, ingratitude, and betrayal, we suffer only a small part of their *malheur*. We have a duty to expose ourselves to it to a certain degree, as we have the power to expose ourselves to *malheur*. When this happens, we must endure it as we would endure *malheur*, without attaching it to a specific person, for it cannot be attached to anyone. There is something impersonal in the near-hell in *malheur* as there is in perfection.

A person who lives in a quasi-inferno of suffering treats everyone as a fellow-damned. This is not because they feel enmity toward others. Weil finds that a collapsed self precludes the possibility of connecting with others, and there is no ground for feelings of appreciation or ingratitude. This is different than the pride that prevents those in need from accepting much-needed assistance. Those experiencing *malheur* are not empty or thoughtless. Weil writes that their existence is plagued by the guilt of a criminal even though they are innocent.

¹⁰⁰ Weil, *Le pesantier et la grâce*, 35.

Le malheur durcit et désespère parce qu'il imprime jusqu'au fond de l'âme, comme avec un fer rouge, ce mépris, ce dégoût et même cette répulsion de soi-même, cette sensation de culpabilité et de souillure, que le crime devrait logiquement produire et ne produit pas. Le mal habite dans l'âme du criminel sans y être senti. Il est senti dans l'âme de l'innocent malheureux. Tout se passe comme si l'état de l'âme qui par essence convient au criminel avait été séparé du crime et attaché au malheur; et même à proportion de l'innocence des malheureux.¹⁰¹

Malheur hardens and causes despair because it imprints on the bottom of the soul, as with a red-hot iron, contempt, disgust, and the same repulsion of oneself, the sense of guilt and defilement, that a crime should logically produce, but does not. Evil dwells in the soul of a criminal without him sensing it. It is felt in the soul of the “unfortunate” (*malheureux*) innocent. Everything that happens as if the state of the soul in essence suits the criminal, as if the *malheur* has been separated from the crime and attached to the innocent.

This is the depth of existential poverty: where one’s existence feels like a crime. A person in this state of distress is not capable of imagining a brighter future, for not only is there no self available to project into it. The ghost of self that remains is imprisoned by guilt and disgust. In contrast to the ideas discussed above that concern economic poverty and the disgust felt by those who are better off, those in existential poverty do not need the mirror of society to see the stain upon them. Their suffering is all-consuming. Weil writes that their lives are “*un équivalent plus*

¹⁰¹ Simone Weil, *Attente de Dieu*, Éditions Fayard (Paris: 1966), 79.

ou moins atténué de la mort,” a more or less attenuated equivalent of death.¹⁰² They are at a dead-end.

For Weil, one may either choose to annihilate the self by seeking a mystical union with God or one’s self may be annihilated by external forces. The former invites grace and divine light to fill the space of the soul, and the latter replaces the soul with opaque darkness. This darkness does not allow for self-reflection and debilitates the ability to plan for better futures. It is like being imprisoned in a dank dungeon with no remembrance of the crime committed. Some approaches to ameliorate homelessness have a sadly ironic quality. By criminalizing acts like ‘public camping,’ which forbids an individual from sleeping in a public space with their belongings at night, the feeling that those experiencing homelessness may already have about their criminality is confirmed. They are not learning a lesson by being punished for their acts, rather their lives are acts of punishment, externally and internally wielded. This may help explain the unwillingness of many unsheltered individuals to accept services, even if they are made available by dedicated and cohesive outreach efforts. It also shines a bit of light on the knot of issues surrounding mental health. This knot is tightened by the uncertainty about whether psychological conditions precede homelessness, are exacerbated by homelessness, or are caused by homelessness. Incorporating Weil’s notion of *malheur* enhances the discussion of this issue because it acknowledges the crushing force of external circumstances that disconnect a person from themselves. At the limit of existential poverty, individuals become ahistorical nodes of suffering with no connection to the “I” they had been, and there is no going back. This is a metaphysical loss of personhood, not merely a series of poor decisions or a lack of psychiatric

¹⁰² Weil, *Attente de Dieu*, 77.

care. At the limit of suffering, for Weil, the self is annihilated. For my definition of existential destitution, I keep the limit in view but focus on the road that ends there. Although there are certainly people already at the dead end, for whom we must provide even though it leaches our compassion, there are many who are not quite there and are still in possession of remnants of themselves. Existential poverty is remedied by the reconstitution and rooting of the self within supportive relationships and communities so that it can be projected into attainable and preferred futures.

Although it is anachronistic to tie these contemporary nuances of economic and existential poverty directly into the story from the *Zhuangzi* translated above, they bring nuance to the distinction Zhuang Zhou puts before the King. Zhuang Zhou is basically saying ‘I am not what you think I am. I just do not have the money for opulence.’ He is shielding himself against psychological warfare, and he even manages, by his famed wit, to reflect the insult back onto the King. Zhuangzi is being ridiculed because he is supposedly a sage and is living in poverty, but he is unruffled. He is not his poverty. He is not experiencing *le malheur*. Rather, those who are wealthy are squandering the world. Thorns and bitterness are preventing the thriving of those otherwise ready to swing through the trees.

This story from the *Zhuangzi* has allowed me to make a distinction between economic and existential poverty and to say that Zhuang Zhou was merely suffering from economic poverty. Why were sages like Zhuang Zhou, Liezi, and Confucius recorded as living in abject, economic poverty? The lives of sages are instructional and inspiring for overcoming adversity. They arose during times of immense social, political, and environmental unrest. They were not regular folks or guides to life, but representatives of the limit of what might be possible. They

were to be emulated as approximately as one is able, but they can never be surpassed. The simplest explanation of their poverty is that they are protesting the corruption that had become the status quo in their times. But this may not be what is intended as instructional. The moral of the poor sage is a more general lesson to continue to make one's way without sacrificing one's values or strength of character. For centuries, these stories were heralded as inspiration for crestfallen bureaucrats to take the post offered to them and, though lamenting its lowliness, to work as if promotion will be granted once someone recognizes their potential. In other words, these texts did not advise a descent into poverty, but rather to make due with what is at hand. But for many living in poverty today, their existential currency is depleted as well. Chinese philosophical texts have much to contribute to this understanding of poverty.

Existential Destitution (*qiong*窮) in Classical Chinese Texts

Works originating in the Warring States Era (475-221 BC) were riddled with stories of hardship and strife, including numerous accounts of Confucius's (551-479 BC) own troubled life. The story of him at his lowest point, in the hinterlands, cast out of political favor, stranded and hungry, is told again and again in the ancient Chinese philosophical tradition. Whether or not this story is interpreted as one describing merely economic poverty or existential destitution, which is characterized by the inability to imagine or attain success, has deep implications for the interpretation of this story in other ancient Chinese texts. The *locus classicus* of the story in the *Analects* sketches Confucius as a role model for those who cultivate themselves in observance of ritual and hope to make a broad impact in the world. But this message is pitted against doubt in

the purpose and goals of his actions. Many of the other tellings of this story exploit this doubt, including many in the *Zhuangzi* that have Confucius give up on his vision.

Whether or not the story conveys an economic or existential message depends on the interpretation of the character *qiong*窮, which I have chosen as the philological basis for this study of limitation. This concept combines existential with economic connotations of poverty, contributing to a transactional account of the cosmos, which I believe is illuminating for modern discussions about extreme poverty and homelessness. For example, in the *Xici* commentary to the *Yijing* there is a passage about the penetrating insight of the sage that indicates a transactional pattern to the world. A selection reads, 「一闔一闢謂之變；往來不窮謂之通」¹⁰³ ‘We recognize the turning over of things by their being at one time closed off and other times opened up. Being able to come and go through life unhindered by these changes is the ability of those who truly understand them.’ Even at times when the world becomes constricted and closed off, the sage is able to pass through (*tong*通) because the limitations (*qiong*窮) that befall those who do not understand the transactions of the cosmos fall away. As things change, they open up or close off human possibilities. A constricted world is pocked with variously interconnected limitations.

We find in the Chinese philosophical tradition that at the extremity of hardship all of the contributing factors interlock into a formidable social, personal, and ecological barrier. This theme matures early in the tradition, as indicated by the story of Confucius stranded between Chen and Cai.

¹⁰³ Based on the *Zhou yi yinde*周易引得. Harvard-Yenching Index series no. 10 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980). Xi Ci 11.2.

Between Chen and Cai: Interpreting Poverty and Destitution in Chinese Philosophy

The story of Confucius in distress in the *Analects* 15.2 is considered the *locus classicus* of the many tellings throughout the Chinese philosophical tradition.¹⁰⁴

在陳絕糧，從者病，莫能興，子路慍見曰：「君子亦有窮乎？」子曰「君子固窮；小人窮斯濫矣。」¹⁰⁵

In Chen they ran out of food, and his followers were all too sick to stand. Zilu turned to him and asked, “Are distinguished folks ever in this much distress?”

Kongzi replied, “Distinguished folks stay true to themselves even when they are in distress, but petty people run amok when they are in distress.”

The moral is that hardship should not change the steadfast character of upstanding individuals.

The use of *qiong*窮 in this passage lends an economic and an existential interpretation. Not only is the group out of food, but they are also without a place to dwell and are unable to plan an exit out of this situation. There is an air of hopelessness in the followers strewn on the ground, and Zilu is concerned about whether Confucius has led them to a dead end.

To his weakened followers, Confucius replies that they must be strong in the face of adversity. He separates their poverty from their character when he describes the different ways that distinguished and petty people behave when they are in distress. But I do not think that this

¹⁰⁴ John Makeham, “Between Chen and Cai: *Zhuangzi* and the *Analects*,” *Wandering at Ease in the Zhuangzi: A Postmodern Critique* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998); Scott Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of the Guodian* vol. I. (Ithaca: Cornell University East Asia Program, 2012).

¹⁰⁵ Based on *Shisan jing zhushu, fu jiaokanji* 十三經注疏,附校勘記 Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series. no. 16 (Taipei: Ch’eng-wen Publishing Company, 1966), 30/15/2.

story should be interpreted as an episode of merely economic poverty because that would dim the instructional moment for the moral psychology of Confucian self-cultivation. Ideally, a distinguished person should be able to move through life with relative ease and equanimity even in difficult times, but this is not a simple feat. Troubling times prompt self-reflection, and this could reveal personal defects that require remedy through self-cultivation. This practice yields the possibility of having brought misfortune to oneself, but it counters with the opportunity to enhance the emotional relationships between self and world that support moral constancy. A person has little control over what hardship may come, but the power to act deliberately and precisely in response preserves self-respect, even if one is in a pitiable state. We find Confucius and his disciples standing alone at the edge of a world that does not value his vision. Kwong-loi Shun amends to the tension between living a moral life in an immoral age the notion of loneliness.

Accompanying this sense of tension is also a sense of loneliness, reflected in such remarks as that the superior person might have to walk the Way alone. This sense of loneliness is not a matter of physical isolation, as the Confucians even in withdrawal are often among students and close associates. Nor is it a matter of social disengagement, as the Confucians continue to be deeply engaged in social matters, if not through active participation in government, then through reflecting and discoursing on such matters. Rather, the sense of loneliness has to do with the awareness that one's ethical aspirations and vision are often not understood and not shared by others. Although Confucius also observes on one occasion that the virtuous does not stand alone, the very fact that he needs to make this observation

also testifies to the sense of loneliness that the virtuous often feels. The ultimate tension, perhaps, is the tension between the sense of equanimity and the sense of loneliness that inevitably accompany each other.¹⁰⁶

Unquestionably, loneliness is an existential issue. It depletes one's social currency and may result in existential poverty along the lines I have discussed above. Turning to Confucius stranded between Chen and Cai, these deep implications swirl in the background. We read this story and relate to his hardship, and we also take instruction from his placid equanimity in the face of a situation that could not get much worse. This story is a snapshot of Confucian moral psychology, from which a number of lessons can be drawn.

The story of Confucius stranded between states at war, with none willing to house him and some in pursuit of him, is included in the *Mengzi*, the *Xunzi*, the *Mozi*, the *Lüshi Chunqiu*, and the *Zhuangzi*. In these texts, the story is spun to emphasize different aspects of Confucius's hardship. In the *Mengzi*, the party's distress is the result of not having found a supportive audience among powerful individuals.¹⁰⁷ There is no word from Confucius included in this brief passage, and the story is framed as one of many instances of his struggle for recognition. His poverty arises from his inability to achieve a position, but at least he does not yield his principles to tarry among the corrupt and self-serving. The tellings in the *Xunzi* and the *Lüshi Chunqiu* emphasize Confucius's equanimity while in distress and even go as far as to say that everyone

¹⁰⁶ Kwong-loi Shun, "On Anger: An Essay in Confucian Moral Psychology," *Returning to Zhu Xi: Emerging Patterns Within the Supreme Polarity*, ed. David Jones and He Jinli (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), 318-19.

¹⁰⁷ 孟子曰：「君子之危於陳蔡之間，無上下之交也。」 *ICS Concordance to the Mengzi*, 14.18/74/27.

should experience some sort of adversity in their lives in order to have the opportunity to better themselves.¹⁰⁸ Poverty in these stories is framed in terms of willingness to suffer hunger for the sake of one's beliefs. Rather than accept a post that offends his sensibilities but would guarantee that his basic needs are met, Confucius puts his life and those of his disciples at risk by reducing them to dire poverty for the sake of his moral character. The party is reduced to the social level of paupers, eating coarse grains and soup made from weeds. How food is presented in these stories gives force to their lessons.¹⁰⁹ His inability to provide for the group is rooted in his moral disdain for the powers that would willingly sustain them, but in the *Mozi*, putting his moral scruples before the health of the group frames him as a selfish hypocrite.

The story in the second *Fei Ru* (Against Ruism) chapter of the *Mozi* claims that Confucius had enough food even though there was a shortage. It describes an instance where Confucius was invited to dine with Duke Ai of Lu, and he refused to participate in the banquet on moral grounds, though his unwillingness to take part in the feast was likely because he'd unscrupulously eaten so much of the suckling pig Zilu had prepared earlier.¹¹⁰ This story is

¹⁰⁸ 君子貧窮而志廣，隆仁也；富貴而體恭，殺執也；安燕而血氣不衰，秉理也；勞勩而容貌不枯，好交也；怒不過奪，喜不過予，是法勝私也。Based on the *Sibu congkan* edition. *ICS Concordance to the Lü Shi Qun Chiu*, v. 26. (Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 1996), 2/8/13-15.

¹⁰⁹ Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 231-233.

¹¹⁰ 孔丘窮於蔡陳之間，藜羹不糝，十日，子路為享豚，孔丘不問肉之所由來而食；號人衣以酤酒，孔丘不問酒之所由來而飲。哀公迎孔子，席不端弗坐，割不正弗食，子路進，請曰：「何其與陳、蔡反也？」孔丘曰：「來！吾語女，曩與女為苟生，今與女為苟義。」夫飢約則不辭妄取以活身，羸飽則偽行以自飾，汙邪詐偽，孰大於此？Based on the *Sibu congkan* edition. *ICS Concordance to the Mozi*, v. 41. (Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 2001), 9.7/66/18-22.

intended to point out Confucius's hypocrisy and hubris. When times are tough, he is a regular man, but back in civilized society, he is judgmental and cantankerous. This is a common argumentation strategy in the *Mozi*, which favored an impartial and frugal version of society often compared to modern notions of social and political utilitarianism.¹¹¹ The theme of eating found in the *Mozi* is also seen later works, for example in the *Lüshi Chunqiu*. Here Confucius secretly watches Yan Hui prepare a meal and notices that he picks some out and eats it when he thinks no one was watching. Once the preparation is finished, Confucius declares that he intends to offer the meal as a sacrifice to his father. As offerings must be pure, Yan Hui stops him and tells him that a bit of grit had fallen into the pot and he had reached into the pot to retrieve it and ate it. Although he removed the dirt, the food was not prepared the appropriate way for an offering. Confucius replies that one cannot truly know by looking what a person's intentions are.¹¹² This story is framed as an instructive lesson for Yan Hui. It was a test to see if he would admit to reaching into the pot so he could have some before anyone else in the hungry party. To remain upstanding in the face of poverty is the moral of this story, as in the original telling in the *Analects*.

The story of Confucius stranded is included seven times in the outer and miscellaneous chapters of the *Zhuangzi*, with a variety of themes. There are three tellings of the story grouped together in the *Shanmu* 山木 chapter that pick up on a theme from the *You zuo* 宥坐 chapter of the

¹¹¹ Dennis Ahern, "Is Mo Tzu a Utilitarian?" *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 3(2) 1976, 185–93; Dirck Vorenkamp, "Another Look at Utilitarianism in Mo-Tzu's Thought," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 19(4) 1992, 423–443.

¹¹² 孔子歎曰：「所信者目也，而目猶不可信；所恃者心也，而心猶不足恃。弟子記之，知人固不易矣。」故知非難也，孔子之所以知人難也。 *ICS Concordance to the Lü Shi Qun Chiu*, 17.3/102/17-18.

Xunzi. In the *Xunzi* version, Zilu ponders the question of whether bad things can happen to truly good people. Confucius replies that he is right to be concerned, but it is possible that the worthy encounter the wrong times. Just as flowers in the forest are fragrant even when no one is around to smell them, good men retain their moral potency even when no one is around to appreciate them. He assures Zilu that one must continue to cultivate and rectify one's conduct until the right times roll around.¹¹³ The invocation of timeliness can be summed up with this selection from the story:

君子之學，非為通也，為窮而不困，憂而意不衰也，知禍福終始而心不惑也。¹¹⁴

When the distinguished person focuses on learning, it is not for the sake of unhindered success. It is so that when there's a dead end one does not feel helpless. When feeling anxious, one should hold steadfast to one's ideals.

Knowing that distress and success turn over endings and beginnings, one may be free of doubt.

The versions of the story in the *Zhuangzi* expound on this sense of timeliness. The first in the *Shanmu* chapter ends with an interlocutor suggesting to Confucius that he abandon the cycle of failure and success. Confucius then gets up, bids adieu to his disciples, and strides into the swamp to commune with the birds and beasts. The second story similarly has him abandon his studies so that he can be freed from the cycle of fortune and misfortune. In the third telling of the

¹¹³ Based on the 夫遇不遇者，時也；賢不肖者，材也；君子博學深謀，不遇時者多矣！ *ICS Concordance to the Xunzi*, 28/141/3-4.

¹¹⁴ *ICS Concordance to the Xunzi*, 28/141/5.

story in this chapter, Confucius, starving, is rapping out an unmeasured beat against a tree and singing tunelessly. As the historical Confucius considered classical music to be the utmost expression of refinement, we readers already know that something is amiss. Confucius tells his disciples that the afflictions that plague him are not his doing and so are not his worry. The story concludes with 聖人晏然體逝而終矣¹¹⁵ ‘The sage calmly goes along with things, and when the body dies, that is the end of it.’ The tellings of the story in the *Zhuangzi* depart from the theme of Confucian moral psychology in their portrayal of Confucius as one conversation away from giving it all up. Having his experience of poverty undermine his sense of duty threatens the credo of living according to a set of moral principles. This interpretation takes Confucius past the limit of mere economic poverty toward existential distress. This theme is shown in telling in the *Rang wang* 讓王 chapter of the *Zhuangzi*.

Confucius is playing the zither, singing, and dancing shamelessly, as appraised by Zilu and Zigong. His response to their concern that he might be at the end of his rope may be translated as ‘I may be a lot of things, but impeded (窮) I am not.’ Confucius compares himself to the evergreen trees that thrive in winter, another botany metaphor with the same thrust as the orchid in the forest: being unappreciated and left in the cold should not impact one’s behavior. Confucius tells his disciples that the important thing is to be happy, and the comparison to the evergreen tree lends the idea of the naturalness of being content with one’s lot. This telling of the story includes two elements not present in the *Analects* version. First, Confucius rarely declares the intention to be happy in the face of obstacles. Rather, happiness and pleasure are reserved for the appreciation of a life lived suitably well, unobstructed and with wide-ranging moral and

¹¹⁵ Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series. Supplement no. 20., 54/20/61.

sensual rewards. Second, though Confucius was known to be a splendidly refined zither player and an authority of the *Book of Odes*,¹¹⁶ it does not seem from the response of his disciples that he was playing a cultivated tune. He seemed to be playing a folk song or some kind of ditty, and Zilu grabs a shield and dances with the all the gusto of a seasoned warrior. This detail, the shield, may indicate that the song was an old one rather than improvised. In the *Book of Rites*, there are a couple of passages that indicate that the training with instruments for music and war are similar.

「凡學世子及學士，必時。春夏學干戈，秋冬學羽龠，皆於東序。小樂正學干，大胥贊之。龠師學戈，龠師丞贊之。」¹¹⁷

The instruction of heirs and eligible, talented young men, varied seasonally. In spring and summer they learned to wield arms, and in fall and winter, they learned the feather and the flute.¹¹⁸ All of these techniques were in the Eastern style. The lower ministers of music taught how to use a shield, and the more qualified assistants helped him. The master flautists taught how to use a spear, and his deputy helped him.

It may be a bit of a stretch to judge the type of song by this one criterion. But it would make the scene a little less blatantly anti-Ruist, which would make the concluding lines that emphasize

¹¹⁶ See *Analects* 3.23 where Kongzi instructs a music master how to play, 8.8, 11.1 where he likens himself to former generations in his preference of music, and 13.3, 15.12.

¹¹⁷ *ICS Concordance to the Liji*, v. 2 (Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 1992), 8.2/56/27-28.

¹¹⁸ The feather may be an early reference to the *yubao gu*, a feather screen drum, which was used in military proceedings in the Tang dynasty. For a list of the instruments used in military ceremonies, see Kai Filipiak ed., *Civil-Military Relations in Chinese History: From Ancient China to the Communist Takeover* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

naturalness over ritual more forceful in their delivery. Suffice to say that men attempting to garner an official position would not engage in frivolous or ecstatic song. Much like in the ideal polis conceived by Plato in the *Republic*, there were certain sets of chords and melodies that were approved for dignified people to enjoy, and for Confucius, this was very important. The Confucius of the *Analects* would have likely stopped his ears to keep from hearing tones that may have a negative effect on his character. If the *Zhuangzi*'s Confucius is singing an old song, but with a folksy twang, it effaces his propriety. But if he is playing a proper song while in the wilds at the bounds of society, it might be seen as an act of defiance. Even in a calamitous state of hunger, he will not resign his self-won moral excellence. The world may fall to ruin, the songs forgotten and the rituals debased, but one may find some footing by holding firm to behaviors that would prevail in a different, better world.

The story ends with reference to the contentment of the hermit Xu You, who refused to take the throne, and Gongbo, who abdicated the throne. They removed themselves from the cycle of favor and disfavor, hot and cold, impeded and unimpeded, and they were content. What is at stake in portraying Confucius this way? John Makeham argues that the exclusion of the stories about Confucius in the *Zhuangzi* would be arbitrary because even though it is not a Ruist text, it does provide valuable insight into the interpretation of the relatively sparse account in the *Analects*.¹¹⁹ In order to understand the account of Confucius living in dire straits, a few words must be said about the *Zhuangzi* itself as a composite text with many philosophical motives. After providing a brief interpretive context, I will illuminate a theme that becomes fully fledged in the *Zhuangzi*: the celebration of poverty.

¹¹⁹ Makeham, "Between Chen and Cai," 94.

The Role of Confucius in the *Zhuangzi*

In order to explore Confucius's role in the *Zhuangzi*, a word must be said about the cohesiveness of the text as it is bound together today. Different contributors to the text likely used the figure of Confucius in different, instructive ways. Speculation regarding the timeline and the number of contributors has abounded over the last century in many articles, books, and dissertations.¹²⁰ Many criteria have been created and theorized for stratifying the strips of the composite *Zhuangzi* text. It is grouped into three sections, inner, outer, and miscellaneous, although the *pian*, or portions of text grouped together roughly based on theme, that comprise each of these sections do not lend to airtight divisions between the three. By convention and for consistency, these designations have stuck. The first seven chapters, the inner chapters, are still considered by many to be written by Zhuang Zhou, the illustrious *Zhuangzi* himself, though I'm partial to David McCraw's assessment, which uses data analysis to quantify differences in rhyme and word choice in the inner chapters, that even they were likely penned by several authors. Many 20th century scholars were caught up with an authentic-inauthentic distinction, which made the question of the authorship of the inner chapters contentious.¹²¹ Hopefully, we have moved on as a scholarly community because the text, as it is received now, is a treasure chest of philosophical inquiry and storytelling regardless of the intent of the many contributors.

¹²⁰ See authors Liu Xiaogan, Angus Graham, Lu Deming, David McCraw, and Brian Hoffert to name a few recent studies.

¹²¹ David McCraw, *Stratifying Zhuangzi: Rhyme and Other Quantitative Evidence*, Language and Linguistics Monograph Series 41 (Taipei: Institute of Linguistics, Academia Sinica, 2010) p. 48.

The value of getting to the bottom of who wrote the *Zhuangzi* is to untangle the mass of political threads woven throughout the tapestry of characters. It would be misleading to assume that every story in the text speaks to a purely Daoist worldview, or that Daoism itself was not permeable and accommodating to myriad influences over the centuries. For example, the disdain for government, indicated by stories in which Confucius decides to jettison his desire for government approval, is the calling card of the editors hailing from the intellectual tradition credited to adherents of Yang Zhu's (c. 350BC) school, and these additions to the text, judging by the style and use of binomial terms, were likely added at least at the end of the Warring States Period (475-221 BC) and even well into the Han Period (206 BC - 220AD). A handful of the tellings of the Confucius stranded between Chen and Cai story are included in the chapters A.C. Graham terms the Yangist miscellany.¹²² The similarity of these four *pian* is taken to show that they were likely grouped together before their inclusion in the *Zhuangzi* text, and though some commentators conflate the Yangist message as Daoist, there are indicators that it is not. In *The Spirit of Chinese Philosophy*, Feng Youlan labels Yang Zhu a proto-Daoist, but even that is dubious. Feng writes that the Yangist man engages in just the right amount of good and evil. But anyone who has ever gone down the rabbit hole of 'that's it' and 'that's not' (是非) in the *Qi Wu Lun* to its inevitable anti-conclusion will have trouble agreeing with the connection to Daoist themes, which tend to take the difference between good and evil an arbitrary distinction.

Feng Youlan cites Confucian derision of the Daoists to make a division between early and late Daoism. From the following quotes, he surmises that Daoism was first a utilitarian, selfish belief system that only later became concerned with transcendent matters.

¹²² Graham, *Zhuangzi*, 221-223.

“Taoism came from recluses. We get a glimpse of such in the *Lun Yü*, for Confucius met a number of them; and since he had the wish to save the world, they did not approve.”¹²³

“So far as the early Taoists were concerned, they were selfish. Their principle was to encourage selfishness... As Tzu Lu said of them, “they want to make themselves clean, but they throw into confusion the great relationships of life.”¹²⁴

“It is entirely obvious that Yang’s theory blocked the way to *jen* and *yi*, because the Confucian emphasis on *jen* and *yi* contained an emphasis on ‘the other man’.”¹²⁵

The Yangist school emphasized the preservation of the body over the accumulation of wealth and material things. Although a historical account about him is included in the Legalist text *Hanfeizi*,¹²⁶ the most well-known stories about Yang Zhu appear in an eponymous segment of the *Liezi*, a Daoist work likely compiled around 300 AD.¹²⁷ When asked by Qin Guli, a

¹²³ Feng, Youlan, *The Spirit of Chinese Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), 30.

¹²⁴ Feng, *The Spirit of Chinese Thought*, 33.

¹²⁵ Feng, *The Spirit of Chinese Thought*, 34.

¹²⁶ 楊子過於宋東之逆旅，有妾二人，其惡者貴，美者賤。楊子問其故，逆旅之父答曰：「美者自美，吾不知其美也，惡者自惡，吾不知其惡也。」楊子謂弟子曰：「行賢而去自賢之心，焉往而不美。」 Based on the *sibu congkan* edition. *ICS Concordance to the Hanfeizi*, v. 42. (Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 2000), 22/50/18-20.

¹²⁷ Another contentious date. According to A.C. Graham, many Western scholars argued for its inclusion as one of the three main Daoist texts alongside the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi* long after Chinese scholars had agreed that it was likely a compilation if not a creation of the Han[??300+ce] Dynasty. A.C. Graham, “The Date and Composition of the Lieh-Tzu,” *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature* (New York: SUNY Press, 1990).

disciple of Mozi, if he would sacrifice a single hair to help the whole world, would he do it? He replied that it would do no good to give up even one hair. Qin incredulously asks him if he would do it if it really would help, but Yang refused to answer. His disciple, Meng Sun-yang, stepped in to continue the conversation on his behalf. His argument consisted of upping the ante on what Qin himself would be willing to do for others until he would no longer agree to help, which was having a limb cut off at the joint. Taking this as a concession, Meng presses Qin on the difference between a single hair and a joint, as they each have their place among the parts of the body.¹²⁸ The focus on health and longevity instead of the pursuit of notoriety and material wealth was incorporated in the Daoist tradition, but not wholesale from the Yangist school. It was paired with the pursuit of the unknowable, the transcendent, the unexplainable, and the mystical, and so it shed the grounded, utilitarian ideals of Yangism.

A reader of the *Zhuangzi* must be careful in ascribing Daoist predilection to the character of Confucius portrayed in the work. The seven tellings of the Confucius stranded between Chen and Cai are all in the outer and miscellaneous chapters, which does not necessarily mean that they are inauthentic, but that their inclusion may have been at the whim of a contributor who, although devoted to the Zhuangzian message, fell in with the ilk of Han Dynasty scholars for whom the lines of the past and the current status quo were blurred in the immense effort of

¹²⁸ 「禽子問楊朱曰：「去子體之一毛以濟一世，汝為之乎？」楊子曰：「世固非一毛之所濟。」禽子曰：「假濟，為之乎？」楊子弗應。禽子出語孟孫陽。孟孫陽曰：「子不達夫子之心，吾請言之。有侵若肌膚獲萬金者，若為之乎？」曰：「為之。」孟孫陽曰：「有斷若一節得一國，子為之乎？」禽子默然有聞。孟孫陽曰：「一毛微於肌膚，肌膚微於一節，省矣。然則積一毛以成肌膚，積肌膚以成一節。一毛固一體萬分中之一物，柰何輕之乎？」」 Based on the *Sibu congkan* edition. *ICS Concordance to the Liezi*, v. 25. (Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 1996), 7/41/20-25.

unification and preservation during this time. How does this affect the interpretation of the stories about Confucius? This influence flattens the implications of Confucius's poverty and willingness to abandon his purpose because the potential to rise above the distinctions and merge with the limitless (*wuqiong*無窮) is not included in the Yangist assessment of reality. He either must attempt to continue his journey down this rocky, obstructed path or take the fork in the road, foregoing the social and political milieu in favor of self-preservation and retreat into the natural. By contrast, the Zhuangist would find this choice superficial and the result of an ill-begotten perspective. This difference is humorously shown in the legend of Yang Zhu weeping at a crossroads. Not knowing which way to go, but having a sagacious awareness of the repercussions of choosing the wrong path, he is the picture of existential despair. Can he trust himself to make the right choice? For now, he is stuck, unable to determine which way to go. Compare this to the Zhuangists who asked one another 「孰能登天遊霧，撓挑無極，相忘以生，無所終窮？」¹²⁹ 'Which of us can ascend into the sky, wander in the obscuring mists, go whirling into the infinite, and forget about one another, without end?' Hearing them, Zigong was mystified by these men and their unsolemn behavior at the death of their friend. Confucius told Zigong that whereas he stays within the guidelines of propriety and humanity, they go beyond it to commune with the changes themselves and forget themselves and their bodies. A Zhuangist would not be stuck at a crossroads because their goal is not to find the right path, but to transcend the difference between right and wrong paths. Thus the portrayal of Confucius in the *Zhuangzi* does not style him as a Daoist or Zhuangist, but rather a Yangist. This is notable because with no transcendent realm (*wuqiong*無窮) to appeal to, which would allow him to dissolve the

¹²⁹ Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, Supplement no. 20., 18/6/61-2.

distinction between bad times and good, Confucius decides to leave off with his studied, ritualized ways of making his life meaningful. This situation has a glimmer of what I refer to as existential destitution because for Confucius, the figure merely caricatured in this story, stepping off his path into the forest would have brought his life's project to an abrupt end. The historical Confucius carefully tended to his path, his life's work and legacy, such that even in distress he was not at a dead end. Put another way, even when he was out of money his surety did not flag. When in the *Zhuangzi* Confucius breaks from his path to find happiness elsewhere, the moral of the story cuts with two edges. The straight-forward one ridicules Confucius for his stubborn adherence to arbitrary ritual with the wit and abandon that is the hallmark of the Zhuangist, and as a result, we can imagine Confucius suddenly agog, following a butterfly into the thicket. The hidden, darker edge cuts through what Confucius holds most dear: the moral constancy of his path through life. Without the spiritual wealth of an incrementally perfected life, Confucius would be made existentially destitute.

The contributors to the *Zhuangzi* forge a path for Confucius that leads him away from the moral dictates that, by their estimation, limit his spiritual progress. Even though he may end up tragically poor, he will find a wealth of insight in an unbounded life. The glorification of poverty is a prevalent theme in Daoist texts and Post-Han philosophy, poetry, and prose. This will contribute to my study of contemporary homelessness by supporting an important distinction. The sort of poverty celebrated in ancient and imperial Chinese texts is one that respects human dignity and the ability to choose an ascetic lifestyle. In these texts, it was celebrated as a political statement against the strict, power-driven status quo. But the vast majority of today's homeless populations are not making a political decision. Their lives are not lived amid such choices

because their basic human needs are not secure. But some insight may be drawn from the preservation of integrity in the face of poverty seen in the Chinese philosophical tradition.

Poverty and Cosmology in Chinese Texts

The narrative of the celebrated poor contributes complexity to the distinction between economic and existential poverty. In this section, I will provide examples that show that these types of destitution are often linked. The glorification of poverty became a common trope in the works annotated and compiled in the Han Dynasty, as the social and political metropolises in China became more bureaucratized, as well as in Tang and Song Dynasty poetry. During this time, when many government positions came with a slew of benefits and privileges unrivaled by any but the high nobility, there were legions who did not receive their desired post and were fraught with competing emotions. Internalizing Confucian moral psychology, they looked within for faults and fortified themselves through study and ritual. But they also condemned their circumstances and yearned for someone or something to blame. The theme of being cast into a dismal situation beyond one's control is common. Before I begin discussing examples from the texts, I will orient the discussion around relevant concepts from the *Yijing* 易經, the *Classic of Changes*. This context is important for interpreting stories that describe and glorify poverty because, as a divination manual that engages the connection between cosmological forces and human social and political striving, the *Yijing* crystallizes the concern surrounding the circumstances of success and failure in early Chinese thought.

The broad scope of the *Yijing* includes uncontrollable and active forces that create circumstances beyond one's control. It is one of many works on this theme originating from

prolific Warring States Period through the Han Dynasty. I am collecting these descriptions together to create a narrative of existential destitution. Existential destitution is the hopelessness of a long path's dead-end. It is an utter depletion of the harmony between being and bearing that characterizes smooth travel, personal advancement, and productive unselfconscious ease. It is a lack both of propitious circumstances as well as the ability to discern the appropriate actions to take, and it only exists if there are forces shaping the world that call humans to question their foundational assumptions about the world.

In the Western Zhou period, the *Zhouyi* 周易 was a divination manual compiled as a collection of the interpretations of the ancient sages, rendered in trigrams and hexagrams, who had the ability to glean the forces that shape the world directly. Interpretations and commentaries were interpolated into the divination manual, and the result is preserved under the title *Yijing* 易經. Eventually, the text became a cornerstone of Chinese intellectual life, so interpretations of Chinese philosophy benefit from this context. The composite *Yijing* was read not only as a manual but as a cosmological description of the cyclical proclivities of the world, though personal divinatory readings could be performed at any time. Naturally, readings were rarely performed when things were humming along nicely. More often, the text was consulted during a big event, such as a birth or wedding, or in times of difficulty. The purpose of this mantic practice is that the would-be cleromancer could be perceptive to the signals of impending shifts in fortune. The *Yijing* describes the cosmological operations of the world as polar and cyclical so that everything eventually gives way to its opposite. This includes the fortunes of humans, who are at the whim of the impersonal forces of the cosmos, which are not always predictable. There are, however, inklings among the mundane phenomena that signal impending change. The

appropriate response to these signals may change one's fortune while by being unscrupulous and unaware of what to look for, one may be beset by perpetually bygone opportunities.

The type of prognostication elicited by engagement with the *Yijing* advises one to act with care or abstain from acting altogether when the current state of things indicate an imminent shift to less auspicious conditions. It cannot aid in preventing the inauspicious because humans are not the only force shaping the world. In the *Yijing*, the first two hexagrams are *Qian* 乾, which is comprised of all unbroken lines, and *Kun* 坤, which is comprised of all broken lines. They are associated with pure *yang* and pure *yin*.¹³⁰ Although the application of *yinyang* theory was not made an inseparable part of Chinese conceptions of the cosmos until the Han Dynasty, there are many attributes the two pairs share. *Qian* is the ascendancy of the growing season, spring through fall. *Kun* is the culmination of the harvest and the dead ice of winter. Without the harvest, the season is not completed, and only after the winter does the next season begin. These represent two interlocking and opposing forces that shape this cosmos, which is why *yinyang*, a description of the same effects but abstracted from the calendrical origins of *qiankun*, was taken by Han Dynasty literati as the central metaphor to describe how the changes that shape the world affect humans. *Yin* is the complementary opposite of *yang*, which connotes an active growing and building. *Yin* is characterized by a return to darkness, potential, and stillness. According to Robin Wang, the purpose of *yinyang* thinking is not merely to describe the way the world physically operates but to quell the anxiety that things are unconnected or random through pragmatic and probabilistic reasoning. She writes,

¹³⁰ This and what follows benefit from the analysis of the *Yijing* in Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Before Confucius: Studies in the Creation of the Chinese Classics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 197-219.

Facing an unpredictable world, we might lose confidence and feel as if there is no stability at all. Yinyang thinking emerged as a conceptual apparatus to ease the anxiety of lost control by creating ways of predicting and accepting the inevitability of change.¹³¹

Focusing on patterns of change instead of on independent events contributes to the view of a radically connected world in which humans have an integral involvement in what comes to pass. So rather than indulging feelings of hopelessness in the face of misfortune, *yinyang* thinking emphasizes a personal responsibility to understand the inevitably shifting propensity of the world.¹³²

Cyclical and patterned thinking is an original contribution to Chinese thought. With the addition of the seminal commentaries, including the *Ten Wings* attributed to Confucius and the commentarial tradition that followed, the effects of cosmic forces on a human life were systematically discussed. Before the introduction of cosmological thinking of the *Yijing*, aspects of hardship referred to human social and political life. This thinking was prototypical of later emphases on broader, more inclusive causal connectivity. The *Shijing* 詩經, or *Book of Odes*, includes many lamentations about one's station in life. One ode, translated by Arthur Waley, begins:

I go out the northern gate;

¹³¹ Robin Wang, *Yinyang: The Way of Heaven and Earth in Chinese Thought and Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 15.

¹³² This is influenced by Robin Wang's interpretation of Xu Fuguan's writings about *youhuan*, the "manifestation of consciousness of one's responsibility toward events and a manifestation of an emerging humanistic spirit." Wang, *Yinyang*, 73.

Deep is my grief.
I am utterly poverty-stricken and destitute;
Yet no one heeds my misfortunes.
Well, all is over now.
No doubt it was Heaven's doing,
So what's the good of talking about it?¹³³

Although at first blush this selection suggests extra-human forces, referring to the odes Arthur Waley opines, “The discontented poet refers to the king, or more generally to those in power, under the cover-name ‘god,’ ‘god on high.’”¹³⁴ The use of Heaven in this selection is more likely to describe the ‘powers that be’ or the ‘higher-ups.’ The Ode continues:

The king's business came my way;
Government business of every sort was put upon me.
When I came in from outside
The people of the house all turned on me and scolded me.
Well, it's over now.
No doubt it was Heaven's doing,
So what's the good of talking about it?

This continues for several stanzas. The lamentations inspired a tradition of poetry and prose that spans Chinese intellectual history. They gesture toward something unpalatably mercurial that threatens to upend a life's work, a good reputation, and the best intentions.

¹³³ Arthur Waley, trans., *The Book of Songs* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1978), 305.

¹³⁴ Waley, *The Book of Songs*, 304.

Cycles of Failure and Success

How do the forces that shape the cosmos infiltrate and disrupt human lives? The cyclical patterns of the world are reflected in the lives of humans, and some amount of hardship is to be expected. Michael Nylan writes, “For change, however perfectly patterned, cannot ever “match,” being a product of the operation of two different polarities (yin and yang) combined in ever-varying proportions; that the polarities will “rub against one another” is an immutable law of the cosmos.”¹³⁵ This friction potently affects humans, generating the extremes of fortune and misfortune.

Although it does not form a significant part of my study of Karl Jaspers, I will mention his theory of the Axial Age, roughly the first millennium B.C. He writes,

What is new about this age, [in China, India, and the Occident], is that man becomes aware of Being as a whole, of himself and his limitations. He experiences the terrible nature of the world and his own impotence. He asks radical questions. Face to face with the void he strives for liberation and redemption. By consciously recognizing his limits he sets himself the highest goals. He experiences unconditionality in the depth of selfhood and in the clarity of transcendence.¹³⁶

The broadening of context that accompanied the cosmological import from the *Yijing* into Chinese philosophical thought makes enough room for consideration of the broadest possible

¹³⁵ Michael Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 248.

¹³⁶ Edith Ehrlich, Leonard H. Ehrlich, and George Pepper, *Karl Jaspers: Basic Philosophical Writings* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1994), 383.

picture of reality, even in the radically imminent context of early Chinese philosophical thought. Interestingly, in the Chinese philosophical tradition, the human, natural, and supernatural realms remained fused. Success and failure slide among the opposing but connected forces that shape the world. As a result, responsibility and culpability are extended beyond the bubble of self-concern and individual efficacy. But faced with the sometimes incomprehensibly complex world in which success is nowhere guaranteed, disconnection, isolation contribute to the possibility of existential destitution.

Success as Interconnectedness and Communication: Encounters (*yu* 遇) in the *Qiong da yi shi* 窮達以時 “Failure and Success is a Matter of Timing.”

In this chapter, I sketch a theory of success as metaphysical communication in the Chinese philosophical tradition. The lack of communication results in failure, which, notwithstanding efforts to be permeable and responsive to the forces and expectations that shape a harmonious world, stymies one’s progress through life. The central metaphor in Chinese philosophy for human flourishing is forward movement along a path. Smooth, unhindered travel analogically indicates approbation of purpose, while the wayward, the lost, those stuck at a crossroads, and those who have reached a dead end lose the momentum of self-improvement and the ability to creatively formulate attainable goals. What I focus on in this chapter draws more from this metaphor. Looking around at unfamiliar and inhospitable surroundings and wondering, ‘Did I make a wrong turn? Am I on the right road?’ is complicated in relation to the moral metaphor of *dao* 道 because in the metaphor the road is not merely traveled, but also hardened, made, with each step.

The moral metaphor of travel along a path includes the equivalent of inclement weather and unexpected obstructions, as well as crossroads and dead ends. How one responds to these distressing circumstances, which are an inevitable feature of a constantly shifting and tilting cosmos, are a prominent concern in the Confucian tradition. This is the theme of a short series of bamboo scripts discovered in the first Guodian tomb in 1993, “Failure and Success is a Matter of Timing” *Qionгда Yi Shi* 窮達以時 (hereafter QDYS). The scripts were well-preserved though jumbled together with many texts. They were painstakingly ordered at the Jingmen City Museum under the direction of Peng Hao and Liu Zuxin. Dated to the Warring States Era (475-221 BC), this collection is attributed to the Ruist scholarly tradition based on its main theme: moral constancy should not be threatened by ill-fated events. I analyzed the stories of Confucius that approximate this theme above, but this text is unique because of its shocking opening line: 「有天人，天人有分」¹³⁷ ‘There are the affairs of the heavens and the affairs of humans, the lot of the heavens and that of humans are different.’ Rarely has this division between the dynamic cycles of the cosmos and the affairs of humans been made so starkly.¹³⁸ In a tradition that emphasizes harmony and continuity, this work is unique because it describes just how out of alignment things can become. The message of this text is that anyone, regardless of their preternatural knowledge and awareness, may find themselves in distress. But they can achieve moral consistency in spite of poor circumstances because they are aware of the unbounded and immense net of the causal cosmos, in which things are alternately snared and set free. Individuals have little control over whether and when they get caught up in the net, which may

¹³⁷ 郭店楚墓竹簡：窮達以時·忠信之道。簡帛書法選：編輯組編，2002，1

¹³⁸ Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of the Guodian*, 435.

hinder them in any number of ways. The text warns, 「有其人，亡其世，雖賢弗行矣。」¹³⁹

‘When the person and the times don’t match up, then though one is worthy there will be no appropriate actions to take.’ Even though humans have a formative effect on the world and by observing ritual can preserve the mores that harmonize society, there are other forces at work that can retard these effects. Cataloged in the QDYS are the experiences of men who encountered the powerful kings, lords, and dukes who promoted them to their appropriate station in life. These men’s natures were not changed as they toiled in obscurity, and they did not change once they advanced to the side of their lords. Like a fragrant orchid in full florescence deep in the forest or a glittering emerald occluded by mountains of drab stone, the dignified person does not change their behavior depending on whether they are found or favored.

The QDYS describes, in moderate detail, the lives of a handful of farmers, prisoners, storekeepers, and shepherds, before they encountered their respective lords who would elevate them to prominence. The celebration of moral consistency during hard times mirrors the many tellings of Confucius in distress, namely those in the *Mengzi* and the *Xunzi*. But the collection of vignettes in the QDYS differs from the stories of Confucius because these men eventually attained notoriety in their lifetimes. These accounts encompass the full spectrum between failure [*qiong*窮] and success [*da*達]. These men saddled a revolution of *yin* to *yang*. It is tempting to ascribe to them a sort of *telos* that was not present in the stories of Confucius stranded between Chen and Cai, something along the lines of their labor not being in vain. But this would undermine the central message of moral constancy, which does not labor to make things come about but regardless of them. A subtler mistake, I argue, would be to take these figures as having

¹³⁹ 穷达以时, 1-2.

done literally nothing to attract the attention of their respective kings, dukes, lords. The main active verb common to all of the vignettes, 遇 *yù* ‘encounter,’ which may also be translated as ‘opportunity’ or ‘chance,’ does not convey the sense that they were randomly found. Although these men did not go to the court and demand a position, they were scanning the horizon for an indication that their fates may change. Their prescient awareness allowed them to put themselves at the right place at the right time to facilitate effective communication.

My reading is different than interpretations of the QDYS that emphasize the passivity of the person focused on moral self-cultivation.¹⁴⁰ Rather than become anxious about a dearth of opportunities, distinguished individuals would, in the absence of distinguishing scenarios, turn inward. This “inward turn” is noted by Michael Ing as a common interpretive mistake in the contemporary literature.¹⁴¹ In his study of dysfunction of ritual, which focuses on the *Liji* 禮記, the *Classic of Rites*, he writes that presenting these ancient figures as unconcerned about the external state of affairs undermines the reasons why Ruists hold rituals to be such a central part of cultivated life.¹⁴² Edward Slingerland is one target of this criticism, Ing claims, when he ignores the distinction between preventable and unpreventable failure and the uncertainty in

¹⁴⁰ See for example this quote from Dirk Meyer: “[T]he text puts forward the notion that the worthy himself plays a rather passive role. He is of worth, and that is it. His fate changes because he encounters the right times (here: the superior). The second part of the introduction already implies this when pointing out the missing times of this encounter, not a missing worthy. This anticipates that the issue which the “Qiong da yi shi” observes is well beyond human influence.” From Meyer, Dirk, “Structure as a Means of Persuasion as Seen in the Manuscript ‘Qiong da yi shi’ from Tomb One, Guodian,” *Oriens Extremus* 45 (2005/06), 188.

¹⁴¹ Michael David Kaulana Ing, *The Dysfunction of Ritual in Early Confucianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 77.

¹⁴² Ing. *The Dysfunction of Ritual in Early Confucianism*, 77.

these ancient works regarding which of these types would explain difficult times. In his essay “The Conception of *Ming* in Early Chinese Thought,” Slingerland emphasizes the passivity of the distinguished person when navigating the vagaries of fate that are beyond human control.¹⁴³ This essay is an interpretation of the concept *ming*命, which may be translated as fate and has the connotation of an impersonal, or non-egoist, force that shapes human possibilities. I add that *ming*命 might also be conceived as the ‘forces of nature’ that reveal and occlude patterns of change. This definition detracts from the temptation to ascribe to *ming*命 teleological or deterministic proclivities. It also prevents the temptation to pit the sometimes oppressive forces of *ming*命 directly against human striving. I believe this is erroneous because it undermines the complexity of the cosmos, reducing it to the level of human machination, which offends against the cosmological influence of early Chinese texts, including the *Yijing* described above. A passage from the *Zhongyong* cements this point.

成己，仁也；成物，知也。性之德也，合外內之道也，故時措之宜也。¹⁴⁴

To realize oneself is to optimize one’s relationships with others. To realize the world is to live wisely in it. This instinctive ability to cultivate virtuosity shows that the internal and the external are integrated. This is how one knows how to put things in the right place.

As does this passage from the *Mengzi*

¹⁴³ Edward Slingerland, “The Conception of Ming in Early Chinese Thought,” *Philosophy East and West* 46:4 (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1996), 567-581.

¹⁴⁴ *ICS Concordance to the Liji*, 32.32/146/5-6

孟子曰：「萬物皆備於我矣。反身而誠，樂莫大焉。強恕而行，求仁莫近焉。」¹⁴⁵

Mengzi said, “The myriad things in the world have their counterpart in us.

Turning inward to realize myself gives me a profound sense of genuine understanding. If I seek to understand benevolence, I will find it in my sympathetic understanding of those close to me.¹⁴⁶

The interplay of human intentionality and the impersonal forces of *ming* 命 does not have recourse to an internal and external conception of self and world because the relationship between self and world is akin to that among people. In each of the passages cited above, the external other and internal self (*wai* 外, *nei* 內; *shu* 恕, *shen* 身), as well as the natural and the human (*wu* 物, *ji* 己; *wu* 物, *wo* 我) are bound together. From this perspective, the idea of a person withdrawing from the world and pursuing internal self-cultivation does not get much traction. So I find it unconvincing when Slingerland writes, “If one does not understand *ming*, that is, what is internal and what is external to the project of self-cultivation, one will lack a sense of what is important and so misuse one's energies.”¹⁴⁷ Slingerland concludes that this does not mean a complete withdrawal from one's obligations, but that one's energies should only attend to one's “proper task.”¹⁴⁸ This interpretation hinges on what it means to dedicate one's energies to pure self-cultivation so that one's efforts will not be wasted in unpropitious circumstances. But what

¹⁴⁵ *ICS Concordance to the Mengzi*, 13.4/67/24.

¹⁴⁶ Translation based loosely on Bryan W. Van Norden. *Mengzi: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2008).

¹⁴⁷ Slingerland, “The Conception of Ming in Early Chinese Thought,” 573.

¹⁴⁸ Slingerland, “The Conception of Ming in Early Chinese Thought,” 577.

would purely inward self-cultivation look like? In the intensely social setting of Confucian philosophy, there is little patience for the person who appears to be doing nothing. In the *Analects* 14.43, we find that one may not be given the benefit of the doubt about whether they are internally self-cultivating.

Yuanrang was sitting on the floor with his legs stretched out, waiting. The Master scolded him, saying, “In one’s youth to be neither modest nor respectful to one’s elders, to grow up without having accomplished anything at all to pass on, and on growing old, not to have the courtesy to die, such a person is a thief.” He then rapped Yuanrang on the shin with his cane. (Ames & Rosemont trans.)¹⁴⁹

Yuanrang is a noted eccentric in the Ruist tradition. In the *Liji*, he is said to have sung an impromptu song during his mother’s funeral preparations, but Confucius did not remonstrate him and pretended he did not hear him. When asked why he carried on a relationship with this person, Confucius replied 「丘聞之：親者毋失其為親也，故者毋失其為故也。」¹⁵⁰ “I have heard this: Members of a family do not forget about their families, and friends do not forget about their friends.” But here we have Confucius beating the old man, his friend, with his cane! It seems like he has finally lost patience with Yuanrang. Ostensibly, Yuanrang has not been dedicated to cultivating himself because Confucius accuses him of accomplishing nothing in his life, and he chides Yuanrang for not even having the dignity to die.

I have related this story from the *Analects* in order to shed light on the activity of self-cultivation. This story indicates that it is not a completely personal or independent activity. The

¹⁴⁹ Roger Ames and Henry Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998), 182.

¹⁵⁰ *ICS Concordance to the Liji*, 4.69/30/8.

QDYS offers the advice that one must wait for the appropriate moment, when one encounters the opportunity to be pulled from obscurity and its concomitant hardships. But this waiting is not an unsubstantial, idle passing of the time. The final few strips of the QDYS indicate that one should not behave any differently whether in obscurity or prominence. I take this to mean that just as one is busy when one is in favor, which means daily appointments to structure and maintain social and political relationships as well as awareness of influences and proclivities in the court and official bureaucracies, one must also busy oneself while out of favor. Self-cultivation is never a purely an inward-directed activity.

The call to continue to cultivate oneself even in obscurity, when the intent and the effect of one's actions do not match up, keeps the possibility of communication open. With this in mind, we can read the stories of Confucius stranded between Chen and Cai in one of two ways. Either he was delusional about his purpose in life and all of his travels to curry favor with whoever would listen were fool's errands, or he was waiting in the nuanced sense I have described above by attempting to put himself in a position to encounter the opportunity he was certain would one day arise. The latter reading is more easily defended in this context. Laboring in the darkness of ill-repute aside, Confucius was not existentially destitute. He was merely at the whim of the vicissitudes of failure and success. These vicissitudes are further chronicled in the *Feng su tong yi* 風俗通義.

Failure and Success in the *Feng su tong yi* 風俗通義

The Han Dynasty text, the *Feng su tong yi* 風俗通義, the *Comprehensive Discussion of Customs* (hereafter FSTY), by Ying Shao 應劭 (140-206 CE) described the practices of the

common people, reconciled accounts of anomalies, examined the history of the Chinese literati, and anthologized the various religious and cultural practices of the tumultuous Eastern Han Dynasty. The seventh chapter (*juan*卷) is titled *qiongtong*窮通, “Impeded, Unimpeded.” It is a compilation of passages from many known works, including the *Mengzi* and the *Xunzi*, but with several original insights. It was a resource for those who found themselves in inhospitable circumstances by providing seminal examples of ancient sages in distress, including Confucius.

Michael Nylan pinpoints the purpose of the FSTY as the unification, under one pattern, of the myriad, contradictory, and unexplainable forces shaping the world. “Written in a time of turmoil,” she writes, “the *Feng su tong yi* assumes unity of political empire and institutions to be the secondary outgrowth of a more fundamental unity of thought.”¹⁵¹ This thought coalesced in Ruist social principles, which orbit around one true ruler and are not enforced by laws but are upheld by rituals. Ying wrote that this was only possible during times of peace and harmony, states conducive to human thriving. He was pragmatic in this regard, and he realized that there was no sense pushing the Ruist agenda into the face of adversity. In the *qiongtong*窮通 “Impeded, Unimpeded” chapter, Ying chronicled the stories of how the sages conducted themselves when they found themselves in distress, many of which I have already mentioned, but several of them tweaked to play up Ruist themes or moral psychology. Ying Shao describes the metaphor of *tong*通 as a talent of the sage to order the people according to the blueprint of the cosmos so that they operate in productive harmony. The sage is unhindered by political or social agendas and may penetrate (*tong*通) through the chaff that obscures the simplicity of

¹⁵¹ Michael Nylan, *Ying Shao’s “Feng Su T’ung Yi”: An Exploration of Problems in Han Dynasty Political, Philosophical, and Social Unity* (Princeton University, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1982), 212.

harmony and balance, and importantly for the Ruist sage, the place of humans as an integral part of this harmony. Its antonym, *qiong*窮, is indicative of being at an impasse, without the ability to move forward. By chronicling the stories of the sages, Ying makes it clear that the ability to determine (*tong*通) the organic movements of the world does not define the sage *qua* sage, but is rather the confluence of the sage's intentions and the prevailing circumstances of the empire. When the times are not conducive to the probing (*tong*通) of the sage, then the sage must likewise recede. Ying Shao emphasizes the eventual return of the sage to prominence, and as in the QDYS, the consistency of their moral character is lauded. The chapter begins with a preface:

《易》稱：「懸象著明，莫大乎於日月。」然時有昏晦。《詩》美：「滔滔江漢，南北之紀。」《詩》美：「滔滔江漢，南北之紀。」然時有壅滯。《論語》：「固天縱之，莫盛於聖。」然時有困否。日月不失其體，故蔽而復明；江、漢不失其源，故窮而復通；聖久不失其德，故廢而復興。非唯聖人俾爾亶厚，夫有恆者亦允臻矣。是故君子厄窮而不閔，勞辱而不苟，樂天知命，無怨尤焉，故錄先否後喜曰《窮通》也。¹⁵²

The *Yi* states, “Of the images hung in the sky, none are as bright as those of the sun and moon.” But now things are confounding and obscured. The *Shi* says beautifully, “Rushing mightily are the Jiang and Han rivers, the regulators of the south and north.” But now things are obstructed and sluggish. In the *Lunyu*, “Surely of all those heaven has endowed, none are more certain to be a sage. But now things are oppressive and evil. The sun and moon do not lose track of their

¹⁵² *ICS Concordance to the Qiong Da Yi Shi*, 49/11. From Dirk Meyer's *Bamboo Texts from the Guodian*.

function, and so they disappear behind the earth, but then they eventually return to their former luminescence. The Jiang and Han rivers do not lose track of their path, and although they may become obstructed, they will eventually return to their former smooth flow. The sages of antiquity did not lose their excellence, so although they were discarded, they returned to their former brilliance. It is not only the sagacious who have such probing awareness. Those who demonstrate constancy may likewise achieve their utmost perfection. This is the reason that if *junzi* fall into a pitiable state of exhaustion and impediment, they do not then mourn. If they labor only to be insulted, then they do not lose focus. They are content with their lot so where could they place blame for their poor fortune? Hence this record of first encountering limitation and strife but then returning to good fortune and delight will be called “Impeded, Unimpeded.”

The chapter includes the stories of Confucius and Mengzi falling out of favor, becoming impoverished, but then rising to a position of respect, if not prominence. The conclusions of these stories are where Ying Shao leaves his most distinguishing marks. The citizens of Qi thank Confucius as he returns to his humble town after reordering and annotating classics and rectifying the names so that power could not be abused again in the name of the ancients. And even though Mengzi was prevented from exercising his vision, any ruler would have appreciated his thought.

In the FSTY, Ying Shao embellished the Ruist insistence on the inherent value of moral constancy with happy endings for its troubled heroes. He emphasized the patterning of the universe and the inevitability of change, which virtually guarantees that everyone who cultivates

themselves would eventually receive their proper due. Their due is not monetary success or political influence, as in the stories of the QDYS, but the reassurance of knowing that if the times had been more propitious, they would have achieved prominence. They might die poor, but they are not existentially destitute. Their path is strewn with obstacles, but they press on.

Failure cannot be prevented but the deleterious effects of failure on one's character can. Cultivated awareness of oneself and the world may reveal opportunities to re-balance one's lot. The inability to effect this balance or continue to try is existential destitution. This interpretation requires a different metaphysical picture than that of the person who is contented regardless of their circumstances. The experience of the limit of human striving is the coupling of coming up against the way things are (*tian*天) or fate (*ming*命), and the existential limit that is not outside of oneself, but an intricate part of what it takes to make sense of a world that is unpredictable and at times dysfunctional. The limit is the occlusion of one's own possibilities. It is a lack of communication and connectivity to the dynamic forces that shape the world. The result is a feeling of being disconnected and incapable of effecting positive change. I interpret *Mengzi* 2B14 along these lines.

孟子去齊。充虞路問曰：「夫子若有不豫色然。前日虞聞諸夫子曰：『君子不怨天，不尤人。』」曰：「彼一時，此一時也。五百年必有王者興，其間必有名世者。由周而來，七百有餘歲矣。以其數則過矣，以其時考之則可矣。夫天，未欲平治天下也；如欲平治天下，當今之世，舍我其誰也？吾何為不豫哉？」¹⁵³

¹⁵³ *ICS Concordance to the Mengzi*, 4.14/24/28.

When Mengzi was leaving Qi, on the road Chong Yu noted, “Your face has a worried look lately. Before today I heard you say that ‘A distinguished person does not resent heaven and especially not people.’” Mengzi replied “That was then. This is now. I thought that every five hundred years it was certain that the right and proper king would come along, accompanied by people who would make a name for themselves. Since the Zhou, seven hundred years have passed. Counting the years, the time has long passed, and I have been expecting them to rise up. But it does not seem like peace and good governance are in store for the empire. If it were to come about, whose priority would it be other than mine? Why should I not be dissatisfied?”

Mengzi is uncertain about whether things will improve and whether he will take part in the shift if it occurs. This is the existential limitation I am tracing, beginning with the story of Confucius stranded between Chen and Cai. The moral sagacity and penetrating awareness of cosmic change ought to guarantee that these sages and distinguished individuals achieve some measure of success. But there are times when obstructive forces prevail. Confucius presses on, traveling from state to state, expanding his network of communication by impressing his vision of an ideal empire on those he meets. This desire for communication in times of hardship goes against an interpretation that emphasizes his passivity, or perhaps sullen disappointment, in simply waiting for better times to roll around. In an attempt to reconcile his vision with reality, and in the face of doubt, Confucius traveled in order to intensify and grow his network of relationships.

Karl Jaspers describes this motivation as the ‘will to communication.’ Describing this will, he writes:

It places trust in itself and in possibility in the world, a trust that can be disappointed time and again and lead to doubt, not in its foundation but in its specific actualization. It also trusts the truth of the other, which is not his but which, as truth, must include some mode of the possibility of communication. Therefore this will cannot simply be extinguished under the burden of failure. Perhaps it possesses, where it is actual, a kind of spirited moderation in which it plans out a vision of its path as idea—to be sure, without an extended actuality but as the expression of his possibility which never betrays itself.¹⁵⁴

This remark is given in the context of Jaspers' discussion about the nature of truth. He emphasizes that there is not one truth that exactly explains one reality, but rather that each individual who searches for certainty founders on an aspect of revealed but uncognoscible truth. This truth is what fuels each life project, or as he describes it, the path each individual chooses both as their present and their own possibilities. I must also clarify that here Jaspers does not simply mean verbal communication between oneself and an other, but a metaphysically-grounded questioning directed outward. He has in mind a conversation with the incomprehensible otherness that comprises a world shaped by natural as well as social, political, and economic forces. It is only from within this maelstrom that humans can hope to make sense of the world, and the certainty of purpose required to walk a path cut through it must be consistently, actively verified as an appropriate projection into the future, or as a path one

¹⁵⁴ Ehrlich, et al., *Karl Jaspers*, 298-9.

chooses to continue following. The hallmarks of Jaspers' philosophy are the yawning gaps in certainty where suddenly foundations once held uncontroversibly true are undermined by doubt. When the world, an undeniable empirical certainty, pulls away from our expectations like a boat from the dock, and we see the dark water below, we wonder if our communication with the world is genuine or whether we have been misled.

This feeling of existential limitation, the inability to match up one's goals to the possibilities presented by the world, is especially distressing if one is living in poverty. The existential danger is that faced with overwhelming obstruction, one will cease trying to facilitate communication and connectivity. Existential destitution is characterized by passivity and detachment. The existentially destitute are mired in the lonely margins of the world. How does enriching a concept of existential destitution aid in helping those suffering from homelessness today?

Practical Application of the Distinction Between Economic and Existential Poverty:

Affordable Housing and Housing First in Honolulu

Distinguishing between economic and existential poverty is important because generalizing in a way that roots all poverty in a lack of money obscures the fact that the poor stand at the intersection of many contributing factors. If poverty is simplified to economics, the fact that the system may itself generate inequality will be overlooked. A purely economic view of poverty that ignores issues of disability, race, gender, and multi-generational poverty amounts to weaponized apathy. These factors affect a person's ability to become integrated into networks that facilitate success. Chinese philosophy contributes two novel factors to this discussion. First,

as a result of the influence of the *Yijing*, this tradition emphasizes the interconnectedness of the processes that shape experience and include the efforts of humans. Such a view complicates placing blame squarely on those who find themselves in difficult circumstances for their hardship. Second, the holistic view of the ideal Confucian world incorporates natural and social forces into one dynamic and complex reality. The ability to improve social circumstances is brought about by the optimal alignment of things, and ignoring the potential for societal improvement invites obstruction (*qiong* 窮). This is an important contribution to understanding homelessness today because change can be wrought through the modification of political and economic systems in a way that does not challenge any prevailing, natural way of things. I will use the example of permanent housing strategies to solving homelessness to show the productive novelty of this view.

Permanent housing strategies began to be implemented in Honolulu in 2013 and aim to create housing that is offered to the unsheltered for free or at reduced rates. This approach relies primarily on state and federal funds to cover the expenses not paid by the beneficiaries. Opponents feel that providing housing at little or no cost sins against the social tenet of earning commensurate on effort. Those who have not succeeded at securing a stably-housed life are presumed to have handicapped themselves. As a result of this judgment, boundaries of difference are erected that impair compassionate responses to the suffering of the unsheltered. Though they are passed on the street every day, they are not seen. So when ballot measures and government bills that fund approaches to remedy homelessness appear in the social mainstream, there is resistance because individuals experiencing homelessness are not seen as having the same relationship to the government as housed citizens, those who are more socially present. Their

need for secure shelter is not seen as a human need, but an economic expenditure that may detract from other projects with more relevance to the housed. On this view, there is an inalienable connection between contributing to society and the merit of social spending. Those who are too poor to contribute to society do not get to draw from it. This, I think, is the danger of collapsing the distinction between economic and existential poverty.

Proponents of permanent housing strategies for ameliorating homelessness claim that not only do these approaches reduce social spending, but they also have significant positive social outcomes. Housing is more than shelter. It brings individuals into alignment with the prevailing patterns and expectations of society. Bridging the divide between housed and unhoused overcomes a significant barrier to social inclusion because the supportive formations of human relationships are currently almost exclusively among the housed. The result of not being included among sustaining and supporting relationships is existential destitution, which in turn limits the possibility of communication in the nuanced sense I described above. The world is inscrutable and silent for those who are disconnected from the currents that harmonize the world. Housing First strategies address existential poverty by providing a baseline requirement for social inclusion, personal and secure shelter, as well as supportive services such as drug and alcohol dependency treatment on a voluntary basis. Permanent housing strategies recognize that although economic and existential poverty are bound together, focusing on methods that reduce the latter has sustainably successful results. I argue that this approach, viewed using concepts from Chinese philosophy, may change the way that we view homelessness. Rather than framing housing assistance as an intervention, which implies intentional action against naturally prevailing forces, the resources gleaned from Chinese philosophy show the possibility of

changing the boundaries of social inclusion to more naturally include those who are not integrated. If we accept the premise that supportive and inclusive communities are necessary for human flourishing, expanding these communities is the responsibility of a developed society, not merely an economic decision.

Conclusion

What does ancient Chinese philosophy have to offer to the modern problem of poverty and isolation that results in homeless individuals and families? It provides a different context for viewing the causes and effects of poverty as well as a new lens to view the effectiveness of programs designed to impact homelessness. In this chapter, I used resources in Chinese philosophy to make a distinction between existential and economic poverty. In these sources, economic poverty and failure are woven into the dynamic fabric of the cosmos, and so are beyond one's personal control. But how one conducts oneself in poverty is a pivotal expression of the human will, for if one becomes existentially poor, there are few opportunities to change things for the better.

The difficulties of finding effective contemporary solutions to homelessness arise in a time of unparalleled affluence and technological advancement, and in effect, two worlds have emerged. One is the benchmark of the aforementioned successes, and the other is populated with the hopelessly poor, and the distance between the two widens in correlation with rising Gross Domestic Product. The danger of this situation for those in the unenviable world is the corrosive effect of poverty on human flourishing. The feeling of being disconnected from and inconsequential to the world of ease and opportunity feeds both fears and realities of permanent

hardship. By contrast, the Chinese philosophies I have discussed draw everything together into a single dynamic whole. These philosophies speak to a connected, interdependent world in which people play an integral part. For Confucians, human harmonies were ordered by moral hierarchies.

In the next chapter, I will explore the concept of moral hierarchy. I will focus on the bottom, the common folk. Many early Chinese philosophical texts indicate that the common folks have little control over their lives and surroundings, which is why the ruler has an imperative to facilitate their livelihood. Although this seems to indicate a division between the common folk and the rest of society, there is a thread of culpability tying the bottom to the top. On my appraisal of the current situation of homelessness, this thread has been cut, and the result has been a free-fall of the most vulnerable populations. I will discuss the alienation that results from not being in the kin of social awareness and concern using resources from Chinese philosophy as well as contemporary agricultural economics. The world's poorest populations are primarily subsistence farmers and peasants who are not a part of the prevailing world economy, which not only does not support them but keeps them in poverty. I will use this as a metaphor for the barriers that prevent social inclusion more generally, and apply it to the problem of homeless among Hawaiians.

Chapter Three. Agrarianism and Constitutive Relationships Among Persons and Places

In the previous chapter, I studied accounts of poverty from ancient Chinese texts to elicit a few themes that I used to add depth to the issue of permanent housing strategies for the unsheltered in Hawai‘i. First, the condition of poverty may be beyond one’s control. If even sages can find themselves destitute, then there must be other forces contributing to human difficulties. Second, one must continue to cultivate oneself even during unrelenting hardship. I explored the lack of existential self-certainty in this context. How can one be sure they are on the right path? At some point, one must ask if the uncertainty of the times has infiltrated and obscured one’s certainty of purpose. In the Confucian tradition, this doubt fuels self-reflection and self-cultivation, which in turn bolsters certainty of purpose. This resolve is captured in the many phrases beginning with *qiong er bu*...窮而不..., poor but not..., which are followed by adjectives typically used to describe the poor: ‘resentful,’ ‘pitiable,’ ‘besieged,’ and ‘lost.’ A person who is dedicated to the Ruist vision of a harmonious world must never believe that they are truly at a dead end. The world shifts precipitously one way then the other, but the things held dear by a distinguished person (*junzi*君子) do not. We know that many of the pivotal works of the Chinese philosophical tradition were penned during periods of unrest and strife, so it is not surprising that many of these concerned appropriate, moral responses to chaotic and undermining circumstances. In an age when brigands and thieves proliferate, how does one define and delineate a path to follow? In the context of the Housing First initiatives in Hawai‘i, which modified the programs adopted in other states to suit Hawai‘i’s unique unsheltered population, I suggested we view those who are in need of housing in this light. When people are not housed, their ability to flourish becomes extremely limited. Rather than begin to catalog all of the things

that went wrong in order for these individuals to come up short on their ability to pay for housing, Housing First programs simply put people in homes, and usually with few or no strings attached. I explored the connection between this treatment of the unsheltered and the theme of ‘unpropitious circumstances’ in the Chinese philosophical tradition.

In this chapter, I will again turn to this scenario, but instead of focusing on the potential for flourishing in the face of hardship ascribed to the sage or distinguished person, I will widen the lens to view the backdrop of human struggle more generally in the Chinese philosophical tradition. Because chaos rules in a chaotic age, one might assume that this background was populated with the immoral and uncivilized, with petty people run amok. Although the petty and corrupt would achieve prominence during these times, according to Pre-Qin and Han Dynasty philosophical texts, there is a large population that is not classified as either moral or immoral. The common folk, toiling in the fields and in the evenings performing folk ceremonies, were given no choice but to succumb to chaos in a chaotic age.

I will begin by showing that the common folk had no agency to counteract difficult times and that they are the most vulnerable to the effects of these times. The world of the common folk does not include any substantial notion of freedom, as it is shaped and manipulated by outside forces. The common folk have a visceral connection to the land, which provides for them during prosperous times and withholds during inauspicious times. This mixture of alienation, from a political perspective, and communion, from a social and ecological perspective, defines the ancient agrarian setting of Chinese civilization. The centrality of farming is an inextricable part of early Chinese social identity. This tradition stretches back to pre-antiquity with the mythical sage Shen Nong 神農, the “God of the Tillers.” He interpreted the cosmos and wrote the language

of the hexagrams collected to form the *Zhouyi* 周易 divination manual, created farming tools and worked alongside the people in the fields, brought the common folk into fruitful communion with the land, and taught people methods for being self-sufficient. Traces of this agrarian past are still distinguishable today in the writings of anthropologist and philosopher Fei Xiaotong (1910-2005), who argues that the defining differences between Chinese society and those in what he refers to as the ‘West’ are a result of different organization patterns. As I will discuss, he emphasizes the deep cultural effects of China’s agrarian past on contemporary Chinese communitarian politics in a way that plants the farmer at the center of Chinese identity.

I will then turn to modern farming, where the division between peasants and modern farming industry, markets, and infrastructure marks the limit of their world. Many times living in abject poverty, the peasant’s world is shaped by forces that they cannot shape or change. In the wake of capitalistic world trends, their way of life, traditional subsistence farming, is no longer viable. Similarly, Hawaiian farming practices have largely given way to modern commercial practices, forsaking a substantial part of the Hawaiian cultural identity and the livelihood of native Hawaiians. I will conclude by arguing that as a result of this and other policies that subjugate relationality among people and the land they inhabit, opting instead for an individualistic narrative that hinges on personal achievement, the prevalence of native Hawaiians in the state’s unsheltered population is a structural problem that is difficult to address from within the modern, capitalist paradigm.

The Common Folk in Ruist Texts

Although the question of why bad things happen to good people is a common theme in the Pre-Qin texts, by the Han Dynasty, when these texts achieved their widest distribution, the intended audience was a specific section of society, namely, those who were eligible for state-sanctioned bureaucratic positions. Men of established lineages who had access to the appropriate education and resources were so numerous that pedigree was not enough to receive a position in court, and many of them related to the idea that fate was acting to deter their progress to their desired height in the system. The subjects of the instructive Ruist stories were preoccupied with this worry, as indicated by the many rags to riches tales, but it would have been unlikely that a commoner would have found their way into the rooms where the privilege was conferred. We must view the poverty described in the stories, for example, the many tellings of Confucius stranded between Chen and Cai, not simply as a historical portrayal of a man living in dire straits. The reason why his strife is described time and time again is that he deserved better. His way of seeing the world should not have been overlooked, and it was shameful that no one vested with political power was lucid enough to see that at the time. This is what makes him such a relatable figure, and the fact or fiction of the story a negligible detail.

What problematizes the application of poverty described in the Confucian context to poverty in contemporary times is that the two situations are woven into different political paradigms. The morals and motives in early Chinese texts were not meant to solve the problems of poverty but to promise the worthy that the recognition they deserved would come in time, and that hardship was only a temporary test of their character. This is not the case for the common folk, who had no choice but to succumb to chaotic times, as shown by their presentation in early

Ruist texts. In a world that was structured and harmonized hierarchically, those at the bottom, closest to the earth and furthest from the sovereign ruler, were limited in many ways.

I will begin with a few selections from the *Analects* that show the inability of the common people (*min*民) to carry out individual, ethical actions. This singular, impressionable mass of people cannot be taught the ethical principles that govern the elite but must be controlled, indirectly, by other means. From the *Analects* 2.19:

哀公問曰：「何為則民服？」孔子對曰：「舉直錯諸枉，則民服；舉枉錯諸直，則民不服。」¹⁵⁵

Duke Ai asked, “How do I go about making the common folk serve me?” Kongzi replied, “Lift the upright people and bury the crooked, then the common folk will serve you. Lift the crooked people and bury the upright, then the common folk will not serve you.”¹⁵⁶

This passage emphasizes indirect rule over the common folk. If we accept the premise that the common people are not able to self-cultivate without intervention, except perhaps in a few rare cases such as Kongzi himself and his disciple Yan Hui, then their actions cannot be assessed as right or wrong, efficacious or deleterious. Rather, they are exposed to distinguished actions of the elite and ruling class, who influence their behavior. By allowing those culpable for their actions to act contrary to ritual propriety or with a dearth of self-control, a ruler risks a mirroring unruliness among the common people. From the *Analects* 8.9, in reference to the appropriate method (*dao*道) of rulership:

¹⁵⁵ *Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series*, no. 16, 3/2/19.

¹⁵⁶ Throughout this chapter, unless otherwise noted, the English translations are my own.

子曰：「民可使由之，不可使知之。」¹⁵⁷

Kongzi said, "The common folk can go along with it, but they cannot go on to know it."

Although similar to the previously cited passage, this selection delivers the message bluntly. The common folk must be ordered by example rather than by an appeal to higher principles. Bringing in the metaphor of understanding as penetrating insight (*tong*通) discussed in the previous chapter, I will conjecture that being unable to understand (*zhi*知) indicates a profound limitation of the common folk in the sense of *tong*'s antonym, *qiong*窮. As I will argue later, they do not forge their own paths (*dao*道), but only meander among the prevailing realities. This limitation is shown in the *Analects* 7.20, again regarding the way things ought to be (*dao*道):

孔子曰：「生而知之者，上也。學而知之者，次也。困而學之，又其次也。困而不學，民斯為下矣。」¹⁵⁸

Kongzi said, "The ones at the top were born knowing it. The next below them are the ones who studied and came to know it. Those who had limited access but studied it nonetheless are just below them. And the common folk at the bottom have limited access and do not study it."

In this passage, the character translated as 'common people,' *min*民, is used to describe those on the lowest rung of the social ladder: those furthest from attaining moral completion or those whose efforts are the least notable. The others are simply those 'above,' *shang*上, and those who

¹⁵⁷ *Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series*, no. 16, 14/8/9.

¹⁵⁸ *Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series*, no. 16, 34/16/9.

come ‘next,’ *ci*次. This passage does not make it clear whether the folks at the bottom choose whether or not to study. I argue that the simplicity of the characters 不學, which I have translated as ‘do not study,’ is for consistent parallelism and rhyme, hallmarks of ancient Chinese texts, more than for describing what the common folks are capable of or choose to do. In fact, the other passages I have included lend to the interpretation that because the common folk do not understand it, there would be no reason to study it. Instead, they encounter the way things are in a way that does not include epistemic discovery. Their lives are contextualized within a larger, encompassing frame in which they have little creative moral power. While their behavior can exacerbate bad conditions, they act from a foundation of mimicry, taking instruction from those above as well as from generationally transmitted wisdom. The way to prevent the common folk from becoming unruly depends on a corporeal and aesthetic mode of education, which encourages harmoniously moral behavior, rather than a set of directions distributed in a top-down manner. In the next section, I will discuss this mode in the context of harmony in the Confucian tradition, which emphasizes inclusivity and cohesion among the different stratifications of a moral society.

Social Harmony in Confucian Thought and the Place of the Common Folk

In this section, I will summarize the Confucian theory of harmony and the expectations of the common folk in a Confucian society. Theories of harmony in the Chinese philosophical tradition do not emphasize equality *per se*, but rather that each element has its proper place. In the Ruist socio-metaphysical system, which privileges change over stasis, harmony is only possible in dynamicity. In his book *The Confucian Principle of Harmony*, Li Chenyang writes,

“Confucian harmony is multi-lateral and multi-faceted.”¹⁵⁹ He lists five characteristics of Confucian harmony (*he*和): heterogeneity, tension, coordination and cooperation, transformations, and renewal.¹⁶⁰ This type of harmony emphasizes the ephemeral compatibility of difference, and that the tension between opposites is what makes harmony possible. The motivation for promoting Confucian harmony is to close the rift between the natural world and the human world, which opens during times of strife and chaos, when even the sage cannot use their powers of discernment (*tong*通) to order and align all of the forces of the world, including social forces. Li writes:

For Confucians, the difference between harmony and disharmony is one between good and bad, right and wrong, and success and failure. As far as the need for harmony is concerned, Confucians tend to see more continuity than distinctions between the “private sphere” and the “public sphere,” between the political and the non-political, and between human society and the natural world. When persons and things are engaged in a healthy, stable interplay and each gets its due, it is described as harmony; the opposite is disharmony.¹⁶¹

Confucian harmony is radically inclusive. There is nothing and no one left out of the picture of an optimally harmonized world. This is due first to the pervasiveness of the socio-political construal of geographical space in this philosophical tradition. The imperial construal of the world is seen in the *Shanhai jing* 山海經 or the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* (compiled

¹⁵⁹ LI Chenyang, *The Confucian Principle of Harmony* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 9.

¹⁶⁰ Li, *The Confucian Principle of Harmony*, 9.

¹⁶¹ Li, *The Confucian Principle of Harmony*, 17.

between 500-200 BC), an early gazetteer that records the strange and otherworldly creatures living in the hinterlands of the empire, far from the ruling center of human society. This text was one of the earliest examples of the political construal of geographical space. The further one travels from the central pivot of the empire, the ruler, who is given authority by celestial forces to order and organize the world, the more uncivilized and unexplainable things become. This is what I mean by the imperial construal of the world. This metaphor is not only horizontally spatial but vertical as well. Those of elevated importance occupy a space physically above those below, in a palanquin (*jiào* 轿), or upper hall (*shangtang* 上堂). The metaphysical perspective of the cosmos is never far from the physical. The proximity of those with power to the forces that shape the world (*tian* 天) is another instance of this spatial metaphor, as the sovereign ruler (*tianzi* 天子) either facilitates or upends a harmonious empire through sagacious ordering or nefarious activity. The results of a poorly ordered empire can come in the form of civil unrest or, in extreme cases, massively destructive droughts and floods. In short, the ruler, with his close proximity to these cosmic forces above, shapes the world, while those closest to the earth and thus furthest from such power are understood to be ‘below’ and without control or effect on these forces.

This paints a different picture than one that portrays all people as having similar faculties, imaginations, and capabilities. But it also gives everyone a place to dwell. Confucian socio-political hierarchy, rendered geometrically, resembles a cone with the ruler at the top and the circumference of the base representative of the boundaries of the empire. This simple representation is problematic as the boundaries of the cone would have to be moderately

permeable to forces that do not originate from within. But this also may be a fruitful way of pointing out the moral influence of the worthy ruler to instate the proper shape. Without the ruler to hold up the top, the shape will become disfigured, yet without the parity of force among all those that comprise the base, the shape cannot be held upright.

This concept of harmony had a profound influence on the political ideals described in Warring States texts. The preservation of difference and tension among sections of society meant that a system of laws and regulations would not be effective, as they would risk reducing the relationships among people to a common standard. Ideally, different types of relationships are determined by appropriate types of behaviors, and each party has a responsibility to the other to facilitate a relationship morally beneficial to each party. These relationships (*renlun* 人倫), according to the *Mengzi*, were defined by the filial sentiment between father and son (*fu zi you qin* 父子有親), the civic responsibilities between distinguished persons and ruler-ministers (*jun chen you yi* 君臣有義), the distinctions between husband and wife (*fu qin you bie* 夫婦有別), the respective responsibilities, or pecking order, of seniors and juniors (*chang you you xi* 長幼有序), and trust between friends (*peng you you xin* 朋友有信).¹⁶² On my reading, only if these values are put into practice, and when everyone cultivates these relationships in uncoerced, organic, and mutually beneficial ways, can a harmonious Ruist society come to pass.

According to the *Mengzi*, the appropriateness of these relationships is the result of moral education and not necessarily the natural proclivity of humans. Only with moral education can the potential, that all people have, be cultivated, and in a harmonized society everyone must

¹⁶² The translations of these relationships are my own. I intend for them to convey the responsiveness and fluidity of these foundational relationships that offer insight into any possible relationship.

achieve a degree of cultivation. But the *Mengzi* did not prescribe a system for universal education to facilitate this goal. Instead, society must first have an educated core of individuals who would spread the virtues of ritualized living among those proximal to them. So rather than educate the common folk *en masse*, they would be educated indirectly, by mimicking the behaviors of the distinguished individuals (*junzi*君子). Even if the common folk did come into the fold of civility, they would never be elevated out of their station, for their labor is necessary to facilitate the lifestyle and education of those above. The moral education of the masses, after all, is not meant to facilitate democratic engagement; it promotes social harmony and cohesion. Although moral education is non-coercive, it keeps people in their place. The place of the common folk is mainly in production, the growing and selling of their wares, so the moral lessons transmitted to them, as shown in the Mencius, ought to be limited to that scope.

The selection that follows is a conversation between Mengzi and Xu Xing's newest disciple Chen Xiang. Chen was very taken with the teachings about Shen Nong神農, the sage of pre-antiquity who was celebrated for inventing the plow based on the blueprint of the cosmos and working alongside the farmers before the world fell to ruin. Carrying his plow handle with him into the city, Chen speaks with Mengzi about the coming of the sage ruler who would restore order by creating a society in which everyone would provide for themselves. First, Mengzi accuses the traveler's master, Xu Xing, of being a hypocrite for not making his own cap and cooking pots, but instead trading for them with grain he had grown. Mengzi asks,

「何為紛紛然與百工交易？何許子之不憚煩？」¹⁶³

¹⁶³ *ICS Concordance to the Mengzi*, 5.4/28/28-9.

Why does he lower himself to the confusing and complicated trading? Why does Xu Xing put himself through the trouble?

If everyone who has a skill is given the ability to do only one thing,¹⁶⁴ like making pots, then everyone else will be saved the trouble of having to do it themselves, and that person can dedicate themselves to pots without having to worry about making other items. For Mengzi, this market is enriched by a moral economy as well. If those who are educated in ritual and social mores participate this market, then by the cultivation of everyone, according to their station, society will flourish. This market would also teach the common folk what is valuable by relating moral worth to material worth. Mengzi goes to some length to make this clear:

「夫物之不齊，物之情也；或相倍蓰，或相什伯，或相千萬。子比而同之，是亂天下也。巨履小履同賈，人豈為之哉？從許子之道，相率而為偽者也，惡能治國家？」¹⁶⁵

Things are inherently unequal. Some are twice or five times as valuable, others ten or a hundred times, and still others a thousand or ten thousand times as valuable. If you instead say that everything is of equal value, then there will be chaos throughout the empire. If fine shoes and shoddy shoes were the same price, then who would want to make better ones? If people wanted to follow the way of Xu Xing, they would lead each other into artifice. How would the empire be ordered like this?¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ A comparison to Plato's *Republic* would not be inappropriate here.

¹⁶⁵ *ICS Concordance to the Mengzi*, 5.4/30/3-5.

¹⁶⁶ Translation based on Bryan W. Van Norden, *Mengzi: With Selections from the Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2008), 73.

Just as a market must be regulated to reflect the true worth of its wares, otherwise vendors may make up any price they wish, those with moral worth must be valued with respect to their contributions to a harmonious society. This is not to devalue the contributions of farmers and artisans to society, but to affirm that there is a proper balance of manual and intellectual labor.

From the *Mengzi*, famously:

或勞心，或勞力；勞心者治人，勞力者治於人；治於人者食人，治人者食於人：天下之通義也。¹⁶⁷

There are those that labor with the power of their minds and those labor with their physical strength. Thinkers govern, and workers are governed. The governed provide and those that govern are provided for. This is how it should be everywhere.

It might be tempting, given contemporary modes of political discourse, to think that the hierarchy celebrated by Mengzi fosters a power differential that disenfranchises common folk. But it would be irresponsible to reduce the social philosophy of the Mengzi to the Platonic notion of the visceral connection between a person and their station, which has the disagreeable effect of positing a person who has and would want no choice other than cleaning latrines. Mengzi is not concerned with the economic system that would be given rise by his statements as much as he is the social impact of implementing a moral society, and the metaphor is an appropriate way to reach the common folk. The essential difference between the laborers and the intellectuals is a moral one, the former having the ability to cultivate themselves according to the internalization of ritual and the laborers lacking that ability. According to the metaphor of the moral economy,

¹⁶⁷ *ICS Concordance to the Mengzi*, 5.4/29/1-2.

laborers are morally poor; they lack the intellectual capital to participate directly in the moral market. Instead, they are sold a less complex version of moral currency, which includes five paradigmatic relationships, and gives them the ability to participate in a moral society in a way that recognizes their moral worth. This can only be the case in a society where everyone's basic needs are met, and so it is the interest of the elite to provide for the poor so that the moral currency will have a wider distribution. But in order to ensure that the common folk are not taken advantage of, the responsibility of the ruling elite to the common populace is emphasized time and time again. This necessitates an explanation of the political authority within a harmonious society.

In his essay titled "Probing the Three Bonds and the Five Relationships,"¹⁶⁸ Tu Weiming advises his readers on how the ancient Ruist tradition ought to be interpreted today.

The secularity of Confucian ethics in dealing with the mundane affairs of the world gives it a particular contour significantly different from those of the other major ethicoreligious traditions (e.g., Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism). The Confucian life orientation, being this-worldly, takes political authority seriously as an essential factor for the maintenance of social order. Confucians consider the respect for authority an important virtue, even though they are often highly critical of the existing power relationships. This is predicated on the Confucian emphasis on duty-consciousness, which is more demanding of the leadership (including the ruling minority and the cultural elite) than of the general populace.

The rationale is that self-imposed discipline as a lifestyle of personal cultivation is

¹⁶⁸ These relationships are the same as those in the discussion of the *Mengzi* above.

a prerequisite for moral and political leadership. A clear manifestation of this lifestyle is the practice of frugality; the precarious livelihood of the farmer rather than the conspicuous consumption of the merchant serves as the basis for social ethics. It was not an accident that the Confucian intellectual considered the farmer, rather than the merchant, as the embodiment of the desired philosophy of life.¹⁶⁹

I have included this long quote to highlight a couple of avenues I will be taking in the remainder of this chapter. In order for there to be social order, an inclusive political context must be maintained. The responsibility of the rulers and elite to provide for the common folks is mentioned many times in the *Liji*禮記, the *Book of Rites*, and I will focus on two selections, the *Daxue*大學, or *Great Learning*, one of the Confucian Four Books (*sishu*四書), and the *Ziyi*緇衣 “Black Robes,” which was also included, as a manuscript, among the scrolls in the Guodian tombs. These passages corroborate the imbalance of responsibilities of the common folk and those of the ruling elite that Tu mentions. The common folk are generally associated with farming and artisan crafts, and they were not educated in the same way as the elite and ruling classes. But they did receive a moral education centered around familial bonds, passed from one generation to the next. These texts show a continuity that spans ethical and political lines and forms the backbone of Ruist society.

¹⁶⁹ DU Wei-Ming, “Probing the Three Bonds and the Five Relationships,” *Confucianism and the Family*, ed. George A. De Vos (New York: SUNY Press, 1998), 130-131.

Ritual and Providing for the People: The *Daxue* and the *Ziyi*

Confucian harmony, which is fostered through relationships, is radically inclusive due to its comprehensively dyadic structure, a feature of the Confucian cosmos. Rather than relating independent relata, this dyadic structure pairs oppositional elements so that if one element exists, so must the other. These relationships interpenetrate what would be described as classes in the Marxist model. In fact, if we take Tu Wei-Ming's statement quoted above at face value, an ideal Confucian society would begin and end with the concerns of the underclass. I do not think a Marxist critique of Confucian society would find a relationship of power characterized by the economic division between the rich class and the poor class. A critique of this tradition might find fodder in the view of the common folk through the eyes of elite, that is, with a hearty dose of romantic idealism without much concern for the true cost of their innocent, good-hearted toiling. But the moral metaphysic of Ruist social philosophy manages an *attack au fer* on this critique. As I discussed in the previous section, the Ruist social metaphysic posits relationships as the units to build a harmonious society, rather than the actions of individuals alone. This metaphysic relies on the conditional dependence of the cultivation of ritual propriety, manifested through five relationships, on behalf of everyone in order to bring about propitious conditions for all. On a broader scale, Confucian harmony is achieved in the dynamic balancing of diversity and opposition, and in a harmonious world nothing is left out or left over. According to Li Chenyang, the existence of the elite necessitates that of the poor.¹⁷⁰ In other words, the common people are a necessary part of a harmonious society, and their flourishing is of paramount importance to the thriving of the ruling and intellectual elite and society as a whole. Such a

¹⁷⁰ Personal conversation at the APA Pacific held in Vancouver, Canada, in April, 2015.

society does not push for equality, which is why the government has a stake in promoting their well-being. The importance of considering the common folks is a common theme in Pre-Qin thought, notably the *Daxue*.

The *Daxue*大學 is one of the Confucian Four Books, which were considered by the Song Dynasty (960-1279) compiler and commentator Zhu Xi朱熹 to be the central texts of the Confucian tradition. Zhu attributed its authorship to Zisi子思, the grandson of Kongzi. These books, the *Daxue*大學, the *Zhongyong*中庸, the *Lunyu*論語, and the *Mengzi*孟子, comprised the core curriculum for the civil service examinations in China and are indispensable in the study of ancient Chinese thought. The *Daxue* emphasized the integral connectedness of the world through the moral imagination of humanity and was included in the *Liji*禮記, the *Book of Rites*. The most well-known passage illustrates the stepwise narrowing of the operation of a flourishing kingdom to the behavior of each individual and then widens the scope again from the individual to the kingdom. The passage ends:

自天子以至於庶人，壹是皆以修身為本。其本亂而末治者否矣，其所厚者薄，而其所薄者厚，未之有也！此謂知本，此謂知之至也。¹⁷¹

From the sovereign ruler down to the common person (*shuren*庶人) self-cultivation is the root of everything. If this root is neglected then what grows from it will lack order and consistency. Important things cannot be treated flippantly and inconsequential things cannot be treated as something important.

¹⁷¹ *ICS Concordance to the Liji*, 43.1/164/25-30.

Here it is undeniable that the common folk have their own role to play in the ordering of the cosmos. But, as the passages from the *Analects* quoted above have shown, the method of self-cultivation is not the same among the different classes of people. The common folk are cultivated by internalizing the behavior of moral exemplars, who treat people in a way that is appropriate for their place in the social hierarchy. As shown by the *Daxue*, self-cultivation is the common denominator of an ordered state. The qualities of a ruler that concern what is best for all of the kingdom's subjects, what I translate as "principled conscience", are focused exclusively on those capable of such action. Between a principled conscience, which not everyone has the material ability to attain, and self-cultivation, a universal human capability, lies the key to Confucian social harmony: moral education. In order to span this divide, the Ruists relied on the replicability of relationship structures across different social and economic demographics. Their belief was that if everyone optimized their immediate relationships in accordance with Ruist principles of deference and respect, then order will ascend to larger social organizations concentrically, eventually encompassing everyone in the world.

I have endeavored to show that even though the common folk were not thought to have the ability to discern the reasons for acting morally, they were led by the example of those who could. By positing that the elite and the commoners share a fundamental moral ability, Ruist social theory binds these groups by a shared moral-metaphysical causality, one in which immoral actions beget chaos and upright actions beget flourishing. The next step is to show the ways in which this moral system distributes responsibility and culpability for the welfare of the common people. I will use examples from a Warring States text, the *Ziyi*, or *Black Robes*. This text is also included in the *Liji*, and it was also purportedly authored by Confucius's grandson, Zisi. It is a

collection whose entries share a common structure: a few lines of social commentary attributed to Kongzi followed by an authoritative quotation from the Classics. The theme of these entries is that a ruler ought to rule by example and not coercion. The three passages I have chosen will speak directly to the responsibility of a ruler to the common people. The first emphasizes the influential behavior of the ruler:

子曰：「有國者章好章惡，以示民厚，則民情不貳。」詩云：「靖共爾位，好是正真。」¹⁷²

The Master said, “If rulers make clear what is preferred and what is despised to show the people what is important, then the people’s natures will not be led astray.” From the *Odes*, “Be circumspect in whom you appoint, and make sure that you prefer what is upright and true.”

This passage illustrates a ‘top-down’ distribution of moral responsibility. The appropriate relationship of the ruled to the ruler is one of deference, and once the appropriate people populate the upper echelons, standing in the moral spotlight, the people will follow their example. But this deference relationship corrodes when there are doubt and confusion about the commitment of the upper echelon to maintaining social harmony, and by extension, cosmic harmony. From the *Ziyi*:

子曰：「上人疑則百姓惑，下難知則君長勞。」故君民者，章好以示民欲，謹惡以遏民淫，則民不惑。臣事君，言其所不能，不詒其所能，則君不勞。

¹⁷² *ICS Concordance to the Liji*, 34.11/153/7-8.

大雅云：「上帝板板，下民卒(瘁)疽(瘳)。」小雅云：「非其正之共，唯王之恐。」¹⁷³

The Master said, “If superiors are doubted, then the masses will be disconcerted. If those below are difficult to know, then the ruler will have a hard time doing their work.” Thus the ruler rules the people by manifesting their likes to show the people what is desirable, are cautious over their dislikes so as to block them from excess, and the people are not confused. If the ministers in government service are forthcoming with what they are able to do and are not deceptive about what they are able to do, then the ruler will not have a hard time doing their work. The *Daya* says, “If the ruler is oppressive, then the people below will be distressed and angry.” The *Xiao ya* says, “They cannot be made to do their work, they will speak about the ruler with enmity.”

Another passage from the *Ziyi* ends with a quote from the *Jun ya*, “In the heat of the summer growing season the rain drowns the crops and blocks the sun, the common folk will complain more and more each day. When in the winter it is too cold for the common folk to sustain themselves, they will likewise complain.”¹⁷⁴ The common folk cannot be faulted for their visceral response to political mismanagement because they have a heavy stake in the maintenance of harmony. From their perspective, even the weather that makes or breaks their livelihood is given controlled to some extent by the ruler.

¹⁷³ 郭店楚墓竹简：緇衣。简帛书法选。编辑组编。vol. 3. 文物出版社（北京：2002）。p. 5-8. The alternate readings in parentheses are considered acceptable variants. See Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian*, 382.

¹⁷⁴ 郭店楚墓竹简：緇衣。简帛书法选。编辑组编。vol. 3.（北京：文物出版社，2002），9-10.

There is no blueprint for Confucian harmony because there is no replicable, stable, or completed state of harmony possible in a changing and dynamic world. But there is a pattern, namely the Confucian social hierarchy as it comes about through the cultivation of the appropriate types of relationships and moral education. But although the relationships, for example between older and younger siblings, may have the same moral structure whether they are between the rulers of a fiefdom or rural farmers, it is not the same relationship because each has a different foundation. The relationship between elite siblings is informed by direct study of the Classics and practices of self-cultivation peculiar to high social status. The relationship between commoner siblings is the result of the influence of the elite relationship. The moral behavior of the underclass is dependent on the upper class as well as generationally transmitted wisdom. The common folk do not discern right and wrong but are led to laud right and loathe wrong by the behaviors of those above, the elite and ruling class. This is shown by the passages in the *Rites* that indicate how common people behave when the modeling is not appropriate. They complain and willfully create problems. The political power of the underclass is in their ability shift things from bad to worse, from tenuous harmony to chaos.

In the classic Ruist texts, the ruler had the inalienable responsibility to provide for the people. As I have discussed above, this goes beyond economic and material support. The ruler and the elite class were also bound by moral, ritual dictates to act as exemplars of appropriate behavior. This complicates the comparison to contemporary societies for insight into poverty and homelessness. A Confucian society does not deal in scarcity, which is one of the primary drivers of a Capitalist economy, nor does it compel the distribution of capital among laborers, a

simplistic account of a Communist economy. Each person ought to be due what is appropriate to their position in society. In the *Analects* 16.1, Kongzi says:

...有國有家者，不患寡而患不均，不患貧而患不安。蓋均無貧，和無寡，安無傾。夫如是，故遠人不服，則修文德以來之。既來之，則安之。¹⁷⁵

As for those who rule the state and those who govern their households, they are less anxious about scarcity than they are about the inequitable distribution of wealth. They are less anxious about poverty than they are about discontent. They know that if there is an equitable distribution of wealth, there is no poverty, and where there is harmony, there is no scarcity. Where there is contentment, there is no incitement to overthrow. Thus when people on the margins are unruly, they ought to receive a moral education. Then they will come to see its value. Once they come to see this, then they will be content with it.

According to Shirley Chan, this indicates a tension in Ruist social philosophy. She writes, Confucius believed social disruption and economic poverty was largely due to moral inadequacy resulting in improper attainment of individual benefits. In other words, the basic rule in the art of governing is to find a balance between individual rights and public interest and to reconcile the tension between individual desire and social harmony in a humane way.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ *Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series*, no. 16, 33/16/1.

¹⁷⁶ Shirley Chan, "Equilibrium in Classical Confucian "Economy"," *Open Journal of Philosophy*. Vol. 2, No. 2. 2012, 101. Accessible at <http://file.scirp.org/Html/19182.html>.

The topic of the inappropriate accrual of wealth (*li*利) as a lack of propriety (*yi*義) is a topic much discussed in the Ruist tradition, especially the *Mengzi*, which begins with Mengzi's admonishment of King Hui of Liang for valuing profit (*li*利) over ritual (*li*禮) and appropriateness (*yi*義). What is pleasurable ought to be so for everyone and what is valuable ought to be accessible to all. This is the commitment that rulers must have to their people.

In order to alleviate poverty today, the poor must be included in the realm of social concern. Due to its focus on harmonious inclusivity and the responsibility of the ruler to act as an exemplar and ensure that everyone has the means to support themselves, Confucian philosophy has something to offer to modern approaches to poverty. Confucian philosophy does not dictate that the role of government is simply to give the people what they need in order to survive, but it also does not say that they must earn these things. What falls between these two drives, and what Confucian philosophy emphasizes, is that a society underpinned by universal human moral expectations instead of economic concerns will relieve hardship and maintain cohesion among social groups. There is no accommodation for abject poverty from the Ruist perspective because such an arrangement would not qualify as a functional society. If the conditions for the common folk do not allow them to sustain themselves, then the predictable result—that they will become unruly—is not morally reprehensible. If the government squanders or sequesters its power and resources among those at the top, then the people below are not bound by their laws. If the rulers do not cultivate appropriate behavior, according to Ruist political philosophy, then neither will the elite, and the common folk will not have the opportunity to cultivate themselves and cannot be blamed for the repercussions of their lack of moral education. If their basic human needs are

not provided for, they will doubt the authenticity of the those above. What would happen if we looked to our government this way?

The basis of a constitutional democracy is concern for the well-being of its citizens. Today in America millions of people, American citizens, are unsheltered and do not have food security. They lack fundamental components for human survival, which puts human flourishing even further from their grasp. They are not at the bottom of the current social hierarchy; they are not a part of the social spectrum at all. They are not included in the world that democracy has built. They are its casualties. Even though Ruist political philosophy, as conceived in ancient China, cannot be imported wholesale into the current American socio-political context, its focus on social inclusivity offers invaluable advice to those hoping to ameliorate poverty.

What does ancient Chinese politics have to contribute to contemporary discussions about the predicament of homelessness in Hawai‘i? There are many things that resonate between Chinese and Polynesian cultures such as social inclusivity structured by a set of relationships, a moral education that dictates appropriate behavior among hierarchically stratified groups with a monarch at the top, and a visceral connection to the land and seasonal changes. In the next section, I will bring these themes to the present by aligning the common folk of the Chinese philosophical tradition to modern-day peasants and framing a discussion of poverty along a rural/urban divide. I will argue that homelessness is an intractable problem in Hawai‘i due to a complex set of interrelated issues including the tension between Hawaiian and American values and the rapid urbanization of the islands. I will argue that the sit-lie ban, enacted by the City and County of Honolulu to prevent unsheltered individuals from sitting and lying down on public

sidewalks and in many public areas, has had the effect of worsening the problem of homelessness among Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations in Hawai‘i.

Ruist Principles in Application

There are many cautions to be heeded in doing comparative projects that use ancient Chinese philosophy to address social problems in the United States. Even within China, the application of ancient principles can be divisive and a hindrance to modern advances in human rights and gender equality. However, I have chosen to bring the social stratification described in early Ruist texts to contribute to a conversation about homelessness in Hawai‘i because it resonates in a number of unexpected ways with pre-colonized Hawaiian society as well as other Polynesian societies. The distributions of power that render the United States of America’s brand of capitalism inhospitable to Confucian political philosophy are similar to those that have systematically undermined Hawai‘i and Hawaiians since the American *coup d’état* in 1893. In this section I will discuss agrarian values in China and Hawai‘i as a focal point for understanding extreme poverty in Hawai‘i.

According to a study conducted at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa in 2015, 63% of the respondents to an ethnic composition survey identified themselves as Hawaiian/Part Hawaiian (28%), Micronesian (19%), Samoan (10%), or Other Pacific Islander and Mixed Pacific Islander (6%).¹⁷⁷ Hawaiians and other Pacific Island populations are overrepresented among unsheltered ethnic groups in Hawai‘i. Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians) experience the

¹⁷⁷ Tai Dunson-Strane and Sarah Soakai, “The Effects of City Sweeps and Sit-Lie Policies on Honolulu’s Houseless,” June 2015, 14. Accessible at http://blog.hawaii.edu/durp/files/2015/06/Houseless-Honolulu-Report.small_.pdf

highest percentage of poverty among ethnic groups living in Hawai‘i and are overrepresented in jails and prisons as well.¹⁷⁸ Why are so many Hawaiians struggling at the bottom of the social heap? Pre-colonized Hawai‘i was self-sufficient even though its population numbered nearly a million, compared to fewer than 100,000 who identified as Hawaiian in the 2010 U.S. census (about 6% of the Hawai‘i islands population). Of course, the wealth of the Hawaiian ruling elite was not distributed among the commoners (*maka ‘āinana*), but the society structure was based on the inclusive model of community interdependence. Bonds were ritualized among members of large families as well as between the people and the land (*‘āina*), and the ruling class (*ali‘i* and *ali‘i nui*). The composition of the ancient Hawaiian social structure shares many of the themes related to harmonious hierarchies in the context of ancient Chinese philosophy, as I have discussed elsewhere.¹⁷⁹ In what follows, I will discuss another similarity: the cultural importance of relationships to the land. Agrarian societies privilege familial organizational structures, and when these structures are undermined the effects can have a disastrous result on economic as well as psychological self-sufficiency. To conclude, I will return to the issue of homeless in Hawai‘i to show how the colonization of Hawai‘i and, more recently, the sit-lie ban have caused the disintegration of bonds among native Hawaiians, which has had the effect of dissolving significant portions of Hawaiian identity especially among its most economically vulnerable.

¹⁷⁸ Shawn Malia Kana‘iaupuni, Nolan J. Malone, and Koren Ishibashi, “Income and Poverty Among Native Hawaiians: Summary of Ka Huaka‘i Findings,” Published by Kamehameha Schools, 2005, Accessible at http://www.ksbe.edu/_assets/spi/pdfs/reports/demography_well-being/05_06_5.pdf

¹⁷⁹ Chapter two of my dissertation, *A Comparative Study of ‘Existential Destitution’ in Pre-Qin Chinese Philosophy and Karl Jaspers in the Context of Homelessness in Hawai‘i*. Defense April 2018.

Agrarianism in Chinese Intellectual History

There were three early sage-rulers in Chinese antiquity who gave shape to a human understanding of the natural world. These supernatural individuals had keen awareness of the changes that shape the world and were inspired to teach their people how to survive and flourish among these changes. Of the three sage rulers (*san huang* 三皇),¹⁸⁰ Shen Nong 神農, the Divine Farmer, taught his subjects to be self-sufficient. Descriptions of Shen Nong appear in the Warring States texts the *Lü Shi Chun Qiu* 呂氏春秋, the *Mengzi* 孟子, and the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 and during this time when many different doctrines flourished, known for its ‘Hundred Schools’ (*zhu zi bai jia* 諸子百家), there was a school dedicated to the teachings of Shen Nong, though very little is known about it today. In his study of this school, the School of the Tillers (*nong jia* 農家), A.C. Graham notes that the books associated with this school, which would tell us more about ancient Chinese agrarianism, have disappeared, but we ought not to assume that they were not important.

Since agriculture has always been an inescapably important topic in China, the loss of its most ancient class the *Shen-neng* is in any case remarkable, and likely to have had something to do with its ‘upsetting of the degrees of superior and inferior’. ... We may suspect that the Tillers are an invisible presence which would re-order our perspectives if we could bring it to light.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Although the texts indicate that there were three, the individuals comprising the three differ among the ancient and Han Dynasty texts, and there are no texts in existence that date back to the times of their purported reigns.

¹⁸¹ A.C. Graham, *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991), 69.

In other words, the formation of a peasant utopia, where the ruler worked alongside the workers, did not accord with the formation of a hierarchically-organized state. This may explain to a certain extent why the texts of the School of the Tillers were not preserved through the intervening ages. Shen Nong is celebrated as one of the formative influences on Chinese society. His rule predated the period of social decline that led to the necessity of implementation of rules for governance and ritual propriety. He was said to have ruled without punishments in a time with no wars and enough food for everyone to live comfortably. The *Lü Shi Chun Qiu* includes an appraisal of his reign: 「神農十七世有天下，與天下同之也。」¹⁸² “Shen Nong ruled for 70 generations, and everything was harmonized.”

The School of the Tillers would have shared several concerns with the Daoists, Primitivists, and Yangists—all compilers of the *Zhuangzi*— about the legitimacy of the Confucian hierarchic bureaucracy. But unlike the Daoist utopia characterized by the complete lack of human artifice (*wuwei*無為), a farmer utopia is decidedly an exercise in re-forming (*wei*為) the earth to suit human needs. The School of the Tillers saw farming as fundamental to human society and hard work as a badge of authenticity not just for the common folk but for all folk. Why, they wondered, would one feel compelled to engage in the machinations of politics and war if all one needs to survive and flourish one can do with one’s own hands? The writings of the School of the Tillers were not likely written by the tillers themselves. During the Warring States Period, there were probably many literate individuals suspended precipitously if not already descending into the plight of the common folk who took it upon themselves to record

¹⁸² *ICS Concordance to the Lü Shi Chun Qiu*, 慎勢2.

what the common folk had to hope for and how they conceived the golden days of the distant past. Perhaps the disenfranchised former elite celebrated the predictability of the farmer's life, which was shaped by the continuity of the seasons and the daily monotony of farming tasks, which may have been soothing to those who found themselves at a dead end.

Although there is no one collection that can be referred to as the main text of the School of the Tillers, the influence of the school can be seen in the numerous references to Shen Nong himself, as well as the characters likened to him, seen intermittently throughout the Chinese philosophical tradition, acting sometimes as gadflies for the well-meaning Ruist and other times as naïve and bumbling caricatures of so-called unsullied living. These folks were no doubt poor, but they were not stuck (*qiong* 窮) in the sense I described in the previous chapter. They lived their lives in simplicity without scarcity, greed, avarice, or crime. I take this to be more or less the standpoint of the common folk, who comprised the vast majority of the Middle Kingdom's population during that time and for centuries before and after. From here I will turn to the importance of agrarian lifestyles throughout Chinese history up to the present, as described in the works of Fei Xiaotong (1910-2005). Here we find the blending of Confucian political philosophy and the anarcho-communitarian leanings of the Tillers.

Agrarianism and Community: Fei Xiaotong's Differential Mode of Organization

Fei Xiaotong was one of China's first social scientists to bring research he himself had conducted in rural China to the classroom. These lectures were compiled into a volume that lays out his theory of 20th-century Chinese social structure from a Chinese perspective. He constructed a theory of human organizational tendencies in China that he saw as a counter to the

prevailing structures in the so-called 'West.' This book was published in 1947, just as Marxist Orthodoxy was taking hold of Chinese academia, and it is fortunate that his works survived because they illustrate the complexity of Chinese social relationships that are not reducible to the structures of class interests. According to Fei, Chinese society is fundamentally agrarian, which defines Chinese social structures even in urban environments, and that because the 'West' does not have the same social structure, China cannot hope to mirror its achievements by the same means. Instead, China will achieve success according to its own unique capabilities. In this section, I will discuss Fei's theory of Chinese social organization and its emphasis on the agrarian roots of contemporary Chinese culture. I will then compare this culture with traditional Hawaiian culture and by extension Kānaka Maoli living in Hawai'i today. When the traditional social system, which was based on subsistence farming, was suddenly upended and replaced by another system, the inevitable result in Hawai'i was dissolution and alienation among its native population. I believe Fei's description of communitarian social groups is a tool for explaining the overrepresentation of Kānaka Maoli among Hawai'i's unsheltered population. Of course, its usefulness is more as a diagnostic and corrective for neocolonialist guilt than for construction of contemporary Hawaiian identity. The next step would be privileging Hawaiian ways of knowing and living as autonomous and valued.¹⁸³

The fundamental difference between Chinese and Western societies, according to Fei, is the way that social groups are formed. In the West, groups are formed voluntarily, and every member has qualifications that allow them to be a part of that group and enjoys benefits that everyone in the group enjoys. Individuals in Western-style social groups enjoy equality and are

¹⁸³ See Noenoe K. Silva, Karin Amimoto Ingersoll, Lilikala Kame'eleihiwa, Elizabeth Green Handy.

fungible within the defined lines of the organization, like straw in a tied bundle. Fei calls this the ‘organizational mode of association’ (*tuanti geju* 團體格局). In this mode, individuals choose whether or not to be a part of an organization, and they can be involved in different organizations. This organizational structure lends to the promotion of individual rights, as membership is non-coercive and each member who meets their responsibilities receives certain entitlements. This mode of grouping is not defined geographically or lineally, although anyone is free to organize according to these criteria. This mode of organization necessitates a differentiation between public and private, as the family does not fit the model of voluntary inclusion. Rather, families are private concerns, and each family is not necessarily connected to any other. Individual rights come from each individual’s relationship to the organization, which in its most inclusive manifestation is the state. Public life is the most formative element of social cooperation and compatibility, rather than the family.

Fei writes there is no material thing that can be identified as ‘the state,’ and likewise, members of organizations do not interact with an entity called ‘the organization.’ Organizations depend on the symbols each member recognizes as important, and they do not exist independently of their members. For example, in the relationship of citizens to the state, laws are created to preserve the symbol of individual liberty. Fei shows that this model is inseparable from the Western idea of God:

Jesus addressed God as the Father, as everyone’s Father. He even publicly rejected his own parents, who gave birth to him and brought him up. To achieve this equality, according to Christian beliefs, Jesus was born of a young virgin; the special and personal relationship between father and son is denied here. This

denial is actually not nonsense; it is, instead, a powerful symbol of the public quality of organizations. God is necessarily without a private side. Jesus symbolizes each person within this universal organization.¹⁸⁴

Abstracting from Fei's observations, I am tempted to explore the dark side of this organizational structure. While the symbol of God as universal inclusivity is the limit of the magnitude of possible organizational structures, most organizations have boundaries, and these boundaries are set by those inside of them. I see the potential here for unincorporated individuals, and in a society defined in terms of identity in a group, these people would be existentially homeless. In other words, there may be people who are not accepted as a part of any group, and whose contributions are not considered valuable in the formation of inclusive social structures. I see this today in the United States of America, where the actions of powerful groups undermine the relationship of citizens to the state. For example, education is compulsory up to a certain age, but the differences between the educational experiences different groups receive are startling. The simplicity of this organizational structure allows for individuals to ignore the complex and systemic problems that create disturbing inequalities among people assumed to be equal in the eyes of the state. This model is also problematic in places where it is imposed on populations that do not share in this type of social identity, especially one where the family takes precedence. This focus on family, Fei argues, is the primary organizing element in China.

The Chinese pattern of association is based on the relationships shared between individuals and those around them, expanding outward in concentric circles. Fei calls this a

¹⁸⁴ FEI Xiaotong, *From the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press: 1992), 73.

‘differential mode of association’ (*cha xu geju* 差序格局). In this mode, the line between private and the public is blurred. The constituting feature of this system is the multitude of interpersonal relationships. The realm of ethical concern is populated by familiar faces, and moral actions are contextualized by the actual relationships they benefit. One’s family is the nexus of moral behavior, and as one expands their social network, one’s realm of moral concern grows. This is very different from what Fei considered the Western mode of interpersonal ethics, which he saw as favoring groups based on preferences and identity more than family or clan. Fei highlighted the difference between Western, or more accurately, American, and Chinese society by comparing their historical counterparts. Western society was nomadic, so individuals needed to band together to survive. Fei saw early American settler colonists as untethered from geography-based identities. Whole segments of society could up and move across the sea and set their sights West, and their strength was precisely drawn from a sense of adventure and danger in the face of the unknown.

Here is where Fei’s account of early American society and morals differs markedly from a problematic and increasingly common interpretation of Americans’ own history. Fei saw the necessity of groups, whether formed by common interests or familial bonds, as an inalienable part of what it is to be human, and even what it is to be an individual. Social commentator and author Rebecca Solnit characterizes and criticizes an attitude peculiar to contemporary right-wing American conservatism, which she terms “the ideology of isolation”: “The loner taketh not, nor does he give; he scorneth the social and relies on himself alone.”¹⁸⁵ By her estimation, when

¹⁸⁵ Solnit, Rebecca, “The Ideology of Isolation,” *Harper’s Magazine*, July 2016, 4-8. Accessible at <https://harpers.org/archive/2016/07/the-ideology-of-isolation/>

we consider ourselves as individuals things start to go sideways. Without a feeling of shared responsibility, there is no way to talk about gun control, women's reproductive rights, environmental degradation, or poverty because none of these fits into the cowboy aesthetic of independence and self-reliance. She describes an online discussion in response to the killing of a homeless man in which a commenter indicated that they did not feel that the homeless had the right to depend on society for help because they did not contribute anything. She writes, "This is the rhetoric of modern conservatives: freedom is a luxury that wealth affords you; wealth comes from work; those who don't work, never mind the cause, are undeserving. If freedom and independence are ideal, dependence is not just merely disdained; it's furiously loathed."¹⁸⁶ If we consider the prevalence and power of conservatives in all levels of government, then it is fair to say that this view is quite common among Americans today. The result of this has been massive, unsubstantiated doubt in things that do not suit the conservative agenda including the findings of climate science, whether women tell the truth about being sexually harassed, and the unseemliness of revisionist histories.¹⁸⁷ "Fear of penetration and the fantasy of impenetrable isolation," Solnit writes, "are central to both homophobia and the xenophobic mania for "sealing the border." In other words, isolation is good, freedom is disconnection, and good fencing, especially on the U.S.-Mexico border, make good neighbors."¹⁸⁸ Solnit's arguments for interconnectedness and collectivity mark her as a something of a radical intellectual. But these

¹⁸⁶ Solnit, "The Ideology of Isolation," 6.

¹⁸⁷ These three topics cluster notable "post-truth" events of 2017 including #MeToo and the saga of Alabama Senate hopeful Roy Moore, the protection of statues commemorating Confederate war heroes, and the withdrawal of the U.S. from the global ecological partnership initiative, the Paris Agreement.

¹⁸⁸ Solnit, "The Ideology of Isolation," 6.

are things that Fei Xiaotong took for granted in his interpretation of an American society that is reliant on rules and laws that privilege the success of the group over the success of the individual, rather than protecting the individual from having their rights trampled upon. Fei's interpretation, and what it shares in common with the viewpoints of America's more liberal contemporary intellectuals, can be noted as community-based but not necessarily family-based.

According to Fei, Chinese society was primarily agrarian, and families tended to be more or less permanently settled on the land and largely self-sufficient.¹⁸⁹ One of the defining features of Chinese society is the spatial metaphor given rise by its agrarian history. In ancient, agrarian China, each family was firmly rooted in the land they cultivated in a way that was foundational for their identity. Those with whom they shared a relationship outside of the home were those closest to them, their neighbors, and that relationship defined their moral obligations to one another. On this scale, relationships begin to translate into social currency, which can be used to accumulate power. The more powerful the family, the wider the realm of moral concern. Fei writes:

In the traditional structure, every family regards its own household as the center and draws a circle around it. This circle is the neighborhood, which is established to facilitate reciprocation in daily life. A family invites the neighbors to its weddings, sends the red-dyed eggs when a new baby is born, and asks for their help in lifting its dead into coffins and carrying the coffins to the cemetery. But a neighborhood is not a fixed group. Instead, it is an area whose size is determined by the power and authority of each center. The neighborhood of a powerful family

¹⁸⁹ Fei, *From the Soil*, 71.

may expand to the entire village, while a poor family's neighborhood is composed of only two or three nearby families.¹⁹⁰

From a Confucian perspective, the power of an individual is a result of their self-cultivation and resulting ethical influence on others. Notice that the examples in this selection of what neighbors do for one another is practical and not defined by obligation or need. Acting ethically in this context means performing the appropriate rites and rituals and meeting the expectations of others with whom one shares a relationship. The larger the network extending out from the individual, the more power and influence this individual has. The attendant reciprocation to each relationship concentrates social, economic, and political power in those that have an extensive network. But this network is not 'solid.' Those within a network do not necessarily share relationships with one another, and not everyone in the network is entitled to the same benefits. Instead, the individual at the center of the social web dictates the commitment to other individuals based on their influence. In other words, although those with comparatively little influence are included in the network of a powerful individual, the further they are away, the fewer relationships they will share between them.

The Pitfalls of Organizational Association

Fei's theory of differential social association, which relies heavily on his interpretation of the concepts benevolence (*ren*仁), filial piety (*xiao*孝), fraternal respect (*di*悌), sincerity (*xin*信), and loyalty (*zhong*忠) from the Chinese Classics, relies on each person's felt obligation toward those with whom they share a relationship. This prevents the system from accommodating

¹⁹⁰ Fei, *From the Soil*, 64.

universal and comprehensive moral principles that are extended to everyone equally. Just as in agrarian societies, families were tied to the land and so their relationships may be defined spatially, the mode of social organization which is bolstered by this history preserves the idea that everyone has their proper place. This distribution may also be viewed vertically as a socio-economic hierarchy. Those at the bottom are still entitled to benefits that come as a result of their being a part of a vast interlocking whole, even if their web of connections does not reach far up the hierarchy.

Fei's distinction between the organizational and differential modes of association frames a discussion about a society's need for laws to govern the people. The organizational mode requires laws that apply equally to everyone while the differential mode does not. In practice, however, laws do not have equitable effects among citizens. The potential for abuse of power is rife in a law-making society, as those with power may write laws to protect themselves and that disadvantage those with comparatively less power. Today, progress in maintaining the rights of the poor that conflicts with moneyed interests is in most cases perpetually stalled. In Hawai'i, for example, activists who advocate for the poor are concerned about the number of exemptions and allowances that allow new condominium projects to subvert the state's commitment to provide affordable housing units.¹⁹¹ And each year, bills to secure funding for projects to assist the state's unsheltered population fail to pass through the maze of numerous government committee hearings. Instead, funding for measures to treat and house the homeless are one-off heaps of funds from various, established budgets. While the numbers sound large, to the tune of \$20

¹⁹¹ Civil Beat Editorial Board, "Turning Their Backs on Affordable Housing," *Honolulu Civil Beat*, 9/14/2016, Accessible at <http://www.civilbeat.org/2016/09/city-leaders-have-to-stop-turning-their-backs-on-affordable-housing/>

million from the state plus \$10 million in federal funding in 2016,¹⁹² not including a slew of private donations and project-specific vouchers, they are not a part of a comprehensive, long-term funding plan and there is no guarantee that they will meet the needs of the state's poor and unsheltered populations. Although an organization mode of association is vastly successful at accumulating wealth, it may be at the expense of equitable distribution among citizens. Those who are not organized among powerful groups do not enjoy the same rights as those who are. In Hawai'i, an increasingly large number of people find themselves without shelter, food, and clean water. They are radically disconnected from the groups that have more than enough to buy the luxury versions of each. From the perspective of Fei's critique of Western organizations, we see our society in an unflattering mirror. There are groups that are politically invisible, and we are not beholden, from within our own groups, to care about them or for them. Fei does not explore the implications of a society structured by boundaries and the lack of inclusiveness that comes as a result of powerful groups undermining the relationship of citizen to state. His likening of the organizational mode to conflict and totalitarianism is not an avenue I would like to travel very far down, though any critique of dominant modes of capitalism would probably share many similarities.

Do the poor fare any better in a differential mode of association? In Fei's account of the history of Chinese society, this question is redundant. Poverty is a defining feature of agrarianism, one that had a profound effect on the evolution of Chinese societies through the ages. Poverty was the reason that people formed inclusive relational networks. Families and

¹⁹²THE MULTI-YEAR PROGRAM and FINANCIAL PLAN and EXECUTIVE BUDGET For the Period 2017-2023 (Budget Period 2017-2019). Submitted to the Twenty-Ninth State legislature December 19, 2016. Accessible at <https://budget.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/01.-The-Governors-Message-FB17-19-PFP.pdf>.

communities were largely self-sufficient, and there was little excess that could be used for establishing a system of capital commerce. This deters the potential for a powerful state but puts it at a disadvantage against adversaries that have such potential. Agrarian societies lack a centralized power structure capable of defending them from a common result of ancient warfare: the loss of land. Fei writes:

When I was doing a survey among Yao tribes in the mountainous regions of Guangxi province, I often noticed that ethnic Chinese people (*hanren*) had occupied the land of the Yao but had never enslaved them. There were certainly a lot of reasons for this; but in my view, the major one was that the place was just too poor, and those Yao tribesmen who planted rice fields could not lower their standard of living yet further to become tenants of the Han Chinese. Therefore, when the Chinese were in a battle with one of the Yao tribes, the Yao just gave up their land and moved. In wars of agrarian societies, the most common pattern is to drive out the natives, take over their land, and cultivate it personally. This especially happens when a population is large, labor is plentiful, and the available arable land is being fully utilized. In studying Chinese history, we often come across references to conquerors who “buried tens of thousands of enemies alive.” In fact, until quite recently, it was not unusual to encounter groups of roving bandits who would kill people with great ferocity. Such a situation is not one that an aggressive industrial power would understand... The conquest would be

meaningless if the conquerors allowed the defeated to continue farming. In this sense, conquest actually means to conquer the land, not the people.¹⁹³

In peace and war, agrarian societies never get off the ground, so to speak. They are connected to the land and lack the strong central state necessary to organize a cohesive defense, much less an offensive. They do not relate abstractly to one another in terms of identity, which precludes organization into a powerful but immaterial state. The power of an agrarian society relies on the optimization of relationships among a large number of people. But each of these relationships is among concrete, unique individuals and has unique valences, which creates a dynamic harmony that never fully materializes as a singular social phenomenon. This type of society is, in Fei's words, egocentric, as opposed to generic or reductionistic. The uniqueness of each individual, their identity and desires, is maintained in dynamic relationships which preserve difference. The result is a harmony that is active as opposed to equanimous, temporal as opposed to universal.

On this theme, Roger Ames writes:

Without appeal to some originative principle and the linear teleology that comes with it, the world has no grand preassigned design; its governing purpose is a localized and temporalized self-sufficiency—a collaboration among the participating elements to make the most out of each situation. This is the meaning of Confucian harmony (*he*和).¹⁹⁴

This quote is taken from the context of individual consummate ethical behavior, which Ames takes as the basic unit of social morality. At the heart of Chinese society beats a concert of

¹⁹³ Fei, *From the Soil*, 112-3.

¹⁹⁴ Ames, *Confucian Role Ethics: A Vocabulary*, 84.

individual efforts. The rhythm is determined by social and natural forces that shape the human experience, which each person strives to approximate in order to achieve optimal harmony. This is consistent throughout the Ruist socio-historical palimpsest that we have today. It is also present in the Kanaka Maoli understanding of each person's responsibility to the land, on the basis of shared needs as well as shared ancestors. Because all things are genealogically related, one has a filial responsibility to respect and preserve the entirety of the natural and human ecosystem.¹⁹⁵ The disruption of the relationship between people and the land on which they orient their identities results in a disintegration of cultural and personal identity. Karin Amimoto Ingersoll writes, "Loss of land is a particularly critical element of Hawaiian colonization (and decolonization) because Kanaka language, economy, politics, and culture are all connected to the 'āina..."¹⁹⁶ Misguided and racist land reform initiatives paired incriminatingly with a lack of cohesive restorative policy have done the work to existentially and literally unhouse the Kānaka Maoli. It seems clear we lack the truly immaterial state so pivotal to Fei's interpretation of a functional Western society. Will Hawaiians be able to negotiate the return of their terrestrial identity, and with it their economic and spiritual self-sufficiency, from those for whom the land is seen as a biochemical and artillery testing ground? The importance of this critique of American neocolonialism cannot be underestimated. The ground of this critique is the sustainability of modern agrarian agriculture in a commercial, market-based farming economy.

¹⁹⁵ The filial connection between humans and the natural ecosystem is an idea developed by Julia Morgan in her dissertation *Mālama, 'Āina, Kalo, and Ho'opili: Growing a Third Way Environmental Relationship*. (Ann Arbor: ProQuest LLC, 2016).

¹⁹⁶ Ingersoll, Karin Amimoto *Waves of Knowing: A Seascape Epistemology*. Duke University Press (Durham: 2016) p. 11.

Finding the Way to the Present: Agrarianism in the 20th Century

Tracing Chinese identity to current times is not simple or linear. Fei wrote his major works while China was on the precipice of its Cultural Revolution, which literally upended Chinese society. Fei's contribution is unique because social science in China was mired in Marxist paradigms for several decades after his works were published and subsequently banned. A modern theory of agrarianism in China is inseparable from the policies of Communist China when urbanites were suddenly uprooted and transplanted into the rural hinterlands of China among peasants they were instructed by the state to emulate. In his novel *Banished!* Han Dong describes the journey of a family selected for the "Glorious Banishment" (光荣下放) who attempt to "strike root" (扎根) in a rural village. Although the family left their lives and histories behind, they do not dwell on the past, but they also do not fully immerse themselves in peasant life. They build a house out of modern materials and keep their belongings clean and polished. The father, Tao, assists the village workers to drastically increase their farming yields by introducing new technology. Tao spends much of his time making a plan for the town to produce a surplus that they can sell to the state for money to buy a walking tractor. But there is a danger in these efforts to increase the productivity in the peasant village.

Yu, the team leader, relied heavily on Tao and discussed everything with him.

Eventually, he handed over most of the team's work to him so that Tao became the de facto team leader. However, when Yu suggested that Tao take over the position officially, the latter declined modestly: "We came to be reeducated, to

learn from you poor peasants. I'll do as much as I can for the team, but as an advisor. You should stay as head!"¹⁹⁷

Tao knew that he could not come to hold a position of authority in the village. He was there because of the top-to-the-bottom demoralizing movement of officials and gentry from urban cities to rural villages during the Cultural Revolution. Moreover, during this time in rural China ideology trumped productivity. These events changed the course of Chinese history in a way that is still being sorted out, when most of the gentry was transported to a strange place where their lives were halted and left to stagnate among state-sanctioned collectives.

In the previous section, I described the agrarian roots of Chinese society, but after the events of the 20th century, when hundreds of thousands of families were relocated to rural villages, agrarianism took on different meanings. During this time, the ideological, rootless system of Communism was grafted onto an agrarian history, and this mutant was nurtured mostly by sheer political zeal. Forcing people to live in poverty with no connection to the land or the farmer clans had an intentionally corrosive effect on Chinese society. I will not dwell on the successes and disasters of communism in China or the more recent *embrace* of its own cultural artifacts. But as I move into the next section, which regards modern peasants, I will step away from the Chinese context into a global one because I do not want to invoke an ideological debate about contemporary farming practice across the capital/communal divide. Instead, I will discuss farming economies along the lines of a neo-classical/subsistence divide, which delineates farming practice roughly in terms of developed and developing countries. The poorest people in the world are the peasant subsistence farmers, and it is likely that rather than improving their

¹⁹⁷ HAN Dong, *Banished!* trans. Nicky Harman (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), 42.

chances for economic solvency, the world economy will leave them behind to live lives of the barest existence. They live in a world where they have no power, and their participation in purchasing and selling markets is inexorably limited. The limits of their world are defined by another world that encompasses it but of which it is not a full part. Their poverty and lack of social and economic mobility glue them to the ground from which they can only reap so much. They are stuck there, and the world is moving on. This metaphor emerges again and again in this dissertation because it haunts the very poor like the worst kind of spectre, the one no one else sees.

Agrarianism in the Contemporary World Economy

In today's commercially driven global economy, subsistence farmers do not participate fully in the world market. In this section, I will show how the isolation of agrarian subsistence farmers whose practices are increasingly untenable is comparable to the debilitating loss of relational identity wrought by the colonization of Hawai'i and the influence of American neoliberal ideology. Agrarian societies, communities, and households are at a massive disadvantage among contemporary economic systems because they do not fit into the capitalistic paradigm that dominates global farming practices. It is as if they live in a different world. They are cut off from the prevailing economic farming apparatus, which has shifted over the last two hundred years to the intensification of agricultural land use that cannot be sustained by subsistence farming, and they are among the world's poorest populations. They are poor mainly because they do not produce enough surplus to participate in a market economy, purchase technologies that increase production, or have the human labor necessary to increase production

without modern technologies. On the stage of the world economy, they are invisible. In this section I will analyze the modern peasant's relationship with the prevailing capital market, and I will show that although poverty has defined agrarian life for centuries, increasingly intrusive capitalist intervention threatens the future of their identity, which is characterized by communal values similar to those I discussed above in the context of Chinese differential social association. This analysis will be supplemented by the unique colonial scenarios in the Pacific, where even though a peasant class did not develop, extreme poverty and lack of self-sufficiency has induced the severing of traditional relationships and massive emigration. A large number of unsheltered individuals in Hawai'i are Pacific Islanders, so this complex issue of poverty, cultural identity, societal structure, and the impact of global commercial capitalism on all three must be addressed. From the perspective of Pacific Islanders living in the US, all of these concerns must be considered in the dazzling light of American exceptionalism, which concedes little to the limiting effects of external forces in its preference for mysterious and open vistas of possibility.

This section addresses the modern-day peasant, a term that, among other connotations, is central to Marxist social philosophy, but I do not intend to engage substantially with the Marxist discourse surrounding modern peasants. Instead, I will reference the broader definition used in agricultural economic theory. There are a few designators that remain static in characterizing modern peasant populations in this context. First, they are farmers, and although many live on their own farms with their families, a significant number work as wage laborers for other peasants, and others rent their land from peasant land-owners. Most peasant communities are not egalitarian; there are differences in social and political status. Second, the majority of modern peasants are unlike ancient agrarian communities because they are no longer discrete, self-

sufficient units in remote rural lands. Their economic activity ranges from very little participation in markets, in terms of purchasing inputs such as seeds, fertilizer, and basic necessities, and selling farm outputs, to full dependency on the market for solvency and sustenance. They cannot construct or manipulate the market, so their participation is always incomplete. What they are able to purchase and sell depends on forces that are beyond their control and often beyond their ability to become informed of, which depends on technologies and communication channels that may not be available to them. Peasants are always in a position of subordination to larger market forces because their way of life is no longer a part of the farming status quo. Agricultural economist Frank Ellis writes:

Peasant household production is never a mode of production in itself, it is always located in a larger society where a particular dominant mode prevails. This means that social reproduction as a whole obeys the rules of the dominant mode of production, even if peasants possess a limited ability to reproduce themselves independently of that mode.¹⁹⁸

The difference between peasants in a feudal versus a capitalist system is that in the latter their role does not have the connotation of being a class. Under a feudal system, their role is quite clearly to provide food, but in a capitalist system, defined in economic theory as the neoclassical model, their role is not so well defined. Even though peasants may participate in different markets, they will never gain complete access to them and will always find themselves at the merciless whims of the dominant modes of production and consumption.

¹⁹⁸ Frank Ellis, *Peasant Economics: Farm Households and Agrarian Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 51.

Third, there is an ambiguity between peasant modes of production and consumption, as the household is sustained by the farm products it consumes. Surpluses are not simply sold, as they are in a commercial farm setting, but are consumed and sometimes saved in case of scarcity. As a result, peasant households do not participate fully in commercial markets, and their labor and surplus cannot be correlated or quantified in a straightforward way. This vagueness complicates the monetization and conversion of inputs and peasant labor into yields and surpluses. The costs associated with hiring labor, paying rent on the land, and various modes of taxation that are set using the quantified theoretical models of neoclassical commercial farm production are levied against peasants in similar ways as commercial farmers, and these must be paid in cash, which requires at least some successful participation in the markets. Relatively inefficient modes of production put peasants at a disadvantage in terms of market values, as increased efficiency among commercial farming families and corporations drives down prices. Even though this ancient way of life continues, modern economies do not provide a way of sustaining it. Plus, neoclassical farming theory begins with an individual farming unit, a person who makes the farming decisions or a corporation with an iterative model of production, which implies that every unit must purchase their own inputs and sell the outputs. This individualist model of farmer identity undermines the peasant model that relies on communitarian, interpersonal connections. The sharing of farm equipment, the pooling of household labour during harvest season, and even the equitable use of available resources including irrigation all depend on putting the good of the community first.

Peasants are diverse and dynamic populations that in recent history have been extraordinarily accommodating to the changes brought about by commercial farming practices

and the global economy. After the disastrous policies of the Great Leap Forward in China that resulted in widespread famine, the peasants were able to push back once they realized the importance of their role in balancing the economy during the rural reform era under Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s. As a result, farming technologies and privatization improved the circumstances of many peasants.¹⁹⁹ More recently, in Africa, the penetration of microfinance into the villages has allowed peasants to increase their income by engaging in different markets, such as handicrafts, as well as local entrepreneurship.²⁰⁰ In India, government programs to diversify agriculture educate peasants on how to protect against market fluctuations as well as the environmental disaster that comes as a result of decreased biodiversity. Viewing peasants as backward and stuck in primitive cultures, ambivalent to the world around them, is shown to be an inaccurate remnant of the imperial mind. Instead, modern peasants are transitioning from agrarian self-sufficiency to integration in modern markets with great speed. Ellis writes:

Transition does not mean that peasants are here today and gone tomorrow, that they are inevitably and soon to be replaced by other, more 'modern,' farm enterprises. What it does mean is that peasants are never just 'subsistence' or 'traditional' cultivators caught in a timeless vacuum. Peasants come from somewhere, indeed they were often thrust out of where they were by powerful world forces outside their previous experience (e.g. colonialism) and they are

¹⁹⁹ For an in-depth study, see Daniel Kelliher, *Peasant Power in China: The Era of Rural Reform, 1979-1989* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

²⁰⁰ Though there is concern that those whose projects are not profitable have little recourse to compensatory cash flow, which may strain personal as well as family and village finances.

undergoing a continuous process of adaptation to the changing world around them.²⁰¹

This is an important point in my larger analysis because just as peasants are often assumed to be remnants of a forgotten past that have no place in the modern world, the poor are often characterized as not having the gumption to carve out a life for themselves among present circumstances. These corrosive assumptions ignore the truly pragmatic nature of peasant and poor populations, who piece their lives together on the margins of the mainstream, as I will discuss in the next section.

Reflections on Modern Peasants and the Modern Poor

When it comes to modern, poor farmers, there is something that falls through the cracks between Marxist and neoclassical approaches to agricultural economics that Chinese philosophy may be poised to address. The prevailing world economic systems are capitalist, which puts Marxian political economy at a disadvantage in practice, but invaluable as a systematic critique. The neoclassical model of agricultural economics does not accommodate those who have little freedom of choice regarding their participation in the market. The world's poorest farmers do not have the ability to choose according to their own self-interest, which is the bedrock of capitalist, individualistic decision making, because their production is limited and the labor they do on behalf of their households is not valued in economic markets. Further, the potential for coercion and usury is high for those who have the least power, few choices, and are unable to live independently of the prevailing economic mode, even though this mode does not assign much

²⁰¹ Ellis, *Peasant Economics*, 5.

value to their contributions. Put simply, peasants will remain extremely poor, and their inability to participate in commercial markets leaves them vulnerable to market swings as well as devastating weather conditions.

These issues come into sharp focus when considered in the context of ecology. The overuse of pesticides, the redirection of waterways, and the increase in agricultural monoculture that have come with the intensification of farm production all have profoundly devastating effects. They reduce the number of sustainable ecosystems, both above and below the soil, and the effects of chemical runoff have killed legions of fish and crippled millions of farm animals. The effects on humans may be slower to materialize and measure but one prediction is especially salient: ecological disruptions will continue to disproportionately affect the poor populations who live in close communion with the land and seas. The life of the poor farmer is increasingly tenuous because the commodity they have access to, the land itself, has a different value in the prevailing world economy, which operates as if the land and its fertility were infinite resources. For the subsistence farmers, there are limitations to what the land can yield, including shortages of labor and capital for the purchase of seeds and fertilizers. In order to transition to a more economically viable lifestyle, by current parameters, peasants will have to commercialize their means of production in order to act as self-interested individuals. But this is shown to be severely detrimental to the environment, which, put simply, cannot act on behalf of its own interest. Agricultural ethics, a necessary discourse in light of the above, must entertain more than capitalist and Marxist theory, as neither directly confronts this issue from the standpoint of environmental devastation and its relationship to poverty. Chinese Confucian philosophy offers resources to address this problem that are centered by relational, integrated societal structures.

These structures do not privilege the autonomy and freedom of the individual, but instead contextualize available choices based on actual circumstances. By not separating economic concerns from social and political circumstances, people are not grouped according to their class or their income bracket as much as they are by those to whom they relate themselves. Although in a way this relational grouping would divide people, the separation is more accurately described in geographical, spatial terms rather than hierarchical, power-laden terms. When it comes to poverty, Confucian philosophy offers a penetrating critique of the prevailing capitalist system, even beyond agrarianism and agricultural ethics. It illustrates that focusing on individuals reifies the boundaries between them, and the emphasis on freedom limits those who have less. This creates a boundary between those for whom doors in life are wide open, or even removed from their hinges altogether, and those who struggle to pry open doors made of heavy steel.

The poor populations of the world live in a reality in which their way of life is threatened by economic and political as well as natural forces. It is unlikely that they will be able to cross over into a relatively prosperous set of circumstances unless they shed significant parts of their identities, and even then they would likely still be in a precarious state. This would put them at risk of a different sort of poverty, existential poverty, which is the loss of individual motivation and purpose to pursue a meaningful future. While the existential optimist might celebrate the farmer's casting off a role played in bad faith in favor of an open encounter with radical freedom, there is more at stake here. Dissolution of self-identity impairs the ability of the imagination to form a coherent view of what futures are possible. This undermines the idea that one merely chooses what path to follow, or that one is authentic only when they do not mind being seen by

others walking along their chosen path. For the peasant as well as other modern populations that prize community and subsistence farming, mapping an alternative to their sedimented cultural livelihood is not as simple as choosing a different path. For most of the world's poor who attempt this transition, for example, the burgeoning migrant worker population cast adrift far from home in search of economic viability, the world offers few alternatives. The vast majority of these individuals are exploited, and their human rights and identities are blotted out. Zygmunt Bauman writes that the design of modern, organized societies of developed countries produce 'human waste.' Policy-makers as well as those that stand idly by while the 'trash' is carried out accept that the system produces waste in the form of human byproducts that have no place within it.

Rubbish collectors are the unsung heroes of modernity. Day in and day out, they refresh and make salient again the borderline between the normality and pathology, health and illness, the desirable and the repulsive, the accepted and the rejected, the *comme il faut* and the *comme il ne faut pas*, the inside and the outside of the human universe. That borderline needs their constant vigilance and diligence because it is anything but a 'natural frontier.' ... Quite the contrary, it is the boundary that divines, literally conjures up, the difference between them—the difference between the admitted and the rejected, the included and the excluded. ... That Boundary is drawn afresh with every round of garbage collection and removal. Its sole existential mode is the incessant *activity* of separation.²⁰²

²⁰² Bauman, *Wasted Lives*, 28.

The poor, especially those from so-called underdeveloped and colonized countries, exist along the margins of the human world far from the concern and compassion of those at the center. They live in a different world: the garbage heap swept to its edge.

Although I do not explore this avenue in detail, there are many resonances between the different contexts I've described that divide the poor from the rest of the world and the social philosophy of Karl Marx and Marxist critiques of capitalism. The diagnosis for a troubled society from the perspective of Chinese philosophy and Marxist philosophy are indeed similar. The lives of the world's poor are shaped by forces beyond their control, and these forces pin to them a limited set of possibilities, few of which include ascension out of poverty. The prescriptions, however, are very different. Marxists advocate for struggle and revolution as a necessary step for equality, which may sacrifice an entire generation in service to an egalitarian future. From the perspective of Confucian philosophy, though unfortunately not Chinese history, this is an untenable requirement. It requires more autonomy and sacrifice than a communitarian, family-oriented society is willing to give up. This type of society also characterizes many Pacific Islander cultures, as I will discuss in the next section. Historically, these populations are characterized by subsistence farming and limited participation in world markets. Today, they are dealing with the effects of imperialism and colonialism as well as modern notions of self and world that run counter to their historically contextualized identities. I will argue that the result that can be seen in increasing numbers of Kānaka Maoli and Pacific Islanders living in abject poverty comes by way of the falling away of their cultural norms, which has resulted in the dissolution of communal and family bonds and the disintegration of

their relational identity. Policies such as the sit-lie ban, I argue, have a profound effect on individuals who value community as a part of their social identity.

The Effects of the Sit-Lie Ban on Hawaiians and Pacific Islander Communities

In this final section, I will bring the above discussion of historically relational societies and subsistence farming communities back to the contemporary predicament of homelessness in Hawai‘i, which inordinately affects Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander populations. I will begin by clarifying the similarities and differences between the concepts included so far in this chapter and Hawaiian and Pacific Islander societies. I will focus on the harmonious and inclusive models of these societies and the visceral connection to the land, and how the effects of modernization, colonization, and the global economic systems have impacted these societies. I will argue that they have encouraged rapid changes among these populations that reverberate all of the way down to cultural identity. While these populations have been shown to be extremely pragmatic and flexible, they are haunted by a history that molds their lives in modern poverty. As a result, the most vulnerable among them are very poor and also very unsure about their place in the world. The world is moving fast while they struggle to take frustratingly incremental steps to keep up. In Hawai‘i, the City and County of Honolulu began to enforce sit-lie bans in 2013, which criminalize sitting, lying down, and placing possessions on public sidewalks, adjacent sidewalk areas, and a handful of public areas. These bans spread rapidly to include most of Oahu’s most populated areas. I will discuss the impact of these ordinances on the disruption and disintegration of community and personal identity among Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders.

Before I go further, I would like to expand the concept of Pacific Islander, which I have been using as an umbrella term in this chapter for inhabitants of all of the islands in the Pacific Ocean between the longitudinal borders of the Americas and Asia, Indonesia, and Australia, not including arctic regions. My main focus will be the Hawaiian Islands and the islands placed under the trusteeship of the United States by agreements ratified in the wake of World War II and updated periodically: The Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, the Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the four districts of Kusaie (Kosrae), Ponape (Pohnpei), Truk (Chuuk), and Yap that make up the Federated States of Micronesia. Although the people who inhabit these islands are labeled Micronesians, they do not identify as a single group. In fact, many of the islands' inhabitants have multi-generational feuds with their neighbors, and until their relatively recent exposure to US-sponsored infrastructure, education, and ports offering the trappings of modern life, they rarely traveled even to nearby islands. In this dissertation, I refer to these societies as subsistence-based, community-oriented, and relatively isolated. Considered this way, they share significant similarities with a likewise idealized Hawaiian society. My hope is that rather than reducing these complex historical identities to romantic, sun-dappled utopias, framing these cultures along these lines of the two themes I've explored in this chapter will be a strategy for addressing a modern problem in a modern age.

Social Harmony and Subsistence Farming in Pre-Contact Hawaiian Society

This dissertation is not a study of Polynesian societal structure and will not delve far into the anthropological research. For resources, I will look to voices that inform the Hawaiian resistance movements that have flourished in the 21st century, who provide a historical account

of pre-contact society. I take two risks in this approach. First, I risk forcing all modern Polynesian societies, including those now referred to as Micronesian, to fit the mold of pre-contact Hawaiian society before 1778, when Captain Cook arrived in Hawai‘i. While there are significant differences among these varied cultures, I think that the general points I will make here are not too far afield, as they arise from what these cultures may share in common. Second, my use of modern Hawaiian sources as the authoritative voice risks silencing the nefarious aspects of Polynesian societies including human sacrifice, rape, brutality, and exploitation. Mark Alfred Kawika Fontaine provides the helpful distinction ‘anthropological’ and ‘traditional’ to address this concern. The former emphasizes academic, historical accounts and studies of artifacts to piece together Hawaiian history and the latter focuses on the oral traditions and ‘cultural repository’ of existing Hawaiian communities, elders, and experts to form a holistic view of Hawaiian culture.²⁰³ I will reference the ‘traditional’ sources in this limited study, focusing on harmonious social inclusion and subsistence. First, I will give a brief introduction to the ancient Hawaiian social structure.

Ancient Hawaiian society was comprised of a ruling class (*ali‘i*) and a commoner class (*maka‘āinana*), who were both considered descendants of the many Hawaiian deities, which were also considered as ancient ancestors. As a result, everyone belonged to the same genealogy, though different family lineages traced back to different deities. The appropriate balance for this society, which emphasized harmonious reciprocity among everyone according to their proper place, is called *pono*. While this term includes all elements of a properly functioning society, it

²⁰³ Mark Alfred Kawika Fontaine, *Two Views of Ancient Hawaiian Society* (M.A. Thesis, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa, 2012), 1-5.

particularly asserts that the division between different types of people must be upheld to maintain functional order. The difference between the elite and the common folk is explained as a quantitative difference in concentration of *mana*, the flow of productive and restorative divine energies through the human realm. When those above did not do their part to facilitate this flow down to those below, the common folk would suffer the loss of life as well as belief. The flow of *mana* also has an effect on the land and weather, as it is the most basic life force of all things.²⁰⁴ In order to facilitate this flow, order was created among the people by the creation of different levels of rank among the elite and ruling class that were determined according to heredity. The commoners were held under the dominion of these ranking individuals and performed all of the manual labor necessary to support themselves as well as the *ali'i*, and in return, they received the promise of their safety and well-being.

There are many clear similarities between the concepts of societal organization I included in my study of ancient Chinese Confucian society above and this brief account of Hawaiian pre-contact society, including harmonious and hierarchical social structure and the preeminence of familial concerns, which drew up the entire Hawaiian civilization as one extended family and celebrated elders in the community as repositories of invaluable social knowledge. There is one notable dissimilarity I will briefly mention. First, the Hawaiian view of social harmony is more teleological and static than the Chinese conception. Once it is achieved, it is possible for the society to remain *pono* indefinitely in a state of equanimity and peace that would prevent fluctuations and upwellings of disorder. This harmony is facilitated by strict laws of conduct,

²⁰⁴ For an in-depth study of these terms see Carolyn Kehaunani Cachola-Abad, *The Evolution of Hawaiian Socio-Political Analysis of Hawaiian Oral Traditions* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Hawai'i, 2000).

kapu, that indicate behaviors to be avoided. These laws had spiritual foundations, and it was believed that avoiding *kapu* behaviors would facilitate harmony among people and the earth. This is much different from the rituals and relationships of the Confucian tradition that allow for the pragmatic flexibility necessary for Confucian harmony. But there is one important aspect they share: a visceral connection to the land and the belief that human actions have an extraterrestrial effect on the natural world beyond their ability to cultivate it. In fact, many of the Hawaiian deified ancestors were believed to give shape to the world in a way that facilitated cultivation.²⁰⁵ Successful farming practices were not simply honed skills. They were matters of ritual and worship. Hawaiians are very successful farmers, and metaphors of cultivation, as well as the benefits of each type of plant, are threaded all the way through Hawaiian culture. The timing of planting and reaping, the treatment of pests and blights, soil amending, and irrigation systems were even by today's standards advanced and clever. But in the wake of contact, overthrow, occupation, and statehood, very little of these traditions is seen among the hotels and shopping centers or even the towns off the tourist-beaten paths, and most of the farmlands that are not protected by trusts have been developed, mono-cultivated, or used for experimental agro-development. These have drastically changed the landscape of Hawai'i, which by virtue of their connection with these lands have also undoubtedly affected native Hawaiian cultural identity. Their ancient ways of life, which had supported their population for centuries, are not valued by the new economic world order, and Hawai'i has been transformed to a profitable state by

²⁰⁵ For a study of Hawaiian cultivation practices and beliefs see E.S. Craighill Handy and Elizabeth Handy, *Native Planters in Old Hawai'i: Their Life, Lore, and Environment* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Pr., 1991).

commodifying its beauty in order to attract tourists and exploiting its location to support U.S. military strategy.

Increased tourism has also had a dissolving effect on Hawaiian family structure and community. It does this in three ways: the claiming of farmland for development, the higher cost of living due to increase of capital and infrastructure, and the influx of foreign values which have little or no connection to the land, which often results in exploitative and apathetic treatment of its resources and meaning. These forces work in concert on the dissolve Hawaiian identity and have been tied to increases in divorce, child abuse and neglect, spousal abuse, poor health, anxiety, and depression especially among rural Hawaiian families who have had to change their daily habits, most entering into some aspect of the service and tourism industry, to accommodate the changes in their environment.²⁰⁶ The financial hardship among these families in transition has also had a measured effect on family cohesion, as families become unable to support non-working and underemployed members. The inability for families to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances has been shown to decrease the amount of time spent participating in activities that contribute to community identity, such as first birthday luaus, and to increase the likelihood of suffering from mental illness.²⁰⁷ Hawaiians are vulnerable to the change from agrarian to modern ways of life in many intersecting ways, and their overrepresentation among the poor and imprisoned populations attests to the limitations that prevent their flourishing.

²⁰⁶ J. Matsuoka and M. Benson, "Economic Change, Family Cohesion, and Mental Health in a Rural Hawai'i Community," *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services* Vol. 77, No. 2. (1996), 109.

²⁰⁷ Matsuoka & Benson, "Economic Change, Family Cohesion, and Mental Health in a Rural Hawai'i Community," 113.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I drew broad connections between ancient Chinese and pre-contact Hawaiian societies in order to address the current problem of homelessness in Hawai‘i using Confucian social prescriptions. This endeavor is valuable if these values can reframe the issue of homelessness to reveal a different perspective than that which motivates many approaches in the United States. One approach that I find intensely problematic is the sit-lie ban, which prevents people from resting or storing items on public sidewalks and the areas around them. In their study of the effects of the sit-lie ban, Tai Dunson-Strane and Sarah Soakai distributed a voluntary survey to those who were affected by the ban: those who were visibly homeless. The results indicated that the majority of the unsheltered individuals living in the areas affected by the sweeps were Pacific Islanders, and more than half of these were native Hawaiian.²⁰⁸ I believe that the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom and the social and economic aftermath of its colonization is connected to the issue of homelessness in Hawai‘i. I argue that the most profound effect of this disruption has been the disintegration of communal and genealogical bonds. Styles of American identity that promote individuality, freedom, and autonomy devalue a relational view of the self. Neoliberal forces that accompany economic expansion corrode the responsibility of the government to its people. This way of ordering society conflicts deeply with traditional Hawaiian beliefs about the world and the place of humans in it.

The potential result of this influence on native Hawaiians is isolation, which I believe is a crucial determinate of homelessness. Hawaiians who live the inhospitable and despised lives of

²⁰⁸ Dunson-Strane and Soakai, “The Effects of City Sweeps and Sit-Lie Policies on Honolulu’s Houseless,” 14.

the visible homeless in Hawai‘i are not simply economically poor. They are existentially poor. The concepts that structure their sense of self are not valued in the new world order that structures their reality. Moreover, they are forcefully removed from public areas; they simply have no place to belong. The profound effect of cultural devastation and the intrusion of Western social and economic values on native Hawaiians is discussed in the context of Hawaiian mental illness by W.C. Rezentes. Kaumaha Syndrome describes the grief and lack of purposive motivation that results from the abrupt disordering of cultural stability and the disruption of traditional bonds to family and earth. Ha‘ole syndrome, the lack of aloha, is a more subjective feeling of despair or failure, where one feels a profound emptiness and cannot catch one’s spiritual breath.²⁰⁹ Pairing these uniquely Hawaiian descriptions of existential poverty with the overrepresentation of native Hawaiians among the poor and imprisoned in Hawai‘i leads to startling realizations about the likelihood of homelessness among Kānaka Maoli. The confluence of psychological and economic as well as internal and external limitations is captured by the character *qiong* 窮 in classical Chinese texts, as discussed in the previous chapter, and this enriched notion of poverty helps to frame homelessness in Hawai‘i especially among Kānaka Maoli.

The circumstances that precipitate homelessness should not be normalized. We should be searching not only for ways to ameliorate poverty but also ways to recuperate those who are not integrated into the fabric of the prevailing social world. Those whose cultural identities appeal to social relationality and inclusivity, and whose livelihoods are dependent on the land both economically and spiritually are at higher risk of ‘disintegrating’ in the sense that they are no

²⁰⁹ Rezentes, *Ka Lama Kukui*, 67.

longer integrated into a society that includes and values them and that they experience the “ontological vulnerability” of their own identity.²¹⁰ We should not erect boundaries of difference that limit our ability to feel compassion for their tenuous existence—or allow them to be constructed by a shadowy garbage collector—because our way of constructing the world is not the only way. An appeal to Chinese Confucian philosophy, as I have shown, may benefit our treatment of unsheltered individuals in Hawai‘i by pointing out the harm that may be done by ignoring and alienating the basic roots of their cultural identities, namely inclusive communal society and subsistence farming practices.

In the next chapter, I will consider our ability to relate to one another across different cultural contexts. I will use resources from the *Zhuangzi*, the *Xunzi*, and the concept of a cipher in the existential philosophy of Karl Jaspers to illustrate the possibility of an opening up of the world to reveal its unboundedness. A boundless perspective careens past the barriers of facts, systems, and beliefs toward the possibility of open-ended explorations of interpersonal understanding. I will tie this analysis to the issue of the ethical treatment of many Pacific Islanders, as well as Kānaka Maoli, in Hawai‘i. Their moral norms and cultural expectations indicate contrasts with prevailing American moral models. As a result, they are ushered to the inhospitable margins of society. How do we bring them into the world that many of us take for granted, but in which they must struggle to redefine themselves?

²¹⁰ This term is used by Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

Chapter Four. Transformative Awareness and the Formation of Solidarity

I began this dissertation with the goal of showing how Chinese philosophy provides useful strategies for considering, critiquing, and pragmatically correcting contemporary social problems, specifically homelessness in Hawai‘i. I find these philosophical resources suitable for this purpose because they focus on the particularity of lived experience as well as the inevitable or occasional experience of limitation and hardship. The story recounted in chapter two, which describes the plight of Confucius between Chen and Cai and its interpretations in early China, indicates the weightiness of limitation and poverty on the minds of early Chinese philosophers.²¹¹ The meaning of the character *qiong* 窮 in these passages, I argued, may connote economic as well as existential limitation. They are either experiencing a lack of money and food, a lack of power and influence, or the inability to discern or decide what comes next.

This focus on limitation makes early Chinese philosophy a valuable voice in today’s discussions about homelessness and extreme poverty. These are elements of the human condition that today remain stubbornly unresolved. There is no easy solution for homelessness, just as there is no simple way to pinpoint its cause. Rather, there are many interconnected causes as well as myriad expressions of the problem. What I have proposed so far is a reconceptualization of homelessness as it has occurred in Hawai‘i, which has both the most diverse population and the highest concentration of poor and unsheltered individuals of any state. Its demographics, politics,

²¹¹ This weightiness, as I mentioned in chapters one and three, underlies the Hawaiian etymology of the condition Kaumaha Syndrome, which is described by psychologist W.C. Rezentes as the feeling of being weighed down by the forces surrounding and suppressing the expression of Hawaiian identity. See Rezentes, *Ka Lama Kukui*, 67.

and climates mark degrees of difference, which are measured in conversations about whether and what sort of aid homeless individuals require and deserve.

In chapter three I indicated the different valences of self among agrarian, subsistence farmers and cultures, such as Hawaiian and Polynesian cultures, and the global, speculative markets and commercial methods of farm production that devalue and in many ways exclude subsistence production. Though this distinction may seem distant from concerns surrounding poverty and homelessness, communal responsibility and culpability is presumably an integral part of the former but not the latter. The other side of this coin is the preponderance of capitalist systems and commerce-based attitudes that promote narratives of freedom and autonomy in Western, liberal societies. These narratives undermine the relative success of communal, subsistence living.

The vicissitudes of external circumstances and the dynamics of power in agrarian versus commercial agriculture sculpt limited vistas for subsistence and sustainable farmers. I tied these concerns to the experience of homelessness in Hawaii especially among Kānaka Maoli and Pacific Islanders. I brought in the psychological, existential effects of historical, imperial realities as a way to clarify and understand the limited number of choices available to them to facilitate their own success. The inapt ascription of sloth shields the misery that would invite compassion. Instead of being cared for, their helplessness is considered an embarrassment on their behalf and a burden for the rest of us. The most formidable barrier to housing the homeless is seeing those experiencing homelessness as unrelatable. This is what Simone Weil described in her ascription of *le malheur*. There are those who exist among us but are not a part of our society. There is a

connection between being housed and being seen as members of communities held together by care and compassion.

There is at least one attitude Hawaii shares with those customarily called American, which can be attributed to the success of New England Protestant missionaries in converting the majority of the Kānaka Maoli in the years leading up to and following the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom (aided in large part by these missionaries). This attitude was described by Max Weber in his critique of modern American society, circa 1910, in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. He revealed the underpinning of the still common contemporary refrain that the poor, underemployed, and homeless are lazy and unindustrious in a 'Protestant ethic,' which formed a connection between the powerful and wealthy and the blessedness and celestial approval bestowed upon them.²¹² This narrative connects prosperity with preferential attention, such that those who are less well off may be blamed for lacking a beneficial relationship with the Protestant Christian God. Even in the 21st-century renaissance of Hawaiian traditions and ways of knowing, this figment of Hawai'i's imperial past remains, and it complicates efforts to provide solutions to those experiencing homelessness today.

In this chapter, I will consider what it takes to overcome the existential poverty apparent in the fraught, frenetic, penurious, and disconnected experience of many of those experiencing homelessness. I will bring together Pre-Qin Chinese philosophical sources and the existential philosophy of Karl Jaspers to consider the movement past bleak lack of belonging to the reconstitution of meaningfully connected lives. Of course, the opportunity to effect success must be met with the right circumstances, but the ability to recognize the opening of opportunity and

²¹² Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism and Other Writings*, 79.

the willingness to communicate with the unsettled and unknown must be present as well.

Transcending the circumstances that precipitate existential poverty requires both a revolution in the attitudes and policies that address inequality, which I developed in chapter one, as well as the navigation of boundary situations that populate our horizons with conflict and struggle.

In the *Zhuangzi* and the *Xunzi*, we find stories and allegories about living successfully and pleasurably, heeding limitation when appropriate and exceeding it when one can. These ideas couple well with Karl Jaspers' theories about existential communication which, though hopeful and open-ended, find the limit of what is possible, where foundering is inevitable. The desire to reach the limit, for Jaspers, motivates metaphysical communication with the Other of lived, embodied experience, Transcendence. Although the limit is not reached, the dynamic experience of heightened listening and careful, measured expression is the acme of human possibility. This experience frames life as something fundamentally shared, a world shaped by the conversations of innumerable partners across landscapes of difference. Philosophizing—Jaspers considers his philosophy only possible as a conscious activity—is the starting point for imagining beneficial political and social structures. In reality, the conditions of our existence lend to disappointment and confusion, and what we would most like to know is precisely that which consistently slips from our grasp. But this kind of hardship is also a kind of richness. Jaspers writes, “If I hide the boundary situations from myself, stolidly carrying on by force of habit, my life is sheer existence.”²¹³ As I argued in chapters one and two, existential poverty is the lack of the social capital necessary to be and be seen as an active agent in the formation and navigation of one’s relationships and circumstances. Although it is not reducible to economic poverty, it is its

²¹³ Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy*, vol. 3, trans. E.B. Ashton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 63.

common companion. Poverty detracts from one's ability and motivation to be aware of the changes in one's environment, even those that may steel against the riptide of hardship that pulls into hopelessly dark seas. Awareness, then, is the first step toward reintegration into supportive communities and the achievement of beneficial world orientations. In this chapter, I will bring to the theme of awareness Chinese philosophical perspectives as well as the philosophizing activity of Karl Jaspers. Jaspers' philosophizing contributes to this discussion the psychological motivations and deterrents which affect our ability to comprehend and respond to contemporary homelessness.

Philological Considerations: *qiong*窮/*wuqiong*無窮

There is a dimension of the Chinese character *qiong*窮 that I have not yet mentioned. In a fascinating philological turn, limitation and the ability to see past it are both captured in the character *qiong*窮. In early, canonical Chinese philosophy texts, *qiong*窮 means to engage in deep contemplation and investigation of things until one reaches the limit of the possible. At this limit, the differences and distinctions among things give way to a larger, unifying patterning of the cosmos. Discernment and awareness, which would allow one to see boundaries as if they were not boundaries, are the unique abilities of sages and adepts, who are described as *wuqiong*無窮, unlimited and unhindered.

The character *qiong*窮 appears in the accepted text of the *Zhuangzi* ninety-seven times, and twenty-four of these occurrences as part of the compound *wuqiong*無窮. It describes the ability to recognize things as being part of a conjunct unity and the distinctions among things as

merely temporary demarcations among events and processes. This ability allows one to plumb the depths of possible experience. Sages and adepts have the ability not only to recognize subtle and intricate connections, but also to see them as indicative of the boundless turning of things into each moment's unique context. They are thus described in the *Zhuangzi* as capable of stepping off into the infinite.

若夫乘天地之正，而御六氣之辯，以遊無窮者，彼且惡乎待哉！

As for the one who rides the true course between heaven and earth, with the changes of the Six Energies for their chariot, to step off into the infinite, is there anything that he depends on?²¹⁴

These individuals manage to ensconce themselves so completely into the dynamic processes of the world that they no longer depend on their knowledge of things as part of a value and distinction-laden ontology. They make their way in the world by selectively and pragmatically distinguishing among things. They do not rise above the particulars to a universal or conceptual realization of infinity. Rather, sages encounter no boundary or limit in their understanding of things. Here the contronymic aspect of *qiong*窮 comes to light. While in the contexts I have described so far, this term has meant 'exhaustion' and 'limitation,' and, as a verb, to 'exhaust,' it also means to see past the boundaries to encounter what is possible. So although the term connotes the meaning of 'limit' it denotes the 'unlimited'. There are no boundaries among the innumerable and complex interwoven threads comprising the tapestry of reality. The pursuit of sagely pleasure is toward an unlimited understanding that both measures and mirrors the

²¹⁴ ICS Concordance to the *Zhuangzi*, v. 43 (Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 2000), 1/2/2. Based on the A.C. Graham translation.

unlimited potential and propensity of things. Michael Nylan writes that the pursuit of this pleasure is in answer to a question:

“How is a person to progress from a first dim awareness of cause-and-effect to that exalted condition in which he chooses consistently what will give him most pleasure, moving from a state of steady depletion (*qiong*窮) of the self to the fullest state of well-being (also *qiong*)?”²¹⁵

For Confucians, the practice of rituals and the dedication to learning bring about harmony. Continuous self-cultivation ensures that the values instilled by each become habits that do not dissipate over time, and the implementation of ritual performance and enhancement of educational opportunity by the ruler preserve social parity and balance. The embodiment of social grace is, according to Xunzi, the ornamentation of human life that makes human conduct beautiful. It enables a society to set its sights beyond mere mutual toleration to seek out the pleasure and desirability of one another’s company. Amy Olberding draws from Xunzi to emphasize the importance of etiquette in our ability to live a pleasurable life with others. She writes that etiquette “ornaments brute desire and emotion and thereby operates as a barrier against disgust with our fellows.”²¹⁶ ‘Etiquette’ is the word Olberding chooses to facilitate useful comparisons between modern ethical concerns and the Confucian *li*禮, or “ritual propriety.” Both Confucian rituals and contemporary etiquette are learned through immersion in social education and become habitual expressions of societal belonging. Nylan carries this through in her analysis of ritual in the *Xunzi* as “the realm devised by the former sage-kings to forge stronger links in the

²¹⁵ Michael Nylan, Forthcoming from Zone Books.

²¹⁶ Amy Olberding, “Etiquette: A Confucian Contribution to Moral Philosophy,” *Ethics*, January 2016, 434.

populace's mind between pleasure and virtue, so that the people correctly identify ritual institutions as "what nourishes" them in their needs."²¹⁷ Knowing what to do ought to elicit a pleasurable sensation if it has taken proper root in the actor. And this confluence of learning and action means that the work of becoming a good person is never finished because it is a creative, perpetually novel expression of humanity. This moral performance reaches its epitome in the sage, whose learning encompasses all things. From the *lixue* 禮論 chapter of the *Xunzi*:

能慮、能固，加好者焉，斯聖人矣。故天者，高之極也；地者，下之極也；無窮者，廣之極也；聖人者，道之極也。故學者，固學為聖人也，非特學無方之民也。

When one can deliberate and be firm, and adds to this fondness for it, then this is to be a sage. Thus, *tian* 天 is height's limit and Earth is depth's limit. The boundless (*wuqiong* 無窮) reach the limit of breadth, and the sages reach the limit of *dao*. And so, learning is precisely learning to be a sage—one does not learn solely so as to become a directionless commoner. (based loosely on the Hutton trans.)²¹⁸

The spatial metaphor of knowledge indicates that it is possible to reach the limit of all that is possible. Through broad learning and the affirming performance of the rituals, the sages become boundless, and once boundless, they can follow the movement of the cosmos. The performance of ritual, *Xunzi* assures his reader, will "prevent fortunate and unfortunate events from intruding

²¹⁷ Nylan, Forthcoming from Zone Books.

²¹⁸ Eric Hutton, trans., *Xunzi: The Complete Text* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 205.

upon each other.”²¹⁹ Knowledge, in this tradition, does not refer to familiarity with a composition of facts. It is connected and enacted through scripted social performances of propriety. Social conformity is never far from the understanding of the cosmos. Learning and understanding are essentially moral.

Ritual and Awareness in the *Xunzi*

The moral performance of successfully navigating one’s circumstances is made possible through one’s connections to others. Xunzi goes as far as to say that the best way to improve oneself is to be around those who continuously improve themselves through education and ritual. In *quanxue* 勸學 “Exhortation to Learn,” Xunzi writes, 「學莫便乎近其人」²²⁰ “For learning, there is no method more suitable than being near a learned person.” This moral magnetism—the idea that one may be attracted to the beauty of a person’s actions and bearing as to any other type of pleasure—presumes that the development of keen awareness is inseparable from learning appropriate forms of behavior. This awareness is not honed to penetrate to particular targets and goals. Moral learning does not seek to proscribe bad behavior such that one’s choices are narrowed only to the acceptable few. Instead, it emphasizes the wide openness of a well-lived life, for the sake of which one learns broadly and experiences creatively. In *xiushen* 修身, Xunzi writes 「君子貧窮而志廣，隆仁也」²²¹ “Even as they reach the dead end of poverty (*pinqiong* 貧窮), distinguished persons’ pursuits are broadened and they appreciate the importance of

²¹⁹ 荀子，禮論：禮者，謹於吉凶不相厭者也。Hutton, *Xunzi*, 207.

²²⁰ *ICS Concordance to the Mengzi*. v. 15. Edited by D. C. Lau and Chen Fong Ching. Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 2006, 1/3/21.

²²¹ *ICS Concordance to the Mengzi*, 2/8/13-14.

shared humanity.” As discussed in chapter two, moral constancy through both good and bad times is a central feature of Confucian morality. Here, I append the idea that this constancy includes forming and re-forming oneself in response to the vicissitudes of social harmony as well as discord. Confucian moral constancy does not invoke a sense of moral repose, but of moral responsiveness. In times of paucity as well as prosperity, untarnished awareness allows one to clearly see when the clearly right action ought to be done. The broadening of awareness allows for one’s attentions and intentions to be omni-directional. The pluri-perspective that arises from consistent and broad moral awareness, coupled with the “repetitious ubiquity” of ritual that a Confucian social order prescribes,²²² pushes knowledge beyond the horizon of presence into the nebulousness of prescience. The study of social and seasonal patterning cultivates intuitiveness, which in turn codes felicitous expectations. This is the context of the last passage from the *xiangdang* 鄉黨 chapter from the *Lunyu* 論語:

色斯舉矣，翔而後集。曰：「山梁雌雉，時哉！時哉！」子路共之，三嗅而作。²²³

“As they came up, it soared and then landed ahead of them. Confucius said “Here on the mountain bridge there is a pheasant hen. Of course there is! It is the season!” Zilu gestured at it, then ‘whoosh, whoosh, whoosh’ and it was gone.”

This passage is interpreted by Ames and Hall as showing the connection between the social and natural worlds.²²⁴ Someone with Confucius’ observational acuity and deep knowledge of nature’s

²²² Olberding, *Etiquette*, 433. She makes the point that with the basic social norms firmly in place, one’s intentions and actions couple precisely with others’ perception and expectation. This smooths out the ridges that disrupt moral flow.

²²³ Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius*, 141.

²²⁴ Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius*, 246, endnote 160.

revolutions would expect to see the pheasant in that place and at that time. Naturally, the bird would take flight as they approached. The passage would have a different meaning if the wild bird allowed itself to be caught in its own environs with plenty of warning.²²⁵ It is likely that Confucius and Zilu had over-wintered and, now that spring had arrived, they were making calls. Metaphors of new beginnings and the end of difficult times are elicited by reference to the emergence of the pheasant from its winter absence, which according to the *Liji*, is when it transforms into an oyster.²²⁶ This passage illustrates Confucius's vast, variegated knowledge that unveils the world, clearing it of inconsistency and cinching it together with "one continuous strand."²²⁷

Xunzi, like Confucius, understood that awareness and action are part and parcel of moral achievement.²²⁸ In order for society to accommodate everyone—people old and young, from far

²²⁵ This translation follows Ames and Hall's, which suggests that the passage does not include the two of them catching and eating the pheasant. The difference in interpretation concerns the character *xiu* 嗅, which is commonly translated as 'to smell' or 'to sniff'. I suggest here an onomatopoeic interpretation.

²²⁶ 「水始冰，地始凍。雉入大水為蜃。虹藏不見。」 *ICS Concordance to the Liji*, 6/87

²²⁷ From the Ames and Hall translation of the Analects 4.15: 「我一以貫之。」

²²⁸ 荀子，王制：水火有氣而無生，草木有生而無知，禽獸有知而無義，人有氣、有生、有知，亦且有義，故最為天下貴也。 "Fire and water possess vital breath but have no life. Plants and trees possess life, but lack awareness. Birds and beasts have awareness, but lack a sense of morality and justice. Humans possess vital breath, life, and awareness, and add to them a sense of morality and justice. It is for this reason that they are the noblest beings in the world." Knoblock, *Xunzi*, 104.

and near, with poor and plentiful resources—everyone first must find their appropriate place.²²⁹ Even the institutions put in place to make sure no one is left with less than they need, what we now refer to in an impersonal and general way as ‘welfare,’ have as their foundation the unique performances of individual and contextualized moral actors who consider themselves culpable for societal imbalances. To guard against the existence of poverty, everyone must moderate their fancies. The moral training required to see others’ hardships as inextricable from the wellbeing of the society and all of its inhabitants is a crucial element of Xunzi’s philosophy. People are born with the desire to accumulate wealth and power, even if it is at the expense of others. Moral training, beginning in childhood, is the only way to deter further growth of this inborn tendency. Moral training in the rules of propriety, *li*禮, facilitates the division into social classes. Shirley Chan adds,

“When men recognize their positions and duties, guided by the rules of propriety, they are expected to fulfill their roles and make contributions to the economy. By doing so, order, coexistence, and abundance will be ensured. When this happens, not only is the economic problem of scarcity essentially solved, but through it men gain satisfaction through fulfilling their roles properly.”²³⁰

²²⁹ 荀子，王制：人何以能群？曰：分。分何以能行？曰：義。故義以分則和，和則一，一則多力，多力則彊，彊則勝物。“Why can man form a society? I say it is due to the division of society into classes. How can social divisions be translated into behavior? I say it is because of humans’ sense of morality and justice. Thus, if their sense of morality and justice is used to divide society into classes, concord will result. If there is concord between the classes, unity will result; if there is unity, great physical power will result; if there is real strength, all objects can be overcome.” Knoblock, *Xunzi*, 104.

²³⁰ Chan, “Equilibrium in Classical Confucian “Economy”,” 105.

The coexistence and abundance promised by a well-ordered society do not stop at the limits of human affairs. They penetrate into and propel the proper patterning of nature.²³¹ Henry Rosemont brings in the agricultural context of Xunzi's advice to a would-be king, which emphasizes the connection between a harmonious cosmos and a world ordered by human activity to promote human existence. On this reading, a harmonious society does not necessarily have a cosmological implication of a larger order, but a practical one of harnessing nature to provide the safety and sufficiency required and desired by humans. This harmony can be achieved even in the face of natural disasters. Rosemont writes,

“Xunzi believed that the state existed because man was a social animal who could not survive without societal institutions because cooperative economic efforts in the form of public works projects were necessary to guarantee that flood or drought would not wreak havoc with the crops each year. In this way each man's work makes a contribution to the state and thereby everyone else, and hence on Xunzi's grounds every citizen of the state is entitled to and must receive benefits from his membership therein.”²³²

A society that benefits materially from coercion and enslavement, which brings and keeps people in poverty, is not a real society. Cooperation and inclusivity are required in order to attain the social harmony that Xunzi prescribes. Each member of the society must cultivate the moral

²³¹ 荀子，王制：故序四時，裁萬物，兼利天下，無它故焉，得之分義也。 “Thus, that [humans] put the four seasons in their proper sequence, control the myriad of things, universally benefit the whole world, is due to no other cause than that they have developed social classes from their sense of morality and justice.” Knoblock, *Xunzi*, 104.

²³² Henry Rosemont, Jr., “State and Society in the Xunzi,” *Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi*, ed. T.C. Kline III and Philip J. Ivanhoe (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000), 5.

awareness to act according to the social scripts (*li*禮), which dictate mutually and ubiquitously beneficial social relationships. Michael Nylan indicates that the emphasis here is not on everyone accepting what is right and good according to a king's edict, but on their awareness that it will bring them pleasure. She writes,

The well-governed polity, then, requires more than each component of society fulfilling its specific functions, like cogs in a wheel. It requires also that each person experience a zest for his calling, sensing that it is well suited to his capacities and predilections. All humans, "from the Son of Heaven on down to the commoner," want to "maximize their capacities, attain their goals, and take secure pleasure in their activities." Like a fish in its element (a metaphor employed by Xunzi, as well as by Zhuangzi), each person is pleased with his situation, since his particular position "is not too much [or] ... too little for him."

While it would be a stretch to say that Xunzi advocates for a contemporary ideal of social justice, his prescribed social arrangement presumes parity as well as culpability. These moral attitudes stem from the enculturated awareness that moral education instills in everyone the virtuosic ability to act, react, and enact appropriately. Moral improvisation and the internalization of the Confucian five virtues allow one to achieve *cheng*誠, translated by Ames and Hall as 'creativity' and John Knoblock as 'truthfulness'. I will keep 'creativity' in order to preserve a dual meaning of novelty and creation, but I will add 'transformative' to bring in the concepts of awareness and improvisational responsiveness. From the *Xunzi*:

君子養心莫善於誠，致誠則無它事矣。唯仁之為守，唯義之為行。誠心守仁則形，形則神，神則能化矣。²³³

For the distinguished person concerned with nurturing their heart-mind, there is nothing greater than transformative creativity. If one can achieve transformative creativity, then there will be no other tasks that attract attention. Transformative creativity manifests one's focus on authoritative conduct to bring about justice and on being truly adept to propel it into motion.²³⁴ Once it is manifest, it can be understood. Once it is understood, it can be used to bring about changes.

This concept of transformative creativity, *cheng* 誠, will inform the rest of this chapter. It brings together moral knowledge and motivation to bring about amenable changes in one's circumstances. On Xunzi's view, moral knowledge includes prescient awareness of the cyclical, natural patterns that shape the world. Such knowledge stems from an open-ended view of an unsettled future. It is an understanding not of the way things are, but the way that they could most beneficially be. When one reaches the moral stage of transformative creativity, one can, seemingly effortlessly, begin to bring about better days. From the *Zhongyong* 中庸,

故至誠無息。不息則久，久則徵，徵則悠遠，悠遠則博厚，博厚則高明。博厚，所以載物也；高明，所以覆物也；悠久，所以成物也。博厚配地，高明配天，悠久無疆。如此者，不見而章，不動而變，無為而成。

²³³ *ICS Concordance to the Xunzi*. Knoblock section 3.9a.

²³⁴ Following Ames and Hall's translation of *ren* 仁 as 'authoritative conduct' and *shan* 善 as 'truly adept'. See *The Analects of Confucius*, 48-51, 57-58.

Thus, the utmost creativity is ceaseless. Unceasing, it is enduring; enduring, it is effective; effective, it reaches far into the distance; reaching far into the distance, it is broad and thick; being broad and thick, it is high and brilliant. Its breadth and thickness enable it to bear up everything; its height and brilliance enable it to envelop everything; reaching far into the distance enables it to realize all events. Broad and thick, it is companion to the earth; high and brilliant, it is companion to the heavens; far-reaching and enduring, it is without limit. This process of utmost creativity is in full display without manifesting itself, changes without moving, and realizes without doing anything.²³⁵

This evocation of unhindered, expansive movement brings this discussion back to the beginning of the discussion of the *Xunzi* as well as to themes shared with the *Zhuangzi*, to which I will now turn. Both of these texts and their corresponding traditions describe the importance of expansive, transformative awareness that gives way to prescient knowledge of the way circumstances change and the ability to act in a timely way. The ability to navigate propitious and unpropitious circumstances with the same grace, as I have discussed in previous chapters, is central to the Chinese philosophical traditions that have their root in the Warring States Period. The ability to become unbounded (*wuqiong*無窮) allows one to transcend obstruction in pursuit of unclouded awareness and smooth traveling. Note that these philosophies do not seek ways to avoid hard times. Circumstances that shape human lives are wrapped up in the cyclical, swinging movement of the cosmos, and the inevitability of their pressing cannot be deterred or doubted. The solution

²³⁵ Roger Ames and David Hall, *Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the Zhongyong* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), 107.

is to be prepared to guard against the penetrating existential effects of these boundary situations. In the *Zhuangzi* and the work of Neo-Daoist philosopher Guo Xiang (252-312CE), the sage is described as transcending boundaries by metaphorically rising above them. They whirl up into the unbounded and progress unabated regardless of their circumstances.

Whirling into the Infinite: Boundlessness in the *Zhuangzi*

The unbounded (*wuqiong*無窮 or *wuji*無極) in the *Zhuangzi* is not something that exists on its own terms or as a positive ontological or metaphysical entity. Instead, its description relies on the productive use of metaphor and allegory, as well as a nuanced conception of negativity, to speak to the ability of a select few to seemingly effortlessly navigate the vicissitudes of human circumstances. The patterned flow of change is unlimited in its expression and diversity, but humans have a limited perspective that occludes and obscures much of it. The grasping at what can never be fully understood, the infinite plenitude of individual transformation and the encompassing of these realities by one thing mutually shared, only takes hold of the slippery slithering tail of what is already and eternally in motion. To become unbounded necessitates unhindered movement.

Many of the philosophically rich concepts in the Chinese philosophical traditions emphasize the ceaseless movement of the cosmos that propels perpetual changes. The flourishing of the myriad things depends on motion and is hindered by stagnation, obstruction, and exhaustion. In the Daoist tradition, the unbounded, unfettered movement of all things to where they are, which is always where they ought to be, describes the cosmos in its purest, primordial state of existence. It is against this backdrop that humans consider their limitations and

shortcomings, which cause them to dis-integrate from the manifold harmonized flux (*dao*道). Falling away from the enlivening motion of things, one may begin to take what is false as true and the loopy for the logical. The *Zhuangzi* is rife with cautions against knowledge that is based on forging distinctions among things and affirming them timeless. The sage rebuffs the limitations imposed by knowing, affirming, and saying and as a result moves unhindered from the actual to the possible. It is natural that humans encounter hardship because the ephemeral shifts in cosmic emphasis cast some things in darkness, but the sage has prescient awareness that precludes existential destitution even in the most pressing times.

There are several inherent preconceptions regarding philosophical exploration of the world that are different in the context of Chinese philosophy versus Western traditions. One is the absence of an underlying mathematical structure or metaphor that would support the translation of *wuqiong*無窮 as straightforwardly “infinite”. The inalienable somaticity of pre-Qin and Han Chinese philosophy does not allow for the reduction of things, events, people, or histories into countable, discrete, homogenous units or unities.²³⁶ As a result, abstract thinking, especially in *Lao-Zhuang* or philosophical Daoist thought, relies on metaphors of expansiveness and unhindered, varied understanding. The emphasis on the unbounded refuses the basic premises of mathematical thinking of the infinite, namely identity and differentiation, as well as the formation of boundaries among things. But this tradition is not without a conception of

²³⁶ This, of course, does not mean that those of ancient China did not or could not count. Rather, my point is that things were not grouped based on an underlying homogeneity. For example, it is unproblematic for a person to say that they have two children, but how they are counted, namely, as older son and younger sister, retains their heterogeneity.

multitude, or perhaps more accurately, multiplicity. Consider this passage from the *Qiwulun* 齊物論 chapter of the *Zhuangzi*:

夫道未始有封，言未始有常，為是而有畛也。請言其畛：有左，有右，有倫，有義，有分，有辯，有競，有爭，此之謂八德。六合之外，聖人存而不論；六合之內，聖人論而不議。

故分也者，有不分也；辯也者，有不辯也。

聖人懷之，眾人辯之以相示也。故曰：辯也者，有不見也。²³⁷

The way things are is not divided up, and talk about it has never been objectively true. Once there is an identity ascribed to something, a boundary is drawn around it. Allow me to describe this boundary. You can draw them here or there to differentiate things, you can even them out or indicate a preference for one over the other, you can use them to divide things into smaller pieces and show how to discriminate between them, or you can use them to promote contention and fuel disputes. These are what I call the eight intellectual modes of efficacy. The sage lives according to what is liminal to the cosmos, where there is no impetus for discursive boundary-drawing. The sage is discursive within the bounds of the cosmos, but does not assess the value of these differentiations... Therefore when things are divided up, there remains something undivided; when there are discriminations among things, there remains something intact... The sage holds fast to these irreconcilable realities while the masses get caught up with convincing one another that the boundaries are real. Which is why I say that getting caught up in distinctions blinds a person.

²³⁷ Translation is mine, based on the *ICS Concordance to the Zhuangzi*, 2/5/26-30,

This passage is one of many instances of ontological relativity in the text. Things may appear one way and then another, or one person may see something differently than another sees, and there is no convincing and concrete way to assess the truth or validity of either state or claim. When among the common folk in the everyday world, the sage recognizes the practical convenience of boundedness, even to the point of social savvy, but only tenuously. The deeper awareness for the sage is the spectacle of undifferentiated, valueless change. Of course, the context of this concern for the bounded world and the unbounded are, on the surface, political. The *Zhuangzi* disdains the ritualized conduct and moral assertions of the Confucians and Mohists, whom he sees as stubbornly projecting their standards onto the world. But there is something more interesting going on here. We have the notion of unboundedness linked to a distinction between inside (*nei* 內) and outside (*wai* 外). The *Zhuangzi* indicates that the sage may wander around the outside into the boundless. Here the unhindered has a spatial connotation. There is an area outside of divided up, classified, valued things, where knowledge is broadened to include the diversity, multiplicity, and the changes of things perpetually in motion.

The *Zhuangzi* and the Neo-Daoist philosopher Guo Xiang describe unboundedness as a form of unity that preserves difference. Unboundedness is not an abstraction from the world but a literal description of its myriad events and inhabitants. These are not countable because they are transient and dissimilar. They do not combine to form a unity, but rather are unified in their combinations. Such a conception of the unbounded reveals the relationship of the margins to the middle and the value of the useless. It also forges psychological protections against the effects of pernicious circumstances not by preventing them, but by deterring the corrosive effects that often accompany distressing times. The sage looks beyond the obstructions—noticing them but

‘forgetting’ to heed their deleterious effects on personal striving—so as to gird the existential wealth of broadly applied knowing against the effects of living in dire straits. Sages stake themselves outside of the bounds and merge into the changes.

Transformative Awareness in Daoist and Neo-Daoist Texts

If we collect and review the passages from the *Zhuangzi* that describe the ability of the sage to roam outside of the boundaries of the human world, we may come to the conclusion that the sage is unconcerned with the world and even a little disdainful of those caught up in its turning. From the perspective of those inside the sage is incomprehensible. We find in the first chapter of the *Zhuangzi* an encounter with the madman of Chu, who describes to a bewildered Confucian the man who rides the wind, drinks only dew, and roams beyond the human world.

The following is the A.C. Graham translation:

[H]e talked big but there was no sense in it, he left the firm ground and never came back. I was amazed and frightened by his words, which streamed on into the infinite like the Milky Way, wild extravagances, nothing to do with man as he really is.²³⁸

Because he holds fast to his principles, the Confucian, hearing of a man who can “merge the myriad things and make them one” and gives no cares to how to properly rule an empire, must dismiss the words of the madman as nonsense. Even though the empire has been led to ruin, the Confucian must hold tightly to the necessity of rulership. Readers of the *Zhuangzi* have a difficult time agreeing with the Confucian, of course, because the text privileges the viewpoint of

²³⁸ Graham, *Chuang-tzii*, 46.

the Zhuangzian sage. The sage surveys the muddled mire of human strivings and sees in their oppositions and definitions the futility of perspectival certainty. From outside, the sage has no problem seeing difference as sameness. The witty and impassioned arguing among men, in a single Gestalt shift, sounds like the chirping of birds, and their vehement disagreements are reduced to a stream of inane chatter.

The sage is able to traverse the boundary surrounding human affairs and achieve a view of absolute inclusivity. There is only one way the world is. But the bounded world is subject to inevitability and causality in a way that the unbounded is not. Those who are ensnared by the bounded, proficient in office, politics, or sorcery though they may be, will never ascend into the unity of the unbounded, which depends on nothing to be or define it. From the *Zhuangzi*:

若夫乘天地之正，而御六氣之辯，以遊無窮者，彼且惡乎待哉！²³⁹

As for those who ride up to the distinct path between heaven and earth and harness the opposing forces of the six energies (*yin*, *yang*, wind, rain, dark, light) to ride off into the unbounded, where can one find anything they depend on?

In ascending into the unbounded, the sage becomes unbounded. Brook Ziporyn puts forward the phrase ‘vanishing (into) things,’ as “the obliteration of borders, which is to say, the mutual externality of things” to describe this phenomenon,²⁴⁰ which is a pivotal topic in Guo Xiang’s commentary on the *Zhuangzi*. Ziporyn writes:

By such total vanishing (into) the chaos of chance, one is constantly still and constantly one: “He who vanishes (into) things is entangled and disturbed when

²³⁹ Translation is mine, based on the *ICS Concordance to the Zhuangzi*, 1/2/1-2.

²⁴⁰ Brook Ziporyn, *The Penumbra Unbound: The Neo-Daoist Philosophy of Guo Xiang*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 69.

they are so, and yet has never ceased to be placid.” ...as is so often the case, the ideal man is modeled after the Tao itself. Guo’s Tao is nothing, and hence the spontaneity of all particular things: it is everywhere and nowhere.²⁴¹

Guo’s interpretation of the *Zhuangzi* preserves radical diversity and complexity. He gets around the pervading presence of a singular *dao*, and the implication of its totalizing oneness, by relieving it of ontological positivity. Heeding the instruction from the *Daodejing* that *dao* cannot be named, Guo insists that it does not exist, at least in the way that named things may. Rather, *dao* is what allows all things to flourish according to their unique proclivities. The ephemeral combinations and interconnections among things are what elicit the presence of *dao*. *Dao* exists only in the momentum of change, and can only be seen in the traces left behind, inauthentic because their existences are artificially prolonged. Traces, according to Guo, are what moralists use to construct the boundaries of society and propriety and hold fast to the distinctions among people and the value of ritual practices and items. Those who take traces as real shape the world by generating limits. These limits narrow perspectives on inclusivity by emphasizing the differences among things, and they are the scaffolding of any prevailing social arrangement. As was vogue among Han Dynasty commentators, Guo did not incriminate *all* societal organizations, but rather he sought an arrangement that was not discordant with what could conceivably naturally come about. Building and maintaining lasting social mores, traditions, and expectations promotes harmony in the inner, human world. According to Guo, the outer world is neither affected nor perturbed by human artifice. Rather than focus the more eremitic and aporetic elements of the *Lao-Zhuang* Daoist tradition, Guo syncretized the bureaucratic and the

²⁴¹ Ziporyn, *The Penumbra Unbound*, 79.

natural by inscribing a border meant to be transcended.²⁴² Ziporyn writes of this act of intellectual liberty:

The unity of the inner and the outer, of social morality and spontaneity, is founded on the unity of interdependence and independence, which in turn is founded on the unity of oneness and multiplicity, of constancy and change. By means of this elaborate machinery, Guo was able to consent completely to the existing social order.²⁴³

The sense of oneness that Guo Xiang posits does not imply simplicity or singularity, nor is there a sense of tabulation in the collected experiences of the world. There is no mathematical metaphor of addition in the metaphysics ascribed to the *Zhuangzi* by Guo Xiang. It is difficult to count stuff that is never still and always transforming. An attempt to count it would number a quality it does not have, namely, determinate, self-sufficient unity. The infinite, then, is defined from within a metaphysics not fixated on mathematical positivity or unity within certain increments of space and time. Guo insists that the infinite is the removal of limits, which gradually reveals the world that is incapable of being limited. In this “outer” world even one’s own ability to make distinctions and divisions among things becomes an object for dissolution. What is at stake is linguistic more than mystical. The transcending Guo speaks of is over believing that things can really be opposites, not that one sees everything as the same. There are no fundamental oppositions accounted for in the ontology of either the inner or outer world, and

²⁴² This idea of transcending can be connected to a pivotal aspect of Jaspers’ periechontology, which will be discussed in what follows.

²⁴³ Ziporyn, *The Penumbra Unbound*, 135.

there is no distinction wide enough to step through except the one between linguistic versus real distinctions. And in the realm of the unbounded, what real distinctions could remain?

As Guo puts it, “He who roams in [the realm of] no smallness and no largeness is inexhaustible (*wuqiong*); he who vanishes (into) no-death and no-life is limitless (*wuji*).”²⁴⁴

Sages reform the world by fully immersing themselves in it. In a world where we are so muddled and mired, why do we revisit the *Zhuangzi* in times of distress?

The appeal in the *Zhuangzi* to the useless sage, the inhabitant of the hospitable infinite, undermines the divisions among the valuable and the worthless. Zhuangists and Neo-Daoists sought a dramatically open and extended concept of unbounded inclusivity, one that resists the idea of totality altogether. More than preserving diversity in unity, they can be interpreted as insisting on multiplicity and complexity and as rebuffing the simplification of human society down to a set of established rituals. David Wong writes:

The *Chuang Tzu* urges us to “forget (*wang*)” morality. This does not mean that we are to lose all awareness of moral categories or that we should not use them in guiding conduct. We must allow for the characteristic hyperbole of Taoism. What it does mean is that we should not make respect for rules the primary foundation of respect for human beings. We should cultivate the part of us that spontaneously identifies with others, the state of consciousness in which the boundaries between self and others fall away. That state is *tz’u* [慈], sometimes translated as “compassion” or “deep love.” *Tz’u* gives rise to unpremeditated aid to others

²⁴⁴ Ziporyn, *The Penumbra Unbound*, 135.

when they are in distress, not aid given because it is a moral duty. The idea is that once we are able to suspend looking at people through our evaluative categories, we will be able to accept them for what they are, see them as beings like ourselves, and care for them as we care for ourselves.²⁴⁵

In the end, each of the philosophies discussed, Xunzian Confucianism and Zhuangzian Neo- Daoism, indicate a connection between unbounded, transformative awareness and an inclusive, compassionate society. Abstracting from this, we can describe the movement from actual, lived experience, which is subjected to the vicissitudes of fortune and misfortune to unbounded and prescient awareness of the auspicious and inauspicious, and on to the transcending of existential roadblocks that threaten self-certainty. From there, one may begin to appreciate and find pleasure in their surroundings and even in putting the things around them in order. If we begin with the belief that human needs are simple and easily met, then variegated and broad understanding of the cosmos easily accommodates social harmony. Both the *Zhuangzi* and the *Xunzi* emphasize the connection between awareness that allows one to have a transformative effect both on oneself and the surrounding society. Naturally, this would not be such a prevalent theme in Pre-Qin Chinese philosophy if it were something easily achieved. In order to accommodate boundary situations, in which the limitations one encounters are unweildy even if they are anticipated, one must strive to be open to what is happening in order to react appropriately. Michael Nylan writes,

The goal for Zhuangzi is not to produce new knowledge, but to produce a person open to new experiences, and therefore prepared to live life fully. His Dao adept goes beyond "what he knew and how he knew,"[33] developing a knack for

²⁴⁵ David Wong, *Moral Relativity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 208.

accommodating new things. He is more inclined to drink in scenes whole, since he has fewer expectations than usual.²⁴⁶

Cultivating such a mindset would mollify the misery of a precipitously calamitous shift of circumstances. If one learns to understand the world broadly, then the unfolding of the particular is seen not as bounded or binding. Rather, it is yet another of endless opportunities to improve one's response.

As I bring the concept of transformative awareness to the study of homelessness in Hawai'i, I am careful not to simplify the political and economic circumstances that have contributed to this problem in an attempt to tease out what a cultivated, broad understanding would make of such distressing circumstances. Hawai'i's unhoused individuals may not have the choice, the desire, or the social and material support for a roam into the boundless, for such an endeavor is thwarted by the struggle to maintain the barest survival. The boundary situations that threaten existential self-certainty are not easily transcended. The plodding, dismal existence of those whose presence is actively disdained by those around them and whose society builds literal and lawful boundaries to wipe away their humanity provides few footholds to ascend up and over the obstructions in their paths. We must seek to understand the effect that boundary situations have on those whose lives are defined by them. For a discussion of transcending boundary situations to facilitate self-understanding and thriving, I turn now to Karl Jaspers.

²⁴⁶ Michael Nylan, "Reading the Zhuangzi Backwards," Unpublished manuscript from her keynote presentation at the 2016 Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy Conference in Monterrey, California.

Boundary Situations in the Philosophy of Karl Jaspers

Perhaps it is a feature of human life that misfortune, misunderstanding, and missed opportunities shape our experiences day to day. This is the reason that we seek to cultivate prosperity, clarity, and dexterity. We run into problems when the circumstances to which we are inextricably beholden take the wind out of our sails and give way to stagnant, dreary days. I have mentioned previously that the risk of economic poverty is existential destitution, which corrodes the awareness necessary to effectively navigate one's circumstances and handicaps the ability to transform one's surroundings. There is little doubt that we all encounter situations that threaten our self-certainty and call into question our choices, but are these situations remotely similar to those that the unsheltered face? We call difficult times 'pressing' because there is something weighty and suffocating, external and forceful, about the restriction of freedom and choice. In a sense, there is something inhuman about it, which slides into the identity of those living hard-pressed lives. Those who live rough on the sidewalks of urban Hawai'i reside among the waste that tumbles out of overfilled trash cans and the critters that make a home of it. They live lives with little privacy and become used to being seen as a social disappointment, and a hopeless case that withers compassion. Their refrain, "I never thought I'd end up this way." implies the obvious: no one chooses this kind of life. As I mentioned in my discussion of Simone Weil in chapter two, every day is like paying a penance of the crime of continuing to exist. But in the case of the unsheltered, the "prison" is secured by labyrinthine passages and blind alleys rather than doors and locks.

The concept of transformative awareness, discussed in the context of Chinese philosophy above, presumes pendulous shifts in circumstance, so it offers prescriptive advice for

maneuvering around and over obstacles that crop up during hard times. I think that most hardship is attributable to swings in fortune, but I bring Karl Jaspers into the discussion to address the possibility of sustained and unmitigated hardship, such as one might find among those considered ‘chronically homeless’ by contemporary standards.

Karl Jaspers begins his search for existential self-sufficiency with the proviso that the possibility of failure is never far away, but neither is the possibility of successful self-actualization. Jaspers writes:

Knowledge about things increases my care, anxiety, and suffering; it paralyses and shows the senselessness and hopelessness of everything. When one investigates such representations, consciousness must seem like a disaster...

Consciousness can fault, and can be used in faulty forms; it then becomes a source of particular untruth. However, this is possible only because it is the source of particular truth.

For consciousness is not only something adventitious but also something that awakens, impels upward, makes for development, and becomes the condition of new experience derived from all modes of the Encompassing.²⁴⁷

This way of describing knowledge is perhaps the obverse of the themes discussed in the context of Chinese philosophy, which indicate that broadening knowledge leads to *less* strife. But Jaspers’ philosophizing deploys a different metaphor for movement. While the Chinese philosophers discussed above emphasized the increasing ease of movement as one becomes unbounded (*wuqiong* 無窮), my reading of Jaspers illustrates the need for grit and grip, in

²⁴⁷ Ehrlich, et al., *Karl Jaspers*, 148. (From *Von der Wahrheit*).

keeping with the metaphor of friction that propels movement. When consciousness stumbles, the experience of uncertainty and regret are the grit that offers enough resistance for us to regain our bearings. The desire to grip what may pull us out of difficult situations is the meeting of our intentions and the timing that underlies prosperous or impoverished circumstances. Only with both can we achieve the friction necessary to travel forward in the movement of Philosophizing, which moves us through the stages he describes in his periechontology.

Jaspers' Periechontology

The Encompassing (*das Umgreifende*) is, in Jaspers' philosophizing, the comprehensive and inclusive horizon of what humans are and what they may become as well as the world as it is given and what it may become. Humans are blessed with the ability to group particular occurrences according to recognizable features.²⁴⁸ What humans may become is *Existenz*, who cultivate their character and tune their awareness to invite communication from others and the world. The world (*Welt*) "is that which is without our being it and which remains in its ground when we comprehend its appearance that emerges from it."²⁴⁹ But what the world may become is presented to us through Ciphers that point toward something beyond the frenetic and disordered events on which our consciousness founders. These Ciphers indicate the existence of Transcendence. The Cipher appears to *Existenz* as a question posed to thinking. How the message is received is then reflected upon, and knowledge of the world is broadened. For Jaspers, Ciphers are filtered through the experiences of life that supersede the mundane. Jaspers:

²⁴⁸ This is related to Kant's theory of the unity of apperception.

²⁴⁹ Ehrlich, et al., *Karl Jaspers*, 165. (From *Von der Wahrheit*).

In my actions, in opposition, success, failure and loss, and finally in my thinking, which comprehends all this and in turn its condition, I have the experience in which I perceive the cipher... I learn from what happens to me by my attitude toward it. My wrestling with myself and with things is a wrestling for transcendence which appears to me as cipher only in this immanence.²⁵⁰

The existence of *Existenz*, as it relies solely upon the movement of philosophizing, is much different from that of Transcendence, which is pursued through communication with *Existenz*. The pursuit of the meaning of Transcendence is the invocation of the movement of *Existenz* toward authenticity. Philosophizing allows the mind to entertain the possibility of knowledge that is not cognizable, removing the firm ground from beneath the shipwreck. “The bottomless-ness of world-being,” Jaspers writes, “must become manifest to us so that we may gain the truth of the cognition of the world.”²⁵¹ In this way, the mind is liberated from the causal relationships of the apparent world, and through this movement the idea of freedom is palpable. Freedom, for Jaspers, is an openness of a mind oriented toward Transcendence that allows it to momentarily shine through the finite and contingent happenings of the world.²⁵²

Existential Communication in Karl Jaspers’ Philosophizing

The communication between *Existenz* and Transcendence tethers each person to the world in a unique way. It is the way that individuals develop awareness of what guides the

²⁵⁰ Ehrlich et al., *Karl Jaspers*, 311. (From *Philosophie*).

²⁵¹ Ehrlich et al., *Karl Jaspers*, 169. (From *Von der Wahrheit*).

²⁵² Ehrlich et al., *Karl Jaspers*, 170. (From *Von der Wahrheit*).

movement of things in their surroundings and the movement of consciousness toward felicitous coupling with a world that is never fully revealed. Ronny Miron writes:

Existenz, according to Jaspers, is anchored in the world's existence (*Dasein*) by its "situation-being" (*Situationsein*), which consists of the freedom to fulfill one's possibilities and the inescapable necessity stemming from reality's factuality. The idea of "Situation-being" reduces the meaning of the world to the personal perspective of Existenz and uncovers a profound truth about the way Existenz experiences the world, i.e., a person by no means experiences the entirety of the world, but only some of its dimensions in which s/he is directly involved... The establishing of the idea of Existenz retains, then, at the same time the particularity of the subjective meaning, but in addition to that, the awareness of situation that it is surrounded by a world. Consequently, the idea of Existenz marks the shift to the understanding of the self as a worldly being.²⁵³

This awareness moves one beyond an understanding of the world in terms of cause and effect, which posits a distance between the observer and the observed. The communication between *Existenz* and Transcendence allows for receptivity and disclosure on behalf of one's experience and one's world, respectively. Our lives are woven into the world around us, but the enlivening of the world through the interpretation of its ciphers brings out the subtle, intricate patterns in the fabric. As the patterns emerge, the lines between the present and the possible merge into them as well. The movement of philosophizing is not simply struggling to know what the world is. It

²⁵³ Ronny Miron, *The Desire for Metaphysics: Selected Papers on Karl Jaspers* (Champaign, Illinois: Common Ground Publishing LLC, 2014), 107-8.

reveals the limit of what is possible to achieve. It also reveals the limitations that prevent such desirable possibilities.

The limitations that are inevitable for Jaspers' philosophizing are hitches in the movement of *Existenz* toward Transcendence. They take place in the situations that define existence as well as *Existenz*. But not all situations unfold the way that we would prefer, and there is no way to prepare for or avoid them. Jaspers writes:

Situations like the following: that I am always in situations; that I cannot live without struggling and suffering; that I cannot avoid guilt; that I must die—these are what I call boundary situations. They *never change*, except in appearance.

There is *no way to survey them* in existence, no way to see anything behind them.

They are like a wall we run into, a wall on which we founder. We cannot modify them; all that we can do is to make them lucid, but without explaining or deducing them from something else. They go with existence itself.²⁵⁴

Boundary situations (*Grenzsituationen*), according to Jaspers, allow us “to become the *Existenz* we potentially are,”²⁵⁵ but they can also “crush [consciousness's] unelucidated existence into a dull, helplessly musing stupor.”²⁵⁶ They are, according to Sarah Bakewell, the “moments when one finds oneself constrained or boxed in by what is happening, but at the same time pushed by these events towards the limits or outer edge of normal experience.”²⁵⁷ These situations belie our

²⁵⁴ Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy*, vol. 2, trans. E.B. Ashton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 178.

²⁵⁵ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, vol. 2, 179.

²⁵⁶ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, vol. 2, 179.

²⁵⁷ Sarah Bakewell, *At the Existentialist Café: Freedom, Being and Apricot Cocktails* (New York: Other Press, 2016), 82.

rational understanding of the world. There is a unique porousness to them, and our experience is communication between a possibility we choose for ourselves—to be better, more courageous, more open—and a world that refuses to be reduced to a tidy set of suppositions.

Suffering is inevitable. It is also the ground of *Existenz*. If existence did not disclose the possibility for *Existenz*, which opens experience up to possibility, it would raise “the specter of an endless life without potential, without effect and communication. I have died, and it is thus that I must live forever; I do not live, and so my possible Existenz suffers the agony of being unable to die. The peace of radical nonbeing would be a deliverance from this horror of continual death.”²⁵⁸ For Jaspers, if we do not commit ourselves to the pain of communicating with that which can never be fully understood, and to the irresolute impossibility of a full translation of the ground of our being, then boundary situations, such as the inevitability of our own deaths, will doubly crush us. We will physically expire, but our fear and inability to think beyond this inevitable consequence of living will extinguish us long before that. When the possibility of *Existenz* is closed off, the world becomes unpredictable and inhospitable. Without it, we attempt to steel ourselves against the relentless onslaught of existence, and we exhaust what hope we have dealing with each disappointment. Defiantly surrendering to reality and being open and receptive to turns in fate is the only way to keep open the possibility of *Existenz* and the existential communication only it can initiate. Jaspers writes:

For transcendence wants me to yield in the reality of existence. If in defiance I spurned fortune as fleeting and delusive, surrender makes me feel that what everyone is to receive in due time must not be disdained. If in defiance I scorned

²⁵⁸ Jaspers. *Philosophy*, vol. 2, 201.

misfortune, if it makes me loathe all existence, surrender demands that I stand the trial: this was laid upon me; I must bear it and I will, until I perish. But what I experience in yielding is not the blind luck of existence but one of conquered defiance, a luck still beclouded by possible and imminent calamities and thus of a depth that is alien to mere existence. And neither is it simply wretched suffering, but a suffering as deep as the defiance that was overcome, so that the sufferer may still see a reflection of the radiant bliss possible in existence otherwise. In its place all being is existence; I ought not to withdraw from mine. Surrender is a readiness to live, no matter how, to accept life whatever happens.²⁵⁹

For Jaspers, there is no way to relieve the existential suffering of living in a world that does not disclose meaning to those most desirous of it. These twists of fate that close off prosperous, propitious futures threaten our willingness to live and communicate authentically. But if we accept the inevitability of these dark times, and refuse to let them negatively affect our motivation to continue to improve ourselves, then we will prevent the boundaries from closing in on our possibilities. To bring in a theme developed earlier in this dissertation, this is how we avert existential destitution during the most trying times. We have the most of ourselves at stake when we are suffering. For Jaspers, preventing oneself from becoming *Existenz* has the result of getting swept away with the calamity that generates human misery. Without *Existenz*, the fact that an individual is suffering, even if it is myself, cannot be disassociated from suffering as a whole. The possibility of existential communication, which resolves to courageously withstand suffering in solidarity with other *Existenzen*, requires the interpretation of boundary situations as

²⁵⁹ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, vol. 3, 67.

particularized and unique. Only when suffering is understood to *belong to someone* does it generate the grist and grip that move *Existenz* toward realization. Jaspers writes:

The endless frictions, deceptions, discomfitures, and possibilities in my relations with others, those difficulties in which I come to experience myself, are either consequences of pure nature as downright otherness, the hard mutual impediments of unexistential existence, or they are the darkness of a possible Existenz that has yet to open itself to elucidation by offering to communicate existentially.²⁶⁰

Once we realize that the experience of our suffering is particular and unique to our experience, we can begin to live in spite of it. For Jaspers, we do not, of our own conscious volition, begin our experience of the solidarity reserved for beings born both to thrive and suffer. This is a form of existential communication only enacted through the realization of *Existenz*, among *Existenzen*. But there is a stop between interpersonal communication for Jaspers. The impulse to communicate arises first from the experience of a boundary situation, which reveals a metaphysical otherness in the composition of our world. The experience of suffering is first and only our own. We comprehend our solidarity as *Existenz* reaching through difficulties toward actualization. Ronny Miron writes:

Jaspers's perception of communication, which was not dependent on the constitution of real relations with the other, but largely on its contribution to the broader self-understanding of Existenz and its preparation for forming its relation toward transcendence. Existenz stands alone in the face of the boundary

²⁶⁰ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, vol. 3, 9.

situations, and this is not only an expression of the essence of these situations where a person has no support or escape, but it indirectly implies that the perception of communication in Jasper's thought did not deal mainly with relationships between people, but was a metaphysical category.²⁶¹

Here is where I think Jaspers has much to offer to the discussion about homelessness. He brings to light the reasons why appeals to compassion on behalf of the unsheltered are rebuffed by the various political, social, and economic realities that stand in place of their individual identities. In a sense, we do not see others until we see that they are also suffering, and we cannot see suffering until we embrace ours. But, and this is pivotal for Jaspers' philosophizing, we must also see that they are fellow emerging *Existenz*. By cultivating ourselves in the experience of suffering, we reach out into our situations to cognize Transcendence. We open ourselves up to communication that comes from outside, and it reveals, momentarily, the furthest limits of our possible experience. This is only possible through the experience of boundary situations. Suffering is something that happens to us. But seen another way, it is an opportunity for understanding presented to us as an invitation to engage fully with the world.

The Boundary Situation of Suffering and the Emergence of Existential Solidarity

In addition to death, which we must accept as a biological, physical fact of existence, suffering is something we have no choice to avoid. Suffering is a fact of existence and necessary for the emergence of *Existenz*. Jaspers writes:

²⁶¹ Ronny Miron, *Karl Jaspers: From Selfhood to Being* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012), 156-7.

If I act as if suffering were avoidable rather than definitive, I am not yet in the boundary situation. I regard the sufferings of man as numerically endless indeed, but not necessarily part of his existence—as particular sufferings, not affecting the whole of existence.²⁶²

Jaspers presents us with a stunning revelation: there is no end to suffering. It cannot be abolished or prevented, and even if it could, it ought not to be. For Jaspers, the desire for metaphysics that draws us out of our conceptual understanding of a predictable world is what defines our efforts to achieve communication, which gives way to solidarity, which gives way to beneficial, benevolent politics.

Individuals experiencing homelessness in Hawai‘i are suffering. Their lives are framed by circumstances that they had little hand in creating and little efficacy to shift. The depth of their suffering is not entirely comprehensible to those who step over them on the sidewalk and who eye them nervously when they step into offices and restaurants. Those of us who are at least moderately comfortably housed do not see very much of ourselves in them. At worst, we deny their suffering by vilifying their choices, and heap shame and blame on them. Perhaps we do not think of them as individuals who each have a historicity that, if we could read it, would bring them back into our compassionate awareness. We can come to know the circumstances that precipitated their difficulties in the form of legislation, international power struggles, and public opinion, which derogates their humanity, distracts their awareness, and blunts their ability to respond to shifts in fortune. Quite simply, if we see them as nodes of raw and bottomless existential suffering, we do not know how to respond. We realize that we are at our worst when

²⁶² Jaspers, *Philosophy*, vol. 2, 202.

we do not respond at all, and yet we go on with our lives. For Jaspers, this indicates a turning away from *Existenz*. In these cases, we consider their suffering only as long as they are before us. Their suffering is finite, and so is our concern for them. The suffering they press upon us we merely incorporate into the incomprehensible whole of the world, which we can never turn fully toward. Jaspers writes:

For all my efforts to remove sufferings, I should have the bounds of their removal clearly in mind; instead, I give up not only clarity but the rational and effective struggle against my sufferings when in a blind rage I attribute them all to other people's malice and stupidity and comfort myself with the passive thought that all it takes to end my suffering is the destruction of the guilty. Or, in another man's case, I evade suffering by keeping my distance, by withdrawing in good time if his misery becomes incurable. Thus, by rigidity and silent treatment, I widen the gulf that yawns between the fortunate and the suffering. I grow indifferent and inconsiderate; indeed, I despise and finally loathe the sufferer, just as some animals will torture their sick fellows to death.²⁶³

If we do not engage suffering as a boundary situation, then it will not speak to potential *Existenz*. If we do not allow ourselves to offer up consolatory justifications for another day spent not helping those who are struggling, but instead keep the suffering present and festering, then we will incorporate it into our communication with the circumstances that shape our lives. In order to feel the depth of another's suffering, we must imagine the awakening in them of *Existenz*. If

²⁶³ Jaspers, *Philosophy*. vol. 2, 203.

we do not see them as also struggling to communicate with the meaning that emanates from the situations they share with their world, we cannot find the solidarity necessary to help them.

In order to effect and recognize the mode of communication Jaspers believes to be necessary for solidarity, there are moral attitudes each *Existenz* cultivates. Jaspers uses the concept of communication metaphorically to describe the relationship between the Encompassing that we are and the Encompassing that is the world we are in. Interpersonal communication, then, is not merely the exchanging of words. It is the cultivation of the individual, which prepares and motivates them to influence their surroundings. One experiences solidarity with those around them when they find commonality in their search for more than the mundane, brutal givenness of the world. Kurt Salamun groups the moral attitudes from among the Jaspers' passages about existential communication to bring to the fore the necessity of a certain type of orientation to legitimize preferable ways to live with and for others. As I will show in what follows, the goal of these moral attitudes is not dissimilar to the transformative awareness that I used to describe the transcending of limitation prescribed by the *Xunzi* and the *Zhuangzi*.

Moral Attitudes for Existential Communication and the Arrival of Compassion

If we catalog the attitudes that many who are not homeless feel in the face of the suffering of those who are unsheltered, we will find compassion as well as frustration. Human needs for living are shared by all of us, and we understand that the lack of these makes life incredibly difficult. We become frustrated at our inability to chip away at this stubborn problem. Occasionally, we are pushed back by frightening, bewildering behaviors and venomous words,

and we are frustrated that they are not trying or not able to be like we are. Then we are frustrated with ourselves for desiring distance from their exposed, desperate mortality. Jasper presents us, honest though flawed, with a choice. Blame and shame them to assuage your own guilt or engage with the struggle of forcing their existence into yours. If you choose the former, then you will become closed off from the parts of the world that include them and incapable of bridging the distance. If you choose the latter, then boundary situations will crop up to allow for the ascension of *Existenz*. These situations, according to Salamun's interpretation of Jaspers' philosophy, cultivate five moral attitudes that are essential for the formation of interpersonal relationships and beneficial political arrangements.

The first attitude is the "willingness and ability to bear loneliness and the *dignity of solitude*."²⁶⁴ What we face in our daily lives is a maelstrom of events and expectations. We risk humiliation as well as happiness.²⁶⁵ But it is only by cultivating this attitude that we can set the stage for self-introspection. We must seek ourselves before we seek others. In a way, this readies us for others, but not, Salamun assures us, in the messaging of the "psycho- and human relationship-industries."²⁶⁶ We do not necessarily have to love ourselves to love others. The relationship we have with ourselves is a well-intentioned struggle to remain dignified in our own eyes. Only from the position of the will to solitude can we emerge as *Existenz*.

²⁶⁴ Kurt Salamun, "Moral Implications of Jaspers' Existentialism," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* Vol. 49 No. 2 (1988), 321.

²⁶⁵ Jaspers writes, "When a man is unhappy, being himself will be easier than when he is happy. Paradoxically, he has to *risk to be happy*. The being that dares appear in happiness cannot reveal its depth as mere glowing vitality. Not until Existenz has reached the level it needs to maintain itself in happiness can happiness turn into a phenomenon of being." Jaspers, *Philosophy*, vol. 2, 203.

²⁶⁶ Salamun, "Moral Implications of Jaspers' Existentialism," 322.

The second attitude is “a kind of *openness and frankness*, which enables a person to communicate with another person without prejudice and masked purposes.²⁶⁷ We must hold all of our habits up to the harsh light of our own best interests, even if we risk losing fragments of the selves we find solace, but not justification, in being. The third attitude is “an *intellectual integrity and truthfulness* which allows an openness to criticize one’s own failings and dogmatized opinions with equal efforts than failings and dogmatized opinions of others.”²⁶⁸ In order to ready oneself for existential communication, one must be willing to engage in the breaking down of prejudices and corrosive biases. The fourth attitude is “a real intention to *accept the communication partner* in his (her) own *personal freedom* and specific *possibility of self-realization...*”²⁶⁹ Despite the obvious power imbalances among the unhoused and the housed, Jaspers presses us to accept the depth of possible *Existenz* in everyone. This forms the possibility of authentic solidarity in mutually recognized freedom. The fifth attitude is the “*non-egoistic intention*, to help the communication partner to realize his (her) *Existenz* without using the other as a mere instrument for one’s own purpose of self-realization.”²⁷⁰ According to Salamun, only once these conditions are met can Karl Jaspers efforts to elucidate *Existenz* meet the conditions of the modern world. Salamun writes:

While his existentialism deals mainly with private aspects of individual self-realization, with subtle emotions, feelings, and personal moral attitudes in boundary situations and intimate relationships between two persons, like friends,

²⁶⁷ Salamun, “Moral Implications of Jaspers’ Existentialism,” 322.

²⁶⁸ Salamun, “Moral Implications of Jaspers’ Existentialism,” 322.

²⁶⁹ Salamun, “Moral Implications of Jaspers’ Existentialism,” 322.

²⁷⁰ Salamun, “Moral Implications of Jaspers’ Existentialism,” 322.

a pair of lovers, husband and wife, father or mother and child, teacher and student, and so on, Jaspers' political philosophy deals with public affairs, and some of the essential political problems of our age.²⁷¹

Quite frankly, if we do not take the possibility of *Existenz* as driving those around us, then we will not cultivate the solidarity necessary to band together through the disruptive tumult of difficult times.

All of the philosophers mentioned in this chapter were concerned with the deleterious effect of suffering on the pursuit of meaning and morality. While Jaspers contributions are of course more abstract than the focus on ritualized conduct in the *Xunzi*, and more straightforwardly emotionally wrought than the Zhuangzian sages' merging into the changes, the pressing onto boundaries until they give way to the limit of human experience is something that for Jaspers, Xunzi, and Zhuangzi was the foundation of social cooperation and harmony. Existential communication, for Jaspers, weaves the net that will prevent the fatal free fall of existential destitution. This also finds a counterpart in the Chinese philosophical perspectives I discussed: there is no way to thrive alone. Isolation precludes the ability to flourish. Loneliness cannot support the full weight of our existential bounty. Jaspers writes:

First, loneliness is the irremovable pole without which there is no communication.

Second, loneliness as the possibility of an empty I is a conception of intrinsic nonbeing at the brink of the abyss from which my historic decision to

²⁷¹ Salamun, "Moral Implications of Jaspers' Existentialism," 323.

communicate brings me back to reality. Third, loneliness is my present lack of communicative ties to others, and the uncertainty whether this can be helped.²⁷²

We all must deal with the irrepressible fact that there is something in us that sacrifices itself to form relationships with others. The only way to make ourselves available to others is to make ourselves vulnerable. The relationships that sustain us depend, even in the relational context of Confucian moral philosophy, on our ability to cultivate ourselves. This activity preens our attitudes and expectations so that they form a smooth, interlocking matrix. We do this activity so that others may recognize and respect us, and that we are not ruffled by the situations we find ourselves in. For Jaspers, loneliness is a part of life that is demonstrated not only by the solitude in which we contemplate ourselves but also by our fear of being misunderstood and the guilt of mishandling the trust placed in us. Since we do not have the option of sustaining ourselves by ourselves, we shove off from the familiar shores of our unsustainable solipsism onto tilting, open seas of possibility. Our paradoxical search for comfort in the others that are also the cause of so much of our suffering forms currents for existential communication. The search reveals smooth waters when we understand our situations enough to respond according to ingrained social habits and adopted political forms. But otherwise, we founder on the jagged rocks hidden just far enough beneath the water to be unexpected. The suddenness of confronting elements of the human condition that we cannot comprehend jars the movement of *Existenz*. Jasper defines this moment, when we fail utterly to comprehend and respond appropriately to our situation, as foundering (*Scheitern*).

²⁷² Jaspers, *Philosophy*, vol. 2, 73.

Foundering, the Emergence of Complicity, and the Denial of Guilt

Karl Jaspers' philosophizing is based on the possibility of the communication between *Existenz*, authentic self-becoming, and Transcendence, the expression of the world's metaphysical possibilities in the context of our situational experience. We are capable of seeing more of the world than the series of causes which produce its physical and material certainties. Limiting ourselves to understanding the world this way disables our potential to understand the subtle, liminal, and tenuous presence of what is beyond our limited experience of the world. If we refuse to open up the possibility of *Existenz*, then we do not encounter the boundary situations through which we glimpse the furthest limits of what is possible. If we refuse to consider the possibility of *Existenz*, we will react to those suffering as if they do not have the temporal fortitude to continue to exist when we turn away from them.

Jaspers indicates that we have a choice to resist the call of Transcendence to the *Existenz* that we may become. We could conceivably choose to ignore the suffering of others and discount the disclosure of our particular situations as opportunities to shift our expectations and possibilities. We could close ourselves off to the depth of boundary situations, but there is a hitch. Our conscious way of cognizing the world generates limits that circumscribe our understanding of it. Every time we seek more than scientific and conceptual knowledge can describe, we will bump up against these limits. We will seek an answer that we will fail to be able to give. This foundering shows us how much of the world we do not and perhaps cannot know. It rebuffs our confidence that we do not need *Existenz* and the suffering it brings. Foundering brings all of the pain of the boundary situation and more because it is not in any way self-affirming. Rather, it shows us that we are not who we think we are. This is the case even if

we do nothing in an attempt to avoid and absolve ourselves of guilt. For Jaspers, we are only fully who we may become if we accept the inevitability of guilt. Jaspers writes:

My active entrance into my life will thus deprive others, will let entanglements sully the soul, and will hurt the possible *Existenz* which I reject in my exclusive realization. When these consequences of my actions shock me, I may well think of avoiding guilt by not entering into the world at all. By doing nothing I would deprive nobody and would stay pure, and by lingering in universal possibility I would reject no particular one. But inaction itself is a kind of action. It is action by omission, and it has consequences... A refusal to enter into the world is a refusal to meet the challenge of reality which darkly demands that I dare and find out what will happen. In my situation I bear the responsibility for what occurs because I do not intervene; if I can do something and don't do it, I am guilty of the consequences of my inaction. There are consequences whether I act or fail to act, and in each case I cannot help being guilty.²⁷³

For Jaspers, the experience of guilt ought to be a boundary situation for possible *Existenz*. It is a calling to think through the cipher which reveals more than we knew was there. Simply put, we *feel* that the concrete, cognoscible experience does not describe what is really at stake. When we see that people are struggling against seemingly insurmountable obstacles, such as those

²⁷³ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, vol. 2, 216-7.

struggling with chronic homelessness,²⁷⁴ and we educate ourselves on the circumstances that precipitate homelessness and the demographics of those experiencing homelessness, we are shocked, horrified, and dismayed. It does not make sense because it ought not to exist. We founder on the solidity of something impossible to understand as merely a summation of fact. We ask ourselves ‘How culpable am I in perpetuating the suffering of the most vulnerable?’ How we answer this question is how we justify ourselves to ourselves. We either choose to accept our complicity as part of the guilt we are never really without so that it becomes a boundary situation for possible *Existenz* or we do not accept the guilt and seek to eliminate the boundary situation.

Jaspers describes three ways to shirk the guilt that arises in foundering. The first is to evade it by appealing to it as a simple fact. Jaspers:

“I can untruthfully say: that’s the way it is, and I can’t change it; I’m not to blame for the existence being as it is; if it involves inescapable guilt, that’s not my fault —so it makes no difference whether the guilt falls on me, since I’m guiltlessly guilty anyway, as a matter of principle.²⁷⁵

This attitude is behind a common refrain in conversations about homelessness in Hawai‘i: ‘Homelessness is just part of life in Hawai‘i. Maybe it’s the climate. They must come here because it’s warm.’ The attempted evasion of complicity and personal guilt are complicated, however, by the added foundering of attempting to conceptualize the effects of colonialism on

²⁷⁴ Chronic homelessness is a technical term in policy literature about state-sponsored approaches to homelessness. Although ‘chronic’ refers to a persistent state of homelessness, the connotation of chronic illness brings in a useful dimension. Those who are ill rarely choose to be ill, just as those who are homeless rarely choose to be homeless. Plus, homelessness increases the likelihood of illness caused by stress as well as infection due to unsanitary living conditions.

²⁷⁵ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, vol. 2, 217.

the Kānaka Maoli who comprise the highest proportion of those experiencing homelessness in Hawai‘i. There are plenty of people in Hawai‘i who are willing to commit the atrocities to history, even though the remnants shape the lives of everyone living in Hawai‘i today. Jaspers compels us not to commit ourselves to forgetting, even in the hope of a harmonious future. Instead, we must allow it to be the boundary situation to call to our better, active, engaged selves every time it appears to us. Boundary situations are not overcome or annihilated by *Existenz*. They are revealed by our situation and only when we cultivate awareness can they draw us toward broad understanding of our world.

The second way that we may avoid the boundary situation revealed in our foundering is to commit to an abstract idea of external self-correction. Jaspers writes that “I may, for instance, calculate that the services we mutually render and the benefits we derive from each other even out, and that exploitation is canceled by law and order.”²⁷⁶ This attitude can be connected to the public responses to homelessness that prompted the sit-lie bans in Honolulu. It is defined by the belief that the systems we have created to support those living in our society will flex to accommodate everyone in the way it deems fit. This undermines our personal connection to the tragedy. It also prevents us from questioning the motives and motivation of public, lawful action. Appeals to universal dictums of law and civility do the work of undermining those suffering from homelessness. *We* do not loiter. *We* maintain hygienic standards. When we identify ourselves as one of the (reasonable, rational, and respectable) many, and we do not allow the boundary situation of the depth of human suffering to reach the trigger of our sympathy, we deny ourselves the possibility of *Existenz*.

²⁷⁶ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, vol. 2, 217.

The third way to eliminate the boundary situation is to believe that our guilt connects only to specific and transitory situations. This is perhaps the most insidious of the three because it culminates in the belief that guilt is avoidable. Jaspers writes, “Either, I think, I have incurred a specific guilt, a guilt I can name and might also have avoided, or I am not aware of any guilt and may have a good conscience.”²⁷⁷ We see this denial of ourselves when we think, ‘I will not walk past the park today, there are too many homeless people there, and it hurts me to see.’ We associate the foundering that unseats us every time we confront the reality of homelessness with the immediacy of our emotional response. Gathering those feelings together, we tie our guilt around them, then put them aside. We hope not to feel that guilt today, so we avoid the situation that would give rise to it. This is a refusal to experience the depth of our possible *Existenz*. For Jaspers, this is us merely playing the part of being human beings. Jaspers writes:

For *Existenz* in boundary situations, these untrue concealments are impossible. This means that deep down in me a foothold is lost: I am myself, but guilt-laden. Now the only way I can live is the tension of seeking to lift myself up. It is not a matter of guiltlessness any more, but of really avoiding whatever guilt I can avoid, so as to come to the profound, intrinsic, unavoidable guilt—without coming to rest there either. Responsibility mounts to its existential pathos of accepting that inevitable guilt, which we usually shun only to be thoughtlessly and passively entangled in some paltry guilt. The benefits of exploitation will now

²⁷⁷ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, vol. 2, 217.

impose obligations of performance. Impurity becomes a challenge to will only the most lucid reality, to give a clear voice to original volition.²⁷⁸

In order to indulge in the unavoidable guilt that drives us to be better, we must become better so that we have less to feel guilty about. For Jaspers, there is something incredibly formative about struggling to deal with suffering, loss, and guilt. The circumstances that elicit these responses show us the depth of our situations not apparent to our mundane modes of understanding. We do not understand homelessness the way that we understand the antibiotic-resistant bacteria that we know are killing them. The meaning of their life-threatening and preventable infections yawns open, refusing to be sutured with our conceptual understanding. The meaning of it is unbounded and intensely sickening. We can live with the guilt that arises from the boundary situations we seek to plumb, but we cannot live with the guilt of denying our complicity without lying to ourselves.

Through the experience of foundering and the encounter with the boundary situations, we allow our world to be refined and even remade. When we deal with the inevitability of suffering in our lives, we are not making gains in increased understanding in the world. We are working toward the creation of a perpetually new one. We question our own understanding, the framework we hang our identity on, and the structure of our shared experiences when we become *Existenz* in the boundary situation. There is more at stake than whether and what we know. The decisions we make and the world we would like to bring about depend on our willingness to fail to understand. Hansjörg A. Salmony writes:

²⁷⁸ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, vol. 2, 217-8.

*Jaspers ist Denken jederzeit mehr als ein Umgang mit Begriffen: nämlich eine innere Praxis, in der der Denkende sich findet oder sich selbst ausbleibt. Was er denkt und wie er es denkt, entscheidet deshalb in jedem Augenblick über das Heil der Seele und über das der Welt.*²⁷⁹

For Jaspers, thinking goes beyond handling concepts: it is an inner practice in which the thinker finds or misses themselves. What they think and how they think it, therefore, at each moment decides the well-being of their soul and the world.

How well we deal with situations that push us painfully beyond the boundaries of what we know and expect from the world determines our openness to existential communication. Solidarity is only possible once we make ourselves into suitably cultivated and available selves. Then we may become undeniably and compassionately bound to one another.

In the middle of the mire of human existence is a flower that blooms when nurtured, as a point of hope. The flower depends on the humus surrounding its roots. The reality of life is simple and given. The flower will bloom and then wither. Perhaps we can take this as a metaphor for the evanescence of our own lives. But perhaps we ought not to, because we yearn for permanence in a way that the flower does not and cannot satisfy. Perhaps a more apt kinship is with the dirt. We are a mess of vivacity and death but also the only hope for the effortless beauty we are driven to find. Donna Haraway urges us to consider a world framed by kinship with the soil in her description of Terropolis:

Terropolis exists in the... web of always-too-much connection, where response-ability must be cobbled together, not in the existentialist and bond-less, lonely,

²⁷⁹ H.A. Salmony, "Karl Jaspers: seine Persönlichkeit und seine Philosophie," *Universitas Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Literatur* v. 24 issue 5 (May 1969), 490. Translation is my own.

Man-making gap theorized by Heidegger and his followers. Terrapolis is rich in world, inoculated against post-humanism but rich in com-post, inoculated against human exceptionalism but rich in humus... This Terrapolis is not the home world for the human as *Homo*... but for the human that is transmogrified in etymological Indo-European sleight of tongue into guman, that worker of and in the soil.²⁸⁰

Cultivated soil houses billions of symbiotic organisms, and imbalances are devastating and difficult to correct. The interconnectedness of a healthy holobiome is a suitable metaphor for realistic human growth. And it is something that sustainability-driven cultures and agrarian farmers have encoded into their understanding of the world around them.

If we accept the responsibility of handling ourselves and the importance of our being born into beneficial relationships with the potential for formative, cooperative bonds with others and our world, then we will not be deterred by the magnitude of suffering. We will be enlivened to create a world in which we provide what we need to ourselves. Our crises bring transformative awareness to the limits of human experience.

²⁸⁰ Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 11.

Conclusion

As a social issue, homelessness is unlike any other. It is connected to many types and severities of malady, which creates a diverse population of people experiencing homelessness. It is a problem that cannot be reduced to one set of circumstances or dissolved with one solution. It has different facets that face forward depending on whether it is viewed from an economic, political, social, cultural, or medical point of view. This necessitates various and simultaneous approaches in order to ameliorate the factors that contribute to homelessness and assist those experiencing it. In addition, all of these are specifically contextualized by the concrete situation where they occur. In this dissertation, I have sought to describe the situation as it is occurring in Hawai‘i, especially in Honolulu where City and County ordinances and prolonged State of Emergency declaration have placed homelessness squarely at the center of local politics. This is not unique to Honolulu, of course, but this dissertation is intended to be an example of a methodology for doing applied comparative philosophy, where one particular, localized context is required.

I began by orientating the contemporary problem of homelessness in Hawai‘i around three factors that have shaped the political landscape and the public conversation: the sit-lie ban in urban areas on the Island of Oahu, the mass immigration of Pacific Islanders from Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia as part of the Compacts of Free Association, and the Housing First initiative undertaken via partnerships between city, state, and private entities. Each of these issues was used to characterize a different, though non-exclusive, population of people experiencing homelessness as well as a philosophical approach to understanding each type of experience. Each led me to dwell in different philosophical

traditions and consider comparative approaches to understanding these circumstances. I also introduced the Chinese character *qiong* 窮 as the basis for my exposition of ‘existential destitution’.

In chapter two I used resources from Pre-Qin Chinese philosophy to form a distinction between existential and economic poverty. The Ruist 儒 tradition is especially well-suited for this purpose because through the renditions of Confucius trapped between Chen and Cai there is a concern for the corrosive effects of poverty on the ability to cultivate and sustain beneficial moral habits as well as an awareness of impending changes that could be harnessed to facilitate a shift in fortune. I argued that the constitutive connections that are formed in supportive communities and benevolent social arrangements prevent the isolation that disrupts one’s ability to form and carry out plans for positive changes. Housing First programs could be seen as bridging the gap between the housed and unhoused. Those among the latter often find themselves outside of the realm of social concern. Their poverty is often seen as something beyond circumstance. But if we do not move to reconstrue poverty as a foreboding warning of the possibility of existential destitution, the result would be what Simone Weil describes as *le malheur*. The utter collapse of the person into their suffering leaves them with no social currency with which to build interpersonal relationships.

In chapter three I built on the foundation of the formation and maintenance of relationships discussed in chapter two. I brought in the historical context of Chinese philosophy and intellectual history describing the common folk and the necessity of their care in facilitating harmony. Their lives were primarily agrarian, and their understanding was grounded in the experience of working the land and living in accordance with rituals and rites. This perspective is

necessary for fully understanding what ‘poverty’ means in the context of early Chinese philosophy. Fei Xiaotong brought out the differences in how agrarian societies, such as those in pre-industrialized China, relate to one another as compared to Western societies that are not structured on the basis of particular locations. In agrarian societies, which in this chapter I aligned with subsistence farming and sustainable, communal living among indigenous cultures, such as the Kānaka Maoli, the disruption of the relationship between humans and the land they inhabit is devastating. The theft or coerced sale of land severs both the economic ties to the land and the meaningful, constitutive ties to one’s livelihood as well as one’s ancestors. I claimed that if we are to make meaningful progress on ameliorating homelessness in Hawai‘i, we must focus our efforts on understanding the reasons and history behind the high proportion of Kānaka Maoli among Hawai‘i’s unsheltered and houseless populations. This means looking deeply and introspectively, in accordance with a Xunzi’s advice to seek all corners,²⁸¹ into the issues surrounding land reform and the enforcement of the sit-lie bans, which dissolve the relationships between people and the land with which they identify and threaten the basis of interpersonal relationships.

In chapter four I brought in the last piece of the puzzle: forming ourselves into compassionate, aware, and proactive people in the face of such an inscrutable and complex issue as homelessness. I began this chapter by appealing to concepts of comprehensive attention and transformative awareness in the *Xunzi* and the *Zhuangzi*. Each text lays tracks toward the moral goal of dispelling boundaries (*qiong*窮) to form a comprehensive and inclusive (*wuqiong*無窮)

²⁸¹ 「凡人之患，蔽於一曲而闕於大理」”The affliction most people have is they are obsessed with one corner and cannot see the big picture.” *ICS Concordance to the Xunzi*, 21/102/5.

view of the world. This view requires multiple foci of awareness: 1) The necessity of interpersonal human relationships; 2) The supportive and nurturing relationships between humans and the land; 3) The natural cycles that dictate appropriately timed, seasonal human affairs; 4) The patterning of the world that brings about circumstances of prosperity and peril; 5) the gathering together of the diverse multitudes by broad, boundless knowing; and 6) a heightened sense of personal efficacy rooted in prescient awareness of impending change. Any person willing to cultivate this comprehensive awareness will see themselves as responsible for those around them and complicit in any harm that may descend. The transformative aspect, for *Xunzi*, was as much a result of moral training and rote memorization as it was moral improvisation and the visceral pull of the world on our attention. When we see the world as one, we will not seek to exclude anyone from being a part of it. When we see things in perpetual and cyclical motion, we will not find any problem insoluble or immovable.

What prevents us from tapping into the transformative awareness of which we are all capable? This question is startlingly similar to those we ask ourselves and each other about how we ought to respond to the obvious and preventable suffering of those experiencing homelessness and houselessness. I brought in the philosophizing of Karl Jaspers to address the psychological reactions to extreme suffering that seem to render problems too incomprehensible and too large to fix. I used his theory of the 'boundary situation,' in which we see more than we can understand in a world usually so amenable to our conceptual sense-making, to shed light on the suffering we feel in response to the suffering of others. We are met with the limit of our knowledge, experience, and selves when we encounter those suffering from homelessness. At worst, we may see them as 'existentially destitute,' or without the ability or motivation to form

connections with other people and the world. If we do not see them as fellow seekers of *Existenz*, then we will not feel the solidarity necessary to seed compassion and sympathy. The awareness that we, as *Existenz*, bring to our relationships with others is the openness of communication across swaths of difference. We can imagine ourselves in communication with better versions of ourselves, better relationships with another and our non-human kin, and a better and radically shared world. But we must first become aware of our world, which is riddled with incomprehensible and unexpected calamity, by educating ourselves in the circumstances that create and perpetuate our most pressing social problems. For Jaspers, this is the necessity of our perpetual suffering. It is the only choice we have if we seek to improve ourselves and our futures. This is suffering that we choose and a struggle that defines our willingness to be tethered to otherness across the expanse of the unknown. As it is suffering we choose to willingly undergo, it is not like the suffering experienced by those whom, by dint of terrible circumstances brimming with harrowing choices, we avoid, judge, shame, and blame. For, according to Jaspers, this suffering prevents the structure necessary to support formative suffering. They do not have the existential capital to experience the boundary situation as an opportunity to improve. For those that are existentially destitute, the limits of their world relentlessly press in and down, the opposite of what Jaspers, Xunzi, and Zhuangzi prescribe: out (*wai*外) and up.

This dissertation sought to redraw the limits of our understanding of homelessness by viewing the contributors, concepts, laws, and opinions surrounding it through comparative philosophical perspectives. By developing a running theme of ‘existential destitution’ I drew a narrow focus around how and why these individuals are excluded from the shelter necessary to human survival in the midst of affluence and robust ideas of social justice that characterize the

political and social realities in Hawai‘i. As we continue to shape ourselves and our societies, we ought to heed the appeals to inclusion, compassion, and culpability if we hope to truly plumb (*qiong*窮) these prosperous times.

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