

# THE CONFUCIAN GOLDEN RULE, ORIGIN AND PROSPECT

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## Abstract

The task of the paper is to trace the development of the Confucian Golden Rule from its beginnings in the *Analects*, *The Book of Mencius*, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, *The Great Learning*, to the Neo-Confucianism of Chu Hsi, Wang Yang-ming, and Tai Chen. With this development, the Confucian Golden Rule can be shown to be in dialogue with Buddhism and Hinduism in the notion of *ahimsa* developed by Mahatma Gandhi. The prospect of the Confucian Rule lies in its movement from a hierarchical ethics to a cosmopolitan ethics already foreshadowed in the *The Great Learning* and proposed by the Eco-Ethica philosophy of the late Tomonobu Imamichi.

Confucius said, “Ts’an, there is one thread that runs through my doctrines”. Tseng Tzu said, “Yes”, After Confucius had left, the disciples asked him, “What did he mean?” Tseng Tzu replied, “The Way of our Master is none other than conscientiousness (*chung*) and altruism (*shu*)”.<sup>1</sup>

Tse-kung asked, “Is there one word which can serve as the guiding principle for conduct throughout life?” Confucius said, “It is the word altruism (*shu*). Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you”.<sup>2</sup>

The Golden Rule or the ethics of reciprocity is found in all World Religions, formulated in different ways. The task of this paper is not to compare the Confucian Golden Rule with the Golden Rule of other world

religions, noting their similarities and differences and making judgments on its superiority or inferiority. My task is simply to trace the development of the Confucian Golden Rule from its early scriptures, the Four Books (Analects, Book of *Mencius*, *Doctrine of the Mean*, *the Great Learning*) to the Neo-Confucianism of Chu Hsi, Wang Yang-ming and Tai Chen. From this development I hope to draw the prospect of the Confucian Golden Rule, notably in the notion of Hindu concept of *ahimsa* or non-violence as developed and lived by Mahatma Gandhi, and expanding the meaning of “neighbour” as proposed by the Eco-Ethica of Tomonobu Imamichi.

But first, we must rule out some misinterpretations of the Golden Rule. One misinterpretation of the Golden Rule is “Do unto others what they did to you”, and what they did to you is often the bad and not the good. Clearly this is not a golden rule but an iron rule, “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth”, and as Gandhi would say, the world becomes blind and toothless. Likewise, another negative misinterpretation of the Golden Rule is “Do unto others before they do it to you”. This is similar to the position of Callicles in Plato’s dialogue *Gorgias* that “to suffer injustice is worse than to do injustice”, and therefore before injustice is done to you, you beat the other first to it.

Another misinterpretation of the Confucian Golden Rule is to compare it with Christ’s. Jesus says, “Do to others whatever you would have them do to you”.<sup>3</sup> This is positive whereas Confucius’ is negative: “Do not do to others what you do not want done to you”, and therefore not a golden rule but a silver one. As we will point out, there are many positive formulations of the Golden Rule in the Analects.

## **THE GOLDEN RULE IN THE *FOUR BOOKS***

The positive formulation of the Confucian Golden Rule, *shu* in Chinese, is found in its reference to the primary virtue of Confucius: *ren*. *Ren* has been translated as benevolence, love, kindness, compassion, magnanimity, perfect virtue, goodness, human heartedness, humanity. But when Confucius was asked by a disciple for the meaning of *ren*, he replied, “Love others”.<sup>4</sup> The character *ren* (仁) is a composite of two char-

acters: *ren*, meaning man, and *erh*, meaning two. Thus, *ren* has come to mean the virtue governing inter-human relationships. And the Golden Rule is one of its two aspects, the other being *chung*, translated as conscientiousness or fidelity to oneself.

Tzu-kung said, “If a ruler extensively confers benefit on the people and can bring salvation to all, what do you think of him? Would you call him a man of humanity?” Confucius said, “Why only a man of humanity? He is without doubt a sage. Even (sage-emperors) Yao and Shun fell short of it. A man of humanity, wishing to establish his own character, also establishes the character of others, and wishing to be prominent himself, also helps others to be prominent. To be able to judge others by what is near to ourselves may be called the method of realizing humanity”.<sup>5</sup>

Zhong (忠) and shu (恕) are inseparable. They are two aspects of the same virtue, *ren*. *Zhong* is fidelity to oneself, duty to oneself, and *shu*, one’s duty to others. *Ren* as love is love for man, both self and others. It is love for the humanity in man, for what he is, not for what he has or does, for “by nature all human beings are alike; through practice they have become far apart”.<sup>6</sup> *Ren* is essentially the unity of *zhong* and *shu*. Both characters are written with the character *hsin* at the bottom. *Hsin* literally means “heart” and denotes many things: intentions, feelings, cognitive and evaluative activity. It means the very core of man, in phenomenological terms, his subjectivity. *Shu* has the character *ru* above, meaning “just as”. *Shu* therefore means “do or act just as the heart dictates”, in short the Golden Rule, in the negative formulation, “Do not do unto others what you do not want others to do unto you”. *Shu* is translated by Wing-tsit Chan as altruism. *Chung*, translated by Wing-tsit Chan as “conscientiousness” has the character *zhong*, meaning “middle, center” above. Together with *hsin* below, *zhong* literally means “to put one’s heart in the center of whatever you are doing”. *Zhong* means wanting what you really want, being true to oneself.

This inseparability of both conscientiousness and the Golden Rule is what I think Kant missed in his refusal to liken his categorical impera-

tive to the Confucian Golden Rule. In a footnote in the Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals, he says:

Let no one think that here the trivial ‘*quod tibi non vis fieri, etc.*’ can serve as a standard or principle. For it is merely derivative from our principle, although subject to various qualifications: it cannot be a universal law since it contains the ground neither of duties to oneself nor of duties of kindness to others (for many a man would readily agree that others should not help him if only he could be dispense from affording help to them), nor finally of strict duties towards others; for on this basis the criminal would be able to dispute with the judges who punish him, and so on.<sup>7</sup>

What Kant is saying is that the Golden Rule is too relativistic or subjective. One can justify his not helping others in their problems because he does not want to be helped by others in his problems. Or the criminal can contend with the judge that the judge himself would not want to be judged. Similarly, a student can tell his teacher not to flunk him because the teacher would not want to be flunked by his own teacher. In all three instances, one is not being true to oneself as human nature, as judge, and as teacher.

Under the principal virtue of *ren*, the positive and negative formulations of the Golden Rule can go together.

Chung-kung asked about humanity (*ren*). Confucius said, “When you go abroad, behave to everyone as if you were receiving a great guest. Employ the people as if you were assisting at a great sacrifice. Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you. Then there will be no complaint against you in the state or in the family (the ruling clan)”. Chung-kung said, “Although I am not intelligent, may I put your saying into practice”.<sup>8</sup>

Going abroad and behaving to everyone as if you were receiving a great guest is a positive formulation of Golden Rule. Likewise with employing the people as if you were assisting a great sacrifice.

Under the principal virtue of *ren* and its other aspect, conscientiousness, the goal of the Golden Rule is to establish peace and harmony

in society.

Tsu-lu asked about the superior man. Confucius said, “The superior man is one who cultivates himself with seriousness (*ching*)”. Tzu-lu said, “Is that all?” Confucius said, “He cultivates himself so as to give the common people security and peace”.<sup>9</sup>

And to establish peace and harmony in society is to treat everyone as brothers and sisters.

Ssu-ma Niu, worrying said, “All people have brothers but I have none”. Tzu-hsia said, “I have heard (from Confucius) this saying: “Life and death are the decree of Heaven (*ming*); wealth and honor depend on Heaven. If a superior man is reverential (or serious) without fail, and is respectful in dealing with others and follows the rules of propriety, then all within the four seas (the world) are brothers. What does the superior man have to worry about having no brothers?”<sup>10</sup>

Although the humanistic basis of *ren* makes it universal, in application, however, it admits of gradation. One should start with the family and extend it to the community. Mencius said, “Treat with respect the elders in my family and then extend that respect to include the elders in other families. Treat with tenderness the young in my own family, and then extend that tenderness to include the young in other families....”<sup>11</sup> Ren as graded is further elaborated by Mencius, who pairs *ren* with *i* (義), righteousness. Mencius said, “Ren is man’s mind-heart and righteousness is his path”. A path implies priorities, and priorities involve gradation and distinction. One cannot love everybody equally, although love by nature is all-embracing. By respecting the elders in my family, I can by extension also treat with respect the elders of other families. It is unnatural for man to love all alike and to the same degree. By admitting gradations in *ren*, the Golden Rule is applied hierarchically

Mencius is also known for his doctrine of the innate goodness of man, that man’s nature is originally good. One of his arguments is the intuitive appeal to experience, of the “instinct” in man to save a child

about to fall into the well.<sup>12</sup> The feeling of commiseration is the beginning of *ren* and all men have this basic feeling. All also have the innate knowledge of the good and the innate ability to do the good. But what is nature for Mencius? For Mencius, nature is not only what is inborn but what Heaven has endowed,<sup>13</sup> such that “he who exerts his mind-heart to the utmost knows his nature. He who knows nature knows Heaven”.<sup>14</sup> In Mencius, we have a close affinity of man and Heaven through love and the other virtues.

This insight of the affinity of man and Heaven is reiterated in the *Doctrine of the Mean*, originally a chapter from the *Book of Rites*, existing in the early Han dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D.220), but which became part of the *Four Books* of classical Confucianism. The text begins with “what Heaven (*Tien*, Nature) imparts to man is called human nature. To follow our nature is called the Way (*Tao*). Cultivating the Way is called education. The Way cannot be separated from us for a moment. What can be separated from us is not the Way...”<sup>15</sup> The Golden Rule appears in Chapter 13:

Confucius said, “The Way is not far from man. When a man pursues the Way and yet remains away from man, his course cannot be considered the Way. The *Book of Odes* says, ‘In hewing an axe handle, the pattern is not far off’. If we take an axe handle to hew another axe handle and look askance from one to the other, we may still think the pattern is far away. Therefore the superior man governs men as men, in accordance with human nature, and as soon as they change (what is wrong), he stops. Conscientiousness (*chung*) and altruism (*shu*) are not far from the Way. What you do not wish others to do to you, do not do to them”.<sup>16</sup>

In this passage, the Golden Rule, *shu*, together with conscientiousness, *chung*, aside from their being access to the Way, is applied to the ruler in governing his people. The ruler in transforming his people sets himself as a model by the cultivation of his human nature.

A similar insight is found in chapter 9 commentary of Tzeng Tzu on the *Great Learning*, which was also originally part of the *Book of*

*Rites.*

Yao and Shun led the world with humanity and the people followed them. (Wicked kings) Chieh and Chou led the world with violence and the people followed them. The people did not follow their orders which were contrary to what they themselves liked. Therefore the superior man must have the good qualities in himself before he may require them in other people. He must not have the bad qualities in himself before he may require others not to have them. There has never been a man who does not cherish altruism (*shu*) in himself and yet can teach other people. Therefore the order of the state depends on the regulation of the family.<sup>17</sup>

The Golden Rule plays an important role in the educational, moral, and political program of the *Great Learning*: In order to have peace in the world, there must be first order in the states; the order of the states depends on the regulation of the family; the regulation of the family depends on the cultivation of the personal life; the cultivation of the personal life consists in the rectification of the mind-heart, making the will sincere, extending knowledge, and investigation of things. The “world” in the context of the *Great Learning* is the whole of China, at that time made of several states ruled by family clans. The Golden Rule acts as a “measuring square” ensuring order in the states in order to have peace in the world.

What is meant by saying that peace of the world depends on the order of the state is this: When the ruler treats the elders with respect, then the people will be aroused toward filial piety. When the ruler treats the aged with respect, then the people will be aroused toward brotherly respect. When the ruler treats compassionately the young and the helpless, then the common people will not follow the opposite course. Therefore the ruler has a principle with which, as with a measuring square, he may regulate his conduct.

What a man dislikes in his superiors, let him not show it in

dealing with his inferiors; what he dislikes in those in front of him, let him not show it in preceding those who are behind; what he dislikes in those behind him, let him not show it in following those in front of him; what he dislikes in those on the right, let him not apply it to those on the left; and what he dislikes in those on the left, let him not apply it to those on the right. This is the principle of the measuring square.<sup>18</sup>

It is important to note that while the program of the *Great Learning* is addressed to the ruler, it is also applicable to everyone. “From the Son of Heaven down to the common people, all must regard cultivation of the personal life as the root or foundation”.<sup>19</sup>

## THE GOLDEN RULE IN NEO-CONFUCIANISM

After Mencius, *ren* evolved to include the influences of Taoism and Buddhism, and the great synthesizer of Neo-Confucianism is Chu Hsi (1130-1200). In Chu Hsi we find the metaphysical basis of *ren* in the dictum “Principle (*li*) is one but its manifestations are many”. Chu Hsi identifies *ren* with nature and principle, and love as its function. As principle and nature, it is one, but as function, it is many.<sup>20</sup> Although love’s manifestations are many, they are all one because they partake of one principle, the Principle of Heaven and Earth.<sup>21</sup> Now, the Principle of Heaven and Earth is identical with the mind of Heaven and Earth, and the mind of Heaven and Earth is to produce things.<sup>22</sup> Since *Ren* is the mind of Heaven and Earth, it follows that it is also the process of production and reproduction. “In man, it is the mind to love people gently and to benefit things”.<sup>23</sup> The influence of Buddhism and Taoism is shown in Chu Hsi’s insistence on making impartiality as the substance of *ren*.

“When one makes impartiality the substance of his person, that is *ren*”.<sup>24</sup> *Ren* is the principle originally inherent in man’s mind. With impartiality, there is *ren*. With partiality, there is no *ren*. But impartiality as such should not be equated with *ren*. It must be made man’s substance



before it becomes *ren*. Impartiality is antecedent to *ren*; altruism and love are subsequent. This is because impartiality makes *ren* possible, and *ren* makes love and altruism possible.<sup>25</sup>

*Ren* is the principle of love, and impartiality is the principle of *ren*. Therefore, if there is impartiality, there is *ren*, and if there is *ren*, there is love.<sup>26</sup>

In relation to *ren* as impartial love, the Golden Rule or altruism, however, is cultivated.

*Ren* is spontaneous, altruism (*shu*) is cultivated. *Ren* is natural, altruism is by effort. *Ren* is uncalculating and has nothing in view, altruism is calculating and has an object in view.<sup>27</sup>

Wang Yang-ming (1472-1529) extends this creative character of *ren* in his doctrine of “forming one body with the universe”. Because of the character of *ren* to grow and reproduce, the man of *ren* forms one body with the universe.

The great man regards Heaven and Earth and the myriad things as one body. He regards the world as one family and the country as one person. As to those who make a cleavage between objects and distinguish between the self and others, they are small men. That the great man can regard Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things as one body is not because he deliberately wants to do so, but because it is natural to the human nature of his mind that he do so. Forming one body with Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things is not only true of the great man. Even the mind of the small man is no different. Only he himself makes it small...<sup>28</sup>

And loving the people in the *Great Learning* for Wang Yang-ming means “to put into universal operation the function of the state of forming one body.

Therefore, only when I love my father, the father of oth-

ers, and the fathers of all men can my humanity form one body with my father, the father of others, and the fathers of all men. When it truly forms one body with them, then the clear character of filial piety will be manifested. Only when I love my brother, the brother of others, and the brother of all men can my humanity really form one body with my brother, the brother of others, and the brothers of all men. When it truly forms one body with them, then the clear character of brotherly respect will be manifested. Everything from ruler, minister, husband, wife, and friends, to *mountains, rivers, spiritual beings, birds, animals, and plants* should be truly loved in order to realize my humanity that forms one body with them, ...<sup>29</sup>

We can note from the above that the Golden Rule as an aspect of love includes not only human beings but all of nature. Thus, a person would feel alarmed and commiseration when he sees a child about to fall into a well,<sup>30</sup> feel an “inability to bear” when he observes the pitiful cries and frightened appearance of birds and animals about to be slaughtered, feel pity when he sees plants broken and destroyed, and feel regret when he sees tiles and stones shattered and crushed.<sup>31</sup>

Tai Chen (1723-1777) rejected the intellectual speculation of Chu Hsi and the intuitionism of Wang Yang-ming but perpetuated their understanding of principle as an unceasing process of production and reproduction. However, he considered principle as “nothing but the order of things, and by things he understood ‘daily affairs such as drinking and eating’”.<sup>32</sup> As the order of things, principle consists of feelings, not the selfish and excessive ones, but of those that do not err.

Principle consists of feelings that do not err. Principle can never prevail when (correct) feelings are not satisfied. When one does something to others, one should examine oneself and think quietly to see whether he could accept if others did the same thing to him. When one gives some responsibility to others, one should examine himself and think quietly to see whether he could fulfil it if others give the same responsibility to him. When the measure of the

self is applied to others, principle will become clear. The Principle of Nature (T'ien-li, Principle of Heaven) means natural discrimination. With natural discrimination, one measures the feelings of others in terms of one's own, and there will be no injustice or imbalance....<sup>33</sup>

Measuring the feelings of others in terms of one's own is none other than the Golden Rule. By equating principle with feelings that do not err, Tai Chen follows Mencius' doctrine of the original goodness of human nature and attributes error to selfishness and excess. And the objective standard for feelings that do not err in concrete and ordinary things is the Golden Rule.

## **CONFUCIAN GOLDEN RULE IN DIALOGUE WITH BUDDHIST AND HINDU GOLDEN RULE**

What can we discern in the development of the Golden Rule from the ancient texts to the Neo-Confucianism of Chu Hsi, Wang Yang-ming, and Tai Chen? Namely, the expansion of the Golden Rule to include not only fellow human beings but the whole of nature, and consequently a movement of its application from a contextual hierarchical relationship of roles in society to a more universal relationship with the whole of nature. Still, what underlies the development is the common goal of establishing peace or order in the world through love or *ren*, the opposite of which is violence.

It is in the notion of non-violence or *ahimsa* that the Confucian Golden Rule, we can venture to say, has already been in dialogue with Buddhist and Hindu Golden Rule.

The Buddhist Golden Rule reads, "One who loves himself should not harm another".<sup>34</sup> The equality of the self and the other that is the foundation of the Golden Rule is none other than the commonality of suffering and happiness: "All equally experience suffering and happiness, I should look after them as I do myself".<sup>35</sup> The love that the Buddha preached is an all-embracing love, an unconditional self-giving compassion flowing freely towards all living creatures.

May all creatures abound

in weal and peace; may all  
be blessed with peace always;  
all creatures weak or strong,  
all creatures, great and small'  
creatures unseen or seen,  
dwelling afar or near,  
born or awaiting birth,  
--may all be blessed with peace!

Let none cajole or flout  
his fellow anywhere;  
let none wish others harm  
in dungeon or in hate.

Just as with her own life  
a mother shields from hurt  
her own, her only, child,--  
let all-embracing thoughts  
for all that lives be thine,

--an all embracing love  
for all the universe  
in all its heights and depths  
and breadth, unstinted love,  
unmarred by hate within,  
not rousing enmity.

So, as you stand or walk,  
or sit, or lie, reflect  
with all your might on this;  
'--'tis deemed 'a state divine'.<sup>36</sup>

Likewise, the Hindu Golden Rule is expressed in *ahimsa*. Already in Jainism the Indic Golden Rule of reciprocity and nonviolence

encompasses all creatures: “A man should wander about treating all creatures as he himself would be treated”.<sup>37</sup> But in Hinduism it is a principle within a greater principle of the *dharma*. *Dharma* is understood as the order both in nature and society. In the social order, it consists of duties proper to one’s position and rank (the caste system). The Hindu Golden Rule is situated in this hierarchical ethical framework of the *dharma*. Thus the formulation of Hindu Golden Rule found in the epic *Mahabharata* is: “One should not behave towards others in a way which is disagreeable to oneself. This is the essence of morality. All other activities are due to selfish desire”.<sup>38</sup>

That the practice of *ahimsa* is situated in one’s *dharma* is illustrated in the Hindu classic the *Bhagavad-Gita*, which is part of the epic *Mahabharata*. The principal character Arjuna hesitates to fight the opposing army because they are his own kinsmen. His charioteer Krishna, who is an avatar, an incarnation of the god Vishnu, advises him to fight because it is his *dharma*, his duty as a warrior. Besides, the *atman*, the soul, is immortal and undergoes transmigration or reincarnation.

Mahatma Gandhi reinterprets *ahimsa* in the *Gita* and made it the central core of his philosophy of *satyagraha*, the force of truth. For Gandhi, it is wrong to interpret the *Gita* as advocating violence. On the contrary, it advocates non-violence. The poet Vyasa wrote the epic *Mahabharata*, of which the *Gita* is a part, to depict the futility of war. The *Gita*’s subject is not a description of the battle and the justification of violence. The battle is within us, the battle between good and evil, and the battlefield is our body.

That the overall teaching of the *Gita* is not violence but non-violence is evident from the argument which begins in Chapter II and ends in Chapter XVIII. The intervening chapters propound the same theme. Violence is simply not possible unless one is driven by anger, by ignorant love and by hatred. The *Gita*, on the other hand, wants us to be incapable of anger....<sup>39</sup>

In this world there will always be violence. “The *Gita* shows the way which will lead us out of it, but it also says that we cannot escape it simply by running away from it like cowards. Anyone who prepares to

run away would do better, instead, to kill and be killed”.<sup>40</sup> Ahimsa is active nonviolence; it is not meant for the weak but for the strong. “With the weak it might easily be hypocrisy”.<sup>41</sup> When there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, Gandhi would advise violence,<sup>42</sup> but only for self-defense or for the defense of the defenseless.<sup>43</sup>

## **PROSPECT OF THE CONFUCIAN GOLDEN RULE: FROM GANDHI TO IMAMICHI**

We can draw out the prospect of the Confucian Golden Rule in the notion of ahimsa as active nonviolence developed by Gandhi in his philosophy of *satyagraha*.

For Gandhi, “non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute”.<sup>44</sup> “That which distinguishes man from all other animals is his capacity to be non-violent. And he fulfills his mission only to that extent that he is non-violent and no more”.<sup>45</sup> Nonviolence alone is lawful, according to the law made by Nature for man.<sup>46</sup> As an inseparable part of our very being, it is “not a garment to be put on and off at will. Its seat is in the heart”.<sup>47</sup>

Its seat in the heart, *ahimsa* cannot be proven by argument but is a matter of faith and experience.<sup>48</sup> Ahimsa is a passion to be pursued, a creed and not a policy. “Nonviolence to be a creed has to be all-pervasive. I cannot be non-violent about one activity of mine and violent about others”.<sup>49</sup> It is applied privately and publicly.<sup>50</sup>

Nonviolence of the strong cannot be a mere policy. It must be a creed, or a passion if ‘creed’ is objected to. A man with a passion expresses it in every little act of his. Therefore he who is possessed by non-violence will express it in the family circle, in his dealings with neighbours, in his business, in Congress meetings, in public meetings, and in his dealings with opponents.<sup>51</sup>

In answer to a query that observing perfect nonviolence is impossible in practical life since the destruction of insects could never be completely avoided, Gandhi replied that every action or motion involves vio-

lence because of the very association of the atman (the true self) with the body. Perfect non-violence is an ideal to be strived for but some degree of violence is unavoidable. It is a matter of the heart.

Non-violence is a quality of the heart. Whether there is violence or non-violence in our actions can be judged by reference to the spirit behind them. . . . All the gifts and abilities of a good man, that is, a non-violent, compassionate man, are for the service to others. There is violence always in the attachment to one's ego. When doing anything, one must ask oneself this question: Is my action inspired by egoistic attachment? If there is no such attachment, then there is no violence.<sup>52</sup>

Ahimsa is also equated with love. "Non-violence, translated 'love', is the supreme law for human beings".<sup>53</sup> This love is all-embracing, all-pervasive, and unconditional.

We must let the law of love rule us through and through or not at all. Love among ourselves based on hatred of others breaks down under the slightest pressure. . . . War will only be stopped when the conscience of mankind has become sufficiently elevated to recognize the undisputed supremacy of the Law of Love in all walks of life.<sup>54</sup>

Ritual observances such as prayers and fasting will mean nothing if "we do not feel a live kinship with all life", including the enemy.<sup>55</sup> "Brotherhood requires no consideration or response".<sup>56</sup> For Gandhi, "love has no boundary. My nationalism includes the love of all nations of the earth irrespective of creed".<sup>57</sup>

Faith in ahimsa, however, "is impossible without a living faith in God".<sup>58</sup> Ahimsa as Truth and Love is inseparable from a living faith in God. The God that Gandhi believes in is an all-embracing living Light, a living Force which inheres in every living other force. As a believer in this all-embracing Light and living Force, Gandhi was open to all religions.

The practice of ahimsa is the *satyagraha*, meaning soul-force or truth-force or love-force. *Satyagraha* may be used by individuals or communities. It can be used by women, men and children.<sup>59</sup> This attests to

the universality of ahimsa. As truth-force or love-force, *satyagraha* also points to the objectivity of value. Truth and Love are objective values. "In thousands of our acts, the propelling power is truth or love. The relations between father and son, husband and wife, indeed our family relations are largely guided by truth or love. And we therefore consciously or unconsciously apply *satyagraha* in regulating these relations".<sup>60</sup> The standard that we apply to domestic relations should also be the standard to regulate the relations between rulers and ruled, between man and man.<sup>61</sup> *Satyagraha* should be extended beyond the family to the village, beyond the village to the province, beyond the province to nation, and beyond the nation to the world.<sup>62</sup>

The last point rings familiar; it is also the program of the *Great Learning*. And ahimsa as seated in the heart, the nature of the human being, identified with love, inseparable from a living faith in God as all-embracing are also the attributes of the Confucian Golden Rule as rooted in the mind-heart (*hsin*), an aspect of *ren* as love, innate in the human being, and inseparable from Heaven (*T'ien*).

The prospect of the Confucian Golden Rule lies in its universalization and expansion. This is one of the proposals of Tomonobu Imamichi (1922-2012) in his Eco-Ethica philosophy.

*Eco-Ethica* is a Latin term coined by Imamichi, to refer to human beings' habitat, which includes world of technology. *Eco-ethica* "refers to an ethics that encompasses our human habitat" that is mediated by science and technology. "It is an ethics for a borderless society. Since the eco in *eco-ethica* signifies habitat in the broad sense, *eco-ethica* represents an ethics not for the family or the nation, but for our contemporary world with its scientific and technological environment. Eco-ethica is a moral science that addresses issues concerning our entire human habitat".<sup>63</sup>

One such issue is our relationship with others, human and non-human. More and more our relationships with others are mediated by science and technology, for example by the cellphone and the internet. "With technology-mediated environment people in far-flung corners of the globe become our neighbours via the telephone".<sup>64</sup>

In concrete terms, this means we need to rethink the concept of neighbour in ethics. In the past, our neighbours



consisted of people with whom we had blood ties or territorial connections, but sometimes we also regard as neighbours people who are geographically distant and who would never naturally be regarded in that light. This occurs through legal ties or through work ties or through technological ties where people are linked by technology.<sup>65</sup>

Rethinking the concept of neighbour would mean that the traditional face-to-face ethics would have to be transcended<sup>66</sup> and must necessarily include an *ethica ad rem*, ethics towards things.<sup>67</sup>

Applying the Confucian Golden Rule in *eco-ethica* would entail expanding our notion of the other to include the strangers or foreigners, what Imamichi calls the virtue of *philoxenia* (love of strangers),<sup>68</sup> the marginalized who have nothing to eat, the natural environment (think of the engendered species and pollution), and even things. “We need to acquire the know-how to operate cars and communication devices and other equipment in our technology-mediated society”,<sup>69</sup> to provide service to others.

## CONCLUSION

There is so much violence in our world today. As Imamichi has noted, “we are exposed to the threat of seven ‘untimely deaths’ -i.e. starvation, death from accidents, death in war, death from pollution, death through terrorism, suicide, and murder. These existed in the past, but today atrocious termination of human life, which should be protected through technology and human rights, are far more common than in any previous century”.<sup>70</sup> The Confucian Golden Rule in dialogue with Buddhism and Hinduism, as shown in its development from the time of Confucius to the present, may have something to contribute to make our world a more peaceful world to live in.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Analects, 4:15 Wing-Tsit Chan’s translation, *A Source Book in Chinese*

*Philosophy*. (Princeton University Press, 1963). Unless specified, the translation is by Wing-tsit Chan.

<sup>2</sup>Analects, 15:23.

<sup>3</sup>Matthew 7:12.

<sup>4</sup>Analects 12:22. Translation by Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr., *The Analects of Confucius, A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999).

<sup>5</sup>Analects 6:28. Wing Tsit-Chan translation.

<sup>6</sup>Analects 17:2.

<sup>7</sup>Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, translated and analyzed by H.J. Paton (Harper Torchbooks, 1964), p.97.

<sup>8</sup>Analects, 12:2.

<sup>9</sup>Analects, 15:45.

<sup>10</sup>Analects, 12:5.

<sup>11</sup>Mencius, IA: 7.

<sup>12</sup>Mencius, II A: 6.

<sup>13</sup>Mencius VI A: 15.

<sup>14</sup>Mencius VII A: 1.

<sup>15</sup>*Doctrine of the Mean*, chapter 1.

<sup>16</sup>*Doctrine of the Mean*, chapter 13.

<sup>17</sup>*The Great Learning*, chapter 9.

<sup>18</sup>*The Great Learning*, chapter 10.

<sup>19</sup>The “Text” of the *Great Learning*. The “Son of Heaven” is the emperor.

<sup>20</sup>*Chu Tzu ch’uan-shu*, 47/33.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 49:23a.

<sup>22</sup>Chu Hsi, “A Treatise on Ren” in Wing-tsit Chan, *Source Book*, p.593.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 595.

<sup>24</sup>Quoted from the I Ching commentary on hexagram no. 2, k’un.

<sup>25</sup>*Chu Tzu ch’uan-shu*, 47: 19b-20a.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 47:6b.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 47: 6a-b.

<sup>28</sup>Wang Yang-ming, *Inquiry on the Great Learning*, in Wing-tsit Chan, *Sourcebook*, p.659.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.660-661. Italics mine.

<sup>30</sup>*Book of Mencius*, 2A:6.

<sup>31</sup>Wang Yang-ming, op. cit., p.272.

<sup>32</sup>Wing-tsit Chan, op. cit., p.709.

<sup>33</sup>Tai Chen, *Commentary on the Meanings of Terms in the Book of Mencius*, in Wing-tsit Chan, *Sourcebook*, p.712.

<sup>34</sup>John Ireland, *The Udana; Inspired Utterances of the Buddha* (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1990), p.68.

<sup>35</sup>Santideva, *Bodhicaryavatara*, translated by Kate Crosby and Andrew Skilton (Oxford University Press, 1998), p.96.

<sup>36</sup>Sutta-Nipata in E. A. Burtt, *The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha* (Mentor Book, 1982), pp.46-47.

<sup>37</sup>Sutrakritanga 1.11.33. Quoted by Richard H. Davis, "A Hindu Golden Rule, in Context" *The Golden Rule, The Ethics of Reciprocity in World Religions* (Continuum, 2008), p.146.

<sup>38</sup>*Anusasana-parvan* 113:8. Quoted by Richard H. Davis, op. cit., p.146.  
M.K. Gandhi, *The Bhagavadgita* (New Delhi, Orient Paperbacks, 2001), pp.12-13.

<sup>39</sup>M.K. Gandhi, *The Bhagavadgita* (New Delhi, Orient Paperbacks, 2001), pp.12-13.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, p.14.

<sup>41</sup>Raghavan Iyer (ed.), *The Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2010), p.243.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, p.237.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, p.253.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, p.238.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.240-241.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, p.253.

<sup>47</sup>Thomas Merton, *Gandhi on Non-violence* (New York: New Directions Paperbook, 1965), p.24.

<sup>48</sup>Raghavan Iyer, op. cit., p.248.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, p.245.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, p.240.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.250-251.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.255-256.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, p.253.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, p.242.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, p.244.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, p.244.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, p.245.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.* p.278.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, p.309.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, p.324-325.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, p.325.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, p.325.

<sup>63</sup>Tomonobu Imamichi, *An Introduction to Eco-Ethica*, translated by Judy Wakabayashi (University Press of America, 2009), p.2.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, p.vii.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, p.12.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, p.25.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, p.15.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, p.45.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, p.51.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, p.3.