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Wall and Water: Phenomenological Exegesis of the *Analects* of Confucius and Paintings by Ba Da Shan Ren

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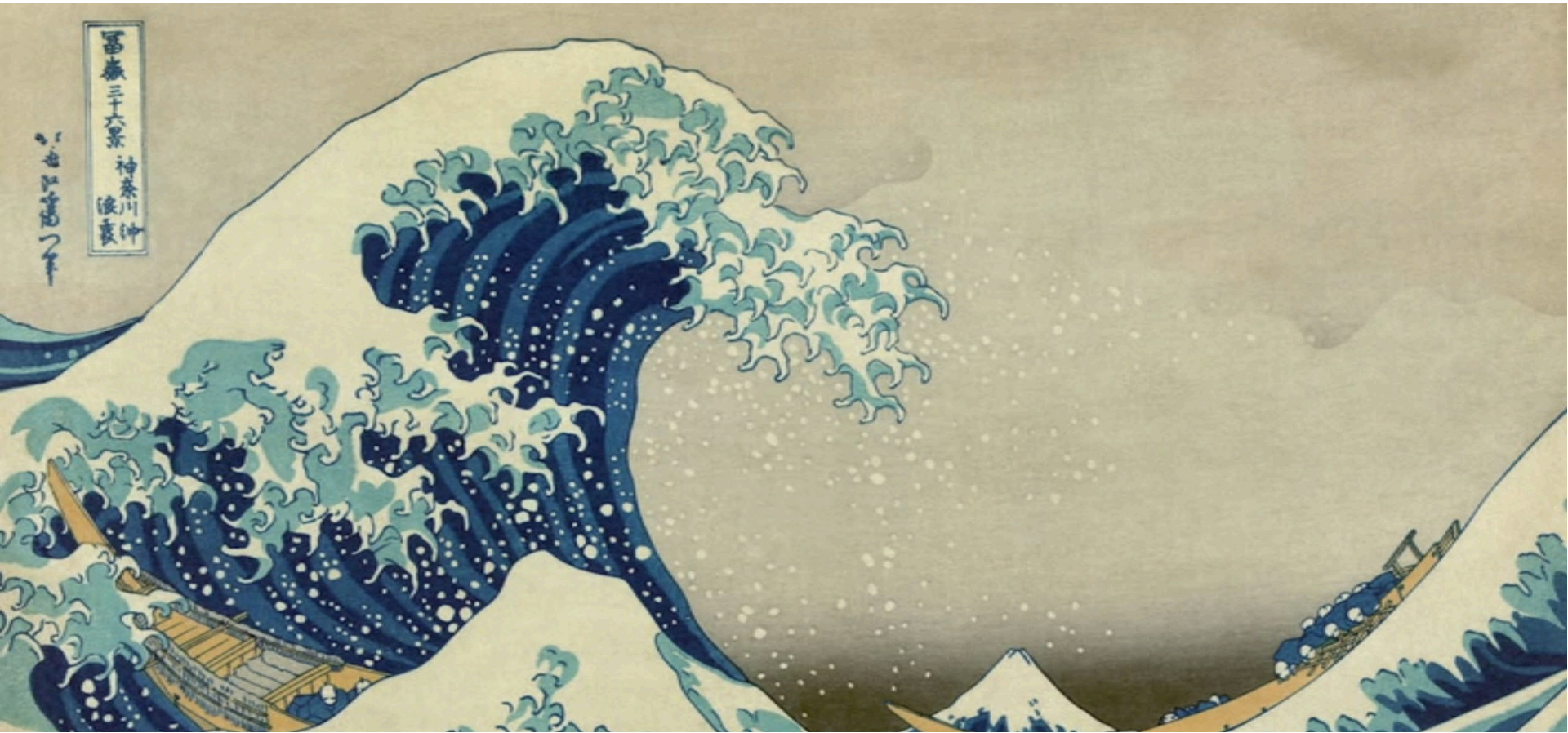
ychen@bond.edu.au



The Shape of Water (2017)



The Great Wave off Kanagawa



Katsushika Hokusai 葛飾北斎 (1760-1849), *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji* 1831





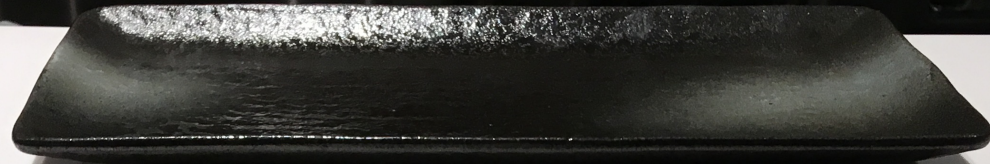
Why this wall?



Exegesis



- What is *meaningful* interpretation?
- What is it meant to be *humane*?



Heidegger writes, “It is not to be reduced to the level of vicious circle, or even of a circle which is merely tolerated. In the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing, and we genuinely grasp this possibility only when we have understood that our first, last, and constant task in interpreting is never to allow our **fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception** to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out these **fore-structures** in terms of **the things themselves**” (*Being and Time*, p.153; (Gadamer, 2013, p. 279).



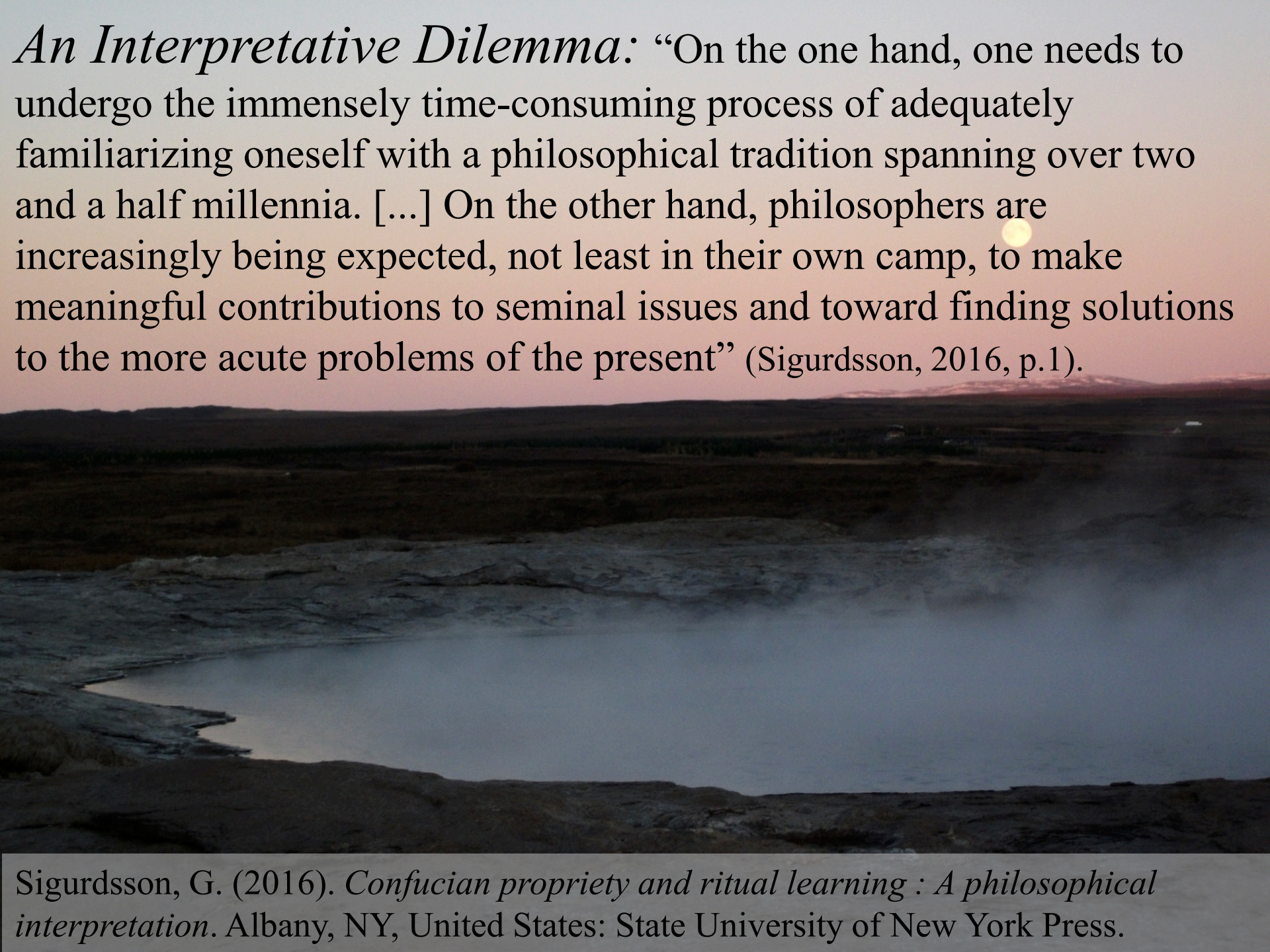
Gadamer, H. (2013). *Truth and method*. London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC.



“What Heidegger is working out here is not primarily a **prescription** for the practice of understanding, but a **description** of the way interpretive understanding is achieved” (Gadamer, 2013, p. 279).



“A person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting. He projects a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning emerges in the text. Again, the initial meaning emerges only because he is reading the text with particular expectations in regard to a certain meaning. Working out this **fore-projection**, which is constantly revised in terms of **what emerges** as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding **what is there**” (Gadamer, 2013, p. 279).



An Interpretative Dilemma: “On the one hand, one needs to undergo the immensely time-consuming process of adequately familiarizing oneself with a philosophical tradition spanning over two and a half millennia. [...] On the other hand, philosophers are increasingly being expected, not least in their own camp, to make meaningful contributions to seminal issues and toward finding solutions to the more acute problems of the present” (Sigurdsson, 2016, p.1).

Sigurdsson, G. (2016). *Confucian propriety and ritual learning : A philosophical interpretation*. Albany, NY, United States: State University of New York Press.

Three Eastern traditions

- Buddhism
- Daoism
- Confucianism



伊川法眼筆



“The Three Vinegar Tasters”

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%27The_Three_Vinegar_Tasters%27_by_Kano_Isen%27in,_c._1802-1816,_Honolulu_Museum_of_Art,_6156.1.JPG

Lǐ Kě Rǎn 李可染 (1907-1989)

“Three Sours” (Sān Suān Tú 三酸圖)

<http://www.likeran.com/library/index/id/753/>

Daoism





Buddhism
(Zen)

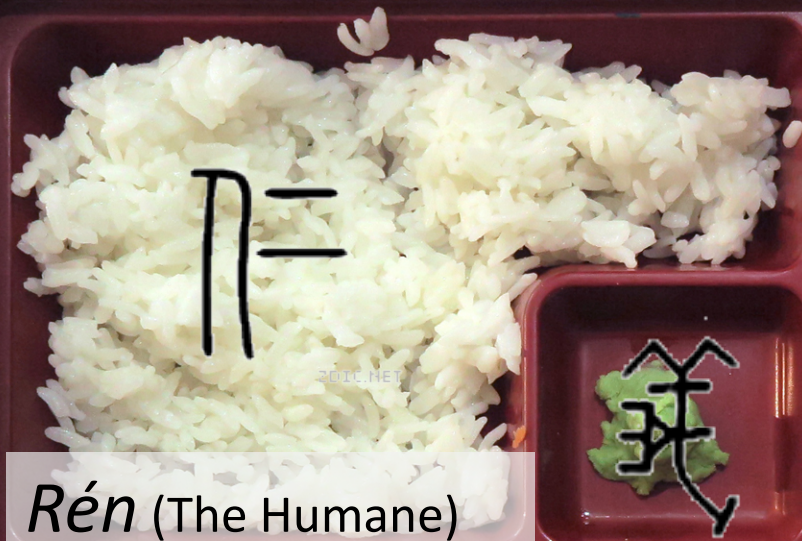
Confucianism

NHK WORLD
JAPAN

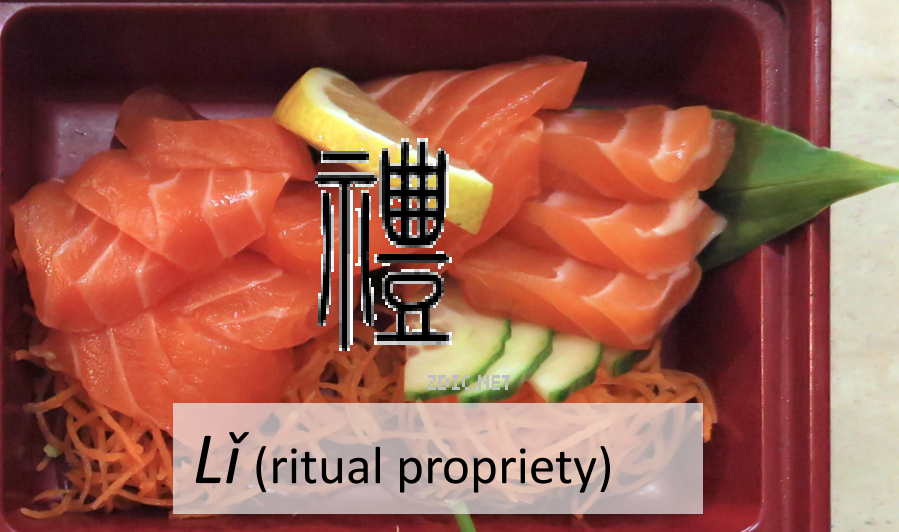
Trails to Tsukiji



I don't use the plums for their flavor,
I use them to bring out the sweetness.



Rén (The Humane)



Lǐ (ritual propriety)



Yì (righteousness)



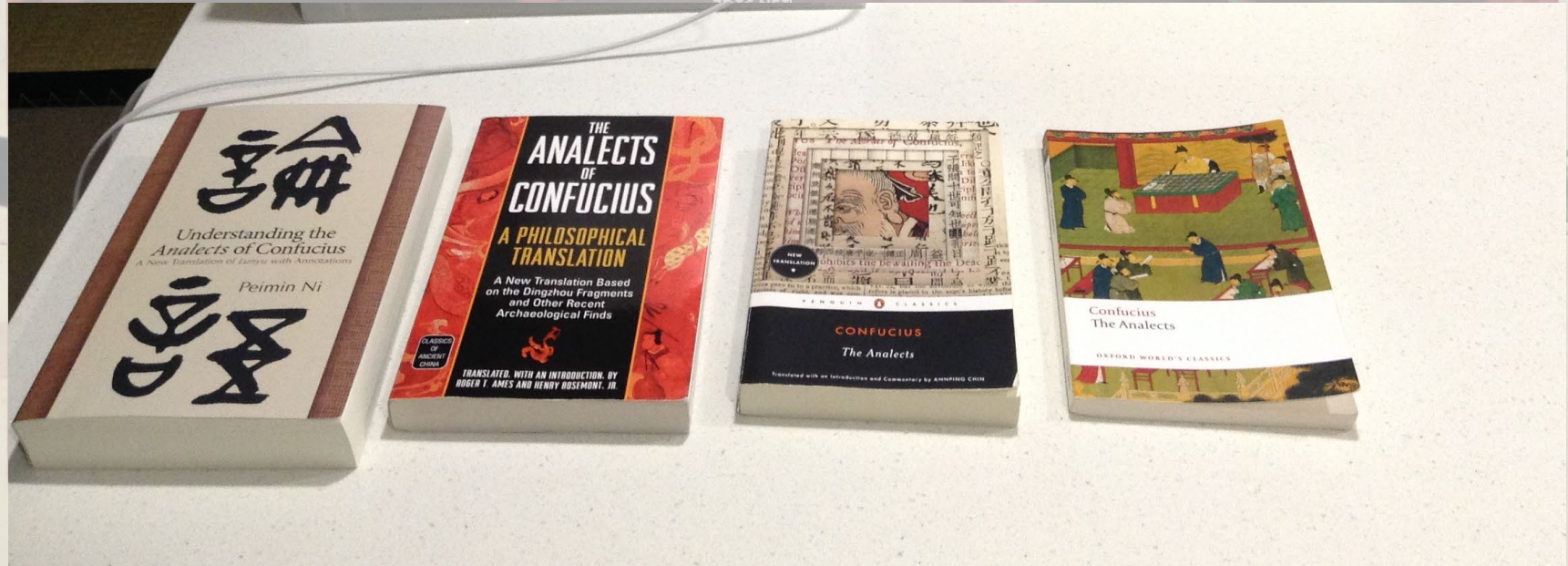
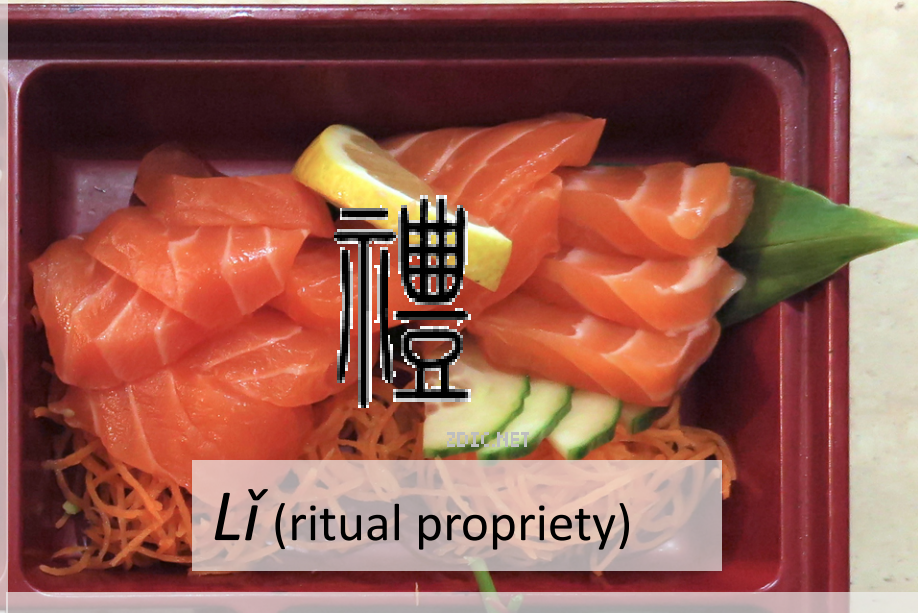
Zhì (wisdom)



Xiào (filial piety)



Xué (learning)





Lǐ 禮 Propriety



Lǐ 禮 Ritual

Qí 齊:
thatched roof

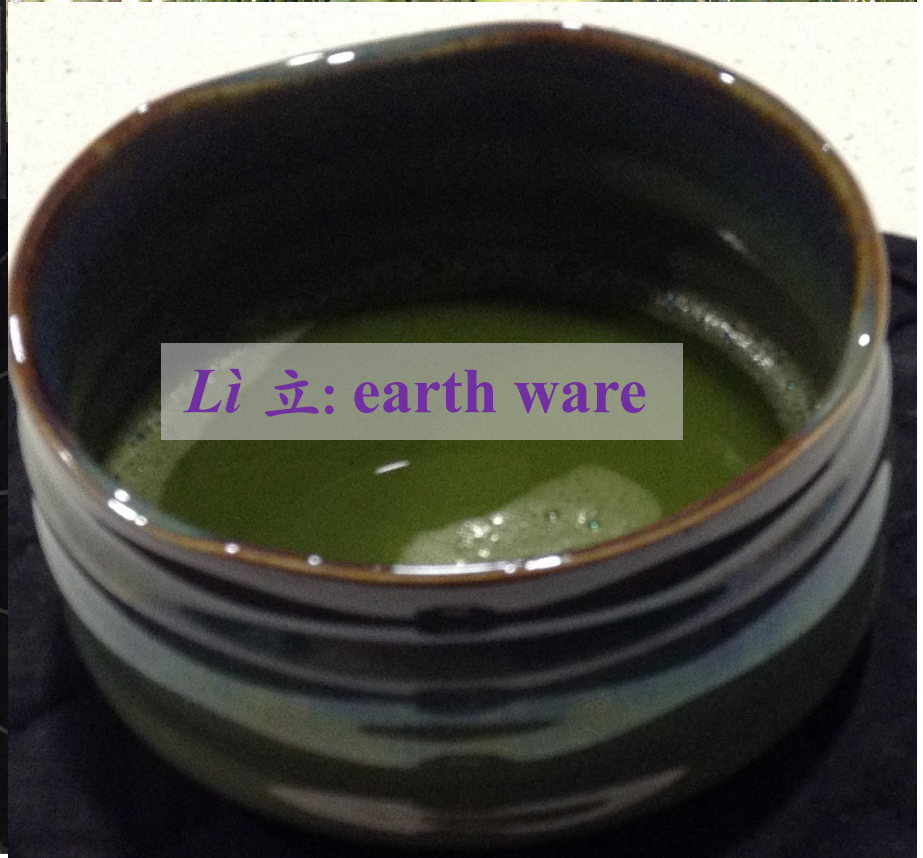


Jié 節:
bamboo node

Lǐ 禮



Yuē 約
silk/paper



Lì 立: earth ware

「禮之用，和為貴。先王之道斯為美小大由之。有所不行，知和而和，不以禮節之，亦不可行也。」 (*Analects*: 1.12.)





「禮之用，和為貴。先王之道斯為美小大由之。有所不行，知和而和，不以禮節之，亦不可行也。」 (*Analects*: 1.12.)

Master You said, “Bringing harmony (*he* 和) is the most valuable practical function of ritual propriety. This is what makes the way of the former Kings beautiful, whether in things great or small. There are situations in which this will not work: If one tries to bring about harmony for harmony’s sake without **regulating it by ritual propriety**, this is not going to work” (Ni, 2017, p.89)

“[...] Yet it does not always work: if you aim only at achieving harmony [in everything] because you know that it is the ideal and do not let **the rules of the rites guide** your action, it will not work” (Chin, 2014, p.9).

“[...] harmony cannot be sought for its own sake, it must always be **subordinated to the ritual**; otherwise it would not do” (Leys, 1997: 5).

Jié 節: bamboo node

“The use of *Lǐ* 禮 is for precious harmony. This way of former kings has beauty, and things small and large follow.

Still they would not practice harmony through harmony: if not propagated through *Lǐ* 禮, harmony won't do..” (*Analects*: 1.12.)



ZDIC.NET

- Self Awareness
- Resilience
- Timing







子曰：「君子博學於文，**約**之以禮，亦可以弗畔矣夫！」
(*Analects*: 6.27)



The Master said, “An exemplary person who is broadly learned in culture and **restrained** by ritual propriety is not likely to go astray” (Ni, 2017, p. 185)

The Master said, “The gentleman broadens his learning in literature and **holds himself back** with **the practice of the rites**. And so he is able to go beyond the bounds of the moral way” (Chin, 2014, p. 94)





Yuē 約: silk-paper

The gentleman has broad knowledge of culture, **patterned** through *lǐ*, so that he would not deviate from the right path.

(Analects: 6.27)



ZDIC.NET

- Transparency
- **Ambiguity**
- **Filter**

「道之以政，**齊**之以刑，民免而無恥；道之以德，**齊**之以禮有恥且格。」 (*Analects*: 2.3.)



The Master said, “Leading the common people with administrative regulations and **keeping them in order** with penal punishments, they will try to avoid troubles (*mian* 免) but will have no sense of shame (*chi* 耻). Leading them with virtue (*de* 德) and **keeping them in order with ritual propriety**, they will have a sense of shame and will constrain (*ge* 格) themselves” (Ni, 2017, p. 95-96).





Qi 齊: Thatched Roof

Guide people through administration and set up right with punishment, people will try to avoid punishment without a sense of shame; Guide people with virtue and **thatch** them with *lǐ*, people will gain a sense of shame, and naturally follow the guidance.

(*Analects*: 2.3.)



ZDIC.NET

- Equalization
- **structure**

子曰：「興於詩，**立**於禮。成於樂。」 (*Analects* 8.8)

“I find inspiration by intoning the songs, I learn **where to stand** from **observing ritual propriety** (*li* 禮), and I find fulfillment in playing music.” (Ames and Rosemont Jr. 1999: 122)



Analects: 8.8:

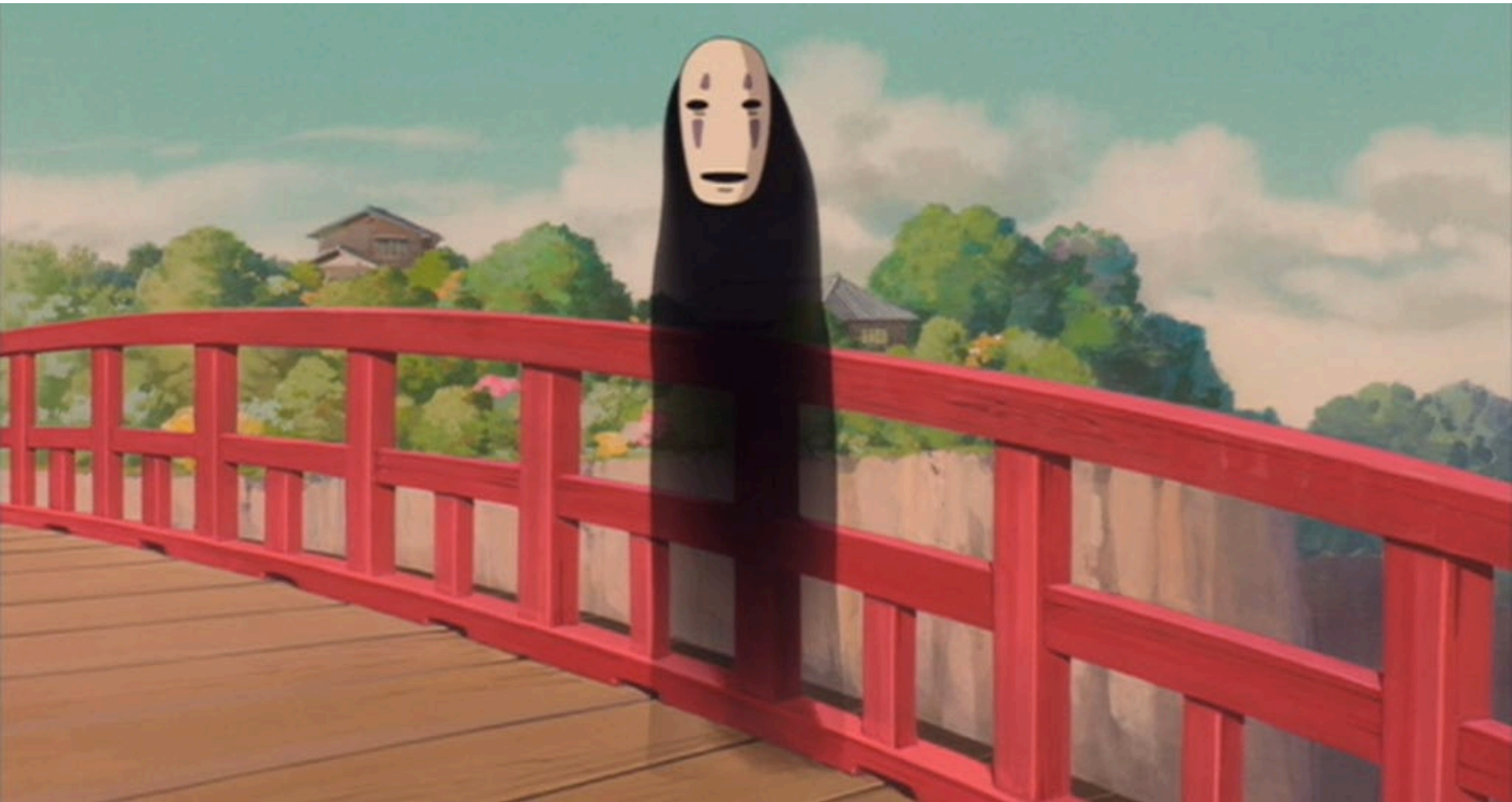


- Revealing
- **Cosmos in the Hand**



Hegel: “Man is characterized by the break with the immediate and the natural that the intellectual, rational side of his nature demands of him.”

(Gadamer, 1975, 1989, 2004, 2013, p.11)



Kaonashi (No-face 顔無し)



The background of the slide is a photograph of a pond. In the foreground, there are several large, green lily pads with prominent veins. A small, light-colored frog is visible in the water, partially obscured by the lily pads. The water is calm, reflecting the sky and the surrounding foliage. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

What is **meaningful** interpretation?

“[...] Now, the fact is that meanings represent a fluid multiplicity of possibilities (in comparison to the agreement presented by a language and a vocabulary) [...] ***The hermeneutical task becomes of itself a questioning of things*** and is always in part so defined. [...] That is why a hermeneutically trained consciousness must be, from the start, **sensitive to the text’s alterity.**

But this kind of sensitivity involves neither “neutrality” with respect to content nor extinction of one’s self, but the foregrounding and appropriation of one’s own fore-meanings and prejudices. **The important thing is to be aware of one’s own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one’s own fore-meanings”** (Gadamer, 2013, p.281-282).

Bādà Shānrén (八大山人),

born Zhū Dā (朱耷) 1626–1705





子山

好兒好子一面
西松上

時个拍如响

子禮手反執

為物

己巳閏五月

八大山人

子山

子山

子山

子山

子山

眼光餅子一面
 月圓西瓜上時
 個個指月餅子
 驢年瓜熟為期



眼光餅子一面
 月圓西瓜上時
 個個指月餅子
 驢年瓜熟為期

為期

己巳閏九月

十五夜月餅

吳



Dazzling sweetcake, round as the

fat moon, melon season rise –

point less, at the moon cake:

a fool in the fall. Melon, be ripe now, be still.



骨



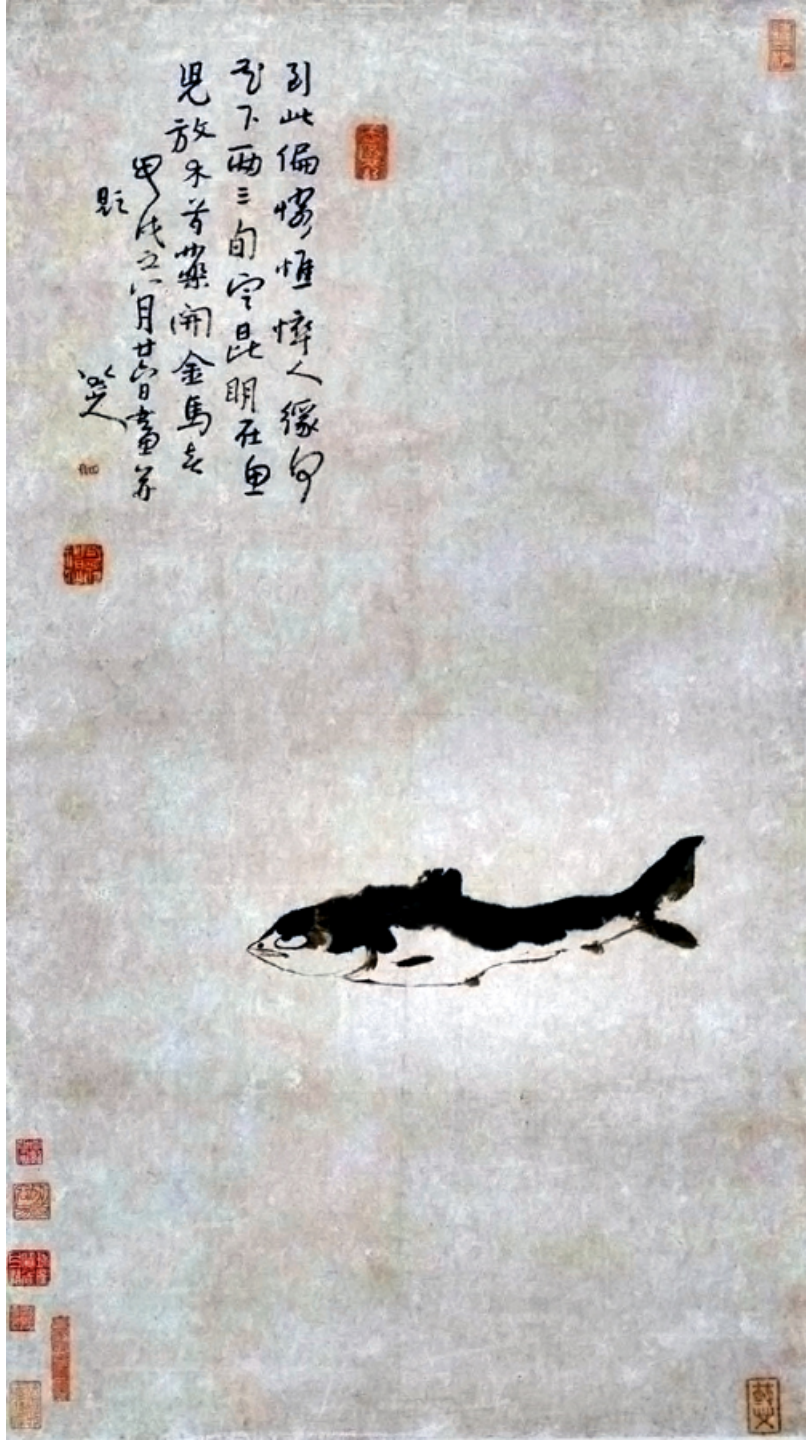
華風左江

風骨



Bādà Shānrén
(八大山人)

1626–1705



Bādà Shānrén
(八大山人)

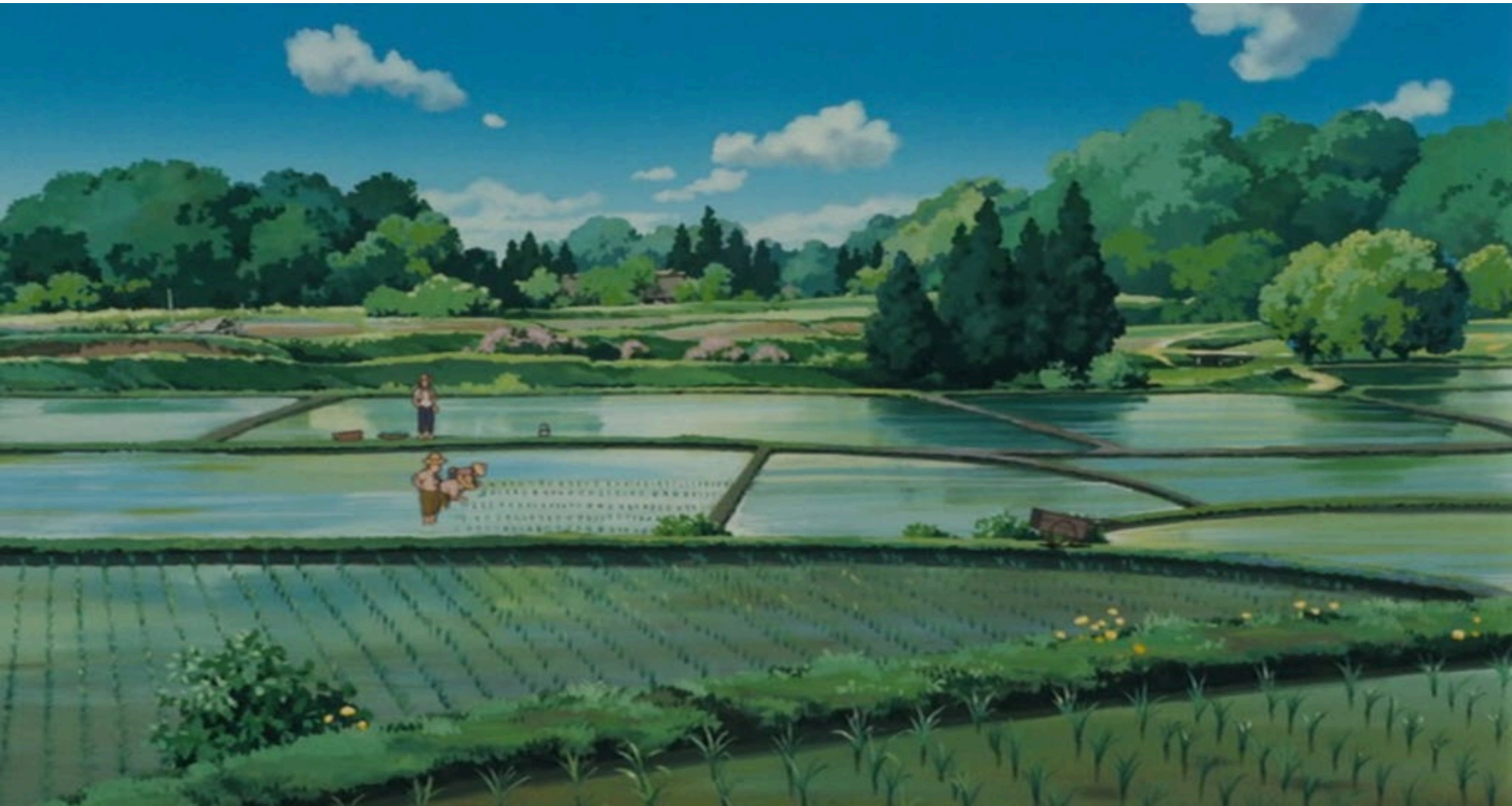
1626–1705



到此偏憐憔悴人
緣何花下雨三旬
定昆明在魚兒放
木芍藥開金馬春

Arrived. And pity for the fallen, the pale
who lie beneath the flowers now, a fortnight, or a month.
KunMing lies silenced. This fish too small to fry,
and after all, peonies bloom on JingMa hill in spring.

Satoyama



My Neighbor Totoro (1988, directed by Hayao Miyazaki)

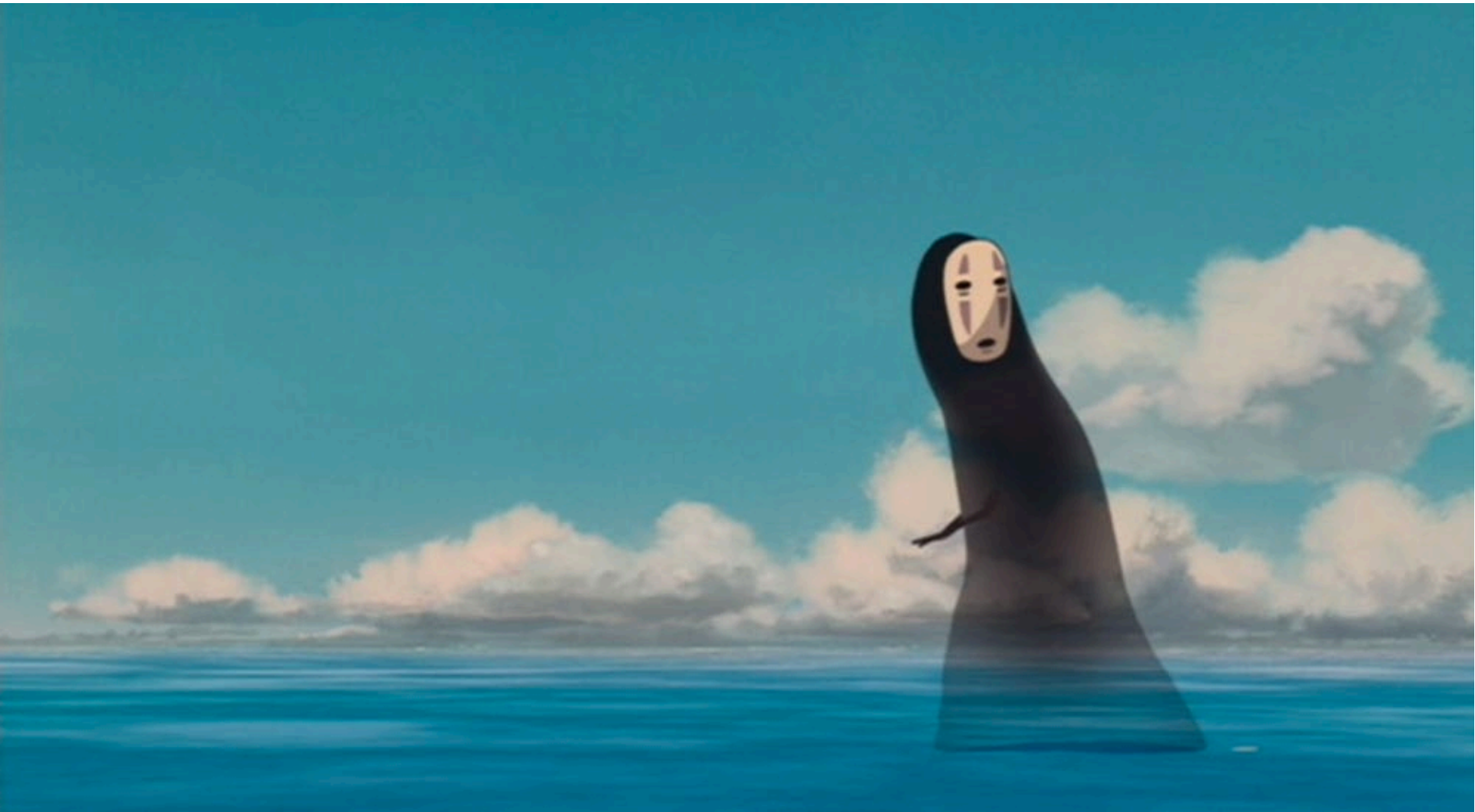


Human Exegesis

Ecological Crises

Is it *my* problem?

“Respect and Reward” : Ecology from the
Analects of Confucius



Respect and Reward

“You cannot at all get for me what I want.”

Spirited Away (千と千尋の神隠し). Miyazaki, H. (Director). (2001).



The blank canvas leaves space to insert the self ...



“[...] I created a heroine who is an ordinary girl [...] someone about whom they can say ‘Yes, it’s like that.’ It is very important to make it plain and unexaggerated. Starting with that, **it’s not a story in which the characters grow up, but a story in which they draw on something already inside them, brought out by the particular circumstances**” (Miyazaki, 2001).

What is it meant to be
“humane”(Human)?



Rén

仁

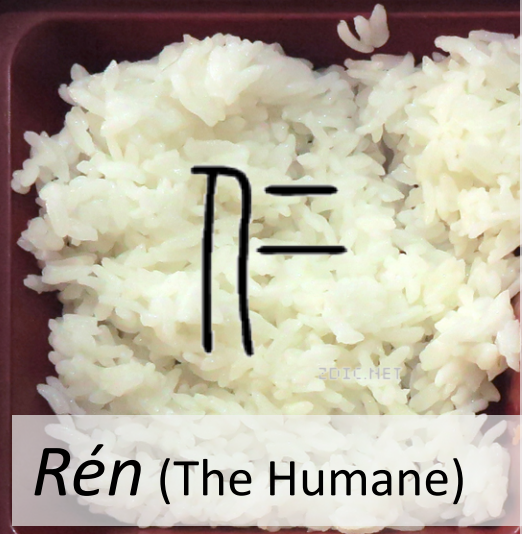
仁



志

- Translations and Definitions

“Benevolence, Love, altruism, kindness, charity, compassion, magnanimity, perfect virtue, goodness, true manhood, manhood at its best, human-heartedness, humanness, humanity, man-to-manness, “authoritative humanity” etc. (Wang, 2012: 463)



仁

Rén (The Humane)



美



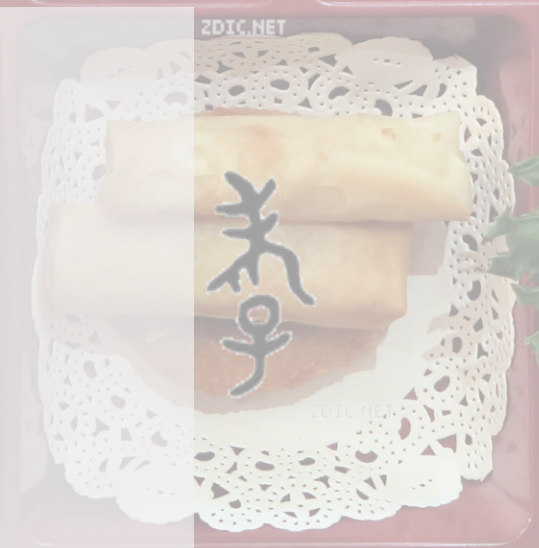
禮

Lǐ (ritual propriety)



智

ZDIC.NET



美
子

ZDIC.NET



學

ZDIC.NET

“To open oneself and to be affected by things”

(Wang 2012: 465)



Huaiyu Wang. 2012. “Ren and Gan Tong: Openness of Heart and the Root of Confucianism”, *Philosophy East and West* 62.4: 463-504.



Rén as

“Infant’s heart”

赤子之心

Mencius
said, “The
great man is he
who does not
lose his
infant’s
-heart.”



Kenji Ekuan. 2000.

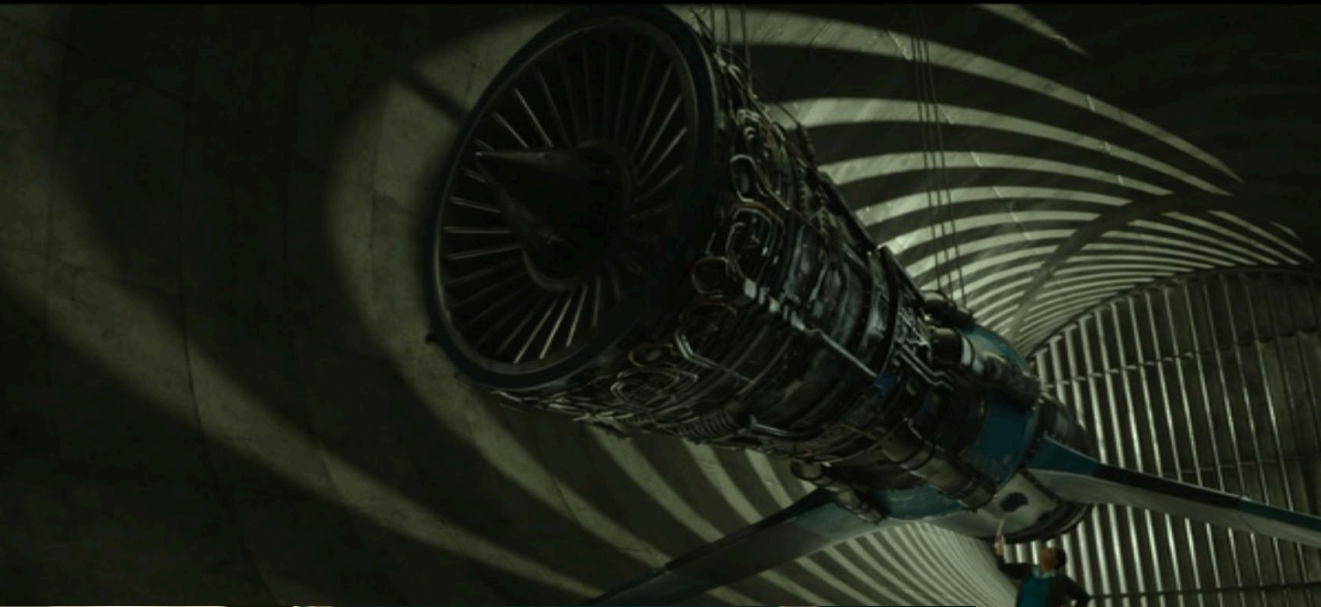
*The Aesthetics of the Japanese
Lunchbox*

(MIT Press)

Design



Ibid.



Questions!



Johannes
Vermeer,
“Woman with a
Pearl
Necklace,”

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/envisioning-vermeer-master-genre-painting-national-gallery-art-180967043/>

Thank YOU!



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