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## The Lost Confucian Philosopher: Gu Hongming and the Chinese Religion of Good Citizenship



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Gu Hongming (Ku Hung-ming 辜鴻銘) (1857–1928) was a Chinese scholar-official in the late Qing dynasty who in his early years received a comprehensive European education. He was widely recognized as one of China’s most distinguished Confucian philosophers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For a long period after his death, however, Gu was largely forgotten both in China and abroad except for the intensity of his conservative leanings. The newer generations of Confucians (*xin rujia* 新儒家) never mentioned Gu in their scholarly works. While recently there has been a rising interest in Gu and his works, most public and scholarly attention has centered on certain “eccentric” aspects of his penchants and personality. There have been few discussions about the *philosophical* value and relevance of his ideas. Thus, Gu remains a lost Confucian philosopher.

The purpose of this essay is to introduce Gu’s philosophy with a focus on his thesis regarding the Chinese Religion of Good Citizenship. Gu lived during a historical period when China and many other countries were subjugated by the modern Western Powers under the prevalent beliefs in enlightenment universalism and the signifier civilization of the West. As Prasenjit Duara writes, this singular conception of Civilization “based originally upon Christian and Enlightenment values . . . came not only to be dominant but to be the only criterion whereby sovereignty could be claimed in the world” (Duara 2001, p. 3). Coupled with Social Darwinism, it had served as the pretext for the various practices of racism, colonialism, and imperialism as the “Western imperial nations invoked the signifier to justify their conquest as a civilizing mission” (ibid.).

The economic and political expansion of modern Western civilization was also accompanied by a moral crisis that featured unremitting clashes of utilitarian and reformative values with conventional social ideals and structures. Drawing upon classical Confucian teachings and the aesthetic ideals of modern Romantic thinkers, Gu proposed that the *ultimate* solution to the major problems of modernity, such as decaying social and international solidarity, destructive materialism and commercialism, and abusive racial and nationalistic prejudices, must be a *moral* and *cultural* solution. In essence, Gu held that truth, understood in its deepest and broadest sense as the *sense of honor* and truthfulness in one’s engagement with persons and things, is of universal and eternal appeal among all humankind. As a living

tradition, the value of the traditional Confucian social order consists in its continuous *personification* of the law of the gentleman, which inspires ordinary persons to realize this sense of honor and truthfulness by fulfilling their individual roles and responsibilities. The Confucian ideal of civilization is not “infinite happiness” or “self-indulgence” for everybody, but “the complete and perfect ‘realization of true moral being—the sense of obligation—and moral order in mankind so that the Universe shall become a cosmos and all things can attain their full growth and development’” (Gu 1906, pp. vi–vii).

Remarkably, many scholars today, including leading Confucian scholars like Henry Rosemont, have regarded it necessary to stay away altogether from the ideas of truth, the universal, and the absolute in order to remedy the hegemonic dimensions of modern Western colonialism, imperialism, and enlightenment universalism (Rosemont 2015, pp. 21, 24; cf. pp. 137–138). In light of Gu’s insights, however, the true crisis of modernity is not what Rosemont has pinned down as the *belief* in “the one true morality” that has to be established with the greatest number of machine guns. As everyone with a basic moral sense can see, to advocate “the one true morality” with machine guns would have implicated a *fundamental inconsistency* with the basic principles of this morality already, such as Kant’s notion of the autonomous self who must treat the humanity in oneself and others as an end in itself. To all appearances, what accounts for the modern crisis of morality is not the utter *falsity* or irrelevancy of “the one true morality.” It is rather the *lack of a genuine belief* in humanity, which brings about “an atmosphere of hypocrisy throughout” (Whitman 1970, pp. 11–12). It is what Gu described as the *moral bankruptcy* of the capitalistic political and economic system.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, when neither the social and political leaders nor the masses take any truth or moral principles of right and wrong as an absolute with binding power under all circumstances, “the one true morality” can easily be manipulated by individuals or nations to sanction their selfish interests through “legitimate” violence and dominance.

In Gu’s view, the answer to the modern crisis of morality consists in the Confucian Religion of Good Citizenship, in the aesthetic appeal of the gentleman, who may inspire ordinary persons in a society to fulfill the law of their being and enable them to become what Walt Whitman envisioned as “a law, and series of laws, unto himself, surrounding and providing for, not only his own personal control, but all his relations to other individuals, and to the State” (Whitman 1970, p. 18; cf. Wang 2017, pp. 1234–1236). In my view, the Confucian Religion of Good Citizenship synthesizes what Henry Rosemont and Roger Ames call role-based contextual ethics and Kant’s deontological ethics. As I will show, Gu’s theses on a universal truth of humanity predicated on a poetic temperament and the aesthetic appeal of the gentleman may bring new insights to current Confucian and comparative moral and political studies and the relation between ethics and society. They

promise a new vision to move beyond moral universalism and relativism, a key problem of cross-cultural discourse against the backdrop of the “clash of civilizations.”

### *The Legendary Life of a Pure Confucian*

Gu Hongming was born in Penang, Malaya in 1857. His family had its roots in the town of Tongan 同安, Fujian Province, China. Gu’s foster father and guardian Mr. Brown brought Gu to Europe for comprehensive education around 1869. During his eleven years’ stay in Europe, Gu obtained an M.A. in Arts from the University of Edinburgh and a diploma from the University of Leipzig. In addition, Gu traveled extensively in Europe and learned half a dozen European languages. He also developed a deep familiarity with works by Goethe, Shakespeare, and a number of Romantic figures including Thomas Carlyle (who was Gu’s personal mentor), Matthew Arnold, John Milton, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and John Ruskin.<sup>2</sup>

Gu was probably the first Chinese to receive a comprehensive European education. In 1885, in recognition of his linguistic capacities and knowledge of Western culture, Zhang Zhidong—a viceroy and leading Confucian scholar-official—employed Gu as his sectary in charge of foreign documents and affairs. Under Zhang’s guidance, along with the influence of a number of leading Confucian scholar-officials at Zhang’s office, Gu progressed steadily with his study of Chinese language and the Confucian classics. By the turn of the century, Gu had not only acquired a respectable expertise in Confucian learning, but also established himself as a major spokesman for Chinese culture in the Western world.

In 1905, Gu was promoted to Department Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Director of the Huangpu Conservancy in Shanghai. In recognition of his scholarly achievements, the Qing court awarded Gu the honorary title of Royal Doctorate (*jìnshì* 進士, first rank, second place) and appointed him principal of Nanyang College in Shanghai (now Shanghai Jiaotong University) in 1910. After the Chinese Revolution in 1911, Gu taught at Peking University as a Professor of English Literature and Latin for a couple of years. Around 1918, an article introducing a German scholar’s endorsement of Gu’s advocacy for Confucian civilization triggered harsh condemnation by leading revolutionists. The disagreement between the “old” and “new” schools over Gu’s ideas and other related issues escalated into the grand debate on Eastern and Western Cultures, which finally led to the May Fourth Movement in 1919.<sup>3</sup> Gu left Peking University shortly after the May Fourth Movement but continued to write and lecture on the modern value of Confucian teachings. In 1928, Gu was appointed principal of Shandong University, but died that same year before he could assume office.

Gu had become a legendary figure in the cultural history of modern China, a pioneer in comparative moral, political, and literary studies. But

after his death, his name and works gradually faded from public attention and scholarly discourse. According to Zhu Weizhen, while Western readers had become quite familiar with Gu's works in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, his influence on Chinese readers had fallen to "nearly zero" (Zhu 1994, p. 332). In my view, it may be fair to say that due partly to the fact that they were written mostly in English, his writings did not enjoy the same reputation in China that they did in other parts of the world. However, it seems a considerable overstatement to dismiss the impact of Gu's ideas on Chinese readers altogether. For example, despite intense interrogation by the revolutionists, Du Yaquan, the editor of *Dongfang Zazhi*, which published the controversial article about Gu in 1918, maintained that he agreed with all of Gu's ideas as presented in the article (Du Yaquan 2003, p. 369). And Du was by no means the only Chinese who had taken a serious interest in Gu's ideas. The German philosopher Hermann von Keyserling mentioned that when he visited Beijing in 1912, he spent many hours each day with Gu and "his friends and supporters" (Keyserling 1925, vol. 2, p. 106).<sup>4</sup> If more substantial evidence were necessary, we need only turn to the famous scholar Wang Guowei and his book review of Gu's translation of the Confucian text the *Zhongyong*. Wang admitted that Gu's translation bore witness to the fact that no one in China could surpass his understanding of the true meaning of this text.<sup>5</sup> Wang's mentor Luo Zhengyu, an authority on oracle bone inscriptions and classical studies, praised Gu as a "pure Confucian" (*chunru* 醇儒). In particular, Luo expressed high admiration for Gu's *Memorial to the Emperor* (written in 1908 in classical Chinese) and compared its superb style and political discernment to those of the great Han Confucian statesman Jia Yi (Gu 1996, vol. 2, pp. 211–212).

However inaccurate his perception may have been, Zhu's dismissal of Gu's influence on "Chinese readers" was not entirely unreasonable. To the best of my knowledge, none of the new Confucians of the past century, as well as any leading Confucian scholars today, has made any substantial reference to Gu's works and ideas.<sup>6</sup> This is so probably because a new generation of Chinese have long taken Gu as an "eccentric" figure, with constant reference to his "conservative" leanings, and especially his insistence on wearing the queue and traditional Chinese clothes after the Revolution had taken place. Justified or not, such prevalent public perception reflected the tension between Gu's philosophy and the trends of his time, which made him sound "strange, reactionary, and impractical." R. David Arkush summed up this tension nicely:

He was an internationalist in an age of nationalism, a conservative in an age of change, an elitist in an age of egalitarianism, a moralist in an age of positivism, a generalist in an age of specialization, a lover of delicacy and refinement in an age of utilitarianism. He was in between East and West at a time when there was nothing there. (Arkush 1965, p. 228)

Such may be the main reasons for the prevailing negative caricature of Gu as an “embodied anachronism” or an “old fogey.” For those in China and the West who were preoccupied with economic and political “progress,” Gu’s views and behaviors, which bore out his scorn for the modern obsession with materialism, his allegiance to a disintegrating monarchy, and his faith in the universal and eternal value of Confucian civilization, all sounded very strange. Nevertheless, the only real strangeness in the matter might be that it should sound that way, if only we could understand the real vision behind Gu’s philosophy: an ideal type of humanity that was able to combine “a true sense for the moral worth and beauty of the old Chinese civilisation with an aptitude for interpreting and understanding the expansive, progressive ideas of the modern European civilisation” (Gu 1912, p. 78).

As Arkush pointed out, Gu “saw himself, thus, like Confucius,” as the gentlemen (*junzi*), “who is not ‘used’” (Arkush, 227). As Gu wrote once himself, “under the present policy of the Powers in China, men like myself who care only for the cause of good government and true civilization in China, can never reach a position in the public service where they can serve the best interests of the nation as they should. . . . The Government of Her Imperial Majesty the Empress-Dowager, therefore, is not perfect by any means; otherwise the present writer would at this moment be at the side of the Imperial Lady to give her his advice, and if need be, his life.” (Gu 1901, xv-vi, Cf. Arkush, 227). For Gu, indeed, the times were out of joint.

However, while most modern Chinese have taken Gu to be “behind the times,” I believe Gu’s visions and ideas, which were inspired by both classical Confucian teachings and the aesthetic ideals of the modern Romantic period, were really ahead of his time. They may even be timeless. Not only are Gu’s interpretations of Confucianism still relevant to current Confucian and comparative studies, but many of Gu’s theses and arguments, with timely modification and expansion, would prove valuable and constructive in solving a range of difficult social and political problems today.

One of Gu’s greatest insights was his critical understanding of and cultivated response to the then prevalent racist, colonial, and imperialistic ideologies, as he envisioned a way beyond the Scylla of a false universalism and the Charybdis of parochial nationalism (relativism). In Gu’s view, the real cause of the Revolution was the intense feeling of humiliation and resentment toward the racist attitudes of foreigners who “think we are only Chinese and look down upon us.” The Chinese Revolution was not a revolt against a corrupt or tyrannical government; it was a revolution against the weakness of that government “for allowing the foreigners to treat us like that.” In other words, the real cause of the revolution was a false universalism (which takes every European standard as universal) combined with fanatic nationalism. Just as “the Boxer outbreak in 1900 was a fanatical

explosion of hurt National pride, so the present revolution is a fanatical outburst of national vanity.”

Remarkably, precisely because the Revolution stemmed from a world of pathos entangled with a false universalism and fanatic nationalism, it was doomed to fail. In Gu’s view, the racial prejudice of the Europeans would not and could not be changed just because the Chinese decided to imitate the Europeans by cutting off their queues and putting on European clothes. Instead, the only way to win true respect was to show “what we Chinese really are—a *people with a somewhat different but as wonderful a civilisation as theirs and not a whit inferior.*” Hence,

[the one reform] which China needs above all others, is not queue-cutting or constitution-making but . . . to send our good people—the best of the Chinese—to show the people of Europe and America what we are. In short, *it is by joining the best with best that we can ever hope to break down the dividing line of East and West.* (Gu 1912, pp. 123–124)

### *The Aesthetic Appeal of the Gentleman and the Universal Order of Civilization*

Gu’s vision to bridge the divide between East and West by “joining the best with best” stems from his deep familiarity with both classical Confucian teachings and modern Romantic ideas. As Gu sees it, “there is very little difference between the East of Confucius and the West of Shakespeare and Goethe” (Gu 1922a, p. 113). Accordingly, “those who well know both, know that the best in China and in the West are in perfect harmony. Let the best of the two civilizations unite and nothing but good will follow.”<sup>7</sup>

Gotelind Müller affirms that Gu’s Confucianism is “the royal road to true civilization of the whole human race, which had been threatened to break into smithereens between the Scylla of a false liberalism and the Charybdis of materialism” (Müller 2013, p. 13). Hence, “when dialogue is often asked for as an antidote against a clash of civilizations,” Gu’s thesis on the correspondence between the best thinkers in the East and West may well “provide more solid foundation for a fruitful intercultural dialogue than today’s fairly common academic value-indifferent forms of postmodern, radically-relativistic anti-essentialism criticism” (p. 19).

In my view, Gu was far ahead of his time when he realized, as many cultural relativists do today, that a global order centered on the “signifier Civilization” of the modern Western Powers and their self-promoting values and interests was doomed to miscarry. However, in contrast with those relativists who went to the other extreme and rejected all universal standards and principles in order to reinstall the “unique” self-serving values of each culture, Gu maintained that a universal order was not only *possible* but also



necessary—although we have no guarantee as to when humankind can accomplish this. Remarkably, the universal order that Gu envisioned was not “a hybrid system of both worlds” as suggested by some scholars (Chunmei Du 2019, p. 37; 2011, pp. 79–80). As a matter of fact, in an article for the *New York Times* in 1921, Gu made it very clear that the attempts to *amalgamate* Eastern and Western civilizations, such as proposed by the then Japanese prime minister, Hara Takashi, reflected an *ignorance* of what civilization is. For a civilization “is either a true civilization or a false or, as the Japanese say, a *magai* make-believe civilization: there is no East or West” (Gu 1921). But how should we understand this universal order were it to involve neither such universal principles as promulgated by the modern Western Powers nor a hybrid of Eastern and Western values? Here, it is worthwhile to recollect Gu’s main ideas on civilization as presented in the 1921 article.

As Gu made clear, the object of his article was not to “abuse the American people” as its title “Uncivilized United States” might have suggested. It was rather to show the true meaning of civilization. Because in order to “save civilization . . . the first thing you must do . . . is to know what civilization is.” For Gu, the essence of a civilization is not its economic and technological advancement as measured by the “standard of living.” It consists not even in the arts, sciences, and institutions, but in its enduring *spiritual* achievement. Here, Gu cited *Analects* 17.11 where Confucius took issue with the then prevalent tendency to take *li* and *yue* (ritual, ceremony, forms of courtesy, and music)—the essential expressions of Chinese religion and civilization—to be merely a matter of “carrying fine jades,” “wearing silk dresses,” and playing musical instruments like bells and drums. Questioning the Japanese prime minister’s desire to amalgamate civilizations, Gu said that it was a gross mistake to take “wearing high collars, cutting the queue, building European houses, riding in motor cars and erecting statues such as one sees in the streets of Tokio” as “the whole of civilization or even civilization at all” (Gu 1921).

In Gu’s view, the true meaning of civilization in classical Confucian teaching was precisely what John Ruskin had revealed as the “making of the civil person.”<sup>8</sup> The *spirit* of civilization consisted in the ideal types of personalities who were able to realize the universal truth of humanity. Resorting to Matthew Arnold and Chinese poet Su Dongpo’s interpretations, Gu stated that both Christianity and Confucianism were, first and foremost, “a temper, a disposition.” Likewise, “civilization is also, first and above all, a state of mind and heart: a spiritual life.” The essence of civilization “is not dress, house, furniture, machine, ship or gun, but—gentleness of mind and heart.” The “chief and one aim of civilization,” therefore, is not “to make and teach men to be strong, but to make and teach men to be gentle.” Accordingly, the only right and effective way to govern an empire, the Japanese shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu remarked, is expressed in the Chinese



word *ci* 慈, or “to have a gentle and tender heart (the Latin *alma* as in *alma mater*, the extreme gentle tenderness of a mother)” (Gu 1921; cf. Gu 1901, p. 173, and Arnold 1892, p. 135).

For Gu, the development of an ideal type of humanity grounded in gentleness of mind and heart is the foundation of all true social orders. It is this *sensus communis* of the heart as inspired by the sublime *moral and poetical temperament* that is truly universal. As Gu elaborated, the “essence and power” of all great systems of religious teachings such as Christianity and Confucianism “does not lie in any particular precept such as even the golden rule, much less in the collection of theories, rules of conduct and discipline.” Rather, it “lies in the perfect state of temper, spirit and mind” (Gu 1906, pp. 89–90). In fact, when this gentle and tender heart is absent, even the golden rule may lose its universal appeal and find itself enforced autocratically by whoever has the greatest number of machine guns. On the other hand, when this gentleness of mind and heart obtains, even those with opposing values and opinions will tolerate, respect, and even learn from each other—or at least agree to disagree, if disagreement is unavoidable. Thus, by shifting the priority from external laws and institutions to the internal law of the gentleman, Gu identified a new idea of the universal as the common sense of right and wrong. Predicated on our refined temperament and cultivated personalities, this idea of the universal is unfettered by the dogmatic insistence on any transcendent principles or haphazard mixture of Eastern and Western values.

As I see it, Gu’s ideas about the truth of humanity and the universal order of civilization comprise two interconnected philosophical theses. First, moral truth or rightness of moral conduct does not come from *partial* or *mechanical* conformity of one’s body or intellect to some pre-established moral rules outside one’s being. Rather, it consists in the enactment of one’s whole nature and being when it is “fully developed, properly balanced, and in a well-ordered harmonious condition.” Gu elaborates in Appendix B to his translation of the *Zhongyong*:

[I]n order to think aright and find out what is morally right and true, we must first of all, put and keep the state of our whole nature and being in a proper and well-ordered condition. The more fully our whole nature and being is developed and the more perfectly it is kept in proper, well ordered and well balanced condition the more exact, just and true will be the product of our thought; i.e. the nearer the idea in our mind or the product of our thought approaches that which the thing we think about really *is*, as it exists by the law of its nature; and in this way brings the action which we take nearer to that which is in unison with the universal order and system of things in the Universe; in fact, what we think then is true and what we do is just. (Gu 1906, pp. 79–80)

Now this state of the proper order and balance of our whole nature and being is the vital state of *zhonghe* (中和). Here, Gu takes the Chinese word *zhong* to mean our central inner self, and thus our true self. It corresponds nicely to what Arnold calls “the central clue in our moral being which unites us to the universal order” (Arnold 1892, p. 32). Gu rendered the word *he*, which is usually translated “harmony,” as “moral order.” This translation makes good sense here in reference to the appropriate expression of our emotions in accord with ritual and social decorum. Thus, when our whole nature and being are attuned to a well-ordered and balanced condition, when our “true moral being and moral order are realized, the universe then becomes a cosmos and all things attain their full growth and development” (Gu 1906, p. 3).

Second, the key to all moral action is the moral *sense* that inspires a person to fulfill his or her moral obligation as a *free* agent, aside from ulterior motives of profit and fear of punishment. Gu identifies this moral sense, this sense of honor and truthfulness, as the heart of Chinese Religion of Good Citizenship. It is essential to realize our true being. It is also the universal foundation of all true social orders. No society, no human organization or institution, can truly function without this sense of honor and duty. As Gu iterates in *The Spirit of the Chinese People*, “a society without the sense of honor in men, and without morality in its politics, cannot . . . be held together, or at any rate, cannot last” (Gu 1922a, p. 33).

In Gu’s view, the true foundation of such social institutions as marriage is not the allegedly sacred social contract sanctioned by legal or divine authority. It is not even the passion of love between a man and a woman. It is rather the law of the gentleman and good manners—the sense of honor that inspires a man and woman to recognize and respect the duty and dignity of their *being* and *belonging together* in the same family and community. This is why Confucius says the law of the gentleman, which is the essence of moral law, “takes its rise” in the relation between husband and wife; “but in its utmost reaches it reigns supreme over heaven and earth” (Gu 1922a, p. 148; cf. p. 35). Even for merchants and gamblers, unless all parties recognize and feel themselves bound by a basic moral sense to *honor* their contracts, no gambling or trade would be possible. As an old Chinese saying puts it, “there must be honor even among thieves” (ibid., p. 30). Without a minimal sense of *honor* and *trust*, it is impossible for even gangsters to work together. Thus, with no, or no adequate, sense of honor and duty, there can be no true social order, for then a society can be held up only by the use of *force and fraud* (ibid., pp. 32 ff.).

But a social order based on force (e.g., the police or military) and fraud cannot really function, or at least not in any *sustainable* manner. Because it would implicate infinite snags of vicious circles: it would have to use greater and greater numbers of guns to put down other guns, and bigger and bigger lies to cover up the old lies. Such vicious circles, indeed, are characteristic

of those individuals (or nations) caught in the mess of a deadlock who strive to escape such a deadlock by means of some clever dodge, contrivance, or schemes of reform, which, instead of salvaging them, only bring them “into a greater mess and deadlock.” In light of Confucian teachings, there is “only one true way of escape” from such a circumstance: “to get back the evenness of your temper and your calm judgment; to get back your true self, or in the words of Confucius, to find the central clue and balance in your moral being.” In other words, the *ultimate* solution to all social and political deadlock must be a *moral* solution. It consists in the *moral reform* of one’s own being and person, which “must precede all and every other reform.” It is only when a person or a nation has recovered and got hold of the truth of their being that they will be able to “see and understand the true and exact state of . . . affairs” and to “see and do what is morally just and right.” It is only then that

not only men and things, but the whole universe, governed as it is by the same moral order, by the same order and system of things, will respond and obey; and whatever things are about and around such a man will at once again arrange themselves into a harmonious and cosmic order. (Gu 1906, pp. 10–14)

### *The Chinese Religion of Good Citizenship: A Royal Road to Rational Democracy*

The Chinese Religion of Good Citizenship is Gu’s rendering of 君子之道 (*junzi zhidao*), that is, the way or law of the gentleman in Confucian teachings. The essence of good citizenship is the Great Principle/Code of Honor and Duty, which Gu held to be the best translation of *dayi mingfeng* 大義名分/*taigi meibun* たいぎめいぶん —an idiom used by the Japanese to introduce the Confucian teaching of loyalty during the Edo period (Gu 1922a, p. 29). Here, Gu translates *dayi* as the great code/principle and *mingfeng* as honor and duty. Now the word *ming* carries the basic meanings of “name” and “title,” which are often associated with certain roles, ranks, and positions. Thus, *ming* may also indicate the repute, fame, or honor of serving in such positions. The basic verbal meaning of *feng* is to cut apart, to divide, and accordingly to distribute, allot, and assign. As a noun, *feng* may refer to the due share or assignment one obtains in a social order, and accordingly the duty to fulfill the proper portion of one’s social responsibilities. Hence, Gu’s translation of *mingfeng dayi* as the Principle of Honor and Duty makes perfect sense. It spells out the essence of Confucian political philosophy according to which the true justification for social divisions and distributions cannot be the rule of force or free competition for rights and interests, but the rule of ritual and decorum. According to the Song Confucian statesman and historian Sima Guang, the essence of ritual

consists in the teaching of *mingfeng*—the great principle of honor and duty. It is only when there is the appropriate assignment of roles and positions in accord with the virtues and merits of each person, and when each person is ready to live up to their roles and responsibilities according to a sense of honor and duty, that the different functionaries in a society can function together like the different parts of an organic human body. Thus obtains the proper order of a society (Sima Guang 1956, 1:2–3).

Although Gu never referred to Kant directly in his writings, Kant's famous line did appear on the front page of Gu's translation of the *Zhongyong*: "Two things fill the soul with always renewed and increasing wonder and admiration the oftener and more deeply one's thought is occupied with them: the starry sky above and the moral law within me!" This seems to indicate the influence of Kant's theory of duty and moral law on Gu's interpretation of Confucian teachings. In my view, the Confucian Religion of Good Citizenship can best be viewed as a *synthesis* of the role-based contextual ethics proposed by Ames and Rosemont and the sense of duty, free will, and moral law prescribed by Kant's deontological ethics. On the one hand, Gu's exposition of the law of the gentleman may be seen to supplement the role-ethics model with a true sense of moral autonomy as the soul and spirit of Confucian personality (cf. Wang 2017, pp. 1234–1236). On the other hand, in contrast to Kant, who took the sole motive for moral conduct as the reverence or respect (*Achtung*) for the moral law itself—what he stipulated as *the categorical imperatives* (Sullivan 1989, pp. 27 and 133)—Gu argued that the true meaning of moral law was "indefinable."

In light of Confucian teachings, good will and moral autonomy are not transcendental ideas that can be established through abstract reasoning and argument; they are habits of virtue and kindness that must be inspired by *the aesthetic appeal of the gentleman* and nurtured with the religious feeling of love. Hence, not only are love, social affection, and the solidarity of ritual essential for cultivating a sense of honor and duty in an ordinary person, but true liberty and autonomy must also be realized through conscientious fulfillment of one's family and social roles and responsibilities. Indeed, it is only through what Carlyle called hero-worship, through loyalty to and reverence for the ideal of Kingliness as personified in a heroic personality that I can become a kinglet, a gentleman (*junzi*, which literally means a little king of men) and realize kingliness, namely the true liberty and autonomy of my own being (Gu 1901, p. 165; Gu 1922a, p. 158).

Thus, the essence of the Confucian Religion of Good Citizenship—the *moral constitution* of the Chinese State, is *zhongxiao* 忠孝—loyalty and filial piety. In my view, the moral and political implications of Gu's ideas on the truth of humanity and good citizenship and their relation to Kant's deontological ethics and Rosemont's role-ethics model can be a fecund field for future studies. Here, it is apposite to reassess first Confucian loyalty and political philosophy, which have become unbecoming to contemporary

liberal thinkers. For instance, Wang Tangjia, the first systematic Chinese translator of Gu's English works, harshly criticized Gu's idea of loyalty. In Wang's view, the Confucian teaching of unconditional loyalty was detrimental to individual personality and creativity as it encouraged tyrannies in Chinese history. It was thus "in itself an impairment to truth and justice" (Gu 2002, pp. 9–10). Steve Angle, despite his commendation of Confucian *ethical* philosophy, expressed similar concerns about Confucian political ideas and structures (Angle 2009, p. 75). As Angle states, there were a number of *problematic political consequences* of the Confucian commitment to sagehood, such as its encouragement of "antidemocratic elitists" and its endorsement of the "political philosophy of rule by men that has made it so difficult for democracy to flourish in China" (p. 181).

Although sympathetic to Wang's and Angle's concerns, I do not think these criticisms of Confucian loyalty and political philosophy are fair overall. Considering the complexity of the issues, I can only make sketchy arguments below to defend Confucian loyalty with a view to rendering Gu's Confucian Religion of Good Citizenship as a plausible and promising voice for Confucian political philosophy and cross-cultural moral and political discourse today.

First, contemporary liberals can be too quick to call someone anti-democratic, with a general disregard for the complex meanings of democracy and its own problematic political consequences.<sup>9</sup> Here, it is helpful to recall Gandhi's savvy distinction between *true democracy* and *mobocracy*. The former consists in the "art and science of mobilizing the entire physical, economic and spiritual resources of all the various sections of the people in the service of the common good of all." The latter is choked by the internecine strife of partisan privileges and interests. According to Gandhi, democracy "disciplined and enlightened is the finest thing in the world. A democracy prejudiced, ignorant, superstitious will land itself in chaos and may be self-destroyed" (Dalton 1996, pp. 144–146). Here, Gandhi echoed Gu, who separated rational democracy from what he called *democracy*. Gu further identified the crazy form of mobocracy as a *camouflaged oligarchy* of "pampered units"—privileged individuals and groups who manipulate the democratic machineries to advance their own interests through the worship of the mob (Gu 1922a, pp. 155–156; cf. Gu 1924, p. 113).

Second, considering the danger of mobocracy, it is unjust to impose modern Western *schemes* of democratic institutions, with all its problematic political consequences, as the *sole universal* standard for legitimate sovereignty. Instead, what is truly universal of rational democracy is not the mechanical apparatus of the popular vote or the superstitious submission to the will of the majority. It is rather the ideal of *good government* committed to promoting the common good of all. According to Mengzi: "He who gains the confidence of the common people should be the king; those who gain

the confidence of the king should be the feudal lords; those who gain the confidence of the feudal lords should be the officials" (*Mengzi* 7B14, translation modified; see [Gu 2015](#), p. 441, and [Lau 1970](#)). As Gu argues, the *spirit* of modern European democracy agrees with this classical Confucian ideal of good government pivoting on the sense of honor and duty, on the *mutual confidence and responsibilities* of all citizens committed to promoting the common good of a body politic.

Lastly, contrary to Angle's suggestion, the real reason why *rational democracy* cannot flourish in *modern China* is not due to the influence of Confucian sagehood, which has had virtually no impact on the contemporary Chinese political setup dominated by the revolutionary mentality and the artificial worship of Western models. It may well be the breakdown of the *moral* foundation of the social order caused by the clamorous destruction of all Confucian virtues, which culminated in the fanatic demolishing of the Confucian Temple in 1966. For the essence of democracy is not so much a political dogma or mechanism; it is rather a kind of personal and social habit, a moral character inspired by the senses of equality, fair-mindedness, tolerance, and proper respect for authority. It is in this sense that we may appreciate the comments by the British political philosopher G. L. Dickinson in 1914 that China was "*the only country whose civilisation has been for centuries . . . democratic*" and that he had "never been in a country where the common people are at once so self-respecting, so independent, and so courteous" ([Dickinson 1914](#), pp. 47–48). The American Baptist Missionary D. J. Macgowan, M.D., likewise reported in the late nineteenth century that the most notable feature of the Chinese people was their "capacity for combining." This civilized character came from the "inherent reverence for authority" and "law-abiding instincts" of the Chinese people, whose "docility is not that of a broken-spirited, emasculated people, but results from habits of self-control and from being left to *self-government* in local, communal or municipal matters." Thus, were we to place "the poorest and least cultured" of Chinese people on an island, "they would as soon organise themselves into a body politic as men of the same station in life who had been tutored in rational democracy" ([Macgowan 1886](#), p. 186; cf. [Gu 1922a](#), pp. 146–147).

### *The Confucian Principle of Loyalty: What Is the Matter with Political Philosophy?*

Modern Western political scientists have championed the rule by many (democracy) over rule by one (monarchy/tyranny) or rule by the few (aristocracy/oligarchy) as an unconditional ideal of government. In contrast, Gu seems to echo Aristotle, who distinguished true forms (which aim to promote the common good) from perverted forms (which aim to advance private and parochial interests) in all three schemes of governmental setup



(Aristotle 1996, III, 7). Hence, there are more similarities between such true forms of government as modern European rational democracy and classical Confucian monarchy than between the true and perverted forms of the same scheme of government, for example between rational democracy and mobocracy. I believe Gu's thesis is insightful. It also involves controversial and complex problems that need to be examined separately. In this section, I will defend the historical validity and modern relevance of Confucian loyalty and political philosophy against some typical criticisms. With timely revision and reformulation, the Confucian Religion of Good Citizenship predicated on the principle of loyalty should prove valuable for contemporary moral and political discourse. It promises not only a royal path to true liberty and moral self-realization, but also an effective remedy for imperfect political situations.

Let me first clear the charges by modern Chinese revolutionists, who took Confucian loyalty as a *slavish morality* instrumental to authoritarian control. In light of recent scholarship, neither the Chinese word *zhong* 忠 nor the English word loyalty entails blind and unconditional obedience to authority. The original meaning of *zhong* is "personal commitment and wholehearted devotion," which requires proper remonstrance toward one's superior to follow the right path (Ni 2017, p. 66). According to the Confucian rule of ritual, when a sovereign commits misconduct, it is the *supreme duty* of "the state secretary to record it, the court musicians to chant about it, the three chief officials to come forward and advise against it, and the chef to reduce the size of the royal meal," so as to make sure that the sovereign stay on the right track (Fang 2008, p. 336; my translation).

Therefore, Confucian loyalty is not a slavish obligation to cater to the personal wishes and interests of the superior. It is an aspiration to realize one's true being through the critical and reciprocal process of moral transformation toward the common ideal of sagehood.<sup>10</sup> Gu's own service to the Qing court personified the Confucian teaching of loyalty and remonstrance. For example, Gu declined a request by his supervisor Zhang Zhidong to translate a selection of Western newspapers because he believed Western newspapers were fraught with rumors and misleading information. Seeing the potential harm, he insisted that he would not translate even if there were a royal directive. While Zhang did not follow Gu's advice due to practical considerations, he did respect Gu's stance and asked somebody else to do the job. In 1902, likewise, at a grand banquet to celebrate the birthday of the Empress Dowager hosted by the Hubei Governor's office, Gu extemporaneously composed and chanted an "anthem for caring for the people" to openly criticize the improper use of public funds for this event: "Long live the Son of Heaven, Lot of misfortunes for the average person!" (Gu 1996, pp. 580–581; my translation).

Second, the purpose of the Confucian teaching of loyalty is not to sanction the divine and absolute *authority* of the King, but to circumvent

endless power struggles and the paradoxical problems of political authority through a reciprocal process of *moral* transformation. A proper respect for legitimate political authority is indispensable for the positive function of all societies. But even in Confucius' day, it had become clear that there could be no justification for political authority based on a *philosophy of entitlement*. Neither the allegedly "divine" right of a king nor the certification by the so-called "will of the people" can ensure a true social order immune from deliberating power struggles, from unrestrained competition among military or intellectual forces. That is why, for Confucius, the only viable way to sanction the political contract of allegiance, and accordingly all subsequent hierarchical social arrangements, must be the law of the gentleman, instilled with the *sense of honor*. As Gu elaborates, it is only this sense of honor—"the instinctive, living, vivid perception of . . . the life and soul of justice"—that can inspire all citizens to live up to their respective roles and responsibilities toward the *common good*. Hence, the root of justice (*yi* 義) as the opportune distribution of different functions and utilities must reside in *ren* 仁, in the *moral sense* and *social affection* of gentlemen and gentlewomen inspired by love and kindness, and in their *loyalty* to the way (*dao* 道) as nurtured by the process of *true education*—by the process of mutual belonging and transformation toward the common ideal of sagehood (Gu 1922a, pp. 38 and 52).

Admittedly, even in a Confucian society, only a very few individuals can achieve true education and attain notable social and political positions. Hence, there are *prima facie* reasons to take Confucianism as a form of elitism that excludes the masses from complete moral self-realization and social and political advancement. Now if we take elitism in the most general sense as the management of social and political affairs by a small number of elites, then Confucian political philosophy, like most premodern Western political theories, indeed approves of rule by the elite. However, the charge that Confucian sagehood is a form of "antidemocratic elitism" (Angle 2009, p. 181) may still be unwarranted as it may be overlooking the spirit of Confucian political philosophy. Here, it is helpful to call attention to three points.

First, for Confucius, not only is (moral) education open and possible for all (*Analects* 15.38), but social, economic, and political advancement is also *not* a condition for *moral* self-realization (Wang 2017, p. 1227). Hence, the division between elite leaders and ordinary persons does not stem from hierarchical authority but from the functional distribution of social roles and responsibilities according to virtue and capability.

Second, it is unwarranted to regard a Confucian sage as a self-proclaimed exemplary or superior person—a godlike omnipotent *elite* who rules a country by telling everyone what is the right thing to do (Angle 2009, p. 214; Chan 2014, pp. 63–64). The true justification for Confucian leadership is not a *philosophy of entitlement* based on superior knowledge

and power. It is rather the utmost kindness, openness, and *humbleness*—the exemplary sense of responsibility and *good faith* that induces the participation of all citizens in a beneficent social and political order.

Third, the “provisional authority” of Confucian leaders is not to certify “greater profits and entitlements but greater responsibilities and sacrifices” (Wang 2016, p. 575). What a Confucian leader assumes is not the greatest authority, but the greatest loyalty—loyalty to the true way of humanity and the cosmic cycle of grace and sacrifice to which all beings equally belong.<sup>11</sup>

All in all, if we recognize that elite rule has turned out to be inevitable even for modern democratic societies (Maloy 2016), then an honest rule by Confucian elites to promote the common good with good citizenship is certainly superior to those camouflaged modern elitisms and oligarchies dominated by privileges of the interest groups.

Last but not least, even for imperfect political situations such as the lack of a sage-ruler, it is adherence to the principle of loyalty, to one’s duty of good citizenship with a sense of right and tact (*Schicklichkeit*), namely with the good taste and common sense of the gentleman,<sup>12</sup> that is still the best way step by step to transform oppressive political situations.<sup>13</sup> Remarkably, here is the dividing line between Gu and New Confucian thinkers like Xu Fuguan, Mou Zongsan, and Tu Weiming, who believe that traditional Confucian governments based on the “rule of the people” and “for the people” must be “modernized” toward the *universal* democratic scheme of rule “by the people.” As Steve Angle nicely summarizes, because “we cannot count on having a sage-ruler . . . all must be limited by objective, democratic political institutions” (Angle 2009, p. 196; cf. Chan 2014, pp. 63–64).

In contrast, Gu stood by his loyalty to the Qing court as loyalty “to the *Religion of China*, to the cause of civilization of the Chinese race” (Gu 1922c, p. 9). For Gu, what is truly *universal* is the cause of *good government* but not any purportedly superior institutional schemes. When we have the right vision of true democracy, a Confucian political order based on sagehood and good citizenship—with a view to improving *imperfect* political situations through reciprocal moral education and transformation—not only does not impede democracy but can also be a best personification of its true spirit. As evidence, Gu referred to Emerson’s American idea of non-government and non-resistance as the “great practical idea of modern Democracy and modern Liberalism”; it agrees with both Confucius’ and Goethe’s ideal of the best form of government, “which tends to make all government unnecessary” (Gu 1901, pp. 156–157 and 153).

On the other hand, taking a cue from a sarcastic line in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* on there being enough liars and swearers to beat and hang all honest men (IV:2), Gu pinpointed a fatal outcome of modern constitutionalism and majority rule that threatened to suppress the weak and the unfortunate forever: “All honest men in America have been or are in danger

of being hanged” (Gu 1901, p. 152). The heart of the problem is that modern Americans “have lost the spirit of their fathers, those true, early Americans,” and thus “become unworthy of the institutions which their fathers intended for them.” In light of Confucian teachings, “it is the men in the nation who make the institutions and not the institutions that make the men” (“Men and not System” [有治人無治法], Gu 1901, p. 152).

As I see it, whether we should prioritize sagehood and good citizenship or democratic institutions, and how they may complement each other, are important questions open to calm and conscientious debate. The key issue here, however, is what should be the *universal* base for comparative moral and political discourse and international relations—the cause of *good government* committed to promoting both common good and personal development or modern Western schemes of constitutionalism, majority rule, and individual rights? It is the presumption of the latter that prompted the colonial and imperialistic policies of the Western Powers in China and other nations, such as the rule of force policy reported by American Diplomat Anson Burlingame in 1861: “the Chinese are conceited barbarians, and must be forced into our civilisation”—a policy Burlingame opposed and endeavored to redress by the landmark Burlingame treaty of 1868 (Williams 1912, p. 65). In Gu’s view, “unless the foreign Powers and foreigners change their policy” based on dogmatic universalism, dominant materialism, and the Right of the Mighty, there would be no way to avoid what Sir Robert Hart had prophesied as the terrible outbreak of Boxerdom in China (Gu 1901, p. 78; Gu 1924, pp. 113 ff.). Despite the conscientious efforts by Hart, Burlingame and other good-hearted Western diplomats and intellectuals to readdress such hegemonic practices, Western capitalist expansions and colonial and imperialistic policies had continued to cause devastating consequences not only in China, but all around the world: the two World Wars, the outbreak of communist revolutions, and the so-called global age of terrorism today.

In fact, it is disillusionment with the signifier “civilization” of the West that has led Henry Rosemont and many other honest intellectuals to believe that the major problems of the world cannot even be addressed properly within the confines of the capitalistic economic system. For Rosemont, the answer to global ethics is not moral universalism but a soft form of pluralistic relativism featured by role-based contextual ethics (Rosemont 2015, pp. xi, 17 ff.). Thus, Rosemont seems to affirm a current view on the mission of morality, which is not to judge right and wrong based on a universal principle but to determine the best action in a given circumstance by balancing competing goods and values, such as the values of *equality* and *freedom* advocated by both communists and capitalists. In my view, Rosemont’s rejection of moral universalism is no doubt well-intended. However, without a universal standard, *how* should we balance competing goods and values except for submitting to the *free competition* of these

values and goods themselves? It is good progress that while the old world recognized only the right of *physical* force, the world today tends to recognize the right of *intellectual* force based on rational arguments. However, within the framework of free competition of values and goods, even the forum of rational arguments may easily degenerate into what Gu feared would be *the battlefield of divided interests*, “a terrible battlefield where the head and heart—the soul and the intellect—come into constant conflict” (Gu 1922a, p. 14).

Arguably, predicated on the principle of loyalty, Gu’s Confucian Religion of Good Citizenship promises a royal path to the universal truth of humanity that may save us from this battlefield of divided interests and competing values. Even the deadlock between liberty and equality could be tempered and hopefully resolved if only we were able to understand their *truest* meanings. As Gu asserts, the Chinese word *dao* “expresses precisely the original American notion of liberty.” In contrast to modern conceptions that allow for liberty “to be vulgar, to swindle, or to be heartless and cruel,” the true sense of liberty, as the Chinese say, is to “fulfill the law of our being” and “to do the Will of God.” This is also the original American notion of liberty: “I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy precepts” (Psalm 119:45; Gu 1901, p. 153).

Likewise, in its truest sense, equality does not mean equal distribution of all for all so that “the best of the nation should become as bad as the worst. . . . [T]he soldiers should command the general, and the horses should drive the coachman.” It means equality against “privilege,” and thus creating space for the “open door” and Expansion. The real meaning of Expansion is that true education will be possible for all people, regardless of their racial, social, and cultural differences. At the same time, there is harmony among the truly educated persons in East and West despite the different paths they may have traveled to realize this universal truth of humanity (Gu 1901, p. 155; cf. Gu 1912, p. xi; Wang 2011, pp. 214–215).

The authentic meanings of liberty and equality, therefore, agree perfectly with each other. “Liberté, Egalité, and Expansion in its *deepest* sense—Fraternité, means Christianity or, as Chinese say, to look upon all men as belonging to the same humanity” (Gu 1901, p. 156). Gu relates how Sir Chaloner Alabaster had correctly ascertained the true meaning of Christianity in the Confucian notion of *ren*—the Chinese word for the truth of humanity, which can be translated as Love, moral *sense*, and empathetic openness (Gu 1922b, p. 2; cf. Wang 2012). Thus, the present deadlock between liberty and equality, like all the deadlocks coming out of the *battlefield of divided interests*, admits only one “true way of escape,” namely “to get back the evenness of your temper and your calm judgment; to get back your true self, or in the words of Confucius, to find the central clue and balance in your moral being” (Gu 1906, p. 13). The *ultimate* solution, then, to all personal, social, and political problems has to be a

*moral* solution. The key to this moral solution hinges not only on the sophisticated new theories and arguments presented from the podiums of academic conferences, national congresses, or the United Nations. It lies also, and all the more, in “the purest and simplest minds,” in what Emerson once told Gu’s mentor Carlyle was the “dogma of non-government and non-resistance,” which is “the gun that does not need another gun, the law of love and justice” that alone “can effect a clean revolution” (Emerson 2000, p. 604; Gu 1901, pp. 170–171; cf. Gu 1922a, p. 160).

In Gu’s view, “this American idea of Emerson lies at the bottom of the Chinese civilization,” which aims to gradually replace all governmental forces with the moral power of good citizenship, with the true social order predicated on the pure and simple mind of the gentleman (Gu 1922a, pp. 159 and 51). Presumably, even opportune economic distribution entails first the proper balance in our nature so that all individuals (and households) can learn to balance their expenditures with basic personal and social needs and keep the happy union of head and heart, soul and intellect, as the signifier of *true freedom*. Hence, the *ultimate* solution to all social and political problems has to start with what Gu calls *true education*, with the cultivation of a simple and pure mind, which is essential for fulfilling the law of our being and fostering the moral habits of the masses. Because “in order to know what the law of being of the gentleman is, one must first be a gentleman and has, in the words of Emerson, the simple and pure mind of the gentleman developed in him” (p. 51).

The whole mission of the Confucian Religion of Good Citizenship, indeed, is to consecrate this pure and simple mind as the soul of Confucian loyalty and the moral foundation of social order. True loyalty is not the opposite of true liberty. Rather loyalty, the reverence for the ideal of kingliness, for the dignity and liberty of another human being, is the essence of true education, which teaches the utmost sincerity and devotion to the truth of humanity. It is through this utmost sincerity, which is the creative principle of the cosmos, that one realizes true liberty and autonomy and becomes a kinglet—a site of being that personifies the heart of sky and earth through empathetic openness. For the spirit of humanity consists in this sublime poetic and moral temperament of empathetic openness. It is the “serene and blessed mood” that “enables us to see into the life of things”! (ibid., p. 70).

## Notes

- 1 – See Gu 1912, pp. 29–31, and Gu 1922c, pp. 3–4. Cf. Ruskin’s criticism of modern political economy, which had a great influence on the thought of both Gu and Gandhi (Ruskin 1907).
- 2 – Among others, I have drawn mainly from comprehensive studies on Gu’s biographical information in Arkush 1965 and Huang 1995.



- 3 – See [Jenco 2013](#) for a careful account of this episode in relation to the May Fourth Movement.
- 4 – One of these friends was Shen Zengzhi 沈曾植, widely held to be the greatest Confucian scholar in the late Qing dynasty. Gu also facilitated an interview between Shen and Keyserling and wrote a biography of Shen after his death ([Gu 2015](#), pp. 368–369; see [Keyserling](#), 2:132–134).
- 5 – Remarkably, Wang harshly criticized Gu’s translation, noting the conceptual gap between Chinese and English words. On its republication in 1925, Wang added a postscript apologizing for the overly critical tone and admitted that public opinion had drawn conclusions long before about Gu’s “grand style and superior insights” ([wang@gcsu 2014](#), pp. 688, 695). Insofar as Gu’s approach to translation is concerned, it is relevant to recall Lin Yutang’s high praise for Gu’s translation of the *Zhongyong*. According to Lin, Gu’s renderings of key Confucian terms “are essentially correct. Some are even brilliant” ([Lin 1938](#), p. 102). In my view, we should take Gu’s translation as a bridge (but not a direct equivalence) between Eastern and Western ideas. In this sense, I agree with Lin Yutang’s affirmation of Gu’s translations.
- 6 – Liang Shuming did make a reverent comment about an informal encounter with Gu when he studied at Peking University ([Huang Xingtao 1998](#), pp. 149–150). Also, Lin Yutang spoke highly of Gu’s achievements, which had a great influence on his own personal development ([Lin 1959](#), pp. 46–57).
- 7 – Gu, “Tōzai no idō o ronzu,” in *Ko Kōmei kōen shu* (Tokyo: Daito Bunka Kyōkai, 1925), pp. 102–125; cited in Chunmei [Du 2011](#), p. 732 n. 79.
- 8 – [Gu 1901](#), pp. 78–79. Cf. Ruskin, who comments on the honor and mercy of the gentleman as the ideal of education for the ordinary person while he identified the first meaning of Lord and Lady as “Giver or dividers of bread” ([Ruskin 1905](#), pp. 18–20).
- 9 – See [Miller 2018](#) for a critical overview of the difficulties and problems of democratic schemes throughout human history.
- 10 – See [Wang 2016](#), pp. 565–66 ff. for a recent study on the Confucian contractual and reciprocal relationship between sovereigns and subordinates and their respective duties.
- 11 – *Ibid.*, p. 575. Cf. Ruskin’s idea on education and government, mentioned in note 8 above.
- 12 – See [Gu 1915](#), pp. 16–21 for elaboration on tact as good taste and common sense for the gentleman and the essence of Confucian

civilization. I believe this *good* taste is not individualistic preference. It is more like what Peimin Ni has called the “cultivated spontaneity” of an educated person whose thoughts and actions agree naturally with Confucian ritual and decorum (Ni 2016, pp. 76 and 96 ff.). Cf. Keyserling’s description of the Confucian gentleman Shen Zengzhi, who exemplified this good taste through Confucian ritual (Keyserling 1925, 2:132–134).

13 – Gu 1912, pp. 99–103.

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