

CHAPTER 4

The Special District of Confucian Culture, the Amish Community, and the Confucian Pre-Qin Political Heritage

ZHANG Xianglong

IT SEEMS COMMON SENSE to a Western mind that a theory of the state should present a potentially optimal mode of political design. Correspondingly, Plato, Aristotle, and modern philosophers propose various political doctrines, each of which takes one type of state as the best. In political reality, every political party, insofar as its political power allows, wants to establish its own ideal state and dismiss all others. It rarely, if ever, occurs to such parties that the best political structure may go beyond one mode of state or be composed of various types of states.

Several years ago when I proposed the notion of a protective district, a Special District of Confucian Culture or SDC,¹ my main objective was not to set up an ideal mode of ruling but to deal with the predicament faced by Confucians that, on the one hand, the revival of Confucianism requires an authentic experience of community life based on family and lineage, but that, on the other hand, the globalized as well as individualized factuality of a ruling society denies such a life. This set of circumstances strongly urges, therefore, that we build a binary structure consisting of both the current political-economic-technological system and the *other* system, that is, the Confucian one. Without the current one, the *other* one cannot possess an actual footing; without the *other* one, the current one finds no way to have a feasible future or to be moral in an integrated sense. This chapter will try to outline a possible “other one” by explaining the concept of the SDC and, moreover, by making comparisons of

it with the Amish in order to state some concrete arguments for its necessity and feasibility. Finally, it will attempt to identify an even further reason for the establishment of the SDC that relates to a pre-Qin Confucian political heritage. *Gongyang* 公羊 Confucians refer to this as “opening up three traditions” (*tong santong* 通三统, discussed below).

Why a Special District of Confucian Culture?

We all know the reasons for setting up a nature reserve: maintaining biodiversity, protecting the original environment and rare species, maintaining ecological balance, and so forth. Almost all of these can also apply to a cultural reserve or protected cultural district to a certain degree, if the “bio” is altered to “cultural.” However, a special cultural district is inhabited by human beings with cultural traditions, and so there must be additional considerations involved in its establishment.

Confucianism has its roots in the family, especially in the parent-child relation. To extend this relation into communities, states, and “land under heaven” through an education in the arts and its exemplars is one of the primary functions of a Confucian authority. Due to these two features—its family orientation and its transformation of human society through education—Confucianism did not feel the need to form itself into a religion with an independent and clear organization. Consequently, when the great tide of Westernization came—the so-called “dramatic change never seen in three thousand years”—the old family-education-society system was destroyed or seriously damaged, and Confucianism found no refuge in churches and temples as had other non-Western religions such as Buddhism and Daoism. That was one reason for the sharp and radical decline in the twentieth century of this once so successful cultural body. Up until about fifteen years ago, therefore, we saw no authentic Confucian living experience in almost any major aspect of life in mainland China, and in this sense Confucianism had become a “wandering soul without a body.”

In the last two decades, there has been a growing interest in Confucianism in Chinese academic circles and among Confucian sympathizers and even some young people. However, this phenomenon looks to belong chiefly to a cultural nostalgia movement and has not penetrated into the mainstream, whether political, economic, educational, or technological. The anti-Confucian ideology fostered by the May Fourth “New Culture” movement and further fueled by the Cultural Revolution still prevails. One of its manifestations was the withdrawing of the statue of Confucius from the side quadrant of Tiananmen Square in April of 2011, following the combined efforts of both the political left and right. Although the Chinese government has set up quite a few “Confucius Institutes” in foreign countries, these institutes seem to be Confucian in name only.

In this unfavorable environment, Confucians have offered two notable responses. One is from the rightist side, represented by Mou Zongsan, which claims that in modern times Confucianism must “be self-restricted” to its moral base so as to let its own political and cognitive traditions be superseded by Western democracy and science, for these are the “universal truth” and the “common ideal.”² The other is the leftist position advocated most famously by Jiang Qing, which insists that Confucianism must sustain its political dimension in the contemporary era, and that, therefore, a Confucian religion in the strict sense should be formed with the goal of becoming the state religion of China.³

The rightist line undermines the vitality of Confucianism by forcing it to adopt a Westernized political and cognitive framework. The leftist line in contrast tries to reform Confucianism into a church-like national religion. In an anti-Confucian atmosphere, however, it risks leaving Confucianism hanging in the air and losing its vitality as well. Both lines pay little attention to the importance to Confucianism of family and community, or to the Confucian focus on *xiaodao* 孝道 (the Way of family reverence, or filial piety). Admittedly, it is extremely difficult in this era of globalization to revive the traditional family and display its advantages. But this does not mean that the Confucian struggle for survival today can afford to neglect its family-*xiaodao* keystone. Without it, no form of Confucianism can be genuine and alive.

For these reasons, the establishment of an SDC makes very good sense, insofar as it enables Confucianism to seek a new way of maintaining its vitality today. It meets the requirements of both compromising with contemporary globalization and regenerating Confucianism. The SDC is marginal, and will therefore not negatively affect what is going on in mainstream society. Because it permits a small but authentic Confucian community to exist, it satisfies the need to sustain a true Confucian life-world in an environment of adversity.

What Is an SDC?⁴

An SDC is a small autonomous region in which Confucian communities prevail. More specifically, it is grounded in the family and guided by a renewal of the traditional Confucian arts and principles. This kind of region requires a land grant for the establishment of limited self-governing communities that only an authoritative institution such as the state can provide. As much as possible the land should be geographically marginal or isolated, for two reasons: the effort to set up an SDC should not interfere with anyone’s livelihood, and the district should be secluded from the ruling society so that it can maintain the necessary space for a free and independent existence. After the initial wave of settlers makes improvements to the environment, the land should be made ready for farming and habitation by a small community.

Without question, this community must be grounded in a family- or lineage-based social structure. Therefore, what directs its establishment is neither liberal nor autocratic principles, but rather the familial rudiments enhanced by the Confucian arts. The family on various levels supplies the organic structure of the small society, in which many problems are dealt with, such as construction and repair, agricultural production, insurance, public welfare, conflict resolution, and basic education. Accordingly, one of the major tasks of an SDC is, on the one hand, to improve family structure by retrieving both a familial prototype and the traditional Confucian refinement of this prototype and, on the other hand, learning as well as creating new family structures. The family should provide a meaning-generating context for human life rather than a rigid hierarchical system that diminishes the natural free spaces of the living. In this respect, the thought of the peasant thinker Wang Fengyi (1864–1937) may be quite illuminating.⁵ He criticized the dogmatic and corrupt aspects of the family culture of his time: for instance, the discrimination against women, the overemphasis on the material aspects of marriage (such as claiming a bride-price), and the insufficient care provided by families to their elders. But unlike the May Fourth radicals, he wanted to preserve and revitalize the inner life of the family, in particular the family ethics that takes *xiao*, family reverence or filial piety, as the foremost virtue. The numerous schools he created for the education of women, for instance, were not intend to reshape the females of society into no-family-care individuals, but to emphasize the “roots of the family” (家之本)—the mother and daughter-in-law, who help the whole family to achieve harmony, moral rectitude, and prosperity.

The political edifice of the SDC would not be a hereditary system like that of a monarchy, for such a system would not be the best concretization of family-configured morality. The ideal of Confucian politics is “to make the world harmonious” (平天下), which depends on “regulating the state,” “coordinating the family,” and “cultivating oneself.”⁶ Its superb manifestation is the Yao-Shun model of transferring authority according to virtue and wisdom, rather than through a hereditary system within one family. In other words, the family and its “role ethics”⁷ are deeper than the political system. It can serve as the latter’s origin and spiritual guide, but its makeup cannot be fully objectified into an inherited form of politics. Therefore, the SDC’s authority should come from and be curbed by the common people (*baixing* 百姓) grounded in the traditional family and in a Confucian wisdom that surpasses that of a monarchical system.

There may be two houses or congresses: a *baixing* house (百姓院) and a Confucian house (通儒院). The representatives of the *baixing* house are elected by family-based *baixing* or common people. Everyone in the SDC can vote for the representatives, but the votes coming from the family as a whole hold greater

weight than those from individuals. In this way, family formation acquires certain advantages, but individuals are also allowed to speak out. To avoid the monopoly of big family lineages, there should be a regulatory system to enforce the division of lineages over a certain size. The Confucian house should be composed of esteemed and tested Confucians. The administrative leader of the SDC, the director of the district, would be nominated by the *baixing* house and approved by the Confucian house. The civil-service examination system (科举制) would be revived for the selection of officers and promising Confucians. The procedure and content of the examination should be adapted according to what the SDC's long-term existence requires.

The primary form of economic production should be agriculture, for it is the form most agreeable to family health, but family-based industry and commerce would be permitted. In brief, this is a natural, family-centered, humanistic economy. It guarantees the basic needs of every family and individual, but also encourages as well as assists everyone to display their own talents, and to conduct their own life with happiness and decency. In this society, the "lowest" people in terms of wealth or social status should be guaranteed a life that allows them to maintain themselves, as well as a hopeful outlook. On the other hand, the "higher" the people rise in wealth or status, the more their contributions to the district should be substantially larger. There is no rigid economic or social stratification. Privileged status is not admitted except that which comes from embodying morality and wisdom.

The district will use clean and family-friendly technologies *only*. That means it will reapply the traditional technologies but at same time improve them, and will try its best to learn and invent smarter green technologies. Fossil fuels for driving engines are to be prohibited, and electricity—especially public-grid electricity—is with a few exceptions banned in general. Traditional medicine such as Chinese medicine will be the cornerstone of healthcare, but the "green" parts of Western and other types of medicine are to be absorbed. *Laodong* 劳动 (work/labor in a wholesome sense) with the aid of such technology will allow labor to regain dignity through craftsmanship in a spirit of joyfulness.

Education will help secure a sustainable and comfortable future for the community by "going back to the past and renewing the present." The Confucian classics and arts are essential, but certain techniques and approaches to thinking developed by Western and other societies beyond China must be taken in, particularly those related to green living and technology. In other words, exchanges between the Confucian and other traditions are encouraged as far as the preconditions that they be clean and sustainable are met. Institutions of higher learning should be introduced for the pursuit of advanced knowledge. The SDC will be a place where a youthful enthusiasm for learning and new

discovery can flourish. Here the moral philosophy of the family will be both conservative and creative, since it will emphasize both continuity of tradition and the capacity to deal with unforeseen changes.

The SDC naturally will take Confucianism as its basic belief system and keep it alive through the program described above. However, due to its dependence on a natural family ethics, rather than on dogmatic creeds, the SDC will have the confidence to leave room for other beliefs as far as they are in harmony with the fundamental principles and rules of this society.

What will the SDC look like? One passage from *The Peach Blossom Spring* by Tao Yuanming 陶渊明 (365–427) may give us a sense of its outlook:

The fisherman left his boat and entered the cave, which at first was extremely narrow, barely admitting his body; after a few dozen steps it suddenly opened out onto a broad and level plain where well-built houses were surrounded by rich fields and pretty ponds. Mulberry, bamboos and other trees and plants grew there, and criss-cross paths skirted the fields. The sounds of cocks crowing and dogs barking could be heard from one courtyard to the next. Men and women were coming and going about their work in the fields. The clothes they wore were like those of ordinary people. Old men and boys were carefree and happy.⁸

The spirit of an SDC community will be poetic in the sense of the harmony realized in “poem, song, music, and temperament” (诗, 歌, 声, 律), as rendered by the “Yaodian” 尧典 section of *The Book of History* (*Shujing* 书经).⁹ And the lifestyle depicted there also shares remarkable similarities with the Amish community in the United States.¹⁰

A Comparison with the Amish Community

The Amish are a special Anabaptist Protestant Christian group that formed in the middle of the seventeenth century in Europe. Persecuted heavily there, the Amish emigrated to North America between the 1730s and 1850s, and they now live in the United States and Canada.¹¹ They believe that true Christians should in every way separate themselves from an immoral world in the pursuit of power. Thus, the Amish have resisted uniformity and control over their rural communities by any alien institution, whether that institution is in the form of a united church system, a state authority, mandatory education, modern technology, or modern rational thought. What the Amish cherish most are a sincere religious faith, a healthy family, and a vital and active community. For these reasons, some significant comparisons may be drawn between the Amish and the proposed SDC.

First, both pay strong attention to family and combine religious beliefs with family morality. For both groups, love of deity essentially cannot be disconnected from love of family members. The Amish resist such code expressions as “eternal salvation,” and prefer to speak of a “living hope” that demands their ethical practice.¹² “[I]t makes no sense to them to separate ethics from salvation or to speak of one dimension and not the other.”¹³ The “ethics” here relates to the conviction that family morality comes first. So they reject a formal bureaucratic church and hold church services in their homes every other Sunday:

The district’s twenty to forty families live near each other. A single four-letter word, *Gmay*—a [German] dialect shorthand for *Gemeinde* (community)—refers to this local church-community, both its members and its worship services.¹⁴

These families are to a great extent related to each other and “provide care, support, and wisdom for all stages of life.”¹⁵ Therefore, “[t]he family [rather than the individual or an institution] is the primary social unit in Amish society. . . . The family is the church in microcosm. . . . It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of the extended family in Amish society.”¹⁶ It is the family orientation of their community and Christian faith that distinguish the Amish from other Christian groups and allows a closer comparison to the Confucian community in the SDC.

Consequently, we find that *xiaodao* or filial piety, which features strongly in Confucian culture, is also encouraged and practiced to a certain degree in Amish society: “The words of the fifth commandment, ‘Honor thy father and thy mother,’ are heard frequently in Amish circles.”¹⁷ When parents become old, they move to an apartment adjacent to the house of one of their married children where they receive care from their children when needed.¹⁸ As a result, among the Amish one hardly hears of anyone applying to live in a retirement center or nursing home.

In order to sustain their family-based religious beliefs in the midst of a hostile environment, both find it necessary to uphold some level of separation from the mainstream society. In 1954 an Amish man named Levi living in Pennsylvania was arrested and imprisoned five times within four months because he refused to send his fourteen-year-old son to the ninth grade of middle school.¹⁹ The same thing happened around that time to one hundred other Amish people who, together with Levi, insisted that it was their own community that should take responsibility for their youngsters’ education and that their children should stop their school education by the eighth grade. Such efforts at keeping a substantial distance from the mainstream have characterized the entire history

of the Amish. Since the twentieth century, the Amish have striven to hold on to “the right not to be modern”²⁰ and to continue their “Ordnung” (divine order of life tested by tradition)²¹ in all aspects of their lives. They well understand that the outcome of this non-modernization struggle will decide the destiny of their community. “Within two generations, the progress-seeking churches would surrender their distinctive Amish identity and merge with neighboring Mennonites.”²² As already mentioned, the SDC community will be aware of the unconditional requirement for isolation from modern society under the present circumstances, and therefore will much appreciate the valuable knowledge gained from the Amish experience. The Amish have shown that without this kind of separation—or “*Absonderung*” in Amish German—no authentic and energetic Confucian community is possible today. In spite of some obvious differences between China and the United States, the two groups are similar in their antipathy to modernity, advanced technology, and “the will to power.”

Furthermore, both sides are composed of small communities with “a high-context culture” (Edward T. Hall’s term) “in which people are deeply involved with one another... [and] are integrated, for members are skilled in thinking comprehensively according to a system of the common good. Loyalties are concrete and individuals work together to settle their problems.”²³ Finding effective ways to attract young people of the next generation—and to persuade them to choose to stay in the “backward” community—is the key to Amish survival. This requires a high level of social intimacy, and a corresponding low level of mobility:

By limiting mobility, horse-drawn transportation supports this small-scale, face-to-face community. In addition, a horse-based culture requires rural environs and keeps Amish communities outside urban areas, which threaten Amish sensibilities.²⁴

“Old Order [the conservative Ordnung] authority rested on informal oral tradition in each local community.”²⁵ Therefore, “[i]n general, the more conservative the Ordnung, the higher the retention [of young people].”²⁶ Contrary to quite a few pessimistic predictions made by researchers, the Amish population had increased from six thousand in 1900 to 275,000 by 2012.

In order to sustain their faith, family, and community, both the Amish and SDC consider it imperative to resist the overwhelming domination of modern technology and to choose technology appropriate to their way of life. They clearly know that the actual consequences of technology are not unrelated to moral standards and their way of thinking. An Amish leader says: “The moral decay of these last days has gone hand in hand with lifestyle changes made possible by modern technology.”²⁷ When we use technology to achieve what we

want, technology in turn uses our lives to realize its own goal and thus transform us to fit its flattening framework. The Amish people “recognized the way mechanization displaced family and local communities in favor of distant sources of production and influence.”²⁸ You may use your cell phone to call your parents, but by using the mobile phone system you are actually being put into a situation where family members are distancing themselves from each other and community interaction is no longer face-to-face. You may bring your high-tech harvest machine to help your neighbor, but when almost everyone has a machine, mutual assistance becomes an unusual phenomenon. Within the web of modern technology, where even individualized service can be essentially uniform, a community is reduced to single families, families to individuals, and individuals to manipulated desires. The result of all this is that we need commercial media and state institutions to form any kind of group consciousness, and we require crises, enemies, or sometimes even war to provoke in us a sense of solidarity.

That is why the Amish, especially the Old Order Amish, have been resisting the universal impact of modern technology. Some progressive Amish communities have tried to accept certain new technologies in order to adapt to a changing world. But, “Diversity has its limits.” If they did not “negotiate” with the technology by following the rules of the Old Order, the result was a disaster. “Although Beachy Amish members have continued to dress somewhat plainly and even retained the Pennsylvania Dutch dialect for a generation or so, their embrace of the car, along with other technological and doctrinal innovations, put them outside the Old Order fence.”²⁹ One of the reasons for rejecting car ownership, according to one Amish leader, is that “they bring moral decay as people work and live away from their families,” and one Amish publication gives as the reason the fact that “the car pulls families apart, increases the temptation to travel into cities, and detaches families from their local churches.”³⁰ From these statements, we can observe what kinds of morals are treasured by the Amish and why they consider cars, telephones, television, grid-supplied electricity, and so forth to be serious threats.

To maintain family, faith, and community, the most suitable profession for both the Amish and SDC is agriculture. “Over the generations, the Amish have developed a strong conviction that the small family farm is the best place to raise children in the faith.”³¹ However, since the 1950s, especially during the latter part of the twentieth century, Amish farming has encountered significant difficulties, and the households engaged in farming have decreased considerably. Some farmers have adopted relatively high-technology equipment such as vacuum milkers and bulk cooling tanks for milk production.³² Fortunately, early in the twenty-first century, in addition to the traditional way of farming, which is still practiced by the most conservative groups, a number of new agricultural

practices, such as cheese making, the auctioning of produce, organic farming, intensive grazing, and the use of greenhouses, have emerged, or in some ways have been revived, in Amish communities.³³ The Amish experience seems to show that the prosperity of the family and community is largely affected by the technology that is used. The SDC needs to make agriculture and traditional green technology its foundation.

With heartfelt admiration for the Amish people and their culture as described above, it is proper here to reflect on some lessons that SDC thinkers can learn from the Amish.

First, although the Amish have been astute enough to recognize the moral consequences of adopting modern technology, and have engaged in resistance to it and chosen to accept only parts of it and negotiate with it cautiously, their approach to dealing with the issue of technology in general may at times seem to be too *passive*. There is no organized, long-term practice to establish an indigenous system for appropriating technology that can satisfy the overall needs of the Amish today and in the future. For example, it is a smart negotiation or compromise to adapt a commercial computer run by grid electricity so that a battery-powered word processor can be used—and as long as “e-mail, Internet access, video games, or other interactive media” are disabled.³⁴ However, it would be much better and safer for the Amish to develop their own processor (on the model, say, of an improved *suanpan* 算盘 or traditional Chinese abacus). The Amish strategies of dealing with modern technology up to now have been partially successful, but new dangers have appeared in some communities such as the acceptance of cell phones and solar electricity,³⁵ which may become more insidious threats. So the future success of the Amish in their attempt to tame modern technology is seen as “uncertain.”³⁶

Second, the Amish need to develop their *own* advanced education and research projects so that they may achieve the capacity to create and sustain their own technology network. Historically, Confucianism had its own effective education and examination system, but these did not cover practical technology relating to farming and industry, a gap that the SDC must fill.

Third and most fundamentally, it will be necessary to establish a clearer boundary between the Amish and SDC communities and their respective surrounding mainstream societies so that the principle of separation can be fully realized. This means that the Amish and the SDC should each have their own special district where their own lifestyles prevail exclusively. Although the Amish have tried to interpret this separation in terms of the dichotomy between religious life and the worldly life, or between church and state,³⁷ they are nevertheless living in the world and hence must constantly confront the politics of the worldly life, if only because it heavily influences the quality of the separation. In other words, they should live on the land run autonomously by them, so that

they can have independent forms of social organization, economy, and technology networks. While it is good to avoid the alienating influence of bureaucratic institutions, they badly need institutions of their own that are not alienated from their family- and community-oriented lifestyles, while at the same time they can organize the dispersed Amish communities into a self-ruling body. It is not a state, but rather a self-run community in the same sense that Hong Kong is (that is, if the Special District's leader is actually selected by its people).

This would allow the Amish people to avoid directly facing the outside world as single-family units or as individuals, and to avoid the economic pressure to modernize their technology. For instance, in the 1950s and 1960s, state health regulations requiring that Grade A milk be distinguished from Grade B milk pushed some Amish farms to accept mechanical milkers and cooling tanks.³⁸ In 2002 "Some farmers complained that an inflexible farming *Ordnung* was actually pushing young families into nonfarm employment and suggested that, if church leaders wanted to save the family farm, the *Ordnung* would need to be relaxed."³⁹ Why did the *Ordnung* hinder Amish agriculture at this point when it had not done so before? Because the external economic environment had changed: "Escalating prices for hybrid seeds, fertilizer, equipment, and veterinary bills all conspired to make farming an expensive enterprise, even on a small scale."⁴⁰ Considering the mutual reinforcement between the modern economy and modern technology, if the Amish want to resist, by separation, the moral-decay brought on by modern technology, the separation should also extend to economic life—and therefore to political life. From this perspective, establishing an autonomous SDC or SDA (i.e., a Special District for Amish Culture) would seem necessary.

How Is the SDC Different from a Reserve?

One difference between the SDC and a nature reserve is that the SDC is less a place for protecting rare species and more a way to preserve a potential way of life for future humanity. It is, in fact, a way, or perhaps even *the* way, of engendering the full essence or possibilities of Confucianism, thereby making it "become itself" in the future.

Confucianism's forte lies not in the building of a power structure or a church system with a prominent form, whether that form be individualistic, governmental, or religious, but in constituting an attractive lifestyle that is characterized by humaneness, harmony, artistic creativity, spontaneity, and durability. This lifestyle must have its primary grounding in a sound family and community structure that takes *xiaodao* 孝道 (loving, serving, respecting, and honoring the memory of one's parents) as its foundation and extends it through the Confucian arts to the whole community. The family relation

and the practice of *xiaodao*, however, have been established in the temporal existence of peoples down through the generations, as I have described elsewhere.⁴¹ Due to the fact that, for Confucianism, all political entities such as the state have their roots in the family and its rituals, this temporality is necessarily embodied in Confucian political philosophy, and therefore makes it different from the Platonic way of seeking the best state in an Ideal that is independent of time.

Because *tiandao* 天道, or the Way of Heaven, is ever changing, no actual political regime, however it may be shaped according to some Ideal, can avoid ultimate deterioration and decline. New regimes must emerge to replace the present one to fulfill the demands of *tiandao*. Here the key to political “replacement” is the actualization of timely virtue rather than a resort to violence, trickery, or some absolutist ideology. This is what distinguishes a legitimate replacement or *ge* 革 (revolution) from an illegitimate one or *cuan* 篡 (usurpation). The *Book of Changes* states:

Heaven and earth effectuate four seasons by revolutions. The revolutions of Tang [the first king of the Xia dynasty] and Wu [the first king of the Zhou dynasty] complied with heaven and were responsive to the will of the people (顺乎天而应乎人). How great was the timeliness of the revolution [hexagram] (革之时大矣哉)!⁴²

Alternatively:

Heaven and earth bring about revolution, and the four seasons complete themselves thereby.

Tang and Wu brought about political revolutions because they were submissive toward heaven and in accord with men. The time of revolution is truly great.⁴³

The legitimization of the revolutions of Tang and Wu, and indeed the evidence of their complementarity with both Heaven and humanity, lie in their timely way of replacing the preceding dynasty, similar to the way Spring replaces Winter. It is a natural way of following the *dao* and of opportunely fulfilling the needs of Heaven and humanity.

A Confucian revolution is therefore necessary for Confucianism to achieve its political objectives. In addition, to prove itself to be a revolution rather than a usurpation is to *show* how it complies with heaven and is responsive to the will of the people. “Showing” cannot, however, be limited to presenting arguments, apologies, or even facts, all of which are subject to interpretations and can be potentially attacked by critics, but instead must demand a real community life

that demonstrates how a self-evident and morally glamorous Confucian life-world can actually function. This community life, however, first requires a grant of land to sustain itself.

Before the Qin (221–207 B.C.E.), there were quite a few autonomous lands in the empire ruled by nobles, which sometimes provided the necessary material basis for such “showing.” Confucius said: “The Zhou’s Wen and Wu arose from the small districts of Feng and Hao, but finally achieved the great kingship” (周文武起丰镐而王).⁴⁴ Here, “Wen” refers to King Wen, who was then the duke of Zhou, and after his death received the posthumous title of Wen Wang or King Wen. He was the father of “Wu” in this quotation (or King Wu). Wen set up the small district of Feng, where he led Zhou’s people in building a fabulous “SDC”; and the same thing happened to Wu in Hao. In this way they were able to *show* the virtuousness of their politics and won over the hearts of most of the people at the fall of the Shang empire. Thus, even before the brief war against the cruel Shang emperor, the Zhou had gained the new legitimacy of heaven by demonstrating their timely morality. This is the very meaning of “kingship” (*wang* 王)—obtaining and sustaining rule by lively virtue rather than by power.

The Amish experience demonstrates how a small minority community through its vitality and humanity can exert a substantial sociocultural influence on mainstream society over time. Before the middle of the twentieth century, the social mainstream did not have a very positive view of the Amish. “A queer religious sect,” “drab,” “odd in many ways: they are a strange people” were the usual comments.⁴⁵ Since the 1960s, however, their image in the public mind has seen a steady improvement, despite some minor setbacks, and they “now have become objects of public interest and admiration.”⁴⁶ “One of the greatest ironies of Amish life is that a people committed to remaining separate from the world have attracted so much attention from it.”⁴⁷ The more curious thing is that, although the Amish reject most of the things that typical Americans cherish—individualism, science, modern technology, and freedom of personal choice—many Americans still feel attracted to the Amish way of life. “Why are we so intrigued by the Amish?” it is asked.⁴⁸ Eventually, the answer is found in the high quality of the Amish lifestyle, which bears certain similarities to how Sima Qian described the district of Feng, where King Wen ruled:

Widows and orphans, the destitute and the disabled, receive respect and care within their community. . . . [V]iolent crime is virtually nil. Divorce is unheard of, and the elderly grow old within a caring circle of family and friends. . . . Work pulses with meaning, human dignity, and a delight in artisanship. Extended family networks provide care throughout the life cycle.⁴⁹

“[A]ll things considered, Amish quality-of-life indicators are remarkably robust.... It seems that in some uncanny way the Amish may have outwitted us—or perhaps even outwitted modernity itself.”⁵⁰ It is apparent from the Amish example that living the community life itself is more persuasive and self-evident than any prevailing values and standards, because it *is* the direct manifestation of *tiandao* or the Way of Heaven.

According to Confucian political philosophy, if someone receives his life’s calling from *tiandao* and touches the deepest parts of the people’s hearts, that person will win the kingship. In the terms of the “SDC” built by Wen and Wu, the Zhou achieved such a calling. This did not mean, however, that the Zhou could claim either legitimacy or kingship forever. Sooner or later, a new dynasty would be born in another small place that had been cultivated with virtue, and in due time it would go on to replace the Zhou. Moreover, this does not mean that the dynasty replaced by the Zhou would forever lose *its* legitimacy. Like the seasons, dynasties complete the circle at least in a formal sense, constituting the political *tiandao*, or Way of Heaven. Therefore, Confucians proposed the idea of *tong santong* 通三统 or “connecting three systems,” which holds that when a new kingship or political system comes to power, it should retain the cultural and political system of its predecessors in a measured way. A specific example: the new ruler must assign a piece of land to each of the remaining inhabitants of the previous two dynasties and permit them to keep their cultures and traditions on the land. Moreover, compared to other feudal subjects, the owners of these lands would carry additional privileges, such as being able to come before the ruler holding the status of guests rather than subjects.⁵¹ In this way, the three systems are “connected” in a circle, implying that, one by one, the old will return in the future.

The current SDC can be seen as the manifestation of a preceding system, and is part of the “circle.” Moving beyond the current PRC government and the Republican government in Taiwan, the SDC stands for the old dynasties, which took Confucianism as their dominant cultural and political direction. It therefore points to the past but also embraces the future in the circle of the “three connecting systems.” More crucially, its existence will make the *tong santong* truly possible today, and allow the current political structure to move from a dependence on power to a dependence on virtue. In the United States—if a speculative comparison is allowed here—there could be an interconnected three-part system there as well: it would be composed of the current U.S. government; the way of life in the nineteenth-century, now represented by the Amish (if they can establish themselves in a special district); and the way of the Indian people, whose ancestors were the masters of the land before the arrival of the European colonists.

As argued above, no fixed political system can forever lay claim to political

virtue, morality, or *tiandao*. *Tiandao* can only be realized in the dynamic and rotating pattern of the three interconnected systems. In comparison, political virtue and legitimacy can only be constituted in a timely fashion *between* or *among* cyclic systems, instead of being locked within one system. No political system is good or virtuous by itself, but must instead demonstrate its goodness through opportune relations and tensions with others. For this reason, an SDC, in a broader sense, is essential for the manifestation of *tiandao* in this world.

Notes

1. See Zhang Xianglong 张祥龙, *Rujia wenhua baohu qu huò tequ* 儒家文化保护区或特区 (Providing an asylum for Chinese ancient culture [is] endangered: A suggestion for establishing a Protected District of Confucian Culture), *Xiandai jiaoyu bao* 现代教育报 (Modern Education News), July 20, 2001, p. B1.

See also by Zhang Xianglong: (1) “‘Rujia Wenhua Baohu Qu’ yiweizhe shenme?” “‘儒家文化保护区’意味着什么?” (What does it mean to establish a “Protected District of Confucian Culture”?), *Kexue Zhongguo ren* 科学中国人 (Chinese scientist) 10 (2001): 33–35; (2) *Sixiang binan: Quanguo hua zhong de zhongguo gudai zheli* 思想避难: 全球化中的中国古代哲理 (Refuge for thought: Chinese ancient philosophies in [an age of] globalization) (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2007), chap. 2; and (3) *Fu jian tiandi xin: Rujia zai lin de yun yi yu daolu* 复见天地心: 儒家再临的蕴意与道路 (Showing the heart of Heaven and Earth by restoration: The implications and ways of Confucian revival) (Beijing: Dongfang Press, 2014), chaps. 8 and 9.

2. Mou Zongsan 牟宗三, *Xin ruxue lunzhu ji yao-daode lixiang zhuyi de chongjian-bian xu* 新儒学论著辑要·道德理想主义的重建·编序 (A selection of works on the reconstruction of Neo-Confucian moral idealism), ed. Zheng Jiadong 郑家栋 (Beijing: Zhongguo Guangbo Dianshi Chubanshe 中国广播电视出版社, 1992), p. 20; English translation here by Zhang Xianglong.

3. Jiang Qing 蒋庆, “Ru jiao chong jian: Zhuzhang yu huiying” “儒教重建: 主张与回应” (Reestablishing Confucianism as a religion: Proposals and responses), in vol. 1 of *Rusheng wen cong* 儒生文丛 (Collected essays of Confucius), ed. Ren Zhong 任重 and Liu Ming 刘明 (Beijing: People’s University Press of China, 2012), pp. 5–7.

4. What this section presents is discussed more concretely in chapter 8 of my book *Showing the Heart of Heaven and Earth by Restoration* (see note 1 above).

5. See Zhu Xuntian 朱循天, *Wang Fengyi nianpu yu yulu* 王凤仪年谱与语录 (Wang Fengyi’s chronicle and sayings) (Beijing: Zhongguo Huaqiao Chubanshe, 2010), and Zhang Xianglong 张祥龙, “Wang Fengyi xueshuo de rujiating: Dui qi kaiwu tiyan de jieti” 王凤仪学说的儒家性——对其开悟体验的解析 (The Confucian nature of Wang Fengyi’s thought: An analysis of his enlightenment experience), in *Zhongwai renwen jingshen yanjiu* 中外人文精神研究 (Studies on the Chinese and foreign humanistic spirit), vol. 6, ed. Liu Muyu 刘牧雨 and Du Liyan 杜丽燕 (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 2013), pp. 42–53.

6. The *Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大学), in *The Book of Rituals* (*Liji* 礼记).

7. See Roger T. Ames, *Confucian Role Ethics: A Vocabulary* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2011).

8. Translated by J. R. Hightower in *Classical Chinese Literature: An Anthology of Translations*, vol. 1, *From Antiquity to the Tang Dynasty*, ed. John Minford and Joseph S. M. Lau (New York: Columbia University Press; Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2000), p. 515.

9. "Poetry is the expression of earnest thought; singing is the prolonged utterance of that expression. The notes accompany that utterance, and they are harmonized themselves by the pitch pipes. In this way the eight different kinds of instruments can all be adjusted so that one shall not take from or interfere with another, and spirits and men will thereby be brought into harmony" (James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 3, *The Shoo King* [Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1994], p. 48).

10. John A. Hostetler, *Amish Society*, 4th ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

11. Donald B. Kraybill, Karen M. Johnson-Weiner, and Steven M. Nolt, *The Amish* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), chap. 2.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 71–72.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 194, 203.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 196.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

23. Hostetler, *Amish Society*, p. 18.

24. Kraybill, Johnson-Weiner, and Nolt, *The Amish*, p. 168.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 315.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 46. "Beachy" refers to the "network of churches" that began under the leadership of Moses M. Beachy (1874–1946) (*ibid.*).

30. *Ibid.*, p. 325.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 275–276.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 277–282.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 284–288.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 316.

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 324, 328.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 334.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 15–17.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 279.

39. Ibid., p. 280.

40. Ibid., p. 281.

41. Zhang Xianglong 张祥龙, "Xiaoyishi de shijian fenxi" "孝意识的时间分析" (An analysis of the consciousness of filial piety through time), *Beijing Daxue xuebao* (Zhezue shehui kexue ban) 北京大学学报 (哲学社会科学版) (*Journal of Peking University [Philosophy and Social Sciences edition]*) 1 (April 2006): 14–24.

See also by Zhang Xianglong: (1) "An Analysis of the Consciousness of Filial Piety through the Perspective of Time," in *Moral Life: Reclaiming the Tradition*, ed. David Solomon, Ping-Cheung Lo, and Ruiping Fan (Heidelberg, London, and New York: Springer, 2012), pp. 105–118; (2) "Xiangxiangli yu lishiji: Neishijian yishi de fenceng" 想象力与历时记忆—内时间意识的分层 (Imagination and episodic memories: The level-division of inner time consciousness), *Xiandai zhixue* 现代哲学 (Modern philosophy) 1 (2013): 65–71; and (3) "The Time of Heaven in Chinese Ancient Philosophy," in *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 30, no. 4 (1999): 44–61.

42. *Book of Changes*, tuan interpretation of the 49th hexagram (*Ge* 革); my own translation from the Chinese edition of the *Zhouyi jiji cuan shu* 周易集解纂疏 (The interpretations of the collected annotations of the *Book of Changes*), by Li Daoping 李道平, ed. Pan Yuting 潘雨廷 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1994; reprint, 2012), pp. 437–438.

43. *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, the Richard Wilhelm translation rendered into English by Cary F. Baynes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967, 1969), Commentary on the Decision, "49. Ko/Revolution (Molting)," p. 636.

44. Cited from the biography of Confucius, "Kongzi shijia" 孔子世家, in the *Records of the Historian* (*Shiji* 史记), authored by Sima Qian 司马迁.

45. Kraybill, Johnson-Weiner, and Nolt, *The Amish*, pp. 50, 415.

46. Ibid., p. 416.

47. Ibid., p. 385.

48. Ibid., p. 416.

49. Ibid., p. 418.

50. Ibid.

51. Dong Zhongshu, *Luxuriant Dews of Spring and Autumn*, chap. 23.

