

CHAPTER 8

Animism and Spiritualism

The Two Origins of Life in Confucianism

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THE JAPANESE HAVE MAINTAINED a profound interest in the teachings of Confucius, especially the *Analects* (論語—*Rongo* in Japanese and *Lunyu* in Chinese). The popularity of the *Analects* has never withered, whether in the “modern” times of imperialistic aggression and postwar economic recovery, or in the “postmodern” times when the nation was captured by manga cartoons and animation products. If we think of other great Asian classical teachings such as the *Mencius*, the extraordinary popularity of the *Analects* in Japan leads us to an inquiry into the deep-seated issues and problems in the study of Confucianism in Japan.

In this chapter, I approach this subject by analyzing a core concept of Confucian thinking: life, or *anima* in Latin. My central argument is that the essential understanding of life in the thought of Confucius is animistic while that of Mencius is spiritualistic. I think that these two divergent understandings render “two origins” of conceptualizing “life” in the East Asian philosophical tradition.

In Japanese tradition, especially during the Tokugawa period, there were many “deconstructive” interpretations of the philosophy of Confucianism—for example from Ogyū Sorai, Itō Jinsai, Dazai Shundai, Motoori Norinaga, and Hirata Atsutane. I think this is because scholars in Tokugawa Japan tended to have non-moralistic and non-universalistic worldviews. Therefore, in Japanese tradition there were many interpretations that were unorthodox and deviant from the orthodox Neo-Confucian point of view, and they tended to criticize orthodox Neo-Confucianism. I am not a follower of the former; rather I would like to think through another path into the Confucian tradition.

Animism and Spiritualism

The *Analects* has been read by numerous scholars and followers in East Asia, producing numerous definitions and interpretations of the same Confucian terms in Confucian thinking. Thus, after thriving for twenty centuries, the *Analects* still remains in the realm of ambiguity, and this ambiguity has given life to a multitude of philological and philosophical variants and schools.

What explains this ambiguity? The answer can be diverse and complex. Yet I find a main reason in the very way in which we conceive of Confucius himself. In other words, in China, Japan, and Korea we might be still mistaken about the true identity of Confucius after all these centuries.

Who, then, was the true Confucius? I believe that he was a thinker who represented one of the two fundamental views on the interpretation of life. One is animism, and the other is spiritualism. And Confucius stood for the former, not the latter.

In order to understand animism properly, let me define spiritualism as the antonym of animism.¹ Here, I define spiritualism as a worldview according to which one spirit pervades the entire universe. Spinoza's pantheism can be interpreted as a typical example of spiritualism in our context. It carries conceptual elements similar to the view concerning *qi* 氣 in East Asian philosophical thought. *Qi* here does not merely mean "matter" or "material"; it means "spiritual matter," which connotes the substance of life. As such, we can approach the conceptualization of *qi* in Daoism as well as Confucianism in the context of spiritualism.

Animism and Shamanism

Now let me turn to animism. Among the scholars of Asian philosophy, there has been a robust view that the life of Confucius and the notion of the *ru* 儒 (the original term for Confucian scholar) in his times were deeply related to shamanism. This view is based on the observation that Confucius' mother was a shaman herself and that the Chinese character for *ru* 儒 originally referred to the rain-calling ritual of the ancient agrarian society of which the lead performer was the shaman.

I refute this view for analytical reasons. It is important to note that the life and thought of Confucius as a philosopher was in this regard unrelated to his mother's calling. His views and conceptions were close to animism, not shamanism. The widespread misunderstanding of this relationship stems from the superficial similarity between shamanism and animism. Yet a close examination reveals that they are entirely different.

Shamanism is rooted in a worldview that believes in the transcendent being known as Heaven. All essential values exist only in Heaven, and Heaven exer-

cises dominion over all the world by imparting its essential values to the Earth. In this epistemological system, the shaman, who mediates between Heaven and Earth, resides in a position of rulership over the Earth. As the representative of Heaven, the shaman therefore has absolute authority and embodies the ultimate values of the universe on behalf of Heaven.

Confucius indeed criticized this shaman-centered worldview in several places in the *Analects*. For instance, there is the following statement:

子曰、君子上達、小人下達。(14.23)

Kanaya Osamu, one of the leading researchers in the field in Japan, translates this phrase into Japanese as follows:

君子は高尚なことに通ずるが、小人は下賤なことに通ずる。

The gentleman is good at refined matters; the small man is good at trivial matters.²

I believe this is one example of the misguided interpretations of Confucian thinking. “The gentleman” (*junzi* 君子) here refers to a learned man who possesses an animistic epistemology and belief system, while “the small man” (*xiaoren* 小人) is the one who has a shamanistic worldview. The small man deduces everything from the universal value of Heaven and tries to apply it to the secular world. In other words, he believes the value of Heaven to be universal and transmits it down to Earth, aggressively and authoritatively. This kind of deductive epistemology is referred to as “transmitting it down” (*xiada* 下達), which implies a vertical vector from up above to down below.

The Confucian gentleman is not consumed by a blind belief in universal, transcendent values. On the contrary, he searches for the true meaning of every worldly thing and fact around him. By doing so, he induces their validity as a way of reaching toward an understanding of the Order of Heaven. The very phrase “proceeding from below to above” (*shangda* 上達) implies this inductive epistemological methodology. Confucius’ scholarly endeavor of over fifty years to reach the Order of Heaven was nothing but a tireless process of inductive reasoning, not research into shamanism.

Now, why is this inductive epistemology of “proceeding from below to above” of the Confucian gentleman animistic? In order to have a valid understanding, we need to clarify the true meaning of animism.

Animism is generally interpreted as a worldview that everything in the world has life (or *anima* in Latin). According to this view, a natural thing such as tree or rock has *anima*, often personified. But is this true?

Let us take the example of animism in Japanese parlance. The teachings of Japanese Shintoism say there exist eight million gods (*yaoyorozu no kami* 八百万の神). And the term “eight million gods” can be mistaken to imply “everything in the world.” Yet a true meaning of the term is the notion of the innumerability of kami (gods) in the world. Therefore, each and every “thing” in the world cannot be identified as a kami in the worldview of Japanese Shintoism.

There are a myriad stones on earth. Some can be worshipped as kami, and others can at the same time be kicked aside as worthless things. Both are stones, but the former is kami, while the latter is not kami. In the Japanese animistic worldview, there could be more than eight million kami. The point is that we should not be falsely bound by the face value of the terms of “eight million” and “kami.” In this regard, this animistic worldview is not compatible with pantheism, spiritualism, or shamanism.

Then what is kami and what is not kami? The determining factor is not the transcendence itself of Heaven. If many members of a human community, be it a village or a country, perceive some indication of life or anima in a stone, it can be called kami, not because the stone’s godly validity descends from Heaven but because the people recognize its kami-ness on the grounds that they share certain subjective but common feelings or an acknowledgment of the inductive recognition of Heaven, that is, “from below to above.” This type of worldview is identified as the very notion of animism, which I emphasize throughout this chapter in order to distinguish it from the general usage of the term.

The Gentleman and the Small Man

We can assume that Confucius inherited some degree of shamanistic worldview from his mother. Nevertheless, what was more important for him was the philosophy that had sustained the ruling system of the Zhou dynasty. He was born in the state of Lu, which had inherited the glory of the Zhou, while his family lineage can be traced back to the Yin dynasty.

For this reason, Confucius thought that *li* 禮 (ritual) was the most important factor in the Zhou dynasty’s political and social order. *Li* was a system of customs, rules, and cultures through which men in the traditional clan society managed their life properly. Confucius believed that *li* was not formed deductively from transcendent or metaphysical values. On the contrary, *li* was formed inductively, little by little, within the constraints of indigenous environments and conditions over the long history of the community. In Confucius’ view, a man can only elevate the status and quality of his being within his community to the highest level as he acts in perfect accord with *li*.

However, the culture of the Zhou dynasty had already deteriorated in the mundane world of Confucius’ times. Instead, the hegemony-seeking social

groups that upheld universally applicable values were coming to dominate the world. They adopted universal values, among other things, in an attempt to eradicate all conventional values that had been accepted in the traditional societies. And it was the “small man” (*xiaoren* 小人) that had played the key role in this process of destruction and re-orientation.

The gentleman, then, was the one who took the opposite position against the new, universal worldview pursued by the small man. He attempted to guard the animistic worldview that adhered to the proper ways of living in the society of the ancient clan. His thinking in this regard was expressed in the following famous sentence:

子曰、君子和而不同、小人同而不同。

The Master said: The true gentleman is conciliatory but not accommodating. Common people are accommodating but not conciliatory.³ (13.23)

The gentleman, the sentence reads, is capable of maintaining harmony in defending the animistic *li* of the traditional society, yet not of equating all things to universal values. In contrast, the small man equates all things to universal values and therefore does not seek harmony and tends to struggle against conservative opponents.

Confucius, rooted in a belief in animism, was very sensitive in perceiving and absorbing facial expressions, demeanor, appearance, and the atmosphere around human beings as well as figures, colors, and the sounds of natural objects. There is one instance where we are allowed to peek into Confucius' attachment to animism. He married his daughter off to Gong Ye Chang 公冶長, who was said to be able to communicate with birds. This discussion leads to another famous passage:

子曰、巧言令色、鮮矣仁。

The Master said, “Clever talk and a pretentious manner” are seldom found in the Good.⁴ (1.3 and 17.17)

This passage says that a globalist person who embodies universal values and has an exquisite ability to conduct deductive communication with a pretentious face is seldom compatible with *ren* 仁 (the life of between-ness), which is inherently a central value of the local clan society. This small man is able to update his knowing of “truth” or value promptly from globalist groups and bring them to the community; he then applies them in the vertical way, that is, from above to down below (*xiada* 下達) as the shaman always does.

The knowledge of the small man was oriented toward the narrow end of

constructing a global empire, and hence, to that end, he had the power to convince people to obey. As such, the small man was equipped with an excellent intellectual capability and efficient solutions, all of which proved valuable for the person who was in a position to exercise global power. But the nature of his knowledge was only strategic or tactical, after all. The gentleman was remote from the small man in terms of mundane knowledge.

Confucius was obviously aware of this knowledge gap and feared that the tremendous power of the small man would destroy the old values of the animistic clan community. His vocal and consistent criticism of the small man stems from this background. If we consider this, it is easy to reason that the stature of the small man was not as trivial as described by Neo-Confucian thinkers. On the contrary, small men formed a global elite group that had an open mindset that could cross over the borders of old cultures, customs, and traditions. On the other hand, the gentleman intentionally disregarded the new trends of the global world and chose to be stuck in the value system of the good old traditional community.

In light of this, until now there might have been a misunderstanding about Zai Yu 宰予, a disciple of Confucius, in the long history of Chinese thought. Zai Yu was infamous for sleeping during the daytime. Confucius is said to have criticized him for this:

子曰、朽木不可雕也、糞土之牆、不可朽也、於予與何誅。

The Master said, Rotten wood cannot be carved, nor a wall of dried dung be trowelled. What use is there in my scolding him any more?⁵ (5.9)

Zai Yu had received two opposite evaluations. On the one hand, he was often scolded by Confucius, as just shown. On the other hand, he was praised for his outstanding ability in speech.

Why did he sleep during the daytime and why did Confucius scold him so severely? A careful reading of this chapter reveals that Confucius did not criticize him to his face. Instead, Confucius made critical remarks when Zai Yu was absent. In short, Confucius disclosed his dissatisfaction about Zai Yu deliberately in front of other disciples.

Confucius' act should be interpreted in light of the fact that Zai Yu was a very competent, globally minded member of the elite and had rich connections to diverse sources of the latest information about the world. We may presume that he continued to update his pool of information and knowledge by meeting with well-informed people who moved around the country. The meetings took place in the evening, and this affected his sleep.

I assume that Confucius was keenly aware of Zai Yu's activities, which put Confucius in a dilemma. A wanderer himself, Confucius was in need of the

information and knowledge Zai Yu had for the purpose of finding valuable work. However, Zai Yu was a person who should be categorized as a small man. This dilemma might have led Confucius to share his negative views of Zai Yu with his disciples during Zai Yu's absence.

We can find a reference to a rather exaggerated situation in the *Mencius*, which depicts the scenes where Zai Yu and Zi Gong 子貢 make great efforts and use their speaking talents to promote Confucius as a greater sage than Yao 堯 and Shun 舜 (by Zai Yu) or even as the greatest sage in the history of humankind (by Zi Gong). Confucius was definitely ambivalent about Zai Yu.

The Third Life

What did the Confucian gentleman uphold to provide protection for his traditional community and the society at large? In order to answer this question, some conceptual clarifications will be required.

Here I wish to introduce the notions of the first life, the second life, and the third life. These may sound awkward, but they are crucial in my interpretation of East Asian philosophy.

Humankind has learned that there are two types of life. One is physical, and the other is meta-physical or spiritual. The physical life is perceived and sustained in our daily living, which depends on natural processes for well-being and continuity. Yet, this life is doomed to perish or be destroyed for a variety of reasons. The human being cannot but accept this law of nature with a fundamental sorrow and despair.

In order to relieve sorrow and despair, the human being finds comfort and rescue in religious notions about life. Statements such as "Even after the body has perished, the spiritual life continues eternally" and "Even though this physical being is limited, the spiritual life given by God is absolutely immortal" have been around for a very long time. The religious view of nature and life exemplified by these statements has had great influence throughout human history.

The former and the latter types of life I refer to here as the first life and the second life, respectively. Between and within each of these two types of life there are a number of variations. Even though we have conducted a deep search into these variations, they basically reside within, and not beyond, the two notions of life.

Now I would suggest a further notion: the third life. In essence, it is neither biological nor spiritual; it is animistic. A good example of this third life can be found in the Japanese conception of a natural being such as a stone or tree acquiring "life" as a kami. This third life can only appear when members of the human community have a shared perception of the life-ness (or *Aura* in German) and accordingly recognize it as kami.

Not being biological or spiritual, the existential mode of the third life is accidental, unpredictable; it may or may not emerge in any particular relationship between or among the entities of the world. This third life may sound illusive or superstitious, as humankind has not yet fully recognized it. But I argue that this third life exists around our daily life although it is not perceived.

In sum, we can attempt to conceptualize and compare the three modes of life as in table 1.

It is important to note that the third life is not unique to the Japanese notion of animism. A careful reading of the Confucian literature indicates that the notion of *ren* has profound logical connections to the “life-ness” between and among social entities. This notion breaks the boundary of the conventional socio-ethical understanding of *ren* in terms of “benevolence” or “love of humanity.”

Confucius’ *ren* at its core refers to the life of between-ness. This notion is rooted in Confucius’ peculiar worldview that life is not a universal phenomenon, but an accidental, coincidental, adventitious one, which can only be recognized between and among the members of the community who happen to share certain common sensibilities. This is the kernel of the Confucian view of the third life. Whether a stone or a tree is perceived to be alive or not is not a concern of deductive reasoning through universal values. It is recognized and sanctioned by the members of the community who happen to share a certain inductive awareness or perception about the said concern. In this sense, animism can be understood as a worldview in a new context that is non-physical (non-first) and non-spiritual (non-second) in its mode of existence; it may or may not penetrate all modes of intersubjective relations of the world.

Table 1. Three Modes of Life

	THE FIRST LIFE	THE SECOND LIFE	THE THIRD LIFE
Nature, essence	Physical, biological	Religious, spiritual	Awareness, recognition of between-ness
Locus	Individual, human body	Universal	Inter-subject (nature-human, human-human)
Mode of existence	Visible and tangible in this world	Transcendent, transpersonal	Accidental, illusive, apparition
Scope of concern	Human needs, desires	Everything	Contingency
Contents	Substantial	Absolute truth	Aesthetic, sensuous

Ren as the Third Life

It is a common understanding that one of the core concepts of the *Analects* is *ren*. Yet it is not easy to come up with a handy definition of *ren* as discussed in the *Analects*. The difficulty stems from the fact that Confucius did not give a clear-cut definition of *ren* and instead mentioned it here and there in fragmented fashion in the *Analects*. This difficulty became ever more serious as the readers of the Confucian literature attempted to grasp some consistent meaning out of the heterogeneous, fragmentary words of Confucius. Captured by the image or prejudice of Confucius as a “great sage,” the general reader presumes that there must be a logically coherent set of meanings among such fragmentary words. This is where we fail to obtain the true meanings and implications of *ren*.

In order to overcome this habitual thinking, among all things we need to realize that there is no consistent definition or meaning of *ren* in Confucius’ thought. It is important to realize that *ren* is not supposed to be assigned a particular consistent definition if we recall Confucius’ animistic views of life, society, and the world. Logically speaking, the animistic worldview cannot offer any universal, deductive, and consistent definition of life, let alone *ren*.

Ren becomes manifest and realized in coincidental and unintended ways. This is why disciples of Confucius always wanted to ask about *ren* while Confucius did not want to discuss it at great length. If there were any clear definition of *ren*, Confucius could lay it out once and for all, instead of taking up the topic time and again with his disciples. The very ambiguity of *ren* led Confucius to characterize it as something unclear, situational, and random, which his disciples were not up to swallowing.

For example, when Confucius says

克己復禮爲仁。

He who can himself submit to ritual is Good.⁶ (12.1)

we should not conceive of this as a general definition of *ren*. This sentence means that if we can ourselves submit to ritual, there might appear an accidental life called *ren*. *Ren* is coincidental rather than entirely accidental. There is regularity and predictability to some extent; *ren* may or may not materialize according to a gentleman’s experiences and intentions. In order to make certain this regularity and predictability, people should learn and practice *li* 禮 (ritual) as the reinforcing system for promoting the status of their being.

When Fan Chi 樊遲 asked about *ren* (12.22), Confucius answered that it is “to love men” (樊遲問仁、子曰愛人). However, this should not be considered anything close to a definition. Confucius’ answer should not read as “To

love men is *ren*.” Instead, when he provided this answer, he might have meant that when a gentleman loves men, a new form of life-like between-ness called *ren* might appear in that particular coincidental interface between the gentleman and the men.

But we need to be reminded of the matter of regularity. When the gentleman loves a human, *ren* might materialize, but we do not definitely know whether or not *ren* materializes at each interface between the gentleman and the human.

When Confucius said “He who can himself submit to ritual is *ren*” to Yan Hui 顏回 and “to love men” to Fan Chi, he might have thought that *ren* would appear only to some specific persons under some specific situations. And all these incidents of *ren* must be recognized from shared subjective perspectives. This explains why there exists a variety of meanings and connotations of *ren*.

Having discussed the preceding, we can understand that *ren* is neither benevolence nor “human-heartedness” (as in Fung Yu-lan),⁷ nor is it morality. Instead, it is life. To be more precise, *ren* represents a form of life in the way it involves the interface and interrelatedness of social entities. In other words, it is the life of between-ness, which is anchored in the power of inter-entity consciousness.

Life and Time

Ren is not eternal. It can be momentary, transitory, and ephemeral, because it is the third life. This is why Confucius thought that timing was the most important factor for the gentleman:

子曰、學而時習之、不亦說乎、有朋自遠方來、不亦樂乎、人不知而不慍、不亦君子乎。

The Master said, To learn and at due times to repeat what one has learnt, is that not after all a pleasure? That friends should come to one from afar, is this not after all delightful? To remain unsoured even though one's merits are unrecognized by others, is that not after all what is expected of a gentleman?⁸ (1.1)

The key word in this chapter is “time.” The Master did not say “To learn and to repeat what one has learnt”; he said “To learn and at due times to repeat.” Here, the phrase “at due times” is not to mean some points in time where some duty or obligation is implied. The repeating could be incidental; yet the final outcomes of the unplanned or unintended incidents would prove that the legitimate timing had been exercised. A gentleman neither prepares nor plans nor

aims at a certain time deliberately. Instead he is cultivated to grope for the very best moments, which appears to be coincidental to the beholders.

However, we should be cautious about the “coincidental” nature of this revelation. It is because a lot of practice, training, and rehearsal are demanded for one to be able to catch the perfect timing. It is not guesswork. It is not a deliberate work either. In a natural stream of consciousness, a gentleman gets to catch the moment accurately as though he had planned it perfectly. This is the very meaning of “at due times.” And it is at this very moment that the third life materializes in the form of pleasure and benefits all members of the group.

In a similar vein, the phrase “有朋自遠方來” should not be read as “from afar (遠方) friends come.” Instead we should read it as “from afar (遠) at the very right moment (方) friends come.” The reason is that Confucius is talking about timing here, too. He says here that at the very moment that friends come from afar, the third life, paraphrased as “delight,” appears between the two persons. The timing may look coincidental, but the two true gentleman friends realize that the right timing is a manifestation of their shared perception.

From this animistic point of view, we can read the third sentence as follows: At the very moment when one remains unsoured (or not disappointed) even though his merits are unrecognized, the third life appears in the form of gentleman-ness.

A logical corollary is that the gentleman here is not a specific object that has an unchanging identity; it rather is a perception or recognition. The gentleman here implies a phenomenon or incident that can enlighten the life, and, for him to do so, timing is crucial. Even if the gentleman can enlighten life once, we should not presume that his gentleman-ness might last forever. In the next moment he can become the small man since the gentleman-ness does not stand for an unchanging, constant entity but a plastic, performative agency.

The following chapter proposes quite a challenge in figuring out the animistic nature of Confucius’ writing:

色斯舉矣、翔而後集、曰、山梁雌雉、時哉、時哉、子路共之、三嗅而作。

[The gentleman] rises and goes at the first sign, and does not “settle until he has hovered.” (A song) says: The hen-pheasant of the hill-bridge, Knows how to bide its time! Bide its time! When Tzu-lu made it an offering, it sniffed three times before it rose.⁹ (10.18)

It is hard to comprehend this chapter clearly unless we understand the special importance of timing in Confucius’ thinking. In my animistic point of view, this chapter must be interpreted as follows.

When Confucius and his disciples went on a journey, a hen-pheasant fly-

ing in the atmosphere about them rose and settled on a tree after hovering for a while. The Master said, “The hen-pheasant of the hill-bridge knows the time, it knows the time!” After listening to these words, Zi Lu (Tzu-lu) 子路 gave food to it, but the bird only sniffed three times and rose.

Confucius praised the hen-pheasant because it knew the timing. This statement corresponds completely to the opening chapter of the *Analects*. In the beginning there is the Chinese character *xi* 習, which portrays a young bird flapping its wings trying to fly.

Now in the last chapter of Book 10 (actually this book was the last volume of the ancient version of the *Analects*), this young bird has become the hen-pheasant (the gentleman) and is flying high (*xiang* 翔) after a lot of learning, practice, and experience in order to give life to everything. In the beginning, a little infant bird did practice the third life awkwardly, but through a long process of training it became able to display the third life without rational reflective knowledge. This is why Confucius emphasized what has happened by yelling out “Timing, Timing!”

That the hen-pheasant sniffed three times at the food Zi Lu gave it and then rose in fact represents the practice of ritual (*li*). Book 10 is a textbook description of Confucius’ daily demeanors and bearings. The compiler of this book wanted to say that every move Confucius made represents the *ren* that gives life to everything. Acquiring the life of *li*, *ren*, and being a gentleman, the hen-pheasant now bows down low three times following the traditional ritual, as described in detail here:

(君召使擯、色勃如也、足躩如也): 揖所與立、左右其手、衣前後襜如也、趨進翼如也。

(An extremely elegant bird emerged as the gentleman here as though): “When saluting his (her) colleagues he (she) passes his (her) right hand (wing) to the left, letting his (her) robe (tail feathers) hang down in front and behind; and as he (she) advances with quickened step, his (her) attitude is one of majestic dignity.”¹⁰ (10.3)

And it is as though the bird has gracefully soared high up into the sky when Confucius says,

(賓退、必復命曰、) 賓不顧矣。

“The guest is no longer looking back.”¹¹ (10.3)

In all these situations, time and life are closely interrelated, for the third life emerges always “at due times.” Confucius puts emphasis on timing in the daily practice of letting the third life emerge in the community.

Rising of the Second Life

This specific worldview of Confucius is based on a particular perspective on life. It recognizes life as a phenomenon that only occurs in a particular community or in a group that shares feelings, and not as a universal phenomenon. This is an animistic worldview in itself. Whether a stone or a tree is living or not is not to be decided deductively by a universal standard. It should be decided inductively by the collective feelings of the people or multitude that observe and listen to the stone or the tree.

However, this animistic worldview had been thoroughly destroyed in the process of dissolution of the traditional society while a powerful empire with a centralized government was establishing itself in the post-Confucian era, especially during the Zhanguo 戰國 (Warring States) period.

The global powers detested the old-fashioned animistic worldview of Confucius and adopted the opposite side's universal and shamanistic worldview. This saga is depicted in the genealogy from the Daoists to Mencius to Xun Zi 荀子 of the Legalist school. Daoists were a philosophical group who thought that it was not animistic life but Dao, the ultimate spiritual being, that was the ruler of the universe. Since Dao is universal, everything derives from and goes back to it; there are no mediating mechanisms such as customs, rules, or cultures between Dao and individual things. This completely brand-new school of thought was intimately understood in particular by the newly emerging global powers, whose intention was to destroy the old clan societies.

The following episode from Book 18 provides a vivid description of the nuanced relationship that Confucius and the early Daoists had with each other.

長沮桀溺耦而耕、孔子過之、使子路問津焉、長沮曰、夫執輿者爲誰、子路曰、爲孔丘、曰、是魯孔丘與、對曰是也、曰是知津矣、問於桀溺、桀溺曰、子爲誰、曰爲仲由、曰是魯孔丘之徒與、對曰、然、曰滔滔者天下皆是也、而誰以易之、且而與其從辟人之士也、豈若從辟世之士哉、耰而不輟、子路行以告、夫子憮然曰、鳥獸不可與同群也、吾非斯人之徒與而誰與、天下有道、丘不與易也。

Ch'ang-chu and Chieh-ni were working as plough-mates together. Master K'ung, happening to pass that way, told Tzu-lu to go and ask them where the river could be forded.

Ch'ang-chu: Who is it for whom you are driving?

Tzu-lu: For K'ung Ch'iu.

Ch'ang-chu: What, K'ung Ch'iu of Lu?

Tzu-lu: Yes, he.

Ch'ang-chu: In that case he already knows where the ford is.

Tzu-lu then asked Chieh-ni.

Chieh-ni: Who are you?

Tzu-lu: I am Tzu-lu.

Chieh-ni: You are a follower of K'ung Ch'iu of Lu, are you not?

Tzu-lu: That is so.

Chieh-ni: Under Heaven there is none that is not swept along by the same flood. Such is the world and who can change it? As for you, instead of following one who flees from this man and that, you would do better to follow one who shuns this whole generation of men.

And with that he went on covering the seed. Tzu-lu went and told his master, who said ruefully, One cannot herd with birds and beasts. If I am not to be a man among other men, then what am I to be? If the Way prevailed under Heaven, I should not be trying to alter things.¹² (18.6)

This chapter introduces the picture of the primitive Daoists, Chang Ju (Ch'ang-chu) and Jie Ni (Chieh-ni), who were not mere hermits. They were ploughing their field without exchanging words. Daoists did not need words, while Confucius' group always needed a lot of words to communicate with each other. Nevertheless, Chang Ju and Jie Ni were not ignorant men; they knew everything in the world including the fact that Confucius and his disciples would come to them on that day. Since they always had the newest information concerning the whole world through the spiritualistic network of primitive Daoists, the meeting between them and Confucius was in fact not at all coincidental, and there seemed to be no surprise in this seemingly "accidental" encounter. The Daoists had all the information even though they hardly move around.

Chang Ju and Jie Ni were not perfect Daoists, but they understood the world in terms of universal spirituality and wanted to unite themselves to the One, escaping from an artificially segmented society.

This episode provides a window through which we can look at a situation where Confucius and his disciples were looking for the "right path" in a disorderly world. But from the perspective of Chang Ju and Jie Ni, Confucius' worldview was completely wrong. The reason is as follows. Confucius thought that he was going to cross over to a certain land when he came to a river, and he looked for a ford. This turned out to be a perfectly wrong understanding of the world. At the time, there was no land at all in the eyes of Chang Ju and Jie Ni. Everywhere the country was under water, and no one could distinguish land from river. So it was futile to look for a ford. Jie Ni said, "Under Heaven there is

none that is not swept along by the same flood. Such is the world and who can change it?" This deductive recognition is the perfect expression of the primitive Daoist and spiritualist worldview. Everyone was drowning in the same moving flood of universal water, but no one could realize this except for the believer in the second life.

From Mencius to Neo-Confucianism

Mencius is widely believed to have been a successor of Confucius. However, he may in fact have been influenced by primitive Daoists and did bring about great changes in Confucianism. Mencius discarded the inductive methodology of Confucius and instead developed boldly the deductive methodology learned from primitive Daoists.

Mencius intended to destroy the profit-oriented (*li* 利) worldview of the hegemony-seeking global powers through righteousness (*yi* 義). Needless to say he was Confucian in this regard, but his perception of life was completely different from that of Confucius. Mencius might have been a successor to the Daoist concept of life, which approaches life in terms of spiritual matter (*qi* 氣). As I have mentioned, this is a typically spiritualistic worldview that believes all things in the universe are made of *qi*.

Confucius had never explained human nature by employing universalistic or deductive discourses. But Mencius explained it deductively in terms of universal morality and the metaphor of moving water spreading all over the world. This indicates a stark difference between the two thinkers.

After Mencius, Confucius' animistic notion of life on the one hand and the spiritual notion of life by Daoists and Mencius on the other came to be in competition with each other. Over the course of time Confucius' out-of-fashion notion of animistic life was forgotten, and his words in the *Analects* became incomprehensible all too soon. In this way, the interpretations of the *Analects* have all become out of focus because of their tendency to understand Confucius in terms of the second life. Thus, Confucius became a spiritual Divine Sage with absolute perfection.

The complete version of the notion of spiritual life in Chinese philosophy lies in Neo-Confucianism. According to the Neo-Confucian worldview, animism or the third life ought to be held in disdain as a lower-level or "vulgar" notion of life. The thorough extermination of the animistic way of thinking from the public sphere in China and Korea can be understood as a Neo-Confucian crusade in the name of civilization.

On the other hand, the animistic worldview was well preserved in a country that was relatively less civilized, that remained "barbaric" from a Neo-Confucian point of view, and that lacked a strong, centralized governing authority: Japan.

This offers a sharp contrast with China and Korea, where strongly centralized power existed that was highly civilized from the Neo-Confucian point of view. Japanese *waka* 和歌 and *haiku* 俳句 are just two illustrations of the animistic form of artistic expression that serves to realize and give form to the ephemeral third life.

The Japanese cherish the momentary aura in these forms of literature and strive to grasp the ephemeral yet eternal quality of “life” (*inochi* いのち) that is inherent in them. Japanese Shintoism is also animistic in its worldview and was not absorbed into shamanism or spiritual religion or formal thought until the Meiji era. The reason is that “vulgar” animism had widely penetrated to the far corners of the country, and the love of the Japanese for the *Analects* may be due to the very animistic atmosphere of the literature, instead of the spiritualism emphasized by a moralistic Neo-Confucianism that deviated from the original Confucian teachings.

Notes

1. In this chapter “animism” will be taking on a new meaning, to be elaborated below.
2. Kanaya Osamu 金谷治, trans., *Rongo 論語 (Analects)*, Waidoban Iwanami Bunko series (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2001), p. 286.
3. Arthur Waley, trans. and annot., *The Analects of Confucius* (New York: Random House, 1989), p. 177.
4. Ibid., p. 213.
5. Ibid., p. 109.
6. Ibid., p. 162.
7. Fung Yu-lan, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, ed. Derk Bodde (New York: Free Press, 1976), p. 42.
8. Waley, *Analects of Confucius*, p. 83.
9. Ibid., pp. 151–152. Where Chinese personal names occur in passages that are quoted from Waley’s translation, his original Wade-Giles romanization has been retained.
10. Ibid., p. 146. I have inserted the parenthetical (her), (she), and so forth in order to explain the actions of the hen-pheasant.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., pp. 219–220. There are no line breaks in the original translation by Arthur Waley. I have rewritten this passage in a playscript style for readability.