1 The Conditions of Thinking

William James characterized philosophy in this manner: "Philosophy is the unusually stubborn attempt to think clearly." The virtue of this understanding of philosophy is that it is altogether free of a host of theoretical accoutrements that would bind it to a particular history and tradition. For James, philosophy is an endeavor, always imperfectly realized, to achieve clarity by means of the process of "thinking."

The aim of clear thinking characterizes not only philosophy but science as well. But, paradoxically enough, science differs from philosophic thinking by virtue of its slightly less stubborn commitment to clear thinking. For the scientist, clarity is contextual; it always means "clear enough for now," or "clear enough given these particular hypotheses." In our culture it is the philosopher who has the aim of thinking things through to their most fundamental ground. The philosopher subjects the assumptions of the scientist (and ultimately his own philosophic assumptions as well) to critical examination.

This is but to say that philosophy has been characterized by a greater degree of self-consciousness with regard to the theoretical assumptions that constitute its various modalities than has scientific discipline. For the philosopher, clear thinking almost always leads to the reflexivity of thinking about thinking itself.

Obviously, clarity is approachable through other than strictly philosophic or scientific means. The poet's use of metaphor or the mystic's meditations are themselves aimed at a sort of clarity. In fact, in our tradition art and religion have often been distinguished from science and philosophy by virtue of the contrasting means employed to search for that elusive clarity so much desired by civilized human beings.

In the Anglo-European tradition, particularly since the advent of the modern period, neither artists nor religious virtuosi have been

considered thinkers in the strictest sense. This tacit rejection of the cultural interests of art and religion as resources for the activity of thinking has entailed consequences for our contemporary cultural self-understanding that must be examined if we are to be open to possible reformulations of the meaning of thinking.

It is the dialectical character of philosophic thinking that has defined its history in Anglo-European culture. The term "dialectic" has a number of associations that are helpful in articulating the principal meanings of thinking. Dialectic has the character of a dialogue. Dialogue (*dia-logos*) is a "talking through" or a "thinking through" which requires the sort of reflective engagement best represented by Plato's early Socratic dialogues. Such thinking is presumed to be *aporetic*, and, therefore, open to continual clarification. The more modern association of dialectical thinking with opposition (thesis-antithesis) is a function of reading the history of philosophy, and of history in its broader senses as well, in terms of agonistic engagement. A philosopher's subjecting of predecessors to dialectical examination has more often than not constituted an effort to supplant those thinkers and to promote a new theoretical construction in place of the older mode of thinking. Historically, thinking has become associated with the dialectical process of discarding and reformulating ideas, the process of critique and reconstruction. The construing of thinking as a progressive activity in which the thought of the present supplants that of the past is a result of the particular manner in which the dialectical character of thought has come to be understood.

The association of thinking with an historic process involving measurable progress in the accumulation of knowledge may best be understood by reflecting on the contrast of "thinking" and "reasoning" in our tradition. The relative openness of thinking as an activity aimed at clarity may be contrasted with the exercise of reason, which searches for ideal values or ends and for the methods that promote their recognition and understanding.

The history of Anglo-European philosophy told in terms of theoretical systems, schools, and movements is more a history of reason and reasoning than of thinking in the broader sense. Further, the rather severe separation of values from the distinctive means of realizing them characteristic of philosophic thinking in the modern period has promoted a distinction between reasoning in relation to ends and reasoning in relation to means. This distinction is rooted

in certain fundamental dichotomies long celebrated in our intellectual culture. The dichotomies of being and becoming, reality and appearance, idea and action, mind and body, and so forth, receive powerful support from the classical distinction between God and the world which entailed the belief that something Divine transcended absolutely the world which He had either created, and therefore had completely determined, or over which He maintained some telic and/or efficient influence. Such transcendence requires that reason itself must transcend the given or created world if it is to comprehend what is most real. Thus, *as* thinker, the reasoning being transcends the structures of his world. Plato's realm of Eternal Forms, Aristotle's activity of self-reflective thought, Leibniz' Principle of Sufficient Reason render thinking detachable from the welter of concrete circumstance.

Reason can discover principles that may be held apart from praxis since they themselves do not originate in it. The discovery of proper ends, therefore, does not automatically lead to their implementation or actualization. Plato's urgent dictum, "to know the truth is to do the truth," has not been honored in our tradition. The separation of ends and means, principles and methods, has meant that we are more often forced to side with St. Paul against Plato: "The good that I would do I do not do; the evil that I would not do, that I do."

There is a greatness in our tradition, however, which is itself a direct consequence of the identification of thinking with reasoning in its two detachable modes. Our scientific reasonings and practice argue that, although there might well be moral and religious problems consequent upon the separation of principles and practice, there could be little if any scientific activity without precisely that separation. The hypotheses of the scientist establish conditions contrary to presently acknowledged fact, and the methods permitting experimental verification of these hypotheses are (surprisingly enough to the naive empiricist) often only indirectly connected to the hypothesis. Nor has verification of an hypothesis generally meant to the scientist or philosopher of science the demonstration of the correspondence of principles with the empirical flux they are believed to order. The paradigmatic scientific hypotheses were those of atomistic materialism. From Leucippus and Democritus to Nils Bohr atomic theory was developed in order to interpret the experienceable world in terms of

nonexperienceable, "rational" constructs. Such constructs were fundamentally ad hoc. The question of Democritus, for example, was not the naive, "What kinds of things are there?", but the rather jaded question, "What kind of world must there be if we are successfully to defend experience against the logic of Parmenides and Zeno?"

Zeno's inexorable logic occasioned a crisis in thinking characterized by the general acceptance of the dichotomy of "reason" and "experience." Much of the greatness and the poignancy of the Anglo-European philosophic tradition has been the consequence of the bold attempts, both fruitful and futile, to resolve this dichotomy. Plato responded to this crisis by providing reason and experience distinctive realms of operation—those of Being and Becoming respectively. The latter was held to be but a pale shadow of the former. Aristotle grounded human reason in experience but maintained a separation between *theoria* and *praxis* which was overcome only at the level of a reflexive "thinking on thinking," that highest form of praxis vouchsafed to the Divine alone. In each of these paradigmatic responses to the problem of the separation of reason and experience the rational activity was ultimately warranted by that which transcended the empirical world.

The theological movements from the fifth to the fourteenth centuries, from Augustine to Scotus and Ockham, worked out their doctrines under the shadow of this problem now ramified by its expression in terms of the relation of a transcendent God to His created world. Theories of revelation supported the experiential side of the human enterprise, and the doctrine of incarnation sought to answer the need for mediation between two vastly distinct orders of existence. But the frantic disputes of the late Middle Ages, which ended in a flurry of nominalist and voluntarist theories, argued against the successful resolution of the problem which so exercised the philosophical spirits of the day.

René Descartes illustrates one of the boldest attempts at resolving the dispute between rational and experiential modes of knowing. He tried to begin and end his philosophic system by recourse to reason alone. The aim of reasoning is the discovery of truth. According to Descartes' familiar discussion of knowledge in the *Meditations*, truth and falsity are qualities or characteristics of judgments. A judgment involves an act of willing as distinct from an act of knowing. That

we do not have the same capacity to know as does the omniscient being (God), the ultimate source of our ideas, means that false judgments are all too possible. Only to the extent that we withhold claims of truth and falsity until we have achieved the clearest and most distinct grasp of the ideas involved in our judgments may we be assured a reasonable degree of accuracy.

Underlying the Cartesian analysis is the claim that the source of understanding, the infinite ground of knowledge, transcends the finite knower. Knowledge cannot, therefore, be immediate but must be mediated through judgments which attempt to introduce ideas into the world of finitude and relative ignorance. The separation of knowledge and will which grounds the theory of judgments is a reflection of the distinction between *theoria* and *praxis*. The exigencies of our practical world require that we cannot indefinitely withhold judgments, but must decide. The act of withholding judgments in order to clarify and render as distinct as possible the ideas which we are striving to grasp is possible only if we can effectively separate our acts of knowing from the application or implementation of that knowledge in practice. Entertaining an idea must not in itself involve a tendency to judge or to act, for if it did then the process of meditation which aims at clarity and distinctness could not proceed dispassionately.

Descartes' philosophic and mathematical speculations were determining influences in the development of the mathematical sciences and technology. Contemporary critics of Descartes, of course, would claim that he perpetuated a pernicious separation of mind and body, making a virtue of the apparent necessity to hold reason and experience incapable of intrinsic union. Perhaps a more trenchant criticism of Descartes would be that his argument for the existence of the self was so much more cogent and immediately persuasive than his arguments for God and for the external world, that skepticism and solipsism were inevitable responses to his philosophy.

Hume clearly discerned this fact about Cartesian philosophy but, unwilling to follow his own reasoning to its ultimate conclusion, avoided absolute skepticism by appeal to the passions of one's "animal nature" and to "custom," the cumulative consequences of the passion of "belief." Hume's philosophy illustrated, at least to Hume's satisfaction, the irrelevance and disutility of Pyrrhonian skepticism. Even if it is the case that metaphysical thinking can lead

nowhere except into the most radical sort of doubt, one is not, after all, bound to be a metaphysical thinker. Reasoning is ultimately a function of the passions, the strongest passion being that of belief. Radical doubt, the outcome of uncompromising thought, is unable to withstand the power of believing, that power which grounds custom and praxis.

Immanuel Kant, recognizing the destructive consequences of Hume's critique of causal connection for the rational ground of scientific thinking, developed a means of defending the autonomy of science by giving to the knower the power of constituting experience through the forms of perception and the categories of the understanding. This was accomplished, of course, by excluding "reality," things in themselves, from the sphere of potentially knowable things. Kant's solution further ramified the division between values and objective facts, by referring to ethics and aesthetics (as opposed to pure theoretical reason) all substantive questions of ultimate ends. The validity of scientific reasonings was guaranteed by making understanding into that which constitutes the principal objects of scientific investigation.

Despite a number of significant demurrers, Kant's solution to the reason-experience dichotomy provided the dominant impetus to reflections upon the nature and character of thinking until the end of the nineteenth century, after which the crisis of thinking originating with Parmenides and Zeno came to be illustrated from within science and mathematics itself. The emergence of conventionalism in science, the development of non-Euclidean geometries, and the discovery of physical relativity, revolutionized the conception of science and necessitated an approach to the meaning of thinking that no longer so blithely associated that enterprise with the narrower conceptions of reason and reasoning.

Within the philosophy of science, the crisis erupted decisively with the failure of the positivists' program. Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*[1] attempted to state a referential theory of language which established univocal relationships between "names" and "facts." Had he been successful, the goal of positivism to ground our knowledge of the external world in the language of physical description might have been realizable. Wittgenstein's recantation of that earlier work, and his subsequent speculations in the *Philosophical Investigations*,[2] were an important factor in determining the direction

of the philosophy of language which, until recently, dominated contemporary Anglo-American philosophic activity.

Philosophers of language have generally been less inclined to consider the referential character of language and more interested in its practical and constitutive dimensions. Wittgenstein's later philosophy probed the consequences of construing language in terms of its use by variant linguistic communities operating in accordance with distinctively different linguistic rules. J. L. Austin's development of the pragmatic tendencies in Wittgenstein's later thought culminated in a rather sophisticated theory of the "performative" character of language which gauged its functions as a set of activities such as promising, judging, giving oaths, and so forth.[3] Several American philosophers—W. V. O. Quine, Nelson Goodman, and Wilfred Sellars—have considered some of the consequences of the *constitutive* functions of language, its capacity to constitute a world for its communicants.[4]

Each of these forms of linguistic philosophy refused the gambit offered by the theory-practice dichotomy. In place of the denotative character of language as providing names and descriptions permitting the thinker to characterize the nature and structure of an antecedently existing "objective" world, there is the celebration of language as a form of praxis, as a way of acting or making.

The general turn away from *theoria* to *praxis* and the claim found in the linguistic movements that philosophy as a theoretical activity has come to an end, was the central claim of Karl Marx as well. Marx's constantly quoted thesis announcing that the true aim of philosophy is to change the world, not describe it, was both a statement of general despair at the ability of philosophers to transcend present praxis in order to characterize the nature of the world in any but a grossly ideological manner, and a programmatic response promising such transcendence as a consequence of the proletarian revolution that would bring to an end the history of oppression and with it an end to ideological thinking.

Of all the academic philosophers who have sought to reformulate the meaning of thinking in the light of the claim that philosophy has come to an end, Martin Heidegger is perhaps best known. He is a particularly interesting example of both the strengths and weaknesses of Anglo-European attempts to reformulate the meaning of thinking, since he, more than any other contemporary philosopher,

has been sensitive to the need to uncover a new vocabulary with which to characterize the cluster of concepts associated with the broader philosophic issues and, more specifically, with the meaning of thinking per se.

Heidegger has called attention to the consequences of attempting to maintain a distinction between ontological and technical forms of reason. That distinction, he claims, insures the victory of technical, means-oriented thinkers. Ontological reason requires a movement from *praxis* to *theoria*. But when, as more recent events in the history of Western philosophy have shown, ontological accounts of the process of thinking as reason prove unsatisfactory, the only alternative is to invert the priorities and construe thinking as a kind of practice or activity. Merely technical reasonings express the extreme forms of this inversion. The difficulty, of course, is that whereas theoretical reason without practice is vacuous and abstract, and practical reasoning without theoretical justification is unfocused and often blind, it is simply not an easy task to provide a parity of emphasis upon theory and practice.

Heidegger addresses the problem of the meaning of thinking in terms sufficiently comprehensive to encompass most of the issues that determine the focus of the current controversies concerning the character and fate of the philosophic enterprise. For Heidegger, the end of philosophy spells its "completion." That completion is the final consequence of the transition from metaphysics—the investigation of the Being of beings—to the special sciences which developed from out of philosophy.[5]

> The development of philosophy into the independent sciences which, however, independently communicate among themselves ever more markedly, is the legitimate completion of philosophy. . . . The interest of the sciences is directed toward the theory of the necessary structural concepts of the coordinated areas of investigation. "Theory" means now supposition of the categories, which are allowed only a cybernetical function, but denied any ontological meaning. The operational and model character of representational-calculative thinking becomes dominant.

The end of philosophy involves the movement away from the investigation of the Being of beings (metaphysics), to the consideration of the "necessary structural concepts of the coordinated areas of

investigation" (science), to the full recognition of the consequence of denying ontological meaning to these concepts (the operational, calculative thinking of technology).

Thinking associated with metaphysics and the sciences can be characterized in terms of such alternative notions as representing, conceiving, reasoning, calculating. The sort of thinking that would constitute philosophic thinking in this age could not be any of these things, since there is no longer metaphysical thinking apart from that which is, and which must remain, implicit in the special sciences. These sciences, having taken over the activity of thinking in its traditional guises, have no need for any special mode of philosophic thinking.

Looking for a role for philosophic thinking under such conditions leads to the question, "Is thinking which is neither metaphysics nor science possible?" Heidegger answers this question with a qualified "yes." The later stages of Heidegger's career involved a search for novel evidences from which to develop a revisioned mode of thinking. The aesthetic and mystical resonances of Heidegger's later thinking suggested such a radical departure from the received meanings of philosophic thought that Heidegger, not without some ambivalence, resigned himself to the demise of philosophy.

Richard Rorty accepts the consequences of this Heideggerian argument, acceding to the end of philosophy as foundational thinking. The vision of philosophy as providing a ground for cultural consensus and a means, therefore, for the adjudication of knowledge claims must be abandoned. Philosophy is not to be identified with knowing in any strict sense.[6]

> It would make for philosophical clarity if we just gave the notion
> of "cognition" to predictive science, and stopped worrying about
> "alternative cognitive methods." The word *knowledge* would
> not seem worth fighting over were it not for the Kantian tradition
> that to be a philosopher is to have a "theory of knowledge" and
> the Platonic tradition that action not based on knowledge of the
> truth of propositions is "irrational."

For Rorty, who extends the implications of Heidegger's apocalyptic vision, the sort of philosophic thinking that will take the place of foundational thinking (metaphysics) or some presumed "alternative

cognitive method" (alternative to "scientific" thinking) is characterized as "edification." Edification involves the discovery of "alternative, more productive ways of speaking."[7]

The emphasis of Rorty upon the discovery of alternative ways of speaking seems to perpetuate the image of the philosopher as a thinker as distinct from an actor or maker. But clearly Rorty feels that edification is a means of aiding us to become new, although it is not altogether clear how this sort of thinking could have the power to transform. There is no argument to demonstrate that this hermeneutic conception of thinking derived from Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer does in any sense get rid of the fact-value distinction, as Rorty claims. The "abnormal" discourse of the edifying thinker "is always parasitic upon normal discourse . . .; edification always employs materials provided by the culture of the day."[8] This fact highlights the element of Rorty's conception of thinking that we shall find most interesting and to which we shall have occasion to revert when we further consider certain contemporary Western philosophic perspectives on thinking in the final chapter of this work.

Existentialism and phenomenology, Marxism, pragmatism, and linguistic philosophy have all attempted to develop theories of human experience and expression that would overcome the abstractness of ontological reason by providing a ground for the activity of thinking in concrete praxis. That these have not been entirely successful, even considered in terms of their own criteria of success, is in large measure due to the fact that the dialectical tensions between theoretical and practical modes of analysis directed at the meaning of thinking have determined that the two contrasting modes cannot be synthesized in any adequate manner. The reason for this is obvious to anyone who rehearses the history of Western philosophy: the dichotomy of theory and practice has so long been presupposed in our tradition that the philosophical categories that form the inventory of our speculative notions are themselves constructed with reference to this dichotomy. The very concepts of "idea," "action," "intention," and so forth, tend to be one-sided, rooted as they are in one or the other of the two distinct modalities of human expression.

Our brief rehearsal of the problem of thinking in the Anglo-European tradition has been aimed at highlighting what surely is one of the central problems of Western intellectual culture. And if the meaning of thinking is in doubt, then the significance of phi-

losophy as thinking in its most unqualified form, must also be questioned. Further, if the tendencies of recent philosophical writing are indicative, it is doubtful whether the resources available within our own cultural tradition are adequate to resolve successfully the crucial dilemmas associated with attempting to think one's way through to a sufficiently novel understanding of thinking.

In these preliminary remarks, we have attempted to describe historically what thinking has meant in the development of Western philosophy and how this definition in turn has determined what it means to be a philosopher. The fact that, in our tradition, the concept of thinking has gradually come to be construed in narrowly cognitive terms has had two very important consequences; first, it has both ramified and reified the disjunction of theory and practice, leading to the construing of practice or action in terms that cannot easily be associated with any putative ontological ground such as is explicitly or tacitly presupposed with respect to cognition. Second, forms of experiencing the world which answer to descriptions such as appreciating, evaluating, participating in, empathizing, and so forth, have not been given entirely respectable status as aspects of the activity of thinking per se.

Contemporary philosophy, whether it be existentialism, hermeneutics, pragmatism, analytic philosophy, or Marxism—or any of a host of other "isms" currently vying for intellectual commitment—expresses a surprising consensus on the subject of the inadequacy of our received meanings of philosophic thinking. A wholesale assault upon the fact–value, theory–practice dichotomies characterizes the vast majority of our philosophers. But the difficulty with all reconstructive attempts is, as we have already indicated, that they are infected by the tradition they seek to overcome. Attempts by reconstructive thinkers to revision the meaning of thinking have required, *per impossibile*, an avoidance of the cultural biases which largely sustain their efforts. Where *does* one stand when challenging a foundational claim of one's own intellectual milieu?

The most obvious answer to such a question would be that one stands in an alternative milieu, in another culture. Granted the difficulty of presuming to step into an alternative culture as a means of examining one's own, it is our intention to make a responsible effort to do just that. The justification of this effort will be pragmatic: if we do in fact provide a meaningful perspective upon our indigenous

culture by recourse to the thinking of Confucius, one part of our project will have been vindicated. The implication of our claim to have done what we have set out to do is that we shall have presented far more than an introduction to Confucius' thought, or an impressionistic assessment of his relevance for our times. To do what we claim must be done requires that we present a coherent analysis and construction of Confucius' philosophy such that reflecting upon Confucius' manner of thinking will provide a model for that crucial activity by which the meaning of thinking itself may be investigated.

We are faced, as philosophers perennially are, with something of the problem of the chicken and the egg: we cannot be expected to understand Confucius' thinking unless we have some understanding of the process of thinking per se. But it is precisely this concept that we seek to reconceptualize by recourse to an understanding of Confucius. Such is the irony of even the most responsible enquiry: it presupposes what it seeks to understand. So be it. All we can do is to provide as clear and as cogent a characterization of the problem of philosophic thinking at the beginning of our essay, and then to see, at the close of our work, if there has been any significant progress toward the resolution of that problem.

Enter Confucius. This most prominent of all thinkers in the Chinese classical tradition may well serve Western philosophers as an alternative model of the activity of thinking. For in many respects his thought departs significantly from our too-familiar reveries; it directs our attention to novel and challenging approaches to the perennial problems and issues which, seen through refocused eyes, are themselves likewise transformed. To reshape the meaning of thinking by an analysis of Confucius, and a consequent reformulation of the character and responsibilities of the philosopher from such reflections, may serve as a timely contribution to our own philosophic culture.

It is our further hope, however, that whatever contribution our work may make will not only serve those Western philosophers relatively innocent of Confucius' thought, but will also be of value to the mainstream of the Confucian tradition and its (sometimes reluctant) contemporary heirs. In this respect we trust that there will not be occasion to accuse us of merely carting coals to Newcastle. The Confucius emerging from our analysis may well be a rather controversial figure, one who might meet with serious criticisms from

certain traditional Confucian scholars. On this count, we believe that we shall have little to fear from those scholars willing to think through our interpretation of Confucius to its conclusion.

Our procedure in interpreting the dynamics of thinking in Confucius shall be a conceptual reconstruction involving a mutually corroborative philological and philosophical analysis: an analysis of the language in which his thinking is couched, and a verification of the direction established by this analysis through a consideration of its philosophical implications.

J. L. Austin once remarked that "a word never—well, hardly ever—shakes off its etymology and formation. In spite of all changes in and extensions of and additions to its meaning, and indeed rather pervading and governing these, there will persist the old idea."[9] The English equivalents most commonly used for the "thinking" or "philosophizing" process in Confucius are heavy with the connotations of our own tradition, and are, consequently, in many ways misleading. To settle upon an English equivalent for each major concept and then pursue the analysis through the equivalent rather than the original term is unquestionably the most problematic methodological pitfall of Western interpreters of Chinese philosophy. It is for this reason that it shall be necessary to begin from a philological and semantic analysis in order to excavate the "old idea" and establish a clear sense of what these concepts mean and what they do not mean within their own context. In this manner, we shall be moving towards a new, more philosophically sensitive set of equivalents for Confucius' philosophy while at the same time keeping the original concepts as visible as possible.

This activity will involve us in what only Peter Boodberg could be allowed to call a "philological semasiology."[10] Such an analysis observes and computes the etymologies of a given locution, its frequency of occurrence, range of meanings, and associations, in an effort to delineate the expression with some precision.

Our methodological approach attempts to take as its point of departure the following historical situation. Over the last century and a half, the classical Chinese corpus has been served well by philologically trained translators with adequate language skills, a significant number of whom have in fact been native Chinese. Many disciplines have participated fully in this enterprise: linguistics, history, economics, and others. However, most philosophers have not

entertained the Chinese tradition as "philosophy." As a consequence, the major difficulty confronted by the reader in attempting to use and appreciate translations and discussions of the original sources lies not so much in the syntax as in the semantic content of core philosophical concepts. An obvious problem of translation generally is that when a concept is assigned an English equivalent, a certain depth of the concept is unavoidably lost: the word-image, its allusive effectiveness, its morphological implications, and so on. At the same time, of course, inappropriate associations are evoked by the translated term to the extent that the term is burdened by its own cultural history. This general problem of translation is exacerbated when philosophy is not translated and interpreted by trained philosophers.

There is a distinctive characteristic of specifically Chinese philosophy that aggravates this already troubled situation. A feature of the classical vocabulary is that a shared terminology is often used by rival schools to articulate significantly different conceptual content. This necessitates a subtlety of analysis that goes beyond the consultation of dictionaries. The methodology that we employ for conceptual reconstruction certainly uses the classical dictionaries and glosses, but we also utilize available concordances and indices in an effort to employ contemporaneous texts and later commentary for lexical benefit. Our argument is that the distinctions necessary to identify conceptual overlap and difference can best be established by defining a given terminology contextually as well as etymologically. There is an obvious check by approaching a concept both morphologically and genetically.

Let us face a probable methodological criticism head-on. As an example, some sinologist is sure to ask how we can use a concept as it is defined by the text of Tung Chung-shu's *Ch'un-ch'iu fan-lu* to elucidate its usage in the *Analects*. It would be equally irresponsible to say that the Confucian Tung Chung-shu (ca. 179–104 B.C.) is irrelevant as a resource for understanding classical Confucian vocabulary as it would be to accept his definition of these concepts uncritically. The problem, then, is to try to discover in Tung Chung-shu's presentation and elaboration of Confucian vocabulary that which is consistent with the *Analects* and that which deviates from it. This problem echoes a similar concern to distinguish a "process" reading of Confucius from a reading of Confucius where a process vocabulary is merely the most appropriate resource available to us to make Confucius clear to a Western reader. We are not presenting

a Han Dynasty interpretation of Confucius, but rather, are attempting to use Tung Chung-shu's commentary critically where it sheds light on the idea being expressed in our record of Confucius. Tung Chung-shu typically elaborates on a concept paronomastically by explaining its content through cognate terms. There is in this approach certainly a playfulness, but it also acknowledges the profoundly organic nature of the Chinese language. Following Austin, it is in focusing in on the "old idea" of the concept that this kind of commentary can be most useful. The argument is that with the classical Chinese language, the "old idea" is often to be excavated from a cognate cluster rather than simply a discrete word.

Given the limited and uncertain data base and the generally speculative nature of this kind of philological analysis, the claims and conclusions derived from it can only be read as suggestive in their various parts. The credibility of our case depends rather upon the coherence of our strictly philosophic claims insofar as they are consistent with the results of our philological analyses.

A first step in this hermeneutical analysis should be careful examination of the etymology of the relevant characters, with attention to their cognates and homophonically related expressions. In this examination, we are inclined to treat the entire characters as meaning-indicative rather than analyzing them as phonograms constituted of discrete phonetic and signific elements.[11]

In our initial discussion, we shall be presenting Confucius' understanding of the activity of thinking as a set of interrelated processes associated with "learning" (*hsüeh* 學), "reflecting" (*ssu* 思), "realizing" (*chih* 知), and, entailed by the notion of *chih*, "living up to one's word" (*hsin** 信). In so doing we shall hope to demonstrate that Confucius provides an understanding of thinking that avoids the disjunction of normative and spontaneous thought in a manner that has not been achieved in other major philosophic visions. If this is, in fact, the case, then it may be argued that his philosophy is directly germane to reconceptualizating one of the frustrating problems of contemporary Anglo-European speculation.

2 Learning (*hsüeh* 學)

The dynamics of "thinking" in Confucius can be explicated as a continuing interplay among "learning" (*hsüeh*) and "reflecting" (*ssu*),

the consequence of which is "realizing" (*chih*) through "living up to one's word" (*hsin**). The "learning"/"reflecting" polarity might be roughly construed as the functional equivalent of reasoning in the dominant Western paradigm, "realizing" would correspond to "knowing," and "living up to one's word" would correspond to at least one meaning of "truth." We must hasten to add that while these categories are a starting point for the activity of "thinking" in Confucius, they by no means exhaust it. We must at every step guard against an impoverishing psychologization of Confucius which, in assuming commitments and concerns of our own tradition, can serve only to frustrate our understanding of the significant differences of the Confucian vision. In the discussion that follows, we hope to make it clear that thinking for Confucius is not to be understood as a process of abstract reasoning, but is fundamentally *performative* in that it is an activity whose immediate consequence is the achievement of a practical result. Far from being a means for lifting oneself out of the world of experience, thinking for Confucius is fundamentally integrative, a profoundly concrete activity which seeks to maximize the potential of the existing possibilities and the contributing conditions. Thus, in place of any activity that merely assesses an objective set of facts and/or values, thinking for Confucius is *actualizing or realizing* the meaningfulness of the world.

It is significant that *hsüeh* 學 as "learning" refers to an unmediated process of becoming aware rather than a conceptually mediated knowledge of a world of objective fact. In fact, the character, *hsüeh* 學, is itself an abbreviated form of *hsiao* 斅, meaning "to teach," "to become aware." During the pre-Ch'in period, this "becoming aware" denoted the heightening awareness of the scholar engaged in both studying and teaching as he pursued the goal of becoming a learned person. It was only later in the tradition, perhaps with the accumulation of a more substantive cultural tradition, that the focus of *hsüeh* came to rest on studying.[12]

A second implication of *hsüeh* is that it involves the project of transmitting one's cultural legacy.[13] In the association of the character *wen* 聞, "to hear," with *hsüeh*, and in the verbal nature of the learning process, there is a clear sense of *hsüeh* as the appropriation and embodiment of the cultural tradition (*wen** 文) through pedagogical interaction and exchange (*wen* 聞).[14]

The objective of the exercise of *hsüeh* is the transmission of human culture (*wen** 文). The root meaning of *wen** is "lines" or "design," often associated with systematic themes in the decoration of pottery. It is the human organization and elaboration of the stuff of existence, the articulation of human values and meaning captured in symbol and then transmitted from generation to generation. In this process of accumulation and transmission culture undergoes gradual refinement (3/14): "The Chou surveys the two preceding dynasties. How resplendent is the culture! My choice is with the Chou." Confucius, perceiving himself from within the context of a traditional society, took the embodiment and transmission of his own cultural legacy as a personal mission.[15]

There are many modes and structures for the transmission of culture, perhaps the most obvious being the written word. To whatever extent the historical Confucius was actually responsible for compiling and editing the various classics attributed to him, it is clear that he placed considerable emphasis on a familiarity with, if not a rote memorization of, historical and cultural documents. This is not to say that books were regarded as the only repository of significances. Much of the traditional wisdom was transmitted orally or captured in social institutions, rituals and music. Although Confucius' commitment to a literary corpus as a basic curriculum is beyond question, learning was perceived as an enterprise which engaged a person both mentally and physically, both cognitively and experientially. From the "six arts" (*liu-i* 六藝) established by Confucius as the curriculum for his followers—ritual (*li* 禮), music (*yüeh* 樂), archery (*she* 射), charioteering (*yü* 御), writing (*shu* 書), and calculations (*shu* 數)—it is clear that learning was a project requiring a commitment on the part of the entire person, and that written documents were only one, albeit important, element in the scholar's career.[16]

Confucius emphasized learning to the extent that, in spite of his modesty, he unabashedly prided himself on his eagerness to learn,[17] and further described his favorite disciple, Yen Hui, in similar terms.[18] In his three-faceted philosophy of education rooted in the concepts of capacity, opportunity, and effort, he took the last, enthusiasm for learning, as his primary concern.[19] Confucius argues that human beings are similar by nature in their capacity to learn; this, in fact, is the distinguishing characteristic of the human being.[20] But the

criteria of opportunity and effort present greater difficulty. Yet when, as in the case of Yen Hui, enthusiasm for learning is great enough, the opportunity to learn can be arranged.[21] Unquestionably the single most important criterion Confucius invoked in deciding whether or not to accept a student was the student's apparent desire to learn.[22] And consistent with this commitment to learning, Confucius' greatest source of disappointment was "the masses who will not learn even when vexed with difficulties" (16/9).

Confucius' perception of the importance of learning is expanded by his distinction between humanistic learning and the acquisition of practical skills. Anxious to distinguish the appropriation of culture from that of functional, instrumental knowledge,[23] Confucius regarded the enrichment of life through cultural refinement as an end in itself. For Confucius, then, learning is not a means to secure a livelihood; it is an end in itself, a way of life.[24]

In the terms that we have described it above, learning (*hsüeh*) denotes the acquisition and appropriation of the meaning invested in the cultural tradition by those who have gone before. As such, it provides persons in a society with a shared world on the basis of which they can communicate and interact. The extent to which participation in this shared world is perceived as a necessary condition of all the various dimensions of personal cultivation is clearly stated (17/8):[25]

> The flaw in being fond of acting authoritatively (*jen** 仁) without equal regard for learning is that it leads to stupidity; the flaw in being fond of acting wisely without equal regard for learning is that it leads to license; the flaw in being fond of living up to one's word without equal regard for learning is that it leads to antisocial conduct; the flaw in being fond of straightforwardness without equal regard for learning is that it leads to acrimoniousness; the flaw in being fond of courage without equal regard for learning is that it leads to unruliness; the flaw in being fond of strength without equal regard for learning is that it leads to rashness.

3   Reflecting *(ssu 思)*

To the extent that learning is strictly the appropriating of meanings—deferring to the excellence of one's cultural legacy—it does not engage

the scholar himself in either the exercise of transforming the appro-
priated culture or in the activity of generating novel meanings. It is
in this spirit that Confucius describes himself as a transmitter rather
than an innovator.[26] There are further passages in the *Analects* that
can support a conservative interpretation of Confucius (15/31): "I
once went a whole day without eating and a whole night without
sleeping lost in my reflections, but to no benefit. I would have been
better off devoting the time to learning." In this passage certainly
Confucius gives priority to learning (*hsüeh*) over reflecting (*ssu*). There
can be no doubt that Confucius believes that the learning of traditional
culture is a necessary condition for the effective development of the
moral person.[27] And to the extent that reflecting (*ssu*) is critical and
evaluative of something given, the learning of this given would, of
course, have priority. But even though Confucius emphasizes personal
appropriation of the cultural tradition, we shall argue that he held
thinking to involve both the acquisition and entertainment of existing
meaning and the creative adaptation and extension of this meaning
to maximize the possibilities of one's own circumstances. In the
dynamics of Confucian thinking, learning and reflecting are correl-
atives and have a polar relationship, neither being adequate in itself.[28]

The term "reflecting" (*ssu*) has several defining characteristics.
It is generic in covering various modes of thinking: pondering, en-
tertaining, imagining and so forth. Not unexpectedly, it is often
associated with tolerance. It also connotes a directed concern. Further,
ssu is not exhausted by its psychical dimension. That is, it does not
exclude the physiological apparatus involved in the process of re-
flecting. We would argue that in the Chinese tradition generally, and
with respect to *ssu* specifically, the psychical and physiological are
perceived as aspects of a continuum.[29] In reducing classical Chinese
discussions of the thinking person to assertions about the psyche
which exclude reference to the physical, we might inadvertently be
misconstruing or even impoverishing this concept in a serious way.[30]

In Confucius, then, the dynamic and holistic nature of the
thinking process is apparent in the interdependence of the broad
categories of reflecting and learning. The *locus classicus* for this
relationship is *Analects* 2/15: "Learning without reflecting leads to
perplexity; reflecting without learning leads to perilous circum-
stances." The point here is that if one simply learns without reflecting
critically upon what one is learning, one will fail to act "properly,"

that is, to personalize what is learned in such a manner as to make it appropriate and meaningful in one's own unique circumstances. As a consequence, one will attempt merely to repeat what others have said or done. Further, any situation that requires him to go beyond his learning will leave him unprepared and hence, bewildered. Said another way, the processive vision of existence to which Confucius is committed requires that each event be the consequence of a unique set of conditions, precluding the precise repetition of what one knows as purely historical record. To some extent, then, the pedant is condemned to move through life in a state of bewilderment.

The interplay between "learning" (hsüeh) and "reflecting" (ssu)—between appropriating widely from the cultural tradition and elaborating on it through an investment of one's own creativity—is a recurring theme in the Analects (19/6): "Learn broadly yet be determined in your own dispositions; enquire with urgency yet reflect closely on the question at hand—becoming an authoritative person (jen* 仁) lies in this." The principle that each event is sui generis requires that whatever is learned be creatively adapted to the new set of circumstances in order to be rendered appropriate (2/11): "He who in reviewing the old can come to know the new has the makings of a teacher."

One must be creative to take full advantage of appropriated culture, both in adapting it for his own place and time, and in using it as a structure through which to realize his own possibilities. He must labor assiduously to acquire the culture transmitted from ancient times but must also be able to take it a step further in maximizing the possibilities of the prevailing conditions (13/5):[31]

> If someone can recite the three hundred Songs but yet when you give him official responsibility, he fails you, or when you send him to distant quarters he is not able to act on his own initiative, then although he knows so many, what good are they to him?

The weight that Confucius placed on critical reflection is fully illustrated in his admonishment to his disciples to qualify even the instruction of their teacher with their own insights (15/36): "In doing what is authoritatively human (jen*), do not yield even to your teacher."

Conversely, an imbalance in the thinking process in favor of reflecting at the expense of learning is even more threatening. If one

reflects without taking advantage of the contributions of others who have gone before, he will not have the shared ground necessary to communicate with his society. A person who lives in his own separate world is generally perceived as mad and a threat to communal meanings and values. Further, to the extent that he is active, he will go off on tangents and pursue often fruitless and even dangerous pathways. Confucius describes this kind of absorption as nonproductive, and Hsün Tzu follows him in decrying this failure to benefit from accumulated wisdom:[32] "I once reflected for an entire day; I would have been better off learning. I stood on my toes to get a view; I would have been better off climbing a hill." The thrust of Confucius' attitude toward thinking as "reflection informed by learning" is captured in the *Chung-yung*:[33] "Learn the way broadly, question it in detail, reflect on it carefully, distinguish it clearly, and act on it with earnestness."

We have suggested above that thinking for Confucius is a process that engages the whole person. Just as the dualistic categories of mind and body are inapplicable, so a theory/praxis dichotomy would also be inappropriate. Throughout the *Analects*, Confucius describes the exemplary person as one whose words do not exceed his actions, as one whose words are authenticated in practice (2/13):[34] "Tzu-kung inquired about the exemplary person (*chün tzu*). Confucius replied: 'He first does what he is going to say, and only then, says it.' "

Even more specifically (14/27): "The exemplary person feels shame where his words go beyond his deeds." Ideas and their articulation in language are not simply academic and theoretical. They have real performative weight as promptings to act. Conversely, Confucius also denigrates the "local worthy" for going through the motions of moral conduct without having cultivated the proper attitude. He is concerned not only that words do not exceed action, but also that action does not exceed meaning (17/13): "The local worthy is the thief of virtue." The *Mencius* records Confucius elaborating on what he means by the "local worthy":[35]

> While their words and actions have no relevance to each other, they prattle: "Ah! the ancients, the ancients! Why did they walk through life alone and aloof? Born of this world, one must act on its behalf. If one can do a little good, he's fine." A person who is thus out to ingratiate himself with the world is your "local worthy."

Confucius himself denies being a pedant, one who "learns a great deal and remembers it all" (15/3), preferring to gauge the value of what is learned by the extent to which it has practical application in the service of others. As D. C. Lau reports, the project of becoming a person combines the sense of "placing oneself in another's place" (*shu* 恕) and that of "doing one's best" (*chung* 忠) to effect one's insight.[36]

4   Realizing (*chih* 知)

A third element in the "thinking" cluster of concepts that directly illuminate Confucius' understanding of thinking is *chih* 知 , commonly translated as "to know," "to understand," but in the Confucian context, perhaps better rendered "to realize" in the sense of "making real." This character is used interchangeably with *chih** 智 , "wisdom," in the early literature, indicating an unwillingness to distinguish between theory and praxis adumbrated in the English distinction between "knowledgeable" and "wise."

Etymologically, *chih* 知 is constituted of *shih* 矢 , "arrow," and *k'ou* 口 , "mouth." We can only speculate about the "arrow" component which, being not at all clearly phonetic, might suggest the sense of "casting," or "directionality." The "mouth" component, on the other hand, indicates an unmistakable verbal association. Whatever it means "to know/to realize," the process entails verbal communication. Beyond the etymology of *chih*, semantic associations connote first the participation in a relationship where *chih* would contribute to the sense of mutual awareness or intimacy. Further, *chih* carries with it the active connotation of administering an office or station.[37]

These various etymological components and connotations of *chih* all come together in the following passage from Tung Chung-shu's *Ch'un-ch'iu fan-lu:*[38]

> What is it that is called *chih?* It is to predict accurately (lit., to first speak and then for events to happen accordingly). Persons who desire to get rid of certain conducts all act only after prescribing the situation with their *chih*. Where one's prescription is correct, he gets

his way in what he does and is appropriate in his undertaking. His actions are successful and his name is illustrious. His person is therefore benefited and free of harm. His good fortune reaches to his children and grandchildren, and his beneficence spreads to all the people. T'ang and Wu were like this.

Where one's prescription is incorrect, he does not get his way in what he does and is inappropriate in his undertakings. His actions are unsuccessful and his name is disgraced. Injury befalls his person, he breaks his lineage, he brings ruin on his kind and lays waste to his ancestral temple. Nations that have perished have been thus served. Thus it is said that nothing is as urgent as *chih*.

One who is *chih* can see calamity and fortune a long way off, and early anticipates benefit and injury. Phenomena move and he anticipates their transformation; affairs arise and he anticipates their outcome. He sees the beginnings and anticipates the end. When he says something, none dare dispute it; when he sets up something, it cannot be disregarded; when he takes up something it cannot be put aside. His course of action is consistent and has its proper order. He considers and then reconsiders something, and when he gets down to it, no one can take umbrage.

His words are few yet sufficient. They are brief yet instructive, simple yet explicit, terse yet comprehensive. Where they are few, they cannot be embellished, and where many, cannot be abbreviated. His actions fit the relationships and his words match the task. Such a person is said to be *chih*.

There are several implications of *chih* made clear in Tung Chung-shu's discussion. First, *chih*, commonly translated as "to know," and *chih**, commonly rendered as "wise" or "wisdom," are used interchangeably. There is no fact/value or theory/practice distinction to separate knowledge from wisdom in this tradition. Secondly (and a point to emphasize), *chih* refers to a propensity for forecasting or predicting the outcome of a coherent set of circumstances of which the forecaster himself is a constituent and participatory factor. This definition of *chih* as an ability to anticipate and predict the future on the basis of known conditions is common in the early literature. For example in the *Pai-hu-t'ung:*[39] " 'Wisdom' (*chih** 智) means 'to realize' (*chih* 知): simply on the basis of what one has seen and heard to have no doubts about events, to see a sign and realize what will ensue." Also, in the *Chung-yung:*[40]

> The *tao* of the highest integrity (*chih ch'eng* 至誠) is being able to realize beforehand. . . . When fortune or misfortune approach, one is certain to realize beforehand whether it is good or not. Thus, the highest integrity is "god-like." . . . Integrity is not simply completing oneself, it is the means of completing things and events. Completing oneself is "person-making" (*jen** 仁); completing things and events is "realizing" (*chih* 知).

We have an example of *chih* being used in this performative manner in the *Analects* (15/4): "Rare indeed are those who realize their *te*."

Many commentators interpret this passage via the frequently advertised Confucian commitment to the unity of knowledge and action. Given that authentication in action is a necessary condition of knowing, to understand *chih* as knowing with such a proviso is to interpret it as "realizing." There is another passage that provides a rather succinct statement of the relationship among "realizing" (*chih*), "authoritative humanity" (*jen**), and "ritual action" (*li*) (15/33):

> Where one realizes (*chih*) something but his authoritative humanity (*jen**) is not such that he can sustain it, even though he has it, he is certain to lose it. Where he realizes something and his authoritative humanity (*jen**) is such that he can sustain it but he fails to handle it with proper dignity, the masses will not be respectful. Where he realizes something, his authoritative humanity (*jen**) is such that he can sustain it, and he handles it with proper dignity, yet he fails to use ritual actions (*li*) to implement it, he will still not make good on it.

Without taking account of the performative force of *chih*, this passage is really quite impossible to interpret. Arthur Waley in his translation of the *Analects* despairs:[41] "This paragraph with its highly literary, somewhat empty elaboration, and its placing ritual on a pinnacle far above Goodness, is certainly one of the later additions to the book." And the characterization of the exemplary person (*chün tzu*) which follows makes considerably more sense where *chih* is something done as well as known (15/34): "The exemplary person (*chün tzu*) cannot undertake trivial things but can be relied upon for important responsibilities. The small person, then, is the opposite." As Waley observes, the standard renderings of this passage manipulate the grammar beyond recognition to force some sense out of

chih here.[42] Because his *chih* (what he "makes real") is integrated and hence meaningful and enjoyable to him, the *chün tzu*, while certainly capable of "everyday" things, is not capable of "trivial things" (*hsiao chih* ⼩ 知 literally, "small realizations"). Since everything he does is funded with meaning and importance, his actions even when "everyday" always conduce to greatness.

Another suggestive passage is (6/20): "To be fond of it is better than merely to realize it; to enjoy it is better than merely to be fond of it." Confucius' point here is that a full realization requires a personal commitment and participation. Three categories are introduced: realization, realization that is a consequence of intention, and realization that effects harmony and enjoyment. The last, for Confucius, is the richest kind of realization. To make something real that is neither desired nor a source of enjoyment is to have undertaken trivial things. The fundamentally dynamic nature of realizing *(chih)* and its attendant enjoyment are highlighted in the metaphorically suggestive passage (6/23):

> Those who realize the world (that is, the wise) enjoy water; those who have authoritative humanity *(jen*)* enjoy mountains. Those who realize the world are active; those who are authoritative as persons are still. Those who realize the world find enjoyment; those who are authoritative as persons are long-lived.

This passage focuses on two fundamental dimensions of being a person of significance. To the extent that one is making a world real with his performative wisdom *(chih)*, he is creative and dynamic, comparable to water in that it too is fluid and productive. To the extent that one is an achieved person, he is a sustainer of values and meaning prominent and enduring like the mountain. The excellence achieved by the authoritative person is normative, influencing the world to become a continuing focus of deference and a resource for emulation. The categories of "being wise" *(chih)* and "being authoritative" *(jen*)* are construed so as to reveal the creativity/continuity distinction present in the relationship between "reflecting" *(ssu)* and "learning" *(hsüeh)*. Just as traditionally both "mountain" *(shan* 山) and "water" *(sui* 水) have been considered necessary to achieve natural beauty in landscape painting *(shan sui* 山 水), so both the continuous and the creative are necessary constituents of the complete person.