

INTRODUCTION

DONALD MUNRO—SCHOLAR, MENTOR, FRIEND

Chad Hansen and Robert Eno

Don Munro used to wonder why students in his undergraduate courses perpetually took him to be advocating for Confucian philosophy when he described and analyzed it. “Zhuangzi’s actually my favorite,” he complained, “why do they think I’m trying to persuade them to become Confucians?” The answer was simple: Don’s combination of formality and kindness, intellectual authority, and obvious interest in ideas that his students and others expressed, presented a model through which students understood the meaning of the term *junzi* (君子): the Confucian ideal of the virtuous person, always seeking to be, and to help others be, better.

In those undergraduate classes, Don set the framework for learning and debate. But his graduate seminars were a very different matter. Those courses were a crossroads of disciplinary encounter. Don’s research program attracted students from political science, law, education, and other departments and schools distant from the humanities, who would join aspiring philosophers and historians in bringing the perspectives of their specializations to bear in contesting the meanings of text passages, philosophical ideas, and evolving intellectual currents in Chinese history and contemporary Chinese society. In this way, Don’s ideas, rich with implications far beyond the discipline of philosophy, spread to other fields, but equally, Don encouraged students to challenge his ideas and uncover where his own viewpoint was narrow or his evidence shaky, so that he could progress towards ever more comprehensive perspectives.

This broadening of perspective is clearly evident in Don's research career. Its most obvious manifestation, perhaps, lies in the chronological leaps of his initial three books, the first on ancient China, the next on contemporary Chinese thought (as Maoism then was), and the third on Song Neo-Confucianism. More fundamental, though, was the fact that the three books employed divergent intellectual methodologies, the first being based on close text analysis and philology, the second on a sociology rooted in comparative historical studies, and the third on a literary approach to the use of analogy. Don's intellectual orientation was in a state of constant revision as he searched for important new problems, and for whatever disciplinary or theoretical keys could best open them up for fruitful analysis. And those familiar with Don's career know that after completing his initial overview of the history of Chinese thought from the age of Confucius to the age of Mao, Don reinvented his approach yet again in another series of three books published after his retirement, which drew heavily on the perspectives of evolutionary biology and neuroscience to relate characteristic themes of Chinese thought to universal aspects of the human condition and to persistent contours of experience specific to the unfolding of Chinese social and political history.

The origins of Don's protean intellectual odyssey are not mysterious. His unending search for new ways of framing fundamental questions, and for new tools to unlock answers more satisfactory than his earlier ones, is an expression of an underlying commitment to pragmatism and its belief that questions and answers are always evolving with the growth of human knowledge in a changing world. Don's father, Thomas Munro, an art historian, earned his doctorate at Columbia University, where he came under the influence of John Dewey. The elder Munro pursued a career guided by Deweyan pragmatism, analyzing the evolving historical role of the arts in culture in his research as a professor at Western Reserve University, and applying those insights in one of the earliest museum outreach programs, as director of public art education at the Cleveland Museum of Art. Don Munro's commitment to analyzing the evolution of Chinese philosophical ideas through the context of changing historical eras and his emphasis on the enduring Chinese view of education as the key to social transformation both resonate with his own early intellectual context.

Don's initial engagement with China took place as an undergraduate

at the university where he later spent his professional career: the University of Michigan. There, in 1950, he began his study of Chinese, moving to the Department of Philosophy at Harvard the following year to complete his B.A. in 1953. His college career was followed by an academic hiatus, as, together with his wife Ann, Don traveled to the Philippines, where he served as a young officer in the United States Navy. Making use of his time in Asia to continue studying Chinese with a private tutor whom he located near the naval base, Don reached a decision to pursue an academic rather than a military career when his four-year deployment came to an end. In 1957, he enrolled in the doctoral program in philosophy at Columbia University, ultimately moving to the Department of Chinese and Japanese, where Theodore de Bary had already built perhaps the strongest program in Chinese thought in the U.S. After three years of coursework preparation, Don headed back across the Pacific in 1960 to pursue research on that most Confucian of Zhuangzian themes: the link between the “sage within” and the “king without.”

In Asia, Don studied under a series of mentors whose guidance led him towards the exploration of Chinese views of human nature, which has been thematic during his career. His initial guide, and perhaps the strongest influence on his development during those years, was a private scholar, Liu Yuyun 劉毓鋆, who had been trained in classical texts as a member of the imperial Aisin Jueluo clan in the wake of the Qing Dynasty's collapse. Like other young royalty whom the Republican Revolution bypassed, Mr. Liu had been educated in the palace by a battery of traditional scholars, led by Kang Youwei, the last representative of a long line of Confucian scholar-reformers. In Taiwan, Mr. Liu had found a vocation teaching American students to read the Chinese classics, conveying in his lessons the Dao of his own teacher, who had read those texts as living documents, conveying a guide to humanity's future. From late 1960 to the spring of 1962, Don met individually with Mr. Liu three days each week, building technical expertise and an understanding of the link between ancient ideas and the perennial Chinese quest to improve the world. At the same time, Don was developing his philological skills by studying with Qu Wanli, one of China's foremost paleographers.

After his work in Taiwan, Don moved to Hong Kong, where he continued his study of the Confucian tradition under the New Confucian

philosopher, Tang Junyi: it was to Tang that he first presented his proposal to study the concept of human nature in early China. Don complemented his study of Tang's philosophical approach by consulting on historical issues with Qian Mu, himself a formidable analyst of Chinese thought, and the author of painstaking studies of the chronology and contexts that shaped the corpus of early Chinese texts. Finally, moving on to Japan, Don strengthened the philological skills he had gained in Taiwan, studying with Shirakawa Shizuka, whose command of pre-Classical bronze inscriptions was unmatched.

Returning to the U.S. in 1963, Don took up the position in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Michigan that he was to hold until his retirement in 1995, completing his dissertation and the book that grew out of it, *The Concept of Man in Early China*. The 1960s was an era when a generation of China specialists, mostly American, were seeking to ask new questions about Chinese history and culture, questions that could provide ways to understand China that escaped from traditional Chinese, Western sinological, or journalistic frameworks that had shaped the way China had been understood in early Western scholarship. These new approaches departed from strictly humanistic disciplines and drew on the social sciences to reexamine evidence with fresh eyes. The University of Michigan, which had not developed a strong Chinese studies program as early as Harvard or Columbia, determined to do so in the early sixties through a systematic program of interdisciplinary hiring, which brought to campus China specialists in all the social science disciplines, as well as an expanded range of humanities departments.

Don's appointment in Philosophy was part of this initiative. Within the varied community of scholars he found himself among at Michigan, many were young and keenly aware of the opportunities for intellectual exchange beyond their home disciplines. They created an ideal environment for Don to reimagine the questions he asked of the Chinese philosophical tradition in each of the three major research projects he completed while an active teacher there. Each time he engaged with a new set of scholarly perspectives that he had discovered to be optimally fruitful in opening up the different eras of Chinese thought to a clearer understanding. And for us, Don's students, it created a similar arena of broad intellectual exchange and excitement, over which Don presided as

an ideal model: a perpetual student himself, always expressing his excitement with new ideas he presented to us, and visibly animated whenever any of those he was teaching offered a thought or perspective that was new to him.

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The two of us have been asked to represent all of our colleagues and fellow students by adding some personal recollections of our experiences with Don as a mentor and friend.

Chad

I didn't choose the University of Michigan specifically to study with Don. I was going to study social and political philosophy. However, that it was the graduate school, among my choices, with a member of the philosophy staff teaching Chinese Philosophy did count in Michigan's favor. I had no thought of a career focused on Chinese philosophy but did have a lingering curiosity derived from the two years I had spent in Hong Kong as a missionary—overlapping, but never intersecting, with Don when he was there.

On arriving at Michigan in 1966, I met Jerry Hill who must have studied with Don in the first year of Don's two-semester course in Chinese thought at Michigan. He enthusiastically recommended I enroll in Don's course. I did, and after only a few classes I approached Don to ask him if he could write the characters for the concepts he was discussing. I knew them only in Cantonese. His immediate willingness to accommodate this strange and somewhat burdensome request was also my first exposure to the kindness and warmth that became the permanent lesson of his character.

My earlier exposure to Chinese philosophy had been in some Hong Kong Grammar School textbook abridgements of Feng Youlan's histories, which I had used in teaching myself how to read Chinese while I was in Hong Kong. What had grabbed my interest, even then, were the central themes in Don's new book and his classes—natural human equality, social inclinations, and perfectibility through education.

Don's pragmatism certainly resonated with me. I had come to Michigan steeped in American Pragmatism, especially Dewey, but had turned to a fascination with its new Quinian linguistic turn. When I learned my original advisor in pragmatic social philosophy would leave Michigan, I quickly decided to choose Don to replace him—a choice based mostly on the contrast in warmth and liberality of character, not yet a decision to change my intellectual specialization. Don's welcome and encouragement, his own pragmatism and intellectual open-mindedness, made him a perfect fit.

I did, however, soon decide to develop Chinese thought as an “area of competence,” as we called it. Don was wise and unstinting with his advice and guidance as I picked my way through an increasingly diverse blend of disciplines and foci.

A hallmark of Don's value as a director of graduate studies was his willingness to accept and support my unconventional approaches even to his own subject—a strength all of his students since have noticed and valued. He introduced me to the young Henry Rosemont who was teaching nearby and who first encouraged me to incorporate Chomsky's linguistic theories into my study of Classical Chinese. Don's introduction, however, came with one of his humanistic lessons about academic reviews. Henry's relations with Don had been complicated by his review of Don's first book. Don taught me to resist the youthful temptation to focus on a single point of criticism and ignore the broad contributions of work which consumed large chunks of the lifetime, dreams, and ego of a fellow scholar. I have conscientiously passed this advice to all my students.

Don's open-minded approach became pivotal to me when, after passing my preliminary examinations, I did, finally, decide to make Chinese my “area of specialization” and write a dissertation on Chinese thought. After a series of eye-opening seminars in which Don continued to encourage me to take my own lead and find new approaches, I eventually became fascinated with trying to plumb the depths of the paradoxes of Gongsun Long. Don was unstinting with his praise and encouragement of all my forays into maverick topics and along almost heretical lines of thought about Chinese philosophy. His hallmark as a teacher was the absence of an official ideology and an open and welcoming tolerance to differences of opinion.

That warmth, of course, was also personal and familial. I cannot remember how many times Don and his dynamic and charming wife, Ann, have welcomed me into their home. He introduced me to scholars from many different fields in these social gatherings at his Ann Arbor home. The social exposure, so new to a farm boy from the mountains of Mormondom, often included gentle, fatherly social advice, helping to soften the rough edges left from my earlier impoverished exposure to a wider world. I remember the baby, Sarah, now a professor at my own undergraduate alma mater. I remember his sharing early dreams and his ongoing progress in building his “Daoist cabin” in the beautiful upper peninsula of Michigan. I remember the runs together we took through the arboretum as we discussed philosophy and life. If Aristotle’s students were “peripatetics,” Don’s were joggers. Of all the life lessons I learned, I remembered none more vividly than his observation that when you work, work hard, and when you play, play hard.

Don encouraged and supported me applying for fellowships for my Mandarin study in Taiwan, research in Hong Kong, post-docs, and so on. At each juncture, I also benefitted from his introductions to many other intellectuals from abroad and from a diverse range of professional and academic fields. He introduced me to the work of Cheng Chung-ying and Angus Graham for my dissertation topic, and to the community of scholars at Stanford and other appropriate scholarly institutions wherever I went.

His ability to share his intellectual resources and background was never more appreciated than when he provided me with an introduction to his own beloved teacher in Taiwan, Liu Yuyun. I never discovered for sure if he was teasing me when he warned me that I should practice how to kowtow to be accepted as a student. “The Prince,” however, welcomed me and paused only slightly when I resisted his suggestion that, as Don had, I read through the Thirteen Classics with him. I said that I trusted that Don had been a good student and I felt no need to retrace and double-check his scholarship. I wanted to move on and build on it by reading the Mohist Canon. He demurred that he had never studied it himself, but that given Don’s recommendation, he would agree we could “read it together”—*if* he was satisfied I could read classical Chinese!

In my prior attempts to forge my own routes of access to the philosophical classics, I had been frustrated by unsystematic, theoretically weak

approaches to the grammatical structure of the language. For the course that Don had recommended in Mandarin linguistics, I had constructed an early version of a Chomsky-inspired phrase structure of classical Chinese from which I could derive both Cantonese and Mandarin grammars by “transformations.” That enabled me to link my intuitive feeling for Cantonese grammar to Classical Chinese structures. But when Mr. Liu asked me to read and explain some passages, I still could do it only in Cantonese. I so desperately wanted to do Don credit that the proudest moment of my year in Taiwan was when Mr. Liu listened, thought, and said simply, “You can read,” and accepted me as a student. That gave me my first real access to Chinese linguistic theory.

Like Don, after my time in Taiwan, I went back to Hong Kong (in 1970) to focus my research and develop my analysis of Chinese language and logic. There again Don’s kind introductions to Tang Junyi at New Asia College enabled me to take perspective-shaping classes with both Tang and his colleague, Mou Zongsan.

Back at Michigan, Don had helped me enormously in putting together a dissertation committee and served as its chair. As I wrote each chapter, I would always submit first to Don, whose reviews—prompt and constructive—first would emphasize the positive, encouraging the direction of thought and praising the work, before gently pointing out the errors and proposing suggestions. It always gave me the courage (and revisions) to take the chapters to my more daunting, analytic committee members.

His kindnesses literally never ended. He supported me as I moved from job to job, shared his favorite haunts in the alleys of Beijing, restaurant gems, introductions to scholars, and recommended sights whenever we overlapped there, advice, and introductions in Japan when I went to Kyoto to learn Japanese. We would meet whenever he came through Hong Kong. His family showered mine in warmth and my sons with impeccably thoughtful presents. His most recent kindness was a work of Japanese art I had admired in his home years ago. He sent it as a house-warming gift for our return to Vermont. He served as advisor and referee for my students’ dissertations, supported cases for promotion and tenure, and most recently attended and contributed to my own festschrift.

The greatest gift had been the warm friendship we’ve had with him

and his family over all those years. Many years ago I had struggled with his frequent request that I call him “Don,” rather than “Professor Munro.” I managed in time to do that, but the blend of close friend, mentor, and inspirational teacher has always been there. As my paper in this volume attests, he remained and remains, after all these years, my teacher and an inspiration to my work.

Bob

Like Chad, I arrived at the University of Michigan in 1966, but I came as an undergraduate, with no intention of studying either philosophy or China. I encountered Don the following year in a large survey course on Western philosophy, for which Don both lectured and led the discussion section I enrolled in. At that time I had no direction and was on academic probation, but I did have strong views for which I was willing to argue stubbornly. After I’d delivered one monologue that particularly annoyed everyone in the room, Don paused in silence. “We’ll talk after class,” he said. He led me to his office, and after remarking, with only a hint of irritation, that my comments in class had made absolutely no sense to him, he told me what he wanted me to do. “Forget the class paper topic,” he said. “You obviously think you have something to say. See if you can say it clearly. That’s your term paper assignment—do your best.” Encountering a constructive challenge was the last thing I had expected, and although my success in that paper was mixed, Don’s success as a teacher was not: a year later I was enrolled in his course on Chinese thought and majoring in Far Eastern Studies. I went on to redeem my poor start well enough to be accepted, with Don’s support, into Michigan’s short, interdisciplinary Master’s program in East Asian Studies.

Don became my initial graduate advisor at that first stage of what became a long graduate career. I was still finding my way, and Don’s continuing forbearance in the years that followed is something I still marvel at. I tried very hard in my own career to emulate him—never to write off a student, never to lose patience—but I could not match him, and I’m not sure I ever had a student as trying as I was. My initial choice was to study contemporary Chinese education policy for the undemanding Master’s project that the interdisciplinary program required. Don found

ways to guide me with the help of colleagues in social science, and even found a sentence of my thesis to quote in a publication, which made my head spin and swell. When I veered back to the humanities, Don once again supported me, and I was admitted for more serious graduate work in Chinese literature, despite the fact that I was still only an intermediate language learner and showing no obvious linguistic talents. Trying to make a virtue of the skills I had, I worked for two years on Chinese socialist realist novels, tackling a second Masters. Although Don did not serve as my formal advisor during this period, he was then writing his book on contemporary Chinese thought and was as much a resource for me as ever, taking an interest in my research and encouraging me to track down Soviet influences in literary theory and practice, which I found to be the most interesting aspect of that work. But the charms of Maoist literature did not outlast that project, and having added rudimentary Classical Chinese to my weak Mandarin, I finally ventured back into Chinese thought and asked Don to supervise my doctoral work, though I meant to focus on the medieval period, rather than on the ancient period, which was the area I saw as most clearly Don's own. In retrospect, I can see that I was still bobbing and weaving to avoid following in Don's footsteps, which would show how little I could fill his shoes.

Once I settled on Chinese thought, Don's approach was to ensure that I had the basic tools to pursue the topics I chose responsibly, but as far as my choice of field and approach were concerned, those were mine to find. All Don demanded was that I work hard and write clearly. When I didn't, he let me know it. To fill in gaps in my background, Don sent me to take a series of courses in Western philosophy that complemented my work on China, alerting his colleagues about me, and reading and commenting on every paper I wrote. As I approached the last year of my coursework, Don realized that it was my intent to finish my degree in the comfortable confines of the library in Ann Arbor—in those days, when the PRC was closed to Americans, you could get by without overseas training, and many of my fellow students were doing so. Don called me into his office and laid down the law. Without language abilities that only immersion work abroad could provide, I would not have the skills necessary to do solid work, and a year abroad was a non-negotiable requirement for him. One year later, I departed for Taiwan to do language work and

dissertation research, having veered into Chinese Buddhist studies, with plans to work on the influence of Buddhism on Neo-Confucianism.

What finally pulled me into early Chinese thought was what Don's old tutor, Liu Yuyun, would call *yi de* 遺德: the lasting influence of Don's past accomplishments. About six months after I landed in Taipei, Mr. Liu heard that a student of Don's was in town, and he deputed a friend of mine who was studying with him to come and fetch me for an audience. I did not want to go: my Mandarin felt suddenly weak, I was sure to be a disappointment, and I protested that I had no interest in early Chinese texts. But my friend said, "It's no use. He's heard you're a student of Donald Munro's, and I'm under orders." A few hours later, Mr. Liu, whose method of advising had nothing in common with Don's, had persuaded me to give up my academic wandering and commit to building a career foundation by studying classical thought with him, extending my planned stay on Taiwan by a year or two in order to become a real scholar, like my mentor, Meng Dan 孟旦 (Don's Chinese name). "You remind me of him," he lied, but I did wish it could become true.

When I wrote Don of my decision to study classical thought with Mr. Liu, he replied with delight. Immediately addressing the additional skills I would need, he urged me to begin a separate course of study in paleography so that I had a sinological basis to supplement the classical approach Mr. Liu would train me in. In this way, I finally undertook to lay a scholarly foundation much like Don's own. At the end of what grew into four years in Taipei, Don arranged for me to continue my studies in Japan, under the guidance of Kanaya Osamu, with whom he had maintained a long and fruitful scholarly correspondence, thus ensuring that I would not evade the challenges of Japanese scholarship. By the time I finally returned to Michigan in 1980, very little of my intellectual profile had not been sketched under Don's guidance, despite the fact that he had left it entirely to me to find my main path.

And Don was more than an intellectual mentor. In early days, when my damaged academic record was still an issue and I could earn no scholarships, he hired me for yardwork and moving projects and recommended me when his friends or neighbors needed work done. Once I had earned the necessary credentials, he appointed me as his course grader and took the risk of employing me to index his second book (as Chad had indexed

his first). When local groups sought a speaker on Chinese thought, Don began steering them my way. Combining financial support with intensive academic training, Don hired me to act as his assistant and a rapporteur for the five-day international conference on individualism and holism in Chinese thought and society, which he organized along with Chad and Irene Bloom. When I told him I had decided to marry, he and his wife, Ann, with their daughter Sarah's cheerful assistance, opened their home so that my wife and I could have our wedding in a place of friendship and graciousness. When my family grew while I was working on my dissertation, Don was the key to my getting a stable administrative job with Michigan's Center for Chinese Studies, which supported us while I finished my degree, and taught me how to be part of an academic community. Here, too, I followed Don by example, observing his responsible citizenship as a member of the Executive Committee of Michigan's College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, much as I later learned from him through discussions of institutional issues when he was chair of the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, discussions that in time helped prepare me for my own turn as a chair.

Throughout my professional career, Don has been an unfailing source of wisdom, inspiration, and support. I have made plenty of mistakes, but never from following his advice or example. He has been my mentor for fifty years, and I do not know how it would be possible to find a finer one. I have always been proud to be known as his student.

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We are grateful to have had the opportunity to represent our fellow students and colleagues in offering our personal recollections of Don as a scholar, mentor, and friend. It is a privilege to which age alone has entitled us. Every contributor to this celebration of Don's career, whether a former student or a colleague, has a unique story to tell about Don's influence and character. As anyone reading our two accounts can see, Don was able to skillfully guide students of very different types. Like Confucius, Don inspired all sorts of people and helped them by meeting them where they were—so long as when he raised one corner, they would try, at least, to look for a way to grip the other three.