

that was very probably decisive in bringing about the relatively high degree of monetization of the economy of Early Imperial China;¹⁶ and the discussion of the Sino-Kharoṣṭhī coins never mentions their date. As is evident even from the passages cited throughout this review, the writing is sometimes rambling and inelegant; as a result the author's arguments, for all their intellectual brilliance, are not always optimally clear. Moreover, the book's Sinological core readership is bound to be irritated by a pervasive indiscipline with respect to the niceties of formatting: Chinese terms occurring in the text are given inconsistently (often only the characters are provided without transliteration); the parsing of binoms and polynoms is likewise inconsistent (especially in the bibliography); and translated passages are sometimes accompanied with the original Chinese text and sometimes not.¹⁷

But such technical flaws are more than made up for by the consistently high quality of thought and by the stimulating originality of Chin's interpretation of the Han world. One hopes that the author herself will produce a more accessible version of the book that can be assigned in university-level teaching; otherwise, there is a distinct chance that her important ideas will gain the currency they deserve mainly through citations in the works of less imaginative scholars.

LOTHAR VON FALKENHAUSEN
University of California, Los Angeles

Moral Cultivation and Confucian Character: Engaging Joel J. Kupperman. Edited by Chenyang Li and Peimin Ni. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2014. Pp. xii + 282. \$85.00 cloth, \$29.95 paper.

This is a very welcome volume. Joel Kupperman recognized the philosophical value of the Confucian tradition and made use of that tradition in formulating his own original ideas about ethical theory and practice during the extended recent period

¹⁶ “During the far more monetized Qin-Han period, when the universal poll tax on adult men and women required cash payments, *bi* became the common term for money” (p. 264); on this see Kakinuma, *Chūgoku kodai kahei keizai shi kenkyū*.

¹⁷ Non-trivial romanization mistakes are few. The name of Lu'an [*sic!*] 六安 county in Anhui is mistranscribed as “Liu An” (p. 247); “emperor Gu” (for 嚳) should read “emperor Ku” (pp. 268, 275); and the book perpetuates the ubiquitous mistranscription of 單于 (recte *chanyu*) as *shanyu*. “Laoshung shanyu” (p. 220) should read “Laoshang chanyu” 老上單于.

when almost no other Western philosopher saw any reason to focus on Confucianism. Things are changing now, but his prescience deserves recognition and receives it in the present volume of essays. All the essays relate to themes and ideas that Kupperman has been interested in, but there is no space in this review for me to engage critically and philosophically with each of those essays, and since it would also be unfair to single out a small number of them for extended comment, I think it best if I try to summarize all the essays and then speak of a general critical reaction I have had to the essays and to Joel Kupperman's response to them.

The first essay in the volume—Roger Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr.'s "From Kupperman's Character Ethics to Confucian Role Ethics: Putting Humpty Together Again"—contrasts Kupperman's "character ethics" with the authors' own "role ethics." They criticize Kupperman's view for (as they put it) reifying the self as unified and discrete from other selves and suggest that the self is best seen in gerundive and socially relational terms. They also say that Confucianism is best viewed as a form of role ethics, and this contrasts with the view expressed by P. J. Ivanhoe in "Kongzi and Aristotle as Virtue Ethicists," the next essay in the volume. Ivanhoe seeks to compare Confucius and Aristotle *as* virtue ethicists and points out a number of similarities and differences between their respective views. The essay that follows, Bryan Van Norden's "Anthropocentric Realism about Values," defends a realist but also pluralist conception of ethical/moral values against anti-realist forms of metaethics. He describes and draws on what he takes to be the anthropocentric realism to be found in the writings of Xunzi, but also offers a number of arguments against modern-day forms of anti-realism, including relativism, non-cognitivism, and error theory.

Next, in "The Different Faces of Love in a Good Life," David Wong describes what he takes to be three forms of love: love not answerable to reasons, love based in reasons concerning the personal qualities of a beloved, and love that answers to reasons grounded in relationship. Comparing and contrasting his own views with those of Velleman and Frankfurt, he argues that an account of love that neglects or downplays any one of these bases will inevitably be inadequate to the rich complexity of love. Kwong-loi Shun's "On Reflective Equanimity: A Confucian Perspective" explores the Confucian idea that someone who values material and relational goods ought nonetheless to retain a state of equanimity when such goods are threatened or lost. The ideal Confucian gentleman will care more about being ethical than about these other things and will thus preserve a deep level of equanimity despite any troubles or losses they may experience.

Robert Neville's "Individual and Rituals" takes off from Xunzi's ideas about ritual(s) and argues that ritual is a fundamental dimension of human reality. Neville holds that ritual serves as a main basis for the differentiation and individuation

of human beings and suggests that this idea usefully supplements what Confucius, Mencius, and Kupperman himself say about the ethics of individuals. The following essay, Chenyang Li's "Material Well-Being and Character Cultivation in Confucianism," considers whether and to what extent moral self-cultivation depends on individual material well-being. He defends the Confucian idea that even impoverished individuals have the capacity for self-cultivation but argues that it is statistically unlikely that a generally impoverished population should generally exemplify moral virtue. Sor-hoon Tan's "Materialistic Desires and Ethical Life in the *Analects* and the *Mencius*" also explores the relationship between material well-being and the ethical life. She defends the Confucian compatibility of material wealth with ethical virtue and argues that any view that treats them as incompatible is likely to turn people away from, rather than lead them toward, the ethical.

Peimin Ni's "Character and Ethics for Social Entities" describes how categories that are familiar in the ethics of individuals can be applied to social entities, and Karyn Lai's "When Good Relationships Are Not Enough for Business: Understanding Character in Confucian Ethics" argues that Confucian business ethics shouldn't focus primarily on relationships but should emphasize the cultivation of good character in individuals. Joel Kupperman's reply to the foregoing essays is the final contribution in the volume. The reply is gracious and appreciative, not polemical, and in the light of what all the participants have said about Kupperman, that should come as no surprise. But now to the overall criticism I mentioned earlier.

There is a familiar theme or thesis of Confucian (and neo-Confucian) thought that serves as a presupposition of almost all the essays in this volume: the idea that human beings should try to cultivate their own moral virtue and are capable of doing so. And I think we need to consider how psychologically realistic this theme or thesis is. Western ethical thought has also widely subscribed to something like this idea: both Aristotle and Kant hold that we can and should shape our own overall moral character so that we become virtuous rather than vicious. But the idea of self-cultivation is more salient and pervasive in Confucian philosophy than it has been in the West, and it is worth considering it in the context of the present volume. This group of essays illustrates the richness of the Confucian ethical tradition and offers reasons to Western ethicists for considering it seriously. But I think Chinese thought has been rather uncritical with regard to the particular thesis I have just mentioned. The kind of (I assume) virtue ethics that pervades Chinese philosophy has much to teach us about the nature of virtue and its connection with human nature and the good life. But I think the bipartite thesis about moral self-cultivation mentioned above has been brought in uncritically within the Confucian ethical tradition—I suspect there has been certain amount of wishful thinking in the acceptance of the idea that we can meaningfully and realistically make ourselves into morally good or virtuous people.

(We shall see that what I am saying here is anticipated to some extent in the work of David Nivison.) I also think that what we can call “the self-cultivation thesis” is actually unnecessary to most of what is good and insightful in Chinese ethical thought. But, of course, I need to give you some reasons for thinking all these things.

Roughly, and to begin with, I think what we know or think today about psychology—and what wasn’t available to earlier Western or Confucian thinkers—gives us reason to suspect the realism of the self-cultivation thesis. Being a virtuous person involves certain kinds of knowledge, but it also involves certain kinds of motivation, and what we have learned or are learning about human motivation gives us reason, I think, to at least doubt the idea of overall individual self-cultivation. But I don’t want to be misunderstood here. I am not criticizing the self-cultivation thesis because moral development requires some help from others. Of course, that is true, but it is also true that those who teach themselves algebra will rely on some book, and that reliance doesn’t undercut our thought that they taught themselves algebra. So the fact that one may need to enlist the help of other people in becoming a better person doesn’t in and of itself show that one can’t make oneself into a better person. It doesn’t at all undercut the idea of self-cultivation.

What does undercut it is looking at how people actually develop morally and taking in some of the most important things psychologists/educationists have said about moral development. “Cognitive developmentalists” (e.g., Lawrence Kohlberg) have emphasized the intellectual developments/changes that must occur in an individual if they are to become fully moral, but they never claimed that this is something the individual can undertake on his or her own (even with help from others). The cognitive developmentalists have also acknowledged that empathy plays a crucial role in moral development, and we have to ask ourselves whether empathy is something we want to develop and can develop on our own. Certain recent psychologists have spoken of a process of “inductive discipline” that can help improve the empathic sensitivity and caringness of children: if one’s child has hurt another child, a parent can (firmly and calmly) get their child to focus on and feel bad about the harm or pain they have caused (“think how little Billy must be feeling right now”), and psychological studies indicate that this process of empathic sensitization (especially if it is repeated in related contexts) can lead to a child who is more concerned about others, to what we would agree is a morally better child. But this is not *self*-cultivation, and even if we add that a child can empathically and in a less than self-conscious way soak up caring attitudes from parents as moral models, there is no hint yet of something that can reasonably be called self-cultivation.

Now Mencius and others influenced by him hold that there is another, very clear way in which moral improvement can occur through deliberate self-cultivation. Someone who cares, say, just about their own family can realize that people outside

their family have basically the same needs and aspirations, and this can lead a person to “extend” their ethical concern or caring beyond an original narrow circle to larger (and larger) groups of people. But there are two problems here: one motivational, the other implemental. The motivational problem is the problem of why someone who is already somewhat benevolent and virtuous should want to become more virtuous. As David Nivison put the matter many years ago, there is a kind of paradox in the idea of someone’s wanting to be more virtuous—it seems as though one already has to be more virtuous in order to want to become so.¹ Nivison’s point has been largely forgotten, and I am proposing here to put it a bit less obliquely and somewhat more forcefully than Nivison did. What is going to motivate someone to care about strangers if all they now care about is their own family: what motivates that change of motivation?

But then the issue of implementation comes up immediately. Inductive discipline and parental modelling are ways in which motivational change and “extension” can be brought about within a child, but this isn’t self-cultivation, and I don’t think the Confucian tradition has adequately recognized, much less addressed, the kinds of worry I am emphasizing concerning the viability of moral self-cultivation. However, I am not saying that moral self-cultivation never actually occurs—I just think it is rarer and more limited in scope than Confucianism has realized. And let me illustrate this by contrasting two examples.

Imagine a factory owner who, visiting his factory one day, suddenly notices how his employees view him—let’s say he turns around suddenly at one point and notices a fearful look or distaste on the faces of two of his employees. Let’s assume the man is already sensitive to the needs of his own family and friends. But he suddenly sees how certain other people are and presumably have been reacting to him, and that disturbs him and leads him to reflect on what he must have been doing in the factory to create such fear and distaste in the workers. This reflection may lead him to realize that he has been haughty, say, toward his employees, and that may make him more sensitive to their feelings (and needs?) in the future. But this process can’t be said, idiomatically, to be a case of moral self-cultivation. The change that occurred in him is importantly due to an adventitious outside influence—the looks on the workers’ faces and his noticing them—and to that extent it resembles what happens with parental inductive discipline, though more reflection may have to have been involved than one would expect from a child whose empathy for another child is aroused via inductive discipline.

Contrast the last case, however, with one in which self-cultivation really can and does occur. Let’s say a man is married to an Americanized Korean-American woman

¹ See his “The Paradox of ‘Virtue,’” in Bryan W. Van Norden, ed., *The Ways of Confucianism* (Chicago: Open Court Press, 1996), pp. 31–43.

whose family are still set in the old ways; and imagine that he finds their ways and thinking somewhat off-putting and shows this attitude in the context of family gatherings. His wife might tell him that he has, by his undisguised attitude, hurt the feelings of his in-laws, and this can make the man feel bad about what he has done or shown—so far the case resembles inductive discipline. But we can easily imagine that his guilt or bad feeling at the hurt feelings he has caused might lead him to start reading works of Korean history and literature in order to become more sensitive to his in-laws and be a better son-in-law. A certain change of heart has already occurred to make him want to read all the literature, but there is no reason, realistically, that the reading he does can't accomplish what he wants it to accomplish, can't make him increasingly sensitive to the values and feelings of Korean people. And that would be an instance of moral self-cultivation in a way that the case of the factory owner is not.

But notice a couple of things. The man doesn't seek to become a more sensitive and better person all on his own. It takes an unanticipated moral influence from outside—what his wife tells him—to initiate the process of moral self-improvement. And cases like this one are also fairly rare and limited in scope—the man may just start to behave better with Koreans. But I mentioned above that there are problems about both motivation and implementation and let me now speak to this latter issue. Let's say that someone admires another person and really wants to be like them. Does this mean they can cultivate themselves into being like that other person? Well, one might think so. Following Aristotle (and this is less emphasized in Confucianism), we might say that if one copies what the person one admires does, that will make one become habitually more like them. But Aristotle and others who emphasize habituation never fully face the problem of motivation here. Even granting that one wants to become like some admired exemplar, how does deliberately copying their actions change one's motivation?

The Aristotelian answer seems to be that the copying creates a habit and a new habit involves new motivation or at least new dispositions to act that can count as self-engendered moral improvement. But this is murky. The literature of psychology speaks of a law of effect according to which rewarded actions tend to be repeated and a law of exercise according to which when actions of a certain kind occur, they tend to be repeated even if they aren't rewarded. But although one or another version of the law of effect is widely accepted, the law of exercise never really has been; and the idea that repetition creates a habit is thus open to question in a way that should worry Confucians who think self-cultivation can occur through imitation of an admired exemplar. When one imitates, one is not acting on the same basis as the person one is imitating, and it is not clear how repeated imitation can lead one to act on the same basis as the person one admires in ethical terms, can lead one to become virtuous in the way that the exemplar is. (If one empathically and subliminally imbibes the

motivation of the person one knows and admires, one may become more like them, but that is not a process of deliberate self-cultivation.)

Nor does it help to compare (as some Aristotelians do) the acquisition of moral virtue with the acquisition of a skill. When I practise the piano and become more adept at playing, my nervous system cooperates, but no change of motivation need occur; but if I copy the actions of some exemplar, I can become like them only if some motivational change occurs within me as a result of such “practice.” And it is difficult in psychological terms to see how the practice or repetition can serve to implement this kind of change.

However, in addition to emulation, the Confucian traditions have emphasized ritual and learning as sources of moral self-improvement, but here too there are problems of motivation and implementation. If attending or participating in certain rituals morally improves a child, it is not clear that this is any kind of self-improvement: presumably all this happens under the guidance of figures of authority. And even if someone knows that participating in certain rituals will improve them morally, there is still the question of why someone should want to improve in this way or any other. The same point applies to reading “the classics.” If one reads them as part of a course of study prescribed by others, any moral improvement that occurs doesn’t seem to fall under the notion of (deliberate) self-improvement, and the question then also remains of why one should *want* to improve oneself by reading the classics. Of course, various Confucians, starting with Confucius himself, have expressed or described a/the desire to make oneself into an ethically better person, but, as I suggested earlier on, it isn’t clear whether such desires really have a chance, a psychologically realistic chance, of working. I am inclined to think that they do not, but even if I am mistaken, the Confucian tradition needs to think more about the issues I have raised here and needs to consult more than it has with the relevant recent literature of psychology.

I know that I am here challenging what a whole tradition has assumed and what all the contributors to the present volume seem to assume. But even if we question the idea of self-cultivation as a means to overall moral improvement, that doesn’t mean we have to jettison the general ideas about what virtue consists in and how it relates to human happiness that one finds in Confucianism or in the work of particular Confucians. My suggestion, therefore, is that Confucians (and philosophers in the West) should continue to engage with issues of moral development and moral education, but put more emphasis on how outside influences can help us morally develop or improve and less emphasis on how one can take charge of such a process, of such change, on one’s own.

MICHAEL SLOTE
University of Miami