Symposium: How Would Feminist Concerns Fare in the Debate between Confucian Role Ethics and Virtue Ethics?

How would feminist concerns fare in the debate between Confucian role ethics and virtue ethics? Ann Pang-White sketches the contours of a non-dichotomous, role-based virtue ethics that is illuminated by a Confucian feminist account as one possible answer to this query. By reimagining the virtues of chastity and filiality that are indispensable to Confucian contexts, Pang-White seeks to develop a reading that can be useful in defending feminist values and replacing outdated understandings of gender roles in societies informed by Confucian thought today. In continuing the conversation with her, Stephen Angle asks whether a modernized, relational, role-based virtue ethics can really suffice to respond to feminist concerns. Sarah Mattice proposes that Pang-White center intersectional perspectives on feminism for the latter's project, while Lily Zhang invites her to analyze how certain ethical conflicts that arise within the framework of Confucian ethics between roles and virtues can be resolved from Pang-White's perspective. Pang-White's reply to the panel reiterates different aspects of her relational role-based virtue ethical reading of Confucian feminism to argue that a better appreciation of the situatedness and imperfections of morality is needed to understand the imperfections that come in with it.

Key words: Confucian ethics; Confucian feminism; intersectionality; chastity; filiality; role ethics; virtue ethics; *Analects*; *Analects for Women*

Feminism, Confucian Role Ethics, and Virtue Ethics: Some Thoughts on the Problematic of Chastity and Filiality

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How would feminist concerns fare in the debate between Confucian role ethics and virtue ethics? This is the symposium topic that I am asked to write on. This question, I suggest, requires a three-pronged approach: First, what are feminist concerns? Second, is Confucian ethics best described as a role ethics or a virtue ethics? Third, are feminist concerns compatible with Confucian ethics?

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1 What Are Feminist Concerns?

Let us start with the first question: what are feminist concerns? As is well known, there is a great variety of feminist perspectives, each bringing forth a different emphasis and analysis on the most pressing issues of sexual and gender inequality and the best solutions to address related problems. Despite their differences, all agree that feminism is a movement and a "struggle to end sexist oppression" (hooks 1984: 24). From this, one can infer that the most fundamental feminist value is equality and equity between the sexes and genders. The cumulated wisdom of the feminist movement has made it clear that this equality and equity must be multi-dimensional, interdisciplinary, and intersectional, encompassing not only educational equality but also class, economic, legal, moral, political, racial, reproductive, social, and technological equality. Equality and equity in all aspects of life ensures that the negative impact of patriarchy does not rob women of their autonomy, self-worth, opportunities and freedom to develop their full potential and pursuit of a life that is worth living. The debate on sexual and gender equality and equity is a relevant topic in Chinese philosophy and culture, though it may take a different formulation and path from what is taken to be typical in the west.

2 Is Confucian Ethics a "Role Ethics" or a "Virtue Ethics"?

Our next question is: is Confucian ethics a role ethics or a virtue ethics? While most scholars of Confucianism interpret Confucian ethics as a version of virtue ethics, some have argued otherwise (Wong 2018: 3). In his landmark book, *Confucian Role Ethics: A Vocabulary*, Roger Ames argues that it is a grave mistake to superimpose western categories and concepts on Confucian philosophy and reduce it to a subcategory of "virtue ethics," for in western philosophical traditions, a number of virtues are individualistic—they may be cultivated in isolation from community (e.g., temperance, contemplation). Moreover, some schools also see virtues as possessing unchanging transcendent characteristics that do not vary across contexts, situations, or persons (e.g., Platonic, Kantian, or theological virtues). Ames argues that instead, it is best to understand Confucian ethics as a "role ethics" because relationship is at the core of Confucian conceptions of personhood and morality.

> When we turn to Confucian role ethics, it certainly offers guidelines for conduct, but more than appealing to abstract principles or values or virtues, it looks primarily to the contours of our concrete familial and social roles for guidance, roles that are existentially more instructive than such abstractions (Ames 2011: 161).
>
> Let me make clear what Confucian role ethics asserts. Confucian role ethics would contend that those family roles and the extended relations we associate with community that designate a specific configuration of activity—the roles of father, mother, son, daughter, teacher, friend, and neighbor, for example—are themselves a normative vocabulary more compelling than abstract injunctions (Ames 2011: 168).

In other words, there is no abstract person *per se* in the Confucian worldview. Therefore, no abstract virtues or absolute moral principles that can universally and transcendently always apply to all. Rather, Confucian morality is person- and site-specific and is at the bottom defined by one's relations to

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relevant others and one's roles in society at specific times and places. For example, there is no *a priori* fixed essence of Mary. Rather, "who Mary is (or becomes)" emerges through an evolving configuration of her roles that are fundamentally tied to the interwoven relations in her life, e.g., she was single and an employee of Company X and is now a volunteer at Feeding America, wife of John, and mother of Justin and Rachael, etc. Therefore, her responsibilities, obligations, and duties change as her roles and relationships change. Robert Neville (2016) seems to be sympathetic to this position as well, arguing that the category "virtue ethics" is loaded with too many unfitting presuppositions.

Despite the strengths of the foregoing arguments, one cannot deny that Confucian texts are filled with discussion of *de* 德, customarily translated as "virtue" (e.g., Legge 1861; Chan 1963; Tan 2005; Kupperman 2007; Yu 2007; Van Norden 2007; Sim 2007; Wong 2015; Olberding 2019; Pang-White 2021; Yao 2021; Angle 2022). A cursory review of some canonical texts shows that *de* 德 appeared in thirty-one paragraphs in the *Analects* (*Lunyu*《論語》), twenty-four paragraphs in the *Mengzi*《孟子》, seventy-seven paragraphs in the *Xunzi*《荀子》, and one-hundred and twenty-one paragraphs in the *Book of Rites* (*Liji*《禮記》). Confucian texts regard *de* or virtues as character traits that an exemplary person (*junzi* 君子) embodies; these character traits inspire others to emulate and are constitutive of a worthwhile life that is fully human. Essential Confucian virtues include *ren* 仁 (humaneness), *yi* 義 (righteousness), *li* 禮 (ritual propriety/respect), *zhi* 智 (wisdom), *shu* 恕 (reciprocity), *xiao* 孝 (filiality), *xin* 信 (trustworthiness), among others. But as I have argued elsewhere, Confucian *de* cannot be fully captured by either the contemporary concept of virtue or the Aristotelian arête, due to its manifold meanings (Pang-White 2021). We can use the language of virtue ethics but must do so with great care and qualifications. There are several reasons for this.

First, Confucian philosophy emphasizes a relational self: there is no self without relations. We find in the Confucian worldview neither the kind of across-the-board metaphysical definition of human essence in terms of its rationality or autonomy as one finds in the philosophy of Aristotle or Kant or other modern thinkers nor a theological definition of human being as an image of God as in the philosophical theology of Augustine or Aquinas or other Abrahamic monotheistic religions. Rather, what one finds in Confucian philosophy are concrete descriptive statements about human relationships and the proper ways to relate to one another. The most significant passage is Mengzi 3A:4, which spells out the Confucian five human relations (*wu lun* 五倫): rulers and subjects, parents and children, husband and wife, the older and the younger, and friend and friend. One's identity and character develop by engaging in these relationships and in one's social roles. In *Analects* 12:1, Yan Hui, one of Confucius' prized pupils, asked Confucius what humaneness is (the paramount Confucian virtue). Confucius replied, "Overcoming the self and returning to rituals constitute humaneness." In 12:22, Fan Chi, another student, asked Confucius what humaneness (*ren*) is, Confucius replied "It is to love others." In 15:24, a student Zigong asked, "Is there a single word that one can abide by in one's conduct throughout a lifetime?" Confucius replied: "It is reciprocity (*shu*). What one does not desire do not do unto others."[1] Thus, Confucian ethics is care-oriented and other-directed: "Such an ethics of virtue, premised on social interdependence, is built on an all-persons perspective that requires a thick (as opposed to thin) interpersonal moral compass that treats others as [indispensable] interdependent partners in a ritual dance where all participants are equally needed for its completion. In contrast, in a thin interpersonal relation, others are treated as discrete entities in relation to the self only in a superficial external relation" (Pang-White 2021: 59-60). Clearly, Confucian virtues are by nature social and cannot be cultivated in isolation.

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Second, ritual and *de* are closely interrelated in Confucian ethics—so important that without the chiseling effect of ritual, virtue is raw, incomplete, and ineffective.[2] "This emphasis on ritual's transformative effect on virtue [and virtue's aesthetic dimension through ritual] is uniquely Confucian, not seen in any other schools of thought" (Pang-White 2021: 68).

Third, ritual propriety, as "the embodiment of righteousness," also prevents nepotism, cronyism, and other forms of moral corruption that may result from close role relations, a criticism directed against certain form of care ethics of either Confucian or western origin (Pang-White 2009a: 217-219; Pang-White 2011: 381).[3] Recall the difficult case of *Analects* 13:18 where a father (or a son) covers up his son's (or his father's) act of stealing and Noddings's highly criticized stance that exiting a corrupt or abusive relation constitutes moral failure because it tears apart a caring relation (Noddings 1984: 109-10; Hoagland 1993: 256; Tong and Botts 2018: 190-92).

3 A Non-Dichotomous Approach: Confucian Role-Based Virtue Ethics

For the above reasons, I propose a non-dichotomous approach and argue that Confucian ethics is a relational role-based virtue ethics. Role and virtue are not mutually exclusive; in fact, they are mutually complementary in constructing a sensible role ethics and virtue ethics. As suggested by David Wong, there is more than one way of defining virtue; one can define virtue broadly or narrowly. If we define virtue in the broad sense, there is no reason why we cannot refer to Confucian ethics as a virtue ethics with appropriate qualifiers (Wong 2018: 3).

Therefore, on the one hand, we cannot deny that Confucian texts are full of descriptions of the ideal type of person, who lives a worthwhile life, with admirable and desirable character traits that inspire others to emulate them. Confucianism seeks to generate such virtuous individuals and citizens with reliable excellence of character and conduct so as to create and sustain a flourishing and caring society and government. On the other hand, we must keep in mind those features that make Confucian ethics unique, including: (1) Confucian *de* or virtues are relational and can only be fostered in social relations, not individualistic or hermit-like virtues as we have seen in some western virtue theories. (2) Confucian virtues are by nature social (even temperance): the ultimate goal in cultivating virtues is not simply for self-fulfillment but to be able to care for the world. (3) Confucian ethics treats virtue as a work of art where the good and the beautiful must converge. This is the transformative function of ritual and its chiseling effect.

For these reasons, even though one's social roles do make significant impact on the contextualization of virtues, it is insufficient to interpret Confucianism as only a role ethics, in disjunction from virtue ethics or some conception of justice (Ramsey 2016; Angle 2014; Sim 2012; Mattice 2019).[4] This is especially important for feminist concerns because the structuring of roles in a society is determined by those who have power. Feminine roles constructed within a patriarchal framework of a Confucian role ethics cannot free women from oppression. I argue that within a Confucian role-based virtue ethics in general and feminist ethics in particular, some objective features that distinguish certain characteristics as virtuous from those identified as vices must be maintained. Criteria such as meaningful rules of ritual propriety (*li*) and righteousness (*yi*) in broad strokes are needed as safeguards

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in preventing corruption of roles and undue partiality. Even Ames, in the epilogue of his *Confucian Role Ethics: A Vocabulary*, acknowledges that:

> But while appreciating the contribution that Confucian role ethics might make …, we also need to consider its limitations, […] While the familiar appeal to universals might suffer from the ambiguity of practical applications, the Confucian attempt to extend consideration to all involved is handicapped by the need for more abstract regulative ideals such as courage and justice that provide direction for what is a legitimate claim for consideration and inclusion (Ames 2011: 260, 268).

Although Ames's main point here is that "a Confucian version of democracy" based on a Confucian role ethics might well need "a continuing appeal to rules of laws and the formal institutions of democracy to contain the excesses of those intimate relations that have their beginnings in family feeling," we share a similar observation: namely, a Confucian role ethics is in need of some sort of supplement, which I argue would be Confucian virtues and meaningful moral rules derived from these virtues.

4 How Do Feminist Concerns Fare in a Confucian Role-Based Virtue Ethics?

If Confucian role ethics and virtue ethics are not mutually exclusive and we can call Confucian ethics a relational role-based virtue ethics, then we can proceed to the next question: whether Confucian role-based virtue ethics is compatible with feminist concerns.

In the classic Confucian worldview, the gender identity of a woman begins at birth when she is born a female. This natural identity of female sex ties her to the social roles that she is expected to perform and the corresponding responsibilities and virtues (Pang-White 2013: 440). Some scholars have argued that gendered virtues are "burdened virtues" imposed on women because of their roles in a patriarchal society. Such virtues (e.g., chastity, obedience) limit women's potential and are undesirable as virtues when the conditions of oppression are no longer present. In other words, they are not virtues that the oppressed would have cultivated if they were not oppressed (Tessman 2005; Angle 2022). This poses the question: whether gendered virtues are genuine virtues at all if we define virtues broadly as desirable character traits that lead to human flourishing. It is an especially acute problem in Confucian ethics due to its longstanding patriarchal past and present.

In what follows, I will tackle this subject by comparing two Confucian texts: the *Analects* and the *Analects for Women*. The former was a record of Confucius's sayings, his students' remarks, and conversations among them or with government officials on matters of moral cultivation and government. The latter was written by female authors, advocating women's education and proper conduct in the domestic sphere. As the title suggested, the *Analects for Women* aspires to be like the *Analects* in its impact. Most readers are familiar with the *Analects* but not with the *Analects for Women*. A brief introduction is in order.

The *Analects for Women* (*Nü Lunyu* 《女論語》) was composed by two Song sisters, Song Ruoxin 宋若莘 (?-820 CE) and Song Ruozhao 宋若昭 (?-825 CE), during the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE). Both

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sisters were women officials (*nü guan* 女官) in the imperial court. Historically, the Tang dynasty is both after the Han dynasty and before the Song dynasty. Philosophically, the *Analects for Women* therefore inherited the Han Confucianism's stricter codification of women's conduct and anticipated Song Neo-Confucianism's further reinforcement of gender distinctions. Aiming at educating non-elite women rather than aristocrats, the work was intentionally written in plain, idiomatic four-word verses. It occupied an important place in women's learning and its popularity surpassed many other women authored texts, in part due to its readability.

Juxtaposing these two texts, geared toward two different gender groups, creates a balanced platform for us to reflect on the problematic of gendered virtues. Furthermore, to focus the discussion, in what follows I will examine some Confucian virtues that have been criticized as "burdened virtues" by some feminists, for example chastity, filial care, and obedience, by contrasting and comparing relevant passages from both texts. I will draw some preliminary conclusions regarding which aspects of these virtues are indeed oppressive and should be discarded, and in what ways these virtues may still retain their merits as genuine virtues for both sexes, though in need of an update in the contemporary context. Let's now first turn to chastity.

4.1 Chastity (*Zhen* 貞)

As I have noted elsewhere, the virtue of chastity was not a gendered virtue in early Confucian classics but was radicalized in later times (Pang-White 2022b). The Chinese word *zhen* 貞, often translated as "chastity" in English, was derived from the pictogram 鼎 (*ding*, a ritual vessel) and originally meant "being correct and firm."

4.1.1 Chastity in Early Confucian Texts

This vocabulary, applicable to both men and women, first appeared in the *Classic of Changes* (*Yijing*《易經》), one of the oldest Chinese classics dated back to the Western Zhou Period (1046–771 BCE) that is still widely studied today. The *Yijing*, initially a text for divination, gradually transformed into a text of cosmology and moral cultivation, echoing the Chinese ideal of "*tianren heyi* 天人合一 (harmonization of heaven and human as one)." The basis of the *Yijing* are the *yin-yang* concepts. *Yin* (symbolized by a broken line - -) and *yang* (symbolized by a solid line –), derived from observing the movement of the sun, are thinking paradigms that explain change. *Yang* refers to the sunny side of the hill and *yin* refers to the shady side of the hill. As the sun moves, the location of the sunny side, and the shady side, of the hill also alters. Thus, *yin* and *yang* "are relative and fluid, not fixed essences [. . .] They are at once opposite and complementary, mutually overcoming and generative" (Pang-White 2022b: 60-1).[5] *Yin* and *yang* represent different forces or conditions and can co-exist in the same object, phenomenon, or person in various combinations and modes in complex temporal-spatial matrices. Stacking the *yin* or *yang* lines in various combinations of six lines generates the sixty-four hexagrams (e.g., ䷀, ䷁) that serve as basic interlocking patterns in understanding the working of the world.

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A cursory survey of the *Yijing* shows that *zhen* 貞 (being correct/firm/chaste) occurred one-hundred and eleven times in the main text of the *Yijing*;[6] only in five of these occurrences do they offer gender-specific advice to women (Pang-White 2022b: 51, 60).[7] This suggests that chastity was not intended to be a gender specific notion in the *Yijing*. The two opening hexagrams, traditionally regarded as the most important two of the sixty-four hexagrams, indicate just as much. The first hexagram *Qian* 乾 ䷀, representing heaven and the paradigmatic *yang* force, elucidates: "*Qian* symbolizes the great origination, limitless, beneficial, and chaste/correct/firm (*zhen* 貞)."

In tandem, the second hexagram *Kun* 坤 ䷁, symbolizing earth and the paradigmatic *yin* force, resonates: "*Kun* represents the great origination, limitless, beneficial, and chaste/correct/firm (*zhen* 貞) like a female horse. A morally exemplary man (*junzi* 君子) will go forward with a purpose […]. Resting in chastity/correctness/firmness (*zhen*) will bring good fortune."

Zhen (correct, firm, and chaste) is mentioned in both *Qian* and *Kun* hexagrams that represent heaven and earth, *yin* and *yang*. Note especially how the *Kun* hexagram breaks the gender binary in using the metaphor of a female horse to represent a cluster of virtuous qualities (generating, boundless, nurturing, chaste) that a morally exemplary man, a *junzi*, should possess. More hexagrams support my reading that *zhen* is applicable to both sexes and is thus a non-gender specific virtue in the *Yijing*. For example, hexagram #12 *Pi* 否 (blockage) states: "There is blockage in the way of men. It is unfavorable. A morally exemplary man should be correct/firm/chaste." Hexagram #47 *Kùn* 困 (hardship) declares: "Being firm/correct/chaste will bring a great person good luck. They will be free from fault." And hexagram #56 *Lu* 旅 (travel) advises: "When traveling, being correct/firm/chaste will bring good fortune" (Pang-White 2022b: 60).

By contrast, *zhen* only appeared once in the *Analects*. And yet, similar to the *Yijing*'s non-gender specific approach to chastity, Confucius advises in *Analects* 15.37 that "A morally exemplary man (*junzi*) is correct/firm/chaste (*zhen*), but not being faithful without principle (君子貞而不諒)."

4.1.2 Chastity in Biographies of Women *and* Analects for Women

If early Confucian texts treat chastity as moral integrity applicable to all sexes and genders, when and how did it become a "burdened virtue" for women? As I have argued in "Female Chastity in Confucianism: Genealogy and Radicalization," the pivotal point is Liu Xiang's *Biographies of Women* (*Lienüzhuan*《列女傳》), composed around the first century BCE, during the Han dynasty (206 BCE –220 CE). *The Biographies of Women* marks a definitive turning point in how chastity became a predominantly female virtue (Pang-White 2022b: 52). There were complicated historical-political reasons why this happened. For example, during the first century BCE the Han dynasty began to decline. Liu, a Confucian scholar-official, used historical examples of licentious women as warnings of the political corruption of his time and appealed to exemplary women with unwavering chastity as metaphors of loyal ministers to their ruler and country (Pang-White 2018: 5-7). Although the *Analects for Women* was composed several centuries later, the influence of Liu's *Biographies of Women* and Ban Zhao's famed *Lessons for Women* (*Nüjie* 《女誡》) (both composed during the Han dynasty) are clearly

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seen. Each time when female chastity was mentioned, it is recommended as a principal virtue, critical to women's happiness and their family reputation. The authors of the *Analects for Women* used Ban Zhao (45-117 CE) as the spokesperson in the preface and wrote in her voice:

> I, a lowly woman, am the wife of a virtuous man, and a daughter of an eminent family. I am roughly equipped with the four virtues and am well-versed in classics and history **[**…**]** I found that there were commendable ardent women, who illuminated their nine family clans, and admirable females, who were remarkably chaste in three areas. I feared that later generations would not be able to follow in these women's footsteps. Therefore, I wrote this book and entitled it the *Analects* in hope that the readers will respectfully observe it, pass it on to others, and use it to instruct young girls. If they can follow these instructions, they will also become virtuous women and will not let our predecessors alone enjoy splendid reputation through the ages (Pang-White 2018: 79).

Chapter one, "Establishing One's Person," further advises that chastity is foundational in women's moral cultivation:

> Every young woman should first learn how to establish her person. To establish her person, she must cultivate tranquility and chastity. If she is tranquil, her body will be pure. If she is chaste, her person will be honored (Pang-White 2018: 83).

Chapter twelve, "Guarding One's Integrity," argues in tandem:

> Since the ancient times, there were virtuous ardent women who illuminated their nine family clans, as well as admirable chaste females who were remarkable in three areas. Their names were recorded in the books of history and passed down to the present day. Students of later times should learn from them, and it is not difficult to do so. The first is to guard one's integrity. The second is to be serene and chaste [….] The husband and the wife in their first marriage tie their hair in matrimony; the righteous meaning of this relationship is as weighty as a thousand pounds of gold. If the husband unfortunately passes away during the middle of this shared life journey, [….] She should safeguard her will, be firm in her heart, protect the family, manage family property, clean her husband's graveside, and earnestly teach their children. Then, both the living and the dead will be honored. This *Analects* is written to provide norms for the inner quarters [….] If women [….] can follow these guidelines, their womanly virtue will be enlightening and luminous [….] If they can abide by these words, they will enjoy endless happiness (Pang-White 2018: 116-17).

This concluding chapter sums up earlier chapters and reiterates the essential point that to ensure women's good name in history and to honor the ritual meaning of marriage between a husband and a wife, women must safeguard their chastity, in their roles as a daughter, as a young woman, as a wife, as a mother, and as a widow. It lays out the responsibilities a widow has (now the head of the household) in order to keep the household going, including "protect the family, manage family property, clean her husband's graveside, and earnestly teach their children."

As noted earlier, the two Song sisters wrote the *Analects for Women* in plain vernacular Chinese, without citing difficult passages from Confucian classics, intending to make the book more accessible to the common people and to encourage non-elite women, that by cultivating their virtues, they too can

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become exemplary women, honoring their family clan and leaving their good names in history, even without an aristocratic birth. This vision resonates with the treasured Confucian values that "in education, there should be no class distinction" (*Analects* 15:39), "in nature people are alike; it is by practice, they become further apart" (*Analects* 17:2), and the Confucian reconstructed idea of immortality in the so-called "three immortals (*san buxiu* 三不朽)"—"establishing one's virtues, doing impactful works, and passing down inspiring words" are what is meant by being immortal.[8] These values are instrumental in promulgating women's education and elevating women's moral status, equal to that of a *junzi*.

Nonetheless, the emphasis on women's chastity as the ultimate expression of their moral integrity, engulfed in the political symbolism of patriotism, had a negative and long-lasting impact in later generations, especially during the Ming and Qing dynasties and the early Republic. Madame Liu's *Short Records of Models for Women* vividly illustrates this emphasis on women's chastity: "A loyal minister will not serve two nations. An ardent, chaste woman will not marry two husbands. [….] Therefore, to go through hardship but retain her integrity is called being chaste. Generously sacrificing her life for her spouse is called being ardent" (Pang-White 2018: 246). The concept of female chastity was further radicalized with a cultish fervor that had resulted in increasing cases of self-imposed suicide and body mutilation till the early twentieth century (Pang-White 2018: 216; 2023a: 253-59).

4.1.3 Challenges to Female Chastity

He Zhen, an early twentieth-century Chinese feminist, vehemently called out the unjust imposition of chastity on women in her essays, "On the Revenge of Women" and "The Declaration of Women" (He 1907). She argued that permitting men unfettered freedom in visiting brothels and marrying multiple wives or concubines anytime they want to, while demanding unwavering chastity of a woman to her husband, was the most despicable expression of patriarchy in feudal societies bred by Confucianism and the monopolization of wealth by the rich. To rectify this problem, one must overthrow the twin-evils of Confucianism and capitalism (He 1907; Liu, el. 2013; Pang-White 2023a: 219-25). Hu Shih, a philosopher and a leader in China's New Culture Movement, in his essay, "The Problem of Chastity," also gave a scathing criticism of what he called "the superstition in chastity" in China and the world. He argued that the obsession with female chastity directly contradicted the Confucian Golden Rule, and that any law and society that imposes one-sided chastity on women and rewards them for self-harming action was barbaric and inhumane (Hu 1918: 47–57; Pang-White2023a: 253-59).

Confronting these powerful critiques, can a Confucian role ethics save women from this unjust imposition of female chastity? As I have argued in an earlier section, a role ethics is insufficient in overturning an established patriarchy because roles are determined by those who have power, and a role ethics that operates under the existing patriarchal model cannot emancipate women. Granted that context, situation, social role, and relationship must be part of moral consideration, yet over-stressing the situatedness of morality can actually trap women in their roles and social stations. It does not matter how subjectively a woman may feel fulfilled in her specific role (for example, as a chaste widow), disproportional expectations and demands of female chastity would still cause unnecessary suffering.

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There needs to be something that is transcendent and objective enough to rectify role-induced subjective feelings that may be misguided.[9] This takes us to the Confucian virtues of *shu* 恕 (reciprocity), *ren* 仁 (humanness), and *zhongyong* 中庸 (abiding in the center) as well as moral guidelines derived from these virtues. As demonstrated earlier, in early Confucian canon, chastity (*zhen* 貞) in its broad sense means "being correct and firm"—it is neither limited to sexual morality nor applicable merely to women. Only in later cultural practice and narrative did chastity take on its distorted meaning. It is in the narrowed sense that chastity became a "burdened virtue" for women due to the confining roles that the society had assigned them. Luckily, Confucianism has the resources to amend the problem with its unique kind of virtue ethics.

For example, the Confucian virtue of reciprocity (*shu*) advises us: "Do not do unto others what you do not want others to do onto you" (*Analects* 15:24). Thus, one should not impose a one-sided moral burden on women if one does not want to be paid back in one's own coin. Moreover, the method of humanness (*ren*) rests on empathy. "The humane person, wishing oneself to be established, helps others to be established; wishing oneself to be successful, helps others to be successful. To be able to take what is close [to one's heart] as an analogy for others, this may be called the method of humaneness" (*Analects* 6:30). Therefore, a good societal member and government have the social and moral responsibility to help women live a flourishing life and cultivate the kind of virtues that are conducive to this goal. Chastity in the original broad sense promotes this goal, but chastity in the distorted narrow sense does not. Furthermore, "moderation, abiding in the center" is a core Confucian value. Notably, *Analects* 6:29 proclaims: "Abiding in the center as a virtue is the highest virtue of all! (中庸之為德也，其至矣乎！)" In the same vein, the 'Zhongyong' chapter of the *Book of Rites* advises: "When the highest degree of centering and harmonization are achieved, Heaven and Earth will be in their proper positions and all things will be nourished. Morally exemplary persons embody the center and the constant, whereas morally dishonorable persons oppose the center and the constant." The *Yijing* too recommends that in response to the vicissitudes of affairs, the best course of action is to reside in the center: "Act by following the center. There will be no fault (*zhongxing wujiu* 中行无咎)" (Pang-White 2022b: 63).[10] Thus, a Confucian morally exemplary person will abide by the center. One-sided imposition of female chastity is an extreme: it departs from the center and causes undue harm to both women and society. It must be repudiated so as to return chastity to its true meaning as a reciprocal, mutually benefiting, virtue.

4.2 Filiality/Filial Piety (Xiao 孝)

We will now turn to the case of filiality and family care. Contrary to the Hobbesian egoistic self or the liberal individualistic self, the Confucian self is embedded in relations. Of all human relations, the parent-child relation is the most fundamental one from a Confucian perspective for several reasons: (1) the parent-child relation is the first human relation that a person experiences; (2) parental care and love that parents render to their children is selfless and immeasurable (at least in its early stage); (3) the existential, emotional, and moral bond between good parents and good children is other-regarding—it transcends the accustomed demarcation of self and other and lays the foundation for humaneness, the ultimate Confucian social virtue.

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4.2.1 The Relational and Reciprocal Nature of Filiality

In the best scenario, parental care comes first, and filiality follows. Filiality, therefore, is an expression of gratitude, love, reverence, and reciprocity, that children have toward their parents for their selfless care and sacrifice. Filial acts include, for example, refraining from bringing shame or worry to parents, providing them with physical care when they are in need, etc., but most importantly it is to show respect and love in one's demeanor.

Meng Wu Bo asked about filiality. Confucius said: "It is when parents' only worry is about one being sick" (*Analects* 2:6). Ziyou asked about filiality. Confucius said: "Nowadays people think that filiality is to be able to feed one's parents. But even dogs and horses can be fed. Without reverence, where lies the difference?" (*Analects* 2:7) Zixia asked about filiality. Confucius said: "It is the countenance that is difficult. When there are tasks to be done, the young will carry the brunt. When there is wine and food, they are offered to the elderly first. Is this really what filiality is? (*Analects* 2:8)

Filial respect is similarly emphasized in women-authored texts. For example, Empress Renxiaowen (1362-1407 CE) wrote in her *Teaching for the Inner Court*: "Filial piety and respect are the fundamentals in serving one's parents. It is not difficult to provide them with material sustenance; what is difficult is to demonstrate proper respect" (Pang-White 2018: 175).

In Confucian role-based virtue ethics, filiality toward one's parents with accompanying respect, love, and care plays an insurmountable foundational role in one's moral cultivation and the creation of a good society. Thus, the *Analects* remarks, "filiality and fraternal respect are surely the roots of humaneness" (1:2) and the *Classic of Filial Piety* echoes, "filiality is the foundation of all virtues, and all teachings grow out of it" (chapter 1). Filiality is a virtue and moral duty expected of both sexes. While the *Analects*, the *Mengzi*, the *Classic of Filial Piety*, and the *Twenty-Four Paragons of Filial Piety* delineate how a filial son should care for his parents, the *Analects for Women* (and other women-authored didactic texts) details how a filial daughter should care for her parents, and her parents-in-law if married. For example, in chapter 5 (serving one's parents), we read:

> Any young woman who still stays home ought to revere and value her parents. Every morning when she gets up, she should greet them and inquire about their well-being. If they are cold, warm them up with a fire; if they are hot, cool them down with a fan. If they are hungry, bring them food; if they are thirsty, serve them tea. If parents correct or reprimand one, do not become flustered or act in a hurry. Rather, get closer and listen to them. [….] When one's parents get old, day and night one is saddened and worried [by their old age]. [….] If parents become ill, one should not leave their bedside. [….] Parents' labor in caring for one has no limit; their kindness and virtue are unforgettable. [….] Do not learn from those rebellious women who disrespect their parents. When parents utter only one word, these women are already puffed up with anger. They demand dowry from their parents and compete for clothes and accessories. [….] They search and claim their deceased parents' fortune without showing a sign of sorrow for their death. Such women are like dogs, pigs, jackals, and wolves! (Pang-White 2018: 94-5)

Further, chapter 6 advises how a woman should serve her parents-in-law:

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> Parents-in-law are the head of one's husband's family. Since one has married to another household, and is called a new daughter-in-law, one ought to serve and care for the parents-in-law just like one's own parents (Pang-White 2018: 98).

In filiality, there should be no gender distinction in work and labor, for regardless of whether one is born a male or a female, the loving care that parents give in nurturing and educating their children is the same, as Madame Liu (c. 16th century CE) has eloquently articulated in her Short Records of Models for Women, chapter 4 (filial conduct):

> Although there is a distinction between males and females, there is no difference in the amount of labor that parents have taken in raising them. Although there are differences between a son and a daughter-in-law, the way they should care for, and revere, their parents and parents-in-law should be the same. Filialness is the life-spring of all good deeds and it is the head of all womanly virtues (Pang-White 2018: 238).

Empress Renxiaowen (1361-1407 CE) of the Ming dynasty made a similar point: "If someone says, 'This is the sages' way of exhibiting filial piety. It is not suitable for women.' I say: 'This is incorrect. Filial piety and fraternal affection are part of heavenly endowed nature. How can there be a difference here between a man and a woman? In serving one's parents, one ought to follow the supreme models of the sage" (Pang-White 2018: 176).

4.2.2 Challenges to Filiality

The first challenge to filiality is that not all parents are good parents, and some may even be abusive or corrupt. Why should one still act filially toward them? The Confucian theory of "the rectification of names (*zhengming* 正名)" can be helpful here. In *Analects* 13:3, Confucius indicates that the first priority in government is to "rectify names" because "if names are not rectified, then words cannot communicate truthfully. If words cannot communicate truthfully, then affairs are not accomplished." In *Analects* 12:11, using the examples of ruler, minister, father, and son, Confucius remarks: "Let a ruler be a ruler, a minister be a minister, a father be a father, a son be a son." His conversant, Duke Jing of Qi, replied: "Excellent! Indeed, if a ruler does not act like a ruler, a minister not like a minister, a father not like a father, a son not like a son, even if there is grain, how can I enjoy eating it?" Names in this context refer to social roles (e.g., father, mother, son, daughter, teacher, student, etc.) and they are not defined simply in virtue of their semantic, biological, or pragmatic meaning like what one can easily find in a dictionary. Rather, names and their corresponding social roles have moral contents and normative functions. If a person plays a role indicated by a name (e.g., a parent) but does not live up to the moral expectation of that name, the person forsakes the honor and privilege associated with that name. Therefore, if a parent is abusive, negligent, or corrupt, a son or a daughter has the moral latitude in judging how much filiality one should adhere to. This is similar to Mencius's discussion in 1B:8 and 2A:3 on the difference between a true king and a despot and how the treatment of each differs.[11]

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A second challenge to Confucian filiality is its alleged demand of absolute obedience to parents. Understandably, the critics are concerned that such demand undercuts autonomy and independence of the children and the development of their critical thinking ability. Although some Confucian texts may seem to suggest absolute obedience to one's parents, such claims do not withstand scrutiny. Let's consider, for example, *Analects* 2:5. When one reads the first few lines: someone asked Confucius about filial piety, and he replied, "Never disobey (*wu wei* 無違)," it would seem that Confucius endorsed absolute obedience. But this is not the case if one continues with the rest of the passage. It describes how Confucius's student Fan Chi felt puzzled by the reply and asked Confucius what he meant by "never disobey." Confucius clarified: "When parents are alive, serve them according to ritual propriety; when they are dead, bury them according to ritual propriety and offer them sacrifice according to ritual propriety." In other words, "never disobey" means "never disobey ritual propriety" even in filial acts, not in blind obedience. Since ritual propriety is the embodiment of righteousness as mentioned earlier in section 2, if there is a conflict of moral demands, one must weigh relevant factors and decide on the best course of action that is both filial and morally right. *Analects* 4:18 elucidates how this can be done:

> Confucius said: "In serving one's parents, one may remonstrate with them gently. If one sees that they do not wish to follow the advice, one should still be respectful and not disobey [their will and ritual propriety]. Even though it is laborious, one is not resentful."

The *Classic of Filial Piety*, chapter 15, further stresses the importance of remonstration (a similar lesson is also found in the *Classic of Filial Piety for Women*). Confucius was conversing with his student Zengzi, who was known for his filiality. Zengzi asked: "I venture to ask if obedience to a father's orders by a son may be called filial piety." Confucius replied:

> What kind of words are these, what kind of words are these! In ancient times, if a king had seven ministers who would remonstrate with him, although he had not the Way of Dao, he would not lose his kingdom. If a duke or marquis had five such ministers, though he had not the Way of Dao, he would not lose his state. [….] And if a father had a son that would remonstrate with him, he would not sink into unrighteousness. Therefore, when a case of unrighteous conduct is concerned, a son must not keep from remonstrating with his father, nor a minister from remonstrating with his ruler. Hence, since remonstrance is required in the case of unrighteous conduct, how can (simple) obedience to the orders of a father be accounted filial piety? (Legge 1861, with modification)

Moreover, according to some accounts of oral tradition, Zengzi was once scolded by Confucius for his simple obedience to his father's harsh beatings. Confucius explained that when parents are in a rage, blind acceptance of severe physical punishment with no fault of one's own is to entrap parents in unrighteousness (Guo 2003: 101–6). The above evidence suggests that Confucius renounced unreflective filial obedience. Sensible filial obedience requires critical thinking and is harder than absolute obedience. This interpretation of filiality also squares better with what is expected of a moral exemplary person, who "cherishes virtue" and "the rigors of the law" (*Analects* 4:11), "understands righteousness" (*Analects* 4:16), and "is non-partisan" (*Analects* 2:14).

A third challenge to Confucian filiality is especially a feminist concern. While the two previous challenges deal with the role of being a child (male or female), the third challenge bears specifically on women's role. Earlier we discussed that filiality is a virtue and moral duty of both sexes, but in practice

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gender disparity shifts the scale. In a traditional Confucian family structure, the inner-outer distinction has been regarded as the most effective method of the division of labor (that women's proper roles lie in the domestic sphere and men's in the public realm), but it has made women shoulder disproportionately most of the care work than men in providing care for their parents, in-laws, and children. Nonetheless, changing technology, economics, and skill sets needed in the work force should alter our conception of how care work should be distributed. The Confucian inner-outer distinction along the female-male gender line is outdated and must be reimagined (Bockover 2012; Mattice 2016). As one's roles and social context change, so do the material contents of virtues. For instance, shouldn't the invention of infant formula make fathers, who naturally cannot breastfeed, equally competent in caring for the new-born? In a double-income family, shouldn't both partners, men or women, share equitable house chores, rather than women or one specific partner have to do it all: cleaning, cooking, and caring for needy family members such as aging or ill parents and parents-in-laws? Caring relations are a corner stone of Confucian ethics and filiality will always be valued as an essential relational virtue because they enhance intimate personal relationships for a flourishing life. While the expression of filiality evolves as one's role changes (from a young unmarried daughter or son to becoming a wife or a husband, a mother or a father) and available resources fluctuate, the spirit of caring endures. It's not caring or filiality that should be abandoned as a "burdened virtue"; it is gender disparity and imbalance of care-work that should be questioned.

5 Conclusion

In this paper, I have outlined the debate between Confucian role ethics and virtue ethics and defended a non-dichotomous Confucian role-based virtue ethics that incorporate the best features from a Confucian role ethics and a Confucian virtue ethics. I argued that a pure role ethics, whether of Confucian or western origin, is insufficient in defending feminist causes or freeing women from oppression because the framework under which it operates is corrupt. Women can be trapped in their assigned roles within a dominating patriarchal paradigm if there're no objective criteria that transcend their womanly roles for them to defend and negotiate their station, autonomy, and independence. This transcendent aspect of virtues does not have to come from a divine agent or in any way be unsupportive of the relational and this-worldly aspect of Confucian virtues. The objective aspect of Confucian virtues must work in tandem with the features of a flourishing human life that is desirable for all.

I then turned to a consideration of specific Confucian virtues which some feminists refer to as "burdened virtues." They argued that these virtues hinder the development of women's full potential and when women are no longer oppressed, they would not desire to cultivate them. Due to limitations of space, I examined only two Confucian virtues: chastity and filiality. I noted that the crux of the question is whether these virtues in their most basic form (without considering gender) have characteristics that constitute a flourishing life and are therefore part of the ideal kind of person that we aspire to be.

To create a platform that incorporates both men's and women's perspectives, I compared two texts: the *Analects* and the *Analects for Women*. These two texts were geared toward two different gender groups and authored respectively by men and women. During the course of textual analysis, a number

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of other Confucian texts were consulted and discussed. My preliminary conclusion is that these virtues only became "burdened virtues" for women when they were radicalized, partly due to the political symbolism of female chastity (wife's devotion to their husband as an analogy of minister's loyalty to the ruler) and the consignment of women and their roles to the inner domestic sphere. But mounting evidence from various texts of the Confucian canon demonstrates that chastity and filiality are moral duties and virtues expected of everyone. In a Confucian world of relational selves, for any human being to flourish in a fully human way, relational virtues such as chastity and filiality are indispensable. To defend feminist values in a society informed by Confucianism in the contemporary context requires us to reimagine these virtues from a gender-equitable perspective rather than relinquish them, and to replace outdated models of gender roles with new and innovative models that are informed by a person's ability, capability, character, and life plan. A non-dichotomous Confucian role-based virtue ethics is ready to take on this task.

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1 Unless otherwise noted, all English translation of Chinese texts in this paper are mine.

2 See especially *Analects* 1:12, 1:15, 3:8, 8:2, 15:18, 16:13, 20:3.

3 See the *Book of Rites*, the *Liyun* chapter: "禮也者，義之實也。"

4 John Ramsey has differentiated a strong version of Confucian role ethics (CRE) from a moderate version and pointed out the difficulty of CRE (at least the strong version) in resolving the tension of role dilemmas and "explain how and why role ethics does not presuppose moral relativism" (Ramsey 2016: 242). I share some of these concerns.

5 See also Wang (2012); Cheng (2020); Pang-White (2016: 8-9); Pang-White (2018: 8-10).

6 The ten commentaries, called "Ten Wings (*Shiyi* 十翼)," are not included in this count.

7 The five instances are: the second line statement of hexagram #3 *Zhun* 屯 (difficulty), the second line statement of hexagram #20 *Guan* 觀 (observation), the main script of hexagram #31 *Xian* 咸 (resonance), the fifth line statement of hexagram #32 *Heng* 恆 (constancy), and the main script of hexagram #37 *Jiaren* 家人 (managing a household).

8 See《左傳·襄公二十四年》(*Zuo Commentary to the Spring and Autumn Annals*, the 24th year of Duke Xiang)："太上有立德， 其次有立功，其次有立言，雖久不廢，此之謂不朽。"

9 There is textual evidence supporting a more transcendent reading of *tian* 天, *tianming* 天命, and *tiandao* 天道. E.g., *Analects* 2:4, 3:13, 3:24, 5:13, 6:28, 7:23, 9:6, 16:8, etc. Some scholars, e.g., Herbert Fingarette (1972), Anna Sun (2013), etc., have read Confucianism and Confucian rituals in a more religious way. Although I do not find Confucian *tian* in any way resembling an absolute transcendent God in monotheism, I do find some credence in a more transcendent reading of Confucian *tian* and virtues (Pang-White 2006).

10 See hexagram #43 *Guai* 夬 (breaking up), the fifth line statement, and the *Xiang* Commentary.

11 *Mengzi* 5A:1 and 5A:2 discussed the extraordinary case of Sage Shun's filiality despite his parents' abusive behavior and multiple attempts to kill him. As Angle has argued, this is super-human behavior and Confucians do not expect ordinary people to live up to such standard (Angle 2022: 33-4).

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A Path Forward for Feminist Confucianism

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Ann Pang-White is a leader among those exploring a historically grounded, feminist Confucianism; her essay "Feminism, Confucian Role Ethics, and Virtue Ethics" (Pang-White 2023c) further advances this cause both by articulating a relational role-based virtue ethics and through her interrogation of the virtues of charity and filiality. In this essay I will begin with some comments about the field and a summary of key points in Pang-White's essay before turning to three issues that emerge from the essay. First, once we take on board Pang-White's investigation of the historical changes to the virtue of *zhen* 貞 (leaving it untranslated for the moment), where does this leave the idea that chastity is a burdened virtue? Second, I look at some ways in which naturalism can be problematic from a feminist standpoint but suggest that the *Yi Jing* may offer a framework that allows us to avoid an overly stark dichotomy between naturalism and conventionalism. Finally, I conclude with reflections on the strengths, limitations, and the possible future of a Confucian feminist (relational) virtue ethics.

Throughout the twentieth century, Sinophone Confucian theorists had nothing to say about feminism or the status of women according to the tradition, though some critics of Chinese traditions (like Lu Xun) were vocal in their concerns about Confucianism's treatment of women. Anglophone discussion of Confucianism and feminism began to take off in the 1990s with important new work in both history and philosophy arguing for a more nuanced picture of women's lives and Confucian theories about gender. Pang-White has played a significant role in these latter developments, thanks to both her philosophical essays and her translations and interpretations of major works by or about women. Her *The Confucian Four Books for Women* (Pang-White 2018) is a milestone, now complemented by her new *Readings in Chinese Women's Philosophical and Feminist Thought* (Pang-White 2023a). In part because of these splendid resources, Anglophone scholarship on the possibilities (and also problems) that emerge from putting feminism and Confucianism into dialogue continues to develop—as witnessed, for example, in recent issues of this very journal.

It bears noting that the same is not true within Sinophone discussions of Confucianism. To be sure, the long-time Harvard professor (and now Director of Peking University's Institute for Advanced Humanistic Study) Tu Wei-ming discussed the importance of the feminist challenge to Confucianism in both English and Chinese back in the 1990s, but for the most part, Chinese thinkers have been uninterested. Indeed, in a dialogue with me from 2017, the prominent Chinese theorist Ren Jiantao commented as follows:

> In the late 1990s, Tu Wei-ming once wrote a quite long essay to respond to Western gender studies from a Confucian standpoint. Such a response must face a very basic question: are you making a response from a Confucian perspective or are you doing so in order to clarify Confucians' take on gender issues? These two matters should not be confused. If you offer Confucian perspectives, there is actually no need to respond at all because gender is not a problem for Confucianism. If you respond to gender studies in order to clarify Confucians' take on it regardless of whether gender is crucial to the Confucian tradition, this response is also trivial because such an effort has little significance within the Confucian framework. If you take

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> a Western stance and only mobilize Confucian resources to better address your Western concerns, then it is reasonable to make a Confucian response. But this response must strike real Confucians as something alien and strange. This is exactly why for a long period of time Mr. Tu has been an outsider to Chinese culture. He works on not so much the development of Chinese culture as on leveraging Chinese resources to develop Western culture (Angle and Jin forthcoming).

This is all the more striking because Ren is himself quite liberal; in fact, the topic we were discussing was what to make of the idea of "liberal Confucianism." Ren has published widely in moral and political philosophy, discussing Confucianism and liberal democracy most directly in his 2013 book *Polyphonic Confucianism*, and clearly thinks Confucianism can and should change (Ren 2013). In other words, Ren is nothing like the former professor and now private Confucian academy head Jiang Qing, whose notorious essay "Only Confucians Can Make a Place for Modern Women" (Jiang 2019) is well known for its fundamentalism.

Happily, there are at least some signs that the blasé failure to attend to the nexus between Confucianism and gender is ending in China. Fang Xudong's *Confucian and Daoist Thought and Modern Society* (Fang 2022) spends three chapters explicitly on issues related to gender, including one on the topic of *zhen* 贞 that I will reference below. Not only that, but a recent issue of the journal *Contemporary Confucianism* contained three positive commentaries on these chapters of Fang's book, including one, by the feminist philosopher Zhang Rongnan, that very explicitly extends some of Fang's ideas further in the direction of a feminist Confucianism that Pang-White herself might endorse (Zhang 2022). It is worth noting that Fang's book includes a sympathetic reading of some of Simone de Beauvoir's key ideas and that Zhang references recent Anglophone writings on Confucianism and feminism. It is certainly to be hoped that fruitful cross-linguistic conversations on this crucial subject continue to grow.

The way that Pang-White tackles the relationship between feminism and Confucianism in the essay to which I am responding combines both historical clarification and philosophical creativity. After a brief summary of what she takes "feminist concerns" to be, she argues as follows. Especially when we take feminist perspectives into account but also for other reasons, Confucian ethics cannot just be a "role ethics," even though roles and relationality are central. Instead, she concludes that Confucianism is best understood as advocating a "relational role-based virtue ethics." She then explores how such an ethics can grapple with specific challenges related to the virtues of *zhen* and filiality, concluding that the kind of relational virtue ethics she has sketched does have the resources to answer these challenges while retaining its distinctive Confucian identity. Pang-White concludes that "To defend feminist values in a society informed by Confucianism in the contemporary context requires us to reimagine these virtues from a gender-equitable perspective rather than relinquish them" (Pang-White 2023c).

A key part of Pang-White's argument is to demonstrate through careful reading and textual analysis that an important transformation took place in the meaning of the term *zhen* from pre-Qin times to imperial times; as she puts it, "The Western Han *Biographies of Women* marks a definitive turning point in how chastity became essentially linked to female sexual morality" (Pang-White 2023c). That is, beginning around the Han, *zhen* is increasingly understood as "chastity" and applied to women, whereas numerous earlier texts make clear that it had been understood as something more like "correct and firm" and applied to men and women. I will say more about the significance of this transformation below, but here I want to add that Fang Xudong's discussion of *zhen* nicely complements that of Pang-

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White. As Zhang correctly notes, Fang's goal is not to be an "apologist" for the Confucian tradition but to offer a more accurate, nuanced accounting of what Confucians actually said about *zhen* (Zhang 2022). Thus, Fang unpacks the context around Cheng Yi's statement that for a chaste widow who refuses to remarry, "starving to death is a small thing, while compromising her integrity is a big thing" (Fang 2022). Fang's extended discussion of the textual and social contexts, audience, and reception by later Neo-Confucians is terrific. He shows that both the "integrity (*jie* 节)" used in this passage and *zhen* continued to at least sometimes be applied to men as well as women and that Cheng Yi clearly countenanced widows remarrying when they were in difficult circumstances. His main point is that we should see *zhen* as a virtue to which one should aspire rather than a harsh rule that was imposed on all. He is perhaps a little naïve in some of his suggestions of equivalence between the ways in which *zhen* applied to women and men—for example, Cheng Yi urged elite men not to remarry either, but of course this did not mean that they could not have concubines, more children, and so on—but on the whole we get at least some glimpses of what *zhen* as a "relational virtue" might look like.

I am fascinated by the complex and shifting meanings of *zhen* that Pang-White and Fang uncover in part because of the questions it raises for my claim that the "burdened virtue" of "chastity" is one illustration of the oppression of women countenanced by traditional Confucianism. Pang-White well explains the idea: burdened virtues are considered to be virtues—i.e., traits that an excellent, flourishing individual possesses—only because conditions of oppression "limit women's potential; [these traits] are undesirable as virtues when the conditions of oppression are no longer present. In other words, they are not virtues that the oppressed would have cultivated if they were not oppressed" (Pang-White 2023c). To be considered a good, virtuous woman, one had to be chaste, but if one had a broader range of social options, chastity would not be valued in the same way. Pang-White accepts this idea but qualifies the way that it applies to Confucianism:

> in early Confucian canon, chastity (zhen 貞) in its broad sense means "being correct and firm"—it is neither limited to sexual morality nor applicable merely to women. Only in later cultural practice and narrative did chastity take on its distorted meaning. It is in the narrowed sense that chastity became a "burdened virtue" for women due to the confining roles that the society had assigned them (Pang-White 2023c).

To see why it is important that Pang-White phrases things precisely as she does here, consider two possibilities: (1) *zhen* always and everywhere means "correct and firm," and at least in some contexts, people widely believe that for women in particular, the way to be correct and firm is to be chaste; or (2) *zhen* initially has the broad meaning of "correct and firm," but at least in some contexts, this is later "distorted" and "narrowed" to mean only "chaste," at least when applied to women.

The latter interpretation fits more easily with the idea that there are distinctive burdened virtues: there are some virtues (perhaps the ones identified explicitly by many pre-modern writers as "women's virtues") that are only considered to be virtues at all because of the conditions of oppression. This interpretation also explains why some writers (such as Empress Renxiaowen who wrote *Inner Training*, one of the texts Pang-White has translated) insisted that the virtues applicable to women were the same as those applicable to men: humaneness, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and so on (Pang-White 2018). The empress claimed that women could be sages, just like men, by developing the same traits as men. Her horizon of possibility was still limited by her times, though; she envisioned a virtuous woman as an "inner helpmate" of her husband. But the virtues being cultivated and demonstrated by such a woman were meant to be the same as men's, just applied to a different sphere. It is of course

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perfectly fine for virtues to manifest differently in different spheres. A humane teacher lives out their humaneness differently than a humane political leader: among other things, the former probably focuses more on individuals while the latter must think about broad systems. Similarly, it is different to be a courageous firefighter than a courageous author. But we can also envision forms of courage that we no longer endorse, such as a brave slave-catcher. What is at stake for us here is whether lauding a *zhen* widow who refuses to remarry is like the so-called brave slave-catcher: a misapplication of a general virtue term to a social category that we now reject. Or had the very meaning of *zhen* shifted? Like Pang-White, I am tempted by the answer that the meaning of *zhen* in these contexts has "narrowed" and been "distorted" such that translating it as "chaste"—and classifying it as a burdened virtue—is correct. The categories used to assess women's character and to envision their possibilities were themselves problematic. Unless we see this, we cannot recognize the true importance of Empress Renxiaowen's breakthrough, even if the empress, too, was limited in a different way.

Another issue that Pang-White's essay raises but does not thoroughly explore is whether we should think about gender differences entirely as matters of "nature." At one point, she writes that "In the Confucian worldview, the gender identity of a woman begins at birth when she is born a female. This natural identity of female sex ties her to the social roles that she is expected to perform and the corresponding responsibilities and virtues" (Pang-White 2023c). In context, she is primarily talking about traditional Confucianism, but it is never clear that she thinks that contemporary Confucians should have a different view. Still, when discussing the foundational concepts of *yin* and *yang*, she states (correctly, in my view) that *yin* and *yang* "are relative and fluid, not fixed essences. They are at once opposite and complementary, mutually overcoming and generative" (Pang-White 2023c). Insofar as the ideas of *yin* and *yang* can be used to understand gender, it is important to keep in mind that the hexagrams of the *Yi Jing* are composed of sixty-four combinations of six *yin* or *yang* lines, and that the hexagrams themselves are not stable but continually in the process of transforming from one to another. In short, while there is little exploration of this (that I know of) in traditional China, the linking of *yin* and *yang* with gender opens up many possibilities for thinking about gender beyond a simple, "natural" binary.

To see why this matters, note that many conservative Confucian thinkers today explicitly rely on the "naturalness" of a gender binary in order to justify continued patriarchal norms. I explore and critique different versions of this position elsewhere (Angle 2018: 22-4), but suffice to say that both simplistic versions and even more sophisticated versions (like the late Zhang Xianglong's reliance on evolutionary biology) are seriously problematic. Fang Xudong appears to have also noticed this problem, although he is quite subtle in his own critique. Fang makes clear that traditional Confucian discussions of the idea that "men and women are distinct from one another 男女有别" is naturalist and essentialist (i.e., not taking advantage of the *Yi Jing*), and then contrasts this with Simone de Beauvoir's idea of "constructed gender 作女性." (Parenthetically, this is the only instance I know of in which a Chinese Confucian scholar writing in Chinese marks a distinction between sex and gender.) Fang's treatment of de Beauvoir is fairly brief but quite sympathetic. He then ends the chapter by noting that Jiang Qing's views clearly rely on a kind of essentialism that de Beauvoir rejects (Fang 2022). He does not draw his own conclusion, but commentator Zhang Rongnan makes explicit what she believes is going on: this is Fang implicitly criticizing Jiang Qing and suggesting that a more constructivist, equitable understanding of "constructed genders" is indeed possible (Zhang 2022: 247). Whether or not Fang would endorse this reading, I certainly agree with Zhang. Gender is more complicated than any simple binary. I would add that feminist Confucians should be delving into resources like the *Yi Jing* to contribute to more healthy contemporary self-understandings.

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In one way, Zhang and perhaps Pang-White may push back against my suggestion that we can fruitfully invoke the *Yi Jing* to help us understand gender. Zhang says that with modernity has come a disembedding of individuals from social groups as well as a secularization and disconnection from traditional cosmologies. For Confucianism to be able to work with feminism, therefore, she argues that Confucians must recognize and accept these deep social and ontological changes (Zhang 2022: 245). Is it quixotic of me to talk of the *Yi Jing* in such a post-metaphysical era? There are two different lines of response available, both of which seem to me to be quite fruitful. One option is to resist the idea that metaphysics is dead and look to ways in which at least some aspects of traditional views resonate with creative, contemporary thinking about self-organizing, complex, holistic systems (e.g., Kalton 1998). The other option is to think of *yin* and *yang* as metaphors that are still able to inspire us to recognize the diverse, ever-changing, and interacting patterns of biological reality and human convention that shape our experiences of gender. At the very least, in this latter vein we should be able to see that *yin* and *yang* were never properly understood as blunt instruments describing two discrete ways to be.

To sum up so far, I began by situating Pang-White's work with respect to both Anglophone and Sinophone scholarship on Confucianism and feminism: her historically rooted efforts to further build on the possibilities already seen in the tradition connect up with recent work in both languages. I explored these connections as they relate to *zhen*, while agreeing with Pang-White that we can read *zhen* quite differently in different contexts. Sometimes it is a general trait of being "correct and firm." (More work is needed to unpack the precise significance of this type of *zhen*: is it closer to spontaneous "sincerity" (*cheng* 诚) and wholeheartedness, on the one hand, or to a more forced conscientiousness (Angle 2013), on the other?) Sometimes *zhen* is the narrower trait of chastity, which Pang-White and I agree is a burdened virtue. Finally, I have suggested that with the help of the *Yi Jing*'s complicated picture of the interactions among *yin* and *yang*, we can arrive at a nuanced and fluid picture of gender that encompasses both biology and convention.

All of this is meant to be supportive of Pang-White's core idea of a Confucian relational, role-based, virtue ethics. There is of course plenty more that needs to be said about how virtues beyond *zhen* may need to be updated, though I agree with Pang-White that this project seems promising. The question I would like to end with is: is a modernized, relational, role-based virtue ethics really sufficient to respond to feminist concerns? Subin Lee's outstanding recent PhD dissertation makes the case for a negative answer. Lee's "Bracketing Women's Human Rights: A Feminist Critique of Contemporary Confucian Theories" argues as follows:

> I assess the viability of "Modern Advocates of Confucian Ethics" (hereafter MACE)'s Confucian-inspired proposals for the modern world from a feminist perspective by considering their practical implications for women in South Korea, an alleged Confucian society. Examining South Korea's laws, policies, and practice concerning "women's issues," family violence, abortion, and women's poverty, which bear great resemblance to MACE schemes, reveals a substantial perfectionist vision of a family-state in which women should be subject to patriarchal authorities for the so-called "common good." I illustrate how such an ideal shared by the South Korean government and MACE leads to disregard of women's human rights and deflection of political attention away from [them], rendering women vulnerable to all forms of oppression. Based on these observations, I argue that MACE's Confucian projects would likely fall short of their ideal of human flourishing and hardly forge an alliance with feminists. I urge MACE to

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> realize the epistemic effects of social location and rethink their perfectionist conceptions of humanity and society (Lee 2021: i).

Lee's strategy, in other words, is to show that on quite charitable reconstructions of "MACE" arguments, it is plausible to say that current South Korean policies related to family violence and other issues resemble the policies that MACE would want, and yet the actual results of these policies are deeply problematic. This leads Lee to strong negative conclusions about the prospects for modern Confucian perfectionism.

This is not the place for me to try to develop a thorough response to Lee's critique, but I do believe that a normative theory resting solely on virtue ethics (relational or otherwise)—or even on the twin pillars of virtue ethics and social ritual (i.e., Confucian *li* 礼)—will have difficulty in answering Lee. Instead, we need to do more than update our understandings of virtues and rituals. Following the lead of Mou Zongsan, I have elsewhere argued that Confucians must recognize law as a distinct form of authority, one that in most circumstances trumps both virtue and ritual when they conflict (Angle 2012). Among other things, this entails the periodic "self-restriction" of our virtuous motivations in order to leave space for others to operate under the law. In the present context, this opens up the possibility for systems of laws, rights, and (when necessary) litigation to more firmly protect women's rights. For this to be a coherent Confucian answer to Lee, we would need to be able to show how a balance of ritual, law, and virtue can remain distinctively Confucian, Confucius's well-known opposition to litigation notwithstanding. Further thoughts along these lines, though, will have to wait for another day. For now, let me close by applauding Pang-White's combination of broad vision and detailed argument which together takes us further down the path to a genuinely feminist Confucianism.

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Feminist Confucian Ethics: From Equality to Intersectionality: A Response to Ann Pang-White's "Feminism, Confucian Role Ethics, and Virtue Ethics"

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The topic of this symposium is the question: How would feminist concerns fare in the debate between Confucian Role Ethics and (Confucian) Virtue Ethics? Ann Pang-White, one of the central figures in contemporary discourses on Confucianism and feminism, argues in her lead essay, "Feminism, Confucian Role Ethics, and Virtue Ethics: Some Thoughts on the Problematic of Chastity and Filiality," that a reimagined "non-dichotomous Confucian role-based virtue ethics" is fully compatible with feminist concerns centered around equality between the sexes/genders (Pang-White 2023c). In this response essay, I first consider Pang-White's argument, and then raise a series of questions for her, concluding with a consideration of the effect of shifting the starting point from feminist concerns with equality to feminist concerns with intersectionality.

Pang-White begins her essay by noting that "the most fundamental feminist value is equality between the sexes and genders" (Pang-White 2023c). Her discussion of equality as the defining feminist concern leads her to attempt to synthesize two somewhat disparate theoretical approaches to Ruist/Confucian [1] ethics—virtue ethics and role ethics—into what she describes as a non-dichotomous "relational role-based virtue ethics" (Pang-White 2023c). This approach is a contemporary, creative amalgamation of insights from, as I see it, four perspectives: Confucian Role Ethics, as articulated by Roger T. Ames; Confucian Virtue Ethics, as articulated by figures such as David Wong, Stephen Angle, and May Sim, among others; certain historical Confucian texts; and broad-based contemporary western feminist commitments to ideals such as gender equality and justice. She brings insights from these perspectives together to try and consider whether or not the traditional Confucian virtues of chastity and filiality, understood in contemporary feminist terms as "burdened" virtues, could be re-imagined.

Articulating Confucian ethics from a virtue-perspective has been popular for more than two decades, leading this to become the dominant paradigm in the field—what David Wong has called "an obvious, uncontroversial truth," for many scholars (Wong 2022). Neo-Confucian scholar Justin Tiwald argues that there are at least two ways in which Virtue Ethics as a frame for Confucian Ethics is philosophically valuable: "as a theoretical rival to consequentialism and rule-deontology," where as a species of virtue ethics, Confucian Virtue Ethics can make significant contributions to contemporary (largely western) philosophizing; and as a way of doing ethics that prioritizes character over principles of right action or various goods/ends, especially in relation to the ways that Confucians see ethical inquiry as dependent on ethical practice (Tiwald 2010: 56, 60-1).

Pang-White considers the common term *de* 德 as somewhat equivalent to a broad sense of "virtue" and suggests that many key Confucian texts are "full of descriptions of the ideal type of person, who lives a worthwhile life, with admirable and desirable character traits that inspire others to emulate them. Confucianism seeks to generate such virtuous individuals and citizens with reliable excellence of character and conduct so as to create and sustain a flourishing and caring society and government"

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(Pang-White 2023c). These parallels with traditionally western virtue ethics, she argues, makes it a useful base from which to build her account.

From the perspective of Confucian Role Ethics, as articulated by Roger T. Ames, Pang-White highlights relationship as the core of Confucian conceptions of personhood and ethical concern, noting that from this perspective, morality is "person- and site-specific and […] at the bottom defined by one's relations to relevant others and one's roles in society at specific times and places" (Pang-White 2023c). Because this account takes context and particularities seriously, Pang-White notes that who we are "emerges through an evolving configuration of […] roles that are fundamentally tied to the interwoven relations" in our given lives and situations (Pang-White 2023c). As such, a role perspective on Confucian ethics prioritizes particular relationships, or relatedness—often understood as constitutive—and looks to our experiences of family as the root of ethical development.

I.M. Sullivan, in their work bringing together queer theory and Confucian philosophy, argues that a role perspective is particularly valuable for contemporary theorizing, as it "takes seriously the power familial relations have in shaping a person [and] the conception of correlative constitution at work in classical Confucian philosophy, especially the role ethical interpretation, offers something not readily apparent" in other contemporary philosophizing (Sullivan 2021: 270). Sullivan argues that in making sense of "Confucian Role Ethics,"

> 'ethics' refers to meaningful existence rather than particular actions or outcomes in isolation, as much of modern ethical theory holds. [Role] ethics is about the quality of our ongoing conduct in everyday life. What provides positive quality to this conduct is that it is rooted generally in a love of others; it comes from a disposition to care. This disposition to care for and love others is only possible when one is cared for and loved oneself, thus familial nurturance is paramount […]. The Confucian lesson, then, is that within the family one comes to understand the value of loving others and of cultivating mutual support for each other (Rosemont and Ames 2016; 51-2). Living a meaningful life is irreducibly intersubjective (Sullivan 2021: 270).

For thinkers who adopt a role perspective on Confucian ethics, it is often precisely the ways in which this articulates a vision of living well with others that is distinct from common western ethical theories that enhance its value in contemporary discourses. In other words, role perspectives on Confucian ethics, unlike virtue perspectives, do tend to focus on the tradition "on its own terms" over potential shared philosophical ground with western ideas.

Furthermore, Ames is explicit in his construction of Confucian Role Ethics that he is articulating an ideal theoretical perspective; Ames and co-author Henry Rosemont state clearly that they "have no truck with authoritarianism in any of its ideological disguises—sexist, patriarchal, racist, homophobic, or otherwise" (Rosemont and Ames 2009: xiii). In terms of resonance with feminist concerns, then, one reason to think that a role perspective may be particularly valuable is that it contains an explicit commitment against sexism, patriarchy, and various forms of oppression.

In sum, a virtue-perspective articulates Confucian ethics in ways that are meaningful in engaging from the inside with major contemporary western ethical theories, while a role-perspective purposely joins the conversation as a distinct or different player. Both perspectives are interested in similar texts and practices, and both are interested in understanding and applying key Confucian ethical vocabulary like *ren* 仁, *li* 禮, *yi* 義, *zhi* 知/智, and *xiao* 孝, but the sites of interventions are different. What this suggests

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is that there is a deep, rich, and multivocal tradition that is philosophically underdetermined and thus available to be understood and applied in our contemporary context in different ways. In building her hybrid perspective on Confucian ethics that draws from both virtue and role ethics, Pang-White begins with the general similarities with virtue perspectives—a focus on ideal persons, character traits, moral modeling, and flourishing lives—and then adds on insights from role perspectives—that ideal Confucian character traits or virtues are fundamentally relational and can only be cultivated in social contexts; that a Confucian flourishing life is intrinsically tied to a flourishing society/community/world; and that ethical living is artful: "the good and the beautiful must converge. This is the transformative function of ritual and its chiseling effect" (Pang-White 2023c). It is my hope that we might hear more about how Pang-White understands the role of ritual in a feminist Confucian ethic in the future, as this is a powerful and undertheorized area of scholarship.

Given that much of the theoretical work that she does in the larger part of the essay seems to be a re-thinking of the way that Confucian concepts might function in a more "feminist friendly" manner, somewhat akin to equality, I am not convinced that the hybrid theoretical perspective, while interesting in its own right, is the best framework for developing a Confucian feminist ethics. In this framing, we are asked to consider which of these two theoretical perspectives on a third tradition (Confucianism) might make it more amenable to a fourth tradition (feminism), hence keeping the focus on which theoretical model (role or virtue) will emerge victorious. How might we instead prioritize a more direct conversation between Confucianism and feminism? In addition, the feminist tradition may not be as neat as Pang-White articulates it, considering the historical, geographical, and contemporary distinctions that lead us to speak about feminisms, plural. This framing makes it challenging to ask the reciprocal question about how Confucian ethics contributes to contemporary feminist projects. As I see it, Pang-White largely sidesteps the thornier philosophical questions raised by Role Ethics, Virtue Ethics, and feminist accounts of equality, and instead dives right into key historical sources to build her account of how chastity and filiality might be understood as non-burdened virtues. This work with primary sources, including sources written by women and sources that range across the whole of Chinese philosophical history, is a valuable contribution to the field.

Concerning chastity, Pang-White notes that until Liu Xiang's *Biographies of Women* (Lienüzhuan《列女傳》), the virtue that is later understood as "chastity"—*zhen* (貞 was understood in its early usage as "being correct and firm," a kind of "moral integrity applicable to all" (Pang-White 2023c). Pang-White gives a convincing reading of the Yijing to suggest that the term was not originally applied exclusively to women. However, after the *Biographies of Women*, and other texts like it from the Han Dynasty forward, *zhen* (chastity) became understood as "the ultimate expression of [women's] moral integrity, engulfed in political symbolism of patriotism" (Pang-White 2023c). Chastity has since been connected with numerous materially harmful practices, including body mutilation and suicide.

Pang-White asks us to return to the roots of the term to re-imagine chastity as applicable across sexes/genders. She does this by drawing on a constellation of Confucian ethical vocabulary, including *shu* 恕 (reciprocity), *ren* 仁 (humanness), and *zhongyong* 中庸 (abiding in the center). From *shu*, she draws out a sense of reciprocity, from *ren*, empathy, and from *zhongyong*, a sense of moderation. She argues that this implies "a good societal member has the social and moral responsibility to help women live a flourishing life […]. Chastity in the original broad sense promotes this goal, but chastity in the distorted narrow sense does not" (Pang-White 2023c). To support this, she cites a variety of sources suggesting that *zhongyong* is a, or perhaps the, core Confucian ethical virtue, thus implying that anything

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not in balance or moderation—such as chastity that applies exclusively to women—is not really Confucian. *Zhongyong* is often taken to imply a kind of middle way, a balancing point between going too far and not far enough, or the activity of being precisely on point, hitting the mark, so to speak. But the sense of sameness or leveling out that we might see in the concept of "equality" is not obviously contained in *zhongyong*, and so Pang-White's reading of *zhongyong* as functioning so much like equality may invite further investigation.

Pang-White's remedy for the burdened virtue of filiality draws in similar terms on the power of a shift toward gender neutrality. She argues that "In filiality, there should be no gender distinction in work and labor, for regardless of whether one is born a male or a female, the loving care that parents give in nurturing and educating their children is the same" (Pang-White 2023c). She is careful to note that while historically (and in contemporary times), the care labor of filiality has been deeply asymmetrical, changes in society can bring about changes in virtues (Pang-White 2023c). Although Pang-White uses the language of virtues here, I would suggest that we can just as easily imagine making the same point about the nature of roles—over time, with changes in societies, the ways that our roles and relationships are understood, lived, and performed change as well.

Pang-White is careful again to bring in a full constellation of Confucian concepts to her discussion of *xiao*, including in this case *zhengming* (正名 rectification of names) and *jian* （諫 remonstrance), giving detailed textual reference for why we ought not read filiality as equivalent to obedience, nor as necessarily oppressive or asymmetrically sexist. Instead, as she concludes, "It's not caring or filiality that should be abandoned as a 'burdened virtue,' rather it is gender disparity and imbalance of care-work that should be questioned" (Pang-White 2023c). Pang-White's re-reading of filiality is thoughtful and carefully tied to a variety of philosophical sources, and given the importance of family in any Confucian project, let alone a feminist project, this is a necessary re-articulation of *xiao* that is well in line with both virtue and role perspectives on filiality.

While I certainly agree that feminist engagements with Confucian ethics must question both gender disparities and imbalanced labor practices, I wonder about the value of chastity, even as a reimagined virtue applicable to all sexes/genders. Absent historical continuity, what other reasons might Confucian feminists have for wanting to retain chastity? Given the very real harms that have been historically justified with reference to chastity, I think there is more work to be done to appreciate it as a desirable forward-looking virtue. Perhaps some of the critical issues raised by figures like He Yin Zhen, whose critique Pang-White discusses briefly, or other feminist discourses on chastity, might be relevant for this task.

Pang-White provides a compelling re-reading of *zhen* and *xiao* as legitimately gender-neutral virtues, distinctive to a Confucian ethical perspective. On her view, Confucian ethics, understood on a thin virtue-role hybrid perspective, is fully compatible with feminist concerns about equality, and the push toward gender neutrality as an or the best expression of feminist equality has a long history and is a valuable perspective. However, we might also ask after what happened to the emphasis on particulars, to the site-specific moral reasoning that is such a key focus of a role-perspective; with so much discussion of gender-neutrality as a resolution, what is lost without a gender-specific perspective? This leads me to be curious about a different starting point for feminist theorizing—intersectionality. If we take intersectionality as a guiding feminist concept, rather than equality, does that help us see anything different or valuable about Confucian ethical thinking? Or about role- or virtue-perspectives on

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Confucian ethics? Does it provide any insights into what some Ruist traditions might have to offer contemporary feminist discourses?

Intersectionality has been part of feminist discourses in some form for more than thirty years, since it was coined in 1989 by legal theorist and feminist Kimberlé Crenshaw. In general, intersectional theorists suggest that women's lived experiences (especially experiences of oppression) cannot be fully understood or disentangled from many other facets of their identities, including but not limited to sex, gender, race, class, sexual orientation, religion, ability/disability, and so on, and that these overlapping facets of identity often result in complex forms of oppression that are not reducible to one another. On an intersectional view, inequities and vulnerabilities can overlap, build on, merge with, and exacerbate each other in ways that are difficult to separate from a site-specific, concrete situation. While much intersectional feminist theorizing has focused on the experiences of black, African-American, and Indigenous women, the theoretical perspective can be used in other contexts as well.

Centering intersectional perspectives on feminism, in this context, is not about reconciling competing theoretical models but rather about what visions of a constructive Confucian feminist ethics might be meaningful now and useful moving forward. An intersectional approach may invite further discussion about the balance between gender-neutral and gender-specific theorizing in the context of Confucian visions of living well; the nature of institutions and institutional change as crucial for feminist aims; and the social/collaborative nature of cultivation.

Where intersectionality challenges us to attend to the multi-dimensional aspects of our identities and social situatedness, a Confucian Role perspective begins from the idea that our roles and relationships are always already specific. I am not just a daughter to a father, but this daughter to this father, this teacher to that student, and so on. There is a necessary negotiation between the descriptive/prescriptive nature of the role—daughters are/ought to be like x—and the particulars of the relevant situation—how I best "daughter" depends a great deal on me, my father or mother, and our local context.

The constitutive relationality of a role-perspective is not precisely the same as an intersectional approach, but they are complementary to one another. In fact, the Ruist tradition in general can help us articulate intersectionality not only as a descriptive label (of how social identities are constituted) but as an aesthetic ideal to be actively cultivated. Where there is a tendency in some contemporary discourse to take intersectional identities in large sociological swaths, Confucian perspectives tend toward smaller, intimate particulars, as these are lived in real time. One thing Confucian thinking brings to an intersectional approach is a deep awareness that change is a fundamental feature of the cosmos as it unfolds, which all human communities and persons must navigate. We grow, change, shift, and develop in manifold ways, and a Confucian sensitivity to change, especially in roles and relationships constituted via aesthetically oriented rituals and practices, might be a useful layer to add to intersectional thinking.

When we think about key Confucian ethical concerns, an intersectional approach provides a way to think about virtues and roles as identity-specific, not merely as gender neutral. The various features of my identity may be important to how I cultivate myself, how I demonstrate that cultivation, and the means and situations for expressing that cultivation. If I am a unique nexus of roles/relationships/virtues, then it stands to reason that it is at least worth thinking about how my gender expression might be important to living a flourishing life as me, in my particular family,

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community, and world(s). Another way to express this might be a question about ideals—are Confucian ideals like the junzi (君子) either male (noble man) or gender neutral (exemplary person)? Is there room—philosophically—for cis-women, trans persons, gender non-binary folks, and others to carve out a space that is both exemplary and particular? I think the answer to this is yes, and that Confucian ethics has a great deal to offer this discourse, especially in terms of site-specific moral reasoning—but that will require a complex negotiation with the benefits that come from a gender-neutral approach.

Intersectional feminism is often concerned with change not only at the level of the individual, but especially at the level of institutions. From a role-perspective, what does change in institutions look like and require? Certainly, it requires change in individuals, but more fundamentally change in the way institutions work, which requires changes in how roles are understood. For example, a sexist organization needs not only anti-sexist people (e.g., virtuous people), but anti-sexist people in positions of power (e.g. roles/relationships), who make changes to roles and policies definitive of institutional roles that ensure structural attention to inequity and vulnerability. This is another space where key Confucian ethical vocabulary like *zhengming*, appropriate naming, offers insight. Change for the better requires virtuous people and good models, but it also requires re-defining and re-evaluating the way that roles function, in part so as to insulate institutions from the vagaries of vicious people.

Shifting to a virtue-perspective, what do constitutively relational virtues look like and mean in a Confucian (intersectional) feminist context? It means that the cultivation of virtue(s) is necessarily a community affair. There is not only a role dimension of analysis, but also an ontology of social groups that needs to emerge with a Confucian feminist perspective. What this community consists in and how it functions to support self/community virtue development requires us to think about not only family contexts, but also contexts of chosen kin (Sullivan 2021: 285-86). A Confucian lens on self-cultivation in the context of contemporary queer kin groups, for instance, has policy implications for the removal of funding from LGBTQ+ Centers. For example, if cultivating virtues requires a supportive kin community, and that community is not family-based, then the conditions for flourishing virtuous queer persons require community support for forming kin groups, e.g. (at minimum) funding LGBTQ+ centers and spaces. While a lens on equality might suggest that women flourish under the same conditions as men, or that queer persons can flourish under the same conditions as non-queer persons, a lens on intersectionality—taking women's and queer lives in their specificity as part and parcel of feminist Confucian theorizing may open up new avenues for both Confucian and feminist thinking and advocacy.

If we re-read *zhen* and *xiao* as key Confucian virtues, not burdened by asymmetrical sexist expectations, one question that might emerge is why we ought to keep these virtues at all. A gender-neutral reading might appear to suggest that we could simply apply the more general virtues/values of moderation, empathy, reciprocity, remonstrance, and appropriate naming across all contexts, family and sexual situations included. But a site-specific reading helps us to communicate that there is something about the context of the family and our intimate relations that is special, different, or distinct from other contexts in which we might apply more general values/virtues. Articulating the need for special sensitivity in these contexts, given their power for both moral development and significant harm, is a hallmark feature of Confucian theorizing and a meaningful contribution to contemporary discourses.

The task for the question of this symposium is about the fate of feminist concerns in the debate between Confucian Role Ethics and Virtue Ethics. Ann Pang-White has created a hybrid approach

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that allows us to re-read potentially problematic aspects of Confucian thinking as feminist-friendly, taking equality as the central feminist concern. Whether on that model, or on a model of intersectionality, as I've suggested here, the question as I see it is not so much about the fate of feminist concerns on these theoretical perspectives, but about how the approaches that might emerge from these different constructions can contribute to making the world a better place for us all. It is a sign of a healthy scholarly field when we can envision not only many ways of understanding Confucian ethics, but many feminist Confucian paths.

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[1] Although "Ruist" is the more accurate term for this tradition in English, in order to maintain consistency with the other essays in this issue I will use the term "Confucian".

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Is Confucian Ethics a Role-based Virtue Ethics? A Response to Ann A. Pang-White

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1 Introduction

In her paper, Prof. Pang-White provides three avenues to resolve the problem of how feminist researchers would value the dispute between Confucian role ethics and virtue ethics nowadays. Initially, she gives readers a brief summary of feminism by pointing out its ultimate goal is to "struggle to end sexist oppression" (hooks 1984: 24) and to provide women "a life that is worth living" (Pang-White 2023c). She wants to show that although feminist issues may have different forms across cultures, it is still a topic of relevance and concern to Chinese scholars. She then brings feminist perspectives into the discussions between "role ethics" and "virtue ethics." By citing Roger Ames', Robert Neville's and David Wong's arguments, Pang-White clarifies her own stance on the issue of what Confucian ethics is, namely, Confucian ethics can neither be simply attributed to virtue ethics nor to role ethics, as it is "a relational role-based virtue ethics" (Pang-White 2023c). With this background, Pang-White reexamines two fundamental Confucian virtues to show that some of the Confucian virtues can be interpreted in a new way from the perspective of feminism.

However, what I want to show in the present paper is that the claim of "a relational role-based virtue ethics" may face contradictions within the theory itself. In some special cases, people's roles and relevant virtues may have sharp conflicts even within Confucian canons and annotations. I thus believe that even from the perspective of feminism, it is too quick to say that Confucian ethics is "a relational role-based virtue ethics." This article will proceed in five sections. I will lay out Pang-White's main argument and her demonstration in the first place. I aim to show that it is super intelligent to propose the idea of bridging the gap between role ethics and virtue ethics from a feminist perspective, as none of the single ethical models can capture all the characteristics of Confucian ethics. In the second section, I will raise a question about what I call "Confucian role-based ethical conflicts" that happened between men's virtue of filiality (*xiao* 孝) and their virtue of loyalty (*zhong* 忠), and women's virtue of filiality and their virtue of obedience (*cong* 從) respectively. The third part will discuss the unique role of mothers in Chinese traditional culture (esp. Confucianism). Despite the history of sexism within Confucian traditions, mothers still have authority in family affairs. Some mothers may even have great influence in the public areas. The fourth section will ask whether the virtue of chastity (*zhen* 貞) in the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經) can be considered to be a gender-neutral concept. If so, the reliability of the idea that the virtue of chastity can provide the basis of contemporary Confucian gender studies may have to be questioned. Then, the last part moves to my conclusion that I agree with Pang-White's main argument, namely, Confucian ethics is "a relational role-based virtue ethics." But it needs to address the above issues to be more persuasive.

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2 Confucian Relational Role-based Virtue Ethics

According to Pang-White, there is a dichotomous tendency in the scholarship on the issue of whether Confucian ethics is role ethics or virtue ethics. Those who advocate role ethics insist that there are no abstract persons nor unchanging moral rules in Confucianism. *Relationships*, including but not limited to family and extended social relations, occupy significant positions in a person's fulfilling his or her virtues. Pang-White agrees with their analysis, but she also strengthens the fundamental status of the concept of *de* 德 (virtue) in Confucianism and points out that although *de* differs from "the contemporary concept of virtue or the Aristotelian arête" (Pang-White 2023c), if virtues are defined in the broad sense, Confucian ethics is still a kind of virtue ethics as it also seeks people's desirable goodness and human flourishing.

She thus argues that "it is insufficient to interpret Confucianism as only a role ethics," as virtues "are regarded as character traits that a good and exemplary person embodies" (Pang-White 2023c). This implies that ideal roles in Confucianism are usually related to their virtue traits, and one cannot simply assume that the role itself can possess fixed virtues. In the meanwhile, she also states that Confucian roles and virtues are mutually inclusive, any Confucian exemplary person might own some of the "essential Confucian virtues include *ren* 仁 (humaneness), *yi* 義 (righteousness), *li* 禮 (ritual propriety/respect), *zhi* 智 (wisdom), *shu* 恕 (reciprocity), *xiao* 孝 (filiality), *xin* 信 (trustworthiness)" (Pang-White 2023c). Hence, virtues should not be excluded from Confucian ethics. With this background, she further explores how to renew the Confucian essential virtue pool to satisfy modern feminist criteria. This is because "feminine roles constructed within a patriarchal framework of a Confucian role ethics cannot free women from oppression" (Pang-White 2023c). One should reflect upon the manner in which other gender-neutral virtues, such as ritual propriety and righteousness, etc., play into discussions of how to redefine the relationship between Confucianism and feminism.

So far, I quite agree with Pang-White's arguments. Confucian model roles and virtues have an intimate relationship, for some Confucian exemplary persons can become model figures precisely because they have performed virtuous behaviors and can represent certain virtues. For example, the concept of the sage king (*shengwang* 聖王) has been discussed by most Confucian scholars from the pre-qin era to the present times and has been viewed as the Confucian highest political ideal. As I have argued elsewhere, the sage king is a historical accumulative concept (Zhang 2017). Here, I borrow a historian Gu Jiegang's 顾颉刚 view of ancient history in accumulative way, which means that the connotation of the concept of sage king is constantly enriched in the history. During the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period, this concept is almost unseen in *Analects*; it appears only once in 3B14 of *Mengzi* and does not refer to any specific person. In *Xunzi*, the Four Lords (*sidi* 四帝, namely, Yao 堯, Shun 舜, Yu 禹, Tang 湯) and the Two Kings (*liangwang* 兩王, i.e., the king of Wen 文王 and the king of Wu 武王) have been seen as the prototype of ancient sage kings (cf. Zhang 2017: 58-9). The reason Confucian scholars classify them as sage kings lies in the virtues they displayed during their reign. It also lies in their combination of personal moral cultivation with the governance of the country perfectly.

I now take *Mengzi*'s records of Shun as an example to show how virtues and roles are inseparable in Confucian exemplary models. In *Mengzi* 3A1, "Mencius discoursed to him how the nature of man is

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good, and when speaking, always made laudatory reference to Yao and Shun". This implies that Mencius speaks highly of Shun's human nature, but the next question is how Shun's good human nature manifests itself. According to *Mengzi*'s records, Shun's virtues emerge from his various social and family roles: (1) as the role of king, in *Mengzi* 3A4, 3B9, 3B14, and 4A1, Shun shows virtues of worrying about "all under heaven" (*you tianxia* 憂天下), righteousness, trustworthiness, and humaneness; (2) as the role of son, in *Mengzi* 4A26, 6A6, 6B22, and 6B23, Shun is a very filial son and manifests the virtue of filiality; (3) as the role of brother, in *Mengzi* 5A2, even though his younger brother Xiang 象 wants to murder him, Shun still shows great family affection and love to this brother. If we take a closer look at *Mengzi* 5A1, Shun also manifests virtues of "no resentment" (*buyuan* 不怨) and obedience to his parents. Also, it is not difficult to find the fact that Shun's virtues are always hand in hand with his social and family roles.

Pang-White's attempt of combining virtue ethics and role ethics is super reasonable, intelligent, and insightful. As she has observed, the Confucian tradition has a strong patriarchal character and Confucian culture still has a profound influence on modern Chinese society. Even though the claim that Confucian ethics is "a relational role-based virtue ethics" leaves some room to reconstruct feminine roles and virtues in contemporary Confucian society, the task of how to renew the essential Confucian virtue pool to respond to modern feminist issues still has a long way to go. Pang-White is the pioneer in this field, and her proposal to rebuild Confucian virtues of chastity and filiality is of tremendous value.

She first reexamines the virtue of chastity from the Chunqiu era to the Tang dynasty. In the *Book of Changes*, "*zhen* is applicable to both sexes and is thus a non-gender specific virtue" (Pang-White 2023c). From *Biographies of Women* (*Lienüzhuan* 烈女傳) and *Lessons for Women* (*Nüjie* 女誡) in the Han dynasty to *Analects for Women* (*Nülunyu* 女論語) in the Tang dynasty, the virtue of chastity is a scale for measuring feminine virtues and a criterion for exemplary women. If we put aside the negative effects of the virtue of chastity, it indeed can help women "leave their good names in history" (Pang-White 2023c). In addition, the authors of *The Confucian Four Books for Women* (*Nüsishu* 女四書) and the female characters recorded in their content also leave a strong legacy in history. Hence, Pang-White believes that women's good names, as one of the "three immortals" (*san buxiu* 三不朽), empower women with highly moral status. Although there are some critiques of the feminine virtue of chastity because, from the Song dynasty down to the May Fourth Movement 五四運動, chastity has become a "burdened virtue" that restrains widows' freedom to remarry, Pang-White believes that its original gender-neutral meaning can help women possess the great power to become a Confucian exemplary person.

In another case of the virtue of filiality, Pang-White argues that filiality is the fundamental virtue that provides the "foundation of all virtues" (Pang-White 2023c). T*he Confucian Four Books for Women* also identifies filial acts and emotions as requirements. Filial daughters should value their parents, and take good care of their parents' bodies and emotions. Such requirements are almost the same as those required in the *Analects* for sons. The only difference is that filial daughters should treat their parents and their parents-in-law equally (cf. Pang-White 2018). Many Confucian canons do not specifically stipulate whether men should be filial to their parents-in-law. Pang-White then refutes three challenges, namely, abusive relationships between parents and children, children's absolute obedience, and burdened family affairs for women, to show that filiality is also applicable to females.

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Except for Pang-White, no one has compared the *Analects* and the *Analects for Women* to understand the virtues of chastity and filiality. Modern Confucian female scholars should thank her for clarifying the virtue of chastity. Otherwise, chastity will always be linked by traditional Confucian scholars (like Song Confucians) to oppression of women in Confucianism. Although she has done the above pioneering work, the practice of combining virtue ethics and role ethics in Confucianism still faces the following challenges.

2.1 Challenge: Confucian Role-based Ethical Conflicts

In the previous part, I present Pang-White's main argument that Confucian ethics is "a relational role-based virtue ethics," and show my agreement with it. It is easy to find examples in Confucian classical texts to support this argument; and in most cases, virtues and roles are perfectly matched (just like they are made for each other). However, through the example of Shun in the previous section, we can find that the role of a person is not a single one. Roles and virtues of Confucianism are not always in harmony; there are some conflicts within one person's different roles and relevant ethics. For example, Confucian scholars have heatedly debated about the conflict between the virtue of loyalty and filiality. Their dispute revolves around the following contradictory situations:

(1) In the *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記) 3.65, "people cannot serve as government officials for three years in mourning for their parents." Hence, the three-year mourning (*sannianzhisang* 三年之喪) has great negative influence on official's performance of their normal work and of relevant social responsibilities.

(2) In *Hanshi Waizhuan* (韓詩外傳) vol. 10, a filial son Shen Ming 申鳴 faces a moral dilemma. His father is captured by enemies; it is very difficult to choose to surrender to protect his father or to choose confrontation to defend his country.

(3) In *Sanguo Zhi* (三國志) *weishu* eleven 魏書 11, Cao Pi 曹丕 proposes a question: if one's father and the king of the state are both seriously ill, but this person only has one specific drug in hand, who would the person choose to save?

(4) In the *Analects* 14.18, the duke of Ye 葉公 asks Confucius the definition of being upright (*zhi* 直) and gives an example that a father steals a sheep and his son bears witness to the theft. Confucius disagrees with duke Ye's proposal and assumes a situation that "the father conceals the misconduct of the son, and the son conceals the misconduct of the father." Their debates have an extended issue, i.e., if a person's father or family members commit a crime, it is hard to make a choice between reporting his relatives' behaviors to the official and helping them to hide it.

(5) In the *Book of Rites* 5.29, "if, when the ruler has died, and is now lying in his coffin, the minister be called to the funeral rites for his father or mother, what course will he pursue?" Obviously, balancing the contradictory relationship between the role of minister and son is not an easy task.

All the above examples show the conflicts between the virtue of loyalty to the ruler and the virtue of filiality to the parents. The underlying reason is that one person performs two conflicting roles (i.e., ministers versus sons) in certain circumstances.

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Because a large number of women in Confucian traditional society did not participate in states' affairs, they rarely encountered the moral dilemma of loyalty and filiality that was confronted by men. But this does not mean that their various roles and corresponding virtues did not conflict; on the contrary, some women may have encountered different variant forms of moral dilemmas. A typical moral dillemma in the *Spring and Autumns* (*Chunqiu Zuozhuan* 春秋左傳) has been translated by Paul Goldin as follows,

> Zhai Zhong was monopolizing power. The Marquis of Zheng was concerned about this, and sent [Zhai Zhong's] son-in-law, Yong Jiu, to kill him at a feast to be held for him in the suburbs. Yong Ji knew of it , and addressed her mother, saying: "To Whom is one closer: one's father or one's husband?"
> Her mother said: "Any man could be your husband, but you have just one father. How could you compare the two?"
> Thereupon [Yong Ji] informed Zhai Zhong, saying: "Sir, the Yong household is leaving its own residence in order to hold a feast for you in the suburbs. I am informing you because I am confused about this."
> Zhai Zhong killed Yong Jiu and left his corpse by the Zhou Family Pond. The Lord [of Zheng] carted off [the corpse], and said: " He let his wife in on the plot; his death is only fitting" (Goldin 2016: 25).+

The above historical story shows us the conflict between Yong Ji's roles as a daughter and wife. In the context of Confucian culture, it actually demonstrates the conflict between the virtue of filiality and obedience. There is no golden rule for women to follow in Confucianism; women have no relevant instruction manuals when they encounter conflicts within their own distinct roles. On the contrary, *Xunzi* 13.2 had provided solutions to the dilemma of men's virtues of loyalty and filiality. That is to "follow the *Dao* rather than the lord, follow the virtue of rightness rather than father."

I argue that these moral dilemmas are caused by people's conflicted family and social roles, not by the irreconcilable contradictions between virtues themselves. I call it "Confucian role-based ethical conflicts." Any role-based virtue theory may encounter the issue of role conflicts, but if Pang-White cannot resolve such conflicts, her claim that Confucian ethics is "a relational role-based virtue ethics" may face a theoretical crisis. Besides this challenge, the next section will raise the concept of mothers, aiming to argue that Confucian culture should value mothers and their corresponding virtues.

3 Mothers: Unique Confucian Roles

In the first section, I agree with Pang-White and her statement that a society deeply influenced by Confucianism may be a patriarchal society that cannot truly free women from oppression. However, when a woman 'wears' the role of mother, her inferior situation changes. There are many exemplary mothers in history, and relevant stories have illustrated their goodness, wisdom, and virtues from different perspectives. One well-known example is Mencius' Mother Moved Three Times (*mengmu*

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sanqian 孟母三遷), which mainly manifests Madam Zhang 仉氏 (Mencius' mother) and her wisdom in education. The story is as follows:

> When Mencius was young, his family lived near a cemetery, full exposed to funeral ceremonies. He and his playmates imitated burying and mourning proceedings. Mencius' mother thought the surroundings were not good for his education so she decided to move. They moved to a place near a fair, and Mencius began to learn the ways of business people; barging and haggling. His mother didn't want her son to become a businessman so they moved again. This time they moved into the house near a school, and Mencius began to learn the classics and etiquette along with the students. His mother thought this was the right place for him and decided to stay there for good [*Mencius Selected Sentences* (*Mengzi Zhangju* 孟子章句)].[1]

Obviously, Madam Zhang plays a very important role in the growth of Mencius, as she is very intelligent in realizing the importance of the impact of the environment on children's education. The reason that Mencius has grown to the Confucian second sage (*yasheng* 亞聖) largely lies in his early proper education and relevant experience. Madam Zhang's wisdom of education also has a far-reaching impact on traditional and modern society. Nowadays, the school district room (*xuequfang* 學區房) has become a high-frequency vocabulary in Chinese people's lives, while the third residential place of Mencius may be the prototype of the contemporary school district room. According to Pang-White's idea of "three immortals," Madam Zhang's mother's wisdom should also be a gender-neutral virtue.

The story of Madam Zhang can give us several beneficial insights. First, the Confucian sexist slogan "three obediences" (*sancong* 三從) is not applicable to the above case. This is because Confucian culture requires a widow to follow her son's instructions, instead of being the authority within the family. When a woman plays the role of mother, she often does not possess a disadvantaged domestic position and has a great deal of freedom. Second, we should dig out more virtues that have close relations to the role of mothers. For instance, Yue Fei's 岳飞 mother Madam Yao 姚氏 tattoos on Yue's back with the words "serving the country faithfully" (*jingzhongbaoguo* 精忠报国). Yue genuinely believes his mother's words throughout his life, and becomes a national hero against the enemies. This story tells us that mothers can influence social affairs by educating their children. Such a statement is indeed outdated from today's feminist perspective, but it did also exhibit the characteristics of the "three immortals" of mothers at that time. Third, mothers not only have a dominant position in domestic affairs and participate in social affairs by educating their children well, but may also have their own moral lineage. In the *Book of Changes*, the hexagram Kun 坤 is viewed as the mother (*mu* 母) and represents a creative force in the universe (aka. generative generation *shengsheng* 生生).

In contrast to Pang-White's approach of seeking gender-neutral virtues, I believe that some gendered virtues should also be discovered from a feminist perspective to support her argument that Confucian ethics is "a relational role-based virtue ethics." As the role of mother, no one can deny her virtue of "generative generation" (the metaphor of fertility). This virtue starts from the physiological characteristics and the fertility ability of women. Here, I do not strength the necessarily link between women and childbirth, or any elements of gender discrimination. Rather, I aim to show that, finding gender-neutral virtues is of course especially important, but it would be also good to find universal virtues based on female roles. These female-role-based virtues can enrich Pang-White's Confucian

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"relational role-based virtue ethics". I thus agree with Pang-White that women should eliminate those "burdened virtues" in Confucianism, but at the same time, I also advocate that when updating the Confucian fundamental virtue pool from the feminist perspective, some gendered virtues should be added to it. The next section will discuss the relationships among chastity, hexagram Kun, the virtue of *sheng*, and mothers in the *Book of Changes*.

4 A Hypothesis: Chastity in the Book of Changes is a Gendered Virtue

In the previous section, I have argued that, from the perspective of feminism, mothers' special family and social roles are persuasive evidence to support the idea that Confucian ethics is "a relational role-based virtue ethics." This section will re-explore the virtue of chastity in the *Book of Changes* from a gendered perspective. By citing two fundamental definitions of hexagrams of *Qian* 乾 and *Kun* 坤 as follows:

> *Qian* symbolizes the great origination, limitless, beneficial, and chaste/correct/firm.
> *Kun* represents the great origination, limitless, beneficial, and chaste/correct/firm like a female horse (Pang-White 2023c).

I aim to show that there is a slightly difference between the two hexagrams, i.e., "a female horse" (*pinma* 牝馬). Even though Confucian scholars have had a heated debate about these four words [i.e., origination (*yuan* 元), limitless (*heng* 亨), beneficial (*li* 利), and chaste (*zhen* 貞)], due to the limited space of this article, I will only cite scholars' consensus here. Scholars believe that the initial meaning of *zhen* should be a divine prophecy or a good fortune of divination. This is because, judging from the glyphs of oracle bone inscriptions, the word *zhen*'s shape is like 𠂤. Within the tradition of pictographs in China, 𠂤symbolizes the shape of a caldron, which is divination and sacrificial supplies. Some scholars also have pointed out that, if we take the fortunate meaning of *zhen*, encountering the hexagram Kun in the divination activities indicates the auspiciousness of women only. Soon after, *zhen* took on another meaning (i.e., the virtue of chastity). According to *Words of the Text* (*Wenyan* 文言傳), *zhen* refers to correctness and firmness, and becomes one of the four virtues (namely, origination, limitless, beneficial, and chaste). Pang-White adopts the "four virtues theory" (*sideshuo* 四德說) to explain *zhen* as a virtue of chastity.

Given that *zhen* has different meanings, and even later twists and becomes a gender-biased concept, I would like to return to the *Book of Changes* and redefine its meaning. My attempt is not to overturn Pang-White's explanation of chastity; on the contrary, I aim to provide a Confucian gendered virtue to update the essential Confucian moral pool, and to support her argument that Confucian ethics is "a relational role-based virtue ethics" from the feminist perspective. As I have mentioned earlier, the only difference between explanations of hexagrams Qian and Kun lies in the interpretation of *zhen*. In the annotation of Kun, *zhen* is associated with the female horse (a metaphor for females). We can also find some textural evidence elsewhere in the *Book of Changes*, which support that Kun and *zhen* have some relations with the role of mothers. For instance, in *Explanation of the Trigrams* (*Shuoguazhuan* 說卦傳), Qian equals to heaven and father while Kun refers to earth and mother. Additionally, if we

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take a look at hexagram Jia Ren 家人, which discusses the *zhen* of women, it is not hard to find that *zhen* has a connection with women. The *Commentary to the Images* (*Xiangzhuan* 象傳) states that " for Jia Ren, what is most advantageous is that the wife be firm and correct." This means that "the wife has her correct place in the inner, the man his correct place in the outer. That man and woman occupy their correct places is the great righteousness shown heaven and earth." In other words, *zhen* is also related to the role of married women.

Therefore, I propose a bold hypothesis that the virtue of chastity might be a gendered virtue, and be inextricably linked to the virtues of women. This hypothesis does not conflict with Pang-White's interpretation of *zhen* as a gender-neutral virtue because, as she has demonstrated, the classic part (*Jing* 經) of the *Book of Changes* regards *zhen* as a virtue of correctness and firmness, which is applicable across genders. However, if we take a careful look at the virtue of *zhen* in the hexagram Jiaren, which discusses "the wife be firm and correct," it is not difficult to find that the virtue of *zhen* restricts women's freedom to participate in social and public affairs. Thus, we cannot avoid the characteristics of *zhen* as gendered virtues. In the meanwhile, we can find some gendered virtue (like *zhen*) and transform them into gender-neutral virtues.

Hence, when we update the essential Confucian virtue pool, we can put some gendered virtues in it. For instance, the virtue of generation (*sheng* 生). From the physiological perspective, the large number of women's innate abilities necessarily include giving birth to a baby. Of course, for various reasons, some women may not have this ability; and some may not want to use this ability. If we put these special cases aside and further explore *sheng*'s metaphysical meaning, the virtue of *sheng* represents a force of creativity. In *Appended Statements* (*Xici* 繫辭), generative generation "is what is called (the process of) change." Through this sentence, scholars have interpreted the *Book of Changes* as a virtue of *shengsheng*, which implies that, as a gendered virtue, *sheng* can still become a virtue that dominates the operation and development of the world. I need to add that these ideas are still in their infancy and have not been rigorously demonstrated. The main reason for presenting them here is to direct Pang-White's attention to them. The next part will move to my conclusion.

5 Conclusion

According to Pang-White, her proposal that Confucian ethics is "a relational role-based ethics" has both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, by bringing feminist perspectives into the debate between virtue ethics and role ethics, the essential Confucian virtue pool has been clarified. Virtues that are gender-biased, sexist, and burdened are abandoned in the Contemporary Confucianism. This activity is crucial because it provides a foundation for the discourses between Confucianism and feminism. In previous studies, feminist scholars have criticized Confucianism, but Confucian scholars seldom give any responses. Because no one can deny that there is indeed a large amount of sexist words in Confucianism. Through scholars' efforts, like Pang-White, Robin Wang, Lisa Raphals, Li-Hsiang Lisa Rosenlee, Chenyang Li, Susan Mann, etc., Confucianism and feminism can at least be discussed on an equal footing. Practically, Pang-White corrects the understanding of the virtue of chastity and frees it from the historical "bad names". In daily life and conversations, women will not feel shame to talk about the virtue of chastity, as it no longer refers to virginity. In the

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meanwhile, I believe that contemporary women (esp. widows) will also have freedom of marriage and remarriage.

I thank Pang-White for her contribution to the research area of Confucianism and feminism, and agree with her argument that Confucian ethics is "a relational role-based virtue ethics." Considering the fact that some "role-based ethical conflicts" existed in the Confucian traditions, mothers' unique virtue of *shengsheng*, and *zhen* with gendered virtue orientation, I believe Pang-White needs to resolve the above questions to make her argument more persuasive. I must emphasize again that the IV section is only a preliminary assumption without strong textual evidence, if Pang-White has already dealt with this issue in other papers, I request her to kindly overlook this part. The reason for mentioning the virtue of *sheng* is an attempt to add a feminine virtue to the essential Confucian virtue pool. Even though Pang-White and I take different approaches to support the idea that Confucian ethics is "a relational role-based virtue ethics," we reach the same goal by different means.

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[1] The story of Mencius' Mother Moved Three Times has been recorded in *Mencius Selected Sentences*, which author is Zhao Qi 趙岐, a scholar in the Han dynasty. This translation is from: https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzI0MzgxNzM0Nw==&mid=2247484475&idx=2&sn=40969f938f584fbc29e37d44ab9e5cc5&chksm=e9660ad7de1183c153694d4a06fd62fdaad4df52235a2a4664072a1ccfcd0d6b3c770ed61ba2&scene=27 (last accessed on November 3, 2023).

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Feminism and Confucian Ethics: Reply to Commentators

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I am extremely grateful to Drs. and Professors Stephen Angle, Lili Zhang, and Sarah Mattice for their thoughtful comments on my article and for taking the time out of their busy schedules to do this. In what follows, I will discuss the insights and suggestions provided by these three commentators.

Stephen Angle, the first commentator, is a pioneer and leader of the "Progressive Confucianism" movement. His many books such as *The Chinese Human Rights Reader: Documents and Commentary, 1900-2000* (2001), *Human Rights and Chinese Thought: A Cross-Cultural Inquiry* (2002), and *Contemporary Confucian Political Philosophy: Toward Progressive Confucianism* (2012), have inspired many Sinophone and Anglophone Confucians into dialogue with contemporary concerns and with one another. I am grateful to Angle's generous praise of my scholarship and his sympathetic reading of my arguments. In his commentary on my current essay, he offers two suggestions to further advance a version of feminist Confucianism that will remain distinctively Confucian and at the same powerfully challenge gender stereotyping.

His first suggestion is based on his observation that I raise the issue concerning women's gender identity but did not explore it thoroughly enough regarding "whether we should think about gender differences entirely as matters of 'nature'" and whether "contemporary Confucians should have a different view" (Angle 2023). He notes that I write that *yin* and *yang* "are relative and fluid, not fixed essences," but I should have gone further in connecting the *yin-yang* ideas with gender. He suggests that the *Yijing* and "the linking of *yin* and *yang* with gender [will] open up many possibilities for thinking about gender beyond a simple, 'natural' binary" (Angle 2023). As Angle sees it, this is critically important because many conservative Confucians today still rely on the naturalness of the gender binary (even invoking evolutionary biology, for example, the late Zhang Xianglong) to continue to justify patriarchy. I agree with Angle that the gender binary is deeply problematic. I do reject it and a restrictive essentialist reading of gender for at least two reasons: (1) pre-Qin Confucian and Daoist classic texts on *yin-yang* do not lend support to a strong essentialist interpretation of this binary; (2) empirical evidence and social sciences show us that the gender binary is factually false: not only there are a range of gender identities beyond male and female, but also a person's gender identity can change throughout their lifetime. I did not dive deeper into this issue in my current essay partly because I have discussed these ideas elsewhere in my other writings, where I explain that a correct (not distorted) understanding of *yin* and *yang* can contribute to a much more nuanced and complex conception of gender beyond a traditional binary thinking—that is, gender is a spectrum, not two fixed points of *yin*-female and *yang*-male (Pang-White 2013: 439-40, 447-49, 2016a: 2, 8-9; 2018: 8-13, 32-4). The *yin-yang* paradigm can be a significant contribution that Confucian feminists can make in their dialogue with transnational, cross-cultural, and decolonial feminists. But, as a word of caution, we must be vigilant in not committing the same mistake as Dong Zhongshu (179-104 BCE), the Han Confucian erudite and prime minister, in his co-relative hierarchical *yin-yang* cosmology and the political symbolism in his *Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals* (especially in chapters 43 and 53). Dong not only essentialized *yin* and *yang*, but staunchly advocated revering *yang* (aligned with ruler, father, male, husband, and son) and denigrating *yin* (aligned with minister-subject, mother, female, wife, and daughter) as a law of nature and a mandate of Heaven. Dong's theory had a long-lasting impact on numerous later Confucians in their assumed naturalism of the gender binary and hierarchy (Pang-

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White 2018: 43-4, 50-1, 181, 184, 220-221). *Yin-yang* and the *Yijing* do have great potentials in enriching our conception of gender and in debunking gender stereotype; but in using *yin-yang*, we must be careful not to fall into the traps of essentializing them as female and male essences and the concomitant unjustified gender hierarchy.

Angle's second suggestion has to do with whether a Confucian relational role-based virtue ethics that I have proposed can sufficiently respond to feminist concerns, given that some Confucian societies—for example, South Korea, as reported by Subin Lee in her dissertation—subscribe to "a substantial perfectionist vision of a family-state in which women should be subject to patriarchal authorities for the so-called 'common good.'" Such an ideal, Lee argues, "leads to disregard of women's human rights and deflection of political attention away from [them], rendering women vulnerable to all forms of oppression" (Lee 2021: i). Therefore, Lee contends, a Confucian ethics (even in its best form) "can hardly forge an alliance with feminists" (Lee 2021: i). Angle is correct in asserting that this is an area that modern advocates for Confucian ethics must give thoughtful consideration to and that they "would need to be able to show how a balance of ritual, law, and virtue can remain distinctively Confucian, Confucius's well-known opposition to litigation notwithstanding" (Angle 2023). Law is needed to protect women's rights and, as Angle has argued and I agree, it should be recognized "as a distinct form of authority" from ritual and virtue. My proposal for a relational role-based virtue ethics does not conflict with this injunction—even Confucius, who notoriously disliked litigation, said that a morally exemplary person cherishes the rigor of the law (*Analects* 4:11). But I remain somewhat skeptical about whether law should be "one that in most circumstances trumps both virtue and ritual when they conflict (Angle 2012)." Laws (even the just laws) and policies are mechanical means to achieve desired results, but they can be easily misused or abused by people who lack appropriate virtue. A case at hand is how the U.S. eminent domain law, designed originally with the intention of serving the public good in time of exigent needs, has been abused a number of times by governments and private developers to demolish low-income neighborhoods in the name of "urban renewal" or take lands away from private owners for economic development (to build or expand factories or shopping malls, etc.).[1] A person's character empowered by virtues is critically needed in order to implement laws sensibly and responsibly. It takes, for example, a person of humane and righteous character to weigh relevant factors in order to decide whether to implement (or refrain from implementing) an existing law, to decipher ambiguity in the law, to change unjust laws, and to ensure that policies and their implications are indeed just and not burdensome to those the law intends to serve. Relating it to feminist concerns, an anti-sexual harassment law, for example, cannot give women a just verdict if the enforcers lack moral integrity or courage when facing mounting external pressure or are overly complacent in judgement. Virtues should come first, rules and laws second.

Next, I would like to respond to the second commentator, Lili Zhang of the Chinese Academy of Social Science, a first-rate research institute in Beijing, China. Zhang has published several essays on Confucian philosophy and feminist studies (Zhang 2017, 2021). Using the examples and the concept of sage kings (*shengwang* 聖王), Zhang makes a persuasive argument on how the prototypes of Confucian virtues are enriched accumulatively through many historical time periods and role models. These role models are model figures precisely because they exemplify essential Confucian virtues (Zhang 2017). Thus, she agrees with my argument that Confucian ethics cannot be reduced to a role ethics, and it is best described as a relational role-based virtue ethics. I am thankful for her many generous words about my arguments, my proposal regarding how to reconstruct Confucian virtue and role ethics, and my suggestion that the reconstructed concept of "three immortals" can empower

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women today. She also points out several challenges that my account needs to work out. I will discuss some of them here.

First, Zhang raises the concern of what she calls "Confucian role-based ethical conflicts." Because a person plays many roles at the same time, a number of Confucian texts such as the *Liji* 禮記 (*Book of Rites*) 3.65 and 5.29, *Hanshi Waizhuan* 韓詩外傳, volume 10, *Analects* 13.18, etc., depict conflicting role duties that a male Confucian faces between loyalty (as a governmental official) and filiality (as a son) that cannot be easily reconciled. So too, she adds, women face their own kinds of ethical conflict because their various roles. In the *Zuo Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu Zuozhuan* 春秋左傳), for example, Lady Yong Ji faces the role dilemma, on the one hand, as a wife (to obey and protect her husband), and on the other hand, as a daughter (to be filial and protect her father). I agree with Zhang that these are difficult moral dilemmas. There are many cases in Liu Xiang's *Biographies of Women* 列女傳, in other *Biographies of Women* in later dynasties, in local county records, or in novels and plays, that highlight the moral dilemmas that a woman faces, e.g., whether to sacrifice one's own child in order to save a brother's and sister-in-law's child. There is no perfect outcome in these dilemmas nor does Confucianism offer a manual as to what the right decisions or actions in these cases are. However, I would like to suggest that these difficulties in fact highlight precisely why Confucian ethics is not a rule-based ethics or a pure virtue ethics and why it is a relational role-based virtue ethics. To say that Confucian ethics is a relational role-based virtue ethics does not imply that it can perfectly solve all moral dilemmas; rather, it means that Confucian ethics has a better appreciation of the situatedness and imperfections of morality and the difficulty that comes with it than many other contemporary ethical theories. At times, moral sacrifice will have to be an unfortunate necessity because of our multiple roles in society. For example, one may have to choose filiality over official responsibility by resigning from a government post (even if one is great at public affairs) or vice versa, unless some circumstance occurs that relieves one from the conflict. Here is where wisdom (an essential Confucian virtue) plays a key role in weighing relevant factors, considering ways to resolve the dilemma or to reduce the damage, though imperfectly, and eventually making the best judgment as one can (Pang-White 2009a: 217-19). There is no fixed rule or manual on how this can be done: it will vary each time based on a person's complex matrices of roles and circumstances within the general parameters of virtues.

Second, Zhang suggests that mothers play unique and powerful roles in Confucian societies, and thus motherly virtues such as "generative generation (*sheng sheng* 生生)" in the *Xici* Commentary 繫辭 of the *Yijing* that begins with women's physiology, or motherly wisdom as illustrated by Mencius' mother, should be included in the "Confucian virtue pool" as gendered virtues that empower and elevate women's moral status (Zhang 2023: 5-8). I agree that mothers play a special role in Confucian family and society, many of them play a transformative role in their children's life and at times in public affairs, and maternal virtues are important virtues (Pang-White 2023b), but I also want to caution against the danger of overemphasizing "gendered" motherly virtue, for it can lead to essentializing women's roles as mothers or women's physiology as "living incubators," so to speak (Firestone 1970; Rich 1979; Ferguson 1989). But we know not all women have the privilege, the ability or capability, or the desire to be mothers. In our pursuit of a sensible Confucian feminism, we should respect these different life plans and not make these women feel deficient, inadequate, or inferior in taking a different path of life. Another question worth pondering is: are motherly wisdom and fatherly wisdom fundamentally different in essence? Or are they the same in kind but only different in expression because of their roles? I think the latter fits better for a "relational role-based virtue ethics" that I have

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proposed. Namely, virtue is the foundation and roles are the adjective that modifies virtue so that it is expressed differently based on a person's roles. So, I will take Zhang's suggestion in the direction that under gender-neutral virtues such as wisdom and caring, particularistic virtues such as motherly wisdom or caring would be on the sub-category list. Zhang also mentioned that motherly figures are quite powerful in Confucian society (e.g., Mencius' mother and Yu Fei's mother); they enjoy a great degree of freedom and often break from the traditional demand on women such as the "three obediences." Based on her statements (e.g., "when a woman 'wears' the role of mother, her inferior situation changes"), if I understand her correctly, what she intends to argue is that mothers as women are not oppressed like other women. Although it's true that mothers are powerful figures, I contend that their range of possibilities as women are nonetheless still restricted in a traditional Confucian society. This is not to say that women have absolutely no autonomy in a traditional Chinese society. Rather, what I would like to argue is that even for successful women and mothers, their autonomy is constrained. Even Mencius' mother cites the "three obediences" of women in order to advance her argument regarding what Mencius should do in pursuing his career path, without needing to worry about her old age, because a woman should observe "the way of three followings[/obediences] (*sancong zhi dao* 三從之道). When she is young, she follows her father and mother. When she is married, she follows her husband. When her husband died, she follows her son. This is what ritual propriety requires" (Pang-White: 2023b, 619; see also *Biographies of Women* and *Hanshi Waizhuan*).

Zhang also advanced a *preliminary* hypothesis that "*zhen*" (chaste/correct/firm) originally in the *Yijing* may be a gendered virtue (rather than gender-neutral as I have argued) based on hexagram *Jia Ren* and the philosophy of "*sheng sheng* 生生 (generative generation)," advanced in the *Xici* Commentary on the *Yijing*, Part I, chapter 5 (繫辭上第五章). I thank Zhang for bringing up interesting concepts from the *Yijing* into the current discussion on gendered virtues. Due to space limits, I cannot fully address her hypothesis here. But it seems that she and I use the word "gendered" differently. For Zhang, if a virtue is connected to a specific gender (e.g., daughter) on occasion, then it is a "gendered" virtue, whereas I take "gendered" virtue to denote a virtue that is essentialized and genderized so that it is permanently tied to a particular gender, often in a limiting or oppressive way. Taking "gendered" virtue in the meaning that I have suggested, then "*zhen*" was a gender-neutral virtue in classic Confucian canons, and it only became radicalized as a "gendered" female virtue of chastity after the pre-qin classic period, as I have argued in this essay and in another essay where I give an in-depth analysis of *zhen* and argue that *zhen* in its original broad form is best interpreted as a gender-neutral virtue, even when we take into account a few places in the *Yijing* where *zhen* specifically applies to women, e.g., hexagram #31 *Xian* 咸 (resonance) and hexagram #37 *Jiaren* 家人 (managing a household) (Pang-White 2022b). The phrase "*sheng sheng* 生生 (generative generation or continuous generation)" also requires further examination because the context in which it appears, it seems to me, implies that *yin* and *yang*, *qian* and *kun*, Heaven and Earth, male and female, jointly perform the function of "generative generation," not just female sex and gender (一陰一陽之謂道, … 生生之謂易，成象之謂乾，效法之為坤。).

I will now turn to the third commentary given by Sarah Mattice, an accomplished philosopher in Confucian (or, as she prefers, "Ruist") and East-West cross-cultural philosophy (Mattice 2010, 2014, 2019). I am sympathetic to Mattice's observation that "a more direct conversation between Confucianism and feminism" would be more fruitful, and it is limiting to be "asked to consider which of these two theoretical perspectives on a third tradition (Confucianism) might make it more amenable to a fourth tradition (feminism), hence keeping the focus on which theoretical model (role or virtue) will emerge victorious." As she notes, "this framing," which asks how feminist concerns fare in the

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debate of role ethics and virtue ethics, "makes it challenging to ask the reciprocal question about how Confucian ethics contributes to contemporary feminist projects" (Mattice 2023). This is an excellent observation. However, a direct conversation between Confucianism and feminism is not the topic that the journal and the chief editor asked me to write on. The symposium topic given to me was: "How would feminist concerns fare in the debate between Confucian role ethics and virtue ethics?" I must work within the parameters of the symposium topic. Moreover, despite the limitation that Mattice has noted, in my view there are still some merits in the symposium topic: that is, it is important to engage Confucianism and feminism with the two currently dominant interpretations of Confucian ethics so that we (feminists) can be in the game. The more often a topic on Confucianism and feminism(s) can be published in a major philosophical journal, the merrier. Personally, as a historically and culturally grounded feminist (or womanist), a Confucian/Daoist/Buddhist, and a philosopher, I will write on these sorts of topics when I am invited to do so if I have something new to say and if my schedule allows, just to increase the exposure of the field and to invite more scholars to reflect on this important subject.

Mattice also writes that it seems to her that I believe "the hybrid theoretical perspective [a Confucian relational role-based virtue ethics] […] is the best framework for developing a Confucian feminist ethics" (Mattice 2023). I must say that is *not* my belief. What I try to do in my essay is to demonstrate that within the two dominant competing interpretations of Confucian ethics (role ethics and virtue ethics), a Confucian feminist would suggest a third approach (this hybrid theoretical perspective) as *a* (not "the") meaningful way forward that can address at least some of the feminist concerns. Other models, when properly assessed, can work as well. Mattice's other concern is that today we talk about *feminisms* in a plural sense. In her view, I sidestep the thornier issues in my essay in oversimplifying feminism by focusing only on equality but omitting intersectionality. I must confess that due to the space limits of this lead essay (to not go over 8000-9000 words), I decided to not spend time in discussing various strands of feminism(s) because I want to focus on a *foundational unifying point* of feminism so that I can move on to a more in-depth discussion on Confucian ethics and how it fares with feminist concerns. I made a conscious choice of what to focus on and what not to focus on (my choice is not a perfect one; it may not even be a good one), but it is not my intention to sidestep the diversity of feminism(s) and the thornier issues. In fact, the driving force of my work has always been to *open up* feminist discourse and Confucianism so that *all voices* can be heard and fairly assessed. I have explored in varying degrees liberal, decolonial, post-modern, and transnational feminism, as well as intersectionality of race, gender, culture, and class, and Confucianism's contribution to feminism(s) in a number of my other works (Pang-White 2009a, 2016a, 2016b, 2018, 2020, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2023a, 2023b). I hope this answers Mattice's concern in some modest way and to readers who are interested in learning more about my stance on these issues.

Mattice also suggests that using "intersectionality," a term coined by legal theorist and feminist Kimberlé Crenshaw, as a starting point in the formation of a Confucian feminism will be more conducive than the notion of equality. I do believe that intersectionality is an important dimension to consider within the pursuit of equity and genuine equality. However, equality must be the foundational value. Without the ideal of a basic equality (regardless of a person's gender, sex, sexual orientation, race, class, religion, culture, ability, disability, etc.), what is the use of talking about intersectionality? Related to intersectionality, she further asks "are Confucian ideals like the *junzi* (君子) either male (noble man) or gender neutral (exemplary person)? Is there room—philosophically—for cis-women, trans persons, gender non-binary folks, and others to carve out a space that is both exemplary and particular?" (Mattice 2023). My answer to this question is "Yes!" I typically use "exemplary *person*" to

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translate the Confucian term *junzi* (unless the texts and historical contexts require it to be translated specifically as "exemplary *man*") in order to allow all gender types, including gender non-binary persons, cis-women or men, transgender, etc., to have the possibility of living a fulfilling life and acting as an exemplary role model in their specific network of relations. This is possible by further developing and working with the *yin-yang* concepts as I have explained in my reply to Angle's suggestion. I have done some work in this area and am eager to pursue it further.

Moreover, Mattice indicates that "Intersectional feminism is often concerned with change not only at the level of the individual, but especially at the level of institutions. From a role-perspective, what does change in institutions look like and require?" (Mattice 2023). Undoubtedly, institutional changes are crucial for a gender equitable society. Thus, in several places of my lead essay I explicitly make the argument regarding why a role ethics, by itself, is insufficient to initiate an institutional change or free women from oppression because roles are defined by those who have power and there is nothing to prevent misuse of power in a pure role ethics. This is an especially acute problem in a traditional patriarchal China where the underlying framework to define roles was already corrupted. Mattice proposes that the Confucian notion of rectifying names offers insight that could facilitate institutional change. She writes, "This is another space where key Confucian ethical vocabulary like *zhengming*, appropriate naming, offers insight. Change for the better requires virtuous people and good models, but it also requires re-defining and re-evaluating the way that roles function, […] so as to insulate institutions from the vagaries of vicious people" (Mattice 2023). Nonetheless, even *zhengming* (rectifying names) for the need of "re-defining and re-evaluating the way that roles function, […] so as to insulate institutions from the vagaries of vicious people," I argue, presupposes the concept of virtues. This is precisely the reason why I said a pure role ethics falls short, we need virtues as the basis to correct corruption in roles, and we need virtuous individuals who can play some sort of transcendent roles as reformers to change society. As Mattice has noted in the earlier part of her commentary, I have brought up the notion of *zhengming* in my discussion of filiality to provide a counterweight to the moral corruption of parental figures when it unfortunately so happens. This again speaks to the difficulty of a pure role ethics as a stand-alone theory. At the same time, as I have articulated several times in this essay, virtues cannot exist in abstraction and they must be appropriated according to one's roles, contexts, and circumstances. These are the reasons that I call the model I have suggested "a Confucian model of a relational role-based virtue ethics." It seems to me that once concepts and reasoning behind our deliberations are clarified, Mattice and I are on a similar page regarding how roles and virtues can work in tandem in a feminist reimagining of Confucian ethics.

To conclude, I would like to again express my deepest gratitude to the three outstanding philosophers, who took precious time out of their busy scholarly agendas to read my essay and provide insightful discussion on how feminist concerns would fare in the debate between Confucian role ethics and virtue ethics. There is a lot of further work that needs to be done in constructing a Confucian feminism and a feminist Confucianism. I hope that this symposium will attract more great minds (both Sinophone and Anglophone) to engage with this important emerging field in Confucian studies and Confucianism's contribution to transnational-transcultural feminism.

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1 "History of Eminent Domain and its Abuse," https://ij.org/issues/private-property/eminent-domain/eminent-domain-history/; "Eminent Domain and its Abuse," https://charlestonlaw.libguides.com/c.php?g=1187381. Last accessed August 27, 2023.

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