Chapter 2

Confucianist Thoughts and Women

The nature of philosophy can be said to be both arbitrary and dynamic. On the one hand, it is arbitrary and subjective as all thoughts and ideas can be interpreted from multiple points of view. On the other hand, its dynamic quality can best be envisaged by the constant re-evaluation and re-interpretation of areas already charted and explored by scholars. The result of this intellectual exercise would be a continual re-invention or even the discovery of uncharted ways of thinking within philosophy itself. Thus, philosophy as a dynamic entity is an important factor to consider as one embarks on the study of Confucianism. And as one takes the first step, it is important to keep in mind Tu Wei Ming's view that "...the Confucian tradition is rife with paradoxes. [Confucius] views it more or less as a restless landscape than a static structure" (Confucian World 17). Paradoxes aside, Confucianism is not the stagnant, 'static structure' that induces orthodoxy but a dynamic force that seems to change, adapt and evolve through the movement of history while maintaining its essential patriarchal features. It is thus

this patriarchal aspect that we will be examining; to see how the quintessential principles of Confucius have been transformed and translated, by various masters within the time range of historical China, into social practices and rituals which are identified as Chinese. This is the 'restless landscape' that Tu Weiming refers to.

Confucianism can be defined as a particular system or set of beliefs which originated from Confucius but was subsequently amplified and enlarged upon by followers and critics, having far reaching effects on the foundation as well as formation of Chinese culture and society:

> CONFUCIANISM has been a determining factor in Chinese culture. It laid down the structural principles and supplied the key operational values for the basic Chinese institutions from the family to the state.... The influence of Confucianism permeated every fiber of Chinese society through some two thousand years of steady development, with only partial interruption for brief periods. Traditional society cannot be properly understood without giving due consideration to the Confucian doctrine and the institutionalized attitudes of the Confucianists. (Yang,C.K. 244)

Nevertheless, the important influence of his thoughts cannot be measured without a working knowledge of his main ideas. It would then be the) Analects that we would turn to amongst the numerous books on Confucianism, for it contains

within it the main principles of the master, as collected by his disciples after his death. For Confucius, the main concept which interlocks and acts as a catalyst for the formation of his other ideas is Ren. Perhaps a definition of Ren itself would allow us to reach an understanding of what constitutes the predominant factors contained within the concept. Ren seems to center upon the achievement of the most ideal interpersonal social relationships. It refers to the way in which one should behave towards another. Thus, etymologically, despite the variant meanings which occurred during translation, the meaning of Ren seems to encompass the nuances contained in being humane or to behave humanely. Moreover, Ren is natural and spontaneous, springing from the heart of humanity, as confirmed by Joseph S. Wu in Great Thinkers of The Eastern World who said:

> When Fan Chi (Fan Ch'ih) asked about the meaning of *ren*, Confucius replied, 'Love of man' (XII,22). *Ren*, as love, is by no means the kind of impulsive, instinctive love glorified by the romantics. Nor is it the love of God or God's love for humanity. Nor did Confucius preach love for one's enemies. *Ren* is a strictly natural and humanistic love, based upon spontaneous feelings cultivated through education. Accordingly, *ren* may be defined as the cultivated feeling which marks the distinction between a human being and other forms of biological beings (4).

The above interpretation would mean that Ren lies deep within the human heart

like a hidden spring to be recovered by cultivating qualities or ways which would bring it out. This naturalness of Ren is further confirmed by Professor Liang Souming who has said that:

> *Ren* as intuition is a kind of moral insight that results from an ethical education and a life experience that provides a reliable evaluation of the scene of life. It is not an inborn intuition but one cultivated through the practice of *li*, the attainment of knowledge, and the development of the sense of *yi* (4).

The instinctive as well as unconstrained nature of Ren is again validated by both Ch'u Chai and Winberg Chai who state that "*Jen* is a natural feeling that comes directly and spontaneously from the human heart" (Confucianism 37). Moreover, " [a]s a natural feeling of the human heart, *Jen* is not only attainable but within the grasp of all. *Jen* is within one's heart" (39). It must be noted that Ren is not a selfish characteristic that aims at the fulfillment of the egoistic self. That humane Ren should be fostered not only within the self but also in one's attitude and conduct towards others. Thus:

> In the strict sense of the word, *jen* is the virtue of being faithful to one's self and having a sense of fellow-feeling with one's fellow men.... Confucius' doctrine of *jen*, essentially a man-to-man relationship, is a moral system which is both practical and

practicable (37).

> According to Confucius, to be *jen* – minded is not just to have a due regard for others; instead, to be *jen* – minded should involve a concern for the whole of humanity. A man of *jen* knows his moral responsibility in society and particularly in his relations with others, and also he is conscious of something above human society and relations – a larger reality, the Heaven, from which, for Confucius, man is derived (Confucianism, 4).

Ren as the foremost ideal in Confucianism becomes the ultimate virtue for the individual to strive and work for. Its source lies within man himself but it must be manifested in his relationship with others in a social context. It is with this point in mind that Confucius expanded and deliberated upon the other equally important principle of Li.

Li, as a concept in the Chinese philosophical pantheon, is not new. It is, in fact, a series of correct as well as appropriate religious and sacrificial rituals that grew to encompass the variety of ceremonial behaviour patterns deemed proper for the aristocratic gentleman, the Junzi. It is however important to note that punctilious adherence to such ritualistic behaviour is abhorred by Confucius :

> The Master said: 'When one talks repeatedly of ritual (*Li*), does

> one really only means jades and silk? When one talks repeatedly of music, does one really only means bells and drums?' XVII-9 (The Analects 71).

By using an analogy to objects of beauty and music, the Master has cleverly argued that superficial adherence to Li has no meaning without awareness of the importance of its concept. Li needs to be cultivated in order to bring out Ren within man. This view is validated by both Ch'u Chai and Winberg Chai who said that:

> Thus Confucius upheld the spirit of ancient *li* against the ill-practice of the time, for he believed that the proper observance of *li* was essential to the development of goodness in an individual as well as in a society. *Li* for him was the restraining and refining force, creating the sense of balance and harmony in man (42).

The master himself has said that:

> If one is courteous but does without ritual, then one dissipates one's energies; if one is cautious but does without ritual, then one becomes timid; if one is bold but does without ritual, then one becomes reckless; if one is forthright but does without ritual, then one becomes rude. When gentlemen deal sincerely with kinsfolk,

> then the people are stimulated towards humaneness. When old friends are not neglected, then the people will not behave irresponsibly VIII. 2 (The Analects 28).

Thus, Li becomes in a sense the supreme regulating force of social behaviour or a kind of socio-behavioural methodology. It is a ceremonial yardstick of social behaviour to be followed with extreme circumspection and sincerity in the individual's interactions with others. If followed carefully, then, Ren would and could be achieved. Thus, Ch'u Chai and Winberg Chai have said that:

> the concept of *li* is 'a kind of balance wheel of conduct', guiding a way of life that avoids extremes, and a state of mind in which human reasoning and feeling reach perfect harmony (43).

A critical consideration will allow one to see that the emphasis on Li does show that the individual does not live in isolation. Instead, he is a social creature. In one stroke the importance of Li reveals man as a social being. Joseph S. Wu pointed out that:

> according to the philosophy of Confucius, an individual is not an isolated entity. Instead, an individual exists only in a set of relations with others....It would seem appropriate to say that, for Confucius, in order to be a fully developed individual, one has to

> go through the give-and-take process of socialization. Individualization and socialization are but two aspects of the same process. Therefore, the practice of *li* is the way to the realization of *ren* (5).

Nevertheless, the genius of Confucius lies in the fact that he has taken a set of ancient rituals and turned it into a definitive code of regulative behaviour for man as well as society; setting the important philosophical foundation to the formation of Chinese social structures.

If Li is the criterion for correct social behaviour, Yi would constitute the moral axiom or rather the spiritual sanction behind the practice of Li. Yi means righteousness or doing what would be considered morally right. The concept itself pertains to the fact that the individual should make and act on any socially correct decision made during any appropriate time or situation. Joseph S. Wu supports this view when he defines Yi as:

> *Yi (I)* (righteousness or proper character) is the habitual practice of expressing one's cultivated feeling at the right times and in the right places (5).
>
> Since there is not a single *li* for all relations and occasions, there must be a higher principle governing the adoption of *li*. This higher principle is called *yi*, which has been translated as 'righteousness'

or 'proper character' (5).

It is interesting as well to note that Fung Yu-Lan himself has expressed a similar view when he explains that:

> Righteousness (*yi*) means the 'oughtness' of a situation. It is a categorical imperative. Everyone in society has certain things which he ought to do, and which must be done for their own sake, because they are the morally right things to do. If, however, he does them only because of other non-moral considerations, then even though he does what he ought to do, his action is no longer a righteous one (42).

It would then be clear that for every situation, there is a corresponding socially correct act or decision. Thus, for Confucius, the gentleman or Junzi who has clearly understood the moral undercurrents within Yi is someone who "... '[i]n his attitude to the world... has no antagonisms and no favouritisms. What is right he sides with'" IV.10 (The Analects 14). It is important to note however that the above quotation indicates as well as emphasizes that the individual who has attained Ren should be able to do what is needful correctly in different circumstances. The act must be commensurate with the circumstances. Nevertheless, the superior morality of Yi is definitely highlighted in the sayings of Confucius as he compares Yi with the analogy of profit and gain:

> The Master said: 'Even in the midst of eating coarse rice and drinking water and using a bent arm for a pillow happiness is surely to be found; **riches and honours acquired by unrighteous means are to me like the floating clouds** '(personal emphasis) VII.16 (The Analects 25).

and;

> The Master said: 'The gentleman is familiar with what is right, just as the small man is familiar with profit' IV.16 (14).

A poor and spartan material life that is complete with the moral attainment of doing what is right by Yi and Ren is preferable to a superficial one where material wealth is obtained by "unrighteous means" according to Confucius. Implicitly, any correct action done in this manner will be requited with a correct one and Yi is thus practiced. Hence, for the individual to do or rather to act with profit as the motivational force is not righteous. To do something for the sole purpose of selfishly expecting reciprocation is deemed incorrect behaviour. The 'riches and honours' attained becomes as incandescent and ephemeral as 'passing clouds'. Yi then, as maintained by Joseph S. Wu, is:

> a principle of priority. *Yi* is morally prior to gains or profit. This means that any profit which is incompatible with *yi* has to be given up. In general, *yi* is a regulative principle governing the adoption

of any pattern of behaviour according to one's rationality and sense of values (6).

Ren, Li and Yi form the highest trinity of philosophical ideals within the body of Confucian thought. This trinity provides the core basis for the development of social values and norms for the individual to follow. By following and upholding such values, the hierarchical boundaries of Chinese society are drawn. Thus, if Ren is the ultimate virtue in Confucianism; Li would be the way or rules of behaviour to follow as well as to cultivate in order to achieve Ren while Yi becomes the moral force of awareness to be realized while practicing the social codes of behaviour contained within Li.

Thus far, Confucianism seems to centre its concerns on perfecting a moral as well as ethical system of social behaviour which is hierarchical in nature. Confucius' goal was to achieve the ultimate in social harmony since it would mean the fulfilling attainment of a stable society where peace would reign. This utopian society would be one in which its members would cultivate and adhere to moral codes of behaviour that are orderly and strictly regimented in their practice. These have been wrought and refined from the three basic Confucianistic principles of Ren, Li and Yi into the moral values of Xiao, Di, Zhong and Shu. All four values have to be developed, improved or nurtured within the individual as well as in his relationships with others in society at large. Xiao and Di seem to allude exclusively to relationships within the family. Xiao is the fostered emotions

of filial piety towards one's parents. It points to the importance of being devout and dutiful towards one's parents, while Di pertains to advancement of brotherly or fraternal feelings as well as respect between brothers. Joseph S. Wu defines the two:

> *Xiao (hsiao)* (filial piety) means the cultivated feeling toward one's parents.
> *Di (ti)* (brotherly love or respect) means the cultivated feeling toward one's contemporaries (4).

Just as the family is the essential unit in Chinese society, Xiao and Di would prove to be the core concepts behind the Confucian ideal society of Ren as both Ch'u Chai and Winberg Chai have confirmed that:

> the basis of *jen* is to be found in the virtues of filial piety (*hsiao*) and fraternal love *(ti)*...The concepts of filial piety and fraternal love express the same unselfish human feeling - filial piety signifying a state of spiritual communion in the eternity of time, and fraternal love signifying a state of communion in the infinity of space. Confucius, with his keen sense of practicality, made the virtues of filial piety and fraternal love the cornerstones of the social structure. By extending them in time and in space, and diffusing their influence through all other related virtues, he made

> them both the bond of social solidarity and the connection between succeeding generations. In their broader extension, filial piety and fraternal love become the rational basis for the love due to men. They become jen (36).

Confucius himself, as culled from the The Analects, said that:

> [y]oung men should be filial when at home and respectful to elders when away from home. They should be earnest and trustworthy. Although they should love the multitude far and wide, they should be intimate only with the humane. If they have any energy to spare after so doing, they should use it to study 'culture' I.6 (3).

By juxtaposing Xiao and Di into the realm of infinity, Ch'u Chai together with Winberg Chai emphasize the pervasiveness of both ideas in the spiritual as well as human world. Thus, for Confucius, Xiao and Di should be ideally practiced internally within the family and externally in society.

From Xiao and Di, we now come to the other two values of Zhong and Shu. If the former two bind the individual to the microcosmic structure of familial relationships; the latter two bind the individual to the macrocosmic structure of relationships between individuals within the society at large. Thus, the Confucian society can be seen as a tightly woven tapestry of intricate familial relationships.

By becoming a member of a Confucian family, the individual automatically qualifies as a member of the larger social family. If Xiao calls attention to the cultivated feeling of devout piety to one's parents, Zhong signifies the nurtured as well as centred emotion of loyal oneness to one's superiors, leader, king and country. Ch'u Chai and Winberg Chai define Zhong as:

> *chung* (conscientiousness), being faithful to one's self....The Chinese character for chung is made of two components: 'middle' and 'heart'. With one's heart in the very center, one will be faithful to one's self. And one will do one's best for others (36).

Hence, Zhong is loyalty to one's heart and conscience. Shu, as the parallel to Di signifies the respect and fraternal feelings one has for one's fellow-men. It is simply translated as altruism or as Ch'u Chai and Winberg Chai have said, " ...having proper regard for one's fellow men" (36). Nevertheless, it is important to note that Shu contains within it the accompanying nuances of compassion, empathy or more precisely, a sense of fraternity with others in society at large. Like concentric circles; the Confucian Junzi stands within the inner boundaries of familial relationships; bound by the adherence to Xiao and Di. Radiating outwards to a wider concentric circle are the Junzi's bonds with others in the larger context of relationships within society; bound again by the corresponding adherence to Zhong and Shu. The bonds do not loosen but tighten like an intricate social web seeking to achieve the utopian ideal of a society ruled by Ren.

To enforce the four essential values of Xiao, Di, Zhong and Shu; to ensure he achievement of the moral trinity of Ren, Li and Yi, Confucius developed the principle of Zhengming. It is however important to note that ming in this instance does not refer to the idea of fate. Ming is translated as name or names. Therefore, Zhengming would then refer to the idea of adjustment, to make right or even to correct and to amend name or names. Zhengming requires the individual to behave correctly in accordance to the social status and qualities defined as well as bestowed upon him by a given name or title. Thus, a son has rectified his name if he has fulfilled the duties of being filial and obedient as required of him towards his elders. Nevertheless, such a simplistic interpretation of the tenet of Zhengming cannot reflect its important nuances. To be given or conferred a name is to be given an identity. This identity is definitely unique to the individual, bestowing him a self separate from others in society. It accords the individual a sense of personal power based on the knowledge of who he is and from where he comes. To have no ming or no name, is to be a non-entity, a person of no importance. To be nameless is to have no self and no social identity. For the individual in a Confucianistic society, the identity of the self is closely connected to the hierarchy of relationships in society. Thus, to be entrusted with a name is to be given an individuality that brings with it a status as well as position in society. The person is, therefore, provided the power, authority and limitations inherent in the status or role. To rectify names would be to uphold and fulfill correctly the responsibilities as well as duties of the given status or role, as substantiated and

defined by Fung Yu-lan:

> [i]n other words, every name contains certain implications which constitute the essence of that class of things to which this name applies....Every name in the social relationships implies certain responsibilities and duties, Ruler, minister, father, and son are all the names of such social relationships, and the individuals bearing these names must fulfill their responsibilities and duties accordingly. Such is the implication of Confucius' theory of the rectification of names (41 – 42).

Interestingly, both Ch'u Chai as well as Winberg Chai have also explicitly given Zhengming a very social delineation:

> A name is a title that gives a man his definite status in society and defines his relationships with others. What is more important is that every man in social relationships implies certain responsibilities and duties. To rectify name (*cheng ming*) is to set up an objective standard of status by which one will behave in accordance with what the name of one's position implies (44 – 45).

Thus, when an individual does what is necessary in accordance to his given role, he is reinforcing the moral precept of Yi. And by doing what is right and needed,

he practices Li. Joseph S. Wu also says this when he defines Zhengming:

> ...*zhengming* (*cheng ming*), is literally translated as 'rectification of names'. In its narrow sense, this doctrine is the enforcement of *yi* in the use of *li*....In the broader sense, then, *zhengming* is not only the practice of putting things in order according to their 'names', that is, their true natures, but also the enforcement of rationality in all institutional procedures and individual behaviour of any kind (7).

From the The Analects itself, Confucius' views and ideas about Zhengming are clearly and precisely presented:

> Zilu said: 'If the Lord of Wei were waiting for you to run the government, what would you give priority to?' The Master said: 'What is necessary is to rectify names, is it not?'Zilu said: 'If this were to take place, it would surely be an aberration of yours. Why should they be rectified?' The Master said: 'How uncivilized you are. With regard to what he does not understand the gentleman is surely somewhat reluctant to offer an opinion. If names are not rectified, then words are not appropriate. If words are not appropriate, then deeds are not accomplished. If deeds are not accomplished, then the rites and music do not flourish, then

> punishments do not hit the mark, then the people have nowhere to put hand or foot. So when a gentleman names something, the name can definitely be used in speech; and when he says something, it can definitely be put into practice. In his utterances the gentleman is definitely not casual about anything' XIII.3 (49).

What would seem probable is the fact that by adhering to the principle of Zhengming, a set of social norms is created which regularize and discipline the behaviour of the individual. This is important to create and to achieve a stable and harmonious society:

> Duke Jing of Qi asked Master Kong about government. Master Kong replied: 'Let a ruler be a ruler, a subject a subject, a father a father, and a son a son' XII. 11 (The Analects 46).

An organized and systematized society where the individual is defined by given positions, is thus formed. It is a society which is status and role conscious in nature and one that rests it's existence on the enforcement of moral values through didactic behavioural examples. When a ruler fulfills his duties and responsibilities as a just and ethical ruler, his benevolent influence would reverberate down the social lines and all would behave as their given roles demand them to. A minister would act according to the authority as well as the limitations of his role just as a father would fulfill his responsibilities to guide, to teach and to take care of his

hildren. Society, then, would have peace and would achieve Ren and the ultimate osmic as well as harmonious union with nature.

Thus, Confucius' ideal social world is one that encapsulates and promotes he values of Ren, Li and Yi as the "holy trinity" of moral values. They are the hree utopian ethics to strive for, both individually and socially. Branching downwards like a pyramid are the various principles of Xiao, Di centering on familial relations as well as Zhong and Shu that prescribe ways of conducting relationships with acquaintances and strangers, while the concept of Zhengming forms the foundation or bedrock for the practical application of the above precepts. A Confucianistic society then, is one which is perennial in its preoccupation with perfecting social harmony and balance; creating and molding stability out of the chaos caused by human fallacies. It is also a society that is authoritative and patriarchal, absorbed in refining a whole corp of specific and conceptual standards of behaviour that have been generated to regulate human deportment. The ultimate aspiration is to develop a society ruled by moral precepts and values.

Interestingly, the locus for the attainment of Confucian ethics lies with the individual, and central to the achievement of this goal is the Junzi, the Confucian gentleman. He is the man of Ren, the crucial protagonist and paragon of virtues, who has fostered, trained and refined within himself the unselfish and self-sacrificing attitudes which spring from the moral tenets of Ren, Li, Yi, Xiao, Di,

Zhong, Shu and Zhengming. The inward cultivation of such values however, must be manifested outwardly to others who would learn from the exemplary behaviour of the Junzi. Thus, by educating himself, the Junzi must learn to educate others. As such, according to Wm. Theodore de Bary:

> [t]he following qualities or capacities of the chun-tzu may be summarized as follows:
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> 1. His manifesting of virtue in forms that benefit the people. (*Analects* 15:34, 20:2)
> 2. His ability to command respect because of his own respectful or reverential manner. (6:30)
> 3. His cultivation of riteness - a disciplined observance of social and religious forms that should govern the common life. Respect for rites and respect for the people are all of one piece. (1:9, 12:2, 13:4, 14:44)
> 4. His kindly, generous, and forbearing manner in dealing with the people. (18:2, 11:24)
> 5. His sense of confidence and trust in relations with the people. (12:7, 13:4, 15:25)
> 6. His reasonableness in making demands on the people, according to the seasons and circumstances. (19:10)
> 7. His zeal for learning and readiness to take responsibility for the education of the people. (6:20, 13:4, 13:29)

(Trouble with Confucianism, 20)

Be he a scholar, a minister, a leader or a king; the Junzi according to Wm. Theodore de Bary must:

> attend to those virtues that generate the appropriate response and corresponding virtue in others: reverence and respect (12:5), filial piety, generosity of heart, and liberality of mind (6:40), consideration for others (5: 160), trustworthiness (14:27, 15:18), strength of purpose, courage, determination, and endurance (8:6, 15:2), and in all of these a sense of priority and sequence, especially of the growth process by which certain primary virtues mature into others if properly cultivated (1:2, 19:12) (29).

The junzi, gentleman or the nobleman, becomes the quintessential Confucian hero, a traditionally masculine, high-minded, honourable, just as well as principled example for the ordinary man in society to follow and to try to emulate. For Confucius, man plays an active role in society and should contribute to its well-being:

> Given the traditional functions of the *chun-tzu* as members of the ruling elite, it is not surprising that the Analects from the start reflect their preoccupation with questions of governance,

leadership, and public service (29).

Although, confining and limited, the roles prescribed for man in a Confucianistic society allow him a certain measure of mobility upward through the various rungs of social structure which increases his social authority and power. Despite his subjugation to the domination of age through the concept of filial piety, the Confucian man or junzi would wield power over his dependents. As a leader, both within the community or even in the government, he holds even more benign, fatherly command over a larger number of persons. Within the enclosure of the family, social rites sanction that, as a son, he owes filial duty towards his parents especially towards the authority of his father. Nevertheless, upon the death of his father, he assumes the position and power vacated and his widowed mother would be subject to his will. He wields complete authority over his children especially his daughters. It is interesting to note that prior to the spread of the influence of Confucianism, "China's classical age was militaristic and masculine, characterized among other things by inter-state rivalries which often used women as instruments of alliance or subversion." (Guisso 51). This would indicate that the patriarchal structure of the society was already in place. Nevertheless, what Confucius and the collection of his sayings in the Analects have done then is to reinforce as well as to concretize the roles and values attributed to both men and women. The ideal man, as we know, is the Junzi, the one who follows and practices the moral principles of Confucius. While he endeavours to achieve the ethical principles of Confucius, he manifests and exudes a benign patriarchal

concern for his subordinates. His purpose is to guide and lead the uninitiated to the ways of the Master. It would seem that Confucius sees man as a social creature who is capable of being rational, moderate, virtuous and noble. Despite the fallacies of human nature; man contains within himself the potential to be honourable. This honourable quality can be cultivated through vigorous adherence to the moral precepts of Ren, Yi and Li.

Thus, Confucianism contains a body of knowledge that gives prominence to male or masculine ascendancy and authority. Its ideal social structure requires the purposeful division of roles in keeping with specific functions and values accorded to men and women. Consequently, Confucianism has served as the foundation for the orthodox, patrilineal nature of Chinese society. As a result, it would seem that the philosophy of Confucius has succeeded in fulfilling the main function of philosophy in a patriarchal society delineated by Elizabeth Grosz as defining:

> the 'nature' of human beings, the range and variety of subjects, the capacities and skills attributed to them, and the ideal forms of social organization – which coincide exactly with historical representations of sexual differences (148).

Accordingly, a philosophy which is patriarchal in nature will emphasize the dominance of men while undervaluing women. It seeks to subordinate women

through the operation of what Elizabeth Grosz theoretically outlines as sexism, patriarchy and phallocentricism (149). Sexism in philosophy has two forms. The first, as Elizabeth defines it, "consists in openly derogatory or discriminatory remarks about women and femininity" (151). The second:

> is provided by a vast mass of philosophical material on the topic of women. Few philosophers, it seems, can resist making some remarks about women, their 'natures', functions, social roles, and relations to men...These remarks range from the most hostile diatribes against women's inferiority, weaker moral sense, and intellectual frailties (e.g. Aristotle) to patronizing comments about their charm and their 'unsuitability' for philosophical tasks (e.g. Kant, Rousseau) to apparently even-handed treatment (e.g. J.S. Mill) (150 - 151).

Patriarchy in philosophy, on one hand, elevates the superiority of men. The focus of what Grosz calls " patriarchal investments" in philosophy is:

> not on what philosophers say about women and femininity, but on what they <u>do not</u> (personal emphasis) say, what is unarticulated or left out of philosophical reflection. Rather than being the subjects of negative remarks, women and femininity are ignored, treated

> metaphorically, and severed from their connections to women's lived experienced. (152).

What is more important is the fact that "[p]hilosophy's patriarchal orientations help to reproduce male supremacy" (152). [1]Phallocentricism, on the other hand, shows us how women and femininity are defined as well as evaluated in relation to men and not autonomously. Thus:

> [t]he feminine [is] conceived as nature in relation to man's culture, body as opposed to mind, lack in opposition to presence, irrational and unknowable in relation to reason, is always reduced to position subordinate to and dependent upon the male, positioning the female only in relation to him (152).

Phallocentricism works through what Grosz calls the 'levelling' and 'hierarchization' processes. The former concerns itself with the procedure where "all differences and distinctions between subjects are ignored, or reduced to a common denominator, implicitly defined by masculine interests" (152). The latter

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[1] The meaning of phallocentricism can best be understood by quoting the definitions of the following two terms – "**phallocentric** Centred on the phallus. Phallocentrism denotes a system which privileges the phallus as the symbol and source of power. A patriarchal society is phallocentric. The term has frequently been used in feminist literary criticism (q.v.) – for example, by Julia Kristeva and Helene Cixious – in attempts to dismantle such binary oppositions (q.v.) as male/female, masculine/feminine.
phallogocentric A term invented by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. It is a conflation of *phallocentric* ('phallo-centred') and *logocentric* ('word-centred';epistemologically, 'truth centred').....Applied to, for example, society, it denotes one which controls or attempts to control by means of sexual /social influence and power. Thus, a patriarchal society would be predominantly logocentric as well as phallocentric...." Cuddon,J.A, ed. The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory. London: Penguin Books, 1992.

refers to the process where "...one sex is judged better than its counterpart" (152). The theoretical concepts discussed above will be used as frameworks for the analysis of Confucian classics as well as the Confucian classics for women. Our concern in this chapter then, is to decipher as well as to critically analyze the inherent values and qualities contained within the classical texts that women are exhorted to follow and practice in order to become the ideal Confucian woman in Chinese society. The portrait of the ideal Chinese woman can thus be drawn from the virtues as well as principles essential in these texts.

Thus, the first and most important text to look into is The Analects as it contains within it the primary concepts and ideas of Confucius. Despite the infrequent references to women as a whole, a careful reading reveals two overwhelming ideas about them. The first is descriptive for it describes the nature and influence of women. The second, however, is prescriptive for it constantly refers to the roles of daughter, wife and mother by which women must regulate and reform themselves. In contrast to the dignified and noble mien of the junzi, the nature of woman is capricious, emotional and childlike. Confucius himself stated that:

> Only women and small men seem difficult to look after. If you keep them close, they become insubordinate; but if you keep them at a distance, they become resentful. XVII. 23 (The Analects 73)

Negative in her influence on man, woman proves to be beguiling influence which distracts men from their intellectual pursuits:

> The Master said: 'I have never come across anyone who admires virtue as much as he admires **sexual attraction** (personal emphasis).' VIV.18 (The Analects 33)

> Master Kong said: 'There are three things which the gentleman guards against: in time of youth, when his vital powers have not yet settled down, **he is on his guard in matters of sex** (personal emphasis); when he reaches the prime of life and his vital powers have just attained consistency, he is on his guard in matters of contention; and when he becomes old and his vital powers have declined, he is on his guard in matters of acquisition.'
> XVI.7 (The Analects 67)

Conclusively, women are depicted as being emotionally unstable and sexually tempting to man, who must foster discipline within himself while pursuing virtuous qualities to become a Junzi. Interestingly, the consistent mention of women as mothers, wives and daughters in the text seems to reveal that opportunities for women to divest themselves of their 'negative' nature lie in the strict adherence to the above mentioned roles. However, such prescriptive roles are subjected to the patriarchal regulation of men in their roles as fathers,

husbands and sons. For example, woman, in the exemplary role of the nurturing mother is venerated:

> Zixia said: 'If he appreciates men of quality, if he makes light of sexual attraction, **if in serving his father and mother he is capable of using his strength to the upmost** (personal emphasis)...I would certainly call him learned even if it is said that he has never studied.' I.7 (The Analects 3-4)

> Meng Wu Bo asked about filial piety. The Master said: 'It is when **father's and mother's** (personal emphasis) only worry is about one being ill.' II.6 (The Analects 6)

> The Master said: '**When father and mother are alive** (personal emphasis), one does not travel far; and if one does travel, one must have a fixed destination.' IV.19 (The Analects 15)

Woman can achieve an honoured status when she becomes a mother. Thus, the role of the mother then is equated with nuturing and caring qualities that would be the opposite complement to the authoritative figure of the father. The implication would be that social acceptance can only be achieved by strict adherence to behavioural roles. Interestingly, women in their status as wives are given due respect but only in relation to the authority of their husbands. This is evident in the diminutive title by which a woman calls herself and is referred to, as the wife

of a man, who is a lord:

> The wife of a lord of a state is referred to by the lord as 'the lady'. She refers to herself as 'little child'. The people of the state refer to her as 'the lord's lady', and when they refer to her in communication with other states, they call her 'our lesser lord', and when people of other states refer to her, they also call her 'the lord's lady'. XVI.14 (The Analects 68)

Women as daughters, however, are subordinated totally to the authority of the father. By stating his willingness to link his family with those of Gongye Chang and Nan Rong through the marriages of his daughter and niece, Confucius not only highlighted the importance of judging a Junzi by his inner worth but also the lack of choice for women. There is no way of ascertaining the personal viewpoints of the two women but the silent acquiescence of Confucius' daughter and his niece reveal their submission to the authority of the father:

> The Master said of Gongye Chang that he might be given a wife for, although he had been put in prison, this was not through any crime of his. **He gave him his own daughter in marriage** (personal emphasis). V,1 (The Analects 16)

> The Master said of Nan Rong that if the Way prevailed in a state,

> he would not be discarded; and, if the Way did not prevail in a state, he would avoid punishment and humiliation. **He gave him the daughter of his elder brother in marriage**.(personal emphasis) V.2 (The Analects 16)

One can conclude from The Analects the implication that the inherent nature of woman is weaker than that of men. That in order for her to reform herself, she must be put under the guiding influence of men. Thus, within the social hierarchies, the identity of women is compartmentalized into the prescriptive roles of daughters, wives and mothers.

Our focus turns next to Mencius, who, through his doctrine, which centers on the intrinsic goodness of human nature, has cultivated and advanced the essential ideas of Confucian morality. Considered the second sage after Confucius, Mencius expanded the cultivation of proper behavioural rules as well as the individual's selfless adherence to familial and social duties. This is an important element in the fostering of the basic goodness which lies within man. More importantly, however, is how the values and views attributed to women are re-emphasized. Mencius, despite his scarce references to women in his collected sayings and conversations, has nevertheless furthered the implicit idea that women, on the whole, have weak and egoistic natures bent on fulfilling selfish needs:

Ching Ch'un said, 'Were not Kung-sun Yen and Chang yi great men? As soon as they showed their wrath the feudal lords trembled with fear, and when they were still the Empire was spared the conflagration of war.'

'How can they be thought great men?' said Mencius. 'Have you never studied the rites? When a man comes of age his father gives him advice. When a girl marries, her mother gives her advice, and accompanies her to the door with these cautionary words, "When you go to your new home, you must be respectful and circumspect. Do not disobey your husband." It is the way of a wife or concubine to consider obedience and docility the norm.(personal emphasis)

(Mencius. Trans. D.C.Lau. London: Penguin, 1987. 107; bk. 3 part b ch 2)

Mencius disapproval of Ching Ch'un's admiration of Kung-sun Yen's and Chang Yi's command of respect and fear from the people in general is veiled in his reference to the rituals associated to sons and daughters. He implies that the nature of both is like selfish women who seek glory and power for themselves and do not serve the people whole heartedly. That women are selfish and superficial can be seen when;

Mencius said, 'If the beauty Hsi Shih is covered with filth, then

> people will hold their noses when they pass her. But should an ugly man fast and cleanse himself, he would be fit to offer sacrifices to God.
>
> (Mencius 133; bk.4 part b, ch 25)

Although Mencius strongly supports the meticulous as well as exact adherence to propriety as a prescriptive measure to ensure harmonious social stability, he magnanimously agree that rules can be bent when the situation demands emergency actions:

> Ch'un-yu K'un said, 'Is it prescribed by the rites that, in giving and receiving, man and woman should not touch each other?'
>
> 'It is,' said Mencius.
>
> 'When one's sister-in-law is drowning, does one stretch out a hand to help her?'
>
> **'Not to help a sister-in-law who is drowning is to be a brute. It is prescribed by the rites that, in giving and receiving, man and woman should not touch each other, but in stretching out a helping hand to the drowning sister-in-law one uses one's discretion.'**
>
> (Mencius 124-125; bk.4 part a, ch 17)

Nevertheless, rules of propriety demand that women be subjected to the strict

authoritative guidance of men according to their prescriptive status as daughters, wives or mothers:

> Mencius said, 'If you do not practise the Way yourself, you cannot expect it to be practised even by your own wife and children. If you do not impose work on others in accordance with the Way, you cannot expect obedience even from your own wife and children.'
>
> (Mencius 195-196; bk.7 part b, ch 9)

In other words, women should always cultivate the values of obedience. It is interesting to note that when a man does not cultivate Confucian morality and be a gentleman, he will never be able to command obedience and respect from the women in his household. This is cleverly illustrated by the following didactic anecdote:

> A man from Ch'I lived with his wife and concubine. When the good man went out, he always came back full of food and drink. His wife asked about his companions, and they all turned out to be men of wealth and consequence. His wife said to the concubine, 'When our husbands goes out, he always comes back full of food and drink. When I asked about his companions, they all turned out to be men of wealth and consequence, yet we never have had a

distinguished visitor. I shall find out where he really goes.'

She got up early and followed her husband everywhere he went. Not a single person in the city stopped to talk to him. In the end he went to the outskirts on the east side of the city amongst the graves. He went up to someone who was offering sacrifices to the dead and begged for what was left over. This not being enough, he looked around and went up to another. This was how he had his food and drink.

His wife went home and said to the concubine, 'A husband is someone on whom one's whole future depends, and ours turns out like this.' Together they reviled their husband and wept in the courtyard. The husband, unaware of all this, came swaggering in to show off to his womenfolk.

In the eyes of the gentleman, few of all those who seek wealth and position fail to give their wives and concubines cause to weep with shame.

(Mencius 137; bk 4 part b, ch 33)

It is significant to note that both men and women have opposite yet complementary roles to play according to the rites. Men have to be the model example of Confucian values who lead and guide women. Women are the obedient and docile entities who must follow the guidance of the cultured men.

However, in a most thought provoking way, Xun Zi bluntly and forthrightly announced that "[t]he Nature of man is evil; his goodness is only acquired training" (301). If Xun Zi believes that "...the guidance of the proper conduct (Li) and justice (Yi) is absolutely necessary..." (301) to cultivate the goodness in man; Meng Zi or Mencius believes that complete adherence to such rules will only bring out the inherently good nature in man. Nevertheless, despite their different opinions on the basic nature of man, both sages agree that learning and the practice of the rules of propriety are indispensable to the attainment of a stable and harmonious society. But it is a society which is structured carefully according to the division of roles and responsibilities for men and women. Xun Zi takes a step further and authoritatively states that even the natures of man and woman are obviously different from each other when he condemns effeminate behaviour in man:

> Suppose we consider one of the "clever fellows" of the villages of the present confused age, none of whom fail to be handsome and attractive, and **have unique clothes and womanish ornaments** (personal emphasis), and **who resemble a girl in physical constitution and behaviour** (personal emphasis); no woman would be unwilling to have such a one for her husband; no unmarried girl would be unwilling to have him for her fiancé, to leave her father's house and be glad to elope with him, and stand shoulder to shoulder with him; yet an average prince would err in

> making him an official....Soon he will be bound and taken before the magistrate, slain before a great crowd.
>
> (70-71; bk V)

The statement implies that when men themselves perverse their own basic nature, the end would be disastrous to society as well as to themselves. Order would be overturned as women would be eager to marry such effeminate men. It gives to understand that women would be disobedient and not adhere to their prescribed roles. More importantly, the statement refers implicitly to the weak as well as undisciplined nature of women which is prone to indulgences. Whereas men could follow and cultivate themselves through the rules of Li and Yi to bring out their goodness, women are clearly encouraged to foster such goodness by obeying the regulations of the given roles:

> **When the rules of proper conduct (Li) and justice (Yi) are not cultivated; when the inhabitants of the inner and outer apartments do not keep apart; when men and women are immoral;**(personal emphasis) when parents and children distrust each other; when the ruler and ruled are at cross purposes and separate; when distress from robbers becomes common – these are what I mean by human ominous signs. These ominous signs are born of disorders.
>
> (The Works of Hsun Tze 180-181; bk XVII)

Indeed, Xun Zi seems to be echoing Confucius' idea of keeping women at a wary distance and Mencius' reiteration that a man must discipline himself by practicing the way of Li and Yi in order to achieve respectful obedience from his women when he describes the fall of evil men bent on achieving selfish desires:

> He whom later generations call evil should study their histories. **This is the way of the man who is not able to resist his wife** (personal emphasis). For extremely worthy man protects the whole country – such were Tang and Wu. **An extremely weak man cannot resist his wife...**(personal emphasis)
>
> (The Works of Hsun Tze 192; bk XVIII)

Xun Zi's view of and on women is similar to that of Confucius and Mencius. Women are weak and indulgent in nature. As the feminine opposite to the masculinity of men, they are encouraged to obey and follow the social regulations prescribed by the principles of Li and Yi. Only by keeping closely to the rules will harmony as well as order be achieved in society.

We will now look at the first of the two short but extremely important Confucian essays which reflect the continuity of the essential values of Confucianism. Both The Great Learning (Da Xue) and The Doctrine of the Mean (ZhongYong) concretize the theories of the sages by advocating the

division of society through carefully structured hierarchies pertaining to the duties and responsibilities for men and women. The Great Learning (Da Xue) is attributed to Confucius' pupil, Tseng-tzu. Society is viewed as a subtle social web in which any deliberate action out of the norm would upset its harmonious balance. Thus, every individual must foster and fulfill the duties of his or her roles:

> The ancients who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue throughout the kingdom, first ordered well their states. Wishing to order well their states, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. ("The Great Learning." Trans. James Legge. The Chinese Classics Vol. One. 3rd. ed. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press,1960. 357)

The inter-relatedness of everything is re-emphasized in the commentary:

> What is meant by 'In order rightly to govern the State, it is necessary first to regulate the family,' is this: - It is not possible for one to teach others, while he cannot teach his own family. Therefore, the ruler, without going beyond his family, completes the lessons for the State. There is filial piety:- therewith the sovereign should be served. There is fraternal submission:-

> therewith elders and superiors should be served. There is kindness:- therewith the multitude should be treated.
>
> In the Book of Poetry, it is said, 'That peach tree, so delicate and elegant! How luxuriant is its foliage! This girl is going to her husband's house. She will rightly order her household.' Let the household be rightly ordered, and then the people of the state may be taught. (Legge 1:370,372; chap IX)

Thus, everyone should behave according to his role and status, in what Serinity Young calls "correct relationships between individuals [that] will lead to a peaceful and harmonious country." (An Anthology of Sacred Texts 355). However, it is a structure which "requires women to remain in the private sphere of the family while men cultivate themselves within the family and then move out into the public sphere." (355).

The Doctrine of The Mean however, focuses its attention on living a moral life by employing moderation while practicing the dutiful obligations of the fundamental five relationships of society. What is more important is the obvious view that women can only partake in such a structure as wives and mothers:

> It is said in the Book of Poetry, 'Happy union with wife and children, is like the music of lutes and harps. When there is

concord among brethren, the harmony is delightful and enduring. *Thus* may you regulate your family, and enjoy the pleasure of your wife and children.'

(Legge 1: 396-397; chap XV)

The duties of universal obligation are five, and the virtues wherewith they are practised are three. The duties are those between sovereign and minister, between father and son, between husband and wife, between elder brother and younger, and those belonging to the intercourse of friends. Those five are the duties of universal obligation. Knowledge, magnanimity, and energy, these three, are the virtues universally binding. And the means by which they carry *the duties* into practice is singleness.

(Legge 1: 407; chapXX)

The works of Confucius, Mencius, Xun Zi and the subsequence Confucian essays are important in that they put forth the theoretical foundation for the structure of Chinese society as well as the main ideas and views of women. Arguments focus on man and how he could bring out the potential within himself to become a junzi. Nevertheless, what is noted in the infrequent mention of women whether directly or indirectly merely confirms two important points. The first reveals subtly that women are not the main protagonists in Chinese society. They are often urged to fulfill their supportive roles of daughters, wives and mothers as the

complements to men. This is important for it sanctions the important position of women within the private realm of the family while men dominate the public sphere. The second involves the definition of the nature of women which is described or even attributed as being weak, sensual and capricious, thus, the need for rules and regulations within the boundaries of the five correct relationships. Obedience becomes the important rule by which women must live.

Our analysis now turns to the or Five Classics. Confucius himself is reputed to have either written them or even have had a hand in editing them. The importance of the books cannot be denied as they are considered the repositories of Confucian knowledge and wisdom in Chinese society. As confirmed by Richard Guisso (47), Confucius himself within the Li Chi emphasized the significant value of the texts:

> Confucius said, 'When you enter any state you can know what subjects (its people) have been taught. If they show themselves men who are mild and gentle, sincere and good, they have been taught from the ***Book of Poetry***. If they have a wide comprehension (of things), and know what is remote and old, they have been taught from the ***Book of History***. If they be large-hearted and generous, bland and honest, they have been taught from the ***Book of Music***. If they be pure and still, refined and subtle, they have been taught from the Yi. If they be courteous and

> modest, grave and respectful, they have been taught from the ***Book of Rites and Ceremonies***. If they suitably adapt their language to the things of which they speak, they have been taught from the *Khun Khiu* [Spring and Autumn Annals]'
>
> (Li Chi, trans. James Legge, eds. C.C.Chai and W. Chai. New York: University Books, 1967. 2:254)

The Five Classics do not only function as the sources of Confucian knowledge, they are also important educative texts used by generations of scholars. Guisso reiterates the immense influence of the texts on the "ruling elite of traditional China" (48) when he says:

> [The Five Classics] became canonical when Confucianism became the state doctrine of China in the second century B.C. Henceforth, they came to form the centre of the curriculum at all levels of education as well as the required texts of the examination system used in most dynasties from the Han to the twentieth century to select men for public office (47).

Nevertheless, our purpose here is to consider critically how the Five Classics justify the qualities and functions of the ideal woman which have been delineated and presented in the works of the Confucian masters.

Out of the Five Classics, it is immediately obvious that our attention will turn to the Book of Changes or the Yi Jing. The Book of Changes is significant as it explicitly denotes the superior and inferior positions of both male and female by affirming their polarized bearings in the cosmology of nature or what Guisso calls the "placement of male and female in the cosmic order" (49). Thus, the hexagrams contained within the Book of Changes not only act as man's cosmological guide to influential forces of nature on human life, they also implicitly set forth the inherent characteristics of man and woman as well as assigning them their proper placings in nature and society. The main theme in the Book of Changes is to establish a harmonious balance in human society and in nature. The relation between both is opposite and yet complementary like "the equation of male and female with yang and yin, with heaven and earth, with sun and moon." (49). Therefore, when humans acknowledge and follow the precepts of correct behaviour in accordance to their nature, society as well as nature at large would achieve a harmonized relationship. Thus, it is interesting to note that Guisso has focused his attention on seven hexagrams that are "explicit to male and female" (49) whereas Serinity Young in her anthology has picked the first, second and the thirty seventh hexagrams to illustrate how women are positioned. A careful study of the sixty four hexagrams reveal a subtle yet precise division of the hexagrams. The first, second and twentieth hexagrams seem to be describing the essential natures of man and woman while the twentieth hexagram explains the important values that a woman should have. Ch'ien, the first hexagram is the Creative and contains "...the primal power.." (I-Ching. Trans. Richard Wilhelm.

London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965. Part I:3) . As the primary power it is thus the aggressor and initiator of action and movement. As Wilhelm puts it:

> the hexagram expresses the strong, creative action of the holy man or sage, of the ruler or leader of men, who through his power awakens and develops their higher nature. (3)

The essence of female power however, lies within the Kun or the Receptive hexagram. It is defined as the "dark, yielding, receptive primal power of yin" (10). Wilhelm takes a step further and describes it as:

> the perfect complement of THE CREATIVE – the complement, not the opposite, for the Receptive does not combat the Creative but completes it. It represents nature in contrast to spirit, earth in contrast to heaven, space as against time, the female-maternal as against the male-paternal. However, as applied to human affairs, the principle of this complementary relationship is found not only in the relation between man and woman, but also in that between prince and minister and between father and son.
> (10-11)

Despite its emphatic insistence that the Receptive is not the opposite of the Creative and does not 'combat' it, the nature of the argument seems to point to a

dichomatic difference. The 'female-maternal' is a contrast against the 'male-paternal' as earth is in contrast to heaven. A pattern of hierarchical relationships is established with the strong leading and governing the weak. Thus, woman should follow the leadership of man. It is important to adhere to the defined relationship as any movement away from the norm would create chaos and disable the fine thread of harmony:

> For the Receptive must be activated and led by the Creative; then it is productive of good. Only when it abandons this position and tries to stand as an equal side by side with the Creative, does it become evil. The result then is opposition to and struggle against the Creative, which is productive of evil to both. (11)

While the first two hexagrams detail the fundamental nature of masculinity-femininity or man-woman, the twentieth begins to expound the foremost attributes of woman. If the woman contains within her the essence of Kun, the Receptive, which is to follow, the image of the "betrothed girl who remains true to her lover in face of grave conflicts" (I-Ching 18) is used to indicate how chaste behaviour together with patient endurance are significant values to inculcate:

> The maiden is chaste,
> She does not pledge herself.
> Ten years – then she pledges herself.

(18)

Since the primary aspect of the female is to follow and to serve, it is natural that her position should be within the inner realm of the family. Using the image of the wife peeping at the outside world from behind a crack of the door, it is established as natural that woman has an enclosed, limited world view which should suffice her from within the closed family compounds:

> Through the crack of the door one has little outlook; one looks outward from within. Contemplation is subjectively limited. One tends to relate everything to oneself and cannot put oneself in another's place and understand his motives. **This is appropriate for a good housewife. It is not necessary for her to be conversant with the affairs of the world** (personal emphasis). But for a man who must take active part in public life, such a narrow, egoistic way of contemplating things is course harmful. (84)

In other words, woman who is made to comply with and be guided by man should inculcate perseverance, endurance and ignorance that would befit her positions within the family. From thirty one onwards, the hexagrams deal with the family as the core unit in society that also confirms the essential rituals associated with social relationships:

> Just as the first part of book I begins with the hexagrams of heaven and earth, the foundations of all that exists, the second part begins with the hexagrams of courtship and marriage, the foundations of all social relationships. (122)

Therefore hexagrams thirty one (hsien) and thirty two (heng) explains that man must take the initiative to lead during courtship. However, the hexagram heng further states that after marriage the man would still take the lead as "...the husband is the directing and moving force outside, while the wife, inside, is gentle and submissive." (126). Hexagram thirty seven is interesting for it not only re-emphasizes the subordinated positions of women in the family but also says that although "[t]he foundation of the family is the relationship between husband and wife, **[t]he tie that holds the family together lies in the loyalty and perseverance of the wife**." (143) Thus, a faithful and dutiful wife would determine the success and growth of the family. Nevertheless, her progress is firmly due to her obedience to the patriarchal authority of the home. In this case:

> [t]he wife must always be guided by the will of the master of the house, be he father, husband, or grown son. Her place is within the house. There, without having to look for them, she has great and important duties. She must attend to the nourishment of her family and to the food for the sacrifice. In this way she becomes the center

> of the social and religious life of the family, and her perseverance in this positions brings good fortune to the whole house. (145)

Firmly entrenched within the inner realm of the family and finding her status as the obedient wife who would run the household as a means of serving her husband; daughters have no permanent place as they belong to their future husbands and this is confirmed by the thirty eighth hexagram (kuei):

> This hexagram is composed of the trigram Li above, i.e., flame, which burns upward, and Tui below, i.e., the lake, which seeps downward....Li is the second daughter and Tui the youngest daughter, and although they live in the same house they belong to different men; hence their wills are not the same but are divergently directed (147).

Hexagrams fifty three (chien) and fifty four (kuei mei) reiterate the rituals of marriage that clearly show that man always leads and woman must follow. This discussion of the Book of Changes ends with the interesting hexagram fourty four. Its message is clearly to admonish and warn. Men must never marry a maiden who is bold where "[t]he rise of the inferior element is pictured here in the image of a bold girl who lightly surrrenders herself and thus seizes power." (171) The admonishment is important for it reveals a clear indication of threat to patriarchal authority by a woman who takes the initiative. Hence, the frequent

repetition to be passively servile for women as a means to obedience and to establish a harmonious social order. Thus, the Book of Changes establishes the sanction for social structure and sexual hierarchy by demonstrating that men and women, by the very nature of their differing qualities, have contrasting yet complimentary roles to uphold in society and nature.

If the Book of Changes is important in that it serves to delineate the natural instincts and positions of men and women, the question to ask as we look at the Book of Poetry is how would a book of 305 odes with prevailing thematic concerns of bittersweet yearnings, separations, love and the founding of a nation prove to continue the Confucian views of woman and her part in society. Consequently, it is important to iterate that for Confucius, society and nature function as an organic whole. The action of the one would influence the other. This is substantiated by L. S. Dembo who says that :

> Confucian philosophy was an idea of order in which the mind, the state, and the universe were organically related, and, in the *Shih Ching*, [is] a demonstration of that idea in action. (The Confucian Odes of Exra Pound 23)

For that reason, the poems chosen by the Master himself have a deeper, more moralistic meaning than their literary emotive statements. Very much like the biblical "Song of Songs", the odes have a morally didactic vision. Its ideal is to

create a harmonious society where all of its members function according to their given roles. The poems are thus to be interpreted symbolically for they are "psychological and moral force[s]" (8) from which social lessons can be derived. It thus becomes interesting to read Richard Guisso's comment that:

> [i]t seems fair to conclude, therefore, that although a few of the poems themselves reflect directly some of the earliest Chinese beliefs about the nature of woman, it was the largely anachronistic interpretations of later Confucian commentators which made them prescriptive formulae for female suppression. (Guisso 53)

The truth of the above statement cannot be denied and the Sung commentator, Yin Ch'ang-wu has confirmed this view in his interpretation of the ode in Chao-nan I where the bride is compared to a type of dove too stupid to build its own nest. Thus, stupidity is seen as a virtue in woman as "household management required little intelligence" (52). Nevertheless, the Book of Poetry has a deeper function in positing the stature of women. As a Confucian tool, it is meant to reflect the correct form of behaviour and role for men and women within the hierarchy of social relationships. Dembo affirms this view when he says:

> [i]n the Confucian reading, the anthology, as arranged by the Master, followed a pattern in keeping with the natural order of the universe. It began with the relationship of men and women and its

> culmination in the family;this was the "Kuo Feng," ....Following the folk songs are the "Hsiao Ya" (small ya), which represent the relations between the king and his ministers, both a prototype of and an influence upon the relations of the family, and the "Ta Ya" (great ya), which represent the relations between the king heaven....Finally, there are the "Sung" or temple odes, conceived as the direct communication with heaven by a virtuous society. (The Confucian Odes 12)

Interestingly, Dembo adds:

> [t]he single moral theme binding all four books is that social salvation depends upon adherence to the rites established by Wen Wang, rites applicable to both family and state, divinely inspired and insuring divine harmony since they are the external reflection in human life of the Way of Nature. (12)

The above idea is important to our understanding of the portrayal of women in the poems. The images and views of women reflect Confucian aspirations and with this is in mind, it is to be noted that women are portrayed as either the ideal Confucian woman with her quiet, self-sacrificing demeanour or selfish, egoistic as well as indulgent personae. By studying the two portrayals mentioned above with their attendant qualities, we have an insight as to the duties as well as placement

of women within the society.

The essential qualities of the woman are already set forth in the first ode of the Book of Poetry. In Kwan ts'eu of Book I the parallel refrain in the poem reiterates that the ideal bride or woman is "[t]he modest, retiring, virtuous, young lady" ("The She King" Trans. James Legge. The Chinese Classics Vol. IV. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960. 1). The Ts'eoh ch'au ode contained in Book 2 simply expands the qualities of modesty and retirement to quiet stupidity as the parallel refrain in the three verses states that :

The nest is the magpie's;
The dove dwells in it....

The nest is the magpie's;
The dove possesses it...

The nest is the magpie's;
The dove fills it
(Legge 4: 20)

The simplicity of the poem cannot be denied for the refrain creates a sing-song tone that renders it melodic to the listening ear. What is more important however, is the symbol of the dove used to represent a woman who is unable to build her

own home / 'nest' since marriage requires her to move into the 'magpie's nest' which represents her husband's home. It is imperative to discern that Legge has given in his commentary that the dove is used literally to represent a lady and that it is the symbol of quiet stupidity:

> The *virtue* of the bride is thought to be emblemed by the quietness and stupidity of the dove, unable to make a nest for itself, or making a very simple, inartistic one. The dove is a favourite emblem with all poets for a lady; but surely never, out of China, because of its 'stupidity'. But says Twan ch'ang-woo....."The duties of a wife are few and confined; there is no harm in her being stupid". (Legge 4: 21)

Quiet virtue and a sense of tranquil adherence to duties is again confirmed by the Yen-yen ode of the odes of Pei where the woman's gentleness and docility is emphasized (Legge 4: 44). Thus, the ideal Confucian woman is one who contains and cultivates within herself the qualities of humble discretion while being demurely unassuming. Guisso himself has stated that in the Book of Odes:

> we see many of the common praises bestowed on woman in all her roles: kind or docile (*hui*), pure or gentle (*shu*), chaste or decorous (*chen*). Along with the modest and retiring nature (*yao-t'iao*) enjoined in the first poem of the entire work, the diligence and

> dutifulness celebrated in the second, and the quietness (*ching*) essential to beauty in P'ei III:17, these constituted the essentials of female conduct. (Guisso 53)

The acclamation of the requisite virtues for women in poems or odes highlights the position of women. Two poems clearly outline the lower or rather the subordinated status of women. The first odes comes from the odes of P'ei in the Jeh yueh ode where the sun/moon images are again used to represent man and woman. The sun equates strength and the aggressive life-giving force of nature whereas the moon embodies its still and quiet force, hence the parallel equation of the above values to men and women. However, the clearest indication of the place of woman which is below that of man, comes in the fifth ode in book 4 from the Decade of K'e Foo (verses 7-9):

> The chief diviner will divine them.
> The bears and grisly bears
> Are the auspicious intimations of sons.
> The cobras and [other] serpents
> Are the auspicious intimations of daughters.
>
> Sons shall be born to him:-
> they will be put to sleep on couches;
> They will have scepters to play with;

Their cry will be loud.

They will be [hereafter] resplendent with red knee-covers,

The future king, the princes of the land.

Daughters shall be born to him:-

they will be put to sleep on the ground;

They will clothed with wrappers;

they will have tiles to play with.

It will be theirs neither to do wrong nor to do good.

Only about the spirits and the food will they have to think,

And to cause no sorrow to their parents.

(Legge 4:306-207)

The use of the snake image is revealing for the animal itself moves quietly. The negative connotation cannot be denied for the snake represent a kind of cold, calculating and slithering cunning that seems to be identified with woman. Hence the idea set forth in the poem that woman is born to a life of servitude within the enclosure of the family; to be concerned only with the rites and rituals of ancestors' worship and preparation of food to nourish members of the family - "Only about the spirits and the food will they have to think...". The need to admonish as well as to educate women in the more 'ladylike' virtues of quiet complacency appears to reflect an unconscious fear of the potential aggressiveness of woman which is seen in what is considered her sexual

licentiousness. In the odes of Yung, in the third ode Keun-tsz' laou, there is a protest against the lustful duchess Hsuan Chiang (Legge 4: 76-78). Unbridled lust is likened to being disloyal. A woman should be totally loyal to her betrothed or husband. Therefore, a woman who expresses her sexuality with more than one sexual partner other than her husband, is one with the powerful potential to destroy man by distracting him away from his dutiful responsibilities, thus disrupting the harmony of society and nature at large. This idea is clearly illustrated by the tenth ode from the Decade of Tang:

> A wise man builds up the wall [of a city],
> But a wise woman overthrows it.
> Admirable may be the wise woman,
> But she is [no better than] an owl.
> A woman with a long tongue
> Is [like] a stepping stone to disorder.
> It is produced by the woman.
> Those from whom come no lessons, no instruction,
> Are women and eunuchs.
> (Legge 4: 561)

The didactic message is clear: woman must not be clever ('wise') nor must she be able to talk wisely ('long tongue') and as Guisso has succinctly commented:

> [a]lthough many commentators have recognized this poem simply as a critique of the political influence of an infamous consort, the generalized form of the statement confirms the existence of the prejudices we noted earlier: **the unrestrained woman was destructive; as unfilial as an owl (presumed to devour its parent); the cause of disorder; unteachable, slanderous and self-seeking** (personal emphasis). (Guisso 55)

Intelligence and wit in women will only lead to the destruction of the natural order of things in the hierarchies of society and nature. Thus, the Book of Poetry provides lessons that affirm the belief that woman is to be led and to follow, emphasizing her opposite yet complimentary position to the vital and active energy of man.

While the Book of Changes and the Book of Poetry outline the basic nature of woman with its attendant positive and negative values; the preoccupation with maintaining socio-political harmony continues to be echoed in the Book of History (Shu Ching) and the Spring and Autumn Annals (Chun Chiu) together with Tso Chuan Commentaries. It is a harmony which can be achieved by conforming with the inflexible social fabric that separates the function as well as responsibilities of men and women. Thus, these two historical documents within the Five Classics are significant in that they reveal the social mores which validate the belief that women should be prohibited from roles outside the family

and particularly from politics.