

# Itô Jinsai on the *Analects* of Confucius: A Type of Confucian Hermeneutics in East Asia

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## 1. Introduction

Confucius (551-479B.C.) occupies the status of incomparable Exemplar in East Asia. In the traditional cultures of China, Japan, and Korea, he is revered as the One with sagely personality, exquisite literary sensibility, robust praxis and humane political principles. Venerated as the Sage par excellence, Confucius has exerted far-reaching influence throughout East Asia. Commentaries on the *Analects*, the received compilation of his didactic dialogues, are as countless as the summer stars. These commentaries have proliferated down to the present, even though Confucius lived over two millennia ago. Even today, Confucius' sentiments continue to suffuse the heart and soul of every Confucian scholar in Asia.

The present essay examines Itô Jinsai's 伊藤仁齋 (1627-1705) interpretations of the *Analects* 論語 of Confucius. Itô was Japan's foremost scholar -- of Classical Confucianism, particular -- of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He venerated the *Analects* as "the loftiest, the greatest Primal Book in the whole universe 最上至極宇宙第一書."<sup>1</sup> He wrote two commentaries, *Gomô Jigi* 語孟字義 and *Rongo Kogi* 論語古義, devoting much of his life to the latter work. His eldest son reported, "He began writing this commentary when his teeth were still growing, . . . and continued revising and adding to it for about fifty years, rewriting the manuscript five times."<sup>2</sup> Thus, Jinsai himself felt confident about

the *Rongo Kogi*, claiming that it “elucidates what has lain hidden for ages in the *Analects* and the *Mencius*. I venture to publicize my personal opinions in this commentary on what has not been explicitly said before.”<sup>3</sup> This indeed was Itô’s most representative work.

The book also represents a type of Confucian hermeneutics in East Asia, a forceful apologia for Confucius against “heresies” of Daoism, Buddhism, and Song Neo-Confucians. Jinsai re-interprets Confucius by offering meticulous textual exegesis with fresh intratextual annotations of the *Analects* and faithful definitions of such key notions as *Tao* 道 and *Jen* 仁 as Confucius himself meant them, on the one hand, and by intertextual collations of the *Analects* with other Classical writings to show their mutual coherence, on the other.

## 2. Methodology of Itô’s Hermeneutics of the *Analects*

Itô Jinsai tried to understand Confucius afresh by commenting on the *Analects* via two routes, (2.1) re-reading the *Analects* with new textual and philological annotations, to replace the Sung Neo-Confucian hermeneutics, and (2.2) meticulously comparing the *Analects* with other Chinese Classics to discern their overall mutual coherence. His fresh grasp of Confucius opened the way to a new Confucian hermeneutics.

**2.1 Intratextual Annotations on the *Analects*:** Itô’s commentaries proceed in three steps. He glossed word meanings after every sentence in the *Analects*, expresses his impressions after every chapter, and sums up matters with, “I judge, saying, 論曰.” The two examples below illustrate how he proceeded.

**2.1a.:** In *Analects* 1/12 Youzi said, “Of the things brought about by the rites, harmony is the most valuable. Of the ways of the Former Kings, this is the most beautiful, and is followed alike in matters great and small. 有子曰: 禮之用,

和爲貴. 先王之道斯爲美, 小大由之.”<sup>4</sup> The word “用” had been interpreted variously for generations. For instance, Zhu Xi (朱熹, Huian 晦庵, 1130-1200) interpreted it according to the Sung Neo-Confucian theory of “substance (*ti*, 體) and function (*yong*, 用).” “Since decorum (*Li*, 禮), though solemn in substance, also originates with Harmony in the Principles of Nature, so both their functions must value unhurried calm.”<sup>5</sup> Based on an alleged distinction between the substance and function in the rites, this interpretation reflects Zhu Xi’s own system of thought more than it explains the word and the rites.

Itô adopted a special tactic to depose Zhu Xi’s normative interpretation. This was to examine the meanings of the words as Confucius himself used them in the *Analects*. He said, “用 is ‘as/with 以,’ as the *Book of Rites* 禮記 said, ‘禮之以和爲貴 *Li* takes harmony as valuable.’ Harmony means no affront, for since excessive *Li* 禮 separates people, in performing *Li* one takes harmony as valuable.”<sup>6</sup> Itô Jinsai thought people should understand the *Analects* by recovering the word meaning in *its* original context, and should avoid imposing extra-*Analects* meanings or contexts, as Zhu Xi clearly had done. This was how Itô criticized and rejected Master Zhu Xi, saying,<sup>7</sup>

An old commentator said, ‘*Li* 禮, though solemn in substance 體, must be unhurried and calm in function (*yung*, 用).’ Now the Song Confucian scholars originated the theory of substance vs. function, but the studies conducted by the sagely ancients had no such distinction. What were they [like]? The way among the sages just shuttled among ethics and its principles; they kept striving to practice their concrete details, never reflecting back to the calm recesses of the mind-heart in practice, seeking where it is yet to issue in action. Thus, as to what is called Benevolence, Righteousness, Decorum, and Wisdom, the sages practiced at the level of their already having been issued in action, without minding their

substance. But, Buddha stayed out of ethics and its principles to concentrate on our single mind-heart and yet could not stop worldly gives and takes among men. In talking about true vs. false doctrines, he could not help but adopt the theory of substance vs. function, as a Tang monk said in *the Commentaries on the Huayan Sutra* 華嚴經疏, ‘Substance and function are the single origin that thoroughly manifest minutest details [of things].’ Sayings like this became so prevalent among Song Confucian scholars that they began to formulate a theory of Principle, Matter-energy [Qi, 氣], Substance and Function. Benevolence, Righteousness, Decorum and Wisdom have their respective substances and functions. ‘Before manifesting’ 未發 is substance; ‘already manifesting’ 已發 is function. The sages’ great instructions thus were torn to pieces and turned into words of function without substance. As long as we stick to the framework of substance-function, we will make light of function in favor of substance and people cannot but pursue substance by discarding function. The result has been to promote the doctrine of desireless quiet emptiness at the expense of Filiality, Brotherliness, Loyalty and Fidelity.

The “old commentator” refers to Zhu Xi. Itô Jinsai claimed that the distinctions the Neo-Confucians had drawn between inner and outer and substance and function had originated in a Buddhist-like desire for orthodoxy, and that the propagation of such dichotomies inclined people to pursue the will-o’-the-wisp of “inner substance” such that they tore to pieces Confucius’ robust praxis of principled ethics. Both of these extraordinary claims await historical confirmation, to be sure, but they show how Itô Jinsai engaged in this sort of “back to Confucius” project to defend Confucius against later heresies.

2.1.b.: The phrase “一以貫之” appears twice in Confucius’ *Analects*. In *Analects* 4/15, Confucius talks to his disciple Zengzi 曾子 about the “single thread binding” his *Dao*, then Zengzi tells others this means doing one’s best (zhong 忠) and using oneself as a measure to gauge the likes and dislikes of others (shu 恕). On another occasion, recorded in *Analects* 15/3, Confucius claims to “have a single thread binding it all together,” while denying that he is a man of broad learning. Liu Baonan 劉寶楠(1797-1855) said, “No one knew what this meant since the times of Han.”<sup>8</sup> Zhu Xi interpreted the phrase in terms of his own philosophical concepts, saying,<sup>9</sup>

Principle runs throughout, responding everywhere appropriately at every twist and turn, thus 貫 means to “penetrate all” (*T’ung*, 通).... The sage’s heart-mind is One turn, to function differently on each occasion.... It is analogous to “the Heaven and Earth stay Sincere to the utmost without ceasing, and all myriad things respectively obtain their proper places.”... “Sincere to the utmost without ceasing” is *Dao*’s substance (*Ti*, 體), the One Origin (*Yiben*, 一本) of myriad things. “All myriad things respectively obtaining their proper places” shows *Dao*’s function 用, the One Origin diversifying in myriad ways.

Clearly Zhu Xi understood Confucius’ “single thread binding it all together” in light of his conception that, “Principle is one while its manifestations are many.”

In contrast, Itô Jinsai says,<sup>10</sup>

貫 means to “unite 統.” It means that *Dao* in its extreme vastness is unity without mixture and is self-attained for good among all under heaven, uniting everything everywhere; it is impossible for us to obtain by means of much learning.... *Dao* is merely a single unity. Although

the Five Constancies go in hundreds of ways, and are extremely various; in their diverse ways, through hundreds of deliberations, they all return to this One, this Ultimate One of all under heaven that can unite myriads of “good” under heaven. Thus, the Master mentions no mind-heart (*Xin*, 心), no principle (*Li*, 理), but mentions only “a single thread binding it all together.”

Itô Jinsai takes 貫 as a concrete unity 統 of all, unlike Zhu Xi’s abstract 通 that penetrates whatever is. Koyasu Nobukuni 子安宣邦 (1933-) recently described Itô Jinsai’s hermeneutic method as understanding the words by concretely deciphering their meanings as they appear in each textual instance, as opposed to interpreting the words via abstract Neo-Confucian theories.<sup>11</sup> Itô adopted what Koyasu dubbed the “concrete incidence approach.”

Itô Jinsai further elucidates such concrete hermeneutics in taking loyalty (*Zhung*, 忠) and reciprocity (*Shu*, 恕) as praxis of *Dao*, not as scholastic glosses on *Dao*. He says,<sup>12</sup>

I judge, saying: The Sages’ *Dao* merely resides in the midst of the human ethical constants, the greatest of which is to save people. Thus, by loyalty and reciprocity, Zengzi developed the one penetrating the Master’s *Dao*. This was indeed how the Sages’ *Dao* was transmitted to later students so clearly and completely. The Master thus answer Fan Chi’s 樊遲 query on *Ren* by saying, “Be loyal to people.” Zigong 子貢 asked, “What would be one word to practice through life?” The Master said merely, “Probably reciprocity.” Mencius also said, “Try to reciprocate with others; for seeking *Jen*, nothing is closer than this.” So, we can see that loyalty and reciprocity are the ultimate essentials of *Ren* that form the start and the finish of the sagely studies. Loyalty and

reciprocity do not refer to “the one that penetrates”; they are themselves that *Dao* by which to penetrate things into one. Former Confucians thought the Master’s heart-mind was totally one Principle, flexibly responding to all. Only Zengzi had grasped Confucius’ real meaning, and it was something that not all students can understand. So, he used loyalty and reciprocity to instruct us about the meaning of the one that penetrates. How could all this be the case?

The “former Confucian” mentioned by Itô Jinsai again refers to Zhu Xi. When Itô Jinsai said that<sup>13</sup> the *Dao* that “penetrates all into one” resides only in the midst of loyalty and reciprocity, in concrete moral behavior, he was targeting Zhu Xi’s view that *Dao* is above loyalty and reciprocity, namely, at one with the metaphysical Principle (*Li*, 理) that gives birth to *Qi* 氣 and the myriad things.<sup>14</sup>

In a similar vein, Itô Jinsai commented on Confucius’ saying recorded in 15/2,<sup>15</sup>

I judge, saying: The ancients considered practicing virtues to be doing scholarship. Outside virtue-practice there was no so-called “scholarship.” Thus, once scholarship was accomplished, virtues were established of themselves. In deepening self-cultivation to manage families and all under heaven, there was nothing difficult. Later, people took practicing virtues as virtue-practice and doing scholarship as scholarship, not realizing that we must take virtue-practice as scholarship itself. Thus, if one decides to practice self-cultivation, one will use strength to grasp and hold on, if one wants to manage the world, one will maintain it with legal regulations, and those with little knowledge will try hard to borrow and pretend. Virtues now lie barren.

Whatever is regarded as abstract in scholarship can actually be found only in concrete practice. This thesis derives from Itô's distinctive interpretation of *Dao* in Confucius.

**2.2. Intertextual Coherence with Other Classics:** Itô's second interpretive method is collating other classical writings with Confucius' *Analects* to identify and display their mutual affinities. Itô Jinsai expressed his general sentiment when he annotated *Analects* 2/2, The Master said, "The *Odes* are three hundred in number. They can be summed up in one phrase, Swerve not from the right path. 子曰：《詩》三百，一言以蔽之，曰「思無邪」。”<sup>16</sup> Itô Jinsai said,<sup>17</sup>

I judge, saying: Benevolence, Righteousness, Principle, and Wisdom are called virtues, they are the root of the human Way. Loyalty, Fidelity, Reverence, and Reciprocity are called behavior-cultivation. Thus, talk about virtues must be the center, while discourses on cultivation of behavior must be what is essential, which is also what our Teacher (Confucius) meant when he said "swerve not from the right path" to cover "the *Odes* are three hundred in number." Some former scholars (i. e. Zhu Xi) regarded benevolence as the essence of the *Analects*, innate good as the essence of the *Mencius*, holding to the Middle, of the *Book of History*, and timeliness, of the *Book of Changes*, thus assigning each Classic one essence, without seeing an overall unity. These scholars were unaware of various classics as various roads converging to one, the one going back to hundreds of thoughts, many words pierced into one. Thus, "swerve not from the right path" is really what begins and completes sagely scholarship.

Itô took the various sagely words in the Classics as penetrable into one. Thus, Itô interpreted the *Analects* also by going through the other classics.



First, Itô Jinsai took the *Mencius* to be at one with the *Analects*, as its derivative,<sup>18</sup> and so the words in the former can lead back to a correct understanding of the latter. Itô Jinsai said,<sup>19</sup>

The Seven Sections comment on the *Analects*, which we understand by grasping the *Mencius*. Not starting at the *Mencius* but seeking what Confucius meant by merely looking at words in the *Analects*, we could become arbitrary and make mistakes, as with Song scholars saying “benevolence means the orthodox principle of all under heaven.” Learners should not be unaware of this danger.

Thus, Itô Jinsai always cited the *Mencius* when commenting on the *Analects*. For example, Itô cited Mencius’ “The organ of the heart can think. But, it will find the answer only if it does think. 心之官則思, 思則得之” (*Mencius*, VIA: 15) in interpreting “think three times before taking action 三思而後行,” (*Analects* 5:20).<sup>20</sup> He also cited Mencius’ arguments based on the “unbearable mind” and “unbearable governments,” to interpret some of Confucius’ comments on benevolence.<sup>21</sup>

On human nature, however, Confucius’ view differs somewhat from that of Mencius, so Itô Jinsai paid effort to harmonize them, saying,<sup>22</sup>

Confucius said, “Nature [among humans] is mutually close,” Mencius specifically said, “[Human] nature is good,” so their words seem to differ. Why? Being a student of Confucius, how could Mencius have meant something different? His “Human nature is good” was to elucidate the meaning of “Human nature is mutually close.” Sages Yao and Shun differ so much from people on the street, yet they are said to be close, for however different people are in their personalities, strong or soft, dark or brilliant, they do not differ in the Four Buds inside. Water may differ in

being sweet or bitter, clear or turbid, yet it always flows downward. Likewise, what our Teacher took to “be close” Mencius said to “be innately good.” Thus, what Confucius said to be close, Mencius specifically said to be as innately good, as water flows downward, and thus as far as our true-nature 情 goes, it is capable of becoming good, in short, “good.” All these words are said in terms of innate quality, not in terms of reasoning. In regard to reasoning, we cannot even talk about ourselves as being far or close.

Itô Jinsai stresses here that Confucius and Mencius were discussing the same points. This was to target the Song Neo-Confucians, especially Zhu Xi, with his so-called “solid scholarship” that we will discuss in detail in Section 3.

Besides being at one with *Mencius*, Itô Jinsai took Confucius to be at one with the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Itô Jinsai said,<sup>23</sup>

The people, events, and political ebb and flow of those days that our Teacher (Confucius) discoursed about do not seem very relevant to students of “today.” Why then did Confucian students avidly receive those volumes? Our Teacher had said, “Rather put down clearly matters relevant to specific times than wield empty words.” Since scholarship aims at effective action, it is best to tackle concrete events and things to observe their rights and wrong, gains and losses, rather than discourse about general principles. These chapters and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* then mutually form “inside and outside.” This is why these students held them dear.

Itô’s view can be contrasted with the approaches taken by two other scholars. Pi Xirui 皮錫瑞 (Lumeng 鹿門, 1850-1908) aptly indicated that, “The *Annals*’ claim that overthrowing rebels is Great Justice tacitly suggests Mencius’ words on

change and establishment of government; *Gongyang* and Zhu Xi's comments make us grasp Mencius' intentions,"<sup>24</sup> to show how the *Annals* and *Mencius* form "the inside and the outside" to one another. A contemporary Japanese sinologist, Takeuchi Yoshio 武内義雄 (1886-1966) adopted a similar view.<sup>25</sup> They both understand the *Annals* in terms of the *Mencius*, while Itô takes the *Annals* and the *Analects* to form the inside and the outside to each other, for both books argue from concrete matters without wielding empty generalizations.

Likewise, Itô Jinsai sees how the *Classics of Poetry* and *History* to agree with the *Analects* in that they all discourse on principles without leaving events, and thus view abstract matters in concrete terms. Itô Jinsai comments on Confucius' saying (7/18): "Where the Master used the correct pronunciations was the *Odes*, the *Book of History* and the performance of rites. In all these cases, he used the correct pronunciation. 子所雅言, 《詩》, 《書》執禮, 皆雅言也,"<sup>26</sup> adding, "The *Classic of Poetry* explains feelings and sentiments, the *Classic of History* explains matters of politics. Both Classics realistically elucidate interpersonal ethics in terms of daily life,"<sup>27</sup> Itô then develops this comment, saying,<sup>28</sup>

I judge, saying: Seeking the Way in the high, seeking matters in the far, this is a general fault of scholars. In contrast, *Classics of Poetry* and *History* teach with matters close to human situations relevant for daily use, making matters not far from us humans into the Way, with words not far from the human world. And so, as we can persist in adhering to Decency 禮, we become paragons of human demeanor to keep up the worldly ways. This is why our Teacher constantly discourses on these three Classics. As for Buddhism and Daoism, they leave the world and break off with secularity to engage only with the high and far without regard to this world. They therefore do not really attain the principles 理

of the *Classics of Poetry* and *History*. Besides, although later Confucians recite the *Classic of Poetry* and read the *Classic of History*, they seek understanding in too deep, too difficult areas without knowing that they should seek it in easy ordinary situations close by. As a result, their words and deeds are often manifestly encumbered with twists and difficulties, lacking in vast, right, and unhurried composure. Isn't it true that the reputed difficulty of reading is not in reading but in reading well and right?

Itô Jinsai stressed that the *Analects*, the *Classics of Poetry* and of *History* all begin at daily human and ethical activity, and so they can cast light on each other.

Itô Jinsai hesitates, however, on the inter-elucidation among the *Analects*, the *Doctrine of the Mean*, and the *Classic of Change* due to the “extremely high and profound 極高明” contents of the latter two. Itô Jinsai commented on *Analects* 5/16, “The Master said of Zichan that he possessed the way of the gentleman on four counts. 子謂子產, ‘有君子之四道焉,’”<sup>29</sup> as follows:<sup>30</sup>

I judge, saying: Claiming the gentlemanly way differs considerably from claiming the sagely way. The sagely way is concerned about the extremity, the gentlemanly way is concerned with ordinary, right and common rules that apply throughout myriads of generations, such as what various chapters in the *Doctrine of the Mean* discourse about. Sadly, the commentator understood the Biyin 費隱 Chapter according to high abstruse principles, thereby losing much of the original intent.

This “commentator” who Itô Jinsai criticized as being too abstruse was Zhu Xi.<sup>31</sup> What is difficult about the *Mean* lies not in its mysterious technicalities. As Itô Jinsai said, “The *Mean* is the most difficult thing to practice in the world, not in

undertaking the difficult actions of the world, but in keeping up our easy daily routines without change from start to finish. This is why they say the Mean is impossible.”<sup>32</sup> Thus, Itô Jinsai thought that the *Mean* and the *Analects* can be taken to inter-elucidate in this light.

Itô Jinsai thus unifies various Classics with the *Analects* under the view that they all discourse on daily human ethical ways. This hermeneutical method meets a difficulty when it comes to the *Classic of Change*. Itô has the following words on Confucius’ words (7/17), “Grant me a few more years so that I may continue to study the *Changes* at the age of fifty and I shall, perhaps, be free from major errors. 加我數年, 五十以學易, 可以無大過矣.”<sup>33</sup>

I judge, saying: In the ancient days of his sagely rule, Bao Xi 包羲 looked up and down, far and near, and created eight trigrams that were modeled after powers of divinities and vicissitudes of Yin-Yang 陰陽, the principles of myriad things giving birth and resting. After last days of Yin 殷 Dynasty, the Zhou 周 Dynasty arose to compile appended remarks to tell fortunes, and called the book the *Zhou I* 周易. When our Teacher came along he only discoursed on the Way of former rulers and virtues of *Ren*-benevolence 仁 and *Yi*-righteousness 義. His talks with disciples were simple and refined. He instructed them untiringly with nothing other than discourses on such virtues in the *Classics of Poetry* and *History*, while we are left with only this saying on the *Classic of Change*, which previously had been a book of divination, so our Teacher went against the custom of concentrating on the principles of change. Mencius also often quoted from *Classics of Poetry* and *History* and argued about the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, but of the *Classic of Change* he left not a single saying with us, for his studies were concerned with adoration of benevolence and righteousness, and attending to

filiality and brotherliness. He taught us to cultivate our nature, while the *Classic of Change* talks about nothing but profit. However, since the book also meticulously details methods of life-management and exhorts people to greatly benefit others, our Teacher also adopted it. Those desiring to learn from Confucius and Mencius also do well to adore the *Classics of Poetry and History and Annals*, and approach the *Classic of Change* in the perspective of our Teacher's saying, "may have no major mistakes," never using it as the book of divination.

Itô Jinsai took Confucius to be the first person in history to understand the *Classic of Change*, not as a book of divination, but as a book of meanings, and in that light to harmonize it with the *Analects* to inter-elucidate.

In sum, Itô Jinsai initiated a new *Analects* scholarship. He not only traced back to the original meanings of Confucius' sayings in the *Analects*, but took all the Classics as co-forming "insides and outsides" by the fact that they all elucidate great principles in daily life. Itô Jinsai pursued both routes so as to refute Zhu Xi.

### **3. Itô Jinsai's Perspective on His *Analects*-Scholarship and Its Reconstruction**

Now that we have seen Itô's hermeneutic methods, our next question should consider in what context Itô Jinsai admired the *Analects* as "the loftiest, the greatest Primal Book in the whole universe." We can say that (3:1) Itô Jinsai understood the *Analects'* world to be providing the context of "*Dao* in the secular," and (3:2) offered new interpretations of Confucius' key notions, *Dao* and *Ren*, in that light.

**3:1. The Context of “*Dao* in the Secular”:** Itô Jinsai understood the *Analects*’ world to be providing the context of “*Dao* in the secular,” which means that the common and inevitable moral principles are to be found only in specific concrete daily life. The so-called *Dao* exists only in the midst of the inter-human deeds and words occurring in daily life. As the *Mean* shows, the metaphysical world appears only in the common ordinary world and both worlds co-form a unity in their shared constitution. Itô Jinsai thus objected to the Song Neo-Confucianists who had constructed, well above the actual life-world, another separate metaphysical world of *Li*-Principle 理 that supposedly gives birth to and governs myriad things in the universe. Itô Jinsai denied the existence of a transcendent world above and beyond the actual one, and sought human nature only through concrete daily life.<sup>34</sup>

Itô Jinsai admired Confucius’ saying in 6/29, “The Master said, “Supreme indeed is the Mean as a moral virtue. It has long been rare among the common people. 子曰, 中庸之爲德也, 其至矣乎! 民鮮久矣.”<sup>35</sup> Itô Jinsai had a long section of comments concerning this saying.<sup>36</sup>

I judge, saying: The virtue of the Mean is the most difficult virtue under heaven. People discourse about the *Dao*. They want to reach the highest and most difficult Ultimate in order to get to the *Dao*. We rely on thrust to reach the highest and on striving to do the difficult. But, the virtue of the Mean is common, easy, and unhurried; it is unreachable by thrust or striving. This is why people are incapable of the Mean. During the Three glorious Generations of Tang and Yü, people were simple, common, pure, without twisty artificiality, and none were not naturally in harmony with the *Tao*. Fathers were fathers, sons were sons, brothers were brothers, and spouses were spouses, naturally without contrivance or strange manipulation, and dealt with one another according as what

they saw and heard. This is what is called the virtue of the Mean. In contrast, later people seek the *Tao* in the far and seek matters in the difficult. The more they try the farther away they get. Trying to repair the situation, they tear things apart farther. Therefore it is said, “It has long been rare among the common people.” This is why our Teacher specifically established the *Tao* of the Mean as people’s ultimate horizon, and this is why the *Analects* is “the loftiest, the greatest Primal Book in the whole universe.”

Itô Jinsai thought that the *Analects* is “the loftiest, the greatest Primal Book in the whole universe” precisely because it conveys are the principles of ordinary daily living. Such a *Dao* bears its inevitable universality and universal effectiveness. As Yang Rubin 楊儒賓 recently said, “Itô Jinsai regarded the content of the *Analects* to be none too mysterious or profound, but just the universal, common, and practicable matters to be learned. This was the so-called ‘No *Dao* outside people, no people outside *Dao*.’ The precise definition of *Dao* is ‘people’s *Dao*.’”<sup>37</sup> Itô Jinsai thus took *Dao* to lie in the common and the human; the *Analects* discourses on such a *Dao*; therefore, the *Analects* is “the loftiest, the greatest Primal Book in the whole universe.”

**3:2a. Itô’s New Interpretations of Confucius (1): Understanding *Dao* by Its Classical Meaning:** Itô Jinsai conducted such mundane hermeneutics of the *Analects* by tracing the key notions back to their classical archaic meanings, in contrast to Zhu Xi’s metaphysical approach to the Classics. One typical example is his interpretation of “*Dao*” and “nature,” as when Itô encountered Confucius’ saying in the *Analects* 5/13, “Zigong said, “One can hear about the Master’s achievements, but one cannot hear his views on human nature and the Way of



Heaven. 子貢曰, ‘夫子之文章, 可得而聞也; 夫子之言性與天道, 不可得而聞也.’<sup>38</sup> Itô Jinsai gave the following comments:<sup>39</sup>

I judge, saying: Sages teach diversely according to the diversity of people. What are mentioned here of [human] nature and Heavenly principle are what people say of them, without anything abstruse or mysterious beyond understanding. What did Zigong mean by “one cannot hear”? People only know human diversity in strengths and intelligence without knowing their common love of original virtue and adherence to a common potential for advancing in goodness, yet because their liking is not strong enough to reach goodness, our good-potential is often doubted. Now Zigong’s virtue was not yet sagely, he also took the Teacher’s word to mean “不可得而聞,” without depending on sages there is goodness already; anyone whose heart-mind is concentrated on goodness will see it covering the entire heaven and earth. Thus, we know that everyone can advance to goodness. Besides, heaven inevitably helps good people. This is how our Teacher became a sage. Sadly, in latter days people studied the high, far, and mysterious, and said such is the way to seek heavenly principles, which are unintelligible except to the enlightened. Zigong had studied quite minutely yet still said something like this. How could it be? What the sage mentioned as [human] and Heavenly principle are just what later generations call *Qi* 氣, not principle 理 and should not be taken as road to follow in seeking the truth.

Clearly, what Itô Jinsai understood as “*Dao*” in the *Analects* was anthropo-genetic, constructed by common people to be moral regulations for people to tread. We can see illustrations of the difference between Itô’s mundane approach from Zhu Xi’s metaphysical one in the following interpretations of “*Dao*” in Confucius’

saying in 4/8, “He has not lived in vain who dies in the evening, having been told about the Way in the morning. 朝聞道, 夕死可矣.”<sup>40</sup> Below are their respective accounts of “*Dao*” in this saying:

Master Zhu Xi said, “*Dao* is the prescriptive principle of things to be as they are. Once we could hear about it, we would be living smoothly, dying contentedly, with no trace of regret. Thus, he stressed the nearness of the time.”<sup>41</sup>

Itô Jinsai said, “*Dao* is that by which people become human. Being human without hearing about it is to live empty, if not being with chickens and dogs then rotting with grass and trees. Isn’t it sad? If once we heard about it, we would have that by which we are human and complete our life, and so a gentleman’s death is called “Completion 終,” meaning that he would not perish.”<sup>42</sup>

For Zhu Xi, *Tao* is the prescriptive principle of things to be as they are, thus constituting both metaphysical principle and ethical norm. In contrast, for Itô, *Dao* is that by which people become human, with the metaphysics dropped.

Similarly, regarding Confucius’ saying in 9/31, Itô asserted, “*Dao* is that in which all under heaven are identical,”<sup>43</sup> in order to refute the Han Confucian theory of “Going against normality and conforming with *Tao*, is called expedience 反經合道爲權.” Against this, Itô Jinsai said,<sup>44</sup>

The Teacher once said, “Is *Ren* far? I desire *Ren*, and *Ren* arrives here.” And, he also said, “If a person claims to practice *Dao* yet is far away from people, he does not practice *Dao*.” Both indicate that *Dao* is very close by. For outside *Dao* there is no person, outside person there is no *Dao*. The sage diversely teaches according to their diversity, and does

not set up a set teaching and drive people into it. Here there is nothing far from people, either. Those *Dao*-ignoramus think the high is admirable as if going up to heaven, see *Dao* as so far away, and make it hard for people to attain *Dao*. What a pity!

In a similar vein, Itô Jinsai also commented on Confucius' saying at 1/4, "Every day I examine myself on three counts. 吾日三省吾身,"<sup>45</sup> saying that "the *Dao* of heaven and earth exists in humans. Human *Dao* is nothing else than filiality, fraternity, loyalty, and fidelity, so such human virtues suffice to fulfill human *Dao*."<sup>46</sup> Such common human practices of common human virtues are the *Dao*.

Itô Jinsai further pointed out that this human *Dao* exists right in the mundane secular life. Itô Jinsai commented on Confucius' saying in 9/3, "I follow the majority 吾從眾," saying,<sup>47</sup>

Former Confucians said, "On things that do not harm righteousness, we can follow secular convention." They are mistaken, for if things would never harm righteousness, the secular is the *Dao*, and outside the secular there is no *Dao*. Thus, it is said, "The gentlemanly *Dao* begins at the spousal relation." Likewise, Yao and Shun both ceding crowns and kings Tang 湯 and Wu 武 expelling and attacking followed the people's hearts. Where people's hearts tend, there the secular accomplishes. Thus, it is enough to see if what you do conforms to righteousness or not, why do we have to put aside the secular to pursue *Dao*? This sort of practice is really the likes of heresy, not sagely *Dao*.

This sort of *Dao* within the secular must be common, easy, and close to people,<sup>48</sup> and such concrete virtues as "in word you are conscientious and trustworthy and

in deed single-minded and reverent. 言忠信, 行篤敬” themselves are the *Dao*, not the transcendent principles 理 in the extremity of the high and the deep.<sup>49</sup>

Itô’s common secular *Dao* bears no distinctions between ancient or present, and remains unchanging through time and place.<sup>50</sup> To Itô, this was Confucius’ *Dao*: “the constant Warp 常經 of heaven and earth, the common justice 誼 through the old and the new; anyone with intelligence can know it and practice it, however uncouth, as common spouses they can all know it and know how to practice it. Such is the so-called sagely *Dao*.”<sup>51</sup>

In summary, Itô Jinsai interpreted Confucius’ *Dao* in terms of the secularity of the *Dao*, thereby unifying all the Classics, including the *Analects*, the *Mencius*<sup>52</sup> and the *Doctrine of the Mean*.<sup>53</sup> Such was Itô’s new unique hermeneutic system.

**3:2b. Itô’s New Interpretations of Confucius (2): Understanding *Jen* by Its Classical Meaning:** Another key notion Itô Jinsai used in offering his epoch-making interpretation was *Ren*-benevolence 仁 – a term that appears in the *Analects* 105 times in 58 chapters, each occurrence bearing a specific linguistic context between Confucius and his disciples. On the whole, the concept of *Ren* as it appears in the *Analects* includes all admirable human virtues,<sup>54</sup> especially those referring to concrete moral behavior. Itô’s interpretations of *Ren* are based on pure Kogaku (classical learning 古學), that is, studies to excavate the ancient meanings, in contrast to Zhu Xi’s more intellectual interpretative style. Consider the following cases in point:

*Analects* 1/2 reads, “The gentleman devotes his efforts to the root, for once the root is established, the Way will sprout from there. Being good as a son and obedient as a young man is, perhaps, the root of a man’s character. 君子務本, 本立而道生. 孝悌也者, 其爲仁之本與.”<sup>55</sup> Zhu Xi commented on this passage, “*Ren* is the principle of love and the character of heart-mind 愛之理, 心之德.”<sup>56</sup>

Influenced by Cheng Yi 程頤 (1032-1085), Zhu Xi's interpretation contains many inconsistencies. Qian Mu 錢穆 (1895-1990) wrote,<sup>57</sup>

[Zhu Xi] quoted from Cheng Yi's saying, "Virtue has its root, which, when established, fills and enlarges its *Dao*, from filiality and fraternity practiced at home extended to love things." This quotation purposely omits a word "birth 生," replacing it with "fills and enlarges 充大" from Mencius, for if *Ren* is substance 性體, it could not have begun to exist by being given *birth* by practicing filiality and fraternity. . . . Zhu Xi said "Ren is Principle of love," and "principle" could not have begun to exist by being given *birth* by practicing filiality and fraternity, either. Besides, "*Dao*" differs in connotation from "principle." We can say, "The *Dao* of *Ren* is born from this" but not "The Principle of *Ren* is born from this." Both Confucius and Mencius often used "*Dao*" but seldom "principle." Both Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi began using "principle" to explain Confucius and had to try hard to patch up the irreparable seam. We can see Zhu Xi's effort at sewing up the distance between Confucius and Mencius, on the one hand, and the two Cheng brothers, on the other.

Qian's view is valid and convincing. Confucius and Mencius both advocated *Ren* in terms of concrete behavior, and never took *Ren* as substance of nature. Zhu Xi's intention of explaining everything according to his theory of *Li* as principle shared by everything is quite explicit in his explanation of Confucius' *Ren*. Zhu Xi says nothing about *Ren* as principle of concrete behaviors.

In contrast, Itô Jinsai's explanation of the *Analects* 1/2 clearly demonstrates his devotion to classicism.<sup>58</sup>

I judge, saying: *Ren* is the thoroughfare of all things under heaven, what people cannot but follow in order to behave. Its root consists of the

innate goodness of human nature with these Four Buds, which if we know how to expand them we will reach *Ren*. Therefore, Mencius said, “People all have what they cannot bear, with such unbearable heart to reach what they can bear, that is *Ren*.” Again he said, “The heart of compassion is the bud of *Ren*,” “Intimate concerns for the intimate parents are *Ren*. There is nothing else, expand it throughout under heaven.” Such sayings fit Youzi’s 有子 sentiment of taking filiality and fraternity as *Ren*’s root. Mencius was merely conveying the ancients’ views. The former scholar took *Ren* and *Yi* to be the principle in human nature, which contained only *Ren*, *Yi*, *Li*-decency and *Zhih*-Intelligence, these four. Where did filiality and fraternity come from? The answer could be *Ren*-substance as the root and filiality and fraternity as function, as the branch, and then such an answer seems to contradict Youzi. So, he had to say that practicing *Ren* is the root of filiality and fraternity, and speaking of nature, *Ren* is the root of filiality and fraternity. But, then, this saying puts Youzi’s original contention upside down, namely, “其爲人也孝悌” and “本立而道生,” in short, filiality and fraternity are the root of *Ren*. But, then, why did Mencius take *Ren* and *Yi* (righteousness) to be what we innately have? It is because human nature is good; both *Ren* and *Yi* are our nature, which is thus described in terms of *Ren* and *Yi*. Mencius did not directly describe *Ren* and *Yi* as human nature. One slight deviation here could lead to a thousand miles of error. We must keep clear-sighted.

“Former scholar” again refers to Zhu Xi. Itô’s contention, “*Ren* is the thoroughfare of all things under heaven, what people cannot but follow in order to behave,” jibes well with Confucius’ original intention of indicating *Ren* through

concrete moral behaviors. Itô Jinsai thus used classical philology to target Zhu Xi. Confucius' saying in 7/30 provides another case in point, "Is benevolence really far away? No sooner do I desire it than it is here. 仁遠乎哉? 我欲仁, 斯仁至矣."<sup>59</sup> Zhu Xi commented on this, saying, "*Ren* is the virtue of the heart, not something outside."<sup>60</sup> Itô Jinsai heatedly criticized this comment,<sup>61</sup>

I judge, saying: *Ren* is the great virtue of the world, yet *Ren*'s affairs are so very close by, practicing it resides in myself. Hence, "is benevolence really far away? No sooner do I desire it than it is here." But, the former scholar took *Ren* to be principle within nature, and took cutting desire to return to the beginning to be the work of *Ren*. If this is the care, everyone has *Ren* as my body has four limbs and hundred bones, and there cannot be anyone who is not-*Ren* or has the necessity of "reaching" *Ren*. For example, take many heart-minds as wood and *Ren* as fire. The use of the wood lies in making fire, and the virtue of the heart lies in *Ren*, if the wood is accumulated yet not burned, the use of the wood would not be manifested. If one lets go of it and does not seek it, then the virtue of the heart is not manifested. Thus, the sages always said "desire benevolence 欲仁," "seek benevolence 求仁," but not "cut desire to return to the beginning as the work of *Ren*." Cheng Yi had the theory of inside-outside and guest-lord that naturally fits our Teacher's meaning of "reach 至," and which differs greatly from taking *Ren* as nature or principle. Students would do well to take note of all this.

Itô Jinsai interprets Confucius' "is benevolence really far away" to mean, "Its matters are extremely close by, practicing it resides in myself. 其事至近, 爲之在我" What he stresses is that it is "I myself" who is conducting concrete acts; thus, Zhu Xi deviated by making it internal, as in "*Ren* is the virtue of the heart."

In summary, Itô Jinsai started from the perspective of practical scholarship 實學, and proposed a new classicist interpretation of “meaning 意味.”<sup>62</sup> In Itô’s new Confucius-scholarship, Confucius’ *Dao* became the *Dao* of daily inter-human living, and *Ren* then was understood as fulfilled in practical acts of filiality, fraternity, loyalty, fidelity, and the like.

#### 4. The Purpose of Itô’s *Analects*-Scholarship

What is Itô’s purpose and intention (in the sense of Searle’s “perlocutionary intention”) behind his reconstruction of Confucius and his *Analects*? Itô’s purpose was apologetic and argumentative. His targets were two, (4:1) Buddhism and Daoism that discard and leave the mundane inter-human world behind, and (4:2) Song Neo-Confucianism with the philosophy of cosmic Principle 理 above this mundane world.

**4:1. Critique of Buddhism and Taoism:** Itô critiques Buddhism and Daoism at many points in his volume, *Rongo Kogi* 論語古義, attacking Buddhism. I cite only one such instance here.

Confucius’ *Analects* in 18/6 reads:<sup>63</sup>

Chang Ju 長沮 and Jie Ni 桀溺 were ploughing together yoked as a team. Confucius went past them and sent Zilu to ask them where the ford was.

Chang Ju said, “Who is that taking charge of the carriage?”

Zilu said, “It is Kong Qiu of Lu.”

“Then, he must be the Kong Qiu of Lu.”

“He is.”

“Then, he doesn’t have to ask where the ford is.”

Zilu asked Jie Ni.

Jie Ni said, “Who are you?”



“I am Zhongyou.”

“Then, you must be the disciple of Kong Qiu of Lu?”

Zilu answered, “I am.”

“Throughout the Empire men are all the same. Who is there for you to change places with? Moreover, for your own sake, would it not be better if, instead of following a Gentleman who keeps running away from men, you followed one who runs away from the world altogether?”

All the while he carried on harrowing without interruption.

Zilu went and reported what was said to Confucius.

The Master was lost in thought for a while and said, “One cannot associate with birds and beasts. Am I not a member of this human race? Who, then, is there for me to associate with? While the Way is to be found in the Empire, I will not change places with him.”

This narrative contrasts worldliness of Confucianism with otherworldly reclusive Daoists during the Spring and Autumn period (722-464 B.C.). Itô Jinsai specifically expanded his sentiments on this passage.<sup>64</sup>

I judge, saying: Jie Ni wanted to change the world; sages do not. The former force the world with their ways. The latter govern the world with the world. The world is made of people, without whom it cannot exist. Thus, sages enjoy the world, worry about it, but never avoid it to cleanse themselves apart from it, like those, such as Chang Ju and Jie Ni did. Their ways were not the universal historical ways of the world. Buddha taught quiet self-demise, Laozi took the way of empty nothingness, thereby they thought to change the world. After two thousand odd years, however, Buddha is still incapable of effecting the demise of ruler-subject, father-son, and spousal relations of the world. Nor could Laozi

revive ancient non-action. This fact shows us that our Teacher's instruction is great, decent, correct, and persists through the ages and cannot be further added to. He also said, "These people are those who enabled the legendary Three Generations to go on." He said again, "Govern people with people, they improve and stop." Sages thus refuse, like this, to cut themselves off from things or fume at the world. Perhaps this is what he meant when Wei Zheng 魏徵 of the Tang dynasty said, "Sagely Five Emperors and Three Rulers changed no people but they transformed themselves."

Itô's based this powerful argument on his interpretation of Confucius teaching as "No *Dao* outside people, no people outside *Dao*."<sup>65</sup> *Dao* exists right in the midst of people's daily activities; as Itô said, "Why seek *Dao* outside the secular?"<sup>66</sup> In Itô's world of thought there exists not a single divine recluse flying high up alone above this world. Itô thus tried to dispel the Buddhist-Daoist mist and return people to the original *Dao* of Confucius. Itô's applies Confucian orthodoxy as apologetics against other teachings he regarded as heterodox.

**4:2. Critique of Song Scholars:** The main target of Itô's critique was Song Neo-Confucianism, especially Zhu Xi's metaphysics articulated on Principle or *li* 理.

Zhu Xi was a great Confucian scholar who wrote detailed commentaries on most of the Classics. His thinking greatly influenced the world of thought in Asia, especially from the fourteenth century. He initiated Asia's Neo-Confucianism that promotes the *Four Books* ahead of the *Five Classics*.<sup>67</sup> His *Collected Commentaries on the Four Books* 四書章句集註, not only anthologized all the commentaries from the Han, Tang and Northern Song periods to unify the entire *Four Books*, but also cast out some of them and molded a

unique metaphysical system centered on Principle.<sup>68</sup> Among the *Four Books*, he particularly stressed the importance of the *Great Learning* 大學, saying, “Learning must begin at the *Great Learning*, followed by the *Analects*, then the *Doctrine of the Mean*.”<sup>69</sup> “I want people to read first the *Great Learning* to define the framework, then read the *Analects* to establish the basic root. After this, people should read the *Mencius* to observe its development, then read the *Doctrine of the Mean* to seek the subtleties of the ancients.”<sup>70</sup> Again, “The *Analects*, *Mencius*, and *Doctrine of the Mean* all depend on *Great Learning* for their grand harmony.”<sup>71</sup> Zhu Xi specifically wrote the “Appended Remark’s on the Investigation of Things” to argue for our heart-mind’s capabilities of discerning Principle and stressed the importance of exhaustively seeking Principle by following things and investigating things to attain knowledge.<sup>72</sup> Zhu Xi placed particular stress *Ren*’s creativity, interpreting *Ren* as “the character of heart-mind and the principle of love 心之德, 愛之理,” stressing that this Principle is the heart-mind of the universe, the Principle that gives birth to all things. Zhu thus put aside Cheng Yi’s account of *Jen* as productive and producing on the basis of Principle, and claimed that love is born only out of Principle that is the heart-mind of the universe to give birth to the universe. It was in this way that Zhu conferred a metaphysical basis to Confucian ethics.<sup>73</sup>

**4:2a.** In contrast, Itô Jinsai claimed that *Dao* is just the *Dao* of daily human intercourse, violently disagreeing with Zhu Xi who had taken Confucius’ *Dao* to be a “Normative Principle of things and events,”<sup>74</sup> adding that “this ultimate *Dao* is difficult to hear about.”<sup>75</sup> Against all this, Itô Jinsai said,<sup>76</sup>

The Song Confucians always undertook to discover what the former sages had not sought, not realizing that the sages’ words pervade up and down, and are all embracing, all sufficient, leaving no undiscovered matters whatever. Why do they have to wait for later people to discover

anything new for them? Mencius' theories of "goodness of nature" and "cultivation of *Qi*" based on *Ren* and *Yi* were just to explain our Teacher's words. The former Confucian [i. e., Zhu Xi] thought them to be discoveries of what former sages did not seek, and so he also wanted to append his own theories, following Mencius, . . . . all of which are remnants of Buddha and Laozi, not to be found in our Confucius or Mencius. Can he be said to "transmit and not create," to be "faithful to and fond of the ancients"? Clearly we need no further explanation about who is right and who has gone wrong.

Itô Jinsai accused Zhu Xi of being completely out of touch with Confucius and Mencius, as well as being unduly influenced by Buddha and Laozi.

Consequently, Itô Jinsai accused Zhu Xi of straying into the mysterious depths and teaching a *Dao* out of touch with daily life.<sup>77</sup>

I judge, saying: Seeking the Way in the heights, seeking matters in the far, this is a general fault of scholars. In contrast, *Classics of Poetry* and *History* teach with things close to human situations relevant for daily use, making matters not far from us humans into the Way with words not far from the human world. And so, as we persist in adhering to Decency 禮, we become paragons of human demeanor to keep up the worldly ways. This is why our Teacher constantly discourses on these three Classics. As for Buddhism and Daoism, they leave the world and break off with the secular world to engage in only the high and far. They, therefore, do not really attain the principles 理 of the *Classics of Poetry* and *History*. Besides, although later Confucians recited the *Classic of Poetry* and read the *Classic of History*, they sought understanding in too deep, too difficult areas without knowing that they should seek it in easy ordinary

situations close by. As a result, their words and deeds are often manifestly encumbered with twists and difficulties, lacking in vast, right, and unhurried composure. Isn't it true that the reputed difficulty of reading is not in reading but in reading well and right?

Itô Jinsai claimed *Dao* was “close to human situations relevant for daily use” because “the secular is *Dao*, outside the secular there is no so-called *Dao*.”<sup>78</sup>

Itô Jinsai also targeted Zhu Xi in his comments on *Analects* 13/18, “The Governor of She said to Confucius, “In our village we have one ‘straight bow’. When his father stole a sheep, his son gave evidence against him. 葉公語孔子曰, ‘吾黨有直躬者, 共父攘弟, 而子證之,’<sup>79</sup> Itô Jinsai criticized Zhu Xi’s comment, “That father and son conceal for each other is the ultimate of heavenly principle and human sentiment.”<sup>80</sup> Itô Jinsai said,<sup>81</sup>

I judge, saying: An old commentary on this passage says, “Father and son conceal for each other is the ultimate of heavenly principle and human sentiments.” This is wrong, for it splits the human and the principle two. What human sentiments share in common everywhere throughout history is that which originates all Five Constants and Hundreds Processes 五常百行 of things, how could there be any heavenly Principle outside human sentiments? Let human sentiments go against one another; then, even if one could have pulled off the world’s most difficult tasks, it is really done with animal heart, whose bane reaches the level of thief’s *Dao*. Why? When things are done with discrimination of yes as yes, no as no without distinguishing close relations from distant, the noble from the lowly, such management is called “public/official/fair 公” acts. Now, if a father conceals for a son, or a son for a father, if it is not called “straight,” it should not be called

“public/official/fair.” Still our Teacher accepted such father-son concealing for each other because this is the ultimate human sentiment, where decency exists and where righteousness resides. So, the sages talk about principle 理 without saying it, talk about righteousness 義 and not public/official/fair. To leave human sentiments and warmth aside in seeking *Dao* is heresy, not the universal *Dao* of the world.

For Itô Jinsai, to split human nature from heavenly principle, for the latter to govern the former, and to leave the secular to seek *Dao*, as the Song Confucians did, was to leave Confucius’ original meaning of *Dao* behind.

**4:2b.** Itô Jinsai also criticizes Zhu Xi on the basis of another central Confucian notion, *Ren* or benevolence 仁. According to Wing-tsit Chan 陳榮捷 (1901-94), Zhu Xi reflected deeply on this notion for ten odd years, from about 36 or 37 years of age (1165-1166). Zhu completed his essay “On *Ren*” at about age 42 (1171), that is, about 20 years before<sup>82</sup> -- which therefore can be taken as the source of his ideas in -- *Collected Commentaries and Questions and Answers on Four Books* (1177, published in 1190) and *Lectures at Mount Yü* 玉山講義 (1194).

The most important key to Zhu Xi’s philosophy of *Ren* is his saying, “*Ren* is the character of mind-heart and the principle of love,” which appeared more than ten times in his commentaries on the *Analects* and the *Mencius*. It is one of Zhu Xi’s important creative ideas.<sup>83</sup> Itô Jinsai critiques this interpretation of *Ren* ruthlessly. Itô Jinsai thought that Zhu had extracted *Ren* from concrete human activities, and sublimated it into abstract Principle. Itô said,<sup>84</sup>

The Former Confucian said, “*Ren*-benevolence and *yi*-righteousness are principles in human nature. Our nature only has *Ren*, *Yi*, *Li*-decency and *Zhi*-Intelligence, these four. Whence then filiality and fraternity?” If so,

*Ren* as substance is the root, filiality and fraternity as function are the branches, this would contradict Youzi's 有子 saying, "filiality and fraternity are *Jen*'s root." So, Zhu Xi said, "Practicing *Ren* takes filiality and fraternity as its root, discoursing on nature takes *Ren* as the root of filiality and farternity." . . . But then, why did Mencius take *Jen* and *Yi* as our innate possession? It was because human nature is good that he took *Jen* and *Yi* as our nature. This is to identify human nature in terms of *Ren* and *Yi*, not to take *Ren* and *Yi* directly as human nature.

Itô Jinsai pointed out how Zhu Xi had strayed way from the dialogic situation in the *Analects* (and thus "contradicted Youzi") and quoted Mencius to point out Zhu Xi's mistakes. This reflects Itô's strategies of attack.

Next, Itô Jinsai pointed out that Zhu Xi's mistakes and irrelevancies came from having been influenced by Zen Buddhism:<sup>85</sup>

After Mencius died, his *Dao* became obscure in the world, and later Confucians merely wandered in the realm of annotating words. When the Song clan arose, many great Confucian scholars appeared to promote orthodoxy and reject heresies, to wash away the disgraceful scholarship of the Han and Tang dynasties. Despite such great occurrences, there flourished also the philosophy of Zen and not a few scholars interpreted the sages' saying with Zen ideas. The situation indeed was not auspicious. People came to treasure oneness of mind, to regard clear mirror and quiet waters as the ultimate task of self-cultivation.

Even though Itô Jinsai respected the Song Confucian scholarly efforts, he differed greatly from them for "seeking *Tao* too highly."<sup>86</sup> Itô Jinsai saw they had polluted valuable Confucian notions, such as *Ren*, with Buddhism and Daoism;

thus, the sages needed Itô to appear to dispel the dark clouds for the sun to appear to re-establish the classical meanings of Confucianism.

In conclusion, Itô's hermeneutics of the *Analects* was not just a theory but also a practice, aiming to protect and promote the original classical Confucianism by attacking the wayward interpretations of Zhu Xi, who had been misled by Buddhism and Daoism.

## 5. Conclusion

We have investigated one major type of Classics hermeneutics in East Asia, of Confucius's *Analects*, in particular, that is a hermeneutics as apologetics. Such a hermeneutics uses annotation or commentary on the Classics -- going back to their original classical meanings -- as a means to clear up polluted understandings of Confucianism. Going back to the original meanings of the original texts resolves many mistakes and problems incurred by Song Neo-Confucian interpretations. Itô Jinsai pointed out how far Zhu Xi and his colleagues had departed from the original dialogical world and context of Confucius and his disciples.

Itô Jinsai used an annotative scalpel that cut back to the original meanings of the Classics, and revealed the insights of mutual harmonies among the Classics, in order to remove surgically later accretions of foreign meanings accrued to Confucian key notions such as *Dao* and *Ren*. This linguistic and contextual correction of Zhu Xi's interpretive system enabled Itô Jinsai to restore Confucius' "one" that penetrates 貫 all from Chu Hsi's mistaken notion of "comprehension 通" by returning to the original *Dao* of "loyalty and reciprocity" to govern all daily virtuous activities in the Five Processes and Hundred Ordinaries. By examining the muddled controversies of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century



Qing Confucians on that simple declaration of Confucius, “a single thread binding it all,”<sup>87</sup> we are all the more impressed with Ito’s insightful interpretation of how the “one” that “penetrates all” successfully dissected and overthrew Zhu Xi’s interpretive approach to the *Analects*. In this way, Itô Jinsai completed the revival of Confucius’ original *Dao*.

Itô Jinsai’s hermeneutic apologetics can be compared instructively to that of the Qing Confucian, Dai Zhen 戴震 (Dongyuan 東原, 1724-1777), who attacked Zhu Xi using a classicist annotative hermeneutics of the *Mencius* in a monograph titled *Textual Critical Commentary on the Mencius* 孟子字義疏證. Unfortunately, Dai Zhen was less effective than Itô Jinsai. He was unable to deliver a fatal blow to Zhu Xi, because he never really entered Zhu’s “circle of hermeneutics.” Dai Zhen’s methodological limitation rendered him less than successful in his apologetic attack on Zhu Xi.<sup>88</sup>

Itô Jinsai would have met with problems like Dai Zhen’s on the *Mencius*, for they both applied the tools of textual hermeneutics – which were more suitable for word studies than for understanding the theoretical metaphysical side that is more prominent in *Mencius* than in *Confucius*. Be that as it may, the debates between Itô Jinsai and Zhu Xi, with the tacit “enemy” of Buddhism and Daoism in the background, add depth to our understanding of Confucianism, including *Confucius*, *Mencius*, *Zhu Xi*, and *Itô Jinsai* himself.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Itô Jinsai 伊藤仁齋, *Rongo Kogi* 論語古義, in Seki Giichirô 關儀一郎 ed., *Nihon Meika Shisho-Chûshaku Zenshu* 日本名家四書註釋全書 (Tokyo: Ôtori Shuppan, 1973), Vol. 3, p. 4. Itô Jinsai 伊藤仁齋, *Dôshi Mon* 童子問, in Ienaga Saburô 家永

三郎 et al., eds., *Kinsei Shisoka Bunshu* 近世思想家文集 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1966, 1981), Vol. 1, p. 204.

<sup>2</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> D. C. Lau tr., *The Analects* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 1992), p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Zhu Xi, 朱熹 *Lunyu jizhu* 論語集註 in his *Sishu changju jizhu* 四書章句集註 (Beijing: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1983), Volume 1, p. 51.

<sup>6</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup> These are the words of Qing scholar Liu Baonan 劉寶楠 (1791-1855) in *Lunyu zhengyi* 論語正義 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1990), Volume 1, p. 152.

<sup>9</sup> Zhu Xi, *Lunyu jizhu*, p. 72.

<sup>10</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>11</sup> Koyasu Nobukuni, based on a recent study of Itô's *Go Mo Jigi*, said that this volume seeks the words' meanings by looking into incidents of Confucius' and Mencius' concrete wording. This approach is diametrical opposed to the theoretical approach of ascertaining definite meanings of words in terms of Zhu Xi's school of Neo-Confucianism, as in *Xingli ziyi* 性理字義. The incident-approach takes the meaning of a word in the concrete context of its usage in specific incidents. See Koyasu Nobukuni, "Itô Jinsai yu ren di shidai ti Lunyu jie: zhi Tianming shuo," paper for the Second Conference on the Hermeneutic Tradition of East Asian Confucianism, November 19, 2000, National Taiwan University .

<sup>12</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, pp. 230-231.

<sup>13</sup> This may be Itô's "locutionary intention" as defined by John R. Searle in *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), and "A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts," in K. Gunderson ed., *Language, Mind, and Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1975), pp. 334-369.

<sup>14</sup> Cheng Shude 程樹德 (1877-1944) said, "This Chapter has only two possible meanings, the one that penetrates all resides either outside or inside loyalty and reciprocity." How right he is! See his *Lunyu jishi* 論語集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1990), Vol. 1, p. 267.

<sup>15</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, Vol. 8, p.230.

- <sup>16</sup> D. C. Lau tr., *The Analects*, p. 11.
- <sup>17</sup> Itô Jinsai, *Mô Shi Kogi* 孟子古義, in Seki Giichiro ed., *Nihon Meika Shisho Chushaku Zensho* (Tokyo: Hô Shuppan, 1973), 9:1.
- <sup>18</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 31.
- <sup>19</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 71.
- <sup>20</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 70-71.
- <sup>21</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 70.
- <sup>22</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 256-257.
- <sup>23</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 29.
- <sup>24</sup> Pi Xirui, *Jingxue Tonglun* 經學通論 (Taipei: Holo tushu chubanshe, 1973), 4:1-2.
- <sup>25</sup> Takeuchi Yoshio, “*Mo Shi to Shunjū*” in *Takeuchi Yoshio Zenshū* 武內義雄全集 (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1978), 2:473-485.
- <sup>26</sup> D.C. Lau tr., *The Analects*, p. 61.
- <sup>27</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 103.
- <sup>28</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 104.
- <sup>29</sup> D. C. Lau tr., *The Analects*, p. 41.
- <sup>30</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 68.
- <sup>31</sup> Zhu Xi commented on, “The way which the gentleman pursues, reaches wide and far, and yet is secret 君子之道費而隱” in Chapter 12 of the *Doctrine of the Mean* 中庸, that he personally compiled, saying, “The gentleman’s *Dao* is inexhaustible, uncontainable, from as close as in the nuptial room to the realm of the sages. Its exterior has no outside, its interior has no inside; it can be called “*bi* 費.” Yet the principle 理 that makes it what it is lies hidden and invisible. What we can know and are capable of is one within Tao, and its outer reaches no sages know or are capable of knowing.” See *Zhongyong Zhangju* 中庸章句, in Zhu Xi, *Sishu Zhangju Zizhu*, p. 22.
- <sup>32</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 69.
- <sup>33</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 103; D. C. Lau tr., *The Analects*, p. 61.
- <sup>34</sup> See my *Dongya Ruxue shi di xin shye* 東亞儒學史的新視野 (Taipei: Himalaya Foundation, 2001), pp. 125-170. Contemporary Japanese scholars unanimously agree on Itô’s anti-metaphysical character. E.g., Ishida Ichiro 石田一良 said, “Jinsai-scholarship is an ‘absolute humanity-scholarship’ against Heaven-centered Song scholarship, insisting on understanding humanity in terms of humanity.” See Ishida Ichiro, *Itô Jinsai* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kôbunkan, 1960, 1973). Koyasu Nobukuni 子

安宣邦 convincingly said Itô Jinsai's world of thought is the "ethical inter-human world," in his *Itô Jinsai: Jinrinteki sekai no shisô*, esp. pp. 27-60.

<sup>35</sup> D. C. Lau tr., *The Analects*, p. 53.

<sup>36</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 91.

<sup>37</sup> Yang Rubin 楊儒賓, "Renlun yu tianli: Itô Jinsai yu Zhuzi di qiudao licheng 人倫與天理--伊藤仁齋與朱子的求道歷程" in my edited volume, *Rujia Sixiang zai xiandai Dongya: Riben pian 儒家思想在現代東亞：日本篇*(Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1999), pp. 87-134, esp. p. 123.

<sup>38</sup> D. C. Lau tr., *The Analects*, p. 41.

<sup>39</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, pp.66-67.

<sup>40</sup> D. C. Lau tr., *The Analects*, p.31.

<sup>41</sup> Zhu Xi, *Lunyu jizhu*, 2:71.

<sup>42</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>43</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 144.

<sup>44</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 145.

<sup>45</sup> D. C. Lau tr., *The Analects*, p. 3.

<sup>46</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 130.

<sup>48</sup> Itô Jinsai said, "Those who are clever and intelligent would soar up high and far to strive after difficulties, not knowing that *Dao* originally stays in the midst of daily common activities, ordinary and close by us." See *Rongo Kogi*, p. 135.

<sup>49</sup> Itô said, "Loyalty and fidelity 忠信 are the root of our studies, whose ground is seriousness 篤敬, and all this completes the whole matter. Later Confucians thought these to be daily constant duties, not theories of the highest and the farthest ultimate, and so established separate doctrines. They did not realize that *Dao* is the real Principle and studies are the real duties. How could there be anything high and far outside of loyalty, fidelity and seriousness? So the words of those who know *Dao* are solid and close to life, and the more they are adhered to and practiced, the more they appear to be inexhaustible. Those who talk of *Dao* without loyalty, fidelity and seriousness do not know what *Dao* is" *Rongo Kogi*, p. 232.

<sup>50</sup> Itô said, "As in *Dao*, so among people, nowhere among them is there any distinction of ancient from present. Today's people are just the ancient people of the legendary Three Dynasties. As long as people practice straightly according to *Dao*, their nature has no difference to begin with. Those ignorant of this have to regard

today's people as not good, so in managing the world they have to entirely transform people of today into the people of Three Dynasties. This is entirely out of line with truth." *Ibid.*, p. 238.

<sup>51</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 288.

<sup>52</sup> Itô commented on Mencius' remark on "assassinating the tyrant Chou 紂" by saying that King Wu's expelling and assassinating was not regicide since "the entire world expelled and assassinated him." Then, Ito said, "Dao is what all people under heaven share; where all hearts agree, there is Dao." See Itô's *Mô Shi Kogi*, 1:35-36.

<sup>53</sup> Itô interpreted the First Chapter of the *Doctrine of the Mean* by saying, "Dao, flowing everywhere under heaven, is where all people commonly originate. Thus, what conforms to human nature is Dao; whatever is otherwise does not. Dao exists within daily human activities and reaches all under heaven throughout myriad generations, and should not be left for a single moment." (*Chû Yô Hakki* 中庸發揮, pp. 9, 11)

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Ju Wanli 屈萬里, "Ren zhi guyi di lishi kaoca 仁之古義的歷史考察" in his *Shu Yong Lunxue Ji* 書備論學集 (Taipei: Kaiming shuju, 1969), pp. 254-266.

<sup>55</sup> D. C. Lau tr., *The Analects*, p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> Zhu Xi, *Lunyu jizhu*, p. 48.

<sup>57</sup> Qian Mu, *Kongzi yu Lunyu* 孔子與論語 in *Qian binsi Quanji* 錢賓四全集 (Taipei: Lianqing chuban gongsi, 1998), Volume 4, esp. p. 272.

<sup>58</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 3.

<sup>59</sup> D. C. Lau tr., *The Analects*, p.65.

<sup>60</sup> Zhu Xi, *Lunyu jizhu*, p. 100.

<sup>61</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, pp. 109-110.

<sup>62</sup> This is Itô's technical term. He said, "I divide our learning into two: to learn the blood vein 血脈, and to learn the meaning 意味. "Blood vein" is the gist of sagely tradition, such as the theory of *Ren* and *Yi* in Mencius; "meaning" is the meaning behind it. Meaning derives from the vein, which we must first learn. Without the vein we are ships without rudders, nights without candles, ignorant of where to stop. The vein is prior in learning, but yet meaning is harder to grasp. Why? A vein is a road; once we are on it, we will arrive, however far, but without insight we are at a loss as to where to find the meaning in the vast terrain. I once said that reading the *Analects* differs from reading the *Mencius*. We first read Mencius' vein, and we can naturally find his meaning. We first grasp the meaning in the *Analects*, and only then

find its vein.” Ito Jinsai, *Go-Mô Jigi* 語孟字義, in Inoue Tetsujirô 井上哲次郎 & Kanie Yoshimaru 蟹江義丸 eds., *Nihon Rinri Ihen* 日本倫理彙編 (Tokyo: Ikuseikai, 1901-1903), Vol. 5: B, p. 50.

<sup>63</sup> D. C. Lau tr., *The Analects*, p. 185.

<sup>64</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 271.

<sup>65</sup> See supra note 44.

<sup>66</sup> See supra note 47.

<sup>67</sup> Uno Seiichi 宇野精一 said that the *Five Classics* were products of the medieval society. Because of the succinct brevity of the *Four Books* that appealed to the contemporaries, the latter easily replaced the former. See his “Gokyô kara Shisho e – Keigakushi Oboegaki 五經から四書へ—經學史覺書” in *Tôyô no Bunka to Shakai* 東洋の文化と社會, No. 1, Kyoto, 1952, pp. 1-14. Zhu Xi’s *Collected Commentaries on the Four Books* rose in popularity similarly in close relation with external social, economic, and political factors. Cf. James T. C. Liu, “How Did a Neo-Confucian School Become the State Orthodoxy?” *Philosophy East and West*, 23:4 (October 1973), pp. 483-505, esp. pp. 501-504.

<sup>68</sup> On how creative and yet how traditional Zhu Xi was in his *Collected Commentaries on the Four Books*, see Ôtsuki Nobuyoshi 大槻信良, “Shisho shucchû shôku ni arawetaru Shushi no taido 四書集註章句に現われたる朱子の態度,” *Nihon Chugoku Gakkaihô* 日本中國學會報, 5 (1953), pp. 80-94. On how Zhu Xi unified the *Four Books* into one, see Wing-tsit Chan, “Zhu Xi’s Completion of Neo-Confucianism,” in *Études Song in Memoriam Étienne Balazs*, Editées par Françoise Aubin, Série II, #1 (Paris: Mouton & Co. and École Pratique de Haute Edudes, 1973), pp. 60-90.

<sup>69</sup> Li Qingde ed., *Zhuzi yulei* (Peking: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 1, p. 249.

<sup>70</sup> *Chu Tzu Yü-lei*, p. 249.

<sup>71</sup> *Chu Tzu Yü-lei*, p. 256.

<sup>72</sup> Yang Rubin makes the novel claim that Zhu Xi’s idea of “investigation of things” was not just a cognitive activity but also involved concentration of mind-heart. This specific concentration and other separated concentrations are parts of the task of striving for seriousness called seriousness penetrating activity and quietude, where seriousness evokes a sudden comprehensive realization. Zhu’s experience of principle warrants the unification of transcendence and experience. What the scholars experience as principle unobstructedly penetrating things is not only an ontological

affirmation in significance and in realms but also facilitates one's free responses and management of concrete affairs. Yang says that Zhu's sudden realization refers to a re-grasping of our primal self, where the mind-heart is a bright, empty quietude in which all principles reside and one's nature is clear and unified. The scholar, the universe, and the Great Ultimate advance together to the Truth realm. In this world, all things that are usually incomplete, partial, processive and potential, are respectively completed. This is where "all things -- inside and out, fine and coarse -- are all achieved, together with the total substance of my mind heart is greatly effective and lucid." See Yang, Rubin, "Gewu yu huoran guantong: Zhuzi gewu bujuan di quanshi wenti 格物與豁然貫通: 朱子'格物補傳'的詮釋問題," paper for Conference on Zhu Xi and East Asian Civilization, Taipei, November 16-18, 2000. Yang's creative view differs from the usual characterization of Zhu Xi as subscribing to a mind-principle dualism. I think dualism describes the process of the mind-heart trying to discern the Principle, while Yang's view describes the realm of sudden realization after discernment. Both views are perhaps mutually complementary.

<sup>73</sup> See Wing-tsit Chan 陳榮捷, "Lun Zhuzi zhi Renshuo 論朱子之仁說" in *Zhu xue lunji* 朱學論集 (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1982, pp. 37-68, and his "Chu Hsi's Completion of Neo-Confucianism," pp. 73-80.

<sup>74</sup> Zhu Xi, *Lunyu jizhu*, p. 71. Commentary on 4/8.

<sup>75</sup> *Lunyu jizhu*, commentary on 5/27.

<sup>76</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 94.

<sup>77</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 104.

<sup>78</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 130.

<sup>79</sup> D. C. Lau tr., *The Analects*, p. 127.

<sup>80</sup> Zhu Xi, *Lunyu jizhu*, p. 146.

<sup>81</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 197.

<sup>82</sup> Wing-tsit Chan, *Zhu xue lunji*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>83</sup> Yamazaki Mitsuaki 山崎美成 (1796-1856) said of *Ren* 仁 in his *Long An shoujian* 龍龕手鑑, "People's voices, the heart's virtue, love's principle 心之德, 愛之理. A Buddhist monk Zhiguang 智光 wrote the volume in 997. Chu Hsi completed the *Lun Meng jizhu* in 1177, and adopted this Buddhist phrase." However, Chan Wing-tsit's textual criticism reveals that people later added the phrase to *Long An shoujian*, showing thus that Zhu Xi hadn't adopted it (see supra note 82). Chan's assertion sounds plausible.

<sup>84</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 3.

<sup>85</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 17.

<sup>86</sup> *Rongo Kogi*, p. 79.

<sup>87</sup> Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764-1849) said, “Confucius’ Way appears in all his daily activities, not just in learning of his teaching and sayings. Thus, when he told Zengzi to penetrate his Way 道 into one, “penetrate 貫” means actions and events. . . . So, if we take “penetrate 貫” as “practice of things,” then the sage’s Way reduces to Confucianism; if we take it as “penetrate through 通貫,” then it is close to Chan Buddhism. We ask what sort of Way it is, then we get what the *Doctrine of the Mean* calls loyalty and reciprocity, virtues of the ordinary, words of the ordinary, the Way mutually involving words and acts.” However, Fan Dongshu 方東樹 (1772-1851) disagreed, saying, “The phrase ‘penetrating into one’ combines knowing and acting, and cannot be tilted to either one. . . . Loyalty and reciprocity is the salt to salt ‘penetrating into one’, the salt penetrates and then we know it. Only upon finishing the salting can we understand its meaning, unreachable by shallow scholars. Jiao Xun 焦循 understood it to be “My Way pervades all through among people 吾道一以通之於人.” He just stuck himself to loyalty and reciprocity, trailing these words to miss the real meaning.” Both statements appear in Fan Dongshu, *Hanxue shandui* 漢學商兌 in his *Hanxue shichengji* 漢學師承記 (Beijing: Sanlian shuju, 1988), zhuan B (I), pp. 198 and 301.

<sup>88</sup> See my *Mencian Hermeneutics: A History of Interpretations in China* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2001), pp. 211-232.