

**The Thought of Confucius and
Its Parallel in Early Rabbinic Tradition**

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Introduction

Comparative cultural studies are a necessary pursuit. Such study does not aim to reduce all cultures to a single form, rather it highlights parallel reactions to similar conditions. Parallels between seemingly dissimilar traditions point to a commonality of the human condition.

While the Jewish and Chinese traditions certainly differ, there exist many similarities. Texts belonging to these traditions, namely the *Avot* and the *Analects of Confucius*, reflect such similarities.

Both texts comprise great bodies of thought dealing with the human condition. They address proper behavior of the individual. Both texts elevate the importance of study, respect for others, especially for those holding positions of esteem, and self-improvement. The *Analects* and *Avot* present ideal models of behavior and instruction for the individual.

The *Analects of Confucius* and *Avot* share a similar structure. The texts attribute statements to specific people. However, the disciples or the disciples of these disciples recorded the sayings, often after the passing of these original teachers. Therefore, both texts present schools of thought based on the teachings of certain individuals. The *Analects* attribute most sayings to Confucius or one of his disciples. *Avot* attributes its statements to specific Rabbis. Since neither Confucius nor the Rabbis wrote the texts themselves, the accuracy of the attribution is unclear. Rather, the thinkers use the past to legitimize their present claims. Both traditions value the teachings of the past. If the

statement the text makes refers to earlier teachings, it is all the more authoritative.

Ancestors and past sages serve as ideal models.

The statements themselves are similar in nature. Generally, they begin with the name or title of the person credited with the saying. The aphorism follows. Most entries are short, to the point, and directive. The similarities in content and structure are striking.

The *Analects* and *Avot* arise out of similar contexts. The thinkers taught during times of political and social instability. They focused on an ideal existence rather than on reality. However, the texts flourished as the situations stabilized. The stability of the early Rabbinic period under Roman rule (beginning in 63 B.C.E.) bears striking similarities to that of the Han period (206 B.C.E.-220 C.E.). In both cases, stability afforded the people the luxury of study and concentration on ethical behavior. Similar contexts produce similar modes of thought. Though the details of culture certainly differ, human responses to similar political situations tend toward similarity.

While political and social stability aided the influence of these texts, technological sophistication helped as well. An advanced system of roads, for instance, benefits commerce as well as easing communication. Life is easier. Ideas spread faster. Under the Romans and the Han dynasty, the people profited from such technological advances.

Similarities abound, but differences certainly exist as well. Ultimate political authority differed in the Chinese and Jewish worlds. Where the Han government used the *Analects* as its projected ideal, the Jewish text spoke to a Jewish society living under foreign rule. Certain subjects reflect the difference in ultimate political authority.

Our world changes daily. Technology allows for communication and cultural exchange unprecedented in the history of human beings. The inherent similarities

between cultures could certainly prove to be useful in bridging gaps between seemingly different peoples. Human beings respond to our world in similar ways.

Chapter 1: Historical Background

In the history of the world, the Chinese dynasties ruled the largest territories and maintained the greatest monopoly of centralized power.¹ We see patterns of political history through Chinese dynasties. Generally, we find a desire toward political reunification. Unity ensured peace and prosperity.² Stability rises with China's ability to remain unified.

History credits the unification of China to the Zhou (pronounced "jou") dynasty (circa 1040-221 B.C.E). The dynasty grew through conquest. The Zhou established power through a system of feudal states. Sons of the Zhou rulers presided over these states and remained loyal to the central government through ties of kinship.³ The Zhou dynasty, like that of the Shang, used kinship as the basis of political organization.⁴ The central government successfully controlled its numerous states. In this way, unity prevailed. Those groups successfully conquered acculturated. During the early Zhou, many adopted the rituals, writing system and administration of the central Zhou authority.⁵

The previous dynasty, the Shang, worshiped their own ancestors. They attributed legitimate rule to their own lineage. The Zhou radically differed. They created the notion of the Mandate of Heaven. Through this theory, Heaven legitimized the ruling family's position. Heaven needed to consent to one's rulership. Thus, the ruler had Heaven's

¹Fairbanks, John King, and Goldman, Merle, *China, A New History* (Cambridge: The Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998) 46.

² Fairbanks, 47.

³ Fairbanks, 39.

⁴ Fairbanks, 40.

approval to rule. They claimed that an impersonal deity, entitled Heaven, sanctioned their rule based on the moral behavior of the ruler.⁶ Thus the Mandate of Heaven attached a level of moral appropriateness to the party in control. The ruler portrayed himself as ethical. Where kinship once ruled, morality now reigned. Based on the Zhou's elevated notion of morality, Confucius will idealize proper conduct.

As time passed, the central authority lost its control over the numerous states. Arguably, unity under the Zhou could not endure. The Zhou dynasty lacked a good system of communication, an adequate monetary system and the political experience necessary to maintain the unity of such a vast area.⁷ Over a period of three hundred years or so, the Zhou dynasty experienced the gradual decline of its central power. In 475 B.C.E. the dynasty entered the period of the Warring States. During this time the larger states actively rallied for ultimate power.⁸

Instability marked the period of the Warring States. The many states fought wars constantly. The boundaries of the states often shifted.⁹ Brute force ruled. The era lacked authority and order. The desire for political advantage subordinated ethical behavior.¹⁰ Politically and ideologically, the period of the Warring States marks the ultimate breakdown of the central Zhou government.

The state of Qin (pronounced "chin") enjoyed powerful growth during the period of the Warring States. The self entitled First Emperor instituted reforms, building upon

⁵ Fairbanks, 40.

⁶ Fairbanks, 40.

⁷ Creel, H.G., *Confucius, the Man and the Myth* (New York: The John Day Company, 1949) 13.

⁸ http://emuseum.mnsu.edu/prehistory/china/ancient_china/zhou.html

⁹ Creel, 15.

¹⁰ Creel, 20.

the Legalist themes.¹¹ The Legalist school relied upon reward and punishment as the means of keeping the people in order.¹² The authorities generously rewarded or harshly punished the people according to their actions. The Qin encouraged loyalty to the state. They elevated their law over all kinship ties. The state invigorated the business of agriculture. The people could buy and sell the land. The state created a bureaucratic system. Counties reported to the central authority in writing.¹³ Such political, social, and economic changes lead to a powerful central authority. The Qin had military strength as well. In 221 B.C.E., the state of Qin defeated the other states. The Qin bureaucratized the empire. They appointed a military and civil head to each area. The Qin standardized writing and weights and measures. They built highways equal to those of the Roman Empire.¹⁴ Surely, the technological advancements eased their ability to control the vast area. Through the Qin dynasty, order reclaimed its hold on China.

The Han dynasty followed the Qin chronologically. The Han controlled China from 206 B.C.E to 220 C.E. John Berthrong argues that "no other imperial institution lasted as long or was as successful as the Chinese empire founded by the Han... the invention of such an enduring political and social order happened only once in human history."¹⁵ The Han utilized the Qin's tools of power. They continued the bureaucratic system. They established government posts that sent communication on the highways, and regional inspectors who reported to the capital.¹⁶ The Han controlled all economic

¹¹ Fairbanks, 55.

¹² Fairbanks, 55.

¹³ Fairbanks, 55.

¹⁴ Fairbanks 56.

¹⁵ Berthrong, John H. *Transformations of the Confucian Way* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998) 35.

¹⁶ Fairbanks, 57, 59.

life. They established governmental markets and set prices. Officials collected taxes that went into the court treasury.¹⁷ The Han developed good foreign relations. They appeased potential invaders. They used diplomacy to recruit "barbarians" when fighting other groups.¹⁸ With a strong central government, the Han unified the Chinese Empire. It was under such stable conditions that Confucianism flourished.

The philosopher and scholar named Confucius (551-479 B.C.E.) lived during the turbulent period of the Warring States. Confucius was a contemporary of some of the great thinkers of world history, including Buddha, the prophets of Israel and the pre-Socratic philosophers in Greece. Though they lived thousands of years ago, all of these thinkers continue to influence society today. Thus Confucius exists as one of the most influential people throughout world history. Outside the arrival of Buddhism, the themes and ideas that dominate East Asia arose between the time of Confucius and the Han dynasty.¹⁹ Confucius and his disciples set the tone for much of Chinese thinking that succeeded them. Berthrong eloquently explains that if "the history of Western thought is a series of footnotes on Plato[,] much the same can be said about Confucius, Mencius, and Hsun Tzu,"²⁰ in the east.

Details of Confucius' life remain a mystery. Because of the later popularity of his work, legend surrounds the stories about him. For instance, we know that he had a son and daughter, but we know nothing of a wife. However, later traditions speak of a divorce. He says of himself that he had humble beginnings.²¹ He tried unsuccessfully to

¹⁷ Fairbanks, 59.

¹⁸ Fairbanks, 61.

¹⁹ Berthrong, 15.

²⁰ Berthrong, 15.

²¹ Creel, 25.

enter into government. Instead, he turned to teaching and learning. Interestingly, his early disciples tried to emulate the life the Master wanted through government employment. However, the disciples of the disciples emulated his actual life and became learned people.²² Since the latter were most likely responsible for the *Analects*,²³ the teachings attributed to Confucius primarily concern individual conduct rather than societal conduct.²⁴ Even when the *Analects* instruct the actions of a prince, the directions involve his duty as an individual, rather than his action on behalf of his people. The individual stands as the focal point for Confucian teaching.

Confucius lived through a time of great turmoil. Because of his turbulent times, he glorified the earlier Zhou period of stability. Generally, the Chinese tended to idealize life under the early Zhou dynasty. They envisioned this period as one of unity, peace and justice.²⁵ Though Confucius may not have known much about previous cultures, he certainly idealized the past. He believed their teachings expressed how people should act.²⁶ During a time of constant struggle, Confucius sought a system that taught people to act ethically. Confucius attempted to make order out of the chaos around him. He criticized the reality and imagined the ideal. He turned to the past to find the stability his generation lacked. In fact, Confucianists explain that Confucian teaching simply repeats the teachings of the past. Berthrong explains that "just as Judaism holds that there was a great deal of Jewish history before the revelation to Moses at Mt. Sinai, Confucians advertise that Confucianism existed long before Confucius...Confucians maintain that

²² Creel, 74.

²³ Legge, James, *Confucius* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1971)15.

²⁴ Creel, 74.

²⁵ Creel, 13.

²⁶ Berthrong, 14.

they are simply reminding humanity of the profound truths to be found in the teaching of the great sages of Chinese high antiquity."²⁷ Confucius reiterates the crucial teachings taught by the great teachers of earlier times.

As mentioned earlier, the disciples of Confucius' disciples likely compiled the *Analects of Confucius* at the end of the fourth or beginning of the fifth century B.C.E.²⁸ The *Analects* seems to lack any intrinsic organization. The work fails to have an ongoing progression,²⁹ which suggests an amalgam of collected materials rather than a single work. The *Analects* direct the individual toward proper conduct. Essentially, ethical conduct on behalf of an individual creates a stable society. The *Analects* serve as an example of the idea expressed by Berthrong. "...[A]ll Chinese thought aims to teach people a regulative rule about how to guide their action, either as individuals or as members of a group."³⁰ The *Analects* emphasize the notion of "humaneness." This virtue establishes the foundation of civilization.³¹ Humaneness includes proper and moral conduct. In a "true civilization," people treat each other ethically. Since Confucius lived through a particularly immoral time, his teachings reflect the ideal rather than reality.

Proper conduct includes both ethical as well as appropriate behavior. The term appropriate refers to suitable conduct between specific people. The hierarchy of relationships holds an important role in the *Analects*. Fairbanks thus explains China's hierarchy: "Parents were superior to children, men to women, rulers to subjects. Each

²⁷ Berthrong, 13.

²⁸ Legge, 14.

²⁹ Legge, 14.

³⁰ Berthrong, 16.

³¹ Berthrong, 16.

person therefore had a role to perform, a conventionally fixed set of social expectations to which individual behavior should conform."³² If only every person adhered to the rules regarding hierarchical behavior, order would hold sway.

The importance of proper behavior applies especially to rulers. Certainly during the period of the Warring States, the rulers conducted themselves immorally. However, if one behaved morally, he acquired certain prestige. This prestige gave one influence over the people.³³ Thus, moral behavior certainly benefited the person of authority. A ruler's moral behavior made people want to follow. Proper conduct sanctioned one's rule. This notion recalls the Zhou's idea of the Mandate of Heaven. Good behavior legitimized one's authority.

The *Analects* express the view that people have the power to perfect themselves. People are perfectible. Confucius stressed the equality of people at birth. Through their own efforts, people become either moral or immoral.³⁴ Every individual has the power and duty to perfect oneself.

Confucius also stressed the importance of models. Those in influential places must behave appropriately, for they serve as examples for those lower in the hierarchy. One's moral conduct serves as the most powerful tool of influence. Living people can serve as models as well as people of the past. Therefore, one connects with the past by emulating their behavior.³⁵ Effectively, Confucius satisfies the goal of glorifying the past and reinforcing hierarchical relationships through the notion of behavioral models.

³² Fairbanks, 51.

³³ Fairbanks, 52.

³⁴ Fairbanks, 52.

³⁵ Berthrong, 20.

Certainly, Confucius imagined an idealized world. He wanted perfect order, a world in which everyone knew their place in the hierarchy and acted accordingly. He believed in a world where everyone acted ethically while taking proper educational steps toward improving him/herself. The Han found Confucianism useful: it favors the status quo. Confucianism tends toward conservatism. Confucius favors age over youth, the past over the present, the establishment over change. His teachings, thus, offer a successfully stable system.³⁶ However, Confucius lived in a time of social and political instability. His message of ethical conduct fell on deaf ears. Because of the constant warfare around them, the people necessarily dealt with the more immediate concerns of life and death.. Rather, Confucianism waited for China to enter a stable condition before it could reach its utmost potential.

The Han dynasty fused Confucianism and Legalism.³⁷ The rulers liked Legalism and its policy of reward and punishment for the general population. However, a new upper class emerged as the dominant social group at this time.³⁸ In order to keep their loyalty, the ruler used Confucian ideals. Here, rituals were crucial. When a ruler conducted the rituals correctly, others supported his rule. Additionally, the Han lacked the strength to rule solely by force. Thus, they utilized the Confucian system to show their concern for morality and proper behavior.³⁹ Proper ritual conduct legitimized the ruler in the eyes of the upper class. They valued the rituals and the ruler's desire to behave appropriately. Confucianism was thus useful in a bureaucratic system.

³⁶ Fairbanks, 53.

³⁷ Fairbanks, 62.

³⁸ Fairbanks, 60.

³⁹ Fairbanks, 62.

Confucianism emphasized action and its consequences in this world. Though the *Analects* discuss Heaven, this world's events were primary. Therefore, the emperor stood as the ultimate source of reward and punishment.⁴⁰ Clearly, such an idea benefited the Han emperor. Through Confucian teachings, people lived in fear of him as the ultimate authority. Ideally, he had only to convince the people of his morality through proper ritual. Then, the people venerated him.

Other Confucian ideals encouraged support of the emperor. Loyalty of the inferior to the superior lies at the foundation of Confucius' hierarchical system.⁴¹ With loyalty comes duty. Thus, true Confucian officials must dutifully serve their ruler in order to fulfill their roles within society.

The Confucianists guaranteed themselves a place within the imperial government due to the emphasis on properly conducted ritual. These educated people knew the how to conduct them. Together, the scholars and the emperor provided all necessary aspects of control. The emperor maintained the instruments and the symbols of power such as the throne itself, the police, and the army. The scholars provided the ideology that legitimized the emperor's reign.⁴² Due to its usefulness, Confucianism became heavily ingrained into the Han government. Confucian scholars were necessary advisors to the emperor. Through their relationship to the government, Confucianists gained influence over Chinese. Thus Confucian norms and ideals became Chinese norms and ideals.

⁴⁰ Fairbanks, 53.

⁴¹ Fairbanks, 68.

⁴² Fairbanks, 67.

Scholarship itself became an important aspect of the Chinese world because of the role scholars played as advisors. Society elevated education. People, therefore, attached superiority to learned people.

Under the Han dynasty, Confucianism gained much popularity. The imperial government and the scholars alike used the system to their benefit. However, such a system succeeded because the Han created political and social stability. Through a unified central government, peace and stability reigned the land. Thus, people had the luxury of grappling with issues of ethics and ritual. Confucius' ideal and moral teachings only make sense in a world where more basic needs were generally met. Such was the condition under the Han dynasty.

The history of the Jews surprisingly follows a similar scheme of fluctuation between stability and instability. Judah enjoyed relative stability under Cyrus of Persia (559-529 B.C.E.). The Persians established a system akin to the feudal system. Local leaders ran smaller states under the umbrella of the larger Persian Empire.⁴³ For all intents and purposes, the Jews ruled themselves. Returning from exile in 450 B.C.E, Nehemiah rebuilt Jerusalem. Through his reforms, he politically stabilized Judah for more than two and a half centuries. Nehemiah "found" an new constitution, called *Torat Moshe*.⁴⁴

⁴³ Cohen, Martin A., *Two Sister Faiths: In Introduction to a Typological Approach to Early Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity* (Massachusetts: Assumption College, 1985) 7.

⁴⁴ Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 8.

Torah Moshe describes a world dominated by agriculturists. At the time, the average Jew lived as a small farmer.⁴⁵ Taxation in the form of produce and the sacrifice of animals appropriately reflect a rural system. The sacrificial system provided meaning. Through the cult and priesthood, the individual connected with the deity. In turn the deity bestowed blessing appropriate to the needs of the farmer, such as health and cooperative weather conditions.⁴⁶ For those who inhabited urban areas, *Torat Moshe* was likely irrelevant. Their needs differed from those of the agriculturists. They were not connected to the cycle of the land. The required sacrifices would have been difficult to obtain since they did not raise animals or farm. However, the fact that *Torat Moshe* reigned as the constitution for so many hundreds of years suggests that there were too few urbanites to necessitate a change in the overall worldview.⁴⁷ *Torat Moshe* satisfied most people, thus Persian force was minimal.⁴⁸ Stability characterized the situation. With the Greek conquest under Alexander the Great, however, all of this changed.

When Alexander the Great entered the Middle East in 334 B.C.E, the balance of stability was necessarily upset.⁴⁹ Alexander the Great rearranged the political and social organization that existed. He established the Hellenistic City. Used for economic development and political control, natives as well as imposed Hellenists controlled these cities. When such cities became hellenized officially, they reached *polis* status. The *polis* or city-state exploited the countryside. They deflated agricultural prices and caused vast migration into the city. Jerusalem became such a *polis* in 175 B.C.E. The

⁴⁵ Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 10.

⁴⁶ Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 10.

⁴⁷ Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 10.

⁴⁸ Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 11.

⁴⁹ Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 11.

irreversible alteration in Jewish society lead to hundreds of years of instability.⁵⁰ Social and political upheaval characterizes this region until 70 C.E.

Ideologically, the new reality was incapable of meshing with the old constitution. Hellenistic ideas upset the balance of inherited traditions.⁵¹ The constitution needed renovation. The texts of the latter part of this period, as we shall see, reflect the radical changes the constitution underwent. Politically, revolution and the constantly changing authority mark the unstable times.

The Seleucids technically controlled the region of Palestine beginning in 198 B.C.E.⁵² Judah struggled with them as well as amongst themselves.⁵³ The foreign power, however, caused the subgroups to join forces. They bound together against the Seleucid enemy under the leadership of the Hasmoneans. Martin Cohen argues that their success came from the ability to reinterpret the Torah "in such a way as to reestablish meaning and purpose in the lives of the disoriented."⁵⁴ However, at least two constituencies existed. The agriculturist longed for the good old days of the farm. Their lives radically changed for the worse due to their migration to the urban areas. The artisan and the craftsman languished in the cities. They continued to live under a constitution that disregarded their concerns and condition. Therefore, there were at least two different issues for the people. The farmers wanted to return to life as it was, while the urbanites required an ideological and social system that better reflected their lifestyle. After the Hasmonean victory, Judah Maccabee instituted changes in favor of the

⁵⁰ Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 11.

⁵¹ Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 11.

⁵² Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 11.

⁵³ Cohen, Martin, "The Hasmonean Revolution Politically Considered," *CCAR Journal* (Fall 1975) p. 13.

urbanites.⁵⁵ Unsatisfied with this direction, subgroups that had sided with the Hasmoneans against the Seleucids now allied themselves with the Seleucids in a successful counter-revolution. Twelve years after the counter-revolution, the Hasmoneans gained a "firm grip on authority."⁵⁶

Rome enters the area in 63 B.C.E. The Jews continue to fight amongst themselves as well as with Rome. Cohen explains that the next hundred years "...are characterized by dictatorial repression, smoldering hostility, the continuous threat or presence of civil war and irreversible trend toward general rebellion."⁵⁷

The political parties known as the Pharisees and the Sadducees opposed each other. Their versions of the constitution conflicted. The Sadducean version tended toward a conservative approach to Torah while the Pharisees liberally interpreted the text.⁵⁸ The Sadducean worldview reflected the needs of the rural population. It represented the agriculturists' interest in understanding the Torah literally. *Torat Moshe's* sacrificial requirements continued to be relevant for farmers. The Pharisaic approach meshed with the urbanites. The Pharisaic worldview concerned life in the city. They developed the notions of a world to come and resurrection. Through *mitzvot*, divine commandments, one ensures a better life beyond the immediate, earthly existence. Urban life was difficult. The revolution of Pharisaic thinking gave the suffering urbanites hope of a better existence in another time.

⁵⁴ Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 12.

⁵⁵ Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 13.

⁵⁶ Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 13.

⁵⁷ Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 20.

⁵⁸ Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 15.

Tannaitic literature represents this urban reality.⁵⁹ The Pharisees instituted the notion of an Oral Law as well as a Written one. Officially, God revealed both at Sinai. Thus, both oral and written Torah's were binding. *Halakha*, which might be translated as the "way," was the new legal procedure by which the individual regulated the relationship with the divine. Where the Temple cult necessitated a priestly class to mediate between the people and God, *halakha* allowed the individual to do it on his/her own. The new system was highly individualistic rather than communal.⁶⁰ *Halakha* addressed the individual's legal responsibility and behavior. The Pharisaic system begins to take hold because of the Hasmonean victory, since the urbanites served as their primary constituency. Tonal Judaism shifts from a rural to an urban perspective. Instability is an understatement. Judaism redefined itself during this period. Ellis Rivkin explains that "[t]he old theocratic-Pentateuchal system was shorn of its authority; its most powerful institutions were radically modified; its autocratic priestly leadership was replaced. A new system of authority emerged; novel institutions were created; fresh concepts were generated, and a new leadership gave direction."⁶¹ Essentially, a new brand of Judaism emerged.

Surely, *Torat Moshe* continued to speak to the life and worldview of many people. However, due to the backing of the Romans, the Pharisaic interpretation of reality ultimately prevailed.⁶² However, instability continued. Once the Sadducees are no longer a major threat to Pharisaic authority, subgroups of Pharisees began to splinter

⁵⁹ Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 15-16.

⁶⁰ Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 17.

⁶¹ Rivkin, Ellis, *A Hidden Revolution* (Nashville: Abington, 1978) pp. 214, 215.

⁶² Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 20, 21.

from the centrist groups. This period saw a great number and variety of Pharisaic sects who vied for control.⁶³

The destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 C.E. shifted Jewish authority from Jerusalem to Yavneh. Yavneh administratively replaced Jerusalem, just as the synagogue replaced the Temple, prayer replaced sacrifice and a scholar class replaced the priestly caste.⁶⁴ Pharisaic Judaism required no ritual center. The innovations of prayer and *mitzvot* could take place anywhere. Thus, numerous synagogues as houses of meeting, study and prayer replaced the Temple.⁶⁵ Jerusalem and the Temple became symbols. Indeed, God dwelt in the Temple. Thus, the institution could not be done away with altogether.⁶⁶ However, both the Temple and Jerusalem lost their functional purposes. Such changes mark the radical instability of the time.

The rise of the scholar class in this period is crucial to our comparison. Cohen explains that "[t]he scholars were now differentiated by the mechanism of ordination...It conferred authority in legal matters in accordance with the two-fold law and entrée to administrative and judicial preference."⁶⁷ These ordainees or Rabbis became the authorities of this period. Thus, education and knowledge became the essential qualities necessary for a position of authority, rather than the hereditary system of the priests. The new system elevates learning and knowledge to new heights. Since the scholar represents society's ideal, study emerged as an important pursuit.

⁶³ Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 21.

⁶⁴ Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 32.

⁶⁵ Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 16-17.

⁶⁶ Cohen, Martin A, "Synagogue: History and Tradition," *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 14, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillian Publishing Company, 1987) p. 211.

⁶⁷ Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 32.

The Pharisaic revolution spawned a new form of Judaism. Rivkin argues that the Mishnah "is the most enduring achievement of this revolution."⁶⁸ The Mishnah breaks with the Pentateuch in its order and language. For instance, it uses proof texts in a legal fashion. The bible in its entirety uses no proof texts. The Pentateuch lacks certain elements found in the Mishnah. Additionally, the Pharisees usurp the power of the priests in all but specific symbolic matters. The *bet din*, for instance, replaces all former judges.⁶⁹ The Mishnah emerges as the quintessential text of the Tannaitic period. The world that it reflects contrasts so greatly with the one projected by the Torah that it reveals the dynamism of the period. The power system shifted to a new group, thus the constitution and ultimately the ideology changes to suit the needs of the new authority and constituency.

Cohen reports that the Mishnah provided a system of "...enforceable norms for personal and social behavior."⁷⁰ *Avot*, a treatise of the Mishnah, contains many such norms. *Avot* is a unique treatise of the Mishnah. It contains no *halakha*. Though, it does provide the credentials of students and their teachers. *Avot* establishes that these Rabbis form the unbroken chain of authority since revelation at Sinai.⁷¹ Each of these characters offers instruction regarding some aspect of personal conduct. These statements represent the essential ideas of this period.

Taken together, these sayings reveal the convictions which shaped the Pharisaic and the early dominant Tannaitic schools: that the principle task

⁶⁸ Rivkin, 223.

⁶⁹ Rivkin, 224-227.

⁷⁰ Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 35

⁷¹ Goldin, Judah. "Avot." *Encyclopedia Judaica- CD-ROM edition*. Israel: Judaica Multimedia.

was to raise many disciples; that the pillars on which society rests are the Scriptures, worship, and acts of piety; that the duty of man, regardless of consequences, is to serve God; that the company of the sages is to be preferred above all; that a household is to be governed by certain proprieties; that proper associations are to be cultivated, proper procedures are to be followed in the administration of justice; that one must engage in work rather than seek power and political influence; that it is no light responsibility teachers assume; that priests have social obligations over and above their ritual ones; that consistency and practice and decency toward all men are what count; that the study of Torah is of prime significance; that there are right ways of human conduct to adopt and wrong ways to avoid... *Avot* preserved those teachings and emphases of the Tannaim which reflected what most concerned classical Judaism: the claim of high antiquity for the Oral Law; the nature and destiny of man; the permanent centrality of Torah; the doctrine of reward and punishment; the approved course for man in his life in this world in the expectation of the world to come.⁷²

Thus, *Avot* presents those ideals the Rabbis held most dear. It is a collection of the "teachings of what the Jewish sages considered fundamental aspects of life..."⁷³ These are the norms and teachings upon which Rabbinic Judaism rests.

Avot d'Rabbi Nathan, one of the minor tractates of the Talmud, comments and expands upon *Avot*. The themes in *Avot* are the same as those addressed in *Avot*

⁷² Golden, "Avot."

d'Rabbi Nathan, though the latter includes aggadic material in its expansion upon the *Avot* text. There are two editions of the text: one that appears in the Talmud text and another published by Solomon Schechter. It seems that *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan* is an early text as those quoted are from the Tannaitic period. Because it is an early text, it preserves some of the early Tannaitic teaching that fell out of use later in that period.⁷⁴

Conservatism must replace innovation if the new authority wishes to retain influence. Such is the case with the rise of the Rabbinic tradition. Through Yavneh, ritual and religious practice became fixed and canonized. Rabban Gamaliel, as the chief executive of the Jews, canonized the Scriptures and concretized the liturgy.⁷⁵ The new legal and ritual system became fixed over time. The fact that the Rabbis could fix the texts and rituals suggests two things: that the environment had grown increasingly stable and that the system itself, though fixed, was flexible enough to endure the numerous political and social changes through time. Indeed, the essential aspects of the Rabbinic tradition continue to lay the foundation for the forms of Judaism that exist today.

Ultimately, the Rabbis did enjoy some level of stability under the Roman Empire. Rome struggled with its own decline.⁷⁶ The decline increased their need for stability in certain areas. Cohen explains that "[t]his concern created the context for the normalization of Judaism [for there was]...a desire on Rome's part for order and on the part of the Jewish establishment groups for political and ideological control."⁷⁷ Therefore, after the destruction of the Temple and the Bar Kokhba revolt, Judah enjoyed

⁷³ Golden, "Avot."

⁷⁴ Goldin, Judah. "Avot de-Rabbi Nathan." *Encyclopedia Judaica- CD-ROM edition*. Israel: Judaica Multimedia.

⁷⁵ Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 32.

⁷⁶ Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 31.

a level of autonomy.⁷⁸ Stability favors the status quo. Since the leadership naturally favored stability, they cooperated with Rome.⁷⁹ Relative stability followed. Naturally, there were those who disliked the situation, but, the controlling groups maintained stability.⁸⁰ Such stability nurtured the growth and strength of the Rabbinic tradition.

As did China, the region of Judah and the Jews traveled between stability and instability, unity and disunity. Instability fostered great thinkers to develop systems of thought that pictured an ideal. For both traditions, the ideal situation focused on the behavior of the individual. Stability ensured the popularity of these systems. It is these social and cultural norms that emerged from the turbulence that will be the focus of our study. Through a close comparison of specific quotes from the *Analects of Confucius*, *Avot* and *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan*, we will be able to observe the unquestionable similarities between these texts.

⁷⁷ Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 31.

⁷⁸ Safrai, Shmuel, "The Era of the Mishnah and Talmud (70-640)," *A History of the Jewish People*, ed. H.H. Ben-Sasson (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1976) 309.

⁷⁹ Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 36.

⁸⁰ Cohen, *Two Sister Faiths*, 36.

Chapter 2: Ultimate Reality

Both the Rabbis and Confucius draw a picture of an ultimate reality. Though their specific images of the ultimate realm differ, they similarly discuss creation, the role of prayer, and the merits of ancients and ancestors.

The Chinese and Jewish traditions share a similar worldview. There exists a unifying entity or being who/that interacts with people or individuals. This entity/being acts as creator. *Avot* discusses the ultimate unity of creation.

Rabbi Elazar of Bertotha said: "Give Him (God) what is His, for you and yours belong to Him. As David said: for all is from You, from Your hand we gave to You."⁸¹

Everything belongs to God. Confucius conveys a similar idea in the notion of an all-pervading unity. The difference, however, lies in the fact that Confucius does not pronounce the definite existence of an entity. The *Analects* explain,

The Master said, "...my doctrine is that of an all-pervading unity.' [A] disciple...replied, 'Yes.' The Master went out and the other disciples asked, saying, 'What do his words mean?' [He] said, 'The doctrine of our master is to be true to the principles of our nature and the benevolent exercise of them to others—this and nothing more.'⁸²

Confucius, here, defines his notion of an "all-pervading unity," as that of appropriate interaction with the self and with others. Confucius believed and taught the idea of an all-pervading unity, though, he did not explicitly relate this unity to any entity with a

⁸¹ *Avot* 3:8

proper name. Elsewhere in the *Analects*, Confucius discusses his search for the all-pervading unity.

The Master said... "I suppose, that I am one who learns many things and keeps them in memory?" [A disciple] replied, 'Yes—but perhaps it is not so?' 'No,' was the answer; 'I seek a unity all-pervading.'⁸³

Again, Confucius professes an implicit belief in an all-pervading unity. He seeks it through learning. Both traditions believe that the universe has an underlying, unifying principle. The Rabbis specifically name this principle God and pronounce attributes of God. Confucius remains vague regarding such identification.

Elsewhere in Confucius, we see that Heaven acts. We read,

The Master said, "Alas! There is no one that knows me." Tsze said, "What do you mean by thus saying—that no one knows you?" The Master replied, "I do no murmur against Heaven. I do not grumble against men. My studies lie low, and my penetration rises high. But there is Heaven—that knows me!"⁸⁴

The *Analects* anthropomorphize Heaven in that Heaven has the power to know. The *Analects* explain further,

The Master was put in fear in K'wang. He said, "After the death of king Wan, was not the cause of truth lodged here in me? If Heaven had wished to let this cause of the truth perish, then I, a future mortal, should not have

⁸² Legge p. 169-70, book 4 chapter 15 parts one and two.

⁸³ Legge p. 295, book 15 chapter 2 parts one, two and three.

⁸⁴ Legge p. 288, book 14 chapter 37.

got such a relation to that cause. While Heaven does not let the cause of truth perish, what can the people of K'wang do to me?"⁸⁵

Heaven acts and values the cause of truth. Heaven becomes a singular entity that acts and knows. Thus, Confucius' notion of Heaven comes close to the Rabbis' conception of God. Heaven/God is a singular entity with the power to act. *Avot* explains,

There are five possessions that God possesses in His world: Torah is the first possession, Heaven and Earth are another possession, Abraham is another possession, Israel is another possession and the Temple is another possession.⁸⁶

God possesses, thus, God acts. (Yet another similarity between these particular passages is the emphasis put on truth and Torah. We will see further examples of this parallel in following chapters.) *Avot* states,

In ten utterances, the world was created...⁸⁷

This is an important phrase, for it details that God speaks, or at least spoke, and that God performed creation. *Avot* discusses God's patience.

Ten generations from Adam to Noah, (are) to make known how great was God's patience.⁸⁸

And,

The ten generations from Noah to Abraham (are) to make known how great was God's patience.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Legge p. 217-8, book 9 chapter 5.

⁸⁶ *Avot* 6:10

⁸⁷ *Avot* 5:1

⁸⁸ *Avot* 5:2

⁸⁹ *Avot* 5:3

These are but a few of the examples of the Rabbis anthropomorphizing God in Rabbinic literature. Clearly, both the Rabbis and Confucius agree that a specific entity, God or Heaven, acts in the world. Such an entity or being serves to unify the universe and interacts with the earthly component.

On the matter of creation, *Avot* and *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan* discuss God as creator. God created people in God's image. *Avot* explains,

(Akiba) used to say: beloved is man for he was created in the image (of God); he was so loved that it was made known to him that he was created in the image (of God), as it is said: "For in the image of God, He (God) made the man." Beloved is Israel, for they are called the children of God; they are so beloved that it was made known to them that they are called the children of God, as it is said: "You are the children of the Eternal your God." Beloved is Israel, for they were given a precious instrument; they are so loved, that it was made known to them that they were given a precious instrument, as it is said, "For I have given you a good doctrine, my Torah, do not forsake it."⁹⁰

Avot d'Rabbi Nathan repeats this teaching in a somewhat simplified form.

Rabbi Meir said: beloved is man for he was created in the image of God, as it is said, "for in the image of God, He created the man." Beloved is Israel for they are called children of God, as it is said, "you are children of the Eternal, your God." Beloved is Israel for they were given a precious

⁹⁰ *Avot* 3:18

instrument through which the world was created, as it is said, "For I have given you a good doctrine, my Torah, do not forsake it."⁹¹

God created people in God's image and informed them of that fact. We learn through these texts, too, that God maintains a relationship with Israel through Torah.

Avot explains the reason for human creation.

Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai received (the oral tradition) from Hillel and Shammai. He used to say: If you have learned a lot of Torah, do not claim credit for yourself, for it was because of this you were created.⁹²

Avot d'Rabbi Nathan repeats this teaching. It quotes Yohanan ben Zakkai, saying

If you did much Torah, do not take credit for yourself, for it was because of this you were created. Humanity was created only for the purpose of engaging in Torah.⁹³

God created people for the specific purpose of studying Torah.

Confucius, too, speaks of Heaven as creator. We read,

The Master said, "Heaven produced the virtue that is in me. Hwan Tui—what can he do to me?"⁹⁴

Though Confucius specifically speaks of virtue alone, he does recognize that creation stems from a higher power. Whether termed Heaven or God, Confucius and the Rabbis identify this being/entity as the creator.

Confucius discusses the notion of "ordinances of Heaven." We read that,

⁹¹ *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan* chapter 39

⁹² *Avot* 2:9

⁹³ *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan*, chapter 14

⁹⁴ Legge p. 202, book 7 chapter 22.

The Master said, "Without recognizing the ordinances of Heaven, it is impossible to be a superior man..."⁹⁵

This suggests the importance of study and following the appropriate path of behavior. One must study to some degree to know what the ordinances of Heaven command. The dutiful, superior man follows those rules. Certainly, one could parallel the ordinances of Heaven to Torah. As we read earlier, God made Torah for people to follow. In no less than three places in *Avot*, the Rabbis discuss the purpose of the giving of the Torah to Israel.

Rabbi Hananyah ben Akashyah said, "The Holy One, Blessed be He, wanting to purify Israel, therefore greatedened them (by giving them) Torah and commandments, as it is said, 'The Eternal desired his righteousness, that he would magnify and glorify Torah.'"⁹⁶

There is an unbreakable link between the rules themselves and the fact that they were either given by God or ordained through Heaven. In order to be a person of true, one must follow the divine mode of conduct.

Differences between Confucius and the Rabbis understanding the universe and ultimate reality exist as well. The *Analects* make no mention of the world to come, an idea prevalent in the works of the Rabbis. In fact, a statement of the existence of a world beyond this reality prefaces every chapter of *Avot*.

⁹⁵ Legge p. 354, book 20 chapter 3.

⁹⁶ *Avot* 3:23, 5:26 and 6:11

All of Israel has a share in the world to come, as it is said, "Your people are all righteous, they will forever possess the land; they are the sprout of my plantation, the work of my hands to be glorified."⁹⁷

Israel has a special relationship with God. *Avot* establishes this relationship at the start of every chapter before discussing Israel's behavioral and ritual requirements. Thus, the Rabbis reiterate their sense of Israel's chosenness, reinforced by the idea that all Israel has a place in the world to come. Confucius suggests that some individuals have a specific relationship with Heaven. However, the *Analects* lack any teaching that connects Heaven with the people.

Confucius and the Rabbis differ on the topic of whether or not Heaven/God speaks in a way that can be heard. *Avot* explains,

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said, "Everyday a voice goes out from Mt. Horeb, announcing and saying, 'Woe to humanity who insults Torah, for anyone who does not engage in Torah is regarded as rebuked, as it is said, 'Like an earring of God in the mouth of a swine, so too is a beautiful woman lacking in sense.'"⁹⁸

One can hear the voice of God rebuking the people. *Avot* offers an audible voice for one to hear, a literal understanding of the voice of God. Confucius differs. We read,

The Master said, "I would prefer not speaking." [A disciple] said, "If you, Master, do not speak, what shall we your disciples, have to record?" The Master said, "Does Heaven speak? The four seasons pursue their courses

⁹⁷ *Avot*, chapters 1-6.

⁹⁸ *Avot* 6:2

and all things are continually being produced, but does Heaven say anything?"⁹⁹

Confucius here argues that conduct and the natural progression of things teaches us how to behave. Speech does not act as a guide. Thus, he contrasts the Rabbis. The Rabbis certainly believe in God's ability to speak and be heard, whether from Mt. Horeb, or through the words of the Torah.

On the subject of ritual, both the Rabbis and Confucius speak of the power of prayer. Consistent with the notion that a unifying being/entity exists and interacts with the earthly world, both traditions identify prayer as an appropriate means of communication with this being/entity. The difference between the traditions lies in the idea of whose prayer Heaven/God chooses to answer. *Avot* explains,

Rabbi Eliezar ben Jacob says, "One who performs one mitzvah obtains an advocate for himself, one who commits a sin obtains an accuser for himself. Repentance and good deeds serve as a shield against divine retribution."¹⁰⁰

Prayer and action act as a defense against divine punishment, which suggests the existence of someone or something that hears and is appeased by prayer.

Confucius offers two somewhat conflicting opinions on prayer. In one instance we read,

The Master said... "[H]e who offends against Heaven has none to whom he can pray."¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Legge p. 326, book 17 chapter 19.

¹⁰⁰ *Avot* 4:13

¹⁰¹ Legge p. 159, book 3 chapter 13 parts one and two.

One who sins has no recourse. In the Rabbinic text, repercussions for good or evil action take place in the human realm, through an accuser or an advocate. However, Confucius sees punishment on the divine realm. Once one sins, that person loses all hope that his/her prayer will be answered. However, Heaven might answer the prayer of a non-sinner. The *Analects* explain,

The Master, being very sick, Tsze-lu asked leave to pray for him. He said, "May such a thing be done?" Tsze-lu replied, "It may. In the Eulogies it is said, 'Prayer has been made for thee to the spirits of the upper and lower worlds.'" The Master said, "My praying has been for a long time."¹⁰²

That prayer was made in order for people can pray to the spirits of the upper and lower worlds suggests that there are beings who hear and may be able to answer prayer.

Though we have examples of a discussion of Heaven here, *Avot* speaks of God far more often. Confucius tends to concentrate on this world more than on transcendent beings.

Both the Rabbis and Confucius value the past. Confucius often discusses the merits of the ancients' actions. We read,

The Master said, "In ancient times, men learned with a view to their own improvement; Nowadays, men learn with a view to the approbation of others."¹⁰³

Confucius values improvement of the self over seeking others' approval. Thus, people of the past acted in a superior manner. Elsewhere, Confucius professes his favor for the ceremonies of former times.

¹⁰² Legge p. 206, book 7 chapter 34.

¹⁰³ Legge p. 285, book 14 chapter 25.

The Master said, "The men of former times, in the matter of ceremonies and music, were rustics, it is said, while the men of these latter times, in ceremonies and music, are accomplished gentlemen. If I have occasion to use those things, I prefer the men of former times."¹⁰⁴

Confucius valued the actions and attitudes of generations past.

Certainly, the Rabbis heavily value the actions of those past. *Avot* details the specific characters through which the tradition passed. *Avot* explains,

Moses received the Torah from Sinai and passes it to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets passed it to the people of the Great Assembly...Simon the righteous was of the last survivors of the Great Assembly...Antigonous of Sokho received (the tradition) from Simon the righteous...Yose ben yo'ezer of Zeredah and Yose ben Yochanan of Jerusalem received (the tradition) from them...Joshua ben Perahyah and Nittai of Arbel received (the tradition) from them...Shemayah and Avtalyon received (the tradition) from them...Hillel and Shammai received (the tradition) from them...¹⁰⁵

The Rabbis carefully trace the transmission of the Torah and its tradition from one generation to the next going back to Moses at Sinai. Each generation legitimizes itself through the claim that the appropriate people transmitted the tradition to them.

Therefore, the teachings of each of these individuals carries weight and merit because they are a part of this unbroken chain from the time of revelation. The past validates the current authorities. Without this authentication from the past, their words and teachings

¹⁰⁴Legge p. 237, book 11 chapter 1.

would diminish in authenticity. Thus it is with both the Rabbis and Confucius that the past carries authenticity and is preferable to the present.

The Rabbis and Confucius discuss their sense of the universe, God/Heaven, and the rituals and ceremonies that maintain the relationship between the ultimate realm and people. Though the Rabbis tend to be more specific in naming the ultimate being/entity, both the Rabbis and Confucius deem the realm of the ultimate an important part of their world view.

¹⁰⁵ *Avot* 1:1, 1:2, 1:3, 1:4, 1:6, 1:10, and 1:12.

Chapter 3: Human Characteristics

The Rabbinic and Confucian traditions paint a similar picture of the human ideal. The scholar of Torah represents the ideal Rabbinic character. All other qualities stem from this most basic attribute. Confucius, too, values study. In his *Analects*, he constantly mentions the "rules of propriety." These rules dictate proper conduct, often paralleling the ideals of Torah. Indeed, learning pervades descriptions of the Confucian "ideal man."

Avot lists many ideal personal characteristics. Its concern is the qualifications required for Torah study. The text explains:

Torah is greater than priesthood or royalty, for royalty is obtained by thirty steps and the priesthood is obtained by twenty four steps, but the Torah is obtained by forty eight things, and these are: study, careful listening, ordered speech, understanding of the heart, awe (of master), fear (of God), humility, happiness, purity, attendance on scholars, attachment to his fellows, discussion with students, being comfortable with Scripture and Mishnah, moderation in trade, moderation in manners (ways of the world), moderation in pleasure, moderation in sleep, moderation in conversation, moderation in laughter, patience, a good heart, faithful wisdom (intellectual honesty), acceptance of chastisement; knowing one's place, being content with one's lot, making a fence around one's words, does not take credit for oneself, being beloved, loving God, loving humility, loving righteousness, loving uprightness, loving reproof, keeping far from glory,

not indulging in one's own learning (being proud), taking no pleasure in decisions (dictating decisions), carrying the yoke with one's fellow, giving him the benefit of the doubt, he directs him (his companion) to truth, he directs him to peace, he is content with his study, questioning and answering, listening and adding, learning in order to teach, learning in order to do, making one's teacher wiser, determining the proper order of what he hears, and gives credit to the one he quotes. You may infer that whoever does something in another's name brings redemption to the world, as it is said, "Esther said to the king in the name of Mordecai..."¹⁰⁶

The acquisition of Torah requires more than study alone. One must maintain positive interactions with others while holding a positive attitude toward the world. The ideal scholar disciplines him/herself in every aspect of his/her life.

Interestingly, the Chinese tradition requires similar behavioral attributes of scholars.

The Master said, "He who aims to be a man of complete virtue in his food and does not seek to gratify his appetite, nor in his dwelling-place does he seek the appliances of ease; he is earnest in what he is doing, and careful in his speech; he frequents the company of men of principle that he may be rectified—such a person may be said indeed to love to learn."¹⁰⁷

Here, Confucius declines to mention specific texts. Rather, behavior suffices to identify one as a lover of learning.

¹⁰⁶ *Avot* 6:6

¹⁰⁷ Legge p.143-4, book 1 chapter 14.

Elsewhere in the *Analects*, Confucius associates learning with principled behavior.

Mechanics have their shops to dwell in, in order to accomplish their works. The superior man learns in order to reach to the utmost of his principles.¹⁰⁸

For both the Rabbis and Confucius, appropriate behavior is inextricably linked to learning. When the superior man concentrates on his behavior, learning becomes an aspect of appropriate action. Though the Rabbinic man of learning focuses on study, one truly obtains Torah through appropriate behavior.

Confucius draws a contrast between the superior and the mean man.

There are three things of which the superior man stands in awe. He stands in awe of the ordinances of Heaven. He stands in awe of great men. He stands in awe of the words of the sages. The mean man does not know the ordinances of Heaven, and consequently does not stand in awe of them.

He is disrespectful to great men. He makes sport of the words of sages.¹⁰⁹

Confucius differentiates between appropriate and inappropriate behavior through ones actions concerning ordinances of Heaven, great men, and sages. The Rabbis, too, hold these people and institutions with special regard. *Avot* explains that one who learns has reverence for his master and for God and has a comfortable knowledge of Scripture and Mishnah.¹¹⁰ So too does the superior man have reverence for the Chinese equivalents of these Rabbinic institutions.

The *Analects* explain the goals of a superior man.

¹⁰⁸ Legge p. 341, book 19 chapter 7.

¹⁰⁹ Legge p. 313, book 16 chapter 8.

Let the superior man never fail reverentially to order his own conduct, and let him be respectful to others and observant of propriety—then all within the four seas will be his brothers...¹¹¹

Confucius, here, concentrates on the behaviors of respect and observance of proper rules. The Rabbis hold these as essential concerns as well. As we saw in *Avot*, the ideal character respects others, including companions and teachers, and carefully adheres to the words and ways of the Torah.¹¹² Not all Confucian texts regarding the ideal character explicitly deal with the issue and practice of learning. However, the ideal attributes Confucius professes clearly parallel behavioral elements that the Rabbis favor and associate with learning.

Both traditions name specific attributes, favorable and unfavorable. Just as the Rabbinic ideal loves righteousness, sincerity, and humility, so too does the Confucian ideal. The *Analects* explain,

The Master said, "The superior man in everything considers righteousness to be essential. He performs it according to the rules of propriety. He brings it forth in humility. He completes it with sincerity. This is indeed a superior man."¹¹³

Elsewhere we read,

The Master said, 'The mind of the superior man is conversant with righteousness; the mind of the mean man is conversant with gain.'¹¹⁴

Later, the *Analects* ask,

¹¹⁰ *Avot* 6:6

¹¹¹ Legge p. 253, book 12 chapter 5 part 4.

¹¹² *Avot* 6:6.

¹¹³ Legge p. 299, book 15 chapter 17.

[D]oes the superior man esteem valor? The Master said, "The superior man holds righteousness to be of highest importance. A man in a superior situation, having valor without righteousness, will be guilty of insubordination; one of the lower people, having valor without righteousness, will commit robbery."¹¹⁵

The *Analects* continue.

Confucius said, "The superior man has nine things which are subjects with him of thoughtful consideration. In regard to the use of his eyes, he is anxious to see clearly. In regard to the use of his ears, he is anxious to hear distinctly. In regard to his countenance, he is anxious to be benign. In regard to his demeanor, he is anxious that it should be sincere. In regard to his doing business, he is anxious that it should be reverently careful. In regard to what he doubts about, he is anxious to question others. When he is angry, he thinks of the difficulties (his anger might involve him in). When he sees gain to be got, he thinks of righteousness."¹¹⁶

Confucius carefully delineates these essential aspects of the ideal character common to the Chinese and Jewish traditions. Having one's mind focused firmly on such principles forms the basis of the human ideal.

Confucius and the Rabbis agree to the undesirability of pride.

¹¹⁴ Legge p. 170, book 4 chapter 16.

¹¹⁵ Legge p. 329, book 17 chapter 23.

¹¹⁶ Legge p.314, book 16 chapter 10.

The Master said, "The superior man has dignified ease without pride. The mean man has pride without dignified ease."¹¹⁷

The Rabbis concur. Overindulging in one's own ability shows a lack of character.¹¹⁸

The Rabbis and Confucius highly regard the quality of honesty. The *Analects* explain,

...A superior man, in regard to what he does not know, shows a cautious reserve...¹¹⁹ Therefore, a superior man considers it necessary that the names he uses may be spoken appropriately, and also that what he speaks may be carried out appropriately. What the superior man requires, is just that in his words there may be nothing incorrect.¹²⁰

Confucius' idea parallels *Avot* when it speaks of "faithful wisdom" or intellectual honesty, and giving proper credit where it is do.¹²¹ Both the superior man and the learned man concern themselves with honesty in speech.

Elsewhere, the *Analects* speak of attributes the ideal man avoids.

Confucius said, "There are three things which the superior man guards against. In youth, when the physical powers are not yet settled, he guards against lust. When he is strong and the physical powers are full of vigor, he guards against quarrelsomeness. When he is old, and the animal powers are decayed, he guards against covetousness."¹²²

¹¹⁷ Legge p. 274, book 13 chapter 26.

¹¹⁸ *Avot* 6:6

¹¹⁹ Legge p. 263, book 13 chapter 3 part 4.

¹²⁰ Legge p. 264, book 13, chapter 3, part 7.

¹²¹ *Avot* 6:6

¹²² Legge p. 312-3, book 16 chapter 7.

Confucius speaks here primarily of emotions dictated by the physical, but apparent similarities exist. The Rabbis speak of contentment with ones lot.¹²³ Without specific mention of the details of one's condition, the Rabbis agree with Confucius that the ideal character lives according to ones life situation.

Confucius affirms the importance of knowing one's place.

[A philosopher] said, "The superior man, in his thoughts, does not go out of his place."¹²⁴

This idea refers back to the quality of honesty, also important to the Rabbis.¹²⁵ In societies that establish hierarchy, the ideal human being knows his/her place in the greater scheme of things and acts accordingly.

Confucius explains that the superior man seeks to bring out the good qualities of others.

The Master said, "The superior man seeks to perfect the admirable qualities of men, and does not seek to perfect their bad qualities. The mean man does the opposite of this."¹²⁶

Certainly this correlates with *Avot*. We read that the learned man "seek[s] to make his teacher wiser," and "direct[s] [his companion] toward truth, and directing him toward peace."¹²⁷ A model for human behavior includes helping others improve themselves.

The superior man concerns himself with perfecting the self, as well as helping others perfect themselves.

¹²³ *Avot* 6:6

¹²⁴ Legge p. 286, book 14 chapter 28.

¹²⁵ *Avot* 6:6

¹²⁶ Legge p. 258, book 12 chapter 16.

¹²⁷ *Avot* 6:6

The Master said, "The superior man is distressed by his want of ability.

He is not distressed by men's not knowing him." ¹²⁸

The superior man worries that he understands and knows humanity and human nature, rather than becoming preoccupied with popularity or reputation. Just as the Rabbis explain the ideal character's attributes of moderation in pleasure, sleep, conversation, laughter and manners,¹²⁹ Confucius states that the superior man keeps his mind on self development to meet the ultimate rules of propriety. The ideal character focuses on the self and ability rather than on reputation.

Avot deals with the rewards and characteristics of a student of Torah.

Rabbi Meir says: all who engage themselves in Torah for its own sake merits many things; even more, the whole world, all of it, is worthwhile for his sake; he is called friend, beloved, he loves God, he loves all people (things created), he makes God happy and he makes people happy. (Torah) invests him with humility and fear, it makes him fit to be righteous, God-fearing, upright, and faithful; (Torah) keeps him far from sin and close to virtue. Others benefit by his advice and wisdom, understanding and strength. (Torah) gives him sovereignty and power and judging ability. Torah reveals strength to him, and he is made like a fountain that is strengthened like a stream that does not ease. He is discreet and patient and forgiving of insult to him. (Torah) strengthens him and raises him above all creation."¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Legge p. 300, book 15 chapter 18.

¹²⁹ *Avot* 6:6

¹³⁰ *Avot* 6:1

These characteristics of the learned pervade the pages of the *Analects* as well. For instance, Confucius discusses the superiority of one who corrects his faults.

The faults of the superior man are like the eclipses of the moon. He has his faults, and all men see them; he changes again, and all men look up to him.¹³¹

The superior man, like the learned man, affects others with his actions. The superior man, thus, commands respect.

As the Rabbis describe the student, Confucius describes characteristics of the wise.

The Master said, "The wise are free from perplexities; the virtuous from anxiety; and the bold from fear."¹³²

What does it mean to be free from anxiety and perplexities? When people are honest and fair, speak correctly and treat others with respect, they free themselves from guilt and difficult situations. Righteousness and sincerity keep life simple and anxiety free.

Confucius explains wisdom.

[A disciple] asked what constituted wisdom. The Master said, "To give one's self earnestly to the duties due to men, and while respecting spiritual beings, to keep aloof from them, may be called wisdom..."¹³³

Wisdom is associated with proper behavior. One attains wisdom through proper human interaction as well as through study. The Rabbis agree. Appropriate interaction with others is as important in achieving wisdom as through formal study.

The Rabbis also discuss the attributes of the wise. *Avot* asks:

¹³¹ Legge p. 346, book 19 chapter 21.

¹³² Legge p. 225, book 9 chapter 28.

Who is wise? The one who learns from every person, as it is written,

"From all my teachers, I gained wisdom..."¹³⁴

Elsewhere, *Avot* describes attributes of the wise:

There are seven characteristics of the uneducated and seven of the wise:
the wise does not speak before one who is greater than he in wisdom and
understanding, he does not interrupt the words of his fellow, he does not
answer hastily, he questions according to the subject and answers
according to halacha, he speaks to the first point first and the last point
last, and what he has not learned, he says he has not learned, and he knows
the truth; the opposite is so for the uneducated.¹³⁵

The wise person learns from all people, acts according to certain rules, and honestly
admits to the limitations of his knowledge. The Rabbis and Confucius agree that wisdom
involves proper interaction with others.

In the mind of the Rabbis, the wise know how to speak appropriately. *Avot*
explains that the wise person cautiously speaks in the presence of one of greater wisdom
and does not interrupt his/her fellow. The opposite holds true for the uneducated or
stupid person. Confucius agrees. In the *Analects*, we find,

The Master said, "Fine words and insinuating appearance are seldom
associated with virtue."¹³⁶

The *Analects* explain,

¹³³ Legge p. 191, book 6 chapter 20.

¹³⁴ *Avot* 4:1, *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan* chapter 23 repeats this teaching.

¹³⁵ *Avot* 5:9

¹³⁶ Legge p. 191, book 17 chapter 17.

The Master said, "The superior man is affable, but not adulatory; the mean man is adulatory, but not affable."¹³⁷

Further, we read,

The Master said, "Fine words, an insinuating appearance and excessive respect... I am... ashamed of them. To conceal resentment against a person, and appear friendly with him... I am also ashamed of it."¹³⁸

Confucius sees inappropriate speech as a product of the "mean man," the one who lacks virtue. Appropriate speech reveals honesty and integrity. Inappropriate words relay deceit and flattery. Through one's speech, another can ascertain the quality of one's character and one's level of wisdom or stupidity.

Both the Rabbis and Confucius value modesty. *Avot* explains,

All that have the three following things are students of Abraham our father, and the one who has the opposite three things is a student of the wicked Balaam. A good eye, a humble spirit and a humble/modest desire are of the students of our father Abraham; an evil eye, an arrogant spirit and a greedy desire, are of the students of the wicked Balaam.¹³⁹

Compare that with the *Analects*, where,

The Master said, "The firm, the enduring, the simple and the modest are near to virtue."¹⁴⁰

The traditions idealize modesty and humility. That the Rabbis associate modesty and humility with Abraham means they regard it as an important personal characteristic. And

¹³⁷ Legge p. 273, book 13 chapter 23.

¹³⁸ Legge p. 182, book 5 chapter 24.

¹³⁹ *Avot* 5:22

¹⁴⁰ Legge p. 274, book 13 chapter 27.

if modesty brings one near virtue, certainly, Confucius considers it a characteristic of high importance as well.

Avot discusses the best and worst qualities a person can have.

(Yochanan ben Zakkai) said to them: "Go and see: what is the best way a person can be?" Rabbi Eliezar said, "A good eye." Rabbi Joshua said, "a good friend." Rabbi Yosse said, "A good neighbor." Rabbi Shimon said, "One who sees the future (one with foresight)." Rabbi Elazar said, "A good heart." He said to them, "I prefer the words of Elazar ben Arakh over your words, for in his words, your words are included." He said to them: "Go and see: what is the most evil way of being from which a person should stay away?" Rabbi Eliezar said, "an evil eye." Rabbi Joshua said, "a bad friend." Rabbi Yosse said, "a bad neighbor." Rabbi Shimon said, "One who borrows and does not repay; one who borrows from another person is like one who borrows from God, as it is said: the wicked borrow and do not repay, the righteous is gracious and gives." Rabbi Elazar said, "A bad heart." He said to them, "I prefer the words of Elazar ben Arakh over your words, for in his words, yours are included."¹⁴¹

Avot d'Rabbi Nathan offers a basic repetition of the same story, with a few additions.

"Go and see: to what way should a person cling in order that he will enter the world to come." Rabbi Eliezar entered and said, "A good eye." Rabbi Joshua entered and said, "A good friend." Rabbi Yosse entered and said, "A good neighbor, a good impulse and a good wife." Rabbi Shimon said, "Foresight." Rabbi Elazar entered and said, "A good heart toward heaven

and a good heart toward humanity.” He said to them, “I prefer the words of Elazar ben Arach over your words, for in his words, yours are included.” He said to them, “Go and see: what are the bad ways from which to stay away in order that one should enter the world to come.” Rabbi Elieazer entered and said, “An evil eye.” Rabbi Joshua entered and said, “A bad friend.” Rabbi Yosse entered and said, “A bad neighbor, a bad impulse and a bad wife.” Rabbi Shimon entered and said, “Borrowing and not repaying. One who borrows from another person is like one who borrows from God, as it is said: the wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous is gracious and gives.” Rabbi Elazar entered and said, “One who is mean spirited toward heaven, mean hearted toward the commandments, and mean hearted toward humanity.” He said to them, “I prefer the words of Elazar to your words, for within his words, your words are included.”¹⁴²

These passages speak of generosity, kindness and good intentions. Having a good heart encompasses such positive human attributes and causes one to follow appropriate and considerate behavior when interacting with fellow human beings, God, and Heaven. Selflessness exists as the underlying ideal. The ideal person considers and acts according to the needs of others.

For Confucius, too, the ideal person focuses on appropriate behavior.

¹⁴¹ *Avot* 2:13 and 2:14

¹⁴² *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan* chapter 14

The Master said, "The superior man thinks of virtue; the small man thinks of comfort. The superior man thinks of the sanctions of law; the small man thinks of favors which he may receive."¹⁴³

The superior man follows a path of virtue rather than preoccupying himself with his own needs. Virtuousness goes hand and hand with selflessness.

Confucius continues to speak of the inferior quality of selfishness.

The Master said, "The mind of the superior man is conversant with righteousness; the mind of the mean man is conversant with gain."¹⁴⁴

The superior man follows appropriate behavior, similar to the code of which Yochanan asked his disciples.

The Master said... "The man, who in the view of gain things of righteousness; who, in the view of danger is prepared to give up his life; and who does not forget an agreement however far back it extends—such a man might be reckoned a complete man."¹⁴⁵

Ideal behavior includes righteousness and virtue. For the Rabbis, righteousness allows one to enter into the world to come. The *Analects* echo a similar idea. Ultimate reward awaits the righteous person.

The *Analects* summarize the ideal of unselfishness we see in the work of the Rabbis and Confucius.

The Master said, "What the superior man seeks, is in himself. What the mean man seeks, is in others."¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Legge p. 168, book 4 chapter 11.

¹⁴⁴ Legge p. 170, book 4 chapter 16.

¹⁴⁵ Legge p. 280, book 14 chapter 13.

¹⁴⁶ Legge p. 300, book 15 chapter 20.

Virtue and righteousness are paths toward appropriate behavior. One's ability to follow those paths are measured according to one's own actions. The ideal character reaches toward generosity and good intentions regarding others, rather than toward gain or improvement at another's cost.

Similarities in the description of the human ideal abound. To some degree, both traditions emphasize study as an aspect of the ideal character, though certainly Torah and learning are much more prevalent in the Rabbinic texts. The ideal man, for Confucius and the Rabbis, focuses on improvement of the self through selflessness and appropriate interaction with other people. Superior and learned people are kind, generous and thoughtful. They treat others respectfully and speak honestly of their own abilities and their knowledge of the truth. They follow an established path, whether it be named Torah, rules of conduct, or rules of propriety. Both understand and respect their position within the greater hierarchy of their societies.

Chapter 4: Individual Conduct

Avot and the *Analects of Confucius* offer behavioral instruction. The traditions encourage the individual to continually better him/herself. The texts address interpersonal relationships, as well as appropriate behavior within the context of the greater society. Between the texts, we see possible comparisons on the topics of study, self-improvement, and speech. Each directs the individual toward self-improvement.

The topic of study is of central concern to the Rabbis and Confucius. Both traditions concentrate on the importance of study. Study is critical for its own sake as well as its means of helping to cultivate other positive attributes of character.

Learning comes with many rewards. The *Analects* teach,

The Master said, "The object of the superior man is truth. Food is not his object. There is ploughing—even in that there is sometimes want. So with learning—emolument may be found it. The superior man is anxious lest he should not get truth; he is not anxious lest poverty should come upon him."¹⁴⁷

The notion of reward associated with learning correlates with the rabbinic ideal of the merits of learning. *Avot* explains,

All who engage in Torah for its own sake merits many things...¹⁴⁸

The traditions agree that study and learning offer rewards.

In the *Analects*, proper behavior in itself equals learning.

¹⁴⁷ Legge p. 303, book 15 chapter 31.

¹⁴⁸ *Avot* 6:1. For a full quotation and translation, see chapter 3.

...If a man withdraws his mind from the love of beauty and applies it as sincerely to the love of the virtuous; if in serving his parents he can exert his utmost strength; if, in serving his prince, he can devote his life; if, in his intercourse with his friends, his words are sincere—although men say that he has not learned, I will certainly say that he has.¹⁴⁹

The *Analects* continue, saying,

The Master said, “He who aims to be a man of complete virtue in his food does not seek to gratify his appetite, nor in his dwelling place does not seek the appliances of ease; he is earnest in what he is doing, and careful in his speech; he frequents the company of men of principle that he may be rectified—such a person may be said indeed to love to learn.”¹⁵⁰

Learning involves proper behavior. Good conduct qualifies one as a learner.

Honesty reflects one’s level of knowledge.

The Master said, “...When you know a thing, to hold that you know it; and when you do not know a thing, to allow that you do not know it—this is knowledge.”¹⁵¹

Again, behavior determines a level of learning. Confucius associates virtue with learning.

...[L]earning extensively, and having a firm and sincere aim; inquiring with earnestness, and reflecting with self-application—virtue is in such a course.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Legge p. 141, book 1 chapter 7.

¹⁵⁰ Legge p. 143-144, book 1 chapter 14.

¹⁵¹ Legge p. 151, book 2, chapter 17.

¹⁵² Legge p. 341, book 19, chapter 6.

Confucius lists specific qualities required for a scholar.

...What qualities must a man possess to entitle him to be called a scholar?

The Master said, "He must be thus—earnest, urgent and bland—among his friends, earnest and urgent; among his brethren, bland."¹⁵³

We find other descriptions of the scholar elsewhere.

The Master said, "If the scholar be not grave, he will not call forth any veneration, and his learning will not be solid."¹⁵⁴

Additionally, Confucius offers a negative model of a scholar.

The Master said, "A scholar, whose mind is set on truth and who is ashamed of bad clothes and bad food, is not fit to be discoursed with."¹⁵⁵

For Confucius, proper conduct is an essential aspect of proper study. A scholar knows how to behave appropriately. *Avot* echoes this idea.

...Torah is acquired by 48 steps, and they are: study, careful listening, ordered speech, understanding of the heart, awe, fear (of God), humility, happiness, purity, attendance on scholars, attachment to fellows...¹⁵⁶

One acquires learning through appropriate behavior as well as through the study of text with teachers. By associating learning with ideal behavioral traits, Confucius and the Rabbis launch learning into a place of utmost importance, for the scholar as well as every other individual. Rather than being esoteric, study applies to general conduct. Thus, anyone who wishes to interact with others appropriately ought to engage in study.

¹⁵³ Legge p. 274, book 13, chapter 28.

¹⁵⁴ Legge p. 141, book 1, chapter 8 part 1.

¹⁵⁵ Legge p. 168, book 4, chapter 9.

¹⁵⁶ *Avot* 6:6. For a full translation, see chapter 3.

Our texts go as far as to say that proper conduct exists only with learning. *Avot* explains,

Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah said, "If there is no Torah, there are no manners (proper conduct); if there are no manners, there is no Torah. If there is no wisdom, there is no fear (reverence); if there is no fear, there is no wisdom. If there is no knowledge, there is no understanding; if there is no understanding, there is no knowledge. If there is no flour (sustenance), there is no Torah; if there is no Torah, there is no flour."¹⁵⁷

Proper conduct and Torah are necessary partners. Torah holds a most central place in Jewish tradition, so much so that the Rabbis link it to sustenance itself. Without Torah, the Rabbis claim, can we say that we have anything at all? Confucius agrees with the centrality of learning. The *Analects* tell,

The Master said, "By extensively studying all learning, and keeping himself under the restraints of the rules of propriety, one may thus not err from what is right."¹⁵⁸

Elsewhere we read,

The Master said, "Without an acquaintance with the rules of propriety, it is impossible for the character to be established."¹⁵⁹

The Confucian rules of propriety parallel the Torah. The texts and the traditions they generate hold a most crucial focus for their followers. Both traditions link proper conduct with the study of such texts. Learning and study are essential aspects of appropriate behavior.

¹⁵⁷ *Avot* 3:21. Sections echoed in *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan*, chapter 22.

¹⁵⁸ Legge p. 257, book 12 chapter 15.

Learning itself is a process. Rules enshroud study. Thus Confucius and the Rabbis specify the appropriate time individuals ought to engage in learning. *Avot* and the *Analects* delineate appropriate ages and situations for study. *Avot* explains,

...at five years, (one is ready) for bible, at ten, for Mishnah, at thirteen for mitzvot, at fifteen for Talmud...¹⁶⁰

Confucius states,

A youth, when at home, should be filial, and abroad, respectful to his elders. He should be earnest and truthful. He should overflow in love to all, and cultivate the friendship of the good. When he has time and opportunity, after the performance of these things, he should employ them in polite studies.¹⁶¹

This particular entry does not specify texts as does *Avot*, but Confucius speaks of a natural progression of action and study. Elsewhere the *Analects* explain,

...The officer, having discharged all his duties, should devote his leisure to learning. The student, having completed his learning, should apply himself to be an officer.¹⁶²

Rules regulate the practice of learning. Age and situation determine appropriate times to engage in study.

Wisdom endures through specific means. *Avot* explains,

Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa said, "All whose fear of sin comes before his wisdom, his wisdom shall endure; and all whose wisdom comes before his

¹⁵⁹ Legge p. 354, book 20, chapter 3, part 2.

¹⁶⁰ *Avot* 5:24.

¹⁶¹ Legge p. 140, book 1, chapter 6.

¹⁶² Legge p. 344, book 19, chapter 13.

fear of sin, his wisdom will not endure... Anyone whose deeds are greater than his wisdom, his wisdom will endure; all whose wisdom is greater than his deeds, his wisdom will not endure."¹⁶³

Confucius, too, explains that knowledge without virtue can not last.

The Master said, "When a man's knowledge is sufficient to attain, and his virtue is not sufficient to enable him to hold, whatever he may have gained, he will lose again."¹⁶⁴

Again, the traditions link behavior with study and wisdom. Proper conduct maintains wisdom.

Avot d'Rabbi Nathan explains that good deeds enhance study. It quotes Eliezar ben Abuyah, saying,

One who has good deeds and who has studied much Torah, to what is he similar? To one who builds beginning with stones and, afterwards, uses bricks. Even if a lot of water comes and stands on their sides, it will not dislodge them. One who does not have good deeds and studies Torah, to what is he similar? To one who builds with bricks first and stones afterward. Even if a little water comes, they (the stones and bricks) will be immediately overthrown...one who has many good deeds and has studied much Torah, to what is he similar? to lime poured over the backs of stones. Even if some rain fell upon it, it will not move them from their place...one who has no good deeds and who studied much Torah, to what is he similar? To lime poured over the backs of bricks. Even if a little

¹⁶³ *Avot* 3:11 and 3:12. Echoed in *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan*, chapter 22.

¹⁶⁴ Legge p. 303, book 15, chapter 32.

rain falls down on them, it will immediately soften them and cause them to go away (be washed away)...one who has good deeds and studies much Torah, to what is he similar? To a cup with a base. One who has no good deeds and studies much Torah, to what is he similar? To a cup without a base. When it is filled, it turns on its side and all that was in it spills.¹⁶⁵

Stability and strength characterize the person who combines good deeds with study.

Confucius agrees with the notion of deeds supporting study and learning. When asked what constituted wisdom, Confucius replied,

To give oneself earnestly to the duties due to men, and while respecting spiritual beings, to keep aloof from them, may be called wisdom...¹⁶⁶

Elsewhere, we see learning as a means of reaching one's behavioral goals.

...Mechanics have their shops to dwell in, in order to accomplish their works. The superior man learns, in order to reach to the utmost of his principles.¹⁶⁷

Deeds and learning are inextricably connected in the ideal character.

The combination of study and secular or worldly occupations supports the ultimate fulfillment of both. *Avot*, in the name of Rabban Gamliel, explains,

It is good to study Torah in conjunction with a secular occupation, for the labor of both causes one to forget sin. All Torah that (is studied) in conjunction with work ceases in its end and carries sin...¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan*, chapter 24.

¹⁶⁶ Legge p. 191, book 6, chapter 20.

¹⁶⁷ Legge p. 341, book 19, chapter 7.

¹⁶⁸ *Avot* 2:2.

Confucius shares a similar understanding of the necessity of study in combination with government service. During a conversation about a person who left his formal studies in order to serve a particular governor, Confucius relays his unhappiness.

“...There are (there) common people and officers; there are the altars of the spirits of the land and grain. Why must one read books before he can be considered to have learned?” The Master said, “It is on this account that I hate your glib tongued people.”¹⁶⁹

James Legge understands this quote to refer to the necessity of preliminary study to the exercise of government.¹⁷⁰ Thus, Confucius believes in the importance of study prior to entering government service. In both cases, the realm of study and that of work intertwine, enhancing the character of the individual.

Clearly, study and learning hold crucial places in the minds of the Rabbis and Confucius. Study in general is crucial, however the study of specific texts is also important to these traditions. *Avot* explains that there is nothing more excellent than the study of Torah. Quoting Ben Bag-Bag, we read,

Study Torah, for all is in it, and examine it, grow gray and old over it, and do not swerve from it, for there is nothing greater than it.¹⁷¹

Similarly, Confucius explains the things one learns from the Odes or the Book of Poetry. This text contains many aspects of virtuous behavior.

The Master said, “...The Odes serve to stimulate the mind. They may be used for purposes of self-contemplation. They teach the art of sociability. They show how to regulate feelings of resentment. From them you learn

¹⁶⁹ Legge p. 246, book 11, chapter 24, parts 1-4.

¹⁷⁰ Legge's footnote to Book 11, chapter 24, parts 1-4, p. 246.

the more immediate duty of serving one's father, and the remoter one of serving one's prince. From them we become largely acquainted with the names of birds, beasts, and plants."¹⁷²

In both examples, the texts contain all one needs to know. Faithful study of each would certainly elucidate the means by which one could behave properly in the world and in society.

Because of the fundamental importance placed on study, learning ought never cease. Quoting Rabbi Tarfon, *Avot* explains,

It is not upon you to complete the work (of studying Torah), yet you are not free to cease from it.¹⁷³

Similarly, Confucius explains through analogy that learners ought not cease their study.

The Master said, "The prosecution of learning may be compared to what may happen in raising a mound. If there want but one basket of earth to complete the work, and I stop, the stopping is my own work. It may be compared to throwing down the earth on level ground. Though but one basketful is thrown at a time, the advancing with it is my own going forward."¹⁷⁴

If one were to stop building before the completion of the project, no matter how close one came to completion, incompleteness defines the work. However, when one continually builds, the building process speaks positively of one's character. While both traditions

¹⁷¹ *Avot* 5:25.

¹⁷² Legge p. 323, book 17, chapter 9, parts 2-7.

¹⁷³ *Avot* 2:21

¹⁷⁴ Legge p. 222-223, book 9, chapter 18.

allow the individual to fall short of perfection, both require the individual to continually strive for additional learning.

Both traditions consider those who do not study rebuked and useless. *Avot* states,

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said, "Everyday, a voice goes out from Mt. Horeb, saying, 'Woe to those people for the insult (humiliation) of the Torah!'

For all who do not engage in the study of Torah are reprimanded..."¹⁷⁵

Confucius explains that one blinds oneself without the study of certain texts.

The Master said, "...The man who has not studied the Chau-nan and the Shao-nan,¹⁷⁶ is like one who stands with his face right against the wall. Is he not so?"¹⁷⁷

Study in general and the study of specific texts are crucial aspects of proper personal conduct. Without such study and learning, one deserves reprimand and remains sheltered.

Surely, study lies at the center of proper behavior. However, both traditions also detail means and attributes by which people can attain self-improvement without mentioning study. *Avot* describes finding an appropriate path for one to follow. Quoting Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi, *Avot* asks and explains,

Which is the straight (right) path one should choose for himself? One that glorifies the one who does it (takes it) and glorifies (distinguishes) him from other men...¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ *Avot* 6:2

¹⁷⁶ The first two books of the Songs of the States. See Legge's notes on Book 17, chapter 10, and p.323.

¹⁷⁷ Legge p.323, book 17, chapter 10.

¹⁷⁸ *Avot* 2:1.

Similarly, Confucius discusses finding an appropriate path. He explains moving toward and following the right course of action. He describes the path of duty,

...Let the will be set on the path of duty. Let every attainment in what is good be firmly grasped. Let perfect virtue be accorded with. Let relaxation and enjoyment be found in polite arts.¹⁷⁹

A person needs to chase after goodness.

The Master said, "There may be those who act without knowing why. I do not do so. Hearing much and selecting what is good and following it; seeing much and keeping it in memory—this is the second style of knowledge."¹⁸⁰

Elsewhere we read,

...[T]he Master said, "Hold faithfulness and sincerity as first principles, and be moving continually to what is right—this is the way to exalt one's virtue."¹⁸¹

One moves toward an appropriate way of being by distinguishing the correct aspects of conduct to follow.

The Master said, "The superior man, in the world, does not set his mind wither for anything or against anything; what is right he will follow."¹⁸²

Individuals must find themselves a path of righteousness and follow it. In so doing, one moves toward proper conduct and improvement of the self.

Both traditions direct the individual to be humble. *Avot* states,

¹⁷⁹ Legge p.196, book 7, chapter 6.

¹⁸⁰ Legge p.203, book 7, chapter 27.

¹⁸¹ Legge p.256, book 12, chapter 10, part one.

¹⁸² Legge p.168, book 4, chapter 10.

Have a humble spirit, for the end of man is worms.¹⁸³

A humble person recognizes that his/her life exists as mere moments in the grand scheme of the world. Humility acknowledges reality. Proper conduct demands the individual to subdue him/herself.

The Master said, "To subdue oneself and return to propriety, is perfect virtue. If a man can for one day subdue himself and return to propriety, all under heaven will ascribe perfect virtue to him..."¹⁸⁴

It seems that recognition comes when one does not seek it, when one seeks to humble oneself. Elsewhere, Confucius speaks of humility as a characteristic of the superior man.

The Master said, "The superior man, in everything, considers righteousness to be essential. He performs it according to the rules of propriety. He brings it forth in humility. He completes it with sincerity. This is indeed a superior man."¹⁸⁵

Both traditions remind the individual of the importance of humility. All people who wish to act in an appropriate manner must strive toward humility.

Confucius and the Rabbis have a similar distaste for idleness. *Avot* explains,

The one who is awake at night, or who goes on a path alone and turns his heart to idleness, behold, this is a deadly sin.¹⁸⁶

Confucius states,

The Master said, "Hard it is to deal with him who will stuff himself with food all day, without applying his mind to anything good! Are there not

¹⁸³ *Avot* 4:4.

¹⁸⁴ Legge p. 250, book 12, chapter 1, part one.

¹⁸⁵ Legge p. 299, book 15, chapter 17.

¹⁸⁶ *Avot* 3:5.

gamesters and chess players? To be one of these would still be better than doing nothing at all."¹⁸⁷

For traditions that concern themselves with the means of self-improvement, idleness is detrimental.

The way in which one sees and promotes his/her reputation sparks comment from both traditions. *Avot* declares,

He who stretches his name (reputation) loses it...¹⁸⁸

One who concerns him/herself entirely with reputation does not and can not have his/her mind on righteous behavior. A good name comes about through following proper conduct. *Avot* explains,

Rabbi Simeon said, "There are three crowns: the crown of Torah, the crown of priesthood, the crown of kingship; but the crown of a good name is greater than them all."¹⁸⁹

The passage prefers a good name acquired through righteous action to any other reward.

Correlating to that idea, Confucius asks,

Is he not a man of complete virtue, who feels no discomposure though men may take no note of him?¹⁹⁰

An individual ought not concern him/herself with reputation, but rather concentrate on proper conduct and a righteous course. A good reputation follows. Confucius himself stands as a model for this attribute. He says,

¹⁸⁷ Legge p. 329, book 17, chapter 22.

¹⁸⁸ *Avot* 1:13.

¹⁸⁹ *Avot* 4:17. Repeated in *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan*, chapter 41.

¹⁹⁰ Legge p. 137, book 1, chapter 3, part 3.

I will not be conflicted at men's not knowing me; I will be afflicted that I do not know men.¹⁹¹

The *Analects* restate this ideal elsewhere,

The Master said, "A man should say, I am not concerned that I have no place, I am concerned that how I may fit myself for one. I am not concerned that I am not known, I seek to be worthy to be known."¹⁹²

Good behavior begets a good reputation and a good name. The ideal character seeks a reputation that reflects a righteous course of action.

Virtue is virtue. Both traditions value righteousness in any form. Thus an individual ought to take part in small acts of virtue as well as great ones. *Avot* explains,

Rabbi said, "...Be careful to do a minor mitzvah as well as a major one, for you do not know the reward of the mitzvah..."¹⁹³

People cannot determine the ultimate reward for any action. The *Analects* agree, saying,

...When a person does not transgress the boundary-line in the great virtues, he may pass and repass it in the small virtues.¹⁹⁴

Both traditions value small acts of righteousness, as they contribute to one's overall mode of conduct.

Speech is a crucial aspect of appropriate behavior.

The Master said, "...Without knowing the force of words, it is impossible to know men."¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ Legge p. 145, book 1, chapter 16.

¹⁹² Legge p. 169, book 4, chapter 24.

¹⁹³ *Avot* 2:1

¹⁹⁴ Legge p. 342, book 19, chapter 11.

¹⁹⁵ Legge p. 354, book 20, chapter 3, part 3.

Speech can determine proper interaction between people, thus, Confucius and the Rabbis carefully describe suitable speech.

Silence marks good behavior and virtuous action. *Avot* explains,

Simeon [Rabban Gamliel's] son said, "All my life I grew up with sages, and I have not found anything better for a person than silence. Study is not more precious than deeds, and those with too many words (who talk too much) bring sin."¹⁹⁶

Elsewhere, the Rabbis continue,

Shammai said, "Make your study a fixed practice, speak little and do much, and receive all people with a cheerful face."¹⁹⁷

These texts stress deeds over words. Silence is a sign of wisdom. Quoting Rabbi Akiba, *Avot* explains,

Joking and lightheadedness bring a person to sin. Tradition is a fence for Torah, tithes are a fence to wealth, vows are a fence to self-restraint, and a fence to wisdom is silence.¹⁹⁸

Confucius agrees that silence embodies wisdom better than does useless or uncalculated speech. The *Analects* detail numerous accounts in which careful speech acts as a symbol of virtue.

The Master said, "The virtuous will be sure to speak correctly, but those whose speech is good may not always be virtuous..."¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ *Avot* 1:17. *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan*, chapter 22, elaborates on this statement slightly: All my life I grew up amongst the sages and I never found anything better for a person than silence. If silence is good for the wise, all the more so for the foolish! No wisdom comes from words, nor words from wisdom, only deeds. All who speak too much bring about sin...

¹⁹⁷ *Avot* 1:15. Repeated in *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan*, chapter 13.

Elsewhere, we read,

The Master said, "The man of perfect virtue is cautious and slow in his speech... When a man feels the difficulty of doing, can he be other than cautious and slow in speaking?"²⁰⁰

And,

The Master said, "The superior man is modest in his speech, but exceeds in his actions."²⁰¹

In addition,

The Master said, "The superior man... acts before he speaks, and afterwards, speaks according to his actions."²⁰²

And,

The Master said, "He who aims to be a man of complete virtue... is earnest in what he is doing, and careful in his speech..."²⁰³

Certainly, deeds express virtue better than words. Additionally, words do not always relay the same message. A superior man can tell the difference.

The Master said, "The superior man does not promote a man simply on account of his words, nor does he put aside good words because of the man."²⁰⁴

And,

¹⁹⁸ *Avot* 3:17.

¹⁹⁹ Legge p. 276, book 14, chapter 5.

²⁰⁰ Legge p. 251-252 book 12, chapter 3, parts 2 and 3.

²⁰¹ Legge p. 286, book 14, chapter 29.

²⁰² Legge p. 150, book 2, chapter 13.

²⁰³ Legge p. 143-144, book 1, chapter 14.

²⁰⁴ Legge p. 300, book 15, chapter 22.

The Master said, "What is the good of being ready with the tongue? They who encounter men with smartness of speech for the most part procure themselves hatred..."²⁰⁵

One with a quick tongue often finds a negative reaction. Those of virtue speak correctly and hold their tongues at the right times. Appropriate speech marks a righteous person.

Since speech represents critical aspects of one's essential nature and character, both Confucius and the Rabbis give warnings regarding careful speech. The Rabbis warn the sages to speak responsibly.

Avtalyon said, "Sages, be careful with your words. You could be punished with the punishment of exile and be exiled to a place of evil waters, and your students who follow after you will drink them and will die, and it would be found that the name of Heaven would be profaned."²⁰⁶

Words are powerful. When harmful or uncalculated words come from a person of stature, such as a sage, they have the power to destroy lives. Sages in particular must use words carefully for their sake and the sake of those they influence. Confucius recognizes the power of words and their consequent ability to destroy stability and virtue. Confucius states,

The Master said, "Specious words confound virtue."²⁰⁷

Elsewhere in the *Analects*, we read,

The Master said, "I hate the way those who with their sharp mouths overthrow kingdoms and families."²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ Legge p. 174, book 5, chapter 4, part 2.

²⁰⁶ *Avot* 1:11. Repeated in *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan* chapter 11.

²⁰⁷ Legge p. 302, book 15, chapter 26.

²⁰⁸ Legge p. 326, book 17, chapter 18.

According to Confucius, words have the power to destroy families and kingdoms.

Avot and the *Analects* discuss the importance of clear speech. Confucius explains that the point of words is to convey meaning.

The Master said, "In language, it is simply required that it convey the meaning."²⁰⁹

Clarity is the ultimate aim of words. Words and language need not be elegant or pretty, they need merely to relay a message. *Avot*, too, upholds the importance of clarity.

Hillel said, "...[D]o not say something that is impossible to hear
(understand) (in the hope that) in the end, it will be heard
(understood)..."²¹⁰

Clarity is the goal of speech.

Additional admonitions in *Avot* and the *Analects* concern repercussions of other's reputations. *Avot* seeks careful wording regarding witnesses in a court situation.

Simeon ben Shatah said, "Examine witnesses carefully, and be cautious with your words, lest, through them they learn to lie."²¹¹

Words influence others and may jeopardize individual's lives and reputations. On the topic of reward as an official, Confucius says,

The Master said, "Hear much and put aside the points of which you stand in doubt, while you speak cautiously of others—then you will accord few occasions for blame."²¹²

²⁰⁹ Legge p. 305, book 15, chapter 40.

²¹⁰ *Avot* 2:5

²¹¹ *Avot* 1:9

²¹² Legge p. 151, book 2, chapter 18, part 2.

Speech is a powerful tool. Both traditions recognize the importance of speech regarding the welfare and reputations of other people. Thus, clarity and caution ought to direct one's speech.

Confucius embodies the essence of proper personal conduct through a specific word: reciprocity. One of Confucius' disciples asked,

Is there one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life?

The Master said, "Is not reciprocity such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others."²¹³

Study and proper conduct lead one to self-improvement. When one understands oneself and one's needs, one equips and trains oneself to better interact with other people. One strives toward self-improvement in order to behave appropriately within larger society.

²¹³ Legge p. 301, book 15, chapter 23.

Chapter 5: Interaction with Other Individuals

Both the rabbis and Confucius write extensively on individuals' conduct within society. They discuss the obligations of an entire range of individuals. Confucius speaks of the interaction between people of different societal rank as well as between leadership and the people. The Rabbis use different individuals as examples. Surely, the difference represents a difference in the role the Confucianists held verses the one occupied by the Rabbis within their respective societies.

The Jewish and Chinese traditions emphasize respect toward teachers and scholars. *Avot* explains,

...Let your house be a meeting place for scholars, cover yourself with dust at their feet, and drink in their words with thirst.²¹⁴

Avot d'Rabbi Nathan expands,

...Let your house be a meeting place for sages, how so? This teaches that one's house should be a center for sages, for students, and for students of students...Another interpretation: Let your house be a meeting place for sages, how so? When a student of wisdom enters your place to say to you, "Teach me," if it is in your power to teach, teach, and if not, immediately let him go. And do not sit him before you on a couch or a chair or bench, rather, let him sit before you on the ground, and all things that come out of

²¹⁴ *Avot* 1:4

your mouth, let him receive with awe, fear, dread and trembling, as was the way our father's received it on Mt. Sinai...²¹⁵

Learning, as discussed earlier, holds a place of central importance within both traditions. Thus, *Avot* encourages people to create situations that welcome both teachers and scholars. All who participate in the process of learning deserve respect. A student ought to treat the scholar with utmost respect and reverence, as if his/her words came from God at Sinai. However, words can be dangerous. *Avot* explains,

Rabbi Eliezer said... "Warm yourself by the fire of the sages, but be careful that you are not burned by their burning coals, for their bite is like the bite of a fox and their sting is like the sting of a scorpion, and their hiss is like a hiss of a serpent, and all their words are like coals of a fire."²¹⁶

Respect must be paid to scholars for their wisdom. Yet their words can be both divine and dangerous. Scholars are powerful.

Indeed, proper respect holds such a crucial place that *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan* claims those who do not revere and respect the sages deserve death.

Hillel the Elder said, "...One that does not attend upon the sages deserves the death penalty..."²¹⁷

Certainly, we learn that scholars hold a very important and prestigious place in the Rabbinic consciousness. Those who learn from them both revere and fear them.

Confucius writes similarly of respect due to scholars. For Confucius, scholars strike awe in the student.

²¹⁵ *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan* chapter 6

²¹⁶ *Avot* 2:15

²¹⁷ *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan* chapter 12

Confucius said, 'There are three things of which the superior man stands in awe. He stands in awe of the ordinances of Heaven. He stands in awe of great men. He stands in awe of the words of the sages.'²¹⁸

One of superior characteristics treats Heaven and the sages reverently. Elsewhere we read,

The Master said, "The accomplished scholar is not a utensil."²¹⁹

A scholar learns for a greater purpose, not merely for the use of other people.

Accomplished scholarship deserves respect. As with the Rabbis, Confucius suggests that the words of the sages are as those that come from Heaven. Sages and scholars, thus, deserve respect tantamount to the respect due to the divine.

Scholars have specific instruction concerning their behavior as well. Confucius and the Rabbis instruct scholars to continue learning. *Avot* states,

Rabbi Ishmael said, "One who studies in order to teach will be given the power to learn and to teach; one who learns in order to do will be given the power to learn, to teach, to observe and to do."²²⁰

One must continue to learn in order to be a teacher. Additionally, when one acts appropriately, one has the means of being a teacher. Thus, a teacher acts as a model of behavior. Therefore, Confucius agrees that teachers must continually learn.

The Master said, "If a man keeps cherishing his old knowledge, so as continually to be acquiring new, he may be a teacher of others."²²¹

²¹⁸ Legge p. 313, book 16, chapter 8.

²¹⁹ Legge p. 150, book 2, chapter 12.

²²⁰ *Avot* 4:6

²²¹ Legge p. 149, book 2, chapter 11.

Scholars deserve respect and reverence for their teachings. However, they must take responsibility to continually learn. Only when scholars take their own learning process seriously do they merit the title of scholar and the role of teaching others.

Interestingly, Confucius and the Rabbis share a similar understanding in the nature of students. The Rabbis list types of students in hierarchical fashion.

There are four kinds of students: quick to learn and quick to forget, his reward is offset because of his loss; one who for whom it is hard to learn, and hard to forget, his loss is offset by his gain; one who is quick to learn and for whom it is hard to forget, his lot is good; and one for whom it is hard to learn and he is quick to forget, his lot is bad.²²²

Elsewhere *Avot* explains,

There are four types who attend school: One who goes but does not do anything, his reward is for going; One who practices but does not go, his reward is for practicing; one who goes and practices, he is pious; one who does not go and does not practice, he is wicked.²²³

The Rabbis detail the characteristics they see in their students.

Avot d'Rabbi Nathan thoroughly discusses the nature of students.

There are four types of students. (The one who wants) to study and that others might study too; a good eye. (The one who wants) to study, but others might not study; an evil eye. (The one who wants) others to study, but does not want to study—this is the commonplace type. There are

²²² *Avot* 5:15

²²³ *Avot* 5:17

some who say the Sodom type. (The one who) does not want to study and does not want others to study. Behold, he is completely wicked.

As discussed in earlier chapters, the Rabbis link behavior with learning. One's conduct while learning needs to follow the appropriate prescription. The following text delineates reward and punishment for proper conduct:

There are four types who go to the house of study. One who comes close and sits, he has a share (reward). One who comes close and sits; he does not have a share. One who stays far and sits, he has a share. One who stays far and sits; he does not have a share. One who questions and answers; he has a share. One who questions and answers; he does not have a share. One who sits quietly; he has a share. One who sits quietly; he does not have a share.

One who comes close and sits in order to listen and learn, he has a share. One who comes close and sits so that others will say "So and so comes close and sits before the sages," he does not have a share. One who stays far and sits in order that he give honor to one who is greater than he; he has a share. One that stays far and sits in order that other will say "So and so does not need this sage," he has no share.

One who questions and answers in order to hear and to learn, he has a share. One who questions and answers in order that others will say, "So and so questions and answers before sages," he has no share. One who sits and keeps quiet in order to hear and to learn, he has a share. One who

sits and keeps quiet in order that others will say, "So and so sits and keeps quiet before sages," he has no share.

There are four kinds who sit before sages: there is one like a sponge, there is one like a sifter, there is one like a funnel, and there is one like a strainer.²²⁴ Like a sponge: how so? the staunch student sits before the sages and learns Bible, Mishnah, Midrash, Halakha and Aggadah. Like a sponge that soaks up all, so too does he soak up all. Like a sifter, how so? this bright student sits before the scholars and hears Bible, Mishnah, Midrash, Halakha and Aggadah. Like a sifter brings forth the coarse flour while collecting the fine flour, so too does he hold back the bad and collects the good. Like a funnel: how so? This simple student sits before the scholars hearing Bible, Mishnah, Midrash, Halakha, and Aggadah. Just as a funnel takes in here and lets it out here, so too it is with him, all things that come to him enters one ear and goes out here. One after the other slips through and leaves him. Like a strainer: how so? This wicked student sits before the sages and hears Bible, Mishnah, Midrash, Halakha and Aggadah. Just as a strainer brings forth wine and collects the sediment, so too does he let go of what is good and collects the bad... On the topic of students, Rabban Gamliel the elder (said) four things: Unclean fish, clean fish, a fish from the Jordan and a fish from the great sea. And unclean fish: who is that? One who is poor, who studies Bible, Mishnah, Midrash, Halakha and Aggadah and he does not understand. A

clean fish: who is that? One who is wealthy and studies Bible, Mishnah, Midrash, Halakha and Aggadah and he understands. A fish from the Jordan, who is that? This is a scholar who studies Bible, Mishnah, Midrash, Halakha and Aggadah who has no knowledge for answering (give and take). A fish from the great sea, who is that? This is a scholar who studies Bible, Mishnah, Midrash, Halakha and Aggadah and who has a knowledge for answering (give and take).²²⁵

The Rabbis classify certain students according to their attitudes and behavior toward learning.

Similarly, we read in the *Analects*,

Confucius said, "Those who are born with the possession of knowledge are the highest class of men. This who learn, and do, readily, get possession of knowledge, are the next. Those who are dull and stupid, and yet compass the learning, are another class next to these. As to those who are dull and stupid and yet do not learn—they are the lowest of the people."²²⁶

Both traditions classify learners and students and assume that attitudes toward learning reflects general behavior.

Though Confucius and the Rabbis rank types of students, both argue that a teacher ought not withhold or affect teaching according to economic or societal class. *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan* discusses the debate between the houses of Hillel and Shammai.

²²⁴ *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan* expands upon the text of Pirke Avot 5:18, though the order of the students is quoted differently. *Avot* lists the sponge, the funnel, the strainer and the sieve.

²²⁵ *Avot d' Rabbi Nathan* chapter 40.

Raise up many disciples: The House of Shammai says, "Only teach one who is wise, humble, a son of fathers (one with good breeding) and wealthy." But the House of Hillel says, "teach everyone, for there were many transgressors in Israel who were drawn near to the study of Torah, and from them came righteous, pious and worthy ones."²²⁷

As in so many other instances, the tradition upholds Hillel's ruling over Shammai's.

One's wealth and breeding is not a marker for whether or not one can be taught.

Confucius agrees.

The Master says, "In teaching, there should be no distinction of classes."²²⁸

While both traditions classify their learners hierarchically, they do so with regard to the attitudes specific learners take to their learning processes. Concerning wealth and social class, they agree that one's background ought not predispose a teacher, either positively or negatively, toward a student.

As well as the obvious parallels between scholars and teachers of both traditions, we find similarities between the Rabbis' conception of scholars and Confucius' understanding of proper leadership.

The Rabbis discuss appropriate treatment of students, companions and teachers.

Rabbi Elazar ben Shammua said, "Let the honor of your student be as dear to you as your own, honor your fellow as you revere your teacher, and revere your teacher as the reverence due to Heaven."²²⁹

²²⁶Legge, p. 313-14, book 16, chapter 9.

²²⁷*Avot d'Rabbi Nathan*, chapter 3.

²²⁸Legge p. 305, book 15, chapter 38.

Similarly, Confucius writes of the importance of respectful interaction between ministers and princes.

Confucius [said], "A prince should employ his ministers according to the rules of propriety; ministers should serve their prince with faithfulness."²³⁰

Though the players differ, the principle is the same. Both traditions uphold the importance of respect between people of different societal rank. Respectful behavior between individuals, no matter their social, political or academic level, is crucial.

Elsewhere, Confucius explains that a minister ought to make his needs secondary to those of his prince.

The Master said, "A minister, in serving his prince, reverently discharges his duties, and makes his emolument a secondary consideration."²³¹

The Rabbis differ only in that their explanation of hierarchy concerns students and teachers rather than princes and ministers. The details are similar. In a particular example mentioned earlier, we see this hierarchical ranking in the physical positioning of the student and teacher.

...Let your house be a meeting place for scholars, cover yourself with dust at their feet, and drink in their words with thirst.²³²

A student ought to sit at the dust of the feet of his/her teacher, physically as well as metaphorically recognizing the proper hierarchy of student and teacher. Princes and scholars deserve primary respect from those who learn from or serve under them.

²²⁹ *Avot* 4:15

²³⁰ Legge p. 161, book 3, chapter 19.

²³¹ Legge p. 305, book 15, chapter 37.

²³² *Avot* 1:4

Confucius directs leaders and officials to govern righteously, for they set an example for the people. When asked about government,

The Master said, "Go before the people with your example, and be laborious in their affairs."²³³

A politician leads by example. When a leader behaves appropriately, the people gladly follow.

The Master said, "...If a superior love propriety, the people will not dare not to be reverent. If he love righteousness, the people will not dare not to submit to his example. If he love good faith, the people will not dare not to be sincere. Now, when all these things obtain, the people from all quarters will come to him, bearing their children on their backs..."²³⁴

And, if the leader has good conduct, then the people need no orders.

The Master said, "When a prince's personal conduct is correct, his government is effective without the issuing of orders. If his personal conduct is not correct, he may issue orders, but they will not be followed."²³⁵

Appropriate leadership begins with appropriate personal conduct and behavior.

The Rabbis similarly explain that one who leads people in an appropriate manner will not cause the people to sin. Thus, one leads by example.

Anyone who causes the populace to be righteous/clean, no sin will come through his hand; all who cause the people to sin, will not have enough

²³³ Legge p. 262, book 13, chapter 1.

²³⁴ Legge p. 265, book 13, chapter 4.

²³⁵ Legge p. 266, book 13, chapter 6.

power to repent. Moses was righteous and caused the people to be righteous, thus the merit of the people is attributed to him, as it is said, "He performed the righteousness of the Eternal and ordinances with Israel." Jeroboam ben Nevat sinned and caused the people to sin, thus the sin of the people is attributed to him, as it is said, "For the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned and caused Israel to sin."²³⁶

A righteous leader has righteous followers and a sinful leader leads a people to sin. A leader primarily leads by example.

Both traditions speak of the importance of having and respecting friends and companions.

Make (provide) for yourself a teacher, get a friend (companion), and judge all people with favorable judgement.²³⁷

This statement embodies many critical rabbinic ideals concerning learning appropriately and treating others fairly. The Rabbis continue.

Rabbi Eliezer said, "Let your friend's honor be as dear to you as your own, do not be quick to anger, and repent one day before your death..."²³⁸ and,

Rabbi Yose said, "Let your friend's property be as dear to you as your own, give yourself to the study of Torah, for it is not an inheritance for you, and let all your deeds be done in the name of Heaven."²³⁹

²³⁶ *Avot* 5:21

²³⁷ *Avot* 1:6

²³⁸ *Pirke Avot* 2:15

²³⁹ *Pirke Avot* 2:17

The Rabbis instruct the people to respect their fellows, an aspect of behavior as important as study and reverence for teachers and Heaven.

Confucius gives similar commands concerning respect for one's fellows. The *Analects* explain,

Between friends, frequent reproofs make the friendship distant.²⁴⁰

Friends are equals. It is thus inappropriate to reprimand them as a matter of practice.

Every person has respect due to him/her because of the position one holds in society. A friend, one's equal, deserves proper respect as an equal. The superior man knows the proper respect due to others.

Let the superior man never fail reverentially to order his own conduct, and

let him be respectful to others and observant of the rules of propriety...²⁴¹

Again, Confucius associates proper conduct and respect with the observance of the rules of propriety. Both traditions see the necessity of respect between individuals of equal as well as hierarchical ranks within society.

Both traditions speak to the importance of fair judgement. When in a place of judging another, either socially or legally, one needs to be fair. *Avot* discusses this notion at length.

...Be patient in establishing justice, have many students, and make a fence for the Torah.²⁴²

Avot d'Rabbi Nathan expands,

²⁴⁰Legge p. 172, book 4, chapter 26.

²⁴¹Legge p. 253, book 12, chapter 5, part 4.

²⁴²*Avot* 1:1

Be patient in judgement, how so? This teaches that a man should be patient in rendering judgement. All who are patient in rendering judgement will be settled in judgement...²⁴³

Having patience in judgement leaves less room for mistakes. *Avot* continues,

Joshua ben Perahyah said, "Make (provide) for yourself a teacher, get a companion, and judge all people with favorable judgement."²⁴⁴

Whether or not one finds him/herself in court as a judge, all individuals must learn to judge people with favor. The Rabbis instruct the individual to see people in a favorable light. Further, *Avot* explains,

Hillel said, "...[D]o not judge your fellow until you have been in his place..."²⁴⁵

Certainly, this is a crucial lesson in assessing other people. Another's actions are often difficult to understand. The Rabbis instruct the people to judge other's actions carefully for no one can fully experience another's position. In addition, the Rabbis caution the individual as to the validity of witness testimony.

Simeon ben Shatah said, "Thoroughly examine the witnesses, and be careful with their words, lest through tem, they learn to lie."²⁴⁶

Judgment of others is a difficult task. Thus, the Rabbis carefully warn individuals to be responsible when rendering judgement, either in social or legal situations.

²⁴³ *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan*, chapter 1

²⁴⁴ *Avot* 1:6

²⁴⁵ *Avot* 2:5

²⁴⁶ *Avot* 1:9

Confucius agrees with the Rabbis that judgment must be carried out responsibly. Correlating to the notion of examining the witnesses carefully, Confucius explains that one can not judge based on what others think.

The Master said, "When the multitude hate a man, it is necessary to examine into the case. When the multitude love a man, it is necessary to examine the case."²⁴⁷

Elsewhere in the *Analects*, we find the same theme. A disciple asked Confucius,

"What do you say of a man who is loved by all the people of his neighborhood?" The Master replied, "We may not for that accord our approval of him." "And what do you say of him who is hated by all the people of his neighborhood?" The Master said, "We may not for that conclude that he is bad. It is better than either of these cases that the good in the neighborhood love him and the bad hate him."²⁴⁸

One ought not judge based on what others have to say about a person. However, if the individual knows the witnesses involved, such as the good of the community, one can make a judgement based on such witnesses. As the Rabbis carefully examine witnesses to ensure that they are credible, so too, Confucius explains that one can rely upon some people's words more than others. The traditions caution individuals to use judgement carefully and urge the individual to use compassion when judging others.

...When you have found out the truth of any accusation, be grieved for and pity them, and do not feel joy at your own ability.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷Legge p. 302, book 15, chapter 27.

²⁴⁸Legge p. 273, book 13, chapter 24.

²⁴⁹Legge p. 345, book 19, chapter 19.

A judge attempts to determine some sort of truth. The truth is important, but one should not celebrate one's ability to prove another's guilt. Good judgement is careful, thorough, patient, and depends only on credible witnesses.

Confucius and the Rabbis recommend that the individual avoid litigation. *Avot* reports,

Rabbi Ishmael...said, "One who keeps himself from the courts rids himself of hatred, robbery and perjury. One who proudly makes decisions is foolish, wicked and arrogant."²⁵⁰

The Rabbis prefer that settlement take place out of court. In addition, they criticize any judge that makes rash decisions. Confucius, too wishes to keep people from litigation, but his stance comes from the viewpoint of leadership. He considers the situation as one who hears litigation rather than one who enters into it.

The Master said, "In hearing litigations, I am like any other body. What is necessary, however, is to cause the people to have no litigations."²⁵¹

A leader, according to Confucius, encourages the people to settle their disputes outside of the court. When possible, both traditions prefer to settle people's differences outside of the established court.

Along with respect for teachers and friends, the Rabbis and Confucius discuss the importance of hospitality. *Avot* explains,

Rabbi Ishmael said, "Be submissive to one superior to you, patient with a youth, and receive all people with happiness,"²⁵²

²⁵⁰ *Avot*, 4:9

²⁵¹ Legge p. 257, book 12, chapter 13.

²⁵² *Avot* 3:16

and,

Rabbi Mattithyah ben Heresh said, "Meet all people with peace."²⁵³

The Rabbis instruct us to treat all people with happiness and kindness. Elsewhere, we read,

Yose ben Yohanan of Jerusalem said, "Let your house be open wide, and let the poor be as members of your household..."²⁵⁴

The Rabbis command us to treat people with kindness. Similarly, Confucius discusses hospitality and welcoming people. Concerning the topic of perfect virtue, Confucius says,

...It is when you go abroad, to behave to everyone as if you were receiving a great guest; to employ the people as if you were assisting at a great sacrifice; not to do to others as you would not wish done to yourself; to have no murmuring against you in the country, and none in the family...²⁵⁵

Righteous behavior dictates kindness toward strangers and guests. A person has to embody the ideal of hospitality in order to function appropriately.

Confucius and the Rabbis carefully address women as another class of people within their society. Just as other specific ranks of people require certain treatment, so too do women receive certain treatment due to their place in society. Both traditions discuss speaking with women and the dangers therein. *Avot* warns against gossip with women.

²⁵³ *Avot* 4:20

²⁵⁴ *Avot* 1:5

²⁵⁵ Legge p. 251, book 12, chapter 2.

Yose ben Yohanan of Jerusalem said, "...Do not speak too much with women. This has been said concerning one's wife, all the more so with the wife of your fellow. From this, the sages say, 'Anyone who speaks too much with women brings evil upon himself, neglects the words of the Torah, and, in the end, will inherit *Gehinnom*.'" ²⁵⁶

Women present a danger because of their presumed nature as gossipers. In order to avoid slipping into such a mode of behavior, the Rabbis warn readers to stay away from conversation with women altogether. Confucius speaks similarly of having to be careful when speaking to certain women, likening them to servants.

The Master said, "Of all people, girls and servants are the most difficult to behave to. If you are familiar with them, they lose their humility. If you maintain a reserve towards them, they are disconnected." ²⁵⁷

Confucius recognizes a specific place girls fit into society. Their position is so specific, that one needs to carefully speak to them or risk jeopardizing that rank. Thus, Confucius issues this gentle warning. As do other members of society we have mentioned, women require specific and specified treatment.

The Chinese and Jewish traditions discuss interaction between specific members of society. Whether two people are of different rank, such as prince and minister, teacher and student, or man and woman, or of equal standing, such as friends and companions, or even perhaps, of unknown rank, there are specific rules regarding respect and appropriate

²⁵⁶ *Avot* 1:5

²⁵⁷ Legge p. 330, book 17, chapter 25.

behavior between interacting individuals. Appropriate personal conduct involves knowledge of suitable behavior and action befitting one's place in society.

Chapter 6: Interaction with Community and Government

Both the Confucian and Rabbinic traditions address the individual's role within the community and his/her relationship to the government. They agree that good things happen within groups, especially when the people concern themselves with talk of God and righteousness. However, we do find differences between the attitudes toward the government. Confucius offers rules for appropriate interaction with the leadership, while the Rabbis generally warn against involvement with the controlling powers. These contrasting attitudes likely reflect differences in the groups' relationships to the controlling authorities.

Avot tells us that when people sit together, the presence of God resides amongst them.

Rabbi Hananyah ben Teradyon said, "When two sit and no words of Torah pass between them, behold, it is a session of scoffers, as it is said, 'Do not sit in a session of scoffers.' However, if two sit together and words of Torah pass between them, the presence of God abides among them, as it is said, 'Then those who revere the Eternal speak to each other, the Eternal listened and heard, and it was written in the book of remembrance before Him who revered the Eternal and thinks of His name.' This refers to none other than two. From where do we know that if even one sits and engages in Torah that the Holy One, Blessed be He establishes his reward? As it is said, 'He sits alone patiently, yet he receives (reward).'"²⁵⁸

²⁵⁸ *Avot* 3:3

Engaging in the study of Torah causes the presence of God to abide among people. The Rabbis continue,

Rabbi Simeon said, "If three eat at one table and they speak no words of Torah, it is as though they eat sacrifices to the dead, as it is said, 'For all the tables are filled with spit and excrement without God.' However, three that eat at one table and speak words of Torah, it is as if they eat at the table of God, as it is said, 'He said to me, this is the table before the Eternal.'"²⁵⁹

Rabbi Halafta ben Dosa of Kfar Hananya said, "When ten sit and engage in Torah, the presence of God abides among them, as it is said, 'God stands in a Godly assembly.' From where do we learn (this is so) even if there are five? As it is said, 'He founded his vault upon the empty earth.' From where do we learn (this is so) even if there are three? As it is said, 'In proximity (of judges) he judges.' From where do we learn (this is so) even if there are two? As it is said, 'Then those who fear the Eternal speak to each other, and the Eternal listens and hears.' And from where do we learn (this is so) even for one? As it is said, 'In every place which I mention my name, I will come to you and bless you.'"²⁶⁰

The Rabbis affirm the usefulness of assemblies that take place for noble purposes, or during which noble conversation occurs.

²⁵⁹ *Avot* 3:4

²⁶⁰ *Avot* 3:7

Rabbi Yohanan ha-Sandler said, "Any gatherings that are in the name of Heaven, in the end, they will endure. Any that are not in the name of Heaven, in the end they will not endure."

Confucius has a similar feeling with regard to meeting of groups. The *Analects* explain, The Master said, "When a number of people are together, for a whole day, without their conversation turning on righteousness, and when they are fond of carrying out the suggestions of a small shrewdness—theirs is indeed a hard case."²⁶¹

Groups of people should concern themselves with righteous conversation and talk of God. The traditions see any other purpose as negative. If a group's intent is not on righteousness, they threaten proper conduct and behavior.

The individual has power in the group. When one resides in a community, one has influence over the behavior of the people there. Confucius, wanting to live in a particular place, was told,

"They are rude. How can you do such a thing?" The Master said, "If a superior man dwelt among them, what rudeness would there be?"²⁶²

Confucius suggests that a superior person's presence alone increases the level of righteous behavior for an entire community. In turn, the community affects the behavior of the individual. Elsewhere in the *Analects* we read that

The Master said, "It is virtuous manners which constitute the excellence of the neighborhood. If a man in selecting his residence, does not fix on one where such prevail, how can he be wise?"²⁶³

²⁶¹Legge, p. 299, book 15, chapter 16.

Tradition teaches that a wise person chooses a righteous community where virtuous action prevails. The community and its behavior have a great effect on the individual.

The Rabbis agree. *Avot* tells a story of a particular Rabbi's journey.

I was traveling on the road and a man met me and greeted me. I returned his greeting. He said to me, "From what place are you?" I said to him, "I am from a big city with sages and scholars." He said to me, "Rabbi, are you willing to live with us in our place? I will give you a million gold *dinars*, precious stones and pearls." I said to him, "If you gave me all the silver, gold, precious stones and pearls in the world, I would not live anywhere but in a place of Torah."²⁶⁴

A wise person would only live in a place where proper conduct is the norm. Part of the individual's responsibility regarding his/her own conduct is to find a place of worthy people that will be conducive to appropriate behavior.

On the topic of the individual's interaction with government, we find many differences in attitude between Confucius and the Rabbis. Confucius describes proper interaction between those involved in government. He addresses both those in charge and those who follow. The Rabbis warn against any interaction with the government and they address only those governed.

Confucius details what government needs in order to be considered "good."

When asked about government,

²⁶²Legge p. 221, book 9, chapter 13.

²⁶³Legge, p. 165, book 4, chapter 1.

²⁶⁴*Avot* 6:9

The Master said, "The art of governing is to keep its affairs before the mind without weariness, and to practice them with undeviating consistency."²⁶⁵

Appropriate government follows its goals with determination. Confucius explains that,

... There is government, when a prince is a prince, and the minister is a minister; when the father is a father and the son is a son.²⁶⁶

Government is good when all people are true to the roles and rank they hold within society. For Confucius, roles and proper behavior within those roles are crucial.

Confucius attributes such proper conduct to the established government. Correct speech, too, can be attributed to good government.

The Master said, "When good government prevails in a State, language may be lofty and bold, and actions the same. When bad government prevails, the actions may be lofty and bold, but the language may be with some reserve."²⁶⁷

For Confucius, government is an extension of the actions of the people, and the actions of the people, an extension of the government. When either is inappropriate, the other is at risk.

In addition to the qualities of government, Confucius explains how one should serve his/her leader.

²⁶⁵ Legge p. 257, book 12, chapter 14.

²⁶⁶ Legge p. 256, book 12, chapter 11, part 2.

²⁶⁷ Legge p. 276, book 14, chapter 4.

The Master said, "Do not impose upon him, and moreover, withstand him to his face."²⁶⁸

A leader's rank demands submission. The individual does not make demands upon his/her leader, but rather endures him/her with patience. Confucius commands the people to serve their leader with respect. Governmental leaders hold prestigious and worthy positions within Confucian society.

Generally, the Rabbis differ in their understanding of the role of government in their lives. *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan* explains,

(Hillel⁰ used to say, "A name made great is a name destroyed...how so?

This teaches that one's name should not go out to (be brought to the attention of) the government. For if one's name goes out to the government, in the end, they will cast their eyes upon him and kill him and take from him his property."²⁶⁹

The Rabbis feared their government. They expected the controlling authority to steal from and murder them. Under such circumstances, they certainly express an inherent distrust for the government. In several other places, we find similar warnings.

Be careful with (ruling) authorities, for they do not receive someone except for their own need; they appear as friends at the suitable hour, and they do not stand by a person in his hour of distress."²⁷⁰

Shemayah and Avtalyon say,

²⁶⁸Legge p. 285, book 14, chapter 23.

²⁶⁹*Avot d'Rabbi Nathan*, chapter 12.

²⁷⁰*Avot* 2:3

...Love work, hate the offices of authority, and do not be intimate with authority.²⁷¹

Avot d'Rabbi Nathan expands upon this idea.

Do not be intimate with authority: how so? This teaches that one's name should not go out to authority (should not come to the attention of authority). If one's name goes out to authority, in the end, they look at him and kill him and take away all of his property. How so? If one's friend sits in the market place and says, "May the Holy one, blessed by he, be gracious to so and so, today he brought out of his house 100 oxen, 100 sheep, and 100 goats!" An official hears him and goes and tells the hegemon, who rises and surrounds his house and takes from him all his property. About him (the friend), scripture says, "One that blesses his friend with a great voice, it shall be thought of as a curse to him."²⁷²

According to the Rabbis, excessive wealth made one susceptible to thievery by the controlling powers. Here, wealth displayed through ownership of numerous animals proves to be dangerous. The Rabbis continue:

Another interpretation: do not be intimate with (ruling) authorities: If one's friend sits in the market place and says, "May the Holy One Blessed be He be gracious to so and so. Today he brought into his house so many *korin* of wheat and so many *kor* of barley." An official hears him and comes and surrounds his house and takes all his property from him. In the

²⁷¹ *Avot* 1:10

²⁷² *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan*, chapter 11

morning he has nothing! Of him (the friend), scripture says, "One who blesses his friend in a loud voice..."²⁷³

Wealth shown through agricultural success threatens one's safety. We read further:

Another interpretation: Do not be intimate with the (ruling) authorities.

How so? This teaches that one should not think to say, "I am prince of the city," or "I am viceroy," because that robs Israel.²⁷⁴

Israel is distinct from the controlling authority. To join the authority not only threatens one's life and property, but robs Israel of its members as well. The Rabbis continue:

Another interpretation: One should not think to consort with authority.

Though, at first they open a door for him and escort him in, in the end, it is fatal for him.²⁷⁵

The Rabbis express their conviction that when one participates in or has any dealings with government, harm and death will come. The Rabbis fear and distrust the ruling authority.

Additionally, the Rabbis speak of service to the government as a yoke in direct opposition to the study of Torah.

All who accept the yoke of Torah avoids the yoke of government and the yoke of worldly affairs. All who break from the yoke of Torah will be given the yoke of government and the yoke of worldly affairs.²⁷⁶

While this particular excerpt from the text may not seem as negative as those previously mentioned, it explains that one who participates in government cannot study Torah. As

²⁷³ *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan*, chapter 11

²⁷⁴ *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan*, chapter 11

²⁷⁵ *Avot d'Rabbi Nathan*, chapter 11

Torah study holds a position of utmost importance within the minds of the Rabbis, one ought to avoid participation in government in favor of studying the Torah.

Though the Rabbis generally paint a negative picture of government, *Avot* includes a relatively positive statement concerning its role. The text instructs,

Rabbi Hanina, the deputy high priest said, "Pray for the peace/welfare of the government, for without the fear of it, people would swallow each other alive."²⁷⁷

While the general feeling toward government is negative, here the Rabbis recognize that there is a semblance of order for which the government is responsible. Fear of the ruling authority keeps the people from hurting one another. However, it is that same fear that keeps the Rabbis from wanting to call attention to themselves or participate in government dealings. The government serves as an institution that inspires fear. While the Rabbis praise it for keeping people in order, they see the government as an enemy as well.

Both the Jewish and Chinese traditions speak to the role of the individual in community. Certainly, the interaction between the individual and the community affects the general behavior of both. The traditions tend to agree that a person's conduct affects his/her surroundings, while the environment also has an influence on the individual. On the subject of government, however, Confucius and the Rabbis disagree. While Confucius tends to instruct the people to properly serve their leaders and describes the qualities of good and bad governments, the Rabbis express a basic distrust and fear of the ruling authorities. The Rabbis do offer a positive comment regarding the government's

²⁷⁶ *Avot* 3:6

ability to incite fear, but as a matter of course, the Rabbis have ill feelings toward the ruling authority.

²⁷⁷ *Avot* 3:2

Conclusion

The similarities between *Avot* and the *Analects of Confucius* are abundant. Both traditions address the individual with regard to appropriate behavior and self-improvement. Scholars and scholarship hold a central place. In both traditions, the stability and sophistication of the time certainly aided in the promotion of scholarship. Only during a time of relative stability and wealth can a society support a scholar class and hold scholarship as the ultimate ideal. Such was the case for Chinese society under the Had dynasty and Jewish society, at certain times, under Roman rule.

However, differences between the traditions certainly exist. The *Analects* and *Avot* discuss the individual's relationship with government differently. The reason lies in the fact that the Imperial Chinese government supported the *Analects* and its teachings while Jewish society existed under foreign rule. Therefore, *Avot* directs individuals to interact with the government cautiously. The foreign authority could not be trusted. Where the *Analects* encourage loyalty to one's prince and participation within the government, *Avot* recommends that the individual stay away. *Avot* credits the foreign authority with trouble and corruption. A Jew betrays his/her people and loses his/her property through interaction with foreign rulers.

However, *Avot* recognizes the importance of the government. The text credits the government with keeping people from hurting each other. *Avot* values the government as a proper warning to behave.

Avot and the *Analects* offer similar instruction to their respective leadership, though the leaders themselves hold different titles. Where the *Analects* address the

princes' and ministers' behavior regarding their role in society, *Avot* speaks to the scholars and teachers about proper conduct. In most cases, the content of the instruction is the same, but the title of the leader differs.

God plays a much greater role in *Avot* than Heaven does in the *Analects*. Perhaps foreign rule caused the Jews to look beyond their reality to something greater. They focused on a power far greater than the political one that controlled them. Their picture of the ideal took power away from those who had it and gave it to a power that transcended this world. By worshiping that transcendent power, they allied themselves with the ultimate authority of the universe. While the foreign government had power for the moment, ultimate power lay with God. And, God had a special relationship with the Jews. Confucianists, on the other hand, held an important role within the controlling government. They did not require a scheme to produce power for them. They enjoyed actual power. Thus, Heaven need not play as crucial a role in Chinese society. The ideas of God and Heaven are most useful to the disenfranchised.

Similar situations promote similar responses from human beings. The comparable thinking of Confucius and the Rabbis illustrate this idea. Parallel ideals pervade the pages of Chinese and Jewish texts. Recognition of the similarities enhances the study of both. While the details between the cultures differ, their basic conclusions are the same. Human beings have much in common.

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