

THE GRASS IS ALWAYS GREENER ON THE OTHER SIDE

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New Confucianism as
an alternative to
western environmental
theories

Abstract

While environmental research is rapidly expanding, the overall debate mostly relies on western theories to explain and assess environmental problems. The application of solely western theories makes research prone to indifferences for cultural variation. China is responsible for a quarter of the global greenhouse gas emissions, but Chinese environmental policies are generally explained through western environmental theories. This thesis explores the possibilities for a more cultural sensitive approach by exploring a New Confucian ecological perspective. It asks the question to what extent New Confucianism can be applied as an environmental theory, alternative to western environmental theories, and on what aspects it fits within the Chinese current context. This research applies a comparative political theoretical framework. It identifies multiple topics of discussion within the western debate, and derives dimensions and values from them. On the New Confucian account, this research combines a neo-Confucian moral framework and ideas of rationality and democracy to develop an environmental perspective. This results in four guidelines for human action towards nature. These guidelines fit well within Chinese culture, but encounter complications in the political aspect of Chinese society. New Confucianism provides an alternative environmental approach as long as it steers clear of the governments' legitimization fundamentals.

Keywords: New Confucianism, China, Environmentalism, Ecology, Comparative Political Theory.

Content

- Abstract1
- Preface5
- 1. Introduction: A Complex Environment5
 - The importance of China’s environmental policy6
 - Current status.....8
 - Double frame on the international level.....9
 - The link to Political Theory.....10
 - Speaking about Chinese Culture11
 - Confucianism and environmental debate12
 - Methodology.....14
- 2. Fifty Shades of Green.....17
 - An overview of western theories about the environment17
 - Start of the environmental debate17
 - Debate discussed by concept19
 - Anthropocentric approach19
 - Individualist consequentialist approaches.....21
 - Individualist deontological approaches.....22
 - Holistic environmental ethics.....23
 - Constructing dimensions26
 - Metaphysical.....26
 - Ethical.....27
- 3. Taking the Confusion out of Confucianism29
 - Tracing Confucian ideas from classical to modern times29
 - Going far back in history.....30
 - The neo-Confucian phase.....33
 - New Confucianism.....37
 - The Manifesto of New Confucianism40

Latest developments	42
4. From New to Nature	44
Constructing a New Confucian ecological approach.....	44
4.1 General ideas of Confucian moral thought	44
The organismic whole	44
The anthropocosmic idea.....	47
Extending responsibilities to Earth	47
4.2 New Confucianism Incorporated.....	50
The ultimate goal.....	51
4.3 Constructing guidelines	53
Four guidelines.....	54
5. Limitations of New Confucianism in Theory and Practice.....	57
5.1 Exploring the limits.....	57
Guideline one: wasting food, wasting the balance.....	58
Guideline two: formalizing self-cultivation	59
Guideline three: balancing interests	61
Guideline four: continuous information-seeking	62
5.2 New Confucianism, ecological approach and Chinese context.....	63
Making a cultural and politicized distinction.....	64
Cultural Confucianism	65
Politicized Confucianism	65
New Confucian Guidelines.....	69
5.3 New Confucianism compared to western environmental theories.....	70
Comparison dimensions and values.....	71
6. Conclusion.....	75
In Theory	75
In Context	76
In Comparison.....	77
Appendix 1 – Historical Timeline.....	79

Appendix 2 – Confucian lineage.....80
References.....81

Preface

During my bachelor in political science, I found some free time and decided to enroll in a minor-program about Chinese history, culture and language. I have been fascinated with China ever since. It escalated to such extent, that I spent the last year researching Confucianism and China's environmental policy, and gathered all the information I could lay my hands on. The environment is an important topic, and currently the realization is settling in that it should be our highest concern. It is not possible to confine the problems of environmental degradation to cultural borders. Exactly because environmental problems ignore these cultural borders, it is necessary to move beyond one's own cultural understanding. In this thesis, this is achieved by moving away from the focus on western scholars and delve into works of scholars with names that still confound me.

Getting the necessary sources for this research has been challenging at times. For a moment I questioned whether a Great Firewall existed on Dutch Universities. There was one time that I had traveled back and forth to Leiden, only to realize that the "*A Manifesto for a Re-appraisal of Sinology and Reconstruction of Chinese Culture*", the whole reason I needed the book, was missing. The chapter was not torn out, but was simply never included. Ever since, I check whether a book includes the chapter I need.

Writing this thesis was a learning process. The journey took longer than expected, but I gained more knowledge, both personally and on topic, than I anticipated. During the process, it was impossible to see where my research would lead me. The New Confucian environmental perspective has many different angles and aspects. But, ultimately, all came together, and every workday new links could be made. These links are not exhausted yet, and I could have spent many more years broadening the scope and depth of this research. China, the environment and New Confucianism all give more than enough material for many further research. However, that would go beyond the scope of this thesis. For now, this thesis focuses on New Confucianism as an environmental theory in Chinese current cultural and political context.

My first thanks are to my thesis advisor, prof. dr. Marcel Wissenburg. His patience, sharp reflections and in-depth feedback guided me throughout the process. I am grateful for his supervision and all his help from constructive criticism to humor and moral support. I am also grateful to Lotte, without whom the argumentation in this thesis would not have been this clear. For corrections in grammar and writing of the various chapters, I am grateful to Daniel, Frederik, Manouk, Ewoud, Sanna, Alan, Giles, Berend, Guido, Megan, and Maj-Britt. I am also grateful to Lisa and Lydwien for the moral support, sharing the same difficulties, and joining me in the much needed breaks to clear my head. I am especially grateful to my parents, I could always count on them to be a voice of reason and compassion, throughout the process of writing this thesis, but also in the past 6 years. While this master thesis was an individual task, it could not have been constructed without all of you.

I'd like to start with one of my favorite quotes by the one western scholar on Confucianism I could not ignore during my research: Daniel Bell says: "A joke about China is that one can say anything about it without getting it right. Another joke is that one can say anything about it without getting it wrong" (2008 p.xxvii).

On that note, enjoy the read,

Dominique Ros

1. Introduction: A Complex Environment

This thesis is about New Confucianism, a branch of a Chinese tradition of thought, as an alternative for the western perspectives on the environment and environmental policy. Environmental degradation is a global issue, where local environmental disasters can have extensive effects on areas far beyond. As such, they cannot be confined by any cultural borders. Therefore, the approach taken towards these global problems should be sensitive of the cultural borders crossed. Consequently, it is important to take into account different perspectives instead of generalizing one perspective as dominant. In the current debate, the contrary often happens. Western theories are applied to analyze policies in non-western countries, for example China. In an attempt to improve dialogue on the issue of environmental protection policies, this paper will research the dimensions on which New Confucianism and western environmental theories discuss the concept of nature. It will argue that a New Confucian environmental theory offers a theoretical framework that is distinct from western environmental theories. The formulation of specific dimensions and positions is no proper representation of the intricate complexity of New Confucian theory. Instead, four guidelines will be developed. The limits of their theoretical application will be explored, and the guidelines will be compared with dimensions and positions of western environmental theories. Furthermore, the thesis will address the extent to which this New Confucian environmental theory fits in the Chinese context, and explore the compatibility on the cultural and political aspect of Chinese context. The thesis will conclude that New Confucianism does indeed present opportunities as a viable alternative to western environmental theories, especially on the cultural aspects of Chinese context, as it is rooted in Chinese traditional culture.

The importance of China's environmental policy

In the last three decades China has developed as the production hub of developed countries. Many products sold in Europe and the United States of America (US) wear the 'made in China' label. However, the staggering economic growth percentages of China comes at the price of domestic environmental problems such as desertification, water pollution, smog, and resulting health-issues. Moreover, this has global consequences as China is responsible for a quarter of the global greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution as result of burning coal as a primary energy resource (World Resources Institute, 2012; Lewis & Gallagher, 2015). In the past China has been reserved in making commitments on environmental policy that demand a reduction in greenhouse gasses. As such, referring to its status as an economically developing country, China has prioritized economic growth above the protection of the environment. The initiative and commitments to environmental targets should be taken on by developed countries of the EU and the US instead.

However, recently there have been changes in Chinese environmental policy and some acknowledgement that “the country’s future is tied to improving its environmental performance” (Schreurs, 2011, p.251). Without taking environmental developments into account, Chinese economic growth cannot develop in a sustainable and lasting way. For example, poor air quality in major cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou has raised the salience of environmental issues. Liu and Mu researched the determinants and variation of public environmental concern in China, and found that environmental protection features as an important issue in urban and coastal regions (Liu & Mu, 2016). Domestic hillside deforestation, desertification, and water pollution further strengthen the issue. Yet, the driving force behind China’s environmental policies is China’s growing dependency on imported sources of energy.

China seems to be acknowledging the pressing need for environmental protection, and such examples are found increasingly from the 2000s onwards. The bilateral talks with the United States in 2014 are such an example. Xi Jinping pledged to stabilize China’s emissions by 2030, although the targets remained ambiguous (Schiermeier, 2014). More recently, China ratified the Paris agreements and committed itself to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and keeping global warming below two degrees Celsius (Aljazeera, 2016). Consequently, China’s ratification of the agreement illustrates the country’s willingness to internationally commit to environmental protection.

China’s official state ideology is Communism. Every five years, the Chinese Communist Party formulates new central guidelines for the policies applied to the whole country. On the domestic level, China’s Five-year plans illustrate a strengthened pledge to climate policy. The eleventh Five-year Plan, setting out China’s policy aims for the years 2006-2010, stated the ambition to decrease energy intensity by twenty percent (energy consumption per unit of GDP) and fifteen percent renewable energy sources (Lewis, 2011). Key to attaining this was the Top-1000 Energy-Consuming Enterprises Program. The program, as the name indicates, targeted the one thousand largest energy-consuming enterprises in China to reduce their energy consumption, in order to reach the twenty percent reduction in energy use per unit of GDP. The twelfth Five-year plan for the years 2010-2015 aimed for a further cut of sixteen percent in energy intensity (Xinhua, 2011). It expanded the energy policies by also aiming for a usage of eleven percent of non-fossil fuel for the primary energy consumption, carbon dioxide emission per unit of GDP cut by seventeen percent and water consumption cut by thirty percent (Xinhua, 2011). The most recent Five-year plan (2015-2020) emphasizes the transition to non-fossil fuel technology. China wants to stimulate clean energy, such as wind, solar and nuclear, to move away from the coal dependent energy consumption and lower the national energy consumption per unit of GDP by fifteen percent by 2020. (Xinhua, 2016).

Current status

China is currently the world leader in solar water heaters. Similarly, renewable energy sources such as wind energy and solar power are rapidly expanding (Schreurs, 2011). Partly, this can be attributed to the extreme measures taken by the central government setting local governments to strict targets and maximum energy usages as the five-year plan subscribe (Qiu, 2013). Actions limiting industrial activities, for example the temporary shutting down of factories during the Beijing Olympics and the strict limit of car-usage in the center of major cities, are illustrations of what Schreurs calls authoritarian environmentalism (Schreurs, 2011, p.250).

The five-year plans are supposed to improve the sustainable energy consumption in China, but have not always had the intended effect. For example, the aim of the eleventh Five-year Plan was to have fifteen percent of the total energy consumption produced by means of renewable energy sources. The 2005 Renewable Energy Law stated that grid operators had to purchase renewable energy from registered producers, and it also included a government subsidy per kilowatt hour (Schreurs, 2011, p.454). Energy-producers in return had to use at least seventy percent domestic technology. However, problems arose with connecting the producers to the grid. In response the law was changed, stating that all renewable energy produced within China had to be bought by the grid operators (Schreurs, 2011). This is an example of the harsh enforcement of China's policy where Chinese grid owners are forced to buy the energy, thus creating an impetus for an improved grid. Some have argued that this is part of Chinese environmental policies (Schreurs, 2011). However, it can also be viewed as a measure to promote the domestic market with environmental benefits being an unintended side effect. China has also increased its nuclear power usage and gas explorations. The developments in energy policies can be portrayed as an economic necessity, and not as a policy aimed at environmental protection.

Another policy that can be assessed as both economic and environmental motivations is the Go West Campaign. The campaign is a government initiative to decrease the inequality between developed coastal regions and the sparsely populated western regions by stimulating development projects and relocation of citizens. The Go West Campaign portrays the importance of the western region of China as a cornerstone for Chinese long term energy policy. President Hu Jintao said that "in the next 10 years, living standards there will be 'greatly improved' and the environment would be 'better protected'" (Moxley, 2010, original quotations). The government argues that the policy will benefit the overall environmental situation of China and emphasizes the increase of 'clean energy' by the development of massive hydro-power installations. Also, by developing the west, it should remove the incentive for people to migrate to major coastal cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, and subsequently decreasing the environmental pressure these major cities put on the environment (Moxley, 2010). However, these hydro-power installations, and the necessary infrastructure do cause some serious side effects. These projects cause desertification, soil erosion and water scarcity, indicating that the project is less concerned with environmental protection than the government

claims (Moxley, 2010). Another motive can be found in the political situation in these western regions. Multiple minorities advocate for various degrees of autonomy and devolution from the central government. Consequently, some argue that the projects are a state-building and resource extraction strategy, and not a development strategy which protects the environment (Herrold-Menzies, Jiang, Muldavin and Yeh in Yeh, 2015, p.620).

Double frame on the international level

Not only on the domestic level is the motivation for environmental policies ambiguous. Multiple scholars have pointed out China's double frame in international environmental agreements (Schreurs, 2011, Wang-Kaeding, 2015; Wu, 2016). Schreurs argues that China shows a paradoxical attitude in chasing high economic growth rates, while referring to its developmental status to deflect responsibility on environmental issues to developed countries such as the US and member-states of the European Union (EU) (Schreurs, 2011, p.254). Wang-Kaeding argues on similar grounds that China uses its status as a BRIC nation to gain recognition in the international community while avoiding commitments by referring to its status as developing economy. Since China has deflected international binding agreements on environmental policy until recently, all efforts of China to improve and protect the environment can be seen as an attempt to claim moral high ground (Wang-Kaeding, 2015, p.32).

There are some, however, who argue that China cannot reject its environmental responsibility simply by pointing out their status as a developing country (Harris, 2011). According to Paul Harris, "China has the capacity and the moral obligation to improve environmental problems" (2011, p.xi)¹. By emitting more than a quarter of the world's total greenhouse gas emissions China cannot refrain from taking action. Wu sees the friction in Chinese international policy not in the referral to their developmental status, but in the nature of China's diplomacy policy on environmental issues, which bears both proactive and reactive features. China is reactive due to its aims of wealth-maximization, but shows some sign of proactive attitude because of their asymmetric dependence on the developed countries for transferring climate mitigation-related technologies and 'their desire to build a great power status in the international system' (Wu, 2016, p.199). As the recent ratification of the Paris climate agreement does commit China to environmental targets, it seems that China has taken another pro-active step.

The Chinese government looks primarily inward when shaping its domestic policy decisions, ranking national energy security and local environmental concerns of higher concern than international

¹ In the preface, Paul G. Harris writes about the contribution of Chinese scholars to *China's responsibility for climate change*. While Chinese scholars in private were willing to reflect critically on Chinese environmental policy, they were not willing to contribute to the book with ideas contrary to the official Chinese policy stand that 'China has no responsibility for climate change, apart from any that it is willing to take on for reasons of magnanimity or generosity' (Harris, 2011, p.xii). This both illustrates the power of the central government's policy and the idea previously mentioned of 'taking moral higher ground'.

environmental policy (Lewis & Gallagher, 2015, p.187). The domestic environmental policy has depended heavily on the central Chinese government actions, such as the previously mentioned Renewable Energy Law and the 'Go west' campaign. Lewis and Gallagher address the potential of a bottom-up approach to Chinese environmental policy and identify enforcement problems of current national policy at the local level. A lack of capacity and transparency in emissions monitoring and energy consumption data creates problems for national policy making (Lewis & Gallagher, 2015, p.207). Furthermore, the focus on the central environmental policy also has as effect that China's society has weak non-governmental actors and that national initiatives encounter local or regional resentment (Koehn, 2015). Koehn's multi-level analysis concludes that China has a large potential of actors that should be recognized and mobilized to tackle the climate-change challenge in China (Koehn, 2016, xviii). The environmental policy of China is thus based on domestic issues, which are primarily dominated by economic concerns.

The link to Political Theory

Whilst in the last decade China has implemented more policies targeting environmental issues, especially on domestic energy usage, these policies can be explained through multiple motivations such as economical, state-building, developmental, and environmental concerns. These motivations have to be grounded in a certain understanding of nature in order to create a sense of coherence in our behavior towards nature. The value of nature and the relationship humanity has towards it shape a certain idea of a future society. This formulation is not based on scientific or technical understanding towards nature, but a moral one, although scientific and technical elements may function as arguments. As such, the certain understandings of values discussed in this thesis refers to the attribution of some moral standard. As it is a normative attribution, there are a plurality of possible options. The energy targets set by the Chinese government can be perceived as the acknowledgement of Chinese policy-makers of the limits of natural resources. In this anthropocentric view, nature is valuable because it is a means to an end in human life. It drives the economy, heats the house, or gives aesthetic pleasure. And this is why it should be preserved and cared for. The shift to non-fossil fuel is necessary to safeguard the Chinese economy and society.

A critique on the anthropocentric perspective is that it is immoral and destructive way for thinking about nature. When nature is valued instrumentally by humans, it creates the danger of a gliding scale. If everything is in service of mankind, it can create self-destructive behavior where nature will be used until it is depleted or not of further use. Furthermore, when it has lost its value because of alternative resources, it leaves no reason to protect the environment. While technological advancements might alleviate pressure on natural resources, it can have unintended side effects that devalues nature leaving environmental protection obsolete. Instead, nature should be seen as imbued with an innate value, leaving for the moment undetermined what the object of this value should be.

This discussion is just a shimmer of the multiple assumptions and conceptions of nature that have been under discussion in western environmental philosophy. Since the 1960s, scholars have investigated metaphysical, ethical, and moral aspects of environmental topics, such as the value of nature, responsibility towards nature, and the relationship between humans and nature. Within this, distinctions are made between human-centered approaches and non-human-centered approaches, i.e. anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism. Another distinction is between environmentalism and deep ecology, where the former emphasizes the need for a well-protected environment in order for human-life to prosper and continue, and the latter which focuses on protection of the biosphere, which focusses on the whole system and sees humans as only one of many elements in this intricate interdependent structure. Although western discussions seem fond of dichotomies, and environmental philosophical debates have many, the question rises to what extent the topics discussed and dichotomies reached in the western debates are apt to use when discussing Chinese environmental policy.

Speaking about Chinese Culture

China is an enormous country and has experienced many different influences in different regions over periods of time. Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and Communism are examples of different traditions of thought that have influenced Chinese philosophy, politics, culture, and daily life, but certainly do not exhaust the list. Because Confucianism in particular, for reasons that will be discussed below, has been experiencing a revival in interest, this thesis will explore the possibilities for a Confucian theory of nature.

Confucianism is a complex theory, with a world view formed around the thoughts of the ancient scholar Confucius (551-479 B.C.). It is a holistic life approach where practice of rituals, social hierarchy, political ideology and reform are all encompassed into one theory. “It is an assemblage of interlocking forms of life for generations in East Asia encompassing all the possible domains in human concern” (Berthrong & Berthrong, 2000, p.1).

Confucianism was adopted as a central part of the Qin dynasty’s state ideology (205BC-220 AD), but fell into decline when the Qin dynasty ended. It experienced a revival in the Song dynasty (960-1279 AD) under the banner ‘neo-Confucianism’. While this phase of Confucianism carries the label ‘neo’, it does not refer to a present-day development, but one during the ancient dynasties of the Qin, Tang, Song and, Ming. During the subsequent dynasties, neo-Confucianism was further developed in China to become one of the historical and cultural pillars of Chinese society. Zooming in on contemporary China, Confucianism is again experiencing a revival in importance. As such, it is in the context of this latest revival that we can speak of ‘New Confucianism’.

This latest revival of Confucianism can be seen to emerge at the beginning of the 20th century. In the 1920s there was a group of scholars who were of the opinion that “there was a core of essence in the tradition that was worth saving” (Berthrong & Berthrong, 2000, p.21). The fall of the Qing dynasty in 1912, the Communist victory in 1949, and the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s are all incidents that seemed to indicate the end of Confucianism in the Chinese culture. Mostly writing outside of China, or in secret on the mainland, these ‘New Confucians’ examined old Confucian texts and tried to place them into a modern context.

Confucianism gained further salience in the late 1980s, when the government established an official national research program on Confucianism. This illustrates how Confucianism was even regained ground within the government (Dallmayr & Tingyang, 2012, p.6). Around this time, the Chinese government turned towards Confucianism in order to strengthen Communist ideas with ancient Chinese cultural ideas such as harmony and community. As Communism was dwindling in popularity, Confucianism was supposed to fill the ideological vacuum that arose (Bell, 2015a). While an attempt was made to erase Confucianism from Chinese at the beginning of the 20th century, it is so embedded in China’s cultural structure that Confucianism has always been present, be it lingering in the shadows during the early 20th century or dominant in politics and policy during many dynasties.

Although Confucianism has been an important influence in Chinese culture, it was not the only influence. Daoism is another classical tradition of thought and after the fall of the Han dynasty in 220AD “permeated every aspect of Chinese life, save for political theory, which remained solidly in Confucian hands” (Berthrong & Berthrong, 2000, p.19).

According to Berthrong and Berthrong (2000), Confucian strength lays in its holistic, pragmatic approach:

[in contrast with] Daoist claims about vacuity and the Buddhist preaching about emptiness [...] Whatever wonderful things the alchemy of the Daoist can offer, whatever bliss Buddhist meditation promises, we still have to raise our children and bury our parents. The rest is art. (p.10)

While acknowledging the importance of Daoism and Buddhism on Chinese thought, the research of this thesis has to be limited in scope. Because of the strong connection to political life, the continued presence of Confucianism throughout history and its current development of New Confucianism, this thesis will only examine the new Confucian stance on nature.

Confucianism and environmental debate

The environmental debate is, as mentioned before, heavily based on western scholarship. Starting at the turn of the century, however, there has been an increase in publications which do not engage with

the questions from a western-centric perspective. In general, recent handbooks, anthologies and overview articles do include Chinese environmental policy. Yet, this is still quite fragmented, often containing only one chapter, and based on China's current ad-hoc policies. Since Confucianism is woven so extensively into Chinese society, Confucianism can give a more structured and robust idea of a Chinese perspective on nature. The revival of New Confucianism in politics and philosophy only increases the need to take a closer look at its specific position on the environment. New Confucianism incorporates elements of western theories into New Confucian thinking, and thereby attempts to bring certain western ideas and Confucian ideas together. New Confucianism is thus well suited for a culturally sensitive approach on Chinese environmental issues.

As we accept we need a cultural sensitive theoretical framework in order to aptly understand Chinese ideas on environmental policy, another question that rises is how this might be different from a western theoretical framework. It could be that different traditions of thought give deviating values on metaphysical, ethical and moral dimensions when speaking about nature. However, it can also be that the differences end with the cultural and terminological differences, and the answers to environmental dilemmas are similar. By constructing a twofold set of dimensions for western environmental theories and New Confucianism, this thesis will try to shed some light on the problems briefly indicated in the previous discussion.

Since environmental issues are increasingly pressing matter, and China is the production hub of the West, it is important to know how Confucianism understands nature, and to what extent this is comparable or different from western environmental theories. Misunderstandings in the theoretical fundamentals can cause grave miscommunication in solving practical matters and cooperation. Since global environmental issues make cooperation a necessity, there is a need to gain understanding in the theoretical fundamentals of Chinese society and to what extent this is different from western environmental theories. When the differences on thinking about nature are clear, it can be of mutual advantage to learn from the other perspective and might even give rise to new innovative ideas to make environmental theory more effective and accurate in a globalized world.

Therefore, the thesis will focus on the research question:

To what extent can New Confucianism be applied as an environmental theory, as an alternative to western environmental theories, and on what aspects does a New Confucian environmental approach fit into the Chinese current context?

In order to answer this question, it is necessary to gain an understanding of the western environmental theories to which New Confucianism may provide an alternative. This is why this thesis starts by exploring existing western environmental theories, the general topics they discuss and the different

positions they take on these topics. The thesis will refer to these general topics of discussion as 'dimensions'. Chapter 2 will answer the sub-question:

What dimensions and positions can be identified in current western environmental theories?

After it is clear to which theories New Confucianism may provide an alternative, it is necessary to explore New Confucian thought itself and its perspective on the environment. The second sub-question to be answered is:

What dimensions and positions can be identified in New Confucianism on the topic of environmental issues?

As the dimensions and positions of both western environmental theories and New Confucian environmental theory are constructed independent from each other, there may be differences and similarities between them. The third sub-question will therefore be:

What differences and similarities of western environmental theories and New Confucianism on the topic of environmental issues can be identified?

These questions together provide an answer to the theoretical opportunities for a New Confucian environmental theory as an alternative approach to western environmental theories. However, they do not provide insights into the practical opportunities for a New Confucian environmental theory. Therefore, the last sub-question of this thesis is:

In which aspects does a New Confucian environmental theory fit within Chinese current context?

Combined, these questions will provide all the information required to answer the main research question of this thesis.

Methodology

As the goal of this thesis is to gain insight in New Confucian theory on nature and the differences of this theory with western ideas of nature, the research conducted in this thesis is comparative in essence. In order to find an answer to the aforementioned questions, the thesis will work inside the framework of comparative political theory. The term comparative political theory was first applied by Euben in his 1997 article "Comparative Political Theory: An Islamic Fundamentalist Critique of Rationalism", but the 'intellectual Godfather' of comparative political theory is Fred Dallmayr, who has written multiple publications on doing comparative political research starting as early as 1996 (von Vacano, 2015, p.466).

Comparative political theory developed in response to globalization and a discontent with the reigning paradigms employed by western scholars. According to Dallmayr, political theory portrays a

professional bias towards familiar theories belonging to the western canon. Political theoretical research should instead be seen as a dialogical process ‘leading to growing proximity and interpretation of cultures’ (Dallmayr, 2004 p.249). Along the same line of argument, Charles Taylor argues for the need for proper cross-cultural comparison in larger east-west comparisons, such as in the case of the language of rights between western liberals and Asian Buddhists. This should happen through a willingness to engage in mutual learning (Taylor, 1999 in Dallmayr, 2004, p.253). As the goal of this sort of research is a global understanding, this strand of comparative political theory has a normative aim (von Vacano, 2015, p.469). The aim is more genuine universalism, steering between narrow specialists and abstract generalists (Dallmayr, 2004, p.249).

In order to construe this dialogical process, it is important to gain a proper understanding of both perspectives. As the aim of comparative political theory is to move away from the western paradigms dominance, this thesis will construct meta-physical, ethical, and moral dimensions for both perspectives separately before comparing them. While in-depth research on a non-western tradition can already by itself give insights, this thesis is internally comparative in the sense that ‘the work itself is comparative between different traditions of political thought’ (von Vacano, 2015, p.470).

The research will draw from written sources in order to construct both new Confucian and western dimensions of green thought. According to Dallmayr “familiarity [of a researcher with a foreign language] will increase their sensitivity to the intricacies of language and to the problems of translation (without obviating, of course, the need for and the benefits of translation itself)” (2004, p.254, n3). The research in this thesis is limited to English publications. Although translations can influence the understanding of specific ideas, the most prominent third generation new Confucian scholars such as Liu Shuxian and Tu Weiming did publish in English. This decreases the problems of using only English literature while trying to stay away from western paradigm dominance, but is still a point of concern. Furthermore, the Confucian concepts cannot be seen isolated from the Chinese language. While most concepts have been matched with a suitable English translation, the English concepts might feel somewhat ‘off’, especially with concepts such as self-cultivation. This thesis will apply the names of the concepts similar to the English sources by Chinese scholars.

This thesis will continue in the comparative theoretical tradition by constructing dialogue between western and Asian environmental theory specifically by looking at western and new Confucian understanding of environmental theories. The aim is to create increased understanding in the differences and similarities on the topic of environmental theory. To arrive at this understanding Chapter 2 will discuss current western ‘canon’ on environmental theory and distil certain dimensions on meta-philosophical and ethical level of western environmental theories are concerned with. Chapter 3 will turn towards the Confucian context of Chinese society and discuss the development of Confucianism from its classical origin to its most recent revival. Taking the original manifest of New

Confucianism as starting point, and further aided by additional articles by Anglophone scholars and New-Confucians publishing in English, Chapter 4 traces the New Confucian stand on environmental issues, and distil guidelines on how to act towards nature from the New Confucian perspective. The differences and similarities between the western and New Confucian environmental theory will be discussed in Chapter 5. Furthermore, this chapter will examine the limits to the theoretical capacity of the New Confucian ecological guidelines, and reflect on the fit of this vision within China's current cultural and political context. Chapter 6 will provide a short summary of the previous chapters, answer the research question stated above, and reflect on the research.

2. Fifty Shades of Green

An overview of western theories about the environment

The environment is a topic that is highly prominent in contemporary discussions. However, discussions about the environment have not always received this much attention. This chapter will provide a general overview of the start of the environmental debate in western Academics. After this short historical examination, the chapter will elaborate on the most important positions within the environmental debate nowadays, ranging from anthropocentric theories on the one end to deep ecology on the other end of the spectrum. These theories discuss the same topics, yet formulate a variety of positions that can be taken in on these topics. The third part of this chapter will take a step back from the different theories, and deconstruct the environmental debate by dimensions, and the values on these dimensions. They will provide the framework for a comparison with New Confucianism in Chapter 5.

Start of the environmental debate

The start of the western environmental debate is often traced back to the late 1960s and the early 1970s (Light & Rolston, 2003; Dobson, 2007). In *Silent Spring* (1963), Rachel Carson was one of the first to raise her concerns on the negative impact of the human behavior towards the environment. The book discussed the use of pesticides and the effects on animals, plants, the ecosystems and human health (Carson, 1962/1990). Erhlich² also pointed out the impact of humans to the world's sustainability. In *The Population Bomb* they argued at the time that the food supply was not suited for the challenges that the fast-growing population posed, and concluded that starvation and death-rates would skyrocket in the upcoming years (Ehrlich, 1968). Measures to control the population growth and improve the food-production had to be taken, in order to prevent this from happening. In the same year, Garrett Hardin published "The Tragedy of the Commons", where he argued that individuals acting on self-interest would cause destruction and depletion of common resources. Instead, it was necessary to recognize the common nature of these resources and to establish common management in order to prevent depletion and destruction (Hardin, 1968). The article was one of the first to look at resources as a common responsibility for humans³. These publications all identified the negative effects of human actions on nature, and argued for a change in human behavior.

² Although *The Population Bomb* was written by Paul R. Erlich and Anne Erlich, the publication was only credited to Paul Erlich. The common format of referencing will be upheld throughout, but the author does feel the need to give credit where credit is due.

³ For an overview on trends in the responsibility of the commons, see Van Laerhoven and Östrom (2007) Traditions and Trends in the Study of the Commons. *International Journal of the Commons*. 1(1), pp.3-28.

During the 1960s and 1970s, there was a growing call for fundamental change in the conceptions of justice, and new legal structures. In the environmental movement, the overriding concern was that ‘fundamental changes were needed in how we understood the value of nature and how we organize human societies accordingly’ (Light & Rolston, 2003, p.1). One of the first scholars to include the environment in a holistic theory of ethics was Aldo Leopold. In *The Land Ethic* (1949), he analyzed an expansion in the moral ethics from the interpersonal ethics to also include individual relations to society, i.e. individual-society ethics. A next logical step, Leopold argued, would be an ethics of relations between individuals and ecosystems which he called ‘land ethic’. Leopold’s concept extended ethics by including the environment into the moral community and attributing moral value to nature.

In 1972, the idea of intrinsic value of nature was further developed by Arne Naess with his famous Bucharest Lectures. Naess made the distinction between theories that were focused on solving the depletion of resources, which he named ‘shallow ecology’, and theories that argued for a whole new understanding of people’s position within the world, which he called ‘deep ecology’. Naess suggested that a structural change in society and perception of nature is necessary in order to attain a sustainable lifestyle for now and future generations. Instead of responding to the effects of environmental problems, people needed to focus on the prevention of the root causes of these environmental issues.

Richard Routley also discussed the idea of value of nature, in his 1973 paper “Is there a Need for a New, and Environmental Ethic?”. He developed a thought experiment to see whether nature possessed intrinsic value. In the thought experiment, there is only one last human in the world. This human, possessing the knowledge that he was the last to ever live on that planet, has the possibility (by ample nuclear weapons) to destroy the whole world and all organism with it and to go out with a big bang (Routley, 1973). According to Routley, the intuitive answer is that complete destruction would be wrong, and that this indicates the existence of an intrinsic value of nature⁴.

However, while most scholars agreed with the idea that humans’ behavior should be restricted in order to protect the biosphere from destructive exploitation, not all under-scribed the idea that there was an intrinsic value to nature. John Passmore argued in *Man’s responsibility for nature*, that while our attitude towards nature had to change in order to preserve the biosphere, we need not abandon the traditional ethical framework in favor of one where nature had intrinsic value. As such that: “values are human generated and human-focuses”, subjecting nature to human stewardship for protection and preservation (Palmer, 2003, p.18).

⁴ However, there has been much criticism on the argument that intrinsic value is demonstrated through Routley’s thought experiment. The intuitive answer might only be given as it is the socially desirable answer to give; the intuitive feeling is something distinct from acting on those feelings; it is no definitive argument for intrinsic value; as we are not in the position of that last person on earth, we are unable to know how this person would act; and thinking how to respond and actually knowing are distinctive understandings. For more information, see Wissenburg, 2005).

As the scholarly debate intensified, multiple organizations joined the debate. In 1979, the journal of *Environmental Ethics* was established and in 1990 multiple environmental scholars founded the International Society of Environmental Ethics (ISEE) to support research and education on environmental issues. As Palmer wrote: “By the end of the twentieth century, environmental ethics was a widely studied and hotly debated subject” (Palmer, 2003, p.16). The debate now included a wide range of topics, from the diversity of moral concern, to rights-perspectives on environmental problems, to wilderness and ecological restorations and many more.

Debate discussed by concept

While it is possible to deconstruct the environmental debate in multiple ways, as with all debates not all arguments will follow the same structure. Topics varied from discussions on the value of nature, the role of people, the position humans have compared to animals, species, the biosphere, and the earth. There are many labels given to the same concepts in a debate as broad as the environmental debate. What do we talk about when we actually speak of environmental ethics? Dobson describes environmentalism as a theory that tries to solve environmental problems (2007, p.3). This ‘light green’ is contrasted to the theories that aims for more fundamental change in relationship with the non-human natural world, so called ‘dark-green theories’ (Dobson, 2007, p. 5). The first to make this distinction was Arne Naess, in 1972 during the Bucharest Lectures. He contrasted shallow ecology movements, who were concerned with pollution and resource depletion, and deep ecology movements, who were focused on ecological principles such as diversity, complexity and symbiosis (Naess, 1973, as cited in Dobson, 2007, p.32).

In general, a distinction can be made between theories that try to resolve environmental problems and theories that are concerned with the more radical changes in the fundamentals of how we perceive nature. Andrew Dobson describes the former as ‘environmentalism’, and writes that: “environmentalism argues for a managerial approach to environmental problems, secure in the belief that they can be solved without fundamental changes in present values or patterns of production and consumption” (2007, p. 2). The latter, Dobson calls ecologism, and “holds that sustainable and fulfilling existence presupposes radical changes in our relationship with the non-human natural world, and in our mode of social and political life” (Dobson, 2007, p.3). In the upcoming part, the environmental debate will be discussed from a range of different perspectives. Starting with environmental ethics, it will gradually shift through other positions to end with deep ecology.

Anthropocentric approach

An anthropocentric approach regards humankind as central in the approach of humans to the world. Nature is of instrumental value to people, whether it is of physical value, such as trees for oxygen,

aesthetic value such as the Niagara Falls, or spiritual form, such as the Five Great Mountains of China⁵. The value attributed to nature is derived from this instrumental relationship with humans. However, having a human-centered focus does not directly imply that nature is subject to total exploitation by human whims. The instrumental value can call for “careful management for human benefit” (Light & Rolston, 2003, p.17). The idea of protection of nature for human benefit can already be found in one of the most important early reports in the 1980 on sustainable development. The World Commission on Environment and Development of the United Nations published a report in 1987 for “a global agenda for change” (Brundtland, Khalid, & Agnelli, 1987, p.11). The report defined sustainable development as: “the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability for future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland et al., 1987, p. 24). The moral community was expanded to also include future generations in the calculation of value for nature and its protection.

As mentioned before, this anthropocentric approach led some to argue that no new environmental ethics was necessary. Since values are human-generated and focused, the idea of taking care of the world for human benefit can be sufficient for environmental issues (Passmore, 1976 as cited in Palmer, 2003, p.18). Andrew Dobson argues that this human-centeredness is actually an unavoidable feature of the human condition (Dobson, 2007, p.43). He applies Warwick Fox’ distinction between a weak and strong notion of anthropocentrism. The strong meaning of anthropocentrism views the non-human world as instrumental to human’s goals (Dobson, 2007, p.42). Yet it is the weak definition of ‘being human-centered’ that is impossible to circumvent according to Dobson. Because all values are perceived by humans, there is a weak-anthropocentric element in all environmental theory.

The strong-anthropocentric perspective was often indicated as the main cause for environmental crisis and degradation (Curry, 2006, pp.42-44). Regarding nature as instrumental for human life was not to create an incentive to protect and guard nature’s wellbeing. Subsequent irresponsible actions by humans are the causes for global warming, polluted waters, decreasing biodiversity etc.. On a more theoretical level, scholars also criticized the instrumental terms of an anthropocentric perspective. Whether or not non-human nature would have value depends on a specific reading of the usefulness in a particular culture. “Saving nature would depend on nature’s being useful to some particular culture in some particular time” (Routley as cited in Light & Rolston, 2003, p.9). Paul Taylor takes the argument even a step further; if plastic trees would be better for humans because they would regenerate more Co2 while aesthetically looking the same, it would imply that we should replace all natural trees with these plastic trees (Taylor, 1984). The human centeredness of the anthropocentric

⁵ While there are many sacred mountains in China, the group of the Five Great Mountains are most renowned. For more information on the spiritual aspects of these mountains, see Bernbaum (2006) *Sacred Mountains: Themes and Teachings*. Mountain Research and Development, 26(4), 304–309

approach was deemed to facilitate the scarification of nature for human well-being. In response, theorists developed alternative perspectives where intrinsic value was attributed not only to humanity but also to nature.

Individualist consequentialist approaches

One attempt to include nature by its own account into environmental theory is the individual consequentialist approach. This approach moves away from human centeredness by taking individual organisms as the unit of moral concern, whether these are all organisms, or organisms with specific capacities. Based on the utilitarian ideas of Bentham and Mill, the concern of the individual consequentialist approach is optimizing the total experience of the organisms included in the moral community.

In the book *Animal Liberation* Peter Singer develops the idea of *speciesism*, stating that all individual organisms which have the capacity to feel pleasure and pain should be included in moral considerations (Singer, 1995). Singer suggested to include all sentient animals into the moral community, i.e. all that have subjective experience (Singer, 1995).

Yet, such a utilitarian approach can be problematic since it bases the value of organisms on the total *experience*. When the experience is greater than the cost of the organism, there will always be the possibility to make a sacrifice for the 'greater good', hereby implying the total experience. In Singers later articles he suggests a distinction of moral consideration into 'the conscious' and 'the self-conscious'. Conscious beings are able to feel pleasure and pain and should be taken into account in light of the greater good. Self-conscious beings have however the added capacity of being self-aware. This self-awareness is morally relevant, and Singer argues that it is therefore worse to kill animals with self-consciousness than animals without (Palmer, 2003, p.19). By adding the distinction of self-awareness, Singer thus constructs a hierarchy in his attribution of value to subjects of the moral community.

Another way of applying this individual consequentialist approach is by applying a 'two-pronged system of priority principle' (Palmer, 2003, p.20). VanDeVeer for example, develops an approach where the value and priority of claims depend on the complexity of the organisms in question and the nature of the claim of the organism. The more complex the organism is; the more value the claim has. Also, 'the more basic the claim, the stronger the priority' (Palmer, 2003).

The focus on the complexity of organisms can leave many organism outside of moral consideration. According to Robin Attfield, "all organisms that have the ability to flourish and develop have an interest in doing so" (as cited in Palmer, 2003, p.20). The ability to flourish should be enough to attribute moral worth to an organism, only inanimate objects are inconsiderable. Yet conflict between interests will happen and the broadening of the moral community only makes this more certain.

Attfield introduces two principles of priority to deal with this, which are the principle of psychological complexity and the distinction between needs (necessary), wants (strong), and preferences (ordered from strong to weak).

All three variations of the individual consequentialist approach tried to expand the scope of moral concern to include nature. They did this by attributing value to the total experiences of this broader moral community. However, the individual consequentialist approach does pose a few problems. There is the problem of sacrifice of nature for human interest, as already seen in Sandel's theory, but applicable to the broader perspective. All approaches start with the expansion of the moral unit to include non-human organism. Faced with the conflict of interest of these organisms, Sandel, VanDeVeer and Attfield, all introduce some element of hierarchy. Whether it is based on a higher form of consciousness as Sandel proposes, or psychological complexity of organisms as VanDeVeer and Attfield proposed, they all result in a theoretical hierarchy where ultimately human interests do trump non-human interests (Palmer, 2003, p.21). Even though the individual consequentialist approaches tried to move away from an anthropocentric view, ultimately it did not achieve much more than using different reasoning to come to the same conclusion as the weak interpretation of anthropocentrism.

Individualist deontological approaches

While individual consequentialist approaches focused on the total experience of individual organisms, individualist deontological approaches attribute its value to the organism itself. This can be done by considering all organisms of equal value, or to generate a hierarchy in the values of these organisms to be morally considered. Albert Schweitzer for example, classifies organisms as morally relevant when they have a 'will to live' and bestows upon all of these organisms equal value (Palmer, 2003, p.21). Paul Taylor also starts with the idea of an inherent value to individual organisms in nature. Set in the Aristotelian tradition, Taylor argues that all organisms 'are teleological centers of life, pursuing good in their own way' (Palmer, 2003, p.22). He formulates a theoretical framework to solve potential conflicts between these organisms and he constructs four different principles of duty to the non-human natural world to act upon. These are the principles of non-maleficence, non-interference, fidelity and restitutive justice. When the interests of different organisms are conflicting, prioritizing principles should give guidance in the choice of morally justified actions. These principles are the principle of self-defense, proportionality of the minimum wrong, distributive justice and restitutive justice (Palmer, 2003, p.22). All organisms are part of this framework.

However, it feels intuitively wrong to attribute the same moral value to a bug as to a human, to a mosquito as to an elephant. Lombardi therefore proposes a hierarchy in the inherent value to organisms. He proposes a "graded individualist deontological environmental ethic" (Palmer, 2003,

p.22). This hierarchy is constructed by differentiation in the capacities of species, or capacities between species.

Individualist deontological approaches also did not remain free from criticism. The idea of restitution in the theories of Schweitzer and Taylor is conflicting with the idea of inherent value. When there is inherent value to an organism, this implies an inherent value to the existence of this organism. By granting a form of restitution to the existence of a life, the inherent value is subjected to a cause, making it a consequentialist argument (Palmer, 2003; Wenz, 1988). Thus, the idea of restitution undermines the starting point of intrinsic value. Furthermore, there is the issue of granting a maggot and a mammal the same inherent value. According to Singer, sentience is necessary for moral consideration. The theoretical concept of equal value to all organisms that 'have a will to live' is in practice not possible to maintain, because organisms have different perceptions and degrees of consciousness. Yet, if we incorporate a hierarchy such as Lombardi did, a different problem arises. By selecting a hierarchy principle that is based on human capacities, other organisms ultimately are judged in comparison to human beings (Palmer, 2003, p.23).

The individual consequentialist approaches and the individual deontological approaches share in their theories the individual character of the moral object. They therefore do have some critique in common. Both approaches do not attribute any value to the greater ecosystems or species, nor to diversity within nature. We will now describe an approach that does focus on this idea of a value to the larger system.

Holistic environmental ethics

Different from the previously discussed approaches, the holistic environmental ethics puts the focus on ecological wholes. Not the individual organisms, but the ecological structure, biosphere, biodiversity etc. are of main interest. Because of this focus on larger systems, holistic environmental ethics tends towards a more consequentialist approach. Within holistic environmental approaches there is a large variety in scale. For example, Erik Katz argues that prosperity of the ecological community should be the primary goal of concern. Individual organisms are of secondary moral importance (Katz, 2003). A different scale can be found in the early work of J. Blair Callicot. He argues that ethical behavior is instinctive (socio-biology) and that individual interests are secondary to the ethical community as a whole.

Some holistic approaches take the whole world as their moral subject. James Lovelock introduces this idea as the 'Gaia hypothesis', where the world is perceived as one single living organism. This organism tries to balance the conditions of life by harmony between flora and fauna (cf. Palmer, 2003). One way to interpret the Gaia hypothesis is to say that humans need to take better care of the world in its entirety in order to maintain a good living space. This could be seen as (again) some kind of anthropocentric argument for the protection of nature. However, it can also be used to take a more

anti-human stance, such as “Earth First!”. This group argues for a reduction of population in order to improve the well-being of the world (Dobson, 2007, p.46).

These holistic approaches have been fiercely criticized, especially by individualists. Holistic approaches have a high risk of sacrificing individuals for a greater good. Tom Regan, for example, expresses these tendencies by linking holistic environmental approaches to “environmental fascism”, as the theory includes the prospect “that the individual may be sacrificed for the greater biotic good, in the name of ‘the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community’” (Regan, 2003, p.361).

Deep ecology

Deep ecology is often seen as the other end of the environmental debate, opposing environmentalism. Deep ecology holds the view that for human life to be sustainable and fulfilling, our relation with and behavior towards nature has to change radically (Dobson, 2007 p.3). Some argue that it goes beyond environmentalism, because environmentalism is occupied with direct responses to environmental problems, whereas deep ecology confronts the underlying patterns of current societies. Dobson even argues that deep ecology can be seen as an ideology, while environmentalism cannot. Deep ecology includes an analytical description, and additionally has an idea for a particular form of what a society should look like, and provides a program for political action (Dobson, 2007, pp.3-7). This in contrast to environmentalists, as this only provides an analytical framework (Dobson, 2007). The elements of an analytical description, idea of society, and program for political action that Dobson speaks of can indeed be found in deep ecology as developed by Arne Naess. Naess perceived deep ecology as a relational, total-field image movement, which is biospherical egalitarian, and where diversity and symbiosis in society are of great importance for the fight against pollution and resource depletion which should take place through local autonomy and decentralization (Baard, 2015, p.25).

The analytical framework of deep ecology poses a challenge to the “established, post-industrial society and its enlightenment assumption that the world had been made for human beings and that, in principle, nothing in it could be kept secret from them” (Dobson, 2007, p.7). Instead of perceiving the world as subjected to human kind, we need to expand our sphere of consideration to also include the world. This holistic consideration illustrates a key element in the deep ecology thinking, alike the supremacy of ontology over ethics which is inherent in Naess’ work (Baard, 2015, p.32). Deep ecology takes a long-term perspective where it acknowledges this holistic consideration. One individual is bigger than its own identity, and needs to develop a sense of ecological consciousness, I.e. Self-realization, one needs to develop an ecological consciousness (Dobson, 2007, p.38). The capital ‘S’ indicates this idea of the identity being larger than oneself. The long term goal is a “maximized self-symbiosis with one’s surrounding” (Baard, 2015, p.31), to attain a lifestyle that is generalizable and sustainable, without extensive invasion into nature (Naess, Drengson & Devall, 2008, p.140). This limited interference with nature is derived from the idea that nature has intrinsic value. This inherent

value of all beings is an axiom (Baard, 2015, p.32). While the value cannot be established by hard proof, intuition points to its existence, according to deep ecology (Naess et al., 2008, p.100 as cited in Baard, 2015, p.32).

A different argument for inherent value comes from quantum theory. It is shown that human surroundings are affected by their observation of those surroundings. As John Archibald Wheeler writes:

the past has no existence except as it is recorded in the present. [...] we would seem forced to say that no phenomenon is a phenomenon until it is an observed phenomenon. The universe does not 'exist, out there' independent of all acts of observation. Instead, it is in some strange sense a participatory universe.⁶ (Wheeler, 1978, p.41)

A weakened version of biospherical egalitarianism shaped the deep ecological notion of a future society. The acknowledgment of intrinsic value to nature could severely restrict human actions. However, deep ecology does not reject all action that interferes with nature, which can be argued to even be an impossible goal. Instead, it argues for a weakened version of biospherical egalitarianism. The idea of biospherical egalitarianism entails that humans are values on the same level as the rest of the biosphere, and that there is no anthropocentric preference. Deep ecology proposes a weakened version, where there is some ranking in differences in obligations. Naess writes that “ranking for me has primarily to do with differences of obligation. In wintertime my cottage receives mice and men as guests, but my obligations are enormously greater toward the human guests than toward the mice” (Naess [1999] 2005: p.549 as cited in Baard, 2015, p.34). Actions that interfere in nature should therefore “require case-by-case assessment of whether this specific “killing, exploitation, and suppression” is permissible or if it is required for vital human needs” (Baard, 2015).

The third part of deep ecology, the ideology for guidance of political action, is based on two things, namely the eight points of deep ecology formulated in 1984⁷ and the Apron Diagram. The eight points of deep ecology were meant to give guidance to political action, for as they stated among other things the intrinsic value of both human and non-human life on earth, the importance of biodiversity, necessity of societal change of policies, and called for an ideological change to appreciate life quality (Naess & Sessions, 1984, p.5). The Apron Diagram was further to guide action by giving a framework

⁶ In Quantum Theory, the double slit experiment is a famous experiment that tested whether human observation affects the outcome of an experiment (Jönsson, 1974). In very basic terms, they experimented with a beam of light and two slits, and recorded through which slit the beam went. The results of the experiment confirmed the influence of human observation on the outcome of the experiment, with all other things being equal. It illustrated this so called ‘participatory universe’ where humans are inherently interconnected with their surroundings. This argument is, as mentioned, used in deep ecology to illustrate the interconnectedness and undeniable link of humans with nature, trying to increase weight to the idea of Self-realization.

⁷ Naess and Sessions, 1983, p.5; and often rephrased; first appeared in *Ecophilosophy VI Newsletter* 1984 (Naess and Sessions 1984), revised forms appeared in other publications (cf. 2008, p.111-112); in Baard, 2015.

to derive to specific action. The diagram is constructed out of four different levels, they are 1) the level of highest premises/the world-view maintained by deep ecologist, 2) the eight principles of the ecology platform, 3) normative or factual hypotheses and policies, and 4) particular rules, decisions and actions. The ideas and conclusions developed on the higher level set the premises on the subsequent lower levels, deriving specific guidance on the lowest level, based on the ideas on the higher level, thus creating a coherent framework for guidance of action.

Constructing dimensions

The above discussion illustrated a range of different perspectives to address the environment. Although there seem too many differences at first glance, these positions do have some common elements. For example, all discuss the nature of value, whether it is intrinsic or external. Individual consequentialist approaches attribute an instrumental value and deontological positions attribute intrinsic value to the object of moral concern itself. As the above discussion illustrated, many different answers can be given to whom should be included in the moral community. This could be answered with only humans, such as anthropocentric approaches do, to also include sentient beings what Singer proposes, or the complete world should be considered in the moral community as Lovelock with the Gaia hypothesis suggests. These multiple topics of discussion can be identified as dimensions, i.e. topics on which different positions can be taken which 'influence' the placement in the green theoretical landscape. Furthermore, the examples given are all illustrations of different values on the conceptual dimensions of western environmental theories. According to Wissenburg, while giving a taxonomy of green ideas rather than green theories, the dimensions can be sorted into four levels, i.e. the metaphysical, ethical, political and policy level (1997, p.31). The metaphysical and ethical dimensions are important levels to establish a coherent understanding of a theory about the environment on an abstract level. Yet, the political and policy levels are more context-dependent, specific levels that are not necessary for the general understanding of a green theory. The general understanding about nature is necessary to direct humanity's moral behavior. This understanding provides guidelines which can be used in the construction of environmental policies, and prevents human behavior towards nature to be random and erratic. In order to compare western environmental theories with a New Confucian ecological approach, the upcoming part identifies topics generally discussed within the western environmental theories. These 'dimensions' will be used for an abstract, general understanding of western environmental theories. The upcoming analysis will therefore focus on the metaphysical and ethical levels of the theories.

Metaphysical

As we saw in the previous discussion, there is a disagreement on whether there is a boundary between human and nature, or whether we are interdependent. Whereas anthropocentric, individual consequentialist and individual deontological approaches base themselves on compartmentalized idea

of the composition of nature, deep ecology and holistic environmental ethics argue for a holistic understanding of the human-nature relationship. It is important to have a clear understanding of the relationship between humanity and nature. Based on the previous overview, we can identify the *composition of nature* as a dimension. The discussion illustrates options for either a compartmentalized or a holistic approach. A theory can therefore have these two values within this dimension

Ethical

The metaphysical understanding on the composition of nature and humanity is related to discussions on the ethical level, amongst other things to the discussion about the object of ethics. There are a multitude of answers to the question who or what to take into moral consideration. According to Singer for example, the unit of ethical concern should be all sentient animals. However, holistic approaches stress the importance of biodiversity or ecosystem, and this doesn't even exhaust the possibilities. A *dimension of object* can be identified. Wissenburg distinguished seven positions on the dimension of object. According to him, the position available are anthropocentrism, intellectualism (all beings capable of learning and understanding), sentience (which he calls pathocentrism), zoocentrism, biocentrism (all (forms of) life), ecocentrism (value to all nature), and evolutionary ethics (which argue the attribution of value is a matter of moral development, relative to time and place (Wissenburg, 1997, p.35). These values correspond with the different positions in the previous overview, although some have been addressed by a different name. For the sake of coherency, Wissenburgs' taxonomy will be adopted here.

A further issue of discussion is whether value is inherent to the object included in the moral community, or whether it is instrumental to a situation or object. This can be seen as the *dimension of nature of value*, and has as positions either intrinsic value or instrumental value. Related to this is the attribution of value, which discusses whether value is equally distributed among all members of the moral community, or whether these is to be made a hierarchical distinction (Wissenburg, 1997, p.35). Positions on this *dimension of attribution of value* thus can be either hierarchical or equal.

Wissenburg argues that environmental theories do not give new options on how action is judged, and instead base themselves on consequentialist or deontological theories of action (1997, p.36). Either an action is judged on the consequences of that action, i.e. consequentialism, or it is judged on the act itself or, deontological ethics. This distinction corresponds with the discussion between the individualist consequentialist approach and the individualist deontological approach. There is thus a *dimension of theory of action*, with the possible consequentialist and deontological positions.

Table 1 gives an overview of the levels, dimensions, and positions which were provided in the previous discussion. The table illustrates how the variation between western environmental theories is derived from the different positions on specific dimensions. The multitude of options covers the whole spectrum of environmental theories, ranging from anthropocentric theories on the one side, to deep

ecological theories on the other. In the following chapters, we will explore the New Confucian thoughts on the environment, and see to what extent the New Confucianism can serve as an environmental theory. The thesis will then proceed by making a comparison between New Confucian environmental theory and the dimensions and positions of western theory which table 1 provided.

Table 1 – Dimensions and positions in Western Environmental Theories

Level	Dimension	Positions
Metaphysics	Composition of nature	Holism – compartementalism
Ethics	Object	anthropocentrism, intellectualism, pathocentrism (=sentiesm), zoocentrism, biocentrism, ecocentrism, evolutionary ethics
	Nature of value	Intrinsic - instrumental
	Attribution of value	Hierarchical – equal
	Theory of action	Consequentialist – deontological

There is layer upon layer [of meaning] in the words of the sages. In your reading of them, penetrate deeply. If you simply read what appears on the surface, you will misunderstand. Steep yourself in the words; only then will you grasp their meaning. – (Zhu Xi cited in Rosemont, 2013, p.x, original)

3. Taking the Confusion out of Confucianism

Tracing Confucian ideas from classical to modern times

New Confucianism is a philosophical movement of the 20th and 21st century. It developed in response to trends of modernization in China that propagated Westernization and rejected traditional Chinese culture. A small group of scholars argued that there remained value in Chinese culture and called for the re-appraisal of Chinese culture and history⁸ (Mou, Zhang, Tang & Xu, 1962). They turned to the study of the classics⁹ in order to come up with a local answer to modernization. The call for re-appraisal was focused on Chinese culture, but especially formed around Confucianism, which they identified as one of the central pillars of Chinese culture¹⁰. Because New Confucianism places great emphasis on the re-evaluation of Chinese culture and history, this chapter will start with an overview of the origin and development of Confucian thought by discussing Classical Confucianism and neo-Confucianism. After the general ideas of Confucianism are explained, the chapter will move to the 20th and 21st century, when New Confucianism was formed. The aim of this chapter is to provide the historical context in which New Confucianism developed. A culturally sensitive approach is one of the main premises of this thesis. This chapter will retrace Confucianism to its roots in order to gain a greater understanding of the New Confucian movement.

Confucianism is described as a religion, a philosophy, a system of thoughts, a tradition or a way of life. Whichever label one applies, in general terms Confucianism gives direction to the proper way for humans to act and rulers to govern. It perceives life as an interdependent web where Heaven, humanity and Earth are connected. In order to reach harmony between these different elements, everything in the system needs to act according to its intended purpose. For humans, this means, amongst other things, to act in accordance with their role in life, to act appropriately, respectfully and thoughtful. Rituals, hierarchy and cultivation of knowledge are important methods of establishing this harmony. Confucianism developed its ideas based on morality and rituals throughout centuries. While it holds the name of the ancient scholar Confucius, Confucianism was inspired by old sages who lived

⁸ Scholars have argued this since the end of the 20th century, but the essay '*A Manifesto for a Re-appraisal of Sinology and Reconstruction of Chinese Culture*' published in 1958 is often seen as the official declaration of New Confucianism.

⁹ The classics referred to here are the old Chinese classical texts belonging to the canon of the imperial examination system. They include the Four Books and Five Classics, which will be discussed below.

¹⁰ This is not to say that other traditions are not included. Liang Shuming (1893-1988), one of the first generation New Confucians looked beyond Confucianism and was also influenced by Buddhism.

prior to Confucius. These old sages inspired further thinking about the moral behavior in social, political and spiritual Chinese life through their own exemplary behavior. Confucian thought was primarily written down and developed after Confucius' lifetime. In general Confucianism is divided into three phases. The classical phase of Confucianism (771 BEC- 959 CE) encompasses the lifetimes of Confucius, Mencius and Xunzi. During this period scholars documented and studied Confucius' learnings. The second phase was a revival of Confucianism after a tumultuous period of dynasty changes and Legalist, Buddhist and Daoist influences. This is often referred to as neo-Confucianism (960-1911 CE). Confucianism was studied by many scholars, used in the state examination system and gave guidance to daily life and governance. After (again) many tumultuous dynasty changes, the third phase is that of New Confucianism, starting in 1912. This last period is based on neo-Confucian thought and the revival of these ideas under the name of New Confucianism, adapted to current societal and political challenges. The upcoming part of this chapter will give a description of the three phases and the central scholars and ideas. A general timeline of the different dynasties and the historical events surrounding Confucianism can be found in appendix 1.

Going far back in history

The roots of Confucianism can be traced to the Spring and Autumn period (771-467 BCE), a time of insecurity and rivalry between different states within ancient China. During this time, scholars travelled between competing states and debated topics such as social conflict, political ideals and human behavior (Ropp, 2010, p.12). This thriving climate for scholarly ideas is often referred to as the 'hundred schools of thought' (Ropp, 2010). While there were a multitude of ideas, the Legalists surpassed competing thoughts and convinced many states of their policies. Legalist ideas included the abolition of serfdom, the drafting of peasants as soldiers, assigning officials based on merit and instead of on birth right, and wielding a system of strict rules and hard punishment, for they saw deterrence as the best way to keep control (Ropp, 2010, p.13). In a war-torn era, many states were convinced by these ideas.

Confucius (孔子, Kǒng Zǐ)¹¹ was a scholar who rejected Legalist ideas. Instead, he proposed, "an idealistic vision based on benevolent rule on early Zhou rituals and reverence for ancestors" (Ropp, 2010, p.13). He emphasized the importance of virtue, in contrast to the Legalists' idea of law and order. Virtuous behavior of humans had to be stimulated through a hierarchical system with strong emphasis on rituals. Confucius wanted to establish a historical understanding of the contemporary political problems and moral cultivation in order to live virtuously. Unfortunately, in the war-torn time

¹¹ Confucius was born as Kong Qiu in 551 BCE, and became known to his disciples by the name of Kong Zi (Master Kong), or Kong Fuzi (Venerable Master Kong). In the 16th century Jesuit missionaries Latinized his name to Confucius to make their translations more accessible to western readers. (see Ropp, 2010, p.161, Ft.2.5). This thesis will make use of the Latinized versions of Chinese scholars.

Confucius lived in, no government was really persuaded to implement his teachings. Confucius died in 479 BCE, “feeling himself a failure” (Ropp, 2010, p.14).

Confucius’ teachings were edited into the five classical books of Confucianism (五经, Wǔ Jīng). These five books are considered part of the traditional Confucian canon because it was believed that Confucius assembled the texts. This assumption is now widely acknowledged to be incorrect. As Rosemont nicely states:

But if he was indeed responsible for assembling the “Five Classics,” as these texts came to be known, he must have done so while suffering from a mild form of schizophrenia, for the five differ widely in scope, thrust, doctrines and practices, each presenting materials altogether conflicting with other materials — sometimes even from the same text. (2013, p.5)

The five classical books have been part of the Confucian canon and Chinese scholarship curriculum for many dynasties and are important sources for Confucian thought, regardless of the question of whether Confucius himself edited them or the fact that they have been altered throughout history. Therefore a few words will be devoted to describing them¹².

The first book is the *Classic of Poetry* (诗经, Shijing) and contains poems, folk songs, festal songs, hymns and eulogies, songs for ceremonies, festivities and remembrance of ancestors and folk heroes. The second book is the *Book of Documents* (书经, Shujing) and contains documents and speeches alleged to have been written to rulers and officials of the early Zhou period (1046 – 256 BCE). The third book is the *Book of Changes*, (易经, I Ching) and describes a divination system. The fourth book, the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (春秋, Chunqiu) contains a historical record of the state of Lu in the period 722-481 BCE and gives insight into the political and social situation of that time. The book is attributed to Confucius. The fifth book is the Book of Rites (礼记, Liji), which describes the rituals and rules necessary for the establishment of a harmonious society. It is said that there used to be a sixth classic, the *Classic of Music* (乐经, Yuejing), but this book was lost during the ‘burning of books’ in 213 BCE, an attempt by the first Qing emperor to stifle intellectual discourse and maintain political power. The topics of the five books are politics, poetry, history, rituals, and speeches by rulers. They illustrate the focus of Confucius’ teachings on the social philosophy of daily life (Yao, 2000). It is a

¹² I owe much thanks to Felix Verhagen (2015) and his description of the five classics and four books of Confucianism. His bachelor thesis ‘*Confucianisme en de Westerse Democratie*’ provided a clear and concise overview of the content of the publications and without it my overview would not have been written in this manner.

gathering of daily practices with the general objective to stimulate proper moral behavior and establish social and political stability.

The emphasis of Confucius' teachings are thus on rituals, filial piety, hierarchy, and cultivation of knowledge. Rituals are important because they help us to understand how to behave properly in situations. They provide guidance in daily life and construct social order. Confucius perceived the family as the root of moral life and regarded the notion of filial piety as central to a proper moral life: "Being affectionate towards relatives is the greatest application of humanity, because it indicates an immediate extension of one's inner morality" (Tu, 1976, p.73). The state is seen as an extension of the familial moral and social workings. It is therefore deemed unlikely that a ruler who does not act properly towards his/her family can become a good ruler. Hierarchy further strengthens the social and political stability as it calls for modesty and obedience to honorable persons. In order to be able to act accordingly in situations it is important to cultivate knowledge, in particular self-cultivation. This is a constant process to improve oneself in relation to society.

Mencius (Mengzi, 371-298 BCE) expanded upon Confucius' thoughts further during the Warring States period. Mencius argued that morality and rituals were more effective for motivating people to behave properly than the Legalist ideas of strict laws, threats of high punishments and brute force (Ropp, 2010, p.14). Furthermore, Mencius recorded the common idea that a king had the right to rule as long as he was committed to the common good. This idea was embedded in the understanding of the Mandate of Heaven. A ruler is granted the right to rule by the Mandate of Heaven, but 'Heaven sees with the eyes of its people. Heaven hears with the ears of its people' (transl. by Lau, cited in Ropp, 2010, p.14). When the people are discontented, the Mandate of Heaven ceases. Mencius' work was written down in the book Mencius, written in the form of conversations with various rulers of the Warring States.

The Warring States period was a period of wars between different states, as the name clearly indicates. It is believed that the Analects were written during this time by followers of Confucius, and these will be discussed in the next section. The Warring States period ended with the Qin's wars of unification. The state of Qin fought wars against the Han, Zhao, Yan, Wei, Chu and Qi states, annexing all won territories and unifying them under the Qin dynasty in 221 BCE. In the subsequent period of relative rest, the Confucian scholar Xunzi wrote "full-blown essays on self-improvement, government regulations, military affairs, rites and rituals, music, human nature, and Heaven", further expanding on Confucius' teachings (Ropp, 2010, pp.14-15). While Mencius believed in the good nature of humans, Xunzi stated the opposite. Human nature was evil and selfish and Confucian rituals and traditions served as a guide to act morally (Ropp, 2010, p.15). This morality has its foundation in the family, where love and respect is taught most directly (Ropp, 2010). The book Xunzi, attributed to Xunzi,

contains these ideas on moral behavior and was influential in the construction of Confucianism as state ideology during the Han dynasty centuries later (De Barry & Bloom, 1999, pp.159-160).

Confucius, Mencius and Xunzi are ordinarily placed under the term Classical Confucianism. They all developed their ideas in reflection on war-torn states and in the shadow of Legalism. Classical Confucianism emphasizes the cultivation of moral behavior through hierarchy, rituals, and the centrality of the family, in contrast to the Legalist ideas of power play and enforcement of rules. Insecure conditions led Legalism to develop as the dominant thought in the Qin dynasty. However, this did not lead to the permanent decline of Confucianism. It is the Legalist construction of the sophisticated imperial state system that ultimately ensured the survival of most of the texts of the Hundred School period, and thus also the ideas of Classical Confucianism (Ropp, 2010, p.18). It preserved the classical books to be passed on to future generations.

The neo-Confucian phase

During the subsequent dynasties, Confucianism gradually became an acknowledged ideology. It developed next to Daoism and Legalism in the Qin dynasty and established itself as the official state ideology in the Han dynasty (206-220 CE). Commentaries on classical texts were the most important advancements of Confucian thought during this period. In the later dynasties, Buddhism was introduced in China, and Daoism and Buddhism replaced Confucianism in many aspects of political and social life. In the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE) there was a 'call for the return to the learnings of the sages' (Angle, 2009, pp.3-4). The widespread revival of Confucianism was experienced during the Song- (960-1279 CE) and Ming- (1368-1644 CE) dynasties and is often labelled as neo-Confucianism. A change took place in the nature of Chinese society during the transition from Tang dynasty to Song dynasty (960-1279 CE). While in the Tang dynasty aristocrats depended on inheritance to obtain government positions, in the Song dynasty this changed to appointment by the civil service examination system (Ropp, 2010). As the examination system included central texts of Confucianism, it made way for a revival of Confucianism in society, politics and scholarly efforts.

Scholars such as Zhang Zai (1020-1077 CE) and Zhu Xi (1130-1200 CE) revived the classical Confucian ideas of tradition and moral behavior. They interpreted and applied the ideas of Confucius, Mencius and Xunzi to the political and social landscape of the Song dynasty¹³. The famous Confucian scholar Wang Yangming (1472-1529 CE) extended the idea of self-cultivation. He drew on Mencius' idea of

¹³ These scholars of the Tang- and Song dynasty are often referred to as early neo-Confucian scholars. Late neo-Confucian scholars were from the Ming dynasty, often followers of Zhu Xi, such as Wang Yangming (1472-1529 CE). Trying to make sense of all these labels, Angle writes that "the Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming comes in for harsh criticism by some Qing Dynasty Confucians, but I would urge an understanding of "Neo-Confucianism" that is broad enough to encompass even these critics" (Angle, 2009, p.4). All Confucian scholars in the Song, Ming and Qing dynasties have in common that they fell back on the old sages and the five classics in order to find the *dào*. As the focus of this thesis is on New Confucianism, there will be no detailed elaboration on the differences within Neo-Confucianism.

the good nature of humans and incorporated the Buddhist idea that all individuals carry an intrinsic good within them. The implication of Yangming's ideas was that becoming a profound person was not exclusively a status that well-studied scholars could reach (Ropp, 2010, p.91). The ideas of Wang Yangming were so vast in influence that it resulted in a school of thought within Confucianism.

One important development instigated during the neo-Confucian phase was the synthesizing of many Confucian works into one philosophical system. Zhu Xi wrote commentaries and edited the five classics of the Zhou period. He combined them with the four books of the *Great Learning*, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, *The Analects*, and *The Mencius*, all publications of previous dynasties. They were part of the official canon for the national state examination curriculum for state officials until the system was abolished in 1905. The four books were selected by Zhu Xi as they represent the core values of Confucianism.

The Great Learning (大學, *Dàxué*) addresses ethical questions about a stable, fair society and presents many abstract ideas such as doing good, loving mankind and fortitude. Stability is established through self-cultivation¹⁴, which starts in the family. As Berthrong and Berthrong write: "Rather, the person begins her or his nurture within a family context. It is the family that forms us from the cradle to the grave" (2000, p.16). They acknowledge that this idea of the family is not always accurate; there exist multiple classics where sages go against the family. However, in ideal circumstances, the family is the place where morality is cultivated.

The second book, *The Doctrine of the Mean* (中庸, *Zhōngyōn*) discusses virtue and moral living. The first twelve chapters resemble Aristotle's ethics of virtue and talk of the stable mean and appropriate action in social consciousness. The other 17 chapters further address how to become a *junzi* (noble man). In order to attain this status of *junzi*, a man needs to act according to the ideas of kind-heartedness to others (*Ren*), cultivation of knowledge and acting nobly. It is based on ideas of the Golden Rule of Confucianism. Similar to the Kantian imperative, the rule states "what you do not wish others to do on you, do not do to them." (Analects, XII:I in Tu, 1976, p.47). The idea of *Ren* appears in different forms depending on the relation between subjects. It materializes as respect between a wife and husband, as loyalty between government and citizen, and as frugality in the consummation of goods (Lau, 1991, p.213). Additionally, a person should strive towards the expansion of knowledge his whole life. Infinite self-cultivation is the reason for Confucian emphasis on education and the pursuit of knowledge. The last key element of a noble man is to show courage and to act noble and place

¹⁴ While the term 'self-cultivation' might feel foreign to the English language, the concept is often used in Anglophone literature on Confucianism. It refers to the idea of the infinite process of self-improvement and search for knowledge in light of morality. For example, Gardner (2014) applies the concept in *Confucianism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press. For further information on self-cultivation in Confucianism, see Keenan, B.C. (2011) *Neo-Confucian Self-Cultivation*. Hawaii, University of Hawai'i Press.

others' needs before one's own. This reflective position towards other interests starts in the family sphere, but expands to the community, society and ultimately to the whole cosmos.

The third book is *the Analects* (论语, *Lúnyǔ*) which outlines the social norms (*Li*) of Confucianism that all men should learn. By internalizing the rites, people can establish harmony and live a virtuous life. It is functional in establishing the just and stable society that Confucianism has in mind. The Analects is often put into connection with Confucius himself, but the book was most likely written by his disciples during the Warring States period. While it was intended as a commentary on the Five Classics, *the Analects* became one of the central books of Confucianism. *The Analects* includes texts on basic concepts within Confucianism such as family, rituals and governance, but also some comments of Confucius to his students (Rosemont, 2013, p.13).

The fourth book, *Mencius* (孟子, *Mèngzǐ*), was written by the Chinese scholar Mencius, and formulates the duties that arise from the rights discussed in the previous books. Together with the five classics of Confucianism, these four books constructed the canon that all state officials needed to study for the state examinations until 1905.

While the developments so far resulted in the Confucian Canon and present seemingly coherence in the Confucian thought, a side note has to be made. Within Confucianism there exist many different interpretations of the same source materials. This makes it difficult to give a coherent reading of Confucianism. One illustration of this is already found in the different interpretations of the direction of human nature. While Mencius believed in the good of human nature, Xunzi argued that humanity was selfish. Furthermore, while *Xunzi* is labelled Confucian, his publications have also been of inspiration to Legalists. As an answer to the multiple interpretations, Rosemont suggest to look at Confucianism in terms of 'lineages', centered on the discussion between scholars and students, and not a particular book (2013, p.6). Indeed, seeing that there are many different interpretations of the same sources, it is a promising way to look at Confucianism. However, this does not prevent us from identifying some general ideas of Confucianism. In the broadest sense of the word, Confucianism is focused on the modelling of behavior and how to act appropriate.

The classical ideas of Confucianism are focused on social and political moral behavior and the cultivation of virtue, as we saw in the previous discussion. Confucianism was revived in the Song and Ming dynasties and classical ideas were expanded upon to create neo-Confucianism. Confucianism was interpreted within the current political and social situation, but there were not necessarily new thoughts developed. It responded to the shift in focus towards Buddhism and Taoism and political developments of aggressive state building. Neo-Confucianism placed more emphasis on moral and spiritual rearmament. In response to Buddhism and Taoism, Neo-Confucianism expanded self-cultivation with ideas of meditation and self-reflection ("*quiet sitting*") (Ropp, 2010, p.73).

After the Ming dynasty, China fell under the foreign rule of the Manchus. The Manchus of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911 CE) supported the neo-Confucian values, thus conserving the neo-Confucian influence in court and social life (Ropp, 2010, p.84). It was not until the late Qing dynasty that neo-Confucian influence waned. The Industrial Revolution, aggressive foreign European powers, economic stagnation and opium addiction disrupted the progress and stability of China. The extensive changes this period caused for China are still prominent in Chinese thinking. To reuse Bell's quote of Ye Zichen, head of the Department of Diplomacy at Peking University:

History cannot and should not be forgotten, in particular the humiliating experiences of China under the Western powers in modern history. This part of history has become the energy source behind the generations of Chinese people to make China strong and prosperous.

(Ye Zichen, in Bell, 2015a, p.15)

The quote refers to the late 19th and early 20th century, a period of imperial domination, international defeat, internal uprisings and a politically unstable situation. It finally caused the downfall of the Qing dynasty in 1911, and with it the Confucian influence on political and social life. It is remembered as a period of decline that China is eager to leave behind and sets the general Chinese mind-set to rise to the potential height of Chinese power again.

The effect of the trauma of the 19th and 20st century is twofold. For one, the Chinese focus shifted from cultural and moral flourishing to the promotion of economic development and social stability. Chinese traditional culture, especially Confucianism was blamed for the failed attempt of China to modernize, due to their focus on tradition and the promotion of moral development. This will be further discussed down below.

The second effect of the trauma of the 19th and 20th century is the Chinese reluctance towards Western liberal imports. This claim becomes clearer when broadening the scope to what happened after the initial stage of decline. The fall of the last dynasty was met with strong rejection of Chinese traditional culture and the call for foreign ideologies. Initially, China looked to Western liberal countries as examples of development and wealth. Yet, this changed after World War I and the Treaty of Versailles. While China had supported the Allied Powers, the Treaty of Versailles stipulated that Japan would gain power over concessions in north China formerly held by Germany. This struck the Chinese as an 'hypocrisy of the Western liberal countries', waging war under the flag of democracy and self-control for all countries, yet in reality to defend trade, foreign rights and privileges in China (Ropp, 2010, pp.117-119). Therefore, the focus shifted towards the Russian example of Marxism-Leninism. After a short period of internal struggle in China between nationalists and communists, the People's Republic of China was established in 1949 under Marxist-Leninist-Maoist Communist rule.

New Confucianism

There existed a strong anti-Confucian public discourse in the beginning of the 20th century. The abolishment of the civil service exam system in 1905 and the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911 had swept away the traditional Confucian order. Some even argued that Confucianism was destined to only live on in museums (Levenson, 1968). It was a paradoxical time for Confucianism. As Berthrong writes:

[On the one hand Confucianism was seen as] a major reason for China's humiliating lack of self-respect as being demoted to an era of semi-colonialism. [...]. But on the other hand, by the 1920s, there was a small group of public intellectuals and scholars who argued that while Confucians may have made many grave mistakes in China's failed attempt to modernize and compete with the European powers, there was really still something worth saving from traditional China's long cultural history. (2014, p.66)

A group of scholars laid the groundwork for the second revival of Confucianism, often referred to as New Confucianism¹⁵. Scholars included in this group were, amongst others, Liang Shuming (1893–1988), Xiong Shili (1885–1968) and Feng Youlang (1895–1990). They were the first to call for the conservation of traditional Chinese culture. Their aim was to apply Confucian ideas to the current political and social reality, similar to the aims of neo-Confucians many dynasties earlier (Angle, 2009 pp.4-5). While these scholars are often seen as having laid the groundworks for New Confucianism, they never applied the term themselves. The term 'New Confucianism' was not used until 1967, leaving some to argue that the movement is a retrospective creation (Makeham, 2003, p.27). But in retrospective, the start of New Confucianism can be traced to the above mentioned scholars.

There is much discussion on who actually belongs to the New Confucian movement. One needs to make a careful distinction between New Confucianism and a more general call for reappraisal of the Chinese culture (Makeham, 2003, p.25). While all New Confucians call for the reappraisal of Chinese culture, not all scholars who argue for reappraisal can be described as New Confucians. Problems arise with the general boundaries of New Confucianism, the similarity with neo-Confucianism, and the philosophical engagements scholars had. For example, while Qian Mu is often recognized as a member of the New Confucianism movement, his pupil, Yu Yingshi, argued that Qian Mu was a historian and no philosopher, and therefore was incorrectly grouped with New Confucian scholars (Makeham, 2003, p.36). It is helpful to reuse Rosemont's statement in order to get a general sense of who was considered

¹⁵ Scholars are not very consistent in their referral to New Confucianism. Sometimes it is referred to as Neo-Confucianism, or contemporary Confucianism. Furthermore, the distinction is not always clear-cut. For example, Fan Ruiping (2010) in his examination of the political, moral, ethical and ritual dimensions of a reconstituted Confucianism, is said to be critical of the group of philosophers identified as the New Confucian school (Berthrong, 2014), while others do argue that Ruiping's thesis is in accordance with the New Confucian thought (Littlejohn, 2011).

New Confucian. As mentioned above, Rosemont suggests on the neo-Confucian account that different interpretations of Confucian ideas are most accessible when viewed in terms of lineage (Rosemont, 2013, p.6). This can be applied to the New Confucian case as well. The roots of the lineage can be traced back to the scholars of the 1920s who called for the conservation of Confucianism in a time of public rejection. Shuming, Shili and Youlang are therefore often grouped as part of the ‘first generation New Confucians’¹⁶. Most scholars of the first generation were mainland Confucians who reflected on the tumultuous times China had experienced around the fall of the Qing dynasty and recognized the value of traditional Chinese culture amidst the transition. However, their appreciation did not prevent them from acknowledging weaknesses in neo-Confucian thought, and trying to improve it.

The students of the first generation-New Confucians were the ones who actually structured the second revival of Confucianism. Mou Zongsan, Zhang Junmai, Tang Junyi and Xu Fuguan were all overseas scholars and belong to the second generation New Confucians. They published a manifesto in 1958, arguing for the conservation of Chinese traditional culture, especially Confucianism. What distinguishes them from their teachers is that the second generation scholars developed their thoughts outside of mainland China and spend most their lives either in Hong Kong or the United States. They reflected on Confucianism in light of current trends of globalization and cross-cultural comparison with Western theory. These reflections led them to argue that Confucians theory could be improved by introducing elements of rationality and democracy. This will be further explained when discussing the content of the manifesto.

There is a difference in the understanding of New Confucianism between mainland and overseas Confucians¹⁷. Mainland scholars, such as the first generation scholars Shuming, Shili and Youlang saw a revival of Confucianism as serving Chinese current needs. A revival would improve the stability in society and would function as a source for government legitimacy (Makeham, 2003, p.92). Overseas scholars assign New Confucianism the ‘savior role’ for China, and an alternative to complete westernization and liberal aims (Makeham, 2003, p.93). Overseas New Confucianism is perceived by the mainland as ‘Confucian capitalism’, because it emphasized the modernization of Confucianism, which goes against the mainland’s cultural conservative aim (Makeham, 2003). Nevertheless, they are all New Confucians because of the call for conservation of Confucianism, and the acknowledgement of conceptual changes in order to successfully apply it to the current context.

¹⁶ See appendix 2 for a general overview of the lineage of New Confucians.

¹⁷ In general, the term overseas scholars refers to those who live in Taiwan and Hong Kong. Another group that is sometimes distinguished is the ‘Boston Confucians’. This is a group of Confucian scholars who argue Confucianism could be realized in western culture as well. Tu Weiming and John Berthrong are classified as Boston Confucians. For more information, see Makeham, 2003 *New Confucianism – a critical examination*.

One of the earliest definitions of New Confucianism comes from Wei Zheng Tong in 1982¹⁸. According to Wei, New Confucianism is formed around the ideas that Confucianism is central to Chinese culture and that one has to examine with respect and empathy the Chinese historical culture, this way it can rise up to the current challenges (Makeham, 2003, pp.29-30). A more specific definition of New Confucianism comes from Yang Binggang. Yang also mentions the acknowledgement of Confucianism as a key component of the traditional Chinese culture, but places more emphasis on the role of moral values, the 'learning of the mind and nature', vitalism and the 'process of unceasing vital transformation' as applied by Xiong Shili and Mou Zongsan, notions that will be further discussed in Chapter 4 (Makeham, 2003, p.31). Both definitions show the importance of Confucianism for Chinese culture, and the objective to revive Confucian thought to address current challenges. Yet, until this point, there seems to be no distinction between New Confucianism and neo-Confucian revivalists.

Makeham argues that the definitions given by the above mentioned authors are deficient because they aim to include too many Chinese scholars, thus invariably will come across inconsistencies when including this multitude of scholars' viewpoints (2003, p.31). He concludes that there is no lasting consensus on a definition of the New Confucian movement. Instead, the definition of New Confucianism varies according to the scope, ranging from a broad scope including all 20th century scholars with a positive stance towards Confucianism, to a small scope that traces a lineage from Xiong Shili, to his students, the publishers of the manifesto and third generation scholars such as Tu Weiming.

The difficulty with establishing a definition of the movement is that the ideas themselves only become apparent throughout the advancement of the movement. The first generation gathered thoughts on general ideas for the conservation of Confucianism. A definition of their account cannot be anything less than very broad, and it is difficult to distinguish conservationist and New Confucian ideas. As the movement established itself, the general thoughts and ideas become clearer. This is what happened during the second generation of New Confucianism and the publication of the manifesto. The ideas of the third generation are more specific, and New Confucian ideas become more distinct from others who also argued for the conservation of Chinese traditional culture. As Yang Binggang points out, "New Confucianism is not alone in emphasizing the explication of Confucian moral philosophy. However, they are distinctive in emphasizing the further development of Confucian moral philosophy and also being innovative" (as cited in Makeham, 2003, p.37).

¹⁸ Makeham lists the following seven characteristics of New Confucianism as defined by Wei Zheng Tong: 1) Confucianism is accepted as orthodoxy and main pillar for Chinese culture, 2) China's historical culture should be seen as a spiritual reality, 3) the notion of Daotong is the basis for nationhood and the source of cultural transformation, 4) respectful and empathetic attitude to China's historical culture, 5) strong sense of 'origin/roots', 6) awareness of the current Chinese cultural crisis and 7) strong religious sentiment and mission to rejuvenate Chinese Culture. Makeham, (2003) *New Confucianism – a critical examination*, pp.29-30)

New Confucianism will be understood in this thesis as a movement that called for the conservation of Confucian tradition, in combination with some elements of development of neo-Confucian thought to the contemporary situation. The manifesto published in 1958 is often seen as the first coherent declaration of New Confucian ideas. The upcoming part will take a closer look at the manifesto in order to establish what specific changes in neo-Confucian thought were argued for.

The Manifesto of New Confucianism

A Manifesto for a Re-appraisal of Sinology and Reconstruction of Chinese Culture was published in 1958, both in Chinese and English. It was published by Mou Zongsan, Zhang Junmai, Tang Junyi and Xu Fuguan, all students of Xiong Shili. These four Chinese scholars protested against the misrepresentation of Chinese culture by foreigners and the rejection of it by mainland China. The publication of the manifesto was an effort to point out the misrepresentations and promote the recognition of traditional Chinese culture. The authors write about the 'Chinese culture', but have especially Confucianism in mind (Mou et al., 1962). They do also refer to Daoism and Buddhism, but the main emphasis of the text is on the misrepresentation of Sung-Ming Confucianism, i.e. neo-Confucianism. In retrospect, the publication is therefore seen as the establishment of the New Confucian movement (Makeham, 2003).

According to the manifesto, foreigners misrepresented neo-Confucianism in a three-fold way. Firstly, Jesuit missionaries misrepresented neo-Confucianism by altering religious motives of neo-Confucian thought and introducing to the west an ideology based on distorted ideas of neo-Confucianism (Mou et al., 1962, p.458). Secondly, misrepresentation occurred in the scholarly sphere. According to the authors, the revived scholarly interest in Chinese culture was focused on ancient ideas, and consequently omitted current developments within China (Mou et al., 1962, p.458). This resulted in an ancient, outdated representation of Chinese culture. The third way of misrepresentation is the opposite of the study of antiquity. In the political sphere, too much emphasis was on political motives, limiting the scope to a study of modernity focused on subjective attitudes, which neglected the rich history of many dynasties (Mou et al., 1962).

Concluding that Chinese culture has been subjected to misrepresentation, The Manifesto proposes a different approach to Chinese culture. A researcher "must put aside his subjective views of the political situation, and formulate his problem and hypothesis in the perspective of the entire cultural history of China" (Mou et al., 1962, p.459). One can only correctly observe the "objective expression of the spiritual life of mankind" (Mou et al., p.460) based on ideas of sympathy and reverence. A person should "transcend his subjectivity' by objective understanding, unaffected by temporal or political distortions arising from the researcher's own cultural foundation" (Mou et al., pp.460-461). In order to attain this attitude, one needs to both take into account the development of Chinese culture in the past/history, and look at the current context of modernity and political developments.

The second part of the Manifesto gives a brief overview of the authors' common conviction of Chinese culture. Mou, Zhang, Tang and Hsu write that Chinese culture rose out of the extension of primordial religious passion to ethical-moral principles and to daily living, not out of the occidental atheism as suggested by the missionaries in the first category of misrepresentation (Mou et al., 1962, p.461). The ethical-moral principles they refer to are based on the *xinxing* (心性). This "concentration of mind on an exhaustive study of the nature of the universe" is seen as the root of Chinese political thought (Mou et al., 1962, p.461). It emphasizes the development of moral subjects in harmony with the universe through practice. Moral practices arise out of understanding, and understanding is realized by practice, making rituals a key action in order to attain harmony with the universe (Mou et al., p.463).

In order to properly understand the Chinese culture, it is essential to acknowledge this emphasis on development of moral individuals as cultural foundation. When the profound understanding of a culture is achieved, further development of a culture can reveal the shortcomings of this culture: "Development through the extension of ideals as the natural direction of progress" (Mou et al, 1962, p.468). According to the authors, the priority on moral development caused weak political guidelines and technological and scientific progress. They identify this as a shortcoming of the Chinese culture. The manifest calls for democratic reconstruction to break power struggles related to the hereditary system that was part of Chinese history for such a long time (Mou et al, 1962, p.469). The implementation of democracy in China could be seen as the institutionalization of the decree of heaven in the form of the popular will (Mou et al., 1962). It would advance the political subject that Confucianism is inapt to fill. Furthermore, it would strengthen the possibility for self-realization by providing the opportunity to ascend and retire from official positions by personal decision, not only by appointment.

Secondly, instead of the emphasis on moral development, the Manifesto calls for objective reasoning. The Manifesto states the following:

Such a spirit [i.e. a scientific spirit] is precisely what was lacking in China's ancient philosophy so that theoretical science could not evolve, and the progress of her arts and technology was arrested. The privation of such as scientific spirit was the result chiefly of the obsession with the fulfilment of moral principles, which prevented any objective assessment of the world.

(Mou et al., 1962, p.470)

An initial emphasis on rationality should support the development of the scientific and technological skills that the Chinese culture needs according to the authors. After this is achieved, the Chinese culture can re-focus to a balance between objective reasoning and moral reasoning.

The last part of the Manifesto turns to the question of what the West can learn from Chinese culture. In a five-fold recommendation, the Manifesto makes suggestions for the West to become a more

inclusive, open culture. The first recommendation is that the West should “retreat instead of advance”, meaning that human life should be valued separately and distinctively from life instead of valued in context and constant development (Mou et al., 1962, p.477). Also, they should develop an all-embracing understanding “to arrive at a true unity with mankind” and a feeling of mildness and compassion (Mou et al., 1962 p.478). The Manifesto further suggests connecting with the cosmos as a life-giving source, to “realize that all men’s external acts do not merely follow a natural course but rather go against this natural course to return to the cosmic life-giving source, and only then to fulfil nature” (Mou et al., 1962, p.480). Lastly, it recommends the attitude of global filial piety by universal kindness *Jen* 仁. Understanding the human nature as good, and the potential for all to attain sagehood implies the possibility, and the need, ‘to come to harmony in virtue with heaven by his own efforts” (Mou et al., 1962, p.481).

In general then, the Manifesto argues for a more objective understanding of cultures. This can be done by transcending one’s own cultural ideas and emerging into the culture of subject, in the Chinese case through the doctrine of *Xinxing*. The objective is to develop compassion and restore the broken global family and live in harmony in virtue with heaven. The Manifesto emphasizes, what the definitions of New Confucianism given by Wei Zheng Tong and Yan Binggang omit: a focus on learning from other cultures on a mutual basis. In the Confucianism case, this means the adaptation of rationality and the democratic tradition.

Latest developments

The publication of the Manifesto is often referred to as the beginning of New Confucianism, as it did convey the first systemized thoughts of New Confucianism. However, the effects were confined to academics and took a long time to set in. It was not until the Cultural Graze, starting in 1985, that New Confucianism drew much attention, leading some to argue that this is the actual starting point of New Confucianism (Makeham, 2003). The Academy of Chinese Culture was established in 1985 and illustrates the government’s interest in traditional Chinese culture in the positive sense. New Confucianism was marked and funded as a key research topic under the 7th National Five-Year Plan for Social Science. It led to a watershed in Confucian research (Song, 2003, p.83). The Cultural Graze attempted “to rediscover and re-imagine the spaces where Western modernism and Chinese cultural tradition operate. [...] In the field of philosophy scholars started to explore traditional philosophical territory through tentative forays into Confucianism” (Makeham, 2003).

With the increased attention on Confucian scholarship, and in particular the development of New Confucianism, the New Confucian ideas became subjected to criticism as well. In the 1990s criticism was voiced that New Confucianism was too heavily focused on the metaphysical level. Scholars such as Lin Anwu and Fan Ruiping argued that New Confucian thought was disconnected from social and political practice and tried to fill this void by introducing foreign ideas from Western liberal traditions

(Fan, 2010; Chan, 2003). These critical scholars, grouped under the label 'Political Confucianism', were of the opinion that the New Confucian's focus on the metaphysical was "betrayal of traditional Confucianism, which is founded on a system of ritual practices, not metaphysical concepts, meant to address social and political problems" (Jiang, 2011, p.19). Instead, they argued to move away from inner ethical cultivation, towards ethical practice.

While the remarks on the emphasis do indicate a weakness in New Confucianism, the assessment of political Confucianism varies. Taiwanese scholar Lin Anwu, himself a Political Confucian, states that it is a "successive and creative adoption of New Confucianism" (cited in Makeham, 2003, p.42). However, Berthrong leaves the criticism within the New Confucian movement: "The practical application in modern life is one of the challenges of third and fourth generation New Confucians in bringing the Confucian thought to 'the middle-class Confucianism'" (1998, p.205).

The previous discussion illustrates the complex development of Confucian thought. The historical overview shows that Confucian ideas were adapted to specific social and political challenges throughout history. Classical Confucianism developed in response to Legalism and the Warring States period, and emphasized ideas of morality. Neo-Confucianism evolved in a context of Buddhism, Daoism and the start of the civil service examination system. Confucianism adopted Buddhist ideas of meditation, further expanded classical notions and consolidated the Confucian thinking in a canon. The New Confucian movement developed during a period of social and political instability, economic recession and hostility towards tradition and Confucian thought.

The New Confucian ideas become clearer as the movement becomes more established. The first generation of New Confucianism is mainly credited for the ideas on the persistent value of Chinese traditional culture and the conservation of Confucian thought. The second generation further specified the value of neo-Confucianism and additionally argued how the neo-Confucian thought had to be adapted in order to face current challenges such as modernization. The third and fourth generations have the task to further develop these ideas, and specify the ethical and practical consequences. The next chapter will make an attempt to link the metaphysical concepts with ethical practice. Based on the metaphysical understanding of the cosmos, and moral self-cultivation, it will formulate specific guidelines for an environmental theory, guiding behavior to live in balance with nature.

4. From New to Nature

Constructing a New Confucian ecological approach

Confucianism has gone through a complex development, as the previous chapter made clear. The Confucian tradition of thought is, as Berthrong and Berthrong aptly describe, an “assemblage of interlocking forms of life for generations in East Asia encompassing all the possible domains in human concern” (2000, p.1). Confucianism was written down in the five classics and four books, discussing the subjects of poetry, rituals, divinations, history and (allegedly) music. These ideas have been expanded and altered in the subsequent dynasties into neo-Confucianism. New Confucianism is derived from neo-Confucian thought, and has expanded the neo-Confucian thought with the elements of rationality and democracy. The current chapter will analyze the New Confucian thought on nature. In order to investigate the New Confucian ecological approach, the chapter will first provide an understanding of the general Confucian moral thought by discussing the central characteristics of organic holism and dynamic vitalism. While this moral framework is the basis of New Confucian thought, it is not distinct from the neo-Confucian ideas. The chapter will then take a closer look at the New Confucian implications for this moral understanding and the New Confucian approach to the environment. This will provide enough ground to formulate more specific guidelines for human action towards nature. This chapter lays the groundwork for a comparison with Western environmental theories about nature in the next chapter.

4.1 General ideas of Confucian moral thought

The organismic whole

Confucianism views all parts of the cosmos as interconnected. This sometimes referred to as “organic holism” (Tucker & Berthrong, 1998, p.xxxvi). The whole universe is an integrated system, interconnected and ‘constantly relating microcosm and macrocosm’ (Tucker & Berthrong, 1998, p.xxxvi). The universe is constructed out of the Human world, Heaven and Earth, and the Confucian goal is to establish and maintain a harmonious situation in the universe. The universe, however, is not solely separated in these three components. It is a continuum where all components are internally connected and form an ‘organismic unity’ (Tu, 1998b, p.109).

Starting with the human part of the triangle, the moral emphasis here is to act according to ‘*the Way*’ (道, *Tao*), i.e. in a way as to ‘unfold the human nature’ (Tu, 1976, p.3). The *Doctrine of the Mean* is one of the four classical books and describes in-depth how humans should live in order to actualize the human nature as good as possible. A central concept in Confucian moral thought is the so-called ‘*profound person*’. The profound person is a person who constantly and fully acts according to the

Way. To follow the Way is to be true to one's own nature and one needs to look inwards to gain understanding in what this is, namely a "process towards an ever-deepening subjectivity" (Tu, 1976, p.32)¹⁹. Yet, this does not mean that the profound person retracts from social life. On the contrary, it is through the reflection of others that the profound person gains further understanding of his/her human nature. Self-cultivation hence is an intertwined process of knowledge and practice where personal reflection and social relations both play a role²⁰. In order to achieve self-cultivation, one has to transcend the personal understanding. The *Doctrine of the Mean* states that:

[...] the ruler must not fail to cultivate his personal life. Wishing to cultivate his personal life, he must not fail to serve his parents. Wishing to serve his parents, he must not fail to know man. Wishing to know man, he must not fail to know Heaven.

(*Doctrine of the Mean*, XX, translation by Chan, 1963, p.105)

This section of the *Doctrine of the Mean* describes the idea of concentric circles, where self-cultivation transcends the individual level in order to attain a holistic understanding of the world. Essential to this idea of concentric circles and moral self-cultivation is the relation towards relatives. If an emperor is not able to treat his family right, he cannot treat the people of his country right. "Being affectionate towards relatives is the greatest application of humanity because it indicates an immediate extension of one's inner morality" (Tu, 1976, p.73).

Confucianism emphasizes the importance of practice of the daily rituals (禮, *Li*) to attain this self-cultivation, such as honoring ancestors and taking care of one's parents. By practicing the rituals, one can attain insight in one's own position in life that is necessary for self-cultivation. When one has insight in their own position in life, they can learn to appropriately respond to their environment and the situations around them. This helps a person realize their human nature and add to the construction of harmony in the cosmos. It is an ever-deepening process, but more than that, it is also an expanding process. It starts with the practice of ordinary virtues such as serving one's parents, taking care of the children and helping friends. While most people do this regularly, the profound person does this constantly and conscientiously. Furthermore, the profound person integrates daily life with the above-mentioned quest for self-cultivation. And when one understands the human Way, they can help in the

¹⁹ This idea seems very similar to the Aristotelian view of human nature. Aristotle considered the understanding of good and evil as a typical human characteristic and regarded humans to be ethical beings by nature (Burns, 2009, p.84). Acting good is the very essence of what it is to be human, and "only if they live a life of justice do they satisfy the requirements of their own nature and thereby become human beings properly so called" (Burns, 2009, p.84). For further research on the similarities of Aristotle and Confucian thought, see for example Yu (2007) *The Ethics of Confucius and Aristotle*.

²⁰ This is different from Rousseau's concept of amour propre. Rousseau perceives amour propre as a destructive form of self-love, where the relation of the individual is focused on comparison and competition with others. The concept of self-cultivation does require a relation to others, but the goal of this interaction is the development of oneself to contribute to the common good, which is the construction of Great Harmony. For more about Rousseau's concepts of amour propre: see Gauthier (2006).

transformation of the existing world and formulate an ultimate order of existence (Tu, 2001, p.249). Tu summarized the path of a profound person as follows:

Only those who are the most sincere [authentic, true, and real] can fully realize their own nature. If they can fully realize their own nature, they can fully realize human nature. If they can fully realize human nature, they can fully realize the nature of things. If they can fully realize the nature of things, they can take part in the transforming and nourishing process of Heaven and Earth, they can form a trinity with Heaven and Earth. (Tu, p.2001, p.249)

Although much emphasis is put on the behavior of the profound person, the existence of a profound person is very rare. These unique qualities are only found in the sages. Although all people are capable of acting in accordance with the Way every now and then, the profound person does not wander off of the Way. It seems as if the profound person is a man among men and the adherence to the Way is a matter of degree (Tu, 1978, p.31)²¹. Confucianism does acknowledge an inner moral capacity to all human beings. The level of awareness differs among people, but once this awareness is reached, the knowledge becomes the same (Tu, 1978, p.112). In other words, the nature of moral self-cultivation is universal, but there exists a variety in the extent of this self-cultivation. When one acts morally according to Confucian standards, they reach higher clarity and stronger understanding of Ch'i. The various degrees of turbidity and purity in this Ch'i account for the different kinds of living creatures and levels of consciousness (Kalton, 1998).

Ch'i should be understood here as the vital force that underlies the continuous, dynamic and holistic structure of the cosmos. Ch'i indicates the numerous streams of vital force that are characterized by characterized by the concord and convergence (Tu, 1998b, p.111). It is the commitment to Ch'i that realizes the self-cultivation. Only humans possess the capacity for self-cultivation, making self-cultivation very important in the limitation of human shortcomings. (Kalton, 1998, p.81).

The human component cannot be understood independently from Heaven and Earth. On the contrary, there is a close link between the nature of humanity and Heaven. The human nature has its origin in Heavenly intentions, such as the intention to construct the Great Harmony in cosmos. Great Harmony is the situation where the cosmic relations are in balance. As the Heavenly way shares these intentions, the nature of the Way is shared by both Humanity and Heaven (Tu, 1978, p.116). Furthermore, as Tu continues in his essay on the *Doctrine of the Mean*, “as an integral part of Heaven’s creative process, man is not only endowed with the “centrality” of the universe, but also charged with

²¹ Tu Weiming discusses the apparent incompatibility in the *Doctrine of the Mean* that the profound person has the same nature as all humans but at the same time possesses highly unique capabilities that enable him to follow the Way steadfastly. Tu accepts this incompatibility as something to keep in mind while talking about the moral self-cultivation and the moral way (Tu, 1978, pp.31-32) and this thesis will adopt the recommendation.

the mission of bringing the cosmic transformation to its fruition” (Tu, 1978, p.9). Humanity is therefore an integral element in the realization of Heavens’ intentions.

The anthropocosmic idea

Since the common goal is to construct harmony in the cosmos, Humanity would benefit from an expanded perspective that supersedes an anthropocentric perspective. Instead, it should adopt a broader, cosmic understanding that also includes Heaven and Earth’s concerns. This enlarged understanding explains the ‘cosmos’ part of the ‘anthropocosmic idea’ that plays an important role in Confucianism.

The second element to this anthropocosmic understanding is the ‘anthropos’, which refers to the human agency in construction of the Great Harmony. Humans are capable to become closer to the ideal state of Great Harmony through the expanding process of self-cultivation. Because of the capabilities of conscious understanding and self-cultivation, humanity positions itself as central in the cosmic process. While the agency of this realization lies with humanity, it is not limited to an anthropocentric focus. Self-cultivation starts with the individual, but works in concentric circles. The expansion of this self-cultivation process “cannot stop at self-sufficient isolating humanism”. As Tu writes: “If we stop at secular humanism, our arrogant self-sufficiency will undermine our cosmic connectivity and constrain us in anthropocentric predicament” (2001, p.254). Self-cultivation should instead expand to include the cosmos as an organic unity. Harmony between the interconnected compartments of humanity, Heaven and Earth can be established when this inclusive perspective is formed. The anthropocosmic understanding of Confucianism thus indicates the holistic, interconnected interests within the cosmos, and the human agency to understand these interests and (re)establish the Great Harmony.

The responsibility of humanity to establish the Great Harmony is a complicated bond. Humans are charged with the mission of bringing the cosmic transformation to its fruition, while simultaneously needing to maintain the equal relation to Heaven and Earth to balance the cosmic unity. It is a fine line to be maintained, but they are not necessarily two incompatible ideas. It does require extensive moral (self-)cultivation to establish this precarious balance in the moral responsibility of humans.

Extending responsibilities to Earth

So far the emphasis has been on the human self-cultivation, and Heaven as being the source of the proper way. The relation between Heaven and Humanity is most explicitly discussed. This does not mean however that Earth is less important. To reiterate an earlier point, the cosmos is an interdependent and interconnected holistic organism, and the three compartments cannot be seen independently of each other. The realization of humanity means the realization of things as well (Tu, 1976, p.118). The process of self-cultivation stimulates the expanding understanding of oneself in

relation to the cosmos. It facilitates the expansion of the person's understanding from an individual level, to the community, and to the understanding of nature in relation to the whole cosmos. In order to successfully construct the human way, one needs to fully participate in the creative process of the cosmos. This implies acting in accordance to Earth as well.

The reciprocal relation between humans and earth is what Tucker identifies as the second central concept in Confucianism, which she calls 'dynamic vitalism' (Tucker, 1998). This vitalism is inherent to Ch'i and refers to the process of continuous production and reproduction. The idea behind this is that nature has an ongoing creativity and renewal (*sheng sheng*) (Tucker, 1998, p.xxxvi). The human interaction with nature is based on this continuous change, and humanity should ideally form itself in accordance to the capacity of this system.

Kalton makes this idea more concrete in his essay *Extending the Neo-Confucian Tradition*. According to him, humans have adopted a production rate that is too high for the natural rate of production and absorption of the earth (Kalton, 1998, p.96). Humanity creates at a higher rate than the earth has the capacity to react to. Earth cannot replenish the resources extracted for these processes in similar time. Humans have shown responses to the world that are inappropriate in terms of the cosmic balance. These actions are not representing the rituals of *Li* that should lead to a life in accordance with the Way and human nature. Current actions have created a systemic misfit between the human temporal rhythm and nature's rhythm (Kalton, 1998). There is an imbalance in the triad of Heaven, Earth and Humanity. Self-cultivation is not expanded to an inclusive understanding of the holistic, interconnected interests in the cosmos. Instead, the understanding of interests is stuck on an anthropocentric level. Further self-cultivation is necessary in order to reach the anthropocosmic understanding that was earlier discussed. Kalton suggests an emphasis on the expansion of this self-knowledge through the learning of *Li* and discipline in order to (re-)establish the balance in the universe (1998, pp.89-95). *Li* will give humans guidance in their daily actions. Furthermore, it will lead to the understanding of the universal roots of humanity and the role humans play in the larger cosmos. The traditions and rituals can be used to 'align human designs with the environment by enhancing intimacy with nature' (Tu, 2001, p.254). It taps in the mutual responsiveness between Humanity and the intentions of Heaven. Through the practice of rituals, humans will understand their position in the cosmos, the interdependent relation with Heaven and Nature and the common interest of the Great Harmony. It can stimulate a recalibration of human behavior to match nature's pace.

The Confucian perspective is that humanity is related to the cosmos in such a way that human interest supersedes the anthropocentric perspective. The cosmos is linked through a dynamic interconnectedness of humanity, Heaven, and Earth, as the above discussion illustrated. Self-cultivation is not an act which is confined to merely the individual level. Instead, the expanding process of self-cultivation will lead to the understanding that humans live in a collective, all-

encompassing system. The expanding process will result in a perspective that takes into account not only human interests, such as nation building, economic welfare, and social stability, but also nature preserve and a production rate that matches nature’s capacity of resource production and absorption.

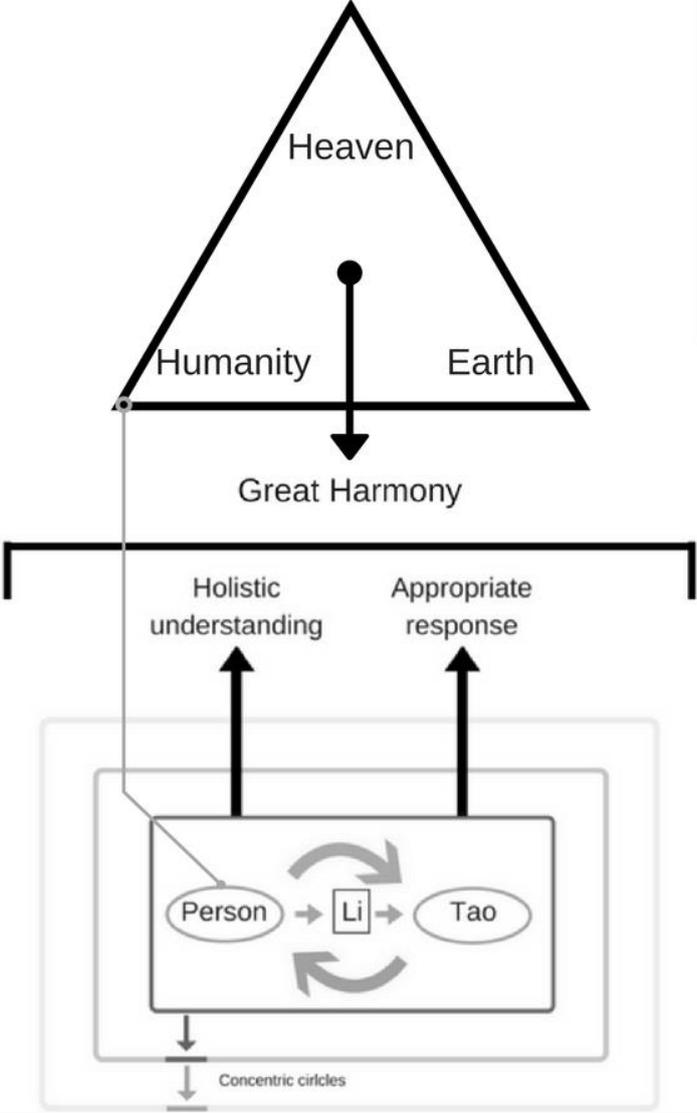


Figure 1: Confucian moral framework

interconnectedness of the cosmos means that people should take into account the balance between Heaven, Earth and Humanity when choosing between different options. Humanity has centrality and agency in creating the Great Harmony in the cosmos. A holistic understanding takes to account all

Illustration 4.1 aimed to visualize the complex moral mechanism at play in Confucianism²². The triangle signifies the organismic, holistic nature of the cosmos, where Heaven, Humanity and Earth make up the balance. The moral development of humanity starts at the individual level, as the line from Humanity to Person indicates. The individual person will act according to the Tao by applying rituals and daily practices (li). It is a two-way process. A deeper understanding of one’s surroundings gives better insight in a person’s own role, and vice versa. This self-cultivation is an expanding process of understanding oneself in the larger context as well, i.e. the idea of concentric circles. A person will attain understanding in their own nature, the role they have in the family, the society and in the cosmos. Thus, self-cultivation will ultimately result into a holistic understanding. Also, the understanding of human nature and one’s role in life will give people the means to act appropriately in the situations they’re faced. Realizing the

²² Some scholars claim that it is not possible to visualize Confucian theory in a 2D illustration. However, seeing a visualization of the intangible ideas can help grasp the general ideas of Confucianism, even if it is not a perfect representation of the mechanisms. Illustration 4.1 was constructed throughout this research, and provided much insight into the Confucian moral framework. Yet a cautionary note is in order, as the illustration should only be used as an addition to the Confucian ideas on self-cultivation and the organismic cosmos, not as a replacement.

three points of the triangle, and will facilitate acting in accordance to this interconnected cosmic system. It provides the context for humans to re-establish the Great Harmony in the cosmos.

4.2 New Confucianism Incorporated

New Confucianism has used these ideas of neo-Confucianism to revive the Confucian thought in contemporary China, but they have added the western ideas of rationality and science. Chapter three showed the difficult period for Confucian thought in the 20th century. The public idea was that Confucian traditions were the main cause of China's decay and relative fallback compared to the Western countries. The fall of the Qing dynasty, the Communist reign and the Cultural Revolution are all examples of the harsh rejection of Confucianism in China in the 20th century. The common perception was that China needed a turn to western ways of thinking based on rationality and science instead. The traditional Chinese thought was seen to 'perceive life as a whole' and to contain moral values that nurture and settle life (Chan, 2003, p.135). Key concepts such as *Li*, and the *Datong* stressed stability, harmony and the suitable way to behave. But these ideas of tradition and hierarchy were later criticized in order to stimulate stagnation and conservative behavior (Berthrong, 2014, p.66).

New Confucians were of the understanding that eradication of all traditional Chinese thought was not the solution however, and argued that there was value in Confucian thought. They were cautious for a turn towards radical scientism if traditional thought was to be fully rejected. A replacement of morality by science would create a spiritual ill society (Chan, 2003, p.135). New Confucianism proposed the reevaluation of Confucian thought and the strengthening of Confucian theory on the issues that were seen as the cause of the downfall of China as a world power. Introducing the western concepts of scientific development and democratic construction would strengthen Confucian thought (Chan, 2003, p.152). To revive China's greatness, it was necessary to continue the Tao but also to develop a scientific tradition based on rationality and develop a political democratic tradition.

The understanding of New Confucians was that the scientific development was necessary to create a balance in Chinese thought. The constant seeking of fulfilment of moral principles was regarded inadequate to maintain a constructive and innovative balance in society. According to the Manifesto, Chinese culture was in need was in need of objective reasoning (Mou et al., 1962, p.470). Yet, the main focus was the creation of a well-balanced understanding, where objective reasoning is used in combination with the moral perspective of seeking fulfilment of the principles discussed above.

The construction of a democratic tradition is seen as a necessary improvement to Confucianism because of the lack in political thought. According to the Manifesto, a democratic tradition is necessary to "break the power struggles related to hereditary rule" (Mou et al., 1962, p.471). The writers of the Manifesto stated that Confucianism did not have rules on the succession of power to people of high moral integrity. The political theory of Confucianism further lacked possibilities for officials to ascend

and descend their official positions when self-realization called for it (Mou et al., p.472). The Manifesto argues that a democratic government see to the need for guidance in political situations. As the nation belongs to all people, and the goal is to construe a stable and harmonious relationship, a democratic government and the popular will it represents can be seen identified with the decree of heaven (Mou et al., p.471).

New Confucians believe that this intricate framework of neo-Confucian thought and the new ideas of science and democracy can provide in the construction of harmony between human, and ultimately to the Great Harmony of the cosmos.

The ultimate goal

The Confucian goal of Great Harmony is, as described above, the central idea of harmony between Heaven, Earth and humanity. This cosmic harmony can be identified as one of the three forms of harmony that Confucianism aspires. To attain cosmic harmony, it is necessary to move beyond the anthropocentric focus and see the unity and interdependence of the cosmos. The focus of human species has to move to anthropocosmism. The responsibility to protect and maintain nature should be acknowledged as equally important as the responsibility to economic development and nation-building (Tu, 2001, pp.257-258). Nature has to be elevated by importance in order to attain this situation of equal interests. One suggestion to attain this is the sacralization of nature (Tu, 2001, p.254).

Second, harmony between cultures is another goal that New Confucians aspire. Globalization increases the importance of inter-cultural communication and New Confucians react to this by setting the goal to “develop a truly ecumenical sense of global community” (Tu, 1998a, pp.10-11). In this case, the harmony does not directly point towards the Great Harmony between the triad of Heaven, Earth and humanity that was discussed above, but to the harmony between the communities on the earth. Globalization trends cause increased interaction between communities. New Confucians see interaction by itself as insufficient, and stress the need for some connectedness between the communities. A technological global village has no real global interconnectedness (Tu, 1998a, p.11). Here exists only interaction through international trade, communication, and media. Instead, the focus should be on the creation of a sense of global community in the Manifesto (Mou et al., 1962, p.481). New Confucians see the promotion of Confucianism as “the teachings that would facilitate the formation of a global structure or world creed and enable different cultures to coexist peacefully and with respect to one another” (Chan, 2003, pp.157-158).

The Confucian idea of the centrality and agency of Humanity in the cosmic harmony can create this sense of global rootedness. It is the holistic understanding of our intertwined futures that create a sense of global community. It taps into the dialectic non-analytical and encompassing qualities of the Confucian thinking, as Chan points out (2003, p.144). Confucianism refrains from the use of exclusive dichotomies, which gives it the potential for the formation of a global structure.

The idea of the collective concern, however, is recognized next to the idea of cultural diversity. Abstract concepts such as the great cosmic harmony are embedded in cultural diversity. In this cultural diversity, daily situations and kinship form the specific understanding of these concepts, and primordial ties are important (Tu, 1998a, p.8). Dialogue between cultures is necessary to understand the specific diversities that obscure the complex interdependency and ultimate common goal of the different cultures. The Manifesto also states that shortcomings of culture are revealed when developed further. Such development that happens through the extension of “ideals as the natural direction of progress” (Mou et al., 1962, p.268). What is meant by this is that cultures are strengthened and developed through the contact and exchange with other culture. New Confucianism itself is a good example of how the idea works. The weaknesses of Neo-Confucian thought were exposed when it came in contact with Western cultures. New Confucians took lessons from the exchange and developed the Confucian thought by introducing the ideas of democracy and rationality.²³

Harmony between different cultures is important for the construction of the Great Harmony. Without a sense of collectiveness, and without the sense of a common goal, it is difficult to come up with a collective policy to protect nature and mitigate the environmental problems already arising. Environmental problems are not bound to cultural boundaries. Nor should the policies. The New Confucian ideal of an ecumenical sense of global justice will aid in the construction of these environmental policies. It will help in the realization of a collective goal of different cultures and strengthen a sense of collegiality. It will provide a framework for communication, with a global understanding of cosmic harmony, and an acknowledgement of cultural differentiation. As Tu stated:

The resilience and explosive power of human-relatedness can be better appreciated by an ethic mindful of the need for reasonableness in any form of negotiation, distributive justice, sympathy, civility, duty-consciousness, dignity of person, sense of intrinsic worth, and self-cultivation. (1998a, p.12)

A third harmony New Confucianism aspires is harmony within the nation. As mentioned, one of the most important contributions New Confucians make to the resurgence of Confucian theory is the addition of a democratic tradition. Democratic representation is seen as an illustration of the Heavenly decree. To understand the importance of the creation of democratic politics one needs to return to the idea of the concentric circles. An emperor cannot reign a country successfully when he is not capable of taking care of his family. Similarly, the cosmos not be in harmony when a society is not in harmony. New Confucian scholars saw the idea of a democratic political system as the solution for the Confucian modernization needs. A democratic tradition would act upon the decree of heaven. New Confucianism

²³ These ideas seem very similar to those of Charles Taylor’s fusion of horizons in “The politics of recognition” (1997). Further research would benefit from looking at the comparison and differences of the two theories.

sees it as the way to construct harmony within the state, and consequently help in the establishment of the Great Harmony as well.

The role of politics is not only to establish law and order, but also to reach this harmony within the nation. On the contrary, an important part of politics is “to establish a fiduciary community through moral persuasion” (Tu, 1978, p.68). The ruler has the duty to guide the citizens on the *Tao*, for example through ethical education. Tu Weiming suggest a different possibility. According to him, intellectuals have the public responsibility to their fellow citizens (2001, p.258-260). The New Confucian idea of national harmony calls for societal cultivation. For this to be effective, there has to exist an active civil society. Due to China’s recent history in the 20th century with central state policy and strong top-down decision structures, scholars have concluded that China possesses a weak civil society. Yet, research finds an increase in local initiatives and a slow expansion of civil society, investing in environmental topics, social injustice and other societal issues. Self-organized voluntary citizen action on environmental issues first appeared in the early 1990s as a response to political decentralization trends, industrialization and environmental degradation, the rise of a middle class, and the globalization of environmentalism (Yang, 2010). Civil environmentalism has developed in the specific form of embedded environmentalism, of informal social networks which provide channels of interaction and negotiation with state actors, a ‘negotiated symbioses with the Party and state’ (Ho and Edmonds, cited in Yang, 2010, p.121).

4.3 Constructing guidelines

New Confucianism focusses on the construction of cosmic harmony through the neo-Confucian moral framework of self-cultivation, and augmented this theory with ideas of rationality and a democratic tradition. This framework however, does not imply homogenization of the way how cosmic harmony is constructed. For example, each person has their own role in society and differs in their extent of self-cultivation. Therefore, the action that is appropriate and the Way they should follow differs per person as well. As Tu concludes: “The multiplicity of models as well as the complexity of rules and procedures renders it unrealistic even to attempt the formulation of an all-embracing pattern of behavior universally applicable to those aspiring to become profound persons” (Tu, 1978, pp.42-3). New Confucianism thus gives a general direction about how to act appropriately, with its focus on the Great Harmony but with the specific actions depending on the context and societal role a person has. Formulating dimensions and values of a New Confucian theory about nature, similar to what is done with western environmental theories in chapter two, would be an artificial interpretation of this complexity. This would reduce the moral frameworks’ multiple paths potential to a single ‘right’ solution. Since New Confucianism gives direction to human conduct, it is more appropriate to speak about guidelines rather than determine values on specific dimensions. These guidelines will be based on the general moral framework as previously discussed in the previous section of this chapter. They

will be derived from ideas such as cosmic unity, self-cultivation, Great Harmony, and rationality but maintain the underdetermined nature of New Confucianism.

Tu Weiming formulated four features of a New Confucian ecological approach. He identified the following features: a sustainable, harmonious relationship between Heaven and Earth, an anthropocosmic understanding, the cultivation and self-knowledge to complete the triad, and the sacralization of nature (Tu, 2001). However, the four features he identified can be found in neo-Confucian theory as well. The distinctive elements of democratic tradition and rationality in New Confucian thought are excluded for Tu's descriptive features. Furthermore, Tu does not expand beyond identifying the central notions of the New Confucian theory.

The guidelines formulated below will include the idea of rationality, and thus place more emphasis on the concepts imported by New Confucianism. They are an attempt to develop New Confucian theory beyond abstract notions and metaphysical discussions. The features Tu formulated will be discussed in the reflection of the upcoming guidelines, expand beyond the aforementioned features, and will be more specifically aimed at the New Confucian perspective on nature.

Four guidelines

The guidelines are derived from an integrated understanding of New Confucianism. They are specific formulations of general concepts in New Confucianism. They are not hierarchical in nature, as they all refer to specific aspects of the same, interdependent grand scheme of thought.

As previously argued, the interdependent nature of the cosmos connects heaven, humanity and earth. The interests of heaven, humanity and earth cannot be seen outside this organismic holism. All human actions, but more specifically the outcomes of these actions have to be placed within the larger context. Because of the interconnected nature, all human actions have direct or indirect effect on the greater whole. Based on this idea, we can formulate the first guideline as: *When assessing options of action, humans should not only include human interests but also Earth's interests to promote the Great Harmony.* Humanity and nature stand on equal footing, and the general aim is to construct and maintain cosmological harmony. Humanity is not above nature. Humanity and Earth are equal in value, and thus also need to be taken into account on equal footing when weighing interests. It implies respectful action towards nature and careful handling of nature's resources. This is similar to Tu's central feature of the sustainable harmonious relation between Heaven and Earth (2001, p.254). The equal position of humanity and Earth (and Heaven) is important to safeguard the idea of a harmonious cosmic interconnectedness.

To reach understanding of this harmonious cosmic system, people need to cultivate themselves and develop their knowledge of human nature and their own relation to the cosmos. The guideline we can distil from this is: *People should combine social interaction and inward contemplation to increasingly*

gain understanding of one's own position in the cosmos. The combined process of social interaction and contemplation make self-cultivation possible. This will increase people's understanding of their position in life, expanding through concentric circles to an anthropocosmic understanding, as was illustrated in figure 4.1. It will be difficult to promote appropriate actions that take into account non-human interests when there is no comprehension of the cosmic interconnectedness. Reflecting on one's own position and the ever deepening process of self-cultivation will lead to the deepened understanding that human's nature is derived from Heavens intentions (Tu, 2001). The understanding of the human position within the cosmos and humanity's responsibilities connects Heaven, Humanity and Earth. This is necessary for the construction of the Great Harmony. If this self-cultivation is not present, humanity falls short to see the interconnected cosmos and its precarious balance. While Tu separates the features present in 'the anthropocosmic understanding' and 'the cultivation and self-knowledge to complete the triad', the second guideline combines them. This is because both features are focused on the construction of the internal process of cultivation to reach and anthropocosmic understanding.

The third guideline is derived from the idea of the Great Harmony and the interconnected triad, as described in the beginning of this chapter. Our human interests supersede our individual interests because we live in an interconnected system. It is important to take into account the effects of our own actions on our surroundings. Furthermore, the interconnectedness implies humanity has an interest in the well-being of Earth. It therefore serves our own interest to create a balanced way of living.

The third guideline becomes as follows: *The actions of people should the aim to construct a durable balance with the environment that sustains us.* A sustainable situation is only possible when the interconnectedness and long term effects are taken into account. The ideal situation would be a balance where the effects of human's actions could be processed and absorbed by Earth without any lasting damage. Currently there is an imbalance between Humanity and Earth, where humans produce and extract in much higher pace than the earth can provide. Humans need to adopt an anthropocosmic understanding in order to reach a balance where earth is valued on equal basis. Yet, this focus on a durable balance with the environment does not take precedence over harmony within a society or between different communities. In other words, New Confucianism does not suggest sacrificing the interests of certain groups of people to establish this balance with the environment. Instead, this balance with the environment is of similar importance to the construction of harmony. Ultimately they both support the construction of the Great Harmony. The interests of communities and the cosmos are one and the same. Tu suggests the sacralization of nature in order to even out the interests of Humanity and Earth (2001, p.255). The third guideline does not argue for a sacralization of nature as this will tip the scale to the other side. Instead, it supports the construction of a sustainable balance between Humanity and Earth.

The last guideline has some distance from the other three. It is not a guideline focused on the moral ideas of Confucianism, but its objective is based on the inclusion of scientific thinking. This concept was imported by New Confucians to counterbalance the moral emphasis of Confucian theory and resolve the theory's inclination to stagnate development (Mou et al., 1962, p.470). Furthermore, the incorporation of scientific thinking is a rejection of political preferences, ideological motives and personal feelings as motives of action. These political preferences, ideological motives, emotional motives, and conservative feelings will be referred to as 'prejudices'. Whilst the absence of these preferences, and the consideration of only factual information will be called 'objective understanding'. The fourth guideline can then be formulated as follows: *People should weigh their options of actions while taking into account the temporality of our knowledge and apply a reflective attitude towards ones prejudices.*

The guideline puts the emphasis on objective reasoning propagated by New Confucianism. It is beneficial to include this fourth guideline in the discussion on New Confucian approach on nature, because it gives guidance on the behavior in situations of environmental problems, where emotional and political arguments often play a role. While Tu is a New Confucian scholar himself, he does not include the rationality argument in his conceptual features. One reason for this could be because the rationality argument is not an integrated part of the moral framework of Confucianism, but an imported attitude on how to judge possible actions.

The fourth guideline requests critical reflection of human behavior in a context where tradition and emotions play an important role. Human actions should be based on factual knowledge about the cosmological balance and on the effects of human actions upon nature. They should not be guided by political, emotional, and conservative sentiments. However, these prejudices are not to be disregarded completely. The manifesto reads that one can correctly observe the 'objective expression of the spiritual life of mankind' when they are based on ideas of sympathy and reverence (Mou et al., 1962, p.460).

The four guidelines as proposed emphasize the plurality of interests, the effects of potential action, and the long term goals to be established which should all be taken into account when assessing human actions. They are guidelines for how to judge specific human action, but they do not have to give one single proper way of action. The guidelines are underdetermined similar to New Confucian theory. The limits of an application of these guidelines will be explored in the next chapter. Furthermore, it will assess the potentiality of these guidelines as actual guidance, both as an alternative theory to western theories as in the Chinese context.

5. Limitations of New Confucianism in Theory and Practice

Western theories on nature present a wide scope of principles concerning different aspects of nature. The theories make different suggestions as to the object of ethical consideration; an anthropocentric or an anthropocosmic approach could be applied. They also consider a different origin of value to the ethical objects; whether this value is intrinsic to the object, or attributed extrinsically. Chapter 2 discussed a large range of these dimensions and values within western environmental theories. The chapter concluded with five different dimensions within western environmental theories, i.e. the composition of nature, the object of ethical consideration, the nature of value, the attribution of value and the theory of action.

On the other side of the world, New Confucianism works with concepts of anthropocosmism, human agency and Great Harmony. These concepts were the foundation of the guidelines formulated in Chapter 4. These guidelines did not follow specific dimensions and values, instead they characterized the conditions of the decision making process for human action. But in a world that is faced with pressing environmental problems, it is necessary to look beyond these theoretical concepts. One needs to put the New Confucian guidelines to the test and see to what extent they are sufficient and coherent enough to be applied to complex environmental dilemmas. Are the New Confucian ecological guidelines distinctive enough to be used as guidance in actual complex political situations?

In order to ascertain the applicability of New Confucianism as an environmental theory, this chapter will probe the limits of a New Confucian ecological theory. It will start off with a reflection on the New Confucian ecological guidelines and explore the limits of their theoretical applicability. The chapter will then test the practicability of the New Confucian ecological approach and investigate how much room the Chinese cultural and political context offers for such a perspective. The final part of this chapter compares New Confucianism with western environmental theories.

5.1 Exploring the limits

Specific guidelines for human action towards nature were derived from the abstract ideas of New Confucianism. As already discussed in the beginning of Chapter 4, the four guidelines are as follows:

1. When assessing options of action, humans should include not only human interests, but also Earth's interests to promote the Great Harmony.
2. People should combine social interaction and inward contemplation to gain increasing understanding of one's own position in the cosmos.

3. People's actions should aim to construct a durable balance with the environment that sustains us.
4. People should weigh their options of action while taking into account the temporality of our knowledge and apply a reflective attitude towards one's prejudices.

Because Confucianism is a social theory and rooted in daily life, the guidelines are meant to consider common and daily actions. They function to guide human behavior towards nature. But do they function properly? Do the guidelines indeed give guidance in complex situations concerning environmental problems? And what are the limits of their reach? The four guidelines will be discussed consecutively, in order to identify the boundaries of the theoretical capacity of the New Confucian ecological perspective.

Guideline one: wasting food, wasting the balance

The first guideline affirms the importance of the inclusion of Earth's interests when weighing options for action. It is based on the ideas of anthropocosmic understanding, interconnectedness and the goal of the Great Harmony, all ideas discussed in the previous chapter. To reiterate a point made earlier, this interconnected system implies the idea that the Earth's interests indirectly are in humanity's interest as well. It is this interconnectedness of humanity and Earth that creates an equality of relation between them. This is meant as an equality of value. Humanity and Earth are equally of value, as the triangular relationship between humanity, Heaven and Earth illustrated in figure 4.1. When one of the three is placed above the other, the balance and the Great Harmony cannot be constructed. However, there does exist an inequality in responsibility and agency between humanity and Earth. It is humanity that is charged with the agency to construct the Great Harmony within the cosmos, because it possesses the capability of self-cultivation. This agency implicates a responsibility to include all interests on an equal basis. If humanity neglects Earth's interests, it indirectly undermines its own interests, as it impedes the construction of the Great Harmony.

The global waste of food is an example of the disrespectful handling of Earth's resources, and indirectly of human concerns. Between 20-30% of the total food production in the world is wasted annually (WUR, n.d.; Fusions, 2016). It is an unnecessary subtraction of resources that aggravates environmental problems. A combination of factors is at the root of this problem. Parts can be explained by inefficient production and transport. Other parts can be explained by individual behavior. Research on the European food waste showed that households contribute an estimate of 53% to the total waste (Fusions, 2016, p.4). Research in the UK showed that approximately 60% of the food waste in 2010 could have been avoided (Quested et al., 2013). The general problem of food waste can be seen as an illustration of the imbalanced of Human and Earth's interests. Food is produced to fulfill the consumer needs and wants of humans, although large amounts of this food are ultimately not consumed but wasted. The consumption of food can serve a multitude of purposes. Next to it being a basic need, it can also fulfill a social role or generate amusement, comfort, and gratification. The example of food

waste is chosen because it is a result of humanity addressing one of its essential needs and illustrates very clearly the interdependent relationship between humanity and Earth.

Following the first guideline, people would be expected to look not only at their own demand for food consumption, but put it into perspective with the pressure their demand puts on nature. Humans should reconsider throwing away yesterday's leftovers just because they do not feel like eating it again. But putting the guideline in practice, the question arises where the limit is. Do we need to cut back the food waste, considering the 20-30% of food that is currently not consumed? Does humanity need to change their wants and constrain them to match its surroundings? Or more generally, to what extent should the interests of Earth be taken into account when assessing human actions?

The limit to this guideline lies in the limit of the capacity of each individual. There is diversity in the levels of self-cultivation of people. Humans vary in their understandings of the interconnected system and the extent of an anthropocosmic perspective. This variety affects to what extent they can give an appropriate response to situations (see Figure 4.1). Confucianism places high value in fulfilling one's own role in society, accepting the resulting diversity in moral development. This idea implies that all people should take into account the Earth's interests in accordance with their own capacity. This capacity can be limited to the social position they hold, their economic funds or their self-cultivated understanding of the interconnectedness of life. However, within their personal capacity they all hold the responsibility to take into account Earth's interests. This implies that a person with a higher level of self-cultivation, and thus a better understanding of the impact of his food consumption, also has a higher moral obligation to prevent food waste than a person who is less self-cultivated. A reiterate argument made in Chapter 4, Confucianism acknowledges an inner moral capacity to all human beings. As self-cultivation is ever-deepening process, the moral obligation a person has is not static but strengthens throughout the process. In an ideal situation all people will reach understanding of interconnectedness, and thus will be able to reflect on their own food consumption²⁴.

Guideline two: formalizing self-cultivation

The second guideline refers to the process of self-cultivation, which is necessary in order to change human behavior towards nature. Self-cultivation builds an understanding of oneself, the nature of humanity and its responsibilities and agency in the cosmos. One can always gain further insight into oneself, one's responsibilities and nature, but this process takes place within the interconnected cosmic system.

²⁴ A distinction has to be made between a situation where there is a complete shortfall of self-cultivation, resulting in an inability to act in a moral and self-cultivated way, and a situation of disregard for the moral responsibilities which follow from the moral self-cultivation. While in the first, there is no moral responsibility towards the Greater Harmony, in the latter the responsibility is ignored, not exempted.

The realization that humanity has an interdependent relationship with nature should affect the actions of humans towards nature. The triad of cosmic unity shows that humanity is on equal footing with the Earth, and this implies that humanity should act with respect towards Earth. Humanity should realize that its requests for food consumption are not all obtainable without damaging nature, and indirectly thus damaging one's own situation within the cosmos. This realization starts with the understanding on the personal level through self-cultivation. People gain insight into their own role within their family, direct community, and general society through the process of social interaction and inward reflection. If a person does not understand his own position in life, he cannot fully see the implications of his actions for the larger cosmos. Nor can someone contribute to the Great Harmony without understanding oneself on a more direct level. The second guideline acknowledges the process of self-cultivation in order to reach the Great Harmony.

One example of how the guideline could be put into practice is the formalization of the process of social interaction and inward contemplation. This could be done through formal education, where the organizational structure is already focused on teaching students. Stimulating social interaction with peers and teachers could improve people's understanding of their own role in and the workings of society. Interacting with peers who are careful about wasting food can promote a higher awareness of a person's own actions afterwards. Furthermore, teachers could educate about the magnitude of food waste, its global effects and the possibilities to reduce the unnecessary waste. Inward contemplation could be stimulated by providing time and space for individual reflection. This individual reflection could influence how a person takes care of its food and consumer choices afterwards.

However, the resulting understanding is a personal process. All people have the inner moral capacity to gain a deeper understanding of oneself, humanity and the cosmos but the extent of the cultivation of these moral capacities varies within humanity (Tu, 1976)²⁵. While it might be possible to formalize the facets of social interaction and opportunities for inward reflection, the realizations and understandings take place within one's own consciousness. This means that there is a limit to the extent in which this self-cultivation can be guaranteed. The individual, through personal understanding, ultimately realizes self-cultivation. The second guideline is thus limited to the extent of a person's own cultivation.

²⁵ The argument that all humans have the inner moral capacity for self-cultivation has been discussed earlier in Chapter 4, see p.45.

Guideline three: balancing interests

A long-term objective of the New Confucian ecological approach is the construction of a sustainable balance between humans and nature, found in the idea of the Great Harmony. The previous chapter explained the current environmental problems as an imbalance between humanity and Earth, where humans produce and extract at a much higher pace than Earth can manage. The third guideline addresses this problem, as it states that “people’s actions should aim to construct a durable balance with the environment that sustains us” and calls for a balance between human actions and its surroundings. The goal is to establish a sustainable relationship. Humanity should ‘re-calibrate’ its current behavior. Humans should focus on constructing a relationship of balance, circular process or harmony with Earth, instead of a linear process of production and growth. The speed of human’s production should match nature’s capacity of absorption and (re)generation of resources.

The example of human behavior towards food is also suitable in this context. From the start of agriculture, humans have produced food in such a manner that we have been faced with the problem of soil exhaustion. Soil gets exhausted when the same or a familial crop is cultivated on the same soil successively. The Greek Theophrastus wrote about this in ca. 300 BCE, the ancient Chinese book ‘Jiminyoushu’ explored methods to prevent the exhaustion of soil around 540 CE and since the 20th century scientific publications on the issue have been published in increasing numbers (Huang et al., 2013, p.232-233). The intense process of growing similar crops prevents the soil from regenerating the minerals needed for the next cycle of production. Alternation of different crops is a specific way to prevent soil exhaustion. It is an example of how human actions affect nature, and how a change in human action can improve nature’s conditions. The alternation of crops might affect the availability of a certain crop at a specific time, but it will create a better quality of the soil, and subsequently establish a better balance between humanity and nature. A distinction needs to be made between the perspective on soil as a means to satisfy humanity’s wants and the conception that the Earth’s interests have value on their own. Confucianism is clear on the fact that Earth is a specific dimension within the cosmos with equal value and particular interests. The interconnectedness between humanity and Earth connects their interests. This means that New Confucianism does not subscribe to the idea that nature is a means to humanity’s ends. On the contrary, the goal is to construct a sustainable balance between humanity and Earth in equal relation.

The limit of the theoretical applicability of the third guideline is that of irreversible damage. The sustainable balance with its surroundings does not mean that humans can never again cut a tree or slaughter a cow. However, it does restrict such action if cutting down that specific tree would cause extreme desertification, or that cow was the last of its kind. To refer back to the example of agriculture, the guideline accepts the cultivation of crops on a stretch of land, but would call for a method of agriculture that would not irreversibly damage the soil. It is up to the people themselves to decide whether they see to this by crop alternation, resting periods or other methods. Indeed, it is important

to know the effects of one's actions on nature, and these can be suboptimal at times. The problem of inadequate information will be discussed in the next guideline.

Guideline four: continuous information-seeking

The last guideline does not direct us to the ideal situation of the Great Harmony and anthropocosmic understanding. Instead, it directs us in our behavior when assessing the specific ways of how to reach an ecological ideal situation: "People should weigh their options of action while taking into account the temporality of our knowledge and apply a reflective attitude towards one's prejudices". People should make their decisions based on objective understanding and reason. This is especially relevant with environmental problems, where there often is the call for change in human behavior. Feelings often play a great role in this call for change (or the rejection of this change). The fourth guideline appeals to a separation from feelings of familiarity and conservative motives. Instead, objective reasoning should be used to assess the specific action and decide whether it is the most appropriate action. This fourth guideline could be put into practice through policies for independent research, open debates and access to research results and new information. It is necessary to increase knowledge of the environment and environmental degradation in order to battle it.

The availability of information is a prominent condition of this principle of objective reasoning. And the previous principle of balancing interests. Even with increased efforts on 'facts and figures', it is necessary to take scientific uncertainty seriously. The precautionary principle addresses this uncertainty and requires that "parties should refrain from actions in the face of scientific uncertainties about serious or irreversible harm to public health or the environment" (Pieters & van Cleeff, 2009, p.51). While this definition by Pieters and van Cleeff is stated in the negative, the principle also implies that scientific uncertainty should not be a reason for not taking measures to prevent 'threats' to the environment or health. The principle opposed the sovereign states' usage of the 'lack of full proof' as a justification of inaction (Fisher et al., 2006, p.3). The principle is often used in environmental and health debates. While already applied earlier, the principle gained popularity in 1992, when it was used in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, formulated as follows:

In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation. (UNEP, 1992)

The UNEP declaration urges the need for action to prevent serious or irreversible damage, just as the limit of the third guidelines stated. Therefore, the precautionary principle fits well within the New Confucian ecological framework. The precautionary principle cautions exactly the prejudices that hinder human actions to be objective and in accordance with the construction of a cosmic balance.

This last guideline is a continuous process because of its appeal to knowledge and reason. Knowledge is constantly subjected to falsification, change and new discoveries. The limit of the theoretical application of the fourth guideline is therefore the current knowledge available to humankind. The guideline calls for the cultivation of a critical reflective attitude, due to the intangible nature of knowledge. People need to stay vigilant for new information in order to facilitate objective reasoning.

The four guidelines state specific conditions for the assessment of certain options for action on the included interests, goals and potential effects. Yet, if equal value is attributed to nature and humanity, the question arises how to make a choice between them when the conditions call for it.

In western environmental theories, this problem has been given much attention by Tom Regan. Regan constructed a thought experiment where there are four humans and one dog in a lifeboat. The four humans and the dog all enjoy inherent value and the equal *prima facie* right not to be harmed. As the boat only has room for four, a choice has to be made as to who should leave the boat. Regan argues that our 'prereflective intuition' to choose the dog is still compatible with inherent value and the equal *prima facie* right not to be harmed that all five living beings in the boat possess (Regan, 1988, p.324). He appeals to the worse-off principle and argues that the death of any of the four humans would be a greater *prima facie* loss, and thus a greater *prima facie* harm, than would be true in the case of the dog (Finsen, 1992, p.118).

New Confucianism extends beyond the anthropocentric view Regan has in mind (Finsen, 1992, p.119)²⁶. It applies an anthropocosmic perspective where nature and humanity are seen as equal, but humanity is bestowed with the agency to construct harmony in the cosmos. This agency seems to strengthen the choice to save the four humans when pursuing the worse-off principle in this specific situation. In general, however, all the guidelines should be taken into account. If the choice to save the four humans results in the extinction of dogs, one can argue that this violates the third guideline, and irreversible damage has been done. Yet, this is a deviation from the original case of Regan's lifeboat.

5.2 New Confucianism, ecological approach and Chinese context

The New Confucian ecological approach is not only restricted by the limits of the theoretical applications of the guidelines. Their applications and interpretations are subject to the cultural setting in which they are applied. Different cultures will provide different ways to engage and use the

²⁶Finsen argued this anthropocentric approach because the common intuition to throw the dog overboard assumes that our interests in rational reflective thought "in attending theatre, planning for our future, regretting our past, and so on, are the sort of things that elevate our lives above that of other animals" (Finsen, 1992, p.119).

various guidelines. The way guidelines are implemented are diverse and one size simply does not fit all. It builds on the ideas New Confucians have about the importance of history and culture. As written in the 1958 New Confucian Manifesto: “Understanding is the light whereby a person may transcend his subjectivity, it is the light that guides the intellect into the souls of others” (Mou et al., 1962, pp.460-461). This understanding cannot be obtained without considering the most prominent actual elements that define society. It drives us to inquire what the specifics are of the context of the implementation. The current cultural and political motivations²⁷ will be discussed in the upcoming section, as they are key important in an assessment of the domestic context of a society. Does a New Confucian approach fit in a Chinese cultural and political context? And to what extent does New Confucianism have potential in Chinese environmental policies?

Making a cultural and politicized distinction

Because the Confucian theory is large in scope, Confucianism can also be applied in multiple manners. Liu Shuxian for example, distinguishes three modalities of Confucianism, distinguishing spiritual, popular and politicized Confucianism as three distinct but related meanings of Confucianism (Liu, 2003, p.23). The spiritual side refers to the traditional thought and written texts about old Confucian scholars such as Confucius himself, Mencius and others (Liu, 2003). The construction of Confucian institutes and the establishment of Confucian schools illustrate the renewed interest in this spiritual side of Confucianism. The popular side represents the belief at the grassroots level, emphasizing concepts such as family value, diligence, and education (Liu, 2003). Contrary to the periods of the May fourth Movement and the Cultural Revolution, these concrete displays of Confucianism are no target of eradication from the Chinese culture. Instead, these popular displays of Confucian ideas are promoted both by the national government as by local initiatives. For example, the Confucian themes were emphasized during the Beijing Olympics, quoting the *Analects* on a world stage (Bell, 2015a, p.142) and there are independent Confucian primary and secondary schools growing throughout China (Rosemont, 2013, p.3). However, the government’s support of Confucianism is not unlimited. A nine-meter bronze statue of Confucius was first unveiled near Tiananmen Square in 2011, but later moved to a less prominent location. The official explanation is that the location near Tiananmen was always intended to be temporary, and that the definitive location was a courtyard sculpture garden of the National Museum (Wade, 2011). Another explanation, suggested among others by the Confucian scholar Chen Lai, is that members of the Central Party School considered the placement of the Confucian statue in close proximity to Mao’s mausoleum a step too far (Jacobs, 2011). The two examples illustrate that the governmental support for Confucianism fluctuates. The politicized side of Confucianism addresses the tradition of thought that serves as the official ideology of a government,

²⁷ The political motivation will include economic motivations as well, because they are part of the legitimization of the Chinese central government, as the section “Politicized Confucianism” will argue.

such as when Confucianism was a state ideology in multiple dynasties (Liu, 2003, p.23). Both the popular and the spiritual definitions of Confucianism are part of a cultural understanding of Confucianism. Whereas the spiritual side focuses on the ancient ideas and old scriptures, popular Confucianism addresses the more tangible side of the spiritual ideas. Therefore, this thesis will combine both in a cultural understanding of Confucianism. The politicized distinction will be treated as a separate interpretation, adopted in similar understanding to Liu's application.

Cultural Confucianism

A considerable potential for New Confucian theory lies in the cultural aspect of the Chinese context. Confucianism has its roots in Chinese culture and it has shown extensive influence on political and social life and resilience during the different dynasties and republics, as we saw in chapter three. The ecological theory derived from New Confucianism strengthens itself through these old structures still present in Chinese culture. Levenson argued that Confucianism was something left to be found only in museums after the establishment of the People's Republic of China and the communist regime (Levenson, 1986). However, as concluded in chapter three, Confucianism has resurfaced.

The revival of Confucianism is seen in the establishment of schools of Confucian studies by universities, the increase in independent Confucian primary and secondary schools, and the government funding for Confucius Institutes around the world (Rosemont, 2013, p.3). These developments can be categorized as actions that strengthen the spiritual and popular sides of Confucianism. They stimulate research of the old Confucian texts and thoughts, and spread the central ideas of concepts such as familial piety, diligence, and education. The general revival of popular Confucianism also implies the renewed application of the Confucian moral framework as discussed in Chapter 4. There we saw that ideas of familial piety and tradition are the beginning of moral self-cultivation. Popular Confucianism calls upon precisely those ideas. One could argue that a new emphasis on moral appropriate behavior will improve social stability, a goal that has always been central to Confucianism. Furthermore, reactivating the old cultural structures of Confucianism that have been embedded in Chinese culture for centuries and remained latent in the 20th century strengthens cultural identity and social stability.

Politicized Confucianism

The politicized definition of Confucianism refers to the application of tradition of thought as the ideology of the government (Liu, 2003, p.23). While (neo-)Confucianism has been a state ideology for multiple dynasties, this ended with the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911. Since the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949 the official state ideology is communism. Starting in 1978 however, there has been a turn away from the Communist grand ideals. Instead, the general focus is on pragmatic policies of economic development and nation building (Bell, 2015a, p.183). The government's

legitimacy is mainly based on ideas of nationalism and economic development, motivations that originate from the trauma of the 19th and 20th century, as discussed in Chapter 3.

New Confucianism, nationalism and democracy

Nationalism is compatible with New Confucian thought, if the Chinese motivation for nationalism is understood as the commitment to social stability and unity within its borders. The general emphasis on proper moral behavior is interesting for a government that faces high levels of corruption. For example, President Xi named Confucianism as one of the traditional cultures that can help combat corruption, by providing Confucian values in a speech on party members' moral training and standards (Bell, 2015a, p.124). Furthermore, the moral framework of Confucianism is an expanding process. While it starts at the family level, the personal understanding expands from the family, to the community, to the society, the nation, and beyond. Whether one calls it a weakened extension of the family (Bell, 2015b) or the expanding process of self-cultivation in relation to the larger whole, the Confucian moral framework does not conflict with political aims of nationalism and nation-hood. Bell formulates this as follows: "The family, in most cases, supports and encourages other-regarding commitments to broader forms of social life, including the political community. The family is the first and perhaps most important 'school of virtue'" (Bell, 2015b, p.39). The moral emphasis of (New) Confucianism promotes appropriate behavior, stimulating stability and unity within Chinese borders.

To gain insight in the opportunities for New Confucianism in the political dimension, it is important to take into account the New Confucian' augmentation of the traditional Confucian thought. The democratic tradition New Confucianism proposes seems incompatible with current Chinese government aims. Albeit China's loosened commitment to Communist ideals, the CCP remains against the idea of democracy as embodied for example by western liberal democracies. Instead, 'Chinese democracy' should be interpreted as the Party's commitment "from the masses, to the masses" (Tsang, 2009, p.867). The party delivers stability, order, rapid growth and general improvements to the living conditions of the people in exchange for the acceptance of the CCP's strong hold over the national political power and government (Tsang, 2009). These ideas are Leninist in the sense that the party is vertically organized, and maintains a strong hold over the state apparatus. However, other key features are not present in the current political motivations of the Party, such as the leadership by the proletariat, and class conflict being the motor of history (Bell, 2015a, p.280). Furthermore, the party cannot ignore the growing middle class, and needs to be sensitive to the public opinion. This leads some to argue that the current political system in China can be described as 'consultative Leninism' (Tsang, 2009). In this system, the Leninist organizational structure is made more robust to face the social and political challenges in China, by combining the strong hold over central political power with a sensitive approach towards public opinion and demands.

Depending on the model of democracy that New Confucianism advocates, this could present a problem for the chances of New Confucianism in the Chinese political context. The Manifesto proposed a democratic reconstruction in light of the power struggles related to the hereditary system that China employed throughout the many dynasties (Mou et al., 1962, p.469). They link the implementation of democracy in China to the institutionalization of the decree of heaven in the form of the popular will (Mou et al., 1962). As the concept of democracy is not defined specifically, one needs to guess, as to which democratic model is referenced here.

If a western liberal democratic model is suggested, opportunities for New Confucianism in the political dimension seem unlikely. One of the causes for this reluctance to the western liberal type of democracy can be found in the trauma of the 19th and 20th century, when the Treaty of Versailles granted Japan power over German territories within China. To reiterate the argument made in Chapter 3, this made China become septic of the western liberal model.

However, it seems likely that the call for democracy in the Manifesto is for a model more closely related to the Chinese culture. Multiple New Confucian scholars have argued for a model of democracy ‘with Chinese characters’ instead of a western liberal model for China. Based on New Confucian thought, Bell for example proposes a meritocratic model of democracy (2006). In such a model there would need to be more room for free speech in order to voice the public will, but the appointment of state officials at the national level would be done in a meritocratic way instead of general elections (Bell, 2008). The mandate of heaven is guaranteed by the selection of state officials on their merit and their capabilities to serve the will of the people²⁸. Bell is not the only one who sees Confucianism and a (Chinese) version of democracy as compatible. New Confucian Tu Weiming already argued for a similar idea in 1996. He acknowledged that, in the eyes of western liberal democracy, the Confucian tradition lacks the commitment to a strong individualism and may need to develop a more critical attitude towards power abuse and corruption. However, Tu sees the strength of a New Confucian tradition in the cultivation of reasonableness in ordinary daily human interaction, “for they believe that true social harmony is attainable only through communication and negotiation” (Tu, 1996, p.35).

Despite this model’s close relation to Confucian thought, this model of democracy is no reality in China yet either. According to the CCP, the government does act upon the popular will, acting ‘from the masses, to the masses’, and this rhetoric could be interpreted as acting in accordance with the mandate of heaven. However, the meritocratic model requires more freedom, such as the freedom of

²⁸ The emphasis of the meritocratic model of democracy is on the national level of government. The government has supported experiments with deliberative democracy on the local level to solve problems such as corruption. See for example: *The Search for Deliberative Democracy in China*, eds. Leib, E. and He, B. (2006).

speech, than exists in the current situation. And here lies the reluctance that New Confucianism could face from the Chinese national government. In order to safeguard the will of the people, free speech needs to be promoted, and this could be of great risk to the strong grasp the CCP currently has (Bell, 2015c).

Irrespective of the New Confucian interpretation of democracy as liberal western or a Chinese model of democracy, the politicized understanding of New Confucianism is met with resistance. Although New Confucianism could strengthen ideas of national identity and social stability, the democratic element in the theory makes implementation problematic. As the democratic element is a New Confucian characteristic, there might be less resistance towards neo-Confucianism, or classical Confucianism. Nationality, however, is not the only motivation in the national politics of China.

New Confucianism and the economic motivation

The second important motivation in Chinese governmental policy is that of economic performance and modernization. The decline of China's status in the 19th and 20th century has its effect on China's current focus on development, as discussed in Chapter 3. Furthermore, to reiterate a point made earlier in this chapter, part of the Chinese national government hinges on the economic development policies it carries out. The legitimacy of the CCP's power position depends exceedingly on the guarantees of societal stability, economic development and general improvement of the Chinese living standards (Tsang, 2009). During the 1980s, Deng Xiaoping already redefined the main mission of the Chinese Communist party from achieving communism to achieving rapid growth (Bell, 2015a p.183). Nationalism combined with economic development makes up the unofficial motivation of the Chinese government.

A strong critique against (neo-)Confucianism has been that it effectively impedes development and modernization. The general opinion in the early 20th century was that Confucianism was the cause of China's decline. Neo-Confucianism had to be replaced with alternative ideas in order to modernize China and regain the position of wealth, stability and prosperity it once held. People needed to adopt an independent, progressive, utilitarian and scientific attitude, instead of the Chinese conservative attitude based on respect of tradition, the elderly and social hierarchy (Ropp, 2010, p.117-118). However, amidst the rejection of Confucian tradition, New Confucians argued that modernization was actually compatible with Confucian thought. They acknowledged that the predominant focus on tradition and the fulfillment of moral principles resulted in China's stagnation. In order to amend this problem, New Confucianism incorporated rationality in Confucian thought (Mou et al., 1962 p.470). Stagnation was to be prevented by the balanced pursuit of moral self-cultivation and intellect. The addition of rationality to New Confucian thought is an answer to the critique that made neo-Confucianism less responsive to modernization and development. Adding rationality to New Confucian theory stressed the importance of objective reasoning and knowledge. This knowledge is

an extending process, and the search for new knowledge acts as an impetus for more technological developments and modernization. Precisely the room for morality and proper behavior in combination with rationality is by some authors seen as a solution to problems of deep individualization that often accompany modernization (Rošker, 2015, p.515).

The opportunities of New Confucianism in China seem to vary when making a distinction between the cultural and politicized understanding of Confucianism. As the previous discussion tried to illustrate, New Confucianism is compatible with the cultural understanding of Confucianism. The Chinese government even promotes the spread of central notions of Confucianism and sees the Confucian moral framework as a means to strengthen proper behavior of state officials (Bell, 2015a). Furthermore, New Confucianism is compatible with the governments' focus on nationality and social coherency aims. It is in this part of the politicized understanding where New Confucianism has some potential. As long as New Confucianism addresses social unity, nationality, moral behavior and modernization and development aims, there exists room within the Chinese context. However, the space to maneuver is limited when the national governmental power of the CCP is concerned. Because New Confucianism is ambiguous in their understanding of democracy, it is not possible to give a definitive conclusion on the politicized understanding of Confucianism. What can be concluded is that New Confucianism is promising in the cultural and political context as long as it is not concerned with the political structure on the national level of Chinese politics.

New Confucian Guidelines

The democratic element seems to complicate New Confucian implementation in China. However, the four ecological guidelines do not explicitly focus on this democratic reconstruction. Instead, these guidelines are based on central ideas of moral self-cultivation, the anthropocosmic understanding of the universe, the goal of the Great Harmony and the need for appropriate response. The call for a reconstruction of a democratic tradition is left aside. The formulated guidelines and the underlying ecological theory of New Confucianism might therefore not have the restrictions that New Confucian theory as a whole faces when considering to implement it in China. This is as long as the ecologic approach does not interfere with the CCP's national political power.

The interpretation of the third guideline of 'a durable balance with the environment that sustains us' might be problematic in this case. It commands a re-calibration of humanity's production rate with Earth's coping capacity, and implies a move away from the focus on production and growth. As described above, it is precisely this focus on economic growth and development that partially legitimizes the government of the CCP. The third guideline therefore, could complicate the implementation of the New Confucian ecologic approach.

The current Chinese environmental policies clearly indicate a standoff between economic/political interests and environmental interest. Environmental concerns are acknowledged by China. Problems

with the environment come with high economic costs and cause problems such as smog, which creates social unrest in large cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou (Alpermann, 2010). China has a strict and comprehensive body of environmental protection legislation. However, problems exist with the enforcement of the legislation due to factors such as bureaucracy, corruption, and fragmented authoritarianism (Lieberthal, 1992; Alpermann, 2010). Further action for environmental improvement by grassroots organizations and NGOs is tolerated by the state as long as it steers clear of sensitive political issues and is conducted in a non-confrontational way (Alpermann, 2010).

This last conclusion can be put in a larger perspective. The previous discussion examined the extent to which New Confucianism fits in the cultural and political aspects of the Chinese contexts. It found high potential in its cultural interpretation as it calls upon structures deeply embedded in the Chinese society and stimulates social cohesion and identity. However, New Confucianism understood in its politicized definition is less suitable to the current political context of China. It can strengthen the political aims of nation building and social stability²⁹, but indirectly erodes the foundation of the legitimacy of the Central Party. In general, there seems to be room for New Confucian thought in the cultural and political Chinese context, as long as it does not corrode the central governments' political power and legitimacy. And this condition severely restricts New Confucianism in its politicized interpretation.

5.3 New Confucianism compared to western environmental theories

So far, we have tried to understand the extent to which New Confucianism can be applied in the environmental debate. The general ideas of an interconnected cosmos, interdependence, and the moral mechanism for self-cultivation facilitated the formulation of environmental guidelines from a New Confucian perspective. The previous section examined the limits of the theoretical capacity of these guidelines. It explored to what extent New Confucianism could work as an environmental theory. The limits of the guidelines are those of the limits of one's own capacity, the extent of one's own self-cultivation, the irreversible damage and the temporality of knowledge. This exploration of the limits laid bare the social emphasis of New Confucianism and the importance of context dependency for decision-making. While the guidelines do give direction towards the general aim, the focus on context and personal agency create the space for various specific actions. It facilitates options of choice, while steering in the general direction of harmony within the cosmos and respectful attitude towards Nature. New Confucianism and the guidelines are therefore applicable as an environmental theory.

²⁹ Although New Confucianism can strengthen nation building and social stability, this is only to a limited extent. A growing middle class creates political and societal tension, and the central government increasingly does have to take into account public demands. For more information, see Bell (2015a) *The China Model: Political Meritocracy and The limits of Democracy*, or Tsang (2009) "Consultative Leninism: China's New Political Framework".

Comparison dimensions and values

New Confucianism and its guidelines however, do not give specific positions on certain dimensions as the environmental western theories did in Chapter 2. However, this does not prevent us from making a comparison between western environmental theories and New Confucianism. A discussion of the similarities and differences provides insight in the extent which New Confucianism serves as an alternative to western environmental theories.

The divergent understandings of western environmental theories were broken down into different dimensions and specific position on these dimensions where presented. Amongst others, this led to a specification on the metaphysical level to whether the world is perceived as holistic or compartmental, and on the ethical level to whether the nature of value is intrinsic or instrumental. Chapter 2 also looked at the way of attributing value to a subject and whether this was hierarchical or instrumental. Figure 5.1 summarizes the distilled dimensions and positions.

Table 1 – Dimensions and positions in Western Environmental Theories (recited from Chapter 2)

Level	Dimension	Positions
Metaphysics	Composition of nature	Holism – compartmentalism
Ethics	Object	anthropocentrism, intellectualism, pathocentrism (=sentiesm), zoocentrism, biocentrism, ecocentrism, evolutionary ethics
	Nature of value	Intrinsic - instrumental
	Attribution of value	Hierarchical – equal
	Theory of action	Consequentialist – deontological

The discussion on New Confucianism however went into a different direction. New Confucianism does not give one set path for humans to follow but provides general guidelines for their behavior. It resulted in the four guidelines as described in Chapter 4 and further explored in section 5.1 above.

The formulation of guidelines rather than of dimensions and specific positions does not mean that no positions can be attributed to the New Confucian environmental approach at all. It should be clear that on the metaphysical level New Confucianism takes a holistic stance for example. The ideas of an interconnected cosmos and the common goal of the Great Harmony indicate a position of interdependence and ecological wholes. The concept of organismic holism is a distinctive idea within

New Confucianism (Tucker & Berthrong, 1998). Furthermore, New Confucianism takes certain positions on the ethical level. The theory differs from the positions on the dimension of object as identified in Chapter 2, and takes an anthropocosmic perspective. To reiterate a point made in Chapter 4, New Confucianism perceives the whole cosmos as object of value but humans are bestowed with the agency of (re)constructing the balance in the cosmos.

However, breaking apart the New Confucian perspective into different dimensions and positions overlooks the intricate nature of this tradition of thought. The common nature of Heaven and humanity constitutes a tangled relation of humanity and the cosmos. The centrality of human agency in the construction of the Great Harmony, derived from human intention, further strengthens this complexity. The metaphysical ideas within New Confucianism shape moral theory on the individual level. However, the moral processes on the individual level also interact with the metaphysical level. Tu points to this complex process of Confucian thinking:

Implicit in this ontological structure [...] is a profound sense of oneness among human beings and a strong belief in the organismic unity of man and nature. It is true that human nature is imparted from heaven, but human beings are not merely creatures and heaven alone does not exhaust the process of creativity. In an ultimate sense, human beings, in order to manifest their humanity, must themselves fully participate in the creative process of the cosmos.

(Tu, 1978, p.118)

The interaction between the different levels of New Confucian theory contrasts sharply with the nature of western environmental theories which were discussed in Chapter 2. Western theories have a hierarchy in their theory that made it possible to develop specific dimensions and positions. The metaphysical understanding shapes the ethical dimensions, and increasingly specifies the content of the theory. New Confucian theory is constructed from an interaction between the different levels. Therefore, it is more difficult to construct dimensions and positions, and such an analysis oversimplifies the intricate nature of the theory. The most prominent difference is that of the intricate, holistic nature of New Confucianism compared to the analytical nature of western environmental theories, able to be broken apart into different dimensions and values. The cultural influence of this difference in nature has to be acknowledged. Chinese thought is more process-based than focused upon results, wherein time is a dynamical, cyclic concept, not linear such as in western thinking (Boden, 2006, p.173).

Within the western environmental debate, there are a range of perspectives, as discussed in Chapter 2, varying from environmentalism on the one side, to deep ecology on the other side. While a comparison on different dimensions and positions with New Confucianism is not the best suitable approach, some general remarks can be made nonetheless.

Environmentalism is positioned on one of the sides of the environmental western debate. In Chapter 2 we adopted Dobson's definition and described environmentalism as trying to resolve environmental problems "without fundamental changes in present values or patterns of production and consumption" (Dobson, 2007, p.2). New Confucianism is based on premises that entail exactly those fundamental changes in present values that environmentalism does not envisage. Because New Confucianism strives towards a cosmic balance, it is necessary to revise human behavior and current anthropocentric approach. Another distinction between environmentalism and New Confucianism is that of the coherence of the approach. As argued above, one of the significant features of New Confucianism is its holistic and intricate tradition of thought. Environmentalism more closely resembles a collection of ad hoc and managerial solutions.

On the opposite side of the western environmental debate is what we defined in Chapter 2 as deep ecology. At first sight, the similarities between deep ecology and New Confucianism are many. Similar to New Confucianism, deep ecology calls for fundamental changes in present values and patterns of production and consumption. It aims to fundamentally change humanity's relationship with the non-human natural world and is concerned with the protection of the complex natural system, protecting diversity and constructing symbiosis with human life (Dobson, 2007, p.32). To attain a harmonious situation between humanity and the Earth, deep ecology advocates a process of Self-realization, i.e. the development of an ecological understanding larger than one's individual self (Dobson, 2007, p.38). This seems similar to the idea of self-cultivation in New Confucianism. While self-cultivation is an ever-deepening process, it too aims at expanding one's understanding beyond himself.

Furthermore, New Confucianism has guidelines to provide an analytical framework for human action in reference to nature and deep ecology proposes the Apron Diagram (as discussed in Chapter 2). The guidelines, however, do differ in their content. For example, in order to construct a balance between humanity and nature, the basic principles of Naess and Sessions state that the human population should be curbed, especially the first world countries (Naess & Sessions, 1984). Ecology is by some authors argued to be an ideology (Dobson, 2007). Besides giving a framework for analytical description and an envisioning for a specific society, it also provides a program for political action (Dobson, 2007, pp.3-7). New Confucianism does acknowledge the need for harmony between humanity and Earth, but remains ambiguous on the specific political actions. This example points toward a general difference between New Confucianism and ecology, which is that ecology defines specific actions for people, where New Confucianism only defines the contours of what such action should include, such as the inclusion of Earths' interest, the aim for long term balance between humanity and Earth and rational motivations. New Confucianism does not instruct specific policies, such as a population reduction, but only provides a framework for decision-making on human actions to construct these general aims. It is, one might say, more comparable to virtue ethics than deontology or consequentialism.

This chapter explored the limits of New Confucianism in theory and practice. A one-by-one discussion of the four guidelines showed the limits to their theoretical application. Personal capacity, a variety in the extent of people's self-cultivation, suboptimal information and irreversible damage are elements that limit or complicate the application of New Confucianism in practice. Furthermore, the prospects for a New Confucian ecological approach are affected by the actual context of implementation. The previous discussion showed a good fit with Chinese culture, but identified some problems in the political context. New Confucianism's call for democracy, and the emphasis on a recalibration of humans' production pace might prove problematic on that account. The third part of this chapter turned to a comparison between New Confucianism and the western environmental theories which were discussed in Chapter 2. It found some superficial similarities with deep ecology, but identified a distinctive difference in the nature of the New Confucianism and western environmental theories in general. The next chapter will relate the three distinct conclusions. It will relate the three different parts of theory, context and comparison to arrive at some general conclusions on New Confucianism as an environmental theory.

6. Conclusion

There has been increasing attention for China's environmental policies. Discussions in the Anglophone literature generally have explained China's case through western environmental theories, or used ad-hoc arguments. However, these explanations are insensitive to cultural differences with Chinese culture. China possesses a rich tradition of thought herself, which could be used for a more culturally sensitive approach to Chinese environmental policies. Confucianism can be suggested as an alternative to western environmental theories as it is derived from a tradition of thought distinct from western theories, and is local to Chinese culture. In the last fifty years Confucianism has experienced a revival. It reactivates the old societal structures that remained dormant in the 20th century. The 21st century therefore reveals the potential of New Confucianism, and its application as an environmental theory.

This concluding chapter provides an answer to the research question as formulated in Chapter 1:

To what extent can New Confucianism be applied as an environmental theory, as an alternative to western environmental theories, and on what aspects does a New Confucian environmental approach fit into the Chinese current context?

In order to formulate an answer, this thesis had a three-pronged analysis. It analyzed New Confucian theory and its potential as an environmental theory, it explored the fit of New Confucianism in the cultural and political context of China, and it compared New Confucian ecological thought with western environmental theories. All three layers of this research were necessary to gain a full understanding of the potential of New Confucianism and its ecological vision. As the starting point of this thesis was to move away from a general, oversimplification of reality, an extensive discussion of the historical development of New Confucianism was necessary. Without the understanding of Confucian ancient roots, and an understanding of China's trauma of the 19th and 20th century, it would have been difficult to grasp how New Confucianism relates to current Chinese culture and political situation. The three layers of this research will be shortly discussed, before arriving at a general answer to the research question of this thesis.

In Theory

New Confucianism is based on the Confucian tradition of thought and builds on the concepts of the Great Harmony, anthropocosmism, and morality. Chapter 3 illustrated how classical Confucianism developed as a response to the Legalist emphasis on law and order. New Confucian theory focused on moral cultivation instead. It advanced into the thriving, rich tradition of neo-Confucian thought, which influenced social, spiritual and political aspects of the Chinese society throughout multiple dynasties. It seeped through the foundations of its culture. Neo-Confucianism structured the ideas of

the moral framework, where nature and the individual are connected through processes of self-cultivation and an interconnected cosmos. New Confucianism is the revival of these Confucian thoughts in the 20th and 21st century, where it is reinterpreted and augmented in light of current challenges, such as modernization and individualization. New Confucians added the ideas of a democratic reconstruction and rationality to neo-Confucian thought. Combining the old moral framework and these new concepts led to the formulation of four guidelines of a New Confucian environmental vision.

1. When assessing options of action, humans should include not only human interests, but also Earth's interests to promote the Great Harmony.
2. People should combine social interaction and inward contemplation to gain increasing understanding of one's own position in the cosmos.
3. People's actions should be targeted to construct a durable balance with the environment that sustains us.
4. People should weigh their options of action while taking into account the temporality of our knowledge and apply a reflective attitude towards one's prejudices.

The guidelines create a framework for human action that takes into account nature's interests. The concepts of Great Harmony, morality and interconnectedness construct an interdependent relationship between humanity and nature. New Confucianism therefore ideally serves as a holistic theory for nature.

In Context

The four guidelines derived from New Confucian theory do not automatically imply that it is possible to implement this environmental theory in practice. While New Confucianism has provided a general framework, it leaves room for a multitude of translations to specific action.

Therefore, it is necessary to make a distinction between a cultural understanding of Confucianism, and politicized Confucianism. The Chinese government supports Confucianism in its cultural application, as it strengthens the foundation of its own legitimization. As Confucianism calls upon a moral framework deeply embedded in Chinese society, it promotes goals of the Chinese governments such as national identity, social stability and cohesion. Within the cultural dimension, New Confucianism, therefore, is highly possible.

However, New Confucianism seems less viable in China's political context. New Confucianism responded to the criticism that Confucianism promotes stagnation by adding the element of rationality to the theory. Yet, by also adding the call for the construction of a democratic tradition, New Confucianism opened itself up to political resistance to implementation. The implementation of New Confucianism is less prone to happen when this weakens the CCP's national political power. As the

New Confucian guidelines call for a move away from economic growth, this may exactly be the effect of implementation. There exists a high potential for a New Confucian ecological vision in Chinese society, as long as it does not include the politicized understanding of nature.

In Comparison

New Confucianism is derived from a different tradition of thought than western environmental theories. It is promising as an environmental theory in the Chinese case, because New Confucianism originated from Chinese culture. Chapter 3 indicated the reluctance towards the foreign import of western liberal ideas. However, the cultural roots are not the only distinct difference between New Confucianism and western environmental theories. Chapter two analyzed the dimensions and values in western environmental theories. The result was five distinct dimensions, and specific positions taken in these dimensions. Chapter four resulted in the formulation of four guidelines instead of dimensions and positions. While western environmental theories are analytical and hierarchical in nature, New Confucian theory is less schematic, and more intricate. Chapter 5 indicated that New Confucian theory relies heavily on the interconnected holistic understanding of the cosmos, making an analytical reduction to dimensions less suitable than for western environmental theories. The difference would not have become clear when New Confucianism was analyzed from a western environmental perspective. It is possible to identify some of the western dimensions, and New Confucianism takes position in these dimensions. For example, the anthropocosmic understanding is a promising theoretical concept in New Confucian thought. However, these superficial similarities do no justice to the distinct difference in the theoretical nature of New Confucianism and western environmental theories.

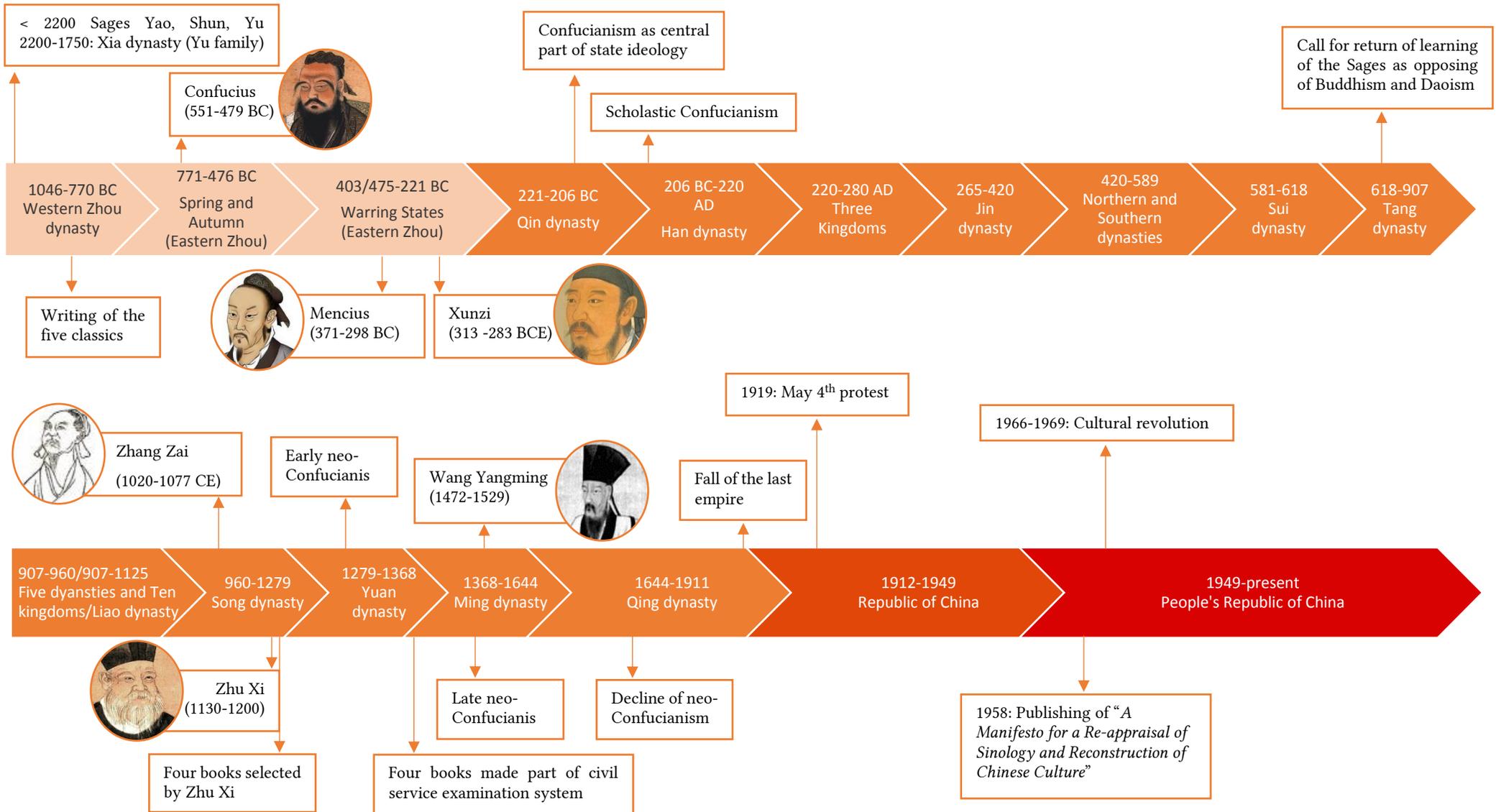
The general research question of this thesis was to what extent New Confucianism could be applied as an environmental theory, as an alternative theory to western environmental theories and on what aspects it would fit into the Chinese current context. The above discussion illustrated that the answer is not so straightforward. New Confucianism can be used as an environmental theory, and the cultural relatedness to Chinese culture gives promising conditions for New Confucianism, however, the political dimension may prove to be problematic in in Chinese current political and cultural context.

Within the politicized dimension of New Confucianism, there still is a need for some clarification. One suggestion is to research the potential for other grounds of legitimization of the national Chinese government, other than growth. This is the most important factor impeding Chinese implementation of New Confucianism, and alternatives might provide a solution. Alternatively, this argument for growth might indicate a weak spot in the New Confucian theory. It might serve the development of New Confucianism to research the focus on human living conditions in relation to the moral framework and grand scheme of interconnected cosmos. Especially since China still faces major developmental challenges, this could provide useful for New Confucian theory. Furthermore, the

discussion on the New Confucian call for a democratic construction highlighted the ambiguity in the interpretation of this democracy. Further research could illuminate the New Confucian understanding of democracy. If this understanding is more closely connected to a Chinese model of democracy, this could resolve another factor of reluctance against New Confucian implementation. The four ecological guidelines have not incorporated this call for democracy. Since it is one of the two modifications by New Confucianism, and the previous discussion indicated the importance for feasibility in the Chinese case, it might prove rewarding to take a further look at the democratic implementations of the guidelines.

Confucius says 'study the past, if you would divine the future'. Only by taking history and culture into account can we move on and develop new theories, and gain new environmental insights. This thesis has moved beyond the confines of western discussion on environmental problems by infusing it with New Confucianism, and tackling the problems this process raised. With this renewed attention to an ancient tradition, and the wisdom it holds we might one day be able to divine better solutions for the world of tomorrow.

Appendix 1 – Historical Timeline



* Based on Angle, 2009, pp.3-9.

Appendix 2 – Confucian lineage

Overview of Confucian scholars categorized by period³⁰

Classical figures

- Confucius (d.479 BCE). Associated with the *Analects*: founder of the tradition
- Mencius (4th c. BCE). Associated with the *Mencius*; develops Confucian teachings.
- Xunzi (3rd c. BCE). The third great Confucian, associated with the *Xunzi*.

Early Neo-Confucians (Song dynasty, 960-1279 CE; Yuan dynasty, 1279-1368CE)

- Zhang Zai (1020-1077) Develops sophisticated cosmological theory centering on *Ch'i*. Author of moral manifesto “The Western Inscription”.
- Zhu Xi (1130-1200). Great synthesizer of Neo-Confucianism; drew on all of the above.

Later Neo-Confucians (Ming dynasty, 1368-1644; Qing dynasty, 1644-1911)

- Wang Yangming (1472-1529) Most influential Neo-Confucian of the Ming dynasty. Famous for his idea of “the unity of knowledge and action” and “innate good knowing (*liang zhi*)”
- Dai Zhen (1723-77). Giant of Qing dynasty philosophy and scholarship; highly critical of Song and Ming Neo-Confucians

Twentieth-Century Figures (Republic of China, 1912-; People’s Republic of China, 1949-)

First generation Based on New Contemporary Confucianism

- Liang Shuming (1893-1988). Mainland New Confucian: influenced by both Buddhism and Confucianism
- Xiong Shili (1885-1968) Mainland New Contemporary Confucian
- Ma Yifu (1883-1967) Mainland New Contemporary Confucian scholar
- Zhang Junmai** (/Carsun Chang, 1889-1969) Oversees New Contemporary Confucian
- Feng Yu-lan (1895-1990) Mainland New Contemporary Confucian
- He Lin (1902-1992) Mainland New Contemporary Confucian
- Qian Mu (1895-1990) (Overseers historian; and DISPUTED)
- Fang Dongmei (Thomé H. Fang, 1899-1977) Mainland New Contemporary Confucian

Second generation

- Tang Junyi** (1909-1978) Oversees New Confucian
- Mou Zongsan** (1909-1995) Leading New Confucian philosopher;
- Xu Fuguan** (1903-1982) oversees historian, philosopher, and political commentator

Third generation

- Yu Ying Shih (1940-)
- Liu Shuxian (1934-2016)
- Cheng Chung-ying (1935-)
- Tu Weiming (1940-)

Bold and underlined = publishers of the Manifesto

³⁰ This overview relies for a considerable amount on the overview of classical and neo-Confucian scholars provided by Stephen Angle (2009) *Sagehood: The Contemporary Significance of Neo-Confucian philosophy* and Zhang Feng’s overview of Contemporary scholars in *Contemporary Chinese Political Thought, Debates and Perspectives* (2012).

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