

THE DEVELOPMENT OF *REN* (仁) IN EARLY CHINESE
PHILOSOPHY

by

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Abstract

This thesis describes the development of *ren* 仁 from its earliest recorded occurrences around 1000 BCE to its use in the Song dynasty around 1200 CE, asking the questions: 1) How did the meanings of *ren* change over time; and 2) How does quantitative textual analysis affect our understanding of *ren*? I argue that the earliest recorded meaning of *ren* was most likely “manliness” in the Western Zhou dynasty, that it later came to mean “Goodness,” followed by “benevolence” during the Warring States period, and that by the end of the Song dynasty, it meant transcendental “humanity.” Quantitative textual analysis affects our understanding of *ren* by supporting and qualifying existing theories, and also by illuminating new areas of research.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Robin Curtis.

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Introduction

This thesis seeks to answer two questions. First, how did the meanings of *ren* 仁 change from its earliest recorded uses in the Western Zhou dynasty (1046 – 771 BCE), to its use by Zhu Xi in the Song dynasty (960 – 1279 CE)? Second, in what ways does quantitative textual analysis affect our qualitative understanding of *ren* during this time period? To answer these questions, I analyze arguments made by previous scholars, examine key passages in which *ren* occurs in selected texts, and conduct quantitative analyses on its distribution pattern, as well as the distribution patterns of other, related characters. My goal in this project is to add to our understanding of the development of an important aspect of early Confucian thought, and demonstrate a way in which a new tool can be implemented in humanitarian research. Regarding my time frame, I started as early as possible, and ended at a time after which the mean of *ren* remained relatively stable for centuries to come.

As I will show, in the earliest sources available, *ren* seems to have meant something close to “manliness,” before Confucius redefined it as a broad, overarching virtue meaning something like “Goodness.” In the centuries that followed, disciples of Confucius honed the meaning of *ren* to “benevolence,” while philosophers of other schools adopted it for their own, related usages. As Daoism and Buddhism gained strength, the term slowly took on increased cosmological and metaphysical significance. Finally, Zhu Xi cemented it as a person’s essential “humanity,” an internal resource for perfecting oneself, as well as a tool for understanding the unity of all things.

I also show that quantitative analysis can add to our qualitative understanding in several ways. First, it can support qualitative theories with numeric data. For example, quantitative analysis can strengthen the argument that love (*ai* 愛) is part of the meaning of *ren* in the works of Zhu Xi by showing that, indeed, in nearly one third of the 118 occurrences of *ai* in Zhu Xi’s

commentaries on the *Four Books*, *ai* occurs within close proximity to *ren*.¹ Second, quantitative analysis can “qualify” existing arguments. By this I mean that it can provide numerical counter-evidence to qualitative theories – evidence that does not necessarily disprove such theories, but does help us understand them in another context. For example, quantitative analysis can qualify the argument that *ren* and *li* 禮 are integrally and inseparably related in the *Analects* by showing that, of the 110 occurrences of *ren* within the *Analects*, only in 5% does it occur within close proximity to *li*. This is numeric proof that, although the two characters may be related, *ren* is often used independently of *li*. Third, quantitative analyses can bring new possible avenues for qualitative research to our attention. For example, a broad-level quantitative analysis of the *Mozi* reveals that in no cases do *ren* and *xian* 賢 co-occur in close proximity to one another. This is somewhat surprising, as one might expect the Mohists, who valued *ren* as the quality of “magnanimity,” would sometimes refer to “worthy” (*xian* 賢) people as *ren*. This finding could be a launching point for a more detailed qualitative investigation of how the Mohists describe *ren* and *xian* throughout the text, and why exactly the terms do not appear to overlap.

Within my qualitative analyses, I view early Confucian thought in terms of virtue ethics. Van Norden (2007) defines virtues as “relatively stable dispositions, the possession of which contributes to leading a flourishing life.”² They are self-activating internal qualities, which naturally lead a person to perform certain actions in response to certain situations. I argue that throughout much of early Chinese philosophy, *ren* functions as a virtue. However, the way one acquires it, and the effects it is considered to have upon one’s thoughts and behaviors vary by philosopher. It should be noted that not all scholars agree with viewing the Confucian moral system in terms of “virtue ethics.” Ames and Rosemont (2011) argue that the Confucian moral

¹ I define “close proximity” as occurring within 10 characters, and justify this definition in more detail shortly.

² Van Norden 2007, p. 39.

system hinges on societal roles and relationships (“role ethics”), rather than abstract virtues, though their position has drawn criticism. For more comprehensive critiques of ethical frameworks within early Confucianism, see Ivanhoe (2008).

Overall, this project represents an effort in understanding the roots of prosocial behavior in different cultures. By examining how moral systems with religious underpinnings affect human thought and behavior, it ties into the larger work of both social scientists and humanities scholars at the University of British Columbia’s Centre for Human Evolution, Cognition, and Culture (HECC). Through the Centre, I have also been involved in a psychological study looking at the effects of modern Christianity and Buddhism on Chinese believers’ generosity levels. In some ways, this thesis could be viewed as a counterpart to that project, analyzing Chinese morality in a different time period using different methodologies. More information about the Centre’s textual and empirical studies can be found at www.hecc.ubc.ca.

Overview of Chapters

The philosophical scope of my research varies by chapter. In my first chapter, I seek to determine the meaning of *ren* within early Chinese language as a whole, focusing on the term’s earliest recorded uses in texts of the Western Zhou dynasty (1046 – 771 BCE). Pinning down the term’s “original” written meaning is not easy, due to its small number of occurrences in the texts we have available, and graphical differences in early Chinese writing systems. I consider the ways in which the graphical, phonetic, and semantic components of *ren* may have come to adhere into a single word unit within these texts.

My second chapter focuses on the establishment of *ren* as a virtue in early Confucian philosophy during the Eastern Zhou dynasty (770 – 221 BCE). I analyze the uses and meanings of *ren* in the primary works attributed to the three most prominent Confucian thinkers of the time

period: Confucius, and his later followers Mencius and Xunzi. During this time period, Confucius established a new, complex meaning for the term, which Mencius and Xunzi inherited, refined, and modified.

My third chapter seeks to describe the overall evolution of the Confucian meaning of *ren* from the beginning of the Han dynasty to the end of the Song dynasty (206 BCE – 1279 CE). To do this, I first focus on the meaning of *ren* in three case studies of works by the scholars Dong Zhongshu (179 – 104 BCE), Wang Fu (82 – 167 CE), and Han Yu (768 – 824 CE). I selected these works because each illuminates important aspects in *ren*'s development, and each derives from a different influential thinker and time period. Next, I analyze *ren* as described by the neo-Confucian scholar Zhu Xi (1130 – 1200), arguably China's most influential Confucian thinker after Confucius himself. All four of these writers helped to update Confucian philosophy, and keep it competitive with other ideas of the times.

My fourth chapter consists of a series of case studies on non-Confucian adaptations of *ren*, both in the Warring States period (475 – 221 BCE) and the centuries that followed. My goal is to show how ideas in other philosophies may have affected the developments of *ren* outlined in Chapters 2 and 3. The Warring States texts I select to analyze consist of the *Daodejing*, and the primary works of Zhuangzi, the Mohists, and Hanfeizi, as these are the main texts for some of the most influential non-Confucian schools of thought of that time period. For the time period that follows, the texts I select are the *Taiping jing*, the *Huashu*, and Soothill and Hodous' *Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*. I chose these texts to showcase how the same methods I apply earlier in the thesis can be applied to other types of texts in different time periods, with varying degrees of success.

Quantitative Methodology

Given its great importance within Confucian philosophy, *ren* has understandably been the subject of much previous academic research. However, my own research is unique in that I take advantage of a methodology that has only recently become available: statistical analysis of digitized Chinese texts. Thanks to the Chinese Text Project (or “Ctext”), the texts I am dealing with are publicly available in electronic format. Ctext was created by Donald Sturgeon, who is currently a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University. With some technical skill, one can download the content of Ctext, and make use of computer software to process and analyze tens or even hundreds of thousands of characters at once. These analyses can highlight word patterns and relationships not easily discernable to the human eye. A major goal of this thesis is to complement qualitative scholarly observations with quantitative data, and I include a “quantitative exploration” table for every major text I address. To clarify my research process, and help make this tool available to future scholars, I have outlined my full quantitative methodology in Appendix 1.

Here, I introduce the reader to the contents of my statistical tables and explain how to interpret them. Each table begins with basic information regarding the text name, author, era, and word count, followed by a series of columns with character-specific information. The first column, “Character,” lists the characters that I consider most relevant for understanding *ren* within the larger context of the text. The characters I choose to include differ somewhat by text – for example, I include *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽 for Daoist texts, but not for texts from other traditions in which these terms are absent or very rare. However, there are several terms, such as *tian* 天, *de* 德, and *dao* 道, that I track through every text.

The second column, “Translation,” provides what I feel is the best English translation for each character, given the text and time period in question. These translations are based on the main translations given by scholars in the field, as well as my own interpretations. In some cases, characters may have additional secondary meanings and translations other than those I provide, which should be kept in mind.

The third column, “Hits,” shows the raw number of occurrences of the characters in question within the text. All characters in a table are sorted by hits in descending order. This gives a very rough estimate of the importance each author attributes to different concepts within the text, based on the frequency with which the concepts are mentioned. Of course, this connection is not perfect, and in some case, a rarely-mentioned term may be quite important, or an oft-mentioned term may be less important. In addition, authors may employ negative or alternate versions of terms, or bring up terms from other philosophies in order to criticize them, all of which contribute to character “hits.” Interpreting numbers in this column in a meaningful way often requires follow-up analyses.

The fourth column, labeled “仁 Prox.,” stands for “proximity to *ren*,” and contains a percentage and a number in parentheses.³ The percentage indicates the percent of occurrences of the character in question which appear within 10 characters of *ren*. In other words, if “仁 Prox.” is 25% for a given character, then one quarter of its occurrences are 10 characters in front *or* behind of the character *ren*. The number in parentheses indicates the actual number of occurrences of the character in question that fall within this range. The purpose of this column is to quantitatively identify other terms within the text which may be linguistically or semantically

³ This column is present in all tables except for those in Chapter 1, and the final table of Chapter 4. There are so few occurrences of *ren* in the texts examined in Chapter 1 that this measure is not meaningful. Meanwhile, the content in the final text of Chapter 4 is structured in such a way that this measure is not meaningful.

tioned to *ren*. The average sentence length in the corpus I analyzed is approximately 12 characters, where “sentence” is defined as a one- or two-part phrase containing a single idea or statement. For the “仁 Prox.” measure, I was not able to ensure that *ren* occurred in the *same* sentence as the target character (though of course occurrences in prior and subsequent sentences may also be related). I chose the 10-character search window as broad enough to capture most direct connections between *ren* and the target character, but narrow enough to avoid many extraneous hits.⁴ As with the “Hits” column, numbers in the “仁 Prox.” column may require further analysis or explanation to be meaningful.

The fifth column is “Rank.” Numbers in this column are inversely related to a characters’ “Hits,” and indicate the relative frequency of characters within the text (the most common character is ranked 1, the second-most common is ranked 2, etc.). Like “Hits,” “Rank” can be used to very roughly estimate the relative importance of a character within a text. However, in any given text, grammatical terms without substantive meaning – such as *ye* 也, *zhi* 之, *er* 而, *yu* 于, and *yi* 矣 – typically occupy most of the top 30 to 40 ranks. Because I needed to easily read and understand the texts under analysis within my computer program, and because I wished to deal with the original texts themselves (or as close to the originals as possible), I did *not* remove grammatical terms from my texts prior to analysis. Thus, the reader should keep in mind that most of the top 30 to 40 ranked characters in every text are grammatical terms. Moreover, textual vocabularies vary widely based on era, author, and writing style. Thus, a character’s exact rank number is less meaningful than its rank *relative* to other important characters in the text. The

⁴ This character window was not empirically determined, but based on my own experience and intuition. Further studies might improve on my methodology by performing more in-depth analyses on how different character windows affect search results.

final column is “Additional Comments,” and contains important notes regarding certain characters, and any follow-up analyses I may have performed.

I do not perform more advanced statistical tests beyond collecting and interpreting descriptive statistics. I did this in order to keep my quantitative analyses as simple as possible, and understandable to all audiences. However, this decision does limit me in that I am unable to make claims about the statistical significance of my findings. It should be noted that other techniques exist for analyzing and understanding ancient Chinese texts in greater depth, which I discuss in my conclusion. My primary quantitative goal is to augment qualitative arguments by illuminating the numeric context of *ren* in ancient Chinese texts. In addition, I also provide basic statistics for many other major terms from the texts in question, something which has not been done before. The quantitative tables in this thesis may thus be a useful resource for those interested in other terms as well.

Notes and Conventions

Most of my secondary sources are limited to English language publications. I have striven to check that my discussions do not neglect major ideas found in scholarship in other languages, though more recent publications may have escaped my notice. Wade-Giles romanizations in quotations from secondary literature have silently been emended to pinyin, and I cite all secondary sources using footnotes. Because all of my primary source quotations derive from high-quality online versions of ancient Chinese texts (primarily Ctext.org), I have consolidated their source details in Appendix 2.

With regard to my conventions for writing characters and their romanizations, I refer to the character 仁 as *ren* throughout this thesis. For all other important characters, I include both the pinyin romanization and the Chinese character (e.g. *hao* 好) the first time I list it within a

given paragraph. For subsequent occurrences within that paragraph, I use only the pinyin form. For characters within quantitative tables, I list only the character form to maximize clarity and conserve space. At times, this requires the reader to possess knowledge of Chinese to make full sense of the tables. To avoid confusion between *ren* 仁 and *ren* 人, I use *ren*[^] when referring to the latter in pinyin.

Finally, with regard to my introduction to each text, it should be noted that this thesis covers a very large breadth of time and material. As I examine the uses of *ren* across different texts, I provide what I consider to be the most relevant background and contextual information. However, due to space limitations, I must limit my summaries to aspects most relevant to *ren*. My introductory summaries should not be viewed as comprehensive.

1. The Origins of *Ren*

My goal in this chapter is to establish the pre-Confucian meaning of *ren*. I begin by citing the earliest occurrences of *ren* in the *Book of Odes* and the *Book of Documents*. I then discuss the ways in which modern scholars have interpreted its meaning within these passages and overall. Finally, I summarize my statistical analyses on the *Book of Odes* and *Book of Documents*, generating additional context for interpretation. I conclude that, before the Warring States, *ren* most closely meant “manliness,” though uncertainty surrounding passage and character authenticities make this claim fairly rough and tentative. Assuming they are authentic, the passages in the *Book of Odes* highlight the physical aspects of *ren*, whereas those in the *Book of Documents* highlight its moral aspects.

First Appearances

The character *ren* has not been found in the oracle bones or bronze inscriptions of the Shang dynasty.⁵ It first appears twice in the *Book of Odes*, a collection of hymns and poems from the early Zhou, and once or twice in the ancient portions of the *Book of Documents*, a collection of historical addresses by early Zhou kings and ministers.⁶ Both texts date from between 1000 – 600 BCE.⁷ *Ren* also appears three additional times in the received version of the *Book of Documents*, and 13 times in the appendices of the received *Book of Changes*.⁸ However, these passages were written as forgeries during the Han dynasty,⁹ and like much of the rest of the

⁵ Chan 1955, p. 295; Lin 1974, p. 172. To support this claim, Chan (1955) also cites an in-depth analysis performed by Tung Tso-Pin 董作賓 in 1953: “The Word ‘*Jên*’ in Archaic Script (in Chinese),” published in *Academic Review* 2(1). I was unable to locate this original article, but my own investigation into the Chinese Ancient Texts (CHANT) online database confirmed that *ren* does not appear in the oracle bones, nor in any bronze inscriptions prior to the Warring States.

⁶ Chan 1955, p. 296; Chan 1975, p. 107. Lin 1975, p. 173. I will discuss chapter dating in the *Book of Documents* in more detail shortly. For a list of all of the chapters believed to date from the Western Zhou dynasty, see Appendix 1.

⁷ Loewe 1993c, p. 415; Shaughnessy 1993, p. 376.

⁸ Ctext.org 2015.

⁹ Chan 1955, p. 296; Shaughnessy 1993, pp. 378 – 389.

Thirteen Classics, they are not representative of Chinese thought before the Warring States period.¹⁰

Given that we have so few occurrences of *ren* before the Warring States, it is worth investigating each of them in detail. Below are the two poems from the *Book of Odes* containing *ren*, along with their translations by James Legge (1871) and Arthur Waley (1937). When interpreting the word choices of Legge, it should be noted that he utilized later commentaries in making his translations, and was not as interested in portraying the *original* meaning of the passages, as he was in portraying the orthodox Chinese literary interpretation. Also, while the content of the *Book of Odes* is generally considered to be authentic, it should be noted that the character forms observed in text may date from somewhat later periods. In a cross-examination between archaeological fragments of the *Book of Odes* from the late Warring States and early Han and the received version of the text, Kern (2005) found character form variation of 30 – 40%, suggesting that earlier forms of the text circulated orally rather than in writing.¹¹ The dates of origin of the two poems are unclear, but they share a striking resemblance in style, suggesting they were composed around the same time, and possibly by the same person.¹² In both poems, I have listed the character *ren* and its translation in bold.

Ode #77 “叔于田 *Shu Yu Tian*”

叔于田、巷無居人。
豈無居人、不如叔也、洵美且仁。

叔于狩、巷無飲酒。
豈無飲酒、不如叔也、洵美且好。

¹⁰ Watson 1962, p. 148.

¹¹ Kern 2005, pp. xix – x.

¹² Based on historical accounts of nobility and hunting, Lin (1974) dated these two passages to approximately 743 – 722 BCE (p. 200). However, this dating method is extremely speculative.

叔適野、巷無服馬。
豈無服馬、不如叔也、洵美且武。

Legge's 1871 translation:

“Shu has gone hunting; and in the streets there are no inhabitants.
Are there indeed no inhabitants? [But] they are not like Shu, who is truly admirable and **kind**.

Shu has gone to the grand chase; and in the streets there are none feasting.
Are there indeed none feasting? [But] they are not like Shu, who is truly admirable and good.

Shu has gone into the country; and in the streets there are none driving about.
Are there indeed none driving about? [But] they are not like Shu, who is truly admirable and martial.”¹³

Waley's 1937 translation:

“Shu is away in the hunting-fields, there is no one living in our lane.
Of course there are people living in our lane; but they are not like Shu, so beautiful, so **good**.

Shu has gone after game. No one drinks wine in our lane.
Of course people do drink wine in our lane; but they are not like Shu, so beautiful, so loved.

Shu has gone to the wilds. No one drives horses in our lane.
Of course people do drive horses in our lane; but they are not like Shu, so beautiful, so brave.”¹⁴

Ode #103 “盧令 *Lu Ling*”

盧令令、其人美且仁。

盧重環、其人美且鬢。

盧重鈎、其人美且偲。

Legge's 1871 translation:

“Ling-ling go the hounds; - their master is admirable and **kind**.

There go the hounds with their double rings; - their master is admirable and good.

There go the hounds with their triple rings; - their master is admirable and able.”¹⁵

Waley's 1937:

“Here come the hounds, ting-a-ling, and their master so handsome and **good**;

The hounds, with double ring, their master so handsome and brave.

¹³ Legge 1871, as quoted in the translation section of Ctext.org.

¹⁴ Waley 1937, p. 39.

¹⁵ Legge 1871, as quoted in the translation section of Ctext.org.

The hounds, with double hoop, their master so handsome and strong.”¹⁶

I will discuss the ways in which these poems have been interpreted in the next section. For now, it is sufficient to note that in both poems, *ren* describes a hunter, and in both cases, it is coupled with the term *mei* 美, translated by Legge as “admirable,” and by Waley as “beautiful” or “handsome.” It also appears in parallel construction to four other terms – *hao* 好, *wu* 武, *quan* 鬪, and *cai* 德 – respectively translated by Legge as “good,” “martial,” “good,” and “able,” and by Waley as “loved,” “brave,” “brave,” and “strong.” It is also worth noting that, among the other songs and poems in the *Book of Odes*, many praise attractive young men or women as ideal lovers, something which these poems containing *ren* may be doing as well.

Next, I will describe two passages from the *Book of Documents* containing *ren*, along with their English translations. The origins of these passages are more controversial than the poems in the *Book of Odes*, and perhaps for this reason, these passages are less often cited by scholars attempting to identify *ren*'s early meaning. Nevertheless, they add another dimension to the possible interpretations of *ren*, and are thus important to address. Both passages appear within the *Book of Zhou* sub-section of the *Book of Documents*, a section which is generally agreed to be a mix of authentic early Zhou chapters and later Han forgeries.¹⁷ The second passage also appears in the excavated Tsinghua manuscripts, which I will discuss shortly. Beyond this, the Tsinghua manuscripts do not include other content related to *ren*. I have provided a full list delineating the authentic, unauthentic, and ambiguous chapters of the *Book of Documents* in Appendix 3. The first passage, given below, is under some suspicion of being a forgery.

¹⁶ Waley 1937, p. 285.

¹⁷ Shaughnessy 1993, p. 377.

From *Taishi zhong* 泰誓中 (“Great Declaration II”):

受有億兆夷人，離心離德。予有亂臣十人，同心同德。雖有周親，不如仁人。天視自我民視，天聽自我民聽。

Legge’s 1865 translation:

“Shou has hundreds of thousands and millions of ordinary men, divided in heart and, divided in practice; I have of ministers, able to govern, ten men, one in heart and one in practice. Though he has his nearest relatives with him, they are not like my **virtuous** men. Heaven sees as my people see; Heaven hears as my people hear.”¹⁸

Karlgren (1950) did not translate the above passage, believing it to have been composed in the Han. On the other hand, this was the only passage in the *Book of Documents* that Chan (1955) believed to be authentic. More recently, Shaughnessy (1993) has argued that this chapter was cobbled together from quotes in other works, and that although it is has traditionally held the same status as the ancient chapters, it “does not share the same provenance as the other chapters and is generally regarded as a forgery of the Han period.”¹⁹ Thus, we should be cautious of regarding it as representative of *ren*’s pre-Confucian meaning. A second occurrence appears within the *Book of Zhou*, quoted below.

From the received version of *Jin teng* 金縢 (“Metal-Bound Coffin”):

若爾三王是有丕子之責于天，以旦代某之身。予仁若考能，多材多藝，能事鬼神。²⁰

Legge’s 1865 translation:

“If you three kings have in Heaven the charge of (watching over) him, (Heaven's) great son, let me Dan be a substitute for his person. I was **lovingly** obedient to my father; I am possessed of many abilities and arts, which fit me to serve spiritual beings.”²¹

Karlgren’s 1950 translation:

“If you three kings really (have the debt of a great son towards Heaven =) owe a great son to Heaven (i.e. if he must die), then substitute me, Tan, for So-and-so’s person. I am **good** and compliant, clever and capable, I have much talent and much skill, I can serve the spirits.”

¹⁸ Legge 1865, as quoted in the translation section of Ctext.org.

¹⁹ Shaughnessy 1993, pp. 378 – 379.

²⁰ Text and punctuation from p. 18 of 尚書正義七 in digital edition of 武英殿十三經注疏 on ctext.org.

²¹ Legge 1865, as quoted in the translation section of Ctext.org.

Although both Legge and Karlgren regard this occurrence as authentic, archaeological evidence from the Tsinghua manuscripts, excavated in 2008, calls its authenticity into question. These bamboo slips, which date to the Warring States period, contain a similar version to this passage, in which the character *ning* 佞, translated as “clever,”²² appears in place of *ren*. The terms *ning* 佞 and *ren* 仁 were cognate terms of similar pronunciation and meaning in archaic Chinese.²³ I will address the way in which Confucius later contrasted them in the next chapter, but for the time being, it is worth noting that the character *ning* would seemingly make good sense in this location, which calls the authenticity of the received version of the passage into question. *If* they are authentic, the occurrences of *ren* in both of these passages pertain explicitly to internal qualities rather than external. Also, both passages deal with relations between superiors and inferiors – rulers, ministers, and commoners in the first passage, and Heaven and men in the second. Finally, in both cases, *ren* is used as a way of delineating a more capable person or people from the less capable.

Scholarly Interpretations

Based on the passages just discussed, and on the general context in which these passages occur, scholars in the last 70 years have put forth several possible interpretations for the early meanings of *ren*. First, many scholars agree that the term *ren* grew out of, or was closely associated with, the cognate term of *ren* 人, meaning “man” or “human.”²⁴ Based on earlier textual evidence, we know that the term *ren* 人 predates *ren*, and it seems likely that the latter developed as a stative verb to convey certain qualities of the former.²⁵ Scholarly opinions differ,

²² Meyer 2014, pp. 947 – 951.

²³ Slingerland 2003a, p. 2, with reference to Nivison 1999, p. 751.

²⁴ Chan 1955, p. 296; Chan 1975, p. 120; Lin 1975, p. 178; Graham 1989, p. 17; Slingerland 2001, p. 101.

²⁵ Graham 1989, p. 19.

however, as to what these qualities are. Four major interpretations, sometimes overlapping, are *ren* as kindness or love toward others, *ren* as manliness or virility, *ren* as clan-based nobleness, and *ren* as co-humanity. I will briefly discuss all of these, as well as some findings regarding the etymological roots of *ren*.

The primary supporter of *ren* as kindness is Chan (1955). He argues that in all of its occurrences before the Warring States, *ren* “means kindness shown by rulers to their subjects... Chinese scholars agree that [*ren*] in the ancient Classics connotes a particular type of virtue, namely, kindness of a ruler to his people.”²⁶ This interpretation draws criticism from Lin (1974), however, who finds such a reading anachronistic and far-fetched. Lin asks how the word “kind” could fit into the same category as words like “brave,” “daring,” and “handsome.”²⁷ By 1975, Chan had altered his stance, writing that “in pre-Confucian Classics... [*ren*] means benevolence, a particular virtue, along with other particular virtues like wisdom, liberality, etc.”²⁸ In this passage, Chan’s argument is that Confucius later innovated the broader meaning of *ren*, whereas its earlier meaning was more narrow. However, his argument retains the same flaws originally noted by Lin. At least in the *Book of Odes*, we do not find any direct link between *ren* and benevolence. Rather, his interpretation seems heavily influenced by later philosophers like Confucius and Mencius. On the other hand, if we take one or both passages containing *ren* from the *Book of Documents* as authentic, such a view becomes somewhat more plausible. In these passages, *ren* functions as a positive descriptor for those in a position to serve others, and thus could be construed as conveying a certain degree of kindness or benevolence.

Watson (1938) makes a somewhat similar claim to Chan, though he does so by interpreting the evidence in a different way. First, he views *ren*^人 as “members of the tribe,” and

²⁶ Chan 1955, p. 296.

²⁷ Lin 1974, p. 177.

²⁸ Chan 1975, p. 107.

argues that these members necessarily “show a forbearance towards one another that they do not show to aliens.” Then, “just as the Latin *gens*, ‘clan,’ gave rise to our own word ‘gentle,’” Watson argues so too that *ren* “in Chinese came to mean ‘kind,’ ‘gentle,’ ‘humane.’”²⁹ Watson thus reads the virile hunter described in the *Odes* in a softer light as “a perfectly satisfactory lover,” drawing on the context of other related love poems for support. Interestingly, another linguistic parallel can be seen in the word “kind,” which stems from the Old English *cynd* and the Proto-Germanic root *kunjam*, both related to the word “kin.”³⁰ Just as the same “kind” of people (i.e. people who share kin with one another) are “kind” to one another (i.e. act “with the feeling of relatives for each other”), one could argue that people of the same tribe (*ren* ^) are kind (*ren*) to one another. This conception incorporates aspects of both Chan and Watson’s views of *ren*.

An alternate interpretation is of *ren* as manliness, not just in the sense of physical virility, but also as “qualities a man should have.” Lin (1974) makes a case for this, arguing that “in a derivative sense [of the term *ren* ^, *ren*] could presumably be used to describe a man having qualities which made him deserve the name of a man,” including handsomeness and attractiveness.³¹ Schwartz (1985) implements the same argument, but takes it one step further. Like Watson, he makes comparison to the semantic development of Latin root words, arguing that just as *vir* originally meant “virility” in the physical sense, so too did *ren*, but both terms eventually evolved to entail “virtue.”³² This argument is both eloquent and plausible, as we do indeed find both types of usage in the *Book of Odes* and *Book of Documents*. Tu (1981) expresses a related view: that one aspect of *ren*’s pre-Confucian meaning was being “fully

²⁹ Watson 1938, p. 27.

³⁰ Harper 2015. <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=kind>. This online etymological dictionary combines 22 principal hard copy sources. Its entry on “kind” corroborates with that found in the Oxford English Dictionary.

³¹ Lin 1974, p. 179.

³² Shwartz 1985, p. 75.

human or adult in the ethical sense,” and that *ren* was originally inseparable from traits of bravery and intelligence.³³

A third interpretation of *ren*, which sometimes overlaps with the others, is that of *ren* as nobleness. Shun (1993) considers it possible that *ren* may have “originally referred to the quality that makes someone a distinctive member of an aristocratic clan,” though he does not reject the alternate hypothesis of *ren* as kindness.³⁴ Watson (1938), meanwhile, argues that *ren* is just the word *ren* 仁 with “a slight modification,” and that *ren* 仁 originally meant “freemen, men of the tribe,” as opposed to *min* 民, who were “subjects” or “the common people.”³⁵ Graham (1989) makes a very similar argument, writing that *ren* 仁, as the root of *ren*, was a noun “which the aristocratic clans of the [early Zhou] used to distinguish themselves from the common people.” He goes on to say that *ren* 仁 was a term distinguishing the civilized Chinese from barbarians, who although technically “human,” should be classed with animals until they had developed virtue. By extension, Graham believes “the stative verb *ren*, as it was inherited by Confucius, covers like English ‘noble’ the whole range of superior qualities distinctive of the man of breeding.”³⁶ While we do not find the noble vs. uncivilized divide in any of the early passages containing *ren*, in all cases it does seem to describe a superior sort of man with diverse characteristics and abilities, lending credibility to this interpretation as well.

A fourth interpretation is of *ren* as a signifier of co-humanity or human relations. These interpretations stem mainly from the etymology of the character itself. Though Chan (1975)

³³ Tu 1981, p. 48. Tu bases his discussion in this section around a Chinese article by Fang Ying-hsien (1974), cited as: “Yüan-jen lun-tzu Shih Shu chih K’ung Tzu shih-t’ai kuan-nien chih yen-pien.” *Ta-lu tsa-chih* 52 (3): 22-34. Unfortunately, I was unable to locate this piece. On page 48, Tu (1981) paraphrases Fang’s main argument: that *ren* originally entailed both *ai ren* 愛人, or “love and care for others,” and *cheng ren* 成人, or being “fully human or adult in the ethical sense,” and that Confucius later merged these concepts together. As Tu does not explain how Fang came to these conclusions, I mention them only in this footnote.

³⁴ Shun 1993, p. 457.

³⁵ Watson 1938, p. 27.

³⁶ Graham 1989, p. 19.

argues that *ren* originally meant benevolence, he also writes, given “that the word *ren* consists of two parts, one meaning an individual man and the other meaning two (human relations),” translating it as “co-humanity” expresses its “essential meaning.”³⁷ Similarly, Tu (1981) observes that the left half of *ren* is a human figure, whereas the two strokes on the right “suggest human relations.”³⁸ Lin (1974) disagrees, arguing that the original etymological meaning of *ren* is unclear. He feels it may have been phonetic, or it may simply have meant “man.”

These arguments, however, are qualified by several newer pieces of archaeological evidence. In the early 1970’s, a cache of silk texts was discovered and excavated at a tomb in Mawangdui in Changsha, China. Although the tomb was sealed in the Han dynasty, the texts within may have dated from the Warring States, or at least have been copied from texts of that era. The cache did not contain versions of the *Book of Odes* or *Book of Documents*, but it did contain a version of the *Daodejing*, a text containing *ren* that I will address in more detail in Chapter 3. My purpose for referencing it here is that this text contains a different form of the character *ren* 仁, written as a “body” radical 身 above a “heart” radical 心, or 息.³⁹ Richter (2005) expresses uncertainty about this character, writing that “it is unclear whether 息 is a character entirely different from 仁, or whether the two have a component in common.”⁴⁰ More recent publications have shed additional light on this character’s nature. As it turns out, 息 also appears in a second version of the *Daodejing*, found in the Guodian tombs of Hubei, which were sealed between the mid-fourth and very early third-century BCE.⁴¹ Caboara (2014) explains that this character form is part of the Chu script, “a regional variant of the Chinese Script that

³⁷ Chan 1975, p. 120.

³⁸ Tu 1981, p. 47.

³⁹ Richter 2005, p. 174.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Slingerland 2008, p. 239.

remained un-unified prior to the advent of imperial China in 221 B.C.,” and which makes common use of the “loangraph,” “a homophonous or nearly homophonous graph borrowed to write another word.”⁴² In a more in-depth analysis, Galambos (2006) shows how the Chu graph for *ren*, like the modern graph, began as 人, but unlike the modern graph, it then passed through the middle stages of 千 and 身 before becoming 𠂇.⁴³ Both Galambos and Caboara agree that 𠂇 likely functioned as a semi-homophonous loangraph, but that the semantic component of 人 in this form of *ren* was lost.⁴⁴ Several other intermediate or intermediate forms of the character (including 𠂇, 𠂇, and 𠂇) have also recently been identified.⁴⁵ Thus, we can conclude that several different forms of the character *ren*, were in existence during the Warring States period. This shows that etymological analyses focusing exclusively on the combination of 人 and 二 are inadequate. It should also serve as a warning against “character fetishization,” or giving “exaggerated status to Chinese characters in the interpretation of Chinese language, thought, and culture.”⁴⁶

Quantitative Analysis

As there are only a handful of passages from before the Warring States containing *ren*, and I have already listed all of them in full, I cannot run any quantitative analyses on the character *ren* itself, as I will in the following chapters. However, other words associated with *ren* do appear more often in the *Book of Odes* and *Book of Documents*, and some of these words lend themselves to analysis. Table 1 below includes statistics for the *Book of Odes*.

⁴² Caboara 2014, p. 256.

⁴³ Galambos 2006, pp. 73 – 75.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 75; Caboara, p. 257.

⁴⁵ Galambos 2006, pp. 73 – 75; Xiao xue tang 2015, <http://xiaoxue.iis.sinica.edu.tw/yanbian?kaiOrder=78>.

⁴⁶ Edward McDonald 2009, p. 1194.

Table 1: The *Book of Odes* 詩經

Author: Unknown | **Era:** Western Zhou | **Total Characters:** 30,447 | **Total Vocabulary:** 2,852

Character	Translation	Hits	Rank	Additional Comments
<i>ren</i> 人	man	273	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occurs most commonly in the couplets 人之, 之人, 他人, and 人不 • Most common descriptive modifier is 良, to form 良人 • Beyond this, there is no clear pattern in the usage of 人; it appears to be neutral
<i>tian</i> 天	Heaven	170	22	
<i>de</i> 德	virtue; charismatic power	71	62	
<i>hao</i> 好	good; love/loved	46	113	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately 33% of usages relate to pleasant sights or sounds, 20% to a romantic lover, 20% to a friend or clansman, and 27% to some other subject (e.g. positive action, demeanor); in other words, it is a very flexible term
<i>wu</i> 武	martial; brave; warlike	45	117	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately 38% of usages relate to King Wu, 18% to a hunter or warrior, 16% to war in general, and 28% to some other subject (e.g. nobility, posterity) • Typically linked to descriptions of strength and power
<i>dao</i> 道	way; path; to say	32	176	
<i>mei</i> 美	beautiful; admirable; good	40	138	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All occurrences are within 14 odes in the section 國風 (first quarter of text) • 80% of hits occur within 2 characters of the character 人 or a person's name, demonstrating a close link to people • Of the remaining occurrences, all are descriptive, including the phrases 美目, 美無度, 美如英, and 美如玉
<i>quan</i> 鬻	good; brave	1	2,070	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occurs only once in Ode 107
<i>cai</i> 偲	able; strong	1	2,070	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occurs only once in Ode 107

As shown above, *mei* 美, most commonly translated as “beautiful,” “admirable,” or “good,” occurs 40 times across 14 different odes, though all of its occurrences are confined to the first section, titled *Guo feng* 國風, representing approximately the first 25% of the text. Notably, 80% of its occurrences are within two characters of *ren* 人 or a person’s name (or other human signifier, such as *nü* 女), suggesting a direct link to people. Its remaining occurrences tend to be in descriptive phrases, such as *mei mu* 美目 “beautiful eyes,” *mei wu du* 美無度 “limitless beauty,” *mei ru ying* 美如英 “beautiful as a flower,” and *mei ru yu* 美如玉 “beautiful as jade.” Generally, its occurrences are linked to external splendor and admiration, and in some cases, Legge and Waley adopt alternate translations such as “elegant” or “lovely.” While we cannot say that *ren* is necessarily physical or external based on its coupling with *mei* 美, these findings related to *mei* 美 do add more context for understanding the two words as they appear in parallel with one another.

Meanwhile, *ren* 人, most commonly translated as “man,” “person,” or “human,” occurs 273 times in the *Book of Odes*, and is evenly distributed throughout the entire text. It is one of the most common characters in the text, and shows up at least once in nearly half of the odes. The ideal hypothesis to test would be whether there are cases in which the term *ren* 人 seems to be shifting away from its noun meaning of “man” or “person,” and taking on a more descriptive grammatical function. This could provide more evidence of *ren* having arisen as a stative verb of the noun *ren* 人. Unfortunately, my analytical techniques are not advanced enough to accommodate this type of test. All I could discover was that, as might be expected, the couplets in which *ren* 人 occurs most frequently are *ren zhi* 人之 “X person’s,” *zhi ren* 之人 “person of X,” *ta ren* 他人 “other person,” and *ren bu* 人不 “person does/is not.” Outside of these, the majority

of occurrences simply consist of *ren* 仁 in conjunction with miscellaneous verbs. This seems to suggest that *ren* 仁 is primarily a neutral, fluid term without positive or negative connotations. The most common stative verb paired with *ren* 仁 does happen to be *liangren* 良人 “good person/people”, with 8 occurrences across 4 odes, but this alone does not tell us much.

As for *hao* 好, it is most commonly translated as “good,” “love” (as a transitive verb), or “loved.” It occurs 46 times across 35 odes, and is well distributed throughout the text, occurring slightly more frequently than *mei* 美. Approximately 33% of its usages relate to pleasant sights or sounds, 20% relate to a romantic lover, 20% relate to a friend or clansmen, and 27% relate to some other subject, such as positive action or demeanor. In other words, *hao* 好 is very flexible, and can be used to describe many things. This may help explain why Legge translates *hao* 好 in Ode #77 as “good,” whereas Waley translates it as “loved.” While *hao* 好 has multiple uses, it is certainly always positive, and the same might be said for *ren*.

Next, *wu* 武, most commonly translated as “martial,” “brave,” or “warlike,” is slightly less common than *hao* 好, occurring 45 times across 24 odes, with a higher density in the last two sections, *Da ya* 大雅 and *Song* 頌 (approximately one third of the text). Again, I coded the word by usage, and found that it shows up most commonly (38% of the time) as part of the name of the King Wu, also known as the “Martial King.” While King Wu is a legendary hero in Chinese tradition, I discounted these occurrences as having no relation to the early meaning of *ren*. The next most frequent uses of *wu* 武 are in relation to hunters or warriors (18%), to war in general (16%), or to some other subject (28%), such as nobility or posterity. In most cases, *wu* 武 appears alongside descriptions of strength and power. These statistics pertaining to *wu* 武 may

qualify Watson's proposition of *ren* as "gentle," at least within the *Book of Odes*, as it would seem somewhat contradictory (though not inconceivable) to describe a person as both "gentle" and *wu* 武 in the same passage. Finally, when I analyzed *quan* 鬻, and *cai* 偲 within the *Book of Odes*, I found that both of them occur only once. Legge and Waley thus based their translations of "good/brave" for *quan* 鬻 and "able/strong" for *cai* 偲 entirely on occurrences of these characters in other texts, and I can make no further quantitative observations about them here.

Having completed my analyses for the *Book of Odes*, I will move on to the *Book of Documents* (Table 2). I only included the ancient chapters, referred to somewhat counter-intuitively as the "New Text" version by modern scholars.⁴⁷ I included the ambiguous chapter *Tai shi* 泰誓 in my analyses, because it has had serious impact on the way Chan and others interpreted *ren*. However, I also cross-checked all of my analyses without this chapter present, and it did not make a significant impact on the numbers. As for the chapter *Jin teng* 金縢, for the sake of consistency, I have used the received version of the chapter, and not the version of the portion appearing in the Tsinghua manuscripts. The Tsinghua version could have been an interesting alternative, but there is substantial ambiguity on how to read many characters within it, and it has also not yet been digitized in a way conducive to quantitative analysis.

⁴⁷ See Appendix 1.

Table 2: The *Book of Document* 尚書 (“New Text” Only)

Author: Unknown | **Era:** Western Zhou | **Total Characters:** 17,200 | **Total Vocabulary:** 1,634

Character	Translation	Hits	Rank	Additional Comments
<i>tian</i> 天	Heaven	203	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occurs more frequently than any other noun except 王 (296 hits) Occurs most commonly in the phrase 天命/天之命, followed by 天降 and 天下; implies direct intention and intervention
<i>ren</i> 人	man	182	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occurs most commonly in the couplets 一人, 人之, and 人有 Most common descriptive modifiers are 前 and 古, to form 前人和 古人 Again, there is no clear pattern beyond this; it appears to be neutral
<i>de</i> 德	virtue; charismatic power	124	22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occurs most commonly in the couplets 明德, 德惟, and 德之 Other modifiers with multiple occurrences include 王德, 好德, 非德, 凶德 17% of occurrences are within 5 characters of 王, suggesting weak connection The two points above may reflect kings' need to develop the right type of virtue
<i>xin</i> 心	heart	42	81	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 21% of occurrences are within 4 characters of 德, suggesting weak connection No other discernable pattern; it appears to be neutral
<i>dao</i> 道	way; path; to say	16	215	
<i>cai</i> 材	abilities; talent; wood	6	453	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All occurrences outside of the chapter 金滕 are in reference to types of "wood;" not relevant here
<i>yi</i> 藝	arts; skill	6	453	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occurrences outside of the chapter 金滕 mainly refer to cultivation of oneself and agriculture, but do not seem relevant here
<i>guishen</i> 鬼神	spirits; deities	3	727	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treated as one character for analysis Occurs once in chapter 大禹謨, and twice in 金滕 Additional 7 occurrences of 神 alone usually include reference to 天 or 帝

Tian 天 is best translated as “Heaven” prior to the Warring States, not in a Christian sense, but in the sense that it is a personified power located “above” the world. It refers to “an anthropomorphic figure – someone who can be communicated with, angered, or pleased – rather than a physical place.”⁴⁸ This character occurs 203 times in the *Book of Documents* New Text, with a frequency rank of 11, making it more common than every other noun in the text except *wang* 王 “king.” I found it was most frequently paired with *tian ming* 天命 or *tian zhi ming* 天之命 “Heaven’s command / mandate,” followed by *tian jiang* 天降 “Heaven sent down” and *tian xia* 天下 “under Heaven.” These statistics support the established hierarchical relationship between Heaven and the human world, as well as the idea that Heaven can enforce its intentions through direct intervention. While these facts do not speak directly to the nature of *ren*, it seems possible that *ren* was a particular virtue of those subservient to Heaven in the *Book of Documents*. This may have helped lay the groundwork for the great importance that Confucius later ascribed to *ren*.

Whereas the divine commonly enters into the dialogue of the *Book of Documents* through the term *tian* 天, the word *guishen* 鬼神, or “spirits,” hardly shows up at all, with only one other occurrence outside the chapter *Jin teng*. The term *shen* 神 does occur an additional 7 times on its own, but in almost all cases, it is in the same line as *tian* 天 or *di* 帝. *Di* 帝 is another character signifying the supreme divine being, with high frequency (80 occurrences, rank 34). While the presence of the word *guishen* 鬼神 shows that other spiritual beings existed within the divine hierarchy of the early Zhou, its few occurrences in the *Book of Documents* won’t tell us much more about *ren*.

⁴⁸ Slingerland 2003a, p. xvii.

I also once again investigated the cognate *ren* 仁, and found similar results to its use in the *Book of Odes*. In the *Book of Documents*, this word also occurs with high frequency and wide distribution. Relating it directly to *ren* is difficult. My most interesting finding was that the most common descriptive modifications to *ren* 仁 are *guren* 古人 “ancient people” and *qianren* 前人 “those who came before.” Passages containing these terms typically refer to wise sayings or lessons from previous generations. This glorification of previous generations would prevail throughout certain schools of Warring States philosophy and beyond.

The term *xin* 心, best translated as “heart” here, occurs with medium frequency and equal distribution. I searched for patterns of occurrences using it in a positive or negative context, but none emerged. The only weakly present link I found was that, in approximately 25% of its occurrences, *xin* 心 was accompanied by *de* 德 within a 4-character search window. *De* 德, translated as “virtue,” “practice,” or “charismatic power,” is much more common. It occurs most frequently in the couplet *ming de* 明德 “luminous virtue,” and holds a weak but present statistical tie to *wang* 王 “king” (17% rate of overlap within 5 characters). After these two associations, it shows up most commonly as qualified in the following ways: *hao de* 好德 “good virtue,” *fei de* 非德 “non-virtue,” and *xiong de* 凶德 “bad virtue.” Combined, these statistics may help underscore the scholarly point that *de* 德 (and possibly *ren*) was considered an important quality for a ruler to have.⁴⁹

Finally, much like *quan* 鬻 and *cai* 悒 in the *Book of Odes*, analysis of *cai* 材 and *yi* 藝 in the *Book of Documents* did not yield useful results. Both words occur only 6 times in total. In all occurrences outside the chapter *Jin teng*, *cai* 材 refers to different types of wood, which is not

⁴⁹ Chan 1955, p. 296.

relevant here. Meanwhile, the other instances of *yi* 藝 refer to both personal and agricultural cultivation. While interesting, these examples are too few, and too far removed from the context of the passage in *Jin teng* to further illuminate *ren*.

Before concluding this section, it is worth noting the relative difficulty of drawing connections between *ren* and other terms in the *Book of Documents*, even if one accepts the passages containing *ren* in the New Text to be authentic. In the *Book of Odes*, parallel structures and possible rhyme schemes allow scholars to make educated guesses about overlap in meanings and pronunciations. These parallel structures also allowed me to more confidently compare the meaning of *ren* to the meaning of words like *hao* 好 and *mei* 美. However, while working with the less structured passages in the *Book of Documents* New Text, I could only draw weak connections between words like *tian* 天 and *de* 德 and general concepts, and I could only speculate very generally about their possible connection to *ren*. Thus, the writing structure of ancient texts can strongly influence how we are able to interpret them.

Conclusion

Ren first occurs in two authentic passages from the *Book of Odes*, and two ambiguous passages from the *Book of Documents*. It seems to have developed from the cognate word *ren* 人 “man,” and its earliest meanings proposed by modern scholars include kindness, benevolence, manliness, nobility, and co-humanity. Given the evidence, I conclude that its most probably meaning was “manliness.” The meaning of *ren* in the *Book of Odes* focuses on the physical characteristics of manliness, namely strength and handsomeness, whereas its meaning in the *Book of Documents* focuses on the moral characteristics of manliness, namely virtue (linked either to the human world, or the divine). Quantitative analysis of the related terms *mei* 美, *hao*

好, and *wu* 武 in the *Book of Odes*, and *tian* 天 and *de* 德 in the *Book of Documents* support these conclusions.

Archeological evidence shows that during the Western Zhou, and even the Warring States, the character *ren* 仁 existed in multiple written forms. This, combined with its phonetic and semantic overlap with *ren*^人 and *ning* 佞, suggest that the graph, pronunciation, and meaning of *ren* did not necessarily co-arise simultaneously as a stable unit. Rather, each of its components may have been independently fluid. Perhaps it was in part this fluidity, along with the term's decidedly positive connotations, which led the early Confucians to appropriate it, as discussed in the next chapter.

2. The Establishment of *Ren*

My goal in this chapter is to explain the meanings of *ren* during the Warring States period, as established by the early Confucians. I begin with the *Analects*, in which Confucius radically redefines *ren*, though not without incorporating traces of its earlier meanings. I continue with the *Mencius*, in which Mencius hones and narrows the meaning of *ren*, while preserving it as a virtue of utmost importance. I finish with the *Xunzi*, in which Xunzi challenges Mencius' account of *ren*'s acquisition and importance, while preserving it as an important component of self-cultivation. After analyzing a few key passages and scholarly arguments for each text, I complement my findings with quantitative analyses. I conclude that Confucius' notion of *ren*, though possessing some ambiguity and inconsistencies, most often equates to an overarching virtue translatable as "Goodness." Both Mencius and Xunzi view *ren* as the narrower virtue of "benevolence," the former believing it to grow naturally from one's own internal goodness, the latter believing it to be attainable only through diligent study in the Classics.

Analects

Confucius famously said, "I transmit rather than innovate."⁵⁰ While he was indeed a conservative, seeking to preserve and transmit the teachings and rituals of the early Zhou, his new use of *ren* was a major innovation. Whereas *ren* originally meant something like "manliness," as discussed in the last chapter, Confucius recrafted it into a deep and complex virtue. The *Analects* is our primary source for understanding the new meaning of *ren*, along with its role in the earliest stage of Confucian philosophy. This text had major influence on all interpretations of *ren* that followed, and for this reason I give it particular attention.

⁵⁰ *Analects* 7.1; Slingerland 2003a, p. 64. Confucius goes on to express trust and love for "the ancient ways."

Composed by Confucius' disciples sometime in the early Warring States period, *The Analects* consists of their master's collected sayings, loosely organized into 20 chapters or "books." Scholars debate the dates of the various books and passages, especially the last 5 books, which differ from the others in terms of style, and are generally thought to have been composed by later followers. Nevertheless, according to Slingerland (2003), there is "enough consistency in terminological use, conceptual repertoire, and general religious viewpoint to allow us to treat the text as a whole... It is highly unlikely that any stratum of the *Analects* was composed after the early fourth century BCE, which means that we can safely view the text as a genuine representation of the state of the 'School of Confucius' before the innovations of Mencius and Xunzi."⁵¹

Ren appears more often in the *Analects* than any other major term except *jun* 君 "gentleman,"⁵² and is a quintessential aspect of Confucius' teaching. Despite its prevalence and importance, however, it defies easy definition. One reason for this is that most passages in the *Analects* are brief and cryptic. Understanding their meaning requires additional commentary and cultural knowledge, and there are often multiple viable interpretations for the same phrase. However, a deeper reason is that Confucius uses *ren* in a variety of ways, some of which seem to contradict one another. Distilling its essential meaning necessarily requires focusing more on certain passages than others in order to arrive at a coherent picture. To demonstrate this, below I have paraphrased what I feel are the key statements about *ren* in all 59 passages in which the character appears within the *Analects*. I have relied on commentary to understand the more cryptic passages, but it should be kept in mind that these statements do not necessarily reflect the full depth of meaning implied by the original author/s of the *Analects*, nor the differing

⁵¹ Slingerland 2003a, pp. xiv – xv.

⁵² See Table 4.

interpretations of later scholars. Nevertheless, this is what I feel the text itself actually says about *ren*, and it is important for contextualizing modern academic perspectives. I will discuss select passages in more detail shortly.

Qualities of *ren* in the *Analects*:⁵³

- It is rooted in “filial piety and respect for elders.” (1.2)
- It is rarely associated with “a clever tongue and fine appearance.” (1.3)
- Those who have it deserve care themselves, and have care for others. (1.6)⁵⁴
- It is intimately linked to ritual and music. (3.3)
- Places where people have it are fine and beautiful. (4.1)
- It allows people to “remain constant in adversity” and “enjoy enduring happiness.” (4.2)
- Only those who have it can “truly love others or despise others.” (4.3)
- If you set your heart sincerely upon it, “you will be free of bad intentions.” (4.4)
- A gentleman is always in accord with it. (4.5)
- People who truly love it are extremely rare, if they exist at all. (4.6)
- Whether a person has it can be known by observing their mistakes. (4.7)
- It is far superior to eloquence. (5.5)
- It is far superior to management skills, hospitality, and quick wit. (5.8)
- It is far superior to rigid loyalty and rigid purity. (5.19)
- One star disciple could maintain it for three months; others only sporadically. (6.7)
- Those who have it face what is difficult first, and consider benefits only after. (6.22)
- It complements wisdom; those with it enjoy mountains, are still, and long-lived. (6.23)
- Those who have it cannot be easily “trapped” or “duped.” (6.26)
- It is inferior to true sagehood; those who have it help others achieve what’s best. (6.30)
- One should “lean upon” it while practicing the Way. (7.6)

⁵³ Quotation marks indicate direct quotes from Slingerland’s 2003 translation of the *Analects*. Phrases without quotation marks reflect my own understanding based on both the original Chinese, and the combined translations of Slingerland (2003a) and Lau (1992). Book and passage numbers from the *Analects* are listed after each statement in parentheses.

⁵⁴ In this list, I frequently use the construction “Those who have it.” Based on classical Chinese grammar, it would also be acceptable to render this phrase as “those who *are* it,” which has somewhat different connotations in English.

- Those who seek it and achieve it have no regrets. (7.15)
- As soon as one desires it, it is there. (7.30)
- Confucius does not claim to have it, but ceaselessly works and encourages others. (7.34)
- Gentlemen being kind toward their relatives can inspire common people to seek it. (8.2)
- It is a heavy burden to carry, and one must carry it until death. (8.7)
- Those who are “excessively criticized” for not having it will become rebellious. (8.10)
- Confucius rarely spoke about it. (9.1)⁵⁵
- Those who have it are without worry. (9.29)
- It consists of “restraining oneself and returning to the rites.” (12.1)
- It includes being respectful, dutiful, and understanding of others. (12.2)
- Those who have it do not speak rashly. (12.2)
- Those who are “renowned” but not “accomplished” only pretend to have it. (12.20)
- It consists of love or care for others; those who lack it avoid virtuous rulers. (12.22)
- A gentleman relies on his friends in order to achieve it. (12.24)
- A true king could inspire everyone to return to it within a generation. (13.12)
- Those who have it are reverent, respectful, and dutiful. (13.19)
- Those who have it are “resolute, decisive, straightforward,” and slow to speak. (13.27)
- It is superior to humility and contentment. (14.1)
- All who have it are courageous, but not all who are courageous have it. (14.4)
- Not all gentlemen possess it, but no petty people possess it. (14.6)
- It is related to loyalty. (14.16)
- It transcends rigid adherence to a single virtue. (14.17)
- Confucius claims not to have it. (14.28)
- Those who have it never sacrifice it, but must sometimes sacrifice themselves. (15.9)
- One should seek to befriend those who have it. (15.10)
- It can protect what one reaches through wisdom. (15.33)
- Practicing it cannot harm a person. (15.35)
- When pursuing it, one should not defer to anyone. (15.38)

⁵⁵ This is probably the most controversial passage concerning *ren* in the *Analects*, and I discuss it in more detail below.

- Those who have it apply their skills for the good of the state. (17.1)
- It covers “reverence, magnanimity, trustworthiness, diligence, and kindness.” (17.6)
- It must be balanced with learning. (17.8)
- It is rarely associated with “a clever tongue and fine appearance.” (17.17)⁵⁶
- Those who have it care greatly for their parents. (17.21)
- Those who have it know the right thing to do, depending on their situation. (18.1)
- It is achieved through a combination of learning and reflection. (19.6)
- It is a very lofty achievement. (19.15)
- Those who are arrogant do not have it, and hinder others from attaining it. (19.16)
- Those who have it are superior to common men. (20.1)⁵⁷
- It is an essential quality of a good ruler. (20.2)

Several paradoxes, contradictions, and points of debate immediately arise from attempts to condense this list to a set of coherent qualities. A basic example is the relative ease or difficulty of attaining *ren*. While attaining it generally seems to be a very long and difficult process, as reflected in passages 4.6, 6.7, 7.34, 8.7, and 14.28, we find some apparent counterevidence in passage 7.30: 子曰：「仁遠乎哉？我欲仁，斯仁至矣。」 Here, Confucius rhetorically asks, “Is [*ren*] really so far away? If I simply desire [*ren*], I will find that it is already here.”⁵⁸ One way to resolve the contradiction is to interpret the passage to mean that *ren* itself is not what is difficult to attain, but the love or desire for *ren*. Slingerland (2003) uses this idea to illustrate a particular dilemma in the *Analects*: “the student cannot learn from the teacher unless he is passionately *committed* to learning, and this requires possessing a genuine

⁵⁶ This passage is identical to *Analects* 1.3.

⁵⁷ In this passage, Confucius is quoting directly from the chapter *Tai shi* in the *Book of Documents*, discussed in the last chapter.

⁵⁸ Slingerland 2003a, p. 74. Note that because *ren* in the *Analects* has been translated by scholars in so many different ways, I leave it in its phonetic form during the translations I quote initially in this chapter.

love for the Confucian Way.”⁵⁹ That is, only students who start out with the proper internal substance (*zhi* 質) will be able to benefit from cultural refinement (*wen* 文) and attain *ren*.

A still more controversial passage is *Analects* 9.1: 子罕言利，與命，與仁。The most common interpretation is to read the word *han* 罕 as “rarely” or “seldom,” and render a translation along the lines of: “The Master rarely spoke of profit, [Heaven’s] mandate, and *ren*.”⁶⁰ However, given that *ren* comes up more frequently than any other virtue in the *Analects*,⁶¹ this reading does not make much sense. Chan (1955) considers various alternate interpretations – that *ren* was too serious a topic to be discussed lightly; that it was too difficult to understand; that Confucius did not want to associate *ren* with profit. However, he finds none of these arguments convincing, and concludes that “unless better evidence is discovered, we had better leave the contradiction unsolved.”⁶² Meanwhile, Slingerland (2003) takes a different reading of *han* 罕, translating the difficult section in the passage as, “The Master *openly* expressed his views on...”⁶³ To reach this interpretation, he follows the Qing scholar Huang Shisan (1789 – 1862 CE) in reading *han* 罕 as a substitute character for *xuan* 軒, which can mean “open” or “wide.” The word *han* 罕 does not appear elsewhere in the *Analects*, and there is precedent for this substitution in two other early classical Chinese texts, the Zuo and Gongyang commentaries, making this a reasonable alternate interpretation. I list this example as a classic case of the ways ambiguous or paradoxical content in the *Analects* can puzzle scholars, and lead to multiple interpretations.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Legge 1893; Chan 1955; Lau 1992; Ames and Rosemont 1998; Brooks and Brooks 1998. These authors’ translations of this phrase do not match my translation exactly, but all treat *han* 罕 in the same fashion.

⁶¹ See Table 4.

⁶² Chan 1955, pp. 296 – 297.

⁶³ Slingerland 2003a, p. 86.

Another critical point of discussion is the breadth of *ren*. In *Analects* 6.23, Confucius describes *ren* and wisdom (*zhi* 知) in parallel, as if they are both discrete virtues. Similarly, in passages 12.22 and 17.21, *ren* seems to be functioning in the limited sense of caring for others. However, in many more passages, Confucius presents *ren* as far superior to – or encompassing of – other key virtues, using it as a sort of “master virtue.”⁶⁴ Strangely though, in *Analects* 6.30, when the disciple Zigong inquires whether a person who “broadly extend[s] his benevolence to the common people and bring[s] succor to the multitudes” could be called *ren*, Confucius replies: “Why stop at [*ren*]? Such a person should surely be called a sage!”⁶⁵ This implies that a truly “sagely” (*sheng* 聖) person has attained some state beyond *ren*. Perhaps Confucius is using *ren* in its narrow rather than broad sense here, but we have no clear criteria by which to parse its usage, leaving the decision somewhat arbitrary. Also somewhat puzzling is *Analects* 15.24, in which Zigong asks, “Is there one word that can serve as a guide for one’s entire life?” Confucius answers *shu* 恕, translated as “understanding,” and elaborates, “do not impose upon others what you yourself do not desire.”⁶⁶ The character *shu* 恕 only appears one other time in the *Analects* (passage 4.15), whereas *ren* occurs with much greater frequency (110 total occurrences). One might expect Confucius to mention *ren* in this passage, at least in his elaboration, but he does not. It seems safest to assume that both *ren* and *shu* are critically important, but in different contexts.

A concept toward which some scholars argue *ren* has a particularly important relationship is *li* 禮, commonly translated as “rites,” “ritual,” or “ritual propriety.” *Analects* 12.1 forms the main foundation of this argument:

⁶⁴ For example, see *Analects* 5.5, 5.8, 5.19, 12.22, 13.19, 13.27, 14.1, 14.17, and 17.60.

⁶⁵ Slingerland 2003a, p. 63.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 183. In his glossary, Slingerland also translates *shu* 恕 as “empathetic understanding.”

顏淵問仁。子曰：「克己復禮為仁。一日克己復禮，天下歸仁焉。為仁由己，而由人乎哉？」顏淵曰：「請問其目。」子曰：「非禮勿視，非禮勿聽，非禮勿言，非禮勿動。」顏淵曰：「回雖不敏，請事斯語矣。」

Slingerland's translation:

Yan Hui asked about [*ren*]. The Master said, “Restraining yourself and returning to the rites (*keji fuli* 克己復禮) constitutes [*ren*]. If for one day you managed to restrain yourself and return to the rites, in this way you could lead the entire world back to [*ren*]. The key to achieving [*ren*] lies within yourself – how could it come from others?”⁶⁷

Slingerland (2003) acknowledges a “long-running debate in the commentarial tradition concerning how to understand the phrase *keji*,” and takes it to mean imposing restraint on oneself. He then quotes the Confucian scholar Huang Kan (488 – 545 CE), explaining that *ren* here means to be able to “discipline oneself in order to return to the mean of ritual.”⁶⁸ Beyond this, he does not attach additional importance to this passage.

Tu (1968) and Shun (1992), however, give the phrase *keji fuli* more attention. According to Tu, *keji* “does not mean that one should engage in a bitter struggle with one's own corporeal desires. It suggests instead that one should fulfill them in an ethical context.” This process, he argues, is equivalent to the more general act of self-cultivation (*xiushen* 修身). As for the phrase *fuli*, it “also conveys wider and more profound implications than its translation, ‘return to propriety,’ would suggest. *Li* refers generally to norms and standards of proper behavior in a social, ethical, or even religious context. *Fuli* means to bring oneself to be in line with *li*. Instead of passive submission, it implies active participation.”⁶⁹ Tu then ties *li* back to *ren* in a fundamental way, arguing that the two principles interact so as to foster “creative tension” promoting continuous self-cultivation:

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Tu 1968, p. 30.

Li means the standards of this world, whereas *ren* means the summons to choice and answerability. *Li* signifies the fact that a man lives in society; *ren* points to the equally important fact that he is more than the intersection of social forces. He feels himself summoned to choose, to actualize a potential selfhood which is more than the sum of genes, plus glands, plus class. Man cannot live without *li*, but when *li* becomes wholly determinative, he is no longer really man. In a deeper sense, therefore, the creative tension between *ren* and *li* suggests a kind of mutual dependability.⁷⁰

In a related vein, Shun (1993) argues that part of being *ren* is following *li*, but that those who are *ren* (such as Confucius) can also modify *li*. His interpretation “acknowledges the role of *li* in shaping the ethical ideal of *ren*,” but also “allows for the possibility of departing from or revising an existing rule of *li* if there is good reason for doing so.”⁷¹ Tu and Shun could not have arrived at such complex theories on the nature of *ren* and *li* based on the original passages in the *Analects* alone. Rather, their ideas are shaped by later commentators, and by other early Confucian texts. I thus hesitate to accept that Confucius himself had fully theorized such a relationship between *ren* and *li*, but the two terms were certainly closely related.

One final term associated with *ren* worth mentioning is *ning* 佞. As noted in Chapter 1, *ren* and *ning* were originally cognates. In *Analects* 5.5, Confucius explicitly contrasts and delineates between the two terms. Following Nivison (1999), Slingerland (2003) notes that “Confucius drives a wedge between the two qualities: *ren* now becomes ‘true’ (i.e., inner) nobleness or Virtue, whereas *ning* represents the false, external counterfeit of *ren*.”⁷²

How, then, do scholars ultimately understand *ren* in the *Analects*? In the table below, I have compiled a list of its translations and definitions by a selection of modern English-language scholars.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 37.

⁷¹ Shun 1993, p. 474. The most classic example of Confucius accepting a modification to existing *li* is *Analects* 9.3, where Confucius allows for ceremonial hats to be made of silk instead of the more traditional linen, because silk is more frugal, while it does not compromise ritualistic meaning.

⁷² Slingerland 2003, p. 2.

Table 3: Scholarly Interpretations of *Ren* in the *Analects*

Scholar	Translation of <i>ren</i>	Definition of <i>ren</i>
Slingerland (2003a)	Goodness (most commonly); benevolence (rarely)	“The overarching virtue of being a perfected human being, which includes such qualities as empathetic understanding (<i>shu</i> 恕) or benevolence (<i>hui</i> 惠).” ⁷³
Chan (1955; 1975)	love; humanity; benevolence	An “active, social, dynamic” virtue, which generally speaking means “love for all.” ⁷⁴
Chong (1999)	[leaves untranslated]	A “practice,” the meaning of which can only be understood through discussion. ⁷⁵
Shun (1993)	humaness; goodness	“An all-encompassing ethical ideal.” ⁷⁶
Tu (1968; 1981)	goodness; humanity [but prefers untranslated]	“The virtue of the highest order in the value system of Confucianism.” ⁷⁷
Fingarette (1972)	humanity	A “mystic entity” in which “reciprocal good faith and respect are expressed through the specific forms defined in <i>li</i> ,” “the perfect giving of oneself to the <i>human way</i> .” ⁷⁸
Ames and Rosemont (1998)	authoritative conduct	A term which entails “the ‘authority’ that a person comes to represent in community... embodying in oneself the values and customs of one’s tradition through the observance of ritual propriety.” ⁷⁹
Brooks and Brooks (1998)	[leave untranslated]	“Its meaning changes within the text.” ⁸⁰
Lau (1983)	benevolence	“ <i>The moral quality a gentleman must possess.</i> ” ⁸¹

Having thus reviewed the modern scholarly understandings of *ren* in the *Analects*, I provide the results of my own quantitative analysis in Table 4 below.

⁷³ Slingerland 2003a, p. 238.

⁷⁴ Chan 1955, p. 303, 319.

⁷⁵ Chong 1999, p. 298.

⁷⁶ Shun 1993, p. 457.

⁷⁷ Tu 1968, p. 31.

⁷⁸ Fingarette 1972, p. 38, 42, 56. Goldin (2003, pp. 232 – 233) strongly contests Fingarette’s position of *ren* as purely a submission to *li*, arguing this does not adequately account for the inward components of *ren* itself.

⁷⁹ Ames and Rosemont 1998, p. 50.

⁸⁰ Brooks and Brooks 1998, p. 13.

⁸¹ Lau 1983, p. xii.

Table 4: The *Analects* 論語

Author: Confucius 孔子 and Disciples | **Era:** Early Warring States | **Total Characters:** 15,962 | **Total Vocabulary:** 1,354

Character	Translation	Hits	仁 Prox.	Rank	Additional Comments
<i>jun</i> 君	gentleman	160	6% (9)	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occurs most commonly in 君子 (109 times) Occurs most commonly immediately after “子曰： ”
<i>zhi</i> 知	to know; knowledge	118	21% (25)	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surprisingly close proximity to 仁 Possible precursor to Mencius’ 智, which does not appear in this text
<i>ren</i> 仁	Goodness; benevolence; humanity	110	N/A	27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most common couplets are 仁者, 仁矣, and 不仁 Densest in Books 4, 5, and 6; no hits in Books 2, 10, or 11
<i>dao</i> 道	the Way	89	8% (7)	29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most common in the phrases 君子之道 and 天下有道則
<i>li</i> 禮	ritual; ritual propriety	75	7% (5)	34	
<i>xue</i> 學	learning; study	66	5% (3)	40	
<i>tian</i> 天	Heaven	49	8% (4)	55	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most common appearance by far is within the phrase 天下 (23 times)
<i>wen</i> 文	culture	42	10% (4)	68	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heavily concentrated in Book 5
<i>de</i> 德	virtue	40	8% (3)	71	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower ranked here than in both <i>Book of Documents</i> and <i>Book of Odes</i>
<i>xiao</i> 孝	filial piety	19	5% (1)	135	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heavily concentrated in first two chapters Not as common as might be expected, given its supposed importance
<i>yi</i> 義	righteousness	24	0% (0)	108	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Never occurs in close proximity to 仁
<i>hui</i> 惠	benevolence	12	17% (2)	208	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Denser in second half of the text
<i>ai</i> 愛	love	10	30% (3)	218	
<i>shu</i> 恕	empathetic understanding	2	0% (0)	662	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occurs only twice, yet Confucius seemingly considers it very important

Based on the numbers, *ren* is indeed a top concept in the *Analects*, appearing more frequently than any other major conceptual term I chose to investigate except *jun* 君. It also appears slightly less frequently than *zhi* 知, but because *zhi* often functions as a normal verb, this is not surprising. I originally chose to include *zhi* in my analyses because it sometimes functions as an early version of *zhi* 智 (“wisdom”), a virtue discussed more frequently in certain later texts. Interestingly, though, *zhi* 知 does appear in closer proximity to *ren* than any other term on the list except *ai* 愛 (“love”). This may be coincidence, or may reflect those who are *ren* having the wisdom to know what to do in most situations. It was an unexpected result, and could serve as a launching point for future research.

Meanwhile *ai* appears in closest proximity to *ren*, with 30% of its appearances falling within 10 characters of *ren*. This result appears to best support Chan’s argument of *ren* as love, even in the *Analects*. However, it is important to note that *ai* is a rare term in the *Analects* in the first place, appearing only 10 times. As will be shown in other texts as well, when terms have low frequency in a text, their “仁 Prox.” ratings tend to range more dramatically. Though I have not implemented a statistical “confidence interval,” higher character hit counts generally produce more reliable results.

Another noteworthy point is that *ren* does not appear in close conjunction with empathetic understanding (*shu* 恕) or benevolence (*hui* 惠). While its meaning in the *Analects* may incorporate these virtues, empathetic understanding and benevolence do not appear explicitly in the cases where Confucius defines or clarifies *ren*. The numeric link between *ren* and ritual (*li* 禮) is also fairly weak. It is possible that both terms function so broadly that their direct overlap is weak, despite similarity in meaning. These findings qualify the definitions of

ren in the *Analects* set forth by Slingerland, Tu, and Shun. We also find no close overlap between *ren* and *yi* 義, a term with which *ren* will often co-occur from the *Mencius* onward. Apart from *zhi* and *ai*, *ren* does not show especially close proximity to any other term. This finding could be taken as support for the view held by many scholars discussed earlier, claiming that *ren* in the *Analects* is an all-around virtue related to *all* other virtues. Meanwhile, the fact that *shu* 恕 only appears twice in the text, and yet in *Analects* 15.24 Confucius cites it as the best single word to serve as “a guide for life,” reminds us that a character’s rank and hit rate do not always correlate with its importance within a text.

Finally, two terms less directly related to *ren* also show interesting trends in the *Analects*. The first is *dao* 道, which did not feature prominently in the *Book of Odes* or *Book of Documents*, but jumped to the top 30 ranks in the *Analects*, qualifying it as a term of major importance. All philosophers to follow will show at least some concern for the proper “Way” of living. Second, *xiao* 孝, or “filial piety,” occurs surprisingly few times in the *Analects* with less than 20 hits. It does receive more attention in other early Confucian texts, and other terms, such as *di* 弟, may express similar notions. Nevertheless, it is somewhat surprising that a term so closely associated with Confucianism today appears relatively rarely in what eventually became the tradition’s most foundational text.

Mencius

Mencius (372 – 289 BCE) is the best-known early follower of Confucius. He is most famous for his assertion that “human nature is good” (*ren xing shan* 人性善), and his theory that all people possess four moral “sprouts” (*duan* 端), which can develop into full-fledged virtues with proper cultivation. One way to think of the ideological divide between Mencius and Xunzi

is as a debate between moral “internalism” and “externalism.”⁸² That is, Mencius saw goodness and virtue as arising from the “inside out,” whereas Xunzi saw them as coming from the “outside in.”⁸³ The primary text associated with Mencius, like many of the texts that follow, is simply named after the philosopher himself. Unlike the *Analects*, the *Mencius* contains fully developed arguments and discourses, often presented as conversations between Mencius and kings seeking his guidance. In terms of authenticity, both Graham (1989) and Lau (1993) cite the text as a sound representation of Mencian thought, and Lau cites evidence that Mencius “must have travelled to the states of Liang 梁, Ji 齊 and Lu 魯 around 320 BC.”⁸⁴

Mencius had several goals. According to Van Norden (2008), his chief goal was to promote a benevolent government that met the needs of its people. He offered “much more specific advice than [Confucius] about how to secure the livelihood of the people, including recommendations about everything from tax rates to farm management to the pay scale for government employees.”⁸⁵ Like Confucius, he also put great emphasis on people properly fulfilling their societal roles, such as parent, child, ruler, minister, spouse, and friend.

In addition, Mencius saw himself as a defender of Confucianism from alternate competing philosophies, including what we now call early Daoism and Yang Zhuism. By the time of Mencius, philosophers were developing more sophisticated arguments on human nature, including an increased concern with the physical body and the clear definition of terms. As noted by Graham, for Mencius, the value of a man “derives from virtues definitely located within the

⁸² Terms coined by Slingerland 2003b.

⁸³ Terms coined by Kline 2000.

⁸⁴ Lau 1993, p. 331.

⁸⁵ Van Norden 2008, p. xxv.

heart [*xin* 心]. The greatest is still *ren*, but the word has narrowed and clarified in meaning... directly translatable by ‘benevolence.’”⁸⁶

Indeed, within Mencius, we see the “narrower” side of *ren* discussed in the last chapter come to the forefront. For Mencius, *ren* is rooted in the “feeling of compassion” (惻隱之心), a “heart that is not unfeeling toward others” (不忍人之心), and a “heart that does not desire to harm others” (無欲害人之心), which he claims all people naturally possess.⁸⁷ A classic explanation occurs in chapter 2A6, where Mencius walks the reader through a thought experiment:

所以謂人皆有不忍人之心者，今人乍見孺子將入於井，皆有怵惕惻隱之心。非所以內交於孺子之父母也，非所以要譽於鄉黨朋友也，非惡其聲而然也。

Van Norden’s translation:

The reason why I say that all humans have hearts that are not unfeeling toward others is this. Suppose someone suddenly saw a child about to fall into a well: anyone in such a situation would have a feeling of alarm and compassion—not because one sought to get in good with the child’s parents, not because one wanted fame among one’s neighbors and friends, and not because one would dislike the sound of the child’s cries.⁸⁸

Van Norden notes here that “Mencius does not say that every human would necessarily act to save the child. All he claims is that any human would at least have a momentary feeling (literally, ‘heart’) of genuine compassion, and that the reaction would occur ‘suddenly’ (which shows that it is not the result of calculations of self-interest).”⁸⁹ The passage continues:

由是觀之，無惻隱之心，非人也；無羞惡之心，非人也；無辭讓之心，非人也；無是非之心，非人也。惻隱之心，仁之端也；羞惡之心，義之端也；辭讓之心，禮之端也；是非之心，智之端也。人之有是四端也，猶其有四體也。

⁸⁶ Graham 1989, pp. 112 – 113.

⁸⁷ Translations are from Van Norden 2008. Note that *xin* 心, typically translated as “heart,” is also translated as “feeling” in the first case.

⁸⁸ Norden 2008, pp. 46 – 47.

⁸⁹ Van Norden 2008, p. 46.

From this we can see that if one is without the feeling of compassion... disdain... deference... [or] approval and disapproval, one is not human. [These feelings are] the sprout[s] of benevolence... righteousness... propriety... [and] wisdom. People having these four sprouts is like their having four limbs.

Van Norden elaborates that “a ‘normal,’ healthy human has four limbs. Similarly, a normal human has the four ‘sprouts.’ But, as the comparison to limbs suggests, it is possible to lose the sprouts.”⁹⁰

Thus, for Mencius, every normal person possesses inclinations towards moral behavior. However, these sprouts alone are not enough to bring about peaceful society. They must be gently cultivated and extended. An example of this related to *ren* occurs in chapter 1A, while Mencius is visiting King Xuan of Qi. Mencius assures King Xuan that the king is certainly capable of “caring for the people” (*bao min* 保民), even if he does not yet know it. As evidence, Mencius recounts a story he heard of how the king responded when an ox was being led to slaughter for the anointing of a bell. Upon seeing it, the king exclaimed:

「舍之！吾不忍其觶觫，若無罪而就死地。」對曰：「然則廢釁鐘與？」曰：「何可廢也？以羊易之！」

“Spare it. I cannot bear its frightened appearance, like an innocent going to the execution ground.” [His attendant] Hu He replied, “So should we dispense with the anointing of the bell?” The king said, “How can that be dispensed with? Exchange it for a sheep.”⁹¹

The king confirms this happened, and Mencius notes that most people must have mistaken the king’s actions for stinginess (sacrificing a sheep is cheaper than an ox), but Mencius knows this is not the case. He explains:

「無傷也，是乃仁術也，見牛未見羊也。君子之於禽獸也，見其生，不忍見其死；聞其聲，不忍食其肉。是以君子遠庖廚也。」

“There is no harm. What you did was just a technique for (cultivating your) benevolence. You saw the ox but had not seen the sheep. Gentlemen cannot bear to see animals die if they have seen them living. If they hear the cries of suffering, they cannot bear to eat their flesh. Hence, gentlemen keep their distance from the kitchen.”⁹²

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

Mencius' larger message here is that the king must take the feeling he felt for the ox, cultivate it, and extend it to the people. As Mencius says in chapter 7B, "if people can fill out (*chong* 充) the heart that does not desire to harm others, their benevolence will be inexhaustible."⁹³ However, it should be noted that Mencius' concept of benevolence does have limits in its scope, unlike that of Mozi (discussed in Chapter Four). According to Van Norden, Mencian compassion and benevolence "should extend to everyone but be stronger for those tied to one by bonds such as kinship and friendship." It "acts like the ripples emanating from a stone dropped into a pond, proceeding out from the center [one's family] but gradually decreasing in strength as they move out."⁹⁴ This relates to the Confucian idea of graded love, which persists in the texts I examine in the following chapter.

Despite the general clarity in Mencius' writing, one minor point of ambiguity is worth mentioning. While he typically describes *ren* as "benevolence" using the terms outlined above, in some cases the term's definition drifts back toward its earlier meaning of "humanity." Such is the case in chapter 7B, where he directly states, "仁也者，人也。" Van Norden does not even use the word "benevolence" here, instead translating the phrase as "Humaneness is being a human."⁹⁵ In fact, in some ways, this line harkens back to before the *Analects*, to the original connection between *ren* and "man" discussed in Chapter One. Also, in the *Doctrine of the Mean* 中庸, another early text traditionally attributed to Confucius, we find a similar line: "仁者人也。" Thus, it would seem that Mencius was not the first philosopher to sometimes view *ren* as the defining factor of being human.

⁹³ Van Norden 2007, p. 235.

⁹⁴ Van Norden 2008, p. xxxi.

⁹⁵ Van Norden 2007, p. 214.

Having thus outlined the basics of Mencius' philosophy as it relates to *ren*, below I present his texts' quantitative statistics:

Table 5: The *Mencius* 孟子

Author: Mencius 孟子 | **Era:** Mid-Warring States | **Total Characters:** 35,426 | **Total Vocabulary:** 1,901

Character	Translation	Hits	仁 Prox.	Rank	Additional Comments
<i>tian</i> 天	Heaven	293	8% (23)	17	• Occurs most commonly in 天下 (overwhelmingly), 天子, and 於天
<i>jun</i> 君	gentleman	253	13% (33)	21	
<i>ren</i> 仁	benevolence; humanity	158	N/A	34	• Most common couplets are 不仁, 仁義, and 仁者 • Only 9 occurrences fall after quotes from Confucius
<i>dao</i> 道	the Way	150	7% (11)	36	• Occurs most commonly in the phrase 先王之道
<i>xin</i> 心	heart; feeling; mind	126	16% (20)	43	
<i>yi</i> 義	righteousness	107	49% (52)	58	• Closest proximity to 仁 of any character to date • 25% of occurrences (27 hits) are in the couplet 仁義 • 5% of occurrences (5 hits) are in the couplet 禮義
<i>kong</i> 孔	Confucius	82	9% (7)	75	
<i>li</i> 禮	ritual propriety	68	18% (12)	87	• Somewhat lower rank may reflect Mencian internalism.
<i>wen</i> 文	culture	52	8% (4)	118	• Low rank may reflect Mencian internalism
<i>ai</i> 愛	love	40	30% (12)	150	• Appears in closer proximity to 仁 than any other character besides 義
<i>de</i> 德	virtue	38	5% (2)	164	• Most common construction (3 hits) is 德之賊 (“thieves of virtue”)
<i>xue</i> 學	learning; study	33	3% (1)	181	• Low rank may reflect Mencian internalism
<i>zhi</i> 智	wisdom	33	39% (13)	183	• Often occurs in direct conjunction with 仁 and the other virtues
<i>xiao</i> 孝	filial piety	29	3% (1)	207	
<i>qi</i> 氣	spirit; essence	20	0% (0)	280	• 25% of occurrences (5 hits) are within 10 characters of 心
<i>duan</i> 端	sprout; beginning	9	22% (2)	493	• Surprisingly rare, given their supposed importance

Ren occurs with similar frequency in the *Mencius* as it does in the *Analects*, again appearing as one of the most commonly discussed terms. This result is not due to Mencius quoting Confucius, as only about 9 of *ren*'s 158 occurrences occur after direct quotes.⁹⁶ However, unlike in the *Analects*, *ren* co-occurs highly with *yi* 義, and it is here that we first see the duo of “benevolence and righteousness” appear in Confucian thought. As might be expected, *li* 禮 and *zhi* 智, the two other Mencian sprouts, also show close proximity to *ren*. Thus, although *ren* occurs almost as frequently in the *Mencius* as in the *Analects*, its pairing with other related virtues helps reflect its narrower meaning as “benevolence,” just one important virtue among several (though *ren* still takes priority as the most important). This finding supports the views of Graham and Van Norden.

Interestingly, the term *jun* 君, or “gentleman,” actually appears in closer proximity to *ren* here than it does in the *Analects* (13% of occurrences within 10 characters of *ren* in the *Mencius*, versus only 6% in the *Analects*). This finding is difficult to interpret on its own, but could possibly inform further research of how Mencius and Confucius respectively defined the term *jun*. The fairly strong connection between *ren* and *ai* 愛 (“love”) is also still present in the *Mencius*. While I did not employ any statistical test to provide a “cut-off” for what degree of overlap counts as significant, I consider it important that *ai* appears in close proximity to *ren* (i.e. within 10 characters) more frequently than any other term researched other than *yi*. It demonstrates numerically that Mencius held the two terms in close association.

⁹⁶ When accounting for quotes in my quantitative analyses, my method was to search in front of the target term (in this case, *ren*) with a window of 20 characters for the terms 孔子, 仲尼, and 曰, and then examine hits in detail individually. This method does not account for quotes which may be embedded in other ways, or so obvious that the author considered citing them unnecessary.

Xunzi

Xunzi (c. 335 – c. 238 BCE) was a third highly influential Confucian philosopher in the Warring States period. He lived after Mencius, and explicitly argued against Mencian philosophy. His primary text, the *Xunzi*, is generally accepted to be authentic, written by either Xunzi himself or his immediate disciples.⁹⁷ Most famously, he argued that human nature was bad, and that all positive things in society derived from following the proper external standards, namely the Confucian Classics. Xunzi therefore placed great value on learning and self-control. Due to later Confucian philosophers favoring Mencian ideas, Xunzi's brand of Confucianism eventually fell out of favor, and he is less remembered. Even as early as the Han dynasty, the shift towards Mencian thought had begun to occur, and Goldin (2007) notes that quotes from Mencius outnumber quotes from Xunzi ten to one in Huan Kuan's "Discourses on Salt and Iron" (*Yantielun* 鹽鐵論) in 83 BCE.⁹⁸

One reason for this shift in popularity may have been Xunzi's treatment of *ren* and *li*. As Goldin hypothesizes, "Xunzi may have suffered for expatiating on *li* (禮) instead of *ren* (仁). Without denying its importance, Xunzi rarely discussed *ren*, whereas he saw in *li* the sage guidelines for every conceivable human endeavor. Later writers, even when they admired Xunzi, found themselves compelled to grant *ren* more political purchase."⁹⁹ After the Warring States period, the policies of the brief Qin dynasty were perceived as harsh and insensitive by the predominantly Confucian Han dynasty that followed. By giving more importance to *li* than *ren*, Xunzi may have been interpreted by later Confucians (perhaps unfairly) as a "philosopher who emphasized doctrine and discipline at the expense of humanity."¹⁰⁰ Indeed, as we will see in the

⁹⁷ Loewe 1993, p. 180.

⁹⁸ Goldin 2007, p. 164.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

quantitative exploration to follow *liyi* 禮義 shows up more than three times more frequently in the *Xunzi* than the more Mencian compound *renyi* 仁義.

How did Xunzi view *ren* itself? Like Mencius, he described it as “benevolence,” an important gentleman’s virtue.¹⁰¹ But unlike Mencius, he viewed it as coming from external sources, and as less important than (or subservient to) other, related virtues. As Hutton (2000) explains, “Even if Xunzi were to admit that people do naturally love their parents [i.e. possible proof of the innate sprout of *ren*], this would not constitute a tendency toward virtue for him, because it would become a virtue only when given the proper form, and there is no natural tendency to do that.”¹⁰² This argument is based on a passage in the chapter *Daliè*, in which Xunzi explains that *ren* is only true when it is based on *yi* 義, while *yi* is only true *yi* when it is based on *li* 禮.

Nevertheless, Xunzi had a very high regard for *ren*. In Chapter 2, after listing “honoring benevolence” (隆仁) as the first positive quality of a gentleman. After *ren*, Xunzi goes on to list the other important qualities, which as: “not presuming upon one’s station” (殺執), “choosing to follow what is right” (秉理), “valuing good form” (好交), and “allowing law to prevail over personal feeling” (法勝私). Similarly, in Chapter 9, Xunzi explains the important function of *ren* in government:

仁眇天下，故天下莫不親也；義眇天下，故天下莫不貴也；威眇天下，故天下莫敢敵也。

Since [a true king’s] benevolence is the loftiest in the world, there is no one in the world who does not draw close to him. Since his righteousness is the loftiest in the world, there is no one who does not respect him. Since his authority is the loftiest in the world, there is no one who dares oppose him.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ For example, in Chapter 2 of the *Xunzi*: 君子貧窮而志廣，隆仁也。 “Though poor and hard-pressed, [a gentleman] is broad of will because he honors benevolence.” Translation by Watson 2003b, p. 32.

¹⁰² Hutton 2000, p. 231.

¹⁰³ Watson 2003b, p. 43.

Not only did Xunzi believe that *ren* would inspire trust and intimacy, he also believed it granted rulers, a sort of supernatural protection and efficacy. In Chapter 15, he writes:

仁人之兵，不可詐也；彼可詐者，怠慢者也。

Against the soldiers of a benevolent man, deceptions are of no use; they are effective only against a ruler who is rash and arrogant, whose people are worn out.¹⁰⁴

This passage echoes Confucius' statement that a man of *ren* can be “tricked,” but not fully “duped,”¹⁰⁵ and also brings to mind stories of the ancient sage-kings, who won battles through the power of their virtue (*de* 德) alone. Xunzi soon makes the reference to the Classics explicit, explaining that the evil King Jie's attempts to deceive the Sage-king Yao were like “trying to break a rock by throwing eggs at it, or trying to stir boiling water with your bare finger.”¹⁰⁶ It is as though those who care sufficiently for others become immune to harm themselves.

However, although useful for those in power, Xunzi's version of *ren* is not the prerogative of rulers alone. As he writes in Chapter 23:

凡禹之所以為禹者，以其為仁義法正也。然則仁義法正有可知可能之理。然而塗之人也，皆有可以知仁義法正之質，皆有可以能仁義法正之具，然則其可以為禹明矣。

The man in the street can become a Yu. What does this mean? What made the sage emperor Yu a Yu, I would reply, was the fact that he practiced benevolence and righteousness and abided by the proper rules and standards. If this is so, then benevolence, righteousness, and proper standards must be based upon principles which can be known and practiced. Any man in the street has the essential faculties needed to understand benevolence, righteousness, and proper standards, and put them into practice. Therefore, it is clear that he can become a Yu.¹⁰⁷

For Xunzi, if a man is capable of fulfilling his duties as father, son, or subject, then he need only apply the same faculty of self-control toward the practice of benevolence and righteousness, and he will be successful. Morality may be an invention of the sages, but everyone

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Analects* 6.27. Translation by Slingerland 2003a, p. 62.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Watson 2003b, p. 170.

is capable of understanding and practicing it.¹⁰⁸ To facilitate self-cultivation, Xunzi put great value on clear meanings and explanatory discourse. Proper knowledge of human relationships was just as important in moral education as dedication to *ren* and *yi*.¹⁰⁹ Portions of the quantitative table below reflect these views:

¹⁰⁸ Lau 2000, p. 207.

¹⁰⁹ Cua 2000, pp. 44 – 46.

Table 6: The *Xunzi* 荀子

Author: Xunzi 荀子 | **Era:** Late Warring States | **Total Characters:** 75,262 | **Total Vocabulary:** 2,664

Character	Translation	Hits	仁 Prox.	Rank	Additional Comments
<i>tian</i> 天	nature	598	3% (20)	18	• Occurs most commonly in 天下 (overwhelmingly), 天子, and 天地
<i>jun</i> 君	gentleman	547	3% (14)	20	
<i>dao</i> 道	the Way	338	4% (12)	28	• Occurs most commonly in the phrases 先王之道 and 天下之道
<i>li</i> 禮	ritual propriety	343	4% (13)	32	• High rank reflects Xunzian externalism
<i>yi</i> 義	righteousness; rightness	315	16% (49)	36	• 10% of occurrences (32 hits) are in the couplet 仁義 • 37% of occurrences (115 hits) are in the couplet 禮義
<i>fa</i> 法	standard; law	183	7% (12)	66	• Occurs most commonly in 王之法 and 仁義法政
<i>xin</i> 心	heart; mind	168	5% (8)	67	
<i>wen</i> 文	culture	143	1% (1)	85	• Higher rank than in Mencius
<i>de</i> 德	virtue	109	6% (6)	111	• Most common construction (12 hits) is 道德
<i>ren</i> 仁	benevolence	89	N/A	134	• Clear drop in importance, reflecting Xunzian externalism • Most common couplets are 仁義, 仁人, and 仁者 • Most common phrase is 仁義法政
<i>xue</i> 學	learning; study	91	4% (4)	138	• More prominent than for Mencius, but still rarer than might be expected
<i>kong</i> 孔	Confucius	83	5% (4)	148	
<i>ai</i> 愛	love	69	13% (9)	196	
<i>xiao</i> 孝	filial piety	47	4% (2)	289	• As in previous Confucian works, not an especially frequent term
<i>wei</i> 偽	artificiality; conscious effort	44	0% (0)	304	
<i>qi</i> 氣	spirit; essence	27	0% (0)	430	• As in Mencius, 25% of occurrences (5 hits) are within 10 characters of 心
<i>meng</i> 孟	Mencius	11	9% (1)	747	
<i>zhi</i> 智	wisdom	9	11% (1)	860	• By far the least common of Mencius' original four virtues

Consistent with the qualitative arguments of Goldin, Hutton, and Watson, the quantitative statistics of the *Xunzi* show a fall in *ren*'s relative frequency, as compared with its frequency in the *Analects* and the *Mencius*. In the *Xunzi*, *li* 禮 and *yi* 義 both appear more than three times as frequently as *ren*, a major change. Meanwhile, the fourth of Mencius' original four sprouts, *zhi* 智, appears much less frequently than the others, with only 9 occurrences throughout the text.

An interesting relationship to note in this text and others is the frequency ratio of *renyi* 仁義 (“benevolence and righteousness”) to *liyi* 禮義 (“propriety and righteousness”). This statistic can serve as a rough metric, whereby texts in which occurrences of *renyi* outweigh occurrences of *liyi* tend to lean towards internalist moral stances, whereas texts with the opposite ratio tend to lean toward externalist moral stances. Such is the case in the *Mencius* and the *Xunzi*: in the *Mencius* the ratio of *renyi* to *liyi* is 5 to 1,¹¹⁰ whereas in the *Xunzi* the ratio is less than 1 to 3. I consider this metric in several subsequent texts as well.

Other statistics that may help support labeling Xunzi as an externalist philosopher are the relatively higher ranks of *fa* 法, *wen* 文, and *xue* 學 in this text. Again, however, it should be kept in mind that relative rankings only tell us which concepts the author chose to write about most frequently. While this can give a rough measure of importance, when supported with appropriate qualitative theory, it is important to look at specific instances of the character's use when making more definitive claims. Finally, it may be noted that in the *Xunzi*, *ai* 愛 still occurs in fairly close proximity to *ren*, but this proximity appears to be falling compared with its proximity in the *Analects* and the *Mencius*.

¹¹⁰ 2 out of 27 occurrences of *renyi* in the *Mencius* are in the longer phrase *renyilizhi* 仁義禮智, but even discounting these 2 occurrences, the 5 to 1 ratio of *renyi* to *liyi* remains intact.

Conclusion

In the *Analects*, Confucius revolutionized the meaning of *ren*. Drawing on its pre-Confucian meaning of “manliness,” or the qualities which make one a man, Confucius employed it as an overarching virtue incorporating the various other virtues that make one a gentleman. He also took care to delineate it from the more superficial, related term *ning* 佞, or “cleverness.” These fundamental changes are somewhat clouded by a handful of puzzling or contradictory passages in the *Analects*, which have required additional explanation by commentators.

Mencius narrowed the meaning of *ren* to “benevolence,” while clarifying its development and function as one of four moral “sprouts.” Rather than a master virtue, it was just one chief virtue among four others, although it still seems to have been the most important. Mencius also paired *ren* closely with *yi* 義 (“righteousness”), a pairing that would stick in future philosophical texts both within and without of the Confucian tradition. Xunzi, for his part, re-iterated the meaning of *ren* as “benevolence,” and its accessibility and importance to both common people and rulers, though he paid it less attention than *li* 禮. Quantitative evidence suggests a present but diminishing association between *ren* and *ai* 愛 (“love”) across these three early Confucian texts, and helps highlight the internalist vs. externalist ideological differences between Mencius and Xunzi.

3. The Evolution of *Ren*

In this chapter, I aim to demonstrate the key ways in which the Confucian concept of *ren* continued to evolve during and after the Han Dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE), all the way into the Song dynasty (960 – 1279 CE). This is a time period of over 1,400 years, and reviewing the ideas of all major Confucian thinkers during this period is well beyond my scope. Instead, I have chosen only a few pieces, which I hope will serve as useful case studies, snapshots reflective of greater ideological shifts taking place. The first three texts I review are the *Chunqiu Fanlu* by Dong Zhongshu (179 – 104 BCE), the *Qianfulun* by Wang Fu (ca. 82 – 167 CE), and *Yuan Dao* by Han Yu (768 – 824 CE). I then finish by investigating the commentaries on the *Four Books* by Zhu Xi (1130 – 1200 CE). My analyses demonstrate that, as Confucians competed with Daoist and Buddhist philosophies, the domain of *ren* shifted toward cosmological and metaphysical reality, sometimes combined with grounding in human physiology.

Chunqiu Fanlu

Traditionally attributed to Dong Zhongshu (179 – 104 BCE), the *Chunqiu Fanlu* is a fairly lengthy exegetical text of nearly 60,000 characters (the longest examined thus far), describing the “ethical and political principles found in the *Chunqiu* [or *Spring and Autumn Annals*], as interpreted through the medium of the *Gongyangzhuan*.”¹¹¹ It contains syncretic Daoist elements, and frames many of its principles “in terms of the Yin-Yang and *wuxing* beliefs that were prevalent at the time.”¹¹² Its authenticity is tenuous, however, and certain portions of the text were likely added or edited between Dong’s death and its inclusion in the *Siku Quanshu* almost 19 centuries later.¹¹³ Nevertheless, it is regarded by many as a likely representation of

¹¹¹ Davidson & Loewe 1993, p. 77.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 80; Loewe 2009, p. 163.

early Han dynasty thought,¹¹⁴ and its content contributes to our understanding of the development of *ren* after the Warring States.

Dong, who for convenience I will refer to as the author of the full text, follows Xunzi in his belief that “the Sages produced civilization by following the normative patterns laid down by Heaven.”¹¹⁵ However, Dong differs from Xunzi in placing great importance on Heaven-sent omens as signs of legitimizing rulership, and by tying close parallels between phenomena in the natural world and the human world. These views extend to *ren*. According to Dong, just as Heaven implements the sun and moon, wind and rain, and *yin* and *yang* in order to harmonize the natural world, so too did the sages use virtue and benevolence to harmonize the human world.¹¹⁶ Dong follows the traditional Confucian theme of linking *ren* to the practice of good government, while tying it to ideas of natural balance. In Chapter 30, he writes: “to be lacking in benevolence while being courageous and bold is a madman holding a sharp sword.”¹¹⁷ To be effective, a ruler must balance courage (*yong* 勇) with benevolence (*ren*).

Following Mencius, Dong also closely associates *ren* with *yi* 義. In Chapter 29 he parses the two terms apart. As Loewe (2011) explains, this chapter highlights the distinction between *ren* and *yi* in the *Chunqiu*’s “recognition of acts of *ren* as being exercised in respect of others and those of *yi* in correcting oneself, with love (*ai* 愛) as an element of *ren*, and suitability (*yi* 宜) as part of *yi*.”¹¹⁸ In Chapter 30, Dong provides the following definition of *ren*:

何謂仁？仁者怛愛人，謹翕不爭，好惡敦倫，無傷惡之心。。。

¹¹⁴ Davidson & Loewe 1993, p. 80

¹¹⁵ Goldin 2007, p. 160. In the case of Xunzi, “nature” may be a better translation of *tian* 天 than Heaven.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 160 – 165.

¹¹⁷ 不仁而有勇力材能，則狂而操利兵也。 Translation by Loewe 2011, p. 238.

¹¹⁸ Loewe 2011, p. 238. Interestingly, this chapter seems to somewhat invert a more common trend in early Chinese philosophy, whereby *ren* is viewed as internal (following Mencius, as described earlier), while *yi* is viewed as external. See Slingerland 2008 (p. 242) for other examples.

What is benevolence? The benevolent person broadly loves others. He is respectful and peaceful, and does not fight. His loves and hates are well-ordered. He does not have a harmful or hateful heart...¹¹⁹

Dong continues by stating that, in addition to the heart (*xin* 心), the aspirations (*zhi* 志), vital force (*qi* 氣), desires (*yu* 欲), and behaviors (*shi* 事 and *xin* 行) of a benevolent (*ren*) person are likewise calm and peaceful. Two aspects of this definition are noteworthy. The first is Dong's use of the phrase "broadly loving others" (*bo ai ren* 怙愛人). This phrase is likely meant as a counter-point to the Mohist conception of "universal caring" (*jianai* 兼愛), discussed in more detail in the next chapter. We will see the phrase *boai* 怙愛 return as a definition of *ren* in the work of Han Yu. The second important aspect in Dong's definition of *ren* is the attention he gives to the body, namely the "heart" (*xin* 心) and "vital force" (*qi* 氣). Within the *Chunqiu Fanlu*, although *ren* is critical in the external care and governance of others, it also derives from and manifests itself in the physical body. The following table provides quantitative statistics for the text.

¹¹⁹ This translation is my own.

Table 7: The *Chunqiu Fanlu* 春秋繁露

Author: Traditionally Attributed to Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒

Era: Early Han Dynasty | **Total Characters:** 58,008 | **Total Vocabulary:** 2,080

Character	Translation	Hits	仁 Prox.	Rank	Additional Comments
<i>tian</i> 天	Heaven	960	3% (24)	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflects strong cosmological concern • Occurs most commonly in 天地, 天下, and 天子
<i>jun</i> 君	gentleman	348	1% (2)	20	
<i>yang</i> 陽	light; strong; male	250	0% (0)	32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater density in second half of the text • 28% of occurrences are coupled with 陰, 76% within 10 characters
<i>yin</i> 陰	dark; weak; female	249	0% (0)	33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater density in second half of the text • 28% of occurrences are coupled with 陽, 76% within 10 characters
<i>yi</i> 義	righteousness; rightness	240	18% (42)	35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8% of occurrences (18 hits) are in the couplet 仁義 • 3% of occurrences (7 hits) are in the couplet 禮義
<i>dao</i> 道	the Way	222	4% (9)	40	• Most common in 天之道 (overwhelmingly), 天地之道, and 春秋之道
<i>de</i> 德	virtue	153	3% (5)	72	• Occurs most commonly in 天之德
<i>li</i> 禮	ritual propriety	132	3% (4)	82	
<i>ren</i> 仁	benevolence	101	N/A	108	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher ranked than in the <i>Xunzi</i>; lower ranked than in the <i>Mencius</i> • Most common couplets are 仁義, 仁者, and 爲仁
<i>ai</i> 愛	love	61	28% (17)	192	
<i>qi</i> 氣	spirit; essence	37	24% (9)	233	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close proximity to 仁, more than even 義 • Occurs most commonly in 陰氣 and 陽氣
<i>kong</i> 孔	Confucius	47	4% (2)	247	
<i>xiao</i> 孝	filial piety	32	3% (1)	342	
<i>zhi</i> 智	wisdom	16	38% (6)	535	• Uncommon (similar to in the <i>Xunzi</i>), but shows quite close proximity to 仁
<i>meng</i> 孟	Mencius	11	0% (0)	646	
<i>xue</i> 學	learning; study	8	0% (0)	775	

Overall, quantitative analysis of the *Chunqiu Fanlu* supports a resurgence in Mencian doctrinal trends, mixed with Daoist syncretism. The relative rank of *ren* in this text has risen slightly compared to its relative rank in the *Xunzi*, but it still is not such a common topic here as it was in the *Mencius*. The ratio of *renyi* to *liyi* is 2 to 1, further supporting the lean toward Mencius. Consistent with the text's syncretist elements, the predominantly Daoist concepts of *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽 feature prominently, though not in connection to *ren*. Once again, *tian* 天 is overwhelmingly the most common term analyzed.

The close proximity of *ren* to *ai* 愛 makes sense in light of Dong's definition of *ren* as *boai* 博愛, and continues the Confucian connection between the two terms. Interestingly, while *ren* maintains a close proximity to *yi* in this text, it shows an even closer proximity to *qi* 氣. This may reflect the beginning of its transition to a more metaphysical principle, with an internal, physiological grounding.

Qianfulun

The *Qianfulun* is a work by Wang Fu (ca. 82 – 167 CE) dating from the later Han Dynasty. In the text's 35 chapters, Wang Fu covers “almost all the important aspects of state, society, thought and religion of Later Han times,” and unlike the *Chunqiu Fanlu*, the text's authenticity is not subject to any serious concern.¹²⁰ Like Dong Zhongshu, Wang Fu also employs syncretic elements in his writing, but his ideas differ from those of Dong in certain ways. According to Pearson (1989), both Dong Zhongshu and Wang Fu “acknowledge heaven, earth, and man as the creative trio of the cosmos.” However, Dong holds “a relatively static view of the human role, one in which men are to fulfill prescribed virtues [such as benevolence and righteousness] so as to harmonize with the cosmos.” The Way as envisioned by Wang, on the

¹²⁰ Ch'en & Pearson 1993, pp. 12 – 13.

other hand, “emphasizes human initiative and activity rather than the passivity and fatalism,” which some associated with the yin-yang Confucian school.¹²¹

The *Qianfulun* does not provide an explicit definition of *ren*. However, in his treatment of the term, Wang Fu focuses on the importance of societal roles, writing in Chapter 2:

五者守本離末則仁義興，離本守末則道德崩。慎本略末猶可也，舍本務末則惡矣。

If these five groups – teachers, gentlemen, debaters, officials, and the filial – protect the roots and sever the branches, benevolence and righteousness will prosper. If they sever the roots and protect the branches, the Way and virtue will die. To be meticulous with the roots and yet perfunctory with the branches is permissible. But it is bad if the roots are severed while branches are cared for.¹²²

The “roots” (*ben* 本) of Wang Fu speaks are honest behavior at any occupational level that nourishes and protects others. The “branches” are decorative or insincere behavior that only benefits oneself.¹²³ In this passage, we see echoes of both Confucius’ skepticism of superficial niceties, and Mencius’ use of agricultural metaphors. With regard to the latter, however, Kinney (1990) notes that “by Wang Fu’s time, some figures of speech had become so common that they functioned as dead metaphors.” Such may have been the case with *ben* 本 and *mo* 末, which Wang Fu construes only “in their secondary senses of ‘essential’ and ‘inessential,’” without further pursuing the agricultural cultivation metaphors of Mencius.¹²⁴ Quantitative analysis of the *Qianfulun* reflects similar trends as those seen in the *Chunqiu Fanlu*:

¹²¹ Pearson 1989, p. 40.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 107.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Kinney 1990, p. 82.

Table 8: The *Qianfu Lun* 潛夫論

Author: Wang Fu 王符 | Era: Late Han Dynasty | Total Characters: 45,062 | Total Vocabulary: 2,773

Character	Translation	Hits	仁 Prox.	Rank	Additional Comments
<i>jun</i> 君	gentleman	252	3% (8)	21	
<i>tian</i> 天	Heaven	221	3% (7)	22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As with <i>Chunqiu Fanlu</i>, reflects cosmological concern • Occurs most commonly in 天下, 天地, 天子, and (new) 天心
<i>de</i> 德	virtue	172	5% (9)	33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest rank of 德 in any text examined thus far
<i>xin</i> 心	heart; mind	145	2% (3)	43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occurs most commonly in 天心
<i>dao</i> 道	the Way	105	7% (7)	61	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most common in 天之道 and 道德
<i>fa</i> 法	way; method; standard	102	0% (0)	63	
<i>yi</i> 義	righteousness; rightness	96	19% (18)	72	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21% of occurrences (20 hits) are in the (new) couplet 德義 • 9% of occurrences (9 hits) are in the couplet 仁義 • 6% of occurrences (6 hits) are in the couplet 禮義
<i>yang</i> 陽	light; strong; male	66	3% (2)	124	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much lower ranked than in the <i>Chunqiu Fanlu</i> • 30% of occurrences are coupled with 陰, 42% within 10 characters
<i>ren</i> 仁	benevolence	54	N/A	156	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most common couplets are 仁義, 不仁, and 仁者
<i>qi</i> 氣	spirit; essence	48	0% (0)	185	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No proximity to 仁, in stark contrast to the <i>Chunqiu Fanlu</i>
<i>ai</i> 愛	love	46	11% (5)	188	
<i>li</i> 禮	ritual propriety	43	2% (1)	204	
<i>xiao</i> 孝	filial piety	42	2% (1)	210	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occurs most commonly in 孝悌 near familial terms (家, 父母)
<i>zhi</i> 智	wisdom	41	10% (4)	220	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower proximity to 仁 than in the <i>Chunqiu Fanlu</i>
<i>kong</i> 孔	Confucius	37	3% (1)	246	
<i>xue</i> 學	learning; study	36	0% (0)	254	
<i>yin</i> 陰	dark; weak; female	32	3% (1)	302	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much lower ranked than in the <i>Chunqiu Fanlu</i> • 63% of occurrences are coupled with 陽, 88% within 10 characters
<i>meng</i> 孟	Mencius	8	0% (0)	846	

Yin 陰 and *yang* 陽, though present, are not as common in the *Qianfulun* as they were in the *Chunqiu Fanlu*, and *tian* 天 features less prominently than *jun* 君. *Ren* occurs with about equal frequency as in the *Chunqiu Fanlu*, and retains its statistical links with *yi* 義, *li* 禮, and *zhi* 智. The ratio of *renyi* to *liyi* is lower in this text, at 3 to 2, although a novel compound, *deyi* 德義 (translatable as “virtue and righteousness”) has arisen with greater frequency than both *renyi* and *liyi* combined. Notably, *qi* does not appear in close proximity to *ren*, in sharp contrast to the *Chunqiu Fanlu*. Overall, the statistics of this text suggest that, although some Han Confucians incorporated Daoist concepts into their philosophical repertoire, the syncretism had its limits, and Wang Fu may have adhered more closely to traditional Confucian doctrine than Dong Zhongshu.

Yuan Dao

Yuan Dao is an essay written by Han Yu (768 – 824 CE) during the Tang dynasty. At less than 1,000 characters, it is much shorter than the other texts I examine. However, I include it here for several reasons. One is to present a snapshot of an argumentative piece dealing with all three of China’s “Three Teachings:” Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. Han Yu’s aim in this piece is to defend and clarify Confucian ideas, and one of the ways he does this is my clarifying the meaning of *ren*.

A second reason is as a demonstration of the limitations of my quantitative techniques. As will be seen, a shorter text results in more dramatic swings in character statistics, particularly the “仁 Prox.” measure. Running analyses on a short essay still brings to light certain trends, but they may be muted or amplified as a result of lower character counts. This piece serves as a good demonstration.

A third reason is to address the beginning of an ideological shift toward neo-Confucianism. Slingerland (2003) writes that Han Yu is “often identified as a forerunner of neo-

Confucianism.” Han Yu strongly criticized Daoism and Buddhism, while following in the same ideological tradition as Mencius. The books he cited (including the Four Books) eventually came to hold an important place in neo-Confucian metaphysics.¹²⁵ Han Yu begins to truly universalize the scope of *ren*, a trend which we will see Zhu Xi continue. Hartman (2014) describes the change in Han Yu’s writing:

The cultivation of one’s ‘sense of humanity’ (*ren*) is no longer a purely private endeavor; rather the extension of the benefits of *ren* to as many people as possible becomes the moral imperative of the ‘superior man’ (*junzi*). The unity of the state becomes the measure of the success of this extension of *ren* into the wider political sphere. Such is the real significance of Han Yu’s definition of *ren* as *boai* ‘to love widely’: the ‘superior man’ who has perfected his own sense of humanity in his immediate surroundings has directly contributed to the health of the state and thus enhanced the possibilities for a wider diffusion of such love. There is no distinction between private moral and public political action.¹²⁶

Like Dong Zhongshu, Han Yu defines *ren* as *boai* 博愛, meaning love or concern that is broad or wide, though not without distinctions. In the second paragraph of *Yuan Dao*, Han Yu writes:

博愛之謂仁，行而宜之之謂義；由是而之焉之謂道，足乎己無待於外之謂德。仁與義為定名，道與德為虛位。有君子小人，而德有凶有吉。

‘Benevolence’ (*ren* 仁) is wide-ranging concern. ‘Righteousness’ (*yi* 義) is doing what is proper. To act out of these [two] is the ‘Way’ (*dao*). What one has within oneself, without relying on anything outside oneself, is ‘Virtue’ (*de*). *Ren* and *yi* are fixed terms, while *dao* and *de* are open concepts. And so, there is the Way of the cultivated person and the Way of the petty person; there is inauspicious as well as auspicious Virtue.¹²⁷

The bulk of the essay consists of Han Yu’s arguments regarding how the Buddhists and Daoists (or more literally, followers of Laozi) have mutilated and misused these terms, and how following the false Way they promote will lead society to ruin. It ends with a demand to burn the books of the other teachings, and force their monks back to lay life, for the sake of nourishing “the widows and widowers, the orphans and childless, [and] the disabled and the sick.”¹²⁸

Quantitative analyses on the short piece reveal the following:

¹²⁵ Slingerland 2003, p. 258.

¹²⁶ Hartman 2014, p. 152.

¹²⁷ Ivanhoe 2010, p. 133.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

Table 9: *Yuan Dao* 原道

Author: Han Yu 韓愈 | Era: Tang Dynasty | Total Characters: 939 | Total Vocabulary: 259

Character	Translation	Hits	仁 Prox.	Rank	Additional Comments
<i>dao</i> 道	the Way	22	32% (7)	6	• Occurs most commonly in 所謂道 and 道德
<i>de</i> 德	virtue	14	57% (8)	13	• 36% of occurrences (5 hits) are in the couplet 道德
<i>ren</i> 仁	benevolence	10	N/A	18	• 70% of occurrences (7 hits) are paired directly with 儀 • Remaining 3 occurrences are in 仁行 and 爲仁
<i>yi</i> 義	righteousness; rightness	10	100% (10)	18	• 70% of occurrences (7 hits) are paired directly with 仁 • 禮義 and 德儀 do not appear in this essay
<i>tian</i> 天	Heaven	9	22% (2)	21	• Occurs most commonly in 天下
<i>kong</i> 孔	Confucius	7	0% (0)	28	• 2 occurrences are quotes
<i>jun</i> 君	gentleman	6	0% (0)	31	
<i>xin</i> 心	heart; mind	5	0% (0)	42	
<i>fo</i> 佛	Buddha; Buddhist	4	0% (0)	49	• In all 4 occurrences, Buddhist disciples and disciples of Laozi (i.e. Daoists) are criticized for having wrong beliefs
<i>ai</i> 愛	love	3	67% (2)	57	• 2 occurrences directly define 仁 through 博愛: “博愛之謂仁” • The third occurrence describes well-fed people loving one another
<i>li</i> 禮	ritual propriety	2	0% (0)	79	
<i>meng</i> 孟	Mencius	1	0% (0)	134	• Describes how Confucius passed the Way on to Mencius
<i>zhi</i> 智	wisdom	1	0% (0)	134	

Many characters investigated in the previous two works do not appear in *Yuan Dao* at all, including *yin* 陰, *yang* 陽, *qi* 氣, *xue* 學, and *xiao* 孝. *Fa* 法 only has two minor occurrences, so was not included in the table. The most noteworthy aspect of the table is that, as a result of low character hit rates, co-occurrence rates between characters with possible semantic connections tend to appear either as very large, or completely non-existent. It is meaningful that all of the 10 occurrences of *yi* 義 occur in close proximity to *ren*, 7 of them occurring within the couplet 仁義. This could support the scholarly argument that Han Yu closely followed the philosophical lineage of Mencius. Beyond this, however, I hesitate to make any arguments based on numbers from this text.

Zhu Xi

Zhu Xi was an extremely influential neo-Confucian philosopher living in the Song dynasty. He interpreted Confucian Classics in a way that brought them more in line with Buddhist ideology, and his reading eventually became the standard interpretation. In 1313, Zhu Xi's commentary on the Four Books was "identified as the 'orthodox' interpretation for the civil service examinations and remained so for the next six hundred years. As a result, generations of Chinese scholars literally memorized Zhu Xi's interpretations."¹²⁹ Zhu Xi "established a school of neo-Confucian thought – later known as the Cheng-Zhu 程朱, 'learning of principle' (*lixue* 理學), or 'rationalist' school – that remained the dominant orthodoxy throughout the Chinese cultural sphere into the twentieth century, and which continues to inform the beliefs of many contemporary neo-Confucians."¹³⁰ Zhu Xi's commentaries were included in basic school education until recently, and his ideas had powerful influence on social customs throughout

¹²⁹ Van Norden 2008, p. xv.

¹³⁰ Slingerland 2003, p. 269.

China and the rest of the Chinese cultural sphere.¹³¹ Therefore, I devote particular attention to him in this chapter.

In many cases, the neo-Confucian lens through which Zhu Xi viewed his material subtly altered the meaning of the original texts. For example, in *Analects* 12.1, discussed earlier, Confucius says that “Restraining yourself and returning to the rites (*keji fuli* 克己復禮)” constitutes *ren*. Zhu Xi takes the character *ji* 己 here to refer not to oneself, but to one’s own selfish desires (*siyu* 私欲).¹³² In the *Mencius*, Zhu Xi “glosses Mengzi’s ‘Human nature is good’ as ‘Human nature is originally good.’”¹³³ He also “interpret[s] *duan* 端 as *xu* 緒, ‘tip,’ [instead of ‘sprout’ or ‘beginning,’] which he understands as an indicator of a fully formed virtuous nature. This reflects the “influence of Buddhist discovery metaphors of self-cultivation on Zhu Xi,”¹³⁴ as observed earlier by Ivanhoe (2001). “For Zhu Xi, becoming virtuous is a process of stripping away selfishness to *discover* one’s true nature; for Mencius, becoming virtuous is a process of *developing* an incipient potential for virtue.”¹³⁵

Zhu Xi’s brand of neo-Confucianism also sets up a duality between “principle” (*li* 理)¹³⁶ and “material force” (*qi* 氣).¹³⁷ According to Chan (1967), “the most important [new doctrine in neo-Confucianism] is that principle (*li*) is the foundation of all truth and values. The concept of principle was not prominent in ancient Confucianism. The word *li* is not mentioned in the *Analects*.”¹³⁸ As Chan notes, Xunzi mentioned *li* more often, but it still did not hold a prominent place in his philosophy. Another neo-Confucian innovation was the new dual methodology of the

¹³¹ Chan 1987, p. 1.

¹³² Slingerland 2003, p. 125.

¹³³ Van Norden 2008, p. xv.

¹³⁴ Van Norden 2007, p. 218.

¹³⁵ Van Norden 2008, p. xliii.

¹³⁶ This is also sometimes translated as “Pattern.”

¹³⁷ Slingerland 2003, p. 269.

¹³⁸ Chan 1967, p. xvii.

“investigation of things” and “exercise of seriousness,” and “there is no question that the dual emphasis on the extension of knowledge and the cultivation of seriousness reflects the influence of the twofold formula of wisdom and calmness in the Ch'an [Buddhist] school.”¹³⁹ Yet another innovation of Neo-Confucianism is the new place given to the Classics. It challenged the traditional Five Classics as the only standard, and put focus on the Four Books (with commentary) as a mode of explanation, support, and practical guidance for life. They were manifested in universal *li*.¹⁴⁰ According to De Bary (1960), after Buddhism’s arrival in the very late Han dynasty, it slowly gained strength as a dominant form of thought. Confucians developed the concepts of *qi* and *li* in order to accommodate some of the themes of Buddhism.

Under Zhu Xi’s ideology, self-cultivation entails the “investigation of things” *gewu*, a phrase taken from the text *Daxue*,¹⁴¹ along with the development of *ren*. De Bary explains the connection between these topics:

The “things” which Zhu Xi had in mind to investigate may be primarily understood as “affairs,” including matters of conduct, human relations, political problems, etc. To understand them fully required of the individual both a knowledge of that literature in which such principles are revealed (the Classics and histories) and active ethical culture which would develop to the fullest virtue of *ren* (humanity or benevolence). It is through *ren* that the individual overcomes his own selfishness and partiality, enters into all things in such a way as to fully identify with them and thus unites himself with the mind of the universe, which is love and creativity itself. *Ren* is the essence of man, his “humanity,” but it is also the cosmic principle that produces and embraces all things.¹⁴²

As in the *Analects*, *ren* is a broad and far-reaching concept for Zhu Xi. Graham (1989) explains that *ren* for Zhu Xi still means benevolence, while retaining some of its original sense of being a man or human. “Integrity [*cheng* 誠] is the Way by which inwardly I discover the

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Van Norden 2008, pp. xxix – xliv. I describe the *Daxue* in more detail shortly.

¹⁴² De Bary 1960, pp. 534 – 535.

benevolence [*ren* 仁] which distinguishes me as human, and outwardly I know the distinctive wholeness of each thing and the nature which I can assist it in fulfilling.”¹⁴³

There is some distinction between the relation of *ren* to the other virtues under Zhu Xi’s framework as opposed to Confucius’. As Van Norden (2007) explains: “Zhu Xi argues explicitly that all virtues are, ultimately, manifestations of benevolence. This entails the unity of the virtues. It is hard to say what Confucius’ own view was, but he does seem confident in attributing some virtues to individuals without attributing others: ‘Those who are Good will necessarily display courage, but those who display courage are not necessarily Good’ (14.4).”¹⁴⁴ Thus, in some ways Zhu Xi seems to hold *ren* in even higher regard than Confucius.

My textual examples and analyses focus on Zhu Xi’s commentaries on the *Four Books*. Two of these books are the *Analects* and the *Mencius*, which I have already described. The other two are the *Daxue* and the *Zhongyong*. Both texts “are uncertainly dated in the 3rd or 2nd century BCE... [and the *Zhongyong*] plainly belongs to the Mencian branch of the school.”¹⁴⁵ Regarding the essay *Daxue*, “in all likelihood its basic ideas go back to Confucius, though the essay itself definitively belongs to a later age,” possible “as late as 200 BCE.”¹⁴⁶ The *Daxue* is a classic account of how “social order derives through the family from the self-cultivation of individuals,”¹⁴⁷ whereas the *Zhongyong* extends Mencius’ theory on the goodness of human nature to the natural realm. Under its ontological framework, human morality is fundamentally tied to the balance of the cosmos. As Graham puts it, human virtues have a teleology in the

¹⁴³ Graham 1989, p. 136.

¹⁴⁴ Van Norden 2007, p. 43.

¹⁴⁵ Graham 1989, p. 132. Regarding the origin of the *Zhongyong*, Riegel (1993, p. 296) clarifies that, “contrary to the often stated conjecture, the *Zhongyong* was not incorporated in the *Liji* as a loan from the *Zisizi*, a text that is associated with Confucius’ grandson and is now lost. Although it may have been composed as part of an effort to explain the teachings of the latter person, we should perhaps identify it with the *Zhongyongshuo*, which is listed in the ritual section of *Hanshu*.” Hulsewé (1993, pp. 129 – 130) dates the ritual section of the *Hanshu* as being completed by the time its primary author Ban Gu’s death in 92 CE.

¹⁴⁶ De Bary 1960, p. 535.

¹⁴⁷ Graham 1989, p. 132.

Zhongyong, whereby “Heaven and earth require man as the third participant to complete their work.”¹⁴⁸

One meaningful passage Zhu Xi investigates is *Mencius* 2A6, also discussed in my previous chapter, which include the examples of a child falling into a well. Mencius gives this as an instance that will automatically activate the sprout of benevolence in an observer. He continues with a description of the other three virtues as well, though in this passage, he does not provide examples of their manifestations. According to Van Norden (2008), “Zhu Xi believes that righteousness, propriety, and wisdom are manifestations of benevolence, and that this is why Mencius goes on to discuss each of them here, after giving an illustration only of benevolence. Zhu Xi thus interprets Mencius as holding the doctrine of ‘the unity of virtues.’”¹⁴⁹ It is worth noting that, under this view, Mencius’ subsequent metaphor of the virtues as limbs of the body seems to break down. How can each of the four sprouts be like limbs, and yet three of the sprouts be manifestations of one other?

Zhu Xi soon elaborates on the unity of virtues. A few passages later (*Mencius* 2A7.2), we find an example of Mencius commentating on Confucius, followed by Zhu Xi commentating on Mencius, in which all three express portions of their view on *ren*:

Original text: 孔子曰：『里仁為美。擇不處仁，焉得智？』夫仁，天之尊爵也，人之安宅也。莫之禦而不仁，是不智也。

[Confucius] said, “To dwell in benevolence is beautiful; if one chooses not to dwell in benevolence, how can one be wise?”¹⁵⁰ Now, benevolence is Heaven’s rank of respect and people’s abode of peace. If one is not benevolent though nothing prevents it, this is to fail to be wise.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Graham 1989, p. 136.

¹⁴⁹ Van Norden 2008, p. 47.

¹⁵⁰ This quote is from *Analects* 4.1, which Slingerland alternatively translates as: “The Master said, ‘To live in the neighborhood of the Good is fine. If one does not choose to dwell among those who are Good, how will one obtain wisdom?’”

¹⁵¹ Van Norden 2008, p. 47.

Commentary: 仁者天地生物之心，得之最先，而兼統四者

Benevolence is the heart of Heaven and Earth in giving birth to things. One gets it first of all, and it links all four virtues together.¹⁵²

In the passage above, Mencius first links Confucius' statement to Heaven, and Zhu Xi further links it to both Heaven and Earth, tying *ren* to the heart of the cosmos. The passage in the *Mencius* goes on to describe one without benevolence and wisdom as “the lackey of other people” (人役), which is a cause for shame. In 2A7.4, Mencius declares: “If you are ashamed of [this], there is nothing as good as becoming benevolent.”¹⁵³ In response to this, Zhu Xi explains: “[Mencius] does not discuss wisdom, propriety, and righteousness, because benevolence encompasses the entire substance. If one can become benevolent, then the other three are in its midst.”¹⁵⁴ Zhu Xi finishes this section with the following comment:

Original text: 仁者如射，射者正己而後發。發而不中，不怨勝己者，反求諸己而已矣。

Benevolence is like archery. An archer corrects himself and only then shoots. If he shoots but does not hit the mark, he does not resent the one who defeats him but simply turns and seeks for it in himself.¹⁵⁵

Commentary: 為仁由己，而由人乎哉？

Does becoming benevolent come from oneself, or does it come from others?!

¹⁵⁶

Zhu Xi's commentary is a rhetorical question, which elegantly ties the discussion back to Confucius in *Analects* 12.1: “The key to achieving Goodness lies within yourself—how could it come from others?”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ 如恥之，莫如為仁。English translation from Van Norden (2008), p. 48.

¹⁵⁴ 不言智、禮、義者，仁該全體。能為仁，則三者在其中矣。English translation from Van Norden (2008), p. 48.

¹⁵⁵ Van Norden 2008, p. 48.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ 為仁由己，而由人乎哉？English translation from Slingerland (2003a), p. 125.

Zhu Xi's response to *Mencius* 1A7, in which the king substitutes a sheep for a sacrificial ox, is also telling of his views on both *ren* and *li* 理:

蓋殺牛既所不忍，鑿鐘又不可廢。。。然見牛則此心已發而不可遏，未見羊則其理未形而無所妨。故以羊易牛，則二者得以兩全而無害，此所以為仁之術也。。。蓋人之於禽獸，同生而異類。故用之以禮，而不忍之心施於見聞之所及。其所以必遠庖廚者，亦以預養是心，而廣為仁之術也。

On the one hand, killing the ox was something that the king could not bear to do. On the other hand, anointing the bell was something that could not be dispensed with... When he saw the ox, this heart had already been expressed and could not be repressed. But he had not seen the sheep, so the Pattern [*li* 理] had not yet taken form and there were no feelings to hinder. Hence, exchanging the sheep for the ox allowed for the two (i.e. the heart and the ritual) to be complete without harm. This is how it is a technique of benevolence... Now, humans are the same as animals in being alive, but are different categories of things. Hence, we use animals for rituals, and our heart that does not bear their suffering applies only as far as they are seen and heard. Keeping one's distance from the kitchen is a technique used to cultivate this heart and broaden one's benevolence.¹⁵⁸

This passage elucidates the metaphysical way in which *li* “takes form” at the sight of a situation stimulating *ren*, and what the proper response should be. Of course, as Van Norden notes, there does seem to be some hypocrisy in allowing others to do work that would damage their sprouts of benevolence, a conflict which Zhu Xi ignores.

Finally, while I shall limit my quantitative analyses to the *Four Books*, it is worth briefly looking at another major philosophical work associated with Zhu Xi, *Reflections on Things at Hand* (*Jin si lu* 近思錄), as it contains two direct explanations of *ren*. The first occurs in Chapter 1:

醫書言手足痿痺為不仁，此言最善名狀。仁者以天地萬物為一體，莫非己也。認得為己，何所不至？若不有諸己，自不與己相干。如手足不仁，氣已不貫，皆不屬己。

Books on medicine describe paralysis of the four limbs as absence of humanity. This is an excellent description. The man of humanity regards Heaven and Earth and all things as one body. To him there is nothing that is not himself. Since he has recognized all things as himself, can there be any limit to his humanity? If things are not part of the self, naturally they have nothing to do with it. As in the case of paralysis of the four limbs, the vital force no longer penetrates them, and therefore they are no longer parts of the self.

¹⁵⁸ Van Norden 2008, pp. 9 – 10.

The “vital force” described here is the *qi* 氣. As shown earlier, *ren* had been evolving a closer relationship to *qi* over the previous centuries, and the two terms appear here in metaphorical parallel. The passage continues:

故博施濟眾，乃聖之功用。仁至難言，故止曰“己欲立而立人，己欲達而達人。能近取譬，可謂仁之方已。”欲令如是觀仁，可以得仁之體。

Therefore, to be charitable and to assist all things is the function of a sage. It is most difficult to describe humanity. Hence Confucius merely said that the man of humanity, ‘wishing to establish his own character, also establishes the character of others, and wishing to be prominent himself, also helps others to be prominent. To be able to judge of others what is in ourselves may be called the method of realizing humanity.’¹⁵⁹ The hope was that by looking at it this way we might get at the substance of humanity.¹⁶⁰

This passages drives at *ren* as a transcendental virtue, capable of unifying man with the universe. It utilizes a quote from the *Analects* that best fits this interpretation. A second important description of *ren* occurs in Chapter 2 of the text:

仁之道，要之只消道一“公”字。公只是仁之理，不可將公便喚做仁。公而以人體之故為仁。只為公則物我兼照，故仁所以能恕，所以能愛。恕則仁之施，愛則仁之用也。

Essentially speaking, the way of humanity may be expressed in one word, namely, impartiality. However, impartiality is but the principle of humanity; it should not be equated with humanity itself. When one makes impartiality the substance of his person, that is humanity. Because of his impartiality, there will be no distinction between himself and others. Therefore, a man of humanity is a man of both altruism and love. Altruism is the application of humanity, while love is its function.¹⁶¹

This passage echoes *Analects* 15.24, where Confucius cites *shu* 恕 as a single word that can serve as a guide for life. However, perhaps in part to address the puzzling relationship between *ren* and *shu* that I cited earlier, the passage clarifies that *ren* is the central unifier, whereas *gong* 公, *shu* 恕, and *ai* 愛 are merely its extensions in different contexts.

¹⁵⁹ From *Analects* 6.30.

¹⁶⁰ Chan 1967, p. 19.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 19 – 20.

For my quantitative analysis, I was able to separate Zhu Xi's commentary text from the segments of quoted text in the original *Four Books*.¹⁶² I originally began by comparing each character's statistics side-by-side between the original text and the commentaries. However, in nearly every case, this comparison proved meaningless. For *Hits*, every number from the commentaries was much larger, because the commentaries are approximately twice as long. For *仁 Prox.*, every character was less close in the commentaries, because in addition to explanation, the commentaries employ instructions in pronunciation, and because Zhu Xi's written classical Chinese is simply more verbose than the original texts – a change in writing style that occurred over the 1500 years in between. In the end, I settled for the two tables below. The first provides general statistics for the originals and commentaries; the second provides the usual quantitative statistics for the commentaries alone:

Text Name	Total Characters in Original	Total Vocabulary in Original	Total Characters in Commentary	Total Vocabulary in Commentary	Segments Quoted in Commentary
<i>Daxue</i> 大學	1,755	395	4,647	821	80
<i>Zhongyong</i> 中庸	3,568	639	10,251	1,057	164
<i>The Analects</i> 論語	15,962	1,354	62,330	2,286	869
<i>The Mencius</i> 孟子	35,426	1,901	65,348	2,557	956

¹⁶² I did this by copying the texts from Ctext on Google Chrome into Microsoft Word. When copied from Chrome (but not other browsers, such as Explorer or Firefox), the texts retain their HTML formatting, in which the original passages appear larger and in bold. I then used the advanced settings of the Find and Replace function in Word to replace all segments of large, bold text with a single symbol, which for me served as a marker for where the original text had been.

Table 11: *Commentaries on the Four Books* 四書章句集注

Author: Zhu Xi 朱熹 | Era: Song Dynasty | Total Characters: 142,576 | Total Vocabulary: 3,188

Character	Translation	Hits	仁 Prox.	Rank	Additional Comments
<i>dao</i> 道	the Way	705	6% (42)	29	
<i>xin</i> 心	heart; mind	689	13% (91)	30	• Higher relative rank than in any other Confucian text examined
<i>tian</i> 天	Heaven	678	6% (42)	31	
<i>jun</i> 君	gentleman	580	5% (28)	44	
<i>ren</i> 仁	benevolence	477	N/A	54	• About on par with the <i>Analects</i> and the <i>Mencius</i> in terms of relative rank
<i>xue</i> 學	learning; study	443	4% (17)	56	
<i>li</i> 禮	ritual propriety	412	7% (29)	61	
<i>kong</i> 孔	Confucius	399	3% (12)	63	
<i>li</i> 理	principle	374	9% (32)	71	
<i>yi</i> 義	righteousness; rightness	373	23% (86)	72	• 14% of occurrences (51 hits) are in the couplet 仁義; 13 of these hits are in the phrase 仁義禮智. • 6% of occurrences (19 hits) are in the couplet 禮義
<i>meng</i> 孟	Mencius	370	2% (8)	73	
<i>de</i> 德	virtue	346	10% (33)	76	
<i>qi</i> 氣	spirit; essence	185	3% (6)	132	• Relative rank somewhat lower than might be anticipated
<i>fa</i> 法	way; method	177	5% (9)	135	
<i>ai</i> 愛	love	118	29% (34)	206	• High proximity to 仁 corroborates view of modern scholarship
<i>xiao</i> 孝	filial piety	68	25% (17)	330	
<i>zhi</i> 智	wisdom	62	44% (27)	357	
<i>zhongni</i> 仲尼	Confucius (alternate)	35	3% (1)	558	• Treated as one character in analysis
<i>yang</i> 陽	light; positive	28	0% (0)	603	
<i>yin</i> 陰	dark; negative	19	5% (1)	787	

The table above shows that the relative rank of *ren* has risen back towards the top within Zhu Xi's commentaries, and it is now about on par with its relative rank in the *Analects* and the *Mencius*. It also shows fairly close association with most of the other Confucian virtues, a notable exception being *li* 禮. Its close proximity to *ai* 愛 may support Chan's theoretical view of *ren* as transcendental love in neo-Confucian scholarship.¹⁶³ Meanwhile, the ratio of *renyi* 仁義 to *liyi* 禮義 is approximately 2 to 1 here, lower than in most other Confucian texts, but still leaning in the direction of Mencius. However, the fact that the numeric proximity of *ren* to *ai* is even stronger than the proximity of *ren* to *yi* 義 helps to re-iterate that Zhu Xi was not just following Mencian theory, but crafting his own novel interpretations. The most unexpected result to come out of my analyses was *ren*'s low proximity to *qi* 氣 in the commentaries. Given the two terms' connection as outlined in the qualitative section, I would have expected their overlap within a 10-character window to be great than 6 occurrences. This finding provides an opportunity for follow-up research, such as delineating between uses of *qi* in Zhu Xi's *Commentaries on the Four Books* and *Reflections on Things at Hand*.

Conclusion

After the Warring States, Confucianism evolved in response to competing philosophies, namely Buddhism and Daoism. *Ren* expanded in scope, and gained increased connection to cosmological and metaphysical domains. This is shown by its frequent appearance in passages concerning Heaven and Earth, and by its increasing connection to *qi* 氣 and *li* 理. Throughout the texts examined, *ren* retains a strong semantic and numeric tie to *ai* 愛, and was directly defined by Dong Zhongshu and Han Yu as *boai* 博愛, or "loving broadly." While the numeric rank of

¹⁶³ Chan 1955.

ren relative to other virtues fell somewhat in the three pre-Song texts examined, Zhu Xi brought *ren* back to the fore, cementing it in orthodox Confucian tradition as a form of transcendental, unifying humanity.

4. Adaptations of *Ren*

Chan (1955) acknowledges that “*ren* held some significance in Buddhism and Daoism, but quickly moves past them, stating that “*ren* is essentially a Confucian concept, and it was Confucius who made it really significant.”¹⁶⁴ This may be true, but after Confucius, philosophers in other schools of thought used the word *ren* as well, impacting its evolution. These other usages of *ren* did not arise and disappear in isolation. While Confucian writers were the primary driving force behind *ren*’s meaning, continuous interaction between competing philosophies meant that new interpretations from so-called Daoists, Mohists, Legalists, and Buddhists had major influence on Confucian thinking. The development of not just these philosopher’s uses of *ren*, but their worldviews in general, was a reciprocal process.

In this chapter, I first look at four non-Confucian texts with major philosophical impact in the Warring States: the *Daodejing*, *Zhuangzi*, *Mozi*, and *Hanfeizi*.¹⁶⁵ I chose these as case studies in primary texts of three other schools of thought in the Warring States period, namely Daoism, Mohism, and Legalism. I then finish by looking briefly at two post-Warring States Daoist texts, the *Taiping jing* and *Huashu*, and one modern dictionary Buddhist Dictionary, Soothill and Hodous’ *Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*. I chose these as experimental case studies in ways my methodologies can be applied to later non-Confucian texts. My findings suggest that *ren* was also an important concept outside of the Confucian tradition, and its flexible meaning of “benevolence” fluidly took on different connotations, depending on the philosophical tradition in question.

¹⁶⁴ Chan 1955, p. 295.

¹⁶⁵ I would also have liked to include the work of Yang Zhu, another major philosopher of the time period. However, due to space limitations, and the lack of a single, coherent text for Yang Zhu, I was not able to include his work.

The Daodejing

The *Daodejing* is a short work of about 5,000 characters traditionally attributed to Laozi, a mythical figure whom scholars consider to be fictional. Though it is not classed as poetry in the Chinese system, it consists of discrete verses, sometimes rhymed. Regarding its authenticity, although it is traditionally considered to be an early Warring States text, the received Wang Bi edition does not seem to have reached its final form until sometime during the third- or second-century BCE.¹⁶⁶ According to Lau (1982), “not only is the *Daodejing* an anthology, but even individual chapters are usually made up of shorter passages whose connection with one another is at best tenuous.” Lau urges readers to view each section as a unit of thought, rather than part of a cohesive whole, and reflect upon the parts that may have been influenced by later philosophy.¹⁶⁷

The Guodian texts discovered in 1993 have further updated our knowledge of the text. Mentioned in Chapter 1, this cache of bamboo strips was excavated from a tomb sealed between the mid-fourth and very early third-century BCE, and published in 1998.¹⁶⁸ The Guodian version of the *Daodejing* differs from the received version in ways that blur the line between “Daoist” and “Confucian,”¹⁶⁹ and one of those differences pertains directly to *ren*. As Csikszentmihalyi and Ivanhoe (1999) explain:

The Guodian texts’ intriguing variation on chapter 19 will certainly elicit much comment. In the received text, the chapter contains one of several attacks on two important virtues associated with Confucius, benevolence and righteousness: ‘Eliminated benevolence and discard righteousness, and the people will return to filial piety and compassion’ (絕仁棄義民復孝慈). The Guodian slips have instead ‘Eliminate artifice and discard falsehood, and the people will return to being filial sons’ (絕偽棄詐民復孝子). For whatever reason, this oldest version of this chapter of the *Laozi* does not include explicit criticisms of the virtues extolled in the other texts next to which it was buried.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Boltz 1993, pp. 270 – 271.

¹⁶⁷ Lau 1982.

¹⁶⁸ Slingerland 2008, p. 239.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

¹⁷⁰ Csikszentmihalyi & Ivanhoe 1999, p. 9.

This finding is curious, and seems to suggest that later authors may have edited the passage so as to highlight the divide between early Confucianism and early Daoism. In most cases, however, both versions of the *Daodejing* depict the word *ren* as the empty husk of a virtue. It is simply a word that people resort to after the true Way has been lost, as in Chapter 18:

大道廢，有仁義；智慧出，有大偽；六親不和，有孝慈；國家昏亂，有忠臣。

When the great Way is abandoned, there are benevolence and righteousness. When wisdom and intelligence come forth, there is great hypocrisy. When the six familial relationships are out of balance, there are kind parents and filial children. When the state is in turmoil and chaos, there are loyal ministers.¹⁷¹

Ivanhoe (2002) cites the passage above as an example of “the idea that more can lead to less and its implication that less can yield more.” He explains that “this passage expresses the general theme that the self-conscious appreciation of virtue is a mark of the decline of the *dao*.”¹⁷²

Similarly, in Chapter 38 we find:

失道而後德，失德而後仁，失仁而後義，失義而後禮。

When the Way was lost there was Virtue; when Virtue was lost there was benevolence; when benevolence was lost there was righteousness; when righteousness was lost there were the rites.¹⁷³

Note that Virtue (*de* 德) here appears on a higher order than *ren*. The Confucian virtues seem to be listed in a hierarchy of increasing crudeness. The fact that *ren* appears as the second-most refined virtue (after *de*) could be said to demonstrate the importance the author/s of this section of the *Daodejing* attributed to *ren*, even though they viewed it as negative. Unfortunately, in performing quantitative analyses on the text, low character counts may once again lead to somewhat unreliable results:

¹⁷¹ Ivanhoe 2002, p. 18. Note that this passage also employs negative use of the term *wei* 偽, translated here as “hypocrisy.” Xunzi later consciously used this term to mean “artificial” in a positive sense, attempting to change the term’s connotations.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 88.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

Table 12: The *Daodejing* 道德經**Author:** Unknown (Traditionally Attributed to Laozi 老子)**Era:** Warring States | **Total Characters:** 5,284 | **Total Vocabulary:** 802

Character	Translation	Hits	仁 Prox.	Rank	Additional Comments
<i>tian</i> 天	Heaven	92	2% (2)	8	
<i>dao</i> 道	the Way; to say	77	4% (3)	13	
<i>de</i> 德	virtue	45	7% (3)	21	
<i>ren</i> 仁	benevolence	8	N/A	117	
<i>zhi</i> 智	wisdom	7	29% (2)	136	
<i>yi</i> 義	righteousness; rightness	5	100% (5)	166	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occurs once in the couplet 仁義 • Does not occur in the couplet 禮義 • Consistent proximity to 仁 may reflect later editing
<i>li</i> 禮	ritual propriety	5	40% (2)	166	
<i>jun</i> 君	gentleman	5	0% (0)	166	
<i>ai</i> 愛	love	5	0% (0)	166	
<i>xue</i> 學	learning; study	4	0% (0)	203	
<i>xiao</i> 孝	filial piety	2	50% (1)	341	
<i>yang</i> 陽	light; strong; male	1	0% (0)	474	• Term was not yet in common occurrence, despite presence of concept
<i>yin</i> 陰	dark; weak; female	1	0% (0)	474	• Term was not yet in common occurrence, despite presence of concept

As with all of the texts examined in this chapter, *ren* does not occur very frequently in the *Daodejing*. The most interesting result is that the character *yi* 義 always appears in close proximity to *ren*. Contrasted with the *Analects*, in which the two terms never appear within 10 characters of one another, this is interesting. It is generally only around the time of Mencius that the two terms gain close association in Warring States texts, yet even in the Guodian version of the *Daodejing*, we find one occurrence of the couplet 仁義.¹⁷⁴ This paradox, highlighted through quantitative analysis, supports the notion that portions of the *Daodejing* were edited later in the Warring States, and re-iterates Lau's advice to not treat the text as a single unbroken unit.¹⁷⁵

The Zhuangzi

The *Zhuangzi* is another so-called "Daoist" work, building on certain themes found in the *Daodejing*. In terms of its authenticity, "from earliest times the *nei pian* [Inner Chapters] have been considered to be the actual work of Zhuang Zhou (or Zhuangzi), and modern scholars generally concur with this view, on the basis of the style, vocabulary, grammar and philosophical content of the text."¹⁷⁶ The remaining chapters are a mix of material attributed to early primitivists, syncretists, later followers, and the philosopher Yang Zhu.¹⁷⁷ The text took its final form in the early Han dynasty. There is debate over which exact group compiled it, but it is likely that "the philosophical positions represented in the text are not all miscellaneous, but, instead, indicate different strata in the development of early Taoist thought."¹⁷⁸ For the sake of consistency and coherency, I include only the Inner Chapters in both my qualitative and quantitative analyses.

¹⁷⁴ Guodian *Laozi*, Version C, fragment 1.

¹⁷⁵ Although I acknowledge the *Daodejing* as a text possibly composed of different fragments, I still feel justified in conducting quantitative analysis on the text at a basic level. This is because, fragmented or not, on some level the text *was* representative of the early Daoist philosophical movement.

¹⁷⁶ Roth 1993, p. 56.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

Zhuangzi promotes freedom from worldly constraints, and unity with the Way. As in the *Daodejing*, *ren* is the husk of virtue, and a barrier to progress. Those who pursue it are missing the point and constraining themselves. Commentating on the section *Daren zhi xing* 大人之行, Lusthaus (2003) writes:

Unlike Confucians who preach the importance of striving for and maintaining ethical norms such as humankind-ness (*ren* 仁) – and yet may not live up to them in their daily lives – the Great Man is impeccably ethical in his actions while unconcerned with norms... The Great Man is not so because of an ethical formula or rubric, but because he embodies the aporetic vision that frees him from the tugging influence of oppositional extremism (right and wrong, tiny and large, etc.).¹⁷⁹

The Great Man in the *Zhuangzi* is one who we should ostensibly seek to emulate. A colorful writer, Zhuangzi often takes Confucius and his star disciple Yan Hui and invents stories with them as a mouthpiece. The following example from Chapter 6 relates to *ren*:

顏回曰：「回益矣。」仲尼曰：「何謂也？」曰：「回忘仁義矣。」曰：「可矣，猶未也。」

Yan Hui said, “I’m improving!” Confucius said, “What do you mean by that?” [Yan Hui replied,] “I’ve forgotten benevolence and righteousness!” [Confucius responded,] “That’s good. But you still haven’t got it.”¹⁸⁰

In this passage, the fictional Yan Hui continues by stripping away his understanding of ritual as well, but Confucius is not satisfied until the third day, when Yan Hui declares:

「回坐忘矣。。。墮肢體，黜聰明，離形去知，同於大通，此謂坐忘。」

“I can sit down and forget everything!... I can smash up my limbs and body, drive out perception and intellect, cast off form, do away with understanding, and make myself identical with the Great Thoroughfare. This is what I mean by sitting down and forgetting everything.”¹⁸¹

To this, Confucius replies:

「同則無好也，化則無常也。而果其賢乎！¹⁸²丘也請從而後也。」

¹⁷⁹ Lusthaus 2003, p. 187.

¹⁸⁰ Watson 2003c, p. 86.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹⁸² This is a satirical reference to *Analects* 6.11, in which Confucius twice exclaims, “What a worthy man was Yan Hui!” (賢哉回也!).

“If you’re identical with it, you must have no more likes! If you’ve been transformed, you must have no more constancy! So you really are a worthy man after all! With your permission, I’d like to become your follower.”¹⁸³

In this facetious exchange, Zhuangzi depicts forgetting *ren* as just a step along the path to greater understanding, which involves emptying one’s mind of the Confucian virtues and everything else.

Earlier in the same chapter, Zhuangzi actually compares *ren* and *yi* to corporeal punishment:

意而子曰：「堯謂我：『汝必躬服仁義，而明言是非。』」許由曰：「而奚為來軼？夫堯既已黥汝以仁義，而劓汝以是非矣，汝將何以遊夫遙蕩、恣睢、轉徙之途乎？」

Yi Erzi said, “Yao told me, ‘You must learn to practice benevolence and righteousness and to speak clearly about right and wrong!’ ‘Then why come to see *me*?’ said Xu You. ‘Yao has already tattooed you with benevolence and righteousness and cut off your nose with right and wrong. Now how do you expect to go wandering in any far-away, carefree, and as-you-like-it paths?’”¹⁸⁴

Tattoos and nose cutting were punishments for crimes in ancient China, and Xu You was a famous recluse at the time of Yao. In an earlier chapter, Yao is portrayed as offering him rulership of the world, but Xu You eschews it. Passages like these showcase the ideological battles raging during the Warring States. Zhuangzi did not reinterpret *ren* in a way that stuck, but he did make use of it as ammunition against his philosophical adversaries. Quantitative analysis of the text is as follows:

¹⁸³ Watson 2003c, p. 87.

¹⁸⁴ Watson 2003c, pp. 85 – 86.

Table 13: The *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (Inner Chapters)

Author: Zhuangzi 莊子 | **Era:** Warring States | **Total Characters:** 13,793 | **Total Vocabulary:** 1,527

Character	Translation	Hits	仁 Prox.	Rank	Additional Comments
<i>tian</i> 天	Heaven	120	2% (2)	20	
<i>xin</i> 心	mind	48	2% (1)	44	
<i>dao</i> 道	the Way	46	7% (3)	50	
<i>de</i> 德	virtue	36	0% (0)	64	
<i>zhongni</i> 仲尼	Confucius (alternate)	23	4% (1)	91	• Treated as one character in analysis
<i>jun</i> 君	gentleman	21	0% (0)	101	
<i>shen</i> 神	spirit	19	0% (0)	121	
<i>qi</i> 氣	essence	14	0% (0)	162	• Surprisingly rare
<i>yi</i> 義	righteousness; rightness	13	46% (6)	166	• 38% of occurrences (5 hits) are in the couplet 仁義 • The couplet 禮義 does not appear
<i>yang</i> 陽	light; strong; male	13	0% (0)	166	
<i>ren</i> 仁	benevolence	11	N/A	193	
<i>kong</i> 孔	Confucius	11	0% (0)	193	
<i>ai</i> 愛	love	10	0% (0)	218	
<i>li</i> 禮	ritual propriety	8	0% (0)	263	
<i>xue</i> 學	learning; study	6	0% (0)	333	
<i>yin</i> 陰	dark; weak; female	5	0% (0)	382	
<i>xiao</i> 孝	filial piety	1	0% (0)	931	
<i>zhi</i> 智	wisdom	0	N/A	N/A	

In the *Zhuangzi*, *ren* does not occur in close proximity to any of the other usual Confucian terms (except *yi* 義), including *jun* 君, *de* 德, *li* 禮, and *ai* 愛. *Zhi* 智 does not appear in the text at all. This helps show that, when Zhuangzi chooses to bring up *ren* and *yi* at all, he does so specifically so that he can reject them in favor of his own teaching, and not to link them to any other concepts the Confucians would have considered important.

The Mozi

Mohism was a well-organized school of thought during the Warring States. It was strongest before the Qin dynasty, and declined thereafter. The founder of the ideology is known as Mozi, and the work titled with his name contains his own thoughts, as well as those of his disciples. Regarding authenticity, Graham (1993) writes, “no part of the book claims to be written by Mozi himself. Nevertheless, except in the Military Chapters, and possibly in ch. 1 and 2, it displays everywhere the distinctive thought of the Mohist school, which died out in the second century B.C.” The cruder core chapters may go back to the school’s early beginnings, while the later (corrupt) dialectical chapters appear to have been written later.¹⁸⁵ For my analyses, I use the entire book, taking it as representative of the movement as a whole.

Van Norden (2008) cites Mozi as “the first systematic critic of Confucianism. In place of cultivating virtue in individuals, he advocated a kind of consequentialism: policies and institutions were to be judged by how much “benefit” (or “profit,” *li*) they produced.”¹⁸⁶ However, opposing the Confucians did not stop Mozi from appropriating their terminology. Mozi’s use of the word *ren* is best translated as “magnanimity,” and it refers to physical aid rather than mental caring. One example occurs in Book 4:

¹⁸⁵ Graham 1993, p. 337.

¹⁸⁶ Van Norden 2008, p. xxvi.

子墨子言曰：「仁人之所以為事者，必興天下之利，除去天下之害，以此為事者也。」

Mozi said: “It is the business of the magnanimous man to try to promote what is beneficial to the world and to eliminate what is harmful.”¹⁸⁷

Mozi considers things that increase the population, wealth, and order of the state to be beneficial. Meanwhile, he defines harm as “great states attacking small ones, great families overthrowing small ones, the strong oppressing the weak, the many harrying the few, the cunning deceiving the stupid, [and] the eminent lording it over the humble.”¹⁸⁸ Note that the immediate scope of Mozi’s *ren* is “the world,” or *tianxia* 天下. This idea is parallel to his promotion of *jianai* 兼愛, or “universal caring.” It differs importantly from the Confucian ideal of graded love, which diminishes with decreased social proximity.

Mohist thought also emphasizes measurement. In Book 7, Mozi states:

我有天志，譬若輪人之有規，匠人之有矩。。。其於仁義則大相遠也。何以知之？曰我得天下之明法以度之。

The will of Heaven is to me like a compass to a wheelright or a square to a carpenter... On matters of benevolence and righteousness [the Confucian gentlemen] are far apart. How do I know? Because I measure them by the clearest standard in the world [i.e., the will of Heaven].¹⁸⁹

In other words, Mozi compares Confucian beliefs and behaviors with his conception of the will of Heaven, finds them to be at odds, and therefore judges Confucians not to possess the very virtues they extoll (at least as Mozi conceives of these virtues).

For the Mohists, the man of *ren* is able to control his base desires, and acts with pure selflessness, as described in Book 8:

仁者之為天下度也，非為其目之所美，耳之所樂，口之所甘，身體之所安，以此虧奪民衣食之財，仁者弗為也。

¹⁸⁷ Watson 2003a, p. 42.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ Watson 2003a, p. 86.

When the benevolent man plans for the benefit of the world, he does not consider merely what will please the eye, delight the ear, gratify the mouth, or give ease to the body. If in order to gratify the senses he has to deprive the people of the wealth needed for their food and clothing, then the benevolent man will not do so.¹⁹⁰

In some regards, the passage above is reminiscent of the Xunzian perspective. Both stress self-control in the attainment and preservation of *ren*.

In the later chapters of the book, Mozi's followers sharpen his theories and definitions. In Book 10, we find the following explicit definitions of *ren*, *yi* 義, and *li* 禮:

仁，體愛也。

仁：愛己者，非為用己也。不若愛馬。

義，利也。

義：志以天下為芬，而能利之，不必用。

禮，敬也。

禮：貴者公，賤者名，而俱有敬。焉等，異論也。

Benevolence is loving individually.

Benevolence: Loving the self¹⁹¹ is not for the sake of the self being of use. It is not like loving a horse.

Righteousness is being of benefit.

Righteousness: The resolve to take the world as one's sphere of action and, having ability, being able to benefit it. It is not necessary to be used (i.e. have a position).

Propriety is respect.

Propriety: The noble have the title "duke" whilst the lowly just have a name, yet for both there is respect and rudeness. It is only in rank that they differ.¹⁹²

"Loving individually" as a definition of *ren* is a somewhat puzzling phrase, given the Mohist ideal of universal caring, but scholars have interpreted it as being in line with selfless behavior.

According to Graham (1978):

Adhering to the principle of *jian ai* 'loving everyone' assumes moral value only as the love of individuals, which accounts for the definition of *ren* as 'loving individuals.' In the [explanatory portion], one may expect the loss of some words linking love of others with self-love, but the point is clear enough... Self-

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

¹⁹¹ On p. 378, Johnston (2010) notes that some scholars argue this passage is corrupt, and that 己 should be replaced with 民, which would change the phrase from "loving the self" to "loving the people."

¹⁹² Translation from Johnston 2010, pp. 378 – 381.

love is one example of loving a man, and shows that love is for the sake of the man himself, not for his usefulness to some further end.¹⁹³

Fraser (2006) agrees, reading the above definition of *ren* as “concern for an individual,” and reading *ai* 愛 in this context roughly “as desiring benefit and disliking harm to a person, for that person's own sake, and not as a means.”¹⁹⁴ Quantitative analysis shows that, unlike the author/s of the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*, the Mohists used and promoted Confucian virtues, albeit only after they had redefined them. My quantitative analysis for the text is as follows:

¹⁹³ Graham 1978, p. 271.

¹⁹⁴ Fraser 2006, in the *Stanford Dictionary of Philosophy* online:
<http://stanford.library.usyd.edu.au/archives/spr2006/entries/mohist-canons>. Sec. 3: “Benefit and Happiness”

Table 14: The *Mozi* 墨子

Author: Mozi 墨子 and Disciples | **Era:** Warring States | **Total Characters:** 80,500 | **Total Vocabulary:** 2,500

Character	Translation	Hits	仁 Prox.	Rank	Additional Comments
<i>tian</i> 天	Heaven	939	5% (43)	12	
<i>li</i> 利	benefit	394	4% (16)	31	
<i>jun</i> 君	gentleman	331	8% (28)	39	
<i>yi</i> 義	rightness	298	16% (47)	43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occurs more than twice as frequently as 仁, unlike in most other texts, reflecting special attention to standards and definitions of rightness • 11% of occurrences (34 hits) are in the couplet 仁義 • The couplet 禮義 does not appear
<i>ai</i> 愛	care	285	8% (23)	45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (14) occurrences in the couplet 兼愛 • Interestingly, 相愛 is more common, with (42) occurrences
<i>zhi</i> 智	wisdom	182	1% (2)	83	• Higher rank here than any other text
<i>dao</i> 道	the Way	154	7% (11)	95	• Relatively low ranking, compared to other texts
<i>fa</i> 法	standard	149	10% (15)	98	
<i>xian</i> 賢	worthy	123	0% (0)	120	• Somewhat surprising that this term never occurs with 仁, even once
<i>ren</i> 仁	magnanimity	118	N/A	129	• Highest couplet by far is 不仁 (29 occurrences)
<i>xue</i> 學	learning; study	64	6% (4)	223	
<i>xiao</i> 孝	filial piety	50	18% (9)	275	
<i>de</i> 德	virtue	36	3% (1)	360	
<i>kong</i> 孔	Confucius	32	0% (0)	394	
<i>li</i> 禮	ritual propriety	25	0% (0)	466	
<i>ru</i> 儒	Confucian	19	0% (0)	565	

The high ranks of *yi* 義 reflects the Mohist concern with standards and definitions of rightness. With regard to *ren*, it is important to note here that there are an especially high number of negating examples of the term in the *Mozi*. There is also the case in Book 12 of *Mozi* debating Gong Mengzi, who gives what *Mozi* considers to be a *wrong* definition of *ren*. This is a reminder that numbers alone are not sufficient for deriving strong conclusions. Overall, statistics show that the Mohists discuss *ai* 愛 and *yi* 義 far more frequently than *ren*, though *ren* does relate to both of these terms. Interestingly, *ren* never occurs in close proximity to *xian* 賢, or “worthy” people. Follow-up research could determine why this may be the case. Also, although *renyi* 仁義 occurs with fairly high frequency and *liyi* 禮義 does not occur at all, the *Mozi* is a decidedly “externalist” text in terms of its moral stance. Using the ratio of *renyi* to *liyi* as a measure of a text’s lean toward Mencius does not hold up with texts outside of the Confucian tradition.

Hanfeizi

Hanfeizi was a pupil of Xunzi who lived in the later part of the Warring States period.¹⁹⁵ His philosophy, which was later dubbed Legalism, or *fajia* 法家, was closely associated with the harsh legal code of the Qin dynasty. It was not viewed fondly by the Confucians of the Han, although rulers of the Han in fact borrowed many of their laws from the Qin. Most of the text seems to have come from Hanfeizi’s own hand. According to Levi (1993), “from citations which are included in other works and in the encyclopedias it appears that the text has suffered very few losses. The book may therefore be accepted as authentic.”¹⁹⁶

Han Feizi aims to take a more practical approach to improving human behavior and achieving societal peace. He believes that “human nature (*xing* 性) is neither benevolent, as

¹⁹⁵ Loewe 1993, p. 178.

¹⁹⁶ Levi 1993, p. 117.

Mencius would have it, nor bad, as Xunzi holds: man merely strives to satisfy his vital appetites. Far from attempting to reform this nature, the best response is to adapt to it.”¹⁹⁷ And the best way to do this is through proper application of rewards (*shang* 賞) and punishments (*xing* 刑).

In some ways, Hanfeizi’s ideas overlap with those of the Mohists. Both give highest priority to the welfare of the state, and argue that the only way to achieve order is through “articulat[ing] and implement[ing] a set of clear, objective, and publicly known criteria as the basis for choosing and promoting as well as disciplining, demoting, or dismissing those who worked in government.”¹⁹⁸

On the other hand, other aspects of his doctrine overlap with that of the early Daoists. Like the early Daoists, Hanfeizi wanted to ensure that the “ruler undergoes a process of training that leads him to ‘abandon wisdom,’ ‘discard desire,’ practice ‘non-action,’ and in general appear empty and without purpose.”¹⁹⁹ The difference was that for the early Daoists, this meant relinquishing direct control of the state, whereas for Hanfeizi, this was simply an instrumental tactic for maintaining it. A ruler should *appear* without purpose or desire so that others could not manipulate him.

As for *ren*, Hanfeizi takes it as a weakness. Harris (2012) explains his view towards the Confucians’ seemingly prosocial virtues:

The moral virtues of kindness, benevolence, and loyalty, highly prized by Confucians, can be disastrous for order within the state. While this may initially seem to go against the passage in which Han Fei argues that the ruler and ministers should have a close relationship, there is no true conflict. Having a close working relationship with one’s superiors or subordinates does not necessitate any loyalty in the Confucian sense. Rather, the close working relationship implies that everyone within the bureaucracy does their assigned duties, and thus meshes together as finely as the gears of a carefully designed, well-oiled machine.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Galvany 2012, p. 92

¹⁹⁸ Ivanhoe 2011, p. 32.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

²⁰⁰ Harris 2012, p. 119.

In the cold, efficient machine that is good government, *ren* can only get in the way. This idea comes across clearly in Chapter 49:

夫以法行刑而君為之流涕，此以效仁，非以為治也。夫垂泣不欲刑者仁也，然而不可不刑者法也，先王勝其法不聽其泣，則仁之不可以為治亦明矣。

When punishments are carried out according to the law and the ruler sheds tears because of it, this is in order to demonstrate the ruler's benevolence, and not for the sake of creating order. To shed tears and not want to punish is benevolence, but to not allow offenses not to be punished is the law. The former kings allowed their laws to prevail and did not listen to their tears, so clearly benevolence cannot be relied on to produce order.²⁰¹

Thus, for Hanfeizi, rulers who possess *ren* are not able to perform the necessary tasks of government, and “should not be praised” (*fei suo yu* 非所譽). Obviously, the Confucians discussed earlier would all have taken great offense to such a claim, believing good government to be possible precisely *because* of *ren*. It is possible that passages such as this, combined with the negatively-perceived Qin dynasty that thrived upon Legalist code, generated an ideological backlash from the Han Confucians, leading them to promote Mencian internalism, including the importance of *ren*. Quantitative analysis for the text is as follows:

²⁰¹ Ivanhoe 2001, p. 325.

Table 15: The *Hanfeizi* 韓非子

Author: Hanfeizi 韓非子 and Disciples | **Era:** Warring States | **Total Characters:** 106,362 | **Total Vocabulary:** 2,701

Character	Translation	Hits	仁 Prox.	Rank	Additional Comments
<i>jun</i> 君	gentleman	892	1% (10)	17	
<i>fa</i> 法	standard; law	447	2% (10)	38	
<i>tian</i> 天	Heaven	367	2% (8)	48	
<i>dao</i> 道	the Way	350	4% (13)	51	
<i>li</i> 利	benefit	310	2% (6)	53	
<i>shang</i> 賞	reward	257	1% (2)	64	
<i>zhi</i> 智	wisdom	245	4% (9)	69	
<i>ai</i> 愛	care; love	201	2% (4)	88	
<i>xing</i> 刑	punishment	162	4% (6)	114	
<i>yi</i> 義	righteousness	137	40% (55)	144	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 34% of occurrences (46 hits) are in the couplet 仁義 • 3% of occurrences (4 hits) are in the couplet 禮義
<i>de</i> 德	virtue; reward	119	5% (6)	174	
<i>zhongni</i> 仲尼	Confucius (alternate)	100	1% (1)	195	• Treated as one character in analysis
<i>ren</i> 仁	benevolence	97	N/A	197	
<i>li</i> 禮	ritual propriety	89	6% (5)	214	
<i>xue</i> 學	learning; study	77	6% (5)	243	
<i>ru</i> 儒	Confucian	51	0% (0)	249	
<i>kong</i> 孔	Confucius	46	0% (0)	381	
<i>xiao</i> 孝	filial piety	30	0% (0)	526	

These statistics reflect a degree of Mencian influence through the prevalence of the compound *renyi*. However, similar to the *Mozi*, while the ratio of occurrences of *renyi* 仁義 to *liyi* 禮義 in this text is high, Hanfeizi is an externalist philosopher. Although he deals largely with the Mencian compound, he does so in a criticizing manner. The most surprising result arising from this quantitative analysis is that *ai* 愛 is more highly ranked than *xing* 形. Given Hanfeizi's low view of "benevolence," might expect his opinion of "love" to be similar. Making sense of this finding would require additional *qualitative* investigation.

Taiping Jing

My post-Warring States analysis of *ren* in non-Confucian philosophy is very brief. There is a great deal of potential material to cover, but to give a sense for how such research could be continued, I address a few representative case studies. The first of these is the *Taiping jing*, a Daoist text of unknown authorship attempting "to restore to the fading dynasty the harmony, order, and happiness of its first decades."²⁰² According to Pregadio (2007), "the doctrine of the *Taiping jing* is based on the idea, already present in Warring States texts, that an era of Great Peace (*taiping*) will descend on the empire if its governance is based on returning to the Dao."²⁰³ The content of the text "expounds cosmological theories and moral precepts for the improvement of the state and of the world in general."²⁰⁴ The text dates mainly from the late Han, though it was reedited during the Six Dynasties (220 – 589 CE), and many details of its transmission are shrouded.²⁰⁵ Some chapters of the text have also been lost, and several versions exist. For my

²⁰² Hendrichske 2006, p. 1.

²⁰³ Pregadio 2007, p. 939.

²⁰⁴ Schipper & Verellen 2004, p. 277.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

analyses, I used the *Taiping jing hejiao*, which is the most complete and widely used single version.²⁰⁶

At nearly 234,000 characters, the *Taiping jing* is the longest texts I examine. In it, *ren* is positive, and functions as part of a system of cause and effect, affecting both rulers and commoners. As Hendrichske (2006) explains:

The more punishment a ruler applies, the more insurrections he will face, while the extent of his benevolence directly affects the obedience he can expect from his subjects. A violent ruler will lack men who support him and will therefore lose his position. On the other hand, moral conduct and benevolent practices enable a man to assemble followers, to become a king, and to reign successfully.²⁰⁷

Such sentiments ring of Confucianism, and they could be seen as the Daoist mirroring of syncretist components in the ideology of Wang Fu, described in the last chapter. The results that a benevolent or unbenevolent king reaps are his “inherited burden,” or *chengfu* 承負, which Pregadio (2007) cites as “one of the most characteristic features of the *Taiping jing*.” *Chengfu* “refers to a system whereby the effects of transgressions are passed from one generation to the next—neatly explaining the phenomenon, troublesome for religions in many cultures, of good people suffering, and evil prospering.”²⁰⁸ Karma serves a similar role in other Eastern religions.

This same principle also applies to a normal person acting with *ren*, as demonstrated in section 41:

行仁者，中和仁神出助其治，故小富也。行文者，隱欺之階也，故欺神出助之，故其治小亂也。。。人者仁，故仁神出助其化也。文者主相文欺，失其本根，故欺神出助之也；上下相文，其事亂也。

Once someone enacts humaneness, the humane spirits of the harmony that prevails in the realm between heaven and earth will step forward to help him conduct his affairs and achieve a small measure of wealth. Someone who attempts cultural refinement is on the way to intrigues and deceit, so that deceitful spirits will come forth to help him. Thus his conduct will be in some disorder... Humane spirits come forth to help a man’s mission if he is humane. Cultured men are preoccupied with deceiving each other by means of culture. They have lost their root. Thus deceitful spirits appear to assist them. Once superiors and inferiors deal with each other by means of culture, their affairs are in disorder.

²⁰⁶ Hendrichske, 2006.

²⁰⁷ Hendrichske 2006, p. 242.

²⁰⁸ Pregadio 2007, p. 940.

Interestingly, while *ren* is taken as positive in the *Taiping jing*, *wen* 文, translated here as “cultural refinement,” is taken as superficial and negative. Both terms are positive in traditional Confucian philosophy, but the author/s of the *Taipingjing* chose to promote the former and condemn the latter. In addition, this passage reflects the cosmological shift that was also impacting the Confucian conception of *ren* around that time, though the texts examined earlier did not grant the same importance to spirits. Table 16 below provides quantitative analysis for the *Taiping jing*.

Table 16: The *Taipingjing* 太平經

Author: Unknown | Era: Late Han | Total Characters: 233,902 | Total Vocabulary: 2,237

Character	Translation	Hits	仁 Prox.	Rank	Additional Comments
<i>tian</i> 天	Heaven	5075	1% (70)	4	
<i>dao</i> 道	the Way	2125	4% (94)	14	
<i>qi</i> 氣	vital force	1268	1% (10)	33	
<i>jun</i> 君	lord	943	3% (32)	49	• Appears in the names of gods, which helps explain its high rank
<i>de</i> 德	virtue	812	11% (88)	58	
<i>yang</i> 陽	light; strong; male	705	14% (10)	71	• Somewhat surprising proximity to 仁 (highest of any term within text)
<i>yin</i> 陰	dark; weak; female	667	0% (3)	77	
<i>fa</i> 法	method; standard	638	3% (16)	83	
<i>xue</i> 學	learning; study	404	5% (22)	127	
<i>ai</i> 愛	love	206	3% (6)	236	
<i>ren</i> 仁	benevolence	205	N/A	238	
<i>xiao</i> 孝	filial piety	187	2% (3)	251	
<i>li</i> 利	benefit	104	2% (2)	362	
<i>yi</i> 義	rightness	68	13% (9)	470	• 6% of occurrences (4 hits) are in the couplet 仁義 • 7% of occurrences (5 hits) are in the couplet 禮義
<i>zhi</i> 智	wisdom	61	8% (5)	501	
<i>ru</i> 儒	Confucian	24	13% (3)	794	• All three overlaps with 仁 are in the phrase 仁賢明儒道術聖智
<i>li</i> 禮	ritual	23	13% (3)	809	
<i>kong</i> 孔	opening; orifice	5	0% (0)	1321	• Not used to signify Confucius within this text

Quantitative analysis shows that *ren* is not a major theme in the text, but it does hold weak proximal ties with other Confucian ideas mentioned therein. The text's ratio of *renyi* 仁義 to *liyi* 禮義 occurrences is about 1 to 1. Interestingly, the term *jun* 君 ranks quite highly in this text, above both *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽, but not so high as *qi* 氣 or *dao* 道. The fact that *ren* occurs with greater proximity to *yang* 陽 than any other term in the text, including *yi* 義, is interesting, and could possibly reflect positive, masculine connotations of *ren*. These co-occurrences are fairly well distributed throughout the text, and could serve as a starting point for additional research on the exact place of *ren* within post-Han Daoist cosmology.

Huashu

The *Huashu* is a somewhat shorter syncretic Daoist text of about 12,000 characters, dating from the tenth century. I chose it as an example of a later text that may have influenced Zhu Xi's interpretation of *ren* in the Song dynasty to follow. Its authorship is the subject of some debate, but it is primarily attributed to the monk Tan Qiao 譚峭, with later edits by Song Qiqiu 宋齊丘.²⁰⁹ Its content "thoroughly syncretizes significant elements of Daoist, alchemical, Buddhist, and Confucian, as well as ancient Mohist, Divine Agriculturalist, and Huang-Lao, thought."²¹⁰ Moreover, according to Pregadio (2007), it "has been noted in recent times for its scientific observations (for instance regarding optics and acoustics) and for its unusual emphasis on epistemological considerations."²¹¹

The influence of the *Huashu* on Neo-Confucianism is likely. Didier (1998a) writes that the *Huashu* is one of the earlier places where we see the "concept of the quintessence, potency, One, sincerity, etc. that, as principle [*li* 理], is the both immanent and transcendent source from

²⁰⁹ Didier 1998b, p. 99.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ Pregadio 2007, p. 518.

which all things emerge and which each thing possesses in its entirety.”²¹² Didier speculates that Zhu Xi may have in part borrowed this concept, along with his emphasis on “investigating things” from the *Huashu*.

Like the *Taiping jing*, the *Huashu* treats certain Confucian ideas favorably and others unfavorably. Didier sums up the tension as follows:

The author [of the *Huashu*] was attempting to create a syncretic vision in which those of all philosophical prejudices might find worldly guidance commensurate with their needs or levels of understanding. The *Huashu* author likely sought to draw in Ru-ist readers by taking advantage of their tendency to wish to “establish their words” and thus “not fade.” Even so, the *Huashu* author could not condone the conscious employment of the Ru-ist political values and institutions of humaneness and rightness.²¹³

The result is a unique text in which *ren* is neither positive nor negative; it simply exists as part of the cosmological framework, as described in Chapter 4:

道德者，天地也。五常者，五行也。仁發生之謂也，故均於木。義，救難之謂也，故均於金。。。仁不足則義濟之，金伐木也。。。始則五常相濟之業，終則五常相伐之道，斯大化之往也。

The Way and potency are Heaven and Earth. The Five Constants are the Five Processes. Humaneness is what is called sprouting life. Thus, it is governed by the wood process (i.e. soft). Rightness is what is called alleviating disaster. Thus, it is governed by the metal process (hard)... If humaneness is insufficient, rightness relieves it: Metal conquers wood... [Viewed from the perspective of its] incipience, it (this entire process) is the enterprise of the Five Constants mutually relieving. [Viewed from the perspective of its] denouement, it is the way of the Five Processes mutually conquering. This is the Way of the Great Transformation.²¹⁴

In addition to *ren* and *yi* 義, the other three of the so-called Five Virtues (*li* 禮, *zhi* 智, and *xin* 信) are also bound up as interdependent in the cosmological balance, with elemental properties of their own. This treatment of *ren* in the *Huashu* is a precursor to Zhu Xi’s treatment of *ren* as a cosmic principle. One major difference is that in the *Huashu*, *ren* is more-or-less on par with the other virtues (though listed first), similar to its place in the *Mencius*, whereas for Zhu Xi, *ren* contains the other virtues within itself, similar to its place in the *Analects*.

²¹² Didier 1998a, p. 535.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 794.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 772 – 773.

In a subsequent passage within the same chapter, the *Huashu*, gives another noteworthy description of *ren*:

烏反哺，仁也。

The [mature] raven's reciprocal care [of its parents] is humaneness.²¹⁵

In this case, the connotation of *ren* seems more positive, yet subtle criticism of Confucian doctrine may exist. As Didier notes, a “similar argument is made briefly in the *Zhuangzi*, Chapter Fourteen, where *Zhuangzi* is quoted as having said that, ‘Tigers and wolves— they're humane... Sire and cubs warm and affectionate with one another—why do you say they're not humane?’²¹⁶ The meaning is that animals, which most Confucians would view as decidedly *not* capable of *ren*, are in fact in possession of this great virtue as well, and quite naturally so, without the need for conscious self-cultivation. As if to drive the point home, the passage follows up with an example of humans’ relative lack of *ren*:

且夫焚其巢穴，非仁也。

Moreover, [for humans] to burn their (the myriad things') nests and dens is not humaneness.²¹⁷

According to the *Huashu*, it would seem that true *ren* lies more in the natural world and the physical universe than within society. The text’s quantitative statistics are below:

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 774.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 774. The translation is by Watson 2003c, p. 155.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 775.

Table 17: The *Huashu* 化書

Author: Attributed to Tan Qiao 譚峭, Edited by Song Qiqiu 宋齊丘
Era: Five Dynasties | **Total Characters:** 11,715 | **Total Vocabulary:** 1,458

Character	Translation	Hits	仁 Prox.	Rank	Additional Comments
<i>dao</i> 道	the Way	97	14% (14)	19	
<i>qi</i> 氣	energy; vital essence	68	0% (0)	27	
<i>tian</i> 天	Heaven	62	2% (1)	29	
<i>jun</i> 君	gentleman	43	7% (3)	42	
<i>li</i> 禮	ritual	43	21% (9)	45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relatively high rank of 禮 may reflect Confucian syncretism • The meaning of its moderate association with 仁 is unclear, given my qualitative analysis above
<i>yi</i> 義	rightness	39	69% (27)	49	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 36% of occurrences (14 hits) are in the couplet 仁義 • 3% of occurrences (1 hit) are in the couplet 禮義
<i>ren</i> 仁	benevolence	31	N/A	62	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairly evenly distributed, but occurs most densely in Ch. 4 (approximately 15% of the text)
<i>zhi</i> 智	wisdom	25	4% (1)	74	
<i>ai</i> 愛	love	21	10% (2)	82	
<i>de</i> 德	virtue	21	43% (9)	82	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link to 仁 may be reflective of the place of 仁 as a key virtue within the text, even if its connotation differs from its more traditional Confucian meaning
<i>yang</i> 陽	light; male	15	0% (0)	116	
<i>yin</i> 陰	dark; female	13	0% (0)	138	
<i>fa</i> 法	method	5	0% (0)	352	
<i>ru</i> 儒	Confucian	2	0% (0)	645	
<i>xue</i> 學	learning; study	1	0% (0)	928	
<i>fo</i> 佛	Buddha; Buddhist	0	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite its status as a “syncretist” work incorporating all Three Teachings, the <i>Huashu</i> does not include the term 佛

As might be expected based on my preceding discussion, quantitative analysis of this text reveals *ren* in a relatively higher rank as compared with its position in other Daoist texts. It also occurs in closer connection to the virtues *yi* 義, *de* 德 and *li* 禮. Its proximity to *ai* 愛, meanwhile, is somewhat lower, and it barely co-occurs with *zhi* 智 at all. Thus, although this text may have primed Zhu Xi's thinking in some ways as Didier claims, significant ways in which it differs from the work of Zhu Xi are visible in the statistics alone. Interestingly, the *Huashu* contains the highest relative ranking of *qi* 氣 of any text examined, and yet *qi* never occurs in close proximity to *ren*. Also, although Buddhist thought was already strong by the time the *Huashu* was written, and the text may incorporate Buddhist concepts, it does not contain the character *fo* 佛.

Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms

After Buddhism arrived in China, *ren* entered the Buddhist vocabulary, sometimes as a word used in translating scriptures from Sanskrit, and other times as a stand-alone virtue in other writings. An example of the former is the *renwangjing* 仁王經, or “Humane King Sutra,” a sutra of approximately 115,000 characters. An example of the latter was during the Tang dynasty, when the monk Shenqing 神清 in his *Beishanlu* 北山錄 challenged Chan Buddhist lineage by suggesting that developing *ren* might be as good as studying Dharma.²¹⁸ After all, the notion of a perfectly good guiding virtue within oneself may have seemed reminiscent and compatible with the Buddhist conception of a perfectly good inner Bodhi-nature. Zhu Xi, while commentating on the Confucian Classics, masterfully incorporated this connection into his own conception of *ren*.

For my final text analysis, I take a different, more experimental approach, by reviewing the place of *ren* in the Soothill and Hodous *Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*. Though first published in 1934, this book remains a fundamental tool for studies in Chinese Buddhism. I

²¹⁸ Morrison 2010, p. 184; Tripitika T.52.611c21–22.

analyze it here for a rough look at the meaning and translations of *ren* within Chinese Buddhism as a whole, with the aim of possibly attaining a fuller picture than could be gained from investigation of just a few Chinese Buddhist texts. Unlike the other texts examined, this dictionary is primarily in English, not Chinese, and unlike the other texts, its content is not tied to a particular time period. Not all of its entries pertain to exclusively Buddhist concepts, but all are words or concepts that might arise through the study of Buddhism within Chinese texts. I used the digitized version of the dictionary,²¹⁹ which made it easier to locate all entries related to *ren*, and to perform quantitative analyses.

The entry on *ren* itself simply reads: “kindness, benevolence, virtue.” Outside of this, the dictionary contains 7 additional entries with *ren* in the title, 4 of them relating to the title *renwang* 仁王. This term is used in reference to both “the benevolent king, Buddha,” as well as “an ancient king, probably imaginary, of the ‘sixteen countries’ of India, for whom the Buddha is said to have dictated the *renwang jing* 仁王經.” The remaining entries in which *ren* occurs in the entry title are *renzhe* 仁者 (“kind sir!”), *renzun* 仁尊 (“benevolent and honored, or kindly honored one, i.e. Buddha”), and 能仁 (“mighty in lovingkindness, an incorrect interpretation of Śākyamuni, but probably indicating his character”). *Ren* also appears an additional 19 times within entry descriptions, almost exclusively in reference to *renwang* 仁王. However, it also holds connotations as “charitable,” as a descriptor of Śākyamuni. Overall, these findings confirm Chan’s claim that *ren* functions primarily in Buddhism as an honorific, though its meaning of “benevolence” (and associated traits of kind and charitable) also appear. It is quite possible that *ren* holds somewhat different connotations within different schools and time periods – for

²¹⁹ Publicly available at http://mahajana.net/texts/kopia_lokalna/soothill-hodous.html.

example, it may have been a more positive and common term in the more syncretist schools – but these details are beyond the scope of my research.

As before, to give a sense of the relative frequencies of terms in relation to one another, I have conducted a quantitative exploration of the dictionary entries. For this analysis, I isolated only the text of the entry titles themselves, of which there are about 17,000, ranging in length from one character to five or more. In this analysis, the 仁 Prox. category has no real meaning, so I left it out.

Table 18: *Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*

Authors: William Soothill and Lewis Hodous

Era: Modern | **Total Entries:** Approximately 17,000 | **Total Entry Title Characters:** 43,612 | **Total Vocabulary:** 2,595

Character	Translation	Hits	仁 Prox.	Rank	Additional Comments
<i>fa</i> 法	Dharma	548	N/A	3	• Also defined as “law, truth, religion, thing, anything Buddhist”
<i>fo</i> 佛	Buddha; Buddhist	373	N/A	8	
<i>tian</i> 天	Heaven	300	N/A	14	• Sometimes used in the Buddhist sense of heavenly realms
<i>xin</i> 心	heart	286	N/A	18	
<i>dao</i> 道	the Way	222	N/A	24	
<i>zhi</i> 智	gnosis; knowledge	217	N/A	25	
<i>li</i> 利	benefit	188	N/A	35	
<i>de</i> 德	virtue	83	N/A	103	
<i>ai</i> 愛	love	75	N/A	118	
<i>yi</i> 義	righteousness	56	N/A	173	• Also defined as “proper,” “loyal,” and “public-spirited” • 仁義 does not occur at all
<i>xue</i> 學	learning; study	36	N/A	282	
<i>li</i> 禮	ritual	25	N/A	383	
<i>yin</i> 陰	dark; shadow; skandha	22	N/A	426	
<i>jun</i> 君	gentleman	8	N/A	807	
<i>ren</i> 仁	benevolence; kindness; virtue	8	N/A	807	• 50% of occurrences (4) are in the couplet 仁王 • Remaining occurrences are in the entries for 仁, 仁者, 仁尊, and 能仁 • Also occurs an additional 19 times in the descriptions of other entries
<i>yang</i> 陽	light; strong; positive	5	N/A	1086	
<i>xiao</i> 孝	filial piety	4	N/A	1225	

These results can be used as a rough measure for what type of traditionally Confucian terms show up in the Chinese Buddhist vocabulary. *Ren* is not common, especially when compared to terms like *zhi* 智 and *yi* 義, which have their own more specialized meanings in the Buddhist canon, and show up in many more compounds than *ren*. Understandably, the character *fa* 法, which has the specialized meaning of “Dharma” within Buddhism, far outweighs the other characters in terms of frequency.

Conclusion

Of the texts discussed in this chapter, several describe *ren* as a quality to be avoided or discarded. These texts include the *Daodejing*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Hanfeizi*. Such texts may have prompted Confucians to elaborate on and defend their views, contributing to the term’s evolution. Other texts accept *ren* as positive, but modify its meaning in a fundamental way, thus incorporating it into their own ideological framework. These texts include the *Mozi*, *Taiping jing*, and *Huashu*. These syncretic efforts may also have influenced the term’s evolution, as aspects of non-Confucian definitions bled over into more orthodox Confucian thought. For example, it may partially have been in response to the *Mozi* that Dong Zhongshu and Han Yu began to define *ren* as *boai* 博愛, and it may partially have been due to the influence of the *Taiping jing* and *Huashu* that later Confucians defined *ren* in more cosmological and metaphysical terms.

Conclusion

I conclude by revisiting the questions I laid out in my introduction, and by discussing why we might expect Chinese society to value *ren* in the meanings I have laid out. First, how did the meanings of *ren* change from its earliest recorded uses, to its use by Zhu Xi in the Song dynasty? Based on our earliest records, it seems *ren* began as a cognate of the term *ren* 人, meaning “man.” It most likely developed as a stative verb from this noun, and came to mean something close to “manliness.” This meaning likely entailed physical aspects of manliness, such as strength and handsomeness, as well as mental aspects, such as courage and morality. Before the Qin dynasty, *ren* 仁 was also written in several other forms, including 忝 and 息. Interpretations of its meaning based on the form 仁 alone are thus inadequate.

In the early Warring States, Confucius redefined *ren* as a broad, overarching virtue translatable as “Goodness.” While there are some ambiguities in the way Confucius used the term, its meaning generally encompasses many lesser virtues. Later in the Warring States, Mencius narrowed the meaning of *ren* to “benevolence,” which revolved around care and love for others. He treated *ren* as the greatest of four virtues, the other three being righteousness (*yi* 義), ritual propriety (*li* 禮), and wisdom (*zhi* 智). According to Mencius, all four of these virtues existed within every person in nascent form, and could be developed if provided with the proper environment and cultivation. Mencius gave particular importance to *ren* and *yi*, often treating them as a pair. After Mencius, Xunzi briefly challenged and modified this view. Though the best translation for his definition of *ren* is still “benevolence,” he maintained that it derived from external learning, and he prioritized ritual propriety and righteousness above it.

After the Warring States, orthodox Confucian philosophy swung back in favor of Mencius. At least within my case studies, *ren* tended to be paired with *yi*, and was often

associated with love (*ai* 愛). As Daoism gained strength in the Han dynasty, and as Buddhism entered China in the centuries that followed, *ren* took on increased cosmological significance. In the case studies I examined, it retained its base meaning of “benevolence,” but also pertained to the natural balance of Heaven and Earth. In other words, people had to practice *ren* in order to balance the cosmos. At about the same time, *ren* gained metaphysical significance. Zhu Xi reinterpreted it in the neo-Confucian perspective, and under this new meaning, *ren* referred to one’s inner “humanity.” It allowed one to understand and attain unity with the universe.

Thinkers in non-Confucian traditions also influenced the meanings of *ren*. In the *Daodejing*, *ren* had negative connotations. It was portrayed as something that people would only conceptualize and pursue *after* they had already diverged from the Way. Similarly, for Zhuangzi, *ren* was an obstacle, a principle to be cleared away during the process of emptying the mind and achieving greater understanding. Hanfeizi also held *ren* in low regard; for him, following *ren* would block a ruler from doing his job effectively, especially when it came to enforcing punishment. The Mohists, on the other hand, viewed *ren* positively, but redefined it as “magnanimity,” which meant providing material goods for others. In syncretist Daoist texts of the post-Warring States period, *ren* became tied to cosmic balance and supernatural beings. Overall, the appropriation of *ren* by philosophers in other schools of thought motivated Confucians to defend, clarify, and in some cases update their own interpretations of *ren*.

Second, in what ways does quantitative textual analysis affect our qualitative understanding of *ren* during this time period? For several texts I examined, quantitative analysis did *not* have a direct effect on my understanding of *ren*.²²⁰ First, the *Book of Documents* contained too few reliable occurrences of *ren* for me to analyze the term itself, and because

²²⁰ In these cases, quantitative analysis still provided some meaningful, tangential results.

passages in this text do not include other terms in close or parallel usage to *ren*, analysis of other terms had no direct impact on my understanding of *ren*. Second, Han Yu's essay *Yuan Dao* is too short to provide useful, reliable quantitative information. With less than 1,000 total characters, the text is better suited for qualitative reading alone. Third, analysis of the entry titles in Soothill and Hodous' *Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* did not yield quantitative information pertaining directly to *ren*. This was because, after I had removed the English definitions, the strings of entry title characters in close proximity to one another were not semantically connected in any uniform way.

However, quantitative analysis of the remaining texts I examined did impact my understanding, either by supporting existing qualitative theories, "qualifying" such theories with possible numeric counter-evidence, or turning up interesting results that illuminated possibilities for future research.²²¹ In the *Book of Odes*, the frequency patterns of the terms of *hao* 好, *mei* 美, and *wu* 武, which occur in structural parallel to *ren*, support theories that *ren* is positive, of flexible usage, and associated with physical beauty, strength, and prowess in hunting or combat. The frequency pattern of *wu* in particular also qualifies interpretations of *ren* as kindness, love, or gentleness.²²²

As for Confucian texts of the Warring States period, in the *Analects*, the high rate of co-occurrences between *ren* and *ai* 愛 support the theory that "love," or at least "caring," was part of *ren*'s earliest Confucian meaning. Meanwhile, the relatively low rate of co-occurrences

²²¹ For more detailed information on which scholars support which theories, please view my chapter discussions. Also, technically, simply gaining a new avenue for future research does not impact our *current* understanding of *ren*, but it has the potential to do so after follow-up.

²²² The reader should keep in mind that, when describing results of quantitative analysis, I use the word "qualify" to mean that the results provide apparent counter-evidence to a given theory, but that this numeric evidence alone is not enough to disprove the theory. It simply "qualifies" the theory with additional contextual information, which may or may not harm the theory's validity, depending upon the result of follow-up qualitative investigation and interpretation.

between *ren* and *shu* 恕, *hui* 惠, and *li* 禮 qualify theories that these terms were closely bound to the meaning of *ren*. The very high proximity between *ren* and *zhi* 知 in the *Analects* was unexpected, and invites further research. In the *Mencius*, the fact that *ren* occurs more frequently than any of the other chief virtues (*yi* 義, *li* 禮, and *zhi* 智) supports the theory that Mencius placed greater value on *ren*. At the same time, its close association with these other virtues, especially *yi* 義, reiterates the qualitative observation that *ren* in the *Mencius* serves as a narrower virtue, not an overarching virtue as did in the *Analects*. The finding that *ren* appears in even tighter conjunction with *jun* 君 in the *Mencius* than in the *Analects* was less expected. It may be an opportunity for future research, although on the other hand, Mencius spoke with rulers more often than Confucius, which could explain this finding. In the *Xunzi*, the higher rank of *li* 禮 – and, to a lesser extent, *fa* 法, *wen* 文, and *xue* 學 – support the notion of Xunzi as an “externalist” philosopher, promoting moral guidance in external teachings. Similarly, the low Xunzian ratio of occurrences of *renyi* 仁義 to *liyi* 禮義, when compared with the high Mencian ratio, supports the view that Mencius favored internalist philosophical arguments, whereas Xunzi favored externalist.

In the first post-Warring States text I examined, the *Chunqiu Fanlu*, the higher ratio of occurrences of *renyi* 仁義 to *liyi* 禮義 supports the theory that Han Confucians had already begun to favor Mencian doctrine over Xunzian doctrine.²²³ The close proximity of *ren* to *ai* 愛 underscores the new connotations of *ren* as “loving broadly.” Meanwhile, the even closer proximity of *ren* to *qi* 氣 supports the theory that *ren* was beginning to acquire increasing metaphysical significance within the Confucian tradition. However, in the next text, the

²²³ This makes the assumption that language corresponds to doctrine. In theory, it is possible that language could shift in one direction, while underlying logic could shift in another.

Qianfulun, the absence of overlap between *ren* and *qi* 氣 qualifies the theory just described. In Zhu Xi's *Commentaries on the Four Books*, the proximity between *ren* and *qi* remains low, qualifying textual observations that the two terms are closely related within neo-Confucian philosophy, and inviting further investigation. The very high proximity of *ren* to *ai* 愛 in this text support the view that Zhu Xi saw *ren* as fundamentally linked to love.

In regard to the non-Confucian texts I examined, the low frequency of *ren* in the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*, combined with its infrequent co-occurrence rate with other Confucian virtues, supports the view that *ren* does not feature prominently in so-called “Daoist” Warring States philosophy. At the same time, the prevalence of the couplet *renyi* 仁義 in both texts supports the argument that portions of the *Daodejing* were edited later in the Warring States, and the view that Zhuangzi was directing some of his arguments explicitly toward Mencian doctrine. In the *Mozi*, the puzzling absence of any close proximal connection between *ren* and *xian* 賢 might be better understood through follow-up qualitative analyses. In the *Hanfeizi*, the high ratio of *renyi* 仁義 to *liyi* 禮義, coupled with the qualitative knowledge that Hanfeizi is without a doubt an externalist philosopher, qualifies the very use of this ratio as a general measurement tool of internalism vs. externalism, while suggesting that the ratio may be applicable as such a measurement tool in Confucian texts *only*. The low rank of *ren* in the *Taiping jing* supports the notion of that this term was of minimal philosophical importance to the text; however, its relatively close proximity to *yang* 陽 supports the counter-notion that *ren* may still have held some degree of cosmological significance in the text, and invites further research. Finally, the relatively higher ranks of *ren* and other major Confucian virtues in the *Hua shu* support a more open-ended classification of such texts as representative of multiple traditions.

Overall, my quantitative techniques were simple, limited to basic tests of how frequently different characters appear in isolation, and in association with other characters. This had the advantage of allowing me to make clear, simple observations about numeric trends across texts, which would be easily understood by scholars across multiple disciplines. However, my simple techniques had the disadvantage of limiting me to a fairly narrow set of quantitative tools, resulting in a limited number of quantitative observations I could make in regard to any given text. All of my observations also relied heavily on prior qualitative theory for interpretation. However, more advanced textual analysis techniques exist, including one which allows researchers to identify and track much larger clusters of separate yet associated words through a corpus. This type of technique, known as “topic modelling,” allows researchers to identify wholly novel themes running through large bodies of text with minimal reliance upon prior qualitative theory.²²⁴ These clusters of words, once identified and interpreted, can illuminate previously unknown topics and linguistic relationships across texts.²²⁵ However, because very little quantitative work has been done on early Chinese texts before, I chose to keep things simple and forgo more advanced techniques. As a single researcher, I also was not able to conduct hypothesis-blind coding of passages or character occurrences, which in some cases could have provided additional quantitative information for interpretation.

Finally, I will consider why we might expect Chinese society to value *ren* in its various meanings as I have described them. My answer is speculative, and varies by time period. During and before the Western Zhou, I believe that Watson (1938) was correct insofar as claiming that *ren* could help build solidarity among members within a clan. However, whereas Watson argued that this could be achieved through mutual “gentleness” (one of his interpretations of *ren*), I

²²⁴ Of course, *interpreting* these word clusters, or “topics,” still requires significant qualitative knowledge.

²²⁵ For a good example of topic modelling as applied to ancient Chinese texts, see Nichols et al. (2016, under submission).

argue that men aspiring to the ideal of “manliness,” incorporative of physical strength and beauty, as well as good wit and moral character, could achieve better results. Such a meaning of *ren*, if actualized, could have produced strong community figureheads, fit to inspire others, and to lead their small groups to success and reproduction. This meaning of *ren* is especially suitable to pre-Zhou times, when allegiance to shaman-kings may have been less personally rewarding than allegiance to one’s own smaller clan. The only drawback to this interpretation is that *ren* does not show particular close association with leadership itself in Western Zhou texts, which might be expected under this account.

By the Warring States period, however, China had already undergone a more civilized period under the Western Zhou rulership, in which larger scale society had developed. The emergence of the earliest known extended written texts is evidence for more refined culture during this time period. Under such conditions, it is not surprising that a visionary such as Confucius might recraft *ren*, an idea previously best suited for small groups, into a concept more conducive to large-scale cooperation. Thus arose its (relatively brief) meaning of “Goodness,” or perfect virtue.

However, as we see in the textual record, this meaning did not last long. I feel that, as defined by Confucius, *ren* was both too broad, and too difficult to attain. It is hard to pin down its exact nature in the *Analects*, and Confucius himself seems to have had great difficulty in maintaining it. Much more agreeable and valuable to society was *ren* as reimagined by Mencius, a virtue of narrower scope, rooted in instinctual feelings of familial caring, easily attainable by any man willing to work hard in a good environment, and yet ultimately powerful enough to bring peace to a ruler’s country. This was the meaning that stuck, probably because society

tended to flourish when people strove to achieve *ren* under this meaning, even if forces beyond their control (such as the rise of the Qin empire) occasionally threw affairs into chaos.

However, *ren* was not the only force or concept holding Chinese society together. There were many others, and *ren* had room to continue to change. As time passed, and large-scale organized religion became more common (in the forms of Daoism, and later, Buddhism), it is natural that *ren*, an already-influential concept integrally linked to prosocial behavior, should begin to take on more spiritual significance—especially when the philosophical tradition to which it was most closely tied was under competitive pressure to modernize its ideas. Zhu Xi's conception of *ren* as all-inclusive, unifying “humanity” ideally suited China as it existed in the Song dynasty, an intellectually developed society under the influence of multiple spiritual doctrines, the strongest of which (arguably Buddhism) emphasized inner goodness and enlightenment. Thus, as Chinese society developed, so too did *ren*, its meaning continually modified based on the circumstances to best foster mutual cooperation, caring, and success.

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Appendix A: Quantitative Analysis Methodological Guide

This appendix describes how to perform quantitative analyses on ancient Chinese texts from ctext.org. First, one must obtain the text one wishes to analyze in a format that is conducive to digital analysis. For me, this meant obtaining the text as a Unicode-8 text (.txt) file.

Unfortunately, Ctext does not currently provide the ability to directly download its content in this (or any) format. This leaves the researcher with two options. The first is to manually copy Ctext material from one's browser, and paste it into a Word or Notepad document. Unfortunately, the online formatting of Ctext makes it impossible to mass-copy large amounts of text without also including many external links and other undesired material. To circumvent this, one may first paste the text into an Excel spreadsheet, which parses the undesired material into separate columns. One can then copy the desired column into a Word or Notepad file, and save it under Unicode-8 .txt format. However, repeating this process for multiple chapters of multiple texts is exhausting. A second option is to use more advanced software to automatically capture only the relevant information for each of the online texts one desires. I obtained about 80% of the texts I analyzed in this fashion, and am grateful to Carson Logan and Dr. Ryan Nichols for their technical assistance.

Once one has obtained the text, the next step is to “clean” it for analysis. How one cleans it depends on the types of analysis one wishes to perform, and the capabilities of the analysis program that one is using. I wished to perform basic analyses on word frequencies and co-occurrences, using Dr. Lawrence Anthony's free AntConc analysis program, available at www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc. AntConc identifies and processes words as strings of characters separated by spaces, but Chinese is a character-based language that does not use spaces. Chinese also employs specialized punctuation (e.g. , 。 ? !), which the current version of AntConc (3.4.4) does not recognize as distinct “non-word” material. Therefore, in order to

“clean” Chinese texts for analysis using AntConc, I had to first remove all punctuation, and then add a space between every character. Punctuation can be removed by using the “find and replace” function in Word, or in multiple-file-processing programs such as Sublime Text 2 (PC) or TextWrangler (Mac). Spaces can be added using the “find and replace” function in word, turning on Wildcards under advanced settings, entering * in the search field, and entering ^&n plus a space in the replacement field. For both of these cleaning tasks, a fairly powerful computer is needed to process hundreds of thousands or millions of characters at once. Once again, I am grateful to Carson Logan and Dr. Ryan Nichols for providing about 80% of the texts I needed in pre-processed format. Finally, depending on the analyses to be run, a researcher may wish to remove certain characters with only grammatical, non-semantic meaning (e.g. 也, 于, 而). If desired, this can also be done using “find and replace.”

Once the text has been adequately cleaned and saved in .txt format, it is ready to be analyzed. AntConc allows for a variety of tests, which allow one to track ideas through texts, test existing hypotheses about textual structure and content, and identify potential new areas of research. Dr. Lawrence Anthony has created a full video series detailing the capabilities of AntConc, viewable at: www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLiRIDpYmiC0Ta0-Hdvc1D7hG6dmiS_TZj. Alternatively, Dr. Ryan Nichols has published several useful online articles on both AntConc, and quantitative textual analysis more generally, viewable at: www.hecc.ubc.ca/cerc/quantitative-textual-analysis.

Appendix B: Digital Text Locations

All locations accessed on April 29, 2016.

Book of Odes

HTML text source: <http://ctext.org/book-of-poetry>

Scanned digital base text: [《武英殿十三經注疏》本《毛詩正義》](#)

Book of Documents

HTML text source: <http://ctext.org/shang-shu>

Scanned digital base text: [《武英殿十三經注疏》本《尚書正義》](#)

Analects

HTML text source: <http://ctext.org/analects>

Scanned digital base text: [《武英殿十三經注疏》本《論語注疏》](#)

Mencius

HTML text source: <http://ctext.org/mengzi>

Scanned digital base text: [《武英殿十三經注疏》本《孟子注疏》](#)

Xunzi

HTML text source: <http://ctext.org/xunzi>

Scanned digital base text: [《四部叢刊初編》本《荀子》](#)

Chunqiu Fanlu

HTML text source: <http://ctext.org/chun-qiu-fan-lu>

Scanned digital base text: [《四部叢刊初編》本《春秋繁露》](#)

Qianfulun

HTML text source: <http://ctext.org/qian-fu-lun>

Scanned digital base text: [《四部叢刊初編》本《潛夫論》](#)

Yuan Dao

HTML text source: <http://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=en&chapter=732712> (dark text only)

Scanned digital base text: [《欽定四庫全書》本](#)

Hard copy for cross-checking: Qu Shouyuan & Chang Sichun. 1996. *Han Yu quan ji jiao zhu*. Chengdu: Sichuan da xue chu ban she.

Commentaries on the Four Books

HTML text source: <http://ctext.org/si-shu-zhang-ju-ji-zhu>

Scanned digital base text: [《乾隆御覽四庫全書薈要》本《四書集注章句》](#)

Daodejing

HTML text source: <http://ctext.org/dao-de-jing>

Scanned digital base text: [《四部叢刊初編》本《老子道德經》](#)

Zhuangzi

HTML text source: <http://ctext.org/zhuangzi>

Scanned digital base text: [《續古逸叢書》本《南華真經》](#)

Mozi

HTML text source: <http://ctext.org/mozi>

Scanned digital base text: [《摛藻堂四庫全書薈要》本《墨子》](#)

Hanfeizi

HTML text source: <http://ctext.org/hanfeizi>

Scanned digital base text: [《四部叢刊初編》本《韓非子》](#)

Taiping jing

HTML text source: <http://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=en&res=110513>

Alternate online version: <http://www.kanripo.org/text/KR5e0002/000>

Hard copy for cross-checking: Wang Ming. 1960. *Tai ping jing he jiao*. Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju.

Huashu

HTML text source: <http://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&res=199085>

Scanned digital base text: [《守約篇》本](#) (also used for cross-checking)

Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms

HTML text source: http://mahajana.net/texts/kopia_lokalna/soothill-hodous.html

Hard copy for cross-checking: Soothill, W. E. & Hodous, L. 1937. *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*. Taipei: Hsin Wen Feng Publishing Company.

Appendix C: *Book of Documents* Chapter Delineation

Chapters marked as “NEW TEXT” were most likely already written and in circulation by the time of Confucius (i.e. these chapters are *older*, and are thus still included in our “new” understanding of the ancient text). Chapters without this marking were most likely forged in the Han Dynasty.²²⁶ The chapter marked as “AMBIGUOUS” is typically included in the “New Text” version, but was quite likely a forgery.²²⁷ All links lead to Ctext.org, and all were accessed by the author on April 29, 2016.

虞書 - Yu Shu

- [堯典 - Canon of Yao](#) NEW TEXT
- [舜典 - Canon of Shun](#)
- [大禹謨 - Counsels of the Great Yu](#) NEW TEXT
- [皋陶謨 - Counsels of Gao-yao](#)
- [益稷 - Yi and Ji](#)

夏書 - Xia Shu

- [禹貢 - Tribute of Yu](#) NEW TEXT
- [甘誓 - Speech at Gan](#) NEW TEXT
- [五子之歌 - Songs of the Five Sons](#)
- [胤征 - Punitive Expedition of Yin](#)

商書 - Shang Shu

- [湯誓 - Speech of Tang](#) NEW TEXT
- [仲虺之誥 - Announcement of Zhong-hui](#) (*ren* occurs once in this chapter)
- [湯誥 - Announcement of Tang](#)
- [伊訓 - Instructions of Yi](#)
- [太甲上 - Tai Jia I](#)
- [太甲中 - Tai Jia II](#)
- [太甲下 - Tai Jia III](#) (*ren* occurs once in this chapter)
- [咸有一德 - Common Possession of Pure Virtue](#)
- [盤庚上 - Pan Geng I](#) NEW TEXT
- [盤庚中 - Pan Geng II](#) NEW TEXT
- [盤庚下 - Pan Geng III](#) NEW TEXT
- [說命上 - Charge to Yue I](#)
- [說命中 - Charge to Yue II](#)
- [說命下 - Charge to Yue III](#)
- [高宗彤日 - Day of the Supplementary Sacrifice to Gao Zong](#) NEW TEXT
- [西伯戡黎 - Chief of the west's Conquest of Li](#) NEW TEXT
- [微子 - Count of Wei](#) NEW TEXT

²²⁶ Karlgren 1949, Karlgren 1950.

²²⁷ Shaughnessy 1993, pp. 378 – 397.

周書 - Zhou Shu

- 泰誓上 - Great Declaration I AMBIGUOUS
泰誓中 - Great Declaration II AMBIGUOUS (*ren* occurs once in this chapter)
泰誓下 - Great Declaration III AMBIGUOUS
牧誓 - Speech at Mu NEW TEXT
武成 - Successful Completion of the War (*ren* occurs once in this chapter)
洪範 - Great Plan NEW TEXT
旅獒 - Hounds of Lu
金縢 - Metal-bound Coffers NEW TEXT (*ren* occurs once in this chapter)²²⁸
大誥 - Great Announcement NEW TEXT
微子之命 - Charge to the Count of Wei
康誥 - Announcement to the Prince of Kang NEW TEXT
酒誥 - Announcement about Drunkenness NEW TEXT
梓材 - Timber of the Rottlera NEW TEXT
召誥 - Announcement of the Duke of Shao NEW TEXT
洛誥 - Announcement concerning Luo NEW TEXT
多士 - Numerous Officers NEW TEXT
無逸 - Against Luxurious Ease NEW TEXT
君奭 - Prince Shi NEW TEXT
蔡仲之命 - Charge to Zhong of Cai
多方 - Numerous Regions NEW TEXT
立政 - Establishment of Government NEW TEXT
周官 - Officers of Zhou
君陳 - Jun-chen
顧命 - Testamentary Charge NEW TEXT
康王之誥 - Announcement of King Kang
畢命 - Charge to the Duke of Bi
君牙 - Kun-ya
冏命 - Charge to Jiong
呂刑 - Marquis of Lu on Punishments NEW TEXT
文侯之命 - Charge to the Marquis Wen NEW TEXT
費誓 - Speech at Bi NEW TEXT
秦誓 - Speech of the Marquis of Qin NEW TEXT

²²⁸ While this passage occurs within the Tsinghua manuscripts, confirming it as New Text, the Tsinghua version does not use the current form of the character *ren*, somewhat complicating this occurrence. This is the only occurrence of *ren* to which the material in the Tsinghua manuscripts applies.