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Edward Yang's Confusion

*Law Nga-chun
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Abstract [1]

Edward Yang (in Chinese 楊德昌, 1947-2007) is one of the most renowned Taiwanese directors, whose works raise criticisms of modernity. Since the New Culture Movement in the 1910s and 1920s, Chinese literati have queried the place of traditional Chinese culture, especially Confucianism, on the road to modernization. This paper gives an account of Yang's understanding of modernization and the Confucian tradition as illustrated in his work, *A Confucian Confusion* (1994). We argue that, though he despised politically endorsed Confucianism as ideology, without sufficient justification Yang nonetheless reserves the possibility of taking Confucianism as a supplement to modernity.

Key Words

cinema as philosophy, Confucianism, Edward Yang, modernity, New Taiwan Cinema

1. Introduction

At the beginning of his book, *Edward Yang*, John Anderson writes, "Yang is a poet of film, a director less interested perhaps in pure images than in ideas, a director whose work is often so sophisticated in its thinking that it should be accompanied by footnotes." [2] It is true that Yang was very much interested in ideas. His works possess a sense of intellectualism, precisely as one of his long-time co-workers, Wu Nien Jen, wrote: "He is writing academic essays rather than describing." [3] Alongside Hou Hsiao Hsien and Tsai Ming Liang, Yang was a pioneer and advocate of the New Taiwan Cinema but he did not receive as much attention as these other two directors until the release of *Yi Yi* (一一) in 2000. [4]

His choice of maintaining lengthy dialogues to explicitly express certain views or beliefs sets him apart from the others, who prefer to compose the narrative primarily with sounds and images devoid of such dialogue. [5] Hou says that Yang brought a new kind of "eye," or way of seeing, back from the United States. [6] He expresses a similar view about Yang elsewhere, echoing Wu's above-cited description of Yang's detachment. [7], [8] These commentaries indicate that, in comparison to other Taiwanese directors, Yang held a distinctive view and attitude towards the cultural, social, and political situation of Taiwan.

There is sufficient evidence, such as interviews of Yang and his co-workers, to establish his authorial status in the production process of his films. Therefore, we are not arguing for his authorial status in this paper. [9] We also take it for granted that cinema can *do* philosophy, whether intentionally or unintentionally. In this case, we align ourselves with Paisley Livingston's idea that "cinema contributes to philosophical enquiry in part because some film-makers employ the

cinematic medium, along with other means, to express philosophical ideas.”^[10] Edward Yang, we argue, was exemplary in this regard.

We argue that Yang tried to express the so-called “Confucian virtues” through his film, *A Confucian Confusion* (獨立時代), and that the film makes a contribution to the discussion regarding modernization. Our claim is that in this film he explicitly articulated and questioned the modernization of Confucianism and, in a broader sense, the very place of Confucian culture in the modern world. The later part of this paper explores the main thesis of Confucian ethics and assesses Yang’s understanding of Confucianism.

2. An overview of Edward Yang’s *A Confucian Confusion*

Edward Yang engaged in queries of the values involved in the modern Chinese way of living. This is most notable in his film *A Confucian Confusion*. To begin, we take a look at the film’s Chinese and English title. Yang said:

The film is primarily about one taking responsibility for one’s action, which I think is uppermost in the concept of “independence” (獨立). Confucian ethics regarding human relationships are a set of rules and limitations, which, in times of change, are likely to create confusion. So there’s a spiritual kinship between the film’s Chinese and English title.^[11]

Yang explained in the above-cited interview his decision to use different titles for the film. Literally translated, the Chinese title of the film is “The age of independence.” This refers to a very general characteristic of modern lives in which people take responsibility for their actions. The official English title, “*A Confucian Confusion*,” refers to a philosophical confusion in Confucianism or to the confused mental state of at least two of the main characters in the film, Molly’s brother-in-law and Qiqi. The difference in the titles already indicated Yang’s intention to present a problem of Confucian ethics as it relates to its application in the modern way of living. He went on to explain in another interview:

A Confucian Confusion is the first and so far only attempt at self-reflection: at examining what is wrong with trying to head into the 21st century with a 4th century BCE ideology. Getting too bloody rich is the best way to make us all forget to face reality. I hope the current economic crisis will change that.^[12]

The interview was conducted in 1997, when Asia was experiencing a severe economic crisis. The film is set against the background to the period before these crises, when Taiwan was still at the peak of its economic success. The characters in the film are fairly young, professional people. The story consists of a series of mundane events about these characters’ lives and personal and professional relationships in Taiwan during the 1990’s. The events in the film are scattered, so the best way to characterize the story is to introduce some of the main characters.

At the beginning of the film Yang inserted a title card quoting from *The Analects of Confucius* as an introduction, followed by the film's title.^[13] At the same time, the character Birdy's voice overlaps with the quotation and the film's title. Birdy is a theater director who labels himself as an "artist." When asked of the sudden change of his works' subject matter from the previous romantic love story to comedy, he answers, "I haven't. An artist must reflect reality." Later on in the same conversation his answers indicate that his works are not for the sake of art but for selling tickets and making profits.

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As the story develops, this kind of inconsistency emerges in the other characters as well. Molly, for example, is a self-aware independent woman who owns a production company funded by her fiancé Akeem. Their marriage has been prearranged by their parents so as to benefit both families financially. Despite her acceptance of this obsolete marriage arrangement, she struggles to actualize her aspiration of being independent and unique by running her own culture business.

As the story unfolds, her business emerges as a realm that loosely ties together all the relationships of the characters. For example, Molly's brother-in-law is a popular romance novelist (referred to as "the novelist" below), whose works are often stolen and copied into theatrical plays by Birdy. Birdy gains his fame and profits from it by constantly plagiarizing his works. The novelist is well aware of it and does not seem to be bothered. He plays an important role in explicitly expressing Yang's claim.^[14]

In the story, the novelist initially wrote popular romance novels that brought him great success, in terms of fame and financial income. He then experiences a change of mind and doubts his previous way of living. This leads to a reorientation of his creative pursuits and to the completion of the novel, *A Confucian Confusion*, which examines people's modern way of living while reencountering Confucius' teachings. The novel is about Confucius, who is reincarnated in 1990's Taiwan and discovers a city shaped by his doctrines. People in the city attend to his teachings once they hear of his presence. However, they begin to feel suspicious and condemn his apparent sincerity. The revived Confucius is accused of disguising his true intentions with the seemingly altruistic Confucian doctrines. The distortion or misunderstanding experienced by Confucius depicted in the novelist's story is somehow shared by Qiqi in the film.

Qiqi and Larry represent contrasting characteristics. The former is an example of living a life with sincerity while the latter leads a life of hypocrisy. Qiqi is the best friend of Molly and, at the same time, works for her. Her sincerity often creates an ambivalent situation for her. Her appearance is best described by one of the inserted title cards that reads, "She sports that pair of dimples and everyone adores her." On the one hand, she is adept at reconciling conflicts between her co-workers; but on the other, others see her as a vicious person one needs to be cautious of. Her sincerity is seen as a mask to her unfathomable deliberation. She cherishes her friends and loved ones and therefore always tries to maintain harmonious relationships with them. However, it is also interesting to note

that there are moments when she feels perplexed over her own sincerity and its value. So if she is a truly sincere person, we can consider her as the closest to the Confucian ideal person.

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In contrast to Qiqi, Larry is perceived as cunning, insincere, inconsistent, and sometimes hypocritical. He embodies the sort of instrumental thinking that is encouraged by a modern, market-oriented society. Things have to be quantifiable in order to be structured into a cost-benefit analysis and procedures for making judgments and decisions. In Larry's eyes, maintaining harmonious relationships with others has instrumental value because it provides him with future opportunities. In other words, Larry sees that to maintain human relationships is an investment, as he says to Molly, "Just like money, emotion (*qing*, 情) is also an investment. Take friendship for instance. It's a long-term investment, like stocks or savings. Family is another kind of investment, like you and Akeem. Do you know what this 'culture' business is like? All these high-risk, high-return investments are like love."

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In his book, *After Virtue*, Alasdair MacIntyre describes the characteristic of modern market society by singling out three emblematic characters. Of these, the manager might best describe Larry's character:

[A] central responsibility of managers to direct and redirect their organizations' available resources, both human and non-human, as effectively as possible toward those ends. Every bureaucratic organization embodies some explicit definition of costs and benefits from which the criteria of effectiveness are derived. Bureaucratic rationality is the rationality of matching means to ends economically and efficiently.[\[15\]](#)

Larry talks of Confucian values but, so far as he understands them, they are efficient tools or instruments for his own ends. In this way he is a *Homo Economicus*, a false Confucian. As depicted in the film, Yang thought that modern society is dominated by this mentality or ideology and this is why others often mistake Qiqi as the same kind, deeming her courtesy pretentious.

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In order to appropriately evaluate and appreciate Yang's films, it is also important to recognize Yang's role in the New Taiwanese Cinema movement and his intention to articulate the problem of modernization, and also his questioning, in a broader sense, the place of Confucian culture in the modern world.[\[16\]](#) As a leader of the New Taiwan Cinema movement, Yang joined the group of filmmakers and critics who signed the *Taiwan Cinema Manifesto* (1987). The co-authors of the document declared their opposition against the stiff policy imposed by the Taiwanese government and expressed their belief "that cinema can be a conscious creative activity, an art

form, or even a national cultural activity that is both self-reflexive and possessed of a sense of history.”^[17] The group strived for an alternative that would accommodate “films with creative ambition, artistic direction, and cultural self-consciousness.”^[18]

As a leading advocate of this movement, Yang unswervingly made his films guided by these aims. In making *A Confucian Confusion*, Yang showed his commitment to the *Manifesto* in terms of “cultural self-consciousness.”^[19] His concern in the film was to investigate the possibility of the then-popular ideology that some of the Asian countries were promoting, namely the Confucian tradition.^[20] During the 1970s, scholars in various disciplines hypothetically ascribed the economic success of the Four Asian Tigers (Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea and Singapore) to the so-called “Confucian cultural sphere.”^[21] They saw these countries as sharing Confucian values and beliefs, such as familial hierarchy, a sense of affiliation, frugality, and diligence. It is in this context that Yang wished to put the idea to a test through a fictional setting, comparable to a thought experiment. Here, he pursued a philosophical inquiry regarding the modernization of Confucian ethics.

His endeavour echoes the ongoing debate of the problem of modernization that began in the late Qing Dynasty in China. The problem emerged as the Western powers invaded in the late nineteenth century. Chinese literati, or thinkers, realized very soon that, in resisting invasion, it was not simply a technical issue or how to strengthen the military force but a general issue of learning modern Western ideas. It was a time when people in China were experiencing a large scale cultural clash that penetrated every aspect of their lives. The debate divided Chinese intellectuals into two competing camps, namely, anti-Confucianism and conservatism. Anti-Confucianism advocates an overall Westernization and thinks that it is the only way to modernize China. On the contrary, the conservative side holds that traditional Confucian culture is not incompatible with modern Western culture and that the primary mission for the survival of China is to draw on Confucian resources. This debate was rekindled in the 1980s-90s when the term “Confucian culture sphere” was created to label the East Asian region that was experiencing a rapid economic growth.

3. An outline of Confucian ethics

In this section we give a very brief outline of Confucian ethics so as to provide some basic background regarding possible meanings of the title, “*A Confucian Confusion*.”

The basic assumption of Confucian ethics is that the best ordered society for human beings is a society grounded on the five cardinal relations (*wu lun*, 五倫), which are between ruler and the ruled, between parents and their offspring, between husband and wife, between siblings, and friendship. Good and bad, right and wrong, are derived there from. Good and right doings are conducts sustaining and consolidating these relations, while bad and wrong ones are the converses. In other words, conduct upholding the five relations and, hence, an ordered society is taken as virtuous. Any conduct prone to undermine these cardinal relations is vicious.^[22]

To discern virtue from vice in particular cases we have to seek further for the answer to the question, what is the relationship between ourselves and the one unto whom our act is to be done? Such a question does not make much sense in the eyes of agent-neutral utilitarian ethics. But it seems to make sense if the idea of the moral patient is taken into account. Analogously speaking, an aspirin can kill or reduce pain but it works differently on different patients. Knowingly prescribing aspirin to patients with aspirin allergy is an utterly malicious act. Confucianism suggests that it is our role in spheres of social intercourse that determines a particular act to be right or wrong, virtuous or vicious.^[23] For example, supposing that paying family expenses is a virtuous act in the name of filial piety, it is aptly said to be virtuous if and only if the one whom we pay for is our parents. It is inappropriate to do the same for people parentally unrelated to us. It may be said to be virtuous in terms of generosity but never in terms of filial piety.

Edward Yang saw that modern ideology had a rather problematic future because interpersonal relationships are vitiated. The most salient symptom of this is a ubiquitous acceptance of hypocrisy. Confucianism then emerges as a political ideology that deviates from Confucius' teachings. Advocates of this ideology convince some people that the doctrines of Confucianism are solely for instrumental use to gain financial and political benefits. They impose a moral structure by preaching Confucianism as emphasizing social order and hierarchy. This, as Yang viewed it, encourages hypocrisy.^[24]

His view can also be seen from the opening sequence of the film where reporters interview Birdy. Birdy says he would have been a politician in support of democracy if he were not a playwright, because "Buying a ticket is like voting. My ultimate political belief is in *equality*. What's *equality*? It means everyone thinks alike. If everyone's taste is the same, my tickets will always sell. There wouldn't be fistfights in the parliament. Therefore, *equality* is not only for Taiwan, it's for the world! Do these words remind you of a certain Great Man? " The Great Man he refers to is obviously Confucius, and he appropriates concepts like *equality* (*datong*, 大同) to deceive and preach this vitiated form of Confucianism. A similar attitude can also be seen from the conversation between Larry and Molly where he tries to seduce her.

Is the distortion of Confucianism simply a means to regulate others to be obedient, as Yang suggested, intentionally made by the ambitious people who want to stay in power?^[25] The answer to this question is the key to Yang's judgment on modernity and Confucianism.

There are critics who complain that Confucian ethics cannot solve moral problems.^[26] If we take Confucian teachings seriously, confusion would come when we realize, and it is easy for us to do so, that we all have more than one single social role, that we are engaging in different spheres of social intercourse at the same time. Someone may be simultaneously a teacher of his students, an employee of his employer, the son of his parents, and a friend of his friends. What should we do if our role in one particular sphere of social intercourse

requires us to do such-and-such but our role in another sphere requires us to do otherwise? How should Qiqi react in his confrontation with Molly, who is at the same time Qiqi's friend and boss? *The Analects* of Confucius suggests a typical moral dilemma as follows:

The Duke of She talked to Confucius, 'Here we have people exemplifying rectitude. If their father had stolen a sheep, they will bear witness to the fact.' Confucius replied, 'We have a different understanding of rectitude in our state. The father conceals the misconduct of the son, and the son conceals the misconduct of the father. Rectitude is thereby exemplified.'[\[27\]](#)

Confucius does not mean to define 'rectitude' idiosyncratically; his reply insinuates that in some cases we are, indeed, unable to have the best of both worlds, say, being a dutiful citizen and being a filially pious son.

Confucian ethics tends to be shrugged off insofar as such dilemmas are likely to happen. A prioritization of human relations does not help.[\[28\]](#) But, for Confucianism, an ethical person is not one from cradle to grave free from moral dilemmas. This is to say, the task of doing ethics is not to establish rigorous rules to guide our every single act, so as to be invincible in moral dilemmas. Instead, being a Sage (成聖), a person who embodies supreme virtues, is the ultimate goal of doing ethics, and there are different feasible ways (*dao*, 道) to achieve this end. Models of sagacity are provided by history for our reference. As Mencius suggests:

Bo-Yi is a sage of purity; Yi-Yin is a sage of dutifulness; Hui of Liu Xia is a sage of harmoniousness; and Confucius is a sage of timeliness.[\[29\]](#)

Mencius sees them as sages regardless of their inability to solve the moral dilemmas they encountered respectively. Bad luck, something out of their control, causes the dilemmas. In this light, they acted the best and prevented the worst, in consideration of their situation and of what their role required them to do. Here it should be noted that the way to sagacity that Bo-Yi took is inapplicable to Yi-Yin, for they had different roles and were in different situations. Confucianism does not recommend us to strictly emulate the lives of the precedent sages like a copycat.

Similar to the Aristotelian idea of *phronēsis*, what Confucianism suggests is that doing ethics involves situational judgments.[\[30\]](#) Except for certain teleological principles, for example, "to nurture affection in the sphere of relation between father and son, impartiality and righteousness between sovereign and minister, sense of difference between husband and wife, sense of hierarchy between elder and youngster, fidelity between friends,"[\[31\]](#) ethical knowledge aptly consists of only references from paradigmatic figures in history or tradition. *The Analects* gives an example that illustrates the situational susceptibility of ethical decision-making:

Viscount Wei resigned. Viscount Ji was enslaved.

Bi-Gan died for remonstrance. Confucius said, "There were three virtuous men at the end of Yin dynasty."^[32]

These three men occupied different social positions and were granted different entitlements. Providing that Wei and Ji were the tyrannical sovereign Zou's next of kin, they had chosen the best option in confrontation against Zou to save the ties of kinship. As a minister, Bi-Gan had no better choice than to die for righteousness.

Concisely put, the main theses of classical Confucian ethics are as follows:

1. Ethical decisions are made not from general principles or universal laws but in consideration of one's own social role in relation to others and the duties entailed by them.
2. There are responses appropriate to situations, and every situation involves consideration of at least our role in relation to our patients.
3. Stories, either factual or fictional, are important for moral thinking. They tell how those commonly acknowledged sages, on whom we may model our choices, reacted in situations similar to ours.

4. Edward Yang's confusion: conformity or independence?

As mentioned, there are scholars who argue that Confucian ethics had played an essential role in the economic success of the four Asian tigers. By virtue of their success, Confucianism is said to be qualified as an alternative philosophy to guide us to modernization. Conceding that the success did result from qualities such as diligence and frugality, these qualities are substantially different from the virtues of similar names that Confucianism advocates.

To see Confucian virtues as facilitating economic growth and to promote them for this reason would be self-defeating. People wanting to be morally good in the world where virtues are identified as efficient instruments for external goods would inevitably encounter Qiqi's confusion that however sincerely we are in our dealings with each other, sincerity does not have the same value and meaning in a business context that it was meant to have within the normative framework of a traditional Confucian society. To think the contrary is the "confusion" we associate with the title of Yang's film.

Confucianism takes virtues as constituents of a relationally ordered society. For the reason that to establish a relationally ordered society, itself, is the ultimate end, virtues are seen as good contextually, if not intrinsically, and not because of the extrinsic values they promote. In a Confucian sense, a courteous person is good because his courtesy maintains a proper relation between him and his neighbors. Courtesy is good, too, in an instrumental sense but only if one benefits from it. It may be the case that Taipei in the 1990s benefited much from virtues like courtesy, deference, and so on, yet these were by no means the virtues that Confucians uphold. In

other words, some optimistic supporters of Confucianism happen to comprehend Capitalism with Confucian vocabularies, resulting in a misunderstanding that both Capitalism and Confucianism advocate values, though slightly different in expressions, of the same perennial spirit. However, in any sense, Confucian harmony as a pursuit for its own sake does not mean Capitalist cooperation as a means to productivity; Confucian permanence as a metaphysical belief referring to the unchangeable reality does not mean Capitalist sustainability as a measure of economic growth; Confucian educated man as a versatile amateur does not mean Capitalist educated man as a technically specialized product.^[33]

It may be bold to conclude that the application of Confucianism to policy-making entails totalitarian rule but, historically, whenever we have the former, we have the latter.^[34] When Confucianism is implemented or institutionalized, it degenerates to an instrument strengthening power. Therefore Yang, through the novelist, has the imaginative Confucius and Qiqi raise the question: If a Confucian way of living is worth pursuing, is it possible to be a genuine Confucian without being misunderstood? Is it possible for us to live a life in conformity with Confucian ethics in a modern world where, as Charles Taylor puts it, certain "malaises" are ubiquitous?^[35]

The difficulties should not be overlooked. Contemporary China has undergone a drastic change so resources from the past barely help. The five cardinal relations underpinning the old-fashioned Chinese society have been transformed, or even shattered. The relation between ruler and the ruled no longer exists. Is it appropriate for us to cope with the issues centered in the newborn employer-employee relation with reference to the abandoned ruler-ruled relation? Definitely not. Other, more intricate social roles accompany the emergence of new spheres of social intercourse where we may interact with people who, at the same time, are our co-workers and our spouses and our students and our fellows in church.

More fatally, the gulf between Confucian ethics and certain core values in modern times makes them fundamentally incompatible. We can accept either side but not both. As indicated, Confucian ethics assumes that doing ethics is ultimately for the sake of uniting people in a society as one. Individuals in a society are perceived, in a way, as different cells pertaining to a body as a whole. They acquire self-knowledge through recognition of their place in the social network. Contrary to this sort of communitarianism, modernity features atomism, such that any individual is not necessarily tied to a particular society or community.^[36] The roles imposed on people are simply accidents of natural endowment or contingencies of social circumstances.^[37] Those widely acknowledged political ideals currently presuppose this modern conception of the individual. Liberty, for instance, referring to the idea that the fewer external constraints over our will, the freer we are, and the freer we are, the better lives we have, presupposes what Isaiah Berlin eloquently states:

To block before [a man] every door but one, no matter how noble the prospect upon which it opens, or how benevolent the motives of those

who arrange this, is to sin against the truth that he is a man, a being with a life of his own to live... Every plea for civil liberties and individual fights, every protest against exploitation and humiliation, against the encroachment of public authority, or the mass hypnosis of custom or organized propaganda, springs from this individualistic, and much disputed, conception of man.[\[38\]](#)

Of course, whether communitarianism or atomism gives us a better understanding of the nature of human society is subject to further investigation, but as long as the world in the status quo embraces the values derived from atomism, it is reasonably doubtful that Confucian values are welcome in their own right.

Explicitly put, Confucian ethics is incompatible with the modern world. It is true that there were people living a genuine Confucian ethical life, but this was exclusively in the time of imperial China. The practitioners of the modern world have not the resources, in terms of social institution, worldview, and so on, required for stringently following the Confucius's teaching. As a matter of fact, Confucianism would not have enjoyed a dominant place in Chinese culture without political endorsement, since Emperor Wu of Han Dynasty (141 – 87 BCE) and Confucian ethical life could not have been rooted in the populace without the aid of those policies and institutions, such as the landlord system, the paternal family system, and the imperial examination, all of which embodied the doctrines of Confucianism and played a role favoring their succession. However, these inseparable parts of Confucianism are all expelled from modernization. In this respect, subsequent to the last imperial ruler's abdication and the rise of the communist party, Confucianism no longer enjoys superiority as the state academy. Confucianism thereafter is extinct.[\[39\]](#)

Confucianism seems to be undergoing a revival. Universities offer courses in Confucianism, Confucius Institutes are being set up worldwide, statues of Confucius can be found in numerous temples, and organizations in the name of Confucianism are actively providing social services. All these facts indicate that Confucianism survives, but as insignificant fragments. Similar to the fate of religion in the secular age, Confucianism is, at best, residual in the mind of nostalgic men but no more the guidance of their everyday lives. Yu Ying-shih humorously describes that the survival of Confucianism is analogous to a bodiless ghost.[\[40\]](#) For, what Confucian ancestors left is only abstract words. The social contexts, the metaphysical belief about heavenly decree, the embodiment of a Confucian political and ethical life, have all vanished in the mists of history. Joseph Levenson metaphorically accounts for the mentality of modern Confucianism followers:

Many bricks of the old structure are still around—but not the structure. Fragments may survive because they meet a modern taste, not because they must be conveying the essence of an invincible tradition... To the museum mentality, the exhibits may be 'historically' significant,

pointers to a past that does not appeal and does not threaten. Or they may be 'aesthetically' significant, seen with the eye of value rather than history; then they are carefully abstracted from past to present, shorn away from a total culture to take their part in a new one."[\[41\]](#)

In short, Yang denies Confucianism advocated by political authorities, provided that he depicts it as ideology.[\[42\]](#) However, his denial is not an unreserved one, he does not investigate into the theoretical incompatibility between Confucian ethics and atomism, the fundamental organizing principle of the modern world. It leaves room for optimistic Confucians celebrating the doctrines of Confucianism. There is evidence suggesting Yang's undetermined position: Qiqi and Xiao Ming declare their engagement to be annulled but, in the last scene, after visiting Xiao Ming's father, Qiqi shows a bit of attachment left for Xiao Ming by offering him a date. She does not completely detach herself from Xiao Ming. Yang does not attempt to tell the audience whether they will come together again or separate for good. Qiqi signifies two choices here, caring to others or being independent of external bonds. Both are seen as elementary to a good life yet, practically, they are mutually exclusive. Which should we choose? Confucius did give a definite answer to this question but, presumably, there would be only a handful of modern men accepting the conclusion that he would plainly discard independence as undesirable.

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Endnotes

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[2] J. Anderson, *Edward Yang* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p. 1. It is quite puzzling how Anderson praises Edward Yang as “a poet of film” but, at the same time, thinks that Yang was “less interested in pure images than in ideas,” since Yang clearly produced some cinematically innovative and artistically original audio-visual displays in his films. Two of the most notable examples are *The Terrorizers* (恐怖份子) (1986) and *A Brighter Summer Days* (牯嶺街少年殺人事件) (1991). In *The Terrorizers*, Yang made a sequence of shots using still photographs that serve as a part of the narration of the story that is comparable to the French filmmaker Chris Marker’s *La Jetée* (1962). The ending of the film also provides a “twist” where it intends to trick the audience into believing the murders are committed by the husband for moments but, in fact, it is actually a plot of the wife’s novel in the film. Also, in *A Brighter Summer Day*, and many of his other films, he employed long-shot and off-screen sounds to create interesting scenes, thus demonstrating his artistic skills.

[3] Y. Y. Wang, *Edward Yang Revisited: Interviews with Taiwanese Filmmakers* (再見楊德昌 台灣電影人訪談紀事), (Taipei: Shi Zhou Culture, 2012), p. 49.

[4] YiYi won Yang the Best Director Award at the Cannes Film Festival.

[5] E. Yang, *The Terrorizers*, DVD, directed by Edward Yang (Taipei: Central Pictures Corporation: Taiwan Sony Pictures Entertainment Inc., 2010), special features. In the interview, Yang’s and Hou’s long-time collaborator, Wu Nien Jen says, “Take Hsiao-hsien Hou and Edward Yang for example, the way in which they discuss issues are very different. [...] Edward is a person who used concepts. He will think that for instance, the way he views society, he thinks...using a very abstract idea like modern life. Will the modern developments of society today affect marriage or the way people view love? Using such concepts to think, and there isn’t something concrete when you think, so you need to follow a concept, to come up different events so that you can pull out the concept. So his play is different from Hou’s.”

[6] *Ibid.* Hou says, “He studied in Taiwan until college, and left for the U.S. for ten years. After his return, he became someone who came from a totally different world. Looking at where he grew up, he clearly saw the social structure of Taiwan.”

[7] Hou’s similar view about Yang is referred to in P. T. Cheuk, ed., *Hou Hsiao-Hsien Master Class* (侯孝賢電影講座) (Hong Kong: Cosmo Books, 2008), pp. 109, 200-201.

[8] E. Yang, *The Terrorizers*, DVD, Directed by Edward Yang (Taipei: Central Pictures Corporation: Taiwan Sony Pictures Entertainment Inc., 2010), special features. Wu explains, “Perhaps, it is because he studied abroad that he sees things from different perspectives. He can think outside the box, such as the way he views Taipei, and the people of Taipei.”

[9] Y. Y. Wang, *Edward Yang Revisited: Interviews with Taiwanese Filmmakers* (再見楊德昌 台灣電影人訪談紀事) (Taipei: Shi Zhou Culture, 2012).

[10] P. Livingston, "Arguing over Cinema as Philosophy," *Cinema, Philosophy, Bergman: On Film as Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 39-59.

[11] B. Chang and C. Li, *The One and Only Edward Yang* (—重現 楊德昌), (Hong Kong International Film Festival Society Series; 9, 2008), p. 51.

[12] S. Kraicer and L. Roosen-Runge, "Edward Yang: A Taiwanese Independent Filmmaker in Conversation," *CineAction*, 1998, 53.

[13] Refer to *The Analects of Confucius*, 13:9.

[14] S. Kraicer and L. Roosen-Runge, "Edward Yang: A Taiwanese Independent Filmmaker in Conversation," *CineAction*, 1998, 53.

[15] A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), pp. 25-26.

[16] See J. Y. Huang and et. al. eds., *Edward Yang: The Contribution of Taiwan to the World's Film History* (楊德昌—台灣對世界影史的貢獻) (Taipei: Yue Sheng Culture, 2007), p. 158.

[17] H. Z. Zhan, "Taiwan Cinema Manifesto, 1987," ed. H. P. Chiao *Taiwan New Cinema* (台灣新電影), (Taipei: Shibao, 1988), pp. 111-118. The translated excerpt is taken out from F. Lu, "Another Cinema: Darkness and Light," eds. C. Berry and F. Lu, *Island on the Edge Taiwan New Cinema and After* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), pp. 137.

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] S. Kraicer and L. Roosen-Runge, "Edward Yang: A Taiwanese Independent Filmmaker in Conversation," *CineAction*, 1998, 53.

[20] E. Yang, *A Confucian Confusion* (獨立時代 楊德昌的活力喜劇) (Taipei: Wanxiang Books, 1994), pp. 137-140.

[21] T. D. DuBois, *Religion and the Making of Modern East Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); J. Lin, *Demystifying the Chinese Economy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[22] Refer to *Mencius*, 5:4.

[23] Mencius illustrates this idea by his response to King Hui of Liang's query on the legitimacy of overthrowing King Zou. He holds that King Zou did not comply with what a King ought and ought not to do and thus the revolution against him was completely legitimate. See *Mencius*, 2:15.

[24] Refer to S. Kraicer and L. Roosen-Runge, "Edward Yang: A Taiwanese Independent Filmmaker in Conversation," *CineAction*, 1998, 53. Also, J. Anderson, *Edward Yang* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), pp. 76-77.

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] Example such as D. B. Wong, "Coping with Moral Conflict

and Ambiguity," *Ethics*, 102, 4 (1992), 763-784. In his view, what principle to follow so as to evade moral dilemmas is seldom, if ever, discussed in Confucian ethics. This does not mean that Confucians are insusceptible to moral dilemmas but, instead of guiding principles, expediency is what Confucians opt for in dealing with dilemmas. For details, see W. Y. Wong, "On the Way Confucianism in Resolving Moral Conflicts: Illustrated by the Notion of Expedient in Gongyang Annals" (再論儒家對道德衝突的消解之道——藉《公羊傳》中權的觀念闡明), Lecture, Seminars in Chinese Culture, Chinese Civilisation Centre, City University of Hong Kong, October 29, 2008.

[27] Refer to *The Analects of Confucius*, 13:18.

[28] Unlike deontological ethics, a prioritization of duties would defeat the purpose of Confucian ethics. An ethical life in the Confucian sense is a life sustaining all the five cardinal relations and a prioritization means that at least one relation would be forgone.

[29] Refer to *Mencius*, 10:1.

[30] See C. Ham, *The Politics of Affective Relations: East Asia and Beyond* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2004), p. 139; H. Roetz, *Confucian Ethics of the Axial Age: A Reconstruction under the Aspect of the Breakthrough toward Postconventional Thinking* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 183-190; D. S. Nivison and B. W. Norden, *The Ways of Confucianism: Investigations in Chinese Philosophy* (Chicago: Open Court, 1996), pp. 224-230.

[31] Refer to *Mencius*, 5:4.

[32] Refer to *The Analects of Confucius*, 18:1.

[33] For example, T. Li and G. O. Moreira, "The Influence of Confucianism and Buddhism on Chinese Business: The Case of Aveiro, Portugal," accessed November 24, 2015.

<http://www.immi.se/intercultural/nr19/tianbo.htm>. Thankfully there are opponents to the idea that Confucian virtues and Capitalist values are synonymous. See G. Davis, "The Eastern Way: How Chinese Philosophy Can Power Innovation in Business Today." *Innovation Management*. June 18, 2012, accessed November 24, 2015.

<http://www.innovationmanagement.se/2012/06/18/the-eastern-way-how-chinese-philosophy-can-power-innovation-in-business-today/>.

[34] Those totalitarians may speak of "Asian values" instead of "Confucianism," but it is commonly agreed that the former originated from the latter and that two terms refer to, more or less, the same contents. Refer to W. De Bary, *Asian Values and Human Rights: A Confucian Communitarian Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[35] By the expression "malaises of modernity," Charles Taylor refers to subjectivism derived from individualism, the dominance of instrumental rationality, and the general acceptance of soft despotism. See C. Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 1-12. Though Edward Yang did not express his disquiet concerning the modern world with Taylor's exact wording, he was able to sense that the way that people living

in a highly commercialized society think and act is solely framed by cost-benefit analysis, that is, instrumental rationality. See S. Kraicer and L. Roosen-Runge, "Edward Yang: A Taiwanese Independent Filmmaker in Conversation," *CineAction*, 1998, 53.

[36] See C. Taylor, *Philosophy and Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 187-210.

[37] Social role is something that we happen to be assigned; it is not something which we have made the effort to pursue. See J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 15.

[38] Refer to I. Berlin, *Liberty: Incorporating Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp.174-175.

[39] See Y. S. Yu, *Modern Confucianist Theory* (現代儒學論) (River Edge, NJ.: Global Publishing Co. Inc., 1996), pp. 159-164.

[40] *Ibid*, pp. 160.

[41] Refer to J. Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate: The Problem of Historical Significance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), pp. 113-4.

[42] Refer to S. Kraicer and L. Roosen-Runge, "Edward Yang: A Taiwanese Independent Filmmaker in Conversation," *CineAction*, 1998, 53. Besides, in one scene the novelist reflects upon his seclusion as a way to separate himself from the hypocritical people he despises. He says, "In the name of the standardized Confucianism, we regulate him to become someone closed to novelties, blindly following the authorities, and living an empty life." (Refer to E. Yang, *A Confucian Confusion* (獨立時代 楊德昌的活力喜劇) (Taipei: Wanxiang Books, 1994), pp. 115.) It seems that Yang denied only "standardized Confucianism" or "politically endorsed Confucianism."
