is perhaps even natural – but on the wider scene it will no doubt counteract whatever intentions the author had writing this book. In fact, by the frequent use of American academic prose he creates a meta-text about himself, which in its intertextuality with the results he has actually so marvellously achieved, will generate mists of incomprehension between the two. What is worse however, is that de Pee does not integrate his arguments with any explicit statement about his theoretical positions. Instead he provides us with a reading list of nineteen items, the appraisal of which has formed his 'insights'. It would have been interesting for the reader – as the author has pronounced theoretical claims – to have been allowed to follow, at least in outline, the formation of those thoughts. What we get now is the *ad hoc* note of reference and a largely eclectic discourse of seeming incongruence. We are, for instance, entitled to know what the author actually means by frequently and provocatively used words such as 'ritual' and 'culture'.

If Professor de Pee ever reads this review, he may by now be very angry with me and at my post-post-modern stance. He may think ill of me but I can only hope he will allow me to assure him that *in the essentials* I approve of his work.

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Confucianism and Women: A Philosophical Interpretation. By Li-Hsiang L. Rosenlee. pp. ix, 200. Albany, State University of New York Press, 2006.
doi:10.1017/S1356186308009577

Confucianism and Women is reminiscent of Dorothy Ko's two thought-provoking monographs, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers* (1994) and *Cinderella's Sisters* (2005). In the former, Ko scrutinised meticulously the two dichotomies of *yin-yang* (female-male) and *nei-wai* (inner-outer), which offer alternative ways of looking at the Chinese gender issues. In the latter, she alerted the reader to a "modern nationalist bias" when scholars address the issue of Chinese footbinding. Scholars, for example, often fail to perceive the footbinding issue within the context of Chinese cultural tradition. By the same token, Li-Hsiang Rosenlee strives to seek answers to certain questions posed in her insightful book, such as, is Confucianism inherently sexist? Can western feminism be adopted in the Chinese cultural context? Is it possible to reconcile Confucianism and feminism, and in turn develop a new terminology of 'Confucian feminism' in future? In addition to adopting a philosophical approach to these questions, Rosenlee is eager to rethink Chinese women's issues from within the Confucian cultural tradition.

The book has seven chapters. In Chapter 1, Rosenlee is successful in drawing attention to the book's various objectives. The first is to identify the intellectual tradition of Confucianism, which is often perceived as ambiguous and complex. The second is to demonstrate the cultural conceptual schemes in the Confucian world, which are conducive to the construction of gender in the Chinese context. Third, the book is to probe into some possible interconnections between the Chinese gender system and Confucianism, where Confucian ethics help sustain the patrilineal family structure in Chinese society. Fourth, the book tries to offer another way of viewing women as participants in transmitting sexist practices that conform to Chinese cultural ideals. The final objective is to suggest Confucianism as a potential viable resource for the liberation of Chinese women. These objectives are clearly outlined in the introductory chapter, preparing readers for what they may expect in the remainder of the book.

Chapter 2 seeks to address the origins of Confucianism. For Rosenlee, the term 'Confucianism' is a Jesuit 'invention' (p. 17) but not a singular doctrine centring on the thoughts of Confucius. To argue for the ambiguous and mysterious origins of *Ru* (Confucianism), she satisfactorily presents *Ru* before

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1356186308009577 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the influence of Confucius and its relations with the Chinese state through the Qing. Rosenlee does agree with the view that *ren* (person) is central to the teaching of Confucius; nevertheless, she reiterates that *ren* is 'gender neutral' (p. 36) and does not differentiate between men and women. The main points in this chapter are that *ren* is an ethical category; that the virtue-based personhood is relational and is open to both genders; and that reciprocity underlies the basic structure of human relations.

Chapter 3 alerts the reader to the problematic *yin-yang* metaphor when being viewed through the western lens of femininity and masculinity. According to Rosenlee, the western concept of gender is a kinship-neutral term, whereas the Chinese one is coextensive with familial and societal roles. Equally convincing, she points out that the *yin-yang* metaphor is not based on gender per se; one can be *yin* and *yang* simultaneously depending on one's social roles and places in relation with others. Therefore, the main argument in this chapter is that the *yin-yang* metaphor is a 'complementary' and a 'cross-gender' concept (p. 50).

Rosenlee then moves her fascinating discussion of the dichotomy of *nei-wai* to Chapter 4. As with the *yin-yang* metaphor, the *nei-wai* binary is a correlative and relational binary whose boundaries change with context. It is a spatial, cultural boundary separating the neighbouring barbarians from the civilised Hans. The *nei-wai* distinction is also a "*functional* distinction" (p. 93) that defines the two gender spheres and the normative gender division of labour. For example, women belong to the narrow realm of *nei*, while men occupy the broader realm of *wai*. Women's roles as daughter, wife, and mother are the focused centre, the foundation upon which the *wai* is based.

A question hence arises: are women submissive, oppressed, and illiterate? In Chapter 5, Rosenlee challenges this question by skilfully narrating the literary representations of virtuous women as seen through certain didactic texts for women. *Biographies of Exemplary Women* and *Four Books for Women* are cases in point. A traditional assumption made in feminist writings is that the womanly sphere of *nei* is marginal, yet these didactic texts for women prove the opposite. Of paramount importance is the case of Ban Zhao in Han China. The ritual boundaries between the *nei* and the *wai* are subject to negotiation. Ban Zhao's involvement in both literature and politics was "justified through an extension of her gender roles in the realm of *nei*" (p. 116) as a filial daughter and a chaste widow. However, as Rosenlee concludes in this chapter, the disparity between the *nei* and the *wai* also implies gender disparity between men and women. Women's literary talent has no legitimacy; it is outside the realm of traditional Chinese culture.

Chapter 6 focuses on Confucianism and Chinese sexist practices. In this chapter, Rosenlee systematically demonstrates that Confucian familial ethics serve as a foundation for "justifying the social abuse of women" (p. 122). First, female infanticide shows that only boys are worth keeping because boys help perpetuate the family name. Second, concubinage appears because of the failure of a wife to produce a male heir, which is socially unacceptable in Chinese society. Third, a child bride is taken to ensure her service and filial devotion to her future in-laws. Rosenlee, however, convincingly argues that equating Confucianism with sexism can lead one to draw dangerous conclusions. As a few statements in the philosophy of Confucius suggest that he thought it better to deny women's education, some people disregard the constructive aspects of Confucianism. The danger is that the whole value of a philosophy (Confucianism) will be negated based on a few statements made by the philosopher (Confucius).

Accordingly, Chapter 7 suggests using 'Confucian feminism' as an alternative future project. Rosenlee outlines some basic assumptions of this alternative project. First, a relational self is situated in a complex web of relations. Without locating oneself in social relations, one is not fully personed. Second, the achievement of one's personhood is through the cultivation of the virtue of *ren*. Third, each social relation is reciprocal and complementary. Rosenlee then puts forward her argument by saying that "a social inequality changes over the course of one's lifetime" (p. 158). In this connection,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1356186308009577 Published online by Cambridge University Press

one is neither socially inferior nor superior. Confucian feminism tolerates a "qualified inequality" that is based on "ability and moral authority instead of gender per se" (p. 158).

Rosenlee would have been more successful in convincing the reader if she had addressed certain queries in Chapter 7. Is the western term 'feminism' appropriate for use in the Confucian context? Feminism defends the rights of women but not both genders. Readers may expect to have a crystal clear definition of 'Confucian feminism' before the term is adopted. Alternatively, is 'Confucian equality' an improvement on the term 'Confucian feminism'? In Chapter 7, Rosenlee discusses the dichotomies of superiority-inferiority and of equality-inequality. A paradox then arises as to whether she tries to propose the idea of 'the rights of women' or the idea of 'gender equality'. Furthermore, is 'Confucian feminism' relevant to contemporary China when the one-child family policy is implemented? One assumption of her future project is that a self is located in a web of family relations. This web appears to be ineffective in a small-size family. These queries notwithstanding, *Confucianism and Women* is a concisely presented and coherently structured piece of writing. It is a welcome addition to the current research in the fields of Chinese gender studies and philosophy.

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The Woman who Discovered Printing. By T. H. Barrett. pp. xiv, 176. New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2008.
doi:10.1017/S1356186308009589

To those who have been following Barrett's meticulous research on the origins of printing in China, which has been laid out in a series of detailed articles over the last decade, the title of this book will come as no surprise, startling though it may be to other readers. Unlike the articles, which are mostly addressed to an audience of specialists, *The Woman who Discovered Printing* presents a more accessible synthesis of his work to date as well as incorporating the results of recent research. Barrett makes it disarmingly clear however, that this book is definitely not the last word on the subject. Further dramatic archaeological discoveries and/or the identification of documentary evidence that has hitherto been overlooked may well enable Barrett in a few years' time to fill in some of the gaps. For the present, however, all that can be done is to assemble the available evidence, some of it discovered by Barrett himself, and to speculate on possible scenarios and explanations, and nobody is better equipped than Barrett, in terms of knowledge of the times and the religious context, to do that. He is careful enough, however, to alert us to the speculative elements that underlie all historical writing. Perhaps that is why he begins with an avowedly imaginary glimpse of the Venerable Bede gazing at contemporary events in China. But this conceit also serves to remind the reader of the comparative enormity of the scale of manuscript production in Tang China, to say nothing of the discovery of printing.

In a nutshell, Barrett's tentative argument is that printing was first undertaken to produce large numbers of copies of a text in China, some time around the year 700, by the woman emperor Wu in conjunction with Fazang, a Buddhist monk of Sogdian descent. The circumstantial evidence is compelling, but it would not yet stand up in court. One of the many frustrating problems Barrett discusses in this scrupulously honest book is the lack of straightforward contemporary references to printing and the lack of any sure evidence of printing texts until a century or so later. This might seem fatal to Barrett's conclusions, but as it happens it is not. The reason for this is that an example of printing was found in 1966 in Korea that appears to have been produced before 751 and many hundreds of examples produced in Japan in the 760s survive to this day. The texts printed in both Korea and Japan are all from the same sutra of magical spells which was translated into Chinese at the end of the seventh century, and, although some diehard nationalists would object, it is surely absurd

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