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1. Introduction

Welcome to this special issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia*, devoted to *ethical pluralism* as an approach to confronting chief demands of our time as participants in a global information and technology infrastructure. This issue is composed of four articles, each of which addresses the strengths as well as critical limitations of the *pros hen* ("towards one") ethical pluralism I have argued for over the past 2+ decades.

Before exploring in greater detail how these articles do so, I first offer a brief explanation of *ethical pluralism* and its central role in facing central contemporary cultural and ethical challenges in a world increasingly interwoven by information and communication technologies. This explanation includes an initial indication of how the first two articles in the collection – Ayesha Gautam and Deepa Singh's "Building Bridges: Eurocentric to Intercultural Information Ethics," and Soraj Hongladarom's "Charles Ess's *Pros Hen* Ethical Pluralism: An Interpretation" – build on important critiques of *pros hen* pluralism in order to extend and compliment it with more squarely non-Western roots and perspectives. I then turn to a more careful summary of all four articles – including, that is, Rockwell F. Clancy's "The Merits of Social Credit Rating in China? An Exercise in Interpretive *Pros Hen* Ethical Pluralism," and Qin Zhu, Tom Williams, and Ruchen Wen's "Role-based Morality, Ethical Pluralism, and Morally Capable Robots." We will start with Gautam and Singh, in part as their article provides a fine overview of the history of Intercultural Information Ethics, diverse forms of ethical pluralism that emerge there in (primarily) Western contexts, and then moves to introduce *Samvād* as a distinctively Indian approach to dialogue as a (new) alternative. Hongladarom then explores in greater detail my *pros hen* pluralism, arguing for it by way of examples – but only by way of helpfully and importantly expanding it from a distinctively non-Western base. Clancy, as the title suggests, focuses on the Chinese Social Credit Rating system, arguing that we understand it as an alternative solution to

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the cultural evolutionary problem of developing large-scale societies in distinctively different contexts than the Western Educated Industrialized Rich and Democratic (WEIRD) societies. His larger point is that the otherwise stark and profound differences between the Social credit rating in China (SCRC) and WEIRD societies' emphases on privacy, etc. is nonetheless an example of *pros hen* – in this case, where the one (*hen*) is developing functional large scale societies under very different historical and cultural traditions. Last but not least, Zhu, Williams, and Wen highlight the contrasts between Western ethical frameworks and Confucian understandings of role morality vis-a-vis their potential application in robot design – again arguing that these differences exemplify a *pros hen* structure. But as with the previous three papers, they thereby importantly extend and amplify a *pros hen* pluralism through the addition of approaches and applications squarely grounded in non-Western frameworks. The overall structure, then, proceeds from the more historical and theoretical to two more specific / applied examples. And along the way I will point out important connections with other current work in these domains.

We will see that both individually and together, the articles build on important criticisms of *pros hen* pluralism to develop centrally important transformations and enhancements – most broadly, as they offer diverse and novel examples of concrete, empirically-grounded unities as candidates for the One (*hen*) towards which otherwise radically diverse cultural norms, practices, values, and so on can begin to converge. Along with the Indian approach to dialogue via *Samvād*, the articles thus dramatically improve and expand upon pluralism, making it a still more fruitful, practicable, and critically needed approach for coming to grips with the ongoing ethical challenges evoked by current and emerging new technologies that increasingly interweave us with one another across irreducible cultural differences.

2. Ethical Pluralism: a Brief Review

Ethical pluralism can be understood as a middle ground between two otherwise tempting positions to take when we first encounter significant cultural differences in terms of language, customs, traditions, norms – in short, between "the way we do things" in one culture / time / place and another. The first temptation I have characterized as an ethical monism or dogmatism (Ess, 2020a, 238ff.). Here we assume that there are universal norms, practices, traditions, and so on – i.e., that are the ones all human beings and societies everywhere should follow. We further assume that it is *our* own set of such norms, etc. that are the right ones – and if you disagree with us, then you're simply wrong, mistaken, evil, and so on. As the long and terrible histories of genocide, slavery, imperialism, colonialism, you name it, demonstrate, this position is all too common in human history. In the face of these attitudes and contemptible consequences, we are tempted to turn to a second position – an *ethical relativism* that insists that there are no such universal values to be shared and so, when in Rome, do as the Romans do. More broadly, anything goes, and no one person / culture / tradition is any more ethically correct or legitimate than any other. Such ethical relativism is attractive because it is *tolerant* of cultural differences. But if we are consistent relativists, we must be tolerant of all cultural norms, practices, traditions, etc. – including precisely the imperialism, genocide, racism, etc. that we deplored in the first place. Stated differently, a consistent ethical relativism cannot distinguish between our strivings

towards emancipation and greater equality in some places and times vs. countries and cultures built on racism, genocidal practices, and so on (Ess, 2020, pp. 233ff.).

An *ethical pluralism* stakes out a middle ground between these two views. One strategy for doing so is Plato and then Aristotle's *pros hen* pluralism. These philosophers argued that what appear to us on first blush as striking, perhaps irreconcilable differences, may in fact be discerned (more precisely, *judged* or *interpreted*) as different applications or understandings that point towards (*pros*) one (*hen*) norm or value. A key feature of such *pros hen* pluralism is that it allows for forms of connection that do <u>not</u> insist upon shared unities such as the common grounds we always (and most sensibly) seek out when first encountering Others, those whose cultural backgrounds and experiences shape them to be very different from Us indeed. Where "irreducible difference" recognizes and protects the identity and integrity of diverse cultures – *pro hen* pluralism offers a structure of connection (in the form of pointing towards a shared One) that does <u>not</u> require unity by identity (common grounds) and thereby allows these irreducible differences to stand far more starkly than in approaches insisting first on common grounds (cf. Ess, 2020b).

As Soraj Hongaladarom carefully details in his article here, "Charles Ess's *Pros Hen* Ethical Pluralism: An Interpretation," I have argued over some two decades now that such a *pros hen* pluralism can be fruitfully applied to central ethical challenges evoked by the global extension of information and communication technologies (ICTs) – most centrally, the internet. In their historical overview of the rise of "Information and Communication Technology Ethics (ICTE)," Terrell Ward Bynum and Nesiben Kantar point out the challenge raised initially by Krystyna Gorniak in 1995 – namely, how to build a *global* computer ethics (Bynum & Kantar, forthcoming). But this challenge leads immediately to a second: how to develop such an ethics that is recognized globally as legitimate and normatively compelling – but without falling into either side of an ancient dilemma. In my terms, such aspirations to global or universal values run the first risk of devolving into a moral absolutism, dogmatism, or monism – and thereby what I have called a "computer-mediated colonization" (e.g., Ess, 2002). Alternatively, we may be tempted to escape into an ethical relativism – but again, such relativism is of only limited use in a world increasingly and ever more inextricably interwoven by our digital technologies.

On the one hand, such a pluralism has been shaped and given fruitful substance in the biennial conference series on "Cultural, Technology, and Communication" (CaTaC: see Ess, 2017) as well as within information and computing ethics (e.g., Ess 2006, 2020b) and internet research ethics (e.g., franzke et al, 2020). But of course, as Ayesha Gautam and Deepa Singh observe in their chapter, "Building Bridges: Eurocentric to Intercultural Information Ethics," every ethical position has both strengths and limits. As they point out, I have argued in my work that while rooted in Western philosophers from Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and Kant, such *pros hen* pluralism enjoys at least close counterparts or resonances in diverse non-Western traditions as well (e.g., Elberfeld 2002, Chan 2003, in Ess 2016, pp. 219f.). Nonetheless, they are absolutely correct to suggest that it risks remaining exclusively Western-centric and so we must find other forms of pluralism more squarely rooted in non-Western traditions. Their particular

contribution here is to foreground the Indian tradition of *Samvād*, a carefully structured *praxis* of dialogue, as a guiding framework for achieving the aims of a *pros hen* pluralism – namely, a respectful dialogue across irreducible cultural differences that lets those differences stand (my phrase) and thereby preserves diverse cultural identities alongside the connection of respectful dialogue.

3. The Articles

Again, all four articles most fruitfully and helpfully respond to ethical pluralism in diverse ways. The first two, we have just seen, provide careful critique and develop alternatives to *pros hen* pluralism. The second two provide additional insight and substance as they focus on more specific applications of *pros hen* pluralism. Clancy will use such a pluralistic approach to develop new understandings of the deep conflicts between Western values of privacy and freedom vs. their apparent suppression in the SCRC – and so move beyond the current impasse that this simple opposition strands us in. Zhu et al explore similar contrasts between Western ethical approaches and Confucian role ethics in order to ground a rich and pluralistic ethical palette intended to give robot designers maximum possibilities in developing morally capable robots across diverse roles and cultural contexts.

3.1. Gautam and Singh

We begin with Gautam and Singh, first of all as their article provides a comprehensive survey of diverse forms of pluralism and dialogical approaches to the central problems of what Rafael Capurro identified as an Intercultural Information Ethics as early as 1990 (Capurro, 1990). Their survey includes the centrally influential work of Luciano Floridi (e.g., 2013), and Terrell Ward Bynum's *Flourishing Ethics* that builds on Norbert Wiener's foundational work in computer ethics (Bynum 2006; cf. Bynum & Kantar, 2021). It should be noted here that both Wiener and Bynum thereby foreground a *virtue ethics* – one that many of us have likewise taken up as a candidate for a genuinely global ethics that would meet the requirements stated here by Gautam and Singh of moving beyond a Eurocentric frameworks, most especially modern deontologies and utilitarianisms, that all too frequently are "unable to capture the values, ideals and aspirations of non-western societies." They focus on Capurro's work on *Parrhesía* in particular as a form of free speech drawn from ancient Greece which, they suggest, may be similar to a *Buddhist* notion of *Right Speech (samyak vaçan)*. Nonetheless, they doubt that *Parrhesía* fully escapes the limits of its Western origins "to become a universalisable and other-centric framework" as is needed in the contemporary technological world. In order to develop what they see as the needed "intercultural model [of dialogue] based on an empathetic, cross-cultural, other-centric understanding," they turn to the Indian tradition of building dialogue or *Samvāda* between two diverse positions.

A central feature of *Samvād* is that it expressly avoids "cosmetic uniformity or erasure of differences." While the focus on preserving the Other in these ways rightly reminds us of the work of Emmanuel Levinas, Gautam and Singh point out critical differences between Levinas and the treatment of differences in *Samvād*. Moreover, in agreement with other forms of ethical pluralism, they show how *Samvād* avoids cultural and thereby ethical relativism, while at the

same time <u>not</u> turning to "common grounds." They reiterate that the clearly impressive accomplishments of *Samvād* entail central values such as "honesty, mutual respect, good faith and an open-mind, empathetic understanding of each other" – values strained in many contemporary societies. Here, as previously, it is helpful to note the role of *empathy* – a key virtue in virtue ethics, including Shannon Vallor's "techno-moral virtues" as developed from Aristotelian, Confucian, and Buddhist sources (2016).

Last but not least, Gautam and Singh argue that in using *Samvād,* "Instead of getting fixated upon a set of *a priori* principles, we let the context organically decide the mechanics of our inter-relationships as *Samvād* progresses in the due course." This point is especially central to moving beyond – or perhaps complimenting – a *pros hen* pluralism. As Anne Boily (2021) has pointed out, the One in Aristotle's *pros hen* pluralism was a unified conception of human nature as defined with Aristotle's conception of nature as teleological – as intrinsically aiming towards such single final goods. For her part, Boily criticizes this Aristotelian assumption as a "hard teleology," i.e., with the One given by nature in some way, on several grounds, starting with our very difference conception of nature in modernity. Moreover, this sort of "orthodox monism" does not make enough room, she argues, for insoluble dilemmas, i.e., real-world conflicts that include the reality that some choices leave us with "dirty hands," i.e., moral guilt, despite our best efforts. Boily mentions specifically Antigone as an example of such choices (2021, p. 127) – an example we will return to below. To take on board these harsh realities, she replaces Aristotle's "hard teleology" with a "soft teleology": there *may* be a unitary human nature towards which diverse ethical practices, etc. might aim – but this is a conception of human nature that must first emerge in *praxis*, including within the sorts of cross-cultural exchanges, mutual critiques, and on-going debates envisioned both within *pros hen* pluralism and *Samvād*.

3.2. Soraj Hongladarom

Hongladarom undertakes the ambitious project of arguing that "Ess's *pros hen* pluralism could be interpreted in a way that accords with the actual situation in information ethics today." He will do so, however, only by introducing an important modification squarely in line with Boily's critique of Aristotelian pluralism. Hongladarom first offers an exceptionally comprehensive survey of the development of *pros hen* pluralism over the past two decades, including his own significant contributions to it. He is thus especially well-placed to offer important criticisms – as well as to argue for a critically important revision: specifically, "it is the grounding of ethical judgments on the empirical reality that serves as the end which the differing views point toward." As already suggested by Gautam and Singh, as well as Boily, the One here is not a set of purely rational norms demanding uniform (and thus imperialistic / colonizing) agreement across cultures – but rather "concrete entities that are shared by all, even though there are divergences on how to achieve it." Specifically, Hongladarom argues that pluralism must focus on "the social and cultural reality that exists at a particular time and place."

Hongladarom takes up the central issue of privacy, foregrounding deep and now well-documented differences between Western and Thai attitudes (cf. also Gautam and Singh on

Indian conceptions). He observes that Thai attitudes are changing, however, and moving in directions closer to familiar Western views: but this is not, he argues, necessarily the result a Western cultural imperialism. Rather, as pro-democracy protests in Thailand (and, we can add, Hong Kong and Myanmar) suggest, especially younger people desire the "transformation of Thai society toward a more egalitarian and less traditional one." The upshot is that such social and ethical norms are changing, resulting in an empirically-grounded One that both Eastern and non-Eastern societies can aim towards in a pluralism.

Hongladarom acknowledges that there may well remain intractable differences between more egalitarian and more hierarchical societies that would thus represent a limitation on a possible pluralism. But he further argues that two diverse sets of norms will nonetheless fold under "an overarching set of higher-level norms" – e.g., the agreement that killing is wrong. Importantly, "this can only happen when the two societies find themselves to be in touch with each other in one way or another."

In parallel with Gautam and Singh, Hongladarom goes on to argue that this empirically-grounded One is <u>not</u> defined *apodictically* or *a priori*, as Kant would have it. Rather such a One "can only be found within the concrete, empirical situations that make up the tangible world." Such an ethics is then more open to "intercultural reception." In this direction, Hongladarom points us towards Pak-Hang Wong's important critiques of *pros hen* pluralism while Wong nonetheless affirms the critical importance of, in effect, developing something like Hongladarom's empirically-grounded One by thinking through notions of universal human rights through the complex cultural agreements and differences between Hong Kong and China (Wong, 2020). The simple fact that "China must continue to communicate and trade with the rest of world" means that despite often intractable differences – such as will be explored in this issue by Rocky Clancy III, below – China must "subscribe to largely the same set of norms that are shared globally," i.e., a *hen* or One in an ethical pluralism.

There are important and well-known problems in applied ethics, however, with over-emphasizing such empirical grounds – e.g., the *naturalistic fallacy* that seeks to derive "the *ought*" from "the *is*." Hongladarom addresses these, in part as he further takes up the Chinese Social Credit System (CSCS, what Clancy refers to with SCRC). Here he argues that despite the deep differences between Western and Chinese values (and Thai conceptions of privacy as well), the discussion of these still takes place within a shared social reality. "The Chinese Communist Party is not advocating that the country return to the Imperial Age governed by emperors and their retinue of eunuchs and concubines," however much the CSCS may serve authoritarian power.

Last but not least, Hongladarom notes the affinity of his views with those of Floridi's ontocentric ethics and Bynum's flourishing ethics. But while there are important overlaps between these views and a *pros hen* pluralism – first of all, as such a pluralism goes hand-in-hand with diverse traditions of virtue ethics – Hongladarom makes clear that his extension of how we understand the One in such a pluralism is different. In particular, similar to Boily's arguments, "For me, it is the actual conditions that obtain in a particular frame of space and time

conditions that constitute a social reality at a time." *Contra*, that is, to Bynum who endorses "the Aristotelian notion of human rationality and purposes …"

Again, akin with Hongladarom's notion of an empirical unity that might emerge out of a (largely) shared human nature, Boily suggests that such a shared aim will emerge from the fact that we are, in Aristotle's phrase, political animals who *per force* live in political communities – and especially via her conception of a non-adversarial dialogue, we will come to articulate this shared unity over time (*a posteriori*, in contrast with an *a priori* unity assumed by Aristotle).

3.3. Rockwell F. Clancy III

In effect, Clancy expands on Hongladarom's discussion as Clancy begins with noting what he designates as the SCRC has been a prominent target of Westerners concerned with individual privacy rights and the on-going iron grip of the Communist Party on power. Clancy acknowledges several efforts in both philosophy and technologies studies to clarify the deep differences involved, especially by way of differences in values, e.g., with Westerners valuing freedom and privacy vs. the Chinese valuing stability and cooperation. There are – by now, quite familiar – problems with many of these efforts, i.e., they tend to fall back into the either/or between an ethical dogmatism or an ethical relativism. And if (a) either the Western dogmatists are right and the (equally dogmatic) Chinese are wrong, or (b) we seek to simply dismiss the differences via relativism that leaves each side "correct" but thoroughly disconnected from the Other – either way we land in impasse. An important element of Clancy's critique has to do with the infamous difficulties of defining just what we may mean by "culture" – not to mention, "values." A first problem is that "Values are not especially good at picking out cultural groups." Clancy notes here that in important ways, despite their Chinese agreements, people in China, Hong Kong and Singapore are more similar to "people in Zimbabwe, Israel, and Malaysia, respectively, than they are to each other," with the Taiwanese as different from all three in turn. These and other examples make the point that "although values are cultural, much of culture is unrelated to values." This means that additional conceptual elements are needed – in this case, that of cultural evolution. This approach specifically foregrounds the "common human concerns" clustering about "the common human problem of large-scale cooperation": echoing Hongladarom, resolving this problem thus stands as a specific example of a concrete One (*hen*) towards which both Western and Chinese societies can be understood to aim.

Clancy notes that "In large-scale, cross-national studies and honesty and trust, China has ranked last." He argues that this is because of China's distinctive history, including its characteristic Confucian focus on the family and small-scale social relations. While China has always been a domain with large populations, authority has largely been local. Clancy reviews several structures of such local authority as they foreground the key problem of developing a large-scale modern governance structure: very simply, the crucial component of *trust* that is fostered by familiarity with those around you in a small-scale organization is lost in the rise of big cities and movement from country to urban environments. The resulting anonymity fosters

forms of nepotism – doing business with those you do know and trust – and thereby leads to corruption and further loss of trust.

In what Clancy nicely describes as WEIRD societies, "big gods" (e.g., the G*d of the Abrahamic traditions) have provided different cultural backgrounds, starting with beliefs regarding ultimate punishment (Hell) and reward (Heaven). "Coreligionists of big god religions are more likely to trust each other and, therefore, work together, since they adhere to the same moral code and believe the same god is monitoring and will punish them for behaving in an anti-social manner." On the one hand, this means that "People from WEIRD cultures are outliers on various psychological and social dimensions, including self-concepts, thought styles, and measure of fairness and trust." On the other hand, it is these characteristics that foster large-scale cooperation in more or less successful ways.

With this as background, Clancy can show how SCRC thus helps resolve the problems of large-scale cooperation in China – making up, in effect, for the absence of big gods and affiliated structures and practices that have developed over centuries in WEIRD cultures. In this way, large-scale cooperation thus emerges as the One (*hen*) towards which both Western and Chinese societies aim in a pluralistic framework. At the same time, however, Clancy stresses that this analysis is not intended as an *ethical* defense of SCRC – but rather as a way of helping us see, via the lens of interpretive pluralism, that these otherwise deeply intractable differences can thus be understood as a pluralism. This is at least a first step away from the prevailing either/or between either dogmatic or relativistic approaches and the resulting impasses.

3.4. Zhu, Williams, and Ren

Our last article takes the above analyses up to a still more practical and specific example – namely, the ethical dimensions of designing morally capable robots. First of all, the now extensive literatures in robo-ethics and the ethics of robot design have been overwhelmingly dominated by the Western frameworks of deontology and consequentialism. Zhu et al note that these frameworks are ill-suited to the "diverse, unstable, and complex contexts of human-robot interaction," which has led to an important shift towards "virtuous, role-based, and relational ethical frameworks," including the work of Shannon Vallor (2016) and Mark Coeckelberg (2020), among others. They take up ethical pluralism as a lens for examining role-based morality across diverse cultural contexts, contrasting specific Western approaches that "derive morality from role-based obligations" with more recent Confucian versions. Their comparison of both shared norms and deep differences between the two leads to a final series of suggestions for how to design "morally capable robots sensitive to diverse value systems in the global context."

Zhu et al first briefly explore the role of ethical pluralism in Intercultural Information Ethics, including attention to my development of a *pros hen* pluralism. Here I can express a great debt to my teachers Henry Rosemont, Jr., and Roger Ames, whose work inspired and provided significant substance regarding foundational concepts of *personhood* or *selfhood* – starting with broad contrasts between more individual and more relational conceptions (e.g., Ames & Rosemont, 1998; Ess, 2006 as cited here). Zhu et al helpfully update these analyses by

way of more recent contributions from Rosemont and Ames to reiterate how a pluralistic approach – first of all, to privacy as a shared value (*hen*) across cultures – helps us respect foundational differences, examine "how these different approaches can benefit from each other," and thereby develop "a more global account of values responsive to an increasingly globalized world."

With this as background, Zhu et al turn more specifically to Western and Confucian approaches to role-based morality. They offer a fine account of Western approaches, first of all as alternatives to the more individually-based ethics of utilitarianism and deontology – from Epictetus (ca. 50-130 CE) through George Herbert Mead and more contemporary ethicists such as Christine Korsgaard and Glen Pettigrove. Echoing Hongladarom's distinction (1999) – drawn originally from Michael Walzer – between "thick" and "thin" ethical norms, Pettigrove distinguishes between "normatively thin roles … that only indicate what role-occupants characteristically do" vis-à-vis normative thick roles that "also prescribe what [role occupants] should do …" Importantly, Korsgaard incorporates Kantian notions of duties, reason, and categorical imperatives as central to her conception of role ethics: there are specific problems to this, which lead to the larger observation that Western conceptions have difficulty making clear how "a role is a good role for people to exercise and for others to imitate," – i.e., a role that is normatively justified beyond the "what is" of a given community practice.

Zhu et al turn to Confucian role ethics as more explicitly relationally grounded to develop a stronger account. Their account helps counter a common critique of Western virtue ethics – namely, that its cultivation of virtues and focus on contentment (*eudaimonia*) and *flourishing* is too individually-oriented to "scale up" into more social and political organizations. Both Vallor and Coeckelbergh deftly reject such a criticism via their own versions of relational virtue ethics: here, Zhu et al foreground the many ways in which our "becoming virtuous persons" is deeply interdependent upon our multiple relationships, starting with the family and extending into social and political roles.

This points, however, to what we may call the Antigone problem. In Sophocles' play, Antigone is confronted with an intractable dilemma centering on her roles and duties - first to her brother Polyneices, who was killed in the civil war and whose body has been left unburied on the battle on orders of the victor Creon as the new tyrant of Thebes. If she fulfils her citizen's duty to obey the superior authority of Creon, she will violate her familial duty to bury her brother: but if she obeys her family duty, she will be killed by Creon. As Clancy notes, in the Western tradition, this play marks "a break between the family and the state" that was never experienced in China. This tradition, moreover, is tied not simply to an emerging individualism in the West – but thereby to a tradition of conscientious objection and reform, from Socrates through Martin Luther, the women's suffrage movement, the Civil Rights movement, and so on. In particular, modern democratic rights and law specifically codify the individual's right to resist, disobey, and contest – e.g., accusations against us in a court of law (Hildebrandt, 2015, p. 10). As I have discussed elsewhere, a key problem in taking on board these relational turns is how to do so without losing these central notions of individual freedom and rational autonomy that have

proven essential to multiple movements towards greater emancipation and equality across the globe (e.g., Ess, 2021).

In this context, Zhu et al note the concerns of Western ethicists who worry that "Confucian role ethics might reinforce social roles that are oppressive." Specifically, Kathleen Higgins is cited here as articulating the concern that conformity to social roles will lead to "oppression of sexual minorities and others who perform their roles atypically" (Higgins, 2018, p. 218).

This leads Zhu et al to a more detailed comparison and contrast between Western and Confucian role ethics. Parallel with Guatam and Singh and then Hongadarom, they point out how Western approaches focus on more *a priori* conceptions of roles vis-à-vis Confucianism as taking "a more empiricist stance": here, "morality is not … determined by preset standards of abstract roles but are determined 'through particular interactions with the context of the roles that relevant persons live' (Ni, 2018, p. 194)."

While the Confucian approaches thus help respond to the earlier question of how to develop a role with normative substance and grounding – we are nonetheless left with these intractable differences between the two large traditions. Broadly, Zhu et al observe that the enormous variety of roles that robots may take (e.g., friend, partner, doctor, nurse) will be extended into new domains as well (e.g., owner-ownee). These roles will also change over time and context. The authors argue that a pluralistic approach that acknowledges both commonalities and deep differences between Western and Confucian ethics could thus give us a "combination of computational systems for representing and reasoning with [both] relational roles … [and] non-relational roles from the virtue ethics traditions," as have in fact been suggested by ethicists such as Shannon Vallor (2016), as a start. Finally, the authors show how the multiple diverse characteristics and features of both traditions thus give robot designers a rich palette with which to respond to a series of ethical issues raised by the specific demands of robot design.

4. Concluding Remarks.

Zhu et al thus demonstrate in the concrete example of robot design how a pluralistic framework that conjoins both irreducible differences with shared aims or norms as a One (*hen*) not only overcomes the otherwise intractable dilemmas we have seen articulated throughout these articles, including Clancy's clear exposition of the impasses resulting from our falling into the either/or of ethical monism vs. ethical relativism in the example of the SCRC: in addition, their example shows how such a pluralistic framework is thus imminently practicable and fruitful in helping robot engineers resolve specific design problems vis-à-vis distinctive cultural contexts. Their example thereby complements in *praxis* the points made especially by Gautam and Singh, and then Hongladarom, that a workable or practical pluralism – whether that of *Samvād* or a *pros hen* pluralism focusing on empirically-grounded social realities, respectively – is required for an *applied ethics* in an Intercultural Information Ethics. Clancy's argument for resolving the problem of large-scale cooperation in societies as the One (*hen*) towards which such otherwise radically diverse Western and Chinese ethical frameworks cohere adds still another example of

an empirically-oriented social reality that can make a *pros hen* ethical pluralism function in potentially critical ways. These critical and fruitful transformations and compliments to such a pluralism as previously developed thus make critical new contributions to the central aims of a pluralistic Intercultural Information Ethics: to say it a last way, to help us navigate and negotiate the ethical challenges shared by us all – but as we stand and live in specific contexts and distinctive cultural *melanges*, while avoiding either relativism and isolation or monism and imperialism.

Alongside parallel developments such as the recent contribution of Anne Boily, these four articles, both individually and collective breathe wonderful new life into such pluralistic approaches, as now more clearly and substantively grounded in non-Western sources. This by no means implies that the work is done, that the risks of relativism and computer-mediated colonization are somehow over. On the contrary, as these articles also attest, working through such pluralistic approaches is deeply difficult work – and will remain so as ever-new ethical challenges emerge in train with ongoing technological innovation. But at the same time, these new, transformed, and enhanced forms of pluralism give considerable hope for achieving the best aims and hopes of IEE.

5. Acknowledgements

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