**ABSTRACT**

This article examines Jia Pingwa as a novelist of humanitas, a writer exploring the notion of ren 仁. His characters may not be distinguished or renowned, not 大名頭的人, but they are 大人, people who are “intelligent, honest, courageous, and hardworking.” They are characters imbued with a sense of ren 仁, which is not, as Western translators have mistranslated and misinterpreted it, “virtue” or “benevolence” – although ren 仁 can lead to any of these admirable qualities. The Chinese notion of ren 仁 is the recognition of the indisputable fact that every human being is the offspring of two people, and the genealogical and genetic heir of thousands, if not millions of ancestors. The notion of ren 仁 is the relatedness of all humankind. It also involves a recognition that each of us partakes of the qualities of other humans. This is the world that Jia Pingwa depicts in his fiction, and in his prize-winning novel, *Turbulence*, 浮躁.

**KEYWORDS**

Jia Pingwa; Ren; English translation; comparison

关键词

贾平凹; 仁; 英译; 比较

中文摘要

本文通过比照贾平凹小说《浮躁》的中文和英译本中一些与主题及人物人情相关的重要概念的表达和产生出的理解性差异，阐述中国文化、中文语境中“大人”、“仁”、“恩”、“心”、“空”等带有误译风险的词汇含义。本文也同时补充《论语》、《孟子》及英国牧师诗人约翰·多恩《沉思》中对“仁”及其相关概念的阐释，提出“仁”为“富有创意的同理心”。作者亦采用了贾平凹的其他两部小说，用以补充说明相关概念和词语在作家创作中的类似现象。如“大人”的概念有别于“大名头的人”，是源自于沈从文的《边城》。“大人”行“仁”道，其共同特质亦存在于古今中外众多的名作中。而从比较文学的视角，可以看到世界各国文学书写和作品的某些共性。贾平凹的小说回应了前辈作家，如陀思妥耶夫斯基、狄更斯、马克·吐温以及马里奥·略萨等，同时也使自己位于书写人性、书写人之间的互相关联以及书写“仁”之作家之列。

In Shen Congwen’s (沈從文) novella, *Border Town* (邊城), there is a passage in which the ferryman is addressing a young local stalwart:

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**CONTACT** Eugene Chen Eoyang  
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… Outsiders say there’s something about our district\(^1\) that produces outstanding men. Why have we none now? “Men who make a name? I don’t care if we have none of those. We’ve intelligent, honest, brave, hardworking youngsters – that’s good enough for me…” (Congwen, 1981, p. 47)

There is a nuance in Chinese that is lost in English between the distinction of “outstanding men” and those that are “good enough” 就夠了 for the ferryman: 別人家全說我們這個地方风水好，出大人，不知為甚麼原因，如今還不出大人？“ To which, the ferryman replies: 你是不是說风水好應出有大名頭的人。 我以爲，這種人不生在我們这个小地方也不碍事。我們有聰明，正直，勇敢，耐勞的年青人， 就夠了。(中國作家…, p. 26).

I wish to point out the difference in this passage, and in the ferryman’s words, between 大名頭的人 (which I might translate, “big shots”) and the words of the young man: 大人 “outstanding men.” True, the ferryman seems to be saying, we’ve produced no “big shots,” but “we have produced smart, upright, courageous, and hardy young people, and that’s good enough for me.” It is my view that Jia Pingwa’s fiction, especially his prizewinning novel, 浮躁, is a concerted attempt to explore the difference between those who are well-known, 大名頭的人, and those who are, merely, “outstanding people,” 大人. But even Gladys Yang’s rendering of “outstanding people” for 大人 doesn’t adequately convey the sense of 大人 in Chinese, which really means “big person,” as opposed to 小人, “small people.” In life, the “small people” almost always outnumber the “big person” by a wide margin, which is why Gladys Yang is somewhat justified in her rendering of “outstanding people” for 大人. 大人 refers to those who have a big heart, who are not petty or selfish, whose interests are capacious, beyond personal ambition or comfort, beyond individual achievement and fame, beyond a vision of the world that’s limited to the self. One such 大人 is Xiaoshui 小水, which I would translate as “Brook,”\(^2\) in Jia Pingwa’s novel, Turbulence Fouzhao 浮躁. When confronted with a rival for the affections of the most desirable young male in the locality, 金狗, Golden Dog, Brook is not beset with petty self-interested jealousies: she imagines the way Yingying, her rival, must feel. When Yingying comes to see her, because her fiancée, Golden Dog, and the love of Brook’s life, has been neglecting her, these are Brook’s thoughts:

She disliked Yingying for condescending to her, but she understood that Yingying’s inability to consider the effects of her actions made her what she was. She had come to understand that she was in her sorry state not because Golden Dog had forsaken her but because she’d lost Golden Dog. Although she was furious at Yingying,\(^3\) she had to admire her, all the while growing dejected over her own weakness and timidity. As she pondered Yingying’s predicament, she couldn’t help sighing, “Yingying’s heart is broken too.” (Goldblatt translation, p. 190, modified)

That Jia Pingwa couches these thoughts almost as interior monologue indicates that Brook is not voicing these sentiments to elicit social approbation. They are the genuine, uncaculating insights of a magnanimous, big-hearted person, a 大人. (Yes, though it isn’t often recognized, women are capable of being 大人 as well.)
It is clear that 小水 ("Brook") thinks well of 金狗 (Golden Dog): Listening to him in silence, she thinks:

… he’s thought things out so clearly, and she was struck with the realization that he was not only smart, but sensitive as well. He seemed so casual on the surface, so nonchalant about everything, but he never missed a thing, nothing escaped him (Goldblatt translation, pp. 132–133)³.

覺得金狗比她想更深更開。是一個極聰明極有心勁的人。他表面上隨隨便便,漫不經心, 其實把甚麼都看到了, 想到! (Congwen, 2008, p. 111). It is the casual demeanor of simple folk which misleads their social “superiors” into thinking that they are not intelligent. But, in reality, and on the contrary, they are alert and insightful: Golden Dog “never missed a thing, nothing escaped him.” Like a 大人, but unlike a 大名頭的人, Golden Dog hides his light under a bushel: he comes across like a country bumpkin from the mountains, not like a 大名頭的人, a big shot.

The reference to 大人 “big man” naturally conjures up its opposite, 小人 “small man”, but in The Analects (論語), the 小人 “small man” is often contrasted with the junzi 君子, which is a designation for the superior person, assumed to be male. But Golden Dog in 劇躁 Turbulence, is a 大人, but definitely not a 君子; neither is 小水. Jia Pingwa is exploring a different kind of hero, one that need not be educated, or even male. And his depiction of a 大人, “a big person” is one who operates from the principle of ren 仁, which is not “benevolence” nor “virtue,” though it can lead to it. The consequence of being one who sees the world through 仁 is that one is always conscious of one’s relatedness to other people, which includes the 小人, the “small people” who populate our world. Nor is the 大人, “big person” ever mindful that he is not unlike the 小人, “the small people”, in their proclivity toward ambition, profit, status, power, and self-interest. The 大人, far from separating himself or herself from the 小人, the “small people,” sees how much they have in common, and this insight in the interrelatedness of all human beings is the essence of the concept of ren 仁. Along with this ability to understand other people, those who have ren 仁 are naturally humble, because, being related to all others, they can be no better than other people are.

In Jia Pingwa’s fictions, there are no purely “good people” and purely “bad people.”⁵ And the notion of being related to all mankind means that no one is immune to the pettiness of small people: the person who understands 仁 works with all kinds of people. Brook says that “[t]here are good people in the world and there are bad ones.” When Cai Da’an, a toady and a sycophant, offers to join Golden Dog and his crew, Brook insists that “[w]e can put his association with us to our own advantage as long as we don’t forget what kind of person he is” 世上的好人壞人撒得勻勻的, 讓他來也有好處, 當然他的為人咱心裏清楚就是了。 (Goldblatt translation, p. 500; Congwen, 2008, p. 433).

The problem with the traditional understanding of 仁 as “benevolence” or “virtue” is that it undermines the meaning of 仁 as a fundamental truth about human beings: that we all derive from two people and that each of our parents derived from two other people, and so on through the generations.⁶ If all our ancestors were distinct individuals (which is highly unlikely), 30 generations ago (that puts us in the Northern Song Dynasty, or roughly around 1100AD), we would have, potentially, as many as 1,073,741,824 ancestors! That would exceed the total estimated population of the world, which was 320 million. The power of the concept of 仁 is, unlike the arbitrary (and unfounded)
human notions of “benevolence” and “virtue,” an incontrovertible fact. Its recognition has several consequences, only some of which lead to “benevolence”; it may also lead to “compassion,” “consideration,” and “altruism.” 仁 reminds us of the fact that all human-kind is quite likely related, and that no one lies outside the human family.

James Legge, in his translation of Mencius, translates 仁者無敵 as “The benevolent has no enemy,” which indicates that he had no very accurate understanding of the concept. Legge’s translation iterates a statement that is blatantly and patently false: benevolence is replete with enemies. The only sense in which 仁者無敵 is incontrovertible is if we understand that 仁 represents the notion that each human being is related to every other human being, or, as the popular Chinese saying goes, 四海之内皆兄弟, “Within the four seas, all men are brothers.” If all humans belong to “the family of man,” no one can exist outside of this family.

What is less recognized in the concept of 仁 is that, if we are related to all humankind, then none of us can be separated into good people or bad people, because if “we are involved in mankind,” nothing human can be alien to us – a notion put forth in the West by the second-century Roman playwright Terence when he wrote: “Homo sum: humani nil a me alienum puto” (“I am human: nothing human is alien to me.”). That is why Mencius insisted that only with a sense of 仁 could one govern effectively: 堯舜之仁不遍愛人，急親賢也。“Yao and Shun [revered ancient sage rulers]: their sense of 仁 was dispassionate and even-handed, yet they felt closest to the virtuous.”

That Mencius intended by 仁 a truth of human existence, and not an abstraction of goodness invented by human imagination, is evinced by his statement: 仁之實，事親是也, “the reality of 仁 is to serve one’s parents.” (Lau, 1970/2003) Serving one’s parents is no exercise in benevolence: it is a recognition of 仁, one’s indebtedness to two people who gave each of us life. There is no way that a benevolent man can govern well, because benevolent people tend to assume that other people are, like them, benevolent. But this is – alas! – simply not true. However, the person who recognizes the fundamental human truth that each of us is related to the rest of mankind, and for whom this recognition enables him to relate to people of all sorts, he, indeed, is supremely qualified to govern. At the base of this perception is the ethical truth, expressed negatively in Confucianism, and positively in Christianity: “[d]o not do unto others what you would not want to be done to you” and “[d]o unto others what you want to be done to you.” Which is why the concept of 恕 is so important to Confucian ethical teaching.

The best explanation of the notion of ren 仁 that I know of exists not in Chinese but in the words of a seventeenth-century English cleric, John Donne. In his famous Meditation #17, he wrote

No man is an island,
Entire of itself,
Every man is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.
… … …
Any man’s death diminishes me,
Because I am involved in mankind,
And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;
It tolls for thee.
In a 1985 short story, Artemesia, Jia Pingwa provides a telling “author’s note”: whether it is earnest or ironically fictional doesn’t matter. The fact that he thought it important to include it is significant:

This is a story about a girl who has been dead these three years. Her team-mates had written to five newspapers in the hopes that they would use her story as an example to others, and three reporters had been sent at various times, but they had shaken their heads at the banality of it. She had done nothing outstanding in life and died no heroic death. She was not newsworthy. Last winter, when chance took me there, her team-mates, who refused to follow up on the story. As he says himself, he found her quite commonplace. It took two days living alongside the sixtythree of them to motivate me to write about her. I told them none of the comfortable men and women in the big cities would take anything a writer produced other than as wild fantasy, however truthfully I wrote, but every one of them told me just to get it written and have it published, though she was not newsworthy. Last winter, when chance took me there, her team-mates, who refused to follow up on the story. As he says himself, he thought it important to include it is significant.

This “author note” is telling, first because Jia thought it necessary to insert it; second because it shows the author’s (or his persona’s) attitude toward “comfortable men and women in the big cities,” or the greater majority of those whom he imagines to be his readers. But the important point is that Jia does not disagree with the “five newspapers” and “three reporters” who refused to follow up on the story. As he says himself, he found the central character, “quite commonplace.” And, according to the note, it was the earnest entreaties of the 63 “team-mates” that compelled him to pursue the matter, and “two days living with them” that hardened his resolve to write about the character. In one of his essays (“The Sounds of Night”) Jia wrote that “…those who labor hardest with their hearts are the writers…” 天下最劳心者，文人. While it may be difficult to take exception to the translation, inevitably, something is left out. The word 心 in Chinese refers to both heart and mind. “[T]hose who labor hardest with their hearts are the writers…” makes Jia out to be a bit too sentimental. What he is saying is that a writer engages, more than anyone else, both heart and mind. He exercises what might be called “imaginative sympathy.” That is why I contend that Jia embodies the principle of 恻 (which I would translate as “imaginative sympathy,” rather than, misleadingly, “reciprocity” – which is too abstract and impersonal, or “forgiveness” – which is too subjective and too personal). Jia’s fictions are exercises in “creative empathy,” which is also what he demands from his readers. Shu 恻, which I have rendered as “imaginative sympathy,” also addresses both heart and mind.

Take, for example, Jia’s main character, Jingou, Golden Dog, in his novel, Turbulence 作为 someone who seduces Yingying 英英, the niece of the local party chief, Tian Zhongzheng 田中正, in order to enhance his chances of landing a job as a reporter for a
newspaper in Zhou City; who has an extramarital affair with Shi Hua 石華, which turns out to be crucial when he appeals to her to help him extricate himself from an unjust, politically motivated incarceration; who exploits the fact that he saved Tian Zhongzheng from drowning (though he cleverly declines credit for the act); who manipulates the local cadre in Dongyang County 東陽縣 (by deliberating losing to him in chess) and persuade him to give him the notes on corruption in the local political scene – Jingou, Golden Dog, is far from being a “benevolent man.” He is manipulative, calculating, and shrewd. He knows men and he knows women.

Jingou, Golden Dog, as a reporter, “… now realized that the scope for doing good was more limited than it seemed” (p. 213; slightly mistranslated) 才明白問題並不是那麼簡單呀 (p. 177). He’s able to impress the local corrupt official, Tian Zhongzheng 田中正, for whom he has little regard, but whom he takes pains to understand. Tian’s approbation reflects on Jingou’s ability to “read” his character: “You’ve got style, [Tian says] and that’s what you need to get ahead. I’ve had my eye on you for a long time. You have quick mind, and you express your views well. You’re quite a young man!” (p. 126) 「有氣派，幹甚麼就得有這種派頭！ 我暗中 觀察，你思想很敏銳，發言 也有見地，是個人才！」 (Congwen, 2008, p. 105).

Even when the “other” is a good friend, of whom he is very fond, like Lei Dakong 雷大空, Jingou is dispassionate rather than kindly. When Xiaoshui says that to a middle school, Jingo has qualms, but he – …” The narrator reports that “he didn’t go on” (p. 438) 小水說：「大空這人風風火火的。心地倒善哩！ 金狗說：人當然是好人……」却不再說下去了。」 (Congwen, 2008, p. 376). Earlier, when Lei Dakong tells Jingou that he has donated 70,000 yuan “as political capital” to a middle school, Jingo has qualms, but he drops the subject, “realizing that Dakong was no longer interested in his scruples” (p. 378). 金狗沒再問下去，他知道大空現在對他的話不是那麼能聽得入耳了 (p. 328). Clearly, Jingou has resigned himself to his friend falling into political snares, so intertwined the relationship between political and capital profit has become in Lei Dakong’s mind. Unfortunately for Dakong, he didn’t appreciate the difference between capital profit, which often leads to increased revenue and political profit, which can lead to, and can in any case be interpreted as, corruption. He ends up badly, in prison, and the victim of an assassination. Aggrieved as Golden Dog is, he doesn’t miss the opportunity to bring down the Tian can, as a result of their role in Lei Dakong’s murder.

However one characterizes Jingou’s behavior, in no wise could it be described as “benevolent”: canny, people smart, practical, yes, but Jingou’s behavior is anything but benevolent. Nevertheless, at the end of Turbulence, it is Jinguo who emerges as the elected county head. It is he who appears most capable of governing; it is he who is able to relate to the most supporters, who practices the principle of 仁. He understands other people, not as “other,” but as part of himself. It is in this sense that one can understand the statement in Mencius that 仁者無敵: the person with creative empathies has no “other,” because he sees the other as himself.

My suggestion is that Jia Pingwa is a novelist who embodies the notion of 仁, which I have interpreted as “creative empathies.” He follows in the tradition of the greatest Chinese novel, one which explores more “creative empathies” than any other: the Honglou Meng 紅樓夢. Jia pays homage to this masterwork in his characterization of
the Buddhist monk 和尚 ("Abbot" in Goldblatt’s translation), whom the other characters dismiss as the irrelevant drinking buddy of Han Wenju 韓文舉, Xiaoshui’s guardian. Cao Xueqin’s novel was a breakthrough precisely because its “creative empathies” included the highest and the lowest levels in society, reflected by the brilliant use not only of the literary language, 文言, but also of the colloquial language, 白話. Jia’s Buddhist monk 和尚 will remind readers of the “mangy Daoist monk” in the first chapter of Cao Xueqin’s Honglou Meng,14 whose seemingly nonsensical ditty known as the Haoliao Ge 好了歌 not only provides the philosophical theme for the novel, but also offers a brief preview of the story:

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世人皆曉神仙好，
惟有功德忘不了！
古今將相在何方，
荒塚一堆草沒了。

世人皆曉神仙好，
只有金银忘不了！
終朝只恨聚無多，
及到多時眼閉了。

世人皆曉神仙好，
只有姣妻忘不了！
君生日日說恩情，
君死又隨人去了。

世人皆曉神仙好，
只有兒孫忘不了！
痴心父母古來多，
孝順兒孫誰見了。
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Since the text is so well known, I’ll offer my own outlandishly colloquial rendering of the ditty:

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Y’all know this: it’s dandy to be good,
But a good time is what we crave.
Where are the big shots of the past?
In a grassy plot, a piss-poor grave.

Y’all know this: it’s dandy to be good,
But filthy lucre is what we crave.
All day we gripe: there ain’t enough!
But when there is — we’re in the grave.

Y’all know this: it’s dandy to be good,
But a pretty wench is what we crave.
She tells us she loves us every day;
But finds someone else who ain’t so grave.
Y’all know this: it’s dandy to be good,
Our kiddies’ love is what we crave.
You’ll find lots of dotty parents, over the years;
How many young’uns are a-sweepin’ our grave?
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Jia’s monk provides a passage of comparable nonsense when he insists on the plethora of “emptinesses” in Buddhist doctrine:
Emptiness takes many forms. There is inner emptiness, outer emptiness, inner-outer
emptiness, the emptiness of activity, the emptiness of inactivity, the emptiness of no
beginning, the emptiness of essentiality, the emptiness of nothingness, the emptiness of
original meaning, the emptiness of emptiness, and the great emptiness…. (p. 257)

空者, 所謂內空, 外空, 內外空, 有為空, 無為空, 無始空,
性空, 無所有空, 第一義空, 空空, 大空。(p. 217)

This is a variant on the same theme as the *Haoliao Ge* 好了歌, for which, thematically,
Samuel Johnson’s poem, “The Vanity of Human Wishes” might well serve as the closest
Western counterpart. And, toward the end of *Turbulence*, Jia has Han Wenju 韓文舉,
Xiaoshui’s guardian, invoke the message of the *Haoliao Ge*, when he says that “[e]verybody
says how wonderful it would be to be immortal, but they’re not willing to give up the taste of
wine or the feel of money” (p. 489). 人人都說神仙好, 可就是酒色財氣忘不了
(Congwen, 2008, p. 423).

The experience of reading Jia Pingwa is akin to the experience of reading the
*Honglou Meng*; it enlarges our “creative empathies,” our sense of 仁, of being related
to human beings who might at first seem very different from us, but whose humanity
we, as readers and as fellow humans, share. One might deduce from this observation
that all novels embody to some extent the principle of 仁, because reading fiction
compels us to identify with other people, to understand different characters. To the
extent that fiction writers engage us in different perspectives forces us to see from
different points of view, encourages us to recognize that we are related to other people,
that we’re all part of the larger human family, yes, the more fiction enlarges our
“creative empathies,” the more it reflects the principle of 仁. That’s what Bakhtin had
in mind when he described the “polyphony” of the novel.

Jia Pingwa’s fictions are “involved in mankind”; thematically, they harken back to the
*Honglou Meng*, as well as, inadvertently, to “The Vanity of Human Wishes.” They may be
set in a fictional mountain region in 陝西 which is no more unreal than Shen Congwen’s
沈從文 West Hunan, or Mo Yan’s 莫言 Gaomi 高密 County in Shandong 山東, or Mario
Vargas Llosa’s jungles of Peru, or William Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha County. They are
about our common humanity: we recognize ourselves in Xiaoshui 小水 and Jingou 金狗.
*Turbulence* 浮躁 may be about poor illiterate or semiliterate people in the mountainous
terrain of 陝西 trying to adapt to the post-Mao reforms in China toward the last part of
the twentieth century, but they describe the difficulties of anyone who is trying to be a
good person, who is trapped by the trappings of fame and renown, who is seduced by the
blandishments of power and money, and who is deluded by the importance of one’s own
ego. To read Jia is to realize the difference between Shen Congwen’s 大人 and his 大名頭
的人, between the “big shots,” and the really important people.

Jia Pingwa takes his place among those authors who took up the theme of *humanitas*,
of human relatedness or 仁, in their writing. More specifically, he joins the
Dostoyevski of *Poor Folk*, the Dickens of *Oliver Twist*, the Mark Twain of
*Huckleberry Finn*, and the Mario Vargas Llosa’s *The Green House*. In each of these
fictions, the author explored a disenfranchised portion of society, whether the destitute
in *Poor Folk* and *Oliver Twist*, slaves in *Huckleberry Finn*, or the illiterate and semi-
literate clients of the brothels in the jungles of Peru in *The Green House*. In each of
these fictions, an attempt is made to dispel the prevailing notion of the poor and
uneducated as unworthy of notice; they counter the dismissal by snobs of the “unwashed” as “uncouth and unrefined.” The mountain folk in *Turbulence* are not among the educated, the powerful, or the sophisticated: they are far from being the “big shots” of our world – more deserving of notice and admiration than many a celebrity: not to mention so-called aristocrats. They are good enough for the ferryman in Shen Congwen’s *Border Town*, and they should be more than good enough for the rest of us.

**Notes**

1. I prefer Gladys Yang’s version of 風水 as “something about our district” (Congwen, 1981) to Jeffrey Kinkley’s “feng shui” (Congwen, 2009) because “feng shui” has become too technical and trendy in English: here, the emphasis is not on the geomancy of the region, but on the region itself.
2. I don’t care for Howard Goldblatt’s rendering of 小水 as “Water Girl” in his otherwise fluent and capable translation: “Water-Girl” suggests a menial (cf. “Water Boy”), which 小水, though humble, is not. She is a product of her region, a “Zhou River girl”; hence, my rendering, “Brook.”
3. I depart from Goldblatt here. He translates 眼紅着英英 “was jealous of Yingying,” which seems inappropriate at this point, since Xiaoshui (Brook) has explicitly given him up.
4. At this point in the translation, Goldblatt inserts the exclamation “He was a real man!” for which there is no warrant in the text.
5. In his translation, Howard Goldblatt inserts this sentence: “The Gongs and Tians were good people, too, until they became officials” (p. 502). However, true as it might be to the spirit of the discourse, the sentence does not exist in the original (p. 434).
6. Legge’s translation of 仁 of the end of the first chapter of the *Mencius*: 仁者無敵 could not be more disastrous: “[t]he benevolent has no enemy,” an assertion which is not only not self-evident; it is untrue (*The Mencius*, Bk. I, Chapter 5, 6; Legge, 1898, p. 446). Benevolence has many enemies: greed, ambition, self-interest, thirst for power. D. C. Lau seems to be aware of the problem, so he fudges his translation of 敵, and substitutes “match” for “enemy,” coming up with “[t]he benevolent man has no match” (p. 8). But his reliance on “benevolent” to translate 仁 makes this statement very dubious, if not irrelevant.
7. http://ctext.org/mengzi/jin-xin-i#n1806.
8. Legge’s version of this simple assertion is embroidered nonsense: “[t]he richest fruit of benevolence is this: the service of one’s parents.”
9. The Master said, “Reciprocity (shu) – what you would not want for yourself, do not do to others.” [15:23]; “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” [Luke 6:31].
10. The English translation was published in *Chinese Literature Summer 1987*, pp. 3–26.
11. Chinese Literature, 2000, p. 157.
12. 賈平凹散文精选, “夜霧”, p. 322.
13. At this point in the translation, Goldblatt gratuitously inserts the following: “[n]o one understood Dakong better than Golden Dog. He knew him like the back of his hand and was sure of what would happen to him eventually. But the way society was, Dakong couldn’t take all Golden Dog’s advice, and there was nothing the reporter could say or do to fix that.”
14. David Hawkes’s unforgettable rendition.

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Notes on contributor

Eugene Chen Eoyang is Professor Emeritus of English, Humanities, Translation, and General Education at Lingnan University, Hong Kong, as well as Professor Emeritus of Comparative Literature and of East Asian Languages & Cultures at Indiana University, USA. He has published a number of books, including The Transparent Eye: Translation, Chinese Literature, and Comparative Aesthetics (Hawaii, 1993); Coat of Many Colors: Reflections on Diversity by a Minority of One (Beacon, 1995); Borrowed Plumage: Polemical Essays on Translation (Rodopi, 2003); Two-Way Mirrors: Cross-Cultural Studies in Globalization (Lexington: 2007). A co-founder of the journal CLEAR: Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews, he was elected president of the American Comparative Literature Association (1995-1997). He edited Translating Chinese Literature (Bloomington, 1995) with Lin Yao-fu, and he compiled Intercultural Explorations: Volume 8 of the Proceedings of the XVth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association, Leiden (Rodopi, 2005). He has also published translations of a Taiwanese-American poet, Wann Ai-jen (Renditions: A Chinese-English Translation Magazine, May and November 2010). He has also written a children’s book, The Smile of a Crocodile: Rhymes for Chloe (and Kyle) (Booksurge, 2008). He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society for the encouragement of the arts, merchandise, and commerce in 2001.

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