

Reinterpreting the *Analects*: History and Utility in the Thought of Ogyū Sorai

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Introduction: Sorai and History

The grandest claim for historical studies from a pre-modern Japanese surely came from the Confucian scholar Ogyū Sorai (1666-1728).¹ Sorai believed that an imaginative understanding of the past was essential for comprehension of the present. He wrote: “Thus, observing widely and being pervasively familiar with realities constitute what is called learning, and this is why learning achieves its ultimate form in history.”²

The study of history aroused Sorai’s intense intellectual creativity and polemical reflexes. For him, history, rather than the pursuit of personal moral excellence or spiritual self cultivation, constituted the project of Confucian learning. It had a strongly linguistic dimension, for Sorai believed passionately that language itself and with it the texts that recorded the past were conditioned by history. He brought to the study of history the resources of a brilliant mind, a remarkable philological intelligence, and a mastery of Chinese sources. History was an extension of the imagination into the past based on Sorai’s own rigorous linguistic and textual methodology. He borrowed the metaphor of “flying ears and long eyes” from an ancient Chinese text, the *Kuan tzu*.³

One might, on this basis, have expected Sorai to have channeled his energies into writing history himself, whether of China or of Japan. Certainly, as a young man in the employment of Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu (1658-1714), Sorai had participated during the years 1700-05 in “punctuating” Chinese dynastic histories.⁴ It is clear that he was deeply familiar with the records of both the Chinese and the Japanese pasts. In fact, paradoxically, apart from monographs on discrete topics such as the ancient “well-field” system or weights and measures, Sorai does not seem to have been drawn to write history himself. Nonetheless, historical knowledge and a vivid sense of historical change permeate his written works, whether on the classics or his proposals for the reconstruction of his own society.

History for Sorai concerned the empirical study of objective “institutional changes” (*seido no kawari*) as implemented by successive regimes in China and Japan.⁵ But it was not a disinterested enquiry. It was teleological, driven by a practical and political purpose.

The man who desires to know the present must understand the past. He who desires to understand the past must study history. Studying history necessarily means studying the records. Only when aspiration is focused on the records, will the Six Classics become increasingly clear. If the Six Classics are clear, then the Way of the Sages has neither past nor present. Only thereafter, will one be able to rule the realm. For this reason, the *chün-tzu* [superior man] always “considers history”⁶ and therein his concern is only with concrete things.⁷

Sorai’s language here and throughout his discussions of history suggests a two-fold agenda. History was both an object of study and the basis for political intervention in the

present. Both aspects of Sorai's views on history have attracted serious scholarly attention in recent times.⁸ Both have been recognized as fundamental to his system of thought. The view of two prominent scholars may be cited as examples here. In the immensely influential analysis of Maruyama Masao (1914-1996), Sorai was the thinker who "for the first time [in Japan enabled] history to develop freely"⁹ as an autonomous field of enquiry. With that, came a changed view of the role of man as a historical agent. Maruyama showed how Sorai achieved this by dismantling the mode of thought characteristic of the Neo-Confucianism of Chu Hsi (1130-1200), then ascendant in his world. This tradition saw all human activity in terms of a moral Way immanent in both man and nature. Sorai, by contrast, saw the Way as constructed by superordinate human beings in the remote past. "Only by denying the idea that [a naturally existing] Way itself is the ultimate source of authority . . . is it possible to free . . . history for the first time from the fetters of fixed standards; only then is it possible for history to develop freely."¹⁰ For Maruyama, writing from a western liberal point of view, Sorai's historicism opened at least the possibility of a "modern" sense of autonomous human control over historical change in a mode that was other than purely and directly moral. "Thus politics ceased to be a mere extension of the 'cultivation of personal life and regulation of the family,' history ceased to be a 'mirror' for moral precepts, and literature ceased to be an instrument rewarding good and punishing evil. Each acquired intrinsic normative standards."¹¹

Sorai's belief in the practical relevance of history to the present has been recently explicated by Tetsuo Najita. For Najita's Sorai, history not only explains the causes of dynastic decline; it also "serves as the basic premise from which to once again reconstruct an order"; it was the basis for the political agenda of the present. Najita refers to this activity of reconstruction and governance as "the principle of fostering human life in a social context." Sorai's thinking on history and politics, he claims, "reveals [him] to be a romantic and optimistic thinker," a quality "often denied of him by historians."¹² Najita evaluates Sorai's political thought highly. Indeed, he claims that Sorai's "ideas continue to reverberate in the discourse on politics in modern Japan."¹³

This essay will argue for a slightly different Sorai from that presented by many of his apologists in recent decades. It will explore the structure of Sorai's historical thought with reference to his underlying philosophical assumptions. The focus is on the internal structural dynamics of Sorai's thought, rather than with such broader issues as its modernity. The main argument is that Sorai was a historicist,¹⁴ but that his historicism, his strong conviction that both the institutions and language of ancient Confucianism were responsive to and determined by a constantly changing historical environment, created a version of what has been called the "crisis of historicism."¹⁵ Sorai's explicit solution to this problem lay, paradoxically in view of his historicism, in a declaration of faith in the transcendent and universal value of the Way of the Sages, combined with an arduous dedication to critical study in order to gain disciplined access to the historical manifestations and record of this Way. Certain difficulties resulted from this position, however, and it is argued here that Sorai supplemented these approaches with a third structural element of his thought: an appeal to a consequentialist morality, utilitarian values and a utilitarian concept of "good"; utility was the value that, in practice, linked the absolute and transcendent with the relative and historical. Essentially, for Sorai, a form of elite political utilitarianism both complemented and compensated for his radical historicism. In Western philosophical terms, it will be argued, Sorai rejected the deontologi-

cal view of morality, characteristic of the Neo-Confucian world view, that sees moral actions as right in themselves. In its place he adopted a consequentialist morality that judges actions from their effects. Sorai based this utilitarian cast to his thought on his reading of Confucian canonical texts, particularly the *Lun-yü* (Analects) of Confucius (557-479 B.C.E.). His utilitarianism is developed further in his treatises *Bendō* and *Benmei*. It also underpins his prescriptions for political action in his own present. It is pervasive in Sorai's works on contemporary Japanese society and practice, *Taiheisaku* (Policy for great peace) and *Seidan* (Discourses on administration), and in *Sorai Sensei tōmonsho* (Master Sorai's letters in answer to queries). Adopted as a philosophy of administration, it carries all the nuances of moral ambiguity critically associated with utilitarianism as a philosophy of elitist political management.

The essay seeks to document this utilitarian interpretation of Sorai's thought from his own texts. It has two main themes: Sorai's radical historicism and the utilitarianism that, in some sense, sprang from and complemented it. It first sketches the broad framework of the historical thought of Sorai's maturity with particular reference to the structural problem created by his historicism; it next proceeds to explore his utilitarianism, primarily with reference to his major work of scholarship, the *Rongo chō*, a commentary on the Confucian *Analects*. It then turns to broader aspects of Sorai's utilitarianism, including the possibility that Sorai was influenced by the ancient Chinese utilitarian thought of Mo tzu (between 500 and 396 B.C.E.). All this is not to diminish the magnitude of the achievement that Sorai's recent interpreters have so highly evaluated. Reassembling ancient elements to form an integrated whole addressed to a new historical situation requires originality scarcely less than the creation of radically new theories.

Sorai's "Crisis of Historicism"

Confucians since Confucius himself had been interested in history; they always knew that time brought great changes in institutions and societies.¹⁶ Neo-Confucians, however, adopted a rigorously moral approach to the past. History tended to be an exercise in retrospective moral judgment, ironically often largely ahistorical in its disregard of dynamic or developmental aspects of phenomena as they occurred in the dimension of time; it was the hand-maiden of an unchanging and absolute morality, the Way, that was part of the order of nature. Sorai himself sharply distinguished his own understanding of history from this Neo-Confucian view. He particularly objected to that style of history that he identified with Chu Hsi, exemplified in Chu's own redactive work of history, the *Tzu-chih t'ung-chien kang-mu* (Outline and Details of the *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government*).

[T]he arguments presented in [this work] are like seal stamps: the form is set; the principle is determined; the impression is fixed. Heaven, earth, and people are active phenomena, and to view them as though they were bound and tied with rope is truly a useless kind of learning and merely encourages glibness. It is for this reason that the wholly factual *Tzu-chih t'ung-chien* [Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government; the original work by Ssu-ma Kuang (1019-1086) from which Chu Hsi's redaction was made] is far superior to *Tzu chih t'ung chien kang-mu*.¹⁷

Sorai argued, in contrast to the view that he imputed to Chu Hsi, that the Way was not a set of unchanging laws immanent in nature. It was man made and had, in its particularities, been a response to historical conditions; and it remained subject to historical change and

adaptation: "The Way is what Yao and Shun set up, and the myriad generations depend upon it. However, it has aspects that change in accordance with the times. Therefore the Sage of a [particular] dynasty has that which he changes; he establishes this [changed version] as the Way and so the rulers and ministers of that dynasty enact it on this basis."¹⁸

If history was thus purged of rigid moral categorization and direct moral meaning, what then was the significance of the Confucian canon itself to a changed historical present? His refusal to see history as retrospective moral judgment induced in Sorai a distinctive reading of the Confucian classics. Sorai reconceived and historicized the Confucian canon. In his eyes, that corpus became no longer a repository of direct and explicit moral instruction or a revelation of the path to an idealized Sagehood, as it was for most Neo-Confucians. As is well known, Sorai shifted attention from the "Four Books" (the *Analects*, *Mencius*, *Great Learning*, and *Doctrine of the Mean*), works concerned to a greater or lesser extent with self cultivation and the moral underpinnings of action in society. He focused rather on the "Six Classics" (*Odes*, *Documents*, *Changes*, *Rites*, *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and *Rites of Chou*). He viewed these as primarily an historical record of the seminal political activity of the successive Sage rulers of early China. In this sense, even if not active as a historian himself, Sorai expanded the boundaries of history. But Sorai had done this at a cost; the moral norms that Neo-Confucians had believed to be eternal and immanent were now posited as history-bound, relative creations. Yet this historicism, once more, raised the question of how to address the present. How did the past reflected in a historicized, yet still implicitly normative, Confucian canon relate to the changed world of eighteenth-century Japan?

The difficulty that Sorai's intellectual position created is familiar, *mutatis mutandis*, from the European experience of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There, "the tendency to interpret the whole of reality, including what . . . had been conceived as absolute and unchanging human values, in historical, that is to say relative, terms" led, in turn, to "an anarchy of values." In this situation, "[m]an was cast out on a sea of flux, at the mercy of a mythological conception called time, reduced to the servant of values which were shown to be mere ideologies."¹⁹ Just so, Sorai argued that the Way was a human creation, and in its particularities a response to historical conditions. It followed that, apart from certain communal reflexes that Sorai considered natural to humans,²⁰ the morality, and particularly the political morality recorded in the Confucian canon, was historically contingent. If it indeed retained a normative value for later ages, that value now implicitly required to be substantiated and legitimated.

At the explicit level, Sorai responded to his "crisis of historicism" in two main ways. One was to reassert the traditional respect for the canon but in a changed form. Sorai concentrated on the person of the Sages themselves and the Way that they had created. As though to compensate for any weakening that his historicism might suggest and to bolster the authority of the Way, he proclaimed that, paradoxically, the Sages' abilities and the Way that they created transcended time. The Way "had no past or present." Sorai insisted that it was relevant to his own or any present.²¹ In his *Benmei*, he wrote: "If the teachings of the Sages were not to accord with what is right for the present age, then they would not be Sages. Therefore, . . . the teachings of the Sages span ten thousand ages and possess a quality that cannot be changed."²² Elsewhere, in his *Tōmonsho*, Sorai elevated his attitude to the level of a declaration of faith in the Sages comparable to faith in the Buddha.²³ But he proceeded further still to claim a

sanctified, indeed religious, status for the Way. “The Sage emperors and enlightened kings all modeled their actions on Heaven in ordering the realm; they served Heaven and thereby enacted their administration and teaching.”²⁴ As a result, “the Sages’ achievement was like Heaven; therefore, they are correlated (*p’ei*) with Heaven”.²⁵ This relationship between the Sages and Heaven, the sacred power ordering the world, however, was based on the Sages’ special powers, for Sorai conceived of Heaven as inaccessible to ordinary human understanding.²⁶

Sorai’s sacralization of the Way was surely motivated in part by his anti-Neo-Confucian polemic. For, as Maruyama so incisively pointed out, Sorai’s Confucian revisionism required him to refute the “rationality” of Sung philosophy and the system of “rational” self-cultivation leading to Sagehood that it underpinned.²⁷ Sorai’s doctrine of the unknowability of Heaven achieved both this but, more importantly in the present context, also the related aim of enhancing the status of an historicized Way. At the same time, secondly and from a different direction, but again as though to enhance the grandeur of the Confucian project and to deny the Neo-Confucian view that self-cultivation was a duty of all students of the Way, Sorai declared that an arduous, highly specialized, even life-long dedication to critical and empirical study was necessary in order to gain disciplined access to this object of faith.

In effect, however, Sorai’s two-fold approach to his “crisis of historicism” can be said merely to have deferred the problem. Sorai’s paradoxical assumptions concerning the status of the Way begged the further question of the precise nature of the object of faith and the appropriate focus and method of study.²⁸ Did the Sages’ legacy consist of an objective set of institutions, somehow and to a greater or lesser extent to be adjusted to later times? Or was it a state of mind in the student to be inculcated from study of their texts? Or was it simply a religious obedience to Heaven? What, precisely, should the student of Confucianism study? How was the legacy, once recovered, to be seen to be coherent and legitimate?

This problem has been reflected in disagreement among modern scholars as to whether, for Sorai, the canon provided a set of objective methods to be studied and applied by the inaugurators of later regimes, or whether it yielded something more subjective, what Tahara Tsuguo (b. 1924) describes as the “autonomous spirit of the Former Kings” in creating the Way.²⁹ Sorai himself seems to speak with two voices. On the one hand, as Tahara has argued, he seems to view the objective, historical institutions themselves as normative; in other words to be some sort of restorationist.³⁰ Thus Sorai referred to the *Book of Odes* and the *Book of Documents* as “a repository of propriety” (*i chih fu*).³¹ He defined *i* precisely as an objective subset of ritual: it was “the appropriate” or “propriety”; it “regulated affairs” and “responded to change.”³² This suggested that these works indeed contained objective institutions for regulating affairs. In *Taiheisaku*, again, learning is described in terms of objective and comparative enquiry:

The person of great capacity, when, through the way of “flying ears and long eyes,” he sees the contrasts between the institutions of the sages of old, the institutions of the Han, T’ang, Sung and Ming dynasties, the institutions of our country in the remote past and its present-day institutions, what the past lacked and the present has and the past had but the present lacks are patently obvious. So the make-up of the present is apparent. When the make-up of the present is apparent, the site of the illness is evident.³³

Why not, then, elucidate the institutions of the past directly from the canonical texts? Why not write an appropriate commentary on the *Book of Documents*? But Sorai did not do this. The Sorai scholar Imanaka Kanji (b. 1913), confronting this problem, fumbled with the suggestions that “even a great scholar like Sorai” could have been discouraged by the enormity of the task, or was simply disinclined to undertake it, or may have keenly regretted his inability to do so.³⁴ Perhaps also Sorai’s own realistic sense of his own society may have inhibited him from pursuing too facile or fundamentalist an agenda of restorationism. However, in his proposals for the reconstruction of his own society embodied in his late *Seidan*, for instance, Sorai did go some distance to deriving certain general objective “great principles” from the Confucian canon.

So we find that the way to relieve the poverty of high and low is not particularly miraculous or mystical; it is merely a matter of applying the methods of the ancient sages. . . . When we ask how to achieve this, we find that the great principles . . . behind the teachings of the ancient Sages was that all people, high and low, be attached to the land and, on that basis, that the institutions (*seido*) of ritual laws be established. These were the great principles of good government.³⁵

Yet Sorai seems to have gone little further than this in distilling objective political wisdom from the classics.

On the other hand, he seemed also to entertain a different, more subjective approach. This was based on the premise that study of the canon produced a state of mind that qualified the subject to make the correct political or moral choices for his own time. In Sorai’s world, there were two possible routes to this end. The first was based on the conventional assumption that the mind of the Sages was accessible, and that, by gaining access to it through the discipline of self-cultivation, the student of the Way could attain a Sagerly ability to respond to his own world. This approach was found among Neo-Confucian thinkers. It was particularly strongly represented by the subjectivist “School of Mind” and pre-eminently by Wang Yang-ming (1473-1529) in China, whom Sorai condemned precisely on this count.³⁶ In the previous generation in Japan, this approach had been pursued particularly in the “Shingaku” (Learning of the mind) of Nakae Tōju (1608-48) and Kumazawa Banzan (1619-91). Sorai, however, had a profound distaste for self-cultivation, and vehemently rejected the Neo-Confucian view that Sagehood could be achieved through learning.³⁷ He was usually most reluctant to concede that the minds of Sages were directly accessible to their latter-day followers. Indeed, he seems often to have wished to limit the understanding of the “mind” of the Sages to Sages themselves. Thus in *Benmei*, he wrote: “The virtue [of the Sages] is spiritually illumined and unmeasurable; how can it be successfully glimpsed?”³⁸ Under these circumstances, the mind-set of the Sages was not a concern for students of the tradition. “To discuss the Sages in terms of their minds is not the intention of the school of Confucius” (VIII/18/3/350/672).³⁹ However, Sorai occasionally seemed to draw back from this approach. In *Benmei*, writing of Confucius’ discussion of ritual with his disciples, Sorai wrote: “. . . in one or two instances, through Confucius’ discussion with his disciples, one can discern the mind of creating.”⁴⁰ In fact, Sorai seems ambivalent on whether, or to what extent, ordinary men can attain to the “mind” or “virtue” of the Sages.⁴¹

Sorai’s more frequent approach, however, was to emphasize that study led to a more modest change internal to the mind of the student, rather than a direct access to the mind of

the Sages themselves. Sorai described this change as a spontaneous or “natural,” unself-conscious conversion resulting from sustained effort: “[I]f the student follows the teachings of the Sages well and with all his will, learns them over a long period, and is converted to them (*yū chih hua*),⁴² he will then and then only perceive that the teachings of the Sages span ten thousand ages and cannot be changed.”⁴³

At the outset of *Taiheisaku* Confucian learning is depicted as a time-consuming “shift” (i) in the subject:

The Way of learning is entered through study of poetry and prose in the vernacular, acquiring knowledge of foreign language; by learning history, becoming aware of differences in the institutions and manners of successive ages; through learning the books of remote antiquity, becoming aware of differences in the languages of past and present, and by steeping one’s mind in the Six Classics becoming familiar with the teachings of the Sages. When one does these things, as one learns and is steeped in their language and their acts, at no one particular time one’s own mentality (*kokoroawai*), too, progressively shifts (*utsuriyuki*) and the operations of one’s wisdom spontaneously becomes consistent with the Way of the Sages. Thereafter, when one looks at the state of the present world, the way of ordering the realm and state becomes like pointing at the palm of one’s hand. However, this is the learning of Confucianists, and when one does not devote a lifetime of energy to it, is something difficult to achieve.⁴⁴

Here, it is true, there is no claim to appropriating the minds of the Sages. None the less, logically speaking, some understanding of the motives and rationale behind the objective institutions of the Way, some intellectual assimilation to the thinking behind the institutions of the Sages, is implied.

Thus, though Sorai entertains both the objective and the subjective approaches to study of the “rituals of the Former Kings,” he develops neither beyond a certain point. It is true that, intuitively and practically, his formula for study and recovery of the Way possesses cogency; it suggested an intelligible agenda that it was possible to follow. To borrow Kate Nakai’s words, the “records of the institutions of the ancient kings” provided “exemplary models—in contemporary parlance, . . . case studies” that could be studied.⁴⁵ Yet, at crucial points, it is also undeniable that Sorai’s solution to the crisis of historicism is obscure, irrational, ambivalent or even mystical. The very concepts of “faith” and of a transcendent Way seem more religious than philosophical. Heaven, invoked by Sorai as the basis and sanction of the activity of Sages, is also, self-consciously for Sorai, an intellectually inaccessible concept. And the achievement of understanding in the student is described in terms such as “naturally” and “at no particular time,” that also put it beyond the reach of rational analysis and seem intended to emphasize its elusive quality.

Thus there seems to be a suspension of rationality at the heart of Sorai’s thought, an uneasy space, a no man’s land between knower and known, an ambiguity between subject and object. Sorai’s polemical desire to reject Neo-Confucian rationality and to enhance the transcendent status of the Way can thus be seen to have confronted him with a complex impasse. This situation was a consequence of a worldview that sought to combine a radically historicist view of the canonical sources of a given tradition with the belief that the same canon also

contained a transcendent element normative for the present. On the one hand, Sorai postulated a relative, history-bound yet also in some sense normative set of institutions created, so he argued, by superordinate, unknowable figures, sanctioned in turn by the unknowable power of Heaven and recorded in a canonical corpus of texts. On the other hand, he denied the legitimacy of attempting to gain access to, or emulate, the minds that had created these institutions. Put in more abstract terms, Sorai's intellectual position faced him with a version of the age-old problem of the interface between the absolute and the relative, of deriving relative imperatives (actions in historical time) from an authority claimed to be absolute or transcendent (the Way of the Sages). How was this absolute, transcendent Way to be accessible and implemented in relative time once the Sages had departed and the Way itself lost? Sorai does not, of course, address this problem in precisely these terms.⁴⁶ Yet the question of access to the Way and its implementation in his present can be argued to be salient among the problems that he confronted as a Confucian scholar. Here, indeed, was Sorai's own particular "crisis of historicism." This difficulty, it could be argued, exposed a fault line in his thinking.

The space created by Sorai's radical revisionist historicization of the canonical sources of Confucianism was filled not only by his declaration of faith combined with arduous empirical study and a process of conversion of the student. In addition, the structural need for a link between the absolute or transcendent Way and its relative applications inspired the development of a third pillar of his system. Sorai identified within the Confucian canon a utilitarian mode of thought based on the concepts of "profit" (*li*) and of "good" (*shan*). According to this mode the actions of those in political authority were determined by their consequences, irrespective of the moral state of mind of their authors. For Sorai, this mode of thinking solved the paradox and the methodological difficulty inherent in his thought. It also provided the essential link between the Way of the Former Kings and the governments of later ages.

As a Confucian, a follower of a scholastic tradition, Sorai inevitably felt required to justify this position from canonical sources. He believed that Confucius himself, properly and historically understood, had subscribed to a utilitarian approach, and that this approach was recorded in the canonical *Lun-yü*. This essay proceeds to discuss Sorai's revisionist historical and utilitarian reading of that work. First, however, a historical and cultural context is provided by a brief glance at the utilitarian mode of thought itself and its following in East Asia before the time of Ogyü Sorai.

Elite Utilitarianism and Government, in West and East

Utilitarianism is a mode of thinking according to which the moral status of actions is based on their consequences. In particular, those actions that maximize well-being are judged to be morally good. "Well-being" is variously defined as an absence of pain, or, in a more positive direction, satisfaction of desire. A utilitarian "use[s] 'right' and 'wrong' to appraise choices on account of their actual success in promoting the general happiness."⁴⁷ Utilitarian morality contrasts with alternative types of moral thought that regard moral imperatives as deriving authority from elsewhere than from their direct consequences. Such alternative theories are "absolutist" if they prescribe that a moral imperative must be obeyed whatever its consequences; or "deontological" from the Greek word for "that which is binding," if they postulate that acts are intrinsically right or wrong in themselves.

Utilitarian moral thought is likely to be unconcerned with certain aspects of the subject. "Acts are not right or obligatory because of their inherent character, their underlying motives, or their relation to divine or social dictates, but because of how much overall human or sentient well-being they *produce*."⁴⁸ Yet utilitarianism may also hold that certain mind-sets may be more favorable than others to determining actions conducive to widespread well-being. It seems likely to stress empirical knowledge. The capacity to know the likely outcome of actions is likely to increase a subject's ability to act morally in the utilitarian sense. From the perspective of elite political management, knowledge of history is likely to dispose rulers to be aware of the consequences of their actions, and thus to take informed measures to maximize the well-being of their subjects. A further characteristic of utilitarianism as a social or political philosophy may also be noted at this stage. In so far as it identifies morality with maximizing utility, "any means can be justified by a good-enough end."⁴⁹ Such means might include the destruction of human life. Hence it is difficult to subsume utilitarianism in its direct or simple form under the kind of humanism that accepts that all individual human beings are equally ends in themselves.⁵⁰

Utilitarianism as a systematic moral philosophy is particularly associated with the English Utilitarians Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873). Its basis in a consequentialist view of morality has a simple structure, however, and can be identified in other intellectual and moral traditions. In approaching Sorai's utilitarianism, it will be helpful to set his ideas in historical perspective through a brief glance at the Chinese tradition in terms of the basic distinction between consequentialist or "utilitarian" and "deontological" morality. For long before Sorai's time, a utilitarian view of morality had been the subject of debate in East Asia. In this sense, Sorai's utilitarian views are sited in an ancient controversy whose concepts were already familiar to students of the East Asian tradition.

The mainstream of the Confucian tradition tended historically to be deontological or even absolutist rather than utilitarian. Although, for instance in addressing moral dilemmas, Confucians did resort to consequentialist arguments, they were inclined to express disdain for actions directly motivated by a quest for benefit, especially of the material sort, for self or society. Discussion was conducted, more often than not, in terms of the contrasting values of "profit" (*li*) and "righteousness" (*i*). For Confucians, "profit" was at most legitimate only when subordinate to, and a by-product of, "righteousness." It was not an acceptable end in itself. "The man, who in the view of profit thinks of righteousness, . . . may be called a complete man."⁵¹ "The Master said, The mind of the superior man is conversant with righteousness; the mind of the mean man is conversant with profit."⁵² When questioned by King Hui of Liang about "counsels to profit (*li*) my kingdom," Mencius (371-289 B.C.E.) indignantly replied, "Why must your Majesty use that word 'profit'? What I am provided with, are counsels to benevolence and righteousness, and these are my only topics."⁵³ Chu Hsi Neo-Confucians were even more emphatic, even absolutist, in their moral thinking.⁵⁴ Their elaborate metaphysics underpinned moral values as binding in themselves; no doubt their Buddhist-influenced asceticism also inhibited them from a direct maximization of material benefits. The *Chin-ssu lu* (Reflections on things at hand) contained the following well-known quotation from the Han dynasty philosopher Tung Chung-shu (177-104 B.C.E.): "Rectify moral principles and do not seek profit. Illuminate the Way and do not calculate on results."⁵⁵ Wang Yang-ming spoke even more categorically of the "poison of the doctrine of success and profit."⁵⁶

It must be noted, however, that some texts important to Confucians, notably the *Changes*, played down the conflict between “righteousness” and “profit.” “What is called ‘profit’ is the harmony of all that is right.”⁵⁷ Even Mencius, though strongly anti-utilitarian, could define “good” (*shan*), a moral value, in terms of what people desire. His statement that: “The desirable is what is meant by the ‘good’” (*k’o-yü chih wei shan*) suggests a utilitarian assumption that “good” is to be defined in terms of satisfaction of the wants of men, an essentially utilitarian position.⁵⁸ Furthermore, a utilitarian emphasis has been identified within the Confucian tradition itself. Hsün tzu (ca. 350-286 B.C.E.) is noted particularly for his belief in the primacy of man-made institutions as a means for achieving social regeneration.⁵⁹ However, Benjamin Schwartz (1916-1999), for instance, while first conceding that “Hsün tzu’s ethic seems to be essentially utilitarian,”⁶⁰ later concludes that his “ethic of the noble man is not utilitarian.” As Schwartz sees it, Hsün tzu’s “devotion” to rites and music “seems to carry him well beyond his appreciation of their social function.”⁶¹ Hsün tzu is in fact ultimately interested in the moral regeneration of individuals for its own sake in a way foreign to a thoroughly utilitarian view. Nonetheless, Hsün tzu is frequently cited as an influence on Sorai, and it will be necessary to return to him later in this essay.

There were, however, more radical, independent traditions of thought in China that have a claim to be considered “utilitarian.” Outside what is normally considered “philosophy,” the writings of military thinkers were founded, of course, on assumptions concerning human conduct that were radically realist and instrumental, a mode in some ways congruent with utilitarianism. They were destined to be particularly influential in Japan. Their possible influence on Sorai is discussed below. But a more philosophical utilitarianism, associated with political management, was also found among the ancient schools of thought in China. In pre-Ch’in philosophy, a utilitarian approach is represented classically by Mo tzu. “[T]he Mohists are . . . vigorous independent thinkers who submit all traditional morality to the test of social utility, explicitly defend innovation, and support the new kind of centralized state, with merit rather than birth as the grounds for preferment.”⁶² Utilitarianism, again of the political variety, has also been identified later in Chinese history. A group of scholars in the Sung dynasty, who in the view of some scholars influenced Sorai, criticized Chu Hsi style Neo-Confucianism (*Tao-hsüeh*) on the basis of “utilitarian” assumptions. The “Yung-chia” thinker Yeh Shih (1150-1223) showed a “utilitarian” lack of interest in the moral state of mind of individuals. He attacked the mysticism of his *Tao-hsüeh* contemporaries and “relegated the quest for sagehood to the background.”⁶³ “The way of learning,” rather, “was not abstract reasoning or contemplation, but unremitting attention to concrete facts, both natural and man-made.”⁶⁴ Another Sung utilitarian was Ch’en Liang (1143-94), whose “Yung-k’ang” learning argued that success in government rendered nugatory the traditional Confucian distinctions between “king” and “hegemon” and “righteousness” and “profit.” Provided a ruler achieved success in government, he was at once a Confucian moral ruler and a “hegemon” who achieved “profit.”⁶⁵ According to Ch’en’s biographer, “in [his] eyes, that which possessed utility—that is satisfied the reasonable desires and needs of the people and was advantageous to the greater good of society and state—validated its own correctness.”⁶⁶ These claims to identify utilitarian thought in the Chinese intellectual tradition are important, for they suggest possible sources for Sorai’s own style of political utilitarianism.

Rongo chō

Of his *Rongo chō* (The *Analects* Attested), Sorai wrote that it “required the expenditure of a lifetime of effort,”⁶⁷ and it has been recognized as the prime source for the thought of his school.⁶⁸ The work is, first, the product of great learning, a lively and incisive mind, a vivid historical imagination and a passionate commitment to the study of the Chinese language. The commentary has been found to draw eclectically on a wide range of sources.⁶⁹ These encompass the Han dynasty commentarial tradition; the later *shu* (sub-commentaries) of Hsing Ping (931-1010); the *Chi chu* (Collected Annotations) of Chu Hsi, the *Lun-yü ta-ch’üan* (Compendium on the *Analects*), a Ming compendium of Neo-Confucian commentaries, and the *Rongo kogi* (Ancient Meaning of the *Analects*) of Sorai’s fellow countryman, Itō Jinsai (1627-1705). Other sources were the commentary attributed to the T’ang scholar Han Yü (768-824) and that by Yang Shen (1488-1549) of the Ming dynasty. Sorai engages critically with this long commentarial tradition with great panache, confidently selecting between rival glosses and interpretations. Usually, for philological and his own polemical reasons, he preferred the “ancient commentaries” on the grounds that they still preserved the semantic usages of Confucius’ time. Sometimes, however, when his own exegetical purposes suited him, he found in favor of Chu Hsi.⁷⁰ He offered syntactical as well as lexical revisions and cited epigraphical and phonological evidence. He was particularly alert to Confucius’ use of popular sayings. He confidently identified both lacunae and interpolations. He explained in his preface that the *Analects* was not a text (*wen*) from the hand of Confucius himself. It did not record Confucius’ actual words (*tz’u*) but his “speech” or “discourse” (*yen*). It had been written down by disciples simply as an aide memoire. These disciples had had different levels of ability (3/7-8/370). Sorai generalized that those passages which recorded question and answer among disciples all represented the respondent as correct: “this is merely the intention of the recorder” (XIX,3/4/330/678). His lively sense of the historical and social context of from which the *Analects* originated even enabled Sorai to restore humor and irony to the text.⁷¹ Thus Sorai explored the dynamics of the compilation of the *Analects* and brought it to life. His thorough historicization of the text encompassed not only its language but also changes in social and economic life that affected understanding.

Sorai’s bracing critical spirit extended to broader exegesis. Informing his reading was a polemical desire to purge the *Analects* of distortions that he believed had been imposed by an erroneous exegetical tradition, chiefly represented by the Sung Confucians and, nearer at hand, by Itō Jinsai. These men were guilty of philological and historical ignorance. Many Neo-Confucian doctrines reflected the Zen Buddhism that had been ascendant in the Sung (IV,15/3/178/511). But Neo-Confucian interpreters of the text had also labored under the influence of Mencius and of the heterodoxies of Taoism and Buddhism. Philologically, they read the text on the basis of the Chinese grammar of times since the T’ang dynasty scholars, Han Yü and Liu Tsung-yüan (773-819) (VIII,6/3/336/658). As a result of these failings, they deflected the text from its historical meaning in a number of directions. Their most blatant inadequacy lay in a fundamental misreading of the objective, institutional, and political character of the Confucian Way. Unhistorically, they regarded the *Analects* as concerned with personal self-cultivation (I,9/3/39/395). They also imposed doctrines such as the Mencian theory that human nature was good, that Confucianism was concerned with enlightenment,

and that men could learn to become Sages (I,1/3/15-6/375-6), though these were remote from Confucius' own historical concerns. As a result they made the text metaphysical, concerned with a hypostatized "substance of the Way" (*tao-t'i*) (IX,10/4/21/383).⁷² They imposed the doctrine of "substance and function" (*t'i yung*) and pursued the achievement of a Taoistic "Sagely within and kingly without" (*nei-sheng wai-wang*) state of mind (I,2/3/24/382).⁷³

The person of Confucius himself, Sorai insisted, must be viewed historically. This applied at the level of close commentary on the text. Thus commenting on the saying that "The Master fished but did not use a net; he shot, but not at birds perching," Sorai argued that the reading of later scholars that this saying reflected Confucius' "humanity" had been overly influenced by Mencian interpretations of benevolence and the teaching that "the superior man. . . keeps away from his slaughter-house and cook-room."⁷⁴ But Confucius' conduct here was a question of ritual practice rather than of moral attitude. Anciently, the common people had used nets and had shot perching fowl; the elites of emperor and feudal princes, by contrast, had personally hunted to make offerings for sacrifice and for guests. They had done this as a gesture of respect and without primary interest in taking the quarry itself. However, since Confucius' time there had taken place a historical shift to a market economy. Respect towards sacrifice and to guests was now demonstrated by paying a high price for offerings in the market place, rather than by hunting in person. Imprisoned in their own history, later commentators had lost sight of the historical meaning of the passage (VII,26/3/307-8/632).

But Sorai's historicization operated also at a grander level. He placed Confucius himself in a wider historical context. Broadly, Sorai assumed, history was characterized by cycles of dynastic decline and renovation; but it had experienced three broader phases. The early history of mankind had seen the activity of Sages such as Fu Hsi, Shen Nung, and the Yellow Emperor (VIII,19/3/354/675). These men did not invent political institutions.⁷⁵ They had taught the basic technology of human life, "profit and convenience and the securing abundant means of sustenance" (*li-yung hou-sheng*).⁷⁶ The second stage had been the creation of administrative institutions to "pacify the people" (IV,15/3/179/512), through the invention of political control in the form of "rites and music." This was the achievement of the seven historical Sages—Yao, Shun, Yü, Tang, Wen, Wu and the duke of Chou (XIV,40/4/209/564)—whose activities and institutions were recorded in the Six Classics. Heaven had endowed them with transcendent "hearing, seeing, comprehension, and knowing" beyond what could be learnt. Historically, they had all been "founding rulers of states" (VI,28/3/270/596). It was their superordinate ability in creating institutions to "order the realm" that defined them as Sages in the full sense. In so doing, they had been constrained by, or "respected," Heaven (*T'ien*) and had "received the Decree of Heaven (*T'ien-ming*)" (I,1/3/13/375). But, Sorai constantly emphasized, the Way that they created was wholly objective, political, and institutional, devoted to "pacifying the people." It had nothing to do with personal moral and spiritual regeneration as an end in itself. At the same time, in its particularities, it remained relative, subject to historical change and adaptation. The achievement of the Sages had been cumulative. "The way of the ancient Sages could not be established by a single Sage" (VII,1/3/277/601). Indeed, Sorai emphasized that there were no ritual institutions "unchanging for ten thousand ages" (XV,10/4/231-2/584); each of the Sages had created a system in response to historical conditions.

King Wu, founder of the Chou dynasty, had been the last of the full Sage founders of a regime. During the Spring and Autumn period, the ancient rituals still survived. But by the Ch'in and Han, in the third stage of human history, all "legal regulations" with respect to "dress and utensils" had become lost (VI,23/3/260/587). Since the time of Shang Yang (d. 338 B.C.E.), the state had been dominated by Legalists; since the Sung Neo-Confucianists, by "the School of Reason" (VI,3/3/240/568). Or, as Sorai saw it, since the T'ang and Sung dynasties, the Way had become misrecognized and conflated with personal virtue rather than with objective institutions (VII,1/3/278/601).

Against this long perspective, Confucius had been born at the end of the middle phase, during a time of decline "at the end of Chou" (3/3/367). At this time, the monarchical, autocratic power on which Sagely government rested had deteriorated. "The Way of Chou had declined, and rites, music, and military chastisement did not proceed from the Son of Heaven, but lay with feudal lords" (VIII,4/3/332/654).⁷⁷ Sorai characterized this period as "a time of change in the Decree" (XV,10/4/231/584), and a "time for creating [new rites and music]" (XI,1/4/100/451). This period could, if Heaven had permitted it, have witnessed the activities of a Sage in instituting new rites and music. Confucius, Sorai believed, was qualified by ability, learning, and understanding of his Sagely predecessors to perform this task. Sorai took Confucius' claim of himself that "My studies lie low and my penetration rises high" to refer to "learning the poetry, documents, rites, and music of the Former Kings and reaching to the minds of the Former Kings" (XIV,37/4/207-8/562). Moreover, referring to Confucius' difficulty in "attesting" the rituals of the Hsia and Yin (Shang), Sorai declared: "Probably Confucius perceived and knew the mind with which the Sages created rites and music, and had masterly knowledge of human feelings and historical change. Therefore, although the rituals of Hsia and Yin did not survive, by grasping merely one or two he inferred the rest as though looking at them in the palm of his hand" (III,9/3/114/459).⁷⁸

But Confucius had not been favored with the role of full creator Sage. "Heaven, in commissioning Confucius, did so through transmitting the Way of the Former Kings to later generations and did not let him put the Way into practice in his own age. This was because Heaven knew Confucius" (XIV,37/4/207/562). Confucius thus "did not obtain the rank that he deserved, did not practice his Way in the realm, and ended his life as a common man" (3/9/371). In this sense Confucius had not been a full creator Sage, but "through his virtue and project (*ye*), he is to be classified with creator Sages" (VI,28/3/270-1/596). Indeed, Confucius had actually prepared himself for the task of creation. He had indicated broadly the form which, in those historical circumstances, his own ritual institutions would have taken; he would have "mostly followed Chou" (III,14/3/126/469). Moreover, he had, as Sorai saw it, at the very end of his life, tried actively to intervene to create the opportunity of realizing his own Sagely ideals. He had advised the ineffectual Duke Ai of Lu to attack the powerful neighboring state of Ch'i, following the assassination of Duke Chien, and so to achieve hegemony over the whole of China and create a situation in which a Sage might arise (XIV,22/4/196-8/550-1).⁷⁹

Frustrated, during the final phase of his life, Confucius had devoted his efforts to teaching and to documenting the Way of the Former Kings. His main achievement had been the compilation of the Six Classics. He had gathered together for the first time the material for,

rather than, as later Confucians believed, merely edited, the canon. “[B]efore Confucius there had been no Six Classics. . . . Confucius wandered round the four directions and his quest [for material] became detailed. Thereafter his disciples transmitted the books. . . . Therefore, though Yao, Shun, Yü, Tang, Wen, and Wu might have existed, had there been no Confucius, their Way would have been destroyed” (IX,14/4/29-30/390). The compilation of the canon, rather than any exemplary personal or moral achievement, constituted Confucius’ contribution to history and the Way. The *Analects*, as the record of Confucius’ discourse, was thus supplementary and secondary to Six Classics, the main repository of the Way. It shed light on the task of students who, like Confucius himself, had been denied the opportunity to implement the Way directly. The Way, properly understood, remained an unremittingly political project, and, for Sorai, the *Analects* was a book exclusively focused on political management and institutions. Historically, he believed, “most of Confucius’ utterances were made for rulers” (IX,17/4/35/394); equally, “in general, ritual is preponderantly [the subject] spoken of in the *Analects*” (XIV,24/4/200/553).

For Sorai, Confucius was thus a liminal figure. He had access to, but could not himself “create,” the Way of the Former Kings. Sorai’s historicization of Confucius cut his status down to that of a fallible, frustrated human being, albeit a more real and in some ways more compelling figure than the Confucius of Confucian or Neo-Confucian hagiography. Confucius himself was no longer a personal or moral paragon. Sorai criticized the attitude that “does not want to learn what Confucius learnt [namely, the Way], but wants to learn Confucius” (3/8/370). Sorai had stripped him of any claim to be a pre-eminent teacher of self-cultivation, let alone of metaphysics. The central figure, inspirer, and legitimator of the cultural tradition had been shorn of his metaphysical and mystical aura. The “uncrowned king” (*su-wang*) of later Confucian tradition, celebrated by Mencius as the greatest man who had ever lived,⁸⁰ was effectively dethroned.⁸¹ In a similar direction, the *Analects*, extolled by Itō Jinsai as “the highest and ultimate book of the universe,”⁸² was reduced essentially to the status of a work of secondary importance, ancillary to the more valuable and concrete Six Classics.

The *Analects*, thus historicized like its central figure, was also a liminal text. Why then did Sorai choose to make it the subject of his life’s work? One reason must surely have been the sinological challenge of commenting on this most read of Confucian classics; the text of this work provided spectacular scope for the exercise and display of disciplined philological learning that was so dear to Sorai. But there is another reason that provides direct support for the argument of this essay. For the *Analects*, in Sorai’s revisionist interpretation, provided neither an objective account of the institutions of the Way, nor did it engage in discussion of self-cultivation. Rather, it addressed precisely the middle ground between subject and object brought to the fore by Sorai’s “crisis of history.” Properly understood, it revealed the true values informing the discourse of a man who, though he himself understood the minds or values of the Former Kings, had yet been denied the opportunity to objectify them in practice. And those values were, it will be shown, rational, coherent, and common to all good political action; they linked past and present. They were the values of “profit” and of utilitarianism.

Profit

In the ancient Chinese tradition, it was suggested above, a utilitarian mode of thought was symbolized by the concept of “profit.” Sorai sought to show that, far from an illegitimate concept, “profit” had been built into Confucianism from the beginning. He found Confu-

cius' most direct endorsement of the utilitarian position in the verse: "The subjects of which the Master seldom spoke were — profit, the Decree and benevolence."

Sorai rejected both the ancient and Neo-Confucian interpretations of this passage. The verse, he argued, should rather be read: "When Confucius spoke of profit, he invariably put the Decree and benevolence with it. He did not speak very much of profit alone." This was because "profit" was contingent on both the Decree (namely, the inscrutable power of Heaven) and a benevolent administration. Confucius had wished to guard against a superficial pursuit of "small" (that is, selfish or sectional) profit alone, which could be harmful.⁸³ It was not that he disapproved of profit itself. In fact, there was nothing more profitable to the realm than "the way of pacifying the people." Material welfare, "profit and convenience and the securing abundant means of sustenance" (*li-yung hou-sheng*), had constituted two of the "three businesses" of the Sage emperor Shun.⁸⁴ Profit, in fact, was built into the Way of the Sages: "The Sages' wisdom was great and their thought profound; they were well aware of wherein lay the "true profit (*chen-li*). So they established the Way for later ages and caused it to be to practised accordingly." (IX,1/4/4/368) The *Changes* spoke of "[the Way being] able with its admirable profit to profit all the realm. How it profits is not told, but how great it is."⁸⁵ The *Great Learning* quoted the saying: "In a state, profit is not considered profit; propriety (*i*) is considered profit."⁸⁶

Mencius, in his famous royal audience with King Hui of Liang, had overdrawn the distinction between "propriety" and "profit" for factional purposes, untrue to Confucius' teachings. He had wished to refute the prevalent utilitarian (*kung-li*) schools of his day.⁸⁷ Even he, however, had spoken of the superior man enjoying "tranquillity, wealth, honour and glory."⁸⁸ "If these are not profit, what are they?" "If the Way does not profit the people, how is it worth calling the Way?" "It was only the morally uninformed, partial understanding of profit that Confucius was reluctant to speak of. Thus it is not the case that the Sages hated profit." Later Confucians had been misled by the moralizing of the concept of rightness and the doctrines of "Heavenly principle and human desire." Their rejection of profit had brought them close to Buddhist or Taoist style asceticism, and to "withering to death in the hills and forests" (IX,1/4/3-6/367-9).

But Sorai's identification of a utilitarian mode of thought in the *Analects* went deeper than his positive reading of Confucius' explicit discussion of the concept of "profit." Sorai systematically shifted exegetical focus away from matters of self-cultivation and the state of mind of the student of the Way that were the concern of much Neo-Confucian exegesis of this text. As already quoted, in true utilitarian spirit, he was unconcerned with the state of mind of the founders of the tradition. "To discuss the Sages in terms of their minds is not the intention of the school of Confucius" (VIII/18/3/350/672). He interpreted the cardinal Confucian virtues not as ends in themselves or as subjective virtues, but for their utility in achieving order in society. This represents a systemic shift from a deontological to a consequentialist view of morality. Benevolence, the cardinal Confucian value, was "the virtue that pacifies the people" (III,3/3/101/448). It was evaluated, indeed defined, in terms of the achievement of the "profit" in implementation to which it was properly directed. The following passage hints at an awareness, at least in negative terms, of the utilitarian's "felicific calculus."

One may state that benevolence is the virtue of pacifying the people and presiding over men.⁸⁹ . . . But the people are many! If you do this, you damage that; if you be-

stow on this party, then the other is resentful. . . . Although one may do something, assuming that it is for the profit of the people, yet there are not a few cases where it will produce harm where one is not aware of it. Therefore the enacting of benevolence by the benevolent man is always regarded as difficult. (XII,3/4/134/484)

The same goals applied to the objective, institutional aspects of the Way. Here, Sorai reclaimed as objective institutions concepts interpreted as psychological dispositions or virtues in the Mencian and Neo-Confucian tradition of Confucianism. "Ritual (*li*)," a key concept in Sorai's system, was not an end in itself, but explicitly instrumental and goal-directed. "Rituals are the instruments of the Former Kings to order the state. This means that they set these rituals up to order the state. Thus if one cannot order the state by means of 'the complaisance proper to the rules of propriety,'⁹⁰ then what use do the rituals of the Former Kings serve?" (IV,13/3/177/510). Again, the "propriety" (*i*) with which "ritual" was often paired was an objective institution rather than, as the Neo-Confucians interpreted it misreading *Mencius*, a subjective virtue. It was a kindred concept to ritual, "of the same category" (IV,16/3/183/515).⁹¹

Thus all aspects of the Way, including all virtues, were functional and teleological, directed to "pacifying the people." This objective, in turn could be subsumed under the rubric of "profit." Profit was implemented by, rather than contradictory to, "benevolence." Sorai accorded this concept a centrality in his thought quite foreign to the spirit of mainstream Confucian thinking.⁹² It was an essential goal of government, an end to which the virtues and institutions of the Way of the Former Kings were directed. "Why should even a superior man not desire profit?" he asked rhetorically (IV,16/3/184/516).⁹³

The "Good"

The quality that Sorai habitually associated with the benevolent rule that maximized profit to the realm was "good" (*shan*). His use of this word to describe profitable political actions, irrespective of the moral status of their authors, helps identify Sorai as a "political utilitarian." In effect, with his concept of "good" Sorai supplies the "crown[ing] definition" that a "Westerner [would] expect" for the structure of his utilitarian approach to government, found lacking by A. C. Graham in the utilitarianism of Mo tzu.⁹⁴

In line with his overall purpose to shift attention from the moral state of mind of individuals to the consequences of their actions, Sorai criticized the use of the word "good" with reference to moral subjects and applied it to objective institutions. He rejected the Mencian theory that human nature was "basically good" (I,1/3/16/376). The Sung Neo-Confucians had taken "good" to refer to a naturally endowed goodness of disposition, a universally endowed moral attribute of the subject, as opposed to the qualities acquired by learning. He quoted Chu Hsi's commentary to document this misunderstanding: "The good man is one whose disposition [endowed by birth] is beautiful but who has not yet studied." Nor had Jinsai been right to understand the good man in terms of personal moral conduct as "untiring in the practice of good" (XI,19/4/120/469).⁹⁵

"Good," rather, was predicated of the central instrumental values of Sorai's thinking and was characteristic of the government of Sages. It was associated with ritual and the institutions created by the Former Kings. "With regard to ritual, there is nothing as good as the Way of the Former Kings in ordering the realm" (XV,32/4/247/600). However, crucially also,

“good” in this sense lay explicitly within reach even of those who were not Sages. Commenting on Confucius’ description of the good officer that “he preserves death as the good Way” (*shan tao*), which he identified as “an old saying,” Sorai wrote: “There are things which even though not the Way of the Former Kings are good. Therefore this is called the ‘good Way’” (VIII,13/3/344/666).⁹⁶ “Good” thus linked the acts of Sages with those of men historically denied that status. It thus transcended history and could be said to bridge the absolute and the relative.

Confucius himself had spoken of the “good man” as next in status to the Sage; he lamented that he had seen neither.⁹⁷ A “good man,” according to Confucius’ own definition, “does not tread in the footsteps of others, but, moreover, he does not enter into the chamber of the Sage.”⁹⁸ “Footsteps,” Sorai explained, referred to the institutions set up by Sages.⁹⁹ But because imperial authority has declined, the good man does not follow the “rites and music” of the Sagely founder of his dynasty (XI,19/4/120/470).¹⁰⁰ Examples were Duke Huan of Ch’i and Duke Mu of Ch’in (VII,25/3/305/630). These were men traditionally classed among the “five hegemon” (*pa*). Mencius had condemned them as “transgressors against the three kings.”¹⁰¹ They had “feigned” benevolence and used force.¹⁰² Confucius had also discussed certain of these figures. But Sorai, typically, asserted that he had not criticized them from a moral point of view. Rather, Confucius’ evaluation of Duke Wen of Chin as “crafty and not upright” referred not to his morality but to his military methods; it really meant “inventive in the use of unconventional soldiery and not using well-ordered flags and formations.”¹⁰³ He quoted Chao P’eng-fei¹⁰⁴ to the effect that the derogatory classification “hegemon” had not existed in Confucius’ time; it had been created during the later age of Mencius and Hsün tzu (XIV,16/4/193/545-6). For Sorai, importantly, the *pa* bridged the gap between superordinate Sages on the one hand and rulers on the other who, though effective, were for historical reasons denied the status of Sage or access to surviving Sagely institutions.

This point is developed in Sorai’s discussion of another implicitly “good” man, Kuan Chung (d. 645 B.C.E.),¹⁰⁵ minister to Duke Huan of Ch’i. It was Kuan Chung, Sorai claimed, whom the disciple Tzu Chang had had in mind when asking Confucius about the “way of the good man.” Sorai pointed out that, “though he did not follow the traces of a Sage, . . . [Kuan Chung] gave the appearance of having effectively entered the inner recesses of the Sage’s [Way]” (XI,19/4/121/470). Strikingly, he used the same language of Kuan Chung’s administration as he used for the actions of Sages. He wrote: “Suppose Kuan Chung had not met Duke Huan, then his achievement (*kung*) of saving the age and pacifying the people—how could the realm in later ages have inherited it? This is why Kuan Chung should not be censured.” Kuan Chung was responsible, in his capacity of adviser to Duke Huan, for the first *pa*, an achievement that Sorai viewed positively (XIV,17-18/4/194-5/547). Once more, “good” was linked to effective government and made to bridge the activities of Sages and their historically less favored successors.

The Problem of Regime Change

A further conspicuously utilitarian emphasis lay in Sorai’s discussion of the difficult problem of dynastic change, or *fang-fa* (expulsion and chastisement of a miscreant ruler) and *k’ai-kuo* (foundation of a new regime), and his assertion of the transcendent status of the “princes who found regimes” (VI,28/3/270/596).¹⁰⁶ Analysis of this problem focused on the

transition from the Hsia to the Yin and from the Yin to the Chou dynasties. Chu Hsi had regarded the supplanting of the miscreant last rulers of Hsia and Yin as instances of moral "weighing" (*ch'üan*)¹⁰⁷ and, potentially, as consistent with the Way. For Tokugawa Japanese Confucians, the question had been both salient and sensitive since the beginning of the regime,¹⁰⁸ and was much debated. Clearly, the question of the legitimacy of the Tokugawa regime was implicit in these discussions. Many members of the influential Kimon school of Yamazaki Ansai (1618-1682), for instance, held that the notion of royal dynastic change did not apply in Japan.¹⁰⁹

Sorai rejected the Neo-Confucian moral view of regime change, as he did so much of Neo-Confucian moral thinking. He argued that dynastic change was a transcendent moment in history, inaccessible to the analysis or moral judgment of posterity. "Rulers who founded regimes are associated with Heaven." From Confucius and earlier, no one had discussed their actions; rather, they were the objects of honor and deference. Those who, from Warring States times, had belittled them were "transgressors against the Sages." Mencius had tried to out-argue such people, but instead had incautiously inaugurated a tradition of presumptuous discussion of the subject (IX,29/4/40-1/403). In other words, the circumstances of the founding of a regime required the suspension of conventional human moral judgment. The foundation of new regimes could only be viewed in utilitarian terms: the only consideration was the implementation of the Way that the new regime made possible.

Sorai's robust, *prima facie* amoral and realist but essentially consequentialist and utilitarian, view of regime founding is further illustrated by his discussion of Po I and Shu Ch'i, two heroes associated with opposition to the Chou conquest of Yin in ancient China. Their loyalty to the Yin was such that they had chosen to starve rather than serve in a court for which they were, by previous allegiance, morally disqualified and which they deemed illegitimate. Mencius had included Po among the Sages for his purity of mind.¹¹⁰ Confucius had extolled the generosity of the two men towards the Chou, the cause of their misfortune: "Po I and Shu Ch'i did not keep the former wickednesses of men in mind, and hence the resentments directed towards them were few." These few "resentments," according to Chu Hsi's commentary,¹¹¹ were those of others towards them for failing to recognize the moral probity of the new regime, mitigated on account of their own exemplary moral purity.

Sorai's interpretation was radically different.¹¹² He rejected Mencius' classification of Po I as a Sage as imputing him to be "like Bodhidharma," that is rigorously and misguidedly ascetic. The "resentments" of Confucius' encomium were not those of others towards the heroes. Rather, the resentments were the heroes' own toward the ascendant Chou dynasty. They were aware that the Chou conquest had originated in aggression, but had simply and realistically come to the recognition that it was irreversible. They had therefore abated their resentments against Chou. Po I's seclusion, Sorai conceded, "looked like [continued] resentment." Evidence that this was not the case was supplied by the fact that, as recorded in the *Mencius*, Po I had submitted to the Chou and "received the old age nourishment," so that his resentment was "cleanly absolved."¹¹³ What mattered to the two men, by implication, was not the possibly morally questionable pre-history of the founding of the Chou state. They were prepared to overlook that, rather, in the light of its consequences in facilitating the implementation of the Way. Once again, Sorai had provided a consequentialist and utilitarian explanation of an incident normally interpreted in terms of a deontological, inflexible loyalty (V,22/3/218-20/549-50).¹¹⁴

Elite Utilitarianism

Sorai, it will have become clear, believed that “profit,” the well-being of the community, was the proper object of the government not only of the Sages of antiquity but also of subsequent ages. How, then, did this objective relate to those who were, implicitly, its subjects and beneficiaries? Did Sorai’s vision rest, as did J. S. Mill’s, on the assumption that “an intelligent interest” “in the principle of the Greatest Happiness principle” should be “the inheritance of everyone born in a civilized country”?¹¹⁵ Was Sorai’s utilitarianism a generalizable or universal philosophy of individual life, as Mill believed utilitarianism should be? Or was it, more perhaps in the manner of Bentham, simply the guiding principle of government imposed by the legislator, a philosophy of political management?

Sorai’s unequivocal answer to this question defines his philosophy as “elite political utilitarianism.” Sorai divided humanity into three groups: Sages, men of superordinate insight, whose existence had been confined to Chinese antiquity, “superior men (*chün-tzu*),” whom he defined as “those who are [in positions of] superiority”;¹¹⁶ and the “people” which included all others. His most radical division, however, was drawn between “superior men,” who exercised political authority, and “the people,” who were the objects of governance. This was a distinction of rank (*wei*) (IV,11/3/176/509). True, Sorai conceded that “Those who are below but who have the virtue to be above are also called superior men” (IV, 16/3/183/515). Such a discrepancy between moral and political status had, however, implicitly not been characteristic of ancient times.¹¹⁷ Moreover, Sorai believed that, in ancient China, the social and occupational order had been hereditary. Social mobility, or the desire for it, was a phenomenon of decline.

In ancient times, kings enjoyed hereditary succession, as did feudal princes, the sons of ministers (*shih-ta-fu*) became ministers, and the sons of peasants, artisans and merchants became peasants, artisans and merchants. The division of honorable and base was fixed. . . . After the Ch’in and Han, men all began resentfully to crave to become the three dukes. (V,1/3/189-90/523).

Against this background, the “superior man” was concerned with “pacifying the people” (IV,11/3/176/509). His concern, whether he was the Son of Heaven, a feudal prince, minister or gentleman, was with this “Heavenly office” (*T’ien-chih*) (XVI,8/4/261/616). By contrast, the people—that is, peasants, artisans, and merchants—were identified as “the stupid of the lowest class” (*hsia yü*). “Since the stupid of the lowest class cannot change (*i*), they are regarded as the people (*min*) who do not ascend to gentlemen (*shih*)” (XVII,2/4/278/630). True, “men all have their respective virtues” (VI,17/3/253/580).¹¹⁸ But, as generically “small men,”¹¹⁹ the people had, in Sorai’s view, a only a limited moral vision; being concerned with their own “warmth and satiety” (I,14/3/49/403). Their outlook was “private” or “selfish,” in contrast to the “public” concerns of the superior men (II,13/3/74/426). What they worked for was, precisely, profit, but “profit” in a morally limited and uninformed sense. Here, Sorai was able to draw on the negative view of “profit” that prevails through much of the Confucian canon. Theirs, in fact, was the “small profit,” against which the Master himself had warned.¹²⁰ Sorai, however, in a typically utilitarian concern with results rather than the moral status of agents, suggested that this morally inferior “profit” could be used instrumentally to persuade

“small men” to act appropriately (IV,16/3/184/516). The people were thus the object of “transformation” (*hua*) through the institutional procedures imposed by “superior men,” in order that they might “practice (*hsi*) and perfect their customs” (XV,24/4/242/594-5). On canonical authority, however, this was not a matter of imparting intellectual understanding. With the pedagogy of his contemporary Japanese Confucians in mind, Sorai condemned the “lectures” of “later Confucians” as ineffective (VIII,9/3/341/662-3). “Small men” were thus the passive, usually uncomprehending, objects of the administrative manipulations of the elite.

Elitism was, of course, built into the mainstream of the Confucian tradition. It was, however, generally mitigated by a tendency to universalism. To Sorai, however, the distinction between “superior men” and “small men” was particularly fundamental. In *Benmei*, indeed, he likened it to the difference between “the firmament and the earth.”¹²¹ Significantly, he seems uneasy with the positive expression of the golden rule; he could not accept that “small men” could understand the minds of “superior men.”¹²² Sorai’s view of women, it may be added, seems dismissive even by Confucian standards. “Women serve others by means of [their physical] form; poor people do so by means of physical strength. In all cases, their aspiration does not lie towards the right” (XVII,25/4/312/660).

Sorai’s elitism was recognized with repugnance by the people of his own age. Confucians of the next generation, such as Goi Ranshū (1697-1762) and the Nakai brothers Chikuzan (1730-1804) and Riken (1732-1817) are said to have criticized him precisely for his denial of moral subjectivity to “ordinary minds.”¹²³

Beyond *Rongo chō*

Rongo chō is a commentary on a disjunctive and fragmentary text. Sorai’s utilitarianism is necessarily diffusely presented here. As he wrote this work, however, Sorai distilled his views in the more analytical and systematic form of his two treatises, *Bendō* and *Benmei*.¹²⁴ The overall structure of the Confucianism put forward in these works was, first, profoundly instrumental in a manner congruent with elite utilitarianism and a consequentialist view of morality. In a well-known passage in *Benmei*, Sorai defined the Way of the Former Kings as “entirely techniques (*shu*)”.¹²⁵ “Techniques”, in turn, “refer to particular courses of conduct which, if men follow, they attain to naturally and unaware of so doing”. They were, in effect a form of manipulation, the path that “the people may be made to follow”.¹²⁶

In *Benmei*, he also focused more sharply on the concept of “profit” that, together with “good,” was the key concept in his utilitarianism. “Profit” was a property or “virtue” of the trigrams of the *Changes*. Like other such properties, “[no] invariable and compendious rule [could] be derived from [it].”¹²⁷ It was, in other words, pragmatic and could be judged only by its consequences. He further classified “profit” into “several meanings”: “material profit” (*ts’ai-li chih li*),¹²⁸ which he defined as “gains made in the pursuit of life”; “efficient profit” (*ju-i-li chih li*),¹²⁹ or “ordering implements effectively and making them easy and convenient to use”; “opportune profit” (*chi-li chih li*), “doing something with success”;¹³⁰ and “beneficent and incremental profit” (*li-i chih li*), or “obtaining increase and bringing about the incurring of beneficence [to the realm].”¹³¹

In most canonical texts, Sorai argued, “profit” was spoken of from the point of view of the recipient or beneficiary.¹³² Implicitly, this was the “small profit” disparaged in many Con-

fucian texts. In the “Supplementary explanations” to the *Changes*, however, it was expounded from the standpoint of the “bestower,” the superior man, for whom it was identified with the most important of all moral virtues exercised by those in authority: “Profiting creatures’ means bringing profit to the myriad creatures. This is benevolence.”¹³³

Sorai’s clearest and most arresting articulation of his utilitarian beliefs is found in a key passage on “good” in *Benmei*.

“Good” is the opposite of bad. It is a broad term of reference. Its explanation appears in the *Mencius*. There, it says: “The desirable is what is meant by the good.”¹³⁴ Even though it is not the Way of the Former Kings, in general what can profit men and save the people is all referred to as “good.” This is because it is what the many men desire. The Way of the Former Kings is the perfection of good. . . . Those who, even if they are not Sages, nonetheless can effectively, by establishing laws (*fā*), setting up institutions and thereby governing the state and pacifying the people, all win the designation of “good people.”¹³⁵

Here, “good” is defined clearly in consequentialist terms; it is what profits men and, in turn, satisfies men’s desires.¹³⁶ It is explicitly linked to “profit.” Moreover, once again, “good” is a value predicated alike of the government of Sages and their historically less privileged successors. Most significantly of all, “good” here, as in *Rongo chō* is explicitly identified as transcending the objective institutions of the Former Kings. It is also explicitly linked to “profit”. This suggests that the principle of utility in some sense transcended faith in the Sages. Sorai’s definition thus accords with Mill’s famous definition of utilitarianism that “actions are right [in Sorai’s terms “good”] in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain and the privation of pleasure.”¹³⁷ When this basic feature of Sorai’s thought is set beside his indifference to the state of mind of the authors of actions and his political perspective, it can be seen that he is indeed properly described as a “political utilitarian.”

Resonances with Classical Chinese Utilitarianism

The claim that Sorai is a utilitarian thinker is by no means new. Already in the Tokugawa period, Bitō Jishū (1745-1813) had remarked of Sorai: “He is not a Confucian scholar. He is concerned with success and profit (*kōri*). His fondness for the *Sun tzu* and authorship of a Japanese commentary on it reflect the direction of his basic ambitions.”¹³⁸ That Sorai was a utilitarian thinker was claimed also in the Meiji period by the historian of Japanese Confucianism, Inoue Tetsujirō (1855-1944), who suggested an affinity with Kuan tzu and the Legalist, Shang Yang.¹³⁹ Sorai, however, is remarkable for the range of influences suggested on his thought, particularly from ancient China. Identification of any particular intellectual debt on Sorai’s part is rendered difficult by the sharing of what Schwartz called a “common discourse”¹⁴⁰ among ancient Chinese thinkers. Elements from different traditions of Chinese thought could combine and recombine without too conspicuous inconsistency. Imanaka suggests that Sorai’s use of “techniques” (*shu*), for instance, may be derived from the Legalist Han Fei tzu (d. 233 B.C.E.), on whose work he wrote a commentary. Following an observation by Kano Naoki (1868-1947), Imanaka also notes an affinity between Sorai and Yeh Shih, and,

on the basis of indirect evidence, argues that Sorai was aware of and influenced by the Sung utilitarians.¹⁴¹

The most frequently cited influence on Sorai is Hsün tzu, on whom he also wrote a commentary, and in whose thought, as already suggested, a utilitarian emphasis is often detected.¹⁴² Hsün tzu also shares with Sorai the belief that the Way is a human artifice, rather than natural. There appear to be two related questions here. The first is that of Hsün tzu's influence on Sorai; the second is whether that influence is towards utilitarianism. On the broader question, Imanaka claimed at least five features for which the formation of Sorai's thought was, whether directly or indirectly, indebted to Hsün tzu:¹⁴³ the primacy of "ritual"; the concept of the "Way of the Former Kings" as man made and distinct from nature; the concept of Heaven as external to man; a tendency to a "Legalistic" view of administration; and his theory of human nature.¹⁴⁴ Most recently, Olivier Ansart's monograph on Sorai's political thought also devotes much attention to Hsün tzu's influence on Sorai. Ansart, while drawing attention to differences between them, writes that "Ogyū Sorai bâtit un système dont l'architecture ne peut pas ne pas rappeler Xunzi [Hsün tzu]."¹⁴⁵ For Ansart, "Sorai a développé de manière très sophistiquée la philosophie ritualiste amorcé par Xunzi."¹⁴⁶ Much of this is persuasive, and even Maruyama conceded that "there is some truth" to the case that Sorai drew on Hsün tzu.¹⁴⁷

But even if it is conceded that Sorai was indebted to Hsün tzu for the primacy of man-made ritual in his thought,¹⁴⁸ this does not necessarily imply that Sorai's utilitarianism is derived from the same source. Schwartz's comments on the limits of Hsün tzu's utilitarianism have already been quoted; Hsün tzu was, in fact, interested in states of mind in a way foreign to utilitarianism. Maruyama himself correctly pointed out that Hsün tzu, unlike Sorai, believed that human nature could be changed by study¹⁴⁹ and that Sorai in fact condemned Hsün tzu's best-known teaching that human nature is evil, just as he did Mencius' teaching that it was good.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, Maruyama found Hsün tzu lacking in precisely the "modern consciousness germinating in Sorai's system"; his thought remained "continuous" between "public" and "private" and "ethics" and "politics."¹⁵¹ It may further be noted that Hsün tzu, unlike Sorai, identified a regenerated state of mind in Sagehood;¹⁵² was wary of "profit,"¹⁵³ identifying its pursuit as a hallmark of the evil nature of man;¹⁵⁴ and was basically skeptical about spirits and the supernatural,¹⁵⁵ where Sorai condemned atheism as presumptuous (VI,20/3/256-7/583-4). Most strikingly, Hsün tzu, quite unlike Sorai,¹⁵⁶ believed that the ruler should "not be secretive," but "open."¹⁵⁷ Openness postulates a society based on a common morality accepted by individuals implicitly conceded some degree of moral independence. Sorai, by contrast, maintained that moral understanding was confined to the elite and inaccessible to the general populace, who should be controlled through manipulations. Thus it seems unlikely that Sorai's political utilitarianism derives its basic assumptions from Hsün tzu.

Recent work has also pursued Bitō Jishū's early suggestion of influence from military thought, a ruthlessly "realist" and instrumental tradition. The work of Maeda Tsutomu (b. 1956) has documented structural homologies between Sorai's thought and "military philosophy." Maeda pointed to the similarity between Sorai's analysis, in his commentary on the *Sun tzu*, of the unknowability of the outcome of battle and his more general belief that Heaven was unknowable. Sorai's belief in politics as a means of manipulation that might be based

on falsehood, Maeda also argued, resonated with the military need for secrecy and deception that is a feature of Sun tzu's (fourth century B.C.E.) military thinking.¹⁵⁸ It has also recently been suggested that Sorai's concern with the "unity" of society, to be achieved by "techniques" (*shu*), including, if necessary, "killing by warfare and executions" resonated with Sun tzu's for that of the army;¹⁵⁹ and his vision of a society in which "all men are officers" might be influenced "by the sense of the functional, rational and interdependent organization of an army that is a theme of such works of military philosophy as the *Sun tzu*."¹⁶⁰

But Bitō Jishū's use of the expression *kōri* suggests another resonance with the utilitarian tradition within Chinese philosophy.¹⁶¹ The possibility of influence from this quarter has received less attention, particularly with regard to the ancient Chinese utilitarian, Mo tzu. The case for direct influence, here, as elsewhere, is in fact difficult to substantiate, partly again because of the common ground between the various ancient traditions. But Sorai was certainly familiar with the *Mo tzu*. In his *Keishishi yōran*, he described it as "essential reading," not least for its linguistic value.¹⁶² The *Rongo chō* adduces philological evidence from this text (II,8/3/67/419). A systematic, statistical investigation of the linguistic or philological influence on Sorai of Chinese utilitarian texts, both ancient and from the Sung utilitarians, has been beyond the scope of this essay. Some suggestions of linguistic influence, however, are quickly apparent. Ogawa Tamaki (1910-1993) notes that the expression *sheng-wang*, "Sage-king," is used in a similar sense by Mo tzu and Sorai, though it is rarer and used differently in Confucian texts such as the *Analects* and *Mencius*.¹⁶³ Sorai identifies "punishments and administration" (*hsing-cheng*), an expression used by Mo tzu, with the Way, though they had been condemned as a method of government by Confucius.¹⁶⁴ Such locutions as Mo tzu's "mutual (*hsiang*) love and mutual benefit" resonate with Sorai's "mutual cherishing and mutual love, mutual birth and mutual completion, mutual help and mutual nourishment, mutual correction and mutual succor";¹⁶⁵ both men refer to "the will of Heaven" (*T'ien-i*);¹⁶⁶ both employ the locution "people of Heaven" (*T'ien-min*).¹⁶⁷ Most strikingly, both men use the locution "modeling on Heaven" (*fa-T'ien*) for Sagely administration.¹⁶⁸

Of course, Sorai cannot be claimed to be a Mohist in any open or declared sense. The attack of Mo tzu on the deleterious effects of Confucian "rites and music" made it difficult for Sorai explicitly to go much beyond recommending the text for its "dignified use of the ancient language."¹⁶⁹ Formally, Mo tzu remains for Sorai, as for other Confucians, among the representatives of heterodoxy (I,11/3/42/398). None the less, even a preliminary survey will suggest striking structural and doctrinal commonalities. Even Mo tzu's well-known condemnation of Confucian ritual may matter less than first sight suggests; it is worth remarking that those aspects of Confucian ritual that Mo tzu most vehemently attacks, such as family and funeral rites, are those about which Sorai seems generally least insistent.¹⁷⁰ It is as though he tacitly acknowledges the force of Mo tzu's argument that they were dysfunctional. Both men, it is worth noting, were actively interested in military science, the most instrumental and goal-oriented of traditions available to them. But there are more positive similarities. Both stress that the Way is a large matter, not concerned with minutiae.¹⁷¹ They share an explicit concern less with individuals than with the political order as a means to achieve a good society. Within that large framework, Mo tzu speaks of three tests of "doctrine," summarized by A. C. Graham as "ancient authority, common observation, and practical consequences."¹⁷²

Just so, Sorai, too, constantly stressed the authority of the "Former Kings," the pervasive

theme of his *Rongo chō* and other works of his later period. This authority derives, for both Mo tzu and Sorai, not from the Former Kings' exemplary character as human beings but from "their superior intelligence."¹⁷³ Like Mo tzu, Sorai particularly stressed the *Odes* and *Documents* as sources documenting this authority.¹⁷⁴ Both men stress the objectivity of the institutions created by the Former Kings and employ the analogy of carpentry for controlling the social order. Sorai's statement that "It is better to regard the way of the Former Kings as a compass and marking string. How can even a good carpenter, if he does not have compass and string, ascertain the straight and the crooked?" (II,19/3/83/433)¹⁷⁵ resonates with Mo tzu's use of the same analogy.¹⁷⁶ Medical analogies were used by both men,¹⁷⁷ and with particular fierceness by Sorai in his *Seidan*.¹⁷⁸ Both men denied the "any notion of an immanent good in individuals or any latent good order of society."¹⁷⁹ Here again, Mo tzu demonstrates one of the discontinuities identified by Maruyama as "modern" in Sorai.

In broader discussions of government, Mo tzu and Sorai identify as the end of good administration a populace respectively "peaceful and without worry" (*pien-ning wu-yü*)¹⁸⁰ or "content" (*an-wen*).¹⁸¹ Both believe in a social hierarchy and, strongly, or so they professed, in the need to promote men of ability.¹⁸² Both men believe that the interventions of an authoritarian government are the way to control and improve society. Mo tzu wrote: "When . . . orders are not decisive (*luan*), people will not stand in awe before them."¹⁸³ Likewise, Sorai insisted that "orders and regulations should not have to be explained" because that diluted their authority.¹⁸⁴ Both men take a positive view of "hegemons."¹⁸⁵ Neither Mo tzu nor Sorai is interested in the moral or spiritual state of mind of the ruler. Schwartz writes: "Mo-tzu's righteous man is totally oriented towards 'doing good' and not preoccupied with 'being good.' [His] attention is totally and undeviatingly fixed on the world 'out there.'"¹⁸⁶ Here yet again, Mo tzu demonstrates one of the "modern" discontinuities that Maruyama identifies with Sorai. Mo tzu's "universal love" bears a strong resemblance to Sorai's "benevolence." Indeed, Sorai explicitly professed admiration for this doctrine. "When I formerly obtained and read the book of Mo tzu, I found that the doctrine of universal love that he puts forward was very different from [the version] that the Sung Confucians rejected. Thereupon for a long while I sighed with admiration."¹⁸⁷ Similarly, both proclaim the need for government both to know and reflect the "feelings" or "conditions" of those below (*hsia chih ch'ing*).¹⁸⁸ Both men invest the "people" with a certain sanctity as "the people of Heaven."¹⁸⁹ At the same time, they shared a view of the common people as morally benighted.¹⁹⁰ Both denied the capacity of the common people subjectively to determine right action.¹⁹¹ Only authoritarian intervention by an elite could prevent society from disintegrating.

But it is above all in the third of Mo tzu's "tests," that of utility, that the resemblances are most striking. The thought of both men is directed to the goal of "profit." Both Mo tzu and Sorai use the term "good" to evaluate actions that are "profitable" or "useful." Mo tzu identified the "good" with what profits Heaven, the spirits, and the people.¹⁹² He asked: "How can there be anything that is good (*shan*) but not usable (*k'o yung*)?"¹⁹³ Both relate benevolence to "profit for the realm."¹⁹⁴ Both, however, insist that "profit" is constrained in practice by "propriety."¹⁹⁵ Moreover, just as Mo tzu's utilitarian ethic stands in a relationship of potential tension with his faith in the normative status of the Sages' actions, the same tension can be seen in Sorai's thought. As Sorai put it, "Even though it is not the Way of the Former Kings, in general what can at all profit men and save the people is all referred to as 'good.'"¹⁹⁶ Both

thinkers contrast with Hsün tzu in their strong emphasis on a religious belief that might seem to contradict their rational espousal of a utilitarian ethos. For both, the natural world, conceived to be ordered by “Heaven,” is the *mise-en-scène* for human action; in framing their “institutions,” rites and music, the Sages based them on the world as Heaven had ordained it to be. Both men, as already noted, use the locution “imitating Heaven” for Sagely administration.¹⁹⁷ In Sorai’s thought, “respect for Heaven” (*ching T’ien*; I,1/3/19/378) and “respect for the spirits” (VI,20/3/256/583) represent both a basic recognition of the reality principle which constrains all human activity and an acknowledgment of the apparent irrationality of events in the world. For Mo tzu, Heaven and the spirits are to be “revered (*tsun*) and served.”¹⁹⁸ This respect for Heaven and the supernatural rests uneasily with the belief, expressed by both thinkers, that men controlled their own destinies.¹⁹⁹ Something of the contradiction may recede, however, when it is recalled that both men seem to believe that aspects of religion represent what Sorai termed “techniques,” for achieving the end of pacifying the people. Mo tzu advocated belief in “ghosts and spirits” out of what Schwartz calls “sociopolitical need.”²⁰⁰ Sorai, similarly, believed that worship of the spirits was a man-made “technique of teaching,” created by the “Former Kings” to establish and maintain order.²⁰¹

Many, if not most, of these elements common to Mo tzu and Sorai can, it need hardly be said, be found discretely in other pre-Ch’in thinkers, Confucius and Mencius included. They are part of the “common discourse” of ancient Chinese philosophy. Nor is there any reason at this stage of research to deny significant influence on Sorai from Hsün tzu, from the Chinese Legalists, from military thought, or, indeed, from the Sung utilitarians. Like his use of *Lun-yü* commentaries, Sorai’s more general thought is clearly eclectic.²⁰² But the shared systematic structural coherence between the thought of Mo tzu and Sorai, the architecture of their systems, is arresting. The boldest interpretation would see this as the imprint of Mo tzu on Sorai. Such influence is entirely possible, since Sorai certainly knew that text and admired aspects of it. That he did not openly acknowledge such influence would not be surprising, given the formal status of Mo tzu as heterodox. A more cautious interpretation would see this as a parallel response. This is, again, not unlikely. For utilitarianism has a simple, coherent and rigorous rational structure. It has obvious attractions as a political doctrine to regimes under stress, seeking authoritarian solutions, or new modes of legitimation for political action. No doubt also it holds attractions to thinkers reacting against established or traditional modes of thought or religious systems.

Summing Up: Sorai’s Utilitarianism—Elitist and Authoritarian

Sorai’s Confucianism is marked by a vivid sense of history. His *Analects* commentary was a bold and original attempt to use historical and philological knowledge to retrieve Confucius from what he perceived as the overlays of a distorting exegetical tradition. *Rongo chō* is a justly acclaimed monument to one man’s erudition and historical imagination.²⁰³ Like all Confucians, however, Sorai was also concerned with his own present. He implicitly required of Confucius that he be not only historically understood but also relevant to his own times. Yet his revisionist reduction of the Way to historical political institutions resulted in his own crisis of historicism. It exposed an apparent conflict between, on the one hand, a Way claimed to be transcendent and unchanging and, on the other, its historically conditioned expression.

It has been argued here that, in addition to his declaration of faith in the Sages and in Heaven and his belief in philologically disciplined study, Sorai resolved this impasse through appeal to a set of values that related the absolute with the historical through the utilitarian concepts of "profit" and "good." History and utility were thus intimately linked structural elements in Sorai's thought. His utilitarianism filled in the space left by his historicization of the Confucian canon and of the person of Confucius himself. Though both historicism and utilitarianism had ancient roots in East Asia, Sorai's synthesis and exposition were new to Tokugawa Japan. He presented them with great erudition, intellectual authority and panache. He debunked Sung metaphysics and practice with energy and conviction. Sorai's Confucius, the student and perpetuator of an ancient tradition of political wisdom, is in many ways more compelling than the morally perfect human being and teacher of metaphysics of the Neo-Confucian commentarial tradition.

Thus Sorai radically politicized the Confucian tradition. In place of the pursuit of individual perfection, he argued that disciplined and objective historical knowledge, the goal of learning, equipped qualified individuals with the wisdom necessary to intervene politically in their own worlds. Such individuals based their actions generally on the utilitarian measures of the Former Kings as recorded in the Six Classics. Yet even faith in the former Kings was contingent upon utility. On the basis of their own knowledge of subsequent historical periods, students of the Way might supplement or even override the objective prescriptions of the Sages. As historical human agents, they thus possessed freedom from deontological moral constraints. Here, no doubt, is the modern "absolute agency" imputed by Najita to Maruyama's understanding of Sorai.²⁰⁴ And, as Maruyama proclaimed, Sorai thus dismantled the "medieval" structure of Sung metaphysics and cleared the way for new, independent disciplines. In retrospect, his thought indeed represents a way-station in the modernization of the Japanese intellectual world.

Yet at the same time, amid the celebration of Sorai's achievement, it is important not to lose sight of the less attractive features of his thought that relate to its utilitarian character. His interpretation of the *Analects*, despite its strengths, has been recognized to contain excesses.²⁰⁵ His attempt to eliminate interiority and self-cultivation surely does violence to Confucian teaching, particularly in its Mencian version.²⁰⁶ His historicization of Confucius and the Confucian canon, despite signal and persuasive successes, ultimately resulted in a narrowing of access to the tradition and a restriction of its universalism. For Sorai, indeed, the study of history simply underlined the need for elite authoritarian interventions. But the requisite knowledge was restricted to a minority of "superior men." His sense of political realism suggested that, where the vast majority of men was concerned, moral autonomy was an impractical and irritating distraction. Much of Sorai's polemical energy was directed precisely against the tradition within Confucianism that legitimated universal individual moral subjectivity. That tradition runs from Mencius through the Sung Neo-Confucians to Wang Yang-ming, precisely the thinkers criticized in Sorai's works.

Sorai's particular brand of political utilitarianism thus rested on a thoroughgoing elitism, an aspect of his thought, as noted, condemned by later thinkers of his period. Indeed, Sorai adhered with special rigor to the Confucian distinction between "superior men" and "small men." The "superior men" were the only ones charged with governance and with formulating and adjusting the institutional dispositions that constituted the Way. "Small men,"

by contrast, were the passive, usually unknowing, objects of the administrative manipulations of the elite. Furthermore, at least as far as his own society was concerned, society was characterized by a hereditary order of occupational status. Sorai's elitism was reinforced by the view that neither individual human natures nor the distribution of ability in society changed. "With regard to the fact that, among the people of the realm, the stupid and incompetent are many and the worthy and wise few, there is no difference between past and present."²⁰⁷

Utilitarianism, moreover, like the military thought to which it is in some respects kin, lends itself to an instrumental view of human life. Already, A. C. Graham noted a chilling quality in Mohist moral thinking:

[T]here is a tone of intellectual ruthlessness about the Mohists (with their utterly dispassionate use of the word "love") which warns one against saying too easily that they conceive men as Kantian "ends in themselves." Moral worth is independent of external conditions, but nothing in the system forbids us to sacrifice an individual for reasons external to himself. . . . [I]f a death and a life are equally beneficial there is nothing to choose between them.²⁰⁸

Mutatis mutandis, this seems uncomfortably true also of Ogyū Sorai and his "benevolence." There is a tendency for "pacifying the people" to feature more prominently than "what the many men desire." Sorai's knowledge of military thought and perhaps the Japanese military culture that he identified with²⁰⁹ seemed to teach that human life was not sacrosanct.²¹⁰ Najita asserts that "[t]he practical proposals that Sorai made for his society grew directly out of the . . . structure of his thought."²¹¹ But Sorai's practical proposals frequently jar with the "benevolence" that Najita identifies in Sorai's theoretical writings. Indeed, there is a ruthlessness in the program of reform offered in Sorai's *Seidan* that reflects the spirit of his political utilitarianism. This is a repressive document. Sorai lamented the decline of summary executions by samurai of absconding servants, and was in favor of the sale of hereditary retainers. Less dramatically, he wished to render the population immobile through institutional restrictions. In *Taiheisaku*, he made it clear that the objective of "pacifying the people" had little to do with Mencian or Neo-Confucian notions of compassion, which he described as the attitude of "women and nuns." It had more to do with the utilitarian's maximization of contentment or "pacification."

Again there are those who regard taking "no pleasure in killing men" as benevolence.²¹² Truly to have a predilection for killing is not what the benevolent man does. Even so, rigidly not to kill men is not benevolence. . . . Pacifying the people is not like what is commonly called compassion. It is making the people content. That means making it so that the people can spend their whole lives without the calamities of famine, cold, and brigandage, with trust among neighborhoods, feeling it good to live in their state and their world, and taking pleasure in the occupation of their houses.²¹³

Maintaining this "contentment" might require such "techniques" as "killing by warfare and executions."²¹⁴ Warfare was a discrete and legitimate "way." In his *Rongo chō*, Sorai seemed to reject the tendency to pacifism that had been an element of Confucianism since Mencius. He denied that Confucius himself was, as later Confucians had depicted him, un-

studied in military matters (XV,1/595-6/292-3). In *Benmei*, he was unapologetic about the use of force in government by those not Sages: "To use force when one's virtue is insufficient is unavoidable", he wrote of the hegemon (*pa*), "so why should it be accounted the offense of the person concerned?"²¹⁵ Hostilities, once opened, required the suspension of benevolence. "If one truly dislikes unbenevolence, one should devise a way to take hold of the enemy without battle. But once one has already joined battle, one should not shun actions on the grounds that they are unbenevolent."²¹⁶ In fact, Sorai, even in the context of the *Analects*, seems to have been drawn to the "truly beautiful virtue" of "firmness" or "hardness" (*kang*) (XVII,12/4/294/644), a "virtue" that he elsewhere identified as essential in soldiers.²¹⁷

Sorai's ruthlessness may indeed owe to the ethos of samurai culture and to his own absorbing interest in military matters. But a degree of coercion, and even of violence, may be also seen as, to a greater or lesser degree, built into the form of elite managerial utilitarianism that Sorai espoused. Bernard Williams, a modern critic of utilitarianism argues:

If we insist on being told from what actual social spot the utilitarian judgments are being made, and if we form some definite picture of utilitarian decision being located in government, while the populace to a significant extent is non-utilitarian in outlook,²¹⁸ then it must surely be that government in that society is very importantly manipulative. . . . This situation is inherently manipulative, and would very probably demand institutions of coercion or severe political restriction to sustain itself.²¹⁹

This paragraph assumes, from a modern liberal point of view, that democracy is the normative mode of government, that government is a response to popular demands. But its argument nonetheless holds true for non-democratic polities. In Sorai's ideal order, the rulers, elite bearers of the Way, are charged precisely to manipulate or coerce the populace by means of *shu* (techniques) of which the governed have no conscious understanding, let alone have consented to. That is why Sorai's philosophy is premised on the radical separation of the *chün-tzu* from the *hsiao-jen*. Consider, for instance Sorai's view of belief in the spirits. For him this is justified, not because it is true, but for its utility. It is a "teaching" set up by the "former kings" for utilitarian ends. In a remarkably similar direction, Williams points out that an intellectual elite of utilitarians in, for instance, a society where magic is accepted, "can view society and indeed have an effect on it, but they do not belong to it, and for the best outcome they let the local practices continue. It is not surprising that one should be reminded of colonial administrators, running a system of indirect rule."²²⁰

All that is to say that, unsurprisingly, Sorai's thinking is authoritarian. After all, his thought has long been recognized as a reaction to a perceived crisis of warrior authority in his own society. In contemporary Edo, he saw only rampant urbanization, incompetent administration, and the powerlessness of the warrior elite with which he identified. Sung Neo-Confucianism, which underwrote the notion of individual moral cultivation and responsibility, was patently inadequate to cope with this situation; it merely added to the cacophony. In this sense, that he opposed the enfranchisement as moral subjects of those beyond the political elite, Sorai is appropriately termed "reactionary". Is Sorai's elitist, authoritarian, and utilitarian reformulation of Confucianism more illiberal than that of Confucius himself, Mencius,

the Sung Neo-Confucian revivalists, or Wang Yang-ming? After all, Confucius himself, in an utterance that Sorai used to justify his own elitism, said that: “The people may be made to follow a path of action, but they may not be made to understand it”.²²¹ But the answer must be yes, because the latter tradition at least imputed potential moral subjectivity to all men. Moreover, it can be argued to have tended to recognize men as ends in themselves, rather simply as than as subordinate, functional elements in a structure.²²² As Watanabe Hiroshi (b. 1946) has recently written of Sorai’s thought:

Through the policies of a non-transparent ruler who has concealed his intentions based on his own clear understanding of the people’s modes of behavior, the people, unbeknownst to themselves, acquire a minimal morality and pass happy lives. That is a fiendishly clever concept of co-existence that is anti-freedom, anti-equality, and thus thoroughly anti-democratic.²²³

Like certain thinkers in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe confronted with a similar burgeoning of economic and urban life, Sorai felt that “moralizing philosophy could no longer be trusted with restraining the destructive passions of men. New ways had to be found.”²²⁴ Albert Hirschman (b. 1915) identified three approaches in the European response to this predicament: coercion, harnessing the passions, and playing some passions off against others.²²⁵ Of these, Sorai’s solution suggests a synthesis of the former two. While he recognized and sought to utilize a certain familial and communal instinct that he believed all men to possess, he also sought to restrain society’s propensity for disorder by repressive and coercive institutional controls.

Hiraishi Naoaki (b. 1945) has argued that Sorai’s destruction of Sung Neo-Confucian belief that human moral and political institutions were a part of a rational moral-natural continuum and his recognition of irrationality in the world prepared the way for the introduction of modern Western rationalism.²²⁶ The insight is powerful and persuasive. It is, moreover, enhanced by the very utilitarian approach to ideas and institutions inbuilt into Sorai’s thinking. Others have hailed Sorai’s view of the autonomous role of Sages as agents of moral and institutional creativity as incipiently modern. This essay has explored a different aspect of Sorai. It has argued that his historicism created the need for a fresh criterion of political morality, and that that criterion was found in ethical consequentialism and the utilitarian concepts of “profit” and of “good.” The essay also explored possible influences on the formation of Sorai’s position. Utilitarian thought had an ancient provenance in East Asia. Even in its ancient form as found in the *Mo tzu*, it possessed an internally coherent logical structure that in certain respects was already “discontinuous” and “modern” in Maruyama’s terms. Sorai’s historicism, brilliantly realized in his *Rongo chō*, and the utilitarianism that complemented it were among the great creative intellectual and scholarly achievements of Japanese Confucianism. None the less, the roots of Japan’s early intellectual modernization and the influences behind its formation in Sorai’s thought may lie deeper in East Asian history than is ordinarily assumed. Moreover, Sorai’s particular form of “elite political utilitarianism” was linked to a radically elitist and manipulative concept of the exercise of political authority. It left a troubled legacy.

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Abbreviations

- CC *The Chinese Classics*, trans. James Legge. 5 vols. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960 (republication of editions of 1865-93).
- NST *Nihon shisō taikēi* 日本思想大系. 67 vols. Iwanami Shoten, 1970-82.
- OSZ[K] *Ogyū Sorai zenshū* 荻生徂徠全集, comp. Imanaka Kanji 今中寛司 and Naramoto Tatsuya 奈良本辰也. 6 vols. Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 1973-78.
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Changes, see Sung 1985.

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NOTES

1 I first suggested that there is a strongly utilitarian aspect to Sorai's thought in a review article (McMullen 2001) of Tetsuo Najita's translation and introduction to Sorai's *Bendō* and *Benmei*, published as *Tokugawa Political Writings* (Najita 1998). The present article is mainly based on a reading of Sorai's most formal works, his *Rongo chō*, *Bendō*, and *Benmei*, together with his more practical, Japanese-language writings, *Taiheisaku*, *Tōmonscho*, and *Seidan*. I am grateful to members of the Maui conference for their comments on the first draft of this essay, and to Kate Nakai (Sophia University), my brother David McMullen (University of Cambridge), and Wim Boot (University of Leiden) for reading later drafts and suggesting valuable corrections and improvements. I must express particular gratitude to Professor Matsuzawa Hiroaki, Professor Emeritus of the University of Hokkaidō and in 2003 TEPCo Visiting Lecturer at Pembroke College, Oxford, for the care and attention with which he read one of the later drafts of this paper, corrected mistakes, and offered further valuable advice for its improvement.

2 Ogyū Sorai, *Sorai Sensei tōmonscho* (hereafter, *Tōmonscho*. Citations to this text are to the facsimile text page number followed by a slash ("/") and page reference to the transcription), pp. 382/432-33; Yamashita 1994, p. 45; the translation here is adapted slightly.

3 *Tōmonscho*, pp. 382/432; Yamashita 1994, p. 44; Sorai misattributed the metaphor to the *Hsün tzu*.

4 See Lidin 1973, p. 51. The *Chin shu*, *Sung shu*, *Nan-Ch'i shu*, *Liang shu*, and *Ch'en shu* are mentioned.

5 *Tōmonscho*, p. 418/485; Yamashita 1994, p. 114.

6 Cf. *Mencius* VB, 8 (ii); James Legge's translation, CC II, p. 392.

7 Ogyū Sorai, *Gakusoku*, p. 257/193; Minear 1976, p. 23. In references to Sorai's Chinese-language works in OSZ[M], OSZ[K], and NST, the original Chinese version is cited first by page number, followed by a slash ("/") and the page reference to the *kakikudashi*.

8 For a survey of important recent scholarship on Sorai, see Tucker 2006, Ch. 3, "Sorai in Modern Intellectual History."

9 Maruyama 1974, p. 99.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., pp. 183-4. Maruyama's interpretation has been developed further, albeit with a dissenting opinion on Sorai's "modernity," in the recent monograph of Olivier Ansart, (Ansart, 1998). For Ansart's Sorai, history is the operation of nature that, itself "meaningless," provides the context in which the Sages created political and moral order through the artifice of "ritual." History, whose instability in Sorai's view Ansart documents by quotation (pp. 86-91; 190-91), is thus a facet of nature and is not in itself a primary focus of Ansart's analysis. Sorai's history is characterized by Ansart as "un renouvellement constant et sans pitié." Otherwise, however, Ansart does not single out this topic for special attention. His main interest in his stimulating monograph is, rather, on the constructed character of "ritual" and its separation from nature. "Le plus grand intérêt de la reflexion soraienne ne reside pas dans les thématiques de la nature et de l'artifice, mais il en découle. Le plus grand intérêt de cette pensée, c'est d'offrir une nouvelle intuition du rite" (p. 233). Ansart also extends his enquiry into language and literature in the eighteenth century. Much of his work explores resonances between Sorai's thought and Western political and moral philosophy.

12 Najita 1998, p. lii.

13 Ibid., p. x.

14 "Historicism" is here defined as "the tendency to interpret the whole of reality, including what . . . had been conceived as absolute and unchanging human values, in historical, that is to say relative, terms."

(Ibid., italics in the original.) White 1976, p. xvii.

15 Ibid.

16 For a canonical expression of awareness of historical change, see e.g. *Analects* XV, 10; CC I, pp. 297-98: The Master said, “Follow the seasons of Hsia. Ride in the carriage of Yin. Wear the ceremonial cap of Chou. Let the music be the Shao and its pantomimes.”

17 *Tōmonsho*, p. 382/432; Yamashita 1994, p. 44.

18 *Benmei*, pp. 211/44-45; Tucker 2006, p. 176. See also *ibid.*, pp. 216-17/63; Tucker 2006, pp. 197-98.

19 White 1976, p. xvii.

20 For the communal reflexes natural to humans, see e.g. *Benmei*, p. 213/54; for filial piety as a natural virtue, *ibid.*, pp. 223/84-85.

21 Sorai also wrote in *Tōmonsho*: “The Sages teachings have no past and no present, nor does the Way. If one used the Way of the Sages, even the provinces and the realm as they exist today would be ordered.” See *Tōmonsho*, p. 409/472; Yamashita 1994, p. 96; also *Gakusoku*, 257/193; Minear 1976, p. 23.

22 *Benmei*, pp. 250-1/170; Tucker 2006, p. 319.

23 *Tōmonsho*, p. 396/452; Yamashita 1994, p. 71. Compare *Benmei*, p. 169/260; Tucker 2006, p. 319.

24 *Benmei*, pp. 235/120; Tucker 2006, p. 263. Compare *Benmei*, p. 238/130; Tucker 2006, p. 273.

25 *Benmei*, p. 238/130; Tucker 2006, p. 273. *P'ei* carries the particular nuance of ‘association as an object of worship’.

26 *Benmei*, pp. 236/122-23; Tucker 2006, p. 266.

27 Maruyama 1974, pp. 27-28.

28 This problem is also raised by Ansart 1998, pp. 86-91.

29 Tahara 1991, p. 4; attributing this view to early Maruyama, Bitō Masahide, Uete Michiari (b. 1931); and Hiraishi Naoaki.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

31 *Benmei*, p. 222/80; referring to *Tso chuan*, Duke Hsi year 27; CC V, pp. 200-01; Tucker 2006, p. 216.

32 *Benmei*, p. 220/75; Tucker 2006, p. 211. Sorai’s objective interpretation of *i* warrants translation of his usage of this word as “propriety.” For Sorai, “proprieties” were “sub-divisions of the Way,” the appropriate conduct in particular situations. These “thousand distinctions and ten thousand divisions” were systematized into permanent rituals by the Former Kings (*Ibid.*). Elsewhere in this essay, the more conventional translation of *i* as “righteousness” or “right” has been followed.

33 *Taiheisaku*, p. 473. The authenticity of this text has been questioned, notably by Bitō Masahide (“*Taiheisaku* no chosha ni tsuite,” *Nagoya Daigaku Nihonshi ronshū*, gekan, Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1975). However, Maruyama Masao (Maruyama 1973) and Hiraishi Naoaki (Hiraishi 1984, pp. 229-39) have advanced persuasive circumstantial arguments together with arguments from content in favor of Sorai’s authorship. Hiraishi dates the writing of this work to “the turn of the eighth to the ninth month of Kyōhō 6 [1721].” (p. 236).

34 Imanaka 1975, p. 646.

35 *Seidan*, p. 305; Lidin 1999, p. 138.

36 *Benmei*, p. 233/114; Tucker 2006, p. 257.

37 *Benmei*, p. 218/68; Tucker 2006, p. 203.

38 *Benmei*, 218/68; Tucker 2006, p. 203. Compare *Mōshi shiki* p. 667/478: “Alas! How can the minds of the Sages be glimpsed and measured?”

39 References to *Rongo chō* are to the original Chinese text of the *Lun-yü* in the numbering of James Legge in CC I [in bold], the facsimile reproduction of the 1740 woodblock Chinese text of Sorai’s com-

mentary, and the *kakikudashi* text in the Misuzu Shobō edition (OSZ[M], vols 3-4). They are given in the following form: (*Analects* ref. / OSZ[M] volume number / facsimile text page number / *kakikudashi* text page number). I have also consulted the *kakikudashi* of the Kawade Shobō edition (OSZ[K], vol. 2). Sorai's commentary is discursive in style. In citing his views, I have usually, for the sake of economy in presentation, omitted the original *Analects* passage on which Sorai commented except in those cases where the context makes citation necessary or helpful towards understanding Sorai's meaning.

40 *Benmei*, p. 217/64; Tucker 2006, p. 198.

41 The case that the mind of the Sages is accessible to others is argued in Tahara 1991, p.44.

42 For the process of regeneration, compare *Tōmonsho*, p. 408/470 and Yamashita 1994, p. 93, together with the translator's footnote no. 107, where Yamashita glosses the verbs used by Sorai for societal and individual change. Thus *i* 移 is often used for changes in individuals "brought about through self-cultivation," while *hua* 化 signified "changes imposed by others," for instance by government on the governed.

43 *Benmei*, pp. 250-1/170; Tucker 2006, p. 319. The pedagogy is also outlined in *Benmei*, p. 249/164; Tucker 2006, p. 313, where the endstate is explicitly "to reach to the minds of the Former Kings."

44 *Taiheisaku*, pp. 449-50.

45 Nakai 2002, pp. 274-75.

46 Sorai's concept of the *kuruwa* (enceinte) that confines each mind in its historical environment hints, at least metaphorically, at an awareness of the problem. See *Taiheisaku*, p. 449.

47 Smart and Williams 1973, p. 47.

48 Honderich 1995, p. 890; J. S. Mill, "Utilitarianism," in Ryan 1987, pp. 289-90.

49 Honderich 1995, p. 890.

50 Ryan 1987, p. 58.

51 *Analects*, XIV, 13 (ii); CC I, pp. 279-80.

52 *Analects* IV, 16; CC I, p. 170. For Sorai's different reading, see **IV,16/** 3/183-85/515-16: "As for the Way of teaching men, to superior men one does so by propriety; to small men, by profit."

53 *Mencius*, IA 3; CC II, p. 126.

54 For an instructive analysis of the social basis underlying the Neo-Confucian rejection of "utility" see Watanabe 1997, pp. 76-89. Watanabe sees the Neo-Confucian condemnation of "profit" and utility as inspired by the need for an ethos that legitimated the existence and moral status of the *shih-ta-fu* as a governing elite.

55 Chan 1967, p. 57.

56 Chan 1963, p. 123.

57 *Changes*, "Ch'ien," Wen yen; Sung 1935, pp. 5-6 (adapted). Cf. *ibid.*, "Great Appendix" II, 1; Sung 1935, p. 308: "How shall [the Sage] collect a large population around him? By the power of his wealth. The right administration of that wealth, correct instructions to the people, and prohibitions against wrong-doing; — these constitute his righteousness."

58 *Mencius*, VIIB, 25 (ii); CC II, p. 490. For comment on this passage, see Graham 1978. Graham's translation is adopted here.

59 For Hsün tzu as a utilitarian, see Fung 1952, vol. 1, p. 298.

60 Schwartz 1985, p. 299.

61 *Ibid.*, p. 300.

62 Graham 1978, p. 4.

63 Lo 1974, p. 156.

64 *Ibid.*, p. 161.

65 Imanaka 1966, pp. 398-99.

66 Tillman 1994, pp. 1-2.

- 67 Ogyū Sorai, "Letter in reply to Yabu Shin'an," quoted in Iwahashi 1969, pp. 180-81.
- 68 Iwahashi 1969, p. 180.
- 69 The following have been particularly helpful in approaching this difficult text: Yamashita 1977-79, Hiraishi 1995, Ogawa 1994.
- 70 Sorai's choice of interpretation and the motives behind it are incisively analyzed in Hiraishi 1995.
- 71 Commenting on V, 23 (CC I, p. 181); Sorai explained that Confucius was teasing Wei-sheng Kao. "This is the height of friendliness" (V, 23/3/220/551).
- 72 Sorai distrusted generalizations about the Way; his reflexes were those of a nominalist: "The way should not be made the subject of generalizing arguments" (XVIII, 8/4/322/671). Generalizations might lead to hypostatization of the Way, which, in turn, might suggest a substantial, underlying reality and a goal of salvation or mystical interest.
- 73 Watson 1968, p. 364.
- 74 *Mencius* IA, 7 (viii); CC II, p. 141.
- 75 *Benmei*, pp. 216/ 63; Tucker 2006, p. 197.
- 76 *Book of Documents*, "The counsels of the Great Yü," CC III, p. 56; [Legge translates as "the conveniences of life and the securing abundant means of sustentation"].
- 77 Cf. also *Analects* XVI, 2; CC I, 310.
- 78 Further, commenting on *Analects* IX, 3 (i), "The Master said, 'The linen cap is that prescribed by the rules of ceremony, but now a silk one is worn. It is economical, and I follow the common practice.'" Sorai commented "I take Confucius' following the common practice as profoundly grasping ritual and not diverging from the mind of the former kings" (IX,3/4/10/373).
- 79 For this incident, see Noguchi 1993, pp. 240-44.
- 80 See *Mencius* IIA, 2 (xxiii; xxviii); CC II, pp. 194; 196.
- 81 Cf Hiraishi 1995, p. 233.
- 82 Itō Jinsai, *Dōjimon*, quoted in Hiraishi 1995, p. 225.
- 83 Cf. *Analects* XIII,17; CC I, p. 270: "Looking at small profit prevents great affairs from being accomplished."
- 84 *The Book of Documents*, "The Counsels of the Great Yü"; CC III, p. 56.
- 85 *Changes*, "Ch'ien," Wen yen; Sung 1935, p. 11.
- 86 *Great Learning*, X, 23; CC I, p. 381 (adapted).
- 87 The term *kung-li* is not confined to Mo tzu. But Sorai himself associated it with the ancient utilitarians. See *Mōshi shiki*, p. 662/466: "The schools of Kuan [Chung] and Shang [Yang] attach chief importance to punishments, names, success, and profit. They are simply close to Mo Ti."
- 88 *Mencius*, VIIA, 32; CC II, p. 468. Mencius was apparently inconsistent on the subject of wealth. He had quoted the saying of Yang Hu that "He who seeks to be rich will not be benevolent. He who wishes to be benevolent will not be rich" (*Mencius*, IIIA, 3 (v); CC II, p. 240), but, Sorai argued, "These were the words of a small man," quoted by Mencius out of disputatiousness (IV,5/3/166/500).
- 89 *Changes*, "Ch'ien," Wen yen; Sung 1935, p. 6: "The superior man, embodying benevolence, is fit to preside over man."
- 90 *Analects*, IV, 13; CC I, p. 169.
- 91 Sorai here quoted *The Book of Documents*, "The Announcement of Chung Hui"; CC III, p. 182: "Order your affairs by propriety; order your heart by ritual" (adapted).
- 92 For the modern critic Noguchi Takehiko (b. 1937), "profit" is the "basic concept of Soraigaku"; Noguchi 1993, p. 37.
- 93 At first sight there would seem to be a contradiction between this claim and the general condemnation of "profit" in the *Analects*, let alone Sorai's own comment on "The Master said: 'He who acts with a constant view to his own profit will be much murmured against'" (CC I, 169 [adapted]: "Profit is not

what the superior man honours" (IV,12/3/176/509). Sorai would have explained the contradiction with reference to Confucius' own contrast between the "small profit," which looked for quick results. This was characteristic of the mind of the "small man." Its implied opposite was the "great [matters]" and the "great intellect and farsightedness" of the Sage (XIII,17/4/172/522). He also suggested in *Benmei* that in most canonical texts, "profit" was spoken of from the point of view of the recipient). But in the *Changes*, it was expounded from the standpoint of the "bestower," implicitly the man in political authority, for whom it was identified with the most important of all moral virtues exercised by those in authority: "Profiting creatures' means bringing profit to the myriad creatures. This is benevolence." (*Benmei*, p. 234/118). See below.

94 Graham 1978, pp. 50-51.

95 In a similar direction, Sorai argued that Chu Hsi had been wrong to understand Confucius' criticism of the music of Wu as "not perfectly good" as based on moral failings in Wu; the word was simply an aesthetic judgment on the music itself (III,25/3/156/492). But the word could be applied to "benevolence," the virtue that drove "pacifying the people": it was "the topmost among the many good [virtues]" (IV,3/3/165/500). Perhaps Sorai's preferred sense was "competent" or "effective," closest to the English "good at," a locution that carries a suitably end-oriented nuance. "Music is better (*shan*) than anything at changing 'manners' (XVII,4/4/281/632; quoting *Classic of filial piety*).

96 Following the *kakikudashi* of OSZ[K], vol 2, p. 172.

97 VII, 25; CC I, p. 203.

98 XI, 19; CC I, p. 244.

99 He quoted *The Book of Documents*, "The successful completion of the war," II; CC III, p. 311: "It was King T'ai who laid the foundations ('footsteps') of the imperial inheritance" (yet he was not a Sage).

100 He quoted *Mencius* IVB 21 (i); CC II, p. 327: "Mencius said, 'The traces ('footsteps') of sovereign rule were extinguished, and the royal odes ceased to be made. When those odes ceased to be made, then the *Ch'un Ch'iu* was produced.

101 *Mencius*, VIB, 7 (i); CC II, p. 435. Their government is described at *ibid.*, (iii); CC II, p. 437.

102 *Mencius*, IIA, 1; CC II, p. 196.

103 Cf. *Sun tzu*, Sawyer 1993, p. 170.

104 A Sung-era commentator on classical texts from the Spring and Autumn period..

105 Both criticized and praised by Confucius. See *Analects* III, 22; CC I, 162-63: "The Master said: 'Small indeed was the capacity of Kuan Chung. . . . If Kuan knows the rules of propriety, who does not know them?'" See also *Analects* XIV, 17-18; CC I, pp. 281-82: "Tzu-lu said, 'The duke Huan caused his brother Chiu to be killed, when Shao Hu died with his master, but Kuan Chung did not die. May not I say that he was wanting in benevolence?' The Master said, 'The duke Huan assembled all the princes together, and that not with weapons of war and chariots:- it was all through the influence of Kuan Chung. Whose benevolence was like his? Whose benevolence was like his?' Tzu-kung said, 'Kuan Chung, I apprehend, was wanting in benevolence. When the duke Huan caused his brother to be killed, Kuan Chung was not able to die with him. Moreover, he became prime minister to Huan.' The Master said, 'Kuan Chung acted as prime minister to the duke Huan, made him leader of all the princes, and united and rectified the whole kingdom. Down to the present day, the people enjoy the gifts which he conferred. But for Kuan Chung, we should now be wearing our hair unbound, and the lappets of our coats button on the left side.'"

106 "Rulers who found regimes, like Yao, Shun, Yü, Tang, Wen, and Wu, are regarded as Sages. Successor rulers and ministers, even should they have perfect virtue, cannot be acclaimed as Sages" (VI,28/270/596).

107 *Chu tzu yü-lei*, ch. 37; vol. 1, p. 1578. "Weighing" was, potentially at least, an activity accessible to

all students of the Way. For Sorai's explicit rejection of Chu's explanation, see *Benmei* pp. 253/178-79; Tucker 2006, pp. 329-30.

108 For Hayashi Razan's discussion of this problem with Tokugawa Ieyasu, see Hori 1964, pp.159-64.

109 See e.g. Asami Keisai, *Chūgoku ben*, p. 416.

110 *Mencius* VB, 1 (v); CC II, p. 371.

111 Quoted by Sorai here at **V,22/3/218/549**.

112 Yamashita Ryūji (Yamashita 1977-79, Part III, pp. 502-496) points to the influence on Sorai of the Ming scholar Wang Chih (1379-1462) and his essay "I Ch'i shih pien."

113 Cf. *Mencius*, IVA, 13; CC II, pp. 303-04. Sorai here also rejected the story that Po I and Shu Ch'i had "restrained the horse" of King Wu in order to remonstrate with him for hastening a campaign against King Chou before burying his father. This matter had been "exhaustively refuted" by Wang Chih of Ming.

114 A further emphasis in the same direction can be seen in Sorai's interpretation of Confucius' approbation of his disciple Tzu Kung, who was normally disparaged because he "became rich" (*Analects*, I,15; Legge's commentary; CC I, 144). Sorai, typically, defended Tzu Kung and claimed that the advice was not concerned with personal moral cultivation but with transforming the people (**I,15/3/50-4/404-6**). See Yamashita 1977-79, Part II, pp. 41-42.

115 Mill 1987, p. 285.

116 *Benmei*, p. 254/181; Tucker 2006, p. 333.

117 Sorai pointed out in *Benmei* that ideally this situation did not occur, because: "The men of old, when they studied and achieved virtue, were promoted to gentlemen and thereby became officials" (*Benmei*, p. 254/181; Tucker 2006, p. 333).

118 Cf. *Doctrine of the Mean*, XII, 2; CC I, pp. 391-92.

119 *Benmei*, p. 254/182; Tucker 2006, p. 334.

120 For Confucius' strictures against profit, see *Analects* IV, 12; 16; XIII, 17; CC I, p. 270: "Do not look at small profit." Sorai believed that Mencius, in his famous first royal audience with King Hui of Liang, had overdrawn the distinction between "righteousness" [*sc.* "propriety"] and "profit" for factional purposes, untrue to Confucius' teachings. He had wished to refute the prevalent utilitarian (*kung-li*) schools of his day (**IX,1/4/5/368-69**).

121 *Benmei*, p. 240/138; Tucker 2006, p. 283.

122 Sorai's views on this topic require further study. The negative formulation of the golden rule appears three times in the *Analects*. The first instance (**V,11/3/202-4/535-36**) Sorai interpreted in the sense of "what I don't want a man to do to me, I don't want him to do to others either," i.e. as a general discouragement against wronging others, rather than a version of the golden rule itself; for helpful commentary on this passage, see NST 36, p. 569). Sorai passed over the second case (**XII,2/4/132/482**) with a simple gloss "reciprocity." The third instance (**XV,23/4/241/593-94**) he dismissed as an interpolation. See also McMullen (2001), note 16 (p. 261). In *Benmei* (pp. 225/90-91; Tucker 2006, p. 227-29), Sorai discussed the golden rule under the rubric of "reciprocity." He seems unhappy with a positive application of the rule as "not within the capability of the student." This was because "men's hearts are not the same; what they desire may be different" (cf. *Tso chuan*, Duke Hsiang 31; CC V, pp. 552, 566). Nor was he altogether happy with the Sung Neo-Confucian explanation of "inferring from oneself;" perhaps precisely because it suggested a basic equality among men. "Generally speaking, when one explicates it as inferring from oneself, one might arrive at [the impossibility of] searching out the mind of the superior man through the belly of the small man" (cf. *Tso chuan*, Duke Shao 23; CC V, pp. 726-28). Sorai's difficulty with the golden rule contrasts with the endorsement of J. S. Mill, who believed that the golden rule was "the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality." This was because Mill,

in contrast to Sorai, believed that utilitarianism should be a generalizable philosophy of individual life; “education ...should establish in the mind of every individual an indissoluble association between his own happiness and the good of the whole” (Mill 1987, pp. 288-89).

123 See for example Najita 1987, pp. 132, 133, 161-63.

124 For dating of *Rongo chō* and *Benmei* to around 1720, see Hiraishi 1984, p. 125; *Bendō* is slightly earlier, in 1717 (ibid., p. 107).

125 This concept was usually regarded with suspicion by Confucians, but Sorai attempted to rehabilitate it through reference to *Hsün tzu*, II, p. 425.

126 *Benmei*, p. 211/47; Tucker 2006, p.179; the last sentence is quoted from *Analects*, VIII, 9: CCI, p. 211.

127 “Great Appendix,” II, 8; Sung 1935, p. 328; *Benmei*, p. 233/115; Tucker 2006, p. 258.

128 *Analects*, IV, 16; CC I, p. 170 [Legge, “gain”]; *Analects* IV, 12; CC I, p. 169 [Legge, “advantage”]; *Analects*, XIV, 13 (ii); CC I, p. 279-80 [Legge, “gain”].

129 *Book of Documents*, “The counsels of the Great Yü,” CC III, p. 56 [Legge, “the conveniences of life and the securing abundant means of sustentation”]; *Analects*, XV, 9; CC I, p. 297 [Legge, “sharpen”]; *Tso chuan*, Duke Shao 17, CC V, pp. 666-67 [Legge, “They saw to the provision (*li*) of implements and utensils (*ch'i-yung*)”].

130 *Changes*, “Fu”: There will be advantage in whatever direction movement is made”; Sung 1935, p. 107; ibid., “Hsü”: “It will be advantageous to cross the great stream”; Sung 1935, p. 31.

131 *Changes*, “Ch'ien,” Wen yen; Sung 1935, pp. 5-6; “what is called the advantageous”; *Changes*, “Great Appendix,” II; Sung 1935, p. 311 [Legge, “All under Heaven were benefited”].

132 Hence, perhaps, the rather disparaging, cautious, or negative view of it.

133 *Benmei*, pp. 234/117-8; Tucker 2006, pp. 260-61.

134 *Mencius*, VIIIB, 25; CC II, p. 490; cf. Graham 1978, p. 51.

135 *Benmei*, p. 232/113; Tucker 2006, p. 256. Sorai seems to have in mind here the distinction between Sages or Kings and hegemon. He analysed the relationship between “king” and “hegemon” in the final passage of *Benmei* (pp. 254-55/182-5; Tucker, pp. 334-37). Here, too, though he did not use the word “good,” he attempted to establish the *pa* as legitimate exercisers of power, whose government was linked historically to that of the Sages. He reasserted that the distinction between king and hegemon had not been made in Confucius’ time. Confucius did not criticize the *pa*. In fact, the difference lay only in “time” and “situation.” Confucius himself, had he been employed, would have copied Kuan Chung, minister to duke Huan of Ch'i. Mencius had made the distinction and had imputed the use of force rather than virtue, to the *pa*. But, Sorai argued, the *pa* had only used force when issuing orders to fellow rulers, not with respect to the internal administration of their people. Furthermore “To use force when one’s virtue is insufficient is unavoidable, so why should it be accounted the offense of the person concerned?” (pp. 255/183-4; Tucker 2006, p. 335). Later in the same passage, Sorai perhaps backtracked a little, no doubt partly to accommodate Confucius’ disparagement of Kuan Chung.

Although [the *pa*] used administration (*cheng*) and punishments (*hsing*), they were not comparable with [the Legalists] Shen [Pu-hai], Han [Fei], or Shang Yang. The difference from the Former Kings lay simply in that their impetuous will to success and profit (*kung-li*) predominated, and they did not employ rites and music. This is the only sense in which Confucius held that Kuan Chung’s capacity was “small” (*Analects* III, 22; CC I, pp. 162-63; *Benmei*, p. 255/184; Tucker 2006, p. 336).

Implicit here is the concept of “success and profit” as acceptable aims of administration; it seems that Sorai criticized the *pa* only for adopting “impetuous” methods, rather than for their aims. Similarly, Sorai, in fact, included “punishments and administration” (*hsing-cheng*) within the Way (*Bendō*, p. 201/13; Tucker 2006, p. 140). The expression “administration and punishments,” it is suggested in an NST supplementary note (p. 549), is a borrowing from the “Record of music” book of the *Book of*

Rites, where they are attributed to the “ancient kings” (Legge tr., *Li chi*: Book of rites vol. 2, p. 97). It should also be noted that the expression is also found as here in the form *hsing-cheng* in the *Mo tzu* (I, 149; Mei 1929, p. 30).

Sorai endorsed “administration and punishments” despite the fact that Confucius had spoken negatively of them as a technique of government since they encourage mere avoidance (*Analects* II, 3; CC I, p. 146). But Sorai commented that this passage really meant exclusive or “hasty” use of this technique, like the *pa*’s hasty pursuit of profit, was wrong; “administration and punishments” were legitimate, but should be complemented by “virtue.” “Avoid,” Sorai seems to suggest, did not mean simply “be evasive”; the method of “giving uniformity” was indeed “effective in making the people avoid punishment and disgrace” (II/3/3/497/35).

136 It is an irony that Sorai borrows his definition from Mencius, possibly the least utilitarian of ancient Confucian thinkers. See above.

137 Mill 1978, p. 278.

138 *Seigaku shishō*, quoted in Maeda 1996, p. 228. Bitō Jishū was not impartial; he was associated with the 1790 Kansei prohibition of heterodoxy. For the sectarian background and content of *Seigaku shishō*, see Backus 1979, pp. 78-80.

139 Inoue 1945, p. 570. The utilitarian cast of Sorai’s thought was also remarked upon by Yamaji Aizan (1864-1917); see Noguchi 1993, pp. 19-20.

140 Schwartz 1985, p. 174.

141 Imanaka 1966, pp. 147-50, 406-7. Imanaka’s argument is that evidence that Sorai knew of Yeh Shih is provided from a mention of him in the context of his discussion of Itō Jinsai’s views on literature in his *Ken’en zuihitsu* (p. 147). Further, Yeh Shih wrote a preface to the *Lung-chuan wen chi* of Ch’en Liang (described by Imanaka as the founder of the “even more utilitarian Yung K’ang School”), the other major Sung utilitarian. This preface was included in the *Shui-hsin chi* of Yeh Shih, which Sorai criticized in his *Ken’en zuihitsu*. Thus, “it was not the case that Sorai was ignorant of him” (p. 149). Imanaka notes shared views between the Sung utilitarians and Sorai: a closeness to Hsün tzu; a belief in the man-made character of rites and music. He concludes: “[w]ith regard to the fact that Sorai’s learning is so close to the political thought of these utilitarian schools as almost to match it, even if there is the weakness that one cannot grasp clear proof, I think that one can acknowledge their influence” (p. 150). Imanaka suggests that the fact that Sorai does not allude to the Sung utilitarians in his formal works is due to the “artful convention” among Edo-period Confucians to place emphasis in their work on pre-Ch’in (rather than later) authorities (p. 149). However, inasmuch as Sorai seems usually to take pleasure in quoting from Ming scholars, this argument does not seem specially convincing. For an essay exploring the similarities between the thought of Yeh Shih and Sorai, see Yang 2001. Yang, however, maintains that ‘Ogyū Sorai seems not to have heard of Yeh Shih’s theories’ (p. 189).

142 Fung Yu-lan 1952, pp. 298: “Although Hsün tzu . . . also advocated utilitarianism, he was not so extreme as Mo tzu”; Schwartz 1985, pp. 299-300.

143 Imanaka 1966, pp. 175-87.

144 In the following section of his monograph (pp. 187-200), Imanaka adds that Sorai’s late (i.e. from 1725) concepts of the absolutist (i.e. post “three ages”) “historical king” (*shih-wang*; cf. Hsün tzu’s *hou wang*) and of the importance of the ruler controlling “names” (that is, the language of politics) were both shared with Hsün tzu.

145 Ansart 1998, p. 179.

146 *Ibid.*, p. 180.

147 Maruyama 1974, p. 212.

148 Sorai praised Hsün tzu for “manifesting the theory of rites and music” to correct Mencius’ emphasis on personal cultivation. See *Mōshi shiki*, pp. 661/463.

- 149 For Maruyama's exploration of the differences, see Maruyama 1974, pp. 112-13, note 107.
- 150 *Benmei*, p. 241/139; Tucker 2006, p. 284; Maruyama 1974, p. 87. Sorai's condemnation of Hsün tzu's doctrine was structurally necessary to his thought, because that doctrine implied the necessity of moral self-cultivation or education, a project deemed impracticable by Sorai and alien to his view of political morality.
- 151 Maruyama 1974, pp. 112-13, note 107.
- 152 *Hsün tzu*, I, p. 309; Dubs 1928, p. 115.
- 153 *Hsün tzu*, I, p. 150; Dubs 1928, p. 53.
- 154 *Hsün tzu*, II, p. 235; Dubs 1928, p. 306.
- 155 *Hsün tzu*, I, pp. 624-48; Dubs 1928, pp. 173-85.
- 156 *Seidan*, p. 445; Lidin 1999, p. 325; cf. also Maeda 1996, p. 263.
- 157 *Hsün tzu*, II, pp. 1-5; Dubs 1928, pp. 187-9.
- 158 Maeda 1996, pp. 227-78.
- 159 *Benmei*, pp. 213-14/54; Tucker 2006, p. 187. Unity was also a theme of Hsün Tzu. See *Hsün tzu*, II, p. 186; Dubs 1928, p. 282.
- 160 For references, see McMullen 2001, pp. 258-59.
- 161 See above, note 86.
- 162 *Keishishi yōran*, p. 519. Goi Ranshū suggested that Sorai read the *Mo tzu* "late" (*Hi-Butsu hen* [printed 1784], quoted in Ogawa 1994, p. 363); Ogawa Tamaki suggests a much earlier encounter with this text, "around 1706-07" (p. 371).
- 163 Ogawa 1994, p. 370.
- 164 *Bendō*, p. 201/13; Tucker 2006, p.140; *Mo tzu*, I, p. 149; Mei 1929, p. 30; *Analects*, II, 2; CC I, p. 146.
- 165 *Mo tzu*, I, p. 100; Mei 1929, p. 15; *Bendō*, p. 202/17; Tucker 2006, p. 146.
- 166 *Mo tzu*, I, p. 444; Mei 1929, p. 138; *Benmei*, p. 234/118; Tucker 2006, p. 261.
- 167 *Mo tzu*, I, p. 359; Mei 1929, p. 109; *Rongo chō*, II/20/3/83/435.
- 168 *Mo tzu*, I, pp. 97-99; Mei 1929, p. 14; Sorai, *Benmei*, p. 235/120; Tucker 2006, p. 263.
- 169 *Keishishi yōran*, p. 519.
- 170 It may also be noted that in his main works on Confucian doctrine, despite its rhetorical prominence in the formula "rites and music," Sorai is generally quiet on the subject of the public function of music, another *bête-noire* of Mo tzu. This does not seem simply a matter of practicability. Kumazawa Banzan, on whose thought Sorai draws heavily in *Seidan*, accorded music much greater prominence in his discussions of Confucian practice in Japan.
- 171 *Mo tzu*, I, p. 174; Mei 1929, p. 41; VI,3/3/239-40/567: "The Way of learning takes the great as cardinal and does not adhere to the small."
- 172 Graham 1978, p. 15. Cf. *Mo tzu*, II, pp. 568-9; Mei 1929, p. 183: "Some standard of judgement must be established. . . . Therefore there must be three tests: What are the three tests? Mo tzu said: '[A statement] should be based on the deeds of the ancient Sage-kings. By what is it to be verified? It is to be verified by the senses of hearing and sight of the common people. How is it to be applied? It is to be applied by adopting it in government and observing its benefits (*li*) to the country and the people. This is what is meant by the three tests of every doctrine.'"
- 173 Schwartz 1985, p. 159.
- 174 For Mo tzu's use of these texts as authority for the activities and government of Sages, see for example "Exaltation of the virtuous II," *Mo tzu*, I, pp. 162-93; Mei 1929, pp. 36-47.
- 175 Carpentry analogies were widely used in the "common discourse" both at the individual and social levels. See e.g. *Mencius*, IVA, 1 (i-ix); CC II, pp. 288-90; *Hsün tzu*, II, p. 427; *Great Learning*, X; CC I, p. 373: "Thus the ruler has a principle with which, as with a measuring square, he may regulate his

conduct.”

176 *Mo tzu*, I, p. 96; Mei 1929, p.13.

177 *Mo tzu*, I, p. 266; Mei 1929, p. 78.

178 E.g., *Seidan*, p. 392; Lidin 1999, p. 246.

179 Schwartz 1985, pp. 142-43.

180 *Mo tzu*, I, p. 459; Mei 1929, p. 143.

181 *Taiheisaku*, p. 466.

182 For Mo tzu, see his “Exaltation of the worthy” books; for Sorai’s view and its limitations, see McMullen 2001, pp. 259-60.

183 *Mo tzu*, I, p. 167; Mei 1929, p. 38.

184 *Tōmonsho*, p. 398/455; Yamashita 1994, p. 74.

185 *Mo tzu*, I, p. 87; for Sorai.

186 Schwartz 1985, p. 146.

187 “Junshi o koku suru batsu” (1725), quoted in Ogawa 1994, p. 371. Sorai may have identified Mo tzu’s “universal love” with “benevolence.” In *Bendō* (pp. 202-03/18-19; Tucker 2006, p. 147), he attacks Mo tzu for stressing the completeness of benevolence “sufficient to exhaust everything” at the expense of other virtues, thus ignoring the plurality and particularity of virtues.

188 *Mo tzu*, I, p. 247; Mei 1929, p. 70; *Seidan*, pp. 351; 359; Lidin 1999, pp. 197; 210.

189 *Mo tzu*, I, p. 359; Mei 1929, p. 109; *Rongo chō*, II/20/3/83/435.

190 *Mo tzu*, I, pp. 212-3; Mei 1929, p. 55; *Tōmonsho*, p. 414/478; Yamashita 1994, p. 105: “In the world of antiquity, people lived as animals.”

191 *Mo tzu*, I, p. 437; Mei 1929, p. 136; *Benmei*, pp. 221/77-8; Tucker 2006, p. 213.

192 *Mo tzu*, I, pp. 353-4; Mei 1929, p. 107.

193 *Mo tzu*, I, p. 299; Mei 1929, p. 89. Compare *Benmei*, p. 232/113; Tucker 2006, p. 256.

194 *Mo tzu*, I, p. 292; Mei 1929, p. 87; *Benmei*, pp. 234/117-8; Tucker 2006, p. 260-61.

195 *Mo tzu*, I, p. 355; Mei 1929, p. 107 (translating *i* as “the real [meaning of the] principles”); *Benmei*, p. 234/118; Tucker 2006, p. 261.

196 *Benmei*, p. 232/113; Tucker 2006, p. 256.

197 *Mo tzu*, I, pp. 97-99; Mei 1929, p. 14; *Benmei*, p. 235/120; Tucker 2006, p. 263.

198 *Mo tzu*, I, p. 103; Mei 1929, p. 15.

199 *Mo tzu*, I, p. 602; Mei 1929, p. 195. Sorai’s position is more qualified. In *Taiheisaku*, it is stated that “Although [good government and disorder] are determined by the cycles of Heaven, they depend entirely on human matters.” (p. 459; cf. also p. 461, where it is claimed that “when peace lasts for a long time, good government reaches its limit and there is disorder. This is what was meant by my earlier reference that “although [these matters are determined by] the cycle of Heaven, they are not separated from human affairs.”) These references would seem to suggest that human history is subject both to human intervention and to impersonal cyclical processes. In *Benmei*, an interesting compromise position is suggested: “With regard to the affairs of the realm, in general human power occupies half and the will of Heaven occupies half. Men are well aware of what human power can effect. Yet they cannot know where the will of Heaven is” (p. 234/118; Tucker 2006, p. 261). One of Mo Tzu’s most vehement beliefs was “anti-fatalism,” the title of chapters 35-38 of his work.

200 Schwartz 1985, p. 170.

201 *Benmei*, p. 238/131; Tucker 2006, p. 275.

202 Sorai saw instrumental value even in Buddhism; *Tōmonsho*, p. 388/440; Yamashita 1994, p. 54.

203 The *Rongo chō* was known in China, the ultimate accolade for pre-modern Japanese sinology, from “around the middle of the Ch’ien-lung period”; see Ogawa 1994, p. 399-401.

204 Najita 1998, p. xiv.

- 205 A succinct evaluation of the work is given by Yoshikawa Kōjirō (1904-80) in Yoshikawa 1983, pp. 241-43.
- 206 The question of whether, and to what extent, the *Analects* posits “an inner moral self” has been debated among Western students of Chinese thought. For a useful summary of the debate between Herbert Fingarette (b. 1921) and Benjamin Schwartz, see Wilson 2002, pp. 16-18. Sorai conceded that Confucius’ reference to “no self” (*wu wo*) might suggest self-cultivation and be concerned with interior life. “On the whole *Analects*, only this chapter provides what later generations might regard as the ancestry of the Learning of the Mind.” Sorai wrote of Confucius’ mastery of ritual as a state transcending self: “When all the movements in the countenance and every turn of the body exactly accords with ritual, that shows the extent and degree of the complete virtue” (*Mencius*, VIIB, 33 (i); CC II, p. 495); “There is only the existence of the rituals of the Former Kings. There is no Confucius beyond that. Therefore, [his state] is described as ‘no self’” (IX, 4/4/13/375). Here, study of the rituals of the Former Kings leads to the process of Confucius’ conversion. This is perhaps not altogether unlike the process whereby the study of principle (*li*) led Neo-Confucians to enlightenment and moral understanding of the world.
- 207 *Tōmonsho*, p. 409/472; Yamashita 1994, p. 96.
- 208 Graham 1978, p. 51. For Mo tzu’s approval for the action of the paragon king Yü attacking the prince of Miao in the cause of “universal love,” see *Mo tzu*, I, p. 309; Mei 1929, p. 93.
- 209 Though Sorai’s father had been a doctor by profession, it is clear that Sorai himself was conscious and proud of his military ancestry. See Lidin 1973, pp. 11-24.
- 210 Sorai objected to Mencius’ reply to King Hsiang of Liang that “He who has no pleasure in killing men can unite [the kingdom]” (IA, 6 (iv); CC II, 136). This was “the attitude of women and girls. Those who believe in Buddhist teaching are like this.” The founders of the Han, T’ang, and Ming dynasties had not shrunk from violence. But Sung T’ai-tsu had conformed with Mencius’ dictum, with the result that “Sung could not restore the age of Yen, and in the end lost the realm through peace talks.” Mencius’ mistake had been to speak of the “mind,” rather than the objective way. “The damage of not discussing the Way but discussing the mind is beyond description.” *Mōshi shiki*, pp. 666/475-6.
- 211 Najita 1998, p. xli.
- 212 *Mencius*, IA, 6 (iv); CC II, 136: “He who has no pleasure in killing men can unite [the kingdom].”
- 213 *Taiheisaku*, p. 466.
- 214 *Bendō*, p. 203/19; Tucker 2006, p. 148.
- 215 *Benmei*, p. 255/183; Tucker 2006, p. 335. For the *pa*, see above, note 135.
- 216 *Sonshi kokujikai*, p. 327; quoted in Noguchi 1999, pp. 162-63.
- 217 *Sonshi kokujikai*, p. 6; quoted in Noguchi 1999, p. 161.
- 218 Sorai’s view, of course, was that “small men” (the people, the governed) were stupid and concerned with their own physical warmth and satiety (e.g. I,15/495/30); they certainly lacked the capacity to judge the “profit” of the whole society.
- 219 Smart and Williams 1973, pp. 138-39.
- 220 *Ibid.*, p. 138. The use of the locution “indirect rule” resonates well with the view of the Tokugawa polity that sees it as consisting of “multiple layers of decentralized power structures integrated into the shogunate system. Each subordinate unit of control was allowed to be semi-autonomous . . .” See Ikegami 2005, pp. 128-31.
- 221 *Analects*, VIII,9; CC I, p. 211; for Sorai, see e.g. *Rongo chō*, VIII,9/3/341/662-63.
- 222 For this view of Sorai’s concept of the individual, see Bitō 1983, p. 56; McMullen 2001, p. 259.
- 223 Watanabe 1997, p. 103.
- 224 Hirschman 1997, pp. 14-15.
- 225 *Ibid.*, pp. 15-20.
- 226 Hiraishi 1997, p. 71.

GLOSSARY

- Ai (duke) 哀
an-wen 安穩
Bendō 辨道
Benmei 辨名
 Bitō Jishū 尾藤二洲
 Bitō Masahide 尾藤正英
chen-li 真利
 Chao P'eng-fei 趙鵬飛
 Ch'en Liang 陳亮
 Ch'en-shu 陳書
cheng-hsing 政刑
 Ch'i 齊
 Chi-chu 集注
 Chien (duke) 簡
chi-li chih li 吉利之利
 Chin 晉
 Ch'in 秦
 Chin-shu 晉書
 ching T'ien 敬天
Chin-ssu lu 近思錄
 Chiu 糾
ch'i-yung 器用
 Chou (duke) 周
 Chou (king) 紂
ch'üan 權
 Chu Hsi 朱熹
chün-tzu 君子
fa 法
fang-fa 放伐
 fa T'ien 法天
 Fu Hsi 伏羲
 Goi Ranshū 五井蘭洲
 Han Fei tzu 韓非子
 Han Yü 韓愈
 Hayashi Razan 林羅山
 Hiraishi Naoaki 平石直昭
hou-wang 後王
hsi 習
 Hsiao ching 孝經
hsia chih ch'ing 下之情
hsiang 相
 Hsiang (king) 襄
hsiao-jen 小人
hsia-yü 下愚
hsing-cheng 刑政
 Hsing Ping 刑昺
 Hsün tzu 荀子
hua 化
 Huan (duke) 桓
 Huang ti 黃帝
 Hui (king) 惠

i (to move, shift, change) 移
i (propriety, righteousness, right) 義
i chih fu 義之府
 I Ch'i shih pien 夷齊十辨
jui-li chih li 銳利之利
 Imanaka Kanji 今仲寬司
 Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎
k'ai-kuo 開國
kakikudashi 書き下し
kang 綱
 Kano Naoki 狩野直喜
Keishishi yōran 經子史要覽
Ken'en zuihitsu 護園隨筆
kokoroawai 心アワヒ
 Kimon 崎門
k'o-yü chih wei shan 可欲之謂善
k'o-yung 可用
 Kuan Chung 管仲
 Kuan tzu 管子
 Kumazawa Banzan 熊沢蕃山
kung 功
kung-li 功利
kuruwa クルワ (曲輪)
li (profit) 利
li (ritual) 禮
 Liang 梁
 Liang-shu 梁書
li-i chih li 利益之利
li-yung hou-sheng 利用厚生
 Liu Tsung-yüan 柳宗元
 Lu 魯
Lung-ch'uan wen-chi 龍川文集
Lun-yü 論語
Lun-yü ta-ch'üan 論語大全
 Maeda Tsutomu 前田勉
 Maruyama Masao 丸山真男
 Matsuzawa Hiroaki 松沢弘陽
 Miao 苗
min 民
 Mo tzu 墨子
 Mu (duke) 穆
 Nakae Tōju 中江藤樹
 Nakai Chikuzan 中井竹山
 Nakai Riken 中井履軒
 Nan-Ch'i-shu 南齊書
nei-sheng wai-wang 內聖外王
 Noguchi Takehiko 野口武彦
 Ogawa Tamaki 小川環樹
 Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠
pa 霸
p'ei 配

pien-ning wu-yu 便寧無憂
 Po I 伯夷
Rongo chō 論語微
Seidan 政談
seido 制度
seido no kawari 制度の替り
 Seigaku shishō 正学指掌
shan 善
 Shao 韶
 Shen Nung 神農
 Shang Yang 商鞅
 Shen Pu-hai 申不害
 Sheng-wang 聖王
shih 士
shih-da-fu 士大夫
shih-wang 時王
 Shingaku 心学
shu (technique) 術
shu (also *su*; sub-commentary) 疎
 Shu Ch'i 叔齊
Shui-hsin chi 水心集
 Shun 舜
Sorai Sensei Tōmonsho 徂徠先生答問書
Sung-shu 宋書
 Sung T'ai-tsu 宋太祖
 Ssu-ma Kuang 司馬光
 Sun tzu 孫子
 Tahara Tsuguo 田原嗣郎
 T'ai (king) 大
Taiheisaku 太平策
 Tang 湯
Tao-hsüeh 道学
 Tao-t'i 道体
T'ien 天
T'ien-chih 天職
T'ien-i 天意
T'ien min 天民
T'ien ming 天命
t'i yung 体用
 Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康
ts'ai-li chih li 財利之利
tsun 尊
tuan 斷
 Tung Chung-shu 董仲舒
tz'u 辭
 Tzu Chang 子張
 Tzu-chih t'ung-chien 資治通鑑
 Tzu-chih t'ung-chien kang-mu 資治通鑑綱目
 Tzu Kung 子貢
 Tzu Lu 子路
 Uete Michiari 植手通有
utsuriyuki 移り行キ

Wang Chih 王直
 Wang Yang-ming 王陽明
 Watanabe Hiroshi 渡辺浩
wei 位
 Wei-sheng Kao 微生高
wen (text) 文
 Wen (duke) 文
 Wen (king) 文
 Wu (king) 武
wu wo 無我
 Yabu Shin'an 藪震菴
 Yamaji Aizan 山路愛山
 Yamazaki Ansai 山崎闇齋
 Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu 柳沢吉保
 Yang Hu 陽虎
 Yang Shen 楊慎
 Yao 堯
 Yeh Shih 葉適
yen 言
 Yen (state) 燕
 Yü 禹
yü chih hua 與之化
 Yung-chia 永嘉
 Yung-k'ang 永康