Proceedings of the EUROPEAN ACADEMY of Sciences & Arts PEASA

Proceedings of the European Academy of Sciences & Arts 2025; volume 4:63

Topics: ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT **Category:** HUMANITIES

Global ethics: self-critique and dialectics on unchangeable morality principles

Ioannis Liritzis

Vice-President, European Academy of Sciences and Arts, Saltzburg, Austria

Grabbing from the session organizer of the conference The Aristotle–Confucius Symposium on Ethics for the 21st Century Athens and Thessaloniki, July 3–8, 2023, introduction and rationale that our ancient cultural heritages with their wisdom connected to the UN system, and contemporary problems[1], may offer a means for reinvigoration with new ethical impulse, I would reiterate the Classical profound influences of ancient China and Greece applicable throughout the world. Although it appears that in every epoch (including our era), new ethical ideas are needed to enable humanity to thrive and advance, this is a phenomenological question, which humanity always should strive to find ways to apply. Self-discipline leading to self-critique on a dialectic manner with our associates and the environment, ultimately glorifies the triumph of reason and virtue.

Asian philosophy is born through reflection and the effort to **answer meritocratically** clear questions related to ethics, while **the Greeks** - at least in terms of the birth of philosophy - start their study from physical reality (**cosmology**). With this starting point, they end up exploring deeper ontological and metaphysical issues.

In philosophy, it is widely assumed that there is no parthenogenesis. Each philosopher's beliefs are founded on a constant and ongoing feed from the prior philosophical tradition. After all, a more comprehensive knowledge of the history of philosophy and ideas is deemed necessary in order to identify the ongoing permutations of thought upon which every thinker is based and influenced on the one side while he sets the novel aspects of his own thinking by establishing fresh developments on the other hand.

Although the historical reality on a global scale shows at first sight that there is relativity in the ethics of human relations and between people and nature, the environment, nevertheless the concept of ethics[2] could include its absolute definition, when we talk about its Universal Nature.

I will not analyze ethics (Ventura, 2020) when at first sight it would lead us to the nature of our reactions from internal or external triggers, emotions, instinctual drives, personality, imagination, perception, whether emotion through an experience follows or precedes thought reflection. Nor for the process of generating ideas, obsessions and capturing and processing of images in the bidirectional interaction of matter, facts and spirit.

A multitude of philosophers from ancient times as well as researchers have written about it as a kind of historical retrospection or have submitted their own opinions, either original or transformed or adapted into an updated text.

The definition of the content of ethics and morality is given by ancient Greeks and Aristotle and Confucius. Both establish ethics on virtues[3].

Jiyuan Yu's (2007) work is a comparative study of the virtue ethics of Aristotle and Confucius, exploring how each philosopher reflects upon human good and virtue within their respective cultural and philosophical contexts. Yu examines concepts such as eudaimonia and dao, virtue (arete and de), and human nature (xing and ergon-έργον), providing insights into their ethical frameworks.

Correspondence: Ioannis Liritzis, Vice-President, European Academy of Sciences and Arts, St. Peter-Bezirk 10, A-5020 Saltzburg, Austria.
E-mail: ioannis.liritzis@euro-acad.eu

Received: 3 October 2025.
Accepted: 7 October 2025.

Publisher's note: all claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article or claim that may be made by its manufacturer is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.

©Copyright: the Author(s), 2025
Licensee PAGEPress, Italy
Proceedings of the European Academy of Sciences & Arts 2025; 4:63
doi: 10.4081/peasa.2025.63

This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits any noncommercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author(s) and source are credited.

[1] The sustainable development, the intense interdependence, the unprecedented technological power, the climate crisis, digital disruptions, rising inequalities, and peacemaking.

[2] Ethics is a branch of philosophy that deals with identifying, defending and recommending concepts of right and wrong behavior. Ethos is a term that is used to describe principal beliefs or ideals that form the basis of a community, nation, or ideology.

[3] "Virtues" are attitudes, dispositions, or character traits that enable us to be and to act in ways that develop this potential. They enable us to pursue the ideals we have adopted. *Honesty, courage, compassion, generosity, fidelity, integrity, fairness, self-control, and prudence* are all examples of virtues.

Proceedings of the EUROPEAN ACADEMY of Sciences & Arts PEASA
pagepress

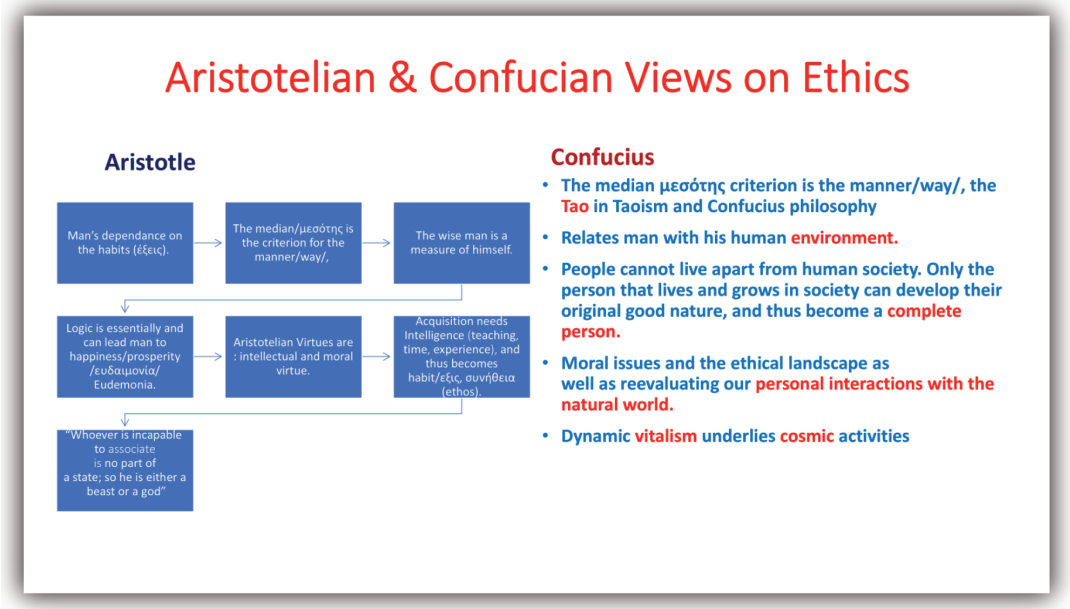
On one hand logic prevails in **Aristotelian** philosophy. Thus, Aristotle's main points on ethics: human's dependance on the habits (έξεις). The median/μεσότης is the criterion the manner/way/, or, I could say the Tao in Taoism and Confucius philosophy. The wise person is a measure of himself. Logic is essentially that which indicates what is necessary and can lead humans to happiness/prosperity /ευδαιμονία=Eudemonia.

Aristotelian Virtues are of two kinds: intellectual[4] and moral virtue. Acquisition needs Intelligence which comes from teaching and takes time and experience to acquire, and thus becomes habit/εξις, συνήθεια/syneithia (ethos; prefix «syn-» (together, with) and the root «ethos», relating to character, habit, or way of life).

On the other side **Confucius** relates a person also with his human environment (Watson, 2007). According to Confucian thought, people cannot live apart from human society. Only the person that lives and grows in society can develop their original good nature, and thus become a complete person. Similarly to Aristotle who sets a person in the frame of his associates, the society, by saying: "*Whoever is incapable of associating, or has no need to because of self-sufficiency, is no part of a state; so, he is either a beast or a god*".

May Sim (2007) offers a detailed scholarly comparison of the ethics of Aristotle and Confucius. Her analysis provides fresh interpretations of the central teachings of both philosophers, highlighting their approaches to virtue and moral development and understanding how these two thinkers approached the concept of morality.

[4] Knowledge (science), art, practical judgement, intuition, wisdom.



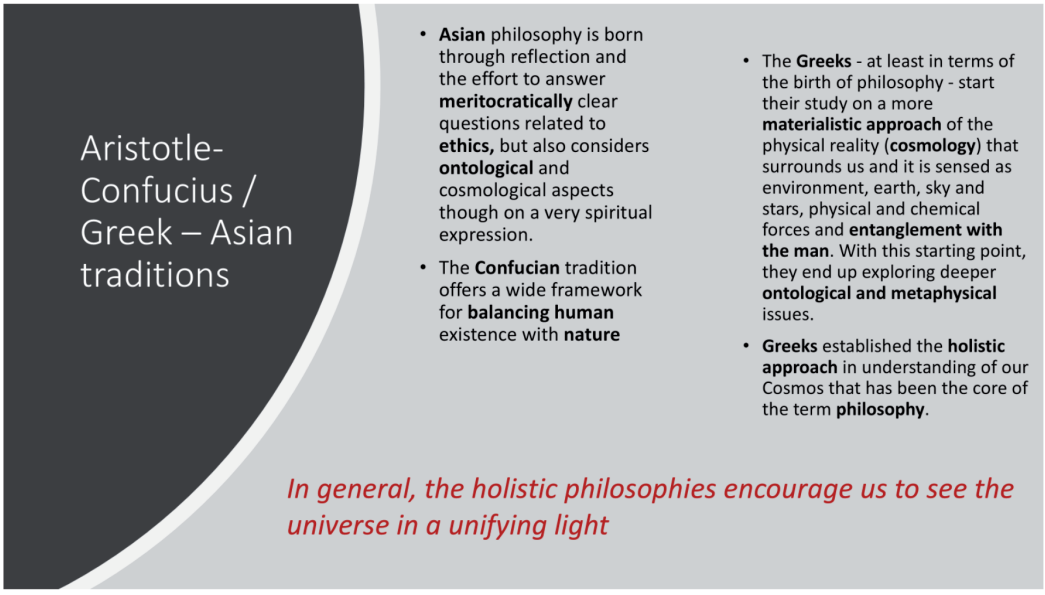
OPEN ACCESS

The world's faiths are emerging as significant repositories of depth and insight in our search for more comprehensive and universal ethics to address the crucial difficulties of our present situation, particularly with relation to the urgent environmental catastrophes of our times. Few would contest the weight of the situation we find ourselves in as a global community engaged in unsustainable modes of production, consumption, and development, notwithstanding disagreements on the size and breadth of the crises (Mickey *et al*., 2020). The faiths of the world undoubtedly have some significant correctives to give in this regard.

There is a growing understanding that, in addition to innovative scientific, technological, and economic answers to our environmental issues, attitudinal adjustments toward nature will be necessary for developing sustainable communities. What is not respected will not be preserved by humans. A moral foundation for altering our exploitative attitudes toward nature is what is now missing. Laws are in place to prevent homicide, but neither ecocide nor biocide are. As a result, we lack a comprehensive environmental ethics that would change how we think about the Earth and how we live on it. Therefore, what should worry us is this: to what degree can the world's religious traditions but ancient Greek Anaxagorean mind (nous) too, provide us moral guidance and cosmological viewpoints that might aid us in redefining mutually beneficial human-Earth relations? (Liritzis, 2003).

Confucianism's dynamic and all-encompassing viewpoint may make a substantial contribution in this area by broadening our understanding of *moral issues and the ethical landscape* as well as offering a wealth of information for reevaluating our *personal interactions with the natural world.* The organic holisms of Confucianism can help us to better understand how all living things are interrelated and to rediscover the holiness of this complex web of existence. A foundation for reverencing nature is also provided by the Confucian idea of the dynamic vitalism that underlies cosmic activities. Nature cannot be viewed from a Confucian perspective as being made up entirely of lifeless, dead substance. Instead, *qi*, or material power, is a shared factor across all biological forms. This common psycho-physical entity serves as the cornerstone for forging a reciprocal relationship between human and nonhuman.

In this respect it appears that **both Aristotle (and Greeks) and Confucius theories** are related not only on the definition of ethics and morality but environmental (terrestrial and celestial) nature.



Asian philosophy is born through reflection and the effort to answer meritocratically clear questions related to ethics, but also considers ontological and cosmological aspects though on a very spiritual expression.

The Greeks - at least in terms of the birth of philosophy - start their study on a more materialistic approach of the physical reality (cosmology) that surrounds us and it is sensed as environment, earth, sky and stars, physical and chemical forces and entanglement with the person. With this starting point, they end up exploring deeper ontological and metaphysical issues.

The Confucian tradition offers a wide framework for balancing human existence with nature. Thus, for Confucians in China, Korea, and Japan, nature and virtue, cosmology and ethics, knowledge and action are inextricably linked (e.g., see for ecological ethics: *qi, li*[5,6] and the role of the human). Confucianism's comprehensive and dynamic perspective of the universe and human function might help us get far in the revisioning that is required to deal successfully with our current ecological

[5] This is qi or ch'i, which is translated in a variety of ways in the classical Confucian tradition as spirit, air, or breath, and later in the Neo-Confucian tradition as material force, matter energy, vital force. Qi moves through the universe from the constituent particles of matter to mountains and rocks, plants and trees, animals, and birds, fish and insects. All the elements — air, earth, fire, and water — are composed of qi. We humans, too, are alive with qi. It makes up our body and spirit as one integrated whole, and it activates our mind-and-heart, which is a single unified reality in Chinese thought.

[6] Li is the inner ordering principle of reality that is embedded in the heart of qi. The Chinese character for li suggests working on the geological veins found in the mineral jade, which must first be discovered, and then carved adeptly. Li is comparable to the principle of logos, whereby all of reality is imprinted with structure and intelligibility.

Proceedings of the EUROPEAN ACADEMY of Sciences & Arts PEASA
pagepress

disaster. It is, in turn, only one illustration of the potential advantage of drawing on the resources of the world religions in our quest to develop a more complete and universal ethics.

In parallel to China development in Greece establishes the holistic approach in understanding of our Cosmos that has been the core of the term *philosophy*. In general, the holistic philosophies encourage us to see the universe in a unifying light[7].

From the above **both Aristotelian and Greek philosophy** in parallel to the Chinese Confucianism treatises on ethics involve the cosmos and cosmological elements.

Intrigued by Greek and Chinese philosophies on ethics and cosmological aspects which related to ethics, but also taking the human entity inseparable of the natural laws, I would incline to provide a definition of **Global Ethics**.

The definition is not an easy matter. Because one has to define the parts that define the asked to be defined. For this, I compose twelve rigorous terms, for offering a global definition and meaning of *Ethics* for the people and morality for the individual: *human, intellect, Law, rational, freedom, science, consciousness, duties, rights (privilege), heart, reason, virtue.*

Then **Ethics** could be defined as the science based on the human intellect. It is the natural, the universal, the immutable Law; the Law that governs all rational and free beings. It is the scientific proof of consciousness. This admirable science teaches us the duties and the justified use of our rights and penetrates the inmost feelings of the heart to ensure the triumph of reason and virtue. This initiated thesis presupposes application of a self-critique (self-knowledge) and dialectics between each of us and with us (know thyself), our associates and the proximal and far environment of our cosmos, which converges on unchangeable ethics based on morality principles.

In the short presentation a brief analysis is made with various ways of example, phenomena, and philosophical-conceptual searches on the definition of multi-dimensional ethics and moral endeavor. The implementation of the universal ethics to teaching, teacher training and decision makers is a prerequisite to hope for a better future than present.

Post note: I thank prof. Phoebe Koundouri (Athens University of Economy & Business) for inviting me to present the topic in *The Aristotle-Confucius Symposium on Ethics* for the 21st Century Athens and Thessaloniki, July 3-8, 2023 (https://www.athenarc.gr/en/news/aristotle-confucius-symposium-ethics).

References

Liritzis I (2003). Anaxagorean nous and its analogies in Orphic Cosmogony. Philosophia 33:257-65.

Mickey S, Tucker M-E, Grim J (2020). Living earth community: multiple ways of being and knowing. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers http://books.openedition.org/obp/12802

Sim M (2007). Remastering morals with Aristotle and Confucius. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Ventura D (2020). The problem of history in the temporal ethics of Henri Bergson, Emmanuel Levinas and Gilles Deleuze. PhD thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London.

Watson B (2007). The Analects of Confucius. New York, Columbia University Press.

Yu J (2007). The Ethics of Confucius and Aristotle. Mirrors of virtue. New York, Routledge.

[7] The 70% is thought to be dark energy, 25% dark matter and 5% normal matter. In theory the universe was first light; this was the moment of first light in the universe, between 240,000 and 300,000 years after the Big Bang, known as the Era of Recombination. The first time that photons could rest for a second, attached as electrons to atoms. It was at this point that the universe went from being totally opaque, to transparent; Ross G (2003). Grand unified theoris (Frontiers in Physics) 1st Edition. Boulder, Westview Press; Georgi H, Glashow SL (1974). Unity of all elementary particle forces». Phys Rev Lett 32:438-41; Wang J (2021). Ultra Unification. Phys Rev D 103:105024.

OPEN ACCESS