

John A. TUCKER (ed. & transl.): *Ogyû Sorai's Philosophical Masterworks. The Bendô and Benmei*. The Association for Asian Studies and Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press 2006; xiv + 478 pp.

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John Allen Tucker's new book provides fresh English translations of the philosophical works *Bendô* ('Distinguishing the way'; completed 1717) and *Benmei* ('Distinguishing names'; probably completed around the same time or a little later) by the great Japanese Confucian scholar Ogyû Sorai (1666–1728). The book is a considerable achievement. Tucker is an experienced translator of Tokugawa Confucian texts, and this is his best translation.

The first third or so of the book consists of generous introductory material. Chapter 1 provides a conspectus of Sorai's thought which outlines Tucker's basic reading of his texts. From the start, he is eager to dissociate his views on Sorai from those of Maruyama Masao, surely the greatest modern interpreter of Sorai. Indeed an anti-Maruyama motif informs much of this introduction. Tucker dissents from the view that he imputes to Maruyama that Sorai was 'the pivotal figure in the development of a modern political consciousness'.

Overall this study suggests that Sorai's thought was not a modernizing force, but rather one appealing anachronistically to the fundamentals of an archaic political tradition for the sake of fashioning an ideology of shogunal absolutism. (p. 11)

This kind of writing, however, seems too blunt to do justice to the dazzling reach, depth and sophistication of Maruyama's thought. Maruyama himself was acutely aware of the reactionary nature of Sorai's political ideas; his analysis operated at a different level. He wrote: 'It is one of the ironies of history that a reactionary may be forced to use the theoretical weapons of his opponents. While Sorai abhorred *Gesellschaft* social relationships, the *Gesellschaft* logic was embedded in his theory of invention' (*Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, tr. Mikiso Hane, University of Tokyo Press, 1974, p. 222 [hereafter, *Studies*]).

Tucker robustly characterizes Sorai as authoritarian and utilitarian, an articulator of the ideological needs of the Tokugawa *bakufu*. He also insistently stresses the importance of 'philosophical dictionaries', the genre in which he places the 'two *Ben*'. *Benmei* in particular is a response to the *Xingli ziyi* of

the Song scholar Chen Beixi. ‘Genre’, Tucker claims, is the key to ‘the utilitarian and authoritarian themes’ of *Bendô* and *Benmei*. It can, indeed, lead to interesting insights. Thus we learn that Beixi

explained that terms in his lexicon were arranged according to their immediacy to people’s daily concerns. Sorai, on the other hand, opened his lexicon with an exposition of the notion most relevant to rulers at least as he defined it – the way. (p. 21)

No one would disagree that ‘philosophical dictionaries’ are an important and interesting vehicle for Confucian thought. But there were also even more prestigious and authoritative, if less concise, genres, such as commentaries, that were also ways of communicating revisionist views. In fact, the genre that Sorai invested most scholarly effort in was canonical commentary. He himself regarded his *Analects* commentary, *Rongo chô*, as his life’s work and probably the serious basis for any claim to importance as a Confucian scholar. It was this work that became known in eighteenth-century China. Most of the polemical views expressed in the two *Ben* are expressed there, where they are based on readings of specific canonical texts. Tucker’s insistence on the importance of genre also produces some ponderous claims:

Contextualized within the genre that he wrote, Sorai appears not so much as a thinker who in every respect broke with a particular intellectual tradition as one aggressively and systematically engaged in what came to be seen as a radically heterodox revision and reformulation of it. (p. 15)

Thereafter, the introduction proceeds to a description of *Benmei*, entry by entry. No doubt, space in what is a long book precluded a deeper exploration of Sorai’s thought here. As it stands, this section is somewhat superficial.

In Chapters 2 and 3, Tucker provides what in Japanese might be referred to as a *juyôshi* or reception history of Sorai’s thought. This account is something of a pioneering foray, and it, too, offers rewards. It is, however, necessarily selective, since Sorai’s radical views have always stimulated a great volume of comment and continue to do so. Chapter 2 deals with the Tokugawa period. Maintaining his critical stance towards Maruyama, Tucker rejects his contention that the decades following Sorai’s death were a ‘golden age’ for his ideas. He points to Sorai’s lack of biological heirs who might perpetuate his influence. Rather than ‘a succession of champions’, there was a ‘succession of acerbic critiques’. ‘Statistics’, he claims, ‘have misrepresented Sorai’s legacy, suggesting that his school was the largest heterodox contingent among domain schools’ (p. 48). But it is hard to dismiss the evidence of such

scholars as Ishikawa Ken or of Kasai Sukeharu for the diffusion of Sorai learning for the period up till the Kansei reforms. Whether, to what extent, and at what level, Sorai's polemic resulted in what Maruyama called the 'disintegration' of Song Neo-Confucian thinking is a matter of controversy. It does seem likely that Sorai's influence was acidic, eating at the credibility of the Song Neo-Confucian conception of the world and man's role in it till a formal and bookish structure was left. But Tucker takes the side of those who downplay Sorai's importance. The relative failure of Sorai's *Kobunjigaku* [School of ancient philology; the name given to Sorai's style of Confucianism], he argues, was due partly to the 'linguistic difficulty and profound cultural dissonance involved in learning to read and write unpunctuated Chinese as Chinese' (p. 46). Moreover, 'Sorai's followers [were] mostly literary specialists known for their supposed frivolity and dissipation' (p. 48). Hostility to Sorai, meanwhile, was rife, chiefly articulated by commoner Confucians and those of nativist persuasion. In the latter context, Tucker glances at Ishida Baigan, the Kaitokudô thinkers, and nativist scholars such as Kamo Mabuchi and Motoori Norinaga.

On Sorai's side, Tucker concentrates on Dazai Shundai and Yamagata Daini, as Sorai's main intellectual heirs. Daini was executed by the *bakufu* for treason in 1767. Tucker writes that his 'development of Sorai's political thought [suggested that] the study of ancient texts could ultimately lead to the resurrection of frightening themes from ancient Chinese philosophy that Sorai had politely avoided [...]' (p. 56).

Such suspicions culminated in the Kansei prohibition of heterodoxy and its associated purge of Sorai's influence from official schools. Tucker writes that it was 'motivated by *bakufu* awareness that reformulations of Sorai's *Kobunjigaku* ideas were taking their advocates in directions never explicitly acknowledged by Sorai' (pp. 74–75). He accepts, however, Herman Ooms's point that Matsudaira Sadanobu, the leading figure in the Kansei Reform movement, believed, with Sorai, that the political system was man made, rather than natural. Why then did Sadanobu ban Sorai's ideas? Tucker suggests that 'sense can be made of this'; on the one hand, Sadanobu 'recognized the value of Sorai's political philosophy to rulers insofar as it empowered them to manipulate the polity in ways that would promote peace and security'; but, on the other, Sorai's ideas were 'potentially dangerous' if widely diffused, again because they could sanction change in the status quo (p. 77). Under these circumstances, it was only prudent to ban them.

There is probably truth in this argument, and it is possible to go further. It was not simply fear of Sorai's potentially subversive influence that inspired

the anti-Sorai purge. There were positive reasons for choosing Zhu Xi Confucianism as an educational orthodoxy at this time. Sadanobu's early Confucian studies had been with a scholar of the Sorai persuasion. Sadanobu, in fact, was influenced by Sorai more, simply, than in his historicist view of the man-made status of the Confucian way. Thus he advocated imposition of unity of thought and suppression of subjectivity, subscribed to Sorai's functionalist view of the different social roles in society, and seems to have accepted Sorai's utilitarian and instrumental approach to ideas and practices.

Sadanobu selected 'orthodox' Zhu Xi Confucianism as the *bakufu*'s exclusive educational orthodoxy for positive, but instrumental reasons. He himself was a man of intense, authoritarian and ascetic temperament; when he came to power and influence within the *bakufu*, he was horrified at the laxness of *bakufu* retainers. He felt that rigorous study and practice of Zhu Xi Neo-Confucianism, imposed as an orthodoxy with no room for dissent, was the best method to recover discipline in the samurai community. In Sorai's terms, Neo-Confucianism, though discredited by Sorai's own polemics, could remain a legitimate 'technique' towards this end. Thus, despite its superficially Neo-Confucian character, the Kansei Reform, arguably, at a deeper level reflects the penetration of Sorai's utilitarian thinking. As Maruyama himself put it, the Kansei reform was 'an attempt to impose feudal standards as a natural law by force when they had already lost such self-evident validity' (*Studies*, p. 282). Not surprisingly, this was an uncomfortable position. It generated anomalies such as, for instance, Sadanobu's own rejection of the ritual veneration of Confucius in his Shirakawa domain school. But such contradictions are more easily explained when Sorai is recognized as a fundamental influence on Sadanobu.

Chapter 3 surveys Sorai in modern intellectual history. Again, this is an instructive and, it has to be said, sometimes provocative, exploration. Major themes are the 'noteworthy subcurrent' of Sorai's ideas in the Meiji restoration, the impact of Sorai's apparent Sinophilia, criticism of Maruyama Masao, and the enduring importance of the genre of 'philosophical lexicography'. Major Restoration figures such as Katô Hiroyuki and Fukuzawa Yukichi were familiar with and influenced by Sorai's ideas. Nishi Amane's knowledge of Sorai's work 'served as a source of inspiration regarding the possibility of wholesale definition' of the concepts of modern political life (p. 92). But with Yamaji Aizan, who drew attention to the similarity between Sorai's thought and that of Jeremy Bentham, the beginnings of nationalist reaction against Sorai's Sinophilia set in. Tucker is informative on Inoue Tetsujirô, the pioneer historian of Tokugawa Confucianism, and his seminal triadic division of Tokugawa

Confucianism into the Zhu Xi, Wang Yangming and Ancient Learning schools. But Inoue, too, criticized Sorai for 'exclusive and single-minded worship of China' (p. 105). This chauvinist trend intensifies until, exceptionally among major Tokugawa Confucians, Sorai was denied posthumous rank. In the ultranationalist period, he was accorded 'pariah' status (p. 110).

During and after the war itself, Tucker concedes that Maruyama was a 'crucial bridge' between pre- and post-war understandings of Sorai. He 'follow[ed] a modified Hegelian mode of explanation derived in part from Inoue' (p. 112); but his interpretation, Tucker argues, is too teleologically preoccupied with 'modernity' to retain permanent value. He refers to Maruyama's 'profoundly provocative misinterpretations' (p. 113), 'hyperbolic claims' and 'rudimentary' abilities in Chinese (p. 116). By contrast, Yoshikawa Kôjirô's quieter and sinologically better-informed approach is praised, but he is faulted for failing to recognize the importance of philosophical lexicography. Bitô Masahide receives informative treatment, particularly for his insights into how Sorai's views on the place of religion in administration were interpreted in the ultranationalist period.

On Western interpreters of Sorai, Tucker writes that J.R. McEwan's early but quite modest book (1962) is 'all the more reliable' (p. 115) for his apparent unawareness of Maruyama's work. H.D. Harootunian's *Towards Restoration*, by contrast, 'echo[es] Maruyama's teleological concerns], with a new touch of hyperbole', and is by now 'badly dated' (p. 116). Herman Ooms's work, he finds, is more satisfactory in this respect. The Western scholars whom Tucker seems most to admire are Olof G. Lidin for his 'monumental contribution' (p. 115) to Sorai studies in the west, made chiefly through his translation of *Seidan*, a work that complements Tucker's own; William Theodore de Bary, in his many publications, for his nuanced and more cautious assessment of Sorai's intellectual relationship to Neo-Confucianism. Even de Bary, however, joins the company of those found wanting for underestimating the importance of philosophical lexicography. Samuel Yamashita is mentioned favourably for his translation of *Tômonsho*. Tucker also touches on the work of Carmen Blacker, Richard H. Minear and Kate W. Nakai. Of the most recent publications on Sorai, he finds Tetsuo Najita 'overly sympathetic' in his account of Sorai's 'social thinking' (p. 129); Naoki Sakai's post-modernist interpretation is 'sadly unconvincing'; besides, he, too, is insensitive to the 'lexicographic organization' of Sorai's work (p. 130). The Swiss scholar Olivier Ansart is censured for his neglect of Sorai's Tokugawa period Confucian predecessors, but praised for his

‘extensive discussion of Sorai’s thought in relation to Western philosophy’ (p. 134).

The remaining two thirds of the book are given over to translated text and annotations. It is here that Tucker’s work is likely to have the greatest impact. It will serve as a valuable introduction to Sorai’s thought for those who do not read Chinese or Japanese. For specialists, it will make a useful starting point. In general, Tucker’s English version is accurate and readable. There are inevitably some slips, mostly of minor importance. ‘King Liang of Qi’ should be ‘the kings of Liang and Qi’ (*Bendô*, in *Nihon shisô taikei*, vol. 36 [hereafter, NST], p. 201/15; Tucker, p. 143); Tucker seems to understand *zhong* 衆, which refers to ‘the multitude’ of members of a category as ‘the people’ (NST, p. 223/82; Tucker, p. 218); he seems to misunderstand the word *zhi* 質 as ‘refinement’, where it clearly means ‘substantial qualities’ (NST, 205/27; Tucker, p. 156); where he translates Sorai as saying of the ‘school of principle’ that ‘their words are sincere’, the correct rendering should surely be ‘that is truly so’ (NST, p. 205/28; Tucker, p. 157); where he translates Sorai as writing ‘people in the north see entirely what is in the south’, he should understand ‘when you look from the north, what you see becomes south’ (NST, p. 205/28; Tucker, p. 157).

Elsewhere, it is sometimes possible to challenge Tucker’s choice of English equivalent for some of Sorai’s vocabulary. Thus he translates *wang* 妄 as ‘far fetched’ (e.g. NST, p. 210/43; Tucker, p. 174), a word defined in the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* as ‘strained’. Sorai’s sense is surely stronger, more like ‘nonsense’ or ‘nonsensical’. Tucker’s translation of the moral term *shu* 恕 as ‘empathy’ may be right for the sense given this word by Itô Jinsai, whose *Go-Mô jigi* Tucker translated in 1998. However, Sorai himself seems to refute it in *Benmei*. His radical elitism led him explicitly to cast doubt on the possibility of the ‘small man’ understanding the ‘princely man’ (NST, p. 225/91; Tucker, p. 228). For Sorai, *shu*, in fact is not an affective term; rather it refers to reciprocating actions. Thus Sorai quoted Confucius’ own negative and restrictive definition: ‘What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others’ (*Analects*, XV, 23). The translation of *shu* as ‘reciprocity’ by James Legge seems closer to Sorai’s understanding.

Another, more serious, doubt concerns Tucker’s use of ‘ritual principles’ to translate the important term *yi* 義, conventionally rendered in many Confucian contexts as ‘righteousness’. *Yi* is indeed a multivalent and problematic word. Morohashi’s *Dai Kan-Wa jiten* lists 24 meanings, excluding proper nouns. One sense particularly relevant to the present discussion is ‘meaning’. The rendering ‘righteousness’ reflects the moral understanding of the word in the

Mencian and Neo-Confucian tradition within Confucianism. But Sorai was hostile to this interpretation and wished to recover what he identified as the pristine sense of the word.

Tucker's translation of *yi* as 'ritual principles' is not entirely consistent (e.g. NST, pp. 239/133–34; Tucker, pp. 276–77, translating the word as used by Itô Jinsai and others), a fact that might suggest uneasiness about its settled meaning. An initial response to 'ritual principles' is that this locution sits uneasily with Sorai's well-known insistence that the original Confucian way, the Way created by the Former Kings, is concrete and external rather than abstract. Tucker's translation also results in an awkward pairing with his choice of 'rational principle' to translate *li* 理, another concept whose conventional, Neo-Confucian interpretation Sorai sought to modify. For Sorai, *yi* were normative, where *li* had 'no fixed standard', and were thus descriptive only (NST, p. 244/150; Tucker, p. 296).

There are, however, more serious reasons to question the use of 'ritual principles'. It is clear, first, that the multiple meanings of *yi* posed a problem for Sorai himself. In works of his maturity, he makes a number of what seem, *prima facie*, to be startling contradictions or inconsistencies over this word. Thus in *Benmei* (NST, p. 223/82; Tucker, p. 218, adapted), he asserts that: 'The three hundred major rituals and the three thousand rules of demeanour all possess *yi* existing in them.' Yet in his *Analects* commentary (*Rongo chô*, commenting on *Analects* IX, 3 (i) *Tôyô bunko* edtn. [hereafter *Rongo chô*], vol. 2, p. 13), he writes: 'In general, rituals are what the ancient Sages fixed, yet there are those which possess *yi* and those which do not possess *yi*'. Or again, in *Ken'en jippitsu* (*Ogyû Sorai zenshû*, Kawade Shobô edtn. [hereafter OSZ], vol. 3, p. 568/389), he claims that: 'The quality of the *Book of Historical Documents* as a repository of *yi* is simply patently clear'. But at the same time, he could also claim: 'Before Confucius, rights and music existed, yet men did not know their *yi*' (Ibid., p. 513/256).

Tucker has clearly given the translation of this difficult word serious thought; what follows is in the spirit of exploring alternative possibilities. In the sketch below, it is argued that Sorai developed a subtle narrative of the history of *yi*, in part to accommodate the diverse and shifting meanings of the word in canonical Confucian texts, in part for his own polemical purposes. It is his understanding of *yi* in these different senses that explains Sorai's apparent inconsistencies quoted above. He traced three successive stages in the development of the term: (i) as an objective institution of conduct: this was the *yi* of the former Kings, or the 'ancient *yi*'; (ii) as 'meaning' or 'intention' of the rituals of the Former Kings; and (iii) as a subjective virtue.

Tucker's 'ritual principles' conveys the sense of (ii), but is arguably less suitable for (i) and (ii).

(i) The institutional *yi* of the Former Kings

Sorai insisted that, in the first sense, *yi*, like 'rituals', were originally 'set up' (*li* 立) by the 'Former Kings'. They were a 'division' or 'subset' (*fen* 分) of the Way (NST, p. 220/75; Tucker, p. 211). In his *Analects* commentary, he refers to *yi* in this sense as 'ancient *yi*' (*guyi* 古義; *Rongo chō*, vol. I, p. 167). In *Keishishi yōran*, Sorai cross-referenced his explanation of *yi* to *Benmei*, but also supplied a definition in the Japanese language:

The Way of the Former Kings fixes and lays down what men must necessarily do and what they should not do. This is called *yi* (OSZ, vol. I, p. 344).

The *yi*, he insisted, were 'of the same category as ritual' (*li* 禮; *Rongo chō*, *loc.cit.*). 'Yi are the detailed aspect of rituals and refer to [the thousand discriminations and ten thousand disparities within society] respectively determining their appropriate place' (NST, p. 222/81; Tucker, p. 217, adapted). This language suggests that *yi* were like 'rituals', objective institutions. Indeed, *yi* were the material source of rituals.

One would say that *yi* are a division of the Way. The thousand discriminations and ten thousand disparities each have their proper place [...]. The former Kings [...] took those thousand discriminations and ten thousand disparities and systematized them to make them rituals (NST, p. 220/75; Tucker, p. 21, adapted).

By gathering the many *yi*, the rituals are established and benevolence is completed (NST, p. 223/82; Tucker, p. 218, adapted).

Despite this commonality, Sorai insisted explicitly that 'ritual and *yi* are different'; *yi* could, it seemed, also 'refer to what was not in the ritual system of the Former Kings' (*Ken'en jippitsu*, OSZ, vol. I, p. 521/274). Furthermore, ritual had a fixed organization and structure, while *yi* are addressed to the wider flow of events. This distinction is made clear in the first definition of *yi* in *Benmei*:

[R]ituals have a fixed form. However, the affairs of the realm are inexhaustible. Therefore [the Former Kings] also established *yi* [...]. Therefore, it is said,

'Ritual and *yi* are the great beginnings (*duan* 端) of men' ('Li Yun' Book from *Book of Rites*; NST, p. 220/75; Tucker, p. 210, adapted).

Further, their purpose was different;

'Ritual regulates the mind; *yi* regulates affairs.' (quoting 'Zhong Hui', *Book of Historical Documents*). Ritual preserves invariance; *yi* responds to changes [sc. departures from the norm] (NST, p. 220/75; Tucker, p. 210, adapted).

In *Benmei*, Sorai illustrated how *yi* featured in governance:

The lord co-ordinates the whole [of the Way], but the ministers are commissioned [to regulate] its parts. They have their respective duties of office and what they take as their affairs. These are the thousand discriminations and ten thousand disparities. Thus if they do not follow *yi*, they do not perform well. (NST, p. 222/79; Tucker, p. 215, adapted).

Yi, therefore, is a flexible system of procedures and responses for regulating the innumerable changing circumstances of daily life with its hierarchies and differentials, while 'ritual' is an invariant structure specially addressed to regulating men's state of mind. Clearly, there is a close relationship: *yi* are almost a necessary condition for ritual, and are a constituent element of most, but not apparently all, rituals. Tucker's translation of 'ritual principles', however, restricts the meaning of *yi* by essentially subsuming it into ritual; it seems to elide the broader application of *yi* to quotidian society.

If it is questionable to interpret Sorai's pristine *yi* mainly in the context of ritual as Tucker's translation suggests, what of the translation 'principle'? The English word 'principle' has the sense of 'a primary [...] law which produces or determines particular results', or 'general law or rule as a guide to action' (S.O.E.D.). In his commentary on the *Doctrine of the Mean*, Sorai wrote: '*Yi* are that by which response is made to change [sc. variations from the norm]; thus they should not be spoken of as being held fast to' (*zhi* 執; OSZ, vol. 2, p. 658). It was also 'by depending on the ancient *yi* of the Former Kings that the people of old determined the rightness of things' (*Rongo chô*, *loc. cit.*). Such passages might tend to support the interpretation that *yi* are indeed, as Tucker's use of 'principle' suggests, somehow and subtly abstract. In that sense, *yi* might be thought of as a body of discrete principles, perhaps appropriately described as a grammar, to be applied in particular circumstances. But Sorai says explicitly of the Six Classics, the record of the Way of the Former Kings, that they describe 'things' (*wu* 物), that is concrete entities (NST, p. 200/12; Tucker, p. 139). Included here were the *Book of Historical Documents* and the *Book of Poetry*, the two texts that

Sorai repeatedly cited as the ““repositories of *yi*”” (quoting *Zuo zhuan*, Duke Xi 27). One might therefore suggest a cautious definition of Sorai’s pristine *yi* such as ‘a detailed grammar of behaviour that is applied flexibly to the changing circumstances of a hierarchical social and political world; the constituent elements of rituals’.

Such a definition, however, does not support the translation of *yi* as ‘ritual principles’. A quite close analogy, from the parallel military world, may be helpful. Soldiers practise a system of responses and procedures in the changing circumstances of daily military work; these responses must be flexible enough to enable them to perform their role (*cf. yi*). Some of this grammar, such as the forms for handling weapons and bodily movements in drill, is formalized as the elements of ceremonial parades (*cf. rituals*). These parades, like rituals generally, have a permanent structure; they may indeed, like rituals, serve religious or political purposes. But like Sorai’s rituals, they are addressed less to the ongoing course of affairs than to men’s affective understanding of their worlds, to their ‘minds’. Thus one would not naturally call the soldier’s grammar of daily work ‘parade principles’. In the light of this analogy, it can be seen that ‘ritual principles’ either restricts *yi* too narrowly to its constituent role in ‘ritual’ or, conversely, concedes too broad a role to ritual. Indeed, in an interesting passage, Sorai took Itô Jinsai to task precisely for taking ‘ritual’ to be concerned with dealing with ‘affairs’ (*Ken’en jippitsu*, OSZ, vol. I, p. 533/303).

(ii) *Yi* as the meaning or principles behind the rituals

The second sense of *yi* for Sorai was the product of Confucius’ particular and disadvantaged historical circumstances and historical role. Confucius lived in a period of political and moral decline. The Way of the Former Kings was no longer observed in full, and Confucius, denied the opportunity to create rituals himself, took on the task of exegesis of the Way. He thus addressed the ‘meaning’ of the institutional components of the pristine Way. For Sorai, the Confucian texts most directly associated with Confucius, the *Analects* and the *Book of Rites*, conveyed these ‘meanings’ (NST, p. 200/12; Tucker, p. 139). Indeed Confucius’ role was seminal.

Before Confucius, rights and music existed, yet men did not know their *yi* (*Ken’en jippitsu*, OSZ, vol. 3, p. 513/256; elsewhere, Confucius had merely ‘made definitive’ these meanings; *Rongo chô*, vol. I, p. 12).

The meanings that Confucius thus explicated were latent in all rituals. 'The major rituals and the three thousand rules of demeanour all have *yi* existing in them' (NST, p. 223/82; Tucker, p. 218, adapted). However, Confucius' discourse on the meanings of ritual, though important in securing their perpetuation to posterity, was a secondary development, as is indicated by a careful reading of Sorai's wording in *Benmei*.

The former Kings had *already* systematized these thousand distinctions and ten thousand disparities and made them into rituals. Scholars [*sc.* among them, Confucius and the authors of the *Book of Rites*] further transmitted the intentions (*yi* 意) whereby they had systematized them. These are the so-called 'meanings' (*sc.* essences, principles) of the rituals' (NST, p. 220/75; Tucker, p. 211, adapted; italics added).

This sense of *yi* as 'meaning' is clearly intended to cover such uses of *yi* as occur in the titles of the books of the *Book of Rites*, such as the 'Meaning of Sacrifice'. It is this meaning of *yi* that comes closest to and perhaps justifies Tucker's 'ritual principles'. In this sense, however, Sorai insists *yi* were still 'necessarily attached to things', that is the concreteness of ritual (NST, p. 200/12; Tucker, p.139, adapted). To pursue the military analogy above, it is possible to explicate the 'meaning' of a ceremonial parade with close reference to its component elements, much as one might that of a ritual.

For Sorai, *yi* in this exegetical sense remained legitimate. Nonetheless, this usage, according to Sorai, opened the path to the third and deleterious use of *yi*. As a potentially 'empty word' (NST, p. 220/75; Tucker, p. 211, adapted), it carried a danger. Sorai even seems to suggest that *yi* in this sense was actually otiose; in the ideal world, there was no need for exegesis:

Rituals are things. Many *yi* [*sc.* meanings, principles] are packed full in them. However eloquent one may be supposed to be, one cannot express their full meaning. Therefore, their benefit lies in silently knowing them (NST, p. 219/71; Tucker, p. 206, adapted).

3. *Yi* as a subjective virtue

As further historical decline took place, Confucius' disciples, 'wanting people to understand the rituals, lectured them urgently and incessantly on their meaning [...]. During the Warring States period, their meanings were divorced from the rituals and came to be discussed in isolation.' (NST, p. 219/71; Tucker, p. 206, adapted). A further deterioration took place with Mencius.

For polemical purposes, he had incautiously spoken in a way that might suggest that ‘the principle of ritual’ was an aspect of human nature, an inborn propensity of conduct. Thereafter, it came to be interpreted as a subjective virtue, to the detriment of the true Confucian teaching. To extend the military analogy once more, the spirit informing ceremonial parades came to be regarded as a broader virtue and even as a natural human propensity, independent of its original institutional basis.

More research is needed. But if this sketch does correctly reflect Sorai’s understanding of *yi*, Tucker’s ‘ritual principles’ are appropriate for (ii) above. There, Sorai does indeed understand *yi* as the ‘meaning [or principles] of ritual’. What seems to have happened, however, is that Tucker has read back this ritual-centered interpretation onto (i). He compounds this by misinterpreting the ‘thousand distinctions and ten thousand disparities’ to apply to ‘ritual’ rather than to society at large. He can be seen doing this in the following passage:

Now, *ritual* principles are best understood as part of the way. The myriad differences and myriad distinctions *within the rites*, each has its right place. [...] Since the early kings systematized the rites recognizing the myriad distinctions *intrinsic to them*, scholars *still* transmit the ideas involved in systematizing of the rites (NST, p. 220/75; Tucker, p. 211).

The added italics suggest where Tucker has inflated Sorai’s text and imposed his own preconception of the relationship between ‘ritual’ and *yi*. The passage would be more accurately translated:

One would say that *yi* are a division of the Way. The former Kings had *already* systematized these thousand distinctions and ten thousand disparities and made them into rituals. Scholars [*sc.* Confucius and the authors of the *Book of Rites*] *further* transmitted the intentions whereby they had systematized them. These are what is called the ‘meanings’ [*sc.* essences, principles] of the rituals.

As a result, Tucker’s reading of Sorai’s thought elides the broader role of *yi*; Tucker’s Sorai subsumes social regulation largely under ritual; the historical Sorai was more subtle and more balanced.

How then, should Sorai’s *yi* be translated? No single English word seems available easily to cover the three senses explored above. However, in senses (i) and (ii), the English ‘proprieties’ seems appropriate, for the propriety or the proprieties are both objective norms and ‘propriety’ can be an abstract virtue. According to the S.O.E.D., there is even a special, albeit rarer, sense

of 'propriety' as the 'essence' of something. This comes quite close to sense (ii) above.

The book is well produced. Tucker has furnished copious and helpful notes on his text. Chinese and Japanese words are supplied in romanized form, albeit not entirely consistently. It is a shame, however, that the University of Hawai'i Press has apparently banished Chinese characters. A character list is of particular value in works that, like Tucker's, treat sources in both Chinese and Japanese.

As analysis of just one word above suggests, Sorai is not an easy thinker. His own radically revisionist treatment of a highly sophisticated scholastic tradition led him to difficult formulations. Behind the facade of authoritarian elitism, there are often subtle manipulations of ancient Confucian concepts. There are also ambiguities. Sorai's thought is too complex to yield quickly to definitive understanding. Interpreting his work in English or any other foreign language poses especially daunting problems. With his new and conscientious translation of *Bendô* and *Benmei*, Tucker has made a significant contribution to the study of this important and original thinker outside Japan. This book is to be welcomed.