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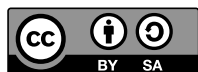
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Introduction

Jana S. ROŠKER*

The present special issue is entitled *Thinking across the Borders: Philosophy and China*. It mainly contains selected contributions from the inaugural conference of the European Association of Chinese Philosophy (EACP), which was held in June 2016 at the Vilnius University in Lithuania. This interesting, vivid and successful meeting has provided new insights into a broad range of questions and problems, riddles and mysteries with regard to both Chinese philosophy and philosophy in China. It brought together many of the leading experts in Chinese philosophy from Europe, Asia, Australia and the USA. However, this first conference of the EACP, which was founded in Ljubljana in October 2014, was much more than just a successful academic meeting. It was the first one of its kind in Europe. It helped to shape a vigorous intellectual community here in the field of Chinese thought and Chinese intellectual history, with scholars and learners in proximity to each other, ready and willing to engage in Chinese philosophy as well as with other thinkers and doers throughout Europe, China and the rest of the world. We are especially glad that the selection of articles from the conference will be published in collaboration with *Problemos*, the journal published by the Department of Philosophy of the Vilnius University, which was hosting this inaugural EACP conference. Such a joint publication is a brilliant example of the sensible implementation and realization of existing possibilities to carry out fruitful academic cooperation and exchange throughout Europe, and as such, it has special significance at this time.

This inaugural conference, which covered topics related to the very broad area of ancient, classical and modern Chinese philosophy, was—inter alia—also another opportunity to reflect once more on these topics. Because whenever we speak of Chinese philosophy, we must inevitably consider the appropriateness of this term. Since the general theory and genuine philosophical aspects of Chinese thought have rarely been treated by Western scholars, they continue to remain quite obscure for the majority of the academic community. Therefore, from the very beginning of our common work, we must—once again—very briefly examine the fundamental question (or dilemma) of whether it is possible to speak of a certain stream of traditional Chinese thought as philosophy at all.

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In his article entitled “There is No Need for Zhongguo Zhexue to Be Philosophy”, Ouyang Min—like many other scholars—argues that philosophy is a Western cultural practice and cannot refer to traditional Chinese thinking unless in an analogical or metaphorical sense. He thus proposes replacing the term “Chinese philosophy” with the notion “*sinosophy*”. However, the original meaning of this notion, which represents a compound of the ancient Greek meanings for “China” and “wisdom” is, in fact, nothing other than the translation of the Western expression “Chinese wisdom” into ancient Greek. The philosophizing or abstract traditions within Chinese thought, on the other hand, go far beyond the sole notion or discourse of wisdom, and so cannot be reduced to it.

It is certainly not the intention of our association to reinterpret Chinese tradition in terms of Western conceptualizations; philosophy as an academic discipline has arisen from the essential human need to philosophize. This is based on a desire to raise and open, again and again, fundamental questions regarding the nature and the significance of our existence and that of the world we were thrown into. This need is something universal, as is, for instance, the ability to generate language. However, although the ability or potential to create language and thus linguistic communication is universal, each individual language and the grammatical structures by which it is defined, is culturally conditioned. Thus the expression “Chinese philosophy” does not refer to a geographic dimension of this universal term, but is rather an expression of the cultural conditionality which defines a certain form of philosophizing, or of a certain system of philosophical thought with a typical paradigmatic structure. As Carine Defoort notes, we are perfectly accustomed to using the terms “Continental” or “Anglo-Saxon” philosophy, denoting different types or genres within the philosophical tradition, but the problem with the term “Chinese philosophy” goes further.

The simplest, but most frequent argument against the notion of “Chinese philosophy” is based on the assumption that a philosophy as such designates a system of thought, which arose exclusively within the so-called European tradition. In this context, philosophy is thus defined as a theoretical discipline which is based on the specific and unique premises and methods of the Western humanities. According to this supposition, every system of thought which arose within the context of any other tradition is thus necessarily scientifically or academically unreliable (or at least irrational), and can thus not be regarded as philosophical.

In methodological terms, this argument is Eurocentrism par excellence, especially if we consider the etymology of the term “philosophy”. As every child knows, philosophy originally meant the love of wisdom. Can anyone seriously maintain that Plato, Socrates or Aristotle loved wisdom more than Laozi, Zhuangzi or Wang Shouren?

On a somewhat more complex level, the assumption that the word “philosophy” in the European tradition signifies a special love of wisdom also holds good; in our tradition, it means a kind of wisdom that deals with specific questions of metaphysics, ontology, phenomenology, epistemology and logic. None of these clearly defined disciplines were ever developed in traditional China. Nevertheless, though more subtle, this argument still lacks a rational basis. Firstly, because Chinese philosophy is, in fact, not a philosophy in the traditional European sense, but a different philosophical discourse, based on different methodologies and with different theoretical concerns. Secondly, because traditional Chinese thought also developed certain clearly differentiated and highly systematic forms of inquiry which, however, differ greatly from those which were generally developed within classical European discourse.

Indeed, one could argue in the same manner that traditional European philosophy is not a complete philosophy, since it never developed any of the most significant philosophical categories and methods which form the core of traditional Chinese theoretical discourse, such as the method of correlative thought, binary categories or the paradigm of immanent transcendence. If we wished to be provocative, we could even invert the argument and state that the opposite was true, that it is European thought which cannot be considered as true philosophy. If philosophy is truly the love of wisdom, then philosophy as a scientific discipline with its rigid, technocratic delimited categorical and terminological apparatus (precisely that discourse which, in Europe and throughout the world, is considered as philosophy in a strict, essential sense) cannot be regarded as philosophy at all. At best, it can be considered as “philosophology”, in the sense of teaching, researching and writing *about* the love of wisdom.

In her famous article “Is There Such a Thing as Chinese Philosophy?”, Carine Defoort also states a position which is not grounded upon an absolute denial, nor on an absolute affirmation of the question. In this context, it could be said that the tradition of the “Chinese masters” (*zi*) is comparable with the wider Western philosophical tradition (and not merely its modern variant), to a degree that “allows us” to denote it as philosophy, since these discourses are, after all, posing questions of deep human concern while substantiating the ideas they contain with rational arguments. On the other hand, this position points to the fact that the Chinese themes and forms of reasoning are sometimes so fundamentally different from those of their Western counterparts that they offer a unique opportunity to question, in a critical and indeed *philosophical* manner, the currently prevailing notion of “philosophy” itself.

Sinologists, especially when in contact with scholars belonging to other areas of the humanities, are often confronted with the need to explain certain specific features of

traditional Chinese thought, its epistemological roots and its methodology. This inter-disciplinary issue, however, has been preconditioned by a necessity to clarify and define certain concepts and categories, which are rooted in East Asian traditions.

Over the past few decades, the previously “absurd” assumption that the “Western” theory of knowledge does not constitute the sole, universally valid epistemological discourse, something which would have been unthinkable for the majority of “Western” theorists less than a century ago, has now become generally recognized among most present-day cultural exponents and communities. It has thus become clear to most that “Western epistemology” represents only one of many different forms of historically transmitted social models for the perception and interpretation of reality.

Recognizing the comprehension, analysis and transmission of reality based on diversely structured socio-political contexts as a categorical and essential postulate offers the prospect of enrichment. Hence, instead of following the rudimentary horizon of Western discursive patterns and problems, we should try to approach the Chinese tradition from the perspective of language and writing, to which it belongs. If we try to follow the inherent laws of its specific concepts, we can gain a completely different, much more autochthonous and much less “exotic” image of this tradition. But how can we bridge the abyss between different cultures, if we no longer possess a generally valid, commonly shared horizon of problems? Certainly not by trying to “think like the Chinese,” in the sense of using some different form of logic. We should instead, as proposed by Chad Hansen and Heiner Roetz, seek to establish a methodology of intercultural research in accordance with the principles of the so-called “hermeneutic humanism”.

Here it should be remembered that humanism is the keynote in Chinese philosophy: people are the focus of Chinese philosophers, and human society has occupied their attention throughout the ages. For centuries, Chinese philosophy has, similar to other philosophies all over the world, been the central driving force for creating ideas and shaping knowledge which forms and develops human understanding, launches curiosity, and inspires creativity.

This creativity is certainly also reflected in the present special issue of our journal *Asian Studies*. It offers the reader an immensely broad, but at the same time profound insight into the complex universe of Chinese philosophical thought, covering a wide scope of different contents that are linked through the common thread of the specifically “Chinese” worldview.

The issue is divided in four sections, dealing with a wide assortment of different fields, ranging from traditional Chinese ethics, through political science and law,

moral cultivation, aesthetics and epistemology, to questions pertaining to history and the relation between tradition and modernity. The opening section is entitled *Confucian Ethics, Politics and Modern Law*. The first two essays in this section deal with the important relation between tradition and the present era, elaborating on the question of how to reconcile ancient Confucian ethics, which still has a lot to say to the present globalized and often alienated world, with the modern idea of normative law that is based upon the concepts of justice and equality. Both authors have treated this significant and topical question through the lens of the question whether it is right to cover up for family members who have committed a crime. Moreover, both deal with this question on the basis of a famous story from the *Analects*, in which Confucius clearly defends this position. In this context, Yong Huang, the author of the essay entitled “Why an Upright Son Does Not Disclose His Father Stealing a Sheep: A Neglected Aspect of the Confucian Conception of Filiae Piety” raises several important questions regarding the correct interpretation of the anecdote, and some crucial terms it includes. He offers a detailed analysis of the related passage, embedding it into current scholarly debates evolving around the topic. Wei-Chieh Tseng, the author of the second article, entitled “Struggle for the Right to Cover Up for Family Member: the Significance and Value of the Confucian Thought ‘Cover Up for Family Members’ in Modern Law Society”, discusses almost the same topic from a different angle. Nevertheless, both authors—although each in his own way—relate the discussion to the discourse of normative modern law and its underlying philosophy. However, in contrast to Huang’s profound and complex analyses, Tseng illuminates a more general dimension of the problem, introducing and summarizing the main points of the dilemma in the wider context of this debate, which is actually rooted in a paradigmatic contradiction between the Confucian and Legalist theories. The section closes with Du Lun’s essay “The Early Zhou Period: Origin of the Idea of Political Legitimacy and the Political Philosophy of Confucianism”, explaining and interpreting some crucial documents of the Early (Western) Zhou Dynasty found in the “inscriptions on ancient bronze objects” (*jin wen* 金文). In this way, the article discusses whether concepts such as the “mandate of heaven (天命), “respect virtue” (敬德) and “protecting the citizens” (保民), really originate from that time. The evidence suggests that in fact these concepts might be rooted in a much earlier period than assumed in previous research.

The second section deals with *A Specific Path to Chinese Modernization: The Term Datong and Kang Youwei’s Datong shu*. It opens with Bart Dessein’s “Yearning for the Lost Paradise: The ‘Great Unity’ (*datong*) and Its Philosophical Interpretations”. In this article, the author explores the term *Datong* (Great Unity) through the lens of different pre-modern interpretations, focusing in conclusion upon its

role in the evolution of Modern Confucian discourse. In his article entitled “A Tale of Two Utopias: Kang Youwei’s Communism, Mao Zedong’s Classicism and the ‘Accommodating Look’ of Marxist Li Zehou”, Federico Brusadelli, on the other hand, analyses the utopian and reformist dimension of Kang Youwei’s work *Datong shu*. The article focuses on the interpretation provided by Li Zehou, one of the most influential contemporary Chinese philosophers.

The next section includes three articles, and deals with a broader range of ancient Chinese philosophy, seen through the lens of new discoveries and innovative approaches to its interpretation, including comparisons not only between the most important representatives of the time, but also between ancient Confucianism and early modern German philosophy. It is entitled *Classical Pre-Qin Philosophy: Comparative and Analytical Perspectives*. It opens with Matthew James Hamm’s contribution, entitled “The Distance of Heaven: An Analysis of the Guodian Wu Xing”. In this essay, the author aims to prove that the Guodian text on the five conducts (*Wu Xing*) consists of two separate but related essays that mirror the distinction between goodness (the harmony of four conducts) and virtue (the harmony of all five conducts). The second article in this section, “In the Shadow of the Decay. The Philosophy of History of Mencius and Xunzi”, was written by Dawid Rogacz and pertains to the relatively unknown realm of the classical Chinese philosophy of history. The author analyses the debate between Mencius and Xunzi from the viewpoint of their opinions on the nature of the historical process, aiming to illuminate the main differences between the two perspectives and clarify which had more impact on the later official Confucian philosophy of history. Anja Berninger, the last author in this section, focuses in her contribution “Kant, Xunzi and the Artificiality of Manners” upon another important aspect of classical Confucian philosophy, namely on the rules and laws of classical ritual, especially regarding the meaning and social significance of manners and etiquette. In order to illuminate the important social function of these general social standards and their ethical dimensions, the author compares ancient Confucian approaches to this topic with Immanuel Kant’s views about the ethical significance of manners.

The subject of the last section, entitled *Unity of Skill and Art through the Lens of Zhuangzi’s Philosophy*, examines classical Chinese Daoism, focusing on different aspects of the work of its most famous representative, Zhuangzi. While Dušan Vávra in his essay “Skilful Practice in the Zhuangzi: Putting the Narratives in Context” aims to shed additional light on the eclectic nature of the text in question, proposing an alternative methodology of its reading, Loreta Poškaitė focuses on the aesthetic dimension of the same work. In her article entitled “The Embodiment of Zhuangzi’s Ecological Wisdom in Chinese Literati Painting (*wenrenhua* 文人畫) and Its Aesthetics”, she explores the relation of Daoist (and especially

Zhuangzi's) ecological ideas with regard to inter-penetration and "communication-without-communication", with a focus on traditional Chinese landscape and bamboo painting. Through the analysis of this linkage, the author aims to explain how certain influential ideas have impacted or represented the relationship between the artist and the world in Chinese figurative aesthetics.

Although the scope of this special issue is rather wide, I firmly believe that polylogues among different forms of intellectual creativity, as offered by the authors, are a good basis for further debates. As such, I hope our readers will enjoy this issue and find it inspiring for their thoughts and future debates about various intriguing ideas found in Chinese philosophy. The contributions included in this issue are much more than simple new presentations of past ideas or interpretations of some particular philosophical problems that arise on a local level, in the scope of some "exotic" system of thought. If we consider their real value and significance within the framework of present global developments, they also enable us to carry out a better grounded and deeper reflection on the question what role contemporary reinterpretations of classical Chinese philosophy will play in the future processes of global developmental.

Jana S. Rošker, Chief editor

Confucian Ethics, Politics and Modern Law

Why an Upright Son Does Not Disclose His Father Stealing a Sheep: A Neglected Aspect of the Confucian Conception of Filial Piety

HUANG Yong*

Abstract

In the *Analects*, Confucius recommends to not disclose one's father stealing a sheep, claiming that *zhi* 直 lies within it. This passage has become the focus of a heated and prolonged debate among Chinese scholars in the last decade. A proper understanding of *zhi*, which is central to understanding this whole passage, is to straighten the crooked, or uprighten the non-upright. So what Confucius means is that the upright son ought to make his non-upright father upright; the best way to do so is to remonstrate his father against his wrongdoing, and the best environment for the successful remonstration can be provided by non-disclosure of his father's wrongdoing.

Keywords: filial piety, uprightness, remonstration, Confucius, punishment

Zakaj pravični sin ne razkrije očetove kraje ovce: O spregledanem aspektu konfucianske zasnove spoštovanja staršev

Izvleček

Konfucij v svojih *Pogovorih* predlaga, da se očeta, ki je ukradel ovco, ne ovadi, saj takšno dejanje vsebuje *zhi* 直. V zadnjem desetletju je ta izsek postal žariščna točka vroče in dolgo časa trajajoče debate med kitajskimi učenjaki. Pojem *zhi*, ki je ključen za razumevanje celotnega odseka, je treba razumeti kot »izravnati ukrivljeno« ali »spremeniti nepravilno v pravično«. Konfucij ima torej v mislih, da mora pravični sin svojemu nepravilnemu očetu pomagati do pravičnosti. Najboljša pot do slednje leži v tem, da se očeta sooči z ugovorom proti njegovemu krivičnemu dejanju. Najboljše okolje za tovrsten ugovor pa je omogočeno, če očetova dejanja niso razkrita.

Ključne besede: spoštovanje staršev, pravičnost, ugovarjanje, Konfucij, kaznovanje

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Introduction

The *Analects* records a conversation between the governor of She and Confucius. The governor told Confucius, clearly with some pride, “in our village there is an upright person named Gong. He bears witness against his father stealing a sheep.” Confucius responded, “in my village, an upright person is different: father does not disclose son’s wrongdoing, and son does not disclose father’s wrongdoing, and the uprightness lies in it” (*Analects* 13.18). This is a controversial passage, as it is often regarded as a case that crystalized Confucius’ idea of filial piety (*xiao* 孝), which is regarded as one that is unique and central to the Confucian teaching as a whole. As such, the controversy surrounding this passage is also one about the value of Confucianism in general, in both historical and contemporary contexts. In section 2, I shall briefly introduce the heated and prolonged debate on this passage among Chinese scholars in the last dozen or so years. Section 3 will reveal an important aspect of Confucius’ idea of filial piety, children’s remonstrance with their parents committing wrongdoings, that has been largely neglected in the debate and yet is central to our understanding of this controversial passage. Then, in section 4, I shall attempt to provide an alternative interpretation of this passage by highlighting this neglected aspect of filial piety. The whole essay will conclude with a brief summary of its main argument.

The Current State of the Debate

In the last decade or so, there has been a heated debate on the Confucian idea of filial piety expressed in *Analects* 13.18. The debate was initiated by a series of articles by Liu Qingping 劉清平, criticizing Confucius’ view as expressed in this passage, along with Mencius’ view, as seen in *Mencius* 7a35 and 5a3, as a source of corruption in Chinese society, past and present. Guo Qiyong 郭齊勇 published a number of articles defending Confucius’ view against Liu’s criticism. A few others also joined the debate on both sides. These articles, together with some related ones, are collected in Guo (2004). I regard this as the first stage of the debate and edited a special issue of *Contemporary Chinese Thought* (2007), including abbreviated English translations of selected articles, mostly from Guo (2004), together with my own introduction. I also arranged a symposium on this topic in several issues of *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, starting with an article each by Liu and Guo, presenting their representative views on this debate (*Dao* 6 (1) 2007, 1–37), followed by a number of critical comments by primarily Western scholars (*Dao* 7 (1) 2008, 1–55 and 7 (2) 2008, 119–74), and concluded with a response each from Liu and Guo (*Dao* 7 (3) 2008, 307–24). On what seems to me

the second stage of the debate, one of Guo's former colleagues, Deng Xiaomeng 鄧曉芒, a prominent Kant scholar, published a series of articles defending Liu against criticisms by Guo and others. These articles are now collected in Deng (2010). This immediately triggered a series of responses by Guo and others (see Guo 2011; Guo 2014). Wang Tangjia of Fudan University introduced this stage of debate to the English speaking world (Wang 2014). The initiators of both debates are primarily Western-trained philosophers. However, in what I regard as the third stage of the debate, two Chinese intellectual historians and experts in excavated ancient texts, Liao Mingchu 廖明春 and Liang Tao 梁濤, have provided unique interpretations of this passage (see Liao 2013; Liang 2012; Liang and Gu 2013), prompting responses from Guo Qiyong and his students (see Zhang and Guo 2013; Guo and Xiao 2014). Some of the articles at this stage of the debate were translated into English, with some abbreviation, and published, along with my introduction (see Huang 2015), in a special issue of *Contemporary Chinese Thought* (2015, 46.3).

Critics of Confucianism often claim that, since Confucius himself regards honesty and uprightness as important moral virtues, he should praise the son who bears witness against his father stealing a sheep, rather than the son who does not disclose his father's wrongdoing. The very fact that he does the opposite shows that Confucius puts family relations, wrongly, in the view of these critics, above the virtue of honesty and uprightness (Liu 2004, 859). In contrast, defenders of Confucianism often emphasize the importance of the natural and genuine filial love a son feels toward his father, and claim that this is what Confucius means by uprightness. Thus the governor of She and Confucius seem to have two different understandings of uprightness. On the one hand, uprightness means impartiality: upright people treat their family members in the exactly same way as they treat others. They will bear witness against any wrongdoers, and so will not do anything differently if such people are their own family members. On the other hand, when Confucius says that uprightness lies in the son's not disclosing his father stealing a sheep, he is referring to the son's "unconcealable genuine feeling of love" toward his father (Meng 2004, 460; see also Guo 2011a, 6).

So the controversy on this *Analekts* passage appears to be one between these two senses of *zhi* 直, here translated as "uprightness", with one stressing the importance of the natural feeling among family members, and the other emphasizing that of social justice.¹ Either virtue, taken by itself, is good, but in this particular

1 Liang Tao claims that these two senses of *zhi* are used, respectively, by Governor She, who regards the boy bearing witness against his father as *zhi*, i.e., as someone who is upright, and Confucius when he says that *zhi*, i.e., straightforwardness and honesty, lies within the mutual concealment of wrongdoings among family members. In Liang's view, however, each of the above two senses is

case they come into conflict, although this is not always the case. It thus seems that we are facing a dilemma. Defenders of Confucianism emphasize the importance of familial feelings. While there are a few good reasons for them to do so, none of them, understandably, seem convincing to critics of Confucianism. For example, it may be argued that for Confucius the family is the basic social unit. Thus to maintain a harmonious family is essential to maintaining “a rational and ordered society with normal ethical relationships” (Guo 2004, 14). But this is not acceptable to critics of Confucianism. For them, even if the mutual non-disclosure of wrongdoings among family members can indeed maintain a harmonious family, which they doubt, it cannot maintain a healthy society. If every family, which has a member who commits a wrongdoing, does it, no wrongdoers will be punished, and they and potential wrongdoers will be encouraged to commit wrongdoings. The result will be no justice in the society (see Huang 2004, 961).

Another common defense is to use the analogy of family love as the root of a tree, and love for others as its branches. This defense is based on *Analects* 1.2: “superior persons pay attention to the root, as when the root is established, the Way will grow. Filial piety and brotherly love are the root of (the virtue of) humanity” (*Analects* 1.2).² In this analogy, in normal situations, family love and love for others are consistent, as the latter is a natural outgrowth of the former, just like a branch is a natural outgrowth of its root. Thus Mencius says that

if you treat the aged in your family in a way befitting their venerable age, you will be able to extend it to the aged of other families; if you treat the young in your family in a way befitting their tender age, you will be able to extend it to the young of other families (*Mencius* 1a7).

Thus, if the two come into conflict in a particular case, one’s love for family members takes precedence over one’s love for others, since the former is the root, and the latter its branches. When a branch is cut off, a new branch can grow as long as the root is preserved; however, if the root is cut, then not only can no new

one-sided, and there is a third sense of *zhi*, which combines these two, and when Confucius says, in the same passage, that the understanding of *zhi* in our village is different, this third sense is used (Liang 2012, 37). In my view, however, even when he says that *zhi* lies within the mutual concealment of wrongdoings among family members, Confucius also includes both meanings, which will be hereafter translated as uprightness. Moreover, as I shall show below, for Confucius, a truly upright person is one who makes non-upright persons upright. Thus, when Confucius says that uprightness lies in a son’s non-disclosure of his father’s stealing a sheep, he implies that this is the best way to make his father upright.

2 My translation of this sentence follows the traditional interpretation. According to the neo-Confucian interpretation, particularly the Cheng Brothers and Zhu Xi 朱熹, which I think makes more sense, it means that “filial piety and brotherly love are the beginning of practicing humanity”.

branches grow, but the existing branches will not be able to survive. This defense, however, has failed to convince critics. For them, just as a healthy branch grows only from a healthy root, moral relationships with people outside one's family can only develop from moral relationships within it. Just as we must fix the root if it has disease, not only for the sake of the branches growing from it, but also for its own sake, we also must correct the problem of a family member. If a family member does something wrong then we must address it, not only for the sake of our relationships with others, but also for the family member him- or herself. Moreover, in order to correct the problem of this family member, it is not right for us to conceal it.

Still another defense is based on legal or moral realism, according to which a law or a moral principle cannot require people to do what is not possible for them to do. For example, Fan Zhongxin 范忠信 argues that when we make a law or even establish a moral principle, we must consider the various scenarios in which it will be applied. Thus, even if a proposed law or moral principle by itself is right, it should not be adopted if what it requires is not something most people can do. He further relates this idea to the issue of the governor of She's praise of the son's bearing witness against his father as being upright, saying that it was not, and is still not, a standard that most people can meet (see Fan 2011, 382–3; Yang 2004, 107–8). This is essentially what Owen Flanagan calls the principle of minimal psychological realism, according to which we need “make sure when constructing a moral theory or projecting a moral ideal, that the character, decision processing, and behavior prescribed are possible, or are perceived to be possible for creatures like us” (Flanagan 1991, 34). This defense, however, remains unconvincing for critics. Suppose a morality does not require a son to disclose his parents' wrongdoing because it is not something most people can do. If the “upright” Gong indeed does it, however, he must be praiseworthy, and perhaps more praiseworthy than someone who merely does what morality requires him or her to do, since what he does in this case is something that most people cannot. While his action is not morally obligatory, it is supererogatory. However, clearly this is not how Confucius looks at what the “upright” Gong does.

While I think that none of these Confucian justifications for emphasizing familial love are convincing to critics, I do not mean that those critics have provided justifications for prioritizing a broader love for non-family members that would be convincing to the defenders of Confucianism. However, I also suspect that the very notion that this *Analects* passage presents us with a dilemma is perhaps wrong, even though this is also what I once thought (Huang 2007, 6). There are two reasons for my suspicion. First, as I argued elsewhere (ibid. 2013, Chapter 2), uprightness for Confucius is not simply to say or do what one truly feels,

but to say or do what is truly right. More importantly, a central component of Confucius' conception of uprightness is that a person with this virtue is not only upright him- or herself, but also aims to make non-upright persons upright. One of the people that Confucius noted as an upright (*zhi*) person was Shi Yu 史魚, a minister in the state of Wei, who remonstrated with King Ling of Wei and made him upright with words when he was alive and with his corpse after he died. Another person Confucius praised as upright was his student Min Ziqian 閔子騫, who, as I shall discuss below, made upright three different people in his family: his stepmother who mistreated him, his two stepbrothers who enjoyed the undeserved preferential treatment from their mother, and his father, who was thinking of divorcing his wife. In his commentary on *Analects* 17.8, where Confucius states that a person fond of uprightness (*zhi*) and yet not of learning tends to be acrimonious to others, Xing Bing 邢昺 points out that "to straighten the crookedness is called uprightness." This is a feature of uprightness that is also highlighted by Confucius' follower, Mencius. While saying that "a person who is not upright himself or herself cannot make others upright" (*Mencius* 3a1), Mencius emphasizes that an upright person makes the non-upright upright (*Mencius* 3a4). It is also confirmed by a statement in the *Zuo's Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*: "To right the crooked is called uprightness" (*Zuozhuan*: Duke Xiang, Year 7). If this is the case, Confucius' conception of uprightness is not materially different from that held by the governor of She. Their disagreement is only about which action, to bear witness against one's father or not disclose his wrongdoing, is a better expression of such uprightness.

Second, according to the common conception, the "upright" Gong puts social justice ahead of filial piety, while the person Confucius praises does exactly the opposite. This assumes a dichotomy between filial piety and social justice, at least in this particular case. However, while filial piety means to take care of our parents, in order to do so we need be concerned not only with their external wellbeing, but also with their internal well-being, which requires us to make sure that our parents do not do immoral things and, if they already have, that they correct themselves. Filial piety in this sense is perfectly consistent with social justice or our love for people outside our family. Thus, to simply not disclose our parents' wrongdoings, which causes harm to their internal wellbeing in addition to the harm to the external wellbeing of their victims, may be seen as offering our approval of their wrongdoings. This is not only not conducive to the enhancement of our parents' internal wellbeing, but will, in contrast, encourage them to inflict further external harm to others and so cause further harm to their own internal wellbeing.

It is in this sense that I think Lao Siguang's 勞思光 interpretation of this controversial *Analects* passage points in the right direction. Central to Lao's interpretation

is his use of the Neo-Confucian idea of one principle with many manifestations. In other words, the moral principles in Confucianism, while universal, must function differently in different situations. Lao uses the analogy of the principle of fairness in treating workers moving stones. To treat them fairly does not mean to ask them to move the same amount of stones. Instead, it is only fair to ask them to move different numbers of stones according to their different abilities. Similarly, to treat people with uprightness does not mean to treat them in exactly the same way. Instead, we need to take their uniqueness into consideration. Since a person's relationship to his or her parents is different from his or her relationship to strangers, when a parent and stranger commit the same wrongdoing, for example, when they each steal a sheep, an upright person does not treat them in the same way (Lao 2010, 123–6). I think Lao's approach is fundamentally correct. The question is that, while it is clear that a person's relationship to his or her father is different from his or her relationship to a stranger, and therefore, to be upright, one ought to act toward them differently if they both commit the same offenses, it is not clear *how* differently one should act. Confucius thinks that a son ought not to disclose his father's wrongdoing, even though he perhaps ought to disclose that of a stranger's, but why does Confucius not think that the son ought to disclose his father's wrongdoing but not the stranger's? Lao does not answer this question.³ In order to better understand this it is important to examine what is unique about the father-son relationship, and in order to examine this it is important to analyze Confucius' conception of filial piety. As this is a very rich concept, I shall limit my discussion only to the aspect that is most directly related to the question under discussion and yet has largely been neglected in related works (for other aspects of filial piety, see Huang 2012, 120–31).

Filial Piety and Remonstrance with Parents

In contemporary Chinese, the character for filial piety, *xiao* 孝, is often used together with another character for obedience, *shun* 順, to form a two-character phrase, *xiaoshun* 孝順, literally meaning filial obedience or simply obedience to one's parents. This gives the impression that to be filial and to be obedient are, if

3 Moreover, Lao points out there are two issues involved here. One is Confucius' view about different functions of the same moral principle; the other is his view of the special father-son relationship. In Lao's view, even though we may not accept the latter, we should still accept the former. In other words, Confucius' view of the special father-son relationship is situational, and may not be applicable to the father-son relationship in contemporary society. This seems to imply that although it is right that in Confucius' time a son ought to not disclose his father's stealing a sheep, it is not necessarily so today (Lao 2010, 125). In the following, however, I shall make a more radical claim that even in contemporary society it is still right for a son not to disclose his father's wrongdoing.

not identical, at least inseparable. It is certainly true that when Confucius talks about filial piety, he does include obedience to one's parents in normal cases. For example, Confucius says that one ought to know what parents think before they say it and do what they like and not do what they don't like (*Analects* 2.8). In another place, Confucius says: "Observe what your father has in mind when he is alive and observe what your father did after he dies. If you don't change your father's way for three years after he dies, you can be regarded as a filial son" (*Analects* 1.11).⁴

However, such an understanding of filial piety as inseparable from obedience is not fully correct. For example, when Zigong, one of Confucius' students, asks whether obedience to parents is filial piety, just like a minister's obedience to the king is loyalty, Confucius replies,

How shallow you are! You don't understand. In ancient times, when a good king of a big state has seven ministers who dare to remonstrate, the king will not make mistakes; if a middle sized state has five remonstrating ministers, the state will have no danger; if a small state has three remonstrating ministers, the official salaries and positions can last. If a father has a remonstrating child, he will not fall into doing things without propriety; and if a scholar has a remonstrating friend, he will not do immoral things. So how can a son who merely obeys the parents be regarded as being filial, and a minister who merely obeys the ruler be regarded as being loyal? To be filial and loyal is to examine what to follow. (*Kongzi Jiayu* 9; 57)⁵

4 There is disagreement about how to understand the first part of the passage. Here I adopt the interpretation that understands the subject of the verb "observe" (*guan* 觀) to be the son, while what is being observed is the father's thinking and action. According to another interpretation, developed by Kong Anguo 孔安國 (156–74 BCE) and adopted by Zhu Xi, what is being observed is the son's thinking and action, while the subject of the verb "observe" becomes a third party (see Cheng 1990, 43–44). D.C. Lau, in his English translation of the *Analects*, also adopts this interpretation and translates this part as: "Observe what a man has in mind to do when his father is living, and then observe what he does when his father is dead" (Lau 1979, 60). Chen Daqi compares these two interpretations and concludes that the interpretation adopted in this essay is more plausible (see Chen 1969, 10–12).

5 There is a similar passage in the *Book of Filial Piety*, when Zengzi says: "I have already heard from you about loving parents, respecting parents, comforting parents, and establishing a good reputation (to illuminate parents). Now I would like to ask you, my master, whether it is also filial to obey parents." Confucius says, "How can that be? How can that be? In ancient times, an emperor with seven remonstrating ministers would not lose the empire, even if the Way was not prevailing; a duke with five remonstrating ministers would not lose the state, even if the Way was not prevailing; a hereditary official with three remonstrating ministers would not lose his land, even if the Way was not prevailing; a scholar with remonstrating friends would be able to maintain a good reputation; a

In this passage, Confucius denies that a filial son ought to be blindly obedient to his parents, but emphasizes the importance of remonstrance. We ought to obey our parents only about right things, and should not obey when our parents ask us to do wrong things and should remonstrate with them against it when our parents themselves are doing wrong things. Later, Xunzi summarizes his ideas as follows:

there are three scenarios in which filial children ought not to obey their parents: (1) if their obedience will endanger their parents, while their disobedience will make their parents safe, then it is truly loyal for filial children to not obey their parents; (2) If obedience will bring disgrace to their parents, while disobedience will bring honor to their parents, then it is moral for filial sons to disobey their parents; (3) if obedience will lead to the life of a beast, while disobedience will lead to a civilized life, then it is reverent for filial children to disobey their parents. Therefore, it is not proper for a son to not obey what should be obeyed, and it is not loyal for a child to obey what cannot be obeyed. It is great filial piety to understand when to obey and when not to obey in order to be reverent and respectful, loyal and trustworthy, and act with sincerity and carefulness. (*Xunzi* 29.2)

In the above-noted debate surrounding *Analects* 13.18, contemporary scholars defending Confucianism often make a contrast between what Confucius thinks a filial child ought to do to his or her parents and what he thinks a loyal subject ought to do to his or her ruler with regard to remonstrance. However, in the passage regarding remonstrance quoted above, Confucius does not make any such distinction. Just as loyal ministers ought to remonstrate with their rulers, filial children ought to do so with their parents. This contradicts what is said in the *Tan'gong* chapter of the *Book of Rites*, a passage often used by scholars claiming that Confucian filial piety is based on obedience, where it is stated that

in serving parents, one ought to not disclose their wrongdoings and yet ought not to remonstrate with them against wrongdoings.... In serving rulers, one ought to remonstrate with them against wrongdoings and yet ought to disclose their wrongdoings. (*Liji* 3.2)

father with remonstrating children would not fall into immorality (*bu yi* 不義). So when something is not right, then sons and daughters must remonstrate with their fathers, and ministers must remonstrate with their rulers. One ought to remonstrate whenever there is something immoral. How can obedience be regarded as filial piety?" (*Xiaojing* 15; the same passage with a slight variance also appears in *Xunzi* 29.3).

Clearly, however, this passage does not represent Confucius' view. In this respect, *Analects* 4.18 is the most important and relevant passage, but as it is also subject to different interpretations, we are going to examine it part by part, to show why remonstrance is essential to Confucius' idea of filial piety.

The first part of this passage is not very controversial. It says, "when serving your parents, (if they are wrong) you ought to gently remonstrate with them". The only scholarly disagreement in interpreting this is related to the character translated here as "gently" (*ji* 幾). While most commentators adopt this interpretation, the Qing Dynasty neo-Confucian Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619–1692) claims that it means "at the beginning (of parents' wrongdoing)". As such, this part of the passage means that children ought to remonstrate at the very beginning of their parents' wrongdoing, as when the wrong action is completed, remonstrance will serve no purpose (see Cheng 1990, 272). I, however, in agreement with most commentators, still think it more appropriate to understand the character as "softly" or "gently" when remonstrating. It is taken for granted that one ought to remonstrate before the wrongdoing is committed and not after, or even at the beginning of the wrongdoing being committed, if the aim is to ensure that one's parents do not do immoral things. Even so, this does not mean that remonstrance has no role after the wrongdoing is committed; one ought still to remonstrate, with the aim of rectifying the wrong that has been done. The question is thus *how* one ought to remonstrate, whether before or after the wrongdoing is committed. Clearly Confucius does not think that a filial child ought to shout at his or her parents. Instead, as is stated in the *Book of Rites*, "one ought to remonstrate with low tone, nice facial expression, and soft voice" (*Liji* 12.15). So this very first passage is rich in meaning and particularly significant to the issue we are concerned with here. First, it is talking about children "serving their parents" (*shi fumu* 事父母), and so is related to the idea of filial piety; second, remonstrance is considered as one way to serve, and thus be filial to, one's parents; and third, any remonstrance has to be done in a gentle manner. As we shall see in the next section, the last point is particularly relevant to our understanding of why one ought not to turn in one's father for having stolen a sheep.

However, there are more scholarly disagreements on the next part of this *Analects* passage, which I shall translate as follows: "when you realize that your will is not followed by your parents, you ought to remain reverent (toward your parents) and yet not go against (your own will)". The key part is what I translate here as "not go against" (*buwei* 不違), which can also be translated as "not disobey". This part is mainly controversial because in the original sentence the object of this verb, *buwei*, is not explicitly stated. According to a more common understanding, the object of this verb is the same as the object of the verb preceding it, *jing* 敬, here

translated as “to be reverent toward”. Although the object of this verb, *jing*, is not explicitly stated either, there is no disagreement that it means parents; and since these two verbs are used together, it is natural to think that these two verbs have the same object. Thus, according to this interpretation, this part of the passage ought to be understood as, “when you realize that your will is not followed, you ought to remain reverent toward your parents and not to disobey them”. For example, the Han Dynasty classicist Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200) supports this interpretation by citing the following passage from the *Book of Rites*, “in serving one’s parents, if after remonstrating them three times they still do not listen, then a son or daughter ought to follow them with crying tears” (in Cheng 1990, 270).⁶ In other words, while one ought to remonstrate with one’s parents with regard to any wrongdoings they commit, if they do not listen then a filial child ought to feel sad but should let them continue to act in this way, and perhaps follow them in their actions.⁷ In contrast, according to the interpretation I adopt here, while the object of the verb *jing*, “be reverent”, is obviously “parents”, the object of the verb *bu wei*, “do not go against” is not “parents” but “your will” (*zhi* 志) to remonstrate in the first part of the sentence. Moreover, I believe that being reverent toward one’s parents is conducive to one’s continuing attempt to remonstrate with them. By being reverent toward one’s parents, the intimate relationship between parent and child can be preserved or enhanced, which creates the best environment for remonstrating with them. In this connection, Zhu Xi makes a very elegant and convincing argument. In his view, “not going against” has a double meaning:

on the one hand, it means to not go against our original will to remonstrate with them *gently*, in order to avoid making our parents angry by yelling at them; on the other hand, it means to not go against our original will to *remonstrate* with them gently, in order to do all that is possible to put our parents in a faultless situation.... When our parents do not listen to our initial remonstrations, it is wrong for us to stop remonstrating with them in order to avoid making them angry; it is also wrong to remonstrate with them in a way that makes our parents angry. (Zhu 1986, 705; emphasis added)

6 Zheng Xuan states that this passage is in the chapter on “Family Rules” (*neize* 內則) of the *Book of Rites*. However, it is not in this chapter, number 12 in the extant edition, but instead appears in the second chapter (*Liji* 2.28).

7 Indeed, this seems to be the view of Zengzi: “if one’s parent commits a wrongdoing, one ought to remonstrate and yet not to disobey” (*Da Dai Liji* 52); and “It is not filial to obey parents without remonstrations, nor is it filial to remonstrate without obeying parents (if they don’t listen). A filial son’s remonstrations aims at goodness and therefore should be done without quarrels with parents, as quarrels are the source of disorder” (*Da Dai Liji* 53). However, as I discussed elsewhere (Huang 2013, 43), Zengzi is criticized by Confucius for being too blindly obedient to his parents even when they are wrong, which actually causes harm, i.e., internal harm, to them.

There are a couple of reasons for adopting this interpretation. On the one hand, in another part of the *Analects* Confucius uses *wu wei* 無違, a synonym to *buwei*, both meaning “not going against”. There, Meng Yizi also asks about filial piety, and Confucius replies “*wu wei* (do not go against)”. His student Fan Chi asks what this means. While we may all expect Confucius to reply “do not go against your parents’ will”, since he is talking about filial piety, he surprises us all by saying that “when your parents are alive, serve them with propriety, and after they die, bury them with propriety and worship them with propriety” (*Analects* 2.5). So what he means by *buwei* is to not go against propriety instead of the will of one’s parents. It would thus be inconsistent if Confucius, in *Analects* 4.18, asks people to not go against the will of their parents when their intentions are clearly wrong.⁸ On the other hand, such an interpretation goes well with the last part of the *Analects* passage, which I translate as “you ought not to have complaints even if you wear yourself out by doing so”.

In this last part, the key word is *lao* 勞, translated here as “wear yourself out”. Song Dynasty classicist Xing Bing 邢昺 (932–1010) understands it differently, claiming that it means “being severely hit by your parents”. Thus, for him, this part of the passage means that “even if you are hit severely by your parents for your remonstrance, you ought not to have any complaint”. This interpretation receives some support from the chapter in the *Book of Rites* that appears to be a paraphrase of *Analects* 4.18. After the sentence about how to remonstrate with parents gently quoted three paragraphs back, it is stated that

if your remonstrance is not taken by your parents, you ought to remain reverent and filial. If they are happy, you ought to resume gentle remonstrance; if they are not happy, however, instead of letting your parents cause harm to your neighbors, you ought to use an extreme form of remonstrance. If at this extreme form of remonstrance your parents get angry and unhappy, hitting you hard with whips, you still ought not to complain about them; instead you ought to remain reverent and filial to them. (*Liji* 12.15)

This passage from the *Book of Rites* is to some extent consistent with the *Analects* passage we are interpreting here. Both insist that if our remonstrance is not taken, then rather than letting our parents commit the bad deed or even assisting them in doing so, we ought not to give up our efforts at remonstrating with them. It does add that if our continued *gentle* remonstrance does not work and our parents

⁸ Guo Qiyong thus argues that here it also means to not go against rules of propriety (Guo 2011a, 8). Although this is not the interpretation I adopt here, the outcome is the same.

are about to do wrong, then we ought to do more than a gentle remonstrance to stop them from causing harm to our neighbors; this may make our parents angry, and thus they may hit us, but we ought not to have any complaints about them. This is a very interesting point, and one that Confucius may well accept. Still the original *Analects* passage that we have been discussing does not mention stopping our parents from harming our neighbors and being hit by our parents because of our protests. I thus agree with most commentators who understand the passage to mean simply that children should continue to remonstrate with their parents. For example, according to Huang Kan,

when parents don't listen to our remonstrance, we ought to continue to remonstrate with them for tens and even hundreds of times and dare not to withdraw our labor and lodge complaints against our parents. (Cheng 1990, 271)

For another example, according to Lü Bogong 呂伯恭,

in order to move parents to a faultless station, we ought to think front and back, left and right, by hook or by crook, exhausting all possible ways. Even though we are thereby exhausted physically and mentally, we ought not to lodge any complaint against our parents. (ibid.)

So *lao* here means that the son or daughter, instead of giving up, makes a tireless effort to remonstrate with his or her parents until they cease to commit any wrongdoings.

Now we can put the whole passage together. Confucius asks us, when serving our parents, to remonstrate with a low tone, appropriate facial expressions, and a soft voice, if we are aware that our parents are going to do commit some bad action. If our parents do not listen to our initial remonstrations, we ought to remain reverent and filial toward them but not change our view of their deeds. Instead, we ought to think of all possible ways to dissuade our parents from carrying out the action, instead of letting them proceed and harm the neighbors (see *Liji* 12.15). Even if this process exhausts us physically and mentally, we should not make any complaints about our parents.

What we learn from the textual analysis of this short *Analects* passage is that when parents are committing or about to commit wrongdoings, a filial child ought not to be obedient in the sense of allowing them to do these actions, or even helping them to do so. If this is the case, however, how should we understand *Analects* 1.11, quoted at the beginning of this section, in which Confucius says that a filial

person ought to know and do what his or her parents think when they are alive and observe what they did after they die without changing their way of doing things for three years? The key to understanding this passage is to be clear about what Confucius means by the thoughts and practices of parents that a filial child is supposed to observe, and the ways that parents do things that a filial child is not supposed to change for three years after their death. Yang Bojun claims that all these mean right things, since if they were bad then Confucius would not think a filial child should continue to observe them without any changes. However, this then raises the question: if such practices are the correct ones, should they really not be changed at all? In this context, thus, I agree with Qian Mu, according to whom what Confucius has in mind are the ways to run routine family matters, such as the budget for various rituals, gifts to relatives, the arrangement of food and clothing for family members, and so on, which are more or less morally neutral. There is thus no urgency to change such routines, even if there are more efficient ways to run them (Qian 2006, 16). On moral matters, however, if what parents think and do is wrong, then a filial child ought to try and change them even when the parents are alive. In contrast, if what parents think and do is right, then these practices ought not be changed even after three years following their death. Understood this way, there is no tension between the passages in which Confucius seems to think that a filial child ought to be obedient to their parents and those in which he makes clear that a filial child ought to remonstrate with their parents if they are doing the wrong thing.

It is thus clear that, for Confucius, it is important for us to remonstrate with our parents when needed, and so we should not blindly obey them. Moreover, although we tend to think that filial piety is inseparably connected with obedience to parents, for Confucius remonstration is also its essential component. When parents are doing moral things, a filial child should of course be obedient to them; and a filial child should also be obedient to them when they are doing things that are more or less morally neutral, even though such matter could be done more efficiently or otherwise better. However, when parents are doing immoral things a filial child, being filial, ought to remonstrate with them. As we have seen, this is already made clear in the *Analects* passage that we have been analyzing so far, which says that, “in *serving* (*shi* 事) parents, we ought to remonstrate with them gently”. So remonstration is a valid way to serve our parents. However, in what sense is remonstration with our parents a service to them and therefore a filial action? When we are remonstrating with our parents with regard to their wrongdoings it appears that we have in mind the interest of those who might suffer from our parents’ actions, rather than the interests of our parents, who would most likely benefit from doing what they wanted. Understood this way, we may still

consider it to be moral to remonstrate our parents, but in what sense is it a service to them and an indication of our filial piety?

To fully understand Confucius' view that remonstration is a way to serve our parents and an essential component of filial piety, we ought to keep in mind that it is in the interest of a person to be virtuous (see Huang 2013, 45–53). For Confucius this is not an egoist thesis, as would be familiar in the Western philosophical tradition. In this egoistic sense, to be moral, for example, to be honest, is the best policy to serve our own selfish interest. First, since (for example) it is in our own interest that other people be honest with us, being honest with them seems to be the most reliable way to achieve this. Second, our being honest with others is also the most reliable way to serve our other interests. For example, if I own a business and am honest with my customers, then this not only wins their repeated business but also attracts new customers because of my good reputation, both outcomes serving my interest to make more money. Third, it is much easier to be honest than dishonest. To be honest, we only need to tell the truth in every situation. To be dishonest, however, requires us to remember what lies we have previously told and make sure that we do not tell another lie (or accidentally tell a truth) that contradicts our previous lies. Since people easily forget things, sooner or later a dishonest person will be found out, and so, as the saying goes, it pays to be honest.

This, however, is obviously not what Confucius means by one's self-interest in being moral, and when a filial child remonstrates with his or her parents, he or she does not have such interests of their parents in mind. To understand Confucius' view that it is in one's interest to be virtuous and not in one's interest to be vicious, we must keep in mind not only the Confucian distinction between interest in external wellbeing and that in internal wellbeing, but also the Confucian ranking of the latter over the former, as it is our internal wellbeing that distinguishes humans from other beings. So a filial child, who is supposed to serve the interest of his or her parents, should not only pay attention to their external wellbeing but also to their internal wellbeing; moreover, when our parents' external wellbeing comes into conflict with their internal wellbeing, to be filial, we ought to pay more attention to the latter. Since parents normally stand to gain externally but lose internally from their wrongdoings, we ought to remonstrate with them against such action, more for the sake of the (internal) interest of our parents than for the sake of the (external) interest of the potential victims of our parents' wrongdoing.

It is thus interesting to see Confucius' contrasting perceptions of two of his students, Zengzi and Min Ziqian 閔子騫. Both are included in the *Complete Pictures of the Twenty Four Exemplars of Filial Piety* (*Quanxiang Ershi Si Xiao* 全相二十四孝),

edited by the Yuan Dynasty scholar Guo Jujin 郭居敬 in the form of poetry, and later published with illustrations, that names the twenty-four people, starting with the legendary Sage King Shun, with the most moving stories about their filial piety. Zengzi shows his filial piety in both his whole-hearted care of his parents and his complete obedience to them, as demonstrated by his attitude when his father knocks him unconscious because he accidentally harmed some plants when weeding: pretending not to be hurt, he was instead showing his concern about whether his father wore himself out in exerting so much energy in hitting him. Confucius disapproves of Zengzi's blind obedience and asks him to follow the example of the Sage King Shun, who does not give his parents the opportunity to cause him harm. In contrast, Confucius exclaims: "How filial Min Ziqian is indeed! No one can disagree with what his parents and brothers say about him!" (*Analects* 11.5)

So what Min Ziqian did do that won him such high praise from Confucius? Min Ziqian's mother died young, and his father remarried and had two sons with his second wife. Min's stepmother mistreated him, but took good care of her own two sons. On a cold winter day, while driving a carriage, Min Ziqian began to shiver and lost hold of the reins. His father got mad and hit him with a whip, which ripped open his coat so that the reed catkins came out. Then his father held the hands of his other two sons who were also in the carriage. Feeling their hands were warm, Min Ziqian's father checked their coats and found that they were padded with cotton rather than reed catkins. Realizing that his wife had been discriminating against Min Ziqian, he planned to divorce her. Min Ziqian knelt down, begging his father to forgive his stepmother, saying that "if you keep her, only one of your sons is cold; but if you divorce her, all your three sons will be cold". This is a typical form of the gentle remonstrance that Confucius advocates in *Analects* 4.18. Moved by Min Ziqian's selflessness, his father accepted his remonstrance and changed his mind. Moreover, his stepmother and stepbrothers were also moved and transformed by it. From then on, his stepmother treated him as she treated her own two sons, and his stepbrothers loved him as an older brother.⁹ So Min Ziqian was not only virtuous himself, but also made others virtuous.

9 This story has multiple dimensions. As the Qing Dynasty scholar Jiao Xun 焦循 (1763–1820) points out, on the one hand, "Min Ziqian remonstrated with his father so that his stepmother would not be thrown out. This was his serving his parents above. (On the other hand,) he didn't have complaints about his two brothers being kept warm while he was left cold and was instead concerned about their being left cold should his stepmother be thrown out. This was his loving his brothers below.... (Originally) the stepmother's cruelty (toward Min Ziqian) was blamable, the two stepbrothers' exclusive enjoyment of warm coats was blamable, and the father's negligence of his wife's discrimination against Min Ziqian was also blamable. However, the whole family was moved and transformed by Min Ziqian's one single remonstrance, so that the parents didn't lose their kindness to children, and the two brothers didn't lose their brotherly love (*ti* 悌) for Min Ziqian, and what was blamable was made blameless." (in Cheng 1990, 748)

In the above passage I have highlighted an important and yet often neglected aspect of Confucius' idea of filial piety: remonstrance with parents against any wrongdoings. Here remonstrance is an essential feature of filial piety, because it is one way to serve one's parents, and the most appropriate one when they are doing wrong. This is because one's parents can be served both externally with regard their material wellbeing, and internally in relation to their heart/mind, with the latter being more important than the former, as it is what defines a person as truly human.

Why a Filial Son Does Not Disclose His Father Stealing a Sheep

With such an understanding of this often neglected dimension of the Confucian idea of filial piety, we can now return to the difficult passage mentioned at the beginning of this paper:

The governor of She told Confucius, "in our village, there is an upright person named Gong. When his father stole a sheep, he bore witness against him." Confucius said, "in our village, those who are upright are different: father does not disclose his child's wrongdoings, and child does not disclose his father's wrongdoing. Uprightness lies within it." (*Analects* 13.18)¹⁰

The crucial question is how, if at all, non-disclosure of parents' wrongdoing can be justified. From our discussion above, it is clear that non-disclosure of our parents' wrongdoing itself, to be appropriate, must be conducive to enhancing our parents' internal wellbeing, and thus the external wellbeing of those with whom our parents interact, since Confucius says that uprightness lies within this. The question is then in what sense our non-disclosure of our parents' wrongdoing is a better expression of our uprightness than our bearing witness against our parents? To understand this, I think that the following view of Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868–1940) that Guo Qiyong brings to our attention is particularly relevant:

10 The Chinese character that is translated here as stealing is *rang* 攘. According to some commentators, it does not mean the positive action of stealing, but simply to keep or not return. So in the *Analects* passage it means that the father simply took a lost sheep without attempting to find its original owner (see Guo 2011, 2). This interpretation is interesting and possibly authentic (although there is also disagreement among classical commentators), but not consequential to our argument. Should one's father indeed take the active action of stealing a sheep, I trust that Confucius' view about what a filial son ought to do would not be any different.

if our parents give a command to do a wrong thing, we not only ought to disobey but also ought to remonstrate with them against doing it. If we know that it is a wrong thing to do and yet still do it, even if reluctantly, because it is our parents' command, then we not only ourselves commit a crime but also thereby put our parents in an immoral situation. This is indeed a serious lack of filial piety! If our parents have unfortunately committed a wrongdoing, it is also not Confucius' way to publicly disclose it without seeking to remedy privately. This is what Confucius means by saying that parents don't disclose their children's wrongdoing, and children don't disclose their parents' wrongdoing. (Quoted in Guo 2011, 1)

In this passage, Cai makes a couple of important points. On the one hand, he says that if one allows one's parents to commit a wrongdoing, instead of remonstrating with them against it, one puts one's parents in an immoral situation (*xian qi fu yu bu yi* 陷其父于不義). This is indeed what Confucius himself says about his student Zengzi, ironically famous for his virtue of filial piety, when he allows his father to wrongfully knock him unconscious, instead of running away so that the opportunity for his father to commit this action would have been eliminated. This is why Cai says that this episode represents a serious lack of filial piety. On the other hand, Cai emphasizes that our public non-disclosure of our family member's wrongdoings is not only conducive to our private attempts to remonstrate with them but also must be followed by such remonstrations. This is fully consistent with Confucius' view of remonstrations as a central component of filial piety, as examined in the last section.

It is thus clear that after our parents have committed a wrong action Confucius thinks that, to be filial, we ought not to disclose it, but we are not supposed to stop here. What is more important is to seek remedies for our parents' wrongdoings, and for Confucius the value of not disclosing our parents' actions is that it serves to create an atmosphere favorable to such remedies. Cai does not explicitly mention what such remedies should be. However, given Confucius' emphasis on the importance of a filial son's persistent and tireless remonstrations with his parents, we can imagine that the correct remedy is to remonstrate with our parents so that they correct themselves. In our discussion of *Analects* 4.18 about remonstrations, we primarily had in mind a situation in which our parents are about to do something wrong, and thus the aim of the remonstrations is to make them change their mind and not act in this way. However, if the wrong has already been done, then clearly, to be filial, we ought to remonstrate with our parents so that not only can the wrong be righted, to whatever extent that is possible, but also, and more importantly, that our parents can become a better

person. In this connection, I find Chen Qianjian 陳喬見 particularly perceptive in pointing out that,

a Confucian filial son ought to not disclose the fact of his father's stealing a sheep on the one hand, and to remonstrate with his father to return the sheep to its original owner on the other. If one remonstrations fails, then do it second time, third time, until the goal is reached. (Chen 2011, 455)

As we have seen, in order for the remonstrations to be effective, i.e. in order for our parents to be willing to listen to us, Confucius recommends that we ought to remonstrate with them *gently* (*ji jian* 幾諫). If we yell at them then our (non-virtuous) parents would naturally get angry, and so it is very unlikely that they would listen to our remonstrations even if we tried to give it. It is thus important to maintain an intimate atmosphere for an effective remonstrations to occur. Now suppose that a son discloses his father's wrongdoing to others. Since his father is not yet virtuous, he will naturally resent his son. In such an atmosphere, if the son wants to remonstrate with his father, it is very unlikely that the father will listen. It is in this sense that not disclosing parents' wrongdoings is important if a filial child is to make any effective remonstrations. Such an action aims not only at rectifying the wrong that has been done, which is the branch of the problem, but, more importantly, to rectify the wrongdoer, which is the root of the problem. So even for Confucius, non-disclosure of one's parents' wrongdoing itself is not upright in and of itself, but uprightness lies within it, because this is what makes uprightness possible.¹¹

In this essay I have been intentionally translating the Chinese character *yin* 隱 as “not disclosing” instead of “concealing”, as is quite commonly done.¹² This is

11 Here I understand the purpose of *yin* 隱, non-disclosure of a family member's wrongdoing, is to rectify the wrongdoer. Recently, Wang Honzhi and, inspired by Wang, Liao Mingchun, argue that the character *yin* 隱 should not be read as concealment or non-disclosure but should, instead, be read as rectification. The main reason for this new interpretation is that the character *yin* 隱 is understood as a phonetic loan from the character *yin* 欝, which is frequently used in the term *yinkuo* 欝枯, a press-frame to make bent wood straight, referring metaphorically to the rituals sages used to reform human nature (Wang 2007; Liao 2013). This is an interesting reading and, if correct, will be consistent with the main points I am arguing in this paper. However, this reading has been questioned, with good reasons presented for opposing it (see, for example, Guo and Xiao 2014; Liang 2013). My interpretation of this *Analects* passage here, however, is independent from and, I think, more plausible than such a unique reading.

12 In a recent essay, Wang Xingguo 王興國 argues that there is not much difference between not disclosing and concealing. In contrast, with some plausibility, Wang argues that the character, *yin*, really means “to get rid of” (*fumie* 伏滅, *minmie* 泯滅, *liqu* 離去, *quchu* 去除). Thus, for Wang, what Confucius says in this controversial passage is that, as soon as one's parents or children have the idea of doing wrong, then one ought to help them to get rid of this idea. In other words, what is

important. The son simply does not disclose his father's wrongdoing in order to maintain the intimate relationship with his parents, conducive to the subsequent remonstrance. However, it should be noted that Confucius does not say that a filial son ought to cover up his father's wrongdoing or to obstruct justice when authorities are investigating the case; nor does he say that the authorities ought not to investigate the case of a father stealing a sheep. This point is made clear by the famous hypothetical case envisioned by Mencius, one that is often discussed along with this issue of sheep stealing. In the hypothetical case, the father of Sage King Shun kills someone. In Mencius' view, Shun, famous for his filial piety, would not bring this case to the attention of Gaoyao, the minister of justice Shun himself appointed. However, Mencius states that not only should Gaoyao arrest Shun's father, but Shun also must not prevent Gaoyao from doing so (*Mencius* 7a35). Therefore, a common complaint by critics of Confucianism that it speaks only from the perspective of the wrongdoer, rather than that of their victims, is somewhat misplaced (see Huang 2004, 958–9). While a filial son does not bear witness against his father stealing a sheep, he would not do anything to obstruct justice.

On the surface there is some inconsistency between these two aspects of Confucius' view: on the one hand, a son ought not to report his father's wrongdoings or bear witness against him; on the other, the authorities or victim ought to investigate and find the wrongdoer. We might think simplistically that if it is right for the son not to disclose his father's wrongdoing, then it must be wrong for the *authorities* to investigate the case, the purpose or at least the result of which would be to make the father's wrongdoing known to others. On the other hand, if it is right for the authorities to investigate the father's theft of a sheep, then it must be wrong for the son not to report it or refuse to bear witness against his father. However, in Confucius' view there is no inconsistency here. In appearance what the son does and the actions the authorities take cancel out each other: a filial son does not disclose his father stealing a sheep, making it difficult, if not impossible, for the authorities to find it out; the authorities do all they can to solve the case of the stolen sheep, making it difficult, if not impossible, for the filial son to keep his father's actions unknown to the public. Moreover, the filial son and the authorities seem to represent two conflicting interests: the former is looking out for the interests of his father, while the latter are working in the interest of the victim. In

important is not whether to disclose or conceal one's family members' wrongdoings, but rather to not allow them to commit this action in the first place (Wang 2012, 38). I think this is generally true of Confucianism, and it is essentially what Confucius' remonstrance aims to achieve. However, it is not plausible in this particular context, as this is Confucius' response to Governor She's praise of the "upright" Gong's disclosing his father stealing a sheep, and so *yin* 隱 here is in contrast to *zheng* 證 (bear witness). Here the question Confucius has is what to do when a wrongdoing is already committed by one's family member.

reality, however, both sides serve the same purpose, or at least overlapping ones, from the different social roles they respectively play. Let me explain.

It is generally understood that the reason Confucius does not approve of the “upright” Gong’s bearing witness against his father for stealing a sheep is that he wants to earn a reputation by doing so. This is particularly true in the extended version of this story recorded in *Lü’s Spring and Autumn*. As recorded in this text, after the “upright” Gong reported his father for stealing a sheep, the authorities were about to punish his father, and so Gong asked to be punished on his behalf. When the authorities accepted this offer and were about to punish him, however, he told the authorities:

My father stole a sheep but I reported it: “Am I trustworthy? When my father was about to be punished, I volunteered to take the punishment for him: Am I filial? Now if you are going to punish a person who is both trustworthy and filial, is there anyone in the state that does not deserve punishment?” Persuaded, the authorities decided to not punish him. After hearing that, Confucius said, “How strange that the ‘upright’ Gong can be regarded as trustworthy! He uses his single father to try to earn a double reputation.” (*Lü’s Spring and Autumn*, 261)¹³

However, let us assume that “upright” Gong reported his father for stealing a sheep not because he wanted to earn a good reputation for himself, but because he sincerely believed that his father was wrong, and that he should treat his wrongdoing in the same way as he would treat that of anyone else’s. Would Confucius then approve of his action? If the analysis set out above is correct, Confucius would still not approve. After reporting his father for stealing a sheep, the “upright” Gong would not be able to make effective remonstrations with him, even if he still desired to do so. One might say that there would now be no need for remonstrations, since it is the duty of the authorities to deal with the matter. However, the main thing, if not the only thing, that the authorities can and will do is to punish the father. Yet, as Confucius has famously pointed out, while punishment may be able to deter a person from committing the same crime again, it will not make the person feel shame (*Analects* 2.3). In other words, punishment can only restrain a person in terms of what he or she can do, but cannot make the person virtuous so that

13 It is possible that the story does not stop here. According to *Hanfeizi*, the result is that the “upright” Gong was eventually punished for his uprightness toward the king but his crookedness toward his father. According to the Qing Dynasty scholar Song Xiangfeng 宋翔鳳, the reason why there is discrepancy between *Hanfeizi* and *Lü’s Spring and Autumn*, with the former saying that Gong was punished and the latter not, is that, having heard what Confucius said the authorities then decided to have the son punished (in Cheng 1990, 924).

the person will not do any bad actions again in the future, even if he or she will be rewarded for doing them. It is in this context that we can see why not disclosing one's parents' wrongdoings is important: it provides a necessary environment in which a son's effective remonstrance with his father becomes possible, and such a remonstrance is an important step in reforming the wrongdoer rather than rectifying the wrong that has been done, with the latter being the duty of the authorities. Here we can see why a filial child's primary concern with his or her father's interest does not come into conflict with the authorities' concern with the interest of the victims. The interest of his or her father that a filial child is concerned with in this case is the father's internal wellbeing; when his internal wellbeing is taken good care of, he will cease to do immoral things and will, instead, start to behave morally, thus not only ceasing to cause harm but will also increasing the external wellbeing of others, the main concern of the authorities.

Now let us also assume that if the "upright" Gong offered to take the punishment for his father's wrongdoing sincerely rather than merely to earn a good reputation for being filial, and that the authorities actually punished him. Would Confucius approve of his action? I think the answer is a bit ambiguous if the "upright" Gong reported the case to the authorities first, as by doing so he again eliminates an opportunity to remonstrate with his father effectively. However, the answer is more likely that Confucius would approve of this action if Gong did not report the case to the authorities, which independently learned about his father stealing a sheep.¹⁴ In this context, the hypothetical example of Shun's father's being a murderer, mentioned above, is also relevant. Since the emperor Shun cannot stop his minister of justice, Gaoyao, from doing his job and arresting his (Shun's) father, Mencius says that what Shun can do is to give up his crown and secretly take his father to the edge of the sea, and then spend the remainder of his life together with him there (*Mencius* 7a35). Although in this hypothetical case Shun does not kill himself for the crime committed by his father, his giving up the crown and going into self-exile can also be regarded as a kind of severe punishment of himself

14 Zheng Jiadong brought to our attention the story of a son's taking a punishment on his father's behalf, as recorded in the *Records of History* (*Shiji* 史記). Shi She 石奢, the prime minister of King Zhao 昭 of Chu 楚, was a person with strength, uprightness, honesty, and integrity, never flattering people nor being afraid of anything in carrying out his duties. Once on a journey within his jurisdiction, there happened to be a murderer on the loose. He chased the man, only to find out that it was his father. He let his father go and put himself in jail instead. Then he sent someone to tell King Zhao, "the murderer is my father. If I administrate the government by killing my father, I am not filial to him; if I encourage crimes by abolishing laws, I am not loyal to you. Therefore I deserve the death penalty." Perhaps moved by both Shi's filiality and loyalty, King Zhao was not willing to punish him. Shi said, "If I'm not partial to my father, I will not be a filial son; if I don't abide by the laws made by king, I will not be a loyal minister. It is your grace to forgive my crime, but it is my responsibility to receive the punishment and die." Thus he killed himself. (*Shiji* 119; see Zheng 2004, 487)

(see Guo 2011a, 3). By spending the rest of his life with his father at the edge of the sea, he could not only be sure that his father would not commit the same crime again, but could also take advantage of the intimate relationship between them to remonstrate with his father and try and reform him.¹⁵ Of course, this element is not present in Mencius' original hypothetical case, but it is certainly consistent with Confucius' conception of filial piety that stresses remonstration.

To willingly suffer punishment for a crime committed by another may sound absurd to the ears of many Western philosophers. However, this is indeed a Confucian view, at least in the last resort. In *The Senior Dai's Book of Rites*, there is the following passage,

if what parents do conforms to the Way, one ought to follow; if what they do does not conform to the Way, one ought to remonstrate. If one's remonstration is not taken, one ought to take responsibility for one's parents' (wrong)doing. (*Da Dai Liji*, 53)

In a recent article, Liang Tao brings to our attention a passage from a recently discovered bamboo script, "Internal Rules" (*neize* 内則), that makes the same point: "follow your parents if they are right, and stop them if they are wrong. If they don't listen, then take the blame on their behalf as if the wrongdoing is committed by yourself" (Liang 2012, 37). However, there is a significant difference between Liang's understanding of a son's taking responsibility for his parents' wrongdoing and my understanding of it here. In Liang's view, in the example of one's father stealing a sheep, the son's taking responsibility means to tell the authorities that it is he (the son) who stole the sheep, and thus should receive the punishment. Such a view, however, invites a strong and legitimate objection from Liao Mingchun:

himself not stealing a sheep, the son takes responsibility for it on behalf of his father, acknowledging that the sheep is stolen by himself (instead of his father). Does this really correct the mistake of his father stealing a sheep? Not at all. Worse! The son himself commits a great wrongdoing: the violation of the basic principle of human behavior: honesty. (Liao 2013, 12)

15 One related objection to Mencius' view about what Shun ought to do is that, by giving up his crown, Shun abandoned his people (see Liu 2004, 869). However, since part of what it means to be a filial son is to take care of his parents' internal wellbeing, and since Shun's father committed murder, which not only caused the greatest harm to the external wellbeing of the victim but also the greatest harm to the internal wellbeing of Shun's father himself, Shun might consider that he did not do his filial duty well. Since in the Confucian tradition, one cannot be a good ruler without being a good son, Shun might also think that he was no longer qualified to be emperor.

To this, Liang's response is that "concealing parents' wrongdoing and taking responsibility for it on their behalf" is justifiable only in a non-ideal situation: when parents don't listen to their children's remonstrations and resist reforming themselves; in any case, the focal wrongdoing, as mentioned earlier, has to be minor (Liang and Gu 2013, 66). This response does not seem to be adequate to Liao's criticism, since in Liao's view, even in such a non-ideal situation, this measure is not the best; indeed it is even worse than reporting the case to the authorities, which, in Liao's view, may harm the family relationship but does not betray one's honesty, and so is essentially still an expression of *zhi*.

In comparison with Liang Tao's idea, there are a number of salient features of the Confucian notion of a son taking responsibility for his parents' wrongdoing as I understand and defend here. First and most important, it does not involve the problem that Liao Mingchun points out. The son does not cover up the truth that his father committed a crime, or lie that the crime was actually committed by himself. Instead, this situation happens normally when the parents' wrongdoing has already been known to the public, through the efforts made by relevant authorities, and not because of the son's disclosure, and the son then asks to be punished on behalf of his parent as he has direct responsibility for his father committing the crime, and thus indirect responsibility for the wrong he has done. In this sense, the responsibility that the son takes here is not vicarious but real. The reason is that, from a Confucian point of view, one of the things a filial son is supposed to do is ensure that his parents not cause harm to their own internal wellbeing by doing wrong to others, and so the very fact that one's parent commits an offense shows that the son has not fulfilled his filial responsibility in this regard. Thus when the son takes the punishment for the crime committed by his father, the son would also regard it as a punishment for his own failure. Second, this is not only applicable in what Liang regards as a non-ideal situation, in which one fails to reform one's parents, but also in the ideal situation, in which one successfully changes them. In the latter case, since the crime is already committed, the son decides to take responsibility for it by receiving the punishment for the wrong done by his father (directly) and himself (indirectly). Third, it is not limited to minor wrongdoings, as Liang qualifies it, but can even work in serious cases, such as murder. This can not only include the case of Shi She who killed himself for his father who murdered others, but also Shun, who, in a hypothetical scenario, abdicated his throne for his father who also committed murder. Fourth, the suffering of such a punishment in itself can serve the purpose of remonstrating with one's parents so that they do not commit any further wrongdoings. As all parents wish their children well, seeing them (children) punished for crimes committed by themselves (parents), they (parents) will naturally have the feelings of remorse and thus may become motivated to be better persons.

Moreover, the filial son's taking responsibility for his parents' wrongdoing is actually only one particular case of a virtuous person's taking responsibility for another's bad deeds. Thus, in addition to the passage from *Analects* 20.1, "if there are people with moral faults, I am the only person to be responsible", we also find the following saying from *Mencius* 5B1: "When he saw a common man or woman who did not enjoy the benefit of the rule of Yao and Shun, Yi Yin felt as if he had pushed the person into the gutter. This is the extent to which he considered the empire his responsibility." It is true that we have been so far exclusively concerned about what a virtuous son or daughter ought to do with a parent who commits an offense. However, if the father is virtuous, while the son is a wrongdoer, then the former may also regard it as his own fault that the latter did wrong, and so take responsibility for it. After all, we are all familiar with the famous saying in the Confucian tradition, "if a child is not cultivated, it is the fault of his father" (*zi bu jiao fu zhi guo* 子不教，父之過).¹⁶ This can at least partially respond to a concern raised by both Wang Hongzhi and Liao Mingchun in relation to *Analects* 13.18 that, as far as I know, has not yet been responded to by anyone in the literature. Wang asks: since Duke of She only mentions a son bearing witness against his father stealing a sheep, why does Confucius talk about the father concealing the son's wrongdoing before he talks about the son doing the same for his father? (Wang 2007, 94). In the English version of his paper, Liao makes his point more explicitly: even if a son should conceal what his father has done, from the Confucian point of view a father should never conceal his son's misconduct (Liao 2015). Now when a virtuous person (whether it is a father or son) tries to reform an immoral person (whether it is a son or father), it is obvious that the former would not try to make everyone know about the latter's misconduct, as we interpret *yin* (non-disclosure) as a means for rectifying the wrongdoer. Confucius himself says that he does not like those who regard disclosing others' shortcomings as *zhi* (upright/honest) (*Analects* 17.24). This clearly should be equally applicable to both children dealing with their parents and parents dealing with their children. There is thus indeed a symmetry between parents and children, and this symmetry is also retained in their taking responsibility for each other's wrongdoings.

Zheng Jiadong 鄭家棟 points out that a common problem with Confucius' view about not disclosing one's father's stealing a sheep, and Mencius' view of Shun carrying his father to a remote area, is that the criminal is still at large, and justice is not done (Zheng 2004, 488). This is a concern shared by almost all critics of

16 It is supposed to be from the *Sanzi jing* 三字經 (*The Three Characters Classic*), although it is stated there, at the very beginning of the text, slightly differently, "it is father's fault if he only raises his children without cultivating them" (*Yang bu jiao fu zhi guo* 養不教，父之過). Still, the basic meaning remains the same.

Confucianism. With regard to the former, it is indeed true that, in both cases, the person that committed the crime is still free. However, also in both cases, a suitable environment for remonstrance is created to reform the wrongdoer. As a result, it is hoped that the criminal will stop committing crimes. Regarding the latter, of course the authorities may want to achieve an additional goal, although one that seems to me morally ambiguous: by punishing the wrongdoer, on the one hand, justice is done in the sense that the same degree of harm is returned to the wrongdoer as the latter inflicted upon his or her victims, and on the other, potential criminals may be deterred from committing the same offenses. The reason I say this is morally ambiguous is that, on the one hand, it is wrong, at least according to the utilitarian theory of punishment, to punish a person if the person will not or cannot commit the same or a similar wrongdoing again; and on the other hand, it is wrong, at least according to the retributive theory of punishment, for the authorities to use a criminal as a tool to deter others. Of course, this involves the central issue of the debate between utilitarian and retributive conceptions of justice in punishment. As this issue seems to be unsolvable, I prefer the restorative conception of justice as alternative: when we identify a wrongdoer, the appropriate or just thing to do is not to inflict the same amount of harm upon this person that was inflicted upon his or her victims to maintain a balance (the retributive conception), or to inflict more harm on the criminal than he or she inflicted on the victim as a deterrent (the utilitarian conception). Instead, the aim should be to restore the person's internal wellbeing so that he or she would not have the inclination to commit any further crimes (see Huang 2007, 9–12).¹⁷ When a wrongdoer's internal wellbeing is rectified, on the one hand, not only will this person not continue to commit any wrongdoing, but this person will also become a role model for other potential wrongdoers. The utilitarian goal (the prevention of future wrongdoings) is thus reached without using the utilitarian means. On the other hand, this person will also try to make compensations, if possible, to the

17 This view of Confucius seems to be very different from what is called “putting one’s (criminal) family member to death in order to promote greater justice” (*dai yi mie qin* 大義滅親) as practiced by some notable people, the most famous of whom is Bao Zheng 包拯 (999–1062), who, as a judge, executed his own nephew. Since Bao Zheng has been praised throughout history as an exemplary official with absolute impartiality, if Confucius holds a view different from his, then some justification is needed (see Mu 2004, 967). On this issue, I think Guo Qiyong and Gong Jianping have made a very elegant argument. In their view, however others look at what he did, Bao Zheng himself “must have a deep sense of guilt and regret, as he would realize that he failed to educate his nephew or at least failed to educate him appropriately (as otherwise he would not commit the crime in the first place), that he failed to learn about (and therefore stop) what his nephew was going to do so that he would not become a criminal, and that he was trying to govern the state while he failed to govern even his own family” (Guo and Gong 2004, 55). What Guo and Gong say here is perfectly consistent with the notion of “moral residue” or “moral remainder”, which I discuss in Huang (2013, 116–7).

victims of his or her previous wrongdoings, and if this is not possible, the person will at least feel some regret and suffer in their conscience. As such, the retributive goal (the equality of benefits and burdens) is also achieved without using retributive means. This sense of justice, i.e., restorative justice, can be best served by Confucius' suggestion of mutual non-disclosure of wrongdoings among family members, followed by gentle but persistent remonstrations.

Conclusion

Filial piety, as one of the most salient features of Confucian teachings, if not the most salient, has been subjected to severe criticism in contemporary Chinese scholarship: why should we always obey our parents? The discussion presented in this work shows that this is largely due to a misunderstanding. Confucius' conception of filial piety does include a duty to serve our parents with respect and love, something that is not at all controversial. However, it also contains some other important aspects, one of which has often been neglected and yet is key to our understanding of the *Analects* passage that is the central concern of this essay: while a filial person, by definition, ought to take care of his or her parents, for Confucius, this not only includes the parents' external wellbeing but also, and more importantly, their internal wellbeing. It is thus extremely important for filial children to do all that they can to make sure that their parents do not commit offenses that will cause damage not only to the external wellbeing of the victims, but also to their own internal wellbeing. In Confucius' view, the best way for a filial son or daughter to accomplish this is to remonstrate gently with their parents against any intended offense if it is not yet done, and to remonstrate with them to right the wrong if it has already been committed. It is indeed in this context that we can understand Confucius' otherwise puzzling view that an upright son ought not to disclose that his father has stolen a sheep. Here, while the non-disclosure of the father's wrongdoing is not an indication of the son's uprightness, it creates or preserves the intimate family atmosphere in which a remonstration can most effectively be made. It is in this sense that Confucius says that the son's uprightness lies in his non-disclosure of his father's wrongdoing. In short, non-disclosure is not the goal but a means, the purpose of which is to change the father into a moral person so that he will not commit the offense again in the future, while also making compensation to any victims of crimes that have already been committed.¹⁸

18 This essay is significantly revised, updated, and expanded from Sections 4 and 5 of Chapter 5 of Huang 2013.

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Struggle for the Right to Cover Up for Family Members: The Significance and Value of the Confucian Thought “Cover Up for Family Members” in Modern Society

TSENG Wei-Chieh*

Abstract

The argument for covering up for family members who had committed offenses was a core part of Confucian thinking, and a topic that has long been controversial. This idea tended to be deemed by traditional Legalist scholars and contemporary law-centered scholars as an outdated approach that compromised legal fairness, and thus should not be accepted by contemporary society. However, it is understood through Honneth's recognition theory that the “law” is in fact merely a principle of recognizing a person's identity as a member of civil society, and we cannot ignore that man also has an identity of the “family” relation that is connected to “love”. The identity recognition based on the principle of “love” is an intrinsic need of humans, and also an essential link in the establishment of an integrated personality. The desire to cover up for a family member is nothing other than an attempt to rebuild an ethics-centered identity recognition, so as to avoid the materialization of humans by “laws”.

Keywords: Confucianism, *The Analects* 論語, *Mencius* 孟子, cover up for the family members 親親相隱, Axel Honneth, theory of recognition, normative reconstruction

Prizadevanje za prikrivanje za družinske člane: pomen in vrednotenje konfucijske ideje o »prikrivanju za družinske člane« v moderni družbi

Izvleček

Razprava o prikrivanju za družinske člane, ki so storili kaznivo dejanje, je bila v samem jedru konfucijskega razmišljanja ter že dolgo predstavlja sporno temo. Tradicionalni legalistični učenjaki ter sodobni raziskovalci zakonov imajo to idejo pogosto za zastarelo ter menijo, da ogroža legalno pravičnost, zaradi česar je nesprejemljiva za sodobno družbo. Toda če sledimo Honnethovi teoriji prepoznavanja, ki pravi, da je »zakon« le princip prepoznavanja človekove identitete v okviru civilne družbe, potem ne moremo prezreti, da ima človek tudi identiteto v okviru družinskih odnosov, ki je povezana z »ljubeznijo«.

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Prepoznavanje identitete, utemeljene na principu »ljubezni«, je notranja človekova potreba in bistvena komponenta pri grajenju integrirane osebnosti. Želja po prikrivanju za družinskega člana ni tako nič drugega kot poskus, da se obnovi prepoznavanje identitete, ki izhaja iz etike, s čimer se izognemo »zakonsko« utemeljeni materializaciji človeka.

Ključne besede: konfucianizem, *Analecte* 論語, *Mencius* 孟子, prikrivanje za družinske člane 親親相隱, Axel Honneth, teorija prepoznavanja, normativna rekonstrukcija

Introduction

Confucianism is often criticized as incompatible with modern rule-by-law due to its support for “covering up for family members” (*qin yin* 親隱), which is viewed as a righteous deed and a virtue in Confucian thought.¹ The concept can be traced to “The Argument about Justice between the Governor of She 葉公 and Confucius 孔子” in *The Analects of Confucius* 論語. If the father steals a sheep, should the son report him or conceal his wrongdoing? From a ruler’s standpoint, Governor of She considered it more valid to report, whereas Confucius, who took ethics’ side, thought it more appropriate to conceal the father’s crime (Lau 2010, 127).

There is another more extreme example in *Mencius* 孟子, “Emperor Shun 舜 in the Face of a Dilemma”. One of Mencius’ disciples—*Tao Ying* 桃應—asked him “If Emperor Shun’s father—the Blind Old Man (Gu Sou 瞽瞍)—murdered someone, what should Emperor Shun do?” Mencius answered, “He should not stop the executors from arresting the Blind Old Man.” Tao Ying was confounded and went on inquiring, “As a son, shouldn’t Shun do something to stop the arrest?” Mencius explained, “Executors have to prosecute their duties. How can they be interfered with? All that Shun could do was to leave behind the royal identity of Emperor and run away with his father to a lawless place and live happily ever after” (ibid. 2003, 303).

It is this cover-up-for-family-member idea in Confucius and Mencius’ speeches that has often attracted criticism of Confucianism as a while, since it violates the idea of rule-by-law spirit, as Liu Qing-Ping notes:

1 Although the concept of “cover up for family members” is pervasive in contemporary law—it can even be traced back to Han dynasty in China—it is undeniable that it is still being measured by the standard of “justice” and Confucianism took the blame for spreading it. Accordingly, it has become an imperative to redefine the concept of “cover up for family members” and show that it is not only the result of civilized progression, but also a right gained through constant collision with the system. It is thus able to emphasize the “family” as the basis of interpersonal relationships and build up a humanized theory of justice based on the atomic-individual ethic of justice. As to the idea of “cover up for family members” in Chinese law, please refer to Fan Zhong-Xin (2004, 602–6).

The main cause of people considering Confucian thought as a cradle that breeds corruption sits in the idea that blood relationship is prior to anything else. It positively approves of the deeds that are done to protect family members regardless of them violating the universal standards in social groups. (Liu 2004, 895)

Yet, as we can see, Mencius did not oppose the idea that murderers should be arrested and held responsible for what they did, nor did he deny of the primacy of law. However, in a sense, Mencius transcended the inflexible rule of law. What he proposed was a legal constitution that embraced humanity and, at the same time, political philosophy.

This can be supported by recognition theory,² as raised by Axel Honneth—a member of Frankfurt School—to increase the value of the Confucian idea “cover up for family members” in modern society.³ Just as what Axel Honneth realized, modern society holds people in the captivity of the identity and human rights that the law is associated with. All human behaviors are seen through the eyes of the law. All we care about is “passive freedom”—what the law tells us to do and not to do, and we overlook the identity and relationships that we are born with, namely the ethical relations emphasized by Confucianism, such as the relationships between

2 Honneth's recognition theory is a statement or verification about the effectiveness and legitimacy between subjects, and is a theory with an attempt to sort out and reflect, systematically, the identity recognitions that people make of each other. By inheriting and criticizing the thoughts of Hegel and others, Honneth basically divided the interrelations of subjects into three levels: identity recognition of family relation, that of civil society and that of nation. (Hu 2015, 151–7)

3 The issue of “cover up for family members” has been widely discussed and debated by Chinese and Western scholars. In China, the book *New Criticism of Confucian Ethics* by Deng Xiao-Mang criticizes the idea. *Criticism of the New Criticism of to Confucian Ethics* and *Collection of Debates on Confucian Ethic—Study of “Cover up for Family Members”* by Kuo Qi-Yong, both respond to Deng's view and collect the debates by contemporary scholars on the issue. Lin Gui-Zhen also makes arguments on the issue in the book *The Issue of “Cover up for Family Members” and Other Topics*. In the Western world, Huang Yong discusses the issue in greater detail, and he focuses more on a son's remonstrations to his father and the buildup of moral character; and yet he overemphasizes the idea of a “moral agent” and overlooks the dilemma of multiplicity in a person in the concept of “cover up for family members”. However, I am not going to delve into this debate in this study. Instead, I hope to raise a possible resolution to reduce the alienation caused by contemporary rule-by-law society and the law itself. Therefore, using Honneth's recognition theory to examine the past and scrutinize the present issue of “cover up for family members”, and to understand contemporary thinking about “justice”, this research aims to pave the way for an ethics of justice in the rule-by-law society. Honneth's theory might not represent the universal opinion of contemporary society, but its basis on current introspection and criticism accords with the intention of this research. Although recognition theory might not be the only way to solve this problem, it is one of the best ways to explore the issue of “cover up for family members” in China and the western world. (Deng 2010; Kuo 2011; Lin 2013; Huang 2013, 139–50)

father and son, brothers, husband and wife. Why do we throw over our ethical relations for what the law identifies us to be, and further throw away the right to protect such relations?

With cross-referencing, we can see that the Confucian idea of “cover up for family members” is quite similar to the criticism of the modern legal-based society presented by recognition theory. It also aims to present practical reasons and an ethics of responsibility in normative reconstruction.

Necessity of Covering Up for Family Members: Reflection on Multiple Identities

We can start by reflecting on the act of “covering up for family members”, as set out in *The Analects of Confucius* and *Mencius*, and consider why the issue of sons reporting fathers’ wrongdoing would trigger such a debate, and why idea of sons covering up for fathers would suffer such public censure in contemporary society. These questions must be probed from the perspectives of contemporary philosophical thought and the legal dimension that defines and clarifies the meaning of “human”.

Reflection: Deficiencies of Law-centered Scholars

In his *Analects*, Confucius discussed the concept of “justice” (*zhi* 直)⁴ with Governor of She. Governor of She perceived the act of sons reporting fathers’ theft as a just deed, whereas Confucius found justice, reversely, in the deed of “covering up”, declaring that fathers or sons should be covering up for each other even when one of them had committed theft.

We can thus consider why the deed of “covering up for family members” would be appraised differently by Governor of She and Confucius, and also realize that the difference in their perspectives would further influence their recognitions of “justice”. One of the key elements to why these differences exist is the two speakers’ identities. The Governor of She spoke from the perspective of a law enforcement

4 D. C. Lau translated “*zhi gong* 直躬” in *The Analects of Confucius* as “straight”, which means correct, upright, and candid. Similarly, James Legge translated it as “upright”. These translations highlight the ancient language context, but if we read the term from the perspective of contemporary philosophy then we can comprehend it as “justice”, which shows traditional Confucian universal values and breaks away from the limitations presented by the traditional context, which is to say, the feeling of being “straight” and “upright”, from the social dimension and philosophical thought, is a deed of pursuing “justice”.

professional, whereas Confucius came from the angle of a philosopher, educator and sociologist (Quan 2000, 4–7),⁵ and thus defined “justice” at the philosophical level.

That is, as a law enforcement professional and administrator, the Governor of She assessed and judged a person’s deeds and defined “justice” from the viewpoint of traditional law and punishment. As such, if anyone went counter to law, then he or she should be punished. The implementation of this punishment is then an act of justice, which indicates that the relationship between Governor of She and the people was based on law, which could be represented in the following order: “Governor of She–Law–the people”. In his opinion, every person is an individual and every individual is a “legal person” before the law.

The term “legal person” is, however, equal to a term that we are familiar with, that of “human” in contemporary legal-based society. In this, every right and obligation is determined by law, with no exception. Judging from such an angle, the statement “Fathers cover up for their sons, and sons cover up for their fathers” (Lau 2010, 127) in *Confucius* is in defiance of the law, a form of injustice. It goes without saying that, in light of such an opinion, Mencius’ statement with regard to Emperor Shun shielding his father, the Blind Old Man, who murdered someone, is beyond comprehension.

A Taiwanese legalist, Zhou Tian-Wei strongly condemned the son who “secretly carried the old man on his back and fled to the edge of the sea and lived there happily”, and stated that even though it was a filial duty, it was a lawless deed (Zhou 1998, 49). He believed this caused immense harm to the fairness of law and was this no valid in contemporary society. A professor from the Department of Philosophy in Beijing Normal University, Liu Qing-Ping, also strongly criticized the idea of “covering up for family members” and thought it “a cradle that breeds corruption in Confucian thought”. In short, “blood relationship before anything else” (Liu 2004, 895) is a concept that violates contemporary ethics.

Criticism: Atomistically Isolated Individuals amid Modernism

However, the legal focus that Zhou and Liu brought about is to be denounced. Neither is the view that Governor of She held, because, as Honneth stated, “in

5 We should not characterize the word “human” as defined by Confucius, but should ponder on what “human” is syntactically. How do we reach justice and stability in society through changing people’s minds and deeds? Of course, Confucius, in some way, was a politician, but his thought was not confined to politics only. As Qian Mu said, he was a person who “mingled knowledge with emotions; mixed religion with wisdom; combined socialism with individualism”.

traditional law, everyone is a legal person" (Honneth 2005, 117–8), and we are deprived of our other identities and only live as "legal people", detached from the complex elements of a community.

The concept of the traditional "legal person" builds on the idea of "individuality", which is propped up by law, and each individual perceives the world from their own perception. They have to face happiness or sorrow, duty or right, on their own, because they are an individual and there are no connections among anyone. Such a concept entered the mainstream after Rene Descartes (1596–1650) and formed a dualism, as such, "based on epistemology and value theory, the basic unit in Western society is the individual" (Liu 2004, 736).

Honneth examined this phenomenon and indicated that people who adopt a strong sense of individuality basically succumb to the dangers of atomic theory. Each individual is alienated before the law, and is not seen as playing one of the many roles in an ethical community, and this hinders the sustainable growth of "ethical integration" (Honneth 2005, 17). This "ethical integration" values "inter-subjectivity" over individuality, which is perceived as a detached being. It emphasizes the complexity and the multiplicity in a person, and integrates these in interpersonal relationships, aiming to understand the interactions between people to find the essence of the "complete person", instead of building up an independent "legal person" and then tacking on it the ethics and circumstances of exception and otherness (ibid.), kindling hostility and conflicts.

The concept of "covering up for family members", as presented in *The Analects of Confucius* and *Mencius*, was called in question by Tao Ying, the pupil of Governor of She and Mencius, and criticized by contemporary legal centralists. They perceived people as detached individuals, resorted only to the law for rationality, and left in oblivion the multiple identities and values of a being.

Here, multiple identities refers to a phenomenon in the interrelationships among people: everyone plays many different roles when in different situations. A woman can play the part of a mother, lover, wife, citizen, or professor. She, in her different roles, finds different obligations and shoulders various responsibilities (Liu 2004, 737). Yet the legal centralists and Governor of She thought it righteous for the son to report his father when the latter committed theft—a case recorded in *The Analects of Confucius*. They only saw the son as a citizen, and left out the fact that he is also a son.

From the idea of multiple identities, as in Honneth, we must recognize the multiple values endowed in a person, and see that there are three orientations to the interrelationships among people, which are emotional attachment, conferring of

powers, and common value. These three orientations exist in beings with different modes of “recognition”, and, accordingly, they lead to the development of distinctive potential moralities. “Emotional attachment” recognizes the righteousness of mutual existence by virtue of love; “conferring of powers” recognizes validity by virtue of law, and “common value” recognizes the social identity by virtue of unity (Honneth 2005, 102–3).

In other words, the Governor of She endowed a person with their rights by law, and it was by law that he assessed a person’s responsibility. In the situation “When his father stole a sheep, he the son gave evidence against him” (Lau 2010, 127), we only see the identity of the son’s citizenship and neglect his role in the family. The law only demands that a citizen act responsibly in terms of the law—there should thus be no concealing of lawless acts or people. Such a concept leaves out the compassion that a son should feel, and perhaps the above statement needs to be revised as follows to conform with the ideas awareness of the Governor of She and legal centralists: “When a citizen steals a sheep, the other citizens should give evidence against him.”

Development: An Integrated Personality with Multiple Identities in Confucian Ethics

We could perhaps form the idea that the law sees a person as an independent and unattached individual, and each has their right and duty based on the ideas of atomism, and yet all the law actually does is emphasize a being’s “legal person” identity, leaving out the multiple identities and values in a person. Such a problem emerges several times in the previous text—we judge a person solely by his identity as a “citizen” and demand that he does what should be done by a “citizen”. We thus singularize and flatten a round character, and we neglect the fact that “citizen” does not stand for “human being”.

We can consider it this way: aside from living in the same city, say, there is no connection between citizen A and citizen B. As such, perhaps it is reasonable to say that citizen B is conforming to the principle of justice to report citizen A after catching him stealing. However, if citizen A and citizen C are father and son, then we cannot expect citizen C to do the same thing as citizen B does, because, besides the identity of citizenship that the law has given, these two men are bound together by “love” and their blood relationship. The justice defined by law is not necessarily the justice defined by love. True justice is inclusive of a person’s different orientations, and leaving out one of these means that it is not qualified to be called justice.

Honneth realized that in a society where everyone is identified as a citizen, the relationship between individuals is based on the trading, while people's roles as family members start to wane, and thus alienation grows (Honneth 2000). The legal-centered "recognition of rights" prevails over the love-centered "recognition of emotion". An over-emphasized individuality leads to the end of certain dimensions in a person, and these dimensions are the most significant elements in Confucian thought—family ethics and family relationships, which refer to the relationship between fathers and sons in *The Analects of Confucius*. In professor Tu Wei-Ming's words, "families imbued with Confucian values are perhaps still the single most important social institution in imparting ways of learning to be human in East Asian societies" (Tu 1998, 135). Family relations are the core of Confucian thought, and are also the dimension Honneth took notice of.

Another question is why Confucius would say "Fathers cover up for their sons, and sons cover up for their fathers. In such behavior is straightness to be found as a matter of course" (Lau 2010, 127). Why is covering up for family members an act of justice? It is because the intention of the act revolves around love, which binds people together emotionally. In such a situation, the identities of fathers and sons are valued, instead of identifying every father and son as a citizen, as the Governor of She and the legal centralists proposed.

Accordingly, and based on the theory proposed by Hegel (1770–1831), Honneth divided the standard of justice and the norm of freedom into "family", "civil society" and "country" (Honneth 2000), which are the important elements for people in a law-based society. They give meaning to family relationships before the law and highlight the significance of the "covering up for family members", showing that every individual is more than what the "law" defines them, and thus their duties and responsibilities are more diverse than what the "law" demands, because everyone is bound by relationships based on love. After seeing the importance of multiple values and identities, we will next take the discussion further into the rationality and necessity of "covering up for family members".

Rationality of Covering Up for Family Members: Seeking Identity Recognition of "Family" Relations in the Suffering Due to Indeterminacy

Since everyone possesses multiple identities, we start to see how love binds people together, and begin to value the identity a person bears in a family, rather than looking at people from a strictly "legal" angle and defining everyone as a "legal

person”. To get a clearer picture, we should ask why when there is a conflict between the role of a “family” member and “civil society” citizen, we should put our family-member role in priority and civil citizenship in the second place, with no exception? Why should we consider the possibility of covering up for family member when they commit a crime?

An Irreplaceable Relation: “Family” Relation as the Identity Recognition of Essential Meaning

First, we can consider this from the perspective of every individual’s irreplaceability. As Honneth proposed, the dimensions of relationship between people are divided into “family”, “civil society” and “country”. If any one of these comes into conflict with the others, which should take precedence? This question is considered below.

The obstacles and possibilities of multiple identities are more easily comprehended if we take a look at the case of “Emperor Shun in the Face of a Dilemma” in *Mencius*: One of Mencius’ disciples “Tao Yin asked, ‘When Shun was Emperor and Kao Yao was the judge, if the Blind Old Man killed a man, what was to be done?’” (Lau 2003, 303). In this situation Shun has three identities: (1) To the Blind Old Man, he is a son, and thus a family member; (2) to judge Kao Yao, he is a supervisor, and thus part of civil society; (3) to the country, he is the emperor, and thus exists in relation to the country.

Most of the legal centralists would criticize Shun—the emperor—for sheltering his father and deem it as corruption and a disdain for law (Liu 2004, 894). And yet, such a condemnation is only seen from the angle of Shun as an emperor, and overlooks the fact that he is also a son. Mencius not only embraced Shun’s identity as a son, but also put “family” before the law, and declared: “He (Shun) would have secretly carried the old man on his back and fled to the edge of the sea and lived there happily” (Lau 2003, 303).

Mencius placed “family” before “civil society” and even before “country”, showing that the relationship between family members is irreplaceable. This corresponds to the observation made by Henry Rosemont Jr and Roger T. Ames: “family feeling (*xiao* 孝) is a prior and necessary condition for later extending and developing fellow feeling (*ren* 仁) for all others” (Rosemont and Ames 2008, 10–11)

That is to say, Shun possessed at least three identities, which are “son Shun”, “superior Shun”, and “Emperor Shun”. However, the identity as a son is inborn, natural and destined, and the other two identities can be abandoned of one’s free will

(Liu 2004, 737); therefore, only the identity tied by love and family relationship is irreplaceable.

As such, why do people abandon their identities as family members, which they were born with, for the law that is not innate? Professor Chen Hong-Xue from Cheng-Kung University suggested that “We should not build up the civil society at the cost of ethical relations” (Chen 2012, 14). This is also what Roger T. Ames pointed out, claiming that the family as an “in-group”⁶ possesses strong bonds, and through the “in-group” bond, every individual associates him- or herself with society, politics and the natural order; they are mutually beneficial to each other, and these roles are the keys to an individual’s self-fulfillment (Ames 1995, 276, 278). This suggests that public order should be established based on the innate “in-group”.

We definitely cannot abandon the inborn relationship between fathers and sons, which is supported by love. Neither should we define and assess a person in too rational a way, which is why the recognition theory proposed by Honneth inspires the current study: we do not have to abandon the relationship between parents and children, and we only have to see it as a limitation and balance it with law (Honneth 2013, 185). This concept goes hand in hand with the idea “cover up for a family member”. Mencius said, “the only thing (that Kao Yao needed) to do was to apprehend him (the Blind Old Man)”. He did not suggest that Shun prevent judge Kao Yao from enforcing the law, and neither did he think Shun could use his power to change the fact that his father—the Blind Old Man—had murdered someone. He should, however, have “looked upon casting aside the Empire as no more than discarding a worn shoe” (Lau 2003, 303). This is a decision made after considering the limitation of a family relationship.

By the principle of multiple identities, “father-love-son” should be placed before “citizen-law-citizen”.

An Inseparable Relation: “Love” as the Key to Forming Normal Personal Traits

We then need to realize that Confucius thought it righteous for the man whose father stole a sheep in *The Analects of Confucius* and Shun, whose father murdered people, in *Mencius*, to cover up for a family member because of the irreplaceability and indivisibility of the bond between fathers and sons. Yet, if we think about it

6 This refers to a group of people that consciously care for one another, collaborate, unite and are intimate with each other. The opposite of “in-group” is “out-group”.

from the perspective of dualism and see everyone as an atomized individual, we naturally cannot see the connection between them and thus come to judge things like the legal centralists.

However, an unattached individual earns their recognition in the society only through law—we recognize the legality of people living in society by virtue of the law, but this does not make a person complete. The completeness of a person stands on their own distinctiveness, which refers to the recognition and self-gratification that one feels in the role as a family member, as achieved by love (Honneth 2005, 28). That is, if we only see a person as a “legal man” and overlook the importance that emotion plays in society, we will be materialized and that leads to alienation. From the perspective of psychoanalysis, this alienation triggers psychological disorders and results in morbidity (*ibid.*, 103–4).

It is thus not hard to grasp that losing the recognition between family ties, which grow based on love, leads to a morbid personality. During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) in China, there were many denunciations and accusations between fathers and sons, teachers and students. In East Germany (1945–1990), secret policemen caused many couples and friends to report on each other, have negative effect on character building. Confucius and Mencius shared the same idea, because the core of their theories was the “family”, which is a very significant characteristic in Confucian thought. One of the Confucian classics, *Liji* (*Book of Rites*), states that “who wanted their pure and excellent character to shine in the world would first bring proper government to the empire; desiring to bring proper government to the empire, they would first bring proper order to their families.” (Hall and Ames 1992, 164)

In the context of “the argument about justice between the Governor of She and Confucius”, Confucius deemed it righteous to give priority to the father, so he suggested that the son should cover up for his father; in the context of “Emperor Shun in the Face of a Dilemma”, Mencius advised Shun to escape with his father to the edge of the sea and live there happily with him (Lau 2003, 303). This is the serenity and bliss brought about by the relationship between parents and children.

As Honneth suggests, in the father-son relationship tied by love, the one that loves and the one that is loved can open their hearts and recognize each other due to this love. The two are thus no longer two individuals. There no longer exists a boundary between them, and they are in a state of mutualism (Honneth 2005, 112). That is, in the situation where the father stole a sheep, the son and father were no longer two individuals but they were mingled as one “father-son”. In the situation where the Blind Old Man murdered people, there is no boundary between Shun and his father, they are “Blind Old Man-Shun”. They mingled as

one because of “love”. We keep emphasizing that we should abide by law, but in this case, if Shun chose to comply with the law he would be pushed away from his state of oneness—“Blind Old Man-Shun”. The meaning of family love would be lost, rendering him lonely, empty, and confused, which means, in Honneth words, he would be “suffering from indeterminacy” (Honneth 2000).

That is, the relationship between individuals should be built on “affection”—every norm and logic rests on “feeling”, or else it loses any rationality for being human beings. Just as Li Ze-Hou indicated, people are beings with emotions, and this is why it is necessary to build everything upon “affection”—otherwise, people will get lost in a ruthless absolute rationalism and order, which is why Li Ze-Hou emphasized the value of emotion-based substance” (*qing bentì* 情本體) that evades the predicament of “killing in the name of justice” (Li 2008, 54–71); why Confucians proposed “the right of covering up for family members”, and why Honneth presented recognition theory.

The concept “covering up for family members” is different from what Liu Ching-Ping said, “put blood relationship before anything else” (Liu 2004, 895), but it comes from deep inside everyone, the intuition that we are endowed with—to protect our family members—and once the connection of love is cut off, we are no longer “complete”.

Quest to Cover Up for Family Members: Struggle for the Right to Cover Up for Family Members

It is acknowledged, based on the idea that covering up for family members is rooted in the family affection, that it is possible to establish the “family”-level relationship as the foundation of all people, such that integrity and normality can be assured. That is, covering up for family members is reasonable and necessary. From exploring its past, present and future, we can further understand how this idea can more closely conform to the principle of justice.

Awakening: Challenge against Law-centered Philosophy

Those against the idea of covering up for family members criticize Mencius’ argument that Shun should have abdicated and run away along with the Blind Old Man. Chou Tian-Wei, for example, argued that would be in contempt of justice (Chou 1998, 55). Qian Mu also stated that “covering up for the father’s act of stealing sheep is a minor crime; running away with the father who had committed

murder is a felony; as an Emperor, Shun's act of abandoning the duty of running a nation is beyond felony" (Qian 1981, 118–9). We now can ask the following: If covering up for family member is right and due, why did Mencius insist that Shun run away with his father?

In fact, Shun's running away with the Blind Old Man did not violate the concept of covering up for family members, but instead had the full reasonableness and rightfulness of doing so. We can see from the Governor of She's idea on the case "when his father stole a sheep, the son gave evidence against him", and in its presentation as a just action in *The Analects of Confucius* (Lau 2010, 127), that "covering up for family members" was not universally accepted, and even seen as incorrect in the eyes of the ancient rulers.

In other words, if we apply Honneth's concept of three divisions, which are "family", "civil society" and "nation", to ancient society, the level of "family" is then tied by "love" to the ruler. Therefore, besides justice, Confucius and Mencius attempted to take ethics into their consideration of justice and tried to promote the idea of covering up for family members, which is also what Honneth advocated. He suggested that we should be able to ascertain who is being suppressed and fight for their rights, based on the sensitivity of our morality (Hu 2015, 195). In this, the Confucians and Honneth are consistent.

As to why Shun had to abandon his throne and flee to the edge of the sea with his father, it is because he was covering up for family members. Because the concept of this action had not yet come into shape, nor did such a right exist, Shun had to break the system to manifest his own ideal. Just as Honneth notes, this was a "struggle for recognition" (Honneth 2005, 50). That is, the system at that time focused on justice and left few footholds for parent-son relationships to stand on. The law required people to report the criminal acts of their relatives, in conflict with the recognition of relationships tied by "affection" and by "justice", in which the subjects are forced to recognize each other in the "citizen-law-citizen" manner, while that in the "father-love-son" manner is not allowed. It is thus necessary to "embody the conflict between subjects" (Hu 2015, 180) to struggle for the right of covering up for family members.

For Confucius and Mencius, emphasizing the importance of "legal" relationships and forcibly waiving the relationship of "love" was an injustice, and thus it was necessary to struggle so that more "affectionate" relationships be realized, just as Shun did. Shun, as Honneth states, took an action "against the mainstream culture in order to be respected" when a certain value was not recognized (Honneth 2005, 129).

Conflict: Seeking the Right to Cover Up for Family Members through Struggles

Confucius' and Mencius' building of the primitive attachment in ethical relationships and, in the context of Confucian classics, Shun's struggle for the right of covering up for family member, did succeed in Chinese history, and the idea became a mainstream one.⁷ On the whole, in post-Han Dynasty China the law was inclined toward accepting the right to cover up for family members (Fan 2004, 602–6). Taiwan and China both preserve this tradition in the present day (Chen 2012, 14).⁸

Now, how did the idea of covering up for family members become the mainstream in China? Why did it succeed in being accepted after all the struggles it had faced? The fact that the concept is now widely accepted proves people's need for primitive attachment; it also embodies the Confucian value of ethical thinking. Chou Tian-Wei criticized Mencius for his belief that "ethics itself is the source of order", because it led to the corruption of the legal order. (Chou 1998, 58). However, when judging from Honneth's theory of three divisions, which are "family", "civil society" and "nation", Mencius belief is tenable. As stated above, when losing the recognition that comes from family ties, which grow on love, then this leads to a morbid personality and may even cause a sociopathic one.

That is to say, the identification recognition in a "love"-connected "family" relationship, as argued by Honneth, is a relationship in men's most primitive experience, also referred to by Hegel as the intrinsic need for "ethic anticipation" (Honneth 2005, 45). Only when this essential need is satisfied can the meaning of "love" for individual development be integrated into social ethics, i.e., the recognition of an identity relationship at the "civil society" and "nation" levels (*ibid.*, 44). This is exactly what Confucian thinking means by an "arithmetic of love"—a man's "network of relations is like a ripple; no matter how far it reaches, the energy is always the greatest at the center" (Tan 2002, 173). It may not be appropriate to say that ethics itself is order, but ethics absolutely is the *source* of order.

In this regard, Guan Zhong—the prime minister of Qi—who Confucius highly praised, once advised Duke Huan of Qi 齊桓公 by saying that Yi Ya 易牙 "should

7 The scenario of Shun "secretly carrying the old man on his back and fleeing to the edge of the sea" was a philosophical hypothesis. However, the existence of such scenarios in Confucian classics really epitomizes early Confucians' struggles for the right to cover up for family members, and is also a reflection of the reality in ancient Chinese society.

8 Apart from the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the then Communist Party of China adopted a comprehensive strategy of criticizing Confucianism, where they revoked the right of covering up for family member sin the law. But the ethical tragedies that resulted conflicts between parents and children during the 1966–1976 Cultural Revolution caused serious reflections. In 2012, China reinstated the provision of covering up for family members in its criminal law.

not be appointed to assist the lord as he killed his own child to ingratiate himself with the lord, which is inhumane” (殺子以適君，非人情，不可), and Kai Fang 開方 “should not be appointed to assist the lord as he betrays his own parents to ingratiate himself with the lord, which is inhumane” (倍親以適君，非人情，不可) (Takigawa 2007, 542). It is thus clear that regarding the “family” relationship, which is tied by love, as one of the basic elements to achieving justice and order is one of the common Confucian characteristics, and the profound exhibition of such an ideal in the assertion of covering up for family members is not only logically reasonable, but necessary.

Reconstruction: To Incorporate the Right of Covering Up for Family Members in the Law

Certainly, in emphasizing the right of covering up for family members the Confucians focused on ethics as the core of the situation; that is, perfecting people’s identity recognition of the “family” relation by establishing the inter-subject networks that are “love” connected. That, however, is not as what Chou Tian-Wei stated, claiming instead that “ethics was considered by him (Mencius) to have a status above justice” (Chou 1998, 50). Rather, it is perhaps better to say that the Confucians believed that the recognition of the identity relation of the “family” was (and is) the foundation of a “civil society” and “nation”, and that without the identity recognition of “family” people will have personality problems and it will be difficult for real justice to be served.

In the networks of relations, just as Honneth stated, the forms of recognition of “love” and “law” are equally important, or we should say that “love” and “law” should coexist in society (Honneth 2005, 184–5). According to Mencius’ argument, if Shun had carried his murderous father and fled to the edge of the sea, this would mean that he denied the importance of the law, because if so Mencius would not have said “the only thing (that Kao Yao needed) to do was to apprehend him”, and further “how could Shun stop it (the apprehension of Blind Old Man)? Kao Yao had the authority for what he did” (Lau 2003, 303). According to Chen Hong-Xue, were it not for Shun’s high affirmation of the law, why should he flee with his father, as he could have freely prevented, with his authority as the Emperor, Judge Kao Yao from enforcing the law (Chen 2012, 14–15).

Hence it is appropriate to say that Shun’s escape is a decision made in honor of the law. Only through strategic conflict to highlight the confrontations between the relationship recognitions of “family”, “civil society” and “nation” can the differences be made in universal value (Honneth 2012, 150), and this further prompts

the unison of “love” and “law”. When every kind of relationship recognition is tied to the other, the contradiction between them will ebb away (Foucault 1977, 113).

The purpose of the quest to cover up for family members is not to justify the actions of the relatives of the criminals, but to strike a balance between “love” and “law”. How to allow every subject in the system of multiple identities and diverse values to have a place of balance amid conflict is exactly what the Confucians meant by the quest for covering up for family members.

As such, what the Confucians tried to seek in the scenario of the “dilemma facing Emperor Shun” was that each of the subjects, namely Shun as the Emperor, Shun as a son, Kao Yao as a law enforcer, Blind Old Man as the criminal, Blind Old Man as a father, a victim, and the family of the victim, would be able to have a balance within the relations of conflict. And yet society only judges Shun—the Emperor, Kao Yao—the law enforcer, and Blind Old Man—the criminal—based on “law”, identifying them as a “criminal” and “the family member of the criminal”, and neglecting their identities as “father” and “son” that originate from love. Therefore, this scenario highlights the need for covering up for family members, although it does not deny the Blind Old Man’s guilt, nor the victim’s right for justice, and the victim’s families appeal to the law. Instead, it hopes to achieve an ideal justice that is more easily accepted by everyone through the continued and constant fights between each subject.

Conclusion

It is clear from the discussions presented in this study that the idea of covering up for family member is a quest for the identity recognition of the “family” relation that is based on “love”. Such a quest was also a contradiction to the Chinese Legalists’ attempts to dominate people by the absolute power of the “law”. Chinese history has proved that the Legalists’ original thinking about cases like “when a father stole a sheep, the son gave evidence against him” led to a time of accepting the concept of covering up for family members after Confucius, Mencius and others had fought for its validity. Moreover, this right was then internalized, through the process of debate, into the “law” of later ages—from Han dynasty to today’s China. This corresponds with Honneth’s idea, which suggests that the values of ethics and moralities have to constantly collide with social and legal norms. What we obtain out of the collision and negotiation is the unison of “love” and “law”. Therefore, ethics and moralities should be a part of the law, and we should not separate them.

Legal centralists tend to define and evaluate every person and deed solely in relation to the law, which possesses absolute universality, and thus they exclude the existence of a morality which is supported by love. Instead of the model of the Kantian theory of justice, we should seek an absolutely universal truth and equality (Hu 2015, 195), and should, as Honneth argued, seek the integration of the recognitions of each other's identities during constant struggle. At first, Confucian scholars in China struggled for the right of covering up for family members, and then successfully created, by integration, new definitions of justice, making covering up for family members part of the new "legal" norms. Thanks to this, the profound and humane idea of covering up for family members became widely accepted, and this has helped in integrating ethics and legal norms.

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The Early Zhou Period: Origin of the Idea of Political Legitimacy and the Political Philosophy of Confucianism

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Abstract

The Chunqiu and Zhanguo Periods are usually regarded as the birth of Chinese philosophy, especially with regard to practical or moral philosophy. If we think about the concept of political legitimacy in the Early Zhou Period, with ideas like the “Mandate of Heaven”, “respect virtue” and “protect ruled people”, then this Period is not only the origin of this in ancient China, but also of Chinese philosophy, and primarily the political philosophy of Confucianism.

The paper will first explain some documents in the “inscriptions on ancient bronze objects” in order to prove that the ideas of the “Mandate of Heaven”, “respect virtue” and “protect ruled people” really originated from this time. Through analysis of several Zhou documents from the *Book of the Documents* the paper will then demonstrate that these ideas are the three most important innovations in the history of Chinese thinking at that time.

Keywords: Early Zhou Period, idea of political legitimacy, “Mandate of Heaven”, “respect virtue”, “protect ruled people”

Zgodnje obdobje Zhou: izvor ideje o politični legitimnosti in politični filozofiji konfucionizma

Izvleček

Obdobji Chunqiu in Zhanguo sta običajno predstavljeni kot začetek kitajske filozofije, zlasti z ozirom na praktično ali moralno filozofijo. Če obravnavamo koncept politične legitimnosti v zgodnjem obdobju Zhou, z idejami, kot so »nebeški mandat«, »vrlina spoštovanja« in »ljudstvo pod zaščitniškim vodstvom«, to obdobje ne predstavlja le njihovih začetkov v stari Kitajski, temveč tudi izvor kitajske filozofije in predvsem politične filozofije konfucionizma.

Prispevek najprej obrazloži nekatere dokumente, ohranjene v »zapisih na starodavnih bronastih predmetih«, s čimer poskuša dokazati, da ideje o »nebeškem mandatu«, »vrlini

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spoštovanja« in »ljudstvu pod zaščitniškim vodstvom« izvirajo iz tega obdobja. Z analizo več dokumentov iz obdobja Zhou, ohranjenih v *Knjigi dokumentov*, prispevek nato prikaže, da so te ideje tri najpomembnejše inovacije v zgodovini kitajske misli tega obdobja.

Ključne besede: zgodnje obdobje Zhou, ideja politične legitimnosti, »nebeški mandat«, »vrlina spoštovanja« in »ljudstvo pod zaščitniškim vodstvom«

Introduction

The Chunqiu and Zhanguo Periods are usually regarded as the birth of Chinese philosophy, and especially of practical or moral philosophy. If we think about the ideas of political legitimacy in the Early Zhou Period, such as the “Mandate of Heaven” (*tianming* 天命), “respect virtue” (*jing de* 敬德) and “protect ruled people” (*bao min* 保民), and remember that the Shang Dynasty and those before this had not produced any documents concerning these concepts, so the Early Zhou Period should be considered as origin of Chinese philosophy, and primarily the political philosophy of Confucianism. This idea of political legitimacy in the Early Zhou Period includes not only political and ethical elements, but also religious ones. At the same time the rulers of the Zhou Period established based on the so-called “patriarchal clan system” (*zongfazhi* 宗法制) the Chinese feudal system which is different from the one that existed in medieval Europe.

If we compare these political practices and the thoughts of the ruling class of the Zhou with regard to “how to govern”, and recall how ancient Greece established several different political forms and constitutions at the same time, with the focus being on “how to construct a state (polity)”, then it is easy to see that the idea of political legitimacy, and the understanding of both politics and political philosophy in ancient China, were different from those in Europe.

In this paper I would first like to explain some documents in the “inscriptions on ancient bronze objects” (*jin wen* 金文) in order to prove that the theories of the “Mandate of Heaven”, “respect virtue” and “protect the ruled people” really originated from this time. Then I will analyse several Zhou documents from the *Book of the Documents* (*Shujing* 书经) in order to demonstrate that these theories were the three most important innovations in Chinese political thinking at that time.

The Documents in the “Inscriptions on Ancient Bronze Objects” (金文)

The three pillars of political legitimacy in ancient China, namely the “Mandate of Heaven”, “respect virtue” and “protect ruled people” were actually developed in the

Early Zhou Period. This can be proved by examining the documents in the “inscriptions on ancient bronze objects”, such as the document known as the Da Yu Ding (大盂鼎). This is a “certificate of appointment” (*ce ming shu* 册命书) of the third King Kang (康王) to the officer Yu (盂). In this document the King gives a territory and its population to an officer, who will then be its ruler. This act can be understood as *fengjian* (封建), which is translated as “feudal”.

Let us at first view the following passage in the Da Yu Ding: 丕显文王，受天佑大命。在武王，嗣文作邦。[.....] 敷有四方，峻正厥民。 (Wang 2006, 65–66) As we can see, the King said to Yu, King Wen received the Mandate of Heaven to help him (Heaven) to rule and King Wu (son of King Wen) carried on with this mandate and established the state of Zhou.

In another passage of this document we learn that King Wen has received through the Mandate of Heaven “people and their territories”: 粤我其遘省先王受民受疆土. (ibid., 66). The word *shou* (受 which we translate as “receive”) Debson (1962, 221–5) interpreted as “take under the my governance”, i.e. “the government of the King of Zhou”. Of course, we can say that the kings of Zhou naturally think that it is legitimate for them to rule the territory they have conquered.

Besides the word *tian* 天 (Heaven) we can also find the word *de* 德 (virtue) in the Da Yu Ding, for example in the phrase 敬雍德經. Debson (ibid., 225) translated this as “reverently to bring all in consonance with the canon of virtue”. The word *de* 德 occurs in several other documents in the “inscriptions on ancient bronze objects”, such as in the He Zun (He 尊) from the time of the second King Cheng (成王): 唯王恭德裕天. We can translate this as “King Wen respects virtue and makes sacrifices to Heaven”. Even the expression *jing de* (敬德) is found, for example in the document of the ritual container Ban Gui (班簋) from the time of the fifth King Mu (穆王): 彝昧天命，故亡，允哉顯，唯敬德. (Wang 2006, 100–1) This last sentence means “(Therefore) the people should respect virtue”.

Let us turn again to the last sentence in the above quoted passage: 峻正厥民. Debson (1962, 221–5) translates this word 正, which we usually give the meaning “correct” today, as “govern”. What is the reason for this? In classical Chinese we can find three words which are pronounced like *zheng* (in different tones, of course) and concern politics: 正, 征 and 政. (Ma and Xiao 1991, 1009–14) The first word 正 originally means “correct” in ancient China.¹ And the second word 征 usually means “go on a journey”, and therefore also “go on an expedition”, as in the “inscriptions on bones or tortoise shells of the Shang Dynasty”. (Ma 2014, 4). Words with this meaning are also sometimes written as 正 (correct). (ibid., 24)

1 For example 仪正而景正 (If the sundial stands straight, then the shadow is correct) in 荀子 • 君道 (*Xunzi* Book 12, Way of the Sovereign).

Finally, the word 政 usually has something to do with politics. But both in the “inscriptions on bones or tortoise shells of the Shang Dynasty” and “inscriptions on ancient bronze objects” we can find this word being used with the meaning “go on an expedition”² (ibid., 80). The fact is that these three words have similar meanings and are therefore connected with each other. For example, “to go on an expedition” is generally used in relation to punishing the people because of their mistakes and so aiming to correct their behaviour. Moreover, for the ruling class of the Zhou Dynasty the most important task of a ruler is just to educate the people.

As such, the core meaning of these three words is “to correct”. Let us thus analyse the sentence 峻正厥民 in more detail. Because the object of the verb 正 (to correct) in 峻正厥民 is 厥民 which should be translated as “his or their people”, so we can say that the Kings of Zhou regarded the people in their new territories as their own people. It is thus difficult to interpret it as meaning “go on an expedition” rather than “govern”. If this interpretation is correct, it would be in correspondence with the general understanding of politics at that time: “To govern” means “the ruler should be correct” and thus “to correct the behaviour of the ruled people”. We think here about the famous saying of Confucius: 政者，正也³ (to govern just means to correct).

Moreover, it is also interesting to consider the meaning of the word 峻 before 正. Besides the Da Yu Ding the word 峻 is also found in other documents of the “inscriptions on ancient bronze objects” and is regarded by some scholars as a synonym of 俊 (*jun*) and 悛 (*quan*). Because the last word means “change” (改), (HYDCD 1986, 4: 2307), so we can interpret the word 峻 as meaning “to bring ruled people to correct their mistakes and to become good people” (使民改过向善). (Wang 2006, 148)

As I will show later, the “education of ruled people” is part of the idea of “to protect ruled people”. In the “inscriptions on ancient bronze objects” of the Early Zhou we can find evidence for all these ideas, namely those of the “Mandate of Heaven”, “respect virtue” and “protect ruled people”.

The Zhou Documents from the *Shujing* (书经)

The American scholar Michael (1986, 27) regards the Zhou Era as “the age of reason”, so we can consider the “Mandate of Heaven”, “respect virtue” and “protect

2 For example in 毛公鼎 (Mao gong ding) (Wang 2006, 263).

3 论语·颜渊 (*Lunyu* 12.17) and 孔子家语·大婚解第四 (*Kongzi Jiayu (Expressions from the Home of Confucius), Dabunjie* 4).

ruled people”, three theories of the Zhou rulers, as the three most important innovations in the history of Chinese political thinking at that time.

With the battle in Muye (牧野) the Zhou defeated the Shang and established a new kingdom in China. Their new dynasty needed legitimacy, not only for the ruled people, but also for the former rulers, namely the aristocrats and the former officers of the Shang Dynasty, as well also for themselves. The new rulers have to be self-confident about the rightness of their assumption of power. The first part of their idea of political legitimacy is the theory of the “Mandate of Heaven”.

The new ruling class thus tried to propagate this idea. They argued that their revolt against the Shang was not because of their own desires, but instead because of the wishes of Heaven (天). As an example we can first quote some passages in the chapter “Kanggao” (康诰),⁴ an imperial mandate from Duke Zhou (周公) to his younger brother Kang. He writes, “(Our) dead father King Wen was able to make bright virtue and to be careful about punishment”⁵ and it “was heard by High Lord and (High) Lord favoured him. Heaven then grandly ordered King Wen to kill the great Yin and grandly receive its mandate, its states and people.”⁶ Duke Zhou (in the chapter Duoshi (多士)) explained to the remaining Shang officers of why the previous rulers had lost the “Mandate of Heaven” to the Zhou, as follows: “How should we have dared to seek the throne? The (High) Lord did not give favour (to Yin); what our lower people held on to and did was (the expression of) Heaven’s discernment and severity.”⁷

The first part of the “Mandate of Heaven” is the so-called “receiving of the Mandate of Heaven” (受天命). In order to understand this innovation we have to explain the term *tian* (Heaven). The highest deity of the Shang was the High Lord (上帝), and the Shang believed that the he only protected the people of Shang, and so they did not need to do anything special in order to have his protection.

4 The chapter Kanggao (康诰) builds a unity with the chapters Jiugao (酒诰) and Zicai (梓材). It is debatable as to whether Duke Zhou (周公) or King Wu (武王) is the author of these three chapters, although traditionally Duke Zhou was seen as such. Sima Qian (司马迁: ca. 145–90 BCE, author of the “Documents of History” (史记)) for example has this opinion. (See 史记·周本纪第四) But in the Song Era (960–1279) this opinion was revised. (See Jiang 1988, 237–47) Now most Chinese scholars see Duke Zhou as the author. (See You 2001, 182; Zhang 2005, 27–28 and Zang 1999, 307–8)

5 惟乃丕显考文王，克明德慎罚。

6 惟时怙冒，闻于上帝，帝休，天乃大命文王。殪戎殷，诞受厥命越厥邦民，惟时叙，乃寡兄勩。

King Wu used the word *shangdi* (上帝, hear: translated as High Lord), but surely meant *tian* 天 (Heaven): although the Zhou have the highest deity of 天 (Heaven), they sometimes used the term *shangdi* (上帝) or *di* (帝: Lord), when they spoke about *tian* 天 (Heaven).

7 我其敢求位？惟帝不畀，惟我下民秉为，惟天明畏。

After their victory over the Shang, the Zhou needed to establish a new highest deity, and this was Heaven. The Zhou tried to convince themselves and the remaining Shang officers that Heaven does not favour a particular person or group of people, but rather helps those who have virtue. In Chinese we say: 皇天无亲，惟德是辅。⁸

This innovation corresponds with the process of a religion evolving from a “natural religion” (*ziran zongjiao* 自然宗教) to a “moral religion” (*lunli zongjiao* 伦理宗教). In contrast to the Shang, the Zhou have then to pay more attention to their moral behaviour in order to get help from the highest deity, in this case Heaven. In Chinese we say: “to prove through virtue to be worthy towards Heaven” (以德配天). The term *de* 德 (virtue) plays a central role in the process of the so-called “growing ethicization of religion” (宗教伦理化).

Although the word *de* was already used in Shang times, it probably did not mean “virtue” and its use was not connected with the highest deity. In the “inscriptions on bones or tortoise shells of the Shang Dynasty” (甲骨文) for example, the word is used with the meaning “to win, to get”, like the homonym *de* (得), or to refer to a sacrifice (Ma 2014, 48). Maybe the Zhou used the original meaning of *de*, namely “to go straight on to the goal” (ibid.), to create a new meaning, “virtue”.¹⁰ Yu Jiyuan (2009, 47–50), who compares the word *de* with the Greek word “*aretē*” and English word “virtue”, states that *de* refers to the internal power of an individual to influence others, and primarily the ability of a ruler to control the ruled without the use of violence.¹¹ At the same time the ruling class of the Zhou Dynasty connected this word with Heaven. As such, through *de* people can get the assistance of Heaven, the highest deity.

8 This probably occurs in 逸周书 (*the Lost Documents of the Zhou*). See 左传·僖公五年 (*Zuozhuan*, Xigong 5).

9 “Growing ethicization of a religion” is translation of the German Phrase “zunehmende Ethisierung einer Religion” of Ohlig (2002, 128).

10 According to Chen Lai 德 (*de*) was not an important term in the culture of the Shang (Chen 1996, 290). In contrast, You Huanmin (2001, 114–6) is of the opinion that *de* (德) was already in the Shang Era part of the category “virtue”, but has given only some evidence drawn from the documents of the Shang in the Book of Documents (书经). But these cannot be seen as originally from the Shang time. The fact is that the character *de* 德 in “inscriptions on bones or tortoise shells of the Shang Dynasty” (甲骨文) only consists of three parts: “eye” (目), a line to above (丨) and “to go” (行), but in “inscriptions on ancient bronze objects” of four parts: “eye”, a line to above, “to go” and—be added—“heart” (心). The Chinese scholar Liu Xiang (刘翔) considers the character 直 (*zhi*) in the “inscriptions on bones or tortoise shells of the Shang Dynasty” as 直 (*zhi*). The character 直 has a similar meaning to the character 挹 (*tà*) which means “go on an expedition”. Therefore, Jin Chunfeng (2007, 5–6) is of the opinion that the word *de* (德 virtue) is a new construction of the Zhou.

11 Yu Jiyuan (2009, 84) also makes reference to discussions about the development of *de*.

Concerning the issue of political legitimacy, this means that the ruler has to “respect virtue” (敬德)¹² in order to “keep the Mandate of Heaven” (保天命), after having received it owing to virtue of their predecessors. The best example to explain this is the chapter Zhaogao 昭诰, Duke Zhao’s (昭公) imperial mandate to the young King Cheng (成王). He talks about the decline of the state of Shang, where the last king (King Zhou 纣王) mistreated the ruled people and notes: “Oh, Heaven also had pity on the people of four quarters, and removed his mandate from Yin and bestowed it on us. May the king (now) urgently respect virtue.”¹³ For example, Duke Zhao warns the young King Cheng to learn a lesson from the decline of the Xia and Shang dynasties, and tells him: The Dynasties of Xia and Shang have lost the “Mandate of Heaven” because their last kings did not respect their virtue.¹⁴

Now we can ask: What is the content of virtue? We can just quote Michael (1986, 31) here, who writes:

What was this “virtue” on which the authority and eventually the continuation of the dynastic rule depended? It was above all concern for the welfare of the people. It had been the suffering of the people that ended the mandate for the Shang. And from the outset Chou¹⁵ rulers stressed their concern for the people’s happiness.

In the opinion of You Huanmin (2001, 101, 121–4), “respect virtue” (敬德) has several meanings, but the core one is just “protect ruled people” (保民). In other words the concept of *min* 民 has been since the Early Zhou Era one of the most important factors in political thinking, and always in connection with the concepts of Heaven and of virtue.

12 You Huanmin (2001, 117) considers “respect virtue” as a development and a new slogan of the Zhou, although he—as mentioned above—believes that the Shang had already developed *de* as part of the category “virtue”.

13 天亦哀于四方民，其眷命用懋。王其疾敬德！ This translation comes from Karlgren (1950, 49).

14 The whole text: “We should not fail to mirror ourselves in the lords of Xia, we likewise should not fail to mirror ourselves in the lords of Yin. We do not presume to know and say: the lords of Xia undertook Heaven’s mandate so as to have it for so-and-so many years; we do not presume to know and say: it could not be prolonged. It was that they did not reverently attend to their virtue, and so they prematurely renounced their mandate. We do not presume to know and say: the lords of Shang undertook Heaven’s mandate so as to have it for so-and-so many years; we do not presume to know and say: it could not be prolonged. It was that they did not reverently attend to their virtue, and so they prematurely renounced their mandate.” (我不可不监于有夏，亦不可不监于有殷。我不敢知曰，有夏服天命，惟有历年；我不敢知曰，不其延。惟不敬厥德，乃早坠厥命。我不敢知曰，有殷受天命，惟有历年；我不敢知曰，不其延。惟不敬厥德，乃早坠厥命。)

15 Chou is the old transcription of the Chinese character 周 (Zhou).

As such, here I will explain the meanings of *min* 民: This word was already used in Shang times, but with a very different meaning than under the Zhou. This character, which we can find in several documents of “inscriptions on bones or tortoise shells of the Shang Dynasty”, refers to people who are “killed to serve as a sacrifice” (*mao min* 卯民). (Ma 2014, 280–1)¹⁶ In opposition to the Shang, the ruling class of the Zhou Dynasty obviously changed the meaning of this character (民), so that it mainly means all of the “ruled people”, and is therefore a term related to the political thinking of China at this time (Du 2003, 247).

In the *Da Yu Ding* (大盂鼎), as discussed above, the people which the rulers of Zhou received through the “Mandate of Heaven” are regarded as *shoumin* (受民). Moreover, in the *Zhou Book of Documents* (书经) we find a more exact use, namely *shouming min* (受命民):¹⁷ people which are received through the “Mandate of Heaven”. When the rulers of Zhou have received the “Mandate of Heaven” they have to obey Heaven in order to maintain their dynasty, and therefore have to treat the people kindly.

The fact is that for the Zhou ruling class the ruled people play an equally important role in political legitimacy as Heaven. The ruling class tried to propagate spread this idea among their peers in the defeated Shang. For example, Duke Zhou (in the chapter “Duofang” (多方)) explains this by means of describing the decline of the Xia and the assumption of power by the Shang as follows: Because the kings of Xia mistreated their people, “(Heaven) then sought a new lord for the people, and grandly it send down its illustrious and felicitous mandate to Cheng Tang,¹⁸ and it punished and destroyed the lord of Xia.”¹⁹ On the other hand, the members of the Zhou ruling class also tried to convince themselves of this ideology. We think about the warning of Duke Zhao to King Cheng which we quoted above: 天亦哀于四方民. It is easy to imagine that these are all reasons why the Zhou ruling class developed the “thought of protection of the ruled people” (保民思想).

Moreover, we can understand the change in the meaning of the word *min* (民) better if we analyse the “thought of protection of the ruled people”. The character

16 The word *mao* (卯) means “to kill for sacrifice”, see HYDCD 1986, Vol. 1, 311–2.

17 Duke Zhou says to King Cheng: “The King ordered me to come here. I will continue to protect the people received by Your Grandfather King Wen through the mandate of Heaven.” (周公拜手稽首曰: “王命予来承保乃文祖受命民, ...”洛诰).

18 Cheng Tang (成汤) is the first king of state Shang.

19 于惟时求民主, 乃大降显休命于成汤, 刑殄在夏. This must be the first use of 民主 in Chinese history which means “lord of ruled people”. Today the word means “democracy” after the Japanese used this term for this foreign term.

bao (保) first meant “to take a child on the back” (背)²⁰ (HYDCCD 1986, Vol. 1, 160), therefore “to raise (a child) (养)”, “to maintain” and “to protect”²¹ (ibid.). This means that Zhou regarded the people they ruled after defeating the Shang as their children. The best example of this is the sentence in the above-mentioned chapter Kanggao, namely 若保赤子 (as if one protected an infant). This is a plea urge from Duke Zhou to his younger brother Kang who had received some of the Shang territory to rule.

Therefore, by changing the use and therefore the meaning of *min* the Zhou have not only introduced a new term into political thinking, but have also established a new kind of political rule through introducing the idea of “protection of the ruled people” (保民): the rulers as parents and the ruled as their children. Today this seems to be very conservative, but for that time it was a breakthrough in political thinking.²²

The core of “protection of the ruled people” can be seen as *an min* (安民), which means to bring peace to the ruled people (in order to stabilize the political and social order). In the *Book of Documents* we often find the word *kang* (康), which means *an* (安).²³ In the chapter “Kanggao”, for instance, Duke Zhou urges his younger brother Kang “to protect the people by means of tranquilization” (用康保民) and “to govern the people means of tranquilization” (用康义民). As noted above, Duke Zhou says at the beginning of this imperial mandate, “(Our) dead father King Wen was able to make bright virtue and to be careful about punishment”²⁴ (惟乃丕显考文王，克明德慎罚). Here we can consider “to make bright virtue” (明德) and “to be careful about punishment” (慎罚) as two important principles to realize the “protection of ruled people” (保民).²⁵

The expression “to make bright virtue” (明德) has a similar meaning as “to respect virtue” (敬德). Duke Zhou reminds his younger brother Kang of the following:

20 Besides this we can also find the word *bao* (保) in the chapter “Zhaogao” (昭诰): 知保抱携持厥妇子，以哀吁天，徂厥亡，出执。

21 We can also find this word in “inscriptions on ancient bronze objects” (金文) like 天[...]癸保先王 (Heaven protected our firmer kings to a great extent) in the above mentioned Da Yu Ding and 峻保四國 (to protect four states long) on the Hu Zhong from the time of King Li (厲王). (Wang Hui 2006, 65–68 and 221–4)

22 This idea has influenced political thinking in China until the present day.

23 See for example Zang Kehe (1999, 312).

24 惟乃丕显考文王，克明德慎罚。

25 In the chapter Kanggao we also find Duke Zhou says to his younger brother: “I told you the theory of virtue and the way of punishment”. (告汝德之说于罚之行)

Grandly take as pattern the active virtue (sc. of the ancients). Thereby make steady your heart, (look at =) take care of your virtue, make far-reaching your plans and intentions, then you will make the people tranquil, and I not remove you or cut you off.”²⁶

According to Zhou Hong (1993, 407), this is about the policy of “to convert the ruled people through virtue” (以德化民).

In general, Chinese culture talks about the idea “to build morality of ruled people” (教化). In the chapter “Kanggao” we can find two expressions which are used in this sense: 裕民 (*yu min*: to lead and educate the people) and 做新民 (*zuo xinmin*: to make new people). The expression *yu min* (裕民) occurs twice and is translated by some scholars as “to lead und educate the people.”²⁷ Duke Zhou asks his younger brother Kang to respect the law and follow this when leading the people.²⁸ Duke Zhou then adds: only if you think about King Wen’s respect and caution, can you lead the people.²⁹ Secondly, Kang should treat the people of Shang kindly, who King Wen has received and must protect. He should also help the king to consolidate the Mandate of Heaven and make his subjects new people.³⁰

To demonstrate that the three most important innovations in the thinking of the Zhou are close related to each other I would finally like to quote the last passage in the warning Duke Zhou makes to his younger brother in the chapter “Zicai” (梓材):

Great Heaven has delivered the people of the Central Kingdom and its territory to the firmer kings. Now may the king by means of virtue harmonize and gladden and (be before and after =) take care of foolish people, and thus gladden the firmer kings who received the Mandate. Yes, being an inspector like this, I say: I wish that unto a myriad years the king’s sons and grandsons may forever (guard =) have charge of the people.³¹

26 丕则敏德，用康乃心，顾乃德，远乃猷，裕乃以；民宁，不汝瑕殄。The translation comes from Karlgren (1950, 43).

27 Some of them thus refer to a dictionary in ancient China, namely 方言 (*Dialect*). According to the author of this dictionary, the word 裕 (*yu*) is similar to 猷 (*you*) and has the same meaning as 道 (“to lead”). See Jiang and Qian (1995, 282–3); You (2001, 233) and Zang (1999, 325).

28 汝亦罔不克敬典，乃由裕民。

29 惟文王之敬忌，乃裕民。

30 乃服惟弘王应保殷民，亦惟助王宅天命，作新民。

31 皇天既付中国民越厥疆土于先王，肆王惟德用，和怵先后为迷民，用怵先王受命。已！若兹监，惟曰欲至于万年，惟王子子子孙孙永保民。The translation comes from Karlgren (1950, 48).

Here I should mention that the Chinese phrase which Karlgren translates as “to have charge of the people” is *bao min* (保民). Therefore “to have forever charge of the people” is also one aspect or goal of the *bao min* (保民) policy.

Conclusions

The Zhou Dynasty is regarded as the “age of reason”, and the “Mandate of Heaven” (天命), “respect virtue” (敬德) and “protect ruled people” (保民) are considered as the three most important innovations in the history of Chinese political thought at that time. Moreover, we can claim that virtue (德) stands at the centre of these innovations.

First these theories of the ruling class are based on a tripartite relationship among Heaven, the ruler and the people. Of course the ruler himself stands in the centre of this relationship, as on the one hand he has to obey Heaven as the highest deity, and on another to care for the well-being of people (敬天保民). It is obvious from texts we have from this era that the ruling class was aware of this position and role.

Certainly the Zhou—like peoples in other cultures—wish to get the favour of the gods in order to have safety and success, but they believe that they can only achieve this if they have virtue. Only through virtue can they get the favour of Heaven as the highest deity, and win the support of ruled people. Without the support of the ruled people they cannot maintain the Mandate of Heaven (legitimacy), and cannot keep their rule.

These three theories influenced the idea of political legitimacy and the political philosophy of Confucianism. I will quote some passages from *Lunyu* and *Mengzi* to show it.

The following well-known expressions of Confucius, “govern through virtue” (为政以德, *Lunyu* 2.1) and “If the ruled people are led through virtue and kept in order through rites” (道之以德, 齐之以礼, *Lunyu* 2.3), are seen as a development of the concept “to convert ruled people through virtue” (以德化民).³²

32 This thought still influences political thought in China. Although Chinese leaders have introduced the idea of 法治 (rule of law), at same time they don't want to abandon the Chinese tradition of “govern through virtue” (德政 *dezheng* or 德治 *dezhi*). Mou Zongsan talks in this case about the so-called “theory of the governance by leading of the people to virtue” (儒家的德化的治道) (Mou 2006, 24–28). Concerning the political thinking in ancient China Mou Zongsan (2006, 1) makes a distinction between the “right way/theory of governance” (治道) and “right way/theory of political power” (政道), which includes the assumption of political power. In this view the Confucians in ancient China did not think enough about the “right way of political power” (政道). (ibid., 13)

This is also the case with the idea “protect ruled people”. Based on this thought the Confucians developed the so-called “people-foundation-thought” (民本思想).³³ For Confucians, the state should at first help the people to “get material prosperity” (富民) and then “build their morality” (教民).³⁴

Concerning the idea of political legitimacy two factors play key roles, namely Heaven and the ruled people. We can explain this through a passage in *Mengzi*, where Mencius talks about the transfer of political power from Yao to Shun (legendary emperors in Chinese history). In his opinion the ruler (in this case, Yao) may not transfer his power to someone else (i.e., Shun), before he has got the agreement of both Heaven and ruled people.³⁵

It is interesting to note that this agreement from both Heaven and those who are ruled does not need to occur before the transfer of power, but after it. Mencius writes:

When he (Shun) was assigned the task to preside over the sacrificial offering at the ceremonial worship of the gods, all the gods came to partake of the sacrifice. This means Heaven accepted him. When he (Shun) was appointed to administer government affairs, peace and order prevailed,

33 The following phrase is seen as the first origin of the “people-foundation-thought” (民本思想): 民惟邦本，本固邦宁 (Only the ruled people are the root/foundation of a state; if the foundation solid, there is peace in the state.). This phrase occurs in the chapter “Wuzi Zhige” (五子之歌) which concerns the time of the Xia, but this document is not seen as originally from that era. This idea (民本思想) also influences contemporary China.

34 “The Master (Confucius) went to the state of Wei and Ran You (a pupil of Confucius) acted as driver of his carriage. The master observed: ‘How numerous are the people!’ Ran You asked: ‘Since they are thus numerous, what more shall be done for them?’ The Master answered: ‘Enrich them!’ And when they have been enriched, what more shall be done for them?’ The Master said: ‘Teach them!’” (子适卫，冉有仆。子曰：“庶矣哉！”冉有曰：“既庶矣，又何加焉？”曰：“富之。”曰：“既富矣，又何加焉？”曰：“教之。”) (*Lunyu* 13.9)

35 “Wan Zhang (a pupil of Mencius) asked: ‘Was it the case, that Yao gave (power over) the world to Shun?’ Mencius replied: ‘No, the son of Heaven (sovereign) cannot give (power over) the world to another.’ Wan Zhang: ‘Yes. But Shun has got (power over) the world. Who gave it to him?’ Mencius: ‘Heaven did.’ Wan Zhang: ‘How did Heaven give it to him? Was it by detailed instructions?’ Mencius: ‘No, Heaven does not speak, but shows its intension through acts and events.’ Wan Zhang: ‘How is it done?’ Mencius: ‘The Son of Heaven can recommend a man to Heaven, but he cannot make Heaven give (power over) the world to the man recommended. (...) In ancient times Yao recommended Shun to Heaven and Heaven accepted him, Yao presented Shun to the people and the people accepted him. That is what I mean by saying: Heaven does not speak, but shows its intention through acts and events.’” (万章曰：“尧以天下与舜，有诸？”孟子曰：“否。天子不能以天下与人。”“然则舜有天下也，孰与之？”曰：“天与之。”曰：“天与之者，谆谆然命之乎？”曰：“否。天不言，以行与事示之而已矣。”曰：“以行与事示之者，如之何？”曰：“天子能荐人於天，不能使天与之天下。[...]昔者，尧荐舜於天而天受之，暴之於民而民受之。故曰：天不言，以行与事示之而已矣。”) (*Mengzi* 9.5)

and people were happy and content. This means the people accepted him.³⁶

It is also interesting to note that for Mencius the people seem to be more important than Heaven. First, he quotes the following passage from the *Book of Documents* (书经): “People’s eyes are the eyes of Heaven; people’s ears are the ears of Heaven.”³⁷ Second, he explains why the last kings of Xia and Shang lost their power as follows: “Jie (the last king of Xia) and Zhou (the last king of Shang) lost (power over) the world, because they lost (support of) the people.” He continues: “There is a right way to get (power over) the world: win the people’s support and you will get (power over) the world. There is a right way to win the people’s support: win their hearts and you will win their support.”³⁸

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36 使之主祭，而百神享之，是天受之；使之主事而事治，百姓安之，是民受之也。（*Mengzi* 9.5）

37 “《太誓》曰：‘天视自我民视，天听自我民听。’此之谓也。”（*Mengzi* 9.5）

38 得天下有道：得其民，斯得天下矣。得其民有道：得其心，斯得民矣。The whole text: “Jie (the last king of the Xia) and Zhou (the last king of the Shang) lost (power over) the world, because they lost (support of) the people. They lost (support of) the people, because they lost their hearts. There is a right way to get (power over) the world: win the people’s support and you will get (power over) the world. There is a right way to win the people’s support: win their hearts and you will win their support. There is a right way to win their hearts: collect for them what they desire and do not force on them what they hate.”（桀纣之失天下也，失其民也。失其民者，失其心也。得天下有道：得其民，斯得天下矣。得其民有道：得其心，斯得民矣。得其心有道：所欲与之聚之，所恶勿施尔也。*Mengzi* 7.9）

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*A Specific Path to Chinese Modernization:
The Term Datong and Kang Youwei's Datong shu*

Yearning for the Lost Paradise: The “Great Unity” (*datong*) and its Philosophical Interpretations

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Abstract

In the course of China's history, the term *datong* (great unity) has been interpreted in multiple ways. This article first discusses the concept as understood in the *Liji*, and then focuses on the way in which the perceived loss of the “great unity” within “all-under-heaven” (*tianxia*) at the end of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), and the endeavor to reconstruct the empire as a modern nation-state starting in the early twentieth century, informed the way the term *datong* was interpreted. After discussing the interpretations by Wang Tao (1828–1897), Hong Xiuquan (1813–1864), Kang Youwei (1858–1927), Liang Qichao (1873–1929), Sun Zhongshan (1866–1925), and Mao Zedong (1893–1976), this work concludes with a discussion on how, against the background of the perceived threat of loss of national unity that characterizes the contemporary People's Republic of China, a New Confucian interpretation is developed.

Keywords: *Datong*, Moism, Confucianism, New Confucianism, Nationalism, Communism

Hrepenenje po izgubljenem raju: »Véliká enotnost« (*datong*) in njene filozofske interpretacije

Izvilleček

V teku kitajske zgodovine je bil termin *datong* (véliká enotnost) interpretiran na najrazličnejše načine. Članek najprej obravnava razumevanje tega koncepta znotraj klasičnega dela *Knjige obredov* (*Li ji*), potem pa se osredotoči na opis izgube »vélike enotnosti« znotraj koncepta »vse pod nebom« (*tianxia*), kakršen se je oblikoval na koncu dinastije Qing (1644–1911). Ta interpretacija termina *datong* je bila izdelana v sklopu prizadevanj za rekonstrukcijo kitajskega cesarstva kot moderne nacionalne države, ki so prevladovale na Kitajskem v zgodnjem dvajsetem stoletju. V tem okviru članek najprej obdeluje interpretacije Wang Taoja (1828–1897), Hong Xiuquana (1813–1864), Kanga Youweija (1858–1927), Lianga Qichaota (1873–1929), Suna Zhongshana (1866–1925) ter Maota Zedonga (1893–1976), nato pa na osnovi izgube nacionalne enotnosti, kakršna opredeljuje sodobno LR Kitajsko, analizira, na kakšen način se razvijajo nove interpretacije tega pojma v okviru modernega konfucijanstva.

Ključne besede: *datong*, moizem, konfucijanstvo, moderno konfucijanstvo, nacionalizem, komunizem

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Datong in Imperial China

The first appearance of the concept of *datong* in the literature is in the seventh chapter “Liyun” of the *Liji* (*Records of Ritual*), a Confucian political handbook that was compiled in the third to second centuries BCE. The “Liyun” chapter devotes 107 of its total of 744 characters to the concept *datong*. (See Pusey 1983, 34) It may have been, as noted by Joseph Needham (1958, 167–8), “a very peculiar historical turn of events that this highly subversive account became embedded in one of the Confucian classics”, as passages with the same wording are also found in the *Mozi*, and thus point to an original Moist affiliation of the concept.¹ We do know, however, that the Moist philosophy was overshadowed by Confucianism in the Han dynasty, and that, it should be remembered, Han dynasty Confucianism is overall characterized by its eclectic nature. Given the installation of Confucianism as state orthodoxy in the Han dynasty, the mere fact that this passage was taken up in a Confucian compilation was presumably because of its political usefulness for the Han Confucian elite. The 107 characters devoted to the concept *datong* run as follows:

When the big road of virtue was followed, “all-under-heaven” (*tianxia*) was public good. Functionaries were selected according to their abilities. Their words were trustworthy, and they cultivated harmony. That is why people did not only treat their own relatives as relatives, did not only treat their own children as children, and made sure that elder people had all they needed until the end of their days, that grown-ups had all they needed, that children had all they needed to grow, that widowers and widows, orphans, and sick ones all had what they needed to sustain themselves. They made sure that men had a job, and women had a place where they belonged. They did not allow the harvest to be left in the field, but neither did they want to hoard it for themselves. They disliked that their power was not made useful for others, but neither did they want to use it for themselves. Therefore, bad plans were not put into practice, there were no robbers, thieves, nor traitors. Therefore, outer doors were not closed. This is what is called *datong*. (*Liji* 1988, 120)

This passage is immediately followed by the statement that, in the Han dynasty, “the big road of virtue” is hidden, and that “all-under-heaven” therefore belongs to the different clans (*jia*).² (*ibid.*, 121) Having described the actual situation of

1 On the importance of this Moist affiliation for Maoism: see further.

2 According to Chen (2011, 3–4), this may be regarded as a reference to dynastic rule, under which the monarch is succeeded by his son and the monarch regards the state as his family possession.

the Han dynasty that does not conform to what a *datong* society should be, the “Liyun” chapter continues as follows:

That is why Yu, (Cheng) Tang, (King) Wen, (King) Wu, (King) Cheng and the Duke of Zhou were selected. Of these six gentlemen (*junzi*), there is none who does not follow the rituals (*li*). They have manifested their justice (*yi*), tested their trustworthiness (*xin*), revealed those who had made mistakes, executed benevolence (*ren*), made (people) give way to each other, and have instructed the people to constantly do so. Those who did not do so were chased away by those having power and position, and they were regarded as unfortunate by the masses of the people. (Then came) what is said to be *xiaokang*. (ibid.)

It is thus clear that it was in the absence of a *datong* society that six Confucian worthies were selected. These should at least uphold a *xiaokang* society which, as can be deduced from the “Liyun” chapter, is inferior to the *datong* society. (See Chen 2011, 2) Such a “second best” society manifests itself through governance by different clans. It is therefore also important to note that while the (originally Moist) concept of *datong* appears in the *Liji*, that of *xiaokang* appears significantly earlier: it first appears in the *Shijing* (*Classic of Poetry*), the content of which dates back to the tenth century BCE. The *xiaokang* society is therefore not only inferior to the *datong* society, but the concept appears earlier in Chinese thought. Phrased differently: achieving a *datong* society is a matter of historical progress and ascent, and historical development is such that the present *xiaokang* society can and has to be transformed into a *datong* society. In the ode “Min lao” (The People Are Hard Pressed) of the “*Daya*” part of the *Shijing* (Part III, Book II, 9), we read:

The people indeed are heavily burdened,
But perhaps a little ease (*xiaokang*) may be got for them.
Let us cherish this centre of the kingdom,
To secure the repose of the four quarters of it.
Let us give no indulgence to the wily and obsequious,
In order to make the unconscientious careful,
And to repress robbers and oppressors,
Who have no fear of the clear will (of Heaven).
Then let us show kindness to those who are distant,

Contrary to this actual situation, a *datong* society is characterized by the selection of functionaries based on merit. Such functionaries are supposed to act for the “common good”.

*And help those who are near; –
Thus establishing (the throne of) our king.*³

This ode shows a clear political message: (1) the masses resort to a moral leadership (“cherish this centre of the kingdom”) that will (2) guide them to a peaceful era of social redistribution (“a little ease may be got for them”); this is (3) the conduct to be followed both for the homeland and internationally (“show kindness to those who are distant, and help those who are near”); and (4) this conduct will be a model for the world at large (“establishing the throne of our king”). In the latter respect, the message of the *xiaokang* (and of the *datong*) society is related to another concept that prevails in the *Liji*: the Confucian concept of *daxue*.

The *Liji* and the Political Mission of the Chinese Confucian State

Commenting on the “*Daxue*” (“The Great Learning”), the 39th chapter of the *Liji*, Wing-tsit Chan (1963, 84) says the following:

The importance of this little classic is far greater than its small size would suggest. It gives the Confucian educational, moral, and political programs in a nutshell, neatly summed up in the so-called “three items”: manifesting the clear character of man, loving the people and abiding in the highest good; and in the “eight steps”: the investigation of things, extension of knowledge, sincerity of the will, rectification of the mind, cultivation of the personal life, regulation of the family, national order, and world peace.

For the present discussion the last two steps—national order and world peace—are important. On this issue, the original text has the following to say (translation by Wing-tsit Chan 1963, 86–87):

The ancients who *wished to manifest their clear character to the world* would first bring order to their states. Those who wished to bring order to their states would first regulate their families. Those who wished to regulate their families would first cultivate their personal lives. Those who wished to cultivate their personal lives would first rectify their minds. Those who wished to rectify their minds would first make their wills sincere. Those who wished to make their wills sincere would first extend their knowledge. The extension of knowledge consists in the investigation of things. When things are investigated, knowledge is extended; when knowledge

3 Translation Legge 1970, 495. *Italics mine* (B.D.).

is extended, the will becomes sincere; when the will is sincere, the mind is rectified; when the mind is rectified, the personal life is cultivated; when the personal life is cultivated, the family will be regulated; when the family is regulated, the state will be in order; and when the state is in order, there will be peace throughout the world.⁴ (Zhu 1988, 1)

Confucianism was the state doctrine throughout China's imperial history; however, necessitated by concrete historical events and developments, this passage has continuously been reinterpreted—as is the whole of Confucianism. One such major development has been the formulation of Neo-Confucianism (in China itself referred to as *daoxue*—the study of the *dao*): a merging of certain Daoist and Buddhist elements with the Confucian doctrine starting from the Sui dynasty (581/589–618). This Neo-Confucianism came to full maturation in the Song dynasty (960–1279), when Zhu Xi (1130–1200) formulated his *lixue* (the study of the principle) interpretation of Confucianism. I will return to the importance of Zhu Xi's interpretation later on. Suffice here to quote his interpretation of the “*Daxue*” passage given above (translation by Wing-tsit Chan 1963, 91–92):

What is meant by saying *that in order to govern the state it is necessary to regulate the family* is this: There is no one who cannot teach his own family and yet teach others. Therefore the superior man (ruler) without going beyond his family, can bring education into completion in the whole state. *Filial piety is that with which one serves his ruler*. Brotherly respect is that with which one serves his elders, and deep love is that with which one treats the multitude. (...) *When the individual families have become humane, then the whole country will be aroused toward humanity. When the individual families have become compliant, then the whole country will be aroused toward compliance*. (...) Therefore the superior man must have the good qualities in himself before he may require them in other people. (...) Therefore the order of the state depends on the regulation of the family. (...) Only when one has rightly ordered his household can he teach the people of the country. (...) Because he served as a worthy example as a father, son, elder brother, and younger brother, therefore the people imitated him. This is what is meant by saying that the order of the state depends on the regulation of the family.⁵ (Zhu 1988, 1)

4 *Italics mine* (B.D.).

5 *Italics mine* (B.D.).

A ruler is thus presented as having the task of cultivating himself according to Confucian moral principles in order to influence his state and the world at large (*tianxia*). Fei Xiaotong (1992, 62–63) illustrated the political view that is expressed in the “*Daxue*” with the metaphor of the concentric circles that appear when throwing a rock into the water. For an individual, the concentric circles of his individual moral and social behaviour are the product of his potential moral autonomy. When an individual develops his moral potentiality, he can increase his impact on other individuals and, hence, his value in society. Society is thus both the inspiration and the aim of an individual’s existence, and the value of an individual is measured by his value for society. (Fei 1992, 67)⁶ This interpretation also reveals the “international” politico-religious mission Confucianism attributed to the “Son of Heaven” (*tianzi*) and to the “Middle Kingdom” (*Zhongguo*). In the same way as each individual is at the centre of the circles produced by his or her own social influence, also each state is at the centre of the concentric circles of its moral and political influence. The morality of a state expands to the world at large, to “all-under-heaven” (*tianxia*). Applied to international relations, this viewpoint was traditionally interpreted as indicating that when the ruler, the “Son of Heaven”, successfully safeguards the harmonious relations in his state through his exemplary Confucian behaviour, this influence would extend to the neighbouring territories, with China, the “Middle Kingdom” at the centre.⁷ In line with the Confucian philosopher Dong Zhongshu’s (179?–104? BCE) famous view of interpersonal relations, the relation between *Zhongguo* and the bordering regions was interpreted as the relation between an older and younger brother, in which China is the older brother and the non-Chinese territories, the so-called tribute states, are the younger brothers. As in a family, the older brother sets the moral example for the younger, and the younger brother follows this example. As with individual relations, “all-under-heaven” is both the inspiration and the aim of China’s existence. (See Fairbank and Teng 1941, 129–30) In periods in which the cultural lustre of the Chinese Confucian elite in the capital was waning, the “cultural model” based on moral virtue no longer worked. As a result, the Chinese political elite could no longer maintain its cultural authority over the bordering territories, while the “tribute states” no longer had a political, economic or cultural profit in maintaining their relations with China. The more recent and less thorough the connection with China had been, the easier Chinese culture disappeared again.

6 Also see Shun 2004, 190–3; and Schwartz 1985, 113.

7 Schmidt-Glintzer (2009, 179) remarks that already in the “Yu gong” chapter of the *Shanhai jing* (*Classic of Mountains and Seas*), the world is represented as consisting of five concentric zones: the royal domain, the domains of the princes, the pacification zone, the zone of allied barbarians, and the zone of savagery. For a historical assessment of the international aspect of this Confucian concept: see Dessein 2016; also see Hellendorff 2014.

(ibid.) It can therefore be argued that Chinese history is a continuous movement of slowly surging and retreating concentric circles of Han cultural influence.

We can thus conclude that the occurrence of both the concepts *datong* and *xiaokang* in the Confucian *Liji*, and its inherent relation to the concept *daxue* as explained in the same work, reveal the Confucian conviction that the perfect *datong* society has been long since lost, but that it is the task of a Confucian ruler to, for the time being, at least maintain a *xiaokang* society, in order to eventually be able to restore the *datong* order. Phrased differently, after an initial decline, progress towards a better (utopian) society is possible. Such a society will then be an example for the world at large.⁸

Datong in the Transition Period from the Empire to the People's Republic of China

When in the confrontation with Europe's military dominance in the middle of the nineteenth century, scholars such as Wei Yuan (1794–1857) claimed that there was no Western knowledge worth studying, except for military technology and knowledge about weaponry, and thus it would be sufficient for China to master these two areas in order to be able to defend itself against the West, this revealed the conviction that Confucianism still had great value for its connection to national unity. (See Wei 1852) This conviction also remained visible in the “Self Strengthening Movement” (*zhiqiang yundong*) of the 1860s—an attempt to make China materially so strong that it would be better able to defend itself against the West.

Contrary to Wei Yuan, Wang Tao (1828–1897) had travelled to Europe and had discerned a peculiar cultural tradition there. He therefore claimed that it was necessary to study European culture in order to become acquainted with the basis of its superior technology. According to him, the knowledge and use of Western technology would, in practice, lead Chinese (Confucian) culture as essence (*ti*) to embrace Western technology as function (*yong*).⁹ The final outcome of this would, so he claimed, be that the different national histories would fuse into an era of universal peace (*taiping*) in which the world would become one “great unity”

8 Pusey (1983, 34) remarks: “In Confucius's mind at least, the Ta t'ung was a Golden Age of the past, and there is no real promise given that it will be attained again”.

9 It is with Zhang Zhidong's (1837–1909) *Quan xue pian* (Exhortation to Study), published in 1898, that the focus in “*zhong ti xi yong*” shifted from the original “Western function”, meaning that Western technology had to be introduced in China, to the neo-conservative “China as essence”, meaning that the Chinese tradition had to be preserved at all costs (see Li 1995).

(*datong*).¹⁰ Notwithstanding the fact that, with Wang Tao, the term *datong* attains a clear international dimension, the equation of the “essence” with China at the same time echoes the age-old Confucian claim that in this unified world the right to rule “all-under-heaven” would remain a Confucian prerogative—an idea that is now being revived in New Confucian thinking.

In his political theory, Wang Tao also relied heavily on the traditional belief in the three-ages (*san shi*) theory that is discussed in the commentaries to the Confucian *Gongyang zhuan*, itself a Han dynasty commentary on the *Chunqiu* (*Spring and Autumn Annals*). The *Gongyang zhuan* belongs to the New Text School of Confucianism, the same Confucian school to which the above mentioned Dong Zhongshu belonged, and presents a holistic view of the universe in which heaven, earth and man are interconnected.¹¹ According to the three-ages theory, human history goes through the stages of the age of disorder (*juluan*) and the age of ascending peace (*shengping*), in order to finally reach the age of universal peace (*taiping*). (See Wang 2001, 42)¹²

Chinese society in the middle of the nineteenth century was far removed from the “utopian” *datong* and *taiping*: dynastic decline combined with the incursions of Western powers had impoverished China and its population. It is against this background, and inspired by Western ideologies that were introduced in China, that the Hakka Hong Xiuquan (1813–1864) shaped his Taiping ideology. Hong Xiuquan’s “utopian” society, his “Heavenly State of Great Peace” (*Taiping tian-guo*) was to be one in which men and women were equal, private property was abolished, and land and wealth were redistributed—the latter reminiscent of the description of *xiaokang* in the *Shijing*.¹³ Given his Christian inspiration—he identified himself as the younger brother of Jesus—he claimed that this “brotherhood of men” would be shaped under the supreme deity.¹⁴ (See Kuhn 1978, 277) Notwithstanding his revolutionary stance of gender equality and his naive interpretation of socialism, Hong Xiuquan, in his *Taiping zhao shu* (*The Taiping Proclamation*) quoted at length the passage of the Confucian *Liji* in which the *datong* society is mentioned: “In the days when the big road (of virtue) was practiced, (...)”

10 For an evaluation of the Fairbankian interpretation of China’s modernization process from first understanding only the superiority of Western weapons, then grasping that of Western institutions, and finally appreciating Western values (see Metzger 2012, 238).

11 Note that the *Gongyang zhuan* is also important in some New Confucian theories, such as in the one presented in Jiang Qing’s “Constitutional Confucianism” (see Jiang 2013).

12 Wang Tao’s speculation on the future of history is seen in his “Yuan dao” (Explanation of the Dao).

13 On Hong Xiuquan see Kuhn (1978, 266–74).

14 Bauer (1974, 407) remarks that *datong* had for thousands of years been the “paradise” of religious Confucianism.

men treated all other men as their own kin". A "socialist" interpretation of *datong* would, along with Christian elements and the concept of an apocalyptic revolution, never cease to interact throughout the following century.¹⁵ (See Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 39)

Probably the most influential interpretation of *datong* was the one Kang Youwei (1858–1927) formulated in his *Datong shu* (*Book on the Great Unity*). A first draft of this work, which both Kang Youwei and Wang Tao had previously attempted, and was based on the commentaries to the *Gongyang zhuan*, was written in 1885. The work was completed in 1902 and posthumously published in 1935.¹⁶ (Chen 2011, 5) The *Datong shu*, as James Reeve Pusey (1983, 18) describes it, was "a plan for world unity and an end to war, but more than that it was a plan for an ideal world society through which man could virtually conquer evil". Conquering evil—i.e., suffering—was thus sought in this world. (Pusey 1983, 19) As in Hong Xiuquan's utopian society, and also in the *datong* society, social inequality would be extinguished.¹⁷ (Chen 2011, 6–7). Reminiscent of what Hong Xiuquan had claimed before him, and important also for later Maoism, is that Kang Youwei stated the following:

In the world of the "great unity" (*datong*) there will be no differences between classes or races. There will be no inferior people, or religious leaders. Everyone will be equal and all under Heaven will possess equal rights. In the world of the "great unity", the boundaries between families and the sexes will disappear. Marriage will be based on liberty. (Kang in Liu 2002, 716)

The abolishment of classes can be interpreted as a reference to the evil situation mentioned in the *Liji* that "all-under-heaven" is ruled by the different clans (*jia*). Kang Youwei shared this opinion with the adherents of so-called early twentieth century "radical Confucianism" (*junxue*) according to whom the installment of Confucianism as state orthodoxy had led to a situation in which such rule

15 For the CCP's explicit claim of filiation to the Taiping movement see Cohen (1997, 292–3). Notice also the Christian influence in Jiang Qing's "Constitutional Confucianism". For the latter see Bai 2013, 118.

16 The first manuscript of this *Datong shu* was entitled *Renlei gongli* (*The Principle of the Common for Mankind*) (see Bauer 1974, 417).

17 Goossaert and Palmer (2011, 95) remark that "Groups such as the Wanguo dadehui and the Daode xueshe maintained a strong Confucian identity, to which they added, however, a universalist tendency, honoring the founders of all major religions and advocating the realization, on a global scale, of the "Great Commonwealth" (*datong*) dreamed of in the *Book of Rites* and elaborated on in the utopian mode by Kang Youwei and others".

was only concerned with maintaining power in the hands of the ruling elite, and was no longer interested in serving the “common good”. (See Dessein, forthcoming) Kang Youwei thus adhered to the *xiaokang* ideal that political and social institutions should serve to relieve the hardships of the common people.¹⁸ As such, he advocated abolishing nine boundaries in order to create a *datong* society: nation-boundaries, class-boundaries, race-boundaries, sex-boundaries, family-boundaries, occupation-boundaries, disorder-boundaries (i.e. the fact that there are unequal laws), kind-boundaries (i.e., the difference between men, birds, mammals, insects and fish), and suffering boundaries (i.e. the fact that suffering produces further suffering without end). (Kang 1936, 78)¹⁹ Lifting these boundaries was possible precisely because of man’s innate *ren* (humaneness), an idea he shared with Mengzi.²⁰ (See Kang 1968, 376) According to Kang Youwei, with society’s ascent in history the Confucian *ren* would increase accordingly, with the supreme *ren* eventually coinciding with the *datong* society.

Reminiscent of the spirit that emanates from the chapter “*Daxue*” of the *Liji*, Kang Youwei interpreted the aforementioned three-ages theory in a way that predicts China’s eventual “revenge”: China’s age of petty selfishness was now, as an outcome of this first stage, in an age of resistance to the Western barbarians, and would, in the end, be triumphant as the “inspiring genius of One World, to which all barbarians would voluntary flock in peace”.²¹ (Pusey 1983, 30) The “Middle Kingdom” would thus return to its historical position as the hub of *datong* (ibid., 35). Referring to the Confucian classics, Kang Youwei could thus claim that, according to Confucianism, history was a progressive process that would eventually lead to perfect happiness. That this interpretation of history was not in the *Gongyang zhuan*, which was already eclectic in nature, but instead only in a commentary to the commentary to the *Chunqiu* written by He Xiu (129–182) in the Later Han dynasty must, for Kang Youwei, only have been a minor detail in his blueprint to attain “utopia”.²²

The progress Kang Youwei envisaged was not Darwinian—a trait that would characterize the philosophy of Sun Zhongshan (1866–1925)—but was based on

18 See the passage of the “*Min lao*” quoted above.

19 See also Bauer 1974, 418; Rošker 2008, 121–2.

20 Notice also the focus on the Mencian *ren* in contemporary Taiwanese New Confucianism.

21 For Kang Youwei’s comment on the three-ages theory: see Bauer 1974, 415–6. See also the maxim “one people one dream” of the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

22 Pusey (1983, 31) remarks that “K’ang Yu-wei saw in the similarities between the commentaries of Tung Chung-shu and Ho Hsiu proof of a legitimate oral tradition, handed down in almost secret ‘apostolic succession’ from Confucius himself, and he could thus accept their commentaries as faithful transmission of Confucius’s true teachings”.

reason. It is very likely that Kang Youwei felt his idea of reasoned progress was supported through works such as the 1873 translation of Lyell's *Elements of Geology*, and the 1887 translation of William and Robert Chambers' *Homely Words to Aid Governance*, a work of which the title resembles the Confucian *Zi zhi tong jian* (*Universal Mirror as Aid in Governance*). (ibid., 23, 26) The Chambers' book saw progress as civilization, and civilization as the gradual extension of reason, knowledge, and good will.

A last element that indicates how Kang Youwei, although convinced of the value of technology and reason, still remained trapped in China's Confucian past, is that he advocated redefining Confucianism within the new "religious" paradigm that was introduced with the introduction and gradual popularity of Christianity in nineteenth century China. As Christianity became defined as a religion (*zongjiao*) and traditional Chinese belief systems, including Confucianism, were degraded as superstition (*mixin*), Kang Youwei tried to "save" Confucianism by redefining it as a "religion" in its own right. In order to transform Confucianism into a "national religion" (*guojiao*)—and the only possible one, for that matter—he proposed banning all religious institutions and transforming the Confucian temples that had begun to be confiscated from 1901 on into schools for instruction in what he called "*Kongjiao*", the Confucian religion. (See Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 45–47) A "modernized" Confucianism would thus have to become the Chinese "orthodox religion", in the same way as an "orthodox" Christianity was perceived as "orthodox religion" in many modern nineteenth century European countries.²³ Reshaping Confucianism as a national religion may have meant that elements of local cults that had traditionally been integrated in "State Confucianism" would now have to be avoided, thus completely severing local cults from the realm of official "religion". (See Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 55–56) On the other hand, it would also mean that Confucianism would no longer be a dividing factor between the elite and common people, but that Confucius would become a symbol for all and be honoured by all in the nation-state—a *guojiao* indeed. (See Kuo 2008, 67) Such a "national religion" could obviously be used as an instrument to attain a Confucian unified *datong* nation-state.

After Liang Qichao (1873–1929) had highly praised Kang Youwei's political insights, claiming that "my teacher's philosophy is socialist philosophy",²⁴ Sun

23 This shows that Kang Youwei was not so much driven by "intellectual rationality" as by an inspiration to modernize tradition (see Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 52).

24 Pusey (1983, 357) notes that the first time Liang Qichao ever mentioned socialism was in his biography of Kang Youwei, published in the December 21, 1901 issue of the *Qingyi bao*, and that "he awarded it his ultimate compliment by insisting that 'my teacher's philosophy is socialist philosophy'" and that he "had come upon much the same ideal thanks to the inspiration of the 'Li yun's ta t'ung'".

Zhongshan connected the *datong* concept to the Three People's Principals, in the sense that the purpose of the Three People's Principles was to bring about *datong*. (Chen 2011, 4; Zhang 1988, 6)²⁵ This can still be seen in the Republic of China's "national" anthem, originally a Kuomintang party song, which puts it as follows: "The Three People's Principles shall be our guiding faith, to build the Republic and advance to the *datong*". With Confucianism dismissed as vehicle to rally the collective feelings of all people, Sun Zhongshan brought in the Nationalist Party (*Guomindang*) and the concept *dangguo* (party state)—nationalist feelings for the state were identified with the Nationalist Party that came to be regarded as the incarnation of the new state.²⁶ (See Harrison 2001, 190–3) According to Sun Zhongshan, it was necessary to first deconstruct the Chinese "cultural state" in order to create the Chinese "nation-state". In his inaugural speech on the first congress of the Nationalist Party in January 1912, he therefore declared that he no longer wanted to "govern" the state through the Party (*yi dang zhi guo*), but to "establish" it through the Party (*yi dang jian guo*). (See Fitzgerald 1996, 185) The only way for the citizens to respond to the nationalist appeal and to contribute to the "establishment of the state" was hence to become members of the Party—much in the same way as they, in imperial times, had to become part of the Confucian bureaucracy. The conviction that a social revolution was impossible without a class struggle aligned Sun Zhongshan with Communism. This is evident from one of his last statements:

When we want to solve the social question in China, then we pursue an aim that is no different from what foreign countries also face: it is the wish that the masses of the people of all countries may reach peace and happiness, and may no longer suffer under the unequal distribution of capital and means of production. When we pursue this aim to liberate them from suffering, we also have to wish for Communism. (...) The idea that is inherent in our "Three People's Principles is that the people should possess and rule (itself) and be happy. (...) This aim is nothing else than the world of 'great unity' that Confucius (once) craved for". (Sun 1960, 271)

The *datong* ideal was thus put forward as much by constitutional monarchists, such as Kang Youwei, as by republicans such as Sun Zhongshan. Both were convinced that the *datong* society had to be realized in China first, before it could be realized in "all-under-heaven". (See Pusey 1983, 32)

25 See also Pusey 1983, 32.

26 This move would also prove important for presenting the Chinese Communist Party as an incarnation of the unified (*datong*) nation-state. See further.

Datong in the People's Republic of China

Having been a widely used symbolic concept in the last decades of the empire and the Republic, also China's communist leaders continued to refer to the *datong* utopia. In the same way as Sun Zhongshan had advocated the Guomindang as an instrument to unify China, Mao Zedong (1893–1976) alluded to the leading role of the CCP in its historical mission of modernizing the Chinese peasants and workers and uniting them in a communist society when he stated:

China can develop steadily, under the leadership of the working class and the Communist Party, from an agricultural into an industrial country, and from a new-democratic into a socialist and communist society, can abolish classes and realize the “great unity” (*datong*).²⁷ (Mao 1961)

With its mention of the abolishment of classes, this statement can be seen as a development of the earlier statement Kang Youwei had made in his *Zhongguo zhexue shi* (*History of Chinese Philosophy*), as noted above. Loyal to his Marxist foundations, Mao Zedong referred to both the Marxist scheme of history in five stages (primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, and communism), and to the three-stages scheme of historical development, culminating in the *datong* society. (See Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 171) Marxist historiography was thus brought into the much older Confucian framework of historic development.²⁸ (See Pusey 1983, 33, 155–6) This is also evident from Guo Moruo's (1892–1978) *Makesi jin wenmiao* (Marx visits a Confucian Temple), a text written in 1925. Here, Guo Moruo, a friend of Mao Zedong, places the following statement in the mouth of Confucius in response to Marx's description of the ideal Communist society: “Yes, truly (...) your ideal society and my world of ‘great unity’ are completely the same without us having deliberated over it. Let me cite a part of an old text of mine for you!” (Guo in Liu 1953), after which Confucius starts to recite the part of the *Liji* on *datong*.

27 Notice that the original English text reads “Great Harmony” instead of “great unity”. See also Schram 2002, 411–2.

28 Chen (2014, 4–8) mentions that when Marxism first arrived to China, it was understood from the perspective of the traditional system of thought that was dominant during that period and thus, inevitably, traditional elements infiltrated the new ideology. For example, the concept of “great unity” (*datong*) came to represent the ideals of socialism and communism and made it easier for the masses to grasp the concept of “the world belongs to all” (*tianxia wei gong*), but at the same time, it brought with it the idea that the evolution from socialism to communism was a continuous struggle against private property, ignoring the importance of the development of the productive forces. That the Marxist chronology starts off from the stage of primitive communism may also help to explain Mao Zedong's sympathy for Moism. Mao's revaluation of Moism, further, did not infringe on the fusion of Marxist and Confucian historiography, as the famous originally Moist *datong* chapter had already been integrated in Confucian philosophy in the Han dynasty.

The communist ideology also fused with the age-old Confucian “international” dimension. This is clear from Zhou Enlai’s (1898–1976) statement that “Socialist patriotism is not a narrow nationalism, but a patriotism aimed to strengthen national pride under the guidance of internationalism”. (In Chen 2005, 41) That China regarded the Soviet Union as a competitor in its leadership of a communist “all-under-heaven” is clear from Mao Zedong’s (1893–1976) aim to create a Chinese version of socialist internationalism after the country’s break with the Soviet Union in 1959, as well as from the country’s attempt to establish a united front of all anti-imperialist powers, starting in 1963. (See Chen 2005, 43)²⁹

Datong and New Confucianism

With Confucianism being labeled as bourgeois and counter-revolutionary, Confucian scholars outside of mainland China further developed their interpretation of the *datong* concept and how it could be a guide for political action. According to Xiong Shili (1885–1968), China’s backwardness that came visible in its nineteenth century confrontation with the West was the result of the fact that especially Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming dynasties had too much emphasized morality, and too little the “exploration of things” and the “extension of knowledge”, the first two steps of the “eight steps” listed in the “*Daxue*”. In the Song dynasty’s systematization of Neo-Confucianism in its *lixue* form by Zhu Xi, and in the Ming dynasty’s systematization in its *xinxue* form by Wang Yang-ming (1472–1529), the focus had indeed been on the development of the moral self. The main difference between Zhu Xi’s and Wang Yangming’s interpretations was merely whether a human being’s moral self had, in the process of physical creation, undergone a deterioration of its archetypal perfect form (*li*), and one thus had to strive to, through the study of the Confucian classics, reach the ultimate perfect morality, or, whether, as Wang Yangming claimed, human beings were perfect in themselves and had—through introspection—to find the ultimate morality in themselves. According to Xiong Shili, this attitude had prevented the development of scientific knowledge, in contrast to what the West had experienced. (Guo and Zhang 2001, 330; Rošker 2008, 226–7). He therefore advocated complementing the “Doctrine of the Inner Sage” (*nei sheng*) with the “Doctrine of the External Ruler” (*wai wang*). Such a renewed Confucianism would, according

29 See also Nāth (1975, 259–68) for China’s attempts to question the Soviet policies in Eastern Europe and in the international communist movement, and its attempts to isolate the Soviet Union wherever possible; and Nāth (ibid., 284) for Zhou Enlai’s focus on the conflict with the United States in the period 1968–1971. Especially after Nixon’s visit to China in 1972, Chinese foreign policy was characterized by a fierce anti-Soviet stance (see ibid., 307).

to him, lead to an “independent, free, equal, prosperous and democratic society of ‘great unity’ (*datong*)”. (Guo and Zhang 2001, 330)

Tang Junyi (1909–1978), a Hong Kong-based New Confucian, made the important point that a *datong* society is not to be equated with a society of “sameness”, by which he criticizes the Communist policies of the People’s Republic of China.³⁰ For this, he referred to the *Lunyu*, in which it is stated that “the nobleman creates harmony, not sameness; ordinary men, on the contrary, are all the same and cannot create harmony”. (*Lunyu*, Zilu, 23) According to his political interpretation, this meant that only when China became a culture of harmony (*hexie*) would it be able to be the leader in the search for a perfect culture through integration with other cultures. (See Tang 2000, 293; Rošker 2016, 111)

Datong and Contemporary New Confucianism in the People’s Republic of China

With the introduction of capitalist elements in its economy, the ascent of China in the contemporary world has increasingly put into question the communist aims of the ruling Communist Party. The parallel with the economic rise of the so-called four Asian economic tigers of which Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan were also the cradle of New Confucianism, has also led to the birth of a mainland Chinese New Confucianism. During the Hu Jintao era (China’s State President from 2003 to 2013), the surprising introduction of Confucian concepts in CCP rhetoric especially highlighted the *xiaokang* concept. This focus may be related to the fact that the contemporary epoch of “socialism with Chinese characteristics” (*you zhongguo tese de shehui zhuyi*)—basically a form of state capitalism—leaves open the possibility that, in line with Marxist historiography, a communist *datong* society will be attained in the future.³¹ (Zlotea 2015, 157) In practical policies, achieving the *xiaokang* level is necessary in order to alleviate social and ethnic division, and hence keep the CCP in power. (Choukrone and Garaspane 2007, 30; Rošker 2016, 197) Achieving the *xiaokang* society will make it possible that, in an undefined future, the “harmonious society” (*hexie shehui*) can be achieved.

30 Note that Tang Junyi was born in mainland China, but went into exile in Hong Kong with the proclamation of the People’s Republic of China in 1949.

31 Kou (2012, 51–55) also compared Confucian socialism to feudal socialism in the Communist Manifesto. He stated that while “Confucian socialism” was a utopian idea, socialism with Chinese characteristics was based on reality and deeply rooted in Chinese contemporary scientific socialism. Note also that Mao Zedong, in his *Lun renmin minzhu zhuanzheng* (*On the Democratic Dictatorship of the People*), described the attainment of a *datong* society as “a remote perspective of the progress of mankind”. For the latter: see Bauer 1974, 544.

The concept of the “harmonious society” has, as part of the Chinese dream of the Xi Jinping era, even been projected to become a “harmonious world” (*hexie shijie*).

It is therefore noteworthy that while the original forms of New Confucianism in Hong Kong and Taiwan emphasized the philosophy of Mengzi, mainland New Confucianism focuses on Xunzi who, being influenced by Legalist thinking, focused on the use of law.³² In the PRC, law is seen as an instrument to support the power of the CCP. This also explains the contemporary upsurge of *guoxue* departments (many PRC universities have established a *guoxue yuan*). Traditionally, *guoxue* studies were those Confucian studies that aimed at maintaining political power in the hands of the ruling imperial house. It is to this *guoxue* that early twentieth century *junxue* reacted in an attempt to restore the pre-imperial interpretation of Confucianism.

Conclusion

China’s nineteenth century confrontation with a scientifically dominant West forced its intellectuals to rethink their traditional Confucian concepts. Convinced of the fact that China’s backwardness was the outcome of the country’s emphasis on morality, adopting Western rationality was seen as the solution to re-establishing the country on much stronger terms. The actual development of contemporary Chinese philosophy, however, shows the impossibility of ignoring the past and trying to start over with a *tabula rasa* past.³³ (See Metzger 2012, 228) Tu Weiming, a contemporary New Confucian thinker who, after an academic career in the US returned to Beijing University, expressed this as follows:

In both the Western and the non-Western worlds, the projected transition from tradition to modernity never occurred. As a norm, traditions continue in modernity. Indeed, the modernizing process itself is constantly shaped by a variety of cultural forms rooted in distinct traditions. (Tu 2000, 198)

32 Rošker (2016, 203–4) refers to Xunzi, Wang zhi 26 in this respect: “With the establishment of forms of punishment, the governing (of society) will become balanced and people will live in harmony”, to which she remarks that the disciplinary connotation that prevailed in the understanding and propagation of a “harmonious society” in China under Hu Jintao, thus derives directly from Xunzi’s interpretations of this notion.

33 Zhang Dainian (1909–2004) formulated this problem as follows: “Contemporary Chinese philosophy has to be connected to and be a continuation of the Chinese philosophy of the past. The kind of philosophy we need should not only be based on the most recent achievements of Western currents, but should first and foremost look at the authentic and original Chinese tradition”. See Zhang 1984, Vol 1, 219.

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A Tale of Two Utopias: Kang Youwei's Communism, Mao Zedong's Classicism and the "Accommodating Look" of the Marxist Li Zehou

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Abstract

In the *Datong Shu* the Confucianist philosopher Kang Youwei (1858–1927) attempted to describe in an utopian fashion the end of history, as consisting of the abolition of private property, the institution of a world government, the disruption of marriage and the eradication of social differences. With his book, Kang somehow anticipated Mao's use of the traditional ideal of *datong* as a revolutionary concept. In my paper, I will discuss a debate on the *Datong Shu* from the 1950's, when a young Li Zehou (1930–) defended Kang's utopianism from the accusations of 'conservatism' moved by orthodox Marxists. Li's "benevolent look" on Kang may serve as an interesting anticipation of his later efforts to synthesize Marxist and Confucianism.

Keywords: Kang Youwei, Li Zehou, Confucianism, Chinese Utopianism, Chinese Marxism

Zgodba dveh utopij: komunizem Kanga Youweija, klasicizem Maota Zedonga in »prilagodljiv pogled« marksista Lija Zehouja

Izvleček

V delu *Datong Shu* konfucijanski filozof Kang Youwei (1858–1927) poskuša na utopičen način opisati konec zgodovine, ki jo sestavljajo odprava zasebne lastnine, institucije svetovne vlade, razkol v zakonu in izkoreninjenost družbenih razlik. S svojo knjigo Kang nekako predvideva Maotovo uporabo tradicionalnega ideala *datong* kot revolucionarnega koncepta. V svojem članku avtor razpravlja o debati o *datong shuju* iz leta 1950, ko je mladi Li Zehou (1930–) zagovarjal Kangov utopizem pred obtožbami »konservativizma«, ki so ga začeli ortodoksni marksisti. Lijev »dobrohotni pogled« na Kanga lahko služi kot zanimivo pričakovanje in trud, da bi sintetiziral marksizem in konfucianizem.

Ključne besede: Kang Youwei, Li Zehou, konfucianizem, kitajski utopizem, kitajski marksizem

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Introduction

In 1955 an article by a gifted Marxist intellectual in his twenties appeared in the journal *Wenshizhe* 文史哲. The author, Li Zehou 李泽厚 (1930–)—still to become an influential and controversial thinker in contemporary China¹—intervened in a learned debate involving a prominent figure in the intellectual *milieu* of late imperial and early Republican China: Kang Youwei 康有为 (1858–1927). A member of the New Text School, author of *Confucius as a Reformer* (1897), proponent of the failed 1898 Hundred Days’ Reform, founder of the Baohuanghui—a political association devoted to the transformation of the Guangxu emperor into a constitutional monarch—and father of the Confucian National Church, defender of the imperial system against the Republicans and the Nationalists, even after 1911, Kang was unsuccessful enough to be exiled by the “conservatives” as a “progressive” and to be later dismissed by the revolutionaries as a “conservative” himself. In sum, he tried to transform Classicism (*ru*, generally translated as Confucianism)² into a progressive and evolutionary ideology capable of serving China in the search for her own “modernity”.³ The focus of Li’s attention, then, was not on Kang’s unsuccessful Hundred Days’ Reform of 1898, his constitutional monarchism nor in his subsequent anti-Republican activities that aimed to restore the Manchu dynasty on the throne. Instead, the article—entitled “On Kang Youwei’s Book of Great Concord” (论康有为的大同书)—in one of the most “personal”, esoteric and maybe unexpected pieces of Kang’s production: the *Datongshu* 大同书, or *Book of Great Concord*, the product of a lifelong meditation, begun in the late 1880’s, but published posthumously in 1935, being “too advanced for the times” in the author’s own opinion.⁴

There, Kang’s interpretation of human history as a march towards a brighter future—a linear and progressive trajectory, not cyclic, nor retrograde, which Kang

1 An interesting, although very short, summary of Li’s thought can be found in Ding 2002.

2 The traditional translation of *ru* 儒 into “Confucianism” has transformed a philosophical approach to the study, preservation (and hopefully re-creation) of the Past—of which Confucius was with no doubt the founding father—into a sort of “religion” or “cult” of Confucius himself. The latter—which is termed in Chinese *Kongjiao* 孔教—will be attempted much later, in response to contact with Western religions such as Christianity (and Kang Youwei himself, incidentally, will play a role in the organization of a Confucian Church). For these reasons, I have opted for a more literal translation of *Ru* into “Classicism”, highlighting its philosophical, philological and historiographical perspective.

3 For a comprehensive survey of Kang’s thought, see Hsiao 1975. A more recent analysis of his political agenda in the wider framework of late Qing and early Republican China is in Zarrow 2012.

4 This is what Kang explicitly says in an essay of 1917, *Gonghe Pingyi* 共和评议 (*Impartial Words on Republicanism*), in which he tries to solve the apparent contradiction between his views on democracy and Republicanism expressed in his “private” philosophical agenda (*Datongshu* included) on the one hand and on the public stage of Chinese political life on the other.

had inherited from the New Text School of Confucianism, and more specifically from the esoteric Classicism of the Gongyang Commentary to the *Chunqiu*—was presented in its fullness. In a nutshell, the *Datongshu* describes the long march of mankind from division to unity. Generally considered as a “utopia”, the book is rather a world history describing the past, present and future of humanity: as if moved by an inevitable mechanism, Kang claims, the world will evolve through the Three Ages (derived from the Confucian *Book of Rites*) from Chaos to Equality and Peace, finally attaining the state of Datong, or Great Concord.⁵ States will erase their borders and boundaries and a one-world government will grow to a global scale the ideal model of the Zhou. No races, no languages, no nations nor armies, no difference between men and women nor discrimination against homosexuals, no poverty nor exploitation. No private interest (*si 私*) nor private property: everything will be public and common (*gong 公*) again.

Generally labeled as a “Chinese utopia”, Kang’s work actually defies any strict categorization. Defining its literary genre is also a more complex task than one may expect: besides the fascinating and indeed “utopian” descriptions of the “world of tomorrow”, which make up a large part of the book, it also includes significant pieces of historical, political, religious and scientific literature. In fact, if we wish to adopt Michel Foucault’s definition of Utopias as “sites with no real place”, “sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of Society”, which “present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case are fundamentally unreal spaces”, (Foucault 1984) then the *Datongshu* transcends this category. The world prophesied by Kang is in fact our own world, not another, nor an allegoric realm to be used as a philosophical model. And the Age of Concord is not presented as an ideal stage of development placed *outside* of history, but as the natural conclusion of the very same historical dynamics which are at work in the present. In Kang’s book there is no break between the survey of the past and the anticipation of the future. In fact, there is no description of another space, but only of another time in this same space as ours. Indeed, its utopian components notwithstanding, we could paradoxically describe the main feature of the *Datongshu* as that of being a “global history of the future”.

However, what Li Zehou intended to point out in his article was less the nature of Kang’s prophecy than its social and economic aspects, mainly illustrated in Part Six of the *Datongshu*. The reason is in the self-evident Marxist flavour of Kang’s ideal of “commonality”, by which no private property will be allowed in the world of Supreme Equality: a Confucianist imagining a sort of Communist paradise

5 For a general summary of the *Datongshu*, see Thompson 1958 and Hsiao 1975, 419–513. On the origins of the term *datong* and on its political significance through the imperial era, see Pines 2012.

was clearly an interesting intellectual challenge for the Chinese *intelligentsia* of the 1950's, as will be argued later. First, Kang's Utopia will be presented in more detail, before proceeding with its interpretation by Li in the first years of the PRC.

Kang's Utopianism: All Public Under Heaven

As noted above, the trajectory of human development is clear enough, to Kang's eyes. By transforming an esoteric reading of Classicism into an almost Marxist progressive grid, the author acknowledges that in order to reach the "end of history" inequality must be eradicated. An ambitious task—in which the Confucian ideal of social balance is mixed with Buddhist aspirations, and imbued by some clear Western influences as well—which seems to be challenging even in the "modern" world:

People rely on farming, crafting, trading, but the ingenuity in earning money has been progressively refined, and now the reliance on industry has almost doubled. Until recently, each activity has been increasing its productivity and refining its techniques: common farmers, craftsmen and traders have been able to attend schools and farmers have been able to use new tools and fertilizers. Construction techniques, for example, have become remarkable: dirigibles sail the skies, railways shrink the distances, wireless communications cross the seas; in comparison with the "old" world, this is a "new" one indeed. The flow of trade is bigger, steamboats are spreading, goods are transported everywhere across the five continents and new enterprises which have never been achieved for centuries are now flourishing everywhere. Culture evolves day by day, and the past is left behind. As remarkable as these new techniques can be, they are just a superficial aspect of this new world, and they cannot prevent the deprivations suffered by common people, nor the lack of public mindedness. (Kang, *Datongshu*, 262).

This "lack of public mindedness" (a concern derived from the Confucian, and especially Mencian, ideal of *gong*) is identified by Kang as a massive obstacle to the evolutionary step towards the Great Concord. In an interesting reflection on the Confucian ideological sources of egalitarian views, scholar Gao Ruiquan 高瑞泉 has pointed out that Chinese Classicism—albeit moving in a social context that "cannot be defined as egalitarian" (Gao 2009, 120)—still provided some interesting examples of egalitarian concerns. Whereas the existence of a public examination system offered a striking difference with European feudalism, the traditional Confucian system of values, unquestionably based on agrarianism and on the

reduction of differences between rich and poor, with a consequent bias against an excess of private wealth, is not too distant from modern socialist blueprints. Gao himself widely quotes the *Datongshu* as a significant example of this link between the two apparently distant cultural constructs of *ru* and Communism (and he is just one among many scholars who have devoted their studies to these issues). For sure, Chinese Classicism does indeed appear more hierarchically structured than the fully-egalitarian Christianity—as argued by Jacques Gernet, among the others—and the “ritualist veneration” prescribed by the Classics is a clear manifestation of such a hierarchical vision of society, fully elaborated by Xunzi 荀子, Gao explains (Gao 2009, 122). We know that many of the most prominent figures in the history of Chinese Classicism, starting from the Master himself, albeit holding to the traditional “ritualistic” view of society, have underlined the importance of “balance” (and therefore, equality) in order to stabilize social order. Mencius, in particular, produced the well-known *minben* 民本 theory, by which the people have to be considered by the ruler as the bedrock of his power and the centre of his concerns. This care for the people’s needs (often undertaken for reasons of political stability, more than humanitarian concern), spurred the famous Classicist criticism of the fact that “rich people own pieces of land one after another, while the poor have land just enough to stick an awl into it, 富者地連阡陌, 貧者無立錐之地” (ibid., 12). So, the paradox underlined by Gao (and by many scholars investigating the Confucian echoes in Chinese socialism) is that Western liberalism, focusing on individual freedom and on the “equality of opportunities”, has generated an economic system in which the difference between rich and poor is acceptable, while Confucianists (both ancient and modern), although preaching “ritual hierarchies” have come to criticize the emergence of economic disparities. Even an adversary of Kang like Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (1868–1936) used to state that the Chinese imperial system’s social structure was closer to any concept of equality than Western or Japanese constitutional states.⁶ It can be said that the binary opposition between hierarchism and egalitarianism is therefore mitigated by Confucian ethics into a complementary relationship. In other words, in the Confucian worldview, the “status inequality” prescribed through the ideal of *li* 禮 is balanced by the importance of *ren* 仁 and by the praise of a compassionate rule: the famous—and often overestimated—Confucian aversion to merchants’ profits is thus rooted in such a philosophical construction. And Kang’s utopia, preaching the abolition of private interests in any human field drawing on Confucian ideals, perfectly fits in this framework, as the next excerpt demonstrates. Here, more specifically, Kang straightforwardly addresses the possibility of selling and owning land as one of the major causes of inequality:

6 See Zhang Taiyan’s *Daiyi ranfou lun* 代議然否論, quoted in Gao 2009, 122.

Now, we shall talk about agriculture. In China people can buy and sell land. Since everyone can obtain a small piece of land, it is difficult to use machinery to farm. Not to mention the fact that there are no farming schools yet, there is no knowledge on how to improve production, the landlords usually do not farm themselves because many of them are tenants, the leasing rates are expensive, floods and droughts may occur; even if they work the entire year with callused hands and feet while the whole family double their efforts, farmers can't raise their livestock; (...) their suffering is hard to describe. If schools for farmers were established, if the species of crops were better known, if fertilizers were perfected and machines were used more diffusely, as in Europe or in America, yet the fields would still be too small making it difficult to attain a complete uniformity: large fields would go uncultivated while small ones would still cause fruitless efforts, and those who own no piece of land would still be used as farmers, suffering cold, wandering and ravenous like beggars. This is not characteristic of China: except for America, where a newly opened land provides large fields, almost every country cannot avoid such a situation. Confucius was worried about this, therefore elaborating the well-field system, but those who came after him did not care about people suffering cold and hunger. (...) As Confucius said, "Through equality there is no poverty": this is the highest principle. Later Confucians constantly developed the theory of equalizing the fields and developed the methods to divide each field (...) The theories on livelihood by the foreigner Mr. Fourier,⁷ prescribe that a big field of ten *li*—arranged as a well-field—may sustain one thousand people: his ideas are moved by universal empathy (*ren*), but they cannot be implemented. Then, when people start to sell and buy properties, having their own private properties, the distance between rich and poor is far from levelled, ultimately resulting in the lack of equality. (Kang, *Datongshu*, 262–3)

In the following section, Kang moves to enumerate in more detail some of the "evil" fruits of private property in different economic activities. As far as agriculture is concerned, Kang underlines that "in a private mode of production there

⁷ In the original text, Kang mentions "Mr. Fu, the Englishman"; however this is a clear reference to Charles Fourier (1772–1837), the French philosopher who inspired the creation of utopian socialist communities in the United States throughout the nineteenth century. Fourier's thought has many common points with Kang's: the evolutionary view of history, moving from Chaos to Harmony; the struggle for the abolition of private property; an egalitarian view of women, with a consequent denunciation of the traditional family and praise for sexual freedom. Among modern European thinkers, Fourier seems to be the closest to Kang's vision of social and historical development. For a survey of Fourier's utopianism, see Fourier 1971.

are those who cultivate a lot and those who cultivate less, so their productivity is uneven, as is their labor”, and “in addition to that, market fluctuations are variable, so it is difficult to predict sales and farmers cannot decide in advance what crop is more convenient to cultivate, consequently wasting their surplus”. If farmers cannot predict what will be needed, they cannot plan their production: “therefore, for the minority of them it is a matter of lack of planning and missed opportunities; for the majority, though, it means a reckless waste of products and labor”. Globalization, Kang anticipates, will make things even worse if it is not governed:

if we sum up all the farmers of the world, their numbers will grow a thousand times; if we sum up the missed opportunities of each single farmer, the waste of production and of labor of each single farmer, the result will be millions of wasted products, of missed opportunities and useless hours of labor, and hundreds of thousands of unused products and devalued tools. The solution lies in the “global planning” of any human activity, Kang prescribes, and in the will to stand firm into the ideal of *datong* (本於大同). (Kang, *Datongshu*, 265)

Commercial activities present the same problems (and solutions):

Since individuals run their own businesses, free to open their activity and to choose their employees, they cannot merge their activities, because it would be impossible to plan and foresee the needs of an entire population. If planning were possible, though, each shop would strengthen its profits, overcoming the incapacity to store a wide arrange of goods in advance to anticipate people’s requests, which now causes stored goods not to be requested, or requested goods not to be stored, with the result of over-capacity in some shops and under-capacity in others, as now happens to many people.

With over-supply on one side and under-capacity on the other, the same good’s price fluctuates: under-supply makes its price higher, while over-supply makes it cheaper: there may be clever individuals who get rich because of this, but more and more families lose their business. So people lose their money, productivity is uneven and human dignity is unequal. When people lose their business they bring poverty and suffering to their family, to the extent that they may even die and cause unhappiness to the world. But when there is over-supply of any kind of goods, their prolonged accumulation produces corruption: merchants have interest in keeping them and do not give them away lightheartedly, instead producing falsifications and selling them to people; there are laws

prohibiting this practice, yet they manage to escape any control. When this kind of corruption involves food and medicines it harms people's health and well-being; when it involves machinery, the dimensions of its destructive consequences are indescribable. Also those selling any other good, besides food, medicines and machinery, may be corrupted, cheating and harming people: aren't they like worms corroding the world and the attainment of the Supreme Equality? Even if governments could exert their control, avoiding the accumulation of surpluses, corrupt traders could simply discard their goods, causing, again, a reckless waste.

In the world of the Supreme Peace, all continents will be linked, the population will grow enormously, and the need for goods and tools will be vast. Uncountable human beings on one side, limited natural resources on the other; what we calculate today as the daily needs of an individual (for example: flour, meat and sugar daily consumption, or the quantity of iron, cotton, silk, leather, wood, bamboo, metal, stone, feathers, herbs, bones, drugs, colors and tools needed, and all the thousand life necessities) will exceed the capacity of the world to generate them and the capacity of men to produce them. So everything will have to be fixed in advance, corrupted people will have to be cast aside, the land will not be distributed to privates and the global rule, based on statistics, will consider making profit on other individuals as a mistaken policy, a stupid error! Describing the *Datong*, Confucius said: "It is hateful to waste accumulated goods, they must not be stored for oneself". (This is a quotation from the *Liji*) So, if traders all over the world started distributing the goods they have been accumulating for a long time, and if each one of them decided to give them back and make them available, according to the needs of people, would this not increase the health of citizens a thousand times? What could be more efficient than this, in fighting poverty? But it is impossible, unless we don't rule the market according to the way of the Great Concord. (Kang, *Datongshu*, 266–7)

Finally, Kang's prescription for equality emerges in the following section: in short, it involves global planning, centralization, redistribution, technocracy, and the abolition of any form of private property. Such a blueprint, and the vocabulary used to articulate it, might have indeed sounded familiar in the early years of Maoist rule over China:

Now, if we want to attain the Great Concord, first we have to overcome any form of private production. That's why agriculture, commerce and

industry must return to the public sphere. If all the fields of the world are managed as public property it will be impossible for anybody to own or purchase them. The central government will establish a Ministry of Agriculture in charge of all the cultivable pieces of land around the world, and each administrative level will establish its Department for Agriculture and supervise their division; its offices and branches will be established for every fixed amount of li. Each of these levels will install its officials. Students of agriculture will be examined by those offices and if they pass the exam they will be given a piece of land to be cultivated. The amount of cultivated land will vary according to the machinery developed at the time. They will be used for any kind of grains and plants and livestock and fishery. They will work and study in the same place; those who can't stand both activities will be substituted by someone else, because as the number of employees will increase, a new grade of perfection will be needed. So, as the population increases, the farming activity will flourish, more new territories will be opened up and techniques will be perfected. Every small administrative unit will routinely call a meeting of its agriculture officials to examine gains and losses; every year, it will communicate its revenues to the Central Ministry of Agricultural Affairs, which in turn will pass them to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. The Ministry will calculate the amount of daily supplies needed by the world population, in addition to those needed to repair the damage due to natural calamities; it will also consider the most suitable sites of production (among hills and swamps, coastal areas and deserts, fertile plains and dry zones) for any kind of crops, fruits, livestock and fishery; the Ministry will then compare the yearly data on land production provided by every administrative subdivision's rural bureau, providing a general estimate and communicating it back to the Ministry of Agriculture. The latter will check and ratify the decision; then, it will give to every subdivision its production quotas, passing down to the smallest unit's agricultural bureau the information on which plants, crops and animals must be grown or bred according to the geographical features of the place. Jiangnan is suitable for paddy rice, Hebei for wheat, Jiangsu and Zhejiang for mulberry, Sichuan for herbs, Guangdong for flowers and fruits, Siam and Annam and Myanmar for husked rice, northern Kouwai is good for animal farming, the coast for fishing, Shanxi for salt and coal, India for the five cereals, the islands of Nanyang for sugarcane, gems and pepper. Similarly, we can describe the most suitable products for any country of the world. (...) Any administrative unit will have an autonomous government and will establish a rural unit, under which rural bureaus will be established every ten

kilometers and, below these, farms will be established within every kilometer. They will distribute rice, wheat, cereal crops, fruits and vegetables, fisheries and cattle, and the work will be organized through directors, elders, vice-directors, members of the brigade, administrators, secretaries, officials and apprentices. Directors will supervise general activities, elders will manage the division of work, vice-directors will be their assistants, brigades will carry out their group activities, administrators will collect and store up goods, and secretaries will collect data and record them. Single farms will be charged with tilling and planting. Their extension will not be fixed in advance: as their techniques become more and more refined, as they open new roads and as the strength of their members increases, the communes will become larger. Rural units at each level will have an office supervising the quality of the soil, arranging human settlements according to a careful analysis of the distribution of mountains, plains, marshes, rivers, in order to avoid disparities in soil's fertility or in meteorological conditions. (Kang, *Datongshu*, 269–71)

In sum: no private property, but instead labor units, rural communes, central planning and redistribution. Kang's own agenda was not Communism at all, and he mentions it just once, but only to criticize Marx's "divisive" vision of history as moved by class struggle.⁸ As already pointed out, the philosophical background of Kang's utopianism is fully Confucian: the well-field system, the ideal of *gong* and the criticism of interests and capital accumulation, all seem to belong to the orthodox Classicism). And yet, is it so easy to dismiss such a grand dream of equality as a reactionary piece of writing? That's what some Communist critics had had to say about the *Datongshu* in the early 1950's and that's why Li Zehou decided to have his say on the issue.

Li Zehou: a Benevolent Look at Kang's Confucian Dream

Li's article was first of all an attempt to defend the utopianism of the *Datongshu* from the harshest critiques brought against Kang's thought by the PRC *intelligentsia*. Basing his argument on a careful reading of the aforementioned sections of the book, Li concludes that, all its limitations notwithstanding, the *Book of*

8 There is another interesting similarity between Kang and Li Zehou here. Even though "Li's philosophy is Marxist historical materialism through and through", he nevertheless "emphatically repudiates the Marxist social theory of class struggle, arguing that it has been proven wrong by the practice of many Marxist states and political parties", thus preferring "to style his philosophy 'post-Marxist', to highlight differences from the official Chinese version of Marxism" (Chan 2003, 109).

Great Concord is a generous attempt to overcome the social boundaries and inequalities of traditional and feudal China. At the beginning, though, Li provides the readers with a short survey on Chinese utopianism.

Before the diffusion of Marxism modern China had witnessed three main currents of anti-imperialist and anti-feudal thought. Accordingly, modern China had also witnessed and experienced three forms of socialist utopianism: the agrarian-socialist utopia of the Taiping Kingdom, Kang Youwei's bourgeois and liberal progressive utopia of *Datongshu*, and the Universal Welfare utopia of Sun Yatsen's petty-bourgeois revolutionary party. These three socialist idealisms appeared in succession and represent a historical phenomenon that is particularly significant in social terms. They appeared under different circumstances, in different situations and at different stages, each of them strongly expressing, through their unique aspects, the hatred of the Chinese people against an exploitative system and their aspiration for a better life, as well as depicting the objective challenges faced by Chinese society at the time and the actual trends of its economic development. A thorough research in modern Chinese socialist utopianism is therefore highly significant for the understanding of modern Chinese political and intellectual history, being also a magnificent page in the history of the contribution of the modern Chinese nation to the global advance of socialism. (Li 1955, 127)

After these introductory remarks, Li gets to one of the key points of his discourse, Kang's utopianism was "misread" in an erroneous understanding of the author's thought's chronological evolution. Surely, the presence of contradictory aspects in Kang's philosophy is undeniable, and his biography, fractured by his post-1898 exile, has proved to be an easy scheme for telling the story of a two-part life: the reformer and utopian, the conservative and socialist. And yet mentioning the complexity of the *Datongshu*'s creative process (begun in the late 1880's, almost completed in 1902, partially published in the 1910's, but then revised and published posthumously in 1935)⁹ is sufficient to understand how fragile such a clear-cut distinction may appear: Kang's production does not fit into a "before" and "after" 1898 pattern; rather, it looks like as a complex fabric constantly redefining Chinese identity as it faces "modernity".

Instead of dividing it chronologically, some scholars have elaborated a thematic separation in Kang's production. Such is the case with the contemporary scholar Bai Rui 白瑞, for example: in order to bypass Kang's apparent contradictions,

9 For a survey of the debate on the *Datongshu*'s composition, see Du 2002.

Bai has interpreted his philosophy as a sort of “two-level building” (Bai 2010). A “compromising” reformism—the actual effort to strengthen China—on the one hand, and an “utopistic” view of mankind’s future on the other. Hsiao’s approach (Hsiao 1975) is similar, and Kang himself hints at the distinction to be made between his public thoughts and most private beliefs. Anyway, these two spheres cannot be considered as two worlds apart, since they form a unique structure, unified by a global vision of historical evolution. Each stage sheds light on the other, with Kang somehow shifting from one level to the other over the decades without ever abandoning the comprehensive structure of his thought. Li Zehou’s analysis of Kang’s philosophy belongs to this interpretive direction:

Kang Youwei’s socialist utopia is well displayed and summarized in his *Datongshu*, which is therefore one of his most significant works. At the same time, though, the *Datongshu* is one of his most misread and misinterpreted works, and such a misunderstanding is clear throughout some of the essays which have recently dealt with this book. For example, someone has argued that the *Book of Great Concord* is a “utopian ideal of agrarian socialism” (Li Rui 李锐, “Comrade Mao Zedong’s early revolutionary movement” 毛泽东同志的初期革命活动 in 中国青年 1953); others have described Kang’s theory as “drifting away from the fundamentals of socialism” (Ji Wenfu 嵇文甫, “Drifting Theories” 游离了的学说 in 新史学通讯 June 1953); while some have credited Kang Youwei for trying to “give Chinese bourgeoisie a way of escape” (Fan Wenlan 范文澜, 中国近代史), and someone else has even described the purpose of Kang’s book as an attempt to “deceive and anesthetize the masses, in order to mitigate the revolutionary tide” (Mao Jianxun 毛健予, “Problems and solutions” 问题解答 in 新史学通讯 May 1953: p. 19). All these different views have generated a confused perception. Actually, the *Datongshu*, through the format of a utopia, expresses Kang’s early anti-feudal progressive and bourgeois ideal in its naked aspect: this is the book’s content and its specificity. So, if we say that Kang’s Hundred Days’ manifesto was the last effort to summarize the whole political program of the 19th century reformers, we can affirm that his *Datongshu* was the first attempt to provide reformism with a utopian aspiration. These two “faces” present a great distance and many contradictions (and this fact has puzzled many observers); however, at the same time they form a single unity. (Li 1955, 128)

Kang’s utopianism was a “generous” effort witnessing the limits of an “unripe class”: this strenuous jump into a “dreamed world”, consciously kept apart from

any public political agenda, somehow served as an indirect self-denunciation of the limits of a “national bourgeoisie” striving to reform its country (Li 1955, 135–6). In fact, reading the *Datongshu*’s chapters dealing with economics, production and society one can hardly deny an affinity with some Marxist concerns, except for their Confucian pedigree. And that is exactly what Li does: Kang expresses a materialistic view of human history, albeit drawing it from Classicism—the author argues, trying to intertwine the Mencian threads of the *Datongshu* with Marxism. This is made evident by the fact that Kang’s ideal of *datong* implies the full realization of *material* necessities, which are in his view inseparable from the *spiritual* importance of global equality. And his materialist approach to human progress was more Marxist than Kang would have ever admitted. Li notes this, as follows:

In his vehement attack against the sufferings caused by the old society, Kang unfolds his optimistic social project of Great Concord. The philosophical foundation of his blueprint is the bourgeois theory of human nature (“people desire to eliminate evil”): “The meaning of life is to avoid suffering and to attain happiness, there is no other way than this.” The *Datongshu* gets rid of the hypocritical exteriority of the feudalistic values, waving the banner of a simple and natural humanism, pointing at the righteousness and rationality of mankind’s “pursuit of happiness” and opposing the reactionary theory of asceticism and frugality, sponsored by the feudalistic landlords throughout the centuries.

Li defines Kang’s dream of Great Concord as “the highest grade of perfection of a material culture, where scientific progress is described as extremely developed and human life is described as extremely satisfactory and people have fulfilled their material (clothes, food, houses, transports) and spiritual (culture, education, entertainment) needs”. (Li 1955, 132) The implications are clear enough:

One cannot easily dismiss all this as a “capitalistic degeneration;” this wonderful image produced by a utopian illusion is—from an objective point of view—the beautiful and powerful ode sung by a new bourgeois class to a capitalistic society which was at that time attaining a high grade of industrialization. (...) Kang’s dream of a “leisure park world” and his belief in the inevitability of social progress resonates with the actual social aspirations of his time, and reflects the pursuit of happiness of wide popular masses, demonstrating how the structure of the world of *datong* lies on a material development: this is undoubtedly something that we can define as “correct” and “advanced”. And it also marks a fundamental

difference between Kang's *Datongshu* and the "System of Imperial Fields". Kang provides further evidence of his utopia's fundamentals when he recognizes that the public ownership of work and capital is at the basis of the Great Concord. And in the *Datongshu*, workers enjoy a high social position. (...) In the world of Great Concord, as Kang points out, there is no exploiting nor oppression, there are no "private interests" and "damaging the public good through personal interests is prohibited" (to cite the commentary to the *Liyun*). In his utopia, the power deriving from property (財產的所有權) is entirely owned by a public government (公政府). As Kang writes: "Every activity, agriculture, industry and commerce, will return to the public sphere;" "every piece of land in the world will be public;" "the infrastructure built by hundreds of workers will return to them: they cannot be private property of any individual;" "there cannot be private enterprises: every economic activity in the world will be controlled by the ministry of industry of the public government." Production and distribution will be planned: "There will be no surplus of products, no corruption nor waste." In Kang's words: "In the Age of Concord, the world will be public, there will be no classes, everybody will be equal." Clearly, this is a grand socialist utopia, which exceeds by far the structural constraints of the "feudalistic" oppressing class and clearly demonstrates the courage of the emerging bourgeoisie in its search for the truth and in its challenge to transcend its own interests. It is a mighty philosophical expression of the Chinese people's aversion to exploitation and its desire to break free from any form of oppression. Therefore, the *Datongshu* is endowed with a rich popular content. (ibid., 132–5)

It follows that, according to Li, Kang's utopianism "certainly does not 'corrupt the democratic consciousness of the masses, concealing a new form of oppression under the glittering veil of the pursuit of selfish desires', to use Lenin's words" nor does "the *Datongshu* contain such political implications, as demonstrated by the fact that Kang decided not to make it public." Rather, "the book marks an important step in the history of modern Chinese socialist idealism and it is far more advanced than the naive agrarian socialist utopianism of the Taiping rebellion" (ibid., 148–9).

Undeniably presenting itself as a socialist and people-oriented prophecy, the *Book of Great Concord* deserves more than a snubbing look by Marxist intellectuals, as Li argues in his concluding remarks:

In conclusion, the economic assumptions and basic principles of Kang's utopia can be described through the words used by Engels speaking of

Saint-Simon: “here we can see the far-reaching look of a man of talent”. Addressing the economic issues of *datong*, Kang acknowledged that the fulfillment of Great Concord can only be realized on the basis of a highly-developed material culture, in which the forces of production have been greatly empowered: only then, people will be able to get rid of poverty and enjoy happiness. He predicted that politics would soon start to gravitate around an economic issue: the regulation of production; and he expressed in a simple way the great principle that everyone ought to work. Of course, Kang is not as farsighted as Saint-Simon, who detected precisely the class struggle between work and capital in a capitalistic society, as well as the conflict of interests lying behind the existence of a private mode of production. Kang’s reformist utopia is, in this sense, more limited. (ibid., 136)

Li Zehou’s interest into Kang Youwei was not exhausted in 1955. Two years later, he produced another essay as a direct response to an article by Tang Zhidiao 汤志钧, an orthodox Marxist and scholar of Kang’s thought. Tang had dismissed the *Datongshu* as a reactionary work, and he also had linked it almost exclusively to Kang’s second life as an active anti-Republican, in order to attack the work. The dating of the *Book of Great Concord* thus became an important point in the discussion (as already hinted by the aforementioned reference by Li to the question of how to organize chronologically Kang’s production): Li, correctly, points out that Kang had drafted the first versions of the *Datongshu* in the 1880’s, and that his utopianism is inseparable from the rest of his political and philosophical production. Moreover, and this leads us to the bigger issue behind these comments on the *Datongshu*, Li criticizes Tang’s stern look at Kang and late Qing reformism as a whole as insubstantial. Again, a translation of Li’s very clear words on this point is provided here:

Mr. Tang Zhidiao’s paper *On Kang Youwei’s Book of Great Concord* (published this year on the first issue of *Philosophy of Cultural History*) moves some criticism on my previous essay *Discussion on Kang Youwei’s Book of Great Concord*, touching fundamental questions with regard to the evaluation of the *Datongshu*. In other words: is the *Datongshu* a fundamentally progressive or reactionary book? The point of divergence is that for Tang Zhidiao the philosophical foundation of Kang’s book is reactionary, serving as the theoretical basis for his late years’ activity of “lulling the masses”, “contrasting the revolution” and “defending monarchy to restore the Empire” (these are quotations from Tang’s article). I cannot agree with this view, since I am convinced that in its main content the *Datongshu*

basically expresses the progressive thought of young Kang, advocating for bourgeois democracy and liberalism. Now, I will briefly address some of Mr. Tang's remarks.

First of all, I consider Mr. Tang's methodology of research as absolutely inappropriate. He does not rely on any analysis of the *Datongshu*'s actual content, rather using a purely chronological examination of its dating as the point of departure for his discussion. The *Datongshu*—Tang argues—was “completed” in 1901–1902, during Kang's exile following the failure of the Hundred Days reform, a time when the emergence of revolutionaries spurred Kang's “reactionary” attitude: “He supported Guangxu, feared a popular uprising and wished to draw an ideal boundary: that's why he wrote the *Datongshu*”, Tang writes, and *consequently* the *Datongshu* is defined as reactionary. In the article there is no reference to the *Datongshu*'s contents, there are no observations nor concrete responses to my own analysis of those contents. There is no substantial research on the philosophical content of Kang's text nor of its specific connections to his contemporary social and historical situation: the author simply uses the philological examination of the *Datongshu*'s writing process as the only element in shaping his own judgment on the book's value. Honestly, any theory built on these premises is quite dangerous. (Li 1957, 149–50)

The debate on the composition of Kang's book's, then, is understood by Li as involving a more complex question than a simple issue of chronology: it indirectly requests a judgment on the whole of Kang's production and on the intentions behind his political action after the failure of the Hundred Days. Tang's version of the facts (the *Datongshu* was completed while Kang was already a “reactionary” fighting against the Republic) is used to discredit the entire purpose behind the author's utopianism, and he is thus unacceptable in Li's eyes.

Confucius and Marx: Meeting in the Land of Utopia?

Beneath the surface of this learned confrontation, then, a big question was looming: how immune was Maoism from China's Confucian heritage? Indeed, if the debate on the ideological roots of Maoism was *taboo* at that time, it is now far from closed, even in mainland China. Was Maoism pervaded by “unconscious Classicism”, as recently stated by some Chinese scholars (Xia and Du 2010)? Li seems to agree, while also suggesting that Kang Youwei might have been an unwitting Communist, given his materialist approach to the philosophy of history. More

easily, instead of using the excuse of “unconsciousness”, Kang’s and Mao’s utopias might be considered as being connected by some common concerns emerging at a time in which China was abandoning its old values without any new certainties at hand, and expressed through some common cultural tools. It may be easier to define the two utopias (Kang’s philosophical dream and Mao’s actual political experiment) as two responses to the very same challenges—blending the need for a strong and stable form of government on the one hand, and the search for a new set of universal values on the other—coming from two men who were influenced by the same Chinese cultural context. With all their self-evident differences, Mao and Kang’s roads seem unsurprisingly connected when moving towards utopianism. And Li’s eagerness in following them suggests much about his own philosophical trajectory.

In his studies of Kang’s *Datongshu*, as discussed in this paper, Li Zehou not only provides some interesting clues about the internal debate among Communist intellectuals on the relationship between “tradition” and “modernity,” but also anticipates the revival of interest in late Qing reformers that he and some of his fellow intellectuals would encourage in the decade stretching from the end of Maoism to the Tian’anmen protests in 1989, while bidding “farewell to revolution” (*gaobie geming* 告别革命).¹⁰

As far as Li’s own system of thought is concerned, the 1955 and 1957 essays supply a significant example of the author’s formative development. Although “Li’s philosophy was first developed in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, and bears the hallmark of the intense intellectual ferment of that time” (Chan 2003, 110), the direction to which he eventually moved was already clear in the 1950’s.

Defined as a “post-Marxist anthropological ontology”, Li’s view tries to “combine the most important aspects of traditional Chinese philosophy with those of Western philosophy and to establish a methodology for the study of philosophy that embraces both Chinese and Western thought”, as recently summarized by a scholar of contemporary Chinese philosophy (Ding 2002). Li’s early interest in Kang’s elaborations on the concept of *datong* will certainly resonate in his more mature elaboration on the “philosophy of the future” which, to use John Ding’s words, aims at “overcoming tragic conflicts and dissensions between human beings and nature, society and individuals, emotion and reason, history and psychology, and ideal and reality” through an “analysis of the objective history of social development” (Ding 2002, 252). We could say that Kang’s philosophical “road map”—examining the global history of mankind, from chaos to concord—is not far from Li’s own philosophical purpose.

10 On Li’s intervention in the debate on *gaobie geming*, see Li and Liu 1999.

In fact, in Li's attempts at demolishing some of the fences erected by the supporters of Maoism (or Marxism in general) on one side and Chinese Classicism on the other, we can detect a sort of "accommodative" attitude. It is the same that, according to Jing Wang's definition of Li Zehou's general approach to tradition, is the pivot of the philosopher's intellectual production:

Li Zehou's double call for "constructing two civilizations" (the material and spiritual civilization) is symptomatic of his accommodative streak that always seeks to merge materialism and idealism in a continuum reminiscent of middle-of-the-road Confucian eclecticism. Therefore, instead of valuing Li Zehou's philosophy as a site of contestation, I suggest that we examine it as a site of conciliation where an ongoing process of ideological negotiation among historical materialism, idealism, and Confucian rationalism takes shape. Bearing in mind his penchant for the philosophy of the unity of Heaven and (hu)man, we should anticipate that Li Zehou's theoretical practice faithfully enacts the Confucianist instinct for reconciliation. The meeting of classical Marxist with reformist Confucian ideology thus sets the moral tenor of his philosophy of modernity. (Wang 1996, 94)

Such an attitude received harsh criticism from both the left and right; the former criticized "what they consider to be his pseudo-Marxism", while the latter condemned him "for degenerating into the dogmatism of outworn Marxism", with other less politicized critics considered "his theoretical frameworks to be a 'mixed stew of Marx, Kant and other philosophers or, at most, a 'creative imitation' of those figures" (Ding 2002, 257).

More importantly, we could say that these two pieces of Li's early production sound like a prologue to his later evolution towards a reconciliation between Marxism and *Ru*, with the collateral aspiration to demonstrate that the real roots of Maoism were in fact in the Classical tradition more than in Marx's thought (De Giorgi and Samarani 2005, 49). In this sense, Li's attention to the *Datongshu* as a (maybe unwitting) harmonization of Classicism and Marxism was not coincidental. In other words, Kang's utopianism might be considered to be in Li's mind as a proxy for his own attempt at keeping together the legacy of the Chinese past with the revolutionary aspirations of the twentieth century.

Not surprisingly, once the revolutionary frenzy was over Li Zehou was the first thinker to explicitly praise the Master in mainland China after 1949. In this sense, his earlier analysis of Kang's utopia as "unconsciously permeated" by Communism may be considered as an example of his youthful attempt at reconciling two universalisms (Confucian Classicism and Marxism), at least in the land of Utopia.

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*Classical Pre-Qin Philosophy: Comparative
and Analytical Perspectives*

The Distance of Heaven: An Analysis of the Guodian *Wu Xing*

Matthew James HAMM*

Abstract

This paper argues that the Guodian *Wu Xing* consists of two interrelated sections that reflect its distinction between goodness (a characteristic of humans) and virtue (a trait of Heaven). Individually, each section emphasizes different aspects of self-cultivation. When read against one another, they articulate the text's main argument that Heaven is a distant figure and that the sage, a figure who understands the Way of Heaven, is almost unreachable. As such, the text focuses on the gentleman, a figure who achieves virtue (defined as timeliness) within a dispositional context by emulating Heaven in accordance with the Way of the Gentleman.

Keywords: Guodian *Wu Xing*, virtue, goodness, heaven, timeliness

Oddaljenost neba: Analiza Guodian *Wu Xing-a*

Izvleček

Ta članek zagovarja trditev, da je Guodian *Wu Xing* sestavljen iz dveh medsebojno povezanih delov, ki izražata razlikovanje med dobroto (značilnost ljudi) in vrlino (lastnost neba). Vsak del posamično poudarja različne aspekte samo-kultivacije. Ko ju beremo vzporedno, se nam jasno izoblikuje osnovna trditev besedila, namreč da je nebo oddaljena podoba in da je modrec kot osebek, ki razume pot neba, skoraj nedosegljiv. Besedilo se tako osredotoča na plemenitnika, osebo, ki dosega vrlino (definirano kot pravočasnost) znotraj razpoložljivega konteksta, posnemajoč nebo v skladu s potjo plemenitega.

Ključne besede: Guodian *Wu Xing*, vrlina, dobrota, nebo, pravočasnost

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Introduction

Excavated in the village of Guodian 郭店 in Hubei 湖北 province in 1993, the *Wu Xing* 五行 or *The Five Conducts*, has given rise to a range of interpretations, most of which analyse the text with reference to other works and by situating it within broader contexts.

Most immediately, the work has frequently been read alongside the *Wu Xing* manuscript discovered at Mawangdui 馬王堆 in Hunan 湖南 province in 1973. Based on a variety of factors, including perceived resemblances between the two texts and the *Mengzi* 孟子, many scholars have interpreted the two manuscripts together as key components in the reconstruction of the *Si-Meng* 思孟 scholastic lineage, described by Pang Pu as part of the greater internalist branch of Confucian thought (Pang 1998, 89).¹ Other scholars, accepting or rejecting this historical narrative to varying degrees, have analysed the Guodian text with respect to larger ideas, such as early Chinese moral and aesthetic theory, the work's relationship to the competing theories of the *Mengzi* and the *Xunzi* 荀子, *ru* 儒 virtue discourse, arguments regarding the worldview of the Guodian strips, and strategies of argumentation in the Warring States period.²

In order to supplement this body of research, the present study focuses exclusively on the Guodian *Wu Xing*, analysing it based only on its internal content and structure.³ This approach yields a different interpretation of the text and suggests that it is best read as two discontinuous but related essays that reflect the work's basic division of goodness (*shan* 善), the harmony of four of the eponymous conducts, and virtue (*de* 德), the harmony of all five conducts. These two sections mirror one another in structure, but focus on different conducts and themes. Consequently, investigating parallel passages across the text reveals each section's most basic concerns.

The goodness section emphasizes active engagement with the world, goodness as an inherent feature of imperfect humans, and describes the partial state in which humans begin self-cultivation. Its detailed description of the conducts also reveals

1 Two of the most influential articulations of this view may be found in Li 1998 and Pang 2000. However, this viewpoint has been generally accepted in most scholarship in mainland China, for which Chen Lai provides a helpful overview (Chen 2012).

2 See Cook 2000, Ikeda 2003, Csikszentmihalyi 2004, Holloway 2009 and Meyer 2012, respectively.

3 The exception to this is that I have followed scholars such as Scott Cook who have used the Mawangdui *Wu Xing* to assist their transcriptions of the Guodian manuscript. However, the differences between the two manuscripts are primarily conceptual rather than linguistic and are based on their different textual structures as well as the addition of the commentarial section in the Mawangdui manuscript. This makes the use of the Mawangdui text for reconstructive purposes relatively unproblematic.

that they are not discrete entities that cause one another, but domains of related dispositions and behaviours.

The virtue section focuses on contemplative methods for developing the related conducts and depicts the unified endpoint of self-cultivation. This endpoint is the complete harmonization of the five conducts so that they may be endlessly recombined in order to appropriately respond to any given situation. This timely harmony is the definition of virtue, which is a trait of Heaven (*tian* 天).⁴

However, when read together, these two sections argue that Heaven will always remain a distant figure and that the ideal of the sage (*shengren* 聖人), a figure who understands the Way of Heaven (*tiandao* 天道), is so elusive as to be almost unobtainable. Therefore, the text focuses its attention on the gentleman (*junzi* 君子), an imperfect but more achievable goal. The two sections provide the necessary context to understand how the gentleman might reach a state of virtue by emulating Heaven in accordance with the Way of the Gentleman (*junzidao* 君子道). Ultimately, the text's program of self-cultivation aspires to this Wa—not because it is ideal, but because it is within reach.

Opening Summary of the Text

The *Wu Xing* begins by discussing the formation of five qualities and the effects of their formation:

仁形於內謂之德之行，不形於內謂之行。

When benevolence takes form within, it is called “virtuous conduct”.

When it does not take form within, it is called “conduct”.⁵

The difference between these two types of conduct lies in whether or not the quality of “benevolence” (*ren* 仁) has taken form within. This formula is repeated for the four other qualities: “righteousness” (*yi* 義), “ritual propriety” (*li* 禮),

4 Although *tian* can refer to the sky or the heavens, in the *Wu Xing*, as in many texts of the period, it refers to the principal deity of the time.

5 Strip 1. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own but I have benefited greatly from the excellent translations of Scott Cook, Mark Csikszentmihalyi, Dirk Meyer and Kenneth Holway. The transcription follows the conclusions of Scott Cook (Cook 2012, 46–520). The strip numbering follows that set out by the editors of the *Guodian Chumu Zhujian* 郭店楚墓竹簡 (*The Bamboo Strips of the Chu Tomb of Guodian*) (Jingmenshi Bowuguan, 1998). For photographs of the manuscript and the editors' original transcription and notes see Jingmenshi Bowuguan 1998, 29–36; 147–54.

“knowledge” (*zhi* 智) and “sagacity” (*sheng* 聖).⁶ The work thus provides a definition for the five conducts: they are modes of action distinguished by their moral greatness (virtuousness) and comprising both internal qualities (that take form within) and external qualities in the form of action. The combined nature of the conducts suggests that the boundary between the internal and external is a porous one.⁷ As Scott Cook remarks, the concern is with “morality put into actual practice” (Cook 2000, 122).

Based on the conducts’ internal formation, Mark Csikszentmihalyi has argued that the chief concern of the text is sincerity, and that it seeks to provide a physiological basis to distinguish between “authentic and inauthentic moral actions” as part of an effort by followers of Confucius to meet the accusation that “their actions were hypocritical and their performance of ritual was hollow” (Csikszentmihalyi 2004, 59).

Though there is nothing in the text to preclude the importance of sincerity, the fact that it distinguishes between “virtuous conduct” (*dezhi* 德之行) and simply “conduct” (*xing* 行), rather than a more pejorative term, suggests that the distinction is between ethically ineffective behaviour versus behaviour that is morally efficacious. As such, the primary issue is not authenticity but a moral greatness (virtuousness) that the text will later define as a timely responsiveness.⁸ This is supported by the fact that virtue is achieved by harmonizing the five conducts that have taken form within:

德之行五，和謂之德，四行和謂之善。
善，人道也。德，天道也。

The virtuous conducts are five. When they are in harmony it is called “virtue”.

When the four conducts are in harmony it is called “goodness”.

Goodness is the Way of Humans. Virtue is the Way of Heaven.⁹

While each conduct may be considered virtuous in and of itself, virtue (associated with the Way of Heaven) can only be achieved by harmonizing all five conducts

6 Sagacity is the one exception to this pattern as the text reads, “when it does not take form within, it is called virtuous conduct”. Because the text pays a great deal of attention to developing sagacity internally, I concur with Cook that this is likely a scribal error, although it remains a subject of much debate (Cook 2012, 486 n.8.).

7 The text emphasizes this by using the same graphs to indicate both the internal qualities and as a shorthand for each conduct as a whole.

8 Although it differs in the details, Csikszentmihalyi’s argument for sincerity is broadly compatible with Scott Cook’s (Cook 2000).

9 Strips 4–5.

together. The result of harmonizing only four of them is a state of goodness,¹⁰ which is associated with the Way of Humans (*rendao* 人道). Though virtue is superior to the state of goodness, the two are not radically distinct, as virtue builds atop goodness by adding the conduct of sagacity to the other four conducts and harmonizing the result. How to achieve this feat is the key concern of the text. (Puett 2010, 56)

The text emphasizes the distinction between virtue and goodness by reflecting it in its structure. From strip one through to the end of strip twenty-nine all five conducts appear. However, beginning with strip thirty (and after a significant structural break), only four of the conducts are discussed and sagacity does not reappear for the remainder of the work. This suggests that the text is not a single, continuous essay but rather two separate but interrelated discussions, the first describing virtue and the second describing goodness.

The overall textual structure, therefore, consists of an opening summary (strips one through five) followed by a description of virtue (strips five through twenty-nine) and concludes with a discussion of goodness (strips thirty through fifty). For the sake of clarity, I will discuss the two sections in reverse, beginning with goodness and ending with virtue.

The Goodness Section

The two sections do not discuss all five conducts equally. Instead, they mirror one another by first discussing three conducts and then focusing on the relationship of two conducts in depth. The second section on goodness first discusses benevolence, righteousness and ritual propriety before turning to the interplay of benevolence and righteousness.

10 Franklin Perkins suggests that the “four conducts” (*sixing* 四行) refer to those which do not take form within, in contrast to the five “virtuous conducts” which do (Perkins 2014, 505–6). While this reading is provocative it does not take into account those instances in which the term “five conducts” (*wuxing* 五行) is used in apparent reference to the virtuous conducts (strips 1, 6 and 29). These instances suggest that the phrasing of *sixing* does not differentiate types of conducts but is characteristic of the fluid writing style of the text already mentioned in note 6. Perkins’ reading of the term “conduct” as moral action is shared by scholars such as Pang Pu (Pang 2000), Chung-ying Cheng (Cheng 2010), Wang Qinling (Wang 2015) and Wang Miquan (Wang 2016). It is also similar to the arguments of Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Scott Cook mentioned above, insofar as they are all part of the trend among scholars to read the *Wu Xing* according to an internalist/externalist framework. According to this framework, the work’s primary focus is thought to be a properly internal morality (virtue) that allows for spontaneous and perfect ethical actions as opposed to simply complying with external norms or acting out of conscious deliberation (goodness).

As Michael Puett notes, the text explains how to develop these conducts using a repeated pattern that is characterized by chains of “emotional dispositions, each of which is to be balanced by another disposition, thus leading to a development toward yet another disposition” (Puett 2010, 56). Each chain ultimately results in the formation of a specific conduct. These passages not only explain how the different conducts are formed, but also provide clues as to their nature:

顏色容貌溫，勉。以其中心與人交，悅也。
中心悅，播遷於兄弟，戚也。戚而信之，親也。
親而篤之，愛也。愛父，其繼愛人，仁也。

To have a countenance and outward appearance that is warm is to be encouraging.

To interact with other people by means of one’s inner heart-mind is to be delighted.

When one’s inner heart-mind is delighted and one spreads and disperses it to one’s older and younger brothers one is affectionate.

To be affectionate and make it trustworthy is to be intimate.

To be intimate and make it earnest is to cherish.

To cherish one’s father and, in turn, to cherish other people is to be benevolent.¹¹

As Edward Slingerland notes, this passage “describes the gradual expansion of kin-based affection to encompass benevolence toward non-kin” (Slingerland 2008, 252). The key point of this process is that it is accomplished by intimacy, as one must use one’s inner heart-mind (*zhongxin* 中心) to engage in it. In practicing benevolent behaviour, a person not only shares their inner feelings with their family but also acts upon those feelings, changing and intensifying them before spreading them to others.

A important aspect of this process is the apparent jump from being “encouraging” (*mian* 勉) to being “delighted” (*yue* 悅). While it is clear that each of the subsequent steps relates to one another causally, there is no connection between the first two stages, though they are thematically similar. This point will be dealt with in more detail below. Here it is sufficient to note that the passage does not provide an exact blueprint for developing benevolence or a precise definition of it. Instead, it associates it with a suite of related dispositions pertaining to affection, happiness and intimacy.

The text goes on to describe righteousness as follows:

11 These three passages (strips to 32–37) immediately follow the opening passage of the goodness section (30–32), which is discussed below.

中心辯然而正行之，直也。直而遂之，肆也。
 肆而不畏強禦，果也。不以小道害大道，簡也。
 有大罪而大誅之，行也。貴貴，其等尊賢，義也。

When one's inner heart-mind discriminates it to be thus and one correctly enacts it, one is upright.

To be upright and follow it is to be unreserved.

To be unreserved and not be in awe of despots is to be successful.

To not, by means of small ways, harm the great Way is to be simple.

To have a great crime and greatly punish it is to enact.

To value the noble, and to respect the worthy according to their level is righteousness.

Like benevolence, righteousness is based on the inner heart-mind. However, unlike the familial interaction of benevolence, righteousness arises from the cogent recognition of moral and hierarchical distinctions. Decisively acting upon these distinctions seems to take place more in the public realm as opposed to the domestic sphere, and righteousness is, therefore, defined as a counterpoint to benevolence.¹²

Importantly, this passage contains even more causal gaps than the one preceding it. In particular, “to be simple” (*jian* 簡) and “to enact” (*xing* 行) are presented in a related, rather than a causal, fashion, and neither is directly linked to righteousness or the preceding steps.

The theme of out-group interaction continues in the description of ritual propriety:

以其外心與人交，遠也。遠而莊之，敬也。

敬而不懈，嚴也。嚴而畏之，尊也。

尊而不驕，恭也。恭而博交，禮也。

To interact with others by means of the outer heart-mind is to be distant.

To be distant and make it solemn is to be respectful.

To be respectful and not slacken is to be stern.

To be stern and make it awe-inspiring is to be honoured.

To be honoured and not be arrogant is to be humble.

To be humble and interact widely is to be ritually proper.

Ritual propriety is concerned with the successful maintenance of hierarchical distinctions. Uniquely, it is rooted in the outer heart-mind (*waixin* 外心) and arises from the preservation of a proper distance between oneself and others that

12 This notion is explored in more detail on strips 37–42, where it is implied that the correct combination of the two conducts is the key to effective judicial action.

ultimately leads to a state of appropriate humility. Unlike the other two conducts, its development contains no causal gaps but is a linear process in which related dispositions are folded into one another and intensified.

An important common element of these three passages is that they all involve active engagement with the external world. These conducts are not formed or practiced entirely within the individual, but are dependent on the interaction of the self with others.

These passages are expanded forms of truncated chains that appear in the virtue section of the text, one example of which is the chain of righteousness:

不直不肆，不肆不果，
不果不簡，不簡不行，
不行不義。

To not be upright is to not be unreserved.

To not be unreserved is to not be successful.

To not be successful is to not be simple.

To not be simple is to not enact.

To not enact is to not be righteous.¹³

Here, the same key terms are presented in the same sequence as in the expanded discussion above. However, by obscuring the details of the linkages between the various terms the text gives the appearance that they are produced through strict, linear causation. This presentation even extends to the interactions between the conducts themselves. For example, the goodness section begins with the following summation:

見而知之，智也。知而安之，仁也。

安而行之，義也。行而敬之，禮也。

To see and understand it is to be knowledgeable.

To understand and be at peace with it is to be benevolent.

To be at peace with and enact it is to be righteous.

To enact and respect it is to be ritually proper.¹⁴

This passage appears to be a generative sequence in which each conduct builds on the one that preceded it and causes the next. However, the text's recurrent presentation of a linear system is problematic, because it contains a number of

13 These truncated chains (strips 21–22) summarize elements of goodness in order to demonstrate its presence within the state of virtue.

14 This passage and the lines discussed below appear on strips 30–32.

inconsistencies. These include the causal gaps in the conduct passages noted above, as well as instances in which elements of a given causal chain appear in another causal chain but in a different order.¹⁵ Moreover, each of the conducts is defined in the above passage, but these definitions do not match others given in the text. Such inconsistencies undermine the structured system that the text presents, and have given rise to different interpretations of the work's meaning.

Dirk Meyer, for instance, reads the above passage as describing the development of the conducts. Because of the causal contradictions present in the text, he argues that what is being discussed is a “paradox of self-cultivation”, in which “realising any of the five virtues simultaneously depends on the accomplished cultivation of the other virtues”, and that the solution “lies in a human's awareness (*zhi* 知) of possessing the five virtues within him” (Meyer 2012, 128). Consequently, the system of the text is linear and causal, but in a circular and, therefore, paradoxical sense.¹⁶

By contrast, Michael Puett argues that the “proliferation of series of interlocking chains” and the fact that “there is no consistent definition given to any of the terms” means that in every situation one is “modulating each type of action by bringing it into play with the other types of actions”, so that each “is relevant only insofar as it is modulated by and harmonized with each of the others” (Puett 2010, 57). Accordingly, apparently causal depictions of the conducts or their formation are descriptions of harmonious interactions and not linear generation.

That one can understand the relatedness of the concepts present in the above three conduct passages despite their causal gaps is suggestive of this latter reading. In them, the text is not presenting a sequential process in which each trait leads successively to the formation of an ultimate conduct. Instead, it is describing a scheme in which the conducts may best be understood as domains of similar traits. Therefore, one forms the conducts by successfully bringing together and deepening groups of related dispositions and behaviours. These dispositions could cause one another but need not do so in a set order, and thus the source dispositions and their results could be interchangeable.

Consequently, the summary passage above does not describe how the conducts form one another as discrete, metaphorical objects, but how they might act together in concert as domains of related dispositions. According to such a reading, the names of each conduct would be understood as shorthand references to

15 For example, the chains on strips 6 and 13 present opposite orderings of “to be delighted” and “to be at peace” (*an* 安).

16 Although Meyer's idea of the paradox of self-cultivation within the *Wu Xing* is relatively unique, his linear and causal reading of the conducts is representative of most scholarship on the text.

broader domains, and one's response (such as "being at peace") would indicate what particular domain one was drawing upon. The result is a fluid system in which the various conducts might be rearranged in different orders—something that would not be permitted in a fixed, linear model.

The implication of this is that while the summary passage demonstrates how four of the conducts interact as responses to a shared object, this image is partial at best. The *Wu Xing* can never present a fully systematic and complete view of the world, because it "posits a world of endless work" in which one strives to achieve harmony, a goal that "is at best a brief occurrence" (Puett 2010, 57).

The text concludes the summary passage with a description of this ephemeral harmony:

和則同，同則善。

If (the four conducts) are in harmony then there is uniformity, if there is uniformity then there is goodness.

When the four conducts are in harmony they are in a state of uniformity (*tong* 同), which is further understood as a state of goodness that is, by definition, incomplete. The text explains that this deficiency is an inherent part of human nature by presenting the following explanation of our internal workings:

耳目鼻口手足六者，心之役也。

The ears, eyes, nose, mouth, hands and feet are six. They are the heart-mind's servants.¹⁷

The text then details how no part of the body can resist the heart-mind's mastery and concludes with a telling description of the harmony that it enforces:

和則同，同則善。

If (the six) are in harmony then there is uniformity, if there is uniformity then there is goodness.¹⁸

This harmony is described in the same terms as that of the four conducts, implying that there is an unknown, missing element to this internal scheme. This presentation fully explicates the text's statement that "goodness is the Way of Humans". Goodness, the harmonization of an incomplete set of elements, is an inherent characteristic of human beings, and achieving it with respect to the four

¹⁷ Strip 45.

¹⁸ Strip 46.

conducts means to accord with the manner in which human beings exist (the Way of Humans).

Furthermore, achieving even an incomplete harmonization of the conducts is not a certain prospect:

聞道而悅者，好仁者也。聞道而畏者，好義者也。

聞道而恭者，好禮者也。聞道而樂者，好德者也。

One who hears the Way and is delighted is one who loves benevolence.

One who hears the Way and is in awe is one who loves righteousness.

One who hears the Way and is humble is one who loves ritual propriety.

One who hears the Way and is joyful is one who loves virtue.¹⁹

In this, the last passage of the text as a whole, the *Wu Xing* presents a typology of individuals based on their reaction to hearing the Way without understanding it.²⁰ The type of reaction a person has inclines that person toward one of the conducts more than the others. Because different people exist in varying states of inherent imbalance they must develop other aspects of themselves to achieve a harmony of the conducts. The text thus concludes by positing the beginning point of self-cultivation, which, if it accords with the Way of Humans, will be only partially successful. However, the person who loves virtue points away from this tragic possibility toward the higher state described in the virtue section, as discussed below.

The Virtue Section

Like its counterpart, the virtue section discusses the formation of three conducts (benevolence, knowledge and sagacity) in detail before investigating two (knowledge and sagacity) in greater depth. Their formation is described in three passages which parallel those found in the goodness section, but focus on the notion of “contemplation” (*si* 思). As before, these passages begin with benevolence:

仁之思也清，清則察，察則安，安則溫，溫則悅，

悅則戚，戚則親，親則愛，愛則玉色，

玉色則形，形則仁。

When one contemplates benevolence, one is pure.

If one is pure then one examines, if one examines then one is at peace.

If one is at peace then one is warm, if one is warm then one is delighted.

19 Strips 49–50.

20 Since this Way is “heard” (*wen* 聞), it is likely to be the Way of the Gentleman discussed below.

If one is delighted then one is affectionate, if one is affectionate then one is intimate.

If one is intimate then one cherishes, if one cherishes then one has jade colouration.

If one has jade colouration then it takes form, if it takes form then one is benevolent.²¹

Here the text discusses how to form benevolence by first contemplating the idea of it, which triggers a series of affective changes in one's thoughts.²² Following these changes through to the end of the process results in a "jade colouration" and benevolence taking form.

This process of developing the conducts through individual contemplation continues with knowledge and sagacity:

智之思也長，長則得，得則不忘，
不忘則明，明則見賢人，
見賢人則玉色，玉色則形，形則智。

When one contemplates knowledge one is long-lasting.

If one is long-lasting then one obtains, if one obtains then one does not forget.

If one does not forget then one is perspicacious, if one is perspicacious then one sees the Worthy Person.

If one sees the Worthy Person then one has jade colouration, if one has jade coloration then it takes form, if it takes form then one is knowledgeable.

聖之思也輕，輕則形，形則不忘，
不忘則聰，聰則聞君子道，
聞君子道則玉音，玉音則形，形則聖。

When one contemplates sagacity one is light.

If one is light then it takes form, if it takes form then one does not forget.

If one does not forget then one is acute, if one is acute then one hears the Way of the Gentleman.

If one hears the Way of the Gentleman then one has a jade tone, if one has a jade tone then it takes form, if it takes form then one is sagacious.

21 This passage and the two subsequent passages occur on strips 12–16.

22 Mark Csikszentmihalyi provides a fascinating discussion of what the terms in these passages might entail, and argues that the "jade colouration" (*yuse* 玉色) and "jade tone" (*yuyin* 玉音) are physiological manifestations of moral development, indicative of the *Wu Xing's* "embodied moral psychology" (Csikszentmihalyi 2004, 73–78).

These two passages are written in parallel with one another, reflecting the complimentary perceptual nature of the two conducts. Knowledge is associated with visual clarity or perspicacity (*ming* 明), the ability to see the Worthy Person (*xianren* 賢人) and, like benevolence, the visible sign of jade colouration. Sagacity, on the other hand, is linked with aural clarity or acuity (*cong* 聰), the ability to hear the Way of the Gentleman and, uniquely, is marked by a jade tone. Elsewhere in the text, knowledge and sagacity are repeatedly defined as including both the perception and understanding of their respective objects.²³

Because these three passages all use the term “to take form” (*xing* 形), they appear to be describing how the conducts “take form within,” as described in the opening of the text. Since only three conducts are described the explanation would appear incomplete. However, when paired with the parallel portion of the goodness section it becomes clear that the text is differentiating between different types of conducts.

Righteousness and ritual propriety are those conducts that can be developed primarily through external engagement with the world. By contrast, knowledge and sagacity are developed through contemplation. Though one set of conducts is socially active and the other contemplative, we cannot say that they lie on either side of a rigid barrier between the internal and external. Righteousness and ritual propriety incorporate internal, emotional elements, while one could easily argue that the Worthy Person and the Way of the Gentleman are external objects. As such, the two pairs differ in whether they focus on the internal or the external, but do not adhere to either absolutely. Such an ambiguity might account for why benevolence falls into both categories, capable of being developed through both engagement and contemplation, and thus bridging the two classes.

By including internal and external elements in both sections, the text clarifies that the state of virtue is not superior because it is based on an internal moral root or a balance of internal and external sources of morality, but rather because it is a complete harmony that incorporates the fifth conduct of sagacity:

聞君子道，聰也。聞而知之，聖也。

聖人知天道也。

知而行之，義也。行之而時，德也。

To hear the Way of the Gentleman is to be acute.

To hear and understand it is to be sagacious.

The sage understands the Way of Heaven.

To understand and enact it is to be righteous.

To enact it and be timely is to be virtuous.

23 See strips 23–25 and 26–30.

見賢人，明也。見而知之，智也。

知而安之，仁也。安而敬之，禮也。

To see the Worthy Person is to be perspicacious.

To see and understand them is to be knowledgeable.

To understand and be at peace with them is to be benevolent.

To be at peace with and respect them is to be ritually proper.²⁴

Here, in a manner similar to the goodness section, the text presents two discontinuous and partial portrayals of how the conducts interact with one another, this time presenting all five conducts across the two sections. That the two passages each display only a subset of the conducts interacting reinforces the text's non-systematic worldview, which becomes sensible when the conducts are understood as domains of associations.

For example, although the sequence is slightly different, each conduct is associated with the same idea as in the goodness section's summary passage. These associations further clarify that the different chains of conducts represent the variable interaction of different families of dispositions, rather than causal sequences of discrete entities. By presenting the combinations as reactions to different perceptual objects (the Way of the Gentleman and the Worthy Person) these passages also emphasize the idea that the harmonious interaction of conducts is situational: different combinations will be appropriate to different circumstances.

Fittingly, it is in this context that the text adds to its definition of virtue, describing it as acting in a manner that is "timely" (*shi* 時). This definition explains why only four conducts would fail to produce such a state. A virtuous, timely individual would be able to respond with the appropriate conduct or combination of conducts in any given situation. However, if a person had only developed and harmonized four such conducts there would inevitably be instances that they could not respond to, resulting in a loss of harmony. This difference articulates the text's initial distinction between "virtuous conduct" and mere "conduct." While "conduct" refers to those actions that are not timely, each of the five conducts is virtuous because it can be the correct response to a given situation and may be harmonized with the other four to produce a unified and responsive virtuous state. It is this timely responsiveness that forms the *Wu Xing*'s idea of moral greatness.

This definition of virtue also explicates the association between virtue and the Way of Heaven. Just as goodness is an inherent aspect of humans, so too must virtue, understood as timeliness, be an inherent characteristic of Heaven and how

24 These passages and the concluding lines below are on strips 26–30.

it operates. Furthermore, it is a characteristic that humans can emulate through virtuous behavior.

The virtue section concludes with summary lines that parallel those found in the goodness section:

和則樂，樂則有德，有德則邦家譽。

文王之視也如此。

「文王在上，於昭于天」，此之謂也。

If (the five conducts) are in harmony then one is joyful. If one is joyful then one has virtue. If one has virtue then the states and families will praise (one).

The vision of King Wen was like this.

“King Wen resides above, how bright he is in Heaven!” This refers to it.

Here, the text utilizes the same pattern as the goodness section, but differentiates virtue by replacing “uniformity” with “joy” (*le* 樂). Mark Csikszentmihalyi points out that the character *le* can also be read as *yue* with the meaning of “music”, and argues that this “is used as an unstated philosophical argument” (Csikszentmihalyi 2004, 169). In this case, the double meaning depicts virtue as a metaphorical symphony in which the different notes of the conducts are harmonized in a timely and joyful way.²⁵

The image of King Wen in this passage mirrors the ending of the goodness section. That passage describes four different types of people, demonstrating the beginning of self-cultivation. Here the text describes only one person, King Wen, who appears as the end goal of self-cultivation. Together, the two passages demonstrate that self-cultivation begins with multiplicity and partiality, but ends with unity and harmony, embodied in the singular figure of King Wen who stands radiant alongside Heaven.

A further significance of this imagery is that it implies that even at the highest levels of self-cultivation there remains a distinction between humans and Heaven. Although humans can emulate the timeliness of the Way of Heaven through virtuous conducts they cannot become Heavenly. Heaven remains a figure apart, and the distance between it and humans is exacerbated by the description of the sage in the above section: “the sage understands the Way of Heaven” (*shengren zhi tiandao ye* 聖人知天道也). This is the only occurrence of the sage in the entire

25 Scott Cook artfully captures this notion of a virtuous symphony with his elegant translation of *de* as “virtuosity”. and provides a fascinating analysis of how music relates to the highest moral state (Cook 2000).

text, and its striking appearance breaks the otherwise perfect parallelism of the two summary passages, as well as the goodness summary passage that follows them.

Some scholars have downplayed this breakage. For instance, Mark Csikszentmihalyi suggests that it might represent “misplaced commentary” (Csikszentmihalyi 2004, 297). By contrast, Chung-ying Cheng reads the passage as a continuous narrative in which the sage understands the Way of Heaven and puts it into practice through righteousness so as to develop ritual (Cheng 2010, 154). However, the strategic placement of this break after the discussion of sagacity and its disruption of the passages’ parallelism seems to suggest that it is a deliberate rhetorical move meant to emphasize the distinction between sagacity and the sage. One who has cultivated the conduct of sagacity understands the Way of the Gentleman, but the sage has access to a higher level of understanding altogether.²⁶

This understanding also marks the sage as an elusive ideal. At no other point is “understanding the Way of Heaven” described as being possible, nor is any advice given as to how one might attempt such a feat. The parallel break illustrates that the sage is wholly outside of the text’s system, appearing and disappearing without explanation. Moreover, while the sage understands the Way of Heaven he is still not portrayed as Heavenly, suggesting that there remains an element of distance between the figure and Heaven itself.²⁷ Thus, in the system of the *Wu Xing*, Heaven is an unreachable figure and the sage (although not necessarily a perfect ideal) is so elusive as to be almost unobtainable. Faced with this seemingly tragic picture, the text turns away from it and instead focuses its attention on the gentleman, a figure less advanced than the sage but more achievable.

The Figure of the Gentleman

In keeping with its division of goodness and virtue, the text presents two modes in which the gentleman might operate, summarizing this distinction in the virtue section:

君子之為善也，有與始，有與終也。
君子之為德也，有與始，無與終也。

26 Dirk Meyer has suggested that this is a common rhetorical feature in early China, referring to it as “principal insertion”, though he argues that the statement is more compatible with the remainder of the passage (Meyer 2012, 116–7).

27 For representative studies that argue for a much tighter linkage between Heaven and humanity see Pang 2000, Ikeda 2003, Csikszentmihalyi 2004 and Li 2015.

When the gentleman practices goodness, he has that with which he begins and that with which he ends.

When the gentleman practices virtue, he has that with which he begins but lacks that with which he ends.²⁸

The text divides the gentleman into two types, the gentleman of goodness and the gentleman of virtue, and discusses them in the goodness and virtue sections, respectively. Consequently, the portrayal of the gentleman in each section reflects the dominant themes associated with that section.

In the above passage, the division between the two types echoes that seen in the summary passages on goodness and virtue. Having achieved only an incomplete harmony, the gentleman of goodness would inevitably encounter situations he could not respond to, and so his harmonized responses would come to an end. By contrast, the gentleman of virtue would be able to endlessly respond to all situations with the appropriate combination of conducts, thus marking him as the goal of the text's self-cultivation program.²⁹ By examining the two presentations of the gentleman we can see how the gentleman of goodness might become the greatest version of himself.

The first of half of the text's description of the gentleman of goodness reads as follows:

君子集大成。

能進之為君子，弗能進也，各止於其里。

大而顯者，能有取焉。小而隱者，能有取焉。

The gentleman gathers the great achievements.

Being able to advance them is to be a gentleman. If one is unable to advance them each will stop in its territory.

Of the great and obvious, (the gentleman) is able to take from it.

Of the small and concealed, (the gentleman) is able to take from it.³⁰

The gentleman is defined as one who is able to “advance” (*jin* 進) the conducts that would otherwise remain separate from one another in order to obtain the harmony of goodness that is referred to as “the great achievements”. This is clarified by the

28 Strip 18.

29 Mark Csikszentmihalyi offers a largely compatible reading of this passage, but argues that the practice of virtue is an “ideal of perfection” rather than a step removed from the sage (Csikszentmihalyi 2004, 80–81). Scott Cook suggests that the endlessness of virtue may also relate to its effects upon society (Cook 2012, 498 n.80).

30 Strips 42–44. I have followed Mark Csikszentmihalyi's reading of *da cheng* 大成 (Csikszentmihalyi 2004, 180–1). Despite this I have largely concurred with Scott Cook's reading for the remainder of the passage, such as taking the *zhi* 之 as referring to the conducts (Cook 2012, 515–6).

phrases “great and obvious” (*da er xianzhe* 大而顯者) and “small and concealed” (*xiao er yinzhe* 小而隱者). Though the wording is not identical, these phrases paraphrase the two passages describing the interaction of benevolence and righteousness that immediately precede this section and provide examples of how the gentleman takes from each of the conducts’ domains.³¹

As for the enigmatic method of “advancing” the various conducts, the text provides a gloss³² for the term in a subsequent passage:

目而知之，謂之進之。喻而知之，謂之進之。

譬而知之，謂之進之。幾而知之，天也。

To know it by categorical comparison is referred to as “advancing it”.

To know it by analogy is referred to as “advancing it”.

To know it by metaphor is referred to as “advancing it”.

To know it by intuition is Heaven.³³

This section, which immediately follows the passage detailing the unifying power of the heart-mind, defines “advancing it” as three ways of understanding the world. The placement of these passages, together with the terms themselves, suggests that the first three methods are all functions of the heart-mind and, therefore, inherently human ways of understanding the world. The passage underscores this by distinguishing them from a Heavenly means of understanding objects through “intuition” (*ji* 幾). It is unclear if humans are able to access this method of understanding, although the possibility that Heaven is the subject of the final clause would seem to make it an unlikely prospect. Regardless, it is clear that the gentleman of goodness only utilizes human methods of understanding to assemble the disparate conducts into the harmony of goodness—reflecting the idea that an incomplete harmony is inherent to humans.

The text builds on the notion of “advancing” in the second half of the passage:

赫臚臚達諸君子道，謂之賢。

君子，知而舉之，謂之尊賢；

知而事之，謂之尊賢者也；

後，士之尊賢者也。

31 These occur in the aforementioned discussion of judicial conduct on strips 37–42.

32 Ikeda Tomohisa provides a somewhat similar interpretation of this passage (Ikeda 2003, 469).

33 Strips 47–48. I have followed Scott Cook in translating *mu* 目 and *ji* 幾, though I would diverge from Cook’s interpretation by arguing that Heaven, not the gentleman, is the likely subject of the final clause. However, the phrasing is ambiguous and the translation tentative, though this does not seem to alter the overall point of the passage (Cook 2012, 518–9).

One who gloriously and radiantly causes them to break through to the Way of the Gentleman, is referred to as “worthy”.

As for the gentleman, to know and select him is referred to as “honouring the worthy.”

Those who know of and serve him are referred to as “those who honour the worthy”.

The latter are those scholars who honour the worthy.

Here, the text elaborates that it is not enough to advance the conducts; one must strive to elevate them to the Way of the Gentleman. Those who strive to reach this are suitable candidates to either employ or serve, reflecting the prioritization that the goodness section gives to active engagement with the world.

Therefore, the gentleman of goodness embodies some of the principal themes of the goodness section, such as worldly engagement, the idea that goodness is an inherent part of humans, and that one must strive for a higher state of being, as embodied by the gentleman of virtue:

五行皆形于內而時行之，謂之君〔子〕。

One for whom the five conducts all take form within and who enacts them in a timely manner is referred to as a gentleman.³⁴

The gentleman of virtue is one who has developed all five conducts and is able to enact them in a timely, and therefore, virtuous manner. The gentleman of virtue is able to achieve this goal by further engaging in contemplation, exemplified by his concern with his “solitude” (*du* 獨):

「淑人君子，其儀一也」。

能為一，然後能為君子。

慎其獨也。

“The well-refined gentleman, his manner is singular”.

Only if one is able to be singular can one be a gentleman.

(The gentleman is) cautious regarding his solitude.³⁵

A greater focus on contemplation³⁶ allows the gentleman to generate the fifth conduct of sagacity and thereby understand the Way of the Gentleman, which

34 Strips 6–7. The *zi* 子 is missing due to a break in the strips (Cook 2012, 489 n.27).

35 Strips 17–18. I have followed Cook’s excellent translation of this passage. The term “gentleman” is provided by the context of the following lines (Cook 2012, 496–7).

36 The gentleman of goodness would also engage in contemplation to develop the conduct of knowledge, but not to the same degree as he lacks sagacity.

is the path to a successful and timely harmonization of the five conducts.³⁷ This understanding sets the gentleman apart from those varied individuals described in the final passage of the goodness section, who simply hear and react to the Way without understanding it. Like King Wen, the gentleman of virtue is a singular figure who stands as the end goal of the process of self-cultivation. He understands and follows the Way of the Gentleman, and is thereby able to emulate Heaven by achieving a unified, timely and harmonious state among the conducts. Thus, while the text contrasts the Way of Humans and the Way of Heaven in its opening passages, the Way of Heaven is ultimately depicted as unreachable, and following the Way of the Gentleman is revealed as the true goal of the *Wu Xing*.

Conclusion

Focused on a truncated selection of mirroring passages, this study is necessarily limited and there remain many areas of future research that are likely to involve other texts and debates about early China. However, before the *Wu Xing* can be compared to other works it must be understood, as much as possible, on its own terms in order to fully appreciate both its own depth and the depth of its relationship to broader themes in early Chinese thought.

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37 This term is never clearly defined, although Kenneth Holloway argues that it may refer to the language used to teach self-cultivation (Holloway 2009, 55–58).

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In the Shadow of the Decay. The Philosophy of History of Mencius and Xunzi*

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Abstract

The aim of my paper is to analyze the debate between Mencius and Xunzi from the perspective of their views on the nature of the historical process. The Mencian approach embraces not only elaboration on the doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven, resulting in a cyclical vision of history, but also strong idealization of the past. I will show that *ren* (benevolence), treated as a historical principle, could link two dimensions of his historical thinking: the moral and ontological. Xunzi rejected the possibility of the intervention of Heaven in history, however, his theory of rituals and belief in moral use of history made his philosophy of history much more conservative, embalming the idealization of the past. In short, I will look for the main common points and differences between these two major figures of Confucianism regarding their views on history, attempting to answer which beliefs could constitute a unique Confucian philosophy of history.

Keywords: Confucianism, Mencius, Xunzi, philosophy of history, Mandate of Heaven, idealization

V senci propada. Mencijeva in Xunzijeva filozofija zgodovine

Izvleček

Osrednji namen prispevka je analiza debat med Mencijem in Xunzijem z upoštevanjem njihovih stališč o naravi zgodovinskega procesa. Mencijevo izhodišče ni opredeljeno zgolj z nadgradnjo doktrine Nebeškega mandata, katere rezultat je ciklično dojemanje zgodovine, temveč tudi z intenzivno idealizacijo preteklosti. Avtor pokaže, da lahko koncept *ren* v vlogi zgodovinskega principa poveže obe osrednji dimenziji njegove historiografske miselnosti: moralno in ontološko. Xunzi pa je možnost poseganja Neba v zgodovino zanimal, četudi je njegova teorija zgodovinopisja zaradi teorije obrednosti in moralne funkcije zgodovine, ki prav tako zaobjema idealizacijo preteklosti, veliko bolj konservativna od Mencijeve. Avtor se osredotoči na osrednje razlike med obema historiografskima teorijama, da bi si odgovoril na vprašanje, katera je bila pomembnejša za specifično konfucijansko filozofijo zgodovine.

Ključne besede: konfucijanstvo, Mencij, Xunzi, filozofija zgodovine, Nebeški mandat, idealizacija

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Introduction

Two major figures of early Confucianism—Mencius and Xunzi—have been the subject of numerous comparisons, most of which started from elucidation of their views on human nature (Soles 2008) and then analyzed their concepts of virtue (Jiyuan 2005; Nivison and van Norden 1996), moral feelings (Lodén 2009; Chong 2003), ritual (Kim 2011, 2012) or politics (Twiss and Chan 2012; Kim 2016). However, I have not found a paper devoted to an analysis of their views on history, despite the fact both Mencius and Xunzi created intriguing philosophies of history. The aim of this paper is thus to fill this gap and explicate their concepts of the historical process. Of course, both Mencius and Xunzi did not perceive reflection on history as an independent discipline, different from other fields of philosophical inquiry. However, this should not be an obstacle, since it also concerns their ethics and political philosophy. We therefore have to read *Mengzi* and *Xunzi* once again, but from the perspective of their modes of historical thinking, as this would help to us see a rather ignored yet impressive literature on a Confucian philosophy of history. In order to avoid laying out Western (especially Hegelian) ways of understanding the task of a philosophy of history, we will follow the proven path of extensional definition, and so determine (by enumerating exemplars) which type of questions are posed by philosophers of history, and then examine these on the basis of works of Mencius and Xunzi.

Let me specify some of the questions forming part of the subject of interest of the philosophy of history in its classical sense.¹ First of all, it is an idea about the rational order of the historical process, making it something more than a mere sequence of events, e.g. whether history is linear or cyclical or a combination of those two modes, or something else. After we have determined the shape of the historical process we could ask about its direction: typically, progress or idealization of the past (or eternal return, and so on.). We can then suppose that this order is embodied in God, *Weltgeist*, Heaven or Dao, manifesting itself in the history. If we do not believe in such an extraordinary supervisor then we are still philosophers of history, what is often not fully acknowledged by critics of the philosophy of history. Furthermore, we have to answer whether there are historical “heroes”, or prominent individuals who were given certain special historical missions (or not). Some answers exclude others. For instance, if we believe in the Absolute manifesting in history, giving a sort of historical mission to emperors or prophets, we could hardly maintain that nature or economics constitute an ultimate basis of

1 Arthur Danto distinguished substantial and analytical philosophies of history (Danto 1968). The way I understand “classical” philosophy of history is thus similar to his notion of a “substantial” philosophy of history, albeit Chinese philosophy was in close contact with historiography.

all historical changes. This choice is widely known as that between historical idealism and materialism. But we have still not even touched on another key problem of the philosophy of history, that is how the past influence the present and how it is connected with the future. One of the possible connections between these three times is a moral one (e.g. *historia magistra vitae*). That implies a particular attitude towards historiography and myths of beginning. To simplify work on as comparative history of historical thinking, some theorists propose ready-made matrixes of notions, e.g. Jörn Rüsen offers whole list of Chinese correlatives for such Western terms like memory, sense, history, tradition, evolution, progress, collapse and revolution (Rüsen et al. 2015, 108–9). Instead of proposing such a table, we will carefully analyze the text, focusing not only on the terms, but also on the whole emplotment (Hayden White's term) and the context of the delineation of certain concepts.

Without doubt, these investigations will be helpful not only for historians and philosophers, but also for scholars in Chinese studies, shedding a new light on the similarities and differences between these two thinkers, and hopefully helping us leave behind some inadequate interpretations, notably in the case of Xunzi. For instance, Q.E. Wang writes that “Xunzi hinted at the idea of progress or evolution in history” (Ng and Wang 2005, 49). We will see that such a superposition of Xunzi with the Legalists is far from accurate, and, not without effort, we can describe the Confucian philosophy of history as a coherent unit, different from its Legalist, Mohist and Daoist counterparts.

To Follow the Shadow of the Sages: Mengzi's Idealization of the Past

One of the most striking features of Mengzi's philosophy (and his literary style) is the idealization of the past, particularly (but not only) the times of great founders of dynasties: Zhou Wenwang (1152–1056 BCE), the founder of the Zhou Dynasty,² Cheng Tang (c.1675–1646 BCE), the founder of the Shang dynasty and, even before, the times of the legendary emperors Yao (c. 2356–2255 BCE) and Shun (c. 2294–2184 BCE), the first human rulers “under Heaven”. Idealization means, firstly, that the behavior, words, decisions, and so on of these rulers followed and perfectly applied (Confucian) moral norms. As such, their actions differ significantly from those seen in the Mencian era. They are ideal not because their patterns of conduct could not be achieved, but because such conduct should

2 Although Zhou Wenwang received a lot of esteem from Confucians, it was his son, King Wu of Zhou who finally overthrew the Shangs. Mencius referred to his figure as well, cf. M VIIA, 30 or VIIIB, 79.

be followed by all people in all times: “Shun was a man and I am also a man. But Shun became an example to all people in the kingdom and his conduct is worthy to be transmitted to later generations.”³ It is said, for instance, that Zhou Wenwang governed with benevolent action,⁴ looked on the people as on a man who was wounded⁵ and shared his pleasures with the people.⁶ It is also claimed that whole world put their faith in Tang.⁷ As far as Yao and Shun are concerned, we can find even clearer examples: Shun completely fulfilled the duties of what constitutes filial piety⁸ and, moreover, the same “great Shun had a great delight in regarding virtue as the common property of the people”.⁹ This example credits Shun with some sort of moral theory, and one that is notably close to Mencian ethics. In fact, we can find that the moral theory of Mencius was projected back onto the times of Yao and Shun, and this is the second sense of the idealization of the past in his philosophy: modelling the past in compliance with certain philosophical principles. Let us consider the following statement: “Mencius explained to him that man’s nature is good, always making laudatory reference to Yao and Shun”.¹⁰ Here we have not only an act of attribution with regard to the purely Mencian doctrine of human nature, but also an explicit mention of Mencius himself (probably made by one of his disciples editing the work), which shows that Yao and Shun served as important stylistic figures. In other words, in order to justify his concepts, Mencius put his own beliefs into the mouths of Yao and Shun: “I do not dare to set forth before the king anything but the ways of Yao and Shun”.¹¹ In the same way, Mencius tried to authenticate his political theory: after delineation of the politics of Yao and Shun, he wrote: “one who does not serve his sovereign like Shun served Yao, does not respect his sovereign”. Such a commandment has the force of rhetorical emphasis, or even a formal tool: “do it, because Yao and Shun did it”. The figures of Yao and Shun were also invoked in order to promote concrete political solutions, e.g. M VI B, 30 vis-à-vis the ideal tax system.

3 舜人也，我亦人也。舜為法於天下，可傳於後世；M IVB, 56. “M” will denote *Mengzi*. “A” and “B” refer to “上” and “下” characters in the titles of respective chapters. In matters of paragraph divisions, I am following Chinese Text Project edition (see: References). All quotes without a translator mentioned have been translated by the author.

4 文王發政施仁；M IIB, 12.

5 M IVB, 48.

6 M IIB, 11.

7 天下信之；M IB, 18.

8 M IVA, 28.

9 大舜有大焉，善與人同；M IIA, 8.

10 孟子道性善，言必稱堯舜；M IIIA, 1.

11 我非堯舜之道，不敢以陳於王前；M IIB, 11.

It has to be stressed, however, that such a tool was not Mengzi's invention, and there are numerous references to Yao and Shun in the Confucian Dialogues.¹² Interestingly enough, Mencius made a significant criticism of the Mohist Yizhi 夷之 in this regard, who referred to the ways of the ancients in order to justify the doctrine of universal love.¹³ Zhuangzi also used this rhetorical tool, referring to the figures of Yao and Shun in order to attack Confucian values.¹⁴ We can thus see that Yao and Shun were common vehicles for expressing one's own beliefs in the Warring States period, mostly owing to Confucianism.

Nonetheless, one can claim that so far we have analyzed nothing but Mengzi's attitude towards great emperors. Even if idealized, supposing such views still broadly agree with their historical records, this does not propose any independent philosophy of history that would not be rooted in general, historiographical views of their reigns. Indeed, Mencius stressed the necessity of learning histories, as follows:

When a scholar feels that his friendship with all the virtuous scholars of the kingdom is not sufficient to satisfy him, he proceeds to ascend to consider the men of antiquity. He repeats their poems, and reads their books, and as he does not know what they were as men, to ascertain this, he considers their history.¹⁵

But even a superficial review of the ancient Chinese chronicles does not allow us to share Mengzi's optimism on this point, as kings often killed and betrayed the allies. What should we do when faced with such a contradiction? Mengzi's answer is: so much the worse for the facts. "Mencius said, 'It would be better to be without the *Book of History* than to give entire credit to it. In the 'Completion of the War', I select two or three passages only, which I believe.'¹⁶

With this statement, disputing the reliability of a work which finally became the part of Confucian Classics (五經, *Wujing*), Mencius gave priority to his own philosophy, making it a starting point of much reflection on history. It does not mean that he totally rejected *Shangshu* as a source of historical knowledge (he quotes it from time to time, cf. M IVA, 8), but the way he used this (and any other) historical source was highly selective. We could say that this attitude constitutes the third meaning of the notion of the idealization of the past: the more we idealize a story, the more we wander from the account of "what really happened".

12 *Lunyu* VI, 30; VIII, 19–20; XII, 22; XIV, 42; XV, 5.

13 M IIIA, 5.

14 *Zhuangzi* I, 4; II, 10; XII, 6; XIII, 5; XXII, 4; XXIII, 2; XXIV, 5.12.

15 M VB, 17. J. Legge's translation.

16 M VIIB, 49. J. Legge's translation.

Apart from references to particular rulers, Mencius discussed former kings and the ancients in general, which should finally dispel any doubts that his reflections in this context depend on previous histories. This shows that he was not interested in praising singular individuals, but all rulers and all people of ancient times, and thus his idealization of the past was very broad. None of the actions of the so-called former kings (先王, *xianwang*) are described as wild or lost.¹⁷ Their hearts are full of compassion for the people, and their politics follow this attitude.¹⁸ Virtuous monarchs of antiquity loved virtue and therefore forgot about the immoral use of their political power.¹⁹ And although Mencius wrote that the influence of *junzi* ends in the fifth generation,²⁰ this did not prevent him from stating that the principles of both earlier and later kings were the same.²¹ This idea is thus the key bone of contention between Mencius and Xunzi in the context of this study.

As we have already said, Mencius used not only the notion of former kings, but also the term 古之人 *guzhiren*, “the people of antiquity”. It is explicitly claimed that the ancients surpassed other men because they did nothing but that which was good.²² They raised their children in the same manner, but were not attached to their own vested interests: “the ancients exchanged sons, and one taught the son of another”.²³ Although they sought high offices, none of these men wanted to fulfill obligations in an improper way,²⁴ and so there was peace in the whole kingdom (cf. M VIIB, 54). Their moral conduct stemmed from systematic effort and self-restraint, while also accompanied by common pleasures²⁵ and full of utility: “if you make half of the achievements that have been done by the ancients, you will be surely accompanied by success”.²⁶ The unity of deontological, hedonistic and utilitarian aspects that is proposed depicts the ancients as a pure ideal of conduct, making them (especially former kings and founders of dynasties) exemplars to be followed by all following ages. People who repeat that “born in this age, we should be of this age” have the moral standards of eunuchs.²⁷ This unity shows also that three kinds of idealization (distinguished, at a first glance, quite artificially) are

17 M IB, 11.

18 先王有不忍人之心，斯有不忍人之政矣；M IIA, 6.

19 古之賢王好善而忘勢；M VIIA, 8.

20 M IVB, 50.

21 先聖後聖，其揆一也；M IVB, 29.

22 古之人所以大過人者無他焉，善推其所為而已矣；M IA, 7.

23 M IV A, 18.

24 古之人未嘗不欲仕也，又惡不由其道；M IIIB, 8.

25 古之人與民偕樂；M IA, 1.

26 故事半古之人，功必倍之；M IIA, 1.

27 生斯世也，為斯世也，善斯可矣。闔然媚於世也者；M VIIB, 83.

one and the same way of thinking: we have to read chronicles (third kind) as a manual of proper conduct (second kind), embodied in the figures of the ancients (first kind).

The Shadow High as Heaven: Mengzi's Metaphysics of History

The moral use of the past is not what the whole Mencius consists of. In the field of the philosophy of history, apart from its ethical dimension, we also have to elucidate ontological concepts of history, which seems to be quite opposite to what we have already described. What I am thinking of is Mengzi's theory of Heaven (天, *Tian*) and its impact on human history, particularly the doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven (天命, *Tianming*). Mencius is convinced that only by receiving the favor of Heaven can one achieve significant results with any endeavor.²⁸ There is no way, for example, to besiege a city, if Heaven did not send down the right moment for doing so.²⁹ Accordingly, not being equal to the task that Heaven has placed before us at a particular time and place, results in disasters that Heaven visits on us.³⁰ Heaven cares for those who obey its commands: it preserves their countries and helps them conquer what is under Heaven.³¹ Those who rebel against the will of Heaven, will surely pass away.³² Mohist imputations of fatalism to Confucians are, therefore, to some extent valid. Although Mencius agreed with his Master that Heaven does not speak, but only manifests its will through the course of events,³³ he credited Heaven with features making it responsible for all events happening objectively, mostly those unexplained rationally. In M VA, 6 he provides specific criterion, allowing us to see which actions are caused by Heaven:

- (1) What man cannot make, comes from Heaven;
- (2) That which does not have the perpetrator, comes from Heaven;
- (3) That which does not have (recognized) cause and purpose, comes from the command of Heaven.³⁴

As we can see, the triple criterion could also include natural disasters and seemingly random factors enabling the seizure of power: the right time, a favorable combination of events or the right people encountered on the road of life. In this

28 若夫成功，則天也；M IIB, 21.

29 夫環而攻之，必有得天時者矣；M IIA, 10.

30 不取，必有天殃；M IB, 17.

31 樂天者保天下，畏天者保其國；M IB, 10.

32 順天者存，逆天者亡；M IVA, 7.

33 天不言以行與事示之而已矣；M VA, 5.

34 皆天也，非人之所能為也。莫之為而為者，天也；莫之致而至者，命也。

respect, the Mencian concept of Heaven ties in with the basic sense of the term “providence” in Western culture. Whereas Europeans talk about the “providential man”, Mencius introduces the figure of the “minister of Heaven” (天吏 *Tianli*, cf. M IIA, 5 or IIB, 7). What we mean here is only a structural counterpart, and not the meaning itself: both terms have meaning in relation to other terms, which are strictly different, especially regarding the attitude towards Transcendence.

Notwithstanding this, it is only one side of the Mencian theory of *Tian*. The other is that one has to receive any gift of Heaven in humility, because what is sent by Heaven comes naturally. Heaven’s gift is thus the culmination of the way than a ready solution (*deus ex machina*): “When Heaven is about to confer a great office on any man, it first exercises his mind with suffering, and his sinews and bones with toil. It exposes his body to hunger, and subjects him to extreme poverty.”³⁵

It is thus sometimes necessary to wait hundreds of years, until the desired, outstanding individual called by Heaven will reveal himself.³⁶ Only a person who faithfully serves Heaven is able to overcome all these difficulties.³⁷ He is also able to overthrow all his opponents, with the result that there are no enemies throughout the state.³⁸ This is the reason why not a few scholars claim that Mencius’ theory of Heaven is nothing but a theory of the legitimization of power. On the one hand, in contrast to Legalists, it is also the theory of moral legitimacy: Mencius does not see any possibility for political takeover made by murderer basing solely on *Realpolitik*. If someone came to power and established a new dynasty then he was able to do so because it was the will of Heaven, which had previously tested him. On the other hand, Mencius never answered what kind of being *Tian* exactly is. He does not provide a clear explanation, because he defines Heaven through its functions (“creates”, “rewards”, “listens to”, etc.), and not by predicates (Zeng 2013). A famous statement made by Robert Eno seems to be rooted in a similar remark, summarized as follows: Confucianism is not “about” *Tian*, and the concept of Heaven serves as a “rhetorical anchor” for other kind of beliefs (Eno 1990, 5). El Amine is not so radical in denying ontological considerations at all, but still argues that the political theory centered on the idea of Heaven was independent from any metaphysics of *Tian* (El Amine 2015, 178). If ontological reflection on the nature of Heaven (or rather the lack of it) is irrelevant for political philosophy, it should thus not be a primary subject of our main concern, which is an interpretation of the philosophy of history. The Mandate of Heaven results in

35 M VIB, 35. J. Legge’s translation.

36 M IIB, 22.

37 為天吏，則可以伐之；M IIB, 7. Here we have the same *Tianli* that means “minister of Heaven”.

38 無敵於天下者使也；M IIA, 5.

the founding of new dynasties (and the fall of the old), along with the raising up of eminent individuals, i.e. historical heroes, and thus *Tian* intervenes in history, no matter what *Tian* is.

Interpretations arguing that *Tian* was used in order to legitimize political power at the same time reverse (in a critical manner) the view of Mengzi himself: only moral individuals can receive the Mandate of Heaven, and history is full of such examples. In a long dialogue with Wan Zhang, Mencius explained how the sages had received their thrones, and he noticed that, on closer examination, nobody had given another person the throne:

The sovereign can present a man to Heaven, but he cannot make Heaven give that man the throne (...) Yao presented Shun to Heaven, and Heaven accepted him. He presented him to the people, and the people accepted him (...) When Heaven gave the kingdom to the worthiest, it was given to the worthiest. When Heaven gave it to the son of the preceding sovereign, it was given to him. Shun presented Yu to Heaven (...) In the case of a private individual obtaining the throne, there must be in him virtue equal to that of Shun or Yu; and moreover there must be the presenting of him to Heaven by the preceding sovereign. It was on this account that Confucius did not obtain the throne. When the kingdom is possessed by natural succession, the sovereign who is displaced by Heaven must be like Jie or Zhou (...) Confucius said, “Tang and Yu resigned the throne to their worthy ministers. The sovereign of Xia and those of Yin and Zhou transmitted it to their sons. The principle of righteousness was the same in all the cases.”³⁹

Ren as the Principle of Historical Cycles

This passage from M VA, 5–6 provides us with explicit elucidation of the Mencian philosophy of history. What is more, it shows a connection between two dimensions of his historical thinking which seem to be separate: on the one hand, idealization and moral use of the past, and on the other, a quasi-ontological theory of Heaven being a historical agent. Throughout all of (Chinese) history, successors were proposed by current rulers because of the virtue of candidates, then accepted and appointed by Heaven and finally accepted by the people (in consonance with the principle of 民本 *minben*). “The principle of righteousness was the same in all

39 M VA, 5–6. J. Legge’s translation.

the cases”, a general rule of historical change from the legendary emperors until the Zhou dynasty. As appointed by *Tian*, these historical heroes (especially the founders of dynasties) could serve as moral examples for the following generations: this is what I mean by unity of two dimensions. Counterexamples of cruel rulers or righteous people who did not obtain the throne (like Confucius) do not falsify Mencius’ thesis: they only show that one of the conditions was not fulfilled, e.g. Confucius was not presented as a candidate, and tyrants were not accepted by Heaven.

We can go further and ask which principle makes king a king, a person who changes the course of history. Mencius’ answer is: benevolence (仁 *ren*). “The worthiest” were not full of any kind of virtue or virtue in every meaning of this word (cf. the notion of 德 *de* in Daoism), but instead were worthy because of *ren*. All those who conquer the world can be called benevolent.⁴⁰ This statement is found amid a few sentences describing how Yao, Shun and Yu ordered the world and made Middle Kingdom so different from barbarian countries. In M VIIB, 12 this is made even more explicit: “there are instances of individuals without benevolence, who possessed a single state, but there has been no instance of one who got the world without benevolence”.⁴¹ What Mencius aims to say here is that the past should be followed not because it is a past, but rather because it was benevolent. However, only some of the past is good, based on the supposed fact that everything the founders of dynasties and great emperors did was good, one has to be aware of the other side. In other words: antiquity alone is not a pattern of conduct, and thus the Mencian idealization of the past is not naïve; *ren* alone is not sufficient to have historical influence, as one must also be compliant with ancient laws:

The principles of Yao and Shun, without a benevolent government, could not secure the tranquil order of the kingdom. There are now princes who have benevolent hearts and a reputation for benevolence, while yet the people do not receive any benefits from them, nor will they leave any example to future ages—all because they do not put into practice the ways of the ancient kings. Hence we have the saying: “Virtue alone is not sufficient for the exercise of government; laws alone cannot carry themselves into practice”. It is said in the *Book of Poetry*, “Without transgression, without forgetfulness, Following the ancient statutes.” Never has any one fallen into error, who followed the laws of the ancient kings.⁴²

40 為天下得人者謂之仁; M IIIA, 4.

41 不仁而得國者, 有之矣; 不仁而得天下, 未之有也.

42 M IVA, 1. J. Legge’s translation.

We could even say that for Mencius *ren* is the principle of history: if the conduct of the ancients was benevolent, they were respected by Heaven and hence able to do what seems beyond human power and change the history of the world. But if *ren* is a principle of history then this statement has two implications: the first is that it remains the same throughout history, but the second is that it has to change things—there is no “history” without a change. The question thus arises: what is to be changed?

The change is determined by the difference, and this is also true in this case: rulers are benevolent or not. The possession or lack of benevolence has historical impact: “it was by benevolence that the Three Dynasties gained the throne, and by not being benevolent that they lost it”.⁴³ As we can see, the Mandate of Heaven is not mentioned here—rulers owe it to themselves to bring their dynasties to collapse. On a large scale this concerns whole dynasties, as the Three Dynasties mentioned are of course the Xia, the Shang and the Zhou, covering the whole of Chinese history before Mencius. Cyclical “transformations of *ren*” are therefore identical with dynastic cycles. In this way Mencius laid the foundations for this influential idea, developed later by Dong Zhongshu by mixture of Confucianism and yin-yang school. In M VIIB, 37, in the last remaining passage of *Book of Mencius*, the Chinese philosopher determined the length of each cycle, estimating it for 500 years. However, in order to massage his calculations he treated Confucius as a king (without a crown), which means that his contemporaries would have had to wait another four centuries for the end of the cycle.⁴⁴

The difference between the beginning and the ending of each cycle is called “period of harmony and period of chaos” 一治一亂 *yizhi yiluan* (M IIIB, 14), in just the same phrase as was later used by Wang Fuzhi (1619–1692) (Liu 2001, 198). The other difference has to be made between the principles of the sages and morality of Mengzi’s contemporaries. Even in periods of harmony, the moral standards of the people were often not—as in the time of Mencius—as high as those in the times of Yao and Shun. We thus not only have a cyclical change of harmony-*ren* and chaos-*buren*, but also a linear and graduating decay of the principles, so strongly stressed by idealization of the past:

From Tang to Wu Ding there had appeared six or seven worthy and sage sovereigns (...) Then, Zhou was removed from Wu Ding by no great

43 三代之得天下也以仁, 其失天下也以不仁; M IVA, 3.

44 That is the times of the Eastern Han dynasty, but since the Han dynasty in general was established in 206 B.C., Mencius’ figures were quite wrong. His calculations were used by Sima Tan, who in *Lun liujia yaozhi* predicted that a “new Confucius” should write a chronicle for his own times, just like Kongzi made *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Shiji* V, 130). In this respect, the new cycle began with Sima Qian.

interval of time (...) There were still remaining some of the ancient families and of the old manners (...) The present time is one in which the royal dignity may be easily attained. In the flourishing periods of the Xia, Yin, and Zhou dynasties, the royal domain did not exceed a thousand li (...) never was there a time when the sufferings of the people from tyrannical government were more intense than the present.⁴⁵

From times of Yao and Shun, and the times of Zhou Wenwang, there were periods with “several” good kings and when “something remained” from the old customs of the Zhou, up to the times when tyrants were governing their countries, and the one kingdom of Zhou had been divided into separate and warring states. In fact, this is not only an interpretation that we use in order to connect a more cyclical approach with the linear view of gradual collapse (after already having linked the moral use of the past with reflection on the historical role of Heaven). Mencius himself gives such an account, as follows:

After the death of Yao and Shun, the principles that mark sages fell into decay. Oppressive sovereigns arose one after another, who pulled down houses to make ponds and lakes, so that the people knew not where they could rest in quiet (...) By the time of the tyrant Zhou 紂,⁴⁶ the kingdom was again in a state of great confusion. Zhou Gong 周公⁴⁷ assisted king Wu, and destroyed Zhou. He smote Yan, and after three years put its sovereign to death (...) Again the world fell into decay, and principles faded away. Perverse speakings and oppressive deeds waxed rife again. There were instances of ministers who murdered their sovereigns, and of sons who murdered their fathers. Confucius was afraid, and made the “Spring and Autumn” (...) Once more, sage sovereigns cease to arise, and the princes of the States give the reins to their lusts. Unemployed scholars indulge in unreasonable discussions. The words of Yang Zhu and Mo Di fill the country (...) When benevolence and righteousness are stopped up, beasts will be led on to devour men, and men will devour one another. I am alarmed by these things, and address myself to the defence of the doctrines of the former sages, and to oppose Yang and Mo (...) When sages shall rise up again, they will not change my words.⁴⁸

45 M IIA, 1. J. Legge's translation.

46 Last ruler of the Shang dynasty.

47 That is Zhou Wenwang.

48 M IIIB, 14. J. Legge's translation, italics made by the author.

This passage gives us the most comprehensive exposition of the Mencian philosophy of history, combining an idea of the decay of the ancient principles with cycles of arising sages (cf. italics). It also provides us with an important theory of why Confucius wrote the *Spring and Autumn Annals* in order to save some of the Zhou principles, just before the next period of chaos. Mencius encapsulated all the dimensions of his philosophy of history, including the moral use of the past, in this one passage.

Moral Use of History in Xunzi

The motif of the moral use of the past, known in the Western culture as *historia magistra vitae*, was also an integral part of Classical Chinese (or at least Confucian) culture (Rüsen 2007), and Xunzi was not an exception in this regard: “We observe past events that we can take precautions against them. Order, anarchy, right and wrong as well can be recognized in them.”⁴⁹

The abovementioned recognition is not different from education (thus making the comparison to *magistra vitae* possible): “if you have not heard the words inherited from the Ancient Kings, you will be unaware of the greatness of learning and inquiry”.⁵⁰ Or, in other words, “knowledge that does not fit with the standards of the Ancient Kings, though hard won, is said to be that of a dissolute mind”.⁵¹ What is more, learning does not refer to a purely intellectual activity. It implies the practice of rituals and music in the shape created by the ancient kings (cf. X 20, 4 and X 20, 13). It means also, if not first of all, that the words and deeds of the ancient kings should be present, i.e. repeated, in one’s own life. *Xunzi* is characterized as a person who “in conducting his affairs observes the usual customs of the past”.⁵² Finally, for someone who, in addition to his own life has to govern other people’s, as is this case for politicians, the past should also be a pattern of ideal government. In X 5, 3 and X 8, 4 Xunzi uses exactly the same sentence: 後世言惡，則必稽焉 (“whenever we of later generations speak about evil, we must always examine their cases”), and it appears just after the stories of particular ancient kings. In the commentary to Xunzi, John Knoblock aptly noted:

49 觀往事，以自戒，治亂是非亦可識; X 25, 3. “X” will denote “Xunzi”. I am using Arabic numerals for chapters, because the abbreviation “X” could mean “ten” in Roman numerals. For quotations I rely on J. Knoblock’s translation: Xunzi (1988, 199), Xunzi (1990, 200), Xunzi (1994), although with respect to division I am still following Chinese Text Project, different from the sequence employed by Knoblock.

50 治亂是非亦可識; X 1, 2.

51 勞知而不律先王，謂之姦心; X 6, 10.

52 事行則遵備故; X 9, 26.

Xunzi shares with most of his contemporaries the belief that history provides the basis on which any philosophy of government must be based (...) Political philosophy, then, is inseparable from the study of history and, in Xunzi's particular view, of ritual principles (...) The model left behind by the sages is the starting point for any analysis of the proper form and function of the government. (Xunzi 1990, 200: 3)

The keyword of the last sentence is “model”. Here model means not only something on which the latter is being modeled, but also a representation which consists of numerous items structured in proper order. It is not a single instance, but a set of examples. Thus Xunzi wrote that “to oppose ritual is the same as lacking a model”⁵³ and, as a result, “‘well ordered’ refers to ritual and moral principles and ‘chaotic’ refers to what is contrary to them”.⁵⁴ And again, not any kind of rituals but concrete customs of antiquity, as they are described in the Classics: “the Way of the Hundred kings is at one with the sage. Hence, the Way expressed in the *Odes*, *Documents*, *Rituals* and *Music* returns to this oneness”.⁵⁵ However, rituals are not perceived there as an artificial activity, contrasted with benevolence, despite the fact that Xunzi actually prefers to link righteousness with rituals (禮義 *liyi*) rather than benevolence, but still an imitation of the model of the ancient kings has to be full of benevolence, because their conduct was *ren* to the utmost extent:

how much more important, then, are the ways of the Ancient Kings, the guiding principles of humanity and justice, and the pattern of life given in the *Odes*, *Documents*, *Rituals*, and *Music*; they certainly contain the most important thoughts in the world.⁵⁶

The Classics are much more than a handbook or guide:

Learning—where should it begin and where should it end! I say: Its proper method is to start with the recitation of the Classics and conclude with the reading of the Rituals. Its real purpose is first to create a scholar and in the end to create a sage.⁵⁷

The goal of education is expressed in the most conservative way: one has to read and learn nothing but the Classics, giving priority to the *Book of Rituals*. What is

53 非禮是無法也; X 2, 10.

54 禮義之謂治, 非禮義之謂亂也; X 3, 7.

55 百王之道一是矣。故詩書禮樂之道歸是矣; X 8, 16.

56 況夫先王之道, 仁義之統, 詩書禮樂之分乎! 彼固為天下之大慮也; X 4, 11.

57 X 1, 12.

interesting, from the point of view of the individual, is that one has to make progress in learning: to start from zero, to recite the Classics, and to end with the *Book of Rituals*. But from the perspective of the society, nothing could change the state of knowledge: after achieving one's own purpose, the final result of the process of education is still identical to what previous generations had already obtained. We have to be mature enough to get the meaning of the Classics, but not to find new principles, both for the future as well as for the current needs of the community.

Xunzi states this positively: the model of the sages is the first and last pattern of conduct. It guarantees the continuity and maintenance of civilization:

If each dawn begins a new day and each day a man begins anew, then how is it that there are states that have lasted a thousand years tranquilly through this? I say it is because the state is succored by a trustworthy model, itself a thousand years old.⁵⁸

The biggest danger for the state is to break this continuity: “only when there is removal of a dynasty and the creation of new regulations are difficulties engendered”.⁵⁹ If introducing new laws and customs result in chaos, holding the ancient regulations surely implies harmony: in this respect the thought of Xunzi is very coherent and depends on the simple principle of the idealization of the past.

Let us now analyze this idealization in more detail. Since one “should model himself after the regulations of Shun and Yu”.⁶⁰ (re-)construction of those regulations is a key problem, not for historical research, because Xunzi (just like Mencius) is not interested in scrutinizing ancient historical sources (!), but rather for ethics and political philosophy. Xunzi upholds the Confucian tradition that Yao did not abdicate because of old age or infirmity, but gave the throne to Shun, acting on his morality.⁶¹ However, when transmitting this story Xunzi does not mention *Tian* at all: it was just Yao's decision. He was able to do this because “his heart was filled with the purest pleasures” (so he was not attached to power) and he found that Shun was full of virtue, like he himself, which made him a proper candidate for succeeding the first human emperor. Hence, “Yao and Shun were the most expert in the whole world at teaching and transforming (the people)”.⁶² They were heroes of the empire:⁶³ they govern so well that in their times robbers did not steal and

58 X 11,7.

59 X 18,19.

60 上則法舜禹之制; X 6, 9.

61 X 18, 16–17.

62 堯舜至天下之善教化者也; X 18, 26.

63 堯舜者天下之英也; X 18, 26.

thieves did not break in.⁶⁴ Yao and Shun promoted those with moral worth, so the world was well ordered.⁶⁵ They honored the worthy in order to teach them.⁶⁶ Without initiating wars, they submitted other tribes.⁶⁷ They were loyal and honest,⁶⁸ returned good for good:

Such was the Way of Ancient Kings, and such is the foundation of the unity of mankind. It is the natural response of treating well what is good and of despising what is evil, out of which the principles of government necessarily grow and concerning which both antiquity and today are in total accord.⁶⁹

This passage stresses that the rule of the ancient kings was not only benevolent, loyal, generous and so on, but also just: “Yu and Tang founded their conduct on morality and justice”.⁷⁰ With this explication of the ideal of ancient kings, Xunzi tries to express his own vision of making politics. For instance, while praising the system of the Qin state (which was, incidentally much more just than benevolent), he ends each sentence with the proclamation: “just as were *x* of antiquity”.⁷¹ As we can see, Xunzi “uses the past” in very different ways. Some of them are purely rhetorical, e.g. in the sentence which states that even Yao and Shun could not have added more.⁷² For this reason, Antonio Cua distinguished five kinds of use of the past in Xunzi: pedagogical, rhetorical, elucidative and evaluative (Cua 2005, 73–98).

The Shadow of the Later Kings: Broken Unity of History

The distinctive feature of Xunzi’s idealization of the past is his effort to show that sages and ancient kings, albeit magnificent, were still people of the same nature as their subordinates, and thus like us:

All men possess one and the same nature (...) It is the same in the case of a Yu and in that of a Jie (...) Yao and Yu were not born wholly what

64 X 18, 28.

65 X 25, 2.

66 X 28, 3.

67 X 25, 2.

68 X 32, 1.

69 X 16, 4.

70 古者禹湯本義務信而天下治; X 16, 10.

71 X 16, 8. He repeats this four times, substituting into *x*: the people, the officers, the knights and the court.

72 X 9, 25.

they became, but rose up by transforming their old selves, brought them to perfection through cultivation and conscious exertion, and only after first putting forth the utmost effort did they become complete.⁷³

Ancient kings are not an unapproachable ideal: everyone could and should follow them, and this is possible because they already transformed their original nature in the same way as everyone ought to:

The man in the street can become a Yu (塗之人可以為禹), since it is possible for every man to understand the substance of humaneness, morality, the model of law, and rectitude (皆有可以知仁義法正).⁷⁴

If kings are primarily “common people”, and the latter are also able to follow the path of the sage kings, then the appearance of eminent individuals in history is normal and regular, and one does not need to appeal to Heaven in order to explain their existence. Even without divine intervention, it is “statistically” certain that some of the people will follow the model: “In every generation there have been⁷⁵ individuals who were the proper man. If born in the present age, such a proper man would fix his mind on the way of the Ancients.”

This does not necessarily mean that people following the sages have the status of sages: they could simply follow their conduct in the belief that they have to do so, although it is hard to fully realize their principles or some of their regulations are difficult to understand. The ancient principles are present today first and foremost because they have been transmitted from father to son. This partially explains why Xunzi so stresses the role of education: because it has historical, and hence also political, impact:

The reason that the model of the Three Dynasties still exists even though they have perished is that officers and bureaucrats have meticulously observed the rules and laws, the weights and measures, criminal sanctions and penalties, and maps and registers. This has been accomplished even when they no longer understood the meaning because they conscientiously safeguarded the calculations and out of prudence never presumed either to increase or diminish them. Rather, they handed them from father to son in order to aid the king or duke.⁷⁶

73 X 4, 10.

74 X 23, 20.

75 彼或蓄積而得之者不世絕。彼其人者，生乎今之世，而志乎古之道；X 12, 5. Literally: “none of the generations is an exception” (不世絕).

76 X 4, 8.

This kind of reflection leads Xunzi to the fundamental statement about the unity of history—past and present are not separate dimensions, guided by different principles: “the beginnings of Heaven and Earth are still present today. And the way of all True Kings is in that of the Later Kings”.⁷⁷ As a result, Xunzi criticizes those who claim that it is impossible to follow rules of the past in present times: “fools say: the circumstances of the past and the present are quite different, and the Way by which to bring order to the anarchy of today must be different”.⁷⁸ Those words should have a galvanizing effect on those who have tendency to classify Xunzi as proto-, semi- or krypto-Legalist: they stand in stark contrast with remarks of Gongsun Yang. In *Book of Lord Shang* (商君書 *Shangjunshu*) we can read that if sage “were to imitate antiquity, he would be behind the times (法古則後於時)” and that is the reason why “the Zhou dynasty did not imitate the Shang dynasty, nor did the Xia dynasty imitate the period of Yu” (chapter 7, Shang and Duyvendak 2011, 117). Xunzi does not agree with the premise, i.e. that the Three Dynasties followed different principles, and thus largely denies the “category mistake” of being behind the current times:

The sage uses men to measure men, circumstances to gauge circumstances, each class of thing to measure that class, the persuasion to measure the achievement, and the Way to observe the totality, so that for him the ancient and modern are one and the same (以道觀盡, 古今一也). Things of the same class do not become contradictory even though a long time has elapsed because they share an identical principle of order (類不悖, 雖久同理).⁷⁹

Because different epochs share the same principles and can be further used as a gauge of proper conduct, they also provide us with negative criterion: every doctrine that is neither consistent with ancient kings nor in accord with the requirements of ritual and moral principles is properly described as a treacherous doctrine.⁸⁰ On the other hand, theories which were not created by ancient kings but are falsely attributed to them and called “ancient”, are pernicious as well, just like theory of Five Phases (五行), pretending to be ancient.⁸¹

But Xunzi is not naïve, and he sees the difference between the ancient times and his own, on the epistemological rather than ontological and ethical levels. Despite

77 天地始者,今日是也。百王之道,後王是也; X 3, 10.

78 夫妄人曰:古今異情,其所以治亂者異道; X 5, 7.

79 X 5, 7.

80 凡言不合先王,不順禮義,謂之姦言; X 5, 8.

81 X 6, 7.

the unity of principles (ethics) and belonging to one category of events (ontology), the third subject of comparison, that is knowledge of the past, is not the same in both cases: the ancients knew more of their times than we know about them now, and this is obvious. Moreover, the more ancient the times, the less we know about them: “for Yu and Tang there are traditions concerning their government, but they cannot be ascertained with the detail of those for the Zhou dynasty”.⁸² This does not mean that Xunzi looks for historical truth (“what really happened”), different from moral principles, because—let me put it in this way—moral truth is what really happened: “that before the Five Ancestors there are no traditions concerning individuals is not because of the absence of sages during that time, but because of the extreme antiquity of the period”.⁸³ The blurred and almost inaccessible truth here is that the model of the sages (a particular set of values) had been existing even before the first such sages were mentioned. The epistemological difference between former and later kings does not make Xunzi suspect that we know very little about ancient principles: the moral unity of history is the indisputable truth (or dogma). It is so even though we do not know why antiquity and our own times constitute one totality.⁸⁴ The distinction between former and later kings has normative implications: since the principles of early and late antiquity are identical, but those of late antiquity are more accessible for us, we should follow the principles of later kings:

Hence I say: If you want to observe the footprints of the sage kings, you must look where they are most clearly preserved—that is, with the Later Kings. These Later Kings were lords over the whole world. To put them aside and to discuss instead extreme antiquity is like giving up your own lord and serving another.⁸⁵

From this point of view, Xunzi condemns those philosophers who follow the ancient kings only in a fragmentary manner, such as Mencius, who sees no difference between our knowledge of the ways of former and later kings.⁸⁶ One should not listen to the doctrines of those philosophical schools which do not follow the way of later kings.⁸⁷ Those following the model of former kings are called vulgar Confucians/*ru* (俗儒 *su ru*), while those following the model of later kings but

82 X 5,7.

83 X 5,7.

84 古今之所一也，未有知其所由來者也；X 19, 23.

85 X 5, 6.

86 X 6, 7.

87 百家之說不及後王，則不聽也；X 8, 27.

not knowing why they should do so are called cultivated *ru* (雅儒 *ya ru*), and finally there who are great *ru* (大儒 *da ru*) are intentionally modeling themselves on the later Kings.⁸⁸ Interestingly enough, in this passage it is said the lesser *ru* give priority to the *Book of Songs* and so on, and not to the rituals. While learning of the Classics is vital for Xunzi, as we have already seen analyzing his concept of the moral use of the past and learning histories, it is rituals alone that are placed at “the top”. Just like in the case of former/later kings, Xunzi presents his own preferences without interrupting the main unity.

Decay of the Historical Agency of Heaven

However, the biggest difference between Xunzi’s philosophy of history and the view of history held by other Confucians, and Mencius in particular, does not lie in prioritizing rituals over the Classics, or even later kings over the former ones, but rather in the lack of any concept of the Mandate of Heaven (and hence historical cycles). The seventeenth chapter of Xunzi’s collected works directly elaborates on this topic. The idea of *Tianming* is built upon the variations that the will of Heaven undergoes: when ruler is benevolent and follows the way of the ancients, Heaven is “tranquil”, while it responds to disruption and inappropriate conduct by withdrawal of its Mandate, resulting in civil war, floods, earthquakes, and other disasters. Xunzi denies the doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven by denying its very premise: “the course of Nature is constant: it does not survive because of actions of Yao; it does not perish because of the actions of Jie”.⁸⁹ Regardless of the moral or immoral conduct of rulers, *Tian* has never changed its course and intervened in history, in other words: it has never been a historical agent, rather the background to all historical actions. Consequently, only people are “history-makers”: “since Yu achieved order and Jie brought chaos, order and chaos are not due to Heaven”.⁹⁰ In Xunzi’s thought, people are fully responsible for history: if they became sages (since Yu and others were originally like men in the street), it is due to their own effort.

If the way of Heaven is constant, it is also understandable and rational: what are perceived as miracles or unique events can thus be explained rationally: “these are unusual events that occur because of a modification of the relation of Heaven and Earth or a transmutation of the Yin and Yang”.⁹¹ For such a methodical mind like

88 X 8, 21.

89 天行有常，不為堯存，不為桀亡；X 17, 1.

90 禹以治，桀以亂；治亂非天也；X 17, 6.

91 是天地之變，陰陽之化；X 17, 7.

that of Xunzi, the rationality of nature implies certain conclusions concerning how it is used. As he puts it in his famous poem, “how can obeying Heaven and singing in hymn of praise be better than regulating what Heaven has mandated and using it?”.⁹² The contrast between the preexisting and arbitrary Mandate of Heaven in classical Confucian thought (from *Book of Documents* up to *Mencius*) and Xunzi’s rationally recognizable yet useable Mandate of Nature is clear and distinct. The question of how to use Nature was therefore very important for his philosophy of history. All kings have to be, first of all, as constant in their conduct as Heaven, and this is achieved by modeling themselves on *Tian* and positively following the way of the ancients.⁹³

Secondly, they have to use nature for moral and political purposes, and in this respect follow the way of ancient kings. We have to stress that although Xunzi refutes the doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven, he still agrees with the statement that sages became sages and played roles in history because they understood decrees of *Tian*. From his viewpoint they successfully employed nature in order to prevent chaos. In other words, the ancient kings regulated nature,⁹⁴ and continued those regulations in their own conduct:

Heaven and Earth have completed their changes, the four seasons have come full circle, and everything under the canopy of heaven has begun anew. Thus, the Ancient Kings based themselves on this and used it for their pattern.⁹⁵

By “transformation of nature” there is meant not only the natural world, but also people’s nature. Sages transform original nature, both their own and that of other people; the tools used for transformation of one’s own nature are rituals and moral duties, which form a basis for the system of laws and standards—in this way the whole system of rituals and laws was created by sages who transformed nature.⁹⁶ The sage’s relation to ritual and moral principles is like that of the potter to his pots.⁹⁷ In other words, culture was made by ancient kings by means of transforming nature. The reason for the transformation of human nature was that it was originally evil:

92 從天而頌之，孰與制天命而用之；X 17,15.

93 X 17, 9.

94 X 19, 27.

95 X 19, 28.

96 故聖人化性而起偽，偽起而生禮義，禮義生而制法度；然則禮義法度者，是聖人之所生也；X 23, 9.

97 X 23, 8.

In antiquity the sage kings took man's nature to be evil, to be inclined to prejudice and prone to error, to be perverse and rebellious, and not to be upright or orderly. For this reason they invented ritual principles and precepts of moral duty.⁹⁸

Those precepts also embraced music, established to harmonize the people: "ancient kings guided the people with ritual and music, and the people became harmonious and friendly".⁹⁹ Later kings established proper names,¹⁰⁰ but they have been neglected since the last sages passed away.¹⁰¹ As a result, the rituals and principles employed by kings indicate the causes of anarchy in the world.¹⁰² And this is how we revert to the theme of learning from history and idealization of the past.

Conclusion

Without any doubt, both Mencius and Xunzi offered different yet comprehensive concepts of history, falling within the ambit of Confucianism. The biggest difference between their views concerns the way of interpreting *Tian* and its relation to human history. For Mencius, Heaven is a powerful, if not the only, ultimate historical agent, giving and withdrawing its Mandate and by means of the course of things revealing its mysterious will. For Xunzi, *Tian* is rather a synonym for "nature", constant in its course and understandable in its transformations (not decisions!), and in this way employed by sages and "prolonged" in rituals. As such, Xunzi did not refute the concept of *Tianming*, but modified it in such a way that *Tian* became the background of history and not its backroom. The second bone of contention is an issue of former and later kings. In fact, Mencius sees no difference between the former and later sages (先聖後聖, 其揆一也). All of them realized and applied one and the same principle, namely *ren*. History is only a repetitive process of individuals respecting or disrespecting benevolence. In this sense, Mengzi's philosophy of history is in the end ahistorical, since it denies any historical change, regarding each cycle as reincarnation of the previous period and reducing human agency to a passive response to the will of Heaven.¹⁰³ Xunzi, on the other hand, is fully aware of the historicity of history: he made a distinction between *xianwang* and *houwang*

98 X 23, 2.

99 王導之以禮樂, 而民和睦; X 20, 6.

100 後王之成名; X 22, 1.

101 今聖王沒, 名守慢; X 22, 3.

102 先王以禮義表天下之亂; X 27, 12.

103 This approach was later accepted and deepened by Dong Zhongshu, (cf. Ng 2005, 195: 61).

not because of different principles guiding their lives, but due to limitations of our knowledge of the past and practical difficulty of following those who had lived far before the last recognized and remembered sage kings. It is intriguing that the supposedly “ahistorical” Mencius insisted on talking about historical cycles, whereas Xunzi has no criterion to distinguish them, since *Tian* acts regularly and all unusual events can be explained. Last but not least, we have to mention different preferences of both thinkers. Although as faithful Confucians they stress the historical role of both morality and rituals, one could readily notice that *ren* plays a central role in the Mencian philosophy of history, which has little interest in rituals, while Xunzi’s case is the reverse. For the latter, those Confucians who set something above the rituals cannot be called “great *ru*”. This point of debate has its source in basic assumptions of those thinkers: benevolence is a response to Heaven’s calling (Mencius), and rituals result from the transformation of nature (Xunzi).

If this is so, we can ask what makes their views of history Confucian in the final result? First of all, it is the moral use of the past. One has to follow the principles of the sages, repeat their rituals and read the Classics: the exact order in which these actions should be done thus seems to be an internal dispute. The rationale for learning from history is of course the idealization of the past, and in the case of both thinkers the Zhou times in particular.¹⁰⁴ Both philosophers repeat the same structures and legends, both of them put their own beliefs into the mouths of the legendary emperors Yao and Shun. As a result, both Mencius and Xunzi were proponents of the fundamental unity of the past and present (古今一也), and perceived history as history only owing to everlasting principles, guiding kings’ conduct from the beginnings up until today (to varying degrees). Those degrees made them not only idealize the past, but also criticize the present, creating the image of the gradual decline of the principles of the sages. They intended a return to this state and not to search for anything new: the issue of whether we should return to Yao and Shun or to the later kings¹⁰⁵ seems not to be, again, a matter of utmost importance. The collapse of the world of the sages and critique of the present times make learning from history an urgent and necessary task, while the unity of history and idealization of the past makes this mission possible. This fundamental view was common and untouched in the thought of Mencius and Xunzi, despite all of the differences between them, showing once again that the core of Confucianism lies not in metaphysics or epistemology, but in the field of ethics. The sub-field of the ethics of history cannot change this principle, which was established in the dim and distant past.

104 Daoists derived their genealogy from Yellow Emperor, Mozi claimed to follow the Xia dynasty and Legalists called for searching for new principles, associating with the Qin dynasty.

105 復後王; X 25,1.

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Kant, Xunzi and the Artificiality of Manners

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Abstract

Both Chinese and Western philosophers have argued for the ethical importance of manners. Their approaches are sometimes criticized on the grounds that manners are artificial. I compare Xunzi's and Kant's responses to this claim, and discuss the relevance of both positions for the development of a theory of manners. I show that there is no single artificiality claim, but rather four different claims: the claim that polite behavior lacks spontaneity, the claim that it is insincere, the claim that it goes against human nature, and the claim that it is arbitrary. While Kant is mainly concerned with the insincerity claim, Xunzi focusses on the claim that manners are arbitrary rules. Because of their different understandings of the function of manners both authors only provide a partial answer to the artificiality claim. To arrive at a full account of manners both perspectives must be combined.

Keywords: Xunzi, Kant, manners, politeness, artificiality

Kant, Xunzi in izumetničenost pravil vedënja

Izvleček

Tako kitajski kot zahodni filozofi so poudarjali etični pomen pravil vedënja, četudi so jih pogosto kritizirali zaradi njihove umetne narave. Avtorica primerja Xunzijevo in Kantovo stališče o tem problemu in ovrednoti pomen obeh pozicij za razvoj teorije vedënja. Pokaže, da stališče o izumetničenosti vedenjskih pravil ni samo eno, temveč gre za štiri različna stališča: pomanjkanje spontanosti, neiskrenost, nasprotje s človeško naravo ter arbitrarnost. Medtem ko se Kant v glavnem ukvarja s predpostavko neiskrenosti, se Xunzi bolj osredotoča na problematiko arbitrarnosti vedenjskih pravil. Zaradi različnega razumevanja funkcije pravil vedënja vsak od njiju izdelava samo delne rešitve problema izumetničenosti. Če pa želimo izdelati celovitejšo teorijo vedënja, je treba kombinirati obe perspektivi.

Ključne besede: Xunzi, Kant, vedënje, vljudnost, izumetničenost

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Introduction

Both Western and Chinese theorists have argued that manners have ethical importance (some recent examples are Buss 1999; Olberding 2016; Stohr 2012). In their view, politeness is not just a matter of convention, and thus we should not act politely simply because “that’s what people do”. Nor is well-mannered behavior merely of instrumental value. Rather, according to these thinkers, acting in a well-behaved manner is an important part of a good life.

Politeness is not a naturally given quality. Even though manners are not just a matter of mere convention, well-mannered behavior generally involves following certain man-made rules. Politeness thus requires us to acquire certain affective and action dispositions that are not always in line with our innate inclinations. These and similar aspects of manners have led critics to claim that manners are artificial.

In this paper I will explore two responses to this claim, one given by Kant and the other by Xunzi. In spite of the temporal and cultural distance between these two philosophers, their approaches to manners display some striking similarities. Both believe that manners and politeness can transform people for the better, and both are concerned about the claim that manners are artificial. Nevertheless, a close examination of their arguments shows that they discuss artificiality in slightly different senses. As I will show, this difference is a natural result of the overall function that they assign to well-mannered behavior. While Kant stresses that there is a communicative function inherent in manners, Xunzi is primarily concerned with what one can call the ordering function of manners.

These differences are instructive for those interested in systematic questions concerning the status of manners within ethical theory. We *prima facie* have reason to think that the artificiality claim poses a challenge to the belief that manners should be accorded ethical relevance. Both Kant and Xunzi respond to *part* of this challenge, but because of their respective takes on the function of manners each leaves out one central aspect. I will briefly suggest that this problem can be remedied by accepting that manners do not have a single function, but rather a row of different functions.

I will start off by first analyzing the term “artificial”. I will show that we can differentiate four meanings, each of which can be used as the basis of a slightly different attack against the claim that manners are ethically relevant. I will then go on to explore both Kant’s and Xunzi’s positions on manners in detail and discuss which of these artificiality arguments they pick up, how they respond to them, and how this fits in with their overall theory. At the end of the paper I will then come back to the question of what this means for a systematic perspective on manners.

Unpacking the Artificiality Claim

In a recent article on manners in the *Xunzi*, Amy Olberding highlights both the importance of the criticism that manners are in some sense artificial, and the diverse forms that this claim can take. She describes “artificiality” as a “catch-all term embracing a host of sins and ills associated with etiquette” and then claims:

For example, practicing etiquette may oblige social actors to insincerity and hypocrisy, requiring that they suppress expression of unretouched opinions or feeling in favor of adopting a more socially pleasing façade. Etiquette can demand adherence to norms that are, sometimes rather obviously, culturally contingent or seemingly arbitrary. Etiquette can require that even the simplest endeavors be pursued circuitously, detouring practitioners away from straightforward efficiency by demanding they do what they do decorously. (Olberding 2015, 145)

From this we can discern at least four different meanings of “artificial” relevant to the discussion of manners, which can also be found in a standard dictionary definition of the term (*Random House Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary* 2001, 119):

- (1) We may use the term “artificial” to indicate that something is *effortful* or that it *lacks spontaneity*. The opposite of the term here is the way we use the term “natural” in saying that something comes naturally to someone (i.e., he does not have to use much effort to do it). We might then make the additional assumption that everything that is effortful or non-spontaneous is in some sense deficient. If we then add the idea that well-mannered behavior will often prove effortful, it becomes clear why we should consider manners as problematic.¹
- (2) “Artificial” can also be used to mean “false”, “insincere”, or “inauthentic”. The assumption here is that our natural behavior has a positive quality, namely authenticity or sincerity, and that these qualities are lost through our focus on well-mannered behavior. Thus, for instance, well-mannered behavior often does seem to involve masking one’s true feelings towards others and their actions.
- (3) We can also understand “artificial” as simply meaning “non-natural”. One might then further assume naturalness is a positive quality. This would be the case, for example, if we assumed that *human nature* and the behavior that directly springs from it may be changed for the worse through the installation of certain non-natural patterns and rules of behavior (artificial rules).

1 Zhuangzi’s criticism of human activity (*wei* 偽) can be read along these lines. For such a reading see e.g., Lee 2005, 15–17. For a further discussion of naturalism in the Warring State Period, see Eno 1990, 138–43.

- (4) Lastly, the term “artificial” can be used to denote something arbitrary. Thus, in a different context, we can say that a given system of classification is artificial or that a particular distinction seems artificial. What we mean to say here is that the classification or distinction has no grounding in what is (objectively) given. Polite behavior will at least sometimes involve differentiations (such as when we host an event and greet the guest of honor before the others). Critics could claim that the distinctions made in polite behavior often lack any form of proper grounding.

If the alleged ethical value of manners is to be defensible, it seems one must have something to say about all four of these claims. This can take various forms, such as a direct rebuttal of the validity of the claim or some argument that manners do not in fact instantiate the property in question. In what follows, I will discuss two different strategies of dealing with the claims, one suggested by Kant and the other by Xunzi. As I will show, both authors answer the claims by making a suggestion as to the function of manners, which in turn also delimits the scope of what can count as well-mannered behavior.

Kant’s Concept of Manners

Engaging with Kant when discussing the artificiality of manners may seem like a surprising choice. Indeed, in contrast to Xunzi, Kant does not give us a full-blown account of manners. Nevertheless, we do find some discussion on the importance of manners, in the course of which he portrays them as ethically relevant. The most prominent work in this respect is his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, which I will focus on in this paper. There, Kant begins his discussion of manners with a paragraph that delves right into the heart of the matter:

On the whole, the more civilized human beings are, the more they are actors. They adopt the illusion of affection, of respect for others, of modesty, of unselfishness, without deceiving anyone at all, because it is understood by everyone that nothing is meant sincerely by this. And it is also very good that this happens in the world. (Kant 2006, 42)

The passage appears baffling at first. Why should it be a good thing that we behave like actors, creating the illusion for others that we respect them and wish them well, when really we don’t? And why would it make a difference ethically that everyone knows that we are only creating an illusion?

One suggestion that can be constructed on the basis of Kant’s text is that the illusion in question is a necessary evil resulting from serious flaws in human nature.

Kant discusses the question of whether man's nature is good or evil towards the end of the *Anthropology*. Here, he distinguishes two aspects of human nature: man's rational (intelligible) nature and his sensible nature. The intelligible nature allows us to recognize the moral law and act in accordance with it, and therefore Kant takes it to be *good*. He is clearly far less optimistic with respect to man's sensible nature. Thus he claims:

But experience nevertheless also shows that in him there is a tendency to actively desire what is unlawful, even though he knows that it is unlawful; that is a tendency to *evil*, which stirs as inevitably and as soon as he makes use of his freedom and which can therefore be considered as innate. Thus, according to his *sensible* character the human being must also be judged as evil (by nature). (Kant 2006, 229)

One can thus see man's sensible nature as a kind of obstacle that must be overcome. According to Kant this can be done, but only through an effortful process of cultivation and moralization (ibid. 1968, 324–5). He does not mention politeness in this part of the *Anthropology*. Nor does he give us a very detailed account of the moralization process here. Nevertheless, it does seem plausible to suggest that manners could be part of such a process, as they will often demand keeping our sensible nature in check, and arguably form an important basis for humans living together in a society, which Kant, in turn, does mention in his discussion of moralization (ibid., 324).² Through these remarks Kant indirectly counters artificiality claims (1) and (3), i.e., the claims that manners are artificial in the sense of demanding effort, and in that of running counter to human nature. According to Kant, manners do indeed run counter to our sensible nature. However, because our sensuous inclinations are problematic anyway, this cannot be taken as the basis of an argument against politeness. Kant simply denies the claim that the whole of human nature is good and worthy of being preserved. Rather, it is only the intelligible part that must be upheld. And, with respect to this part of human nature, manners seem to play a bolstering instead of a destructive role. They are instrumental in letting rationality prevail against our problematic inclinations.

A similar strategy can also be applied for giving a Kantian answer with respect to the first artificiality claim. Kant simply denies that activity and effort are problematic qualities. Rather, according to his account, it is passivity on the side of our intelligible nature that is problematic. It is only the active countering of our problematic, sensible inclinations that makes us “worthy of humanity” (ibid., 325); this is also stressed

2 It is interesting to see that in the same passage Kant also heavily criticizes Rousseau for his pro-naturalism view of human nature (Kant 1968, 326–7).

in Klemme 1999). Effort, insofar as it is guided by reason, must thus be seen as a positive trait, while passivity towards our sensible nature will incline us to act badly. In failing to take an active stance, we are responsible for the evil actions that ensue (Klemme 1999). Again, though Kant does not explicitly mention politeness, it does seem that we could see it as part of such an active endeavor guided by rationality.

Up to now I have focused exclusively on Kant's understanding of human nature as it is conveyed in his *Anthropology*. Taking Kant's other writings into account, and especially his *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, gives us a different angle on human nature and the role of manners with respect to it (Kant 2003).³ In this work Kant explicitly rejects the sort of mixed view on human nature sketched above (DiCenso 2012; Wood 2014; Palmquist 2016; Kant 2003, 43). Rather than residing in our sensible nature, evil here is suggested to come about as a result of *human choice*. Thus, as Wood explains, in this view:

Inclinations themselves, insofar as they do not originate from free choice, can never be evil. They become involved in evil only when they have been taken as incentives in a freely chosen maxim which is evil. And then it is this maxim that is evil, not the inclinations themselves. (Wood 2014, 34)

Although our natural inclinations are not bad as such, we can still make a mistake by assigning a wrong role to them. We can furthermore be tempted to do so due to the strength of some of our inclinations and to the propensity to evil that Kant ascribes to humans. As has been noted in recent publications, we should not understand this as implying that human nature is in some sense bad. Rather a propensity, according to Kant, is an inclination that exists only in potential form at first but grows if it is nurtured by us through engaging in the related activities. Thus, according to Kant, the desire for alcohol in the alcoholic might exist as a mere potentiality, until the person has actually drunk alcohol. Only through such acts of nurturing do we arrive at strong habitual desires to seek out more experiences of the same kind, and there is thus an element of choice ingrained here (Stroud 2010, 642–3; Wood 2014, 50–51; Kant 2003, 34–39).⁴

3 In claiming that Kant is offering two competing interpretations of human nature in these two texts I follow Brandt (Brandt 1999, 483–5). As Brandt points out, it is not quite clear why the two positions diverge. As he suggests, it may be the case that Kant does not want to go into too much detail in the *Anthropology* and therefore settles for a position he does not deem fully correct. Otherwise, it may also be the case that he is in some sense rethinking his position. I leave the question of how these differences come about open, as nothing much depends on this issue for the purposes of this article.

4 I do not have the space to go into the details of Kant's exposition here, and am therefore skimming over some of its complexities. For an overview on the matter, see newer commentaries on this section (Palmquist 2016; Wood 2014; DiCenso 2012).

Kant also assigns the (good) predisposition to us to follow the moral law. This predisposition cannot be lost, even if we continuously act badly. What we should aim for is to reinstate it to its “rightful place as the sole element influencing our moral choices” (Palmquist 2016, 128). And this, in turn, involves viewing our inclinations as irrelevant to these choices (*ibid.*). In requiring us to act as if we respect others (independent of our actual feelings), behaving politely can be an important part of such a reinstatement. We can thus say that (in spite of their differing discussions of human nature) manners can be assigned an important role in self-cultivation on the basis of both the *Anthropology* as well as *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*.

Kant does not only state that the illusion of benevolence created by politeness is a necessary evil for keeping our sensible nature in check or reinstating our good predisposition to its rightful place. Rather, he also claims that this illusion can—in the long run—turn into something *real*. Thus he explains: “(...) these signs of benevolence and respect, though empty at first, gradually lead to real dispositions of this sort” (Kant 2006, 44). In behaving politely, we start off by faking our respect for others, but over time we can acquire *real* respect by doing so.

Nevertheless, the fact that Kant suggests that “faking it” is permissible seems puzzling. As quoted, he claims that manners are “*signs* of benevolence and respect” (my emphasis). The talk of “signs” is rather vague here, but an earlier passage in the *Anthropology* suggests that Kant directly links the term with acts of communication. There he lists “signs of gesticulation” and “memetic signs” with language, letters, and “signs of social standing” as “arbitrary” as opposed to “natural signs” (Kant 2006, 85–86) and highlights their importance in interpersonal communication. Thus, by talking about well-mannered behavior as a sign, Kant is suggesting that politeness is a communicative, interpersonal act. But this gives rise to a problem. If we are engaging in an interpersonal act of communication and are intentionally being untruthful in this act, then one could suggest that we are *lying*. And it seems that even if a lie has positive results in the long run, it is nevertheless a morally problematic act.

The problem is all the more pressing for Kant, because in other places he suggests that lying is not permitted under any circumstances. As Korsgaard has pointed out, a reason for Kant’s rigorous stance can be reconstructed from the so-called Formula of Humanity, which demands: “So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any others, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means” (Kant 1998, 38). Humanity, in turn, is understood here as a specific capacity, namely the capacity to rationally determine our own ends (Korsgaard 1986; Kant 1998, 44).

The problem about lying, according to Kant, is that we are putting others in a condition in which we are depriving them of the possibility to exercise that capacity, because those we deceive cannot possibly rationally assent to our action. As Korsgaard has highlighted, the issue comes up independently of whether the victim of the deceit knows what is happening. Thus, if we do not know we are being deceived, we cannot of course rationally assent to that act, as we do not know that this is what is happening. However, even, if we do know that we are being deceived, it is also not within our capacities to assent to the deceit, because in this situation there is no actual act of deceit (only a failed attempt to engage in such an act) (Korsgaard 1986).

Because of this rigorous rejection of the permissibility of lying, Kant cannot accept that manners are both ethically valuable *and* that they are a way of deceiving others. He needs to offer some other explication of what “empty” signs of “benevolence and respect” amount to, and in doing so he must show that we can *rationally assent* to each other’s polite behavior (thus distinguishing it from the case of deceit).

The solution Kant offers lies in claiming that politeness is no act of deceit, but merely a benign illusion. Illusions, according to Kant, do not vanish once we are informed about the real circumstances, and in this they differ from deceit. Take the case of deceit again: Say Peter is a criminal who has just escaped from jail. Assume that he is pretending to be a policeman (by wearing a uniform, acting in ways associated with that role, and so on). If I do not know Peter, I will have the impression of seeing a real policeman. But as soon as I learn about his real identity my impression will change dramatically, and in a rather unpleasant way. This is different from the case of optical illusions, like the frequently discussed Müller-Lyer-illusion. Even once we learn that the two lines in this illusion are of equal length, the impression that they are unequal remains, and there is no unpleasantness in this at all.

Kant claims that politeness is an illusion, not a case of deceit, and as such, in his reckoning, the problems resulting from deceit vanish. We are not treated as mere means to an end by those that behave politely. We are not deceived, because we know that people are being friendly for show. Nevertheless, the behavior of those engaging in the illusion still has a positive effect on us, we continue to see this sort of behavior as appealing and worthy of emulation. The positive impression therefore remains.⁵

5 The distinction between deceit and illusion and its importance for understanding Kant’s position on manners is highlighted by Frierson on whose discussion I rely here. Frierson also provides a detailed discussion of how illusions can motivate, which does much to explain and extend Kant’s rather short comments on the issue (Frierson 2005).

There is a further point that Kant makes concerning deceit, which deserves mention. While the positive impression that well-mannered behavior makes on others may lead them towards virtuous behavior, it is not clear from what has been said so far how it can also play a role in improving ourselves. Kant sees politeness as an act of “deceiving the deceiver in ourselves” (Kant 1968, 151), and then goes on to claim that, again, this is not deceit proper, but actually the mere creation of an illusion. Thus one can say that Kant suggests there are two kinds of illusions at play here, an outer and an inner illusion created by manners. While it is clear why the outer illusion is relevant, one may wonder why this act of inner illusion should be necessary.

As Frierson has stressed, this idea is linked to Kant’s take on the role that self-deceit plays for us.⁶ What Kant is implying is that while we are able to make rational choices independent of our inclinations, it is not always easy to do so. One reason for this is that at least some of our inclinations find a powerful ally in self-deceit. Kant gives us an example of such an act of self-deceit: he explains that we have an inclination towards being at ease, which leads us to staying largely passive. The self-deceit here is two-fold. First, we may have the impression that in remaining passive we are not doing anything evil, and are thus pursuing something that is morally good, while this is obviously not the case. Secondly, we are under the impression that we are avoiding unpleasant experiences (i.e., the experience of effort). But in doing so we are in fact conjuring up a most unpleasant state, namely boredom (Frierson 2005; Kant 1968, 151–2). Manners trick us into avoiding this problematic form of passivity by engaging us in pleasurable pursuits such as conversation, which, while seemingly effortless, nevertheless keeps our minds occupied and turns us into more cultured beings (Kant 1968, 152).⁷

Where does this leave us with respect to the artificiality claims? In his description of politeness, Kant counters claims (1), (2), and (3). In his replies he seems to be especially preoccupied with (2). This, in turn, seems to be the case because he understands manners as acts of tricking oneself and others. Through this, the problem of deceit looms large, an issue that Kant has to take seriously, in part because of his rigorous views on lying. Furthermore, it is striking that Kant does not seem to care much at all about the fourth artificiality claim, namely that manners involve arbitrary differentiations. This too is no accident. As explained earlier, Kant understands politeness as a sign of benevolence and respect. According to Kant, respect is something we owe to everyone, simply because they are persons.

6 For a further discussion of self-deceit, its relation to passions and importance for Kant’s position on human nature, see Wood (Wood 2014, 44)

7 For a more detailed interpretation that also explores the different discussions on self-deception, which Kant offers in his *Lectures on Anthropology*, again see Frierson’s analysis (Frierson 2005).

Manners, from this perspective, are thus not connected to any sort of distinction between people on the basis of achievement or rank, but rather just expressing what is owed to all persons qua persons. Therefore, there is no need to worry about them potentially containing arbitrary kinds of differentiation. The fourth artificiality claim thus does not seem threatening to Kant's approach, because he denies that manners have a differentiating function.⁸

Xunzi's Understanding of Artificiality

While manners and politeness lie at the periphery of Kant's philosophy, they are at the very heart of Xunzi's thinking. In saying so, one should be aware of the fact that Xunzi uses the term *li* (禮), and thus does not talk about manners in isolation, but rather also about rituals, religious customs, and so on. In spite of this broader notion, I will only discuss manners here. Often, *li* (禮) is translated as "ritual". To avoid confusion, I will replace this with the original term (*li* 禮) in the translations cited.

Central for Xunzi's position on manners is his view of human nature. Thus, at the very beginning of the *Discourse on Ritual* he writes:

From what did *li* (禮) arise? I say: Humans are born having desires. When they have desires but do not get the objects of their desire, then they cannot but seek some means of satisfaction. If there is no measure or limit to their seeking, then they cannot help but struggle with each other. If they struggle with each other then there will be chaos, and if there is chaos then they will be impoverished. The former kings hated such chaos, and so they established *li* (禮) and *yi* (義) in order to divide things among people, to nurture their desires, and to satisfy their seeking. (Hutton 2014, 201)

In this passage Xunzi indirectly seems to be tackling the third artificiality claim. He does so by applying a strategy that is, on first glance, similar to Kant's. Like Kant, Xunzi highlights certain negative aspects of human nature, as well as the disastrous effects uncontained expressions of our naturally given desires may have. In the passage cited, Xunzi stresses the *social* instead of the *individual* consequences of leaving our desires uncontained. He might therefore be read as worrying not so much that the individual may act in morally problematic ways, but rather that social order cannot be upheld if everyone were to focus on their own desires.

8 In the current literature, Sarah Buss presents a largely Kantian view, which also puts strong emphasis on this notion of respect (Buss 1999).

This, however, does not mean that Xunzi focusses *exclusively* on these social consequences. He does not only speak of society being chaotic; he thinks that this can also be a feature of individuals.⁹ As such, in his reflections on human nature he claims the following:

Thus, crooked wood must await steaming and straightening on the shaping frame, and only then does it become straight. Blunt metal must await honing and grinding, and only then does it become sharp. Now since people's nature is bad, they must await teachers and proper models, and only then do they become correct. They must obtain *li* (禮) and *yi* (義), and only then do they become well-ordered. (ibid., 248)

This passage may seem puzzling. What does it mean that people are “well-ordered”? In what sense is a well-ordered person different from a badly ordered one? Xunzi certainly does not believe that becoming a well-ordered person involves *extinguishing* one's desires. As he puts it:

All those who say that good order must await the elimination of desires are people who lack the means to guide desires and cannot handle the mere having of desires. All those who say good order must await the lessening of desires are people who lack the means to restrain desire and cannot handle abundance of desires. (ibid., 243)¹⁰

Rather than being exterminated, desires must be brought under control in the sense of people not automatically following any desire they have. This is difficult, because we have the natural tendency to act on them.¹¹ Nevertheless, our psychological makeup also opens other options. Namely, we are also able to reflect on our desires through some higher order capacity, i.e. through our intellect (*xin* 心). It is through this capacity that we decide which desires we should act upon.¹² When we fail to put this capacity to use, we remain internally disordered.

9 The general focus on order in the *Xunzi* is also highlighted by Machle. Machle stresses that Xunzi mostly uses the term *zhi* 治, which he translates as: “to manage”, “to put into order”, “to heal”, instead of *zheng* 政, which he understands as being connected to “government” or “to correct by law, force, or sanctions”. (Machle 1993, 47)

10 In other sections of the *Xunzi* we do, however, find the idea that we can shape and thus change our “inborn dispositions” through practice. (See Hutton 2014, 249).

11 This aspect of Xunzi's theory is often overlooked, but has recently been stressed by Chenyang Li (Li 2011).

12 For an interpretation along these lines see Lee 2005, 48–51.

The idea of there being such a thing as an “internal disorder” becomes clearer when we reflect on what it would mean to act on any desire we have without further reflection. If we did so, our overall pattern of action would turn out incoherent. To give an example: we may have the desire to remain healthy, but also a desire to eat large quantities of fatty foods and smoke cigarettes. Clearly, these desires cannot all be fulfilled at the same time, and we must choose among them if we are to achieve any of our goals. If we decide that staying healthy is the desire we should follow, then this gives our actions a distinct direction and stops them from oscillating between healthy and unhealthy ways of acting.¹³

This reading does not imply that man innately has both good and bad qualities or good and bad desires. Rather, the suggestion is that Xunzi does not take the desires *in themselves* to be the problem. It is not, for instance, that we are beset by ethically problematic desires and that we therefore continuously strive for what is bad. It is rather that blindly following our desires without any further reflection leads to both inner and outer turmoil and chaos. It is this chaotic state that Xunzi condemns. This strong disapproval lets him declare human nature to be bad, because it lacks standards that allow for a proper ordering of desires, a step that is crucial if we are to avoid disorder.¹⁴

So far, so good, but why should we think that *manners* are of relevance for creating order at the individual level? One way in which manners are essential, according to Xunzi, is that they give us some *standard* on the basis of which we can decide which of our desires we should follow. What we thus need is some understanding of which of our desires are permissible (*ke* 可) and which are not (Hutton 2014, 243). Manners provide us with a standard against which we can judge the appropriateness of our desires, and on the basis of which we can decide which of our desires to pursue.

We can now see the difference between Xunzi's and Kant's conception of human nature and how it figures in their reflections on the artificiality of manners. While Kant focusses on the fact that we may be tricked into pursuing what is not allowed

13 I am picking up on a very similar interpretation of the passage suggested by A. C. Graham. Graham gives us a very fitting description here: “For Hsün-tzu human nature is bad in that desires are anarchic, in conflict both within and between individuals” (Graham 1989, 248). For a further interpretation along similar lines see Stroud's text on Xunzi and Kant (Stroud 2010).

14 My interpretation here owes much to Chenyang Li (Li 2011), who also stresses the fact that desires cannot in themselves be declared as moral or immoral. He distinguishes between the talk of badness in a world that is still devoid of any standards, and in a world in which the standards are already in place. He sees Xunzi's talk of human nature as bad as meaning that it is *naturally bad* (i.e. bad in the sense that it inhibits the satisfaction of our desires). Once the standards are put into place, we can look back at this point in time and declare human nature as bad from our current (moral) standpoint (ibid., 60).

in spite of knowing better, Xunzi stresses the chaos into which our uncontrolled desires may lead. Xunzi does not claim that in blindly following our desires we are acting against better knowledge. Initially, this cannot be the case, because in the state of nature he presumes, there is no standard according to which we could know better.

Xunzi thus suggests that without *li* there are no standards which allow us to fend off the anarchy into which our uncontrolled desires lead. The disorderly nature (not the inherent badness) of our desires as well as our inclination to blindly follow them is what is bad about them, and this is what makes it necessary to install standards which permit us to weigh our desires, sort them into good and bad, important and unimportant, and decide upon which of them to act. Xunzi's reflection on human nature can also be understood as an argument against the first artificiality claim, namely the idea that manners disrupt our spontaneous ways of acting.¹⁵ This indicates that Xunzi, like Kant, thinks that deliberate effort is needed to make up for the problematic aspects of human nature. This also becomes clear in a further passage, where Xunzi explains: "Thus, I say that human nature is the original beginning and the raw material, and deliberate effort is what makes it patterned, rendered, and exalted" (Hutton 2014, 210). Deliberate effort is needed to bring *order* to our own nature and to the social world that surrounds us.¹⁶

Xunzi takes manners to be central for the creation of individual and social order, because they allow us to differentiate. In the social world, these differentiations take the form of distinctions between different social ranks. He thus explains: "In *li* (禮), noble and lowly have their proper ranking, elder and youth have their proper distance, poor and rich, humble and eminent, have their proper weights" (ibid., 84–85). At the same time, he also suggests that on the individual level *li* allows us to differentiate between what is permissible and impermissible, and also between other aspects such as good fortune and bad fortune which may result from our desires (ibid., 245). These differentiations in turn allow us to adjust our conduct appropriately.

Here, a crucial difference between Kant and Xunzi comes into view. While Kant stresses the communicative and activating function of manners, Xunzi's concern is with manners in so far as they allow us to bring order to an otherwise chaotic world. With this focus on manners as crucial for creating social and individual

15 For a recent publication stressing this aspect of the *Xunzi*, see Puett and Gross-Loh (Puett and Gross-Loh 2016).

16 The fact that both Kant and Xunzi stress the importance of human activity with respect to our desires and inclinations is also stressed by Stroud (Stroud 2010).

order, artificiality claim number four (the claim that hardly plays any role in Kant's theory) comes to the forefront of our attention. Because Xunzi understands manners as creating order both on the individual and the social levels, he must rebut the criticism that the order thus constructed has no grounding in reality.

To counter this line of criticism, Xunzi must insist that it is not *any sort* of ordering that will do. What must be installed in society and the individual is rather the 'right kind' of order, and this is supposedly an order that has some grounding in objective facts. Thus Xunzi claims: "One's virtue must have a matching position, one's position must have a matching salary and one's salary must have matching uses" (Hutton 2014, 85). Xunzi stresses that one's position in the social world is not without grounding in one's own character and achievements, but rather ideally has a basis in one's own character and virtues.

As Janghee Lee has elegantly shown, this position can be combined with Xunzi's view on the rectification of names. Lee suggests that names in Xunzi are conventional, in the sense that they are agreed upon by the people using them, but are nevertheless not to be understood as totally arbitrary. They cannot be, because Xunzi takes care to stress that good names (*shanming* 善名) should not be at "odds with the things" (*bufu* 不拂) (Knoblock 1994, 22.2 g).¹⁷ Lee stresses that there is an analogy here with measurements (an idea also found in the *Xunzi*). While the metric unit we establish in a society is conventional, no metric system we develop should be at odds "with the world" (Lee 2005, 61–62). In a similar vein, we might say that manners are conventional, but not arbitrary, because the differences they establish must be grounded in reality.

Going back to the original discussion of different kinds of artificiality arguments, we can see that Xunzi tries to counter arguments (1), (2), and (4). But what about argument (3), the claim that manners are artificial in the sense of being deceitful or insincere?

In my view Xunzi is not concerned with this aspect. There is no detailed, explicit discussion of whether manners must always present us with a truthful expression of our inner feelings and intentions. And, indeed, the omission makes sense in view of what I have presented thus far. One could suggest that Xunzi is primarily concerned with the ordering function of manners and not with the

17 Note that I am using Knoblock's translation here. Hutton sees the passage as implying that the names should "not conflict" with one another (Hutton 2014, 239). I think that the difference between the two translations is not as great as it may seem at first. Thus, one would generally assume that names that conflict with one another are also at odds with the world. Furthermore, it seems that while there could be internally coherent systems of naming that have no basis in reality whatsoever, these would be extremely difficult to uphold. As such, it does seem plausible that Xunzi has both internal coherence as well as external congruence in mind.

communicative one, and therefore that inauthenticity and insincerity are not issues he must deal with.

Unfortunately, however, the issue is not quite as clear cut. Indeed, there are some sections of the *Xunzi* where the author does seem to associate some form of communicative function with *li*, and perhaps even seems to hint at issues connected to their potential insincerity. In what follows I will briefly discuss the most striking of these passages, and show why they do not necessarily commit us to assuming that Xunzi does assign a communicative function to *li*.

Some newer interpretations of the *Xunzi* stress the importance of make-believe in the discussion on burial rituals.¹⁸ For example, Xunzi claims that in funeral rites one treats the dead “as if still alive” (Hutton 2014, 211). Doesn’t this “as-if” way of acting suggest that there is, after all, some form of pretense ingrained in the rites themselves? And how does this fit together with the idea that *li* must not be at odds with the things? In treating someone dead as though he were still living aren’t we deviating from this norm?

Though the observation that there is an as-if mode of acting is adequate, these are not the right conclusions to draw. Amy Olberding has suggested that Xunzi’s discussion of funeral rites is due to a particular dilemma we encounter when facing death. On the one hand, the dead person is, for us, still a person, a person that we grieve for. On the other hand, the dead person is also a mere thing, a slowly decaying corpse. Both perspectives are bound up with different dispositions: the disposition to take care of the person and the disposition to flee from the corpse. Xunzi sees burial rites as necessarily paying heed to both aspects (Olberding 2015). It is thus necessary that the dead person is treated both as a person and as a corpse, and that the rituals in question reflect this. We can thus say that in treating someone dead as if he were still alive we are not acting at odds with the things, but rather very much in line with them. This double perspective is reinforced through the fact that, while dressing the person as if he were still alive, there are subtle differences that are put in place such as not securing the hat with a hairpin and not fastening the belt (Hutton 2014, 211). This can be understood as an acknowledgement that we are not dealing with a person in the full sense of the term anymore, namely we are not dealing with someone who partakes in social interactions. The make-believe we are engaged in is not really a case of deception

18 Berkson highlights the frequent usage of the term (*ru* 如) in the *Xunzi* and claims: “Ritual participation can be seen, perhaps, as a form of sophisticated pretending or play, artificial and invented, yet necessary for conflicted and fragile beings such as ourselves.” (Berkson 2014, 120). Note that Berkson also does not assume that we are deceived, but suggests that we are fully aware of what is going on. I am not rejecting Berkson’s interpretation, but rather only a conclusion one might be tempted to draw from it.

(nor a case of illusion, in Kant's sense of the term), but rather an acknowledgement of our complicated relationship with death.

There are some further aspects of Xunzi's discussion of *li*, which also suggest an interest in their communicative function. Olberding thus suggests that manners are supposed to beautify our behavior. This beautification is necessary, because the "open display of our base needs and interest" may well generate aversion in others and therewith undermine human cooperation (Olberding 2015, 157). On her reading of the *Xunzi*, manners are needed to make our behavior sufficiently attractive to others to allow for cooperation. But this again seems to bring up the following problem: Doesn't beautification amount to merely hiding what is base about ourselves? And, again, isn't this an act of deceit?¹⁹

I don't think this is the case. As I have stressed before, I take Xunzi's *li* to be a standard which allows us to choose non-arbitrarily among our desires. Choice here will mean putting some desires into action while leaving others aside. And this is, in turn, a crucial step for liberating us from a situation in which we must blindly follow any desire that happens to crop up. But in this act of choice there is no room for deceit. We cannot "just pretend" to follow one desire or another. Rather, in choosing a desire we act on it *and* outwardly express it. Expression and action are not additional acts, but part of the choice itself. This also becomes clear in the following passage:

Li (禮) cuts off what is too long and extends what is too short. It subtracts from what is excessive and adds to what is insufficient. It achieves proper form for love and respect, and it brings to perfection the beauty of carrying out *yi*. (...) Thus, when the change in disposition and appearance are sufficient to differentiate good fortune and ill fortune and to make clear the proper measure of noble and lowly, close relations and distant relations, then *li* (禮) stops. To go beyond this is vile, and even should it be a feat of amazing difficulty, the gentleman will still consider it base. (...) It is not the proper patterning of *li* and *yi*, it is not the true disposition of a filial son. It is rather the behavior of one acting for ulterior purposes. (Hutton 2014, 210)

Changes in disposition are only supposed to make the differentiations in line with *li* and *yi*; our outward expressions are simply an expression of *these differentiations*. There is no room here for other motives. Such other motives and intentions can only come up when we are no longer acting in line with *li*. As a consequence, it

19 This is not Olberding's explicit position, but rather only a conclusion one could (but need not) draw from her description of the beautifying function of manners.

seems that deceit and illusion are unrelated to *li*. One can thus conclude that the claim that manners are artificial in the sense of giving rise to insincere behavior is irrelevant when viewed from Xunzi's position.

Implications for a Theory of Manners

The different versions of the artificiality claim discussed above highlight potentially problematic aspects of manners, and so pose a threat to the claim that manners are ethically relevant. Both Xunzi and Kant counter this claim. From a systematic perspective, we can say that they do so by employing a similar mix of strategies. They respond first of all by giving an account of human nature and effortful action which indicates that manners can be ethically relevant in spite of being effortful, and despite (at least in the case of Xunzi and Kant's discussion in the *Anthropology*) their running counter to some aspects of human nature. However, they also respond to the artificiality claims by giving a specific analysis of the function of manners. While Kant focusses on the communicative function of manners, Xunzi assigns them the function of installing a non-arbitrary social order. Through this step both authors indirectly block one specific sort of artificiality claim (i.e., the claim that they are deceptive in the case of Xunzi, and the claim that they install an arbitrary social order in the case of Kant).

When considered from a systematic point of view, this step is not unproblematic. From an everyday perspective, it seems that manners can be both expressions of an egalitarian type of respect (a type of respect we owe to everyone independent of their social standing) and a means of constituting a specific social order, an order that will also include certain hierarchical elements (i.e., putting someone above or below us in social hierarchy). And it also seems that, properly understood, both aspects are ethically relevant. I seem to be at fault, for example, when jumping the queue at a local coffee shop, because I fail to pay due respect to those others waiting in line.²⁰ But I equally seem at fault if I fail to pay due respect to a legitimate guest of honor at an official dinner I am hosting, where "legitimate" indicates the guest is truly deserving of the honor. Both Kant and Xunzi thus limit the scope of manners and analyze their function in a way that leads them to ignore one of these central aspects instead of acknowledging its relevance.

There are various ways in which one can respond to this issue. At first glance, it may seem as if the easiest solution lies in denying that both authors are indeed right. That is, we could construct some argument for why we must either be

20 I take this example from Karen Stohr (2012).

Kantians or Xunzians on the issue in question. In my view, however, this is not a very promising avenue. A brief look at our everyday way of speaking suggests both authors are saying something fundamentally right and worthy of attention. So, *prima facie*, we should focus on the ways in which the two fundamental insights could be combined. There are two ways in which we might do so. We can either assume that what we call 'manners' in the everyday sense of the term actually consists of (at least) two different sets of conventional rules with different functions: one expressing egalitarian respect and one assisting in building a hierarchical social order. Or we can assume that well-mannered behaviour always consists in expressing respect towards others as persons, and that *additionally* some cases of well-behaved interaction assist in building a well-ordered society. Independently of which option we choose, it seems we must find some way of combining both Kant's and Xunzi's insights to arrive at a full-blown picture of manners and their functions.

Conclusion

To conclude the paper, let me briefly sum up the main line of argument. I suggested that there are different artificiality claims voiced in criticisms of manners: manners can thus be characterized as effortful, deceitful, contrary to human nature, and arbitrary, depending on the notion of artificiality one has in mind.

Both Kant and Xunzi share some basic views on manners, and therefore respond to some of these claims in a similar fashion. Specifically, they agree manners may function to counter the more problematic aspects of human nature. Therefore, both highlight these features and argue against the notion that human nature is good in its own right. For both of them manners present an effortful but worthwhile means of self-cultivation.

Nevertheless, there are also crucial differences between the two: Kant has a view of manners that stresses their communicative function and their egalitarian aspects. Manners are signs of a type of respect, which is owed to all persons independent of social rank, virtue, and so on. These aspects demand that Kant reflects on the potential deceitfulness of manners. But they also relieve him of the need to argue against the claim that manners install an arbitrary social order. Xunzi, on the other hand, focusses on the individual and social order established through manners. Therefore, he is hardly concerned with their potential to deceive and much more with the threat of their installing a merely arbitrary order.

I concluded the paper by suggesting that both approaches are insightful in their own right. Nevertheless, both accounts are problematic in the sense that they

limit the scope of manners in ways that are inconsistent with our everyday usage of the term. I thus suggested that we should aim at combining the two views to arrive at a plausible response to the artificiality claims and a full-blown account of manners.

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*Unity of Skill and Art through the Lens of
Zhuangzi's Philosophy*

Skilful Practice in the *Zhuangzi*: Putting the Narratives in Context*

Dušan VÁVRA**

Abstract

The *Zhuangzi*, like many other early Chinese texts, is a composite work consisting of relatively short textual units. Despite its composite nature, the *Zhuangzi* is often approached as a philosophical work, which (at least in part or parts) can be viewed as philosophically coherent. As a result, the *Zhuangzi* as a whole (or several wholes) is usually taken (at least implicitly) as the context in which all the textual units are read and understood.

In contrast, this paper explores alternative ways to establish context for individual textual units in the *Zhuangzi*. The famous short narratives about skilful practice (often introducing the idea of perfect craftsmanship) are taken as an example, and the possible contexts are examined along two lines of inquiry: 1) the narratives are read within their immediate context of the textual unit; 2) the vocabulary used in the narratives is checked against other textual units in the *Zhuangzi* where the vocabulary appears. The paper argues that diverse contexts can be established for seemingly similar narratives. The narratives about skilful practice are viewed as a literary device that can be used in various contexts for various purposes. The paper thus demonstrates that the received *Zhuangzi* can be read as a process of putting shared narratives and terms in contexts and using them for different ends. The paper concludes by suggesting that the proposed reading highlights and retains meanings that are necessarily obscured by any reading that establishes the whole *Zhuangzi* as the primary context.

Keywords: Zhuangzi, Daoism, philosophy, textuality, reading strategy

Veščinske prakse pri Zhuangziju: postavljanje zgodb v kontekst

Izvilleček

Zhuangzi je, kot mnogo drugih kitajskih besedil, sestavljeno delo, ki je sestavljeno iz razmeroma kratkih besedilnih enot. Kljub sestavljenosti se *Zhuangzi* pogosto obravnava kot filozofsko delo, ki se ga, vsaj delno ali znotraj posameznih delov, lahko dojema kot

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filozofsko koherentno. Tako se *Zhuangzi* kot celota (ali več celot), (vsaj implicitno) razume kot kontekst, v katerem se berejo in razumejo vse enote besedila.

V nasprotju s tem pa članek raziskuje alternativne načine določanja konteksta za posamezne enote besedila znotraj *Zhuangzija*. Kot primeri služijo slovite kratke zgodbe o večinskih praksah (ki pogosto vpeljujejo idejo popolne obrti), kontekste pa se proučuje v dveh smereh: 1) zgodbe se berejo znotraj neposrednega konteksta posamezne enote besedila; 2) besedišče, ki se ga uporablja v posameznih enotah, se preverja tudi v primerjavi z drugimi enotami besedila v *Zhuangziju*, kjer se pojavlja. Članek trdi, da se za navidezno podobne zgodbe lahko določijo različni konteksti. Zgodbe o večinskih praksah so razumljene kot literarni pripomočki, ki se jih lahko uporablja znotraj različnih kontekstov in z različnimi nameni. Tako se pokaže, da splošno sprejet *Zhuangzi* lahko razumemo kot proces postavljanja skupnih zgodb in pojmov v kontekste in uporabe za različne namene. Članek se sklene z mislijo, da predlagani način branja poudarja in ohranja pomene, medtem ko jih vsako drugačno branje, ki vzpostavlja celoto *Zhuangzija* kot primarni kontekst, nujno zastira.

Gljučne besede: *Zhuangzi*, daoizem, filozofija, tekstualnost, načini branja

Introduction

The narratives on skilful action represent one of the most well-known and often discussed topics of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子.¹ Although interpretations of these narratives vary widely, most of the scholarship seems to share two basic (and in my view, problematic) assumptions concerning the reading of these passages. Firstly, the narratives are usually read simply as vehicles carrying meaning(s) emblematic of the *Zhuangzi* as a whole, and thus conveying important features of its philosophy. More specifically, they are typically read *in the light* of the whole work, which is constructed by other means, and not (or at least not primarily) by the narratives in question. Secondly, all the skilful action narratives are generally supposed to convey a similar meaning. This paper explores the limits of these two assumptions and problematizes them. By doing so, it suggests an alternative strategy for reading these narratives, one that does not read them primarily as instantiations of the *Zhuangzi*'s philosophy but, instead, focuses on the meaning constructed from the narratives themselves, read *against* the *Zhuangzi*, and not *in the light* of it. It is argued that this kind of analysis may suggest a context which does not necessarily include the other narratives on the same topic, and not even the *Zhuangzi* as a whole, but rather *some parts* of the work (against other parts) and even other texts.

1 Livia Kohn lists twenty-eight scholarly works discussing Cook Ding's story, the most famous of these narratives (Kohn 2014, 211).

Both the abovementioned assumptions are based on another, broader assumption, concerning the coherence of the text and its supposed authorship. This assumption is applied not only to the *Zhuangzi*, but also to many other early Chinese texts, especially those designated as “Masters” or “Master texts” (*zi* 子)—a category where the *Zhuangzi* is traditionally placed. These texts have been identified with their supposed authors,² which in turn creates the image of coherence across the works. This practice is, however, in contrast with the content of these texts. The texts themselves usually do not create the image of coherence or homogeneity. Instead, they very often appear more like collections of texts of variable length, ranging from short paragraphs to full chapters. Moreover the sequence of paragraphs within chapters and chapters within books typically does not reveal any apparent pattern. The Master texts as wholes, as well as their individual chapters, often look like a random collection of sayings, short narratives, dialogues, or expositions, only loosely tied thematically.³ This combination—seemingly unstructured texts, which are read as authorial texts—often results in a selective reading that picks out isolated sections of the text and puts them together (sometimes quite wilfully) as “building blocks” of a philosophy that is then presented as the essence of text by the related scholar.⁴ Since the *Zhuangzi* is very often subject to this kind of approach, it is the aim of this paper to problematize it and offer an alternative reading strategy for selected parts of the text.⁵

2 This practice is first attested in the *History of Former Han Dynasty* (*Hanshu* 漢書), chapter *Yiwen-zhi* 藝文志 (*Hanshu* 30).

3 This is definitely valid for the books (Master texts as wholes). As for the coherence of individual chapters, there are, of course, differences among the texts. A typical chapter from the *Hanfeizi* 韓非子 is more coherent than a typical chapter from the *Analec*s (*Lunyu* 論語). Moreover, as two recent publications have shown (Meyer 2015; De Reu 2015), a careful analysis can construct a meaningful structure even for a text (a chapter, *pian* 篇, not the whole book) that looks, in an uninformed reading, like a random collection.

4 Matthias Richter (2014, 1026) points out this problem in a recent article: “Systematizing accounts of ancient Chinese philosophers tend to be constructed by relating representative extracts from the texts attributed to these philosophers to each other as building blocks of a consistent philosophy.”

5 There is already a number of (mostly recent) works questioning the author-oriented approach to the Masters. Richter (2014) criticizes the “building block” approach to reading the Masters. De-foort (2012, 459–62) stresses the link between writing and practice in early China: “Writings were usually not self-contained, consistent, theoretical constructions, but rather footnotes to living practices” (ibid., 460). Klein (2011) questions the validity of the “core text” approach to the *Zhuangzi* in principle, and proposes “that the most appropriate textual unit to use in analysing the *Zhuangzi* is not “inner/outer” or even whole chapters, but rather some subset of a chapter” (ibid., 317). The “building block” approach to the *Zhuangzi* is the target of two recent articles by Dirk Meyer (2015) and Wim De Reu (2015). These authors analyse individual chapters of the *Zhuangzi*, which they construe as structured wholes, and thus read the individual sections of each chapter in the context of its whole structure. This re-contextualisation has a profound impact on the meaning of many of the sections.

There are many textual features shared across the text of the *Zhuangzi*—shared vocabulary and terminology, literary *topoi*, narrative structures and topics, ideas. Naturally, these shared features form the basis of most attempts to read the *Zhuangzi* as a whole or wholes (as a philosophical work or works).⁶ In this paper, however, I would like to argue that these shared features *do not construct the meaning of the text directly*. Instead, I take them as a repertoire of literary devices available to the text's authors, who used them to make a point that does not necessarily amount to one coherent philosophy that underlies the text and is advocated by it. This means, above all, that any term, metaphor, narrative, dialogue, or other type of expression formulated by the text must be adequately understood within its textual context (primarily, textual units⁷ within the chapters). Only when this is done are attempts at linking passages across the text possible.

The narratives on skilful action, which are the topic of this paper, are taken as literary *topoi* that can be used to convey diverse meanings. It is argued that despite similarities in content, narrative structures, and terminology, these narratives should be read (at least primarily) not as vehicles conveying an abstract philosophy, but rather as texts making a point, communicating a specific instruction, that vary in different instances of this type of narrative. This view is further underpinned by the fact that most of the skilful practice narratives are simultaneously “instruction scenes”.⁸ Typically they depict dialogues between the skilful person and an observer marvelling at the skill performed, with the latter usually a person of high social or intellectual status (a ruler or Confucius in most cases). Most importantly, the instruction is clearly implied (if not directly stated, in some cases) within the scene, aimed at both the fictional observer and the reader of the text. In

6 The prevalent assumption is that the *Zhuangzi* as a whole is not an authorial work, and not one which is entirely coherent—it contains parts of diverse origin and intention. Those scholars who address the question of the origin and authenticity of the *Zhuangzi* divided the work into several parts according to the text's supposed authorship (see Graham 1990; Liu 1994; Liu 2014, 129–58; Roth 1991a, 122–3). This approach thus tries to overcome the incongruity of the *Zhuangzi* as a whole by identifying partial wholes that themselves are supposedly coherent. In addition, this approach to the text typically tries to elevate one of these partial wholes to the position of the core text—the “true” *Zhuangzi*, the textual layer identified with Zhuangzi (Zhuang Zhou) as the author, or at least considered the most “authentic” layer identifiable with his intellectual heritage. There is a general consensus that the “Inner Chapters” (*nei pian* 内篇) as well as some of the “Outer Chapters” (*wai pian* 外篇) are the “core text”.

7 By “textual unit” I refer to parts of the *Zhuangzi* that can be identified as textual wholes by internal criteria (continuous narrative or dialogue, continuous exposition on a given topic, short sections linked together by formal means, like the simple “therefore” *gu* 故, etc.) Of course, in some cases setting the boundary between units can be controversial. The narratives about skilful action analysed in this paper usually form a clear whole identifiable as a “textual units”.

8 See Defoort 2012 for the term “instruction scene” or “instruction dialogue” and an analysis of the genre of “instruction dialogue” in the *Zhuangzi*.

this paper, the instruction (or the point made by the narrative) is regarded as the primary import of the text. Textual analysis is thus undertaken in order to better understand the instruction.

Wheelwright Bian

The passages that I have been referring to as showing “skilful action” in the *Zhuangzi* have in previous scholarship been discussed using terms such as “knack-passages” (Needham 1956, 121), “effortless action” (Slingerland 2003), “skill stories” (Yearley 1996, 163), or “skilful spontaneity” (Kohn 2014, 209). All these labels point to the most obvious characteristics all these narratives share. They always depict a skilful person engaged in an activity performed with enigmatic mastery and ease. This mastery usually involves no effort, it is completely integrated in the person of the perfect craftsman, boatman, swimmer, or even a cicada catcher.

Lee Yearley, in his article on this issue, distinguishes three fundamental elements of the skilful action in these narratives: adaptive responsiveness to change, unification of the physical and mental, and resistance to being communicated by normal means (Yearley 1996, 165). All these characteristics can be found in the following section:

桓公讀書於堂上，輪扁斲輪於堂下，釋椎鑿而上，問桓公曰：敢問公之所讀者何言邪？公曰：聖人之言也。曰：聖人在乎？公曰：已死矣。曰：然則君之所讀者，古人之糟魄已夫！桓公曰：寡人讀書，輪人安得議乎！有說則可，無說則死。

輪扁曰：臣也，以臣之事觀之。斲輪，徐則甘而不固，疾則苦而不入。不徐不疾，得之於手而應於心，口不能言，有數存焉於其間。臣不能以喻臣之子，臣之子亦不能受之於臣，是以行年七十而老斲輪。古之人與其不可傳也死矣，然則君之所讀者，古人之糟魄已夫。

Duke Huan was in his hall reading a book. The wheelwright Bian, who was in the yard below chiselling a wheel, laid down his mallet and chisel, stepped up into the hall, and said to Duke Huan: “This book Your Grace is reading—may I venture to ask whose words are in it?”

“The words of the sages”, said the duke.

“Are the sages with us?”

“Dead long ago”, said the duke.

“In that case, what you are reading there is nothing but the chaff and dregs of the men of old!”

Duke Huan said: “Since when does a wheelwright have permission to comment on the books I read? If you have some explanation, well and good. If not, you die!”

Wheelwright Bian said: “Let me look at it from the point of view of my work. When I chisel a wheel, if the blows of the mallet are too gentle, the chisel slides and will not take hold. But if they are too hard, it bites in and will not budge. Not too gentle, not too hard—you can get it in your hand and feel it in your mind. You cannot put it into words, and yet there is a knack to it somehow. I cannot teach it to my son, and he cannot learn it from me. So I have gone along for seventy years and at my age I am still chiselling wheels.”

When the men of old died, they took with them the things that could not be handed down. So what you are reading there must be nothing but the chaff and dregs of the men of old.”⁹ (*Zhuangzi* 13; Guo 1985, 119)

All three basic characteristics of skilful action narratives mentioned above are clearly present in this section. Chiselling a wheel is an activity that requires adaptive responsiveness to change, a “knack” that can be described only in negative terms—“not too gentle, not too hard”. It requires unification of the physical and the mental—“you can get it in your hand and feel it in your mind” and it cannot be expressed in words. The narrative structure, however, makes it clear that the skilful action (the mastery of chiselling the wheel)¹⁰ is not the focus of the narrative. The description of the craft and inherent problems it entails form a major part of the section but its point (the instruction) is something else—it is the resistance of a certain kind of human experience to being communicated. In this case we can safely say that the instruction the Duke Huan is given is communicated to the reader as well. The whole section uses the literary device of the skilful action narrative in order to promote the main idea of the section—human experience cannot be passed on in its fullness. Above all, it is inexpressible in words.

As we shall see below, this narrative structure and the point the section makes are not typical of the skilful action passages in the *Zhuangzi*. Another dissimilar point

9 Translation by B. Watson (1970, 152–3), adapted.

10 It should be noted that Wheelwright Bian’s skill is not in fact described as “enigmatic mastery” (comparable, for example, to that of Cook Ding). It is simply a skilful craft, nothing extraordinary. The point of this story is also different—that such skills cannot be expressed and passed on in words.

is the section's lack of any terminology concerning perfect skill. We do not know how wheelwright Bian attained his skill or what kind of psychological features it consists of. All we have is a vague description of the “knack”—“not too hard, not too gentle”, which can be “got in your hand and felt in your mind”—and the rest of the section is focused on the main point—the inexpressibility of human experience.

Cook Ding

The next section is by far the most well-known of all the skilful action narratives, indeed, it is one of the most famous passages of the whole *Zhuangzi*:

庖丁為文惠君解牛。手之所觸，肩之所倚，足之所履，膝之所踣，砉然騞然，奏刀騞然，莫不中音。合於桑林之舞，乃中經首之會。文惠君曰：謩！善哉！技蓋至此乎？

庖丁釋刀對曰：臣之所好者道也，進乎技矣。始臣之解牛之時，所見无非牛者。三年之後，未嘗見全牛也。方今之時，臣以神遇，而不以目視，官知止而神欲行。依乎天理，批大郤，導大窾，因其固然。技經肯綮之未嘗，而況大軋乎！[...] 雖然，每至於族，吾見其難為，怵然為戒，視為止，行為遲。動刀甚微，謦然已解，如土委地。提刀而立，為之四顧，為之躊躇滿志，善刀而藏之。文惠君曰：善哉！吾聞庖丁之言，得養生焉。

Cook Ding was cutting up an ox for Lord Wenhui. At every touch of his hand, every heave of his shoulder, every move of his feet, every thrust of his knee—zip! zoop! He slithered the knife along with a zing, and all was in perfect rhythm, as though he were performing the dance of the Mulberry Grove or keeping time to the Jingshou music.

Lord Wenhui said: “Ah, this is marvellous! The skill must have reached perfection at this point?”

Cook Ding laid down his knife and replied: “What I care about is the way (*dao*), which is more advanced than a mere skill. When I first began cutting up oxen, all I could see was the ox itself. After three years I no longer saw the whole ox. And now—now I approach it with spirit and do not look with my eyes. Perception and understanding have come to a stop and spirit (*shen*) moves where it wants. I go along with its “heavenly structure” (*tianli*), strike in the big hollows, guide the knife through the big openings, and follow things as they are. So I never touch the smallest

ligament or tendon, much less a main joint. (...) However, whenever I come to a complicated place, I size up the difficulties, tell myself to watch out and be careful, keep my eyes on what I am doing, work very slowly, and move the knife with the greatest subtlety,—flop! the whole thing comes apart like a clod of earth crumbling to the ground. I stand there holding the knife and look all around me, completely satisfied and reluctant to move on, and then I wipe off the knife and put it away.”

Lord Wenhui said: “Excellent! I have heard the words of Cook Ding and learned how to care for life!”¹¹ (*Zhuangzi* 3; Guo 1985, 119)

The structure of this section is typical of skilful action narratives. The craftsman performs his skill and is marvelled at by an observer (a prince, in this case). The skilful person then talks about his skills and reveals its underlying principles. The explanatory part forms the core of the narrative and the focus of its instruction. In this section, the instruction is made explicit in the last sentence—the prince has learned from Cook Ding not how to cut oxen, but how to care for life. The principles underlying the perfect skill obviously have a general significance and could be applied to other activities, not just cutting oxen. The instruction is clearly aimed at the prince in the narrative, although the reader also receives the same advice.

The explanatory part of the narrative employs a specific terminology, which we find not only in other skilful action narratives, but in many other passages in the *Zhuangzi*. It is the self-cultivation terminology that is used often in early Chinese texts, especially those labelled as “Daoist”—“spirit”, *shen* 神, as a source of superhuman perception (See Roth 1991b and Roth 1994).¹² Besides this terminology another common discursive strategy is used, which we will also encounter in other skilful action narratives—the description of the gradual closing of the conventional ways of perceiving the world that leads to a more effective way of perceiving things.¹³

This famous story of Cook Ding is in my view exceptional, in a way that may seem trivial but in fact is crucial to the narrative’s reception by the reader. Compared to the other skilful action narratives and many other textual units in the *Zhuangzi*, it is remarkably clear and easy to understand. Cook Ding’s mastery is based on two

11 Translation by B. Watson (1970, 50–51), adapted.

12 Roth argues that the *Guanzi* 管子 chapter *Inner Training* (*Neiye* 內業) and the self-cultivation process described there is the core of all Daoism. This self-cultivation is based on cultivation of one’s “vital energy” (*qi* 氣), accumulation of “vital essence” (*jing* 精) and reaching the state of “spirit” (*shen* 神), in which the adept acquires certain superhuman cognitive abilities. See also Puett 2003 for the term “spirit” in the *Zhuangzi*.

13 At first, he saw the whole ox (with his “senses”, *guan* 官), then “not the whole ox”—only the parts (“rational analysis”, *zhi* 知), at the end he approached the ox with his “spirit” only.

interconnected factors: on one hand, the subject—Cook Ding—has exceptional skill (conceptualized as “approaching the ox with spirit”), and on the other hand, the object—the ox—is not just a mass of flesh and bones but is structured (it is endowed with “heavenly structure”, *tian li* 天理).¹⁴ The text makes clear that by using the “spirit” a man can discern the “heavenly/natural structure” and thus be capable of highly refined and miraculously effective action. Reality is thus structured (intelligible), but only a uniquely trained individual can see and make use of it. This is, I believe, the point of the instruction and the main significance of the narrative.¹⁵ It presents a universally comprehensible image of a “master”,¹⁶ and thus it is perhaps no wonder that it is exactly this version of skilful action narratives that is the most well-known. As we shall see, most of the others present more obscure and less easily digestible examples of this literary *topos*.

The terminology used in this section can be put into the context of other *Zhuangzi* passages as well as other texts. It has been suggested by other scholars¹⁷ that the three-step sequence leading to “approaching the ox with spirit” can be read as parallel to another famous passage from the *Zhuangzi*, a conversation between Confucius and Yan Hui in Chapter 4. (*Zhuangzi* 4; Guo 1985, 147; Watson 1970, 57–58) In this dialogue the process of attaining true understanding is called “fasting of the mind” (*xinzhai* 心齋), a three-fold sequence of “listening” with one’s ears (sensory perception), then with the mind (discursive understanding)—and finally with the vital energy (*qi* 氣) (instead of *shen*), which is the final state representing a superhuman understanding of the world. Putting *shen* and *qi* together in this way further puts into play the widely shared (in traditional Chinese culture in general,

14 Or simply “natural structure”. The meaning of the word *tian* 天 ranges between “heaven” as the deity or cosmic power, and “nature” as the sum of natural cycles and processes. In the *Zhuangzi* it very often means the latter. However, I still often translate *tian* as “heaven” (heavenly, heaven-like, etc.) because I find the translation “nature” strangely ambiguous, among other reasons because “nature” is the standard translation for *xing* 性—which also appears frequently in the *Zhuangzi*.

15 There are, however, many authors who include the Cook Ding story into a broader concept of “immersion” in reality, which in their view informs all the skilful action stories: Kohn 2014, 209–19; Yearley 1996; Slingerland 2003, 197–203 (although Slingerland’s position is more complicated, and we get back to it below); Graham 1981, 135–42. As I argue below, I take “immersion” as an important metaphor informing many of the skilful action narratives, but not all of them, and not Cook Ding’s story.

16 In this general evaluation of Cook Ding’s story, I basically follow Robert Eno’s analysis in his article “Cook Ding’s Dao and the Limits of Philosophy” (Eno 1996, 135–6). Eno notices that Cook Ding’s skill is actually a mix of enigmatic, effortless action and a more conventional way of action, a conscious concentration, which is based on senses and cognition. According to Eno, “in its imperfection, Cook Ding’s level of mastery bears a recognizable relationship to levels of human skill performance that we encounter in actual life, the skills of great athletes or performing artists” (ibid., 136).

17 Slingerland (2003, 201), who refers to Pang Pu (1994) as to the origin of this idea.

beginning with several early Daoist texts) self-cultivation sequence of “vital energy” (*qi*)—“vital essence” (*jing* 精)—“spirit” (*shen*).¹⁸ In these texts, *shen* represents a state of mind with superior cognitive abilities transcending the ordinary human sensory and cognitive processes. It attunes the sage’s mind to cosmic processes due to energetic and material continuity—everything is made of “vital energy” (*qi*) and “vital essence” (*jing*), which gives rise to the subtlest reality called “spirit”: “Generally speaking, the vital essence (*jing*) of things is what gives them life. Below it gives life to five grains, above it creates stars and constellations. When it flows between Heaven and Earth, it is called “ghosts and spirits” (*guishen*). When it is hidden in the breast, it is called the Sage (*shengren* 聖人).”¹⁹ The human mind, endowed with the quality of “spirit”, is then capable of superhuman understanding of the world. For example, according to the famous chapter of the *Guanzi* known as “Inner Training”, a person with such abilities will be able to foretell good and bad fortune without resorting to divination.²⁰

Finally, it should be noted that part of the specifically Daoist concept and terminology of self-cultivation, the general meaning of *shen* as “superior cognitive abilities” (distinct from “mind”, *xin* 心), appears often in early Chinese texts. In these, “spirit” or “spiritual insight” (*shenming* 神明) often refers to a highly refined perception, characteristic of the sage (*shengren*), and this is conceived in various ways, not only in the context of Daoist self-cultivation set out above. For example, in the *Xunzi* 荀子, the superior perception and understanding of the sage is described as follows:

If you accumulate earth and make a hill, wind and rain will arise there. If you accumulate water and make a pool, dragons will be born there. If you accumulate goodness and make moral charisma, the spiritual insight (*shenming*) will be naturally attained and the sagely mind (*shengxin* 聖心) will be complete.²¹

Or *Guanzi* 管子, Chapter 41: “It was due to the utmost spiritual insight (*shenming*) of the Yellow Emperor that he obtained these six ministers and established order in the whole world.”²²

18 See note 12 above.

19 *Guanzi* 49, Chapter “Inner Training” (*Neiye*): 凡物之精，此則為生。下生五穀，上為列星。流於天地之間，謂之鬼神，藏於胸中，謂之聖人。(Li 2009, 931; Cf. Rickett 1998, 39)

20 *Guanzi* 49, Chapter “Inner Training” (*Neiye*). (Rickett 1998, 51)

21 *Xunzi* 1.6: 積土成山，風雨興焉；積水成淵，蛟龍生焉；積善成德，而神明自得，聖心備焉 (Wang 2010, 7; Cf. Knoblock 1988, 138)

22 *Guanzi* 41: 黃帝得六相而天地治，神明至。(Li 2009, 943; Cf. Rickett 1998, 123)

In sum, Cook Ding's story conveys the idea of superior cognitive abilities, termed "spirit", by which one can recognize the true structure of things, and thus act with miraculous efficiency, transcending the abilities of ordinary men. The process of reaching the state of mind called "spirit" is described only very vaguely as a gradual "stopping" (*zhi* 止) of the conventional capacities of perception (*guan* 官) and understanding (*zhi* 知). It can, however, be put into the context of other passages in the *Zhuangzi*, as well as other texts, where the meaning of "spirit" as a refined and miraculously effective power is often applied.

Woodworker Qing

The following skilful action narrative seems to be very similar to that of Cook Ding in terms of narrative structure, terminology, social setting, and the implied reader's response:

梓慶削木為鐻，鐻成，見者驚猶鬼神。魯侯見而問焉，曰：子何術以為焉？

對曰：[...] 臣將為鐻，未嘗敢以耗氣也，必齊以靜心。齊三日，而不敢懷慶賞爵祿；齊五日，不敢懷非譽巧拙。

齊七日，輒然忘吾有四肢形體也。當是時也，無公朝，其巧專而外骨消；然後入山林，觀天性；形軀至矣，然後成見鐻，然後加手焉；不然則已。則以天合天，器之所以疑神者，其是與？

Woodworker Qing carved a piece of wood and made a bell stand, and when it was finished, everyone who saw it marvelled, for it seemed to be the work of gods or spirits. When the marquis of Lu saw it, he asked: "What art is it you have?"

Qing replied: "(...) When I am going to make a bell stand, I never let it wear out my energy. I always fast in order to still my mind. When I have fasted for three days, I no longer have any thought of congratulations or rewards, of titles or stipends. When I have fasted for five days, I no longer have any thought of praise or blame, of skill or clumsiness.

"And when I have fasted for seven days, I am so still that I forget I have four limbs and a form and body. By that time, the ruler and his court no longer exist for me. My skill is concentrated and all outside distractions fade away. After that, I go into the mountain forest and examine the heavenly nature (of the trees). If I find one of superlative form, then I imagine a bell stand in it, and then I put my hand to the job of carving;

if not, I let it go. This way I am simply matching up heaven with heaven. That is probably the reason that people wonder if the results were not made by spirits.”²³ (*Zhuangzi* 19; Guo 1985, 658–9)

Just like the Cook Ding story, this is a narrative about a perfect craftsman who is admired by his ruler. The ruler asks him for the principles of his craft and the woodworker gives him an explanation. The explanatory part is the core of the section, and the instruction given to the ruler in the fictional dialogue is also given to the reader in the act of reading. All these features also appear in the Cook Ding narrative. Moreover, the explanatory part itself is also very similar to the same part in the earlier text. According to the woodworker's words, his skill is attained in a three-fold sequence of “fasting” (*qi* 齊) and a similar pair of terms is employed—“spirit” (*shen*) and “heaven” (*tian* 天). Moreover, just as Cook Ding is able to discern the “heavenly/natural structure” (*tianli*) of the ox, Woodworker Qing is able to see the “heavenly/natural condition” (*tianxing* 天性) of trees, and thus select those suitable for carving a bell stand.

There are, however, important differences between the two passages.²⁴ These can be found in the sequence of the three-fold self-cultivation and in the meaning of two key terms: *shen* and *tian*. I will analyse these in turn, as follows.

In Cook Ding's story, the three steps of self-cultivation consist of gradual transformation of one's perceptive and cognitive abilities. This is a long-term process that, most likely, occupied most of Cook Ding's life. The result is “approaching the ox with spirit”, which enables one to discern the “heavenly/natural structure” of the ox, although it can be surmised that this kind of training could be done with any other focus, or with life as a whole, as Duke Wenhui notes. The “spirit” seems to be a profound and active cognitive ability. Besides the perception and cognition, no other transformation of Cook Ding's personality is hinted at. By and large, despite the “metaphysical” nature of the terms “spirit” and “heavenly/natural structure,” this passage presents a widely acceptable description of life-long training to acquire a highly specialized skill, which results in the attainment of mastery.²⁵

23 Translation by B. Watson (1970, 205–6), adapted.

24 Eno (1996) identifies the difference between Cook Ding's story and the other skilful action narratives as based on the imperfection of Cook Ding vs. the perfection of the others, who are perfect due to “immersion in nature/heaven”. Slingerland (2003, 197–203) distinguishes between metaphors of “Self as irrepressible force” (i.e. “spirit” in Cook Ding) and “Self as allowing the world of normative order to do the work” (i.e. immersion in “heaven” in the other stories). Finally, however, he stresses the continuity of both as just different metaphors of “effortless action”.

25 “Mastery” itself is a term equally difficult to grasp. A “spiritual” understanding of the hidden “natural structure” of things may well serve as a description of “mastery” in any context.

Woodworker Qing, on the other hand, undergoes a very different three-fold self-cultivation process. While the result is a similar spiritual insight into the inner condition of things, unattainable by normal means, the steps involved are different. What Woodworker Qing gets rid of is not his ordinary sensory and cognitive abilities, but instead the *social and cultural values and relations* that normally define a person as a social being. Then, in the final step, he loses his awareness of his body. The whole process is called “fasting in order to still the mind,” and in the state of a still mind it is possible to acquire spiritual insights into trees. The process is obviously short-term, as the woodworker repeats it each time he needs to find a tree trunk for carving a bell stand, and it requires a profound existential transformation of the craftsman’s personality, albeit only for the duration of the action. An important term is used for the last step of the process: the woodworker *forgets* (*wang* 忘) his limbs and his body. This term is often used in the *Zhuangzi* to refer to a profound existential transformation that results in a specific state of mind enabling one to act more effectively, as we shall see below.²⁶

Both the Cook Ding and Woodworker Qing narratives make use of the term “spirit” (*shen*). It should be noted, however, that the term is used in a very different sense in each section. As I argued above, in Cook Ding’s story, the “spirit” simply means superior cognitive abilities, a meaning that is often used in early Chinese texts. However, *shen* is used differently in Woodworker Qing’s story. At the beginning of the narrative, the observer marvels at the woodworker’s mastery, wondering if the bell stand is not the work of spirits (*guishen* 鬼神). At the end of the explanatory passage, where Woodworker Qing explains the secrets of his mastery, he adds: “That is probably the reason that people wonder if the results were not made by spirits (*shen*).” Clearly, “spirit” here does not refer to a supernatural cognitive ability. Rather, it belongs among many examples in various early Chinese texts where “spirit” (*shen*) refers to the unknown cause or the principles of a (seemingly) miraculous action, which thus seems to be “as if” done by spirits, or simply looks magical or daemonic. An example from the *Zhuangzi* runs as follows: “In the state of Zheng there was a spirit-like shaman (*shenwu* 神巫), named Ji Xian. He knew whether people will live or die, perish or survive, be lucky or unlucky, die young or live long. He could predict the year, month, week, and the day, as if he was a spirit (*ru shen* 如神).”²⁷ (*Zhuangzi* 7; Guo 1985, 297–306) While “*shen*” in Ji Xian’s appel-

26 See also the similarity with the famous dialogue between Confucius and Yan Hui, where Yan Hui explains the state of “sitting and forgetting” (*zuo wang* 坐忘) (*Zhuangzi* 6; Guo 1985, 282–5; Watson 1970, 90–91). The structure is similar. Yan Hui “forgets” social and cultural values (rites, music, etc.) and, in the final step, he forgets his body and merges with the “Great Thoroughfare” (*datong* 大通), i.e. with the Dao.

27 Translation by B. Watson (1970, 94–97), adapted.

lation “spirit-like shaman” may refer to his superhuman cognitive abilities (which he clearly has), the second “*shen*” is different—it refers to his abilities viewed from outside, without the knowledge of their principles. The situation is similar to the prince wondering about the principles behind Woodworker Qing’s work.²⁸

The usage of the word *tian* is also different in both sections. On the one hand it is used as an adjective in both—“heavenly/natural structure” (*tianli*) and “heavenly/natural condition” (*tianxing*). These expressions both refer to the true inner nature of things unattainable by conventional means. They thus seem to serve the same function in both sections. However, in the Woodworker Qing narrative *tian* is used once more in a different way. It is the core of the explanatory passage—after the process of “fasting,” the craftsman reaches a state in which he gains insight into the nature of trees by “matching up heaven with heaven” (*yi tian he tian* 以天合天). This is a peculiar expression that requires careful examination. Most scholars agree that “heaven” in this context refers to both the inner state of the craftsman (a state reached by “fasting”), and the inner nature of the trees. Therefore, “matching up heaven with heaven” means that reaching the state of “heaven” by the subject (in this case, Woodworker Qing) results in the ability to “see” the “heavenly” (i.e. true, genuine) nature of things. Realizing a quality of “heaven” in one’s personality is in fact a very typical and common topic in the *Zhuangzi*. The word “heaven” is often used in the work in the sense of the sum of cosmic cycles and processes, as opposed to human society with its institutions, norms and values. According to the text, “heaven” should be adopted by people, so that each person can fulfil his/her natural potential and live better (or more effectively, in some instances) than within the confines of human society.²⁹ “Heaven” is thus viewed as the alternative setting of human life with an (implied) alternative set of values, radically different from the established social and cultural values—which a person embodying “heaven” in his/her life or a certain activity must get rid of. As we can see, this is the same as the description of “fasting” in the section of the text discussed above.

To sum up, the key point (or the instruction given) of Woodworker Qing’s narrative proves to be radically different from that of Cook Ding in certain important aspects. Both narratives depict the perfect and effortless skill of a craftsman, and

28 *Xunzi* 17.2 puts this explicitly. In a section describing the workings of Nature (“heaven”, *tian*), he states that every being is born and nurtured by Nature, while “we do not perceive the process, but perceive the results—this is why we call it divine 不見其事而見其功，夫是之謂神” (Wang 2010, 309; Cf. Knoblock 1994, 15)

29 For example, in Chapter 6 the image of the True Man (*zhenren* 真人) includes his independence from anything concerning human society, which is called “not using man to assist heaven” (不以人助天). (Guo 1985, 262; Watson 1970, 78)

present an explanation of the process through which the skill was attained. In the case of Cook Ding we have a mastery built on a life-long effort, which results in a miraculous skill brought about by a specially trained mental capacity, termed “spirit” (*shen*). In the case of Woodworker Qing, on the other hand, we have an individual capable of a much more obscure (and short-term, meditational) activity, “fasting,” which results in the “forgetting” of established social and cultural values and immersion into nature (or “heaven”). In this state, superhuman cognition is possible, which entails the “spirit-like” skilful action.

I conclude that these two skilful action narratives are in fact based on very different views of human existence and its relation to culture and nature. The two narratives share terminology but use it differently, which in turn opens very different contexts for both sections within the *Zhuangzi*, as well as beyond it. *Shen* as a supernatural cognitive ability dominates in Cook Ding’s story, while *tian* as a realm devoid of established social values (and as such a source of superhuman powers) dominates the story of Woodworker Qing. Both stories share the same literary *topos*, but base it on different philosophical grounds and present different key points to the reader.

Skilful Eccentrics

The following section also employs the skilful action *topos*, and again it seems quite similar to Cook Ding’s story, at least at first glance:

仲尼適楚，出於林中，見痾僂者承蜩，猶掇之也。仲尼曰：子巧乎？有道邪？曰：我有道也。五六月累丸，二而不墜，則失者鎚銖；累三而不墜，則失者十一；累五而不墜，猶掇之也。

吾處身也若厥株拘，吾執臂也若槁木之枝，雖天地之大，萬物之多，而唯蜩翼之知。吾不反不側，不以萬物易蜩之翼，何為而不得！孔子顧謂弟子曰：用志不分，乃凝於神，其痾僂丈人之謂乎！

When Confucius was on his way to Chu, he passed through a forest where he saw a hunchback catching cicadas with a sticky pole as easily as though he were grabbing them with his hand. Confucius said: “What skill you have! Is there a special way to this?”

The hunchback said: “I have a way. For the first five or six months I practice balancing two balls on top of each other on the end of the pole and, if they do not fall off, I know I will lose very few cicadas. Then I balance three balls and, if they do not fall off, I know I will lose only one cicada in

ten. Then I balance five balls and, if they do not fall off, I know it will be as easy as grabbing them with my hand. My body is to me no more than the stump of a broken trunk, and my shoulder no more than the branch of a rotten tree. Great as heaven and earth are, and multitudinous as things are, I take no notice of them, but only of the wings of my cicadas; neither turning nor inclining to one side. I would not for them all exchange the wings of my cicadas—how should I not succeed in taking them?”

Confucius looked round, and said to his disciples: “Where the will is not diverted from its object, then it is concentrated through the spirit—this might have been spoken of this hunchback gentleman.”³⁰ (*Zhuangzi* 19. Guo 1985, 639–41)

This is the story of a very peculiar “master”—a hunchback skilled in catching cicadas with a stick who trains for this by balancing balls on the end of the stick—but it still presents the *topos* of skilful action, like the two sections analysed above. The narrative section is similar—a skilful person admired by someone of higher status, here Confucius. The explanatory part forms most of the section and it is clearly the focus of the narrative. The first part of the explanation consists of a description of completely ordinary training—the skilful person simply trains hard and with increasingly difficult objects (in this case, he increases the number of balls to be balanced on a tip of a stick). No special terminology is employed.

It is the second part of the explanation that makes the most important statements. It turns out this is a story about *concentration of will*, which consists of several aspects. A certain disregard for one’s body is presented—the hunchback likens his own to a broken trunk, and limbs to the branches of a rotten tree. However, no terminology known from elsewhere in the *Zhuangzi* is used, so it is hard to tell if this refers to the same phenomenon as “forgetting” one’s body in the previous passage. Then we learn that the skill of catching cicadas depends on the exclusion of all other thoughts. The cicadas thus became the sole preoccupation of the hunchback. Once the will is concentrated like this, his skill reaches a level of mastery. In the final sentence, Confucius mentions the only term we know from the previous stories—“spirit” (*shen*). Here, Confucius draws a lesson from this encounter with the hunchback, and presents it to his disciples. He states that a will concentrated in this manner becomes “concentrated through spirit”. This may be read as another approach that leads to the same spiritual state as the one enjoyed by Cook Ding, although the whole story is a little too vague to be sure of this connection.

It is perhaps more plausible to read this tale as another story of “forgetting”,

30 Translation by B. Watson (1970, 199–200), adapted.

although the term *wang* is not used here. Moreover, the idea of forgetting is recalled by the comparison of the body to a withered tree, and especially by the way the story describes the concentration of will. Having an absolute focus on cicadas means that everything else is “forgotten”. This state is called “spiritual,” and is understood as the crucial component of the hunchback’s training.

The skilful action presented in this narrative thus seems to be a combination of key aspects of the previous narratives. The hunchback’s training is a life-long enterprise (like that of Cook Ding), but it is based on forgetting (like the case of Woodworker Qing). In turn, this combination accounts for the most conspicuous feature of the hunchback’s story. Life-long forgetting of the social and cultural values (and everything else except cicadas) implies an idiosyncratic personality, one whose behaviour is not only unusual but often weird, as with the hunchback at first glance. The philosophical background of this narrative is unclear, but it is probably closer to the one seen in the story of Woodworker Qing than that of Cook Ding.³¹ The lesson that Confucius, his disciples and the reader obtains is not clear in this narrative. What makes this narrative distinctive is the peculiar personality of the hunchback. Both Cook Ding and Woodworker Qing are full-fledged masters, skilled in their craft but also fulfilling their social roles. Instead of a skilful *master*, we have a skilful *nerd* in this section,³² and no doubt this shapes the reader’s response to the story. For instance, it is easy to understand why Cook Ding, and not the hunchback, became the exemplar of Zhuangzi’s skilful masters in general awareness.

In the *Zhuangzi* we find another interesting story that deals with the problem of a “skilful nerd” and also suggests a solution. The first part of this narrative from Chapter 22 is very similar to the hunchback story.

大馬之捶鉤者，年八十矣，而不失豪芒。大馬曰：子巧與？有道與？曰：臣有守也。臣之年二十而好捶鉤，於物無視也，非鉤無察也。

是用之者，假不用者也。以長得其用，而況乎無不用者乎！物孰不資焉？

The grand marshal’s buckle maker was eighty years old, yet he had not

31 We do not know if the hunchback’s existence is conceived of as “immersion in the nature” (*tian*). The *tian* imagery is not used in this section, but is also not excluded. However, this might as well simply refer to the exclusion of all distractions, and nothing more.

32 In this light, it seems possible to read Confucius’ endorsement of the hunchback’s approach to self-cultivation as a subversive form irony directed at Confucius himself. In the *Zhuangzi*, traditional values of contemporary society are often undermined by putting them in provocative context. Crippled thus persons become the models of moral virtue (see Moeller 2015), a butcher (i.e. Cook Ding) becomes a teacher of a prince (see Graziani 2005), and so on.

lost the tiniest part of his old skilfulness. The grand marshal said: “What skill you have! Is there a special way to this?”

He replied: “I have a way. From the time I was twenty I have loved to forge buckles. I never look at other things—if it is not a buckle, I do not bother to examine it.”

This kind of using things relied on not using other things. This is why he could use it for so long. And how much greater would a man be if he reached the point where there was nothing that he did not use! All things would come to depend on him.³³ (*Zhuangzi* 22; Guo 1985, 760–1)

The buckle master is not as peculiar as the hunchback from the previous section. There is nothing special about his skill (making buckles), what is remarkable is his age and the fact he has lost none of his abilities. The connection to the hunchback’s story is the explanatory part—the buckle master has excelled in his craft for so long because he “never looks at other things”, the buckles are his sole interest. It is this “forgetting” of other things enables him to excel in his work.

The second part of the section presents a turn not present in the previous narratives. The buckle master’s skill admired by the grand marshal in the first part (conventionally, as is within the genre of skilful action narratives), is now questioned and disparaged. A different kind of skilful practice is suggested, one which we might call *universal*—it is no longer a particular craft or skill, but the complete transformation of one’s existence that has a profound impact on one’s surroundings. The author points to the limits of buckle master’s skill—the fact that beyond his mastery he can do nothing else. The concept of universal mastery that is then presented implies a master who is skilled at *everything*, and not just one particular activity.

Universal Skilfulness

Before I present more material contextualizing the topic of *universal* skilfulness, we will turn to one more type of skilful action narrative, which describes a particular skill once more:

顏淵問仲尼曰：吾嘗濟乎觴深之淵；津人操舟若神。吾問焉曰：操舟可學邪？曰：可。善游者數能。若乃夫沒人，則未嘗見舟而便操之也。吾問焉而不吾告，敢問何謂也？

33 Translation by B. Watson (1970, 244–55), adapted.

仲尼曰：善游者數能，忘水也。若乃夫沒人之未嘗見舟而便操之也，彼視淵若陵，視舟之覆猶其車卻也。覆卻萬方陳乎前而不得入其舍，惡往而不暇！

以瓦注者巧，以鉤注者憚，以黃金注者殫。其巧一也，而有所矜，則重外也。凡外重者內拙。

Yan Yuan said to Confucius: “I once crossed the gulf at Goblet Deep and the ferryman handled the boat with supernatural skill (like a spirit). I asked him: ‘Can a person learn how to handle a boat?’ He replied: ‘Certainly. A good swimmer will in no time get the knack of it. And, if a man can swim under water, he may never have seen a boat before and still he will know how to handle it!’ I asked him what he meant by that, but he would not tell me. May I venture to ask you what it means?”

Confucius said: “A good swimmer will in no time get the knack of it—that means he has forgotten the water. If a man can swim under water, he may never have seen a boat before and still he will know how to handle it—that is because he sees the water as so much dry land, and regards the capsizing of a boat as he would the overturning of a cart. The ten thousand things may all be capsizing and backsliding at the same time right in front of him and it cannot get at him and affect what is inside—so where could he go and not be at ease?

When you are betting for tiles in an archery contest, you shoot with skill. When you are betting for fancy belt buckles, you worry about your aim. And when you are betting for real gold, you are a nervous wreck. Your skill is the same in all three cases—but because one prize means more to you than another, you let outside considerations weigh on your mind. He who looks too hard at the outside gets clumsy on the inside.”³⁴ (*Zhuangzi* 19; Guo 1985, 641–2)

The narrative structure here is similar to most of the sections discussed above, except that here the skilful actor appears only briefly in the first part of the section, and most of the explanatory part is presented as a dialogue between Confucius and Yan Yuan (i.e. Yan Hui, Confucius’s favourite disciple).

Several terms appear here that we discussed above. The boatman is said to handle the boat “like a spirit” (*ruo shen* 若神). Here the term clearly has the meaning identified in Woodworker Qing’s story—the action is “like a spirit” in the eyes of the observer, who can see the action but not the principles that it relies upon—that

34 Translation by B. Watson (1970, 200–1), adapted.

is why it appears “daemonic”. The second term is “forgetting” (*wang*). In the first part of the section, the boatman says to Yan Hui that a good swimmer can become a skilled boatman immediately (simply by being a swimmer). Yan Hui is confused, and Confucius explains that it is because a swimmer “has forgotten water” (*wang shui* 忘水). The rest of the explanation, as well as the final part about archery, makes it clear that “forgetting water” means “getting rid of fear.” Someone who “forgets water,” and thus sees it dry land, loses clumsiness, which is normally the result of fear. This section employs the opposition of “inner” (*nei* 內) and “outer” (*wai* 外). One’s actions must not be inhibited by the “outer” (which damages the “inner” with fear, or simply with “too much thinking”). “Forgetting” thus means guarding the “inner” against detrimental impacts from the “outer”.

It is not difficult to notice that the kind of skilful action presented in this section is different from that discussed in previous sections in several fundamental aspects. Above all, the skill is not conditioned by training and/or a psychological process of self-cultivation that would be aimed directly at attaining the skill. Instead, a transformation process is required that would change one’s attitude towards the environment. The environment must be “forgotten” because any awareness of it elicits destructive mental processes. If a person thinks about the water (or even is just aware of it), then he/she will never swim or ride a boat well.

The image of the boatman in this narrative is not necessarily incompatible with that of Cook Ding or the hunchback. Cook Ding, when using “spirit” to cut an ox, is perhaps also required to close his mind against distractions from the environment. The focus of the boatman’s narrative (and the key point of the story, the instruction given) is, however, directly opposite to that of Cook Ding. In the latter, everything depends on the right way of cutting (guided by the “spirit”), and the environment is not mentioned. In the former the opposite is true—the skill of handling a boat relies solely on “forgetting water;” the handling itself is not mentioned. Moreover, what in my view is crucial in this section—since the importance of handling the boat is actually played down—a good swimmer can handle a boat without any specialized training, and could probably handle anything involving deep water just as well. This moment leads us back to the idea of *universal* skill. Being attuned to the environment (here: “forgetting water”) is a way to achieve *any* skill within the environment. Notice how different this is from the skill of Cook Ding or the hunchback. Those masters concentrated their powers (termed “spirit” in both narratives) on the object of their skill. In contrast, with the boatman the skill lies in mastery of the environment. Within the limits of water “there is nothing the master cannot do”—which is exactly the idea of *universal* skill put forth in the conclusion of the buckle master section.

It should be noted that what I call “universal skill” here is actually present in many sections in the *Zhuangzi*, even those that are generally not considered skilful action narratives. The following passage is a good example, as although it is usually not regarded as representing a skilful action (for good reasons, one must admit), it is nevertheless based on a similar idea—being completely attuned to one’s environment, as brought about by “forgetting” it, leads to a perfect action:

夫醉者之墜車，雖疾不死。骨節與人同，而犯害與人異，其神全也，乘亦不知也，墜亦不知也，死生驚懼不入乎其胷中，是故選物而不懼。彼得全於酒而猶若是，而況得全於天乎！聖人藏於天，故莫之能傷也。

When a drunken man falls from a carriage, though the carriage may be going very fast, he will not be killed. He has bones and joints the same as other men, and yet he is not injured as they would be, because his spirit is whole. He did not know he was riding, and he does not know he has fallen out. Life and death, alarm and terror do not enter his breast, and so he can bang against things without fear of injury.

If he can keep himself whole like this by means of wine, how much more someone who can keep himself whole by means of heaven! The sage hides himself in heaven—hence there is nothing that can do him harm.³⁵ (*Zhuangzi* 19; Guo 1985, 636)

The forgetfulness of the drunken man in this passage is complete. Nothing can harm him because he has a total lack of fear (or, truth be told, any other mindful mental process). He is completely immersed in his environment (by means of alcohol), and thus is capable of perfect action (in the sense of not getting harmed). The word “spirit” is used as follows—“his spirit is whole” (*qi shen quan ye* 其神全也). This is a peculiar usage of the word, and it is obvious that no supernatural cognitive ability is meant here. Instead, “wholeness” of the spirit clearly means the drunken man is immune to all outside distractions.

The last part of the section is reminiscent of the buckle master narrative. It makes clear that while becoming whole by means of alcohol is valuable, it is still of limited value. The possibility of another, more perfect and *universal* wholeness is suggested—being whole by means of “heaven” (*tian*). Immersion in “heaven” (that is, into the whole of natural process) is the absolute wholeness, and it is clearly implied that this represents a kind of *universal* attunement to one’s environment (i.e., the whole cosmos, not just water or any other specific environment).

35 Translation by B. Watson (1970, 198–9), adapted.

The drunken man passage is just a final part of longer section, and the earlier part reads as follows:

子列子問關尹曰：至人潛行不窒，蹈火不熱，行乎萬物之上而不慄。請問何以至於此？關尹曰：是純氣之守也，非知巧果敢之列。[...] 則物之造乎不形，而止乎無所化，夫得是而窮之者，物焉得而止焉！彼將處乎不淫之度，而藏乎無端之紀，遊乎萬物之所終始，壹其性，養其氣，合其德，以通乎物之所造。夫若是者，其天守全，其神無郤，物奚自入焉！

Master Liezi said to the Barrier Keeper Yin: “The Perfect Man can walk under water without choking, can tread on fire without being burned, and can travel above the ten thousand things without being frightened. May I ask how he manages this?”

The Barrier Keeper Yin replied: “This is because he guards the pure breath—it has nothing to do with wisdom, skill, determination, or courage. (...) But things have their creation in what has no form, and their conclusion in what has no change. If a man can get hold of this and exhaust it fully, then how can things stand in his way? He may rest within the bounds that know no excess, hide within the borders that know no source, wander where the ten thousand things have their end and beginning, unify his nature, nourish his breath, unite his virtue, and thereby communicate with that which creates all things. A man like this guards what belongs to heaven and keeps it whole. His spirit has no flaw, so how can things enter in and get at him?³⁶ (*Zhuangzi* 19; Guo 1985, 633–4)

(The drunken man narrative follows.)

The section as a whole has the standard structure of the skilful action narratives. A skilful person (Master Liezi) is introduced, who is admired by an observer and asked to explain his abilities. This is then followed by the explanatory part.

The terms “spirit” and “heaven” make the core of the argument (besides a range of subtle references to self-cultivation practices and cosmological concepts known from many early Chinese texts, as well as some of the sections discussed above in this paper). Both these terms are used in a similar fashion—Liezi “keeps his heaven whole” and “his spirit without flaw.” These expressions evoke forgetful immersion in one’s environment (just like the boatman or drunk, as well as Woodworker Qing). There is, however, an important difference—Master Liezi’s immersion and forgetfulness is universal and complete. He does not depend on any particular

36 Translation by B. Watson (1970, 198), adapted.

environment and does not excel in any particular skill. His environment is the universe, and he lives in perfect attunement with it—as such, nothing can harm him. Moreover, he is presented as a being with superhuman capabilities (even water or fire cannot hurt him, and he can travel “above ten thousand things”).

Conclusion

In this paper we identified interesting differences among various examples of skilful action narratives in the *Zhuangzi*. The most important dividing line seems to be formed by the terms “spirit” (*shen*) and “heaven” (*tian*). The former has been read as generally referring to a spiritual state consisting of superhuman cognitive abilities, leading to a refined understanding of the outer world and, consequently, to more effective action. The latter is usually seen as consisting of a profound transformation of human personality and immersion in the environment (ultimately immersion in “heaven”). Although both approaches result in “skilful action,” the process leading to this outcome is completely different and implies different philosophical backgrounds (or, more precisely, different forms of self-cultivation and cosmological backgrounds). Furthermore, both ways bring into play different contexts—*shen* can be contextualized in a broad range of early Chinese texts, while *tian* remains almost exclusively in the context of the *Zhuangzi* itself.

In the chapter on the *Zhuangzi* in his *Effortless Action*, Edward Slingerland (2003, 197–203) also analyses the difference between *shen* and *tian*,³⁷ and states: “(...) all of the various and sometimes literally incompatible metaphor schemas used to convey a given idea such as wu-wei must be considered together if we are to arrive at a full understanding of the concept” (ibid., 198, italics in original). For Slingerland, “effortless action, or *wuwei* 無為” is a single *concept* expressed by various metaphors in the *Zhuangzi* (and other texts). He approaches the individual sections with a pre-established concept and reads the concept into the text. In this approach, the individual sections are nothing but vehicles conveying the concept. If we state, for example, that the *Zhuangzi* contains a “philosophy of spontaneity” (another pre-established concept), we can quote all the sections analysed in this paper (despite their differences) to illustrate the point.

The concepts can be “pre-established” for good reasons, I do not mean to question the validity of this common approach. If we wish to approach a fragmented text like the *Zhuangzi* as philosophy, we probably have no other choice. However,

37 Slingerland (2003, 200) conceptualizes them as two different metaphor schemas ESSENTIAL SELF AS IRREPRESSIBLE FORCE (*shen*) and NORMATIVE ORDER AS IRREPRESSIBLE FORCE (*tian*).

we should be aware of the fact that this approach is necessarily reductionist—reading a single concept or a single world-view into the textual diversity we find in the *Zhuangzi* necessarily obscures certain meanings that can be retained by unit-by-unit reading undertaken in this paper. These meanings are embedded in the “instruction scenes” unfolded by the individual narratives. Nevertheless, they still have some generalizing potential—they can bring into play specific contexts revealing underlying cosmologies or self-cultivation ideas the instruction scenes draw upon. Instead of philosophy, we arrive at archaeology—we may thus try to recover the worldviews that underlie and inform these instruction scenes.

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The Embodiment of Zhuangzi's Ecological Wisdom in Chinese Literati Painting (*wenrenhua* 文人畫) and Its Aesthetics

Loreta POŠKAITĖ*

Abstract**

The paper deals with the relation of Daoist (mainly Zhuangzi's) ecological ideas on inter-penetration and "communication-without-communication" of things to Chinese landscape and bamboo painting, more specifically, to the ideas about the harmonization of the painter with the things (scene) painted in the process of producing the artwork. Its purpose is to explore a more nuanced, philosophical and non-Eurocentric interpretation of this peculiar kind of harmony of things or their "unity in particularity", as inspired by Zhuangzi's ideas and seemingly embodied in Chinese literati painting. For this purpose, the paper introduces few conceptual models, formulated by Western sinologists, as the particular philosophical schemes for the understanding of Zhuangzi's epistemology and cosmology, and then discusses their applicability with regard to the relationships between the painter and the world, as presented in early and classical Chinese painting aesthetics and theory.

Keywords: Harmony, Dao, thing (*wu* 物), ecology, transformation

Utelesenje Zhuangzijeve ekološke modrosti v kitajskem slikarstvu literatov (*wenrenhua* 文人畫) in njegova estetika

Izvleček

Prispevek se ukvarja z daoističnimi (večinoma Zhuangzijeve) ekološkimi idejami o interpenetraciji stvari in »komunikaciji-brez-komunikacije« ter z njihovo povezavo s kitajskim krajinskim slikarstvom, še posebej z idejami harmonizacije slikarja s stvarmi (podobami), ki jih naslika v procesu stvarjenja umetniškega izdelka. Namen prispevka je to proučiti in prikazati nekoliko bolj niansirano, filozofsko in ne-evropocentrično interpretacijo tovrstne specifične harmonije stvari ali njihovo »enost v posebnosti«, navdihnjeno z Zhuangzijeve idejami in utelešeno v kitajskem slikarstvu literatov.

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S tem namenom prispevek najprej predstavi nekaj konceptualnih modelov, ki so jih formulirali zahodni sinologi kot posebne filozofske sheme za razumevanje Zhuangzijeve epistemologije in kozmologije, ter poskuša prikazati njihovo uporabnost z upoštevanjem odnosov med slikarjem in svetom, kot je prikazano v zgodnji klasični estetiki in teoriji kitajskega slikarstva.

Ključne besede: harmonija, *dao*, stvar (*wu* 物), ekologija, transformacija

Introduction

Chinese literati painting (*wenrenhua* 文人畫) in both landscape and bamboo genres, as well as its related theory, have fascinated Western artists and sinologists since the beginning of 20th century, thus forming their general understanding of Chinese classical aesthetics. This fascination has fostered a search for the main differences between the principles and aims of Chinese and Western painting, as well as their basis in a particular ontology and cosmology.¹ Many scholars agree that the greatest impact on Chinese landscape painting and its ideas was made by classical Daoist philosophy, especially by *Zhuangzi* (as a book), which, according to Li Zehou, is aesthetic in its essence. As he points out, *Zhuangzi*

urged people to take an aesthetic, contemplative attitude towards life as a whole: discount gain and loss, success and failure, right and wrong, merit and demerit; forget the self and things, subject and object, the self and others, and thereby let the self and the whole universe blend into one (Li 1995, 155).

In the same vein, but with different emphasis, Scott Cook remarks, that

Zhuangzi's philosophy offers us the chance to learn how to live our lives aesthetically, to appreciate that all we encounter are simply themes and variations upon the ever-changing melody of the Great Transformation. He teaches us how to hear and appreciate the Great Harmony (...). The panpipes of Heaven may be enjoyed by all, for they exclude nothing and embrace all things as equal members of a diverse and intricate orchestra. (Cook 2003, 76)

1 The beginnings of such comparative analysis could be found in the famous books by Laurence Binyon (Binyon 1923), George Rowley (Rowley 1947), Benjamin Rowland (Rowland 1954), and this approach is still popular in the literature on Chinese art.

This particular contemplative, aesthetic attitude and the holistic vision of the world are the most important features, which relate *Zhuangzi* with the literati painting in general, and landscape and bamboo painting in particular. Many Chinese painters and poets have admired and tried to embody in their art his ideal of spiritual freedom, spontaneity, wandering and reclusiveness, as the best ways to enjoy this all-embracing harmony of change or “transformative harmony”.² They also tried to follow *Zhuangzi*’s methods for attaining this spontaneity, such as forgetting one’s self (*wang wo* 忘我), losing myself (*wu sang wo* 吾喪我), riding of self (*wuji* 無己), “non-action” (*wuwei* 無爲), “fasting of the mind” (*xin zhai* 心齋), grasping things with one’s mind (*xin* 心) or vital energy (*qi* 氣), “taking off one’s robes and stretching out one’s legs” (*jieyi panbo luo* 解衣般礴贏).³ By this, they aimed to follow (or were compared to) *Zhuangzi*’s model persons or examples of self-cultivation and “eco-creativity”, such as the cook or butcher Ding, the painter, the catcher of cicadas, the swimmer or carpenter. Some painters were even longing for *Zhuangzi*’s presence in their life and art, considering him the only person who could understand their ideal of spiritual concentration and immersion in things and the universe through their painting.

Such a Daoist ideal of following “the natural way of production”, i.e. the Dao (Moeller 2004, 114),⁴ was summed up very well in the famous comment by Fu Zai 符載, Tang dynasty poet and official, when talking about the painting of his contemporary Zhang Zao 張瓘:

When we contemplate Master Chang’s art, it is not painting, it is the very Tao [Dao] itself. Whenever he was engaged in painting, one already knew that he had left mere skill far behind. His ideas reach into the dark mysteries of things, and for him, things lay not in the physical sense, but

- 2 For more on the embodiment of the ideal of reclusion in Chinese painting see: Gao Jianping (Gao 1995). Some of the most extensive studies about the application of Daoist ideas and concepts to Chinese painting and aesthetics were written by Russian sinologists, such as Jelena Zavadskaya, Leonid Bezhin, and Krivtsov. See their books in Russian: Bezhin 1982; Krivtsov 1993; Zavadskaya 1975.
- 3 It is important, that, according to Gao Jianping, the latter compound, which was used in *Zhuangzi* for the description of the painter’s freedom from ritual norms and conventional behavior, later turned to refer in Chinese art criticism to the act of painting in general, and the spontaneous, natural artistic expression in particular. More on this see: Gao 1996, 81–82.
- 4 I totally agree with Hans-Georg Muller, that a Daoist understanding of the art is more concerned with the concept of artisanship and the process of creation of the piece of art rather than with the concept of beauty and the piece of art itself (and in the case of landscape painting—with the nature itself rather than with the depiction of nature or its imitation). See his: *ibid.*, 114–5.

in the spiritual part of his mind. And thus he was able to grasp them in his heart, and make his hand accord with it.”⁵

The main emphasis in this fragment, according to Gao Jianping, is on the process (act) of painting itself and understanding of the highest mastery in painting, influenced very much by Zhuangzi's ideas and concepts, as mentioned above (Gao 1996, 78–80). But this fragment also informs us of the highest aim of the painter, which is—like that of a Daoist sage or fully realized person—to deploy the Dao, or to blend completely with one's environment. This sense of the inseparability of the painter and the world (things) depicted in the painting has often been described by Western and Chinese interpreters as “the unity of (or harmony, intimacy between) the human and nature”, or even as “the act of reverence for nature”, and contrasted with the Western model of “the separateness of human and nature” in the comparative analysis of Chinese and Western painting and their aesthetics, as well as their ecological ideas.⁶ Such descriptions and juxtapositions were certainly influenced by the Neo-Confucian idea of *tian ren he yi* 天人合一 (“harmony as oneness of Heaven and human”), which, as Wang Zhenfu demonstrates, was before and after Zhang Zai formulated and discussed by various poetic and non-poetic phrases, such as *yuanshi hundun* 原始混沌 (primordial chaos), *wuwo tongyi* 物我同一 (“things and me are the same”), *zhu ge hun qi* 主客浑契 (“the host and guest are in muddy agreement”), *tian ren ganying* 天人感应 (“the resonance between heaven and human”), *tian ren yi qi* 天人一气 (“heaven and human united by one vital energy”), *tian ren xiang tong* 天人相通 (“interpenetration of heaven and human”), *tian ren wu jian* 天人无间 (“non-separateness of heaven and human”), *tian ren xiang yu* 天人相与 (“the mutual participation of heaven and human”), and so on. (Wang 2006, 9)

What seems to me problematic in such stereotypical formulas and discussions of a Daoist model is an implicit Eurocentric tendency to view (even by naming) “nature” and “the human” as two separate realms, although there is no clear division between them in Daoist classical philosophy nor in Chinese landscape painting and its aesthetics. Such a formula simplifies and fails to explain the peculiarity of the Daoist (Zhuangzian) holistic or “ecological” worldview, as well as the harmonious relationships between the painter and the world—if we wish to understand them from Zhuangzi's perspective of all-pervading oneness. One of the reasons

5 (觀夫張公之藝非畫也，真道也。當其有事，已知遺法機巧，意冥玄化，而物在靈府，不在耳目。故得於心，應於手，孤姿絕狀，觸毫而出，氣交冲漠，與神爲徒). Except from “Preface on Observing Secretary Chang Painting Pines and Rocks”, quoted from: Bush et al. (1985, 85). I have preserved the translators use of Giles-Wide English transcription of Chinese names and terms.

6 See for example: Rowley 1947, especially the chapter on Man and Nature; Graham 2004, 35–36.

for such simplification lies, as it seems to me, in the abstract nature of the term “harmony”, which is too often used as a synonymous with the terms “ecological” or “ecology”—since there is not one but many sorts of harmony. Maybe the most detailed and specified understanding of Daoist ecology, or ecological relationships, is offered by various authors of the comprehensive collection of articles *Daoism and Ecology*. They emphasize the notion of “transparent communication (*tong*)”, the tendency for all things “to flourish naturally”, the need to construe our action toward the environment “as an action toward the self”, the notion of harmony as the “natural flourishing (*ziran*) of the ten thousand things”, the need to subvert and transcend the dichotomy of nature/culture, to avoid an anthropocentric perspective, and to maintain “the cosmological interdependence of heaven, earth and humankind” as a persistent leitmotifs in Daoist thought and religion.⁷ However, I would prefer to describe those ecological relationships between people and the environment (or things) using Zhuangzi’s phrase “to join with others without joining with others” and “to do with others without doing with others” (相与于无相与，相爲于无相爲), which was used for the characterization of the friendship among three men—Zisang Hu, Meng Zifan and Ziqin Zhang (*Zhuangzi*, ch. 6 in Watson 1968, 86).⁸

No less problematic to me seems the tendency to describe the unity between the painter and things depicted in his painting by Western terms of subject/object relations—for example, as their mutual conversion or “identification of subject and object”. Moreover, these terms are often used in the Western translations of Chinese texts on painting and the related studies.⁹ This is despite the fact that they seem misleading and not useful in the context of Chinese painting (especially literati) aesthetics for at least two reasons. First, because of the absence of the “substance ontology”, based on the idea of primordial separability and the stability of material forms and identities in Daoist (Zhuangzian) philosophy. Second, because of a far broader, processual and perspectival understanding of the word “thing” (*wu* 物) in Daoism—the word, sometimes translated in the texts on

7 A summary of those notions is presented in Miller et al. (2001, 150–3).

8 Wang Rongpei translates this as “befriend others without showing any friendship and help others without leaving any trace”. See: *Zhuangzi* 1999, 103.

9 For example, in his translation of Zhang Yanyuan’s *Li dai ming hua ji* 歷代名畫記 W.R. Acker translates the Chinese word *wu* 物 (thing) as “object”: “Object and self alike forgotten” (*wu wo liang wang* 物我两忘). See: Acker 1954, 192. The same was done by Gao Jianping (Gao 1996, 157–8). Another example: “the appearances of his objects [seemed to] issue entirely from nature” is from the English translation of Zhu Jingxuan’s text in: Bush et al. (1985, 84). Elsewhere Susan Bush also writes about Su Shi’s description of artistic creation “as the fusion of self and object” (Bush 1971, 41).

Chinese painting as “object”, which seems to me also misleading.¹⁰ As such, later in this article I would like to discuss whether it would be possible to interpret the relationships between the painter and the world (things) with the help of special conceptual schemes, which were formulated by the researchers of Daoist (Zhuangzi's) philosophy for the more nuanced and appropriate understanding of a Zhuangzian “ecological” vision of the world and experience of its oneness. I would not like to ignore Chinese scholars, who made considerable contributions to contemporary interpretations of Daoist aesthetics in general,¹¹ and Zhuangzi's aesthetics in particular (especially Xu Fuguan), but for my purpose I will concentrate on the interpretations by Western sinologists, since they are more related to the problems of Eurocentric views of this subject.

Zhuangzi's Ecological Vision of “Intraworldly Mysticism”

This is one of the schemes, as suggested by Lee Yearley, to describe Zhuangzi's radical vision. Such a vision, according to Yearley, implies a “hold and let go” approach. It consists of focusing “intently on the perception that is directly present before you but pass on to another perception when a new perception comes or the old one fades” (Yearley 2010, 127–8). It neither aims at the experience of union with some immutable and transcendent reality, in which two spheres or realities—the immutable one and that of a changing, particular individual—still remain separate, nor at the experience of unity, in which the individual immerses

10 *Wu* 物 could mean, depending on the context, not only material and separate objects or bodies, but also human beings and other creatures, senses, situations, which are understood as various manifestations of vital energy (*qi* 氣) and thus united or inter-related exactly by this *qi* 氣. For example, Taehyun Kim discerns three features of *wu* 物 as being in *Zhuangzi*: their materiality (they are “material objects of sense, language, and cognition; they have external forms and names”), changeability (they are “restricted in time and space, and are dependent on mutual counterparts or opposites”) and origin in Dao. (See Taehyun 2009, 6–7) Moreover, in *Laozi* even Dao is referred to as a “thing” in the phrase 道之物 (*Laozi*, chapter 21)—in this case *wu* 物 means rather “something”, or “that”, or “this”—what is indeterminate or out-of-description. R. Ames and David L. Hall even go so far as to translate this word as “process” (“as for the process of way-making”), commenting that Dao, as participatory, fluid and processual way-making, “contains within it the eventful phenomena we identify as those “things” and “images” that make our lives, including of course ourselves. According to the authors, due to privileging process over substance, continuity over discreteness, “we must understand “things (*wu* 物)” as both processes (happenings) and events”. Accordingly, *wanwu* 万物 (“the myriad things”) should be understood as referring “to the unsummed totality of all particular processes and events as they constitute this world”, “everything that is happening”, while Zhuangzi's expression *wuhua* 物化—as suggesting “the mutuality and interpenetration of all forms of process, as one ‘thing’ transforms to become another” (Ames and Hall 2003, 107, 67).

11 See for example: Liu Chengji's article on the relation of Daoist aesthetics to contemporary eco-aesthetics: (Liu 2006, 236–249)

into oneness as the “sole reality of universe”. According to Yearley, intraworldly mysticism does not seek absolute reality, but instead aims “to see the world in a new way”, “to obtain a new viewpoint on normal experience”, or simply to see “life as a cinema show, a series of passing frames, a kaleidoscope of ever-changing patterns” (ibid., 128). In other words, it urges us to look at beautiful objects and then forget them, as if viewing all life like “an aesthetic panorama”: “Life is a series of aesthetically pleasing new beginnings, and all such beginnings should be grasped and then surrendered as change proceeds” (ibid., 134).¹² This is the ability to grasp each new moment as it comes and surrender as it goes. It combines attachment and detachment to any thing, event, scene, even oneself—like in a mirror, and admits only one reality, the reality of change.

How is this form of “intraworldly mysticism” related to landscape or bamboo painting and its aesthetics? First, the view to life as a series of aesthetically pleasing moments or scenes was most evidently embodied in Chinese landscape paintings through their format. This enables us to view those paintings as changing panoramas of scenes and images, as marked by their moving perspectives or multiperspectivism, without a clear beginning, centre and end. Second, it helps to explain philosophically the peculiarity of the artist’s “wandering consciousness”. Harold Roth, in developing Yearley’s model and following Zhuangzi’s discourse, calls it the “*yinshi* 因是 mode of consciousness”, “the adaptive “that’s it” position or “Dao-centered” mode of being, and contrasts it to *weishi* 爲是—the contrived “that’s it” mode of consciousness or “ego-centered” mode of being. The latter he characterizes as one’s inclination to look at the world according to one’s pre-established position and viewpoint, using a rigid and fixed worldview with a rigid attachment to oneself and one’s predispositions, while the former—as the ability to abandon a fixed viewpoint, a single perspective, and rather to respond to things or situations spontaneously, according to the situations and things themselves, which are self-affirming (*zishi* 自是) and “naturally so” (*tianran* 天然) (Roth 2010, 202–7).¹³ This *yinshi* or “knowing how”, “because of this” mode of consciousness could be achieved only through the going along with myriad things (*wanwu* 万物), as it was demonstrated in Zhuangzi by the paradigmatic examples of various masters and their outstanding skills.

The use of this wandering or *yinshi* consciousness in painting can be illustrated by a conversation between Wen Tong (Yuke) and a visitor, to whom Wen Tong talks about his painting as follows:

12 Yearley states that the mystical experience of union with unchanging reality is a form of “mysticism of union” that was developed in the West, while the experience of monistic unity—as a form of mysticism with a monistic base, is more peculiar to Indian subcontinent.

13 See also Cook (2010, 84), especially note No. 40, in which he presents a summary of Guo Xiang and other sinologists comments on *yinshi* consciousness in Zhuangzi.

Why, what I love is Tao: I have gone beyond bamboo. When I lived in retirement on the south slope of Mount Ch'ung, I made my home in a grove of tall bamboo, and looked and listened in quietness without its affecting my mind. In the morning the bamboo were my friends, in the evening, my companions; I drank and ate amongst them and stopped and rested in their shade (...). At first I looked and enjoyed it, then I enjoyed it and was not conscious of doing so. Suddenly forgetting the brush in my hand and the paper in front of me, I rose up instantly and made bamboo in quantities. How is the impersonality of the Creator any different from this? (Bush 1971, 38–39)¹⁴

These words suggest that the painter has to be able not only to make bamboo a part of his life and his life a part of bamboo, but after this experience and the pleasure it brings to forget the bamboo, and even the enjoyment of it (and Zhuangzi would perhaps add, then to forget the forgetting itself). He thus has to forget the very agent of enjoyment, that is himself. In other words, he has to be able to enjoy without enjoyment (as the parts “looked and listened in quietness without affecting my mind”, and “enjoyed it and was not conscious of doing so” would suggest). Thus, one of the most important conditions for such “wandering consciousness”, or combining attachment and detachment, communication and co-existence with the world without mental involvement or deliberation, is exactly such forgetfulness.

One of the earliest examples of the importance of the notion of forgetfulness in Chinese painting practice and theory can be found in the famous early work of art criticism, *A Record of the Famous Painters of all the Dynasties* (歷代名畫記), by Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠. He describes the act of painting by Gu Kaizhi as follows:

Object and self forgotten, he (Gu K'ai-chih) departs from forms and leaves knowledge behind. When the body can truly be made to be like dry wood, and the mind can truly be made to be like dead ashes, is this not to have attained mysterious principles? It is what can be called the true way (Tao) of painting. (Acker 1954, 192)¹⁵

To forget in this case means to look at things not from one's personal perspective, but rather from that of emptiness and/or oneness; not to see oneself in things, but rather things as they are by themselves and how they change. Instead of reflecting

14 The original Chinese text is given at the end of this book, p. 190, fragment No.62

15 物我兩忘。離形去智。身固可使如槁木。心固可使如死灰。不亦臻於妙理哉。所謂畫之道也。

on himself as an agent of any activity, the painter just follows the changes of things (*wu hua* 物化) without knowing how these happen. Only such a view allows him to establish a particular “ecological” relationship with the world, namely, to communicate with things in the most direct and “energetic” way, by combining involvement with non-involvement, and then to depict things in the most natural way without imitation or intentions. In other words, the painter acts like Dao, which acts without acting, that is, without imposing its will or view on others. Following Zhuangzi’s logic of paradox or the coexistence of opposites, I would rather call such a relationship “communication without communication” (or “non-communicative communication”) and “unity in separateness”.

The Applicability of the Concepts of Vitality (*qi* 气) and Idea (*yi* 意)

Such a particular “ecological” relationship is also revealed in Chinese painting and its theory by the concept of *qi* 氣 (vitality, energy, breath), which became one of the most important Chinese aesthetic categories, especially in theories of literature and painting. Due to its importance, painting was conceived as the exchange of vital energy among the world (things), painter and viewer. Such a view could be justified by the first and the most important canons or elements (*fa* 法) of painting, as formulated by Xie He’s 謝赫—“vital resonance and life movement” (*qiyun shengdong* 气韻生動). I will not engage into a discussion of the meaning of *qi* and the first principle, or the problems of the latter’s translation into Western languages and the changes in its meaning over the history of Chinese art criticism, since they were and still are quite extensively discussed by many scholars in China and the West (Acker 1954, xxix–xxxiii; Lin 1967, 35–37; Sze 1956, 33–54).¹⁶ I would just like to pay an attention to the ambiguity of the “agent” of this *qiyun shengdong*. Who (whose?) or what’s *qiyun* should be manifested or embodied in the painting?

This seems to be one of the most important questions, since its answer directs the interpretation of the relationship between the painter and the world. The opinions of scholars here differ considerably. Some consider *qiyun* the manifestation of Dao in its perpetual motion (the rhythmical movement of *yin* and *yang*) (Sze 1956, 54), or the hidden sense behind the artistic images and forms which gives a feeling of aesthetic satisfaction, or the mood, tone and atmosphere (Krivtsov 1993, 71; Lin 1967, 108).¹⁷ Others relate it to the individuality, heart-mind (*xin* 心)

16 One of the best analyses of *qi* in association with other aesthetic terms in Chinese painting theory and various meaning of the first principle was done by Gao 1996, especially pp. 89–94, 103–111

17 However, Lin Yutang remarks that such an understanding of *qiyun* as a mode or atmosphere has prevailed only since the Yuan dynasty.

and actions of the painter, understanding *qi* as his “psychological force” and vigour, and *yun*—as the cyclical action of the painter’s brushstrokes, revealing his spiritual characteristics (Gao 1996, 91, 107–8). Still others describe it “as sympathetic vibrations of the “spirit” between the painter and the critic”, or as “some sort of transference of emotion from person to person”, or as the turning of the painter into the thing to be painted (Acker 1954, xxxii). Regardless of the details of this point, *qiyun* comes from a subtle vibration or resonance between separate “subjects”, thus reminding us of the abilities of some masters in *Zhuangzi* to listen to things with their *qi* or *shen* 神 rather than ears, and to respond without involvement. Even if *qiyun* is the manifestation of the vigour of the painter, then it was accumulated and developed through close interaction with things or other forms and kinds of vital energy—especially when we keep in mind that most landscape painters of the literati school tended to represent their inner vision, born after long contemplation of natural scenery, instead of representing the real scenery or particular place.¹⁸

Moreover, I would like to extend the question asked above—whose *shengdong* is manifested in the painting? The answer could be—that of nature or things as they are by themselves. The best model for learning to convey this movement of life for Chinese painters is (and was) bamboo. The painter has to convey not its form, but rather the moving impulse for its growth. He has to comprehend and represent in the painting the whole process of bamboo’s growing from its roots to the tips of its leaves, as it stated by Su Shi:

When bamboo first comes into being, it is only an inch-long shoot, but the joints and leaves are all in it. It develops from cicada chrysalises and snake scales to swords drawn out eighty feet, because this development was immanent in it. Now when painters do it joint by joint and add to it leaf by leaf, will this be bamboo? Thus, in painting bamboo one must first have the perfected bamboo in mind. (...) Does this only apply to bamboo? When Tzu-yu (Su Ch’è) composed the “Ink Bamboo Fu” for Yu-k’o, he wrote: The cook merely cut up oxen, but a nourisher of life

18 James Cahill notes the words of Dong Qichang 董其昌 on the difference between the real landscape and landscape painting: “From the standpoint of splendid scenery, painting cannot equal (real) landscape. But from the standpoint of the sheer marvels of brush and ink, (real) landscape is not at all the equal of painting’. In other words, if it is beautiful scenery you want, go to nature, if it is painting, come to me.” (Cahill 1982, 4–5). But Cahill also remarks, that we (Westerners) do not have to think about Chinese landscape painting as only the representation of ideal scenery, as we are accustomed to do. He shows in his book that many landscape paintings had their origins in the pictures of particular places—mountains, rivers, and so on. The practice of painting types of ideal landscape, conceived as replicas of the universe, developed only in the Song dynasty. But even in those times this type or genre of landscape painting was only one among several (*ibid.*, 5–13)

learned from him; wheelwright Pien carved wheels, but the reader of books agreed with him. Now, when you make use of these bamboos and I take you to be a man of Tao, is this wrong? (Bush 1971, 37)¹⁹

Like Zhuangzi's paradigmatic masters, the painter has to transform himself into bamboo or, more exactly, into its life movement. To achieve this he has to forget or to lose his "self" (that is, his own perspective or point of view). But he also has to forget the bamboo, in order to be able to look into (and not at!) the world from the perspective of unity. This perspective is suggested in Su Shi's words "one must first have the perfected bamboo in mind". They indicate the concept of "idea" (*yi* 意) and the associated strategy of "yi preceding the brush" (*yi zai bi xian* 意在笔先), which became one of the most important in literati painting theory. Although the meaning of *yi* is no less ambiguous than that of *qi*,²⁰ it seems to me that this concept is very helpful for the understanding the particular aesthetic and ecological relationship of "attachment-in-detachment" between the painter and the world (or things to be painted).

As Gao Jianping remarks (and this remark seems to me very important), an idea (*yi*) was formed in the painter's mind as the result of knowing or realizing "why it is so" (or why a thing is as it is) (Gao 1996, 153). Such a realization comes only after long contemplation of nature—bamboo, trees, mountains at different moments of life, weather, and time,²¹ or after immersion into their existence. But then, after reading Su Shi's texts, Gao Jianping raises the question: "What was the painter really looking at when he took up the brush and contemplated intently? Was he looking at bamboo, or at silk or paper?" His answer is, that he was looking at the silk (paper), because at the moment of painting "there was actually no bamboo present in front of him. It was by virtue of his spiritual concentration that he saw in his mind the image of bamboo", and this image seemed to him more true than the image of the real bamboo seen before, because it "involved the realization of a more profound communication with the object" (*ibid.*, 153–5).

My answer to these questions would be that we are talking about a few different moments or transformations, which take place in the process of painting

19 For the Chinese text see *ibid.*, 190, fragment No.60

20 Gao Jianping summarizes its general meaning as "the general strategy for realizing the intention and for moving brush" (Gao 1996, 153). But it could also suggest some meaning behind the visible forms and images (which reminds us of Zhuangzi's longing to talk with somebody who has forgotten words), as well as something which unites the world, painter and viewer—in this case its meaning could be related to Dao, *shen* 神 or *qiyun shengdong* 氣韻生動.

21 For example, Guo Xi writes extensively about how different mountains and trees look at the different time of the day, weather, etc.

(including the preparatory process of contemplating the things to be painted). It would thus be too risky and simplistic to interpret the relationship between the painter and the world as that between “subject” (the painter’s “self”) and “object” (the thing to be painted). It is very difficult to discern the appearance and disappearance of the boundaries between the painter and the world in this process, since they are simultaneously united and not-united. It would be better to think that there is a painter, and there is also bamboo, mountains and rivers, and they simply meet in the process of painting when the moment of new transformation comes. The painter forgets himself or his previous experience and simply reacts to the movement of nature like an echo, just grasping and manifesting “vital resonance and life movement” (*qiyun shengdong* 气韻生動). Moreover, as indicated by Zhang Yanyuan, and cited above, this movement brings the painter (and the viewer of the painting) to the mysterious principles (妙理) or common source of all beings.

Such a coexistence rather reminds me of the metaphor of the panpipes of heaven (*tianlai* 天籟) or the great harmony (*da he* 大和), described vividly in *Zhuangzi* chapter 2: “Blowing on the ten thousand things in a different way, so that each can be itself—all take what they want for themselves, but who does the sounding?”²² Similarly, the painter has to represent the individuality of each thing/scene by implying their common roots, or their primordial state of non-differentiation. In other words, he acts like that Daoist sage who, according to *Zhuangzi*, “is called walking two roads” at once (*wei liang xing* 謂兩行), or looking at things and himself from the non-movable and empty “pivot of Dao” (*dao shu* 道樞), from which all opposites (“this” and “that”) seem to coexist, be equal and support each other.

Zhuangzi’s Worldview as “Omniscentric Holism”

One of the best philosophical explanations of *Zhuangzi*’s view, as discussed above, was presented by Brook Ziporyn in his conceptual model of “omniscentric holism” (*bian zhong zheng ti lun* 遍中整体论).²³ According to this, the one who does the sounding is nothing other than “the self, always both present and absent in the sounds”, and such simultaneous presence and absence of the self can only be spoken of by considering the question “Is there really a true self or not?” (Ziporyn 2003, 42). One can avoid a clear answer to this if one takes the position of the “value paradox”, on which this model of omniscentric holism is based. Ziporyn describes this as the ability to hold two contradictory perspectives (be they

22 吹万不同，而使其自己也，咸其自取，怒者其谁邪? (Watson 1968, 37)

23 I have consulted with the author himself for the translation of this term into Chinese.

philosophical positions, epistemological or moral values, identities, emotional moods) at the same time, instead of adhering to any one of them (“this” or “that”), since “each perspective constitutes its own whole, is intrinsically correct, and includes its opposite” (ibid., 35). The position of the “value paradox” also allows one “to switch perspectives” or respond without storing, since all different perspectives at the same time, in their interconnection, form one perspective or the perspective of oneness.

Such a switch of perspectives was spoken of by Guo Xi: “There are also different ways of looking at landscapes: if one looks at them with the heart of the woods and the streams, their value becomes great, but if one looks at them with proud and haughty eyes, their value becomes quite low.” (Siren 1956, 221)²⁴ As we see, these ways of looking (perspectives) are different, but Guo Xi privileges the contemplation of the landscape from an insider’s perspective, or more exactly, from the intersection of perspectives (“the heart of the woods and the streams”). Such contemplation removes any of the distance and detachment which is implied by the English word “landscape” but is absent in Chinese terms, such as *shanshui* 山水, *shilin* 石林 or *yi qiu yi he* 一丘一壑 (“one hill and one valley”).

However, one of the most important insights that the model of “omnicentric holism” has, and one that underpins its applicability in understanding the relationship between the painter and the world (“things”) in Chinese painting theory, is not so much in the emphasis of Zhuangzi’s claim that the “true man has no fixed identity” while at the same time privileging the perspective of oneness, but rather in the idea that “a thing entails a perspective”, or even “a thing is a perspective”. This means that all things or “objects” (*wu* 物) are open to each other. Every thing includes the emotional perspective of its perceiver (“subject”), and accordingly “each perspective has not only a “this” but also a “that” (Ziporyn 2003, 35, 46)²⁵—like a mirror or an echo. Such a process of mirroring and overlapping of things (perspectives) is evident in the whole process of the painting as well as its reception. At the start, the painter has to look into nature and simultaneously open the inner source of his heart-mind, in order to preserve its images or forms and to transform them into an inner vision, which will then be simply reflected (i.e., will come out directly) through his brush. Most literati painters and theoreticians were convinced that the brush just follows the impulses of the heart-mind, as the container of all things and images (which reminds us of Zhuangzi’s idea of listening with one’s heart-mind), but it also could be added that the painter sees himself in

24 看山水亦有體。以林泉之心臨之則價高。以驕侈之目臨之則價低

25 Here the author quotes Zhuangzi’s: “Without them there is no me, without me there is nothing to pick them out.” (ibid., 42)

the scene while the scene reflects the painter. All things support and animate each other—mountains become water's face, while the waters make mountains come alive; the pavilions and kiosks become water's eyes and eyebrows, while the paths give movement to the mountains, and the forests give them life. None of these things seems to lose its individuality (particularity), but rather this individuality is preserved only through the interactions that occur with the individuality of others, and thus the borders between things vanish.

As such I will conclude here that the question of the presence/absence or losing/gaining of one's "self" (in this case, the painter's self) seems very important for Western minds, or those who understand one's identity as definite and substantial. But it seems less important for Zhuangzi and Chinese painters, who were more concerned with the question of how to open or empty one's heart-mind (*xin*) in order to comprehend the world in its wholeness. They preferred to talk about emptiness and lose as the only ways to gain one's fullness or the experience of oneness. This is because Chinese painters, like Zhuangzi, prefer to look *into* the world and the myriad of things from the perspective of oneness or great harmony.

Finally, I would like to point to another concept, which helps us to better understand this experience. It can be illustrated by Su Shi's famous poem on Wen Tong's painting:

When Yü-k'o painted bamboo,
He saw bamboo, not himself.
Nor was he simply unconscious of himself:
Trance-like, he left his body.
His body was transformed into bamboo,
Creating inexhaustible freshness.
Chuang Chou is no longer in this world,
So who can understand such concentration? (Bush 1971, 41)²⁶

Bush comments on this poem by making an allusion to the story from *Zhuangzi* about the bell-stand carver—how "the nature of the carver joins with that of the wood" (ibid., 41). However, for me the most important word in this poem is *transformed*. Transformation (*hua* 化, *bianhua* 变化, *wuhua* 物化) is one of the key terms in Zhuangzi's cosmogony, ontology and ecology. It helps in particular to explain the transitivity of "self" and "other", or "this" and "that", as well as the coexistence and interpenetration of things (and the human beings among them).

26 For the Chinese text see ibid., 190–1, fragment No.66

The idea of the all-pervasiveness of such change was even more emphasised by *Zhuangzi*'s commentator Guo Xiang, who notes:

Of the force which is without force there is none greater than change and transformation; thus it opens heaven and earth so as to press on to what is new, bears up mountains and hills so as to dismiss what is old; thus it does not stop for a moment, (...), the myriad things of heaven and earth are never at any moment not shifting. The world is completely new yet we take it as old. (...). A mountain alters daily and we look at it as if it were in the past...Therefore, the self I was is not the self I will be or now am (...). (Zhang 2002, 202)

I would suggest that painting, and especially landscape painting is maybe the most meaningful and impressive visual embodiment of this process of transformation, or generation and regeneration, especially if we have in mind a common idea about the origins of painting from *Yijing* and trigrams as symbols and images of cosmic change, which have prevailed in Chinese painting theory since its beginning. Such an understanding of painting culminated in Shi Tao's 石涛 theory of "one stroke" (*yi hua* 一畫) and "method-of-no-method" (or "the method created out of no-method"—*wu fa sheng you fa* 無法生有法). The idea of one stroke in this master landscape painter's theory has many meanings. It is both a symbol of cosmic unity and at the same time that ultimate One which transforms itself from the highest simplicity (*pu*) and becomes a kind of potentiality or source of all the multiplication of the world. It is the same one stroke from which the 64 hexagrams of *Yijing* are formed. It also reminds us of the smallest (separate) things, which already contain Dao as oneness, or the first touch of the brush, from which come all other lines and images as the manifestations of the vibrations of vitality (*qiyun* 氣韻).

Consequently, the "method-of-no-method" is understood as grasping (*shou* 受) the cosmos in its oneness by the painter's heart-mind, or as the method of nature (or Dao) itself. For example, in the chapter on "Transformation" (*bianhua*) from his famous essay *Hua yu lu* 畫語錄, Shi Tao writes:

Painting is the greatest method for representing the world in the process of transformation and interaction, for capturing the essential beauty of landscape's dynamic forms, the eternal activity of creation, the succession of day and night and of the seasons. (Strassberg 1989, 64)²⁷

27 夫畫天下變通之大法也。山川形勢之精英也。古今造物之陶冶也。陰陽氣度之流行也。

According to Shi Tao, such a representation is possible because of the moulding of those transformations by the painter himself. But the context of his whole theory still suggests that the highest aim of artistic creativity for him, as well as for some other of the Northern Song literati, is the painter's immersion in the natural process of transformation and being imbued with the naturality or so-of-itself (*ziran*). The painted landscape thus becomes as real as the reality around the painter, who paints as if he travels with his body and mind through the mountains and rivers, and the viewer joins his travels. This is why landscape painting and its contemplation is sometimes equated with various forms of Daoist meditation, such as "Guarding the One" (*shou yi*) and visualization (*cunxiang*). The images (*xiang*), born in the painter's heart-mind as the result of his communication with nature (paraphrasing Shi Tao, "the mountains are in me, and I am in the mountains") and self-transformation, are transformed into the really existing images.

Finally, if the absence or presence of one's self was not the main concern of Chinese painters and aestheticians, then what was the highest aim of forgetfulness in the process and reception of painting, especially landscape painting? As many texts on this issue suggest, it was the experience of an atmosphere of wonder, of something inexpressible and unexplainable, which indicates this inexhaustible oneness and is referred to by various terms, such spirit (*shen* 神), *qiyun* 氣韻, Dao as invisible centre, and so on. I would in fact suggest that it is this wonder which is a necessary and particular element of the Daoist perception of the beauty (*miao* 妙), and which makes it different from the Confucian or mainstream Western understanding of beauty. This particular form of Daoist beauty is manifested in Chinese painting and its aesthetics in close relation to other Daoist concepts, such as the mysterious (*xuan* 玄) and emptiness (*xu* 虛), or as well as in the mutual production of emptiness and fullness (*xu shi xiang sheng* 虛實相生). These terms all refer to the activity of Dao as something all-pervasive and harmonizing, which keeps all the kaleidoscopic patterns and changes of the world together.

It is exactly this infinity of space, time and atmosphere, or more exactly—this emptiness or whiteness (*bai xu* 白虛), which unites all perspectives, all things depicted in a painting, as well as the painter and the viewer. It invites one to view landscape or bamboo painting not as simple representation of the outer reality or inner imagination of the painter, but as a kind of sacral art, which unites those two realms and perspectives into only black and white—blackness in whiteness and whiteness in blackness. Even more, it is the meeting point of being (*you* 有) and non-being (*wu* 無), or that what is formed and unformed. As such, the presence or presentiment of this uniting and mysterious emptiness makes the painter and viewer be receptive not to the visible forms of things, but rather to the stage

of their emergence from the “invisible-undifferentiated fount”, or “the process of taking form and coming into actuality” (Jullien 2009, 23).

Conclusion

In my discussion and application of particular conceptual schemes, as formulated by other sinologists, I wanted to demonstrate that the Zhuangzian ideas of wandering, of “the pivot of Dao” and “traveling two roads at once”, are very helpful for a better understanding of the particular ecological relationships between the painter and the world in Chinese painting, which, accordingly, could be characterized rather as “communication in non-communication”, or “attachment and detachment”. Such an interpretation could be supported by the particular understanding of thing (*wu*) as perspective rather than “object”, and transformation (*hua*) as the most important characteristic of reality.

This is why the creative act in Chinese painting, especially landscape painting, cannot be treated as the act of paying homage to nature, as was sometimes interpreted in the West in order to stress the differences between Western and Chinese models of the relationship between people and nature. Landscape painting is not an act of homage to nature, since nature here (in the painter’s and viewers’ minds) does not exist as an external object of adoration, emotive attachment or aesthetic pleasure. This is because Chinese painters preferred to view nature not from the human perspective, but rather from a macrocosmic (or Dao axis) perspective of the unity of things, which also include the human point of view. But it is this unity which helps both the painter and the viewer to not be attached to any particular thing or perspective, thus fostering the attitude of “engagement with detachment”.

However, such view, fundamentally influenced by Zhuangzi’s ideas about the simultaneity of oppositions and simultaneous arising of things, should be considered as only one among many in the tradition of Chinese literati painting and aesthetics, and also as having not only aesthetic but also therapeutic effects. This is why contemplation of landscape painting was considered by some Chinese, and later—by many Westerners, as a way to improve one’s health, and to maintain a balanced relationship with natural environment. As Zong Bing 宗炳, the author of the first essay on landscape painting *Preface on Landscape Painting* (*Hua shanshui xu* 畫山水敘), wrote, “Sages, possessing the Tao, respond to things. The virtuous, purifying their thoughts, savour images. As for landscape, it has physical existence, yet tends toward the spiritual.” (Bush 1985, 36)²⁸

28 聖人含道應物。賢者澄懷味像。至於山水。質有而趣靈

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Asian Studies in Slovenia

»Ko bom velik, bom umetnik.« Eksperimentalni peskovnik japonske avantgarde

Klara HRVATIN*

Izvleček

Umetniški center Sōgetsu, ki je eden od pomembnejših avantgardnih središč 60. let 20. stoletja, bi lahko opredelili kot umetniški »eksperimentalni peskovnik«. Japonski umetniki, ki so na svojih področjih danes že mednarodno priznani, so se prav v tem »peskovniku« imeli možnost preizkusiti v krogu interdisciplinarnih umetnikov in najti svoj umetniški slog. Dober primer takšnih ustvarjalcev so: filmski režiser Hiroshi Teshigahara (1927–2001), novelist Kōbō Abe (1924–1993) in glasbenik Tōru Takemitsu (1930–1996).

V članku bomo orisali natančen pregled vseh umetniških združenj in njihovih dogodkov, ki so jih oblikovali umetniki v času delovanja Centra, od septembra 1958 (13. septembra je potekalo odprtje Centra) do marca 1971, ko je Center prenehal delovati. V ospredje bodo postavljena glavna združenja oziroma aktivnosti, predvsem s področij jazzovske glasbe, sodobne glasbe, eksperimentalnih filmov in animacije. Poiskali bomo skupen imenovalec vseh aktivnosti v tem »peskovniku« ter poudarili novosti, ki so jih glavni akterji gibanja z deli, ki so nastala v Centru, vnesli na področji glasbe in filma.

Ključne besede: umetniški center Sōgetsu, *Sōgetsu Music Inn*, *Sōgetsu Contemporary Series*, *Sōgetsu Cinematheque*, *Cinema 57*, ATG, Cageev šok

“When I Grow Up, I Will be an Artist.” Japanese Avant-garde’s Experimental Sandpit

Abstract

Sōgetsu Art Center, one of the most important venues for the avant-garde in 1960s Japan, could be defined as an artistic “experimental sandpit”. Its activities brought new musical expressions to the world of Japanese art, and lead to the independent film production. Japanese artists could play in this sandpit with a group of interdisciplinary peers and thus search for their most suitable artistic styles. Good examples are film director Hiroshi Teshigahara (1927–2001), playwright Kōbō Abe (1924–1993) and musician Tōru Takemitsu (1930–1996).

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The article gives an insight into the artistic associations and events, which took place under the roof of the Sōgetsu Art Center in the period from September 1958 to March 1971. The emphasis will be put on the main associations; activities related to the fields of jazz music, contemporary music, experimental film and animation. We will look for the common ground among these, and note the innovations which were brought about by the main participants at the Center in the fields of music and film.

Keywords: Sōgetsu Art Center (SAC), *Sōgetsu Music Inn*, *Sōgetsu Contemporary Series*, *Sōgetsu Cinematheque*, *Cinema 57*, ATG, John Cage's shock

Cilj centra je bil nuditi prostor umetnikom iz različnih umetniških zvrsti,
da bi se zbirali in ustvarjali,
prikazovali in kritizirali drug drugega brez kakršnih koli omejitev.
Sistem, v katerem umetniki izdelajo svoje delo,
je v ospredje postavljala kreativnost
in se zavzemal za zaščito umetnikov
in njihovih kreacij pred komercializmom.
(*Sōgetsu o shiru*)

Uvod

Umetniški center Sōgetsu (*Sōgetsu āto sentā* 草月アートセンター) je imel jasno načrtane postavke. Kot je značilno za avantgardno gibanje, je Center težil k inovacijam in delom eksperimentalne narave. Med glavnimi idejami je poudaril nasprotovanje vrednotenju umetnosti, ki je takrat v družbi veljala za *mainstream* ali prevladujoči tok.

Umetniki Centra so delovali vzajemno, njihova dela izkazujejo močno zavest in pripadnost sodelovanju. V ospredje so postavili koncept *celostnega umetniškega dela* ali *totalne umetnine* (*Gesamtkunstwerk*). Ena od najpomembnejših značilnosti omenjenega gibanja je tudi prisotnost mednarodnih umetnikov v Centru, ki je prav tako pripeljala do sodelovanja in skupnih del v simbiozi japonskih umetnikov ter, na področju glasbe, umetnikov iz ameriške eksperimentalne šole.

Drugače od prejšnjih avantgardnih umetniških gibanj na Japonskem je imelo gibanje Sōgetsu (*Sōgetsu geijutsu undō* 草月芸術運動) svoj prostor – umetniški center Sōgetsu (ali skrajšano SAC, iz inicialk japonskega imena centra *Sōgetsu āto sentā* 草月アートセンター).¹ Nastanjen je bil v pritličju stavbe Sōgetsu, namenjene

1 Več o predstavitvi umetniškega gibanja Sōgetsu (1958–1971) in njegovem mestu v zgodovini japonske avantgardne scene si lahko preberete v Hrvatini 2016.

v prvi vrsti šoli ikebane Sōgetsu pod okriljem mojstra Sōfuja Teshigahare (勅使河原蒼風, 1900–1979). Za direktorja Centra je bil postavljen Hiroshi Teshigahara (勅使河原宏), sin Sōfuja Teshigahare. Center je imel glavno vlogo v ustvarjanju skupinskega, interdisciplinarnega in internacionalnega ozračja avantgardnega odra. Obenem pa je bil tudi prostor, kjer so umetniki lahko v resnici producirali svoja dela. Na razpolago so imeli elektronski studio, v katerem so imeli s pomočjo tonskega mojstra Yunosukeja Okuyame (奥山重之助) možnost oblikovati in posneti marsikatero skladbo eksperimentalnega značaja, ki je lahko služila tudi kot filmska glasba ali glasba za animacije. Imeli so tehnične sobe za projekcijo in osvetljavo, oder z dvorano s 360 sedeži in klavirjem ter prostore za predstave in predavanja.

Že ob odprtju Centra je ta imel oblikovano skupino umetniških svetovalcev, ki so jo sestavljali Sōfu Teshigaraha, Kōbō Abe (安部公房), Michio Itō (伊藤道郎), Tarō Okamoto (岡本太郎), Yūsaku Kamekura (亀倉雄策) in Kenzo Tange (丹下健三), skladatelja Toshirō Mayuzumi (黛敏郎) in Makoto Moroi (諸井誠). Njihovo prisotnost je opaziti že v prvi publikaciji, ki jo je Center izdal kot uvodni vodič k Centru (glej *Sōgetsu* 1958 in Hrvatin 201.). Čeprav bi pričakovali, da so imeli naštetí člani kot umetniški svetovalci v gibanju pomembno vlogo, so bili v bistvu bolj zaposleni s samim upravljanjem in oblikovanjem Centra do njegove ustanovitve (Ashiya Shiritsu Bijutsu 1998, 201). V času delovanja Centra so kot umetniki veliko doprinesli k aktivnostim in k umetniškem ustvarjanju v Centru.

Poleg umetniških svetovalcev je Center vključeval tudi manjšo skupino – pet članov osebja –, ki so jo sestavljali: Hiroshi Teshigahara, filmski producent Kōzō Igawa (井川宏三), tonski mojster in umetniški direktor Yunosuke Okuyama, Masamitsu Nakano (中野雅充) in urednica Yoshimi Nara (奈良義巳).²

Reprezentativnejši predstavniki Centra so bili poleg zgoraj omenjene umetniške skupine in umetniških svetovalcev prav tako glasbenika Tōru Takemitsu (武満徹) in Yūji Takahashi (高橋悠治), kantonist Yōji Kuri (久里洋二), grafični oblikovalci Kōhei Sugiura (杉浦康平), Kiyoshi Awazu (粟津潔), Tadanori Yokoo (横尾忠則) in Makoto Wada (和田誠), pisci Yoshiaki Tōno (東野芳明), Makoto Ōoka (大岡信) in Yusuke Nakahara (中原佑介) ter dramatik Shūji Terayama (寺山修司).³ Glede na tendenco Centra, ki je stremel po prisotnosti tujih umetnikov, so ti

2 Center je zaposloval tudi tri tajnice, ki so sodelovale pri načrtovanju sponzoriranja zgodnejših aktivnosti Centra in so bile odgovorne za vodenje najema dvorane.

3 Omenjena skupina ne obsega celotnega jedra umetnikov v Centru. Izpostavljeni so najpomembnejši. *Kagayake 60-nendai Sōgetsu Āto Sentā no Zenkiroku*, obsežnejša publikacija o Centru, ki je izšla leta 2002, vsebuje spomine na Center več kot petdesetih danes uspešnih in prepoznavnih figur v japonski umetnosti. Glej Nara et al. 2002.

pogosto sodelovali v njegovih aktivnostih in omogočili številne predstave v sodelovanju z umetniki iz Centra. Treba je omeniti skladatelja Johna Cagea in Davida Tudorja, koreografa Merceja Cunninghama, umetnika Nam June Paika, kuratorja Michela Tapiéja, skladatelja Iannisa Xenakisa, slikarja in kiparja Roberta Rauschenberga, jazzovskega klarinetista in vokalista Raymonda Conteja, armensko-ameriškega skladatelja Alana Hovhanessa, ameriškega jazzovskega pevcu Billyja Banksa ter ameriškega skladatelja in dirigenta Aarona Coplanda.

Gibanje je doživelo marsikatero kritiko, ker so ga v glavnem sestavljali moški umetniki. Od žensk lahko v prvi polovici obstoja gibanja omenimo umetnico Yoko Ono.

Kolaž glasbenih aktivnosti: Od koncertov modernega jazza do avantgardne glasbe s poudarkom na interakciji japonskih in tujih umetnikov

Glasba je bila pomemben del gibanja, še posebej je prevladovala v prvem obdobju,⁴ in sicer od leta 1960 do 1965. Takrat sta v Centru delovali dve glasbeni aktivnosti, ki sta tvorili osnovno dejavnost centra: *Sōgetsu Music Inn* (*Sōgetsu myūjikkū in* 草月ミュージックイン) in *Sōgetsu Contemporary Series* (*Sōgetsu kontenporarii shirizu* 草月コンテンポラリー・シリーズ).

Sōgetsu Music Inn, delujoče od januarja leta 1960, mesec dni pred začetkom delovanja *Sōgetsu Contemporary Series*, je bilo združenje, ki je vključevalo predavanja o jazzovski glasbi, njeni zgodovini in izvajalski tehniki, ter organiziralo eksperimentalne jazzovske koncerte.

Združevalo je skupino mladih in pomembnih jazzovskih glasbenikov v tedaj še nenavadni obliki mesečnih združevanj. Pogosto je šlo za kombinacijo predavanja in koncerta na določeno temo v jazzovski glasbi, na primer na temo bluesa, soula, dixielanda ali modernega jazza. Poglobljali so se v dela tako tujih jazzovskih glasbenikov (dela Milesa Davisa) kot jazzovske glasbe na domači sceni (Kvintet Hiraoka Seijija). Prirejali so poglobljene seminarje na temo modernih jazzovskih idiomov, vloge pianista v jazzu, jazzovskega vokala, glasbenega aranžiranja in improvizacije (glej Tabelo 1).

Njihov prvi koncert (28. januarja 1960) je vseboval nastop Kvinteta Hiraoka Seijija, v katerem so podrobno analizirali glasbo Johna Lewisa in njegove skupine Modern Jazz Quartet ter poskusili igrati oziroma posnemati njihov slog igranja

4 Center je začel resno delovati s koncertom vodilnega pianista Takahiro Sonoda (11. julij, 1959).

(Akiyama 1980a, 18–19). Verjetno so se zavzemali za spojitev jazza in klasične glasbe oziroma za tako imenovani *tretji tok* (daisan no ryū 第三の流), sintezo klasične glasbe in improviziranega jazza, za katerega si je prizadeval prav John Lewis (Watanabe 2009, 191). Njihove aktivnosti so vključevale tudi predstavitev tujih jazzovskih izvajalcev; na odru Centra so med drugimi nastopili jazzovski klarinetist Raymond Conte ter pevec Billy Banks.

Med člani *Sōgetsu Music Inn* sta bila odločilna jazzovski pianist Masao Yagi (八木正生) in Keitarō Miho (三保敬太郎), aktivna člana že predhodne, manj časa delujoče aktivnosti jazzovskega značaja *Modern Jazz Circle* (11/14/1959–6/24/1960). Kot ena prvih uradnih aktivnosti v Centru, ki je vključevala glasbo, se je kasneje preimenovala v *Etcetera and Jazz Circle* (*Eto setora to jazu no kai* 「エトセトラとジャズの会」). Poleg jazza so se njena prizadevanja posvečala spajanju različnih medijev, kot so bili simultani nastopi jazza in eksperimentalnih filmov ter animacij. Njeni člani so z delovanjem nadaljevali v aktivnosti *Sōgetsu Music Inn*; med drugimi so bili to Jin'ichi Uekusa (植草甚一), Tōru Takemitsu (武満徹), Shuntarō Tanikawa (谷川俊太郎), medijski umetnik Katsuhiro Yamaguchi (山内勝弘) in Hideto Kanai (金井英人).

Ime aktivnosti *Sōgetsu Music Inn* in vsebina njenega delovanja se utegneta navezovati na legendarno jazzovsko glasbeno sceno, ki se je imenovala *Music Inn* in je imela svoj prostor v zvezni državi Massachusetts. Po besedah Jeremyja Goodwina (Goodwin 2012) je bil to poskus formiranja jazz kot centra sveta, ki je prenesel jazz iz zakajenih klubov v okolje, ki je bilo bližje koncertni dvorani. *Music Inn* je v prvi vrsti organiziral koncerte, glasbene delavnice in ustanovil šolo jazza (*Lenox school*, ki jo je vodil John Lewis). Omogočil je prostor za resnejše razglabljanje o jazzu in folk glasbi za tiste, ki so iskali kontinuiteto in globino v glasbi anglo-ameriškega kulturnega izraza. Gostili naj bi najznamenitejše figure glasbenih oblik folk, jazz in blues, veliko je gostoval prav Modern Jazz Quartet z Johnom Lewi- som na čelu (ibid.). Ustvarjalci vsebine *Sōgetsu Music Inn* so verjetno stremeli k oblikovanju malega *Music Inn* v Centru.

Zanimanje za jazzovsko glasbo oziroma hiter porast popularnosti modernega jazz na Japonskem je bil značilen za obdobje od konca leta 1950 do začetka 1960. Glasbeni kritik Kuniharu Akiyama, ki je bil prav tako član gibanja *Sōgetsu*, opisuje to obdobje kot čas, v katerem so jazzovske kavarne (*jazu kisa* v japonščini) postale aktivnejša zbirališča mladih. Tednik *Asahi* je objavil celo šest strani v posebni izdaji, posvečeni modernemu jazzu, z naslovom *Moderni jazz: zakaj je tako čaroben*, prav tako je bilo odmevno predvajanje filma *Jazz na poletni dan* (*Jazz On A Summer's Day*, Bern Stern 1959) (*Manatsu no yoru no jazu* 真夏の夜のジャズ) (Akiyama 1980a, 18).

1960

- (1) Kvintet Hiraoka Seijija/študija Modern Jazz Quartet (1/28)
- (2) Dediščina bluesa (2/25)
- (3) Eksperiment s trobili (3/21)
- (4) Na sledi vibracijam (4/20)
- (5) Moderni jazz v praksi (5/27–28)
- (6) Študija modernih jazzovskih idiomov (7/1)
- (7) Duša jazza (7/20)
- (8) Študija Milesa Davisa (9/22)
- (9) Vloga pianista v modernem jazzu (10/24)
- (10) Dediščina bluesa (11/12)

1961

- (11) Jazz-session »Etcetera« (1/25)
- (12) Preporod Dixielanda (3/25)
- (13) Moderni jazz na prelomni točki (3/25)
- (14) Očarljivi zvoki skupin (5/25)
- (15) Trije jazzovski vokali (7/17)
- (16) Moderni jazz (11/21)

1962

- (17) Moderne jazz in folk pesmi: O aranžmajih, Suita folk pesmi, O improvizaciji (3/29–39)
- (18) Dela modernega jazza (11/29)

1963

- (19) Masao Yagi Trio (6/18)

Tabela 1: *Kronološki seznam dogodkov, prirejenih v okviru niza Sôgetsu Music Inn (1960–1963)*⁶

V Centru je pojavnost modernega jazza zaznamovala prve glasbene aktivnosti Centra, ki so v različnih spojih umetnikov in s povezovanjem modernega jazzu tudi s filmom in z animacijo (odločilen pri aktivnostih *Sôgetsu Music Inn*) nazkazovali nova udejstvovanja in razvoj modernega jazzu. Center je s spajanjem

5 Seznam dogodkov (Tabele 1–6) je v slovenščino preveden predvsem iz publikacije *Sôgetsu to Sono Jidai 1945–1970* 草月とその時代 1945–1970 (Sôgetsu in njegovo obdobje, 1945–1970) (1998), ki je katalog razstave. Poleg obiska arhivov materiala o Sôgetsu (1) Arhiva Sôgetsu v današnjem poslopiju stavbe Sôgetsu ter 2) RCAA arhiva univerze Keio, ki je zadolžen za precejšnji del dokumentacije o umetniškem Centru Sôgetsu) se je ta izkazal za najbolj verodostojnega. Del seznama je avtorica prvotno prevedla v angleščino in je naveden v doktorski nalogi avtorice. Pomembno je poudariti, da je celoten seznam dogodkov, ki je naveden v članku, oblikovan pred samim internetnim virom seznama dogodkov, ki ga lahko najdemo na *postu*, spletnem resursu muzeja MoMA (gl. post 2013).

umetnikov in aktivnosti omogočil, da je bil jazz med drugim tudi večkrat uporabljen pri glasbeni opremi filmov novega vala (*nūberu bāgu*). Veliko skladateljev, ki se niso mogli do tedaj izkusiti v jazzu ali pa jazz ni bil njihova glavna dejavnost, je tu dobilo svojo prvo priložnost. Dva izmed takšnih sta bila tudi Tōru Takemitsu in Yūji Takahashi, sicer najprepoznavnejša avantgardna japonska skladatelja (poleg Toshija Ichiyanagija). Takahashi se spominja, kako težko je bilo zanj improvizirati v bebop slogu v tistem času, čeprav se je izkusil v pisanju marsikaterega sestava za jazzovski ansambel, včasih individualno, včasih kot pomočnik skladatelja Tōruja Takemitsuja (Yūji Takahashi, osebno sporočilo avtorju, 24. april 2012). Kljub temu pa delovanje tako *Sōgetsu Music Inn* kot tudi doprinos Centra na področju jazzovske glasbe in umestitev v zgodovino japonskega modernega jazza do danes nista dovolj dokumentirana oziroma sta pomanjkljiva (Watanabe 2009, 191).



Sliki 1, 2: Plakat in vstopnica za prvo prireditev v okviru aktivnosti *Sōgetsu Music Inn* (kvintet Hiraoka Seijija/studija Modernega Jazz Quarteta (1/28))
(Vir: Kōhei Sugiura v post 2013)

Druga od glavnih glasbenih aktivnosti so bile serije recitalov sodobne glasbe, imenovane *Sōgetsu Contemporary Series*, ustanovljene marca istega leta kot *Sōgetsu Music Inn*. V časovnem razponu približno petih let, v katerem je ta aktivnost delovala, so jo sestavljala tri različna glasbena združenja, ki so skupaj priredila štiriindvajset glasbenih dogodkov. Prvo delujoče združenje je bilo *Skladateljski*

sestav (Sakkyokuka shūdan, 作曲家集団). Drugo ni imelo posebnega imena, šlo pa je za serije glasbenih dogodkov, ki so vsebovali element nedoločenosti in so jih imenovali *Series of indeterminate music*. Pod tretje združenje pa je spadala *Skupina glasbenikov: Nova smer* (Ensōka shūdan • New direction, 演奏家集団 • New direction). Šlo je za bogate ter raznovrstne glasbene aktivnosti, ki so vključevale tako dela japonskih kot tujih skladateljev in izvajalcev.

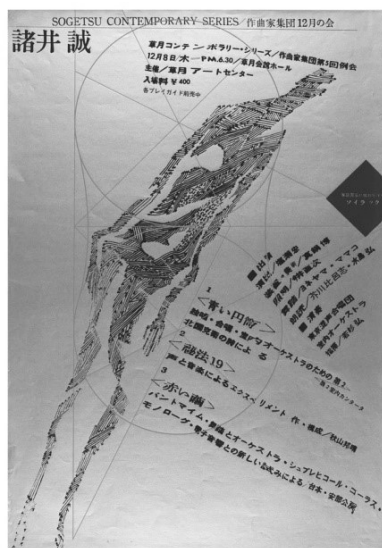
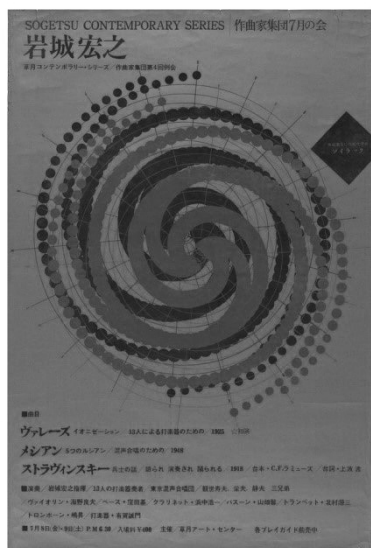
Skupino *Skladateljski sestav* so sestavljali skladatelji Hikaru Hayashi (林光), Tōru Takemitsu, Yoriaki Matsudaira (松平頼暁), Makoto Moroi (諸井誠), Yasushi Akutagawa (芥川也寸志), Michio Mamiya (間宮芳生), Toshirō Mayuzumi, Akira Miyoshi (三善晃) in maestro Hiroyuki Iwaki (岩城宏之), kasneje priznani japonski dirigent, ki je bil dolga leta tudi dirigent MSO (Melbourne Symphony Orchestra). Vse je k sodelovanju povabil umetniški center Sōgetsu.

Šlo je za spoj osmih skladateljev in enega dirigenta, ki so svoja nova dela izmenično predstavljali v obliki individualnih koncertov vsakega posameznega skladatelja. Skupina je sicer želela ustvariti skupni jezik s ciljem, kot so ga zapisali v programu ob nastanku, in sicer »da bodo prekoračili medsebojne razlike in pomembno doprinesli k sodobni japonski glasbi« (Sakkyokuka 1960), kar pa jim ni najbolje uspelo. Že v času nastanka skupine je bilo opaziti različne nagibe skladateljev. Mayuzumi, Akutagawa in Miyoshi so kot zvezde cveteli v ospredju novinarstva, Matsudaira in Takemitsu sta prednjačila v glasbeno eksperimentalnih poskusih, Mamiya in Hayashi pa sta iskala načine povezovanja glasbe z japonsko družbo (Akiyama 1980, 18).

Če si ogledamo predhodno delovanje vsakega posameznika, vidimo, da je šlo za umetnike iz popolnoma različnih smeri. Hikaru Hayashi in Michio Mamiya sta bila predhodno združena v *Skupini kozorogov* (Yagi no kai, 山羊の会), ki je s prilagajanjem elementov japonskih ljudskih pesmi in drugih zvrsti ljudske glasbe v svoja dela iskala načine, kako ustvariti resnično nacionalno glasbo. Kot vir za svoje kompozicije so se obrnili tudi na literaturo (poezijo sodobnih avtorjev, kot so Kōbō Abe, Tamiki Hara in Shuntarō Tanigawa), politiko, folkloro ter aktualne teme. Toshirō Mayuzumi in Yasushi Akutagawa sta bila dva od članov *Skupine treh mož* (Sannin no kai, 三人の会), ki je prisegala na povojni panazijanizem in nadobudno asimilirala umetniške oblike Azije v svoja dela. Najbolj znano je Mayuzumijevo zanimanje za tonsko barvo, ki ga je vodilo k študiju parcialnih tonskih struktur budističnih tempeljskih zvonov. Takemitsu je izhajal iz *Eksperimentalne delavnice* (Jikken Kōbō, 実験工房), ki so jo sestavljali le skladatelji s skoraj nič formalne izobrazbe z vzorom v post-Webernovi generaciji ter kasneje v Cageevi estetiki (Hrvatini 2004, 19–24).

Brez trdnjšega skupnega imenovalca in glede na to, da je imel vsak skladatelj svoj slog in svojo vizijo ustvarjanja ter med seboj niso bili »ne politično ne tematsko

združeni» (Everett 2009, 194), so razpadli, še preden so izvedli solo koncerte vseh članov skupine. Drugače od drugih dveh glasbenih dejavnosti pod okriljem *Sōgetsu Contemporary Series* so sloveli po pogostem »združevanju modernističnih elementov, kot so pantomima, nō ples ali predstave s projektiranimi podobami« (ibid.).



Sliki 3, 4: Program (poster) Skladateljskega sestava za nastop dirigenta Hiroyukija Iwakija (7.8–9.1960) in nastop pionirja elektronske glasbe Makota Morojia (12.8.1960) (Vir: Kōhei Sugiura v post 2013)

V skladu z načrtovanim programom je bil eden izmed barvitejših nastopov *Skladateljskega sestava* glasba pionirja elektronske glasbe na Japonskem Makota Morojia (glej Sliko 4) – glasba na kratek roman Kōbōja Abeja *Rdeči kokon* (Akai Mayu, 赤い繭). Omenjeno glasbeno dramo je predvajal že NHK leta 1960, čeprav je v izvedbo v umetniškem centru Sōgetsu vključila pantomimo, abstraktno projekcijo ter odrsko postavitev ilustratorja Hiroshija Manabeja (*Sakkyokuka* 1960). Verjetno prav nič manj spektakularna ni bila premiera Takemitsujevega *Nō mai/Glasba kapljic* (*Nō mai/Mizu no Kyoku*, 能舞・水の曲), glasba za magnetofonski trak, narejena na osnovi vodnih kapljic, ki jih je Takemitsu ritmično uredil tako, da je nanje plesal nō mojster Hisao Kanze. Zvočno je bila zagotovo zanimiva tudi premiera skladbe *Ionisation* (predstavljena na nastopu dirigenta Hiroyukija Iwakija, glej Sliko 3) za trinajst tolkalistov skladatelja Edgarda Varèseja. To je bila ena od prvih kompozicij za koncertne dvorane, ki je vključevala samo tolkalski ansambel

(za pregled vseh aktivnosti, ki jih je *Skladateljski sestav* izvedel v času svojega delovanja, glej Tabelo 2).

1960

SKLADATELJSKI SESTAV 「作曲家集団」

- (1) Hikaru Hayashi – solo predstavitev (3/31)
- (2) Tōru Takemitsu – solo predstavitev (4/28)
- (3) Yoriyaki Matsudaira – solo predstavitev (5/31)
- (4) Hiroyuki Iwaki – solo predstavitev (7/ 8–9)
- (5) Moroi Makoto – solo predstavitev (12/8)

1961

- (6) Skupinska predstavitev 1 (4/28)
- (7) Michio Mamiya – solo predstavitev (6/19)

1962

- (8) SKLADATELJSKI SESTAV: Miyoshi Akira – solo predstavitev (Teizo Matsu-mura) (4/2)

Tabela 2: *Kronološki seznam dogodkov v okviru Skladateljskega sestava*

Druga, radikalnejša skupina *Series of indeterminate music* (1961–1962) je na japonski glasbeni sceni pustila nepozaben pečat. Bila je priča fenomena Cageevega šoka⁶ na Japonskem, nove dimenzije, ki je vključevala naključno naravo kompozicijskega postopka, ta pa se je iz glasbenih dejavnosti »razlezel« na celotno umetniško delovanje v Centru. Glavni krivec tega gibanja novega glasbenega mišljenja je bil Toshi Ichianagi, ki je na Japonsko pripeljal Johna Cagea in je bil prvi, ki je predstavil Cageeva dela japonski publiki⁷ ter tudi sam ustvarjal pod njegovim

6 Ime za Cageev šok je oblikoval japonski kritik Hidekazu Yoshida in je bilo že uporabljeno pri Cageovem nastopu leta 1962 v Centru.

7 Po drugi svetovni vojni so japonski skladatelji lahko slišali o Cageu in njegovih glasbenih pogledih od poeta Shūzōja Takiguchija in glasbenega kritika in skladatelja Kuniharua Akiyame. Najpomembnejši pri prenosu Cageeve glasbe na Japonsko pa je bil skladatelj Toshi Ichianagi (prvič je njegovo glasbo predstavil na četrtem festivalu sodobne glasbe v Osaki, 1961), eden od treh najbolj poznanih avantgardnih skladateljev na Japonskem poleg Yūjija Takahashija in Tōruja Takemitsuja. Obiskoval je newyorški konzervatorij Juilliard, kjer se je srečal s Cageem in skupaj z Yōko Ono, njegovo takratno partnerko, obiskoval predavanja Johna Cagea. Ob vrnitvi Ichianagija na Japonsko leta 1961 je bilo japonsko občinstvo zelo ponosno nanj, saj je imelo pred seboj predstavnika ameriške avantgarde, tako da so nekateri od japonskih skladateljev omenjali tudi »Ichianagijev šok«. Je pa Ichianagi toliko bolj presenetil – ko je odšel od doma, je bil glasbeno še vedno usmerjen v 12-tonske glasbe, čez nekaj let pa je prišel domov kot skladatelj aleatorične glasbe, kar je bilo nekaj nepredstavljivega. Nastop Ichianagija ter njegovo predstavljanje Cageeve glasbe na japonskih glasbenih odrih, med

vplivom. V Center so vnesli področje hepeninga, dogodkov (Events) in Fluxusa in so v nasprotju s *Skladateljskim sestavom* in njihovim priseganjem k modernizmu v svojem delovanju izrazili tendenco po eksperimentalnem (Everett 2012, 3).

V teh serijah so se poleg koncertov Johna Cagea in Davida Tudorja publiki prvič predstavili mladi skladatelji in pianisti, kot so bili Yūji Takahashi s svojima recitaloma, Ichiyanagi in ena redkih ženskih umetnic Yōko Ono (glej Tabelo 3). Yūji Takahashi se je v tem sklopu, tj. v svojem drugem klavirskem recitalu, predstavil s prvo predstavitvijo Xenakisove *Herme*. Xenakis je Takahashija srečal že leta 1961, ko je obiskal Center, kasneje mu je Takahashi pisal in mu naročil klavirsko delo *Herma*, za katerega so drugi skladatelji menili, da ga ni mogoče izvesti. Odlična interpretacija dela je bila tudi povod, da je Xenakis Takahashija povabil na študij v Evropo (1963–1966).

1961

- (1) Klavirski recital Yūjija Takahashija 1 (10/30)
- (2) Dela Toshija Ichiyanagija (11/3)

1962

- (3) Klavirski recital Yūjija Takahashija 2 (2/23)
- (4) Dela Yōko Ono (5/24)
- (5) Toshi Ichiyanagi, Kenji Kobayashi: recital v dvoje (5/28)
- (6) Večer z Johnom Cageom (10/9) & Večer z Davidom Tudorjem (10/10)
- (7) Dogodek z Johnom Cageom in Davidom Tudorjem (10/17)
- (8) »Dogodek Johna Cagea in Davida Tudorja: predavanje in gledališka predstava« (10/23) ter »Dogodek Johna Cagea in Davida Tudorja« (10/24)

Tabela 3: *Kronološki seznam dogodkov v okviru Series of indeterminate music*⁸

Že prvi dogodek iz *Series of indeterminate music* se je navezoval na Cagea. Takahashi je v svojem devetdesetminutnem recitalu v celoti izvedel skladbo *Winter music*

katerimi je bil Center eden od najpomembnejših, je prinesel tako imenovan Cageev šok. Prav tako kot Ichiyanagiju je tudi skladateljem, kot so bili Takemitsu in drugi, Cageeva glasba odpirala nova vrata, na katera so vsi trkali pri iskanju nove poti, stran od 12-tonske glasbe, serializma ter konkretne glasbe. Cage je bil tudi večkrat vzrok za razdelitev japonskih skladateljev: Toshi je najbolj zvesto prevzel njegove ideje, skladatelji, kot so bili Tōru Takemitsu, Yūji Takahashi in Jōji Yuasa, so mu sledili, čeprav so na koncu šli po novih poteh, medtem ko so nekateri skladatelji, kot sta Yasushi Akutagawa in Makoto Moroi, zavračali Cageeva dela (Glej Cope 2007, 41–73; Everett 2012, 194–5).

8 Treba je poudariti, da sta bila le dogodka po točko (8) izvedena v umetniškem centru Sōgetsu, medtem ko so bile preostale prireditve organizirane ter vodene s pomočjo Centra, vendar na drugih lokacijah: 10/9 in 10/10 v Ueno Bunka Kaikan, Tokyo, 10/17 v Osaki.

Johna Cagea, ki je bila prvič predstavljena na Japonskem, mesec pozneje pa je Cageeva dela izvedel Ichianagi s koncertom žive elektronske glasbe, prvim takšnem na Japonskem.⁹ Ta dogodek je bil poleg festivala moderne glasbe, ki ga je organiziral 20th Century Music Institute in kjer je japonsko občinstvo prvič slišalo dela eksperimentalnih avantgardistov (kot so Cage, Morton Feldman, Earle Brown, Christian Wolff in Stefan Wolpe), eden izmed prelomnih za tisti čas, v katerem je, kot poudarja Ichianagi, v prvi vrsti prevladoval eksperimentalni duh (Japanese art 1997).

Ichianagi je sodeloval tudi pri ustanovitvi zadnje skupine iz serije recitalov *Sōgetsu Contemporary Series – Skupina glasbenikov: Nova smer*, ki je bila skupina eksperimentalnih performerjev, poleg Ichianagija pa sta jo sestavljala Kuniharu Akiyama in Yūji Takahashi. Svoj radikalizem je skupina povezala z željo po internacionalizaciji, kajti na oder je rada vabila tuje goste, njena novost pa je bila večstranska vloga umetnikov v umetniških delih ter sodelovanje publike. Prva predstava omenjene skupine je bila maja 1963, ko so v vlogi dirigentov in instrumentalistov poleg ustanoviteljev skupine nastopala tudi Yasushi Akutagawa, ki smo ga srečali že pri *Skladateljskem sestavu*, in Ryū Noguchi (野口 竜), danes znan kot ustvarjalec mang in oblikovalec. Japonski publiki so predstavili grafične notacije tujih in japonskih skladateljev: Sylvana Bussotija, Karlheinz Stockhausna, Mortona Feldmana, člana skupine Toshija Ichianagija, Takahashija in Kosugija ter modernistična dela Albana Berga, Luciana Berioja, Krystofa Pendereckega, Pierra Bouleza in Jōjija Yuase (Galliano 2002, 231; Everett 2012, 3).

1963

- (1) 「演奏家集団・Nova smer」

(SKUPINA GLASBENIKOV: NOVA SMER) (5/26)

Začetek delovanja, prvi nastop:

Yasushi Akutagawa, Yūji Takahashi, Toshi Ichianagi in Ryū Noguchi sodelujejo kot dirigenti in/ali glasbeniki.

- (2) NOVA SMER (2) (7/3)
(3) NOVA SMER (3) (10/12)
(4) NOVA SMER (4) (12/19)

1964

- (5) NOVA SMER (5) (4/8)
(6) NOVA SMER (6) (11/4)

Tabela 4: *Kronološki seznam dogodkov v okviru Nove smeri*

⁹ Same sporede predstav ter njihove vsebine je natančno določil Ueno v svoji doktorski nalogi. Glej Ueno 1998, 83–86.

S to aktivnostjo, ki je s svojim delovanjem prenehala novembra 1964 (glej Tabelo 4), so se zaključile serije *Sōgetsu Contemporary Series*, kar sovpada tudi s koncem prvega dela delovanja umetniškega centra Sōgetsu, v katerem je imela glavno vlogo glasba.¹⁰

Japonska tradicija v novi luči

Poleg glavnih aktivnosti so bile zanimive tudi preostale, manj časa delujoče aktivnosti, ki jih je ravno tako treba omeniti. Na glasbenem področju smo že omenili jazzovsko orientiran *Etcetera and Jazz Circle*. Še pred njegovim delovanjem najdemo *Kulturni klub* (Sōgetsu Kyōyō Kurabu 草月教養クラブ), ki je v svojih kasnejših serijah dogodkov vključeval japonsko glasbo v sklopu predavanj *Tradicijska Japonske*. Že po naslovu aktivnosti sodeč ni šlo samo za japonsko tradicionalno glasbo, ampak tudi za predavanja na temo japonskega plesa, uprizoritvene in likovne umetnosti, filma ter arhitekture (glej Tabelo 5).

Tematiko *Kulturnega kluba*, ki bi bil zanimiv še danes, lahko razdelimo na dva niza: 1) na sklop dogodkov, ki je kot nekakšen filozofsko-sociološki debatni krožek spajal predavanja različnih tem, ter 2) na dogodke, vezane na japonske tradicionalne umetnosti, kot so japonski ples (*buyō*), gledališče *nō* in *kyōgen*, japonsko glasbo ter umetnost in arhitekturo. Glavni govorci in producenti prvega sklopa so bili Sōfu Teshigahara, Kōbō Abe in Tarō Okamoto. Na dogodkih, vezanih na japonske tradicionalne umetnosti, pa so poleg njih nastopili tudi vodilni japonski muzikolog Fumio Koizumi, po katerem je imenovano mednarodno priznanje za dosežke v etnomuzikologiji (Fumio Koizumi ongakushō), Hirai Sumiko (平井澄子) ter Hanayagi Tokube (花柳徳兵衛), glavna plesalka obdobja Showa.

Pomembno je omeniti, da je vsak dogodek vseboval tudi vizualno plat – predvajanje določenega filma, ki je bil tematsko vezan na določen dogodek. Na primer dogodek, imenovan *Smeh*, na katerem je sodeloval tudi Kōbō Abe s predavanjem *Zakaj se ljudje smejejo?* (Hito wa nande warauka 人はなんで笑うか) in na katerem sta nastopila danes znana igralka Masao Mishima (三島雅夫) in Sen Yano (矢野宣), je v svoj program vključeval tudi neme filme Charlieja Chaplina in Harolda Lloyda. Na sporedu ene od prireditev je med

10 Poleg glasbenih aktivnosti so se na sporedu *Sōgetsu contemporary series* znašle tudi začetne dejavnosti *Kroga treh animatorjev* (11/26, 12/3, 12/10, 12/17 (1960)), *Eksperimentalna pantomima* Théa Lesoual'cha (2/27–28 (1962)) ter *Plesne dejavnosti 1* (Miki Wakamatsu (若松美黄), Yuriko Kimura (木村百合子), Yūji Takahashi): Poskus modernega jazza (7/24–25). Ker se nobena od teh aktivnosti ni uspela klasificirati bodisi kot aktivnost *Sōgetsu Music Inn* bodisi *Sōgetsu Cinematheque Series*, so jih pripisali sklopu *Sōgetsu Contemporary Series*.

drugim gostoval Donald Richie z desetminutnim eksperimentalnim filmom *Shi* (1958).

1958

- (1) Smeh (12/7/1958)

1959

- (2) Odkritje ritma (1/11)
- (3) Sanje (2/8)
- (4) Lepota (3/1)
- (5) Tradicija Japonske 1: Japonski ples (4/5)
- (6) Tradicija Japonske 2: Japonske uprizoritvene umetnosti (5/17)
- (7) Tradicija Japonske 3: Japonska glasba (6/7)
- (8) Tradicija Japonske 4: Japonska umetnost (7/12)

Tabela 5: *Kronološki seznam dogodkov v okviru Kulturnega kluba*

Videti je, da so iskali in utirali nove poti, ki bi jih pripeljale do novih izražanj in oblik ustvarjanja, in to na različnih umetniških področjih, oziroma so ta področja med seboj spajali. Pri tem pa niso spregledali japonske tradicionalne umetnosti, ampak ravno nasprotno. Presegli so njene tradicionalno zasidrane meje in jo, kot bi jo na novo »zbudili«, spajali z novimi oblikami ustvarjanja. Sama aktivnost *Kulturnega kluba* je bila ena najzgodnejših (ustanovitev 10/15/1958–7/12/1959), ki je potekala v Centru, ustanovil pa jo je sam Sōfu Teshigahara. Že on sam je dobra manifestacija tega, ker je bil toliko odprt, da je svojemu sinu Hiroshiju Teshigahari dovolil, da se udeleži v Centru kot direktor Centra in filmski režiser, čeprav je bil na tem področju amater in bi moral sprva voditi šolo ikebane sloga Sōgetsu.

Doprinos k filmski umetnosti in neodvisni filmski produkciji

Čeprav je *Sōgetsu Cinematheque*, tretja veja najpomembnejših aktivnosti, ki so si utrle svojo pot v Centru, začela delovati julija 1961, se je njeno delovanje razcvetelo in prišlo do izraza predvsem po letu 1965.

Sprva je bila ta aktivnost mišljena kot predstavljanje in predvajanje filmov, tako nekomercialnih kot drugih, ki jih drugje najverjetneje ne bi predvajali. Če pregle damo delovanje *Sōgetsu Cinematheque*, lahko iz njenega programa sklepamo (glej Tabela 6), da so se ukvarjali z dokumentarnim filmom, razglabljali o nemem filmu, predvajali retrospektive svetovnih avantgardnih filmov, značilnih bodisi za

določeno državo (Sovjetska Zveza, Italija, Francija, Amerika in Zahodne Evropa) bodisi reprezentativnih glede na določenega filmskega velikana avantgardnega kina (Man Ray, Germaine Dulac, Jean Renoir, Rene Clair, Luis Bunel, Jean Vigo itd.). Predvajali so tudi filme, predvsem tiste, ki so bili nagrajeni na mednarodnih eksperimentalnih filmskih festivalih, mednarodnih kratkih filmskih festivalih in na festivalih animacij.

Večdelne serije avantgardnega in ekspresionističnega filma so: Retrospektiva svetovnega avantgardnega filma (1–2), Zlata leta avantgardnega filma (1–2) in Retrospektiva nemškega ekspresionističnega filma (1–5). V obilici prikazovanja tujih filmov različnih značajev je imel posebno mesto tudi japonski film. Iz kronologije *Sōgetsu Cinetamtheque* lahko vidimo, da so prikazali razvoj japonskega filma od talkiejev naprej, in sicer dela Nagisa Ōshime, Hiroshija Teshigahare, Toshija Matsumotoja, filme o yakuzah ter filme, ključne za najpomembnejša obdobja in nastanek japonskega filma (glej Tabela 6).

Veliko filmov, ki so jih takrat predvajali, na primer zbirko japonskih predvojnih filmov, je bilo skoraj nemogoče dobiti, saj so si, kot pravi Kuniharu Akiyama, del teh filmov lahko šele nedavno ogledali v urejenih filmskih zbirkah (Akiyama 1981, 23). Lahko si le predstavljamo, kakšen doprinos je bil to za same filmske umetnike v Centru, ki so se lahko tako neposredno učili iz predvajanih vsebin ter so imeli možnost za oblikovanje svojih filmov in za nastopanje/sodelovanje skupaj z zahodnimi filmskimi umetniki.

1961

- (1) Z dokumentarnega vidika (7/21)
- (2) Nove podobe na televiziji – I. (9/29): Dela Kena Wada
- (3) KROG TREH ANIMATORJEV (12/19–20)

1962

- (3) KROG TREH ANIMATORJEV (1/19–20–30)
- (4) Energija nemih komedij (4/21) (6/26): Dva dogodka, ki sta vključevala zgodnje komedije Charlieja Chaplina
- (5) Nove podobe na televiziji – II. (12/26)

1963

- (6) KROG TREH ANIMATORJEV predstavlja »Predvajanje za predogled« (3/25, 4/3, 4/8, 4/13, 4/18, 4/23)

1964

- (7) Nove gibljive slike 1: Dela Nagisa Ōshime (2/20)
- (8) Nove gibljive slike 2: Posebni oddelek za dokumente (3/25)

- (9) Tretji belgijski festival mednarodnega eksperimentalnega filma: predvajanje nagrajenih filmov (6/10)
- (10) Italijanski filmi: Zbirka mojstrov in (7/25–26)
- (11) Festival animacije; organiziral KROG TREH ANIMATORJEV (9/21–26)

1965

Sledovi japonskega filma: Od »talkiejev« do danes (3/10–12)
Festival animacije 65 (10/1–2)

1966

Retrospektiva svetovne avantgardne kinematografije (pionirji filmske umetnosti) (1):
Izvor avantgardne kinematografije (2/1)

Uvid, gibanje v filmu: Sovjetska zveza (2/2)

Zlata doba avantgardne kinematografije 1 (2/3)

Zlata doba avantgardne kinematografije 2 (2/4)

Od nemih filmov do »talkiejev« (2/5)

Avantgardni filmi iz več držav (2/6)

Povojno obdobje (2/8)

Retrospektiva o vojni (2/9)

Razcvet (2/10)

Današnja avantgarda: Italija (2/11)

Današnja avantgardna kinematografija: Francija (2/12)

Današnja avantgardna kinematografija: Amerika (2/13)

Današnja avantgardna kinematografija: Vzhodna Evropa (2/14)

Retrospektiva svetovne avantgardne kinematografije (avantgardisti v kinematografiji) (2):

Man Ray, Germaine Dulac (3/14)

Jean Renoir, René Clair (3/15)

Luis Buñuel (3/16)

Jean Vigo (3/17)

Joris Ivens, Dziga Vertov (3/18)

Nemški avantgardisti (3/19)

Ameriški avantgardisti (3/20)

Cinema Fantasy (3/21)

Poetična kinematografija (3/22)

Etida Nouvelle Vague (3/23)

Eksperimentalna animacija (3/24)

Cinéma Vérité 1 (3/26)

Cinéma Vérité 2 (3/27)

Posebni izbor (SCM):¹² Avantgardni film (4/19)

12 SCM kratica pomeni mesečna srečanja, ki so se izvajala v okviru *Sōgetsu Cinetamtheque* (SCM: Sogetsu monthly meetings).

Posebni izbor (SCM) (4/20–21)

Posebna zbirka: Mc Laren (7)

Underground kinematografija (6/29–7/2, 11–12)

(14) Nemška ekspresionistična kinematografija (Fritz Lang itd.) (7/15–16)

(15) Svet animacije: Kanada, Francija (7/29–30)

(16) Posebna izdaja: Edinstveni kratki filmi iz sedmih držav (9/24)

(17) Posebni dogodek – komedija: Energija v obdobju nemega filma (11/8–9)

(18) Vabilo v svet vzhodnoevropskega filma: Češkoslovaška (12/20)

1967

Srečanje članov ekipe Sōgetsu Cinematheque (1/20)

(19) Razvoj animiranega filma (1/27–28)

Posebni dogodek – nemški ekspresionisti: Fritz Lang (SCM2) (2/24–25)

Festival underground filma (3/8–14)

(21) Posebni dogodek – Charlie Chaplin (3/27–28)

(21) Odkritje montaže, D.W. Griffith (4/8, 4/15)

Ameriški eksperimentalni filmi (od nadrealizma do underground kinematografije) (5/18,19,20)

Rodoslovje komedije (SCM 5) (5/26, 27)

SC – prvo obeleženje: Groteska in fantazija (6/13–14, 20–21, 7/3, 7/6–7, 13–14, 20–21)

Filmi iz Sovjetske zveze (SCM 8) (8/24,25)

Vabilo v svet animacije: Nova svetovna animacija, Animacija z vici in smehom, Walt Disney in Paul Grimauld, Češkoslovaška (9/18–21, 22, 23, 29, 30, 10/1–2)

Posebni dogodek, posvečen satirični komediji – 1 (SCM 10) (10/17,19)

Posebni dogodek, posvečen satirični komediji – 2 (SCM 12) (12/12,14,16)

1968

Izrazita stvarnost filma (SCM 1) (1/23, 30)

Kinematografija Yakuz (SCM 2) (2/10, 13, 17, 20)

Od italijanskega neorealizma dalje (SCM 3) (3/23)

Opazovanje politike v ameriških filmih (4/13, 18, 27)

Simpozij »Expose 1968«: Nanika itte kure, Ima sagasu (»Reci že nekaj, saj poskušam«)
Kisha Kurokawe, Tadanorija Yokooa, Kiyoshija Awazuja, Toshija Ichianagija,
Geoffreya Hendricksa

(1) Se je spremenilo? Kaj? (4/10)

(2) Vsi smo nori cirkuški klovni (4/15)

(3) Nasilje in ekstaza (4/20)

(4) Izparevanje (4/25)

Poljski filmi: Od vojnega do povojnega obdobja (SCM 5) (5)

Novi svetovni film – 1: Cinema Nouveau (SCM 5) (5/2, 15, 21)

Novi svetovni film – 2: Cinema Nouveau (SCM 6) (6/6, 4,11)

Groteske in prikazni (SCM 7) (7/6, 9, 11, 13, 16)
 ex.pose'68 – Transformacija; imenitna avantura sodobne umetnosti (7/17-19)
 Predogled: Monitor (SCM 8) (8/29)
 Pomembno obdobje japonskega filma – 1 (SCM 9) (9/5)
 Pomembno obdobje japonskega filma – 2 (SCM 11) (11/5)
 Posebni dogodek – Jerry Lewis (SCM 12) (12/18)

1969

SCM 1 (1/18, 28)
 SCM 2 (2/3)
 Danski filmski festival, predvajanje Carla Theodorja Dreyerja (Posebni dogodek SCM) (2/17-23)
 Posebni dogodek – pustolovske komedije (SCM 3) (3/11, 25, 18)
 Zakladnica japonskih filmov (SCM 4)
 Retrospektiva nemških ekspresionističnih filmov – 1: Posebni dogodek – Fritz Lang (SCM 5) (15/5)
 Retrospektiva nemških ekspresionističnih filmov – 2 (SCM 6) (6/17, 19, 21)
 Retrospektiva nemških ekspresionističnih filmov – 3 (SCM 7) (7/7, 8, 10, 12)
 Animacija in eksperimentalni filmi: Kanadski eksperimentalni filmi (SCM 8) (8/26)
 Animacija in eksperimentalni filmi: Novi svet animacije (SCM 8) (8/30)
 Posebni dogodek – Kenji Mizoguchi (SCM 9) (9/13, 18)
 Shūsaku Arakawa: Zakaj pa ne – serenada eshatološke ekologije
 Posebni dogodek – Luis Buñuel (SCM 11) (11/26, 28)
 »Das Andere Kino« z nemškimi filmi (SCM 12) (12/15, 19)

1970

Nova perspektiva mednarodnega kratkega filma:
 Nagrajenci mednarodnega festivala kratkega filma v Oberhausnu (SCM 1) (1/28-29)
 Takahiko Iimura – predstava z enim igralcem, ter Shūsaku Arakawa (SCM 2) (2/ 10, 20, 27)
 Posebni dogodek – Luis Buñuel (2) (SCM 3) (3/13, 24)
 Retrospektiva nemških ekspresionističnih filmov – 4 (SCM 4) (4/22, 25, 28)
 Retrospektiva nemških ekspresionističnih filmov – 5 (SCM 5) (5/13, 16, 19)
 Terayama Shūji in Jean-Luc Godard (6/19, 26)
 Roger William Corman, Roman Polanski (7/16, 18)
 Jean-Marie Straub, Glauber Rocha (SCM 9) (9/22, 24)
 SCM 10 (10/2, 17, 30)
 Posebni dogodek – animacija: Kanada, Belgija (SCM 11) (11/6)
 Nova kanadska kinematografija (SCM 11) (11/3)
 Posebni dogodek – Jean Luc Godard (12/9, 12)
 Češkoslovaška in Kuba (SCM 12) (12/15)

1971

Adolescenca: Hudo ranjeni idol (SCM 1) (1/23, 29)

Novi val v nemški kinematografiji (3/22, 23, 24, 25, 26)

Tabela 6: *Kronološki seznam dogodkov v okviru Sôgetsu Cinematheque (1961–1971)*¹²

Ena izmed prvih skupin, ki so oblikovale *Sôgetsu Cinematheque* od njenih začetkov in je pomembno doprinesla predvsem k prenovi in inovacijam v animaciji, je bila *Krog treh animatorjev* (Animēshon sannin no kai アニメーション三人の会). V skupini so trije glavni protagonisti – Yôji Kuri, Ryohei Yanegihara (柳原良平) in Hiroshi Manabe (真鍋博) – stremeli k prenovi animacije. Zamislili so si jo v obliki združevanja različnih zvrsti, kot so ilustracija, manga in oblikovanje. Nezadovoljni so bili s takrat najmočnejšo animacijsko industrijo *Tôei eiga*. Prirejali so festivale animacije *Animation festivals* (1964–1966, glej Sliko 5), kjer je skupina predstavila svoja dela skupaj z deli drugih japonskih kartonistov, ilustratorjev, grafičnih oblikovalcev ter njihovih sodobnikov iz tujine. Omenjene festivale je kasneje nadomestil *Eksperimentalni filmski festival*.

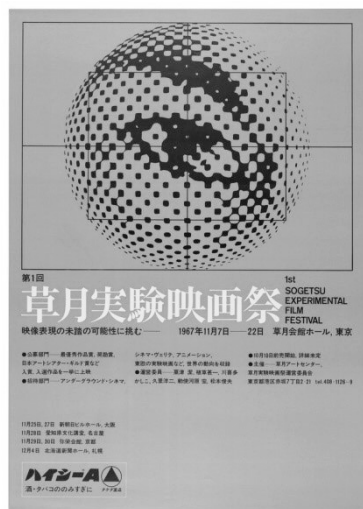
Pred samim pričetkom delovanja *Sôgetsu Cinematheque* je treba omeniti aktivnost *Cinema 57* (Shinema 57 シネマ57), klub mladih filmskih nadobudnežev, ki je bil predhodnik delovanja *Sôgetsu Cinematheque* in zelo pomemben za razvoj filma v Centru. Šlo je za združenje, ki ga je že pred samim odprtjem Centra organiziral Hiroshi Teshigahara. Združenje je poskrbelo za predvajanje nekomercialnih filmov, ki jih drugod ni bilo mogoče videti, ker niso bili v okvirih prevladujočih smernic. Če si natančneje ogledamo glavne cilje kluba, lahko kot njihovo glavno vodilo opredelimo iskanje, zbiranje in predvajanje dokumentarnih, eksperimentalnih ter

12 Če si pogloblje ogledamo program, lahko razberemo, da so, poleg filma in animacije po letu 1965, prevzele oder umetniškega centra Sôgetsu tudi nove smeri na področju gledališča ter plesa, ki pa v tem članku ne bodo poudarjene.

Poleg glavnih ter stranskih aktivnosti v Centru ne smemo pozabiti, da je Center poleg svojih organiziranih aktivnosti nudil prostor tudi drugim ustvarjalcem, ki niso bili nujno aktivni v Centru ali bili del *Sôgetsu Cinematheque*, *Sôgetsu Music Inn* ter drugih glavnih aktivnosti Centra. Omenimo lahko nekatere dogodke takšnih ustvarjalcev, kot so prvi samostojni koncert eksperimentalne glasbene skupine *Group Ongaku*, klavirski koncert pianista Takahiroja Sonode, s katerim večkrat označijo tudi začetek aktivnosti v Centru, predavanje kuratorja ter zgodnjega teoretika tašizma Michela Tapiéja, eksperimentalni glasbeni koncert skladatelja in arhitekta Iannisa Xenakisa ali eden od zgodnejših nastopov Tatsumija Hijikate (土方巽) *Dance of Darkness* (1963). Poleg tega so se na odru Centra gostovale tudi gledališke predstave eksperimentalnega lutkovnega gledališča *Hitomi-za* (režija Hiroshi Iwata (岩田宏), Shuntarô Tanikawa, Shûji Terayama, Kuniharu Akiyama) ter *Študija o Drakuli*, ki jo je napisal Shûji Terayama, izvedla pa Ningen-za. Ta skupina aktivnosti je zaobsegala tudi razstave ikeban, ki jih je imel Sôfu Teshigahara.



Slika 5: *Vabilo na 2. Festival animacije 1965 (Vir: Makoto Wada post 2013)*



Slika 6: *Vabilo na 1. Eksperimentalni filmski festival 1967 (Vir: Akio Kanda v post 2013)*

umetniških filmov ter oblikovanje debatnega krožka, kjer so lahko o ogledanih filmih izčrpno diskutirali in jih preučevali (Nomura 2007, 57). Poleg tega so se, da bi ustregli svoji želji po eksperimentiranju s filmom, odločili, da bodo tudi sami oblikovali neodvisne filme ter poskrbeli za njihovo predvajanje (ibid.).

Začetki skupine *Cinema 57* segajo v leto 1957, ko je Hiroshi Teshigahara srečal Kyushirōja Kusakabeja (草壁久四郎), starega znanca in velikana dokumentarnega

filma Fumia Kameija, ki se je tudi zanimal za dokumentarni film. Pridružil se jima je še Susumu Hani (羽仁進), ki je bil takrat zaposlen pri filmski produkciji Iwanami. Vsi trije so strmeli k ustanovitvi filmske študijske skupine, kjer bi se lahko posvečali dokumentarnim in eksperimentalnim filmom, ki jih ni mogoče umestiti v ustaljene smernice filmske industrije. K sodelovanju so bili povabljeni še: Masahiro Ogi (荻昌弘), takratni kritik v filmski reviji *Kinema Junpō*; Ryūichirō Sakisaka (向坂隆一郎), pomožni urednik revije *Geijutsu Shinchō*; Sadamu Maruo (丸尾定), ki je deloval na oddelku za publicistiko filmske družbe *Tōei*; filmski režiserji Zenzō Matsuyama (松山善三), Yoshirō Kawazu (川頭義郎) in Kanza-burō Mushanokoji (武者小路侃三郎), vsi trije pripadniki šole filmskega velikana dokumentarnega filma Keisukeja Kinoshite (木下恵介) (ibid., 56–57).

Hiroshi Teshigahara je bil že na začetku svojega delovanja privrženec dokumentarnega filma in naslednik gibanja dokumentarnega filma, na katerega so vplivali predvojni evropski umetniki, kot so Joris Ivens, Erwin Piscator, Bertold Brecht, Sergei Eisenstein ali Vsevolod Illarionovich Pudovkin (Yūji Takahashi, osebno sporočilo avtorju, 24. april 2012).

Prvo sodelovanje skupine *Cinema 57* je pripeljalo do prvega eksperimentalnega filma *Tokyo 1958* (東京1958) (1958), s katerim so sodelovali na mednarodnem festivalu eksperimentalnega filma na svetovni razstavi EXPO v Bruslju leta 1958. Film, ki ga je produciral Kōzō Igawa (井川宏三), na zanimiv način dokumentira in slika življenje v takratnem Tokiu, največjem mestu na svetu z osmimi milijoni in pol prebivalcev. Poleg hitre industrializacije ter vpliva zahodnega sveta film prikaže Tokio kot mesto smeti ter gledalcu približa vsakdan delavca. Film pridobi še dodatno razsežnost z vstavljanjem izsekov iz lesorezov Katsushike Hokusaija. Donald Richie, ki je v tistem obdobju tudi sam režiral precej eksperimentalnih filmov in jih predstavljal v sklopu aktivnosti Centra, je nastopil v uvodnem delu filma in bil pravzaprav tudi pobudnik (Nomura 2007, 57), da se je skupina uvrstila na festival.

Cinema 57 je delovala nekje do leta 1961. Vsakokrat je, glede na leto, v katerem je delovala, spremenila letnico leta v svojem nazivu. Formiranje skupine je bistveno vplivalo na japonski film, kajti njeno delovanje je od leta 1959 vodilo v ustanovitev ATG-ja (Art Theater Guild ali Nihon āto shiatā girudo 日本アート・シアターギルド (エーティージャー)), združenja, ki je podpiralo neodvisno kinematografijo od leta 1961 (ustanovljeno je bilo 15. novembra 1961) (ibid., 58). Leta 1960 je *Cinema 60* sprejela tri nove člane, med katerimi je bila tudi Kawakita Kashiko (川喜多かしこ),¹³ ter se preimenovala v Japonsko združenje gibanja umetnosti in

13 Kawakita Kashiko je bila ena od glavnih pobudnic ustanovitve ATG-ja, tudi drugače zelo vplivna v razvoju filmske industrije v povojnem obdobju Japonske. Veliko je pripomogla s sponzoriranjem in promoviranjem japonskega filma ter filmskih igralcev.

gledališča (Āto shiatā undō no kai アート・シアター運動の会). Pol leta pozneje je sledila ustanovitev ATG-ja. K oblikovanju ATG-ja naj bi veliko prispevala prav Kawakita Kashiko, takrat podpredsednica filmskega studia Tōhō.

Kot alternativa velikim studiem oziroma prevladujoči kinematografiji je ATG podpiral avtorski in osebni pristop do filmske ustvarjalnosti in vodil do njega. ATG je pomagal pri distribuciji tako domačih kot tujih neodvisnih, umetniških filmov (predvsem filmov francoskega novega vala) ter japonskih filmov, ki so bili narejeni zunaj monopoliziranega sistema velikih filmskih studiev. Kasneje, leta 1967, je imel ATG tudi glavno vlogo pri filmski produkciji omenjenih filmov. Kot najpomembnejši distributer in producent neodvisnega filma je omogočil mladim umetnikom, da so lahko predstavili svoja avantgardna, nekomercialna ter kreativna dela, ki drugače ne bi imela možnosti ugledati luči v kinematografih.¹⁴ To so bili Hiroshi Teshigahara, Nagisa Ōshima, Kon Ichikawa, Shōhei Imamura, Masahiro Shinoda, Hani Susumu in Yoshida Yoshishige. Z ustanovitvijo lastne filmske produkcije je ATG bistveno pripomogel k zlatemu obdobju neodvisne filmske produkcije, ki se je intenzivno začela z letom 1965.

Teshigahara je ustanovil še lastno filmsko produkcijo, imenovano Produkcija Teshigahara (Teshigahara purōdakushon, 勅使河原プロダクション). Pod njenim okriljem je posnel tudi prvi film *Suna no onna* (Ženska s peščin, 砂の女, 1964), s katerim si je pridobil mednarodni sloves. Poleg nagrade žirije, ki si jo je ta film prislužil na mednarodnem festivalu v Cannesu, slovi kot prvi japonski film, ki je bil (dvakrat) nominiran za oskarja.

Pred uspehom, ki ga je požel film *Suna no onna*, je Teshigahara poleg nekaj dokumentarnih filmov posnel svoj prvi celovečerni film *Otoshiana* (Past, おとし穴, 1962) – »dokumentarno fantazijo«, kot ga je sam imenoval, kjer gre za prepletanje socialnega realizma, političnega trilerja in zgodbe o duhovih. Kritik Masahiro Ogi je označil zgodovinski kontekst filma kot pot nazaj v prihodnost, v turbulenco iz leta 1960, ko so prevladovali demonstracije proti reviziji ameriško-japonske varnostne zakonodaje, nestrinjanje levičarjev in nesporazumi med delavci in upravljavci v primeru premogovnika Mitsui-Miike na Kyushuju, s katero je nasprotoval ideji, da bi premog nadomestili z uvoženim kurilnim oljem (Matson 2007, 65).

Otoshiana je tudi prvi japonski film, ki ga je distribuiral ATG, in dober primer sodelovanja med umetniki Centra. Hiroshiju Teshigahari se je pridružil Kōbō Abe, ki je pripravil scenarij oziroma priredil zgodbo, ki jo je uporabil za scenarij

14 Japonski filmski studio Tōhō se je zavzel za delovanje ATG-ja in postal njegov glavni sponzor. Nudil jim je kinodvorane za predvajanje umetniških filmov, vključno s kinodvorano Nichigeki Bunka Gekijō, ki je kasneje postala filmska dvorana, specialirana za ATG (Masuda 2015).

televizijske drame *Rengoku* (Vice),¹⁵ ter Tōru Takemitsu, odgovoren za glasbo filma. Njihovo sodelovanje se je nadaljevalo pri vseh naslednjih ključnih filmih Teshigahare v obdobju gibanja Sōgetsu: *Suna no Onna* (1964), ki smo ga že omenili, *Shiroi Asa* (1964), *Tanin no Kao* (1966) in *Moetsukita Chizu* (1968).

Uspela jim je vključitev v že zelo ustaljeno in hierarhično piramido japonske kinematografije, v kateri so prevladovali reprezentativni filmski velikani, kot sta Akira Kurosawa in Kenji Mizoguchi. Kot pripoveduje Tadao Sato (*Abe in Teshigahara*), je bilo vstopiti v to piramido na omenjeni način skoraj nemogoče.

»V svetu japonskega filma so 50. leta 20. stoletja veljala za zlata leta japonskega filma. S filmi, ki jih je producirala, je imela filmska industrija v takratnem času ogromno avtoriteto. Prav tako se nikoli ni zgodilo, da bi bilo dovoljeno komu vstopiti v filmsko industrijo z drugega področja. Filmski režiserji, kot so Yasujiro Ozu, Kenji Mizoguchi in Akira Kurosawa, so bili na vrhu ogromne piramide. Četudi bi novelist ali slikar hotel posneti film, ni imel možnosti, da bi ga ustvaril ali da bi ga studio sprejel. Ščasoma so se v tej strukturi začele kazati majhne razpoke. Bolje rečeno, mislim, da je bil Teshigahara sam akter teh sprememb.« (ibid.)

Sodelovanje med različnimi umetniki, ki so pripadali Centru, pa se ni kazalo le v glasbenih in filmskih delih, ampak tudi pri vseh drugih dejavnostih, ki jih Center izvajal.

Umetniška »samooskrba«: *Sac journal* in posterji

Izdajali so lastno publikacijo, imenovano *SAC*, ki se je s 14. številko preimenovala v *SAC Journal*, v kateri so objavljali sporede in pisali o dogodkih, ki so potekali v Centru.¹⁶ V publikaciji so objavljali članke ter eseje umetniških kritikov. Med njimi so bili glavni Nakahara Yusuke (中原佑介), Yoshiaki Tōno, Kuniharu Akiyama in Ōoka Makoto. Vsak od njih je bil zadolžen za svoje področje; Nakahara za filmsko tematiko ter področje oblikovanja, Tōno za umetnost ter likovno področje, Akiyama za glasbo. Pod drobnogled so postavili predvsem aktivnosti, ki so se izvajale v klubu *Sōgetsu Music Inn* ter *Sōgetsu Contemporary Series*. Občasno se jim je s prispevki pridružil tudi Susumu Hani.

15 Predvajal jo je program Kyūshū Asahi (20. oktobra 1960).

16 Publikacija je imela obliko formata ovitka gramofonske plošče. Njena prva stran je bila barvno razgibana, kontrastna ter atraktivna. Oblikoval jo je sam Sōfu Teshigahara (prvo ter drugo edicijo), potem pa so oblikovanje prevzeli Kōhei Sugiura, Makoto Wada ter Ikko Narahara (奈良原一高). Začenši z letom 1960 so v naslednjih štirih letih izdali 38 številčk revije.

Posebno poglavje je bilo namenjeno novicam o umetnostih – bodisi o jazzu, sodobni umetnosti ali filmu –, ki so bile aktualne čez lužo. Zanimivi so bili tudi t. i. »kolaborativni eseji«, pri katerih sta sodelovala muzikolog Fumio Koizumi ter glasbenik in ilustrator Hiroshi Manabe. V isto skupino esejev so spadali tudi eseji v sodelovanju skladateljev Tōruja Takemitsuja in Hiroshija Manabeja, pianista Yūjija Takahashija ter ilustratorja Makotoja Wada. Tematika esejev je imela širok razpon, od kontemplativnih filozofskih, umetniških ter politično-socioloških tem, in ni bila nujno neposredno vezana na dejavnosti v Centru. Poleg zunanje podobe *SAC Journala* so se oblikovalci in fotografi potrudili tudi za zanimivo vsebino, in sicer z različnimi slogi ilustracij ter fotografij, ki so poudarjale vsebino člankov ter aktualnih dogodkov.

Umetniki Centra so za vsako prireditev ali koncert, ki so ga priredili v sklopu dejavnosti Centra, sami oblikovali vabila, vstopnice, letake ter posterje. Kōhei Suguiura je bil zadolžen za oblikovanje prireditev v sklopu *Contemporary Series*, Makoto Wada za *Modern jazz* ter *Sōgetsu Cinematheque*, za plakate koncertov, ki so vključevali tuje goste in muzikale, pa sta skrbela Gan Hosoya ter Kiyoshi Awazu. Posterji so bili natisnjeni na sive, črne, rdeče ali zelene barvne papirje s pomočjo sitotiska. Še danes služijo kot zelo dober pokazatelj dogodkov v Centru, tudi tistih, ki na koncu niso bili izvedeni.

Ne *āto sentā* ampak *auto sentā*?

Iz natančnega sporeda dogodkov umetniškega centra Sōgetsu lahko zaključimo, da so bile za Center odločilne tri glavne aktivnosti. Umetniki so se zavzemali za področje moderne jazzovske glasbe (*Sōgetsu Music Inn*), ki je bila ena najzgodnejših začetnih glasbenih aktivnosti Centra. Sledila je skoraj sočasno začeta aktivnost na področju sodobne glasbe (*Sōgetsu Contemporary Series*), ki ji je sledilo še področje eksperimentalnega filma in animacij (*Sōgetsu Cinematheque*). Poudariti je treba, da so to bile tudi aktivnosti oziroma združenja, kjer so umetniki Centra imeli prvič priložnost predstaviti svoja dela, producirana v Centru.

Poleg glavnih so Center dopolnjevale tri manjše aktivnosti, v večini primerov predhodnice glavnih aktivnosti: *Etcetera and Jazz Circle* je spajala jazzovsko glasbo z različnimi mediji, *Sōgetsu Kyōyō Club* je promovirala zanimanje in iskanje novih poti za japonsko tradicionalno umetnost, *Cinema 57* pa se je zavzemala za predvajanje in ustvarjanje dokumentarnih, eksperimentalnih in umetniških filmov v Centru. Umetniki so bili dobro organizirani v smislu produkcijske »samooskrbe«. Izdajali so publikacijo *SAC Journal* in bili odgovorni za produkcijo vabil, vstopnic ter posterjev vsake prireditve.

Umetniška dela, ki so nastala kot oblika kolektivnega umetniškega delovanja v Centru, so doprinesla k širokem spektru »novega« oziroma »šokantnega«. Aktivnosti v Centru je spremljala značilnost eksperimentalnega, ena izmed odločilnih lastnosti, ki je prispevala k temu, da je v Centru nastala paleta t. i. »hibridnih del«, ki so odpirala vrata novim oblikam umetnosti. Razsežnost je Center dodatno ustvarjal z interdisciplinarnostjo umetnikov, ki so se povezovali med seboj. Odločilna je bila prav tako internacionalnostjo, ki je članom omogočala učenje in združevanje s tujimi umetniki.

V glasbi so omenjena dela sprva doprinesla k modernistični ter kasneje k eksperimentalni tendenci v japonski umetnosti – predstavila so hepeninge, grafično notacijo, dogodke (Events) in Fluxus. Odločilnega pomena je bil tudi fenomen Cageevega šoka, ki se je iz glasbe previl v druge umetniške zvrsti, prisotne v Centru. Filmske aktivnosti so pripomogle k oblikovanju ATG-ja, združenja, ki je podpiralo neodvisno kinematografijo. Z lastno filmsko produkcijo, ki jo je postavil režiser in direktor Centra Hiroshi Teshigahara, jim je uspelo prodreti med reprezentativne filmske velikane in postaviti alternativo prevladujočim velikim filmskim studiom. Upravičeno je Sōfu Teshigaraha tako večkrat imenoval Center kot »izven Center« (auto sentā アウト センター) (Akiyama 1981, 23), in ne »umetniški Center« (āto sentā アート).

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Metodološki problemi Xu Fuguanove primerjalne analize Zhuangzijeve estetike in zahodne fenomenologije

Tea SERNELJ*

Izvleček

Članek se ukvarja s Xu Fuguanovo analizo in interpretacijo nekaterih osrednjih konceptov Zhuangzijeve filozofije, ki predstavljajo njegovo estetiko. Po Xuju se Zhuangzijeve estetika nanaša na estetski način bivanja človeka, pri čemer se lepota aplicira v sfero *daota*, v kateri so ljudje zmožni osvoboditi svojega duha in uživati način življenja, ki ga Zhuangzi označuje kot »svobodno in lahkotno tavanje« (*xiaoyaoyou* 逍遙遊). Po Xujevem mnenju je to najvišja in najlepša sfera človeškega bivanja in je kot taka izražena v umetnosti. Xu je v Zhuangzijeveh konceptih postenja srčne zavesti (*xinzhai* 心齋) in sedenja v pozabi (*zuowang* 坐忘) kot dveh metodah za doseganje tega najvišjega nivoja bivanja videl nekatere podobnosti z določenimi koncepti zahodne fenomenologije devetnajstega in zgodnjega dvajsetega stoletja. Čeprav je bil Xu Fuguan pri orisu vzporednic med zahodno in Zhuangzijevo filozofijo zelo previden, je bil mnenja, da med njimi obstaja določena podobnost, še posebej pri vprašanju, zakaj in na kakšen način je človeška zavest (oziroma srčna zavest) zmožna dojemati svet estetsko. Članek želi pokazati nekatere metodološke probleme in nekonsistentnosti Xu Fuguanovega komparativnega pristopa, ki je temelj njegove teorije estetike.

Ključne besede: Xu Fuguan, Zhuangzi, kitajska estetika, medkulturna metodologija

Methodological Problems of Xu Fuguan's Comparative Analysis of Zhuangzi's Aesthetics and Western Phenomenology

Abstract

The present article deals with Xu Fuguan's analysis and interpretation of some of the central concepts of Zhuangzi's philosophy, which constitute his aesthetic thought. In Xu's view, Zhuangzi's aesthetic thought relates to the aesthetic way of human life, where beauty applies to the realm of *dao* in which human beings are able to liberate their spirit and enjoy a way of life denoted as the "free and easy wandering" (*xiaoyaoyou* 逍遙遊). In Xu's view, this is the highest and the most beautiful sphere of human existence, and is as such expressed in art. Xu found in Zhuangzi's concepts of *xinzhai* 心齋 and *zuowang* 坐忘,

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as methods for achieving this highest level of being, some similarities with certain concepts of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Western phenomenology. Although Xu was trying to be careful in drawing parallels between certain Western philosophies and Zhuangzi's thought, he believed that there is a certain resemblance between them, especially regarding the question of why and in which way human consciousness (or the human heart-mind) is able to perceive the world aesthetically. The article aims to show some methodological problems and inconsistencies in this comparative approach, which underlies Xu's aesthetic theory.

Keywords: Xu Fuguan, Zhuangzi, Chinese Aesthetics, intercultural methodology

Uvod

Xu Fuguan je bil pripadnik tako imenovane druge generacije modernih konfucijancev, intelektualnega toka ponovnega obujanja konfucijanstva na Kitajskem v dvajsetem stoletju, ki je poskušal priskrbeti ustrezno idejno platformo za kitajsko modernizacijo. Ideje, na katerih je bila modernizacija postavljena, so prišle z Zahoda, zato je druga generacija modernih konfucijancev poskušala revitalizirati tradicionalno kitajsko misel s pomočjo novih vplivov, prevzetih od zahodnih sistemov (Rošker 2014, 68). To je bil poskus sinteze kitajske in zahodne filozofije, ki bi lahko ponudila boljše razumevanje obeh miselnih sistemov (ibid.). Tako so skozi prizmo zahodne filozofske misli ponovno poglobljeno ovrednotili kitajsko tradicijo, z namenom doseči potrditev in prepoznavnost lastne filozofske tradicije. V tem kontekstu se je večina akterjev druge generacije ukvarjala z zahodno filozofijo osemnajstega in devetnajstega stoletja. Xu Fuguanov angažma pri poskusu ustvarjanja takšne sinteze je najjasneje izražen v njegovem delu *Duh kitajske umetnosti* (*Zhongguo yishu jingshen* 中國藝術精神), ki ga je napisal leta 1966. Ta razprava bo tako v glavnem obravnavala Xujeve analize in interpretacije, vključene v omenjeno delo.

Kot omenjeno v članku o Xujevi interpretaciji koncepta *you* (遊) (Sernelj 2015, 50) je Lee Su San kot Xu Fuguanovo primarno motivacijo za nastanek tega dela poudarila njegovo željo, da bi v njem predstavil bogastvo dolge in prodrone tradicije kitajske kulture in umetnosti. Upoštevajoč dejstvo, da so v Vzhodni Aziji prevladovala močne tendence nagibanja k Zahodu, je želel ponuditi novo platformo za mlade tajvanske intelektualce in intelektualke ter umetnice in umetnike, ki so bili, po njegovem mnenju, preobremenjeni z iskanjem nove identitete. V njegovih očeh bi lahko bila ta nova identiteta ustvarjena na kreativni fuziji kitajske estetske tradicije z določenimi elementi, ki izvirajo iz sodobnih evro-ameriških in japonskih kultur.

Po Xujevem mnenju je bilo dejstvo, da so umetnice in umetniki ter intelektualke in intelektualci nepremišljeno ter množično sprejemali tako imenovane zahodne kulture, problematično, saj naj bi s tem zanemarjali lastno idejno tradicijo in kulturo. Kot konfucijanec si je Xu prizadeval obuditi lepoto in prodornost daoistične in konfucijanske filozofije. Kot tradicionalist in velik oboževalec tradicionalne kitajske umetnosti in literature je le s težavo sprejemal sodobno umetnost, ki so jo sledeč zahodnim modelom ustvarjali tajvanski umetniki in umetnice. Po njegovem mnenju je sodobna umetnost, še posebej avantgardna gibanja, kot so nadrealizem, dadaizem in kubizem, z destrukcijo tradicije in navidezno nezainteresiranostjo nad idejo lepote, vodila v razpad človeške kulture kot celote. Verjel je, da je sodobna umetnost odraz turbulentnega, grotesknega in turobnega primitivnega življenja, ki bo pripeljalo ljudi do konca civilizacije (Lee 1998, 309).

Skozi poglobljeno raziskovanje Zhuangzijeve filozofije je Xu poudarjal, da lahko nekatere konceptualne vsebine, ki jih je najti tako v zahodni sodobni umetnosti kot tudi v filozofiji, najdemo že v Zhuangzijevi misli, predvsem v njegovih idejah subjektivizma in relativizma, v njegovi ideji integrirane individualne osebnosti, še posebej pa v osvoboditvi človeškega duha.

Zato je glavni prispevek dela *Duh kitajske umetnosti* Xujeva interpretacija Zhuangzija skozi prizmo fenomenološke, ontološke in v prvi vrsti estetske misli. Opravil je obsežno in poglobljeno analizo ključnih konceptov Zhuangzijeve misli, ki jih je primerjal s filozofijo nekaterih zgodnjih zahodnih estetikov osemnajstega in devetnajstega stoletja. Njegova komparativna analiza vključuje nekaj manj znanih mislecev, kot so Hamann, Cohen, Solger in Fiedler, kot tudi imena zelo vplivnih teoretikov, kot so Hegel, Kant, Husserl in Heidegger. Xu si je prizadeval poudariti, da so nekatere ideje, ki so jih izoblikovali omenjeni filozofi, primerljive z Zhuangzijevo estetsko mislijo in obratno. Vendar pa ima, kot bomo videli v nadaljevanju, v metodološkem smislu njegov komparativni pristop določene neskladnosti in pomanjkljivosti.

Ali obstaja kitajska estetika?

Estetika (kitajska ali zahodna) kot filozofska disciplina ni zgolj študija lepote. Je filozofska disciplina, ki proučuje aktivnosti človeškega duha ali človeške zavesti, ko ta uživa ali doživlja lepoto (tako naravno lepoto kot lepoto umetniških del). Da bi lahko proučili Xu Fuguanovo interpretacijo Zhuangzijeve estetske misli, bomo najprej poskušali pojasniti odgovor na vprašanje, kaj tako imenovana »kitajska estetika« kot filozofska disciplina pravzaprav je. Ker Xu sam ni podal nikakršne natančne definicije termina, se bomo oprli na razlagi Li Zehouja in Ye Langa, ki veljata za glavna teoretika na področju kitajske estetike.

Po Ye Langu se kitajski estetiki na splošno strinjajo, da je estetika veda o estetskih aktivnostih, ki sodijo med duhovne aktivnosti ljudi (Ye 2010, 115).

Li Zehou pa po drugi strani poudarja, da je treba biti pri razumevanju tega, kaj pravzaprav so duhovne aktivnosti, previden, saj presegajo kategorije čutne percepcije, morale in religije (Li 2006, 20). Trdi, da je to najjasneje izraženo v Zhuangzijevem zavze-manju za popolno enost sebstva in zunanjega sveta. Takšna identifikacija subjekta in objekta lahko nastane zgolj v kreativni intuiciji »čiste zavesti«, ki ne more biti razumljena v okviru psihologije ali logične znanosti. Prav tako je ne moremo umestiti v polje religioznih izkustev, najdemo jo lahko le v sferi estetike (ibid. 2010, 82).

Pa vendar estetiko zanima predvsem proučevanje lepote, ki se manifestira v naravni lepoti in v lepoti umetnosti. Ye meni, da je *Velika razprava o estetiki* (*Meixue da taolun* 美学大讨论), ki je potekala na Kitajskem med letoma 1950 in 1960 in ki se je ukvarjala predvsem z vprašanjem o naravi lepote, ponudila dva odgovora. Nekateri akademiki so zagovarjali tezo, da je lepota objektivna, medtem ko so drugi vztrajali, da je v zavesti opazovalca ali v razmerju med zavestjo in objektivnim svetom (Ye 2010, 113). Slednji odgovor po eni strani pomeni, da je lepota subjektivna, po drugi pa, da ne obstaja lepota *per se*, temveč da se razkrije s človeško zavestjo skozi estetske aktivnosti. Te aktivnosti človeške zavesti so povezane z našimi izkustvi, domišljijo ali transformacijo naravnih in umetniških objektov v estetske objekte. Ye je razlagal, da estetske aktivnosti ljudi spreminjajo naravne prizore, ki jih oživlja in osvetljuje človeška zavest, iz gole substance v idejo-podobo (*yixiang* 意象). Znotraj tradicionalne kitajske estetike je ravno ta ideja-podoba tista, ki določa lepoto. To pomeni, da lahko lepota obstaja zgolj v takšnih idejah-podobah, ki predstavljajo spoj človeških občutkov in konkretnih prizorov zunanjega sveta, ki nas obkroža. V tem spoju človeška notranjost in zunanji svet ustvarjata harmonično enost (ibid.). V tem okviru estetska aktivnost ni določena s konceptualnim mišljenjem ali racionalnim prepoznavanjem, temveč je v osnovi zamejena s človeškim izkustvom in kot takšna nujno subjektivna. Ye nadalje trdi, da estetske aktivnosti ne temeljijo na prepoznavanju, temveč na čistem izkustvu. Poudarja, da skušamo skozi svoje kognitivne aktivnosti najti značilnosti in zakone objektivnih reči in dobiti odgovor na vprašanje, »kaj določen objekt je«. Vendar lahko v polju estetskega izkustva človeški subjekt vzpostavi komunikativno stanje s svetom in s tem izkustvo »kako objekt je« ali »kako obstajati«, in potemtakem kako živeti (ibid., 116). Po drugi strani je podobno tudi Li Zehou trdil, da je lepota kot estetski objekt neločljiva od človeškega subjektivnega stanja zavesti; in je kot taka – zavedno ali nezavedno – nujen produkt človeške srčne zavesti (*xin* 心) (Li 2010, 50).

Zhuangzijeve estetske misel se ukvarja natanko s tem vprašanjem; zato je Xu Fuguan Zhuangzijevo estetiko opredelil kot estetski način življenja. Pravzaprav v svojih

raziskavah (glej Xu 1966) ni uporabljal besede estetika, temveč je raje govoril o najvišji duhovni umetnosti, utelešeni v enosti človeškega duha in *daota*, ki omogoča avtonomno osvoboditev človeškega duha (*jingshen ziyou jiefang* 精神自由解放). Za Xuja omenjeni osvobodjeni duh predstavlja izraz najvišjega duha umetnosti. Proces, ki vodi k področju tega najvišjega duha, je proces umetniške kreativnosti.

Xu Fuguanove primerjave: Zhuangzijevo »svobodno in lahkotno lebdenje« (*xiaoyao you* 逍遙遊) skozi prizmo zahodnih teorij

V tem kontekstu moramo poudariti, da na Kitajskem pred dvajsetim stoletjem beseda za umetnost (*yishu* 藝術) kot splošna kategorija ni obstajala. Na Kitajsko je prišla preko Japonske, kjer so jo prevedli iz angleščine in francoščine. Pred tem so Kitajci uporabljali zgolj ločene in distinktivne besede za partikularne umetniške veščine, kot so literatura (*wenxue* 文學), slikarstvo (*huihua* 繪畫), graviranje oz. kiparstvo (*diao* 雕刻) in tako naprej (Xu 1966, 49). Zato je razumljivo, da Zhuangzi sam ni pisal neposredno o umetnosti ali procesu umetniške kreativnosti. Vendar pa sta tako Konfucij kot Zhuangzi v kontekstu zmožnosti usvajanja (*gongfu* 功夫) določene sposobnosti uporabljala besedo umetniška veščina (*yi* 藝). Po Zhuangziju lahko ljudje preko usvajanja veščin, ki jih uporabljajo v svojih življenjih, dosežejo združitev z *daotom* in s tem osvoboditev duha. Konfucij je po drugi strani poudarjal pomen kulture in izobraževanja, ki jo je mogoče doseči skozi usvajanje šestih umetnosti (ibid.). Zhuangzi pa je umetnost obravnaval zgolj kot del procesa transformacije posameznikovega individualnega duha (ali srčne zavesti). Xu Fuguan je povezal ta proces s prevladujočo zahodno estetsko mislijo, pri čemer je poudarjal naslednje:

Zhuangzijevo razumevanje tega procesa je drugačno od razumevanja ustanoviteljev sodobne estetike, ki so od samega začetka lepoto razumeli kot cilj in umetnost kot predmet njenega umevanja in prepoznanja¹ (Xu 1966, 49).

Ta argument je precej problematičen, če vzamemo v obzir estetsko misel nekaterih zahodnih teoretikov, kot so Kant, Husserl in Heidegger. V njihovih razlagah vsebina estetike ni vezana zgolj na opazovanje (in kognitivno zaznavo) same lepote, temveč tudi na vprašanja, kot je doživljanje človeške zavesti v estetski aktivnosti in občutka svobode, ki se pojavi od znotraj (glej na primer Thomson 2015, 1; Ginsborg 2014, 2.2; Deranty 2015, 2).

1 莊子則不僅不像近代美學的建立者，一開始即以美為目的，以藝術為對象，去加以思考，體認 (Xu 1966, 49).

Za Xuja je Zhuangzijev *dao* kot kozmična kreativnost in bistvo vseh stvari² tudi bistvo duha umetnosti. Zato je o njem govoril v smislu kreativnega koncepta duha umetnosti ali umetnostne kreativnosti. Kot sem že omenila, Zhuangzi ni govoril neposredno o umetnosti, temveč prej o izpopolnjenju življenja. Zatorej ta kreativnost ni nujno izražena v umetniškem delu. Vendar po Xujevem mnenju najvišji duh umetnosti, torej enost z *daotom*, pravzaprav predstavlja temeljno podlago in predpogoj za stvaritev vsakršne umetnine, kajti Zhuangzijevo doživljanje *dao*-ta je neposredno povezano z njegovo realizacijo znotraj izvajanja veščine ali pa same življenjske aktivnosti. Zato sta za Xuja v Zhuangzijevi filozofiji razumevanje umetnosti in *daota* neločljivo povezana³ (Xu 1966, 52). Xu je problem sledenja *daotu* znotraj veščine ter umetnikov proces stvaritve umetniškega dela razumel kot eno in isto stvar, a z različnim ciljem. Umetniku predstavlja cilj stvaritev umetniškega dela in je kot tak omejen na to, medtem ko je za Zhuangzija cilj v tem, da živiš življenje osvobojenega avtonomnega duha. V svoji analizi je Xu poudaril, da je takšno življenje prosto omejitev in kot tako pomeni estetski način življenja. Predstavlja kontinuirano, in ne zgolj začasno stanje. Takšno življenje je življenje osvobojenega človeškega duha oziroma svobodnega in lahkotno lebdečega duha (*xiaoyao you* 逍遙遊), ki tvori končni pomen in najvišji cilj Zhuangzijeve filozofije (ibid., 56).

Zhuangzi je trdil, da je živeti takšno estetsko in umetniško življenje, torej življenje svobodnega in lahkotnega lebdenja, mogoče doseči skozi aplikacijo dveh metod: postenja srčne zavesti (*xinzhai* 心齋) in sedenja v pozabi (*zuowang* 坐忘). Omenjeni metodi sta ontološka in estetska koncepta, ki tvorita jedro Zhuangzijeve filozofije.

Tako kot v večini daoističnih diskurzov je Zhuangzijev *dao* kozmološka kreativnost *per se*, kar pomeni, da kontinuirano ustvarja lepoto iz vsega, kar obstaja: »Nebo in zemlja posedujeta izjemno lepoto, a (o njej) ne govorita«⁴ (Zhuangzi s.d.: *Wai pian*, *Zhi bei you*, 2).

Poleg tega, kot je pokazal Zhuangzi v zamišljenem dialogu med Konfucijem in Laozijem, stanje osvobojenega človeškega duha, doseženega v enosti z *daotom*, prinaša čisto lepoto in radost:

2 V tem smislu *dao* seveda ni zgolj koncept Zhuangzijeve filozofije, temveč predstavlja jedrno idejo vseh drugih klasičnih daoističnih del, še posebej Laozijevega dela *Dao de jing*.

3 V tem oziru se je Xu osredotočal na splošno znano Zhuangzijevo zgodbo o kuharju Dingu v poglavju *Negovanje gospodarja življenja* (*Yangsheng zhu* 養生主) v *Notranjih poglavjih* (*Nei pian* 內篇). Omenjena zgodba obravnava vprašanje, kako lahko človek doseže enost z *daotom* skozi proces usvajanja veščine (*gongfu* 功夫) ali usvajanja (negovanja) življenja samega.

4 天地有大美而不言.

Konfucij je vprašal o lebdenu (*you*) in Lao Dan je odgovoril: to je doseženo v najvišji lepoti in največji radosti. Ko je dosežena najvišja lepota, lahko tavaš z največjo radostjo. To pomeni biti modrec.⁵ (ibid., *Tian zi fang*, 4)

Kot smo videli, sta velika lepota in velika radost pravzaprav bistveni karakteristiki *daota*. Ko je človek skozi dolgotrajno delo (učenja in usvajanja veščin) zmožen razumeti *dao*, lahko odkrije in dojame lepoto ter od nje pridobi radost. Takšna lepota in radost sta neločljivo povezani z *daotom*. Ljudje tako lahko doživljajo *dao* v njegovi celostnosti in povezavi z umetniškim življenjem, ko so v stanju osvobojenega duha (tj. osvobodjeni in lahkotno lebdeči) (Xu 1966, 59).

V tem kontekstu je Xu omenjene starodavne daoistične pristope ponovno skušal primerjati s sodobnimi estetskimi teorijami. Trdil je, da je v zahodni filozofiji umetnosti umetnost razumljena kot potrditev in indikacija človeške svobode, saj predstavlja osvoboditev od končnega (ali omejenega) sveta. Da bi to predstavil bolj jasno, je citiral različne zahodne filozofe. Opozoril je na primer, da je Theodor Lipps (1851–1914) občutek lepote imel za radost (ali prijeten občutek) svobode (Xu 1966, 60). Prav tako je opozoril na Heideggerjevo tezo, ki pravi, da bolj ko je posameznikovo mentalno stanje svobodno, enostavneje lahko ta občuti užitek, ki izhaja iz lepote (ibid.). V tem kontekstu je poskušal poudariti podobnosti med sodobno zahodno in starodavno kitajsko estetsko mislijo, pri čemer je nakazoval, da so bile vse sodobne in uvožene teorije njegovega časa bolj ali manj prisotne že v kitajski antiki.

Xu prav tako navaja razumevanje umetnosti Hermanna Cohena (1842–1918) kot substance ali fuzije znanosti in etike, pri čemer je umetnost nad njima, njen namen pa je generiranje svobodnih aktivnosti (ibid.). V domeni umetnosti človeška zavest izvira iz svobodne aktivnosti, ki izkazuje spontanost. V tem smislu je Xu Fuguan omenjal tudi teorijo Ernsta Cassirerja (1874–1945), po kateri nam umetnost ponuja notranjo svobodo, katere ne moremo pridobiti na nikakršen drug način (ibid.). V takšnem razumevanju umetnosti in svobode je Xu zaznal največjo podobnost z Zhuangzijem.

Prav tako je Xu predstavil pregled Heglovega⁶ razumevanja umetnosti in svobode, kjer trdi, da Hegel v *Predavanjih o lepih umetnostih* poudarja pomembnost lepote in umetnosti v človeških življenjih, ko smo soočeni s težavami, konflikti, krizami

5 孔子曰：「請問遊是。」老聃曰：夫得是，至美至樂也。得至美而遊乎至樂，謂之至人。

6 Hegel je pisal v času intenzivnega razvoja idej o umetnosti. Kant je estetsko izkustvo v glavnem obravnaval v odnosu do izkustva lepote narave, toda za Hegla je estetika postala predvsem proučevanje *umetnosti*. Zanj je umetnost tista, v kateri »najprej nastane zavest absolutna« (Hegel 2008, 169). Svojskost umetnosti je v *čutnosti* medija, v katerem je objektivizirana njegova vsebina (glej Redding 2016, 3.2.2).

in tako dalje. Umetnost in lepota dajeta ljudem moč živeti in sočasno delovati na način, da povečajo svobodo subjekta, kar je po Xujevem mnenju zelo pomembna funkcija umetnosti. Po Xu Fuguanu Hegel v *Fenomenologiji duha* trdi, da je najvišja oblika človeškega duhovnega sveta polje absolutnega duha, kjer je tudi umetnost. Na tej točki Xu poudarja, da bi bila, če enostavno zamenjamo termin absolutno z *daotom*, Heglova teorija precej podobna Zhuangzijevega razumevanju svobodnega in lahkotnega lebdjenja. Ideji, trdi, sta primerljivi, saj obe govorita o polju, v katerem so ljudje lahko osvobojeni in dosežejo popolno svobodo znotraj svojih življenj (Xu 1966, 61).

Vendar tukaj naletimo na bistveno večje poenostavitve metod in predmetov, ki jih primerja. Ne le, da je Xu citate jemal iz njihovega konteksta v besedilu, prav tako ni podal širšega okvirja ali ozadja za teoretske ideje, o katerih je razpravljal. Xujeva manipulacija z besedami v zvezi s Heglovo implikacijo absoluta in Zhuangzijevo idejo *daota* je še posebej problematična. Zdi se, da Xu ni razumel pomena koncepta absolutno, ne zgolj v Heglovi filozofiji, temveč v zahodni filozofiji nasploh. Absolutnega nikakor ne moremo zamenjati z *daotom*, saj koncepta izvirata iz popolnoma različnih referenčnih okvirjev. Absolut je v Heglovi filozofiji ideja brez kakršnegakoli ekvivalenta, saj vsebuje vse faze dialektičnega procesa, ki temelji na interakciji med vzajemno se izključujočimi kontradikcijami. Je abstraktna shema striktno strukturiranega formalnega razvoja z vsemi njegovimi stopnjami in tranzicijami. Heglov absolut je torej statičen in nespremenljiv. Daoistični *dao* pa je po drugi strani enost vseh relativizacij; kontinuirano niha in je dinamičen; je manifestacija procesa soodvisnih in komplementarnih sprememb, harmonična enotnost bipolarnih nasprotij, ki se ne izključujejo, temveč se dopolnjujejo in so hkrati vzajemno odvisna. Kot tak ne more *dao* nikoli obstajati v izolaciji od sveta, ki ga ustvarja. Medtem ko ima Heglov absolut božansko, transcendentno naravo, je *dao* koncept imanentne transcendence.⁷ Tako je, po mojem mnenju, Xujev poskus, da bi enostavno zamenjali oba termina zavoljo tega, da bi dobila enak pomen pri obeh mislecih, precejšnja posplošitev.

Vemo, da lahko najdemo številne podobnosti ter sorodne kontekste (kot so mnenja) v delih Zhuangzija in Heideggerja, pa tudi v številnih drugih reprezentativnih delih iz zahodne ter kitajske idejne tradicije. Vendar moramo biti izjemno previdni pri tvorjenju splošnih primerjav. V mislih moramo imeti različna idejna ozadja zahodne in kitajske filozofije ter različne referenčne okvire, znotraj katerih koreninijo njihove dotične metodologije.

Kljub temu pa je Xu Fuguan prišel do zaključka, da lahko osvoboditev avtonomnega duha dosežemo le v naši srčni zavesti (*xin* 心). Kot pravi, je ta dosežek

7 Za podrobnejšo razlago paradigme imanentne transcendence glej Rošker 2016, 131–7.

tisti, ki ga je Zhuangzi opredelil kot *slisati dao* (*wen dao* 聞道) in *izkusiti dao* (*ti dao* 體道). Če uporabimo termine iz sodobnega jezika estetike, gre za utelešenje najvišjega umetniškega duha (Xu 1966, 62).

Zhuangzijev simbol te avtonomne osvoboditve duha je izražen v pismenki *you* 遊 in je povezan s pomenom kratkočasiti se ali zabavati se (*xiyou* 嬉遊) ter igrati se (*youxi* 遊戲). Xu je trdil, da igra nima nobenega drugega namena ali cilja kot doseči takojšnje občutke veselja, radosti ter sreče in da je to skladno z inherentno lastnostjo umetnosti. Poleg tega je moč domišljije zelo pomemben pogoj za ustvarjanje lepote umetniških del. Aktivnost čistega občutka igre je sestavljena iz zmožnosti domišljije, ustvarjalnosti in poosebljanja.

V tem kontekstu je Xu nasprotoval razlagam Charlesa Darwina (1809–1882) ter Herberta Spencerja (1820–1903), ki sta trdila, da lahko igro človeških bitij ter igro živali razumemo kot enaki. Na tej točki se je Xu Fuguan bolj strinjal s Friedrichom Schillerjem (1759–1805), ki je menil, da »se človek igra le, kadar je človek v polnem pomenu besede, in da je popolnoma človek le, kadar se igra« (Schiller 2016: Pismo XV). Xu je trdil, da obstaja temeljna razlika med običajno igro ter igrivo ustvarjalnostjo v umetnosti, kar se nanaša na zavesten izraz svobode. A če izločimo namen iskanja védenja ali drugih utilitarističnih pomenov in izkusimo zgolj čisto veselje (ali prijetne občutke), lahko rečemo, da obe obliki igre resnično izhajata iz istega stanja duha.

V povezavi s Schillerjevim citatom, zapisanim zgoraj, je Xu zapisal Zhuangzijevo trditev, da je modrec oziroma pravi človek (*zhen ren* 真人) tisti, ki zmore lahkotno lebdeti (*you* 遊). On ali ona je oseba, ki vsebuje duha umetnosti, in slednji ga oziroma jo hkrati preobraža. V tem kontekstu je Xu trdil, da so si Schillerjevi pogledi na idejo igre ter Zhuangzijevi pogledi na *you* zelo blizu (Xu 1966, 63).

A Xu je poleg tega svaril pred pretiranim poenostavljanjem, ki bi ga lahko prinesli nekoliko redukcionistični pogledi na tisto, kar je Zhuangzi mislil z *youjem*. Za Zhuangzija se to ne nanaša le na akt igre, temveč tudi, še pomembneje, na akt svobode, ki se poraja znotraj takšne igre. Tako je Zhuangzi iz *youja* naredil simbol avtonomnega in osvobojenega človeškega duha, ki je osvobojen pragmatičnih namer. V tem smislu je Xu trdil, da je Zhuangzijevo dožemanje *svobodnega in lahkotnega lebdenja* podobno Kantovemu konceptu nezainteresiranosti v estetskih sodbah, in sicer v sodbah okusa. V tem kontekstu bi morale biti estetske sodbe brez kakršnih koli interesov ali namer, saj užitek nekam vključujemo zato, ker ga sodimo kot lepega, in ga ne sodimo kot lepega zato, ker ga prepoznavamo kot prijetnega. Pomembna lastnost te nezainteresiranosti je, da ne poudarja nikakršnih pragmatičnih aspektov ter namenov (Kant 1987, 90).

Zdi se mi zanimivo, da Xu na tej točki ne omenja Kantovega koncepta svobodne igre. V Kantovi teoriji je harmonična svobodna igra naše domišljije in vedenja tista, ki prinaša estetski užitek ali veselje. V povezavi s tem se zdi smiselno omeniti naslednje:

Kantovo dožemanje svobodne igre veščin (včasih imenovane »harmonija veščin«) je verjetno najbolj osrednje dožemanje njegove estetske teorije. Ampak kakšne so veščine domišljije in dožemanja v »svobodni igri«? Kant opisuje domišljijo in razumevanje v tej »svobodni igri« kot svobodno harmoniziranje, ne da bi bila domišljija omejena z razumevanjem, kot je v kognitivnih procesih. (Ginsborg 2014, 2.3.2)

Po Zhuangziju je prosta osvoboditev človeškega duha, ki prinaša izpolnitev in zadoščenje, dosegljiva skozi držo neuporabnosti (*wuyong* 無用),⁸ kar se zdi precej podobno Kantovemu razumevanju zadoščenja in nezainteresiranosti. Pomen neuporabnosti je zelo pomemben koncept pri Zhuangziju in je povezan z ne-utilitaristično držo do sveta ter do človeških odnosov, z ozirom na prisotne skrbi ter tesnobe glede njih. Poleg tega je to pogoj za doseganje avtonomne osvoboditve človeškega duha. Samo kolikor smo sposobni zavreči utilitarianistično držo ali kakršnekoli namere, lahko vidimo *dao* in s tem lepoto samo. Xu je trdil, da je ne-utilitarianističen pristop nujen pri razumevanju umetnosti. Podobno lahko posameznik ali posameznica uživa v *lahkotnem lebdenju* v skladju z *daotom* le skozi opustitev kakršnekoli namere ali cilja.⁹

Xuju harmonija predstavlja temeljno lastnost umetnosti in na ta način postane pozitiven pogoj Zhuangzijevega *youja*. Po Zhuangziju sta neuporabnost (*wuyong* 無用) in harmonija (*he* 和) v bistvu dva aspekta enega duha (Xu 1966, 69).

Estetika je neločljivo povezana z ontologijo in fenomenologijo, zato je Xu trdil tudi, da je Zhuangzijevo *postenje srčne zavesti* (*xinzhai* 心齋) pravzaprav filozofija človeške zavesti, ki pa ima v tem pogledu veliko skupnega z zahodno fenomenologijo. Tako je primerjal Zhuangzijevo *xinzhai* s Husserlovim dožemanjem človeške zavesti.

8 Glej Zhuangzi s.d. *Nei pian*, *Renjian shi*: 9.

9 A Xu je poleg tega verjel, da ta koncept kljub njegovemu neizmernemu pomenu pri osvoboditvi duha ni tako enostavno prenosljiv na življenje v družbi, kjer ljudje razumejo namen (*yong* 用) kot nekakšen spoj, ki stvari drži skupaj. Xu je v tem smislu prepoznal nekatere omejitve oziroma negativne aspekte Zhuangzijevega *youja*, videl jih je kot narcističen pobeg iz družbe.

Xu Fuguanova interpretacija Zhuangzijeve fenomenologije: onto-estetika¹⁰ *xinzhai* 心齋 in *zuowang* 坐忘

Zhuangzijeve ne-utilitarizem, harmonija ter zahteva po svobodi so po Xujevem mnenju koncepti, ki tvorijo osnovni duh umetnosti. Vendar je trdil, da je Zhuangzijeve subjekt duha umetnosti pravzaprav srčna zavest človeka, ki je naša notranjost. Kar je Zhuangzi razkril o srčni zavesti, je po Xujevem mnenju duh umetnosti in spontani dosežek umetniškega (ali estetskega) načina življenja, pa tudi umetnost sama. V tej dimenziji, ki jo lahko izkusimo skozi prej omenjeno *svobodno ter lahkotno lebdenje*, je koncept brezsebnega stanja zavesti (*wuji* 無己) osrednjega pomena. V tem kontekstu Xu daje poudarek na naslednji citat: »Če lahko človeško bitje v lebdenju po svetu samo sebe izprazni, kdo mu lahko škoduje?«¹¹ (Zhuangzi s.d.: *Wai pian*, *Shan mu*: 2).

Kot sem že omenila, lahko to stanje končne estetske svobode dosežemo skozi postenje srčne zavesti (*xinzhai* 心齋) ter sedenje v pozabi (*zuowang* 坐忘). Da bi dosegli ti stanji, moramo slediti eni od dveh poti: prva je pot opustitve vseh fizičnih hrepenenj, ki zaslužnjujejo srčno zavest, da bi to lahko postalo prosto svojih okovov. To je neposredna metoda za doseganje uporabnosti ne-uporabnosti oziroma namena ne-namena (*wuyong zhi yong* 無用之用), saj hrepenenje samo izvira iz pragmatične naravnosti. V *xinzhaiju* ni prostora za razvoj koristi ali namena (*yong* 用), zato lahko duh nemudoma doseže svobodo. Druga pot za doseganje teh stanj zavesti pa je, da ko se povežemo z objektom, srčni zavesti ne dovolimo zaplesti se v analitično razmišljanje in s tem do sodb o pravilnem in napačnem, o dobrem ali slabem, ki bi zmotile našo srčno zavest.

Na takšen način bi naša srčna zavest postala zmožna težiti k osvoboditvi ter jo doseči in tako tudi povečati svobodo duha skozi uporabo intuicije ali neposredne percepcije (Xu 1966, 72).

10 Termin sem si sposodila iz članka »Becoming Butterfly: Power of the False, Crystal Image and Zhuangzian Onto-Aesthetics« (Postati metulj: Moč napačnega, kristalna podoba in Zhuangzianova onto-estetika) Sebastiana Hsien-hao Liaoja, ki trdi, da je Zhuangzijeve diskusije o veliki lepoti vedno povezana z veliko oziroma absolutno resnico. In zaradi njegove filozofije, globoko ukoreninjene v *daotu*, ki ustvarja neskončno množico stvari in vedno znova postaja in povzroča, da te postanejo, in potemtakem sama po sebi predstavlja kreativnost, jo lahko dojemamo kot onto-estetično. Po drugi strani pa je profesor Cheng Chung-Ying prav tako trdil, da je zaradi kitajskih pesnic in pesnikov ter umetnic in umetnikov lepota vedno harmonična izkušnja in reprezentacija dinamične kreativne realnosti, imenovane *dao*, ter to teorijo lepote poimenoval onto-estetika lepote in umetnosti. Predpostavlja, da je kitajska estetika onto-estetska in da je onto-estetika utelešena ter realizirana v tradiciji kitajske estetike. (Cheng 2010, 128)

11 人能虛己以遊世，其孰能害之！

V tem pogledu je Xu našel nekatere podobnosti med Zhuangzijem ter Heideggerjem, ki je trdil, da se, ko psihološko proučimo estetsko opazanje, predpostavlja, da ga lahko subjekt opazuje svobodno (Heidegger 2008, 145). Na primer, ko smo na lepi lokaciji ter opazujemo okolico in izkusimo občutek svobode, lahko čutimo čisto radost lepote (ibid.). Po Xujevem mnenju je Zhuangzi, ko je govoril o *xinzhaiju*, govoril o osvobajanju od védenja. Ko je govoril o *zuowangu*, je govoril o osvobajanju tako od hrepenenj kot od védenja. Na ta način lahko duh v celoti doseže svobodo (ibid.). Xu je trdil, da navadnim ljudem tako imenovani »jaz« pomeni integracijo hrepenenj ter védenja, za Zhuangzija pa se pozabljanje tega »jaza« v *zuowangu* pravzaprav nanaša na osvobajanje tako od psiholoških hrepenenj kot od tistega, kar po navadi razumemo kot intelektualno aktivnost. Tako Xu poudari del Zhuangzijevega citata v Notranjih poglavjih, ki jasno definira pomen sedenja v pozabi:

Moja vez s telesom in z njegovimi deli je splahnela; moji receptivni organi so zavrženi. Zato zapuščam svojo materialno obliko in se poslavljam od svojega védenja. Enak z enostjo, temu pravim sedenje v pozabi.¹² (Zhuangzi s.d.: *Nei pian*, *Da Zongshi*: 9)

Osvobojen od obojega lahko človek doseže praznino (*xu* 虛) ter tišino (*jing* 靜) v brezsebnem stanju srčne zavesti. Xu trdi, da hrepenenje za svojo razširitev potrebuje védenje, védenje pa se pri svojih namerah po navadi nasloni na hrepenenje. Kot takšna sta pogosto soodvisna. Zhuangzijev *zuowang* je enak kot Laozijevo ne-védenje (*wuzhi* 無知) in ne-hrepenenje (*wuyu* 無欲). Hrepenenja ne zanika radikalno ali absolutno, mu pa prepreči kontroliranje človeških osebnosti.

Pozaba znanja je torej metoda izločanja aksiološkega ter konceptualnega védenja. Kar ostane, je čista percepcija zavesti (*chun zhi* 純知覺). Xu je trdil, da je takšna čista percepcija (ali zavest) estetsko opazovanje (*meidi guanzhao* 美地觀照) (Xu 1966, 73).

V Xujevih očeh je to estetsko opazanje ne-analitsko dojetje stvari (*fenomenov*) skozi intuicijo ali neposredno percepcijo (*zhiguande huodong* 直觀的活動). Takšen pristop je povsem drugačen od pragmatičnega, ki si prizadeva iskati védenje. Preprosto se zanaša na percepcijo, ki se pojavi skozi spontano aktivnost čutnih organov, na primer skozi vid in sluh.

Kot je zapisal Zhuangzi:

12 墮肢體，黜聰明，離形去知，同於大通，此謂坐忘。

Ne poslušaj z ušesi, ampak s svojo srčno zavestjo. Ne poslušaj s svojo srčno zavestjo, ampak s svojim *qijem* (vitalnim potencialom). Poslušanje se konča pri ušesih, srčna zavest se konča pri simbolu. *Qi* (vitalni potencial) je prazen in potemtakem zmožen sprejemati stvari, akumulirana praznina pa je *dao*. Praznina je postenje zavesti.¹³ (Zhuangzi s.d. *Nei pian*, *Renjian shi*: 2)

Xu je interpretiral percepcijo ušes v Zhuangzijevem citatu *poslušanje se konča pri ušesih* kot zgolj slušnost, percepcijo srčne zavesti v *srčna zavest se konča pri simbolu* pa kot zgolj ustrezno percepcijo slušnosti. V obeh primerih Zhuangzi opisuje ne-analitsko dožemanje. To je še bolj očitno v prvem stavku odlomka, ki napeljuje, naj ne poslušamo »s srčno zavestjo, temveč s *qijem*«, saj je dožemanje srčne zavesti še vedno povezano z védenjem. Za Xuja je torej pomen *qija* (vitalnega potenciala) analogen pomenu *xinzhaija* (Xu 1966, 74). Ta način percepcije je pomemben pogoj za vzpostavitev estetskih opazanj (ibid.).

Za Xu Fuguana razlaganje Zhuangzijevega *xinzhaija* le s stališča posameznika ni zadostno, prav tako kot ni zadostno razlaganje estetskega opazovanja le skozi intuitivno perceptivno aktivnost. Srčna zavest, vpletena v *xinzhai*, je subjekt umeetniškega duha. Povedano drugače: je sama osnova, na kateri lahko vzpostavimo estetsko opazovanje. Da bi ta odnos razložil nekoliko jasneje, je Xu skušal primerjati predstavo o *xinzhaiju* z določenimi aspekti Husserlove fenomenologije.

Xu je poudaril Husserlovo metodo *bracketing* ali *epoché* (postavitve v oklepaj), kjer postavimo v oklepaje naš tako imenovan običajen način videnja realnosti, z namenom osredotočiti se na našo izkušnjo tega videnja. Na ta način postanemo zmožni raziskovati svojo zavest. Po Husserlu je naša zavest vedno namerna v smislu, da je dejavna (vedno nekaj počne) ter referenčna (vedno se na nekaj nanaša). Po Xujevem mnenju se to ne šteje med izkušnje naše zavesti, temveč kot transcendenca, in je v tem smislu podobna Zhuangzijevemu *xinzhaiju* (ibid.).

Na tej točki se ponovno poraja vprašanje, ali lahko Zhuangzijeve *xinzhai* res obravnavamo kot transcendentno stanje. Medtem ko so prevladujoči trendi zahodne filozofije utemeljeni na dualistični razločitvi telesa ter zavesti, kjer lahko do združitve subjekta ter objekta pride le v polju metafizične transcendence, Zhuangzijeve *zuowang* izvira iz holistične kozmologije, kjer sta lahko oba aspekta združena v tu in zdaj totranskega življenja. To je hkrati tudi fokus metode *xinzhai*; Zhuangzi ne opisuje le določenega (estetskega) načina percepcije, temveč tudi predloži način, na katerega lahko dosežemo združitev subjekta in objekta v našem življenju.

13 无聽之以耳而聽之以心，无聽之以心而聽之以氣。聽止於耳，心止於符。氣也者，虛而待物者也。唯道集虛。虛者，心齋也。

Po drugi stani pa je Xu Fuguan zaznal, da se Zhuangzijev *xinzhai* pojavi iz pozabljanja védenja in je potemtakem prazen in tih. Po Xujevem mnenju zavest v fenomenologiji izhaja iz postavljanja v oklepaje oziroma postavljanja védenja na stran in je prav tako prazna in tiha (oziroma spokojna). Xu meni, da sta *noesis* ter *noema*,¹⁴ ki se pojavljata v zavesti, medsebojno povezana; imata skupen izvor ter bistvo, saj koreninita v enosti subjekta ter objekta.

V tem pogledu je upravičeno zapisal, da se v Zhuangzijeви »praznini in tišini« *xinzhaija* poraja tudi neločljiva enost srčne zavesti ter vseh drugih stvari. Za Zhuangzijevim »pozabljanjem védenja« stoji aktivnost čiste zavesti, ki je – s Xujevega stališča – enaka kot izvor percepcije v Husserlovi fenomenologiji (Xu 1996, 74). Tudi ta pogled je precej problematičen, saj so lahko aspekti védenja, ki so v Husserlovi fenomenologiji potisnjeni na obrobje (v oklepaje), lahko po potrebi še vedno uporabljeni ali vzeti v obzir, saj še vedno tvorijo osnovno podlago določene, konkretne zavesti. Zhuangzijevo »pozabljanje«, ki je ultimativna stopnja njegove metode *xinzhai*, meri na nekaj povsem drugega, natančneje na drugo polje percepcije, ki je primerljivo s transom in kjer ne le, da ni meje med subjektom ter objektom, ampak niti ni meja, ki bi ločevale sanje in stanje budnosti ali celo meje med življenjem in smrtjo.¹⁵ Poleg tega to ni ločeno stanje zavesti; je tesno povezano ter v neprestani komunikaciji z drugimi bitji in kozmičnimi entitetami.

Skozi analizo omenjenih Zhuangzijevisih konceptov je Xu skušal razložiti tudi bistvo intuicije ter razjasniti, kako nam lahko percepcija zagotavlja vpogled v stvari. Poudaril je, da Husserlu intuicija pomeni spoznanje esencialne narave zavesti in predstavlja fenomenološki pristop, ki vodi »nazaj k stvarjem po sebi«. V zvezi s tem je Xu osvetlil dispozicijo praznine in tišine srčne zavesti v Zhuangzijeve *xinzhaiju*. Poudaril je tudi jasnost razumevanja, ki se poraja iz praznine, saj sta praznina in tišina skupni vir vseh stvari na svetu (vključno z vsemi pojavi). Potemtakem, je nadaljeval, lahko čista zavest izvira le iz praznine. Po Xuju to odkritje prinaša konkretnije rešitve nekaterih ključnih vprašanj znotraj fenomenologije. Prav zato, ker je čista zavest nujno prazna, se lahko *noesis* ter *noema* v njej pojavita hkrati. Samo kadar je zavest prazna, lahko govorimo o čistem intuitivnem vpogledu. V tem kontekstu je Xu poudaril, da zahodna fenomenologija išče možnosti vzpostavitve koncepta čiste zavesti. Tako je upravičeno zastavil vprašanje, zakaj, če je tako, Zhuangzijeve srčne zavesti v *xinzhaiju* ne moremo razumeti kot temelja estetskega opazovanja (ibid. 1966, 79).

14 Husserl imenuje notranji proces zavesti *noesis*, njegovo idealno vsebino pa *noema* (Smith 2013, 3. poglavje).

15 Glej na primer Zhuangzijevo zgodbo o metuljevih sanjah, o ribjem veselju ali o sencah sence.

Xujev odgovor je, da je estetska zavest v fenomenologiji enaka Zhuangzijevemu *xinzhaiju*. Estetska zavest je opazovanje objektov, ki so postali estetski objekti prav skozi to dejanje. Potemtakem lahko opazovanje samo pretvori stvari v estetske objekte. Predpogoj za to pretvorbo pa je, da mora biti dejanje opazovanja izpeljano iz enosti subjekta in objekta. Znotraj te enosti so objekti poosebljeni in človeško bitje kot opazovalec je objektivizirano, čeprav se opazovalec tega ne zaveda nujno. Enost subjekta in objekta je mogoča med opazovanjem, saj sta opazovano in opazovalec v neposredni interakciji. Če se lahko ljudje osvobodijo vseprisotnosti sodb (npr. skozi *xinzhai*), lahko osvojijo stanje praznine in tišine duha ter dosežejo estetsko opazovanje. Vendar so za običajne ljudi takšne izkušnje lahko le prehodne in trenutne. A za Zhuangzija je srčna zavest *xinzhaija* subjekt duha umetnosti (ibid., 80).

Na splošno bi lahko trdili, da je Xujeva primerjava Husserlovega fenomenološkega pristopa k raziskovanju človeške zavesti z idejami po Zhuangziju izjemno zanimiva, čeprav Husserl sam ni govoril o izločitvi naših hrepenenj ter védenja za namen raziskovanja naše zavesti. Kot smo videli, je priskrbel metodo postavljanja v oklepaje oziroma potiskanja védenja, ki ga imamo, na obrobje, z namenom osredotočanja na naše izkušnje stvari v naši zavesti, ko se srečujemo z njimi. Njegova fenomenologija nam tako prinaša metodo razumevanja ter raziskovanja naše zavesti, ko se srečujemo s svetom. Kot sem že omenila, to stežka primerjamo z izločenjem védenja v Zhuangzijevo filozofijo *xinzhaija* in *zuowang*.

Na tej točki bi lahko omenili, da je tudi Li Zehou primerjal Zhuangzijevo izločitev misli in čutov v procesu percepcije s Husserlovim dojetjem čiste zavesti. A Li je jasno poudaril, da je razlika med njunima zadevnima pristopoma ta, da je Husserlova čista zavest epistemološka, medtem ko je Zhuangzijevo *zuowang* estetska ideja (Li 2010, 81). Videti je, da nam je Zhuangzi postregel z metodo izločanja naših hrepenenj ter védenja in pretvarjanja teh v praznino, z namenom doseganja ultimativne svobode našega duha (oziroma zavesti). Čeprav (ali morda zaradi tega, ker) lahko to razumemo oziroma ovrednotimo kot estetsko percepcijo in estetski način življenja, tega ne moremo tako zlahka primerjati s fenomenološkimi predstavami ali dojetji zavesti.

Po eni strani lahko trdimo, da je, v določenem smislu, Xu nadgradil fenomenološko dojetje človeške zavesti z osvetlitvijo Zhuangzijeve predstave o praznini. A po drugi strani ne moremo spregledati dejstva, da je Xu v tem procesu izločil (ali pa preprosto ignoriral) teoretski okvir fenomenologije v dojetanju človeške zavesti, ki je, kot je poudaril Li Zehou, epistemološki. Kljub tem pomanjkljivostim pa so Xujeve dodelave Zhuangzijevega *xinzhaija* v kontekstu estetske misli dragocene ter edinstvene in tako vredne nadaljnje pozornosti ter premislekov.

Zaključek

Xujeva poglobljena in obsežna interpretacija Zhuangzijeve estetske misli je neizmerne pomena, saj opozarja na razsežnosti njegove filozofije, kar nedvomno prinaša novo perspektivo v razumevanju človeškega duha. Kljub temu pa se zdi Xu Fuguanova metodologija komparativne analize problematična, saj ni upošteval širšega ozadja zahodnih filozofskih del, ki jih je vključil v raziskavo. Da bi orisal njihovo domnevno podobnost z Zhuangzijevo filozofijo, je komaj kaj osvetlil določene dele teorij, na primer tiste, ki ustrezajo vprašanju, ki jih je skušal poudariti pri Zhuangziju. Po drugi strani pa moramo vzeti v obzir posebne okoliščine obdobja, v katerem so nastala njegova najpomembnejša dela, in njegove razloge za predstavitev teh analiz. V šestdesetih letih dvajsetega stoletja je modni duh zahodnih liberalnih ideologij (ki so jih večinoma uvozili preko Japonske) prevzel misli številnih mladih ljudi na Tajvanu. V tistem času so poskusi doseganja osvoboditve od okovov tradicije in morale, skupaj z željami po vzpostavitvi nove in boljše družbe, oblikovanimi na modelih zahodnih liberalnih demokracij, preplavili (ne-socialistične) vzhodnoazijske družbe. Xu Fuguan je te težnje razumel kot izjemno nevarne, ignorantske in nepremišljene, saj bi lahko vodile do popolnega pozahodenja ter tako do izgube idejnih tradicij (in s tem kulturne dediščine ter identitete) teh družb, ki so bile po njegovem mnenju še vedno vredne ohranitve ter razvijanja. Tako je preko svojih analiz Zhuangzija, še posebej njegove estetske misli, skušal osvetliti daljnosežnost integralne subjektivitete, relativizma in predvsem metod osvobajanja človeškega duha tega starodavnega misleca. Skozi svojo (nekonsistentno izdelano) primerjavo teh elementov z določenimi razsežnostmi zahodne fenomenologije si je Xu želel vzpostaviti platformo, vredno nadaljnjih raziskav, ki bi po možnosti služila tudi kot navdih mladim tajvanskim umetnicam in umetnikom, ki so iskali nove načine razvijanja svoje umetnosti, ne da bi se zavedali, da lahko veliko črpajo iz zakladov svoje lastne estetske tradicije.

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Yang Zhu – enfant terrible filozofskega daoizma in njegov koncept privatizma

Jana S. ROŠKER*

Izvleček

Yang Zhu, kitajski filozof iz četrtega stoletja pred našim štetjem, se je v zgodovino kitajske filozofije zapisal kot egoističen hedonist, nezmožen krepotnega življenja v skupnosti, ustrojeni po načelih stroge konfucijanske filozofije. Kot takega ga je uradno konfucijansko zgodovinopisje vselej znova ožigosalo za heretičnega misleca, nevrednega položaja resničnega filozofa. Ta članek poskuša zavrniti takšno interpretacijo Yang Zhujeve filozofije in pokazati, da gre pri njegovem idejnem opusu za izjemno egalitarno filozofijo, ki si prizadeva za svobodo, dostojanstvo in osebno integriteto vsakega posameznika v družbi. Članek izhaja iz predpostavke, da je prav Yang Zhu tisti predstavnik klasičnega daoizma, ki je poskušal v svojem nauku najbolj dosledno uresničiti načelo družbene strpnosti, avtonomije in individualne svobode v smislu, ki prihaja do izraza v reku »živi in pusti živeti«. Yang Zhu je pogosto označen kot zagovornik anarhizma in individualizma. Avtorica na podlagi kontekstualne analize kritično preveri to predpostavko in ugotovi, da je za označevanje Yangove filozofije, ki temelji na zaščiti »zasebnosti«, morda najprimernejši koncept »privatizma«.

Ključne besede: Yang Zhu, filozofski daoizem, klasični daoizem, hedonizem, osebna integriteta, avtonomija, individualizem, privatizem

Yang Zhu – Enfant terrible of Philosophical Daoism and His Concept of Privatism

Abstract

Yang Zhu, a Chinese philosopher from the fourth Century BCE, has been in the history of Chinese philosophy regarded as a selfish hedonist, unable of virtuous life in community, structured in accordance with rigid Confucian philosophy. As such, the official Confucian historiography has always marked him as a heretic thinker, unworthy of being a real philosopher. The present article tries to reject such an interpretation of Yang Zhu's philosophy and to expose the fact, that his opus should be regarded as an extraordinarily egalitarian philosophy, striking for freedom, dignity and personal integrity of every individual in society. The article follows the presumption, according to which Yang Zhu is the

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very representative of classical Daoism, who tried in his work to consistently realize the principle of social tolerance, autonomy and individual freedom in the sense of “to live and to let live”.

Yang Zhu is often denoted as an advocate of anarchism or individualism. Instead, the author of the present article proposes to apply the term “privatism” to his philosophy, because her contextual analysis has shown that it is a more appropriate and less Eurocentric term.

Keywords: Yang Zhu, philosophical Daoism, classical Daoism, hedonism, personal integrity, autonomy, individualism, privatism

Uvod

Yang Zhu, pomemben in pri nas še vse premalo znan predstavnik individualističnega anarhizma ali »individualizma«, je živel v obdobju Vzhodne dinastije Zhou (770–221 pr. n. št.). V času svojega življenja je imel kar nekaj vnetih privrženecv in njegova filozofija je bila v tistem času precej vplivna, kljub svoji neortodoksosti – ali pa morda prav zaradi nje. Po legalistični združitvi cesarstva je mojster Yang popolnoma utonil v pozabo. Njegov nauk, ki se zavzema za senzualizem in neposredni čutni užitek kot edini in poslednji smisel življenja, se je moral dostojnim konfucianistom zdeti neznosno amoralističen. Zato ni čudno, da so njegovi nauki ohranjeni zgolj v fragmentarni in nepovezani obliki. Večino teh fragmentov najdemo v 7. poglavju dela Liezi, o njem pa govori tudi Mencij, četudi v zelo jasno ideologizirani obliki (Villaver 2015, 216). Po mnenju znamenitega modernega misleca Hu Shija je Yang Zhujeva filozofija v tem delu tako ali tako ohranjena zgolj po pomoti, namreč »zaradi neumnosti in nepazljivosti Liezijevih ponarejevalcev« (prim. Hu Shi 1984, 176). Tako se imamo »neumnosti in nepazljivosti« končno enkrat zahvaliti za zajeten kupček – zelo nenavadnega in že iz tega razloga nadvse zanimivega – znanja, ki bi sicer za vselej končalo na grmadi državotvorne historiografske morale konfucianističnih cenzorjev. Znani moderni in na Kitajskem še vedno cenjeni zgodovinar filozofije Feng Youlan se s tako razlago ne strinja. (Sicer pa, kdo bi mu to tudi zameril, ko pa Hu po njegovem mnenju s tovrstnim – spet nedostojnim – namigovanjem oziroma podtikanjem po nepotrebnem blati sloves inteligence in moralne neoporečnosti starokitajskih konfucijanskih učenjakov ...) Kakorkoli že, Fengu je ljubša naslednja inačica razlage:

There is reason to suppose, that after death of Lao Tzu, his followers, owing to the different interpretations of the meaning of »Tao«, divided into two diametrically opposite schools, the one represented by Chuang

Tzu, the other by Yang Chu, just as after the death of Socrates, his followers, owing to the different interpretation of the idea of good, divided into three schools, two of which were diametrical opposite: the Cynics and the Cyreanics. Then came a later Taoist, who, seeing that both schools called themselves Taoists, drew materials from both of them and composed the book, in the name of Lie Tzu, whose existence stil lacks historical proof. (Fung 1953, 65)

Umestitev Yang Zhujeve filozofije v opus filozofskega daoizma

V teku stoletij sta se na Kitajskem izoblikovali dve osnovni veji daoizma: filozofska (*dao jia* 道家) in religiozna (*dao jiao* 道教). Yang Zhu zagotovo sodi v prvo strujo. Zato si bomo za boljše razumevanje njegove filozofije najprej ogledali temeljne značilnosti filozofskega daoizma, nato pa bomo na kratko opredelili tudi osnovne razlike med obema zgoraj navedenima šolama daoizma.

Podobno kot konfucijanstvo se je tudi filozofski daoizem kot družbeno relevantna miselnost pojavil v obdobju stoterih šol, torej v času postopnega razpada fevdalne družbe konec petega in na začetku četrtega stoletja pr. n. št. Posamezniki, ki so bili siti spletk in boja za oblast in ki so želeli zapustiti svet uradnih hierarhij, so v individualistično-anarhističnem filozofu Yang Zhuju našli prvega preroka osebne svobode in prvega upornika proti najrazličnejšim družbenim prisilam. Yang Zhujevo filozofijo poznamo sicer samo iz žolčnih razprav drugih filozofov, v katerih običajno izražajo svoje ogorčenje nad njegovo »nedopustno« sebičnostjo. Naj bo kakorkoli že, Yang Zhu, ki je zaslovel po svoji radikalni izjavi, češ da za rešitev sveta in vsega človeštva ne bi bil pripravljen žrtvovati niti enega samega lasu s svoje glave, je bil prvi filozof, ki je poskušal relativizirati splošno veljavna merila o vrednosti družbe in posameznika. Problematiko svobode, ki je osrednji predmet njegovih razprav, sta obravnavala tudi oba druga, pri nas bolj znana utemeljitelja daoistične filozofije, Laozi in Zhuangzi.

V središču daoističnega nauka je pojem dao, ki je nastal v veliko zgodnejših obdobjih, torej kar nekaj stoletij pred nastankom stoterih šol klasične kitajske filozofije. Dao je nevidna in neoprijemljiva, a vendar povsod prisotna, večna in vseobsegajoča manifestacija narave oziroma vsega obstoječega. Človek občuti dao v tem, kar ima za njegove zakonitosti: poti zvezd, menjava dneva in noči, letni časi itd. Dao kot simbolično, a tudi dejansko manifestacijo teh zakonitosti najdemo tudi pri konfucijanskih klasikih. Nadaljnja skupna značilnost obeh nauk je, da oba poudarjata organsko povezavo med zakonitostmi zunanje narave in zakonitostmi

človeškega oziroma družbenega življenja. A medtem ko so konfucijanci v teh zakonitostih videli predvsem naravno dano hierarhijo oblasti in podložništva in so zato v svojih teorijah poudarjali predvsem moralo kot izključno zvezo med naravnimi in družbenimi vsebinami, med metafiziko in pragmatičnim racionalizmom, so daoisti svoj svet dojemali kot naravno dano svobodo. Tako predstavlja konfucijanski *dao* 道 predvsem etično kategorijo, tisto pot namreč, ki je posamezniku vnaprej dana v socialnem smislu. Pri daoistih je isti pojem uporabljen predvsem kot holistični kozmogonični termin – gre za naravno dano pot (zakonitost) večnih premen vesoljstva in vsega bivajočega.

Etimološki pomen besede *dao* je torej »pot«. Ta vključuje nenehno gibanje, dinamiko oziroma nenehno spreminjanje, ki hkrati predstavlja tudi način življenja, torej neke vrste ključno metodo ali načelo. Zato ni čudno, da se konfucijanske in daoistične interpretacije tega pojma med seboj bistveno razlikujejo. *Dao* je za konfucijance tista pot, ki je v svojem globljem smislu predvsem etično vodilo skozi grozljiv pragozd kozmične in družbene nepreglednosti, za daoiste pa tista, ki obstoji sama po sebi, ki je neodvisna tako od čustev kot tudi od razuma, tista pot torej, ki ne potrebuje nobenih dodatkov ali odvzemanj.

Dao je v svojem vseobsegajočem delovanju odločilna in zaokrožena sila, ki v sebi in preko sebe določa vse bivanje, zato se daoistom vsi nasilni posegi v svet zdijo odveč. Ker naj bi se vse stvari razvijale same po sebi, so daoisti tudi najvišjim vladarjem toplo priporočili, naj se čim manj dejavno vmešavajo v naravni in s tem tudi družbeni tok življenja. Osrednji pojem daoistične filozofije je koncept nedelovanja (*wu wei* 無為), ki je kot zrcalna slika konfucijanskega, po kategorijah razčlenjenega sistema odgovornosti, skupaj z njim odločilno vplivala na proces antagonističnega duhovnega razvoja med političnim idealizmom in tisto zavestjo, ki jo v pomanjkanju ustreznega izraza v evropski svet dojemanja žal lahko prevedemo samo z izmaličujočim izrazom »vdanost v usodo«. Pri tem gre za proces, katerega vpliv je še danes čutiti tako v politični in družbeni stvarnosti Kitajske kot tudi v duši vsakega posameznika. Sicer pa ideal nedelovanja ni pasivne narave, saj omogoča, da se v posamezniku, družbi ali naravi izrazi edina dejavnost, ki zmore ustvariti resnično sožitje med vsemi »desettisočimi stvarmi«. To je »*de*«, sila oziroma moč naravno dane, osnovne kreposti, ki jo, kot bomo videli v naslednjem poglavju, najdemo že v naslovu osrednjega daoističnega klasika.

Za daoistično miselnost je tipična tudi odsotnost vsega absolutnega, ki med drugim odseva v samem *daotu*. *Dao* je povsod prisoten, vseobsežen, trajen in večen – in vendar popolnoma neoprijemljiv, saj *dao*, ki ga dojamemo, vselej ostaja omejen na naše predstave, naše subjektivno deojmanje in, kar je še posebej vprašljivo, posredovanje. Resnični *dao*, ki se hkrati nahaja tudi zunaj naše zavesti in celo onkraj

ločnice med subjektivnim in objektivnim, lahko začutimo v trenutku večnosti bodisi kot bistvo samega sebe bodisi kot rahel, mavrični most brezimmnosti, ki ljudi povezuje z naravo in med seboj, kadar »pozabijo« na vsa lažna hrepenenja in vse umetne ideale družbenega sožitja.

Zato tudi ideja nedejavnosti nima absolutnega pomena. Notranja svoboda, ki jo dopušča posamezniku, je v nasprotju z vsakršnim, tudi najbolj dobronamernim in pragmatičnim totalitarizmom, saj je izvedljiva le v okviru relativizacije vsega obstoječega.

V tem je tudi vsa umetnost življenja, ki jo najdemo, kadar znamo prisluhniti tudi tišini in ko se posvetimo tistemu, kar je na videz skrito. Zato so se daoisti na vseh področjih življenja zavzemali za tako imenovane »mehke postopke« (*rou dao* 柔道), ki prihajajo do izraza tudi v ključnih simbolih daoistične filozofije; vodi, ženskosti, otroštvu itd.

Medtem ko se klasiki filozofskega daoizma, h katerim sodijo Yang Zhu, Laozi in Zhuangzi, nikoli niso ukvarjali z nesmrtnostjo, temveč so se prej zavzemali za ideal mirne smrti po dolgem in izpolnjenem življenju, se je od obdobja dinastije Han (206 pr. n. št.–220) naprej vse več daoistov ukvarjalo z raziskovanjem metod in tehnik za podaljšanje življenja, kar naj bi privedlo do nesmrtnosti. Medtem ko so vsa tovrstna vprašanja poskušali sistematizirati že posamezni filozofi v tretjem stoletju pred našim štetjem, na primer pripadnik šole yinyang Zou Yan, pa se je iz nauka prvega znanega daoističnega alkimista iz obdobja dinastije Han, Liu Shao-juna, razvilo pravo pravcato religiozno gibanje, ki je imelo privrženca tako med najvišjimi aristokrati kot tudi med najrevnejšimi ljudskimi množicami.

Seveda so ambicije nege osebnosti in doseganja nesmrtnosti gojili samo tisti daoisti, ki so si to lahko privoščili. Množice revnih kmetov so se morale zadovoljiti s tolažilnim čaščenjem božanstev; obema prej navedenima bogovoma se je ob naraščajočem vplivu budizma v daoističnem panteonu pridružilo še nepregledno število različnih malikov. Najpomembnejša božanstva so pri tem vselej tvorila trojico »nebo-zemlja-človek« (*tian-di-ren* 天-地-人), njihov sedež pa je bil tako v notranjosti posameznika kot tudi v središču vesolja. Daoistična religija je prevzela tudi veliko tradicionalnih ljudskih verovanj in obrednih tehnik, kakršen je sistem »vetra in vode« (*feng shui* 風水). To je specifična kitajska geomantika, ki se je kot veda o kriterijih za celostno in prav vse kozmične dejavnike upoštevala določanje najprimernejšega mesta in najprimernejših razmer za postavitev kakšnega objekta ali za izvedbo določene ceremonije vse do danes ohranila v večini vzhodnoazijskih držav.

Daoizem, torej šola, h kateri brezdvomno sodi tudi Yang Zhu, je v vlogi svobodnjaške opozicije proti vladajočemu konfucijanskemu nauku skozi vso zgodovino

tradicionalne Kitajske ostal vpliven dejavnik družbenega in kulturnega življenja. Posebno pomemben je bil njegov vpliv na razne tajne družbe, ki so pogosto igrale zelo pomembno vlogo pri padcih posameznih dinastij.

Yang Zhujev doprinos k tej šoli je izjemno dragocen, saj je s svojo – četudi v svojem času pogosto osovraženo – filozofijo vseskozi opozarjal na nevarnost podjarmljenja človeške osebnosti in na njeno ukalupljanje v standarde, ki koristijo interesom države in njenih oblastnikov.

Njegovo zavzemanje za človeško integriteto so po njegovi smrti pogosto enačili z egoizmom oziroma (vsaj) individualizmom. Vendar je slednji pojem problematičen, če ga obravnavamo s perspektive tradicionalne Kitajske in njene družbene strukture. Že Yang Zhujeva najbolj znana zgodba, ki jo bomo obravnavali v naslednjem poglavju, je dokaz, da lahko pri njegovi filozofiji govorimo prej o zagovarjanju integritete posameznika kot pa individualizma, saj gre konec koncev pri tem terminu za pojem evropskega razsvetljenstva, ki ima v svojem lastnem zgodovinskem kontekstu popolnoma druge konotacije.

Yangova Zgodba o dlaki

Yang Zhu je skozi vsa stoletja po svoji smrti pa vse do dandanes na Kitajskem užival dvomljiv sloves ekstremnega egocentrika, radikalnega hedonista in asocialnega individualnega anarhista. Vse te nič kaj laskave nazive si je »prislužil« v glavnem z zgodbo dlaki, ki opisuje njegov pogovor z učencem Qin Gulijem:

Qin Guli je vprašal Yang Zhuja: Če bi lahko rešili svet s tem, da bi žrtvovali dlako s svojega telesa, ali bi bili to storili? Yang Zhu je odgovoril, da z eno samo dlako zagotovo ni mogoče rešiti sveta. Vendar je Qin vztrajal:

- Pa denimo, da bi bilo to mogoče. No, kaj bi storili? - Yang Zhu na to ni odgovoril. (cp. Liezi 1998, 217–8)

Za puritanistično moralistične konfucijance je bil Yangov molk že več kot dovolj za obsodbo njegove osebnosti kot nezaslišano pokvarjene, pohujšljive in zato javnemu blagru nadvse škodljive. Te obsodbe, kateri smo lahko priča v večini kasnejših Liezijevih komentarjev, ni moglo omiliti niti nadaljevanje zgodbe, v katerem od ne-odgovora zmedeni Qin poišče dodatno razlago pri starejšem disciplu. Iz nje je jasno razvidno, da Yangova odklonitev ne izhaja iz primitivnega egoizma, temveč iz spoštovanja integritete ter nedotakljivosti človeškega duha in telesa. Kot je razvidno iz interpretacij njegovih učencev, nas njegova Zgodba o dlaki nauči naslednjega: Če nikomur ne bo skrivljen niti en las na

glavi, in če si nihče ne bo aktivno prizadeval za dobrobit sveta, bo svet vladal samemu sebi. (ibid., 219)

Z drugimi besedami: vsak naj se briga predvsem zase, ne da bi karkoli jemal drugim in ne da bi jim karkoli dajal. Če bomo vsi zadovoljni s tem, kar imamo, bomo vsi srečni in s tem bomo še najbolj prispevali k blagostanju družbe in vsega sveta.

Namesto izvajanja izpraznjenih ritualov, ki naj bi vodili h krepostnemu življenju, in namesto uklanjanja ter poslušnosti oblastem se je Yang zavzemal za egalitarno brezvladje. Bolj kot intencionalne, pogosto prikrito nasilne družbene aktivnosti, ki po njegovem mnenju vodijo bolj k škodi kot h koristim, ga je zanimalo nedelovanje (*wu wei* 無為) v smislu sledenja naravnemu teku življenja.

Yangovo zavzemanje za »ohranitev celovitosti naravnega življenja« in za »ohranjanje avtentičnosti individualnega sebstva« (prim. ibid.) lahko razumemo v povezavi z njegovo filozofijo telesa, v kateri trdi, da je razumno zadovoljevat človeške potrebe in želje, kajti le na ta način bomo dosegli ravnovesje v ekonomiji energij, ki so temeljnega pomena za ohranitev celovitosti človeškega življenja.

Avtonomija posameznika, pravična družba in vprašanje nesmrtnosti

Vsekakor je bil Yangov nauk eden redkih ohranjenih filozofij, ki so se v kriznih tranzicijskih časih obdobja Vojskujočih se držav (Zhan guo, 475–221 pr. n. št.) zavemale za osebno svobodo posameznika. Samovoljnost oblastnikov in njihove morale je šla Yangu očitno precej na živce: »S kaznimi in pohvalami se ljudem vse mogoče prepoveduje, po drugi strani pa se jih priganja; vrednotenje in zakoni prihajajo in se spet zamenjajo, tako da so ljudje neprestano zmedeni in nemirni.« (ibid., 208)

Kot pravi klasični daoist je tudi on izhajal iz holističnega pogleda na svet; hlepenje po nesmrtnosti je videl kot slepo ulico na poti ozaveščenega človeškega življenja. Slednje je namreč videl kot del večnih kozmičnih premen, v sklopu katerih je tudi smrt enakovredna življenju; še več, šele smrt je pravzaprav tista, v kateri postanejo vsa bitja v svojih medsebojnih odnosih takšna, kot v resnici so, namreč enaka in enakovredna, neobremenjena z negotovimi in minljivimi postulati moralnih in političnih položajev.

Yang Zhu pravi: To, v čemer se obstoječe razlikuje, je življenje. To, v čemer si je vse enako, je smrt. V življenju so modreci in bedaki, bogati in reveži, v tem je različnost. V smrti pa postanejo vsi zgolj smrdeči, gnijoči kosi mesa. V tem je enakost. (ibid., 209)

Tudi Yangovi fragmenti, ki opisujejo to neločljivo povezanost bivanja in nebivanja, so običajno napačno interpretirani kot povečevanje smrti in skrajni nihilizem. Vendar tudi ta splošno razširjeni predsodek ne drži; kot je razvidno iz naslednjega citata, Yang ni zanikal vrednosti človeškega življenja, ampak ga je zgolj vrednotil kot del vseobsežne relativizacije stvarnosti, v kateri je smrt enakovredna oblika pojavnosti kot življenje. Ko ga eden njegovih učencev, kateremu je ravnokar postalo jasno, da življenje kot tako nima prav nikakršnega posvečenega, višjega smisla, vpraša, ali potem mar ni bolje čimprej umreti in si morda celo sam vzeti življenje, ga Yang Zhu poduči o tem, da je življenje samo po sebi – torej življenje brez visokoletečih, višjih ciljev – edina prava vrednota. To vrednoto moramo sprejeti in spoštovati tako, kot sprejemamo in spoštujemo smrt, zakaj oboje je del naravno pogojena krogotoka bivanja. Če že živiš, se ne obremenjuj s tem in pusti življenju prosto pot. Raziskuj njegova poženja in radosti ter mirno počakaj na smrt. Ko bo ta enkrat prišla, pa se ti tudi z njo ni treba obremenjevati. Pusti ji prosto pot in raziskuj, kam te bo odpeljala, dokler ne bo vsega konec. Potem pa tako in tako ne bo več nikakršnih obremenitev in vse bo šlo svojo pot. Čemu bi torej hotel pospešiti ali upočasniti tok življenja? (ibid., 217)

Predsodki o Yangu kot egoističnem hedonistu

Predsodek o njegovem hedonizmu izvira iz njegove skeptične naravnosti do vrednot, ki so ljudem posredovane skozi splošno veljavne moralne postulate. V konfliktnih obdobjih, ki so jih pogojevali spori in hegemonistične težnje posameznih fevdnih oblastnikov in njihovih dvornih ideologov, od katerih je vsak razglašal svojo resnico kot edino veljavno, je ta filozof očitno prišel do zaključka, da splošno veljavna resnica v smislu absolutnega osmišljenja življenja ne more obstajati. Edini konkretni smisel, ki nam kot ljudem, ujetim v bežni trenutek minljive eksistence, preostaja, je prizadevanje za čim večjo zadovoljnost. Zato je Yang zagovornik uživanja lepote življenja, dokler to traja.

Naj uho posluša, kar želi slišati; naj oko vidi, kar želi gledati; naj nos zavoha, kar želi vohati; naj usta povejo, kar žele govoriti, naj si telo odpočije in duh naj počne, kar se mu zahoče. Uho rado posluša prijetne melodije. Če se mu tega ne dovoli, potem je to zame nasilje nad sluhom. Oko rado gleda lepoto elegance in čutnosti. Če se mu to prepove, potem je to zame nasilje nad vidom. Nos rad voha vonjave cvetja. Če se mu to ne omogoči, potem je to zame nasilje nad vonjem. Usta rada povedo, kaj je prav in kaj ne. Če se jim to prepove, potem je to zame nasilje nad modrostjo. Telo si rado odpočije v prijetnem udobju lepote; če se mu tega ne dovoli, potem je to zame nasilje

nad primernostjo. Duh si želi sprostitve in če se mu to ne omogoči, potem je to zame nasilje nad samoumevnostjo. Vsa tovrstna nasilja so razlogi muk in trpljenja. Komur se posreči odstraniti te razloge muk in trpljenja ter tako v miru dočakati svojo smrt, ta po mojem mnenju živi v skladu z nego svoje osebnosti, pa tudi če živi samo dan, mesec, leto ali deset let. Kdor pa ostaja ujet v te razloge muk in trpljenja, je obsojen na klavno životarjenje, pa četudi bo morda dolgo živel. Tudi če bo (takšno životarjenje) trajalo sto, tisoč ali deset tisoč let, to zame ni nega osebnosti. (ibid., 211)

Predsodek hedonizma je po vsej verjetnosti napačen tudi zaradi tega, ker Yang resničnega uživanja življenjskih radosti ne enači s kopičenjem materialnih dobrin ali politične oblasti, temveč z osebno avtonomijo v smislu občutenja skladnosti s samim seboj.

Ljudje se potegujejo za nično, hipno minljivo slavo in si prizadevajo za odvečne časti, ki naj bi jih preživele. Tako v bistvu ostajajo osamljeni. Budno pazijo na to, kar vidijo in slišijo ter si prizadevajo za vrednostne sodbe, ki bi bile v prid njihovem telesu in duhu. Pri tem pa izgubljajo najdragocenejše trenutke sedanjosti in se ne znajo niti trenutka prepustiti svojim resničnim občutkom. Le v čem se sploh razlikujejo od kaznjencev v verigah? (ibid., 208)

Tako kot sam nikomur ne vsiljuje svojega mnenja, tudi zase zahteva pravico do uresničitve svojih življenjskih idealov in svoje »poti« bivanja. Prej bi lahko torej rekli, da je Yang tisti predstavnik klasičnega daoizma, ki poskuša v svojem nauku najbolj dosledno uresničiti načelo strpnosti in individualne svobode v smislu »živi in pusti živeti«. Seveda pa nosi prav to načelo v svoji srži libertaren politični naboj, kakršnega konfucianisti nikakor niso mogli tolerirati.

Prvemu kitajskemu anarhistu, čigar dela so ohranjena, se torej ni godilo prav nič bolje kot vsem drugim, ki so živeli za njim: državotvorne ideologije oblastnikov so jih vselej pošiljale »na smetišča zgodovine«. Tako kasneje tudi Mencij, eden najpomembnejših Konfucijevih naslednikov, Yang Zhuja označi za nekakšno zver v človeški podobi: »Gospod Yang je bil egoist, torej ni priznaval vladarjev. (...) Kdor ne priznava očetov ali vladarjev, pa je tak kot divje zveri.« (Mengzi 1997, 109)

Znanje in učenje

Morda je Yangovo poudarjanje avtentičnosti individualnega sebe bolj razumljivo bralcem in bralkam enainvajsetega stoletja. Ta starokitajski filozof nas

namreč v marsičem spominja na moderne mislece, ki se zavzemajo za avtonomijo posameznika in njegovo zavračanje zunanjih determinacij kot osnovo avtonomne družbe. Tako razumljena avtonomija predstavlja spontan razvoj lastne narave – narave namreč, ki ni podrejena ali opredeljena z zunanjimi entitetami, ne glede na to, ali so te realne ali zgolj ideali. Avtonomija, za kakršno se je zavzemal Yang Zhu, je opredeljena zgolj z lastnim, intimnim sebstvom posameznika. V tem pogledu se bistveno razlikuje od Kantovega koncepta avtonomije, ki pozicionira norme skupnosti nad svobodno voljo posameznika. S takšno idejo avtonomije je Yang poudaril razlikovanje med »tistimi, ki pobegnejo« (*dun ren* 頓人) in onimi, ki se znajo resnično »prilagajati« (*shun ren* 順人). Medtem ko je v prvih videl ljudi, ki beže pred svojim lastnim sebstvom in svoje življenje prepuščajo na milost in nemilost zunanjim faktorjem, so bili slednji zanj resnično ozaveščene osebe, saj ne sledijo slepo zunanjim vrednotam in svobodno uživajo avtentičnost svojega življenja, ki je neločljivo povezano z avtonomijo lastnega sebstva (prim. Liezi 1998, 112).

Yang je verjel, da se je človeški intelekt razvil zaradi biološke šibkosti ljudi in iz te šibke biološke opredeljenosti naj bi ljudje uporabljali stvari za vzdrževanje in gojenje lastne narave. Na ta način naj ljudje razvijajo svoj intelekt brez odvisnosti od fizične moči (ibid.).

Na tej osnovi je Yang Zhu razvil tudi svojo filozofijo učenja. Pri tem je izhajal iz predpostavke, po kateri je življenje osnovna vrednota. Če se pustimo zavajati prevelikemu številu različnih struj učenja, se nam lahko zgodi, da se bomo v njih izgubili in naša zmedenost bo privedla do tega, da bomo izgubili sami sebe. To si lahko ponazorimo z naslednjim Yangovim citatom, katerega najdemo v Liezijevega poglavju *Shuofu*: »Kadar je preveč razpotij, ne bomo našli izgubljene ovce. In kadar je preveč različnih učenj, bo učenec izgubil samega sebe.« (ibid., 254)

Zato Yang v središče svoje teorije učenja postavlja avtentičnost življenja (Emerson 1996, 540). Njegova pragmatična vizija učenja temelji na učenju za ohranjanje življenja ter življenjskega razvoja v skladu z osebno integriteto, v kateri je videl najvišjo vrednoto človeškega bivanja.

Zaključek

Analiza Yangovih citatov je pokazala, da je pri njegovi filozofiji problematično govoriti o individualizmu, saj gre pri tem za koncept evropskega razsvetljenja, katerega pomenske konotacije so popolnoma drugačne od tistih, ki se nanašajo na pojme, ki so v središču Yangove filozofije. Pri individualizmu gre za pojem, ki nastopa kot negacija ali protislovje kolektivizmu ali vsakršnemu tipu komunitarnosti oziroma

absolutne prioritete skupnosti. Kot smo videli v gornjih besedilih, pa je v ospredju Yangove filozofije zgolj spoštovanje človeške osebnosti kot take. Zavzema se za priznavanje splošnega človeškega dostojanstva in integritete. Ta je mogoča zgolj na osnovi nevmešavanja drugih, torej možnosti zasebnosti. Iz tega razloga je zagotovo primerneje, če Yangovo filozofijo označimo s terminom privatizem, kot da jo označujemo za individualistični diskurz.

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