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HOW CAN ONE BE PERFECTED BY MUSIC?—CONTEMPORARY
EDUCATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF CHINESE PRE-QIN CONFUCIAN
THOUGHT ON YUE JIAO (MUSIC EDUCATION)

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation project is an examination of aesthetic thought of Chinese pre-Qin Confucians with a focus on the idea of *Yue Jiao* (Music Education). Confucius, the founder of the Confucian School is regarded as the first educational philosopher in Chinese history both chronologically and in importance. A central theme in his aesthetics is that the final perfection of one's personhood as an integrated whole is accomplished by the study of music. In this project, I will analyze key aspects in Confucian notion of music and education, and the links between those two and harmonized social relations. In my project, I propose to argue that education of a personhood as a whole is central to be a human being in today's world. I suggest that aesthetic education, music education in particular, has an indispensable role in developing a harmonious balance between our rational intelligence and emotional sensibilities. Music education provides an ideal for living in the world today when unity is achieved without eliminating diversities.

My discussion of the contemporary educational significance of *Yue Jiao* contains two dimensions: (a) cultural, educational communications and mutual learning between the East and West; and (b) a reflective dialogue on education between history and the present. In the first dimension, I find considerable resonance and significant differences between Confucian aesthetics and key issues in ancient Greek aesthetics. Both traditions have a long history of the important role of music in human development and education. But they differ in their understanding of the foundation of musical value: for the ancient Chinese, it is emotive and social; for the

ancient Greece, it is mostly rational.

With the second dimension, I argue that a close examination of Confucian thought on *Yue Jiao* will contribute to the reflection on the nature and role of education in today's world. For how we educate a student to develop her personhood as a whole in a modern world of fragmentation and over specialization is the most critical question that educational philosophers must address. For this purpose, this project will discuss how ancient Chinese aesthetic traditions may bring new ways for us to understand contemporary educational problems and work on solutions, in ways that bear some relation to Western aesthetic traditions but also diverge in significant ways.

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INTRODUCTION

1. Research Thesis

Let a man be first incited by the *Poetry* (The Book of Poetry), then given a firm footing by the study of rites, and finally perfected by music.

Confucius, the *Analects*, 8.8¹

Confucius (ca. 551—479BCE), the author of Chinese Classical text the *Analects*, is recognized as China's first great teacher both chronologically and in importance. He is the founder of the Confucian School whose ideas represent the ancient Chinese mainstream culture and have shaped Chinese traditions in many ways. The beginning short, condensed quotation from the *Analects* has always intrigued me because—in a pithy statement—it delivers a central theme in Confucius's aesthetic thought on *Yue Jiao* (Music Education), that is, the education of a rounded person is finally perfected by the study of music. Confucius's *Yue Jiao* refers to a range of cultural and art education including poetry education, ritual education and music education. The three comes as a sequence of the development of one's personhood. Why, we may ask, is individual personhood as an integrated whole achieved eventually through music? Furthermore, why is the study of music given a higher and thus more important position than the study of rites? And how exactly does music play a role in the perfection of one's personality? To answer these questions, my dissertation project explores key aspects in Confucian aesthetics and pedagogy,

¹ The major English translation that I rely on for Confucius's *Analects* is the version by Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr. See their book *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, (New York: Random House Publishing, 1998.) In a few quotations that I took from *the Analects* and listed in this essay, I revised the English translation based on my own reading of the original Chinese text. Hereafter this reference is cited as *The Analects*.

detailing the importance of music as a means to linking aesthetic practices with harmonized social relations. My intention is to discuss how Confucian ideas of Yue Jiao may contribute to our educators' reflection on the nature and role of aesthetic education—music education in particular—in today's world.

Today technological supremacy has assumed an exclusive instrumental purpose for all activities including educational practices that take place in this new technological environment. Under capitalist monopoly, the uncontrolled pursuit of material wealth has surpassed spiritual and cultural needs and become dominant. In addition, people believe that the world today has hit a moral low point where greed, falsity and vanity are now considered value-neutral. Sometimes they even look like positive social values and norms. Yet more serious than that, modern society is becoming not only immoral, but rather—insensitive to morality—amoral.² The prevalent culture of consumption has witnessed the lack of refined sensitivity on the one hand, and a vulgar overflow of individual desires and emotions on the other. How we educate a student to develop her personhood as a whole in such a world of fragmentation and over-specialization is thus the most critical question philosophers of education must address.

My intention for discussing the history and development of pre-Qin³

² Don MacNiven, *Moral Expertise, Studies in Practical & Professional Ethics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), Introduction xi-xii. For other contemporary theorists who express worries about the conditions of the current world, see, for instance, David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1991) and *The Enigma of Capital: and the Crises of Capitalism*, 2 edition (New York: Oxford University Press: 2011).

³ Pre-Qin Period refers to a long historical time in ancient China prior to 221 BCE when the very first feudal empire of the Qin Dynasty united China. This Period consisted of, chronologically, 1) remote antiquity, also known as the times of legendary “Three Emperors and Five Sovereigns”; 2) Three Dynasties of Xia, Shang and Zhou, when China entered a slave society; 3) the Spring and Autumn Period followed by the Warring State Period during which the slave system started to break down and the landlord class made their first appearance in China's history.

Confucian idea of Yue Jiao is not to ask timeless questions about education or aesthetics in their traditional sense, but to raise new questions about them with strong awareness that our contemporary world is experiencing unprecedented radical changes. Young students today feel serious needs to re-contextualize traditional aesthetic ideas and educational thoughts in the contemporary culture and society. Facing this reality, I do not think that it suffices to teach students only the skills that they must possess to live in this new technological environment. There are deeper questions that need to be addressed: what does it mean to be a human being in the world today, and how should we educate a rounded person?

I suggest we look beyond modernity and travel all the way back to the very beginning of our history of education to seek the seed of education for humanity. One major resource I find from tradition is Confucian idea of Yue Jiao. Yue Jiao is characterized by a musical term of harmony, but with an extended meaning. It focuses on a comprehensive education that seeks to promote a harmony not only between the individual and the social, but also between emotion and reason within each person. The central task for the Confucian school is to develop humanity in everyone's heart through education and cultural cultivation, which I take to be illuminating for the problems we educators are facing today.

Ancient China is not alone in her insightful perception of the influence music can have on individual and society. In ancient Greece where Western aesthetic traditions originated, there is also an emphasis on the value of music and the role of

music education in the writings by Greek philosophers including Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle. Both traditions do not look at music as merely an acoustic form of art. Rather, musical practices are considered to bring embodied experience, educational implications and social relations into aesthetics. Moreover, the role of music is regarded as inseparable from its educational implications. It is considered as an important medium of collective consciousness of the values that govern human life. Despite their similar views about music, there are underlying differences between the two cultures that should not be underestimated. I hope my project can show the ways in which Confucian aesthetics bear some relation to Western aesthetics but also diverge in significant ways that may bring new ways for us to understand the role of music education.

Drawing on both traditions, I develop my **research thesis** to contain three related dimensions:

1) Education of a rounded person is central to being a human being in today's world. This requires a person to develop a rich mind/heart of imagination that helps her to make both individual judgment and social contribution.

2) Tradition is the root of education, and is the past living in the present. Education is committed to carrying forward the spirit and wisdom of a nation's civilization by focusing on developing one's personhood as a whole.

3) To achieve the above goal, music education plays a central, indispensable role of developing a harmonious balance between our rational intelligence and emotional sensibilities. It provides an ideal for living in the world today when unity is

achieved without eliminating diversity.

2. Methodology

My approach to pre-Qin Confucian thought on Yue Jiao is to contextualize it within the background of the social life, religious activities and cultural phenomena in that historical period of time. I adopt this approach based on three fruitful observations that I had in my reading of ancient Chinese classical writings and contemporary research on these ancient works. First of all, in ancient China music took a uniquely important position in social life. Music was the most developed form of art at that time, not only in terms of the diverse types of musical instruments found by archeologists, but also in terms of the incredibly rich literature on music and its role. Second, when ancient Chinese thinkers sought regular patterns in artistic diversities, they often looked at music and considered musical theory as representing the entire theory of literature and art. Not surprisingly, their writings on aesthetics focused on music-related discussions. Third, it was a common phenomenon that Chinese philosophers in pre-Qin Period discussed philosophical topics—for instance, the nature of universe, the ideal life, the right conduct for a person—not in the direct language of “philosophical metaphysics,” but rather from the perspective of the social, political, and ethical needs of the times. Not only their philosophical writings, but also writings on music expressed common concerns of politics and ethics. Among them, Confucius is undoubtedly the most well-known example of someone who considered studying music and observing ritual proprieties to be two related aspects of living the

noble life.

My discussion of the nature and role of music in Confucian writings is from the perspective of cultural and educational influence instead of technical terminology. It is not my intention, nor do I have the expertise, to discuss musical compositions or appreciation of any specific musical pieces in detailed technical terms. Furthermore, I believe a cultural as well as social-historical interpretation will bring about a more direct and objective understanding of the thoughts embodied in music of ancient days.

As a Chinese student studying in the West, I also want to look far into the distance at ancient Greek thought of musical aesthetics, hoping to achieve a better understanding of the role of music through a comparison and contrast between the Chinese and ancient Greek traditions. Through my research, I have come to find considerable resonance between ancient Chinese writings on music and those of ancient Greek philosophers. There are three aspects where this resonance is particularly strong. To begin with, the power of music was emphasized to a similarly great extent in both these traditions. They both wrote about music not as a simple technical matter, but as an indispensable component of education. Music, in the Confucian tradition, was regarded as one of the Six Classical Arts⁴ that formed a systematic curriculum in educational institutions. In ancient Greece, music, together with reading, writing, and gymnastic exercise, comprised the four subjects of the customary branches of education. In addition, both traditions emphasized the immense impact that music has on the development of one's personality as well as the

⁴ The Six Classical Arts are ritual, music, archery, charioteering, literature and mathematics.

state's governance. A third similarity is a shared emphasis on the notion of harmony. Both Confucians and ancient Greek philosophers built on the concept of musical harmony to describe an ideal: in Chinese context, it is of a well-ordered society, and for Greeks, it is of a well-controlled disposition led by reason.

In my discussion of these two traditions, I want to present non-western thought to western readers in a way that builds on their current philosophical knowledge and would thus make sense to them. Similarly, I also want to present Western thought to non-Western, particularly Chinese, readers in a manner that builds on educational and aesthetic ideas they are familiar with. To take this methodological approach, however, is not to overlook or deny the different origins of traditional Chinese and Western aesthetics that, in turn, were deeply rooted in the fundamental differences between their respective cultures and philosophical commitments. Yet these differences would have been less meaningful to me if there were no common practices of music as well as a shared recognition of the value of music in the first place. And it is in this regard that I want to build a bridge between the two traditions to broaden our understanding of the nature and role of music in education.

To argue that Confucian ideas are valuable for addressing the role of music education in today's society is not to say we agree with the whole package of ancient Chinese thoughts. In my discussion of Confucian thought, I try to be critical in terms of which concepts I absorb and which I believe are no longer relevant, or not directly relevant to my topic. And I take the central theme in Confucian thought on education to be also the central question for humanity for our educators today. Despite the

radical changes in social, political and cultural conditions, we may be surprised to find that some urgent and fundamental issues we encounter today have been raised and discussed, although in different format, by educators in the past from whom some insights may be gleaned. After all, as the old text says, “Reviewing the old as a means of realizing the new—such a person can be considered a teacher.”⁵

I also would like to clarify here my usage of the concept of “aesthetic education”. I am applying Pradeep Dhillon’s distinction⁶ made between aesthetics and art to my whole discussion. The notion of aesthetic education refers to the theory and practice of teaching, learning and doing related to issues of aesthetic value and aesthetic practice.⁷ It covers a broad range of issues that not only pertain to art education in educational discipline but also to philosophical aesthetics, a subfield that is often seen as closely related to the area of moral and political education. Understood in this broad definition, aesthetic education plays roles in all human activities from cognition, through the development of our personhood, to our engagement with daily life and natural and built environments.⁸ The arts—music, for example—are used to effect aesthetic education. In the Chinese tradition of Yue Jiao, music is considered distinct from other aesthetic projects and thus regarded as the most effective educational means. Music education provides an effective entry into moral education, but with an unparalleled advantage since it generates an active experience of moral sensibilities rather than an enforcement of passive receipt of

⁵ *The Analects*, 2.11

⁶ See Entry of “Aesthetic Education” (by Pradeep Dhillon) in Stephen Davies and Kathleen Marie Higgins, eds., *A Companion to Aesthetics*, 2nd edition, (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2009), 114-117

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, 114

abstract preaching.

3. Contemporary Educational Insight of Yue Jiao

I believe that Confucian discussion of Yue Jiao may contribute to contemporary education in the following three ways:

(1) Education is Centered on a Whole Development of Personhood

The goal of education in the ancient Chinese context is to enhance a moral and responsible being with a whole personhood developed in an all-round way. It is also a goal for the perfection of a person. According to pre-Qin Confucians, this goal requires a person to not only look inward for moral self-cultivation but also to take responsibility in society. The union of the internal and the external consists in a good education for individual perfection since the education of inward self-cultivation reached its ultimate goal when extended to the larger social realm.

One fundamental assumption of Confucian education is that our body possessed and presented the transformative capacity in the course of actualizing human nature. This process is carried out through self-cultivation in our heart. Pre-Qin Confucians encouraged the pervasiveness of self-cultivation in all aspects of Chinese society. The whole society is a moral institution and the head of the society should be a moral leader.

The value of education is not merely the increase of objective know-how, but the elevation of the heart so that each educated individual may reach out for what is beyond the present actual times, and for the values that connect inner harmony of

individual feelings with outer harmony that sustains a good society. In the current world, material pursuit has surpassed spiritual need and become dominant. Confucius's humanistic concern is suggestive since it attaches importance to one's cultural life. The goal of Confucian education is to improve one's spiritual state of being and Confucius's ideal of a perfect man is a person full of lofty character and rich spirit. This may offer a crucial message to help people of the contemporary society redeem the spiritual from the material, technological and utilitarian dominance. A humanistic foundation of the concrete living person should be taken seriously as the ground for today's education. To fight against the reductionist interpretation of humanity, we should look at ourselves as simultaneously poetic, musical, social, political, historical, and metaphysical beings. Even this list is far from being complete.

(2) Tradition is the Root of Education.

I want to clarify that I take the root of education to be those beneficial aspects of cultural heritage that have been preserved over centuries. Traditions are valuable because of those classics that they gave birth to. These classics reveal to us ancient wisdom, no matter what their languages are, in ways that broaden the space of our humanity and enlighten the path for human flourishing. Returning to these classics in education will allow us to guard persistently the essence of our education when we are situated in the current difficulties of existence.

Looking at ancient Chinese and Greek classics, we saw the focus on education

was cultivated in an uninterrupted tradition. The Chinese educational tradition presented itself in a real-life situation, as knowing how to take advantage of circumstances. Confucian education as an ethics of self-cultivation was grounded not so much in a sense of human being but human becoming. Oriented by this educational goal, the nature of knowledge in Chinese tradition was related with subjective experience as well as objective learning. A clear-cut distinction between subjective experience and objective knowledge is not made in the ancient Chinese educational context. A similar expectation is also held for the role of a teacher. There is a Chinese saying that a person who is your teacher for a day is your parent for life, a saying that communicates the idea that the teacher is more than just the dispenser of knowledge but a moral guide as well. The teacher extends the moral education in the family to others in the community. Hence the teacher is the parent instructing students on how to feel, think and behave in a human community with others who have similar needs and requirements. Thus for the traditional Chinese educator it is impossible to teach students rational skills independent of a personal and embodied relation with the teacher. Rather, the authority extended to the parent in the home is now extended to the teacher in the school, and the rational education of the child is not the sole aim but is co-extensive with acceptance of the parental responsibility of the teacher.

In the case of ancient Greece, its educational tradition built an ideal model and conceived a plan to act with a purpose in view. The Greek notion of *paideia* (culture, civilization) became the root of the Western education. Furthermore, virtue ethics, grounded in the concept of *arête*, i.e., the excellence, is the ground of the Greek

tradition according to which a fundamental question is not what I do, but what kind of person should I become, what's the good life for human beings. We are individuals, but live in social setting. What excellence of character should we be cultivating and how? Aristotle's teleological view of virtue ethics holds that things are imbedded with purposes. There is just one type of activity for the sake of which we do everything else, and which makes one's life worthwhile.⁹ Put in Aristotle's words, a life of *eudaimonia* (often translated as happiness, success, well-being, etc.) consists of just one activity. This *eudaimonia* is the ultimate *telos* of our behaviors. Aristotle takes human virtue to be the excellence of the soul (NE 1102a16). Happiness is therefore an activity of the soul.¹⁰

(3) Arts Education, Music Education in Particular, is the Most Influential Educational Means.

In ancient Chinese society, artistic forms as well as aesthetic feeling were commonly used to display social and political order, moral norms, emotional communication, and other activities. Chinese thinkers tend to rely on direct, concrete visual representations rather than arguments in presenting their thoughts. In writings of Confucians, meanings are often perceived through the senses instead of abstract preaching. In Yue Jiao, the teaching of music is presented by using a mixture of various arts including music, poetry, dance, and acting. Likewise, the study of rites is embodied in artistic or aesthetic forms. By using imagery, Confucians focused more

⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Martin Oswald (Indianapolis: the Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1962), 1097a22 (hereafter cited in text as *NE*).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

attention on emotional power in promoting personal morality. Yue Jiao, in particular, was regarded as having a moderating influence that can regulate one's nature and emotion, and mould one's moral character.

Confucian Music Education outlines a sequence of three stages to build up one's personality—education via poetry, ritual, and music, highlighting the indispensable role of human feeling in its mutual interaction with thinking. It is also noteworthy that Confucius stresses the idea that music precedes and is more important than ritual. Confucius values music higher since music is the completion of perfect personhood. Here Confucius also touches on an intriguing point. The ways in which the modes of feeling interacts with the modes of thinking, and the heart-and-mind connection, are at the center of understanding Confucian aesthetic tradition. This Confucian tradition is oriented in a direction different from the Greek epistemological direction. Unlike the Greek mind that is inclined to see abstract thoughts as the most comprehensive way to explore outer and inner reality, for the ancient Chinese mind, it is rather the sensitivity to things that is the most comprehensive way to become aware of the world and to discover infinite worlds within ourselves. In Chinese the character for mind (*xin*) is the same as that used to denote heart (心), almost as if mind/heart are a single organ with interweaving rational and emotional powers. As in the case of aesthetic activity, our feeling expanded, so our thought is uplifted from the heart and in the heart intention shapes ideas and meanings. The contribution of Confucius is exactly that he synthesizes these interactive elements—emotional feelings as well as rational thoughts, cognitive activities as well as sensational interactions—within one

whole system of aesthetic activity with equal importance attached to each one. Understood in this line, a great artist in the traditional Chinese sense is one who thinks by way of her feeling. And this unique heart-and-mind aesthetic tradition of Confucius has been cherished by artists afterwards and passed on through generations.

According to Confucians, art also provides ways for human beings to live with nature on equal footing and to develop an appreciative intimacy towards nature. The ethical implication of nature is displayed in the analogy drawn between natural beauty and the virtue of an exemplary person. Nature serves as not only the criterion for artistic judgment, but also as an ideal model for one's disposition. Today, modernization has swept across the world with its industrial criterion. Confucian aesthetics, which is conscious of keeping the balance between feeling and thinking, between reverence of nature as spiritual home and renovation of nature, might become a valuable legacy that has worldwide significance.

4. A Brief History of the Development of Confucian Thought on Yue Jiao

Yue Jiao, literally translated as Music Education, is a systematic program of education and cultivation by means of teaching music and ritual. The term Music Education is capitalized here to indicate its difference from how it is understood in a modern, narrow sense. The theoretical foundation of Yue Jiao was first established by Confucius the philosopher, and then further developed by Confucians after him. However, the cultural meme of Yue Jiao had its origin long before Confucius's time. Ever since religious sacrificial activities in the remote antiquity, the primitive

practices of ritual and music had been widely observed in large varieties of social, political and spiritual activities in ancient China. The formation of the tradition of ritual and music was based on these different practices which sought not only to provide each person with a defined place and status within the family, community and social class by regulating rituals of individual behaviors and social interactions. More importantly, it emphasized the power of art in shaping and educating individuals about the way they encounter others and themselves. In addition, as an influential social practice, the tradition of ritual and music had been conducted through rituals and institutions built for the sake of that practice and no other. Thus the tradition of ritual and music became not only the cultural meme of ancient Chinese society, but also the distinctive feature of Chinese arts and education. In what follows, I will introduce briefly the historical development of pre-Qin Confucian thought on Yue Jiao.

(1)

Chinese society in the remote antiquity of barbarism entered an epoch of civilization in the times known as the legendary “Three Emperors and Five Sovereigns” period. According to Chinese classic literature, a variety of labor tools, production techniques, articles for daily use and cultural arts were produced during this legendary age. In particular, many musical instruments were produced for a variety of music-related activities. It was evident that music was an essential component in the lives of ancient Chinese who had received the earliest teaching of music known as “Yue Jiao (Music Education) of predecessors.” As historians

commented, there were no other things called education in remote antiquity besides music for two reasons. First of all, music was created from the basic needs of social and human life. It is noteworthy that as early as circa 2100 BCE, music emerged as a “mixed form of art” that included three main components: music, dance and poetry (or song). On various occasions, musical dance was performed since it not only brought about joy and happiness, but was also valued as the most direct channel to communicate with cosmic gods. For ancient Chinese, the purpose was to please gods and beg for their blessings of better human life and prosperous harvests. Seen in this way, musical dance was not merely an entertainment or game which was separate from the basic human needs. Rather, it was one of those fundamental needs for life in remote time. Music was believed to have an intimate relationship with nature from the very beginning of history. For instance, the origin of the production of music instruments as well as the formulation of temperament was an imitation of the birds singing or the sound of the wind, etc.

The second reason for the importance of music in that legendary age was because it played an influential social role. Music was a tool of organizing and arousing the masses in collective activities such as social production. More importantly, it was an indispensable element in performances for religious ceremonies organized by emperors. Music was used as a tool to communicate between ancient Chinese and ancestral spirits as well as multiple gods. According to historians, music had already developed into a large-scale practice with specific requirements for the match between music temperament and the genre of dance. And the teaching of these

requirements as well as performances was undertaken by either sorcerers or music officials.

(2)

Beginning from the Xia Dynasty (ca. 2100-1600 BCE), China entered a slavery society when social classes became divided. The following Shang Dynasty (ca. 1600-1050BCE) witnessed the earliest creation of Chinese written language known as the oracle bone inscriptions. Archeological records found from the Shang Dynasty presented a picture of the social environment then in which music continued its role as both form and content in two predominant performances by slave masters, i.e., sacrificial activity and celebration of war victory. Also during the Shang Dynasty, practicing sorcery had reached the apex for holding memorial ceremonies for gods or ancestors.

When it comes to the other part of the twin sister—ritual—its origin can be traced back to the Three Dynasties of Xia, Shang and Zhou when the function of ritual was to keep the political and social order in place by putting into practice a system of behavioral norms. At the beginning of the Three Dynasties, ritual was embodied implicitly in musical dance and thus not separated from music. Later during the Zhou Dynasty, ritual received its highest popularity as a fundamental means of governing the people and strengthening the hierarchy among social classes. Although the format of ritual remained a continuity throughout the Three Dynasties, there was a significant change in the role of ritual when the Duke of Zhou of the Western Zhou Dynasty (ca. 1046—771 BCE) governed his state differently from his previous emperors. His

authority was established on moral governance instead of merely serving gods and ancestors in ceremonies for blessings. Consequently, the role of ritual was changed from mediating the relationship between Gods and people, to mediating the relationship between people and other people. Ritual thus became the essence of state governance that restrained the people's behavior to meet the standards of communal life. A major outcome of the implementation of ritual was a hierarchical order of ancestral clans based on family units.

The Duke of Zhou also advocated the significance of the association between ritual and music. The two elements gradually became secularized in the Western Zhou Dynasty as a result of being more often used to eulogize rulers' political achievements and moral virtues. It was not until then that a system of ritual and music was eventually established. On the one hand, music became highly compartmentalized to be performed on different occasions. On the other, there were also strict regulations of the scale of dance performance in order to match the noble rank of the slave-master. For instance, the emperor could have the largest group of dancers standing in eight lines, whereas the duke was allowed a smaller group of six lines, a senior officer having four, and literati two lines.¹¹ Meanwhile, the royal court established large-scale musical institutions which hired large number of musical officials who not only taught musical performance, but also took the responsibility of educating nobles with moral lessons contained in musical literature. It was evident that the development of musical institutions had reached an unparalleled height during this

¹¹ See the historical records in *Zuo Zhuan*, an annals for the Spring and Autumn Period.

period of time. By highlighting the different social status and power of each person, the system of ritual and music strengthened the hierarchy among different social classes.

The Zhou Dynasty system eventually broke down into a competition for power between rival semi-autonomous states in what became known as the Spring and Autumn Period (ca. 770-475 BCE) and the Warring States Period (ca. 475-221 BCE). The disintegration of the political power of the Zhou royal house was accompanied by a deconstruction of the entire social system, which led to a tumultuous time in Chinese history known as a time of collapsing ritual proprieties and deluded music. Nevertheless, history showed us that a politically turbulent time was often accompanied with cultural openness and prosperity. For the very first time, there were heated debates among intellectuals arguing about the role music and ritual could play in the new and emerging political and social condition. Topics for discussions were no longer limited to those ideas such as heavenly fate, religious belief, and so forth. Rather, intellectuals started to reflect seriously on political and social issues beyond the boundary of primitive patriarchic clan systems based on blood lineage.

(3)

Confucius, also known as Kongzi, was born during the late Spring and Autumn period. As a descendent of a noble family, Confucius was exposed to learning rituals at an early age and had decided to make his career as Ru (儒) who were originally a group of professionals helping people hold ritual ceremonies for their

ancestors as well as funeral arrangements. Since these professionals of Ru often specialized in performing and teaching ritual and music, later, the notion of Ru referred to those literati or scholars in general. In his middle age, Confucius started to take disciples in his private educational hub for the first time in Chinese history, which marked the beginning of the separation between “official learning (officer)” and “private teaching (teacher).” He entered the government of Lu for a short period of time before he was forced to resign his post due to a political intrigue. He then traveled to different states with his students, but eventually failed in his political dream of carrying out political and social reformation. Confucius returned to his hometown in Lu at an age of sixty-eight and decided to devote himself to writing commentaries on history.

Confucius lived in a transitional period between the old “golden age” of the Zhou Dynasty and a new start of the very first feudal society in Chinese history—the state of Qin. As we discussed earlier, the most pressing concern of people at that time was to end disturbance as quickly as possible. Since Confucius came from royal families in Shang Dynasty and grew up in the state of Lu where the Zhou system of ritual and music were saved intact, it was a natural choice for him to decide to restore the whole set of rituals established in the Zhou Dynasty. Arguing against his rival schools of thoughts, Confucius held firmly that good governance in a new incoming society could be achieved by observing ritual propriety and maintaining harmony through the study of music. He inherited the Zhou tradition of Yue Jiao, and in the meanwhile creatively transformed the notion of benevolence (*ren* 仁) by turning it into

a philosophical foundation for the ritual. The concept of benevolence (*ren* 仁) expresses a fundamental moral concern for human life, its dignity and value, thus was regarded as the inward center of ritual. *Ren*, mostly translated as “benevolence”, “humanity,” was given a definition of “loving others” in the *Analects*. The introduction of this notion broke the pure family bond underlying the ancestral clan system from the Zhou Dynasty. As a consequence, ritual and music were no longer merely a partial component of the larger social and cultural system; rather they became integral to Confucius’s teaching curriculum.

Furthermore, Confucius provided a richer reading of the profession of *Ru*. According to him, *Ru* is not only someone who knows how to teach ritual and the ancient classics, but also is an individual with noble personhood, values and ideals. In other words, Confucius brought moral content to *Ru* and therefore changed its original mission. It is in this sense that Confucius was regarded as the founder of the school of *Ru*, i.e. the school of Confucianism.

As China’s first great teacher, Confucius made a significant contribution to education by arguing that an education is not a privilege confined to the young noble. He claimed that “In education, there is no social class distinction.”¹² His principle of “education available to all” indicated a belief that human beings are similar in their natural tendencies, but they are set far apart from each other by virtue of their habits.¹³ In his teaching, Confucius regarded music as most influential in educating one’s personhood. For him, learning through music marks the final achievement of one’s

¹² *The Analects*, 15.39

¹³ *The Analects*, 1.14

perfection. It is certain that Confucius was the first among Chinese thinkers to understand music in its highest, self-conscious value.

(4)

Confucius's thought on Yue Jiao was carried forward with further development by Xunzi¹⁴ in his *Yue Lun (Discourse on Music)* and the document of *Yue Ji (Records of Music, from the Li Ji (Records of Ritual))*¹⁵.

Xunzi (ca. 328 BCE—235 BCE) was one of the most influential representative figures in the Confucian school in the Pre-Qin period. Living in the Warring States Period (475 BCE—221 BCE), Xunzi was acknowledged for his arguments that elaborated and systemized Confucian ideas. Xunzi was a native of the state of Zhao. Ever since his childhood, he travelled frequently to study in the state of Qi where he achieved a high reputation as a profound researcher of Confucian classics, such as: *Shi Jing (The Book of Poetry)*, *Li Jing (The Ritual of Zhou)*, *Yi Jing (The Book of Changes)*, *Chun Qiu (The Spring and Autumn Annals)*, etc. Xunzi taught many disciples, among whom Han Fei and Li Si were both representatives of the Legalists, a school of thought in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods.

In a book titled by his name, Xunzi reflected on the spirit of the troubled age of his time and criticized philosophical ideas of different intellectual schools including the Mohist School, the Daoist School, and the Legalist School. Standing firmly in line with Confucius, Xunzi brought Confucius's concept of a culture of ritual

¹⁴ One of the main representative Confucians in the pre-Qin Period

¹⁵ The authorship of *Yue Ji* has been debated for centuries, but scholars generally agree that it was completed prior to the middle of the Western Han Dynasty (second and first century BCE). Given the close relation between its content on music and Confucian discussions of *Yue Jiao*, the writings of Xunzi in particular, scholars generally regard *Yue Ji* as a representative treatise on Confucian thoughts on *Yue Jiao*.

and music to a fuller shape by elaborating on their origin from the root of human nature. According to Xunzi, the function of ritual and music was to set a limit on everyone in the satisfaction of their natural desires. In addition, the two could further transform evil human nature into cultural refinement by virtue of education.

One development that Xunzi made regarding Yue Jiao was his articulation of the difference between ritual and music in terms of the way the two affected cultural transformation. As he argued, while ritual contributed to making social distinctions, music brought about unity and induced harmony in human relationship. There was an often-quoted passage in his works where the distinction and connection between ritual and music were clarified in more detail, “Music joins together what is common to all; ritual separates what is different. The guiding principles of ritual and music act as the pitch pipe that disciplines the human heart.”¹⁶

In addition to the texts of Xunzi’s *Yue Lun*, the document of *Yue Ji* (*Records of Music*) from the *Li Ji* (*Records of Ritual*) is generally acknowledged as an important Confucian aesthetic work. *Li Ji*, one of the ancient Chinese Five Classics, was a commentary on religious ceremonies, mourning rites, and social etiquette. It was said to represent “an encyclopedia of Confucian teachings”¹⁷ of late Zhou Dynasty, Qin Dynasty and Han Dynasty. *Yue Ji* is collected as chapter 19 in *Li Ji*, and is considered the earliest fully developed treatise on music which expresses the Chinese artistic spirit. We find in *Yue Ji* a continuing emphasis on the correlation between ritual and

¹⁶ John Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*. Vol. III, (Stanford University Press, 1994), p.84

¹⁷ James Legge, trans., *Li Chi (Book of Rites): An Encyclopedia of Ancient Ceremonial Usages, Religious Creeds, and Social Institutions*, vol. I, (New Hyde Park, New York: University Books, 1967), liii.

music in building the framework of a society. Compared with the ideas in the *Analects*, *Yue Ji* offered more detailed analysis and arguments regarding issues such as the objective origin of music, the respective features of ritual and music, the effect of music on governance, morality, social custom, etc. According to *Yue Ji*, music was not created from one's psychological instinct. Rather, when the heart was stirred by external things, it spontaneously expressed them in modulations of voice. Thus *Yue Ji* set up a realistic foundation for the origin of music.

One distinctive feature of *Yue Ji* was its emphasis on the central role of emotion in Yue Jiao. When the emotions are stirred by sounds, the body spontaneously expresses them in gestures and body expressions. For Confucians, the emotional side of human nature is given more attention than its rational side. And reason is interpreted as concrete principles rooted in emotional activities.

5. Dissertation Structure

Following this introduction, the dissertation is divided into five chapters. In **Chapter 1, "Background: the Tradition of a Ritual and Music Culture"**, I will provide a historical background of the origin as well as the development of this tradition. For the cultural gene of ritual and music was seeded long before the time of Confucius. The tradition started as early as in the remote antiquity known as the legendary time of "Three Emperors and Five Sovereigns", and continued through the Three Dynasties of Xia, Shang, and Zhou.

In **Chapter 2 "Confucius—Discovery of Aesthetic Spirit through Yue Jiao"**,

I focus on Confucius's discussions of Yue Jiao delivered in the Chinese classical text *the Analects*. In the first half of the chapter, I explore the philosophical foundation of Yue Jiao consisting of two concepts: benevolence (*ren* 仁) and Harmony (*he* 和). In the second half, I examine Confucius's educational system in which ritual and music were the two integral components.

It is noteworthy that ideas in the classic the *Analects* have been the fertile soil in which the Chinese cultural tradition has been cultivated and has flourished. Today, some two and a half millennia after his death, Confucian thoughts are still highly navigable, eminently capable of influencing Chinese culture in many ways. And his influence did not end with China. Around the 3rd century BCE, the Confucian ways of living and thinking were introduced to Korea, and later to Japan and Vietnam as well as other Southeastern Asian countries, which together formed the "Confucian Cultural Circle." Starting from the 17th century, the Confucian school further traveled across Asian continent and arrived in Europe.

Chapter 3, "Development of Yue Jiao in Later Generations of the Confucian School" is devoted to a discussion of Xunzi's *Yue Lun* (Discourse on Music), and *Yue Ji* (Records of Music) from the Chinese Classic, *Li Ji* (Records of Ritual). For Confucians in the pre-Qin Period, the goal of Yue Jiao was to promote social harmony and personal happiness so that everyone may live a more affective and joyful life with a sound personality.

While focusing on Confucian discussions of music, in **Chapter Four, "Music as an Indispensable Component of Education—the Model in Ancient Greece,"** I

also make a comparison and contrast with ideas of music discussed by ancient Greek philosophers. More specifically, I look at the writings of Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle on music and music education. For during the fifth to the third centuries BCE, there were important writings in both China and Greece, on the notion of music in its broad sense. I argue in this chapter that despite the cultural differences, the educational power of music was emphasized to a similarly great extent at the origin of two great civilizations. The goal of bringing together the ancient Chinese and Greeks is to discuss how the ideas of music conceived in both traditions might suggest new ways for us to understand important roles of aesthetic education, music education in particular, in our society today.

In **Chapter 5, “Conclusion”**, I return to the research thesis that I started in the **Introduction**, that is, the contemporary educational implications of Yue Jiao. I point out some problems in traditional Confucian thought that I see as shortcomings in thinking of the role of music education in contemporary context. Given the prevailing individualistic influence of the present, I argue that music education can play a role in the following ways: (1) music provides an effective entry for moral education; (2) music expresses emotional principles of reasonableness; and (3) music is the ultimate perfection of one’s rounded personhood.

CHAPTER 1

THE TRADITION OF A RITUAL AND MUSIC CULTURE

Yue Jiao (Music Education) was an influential, highly-valued cultural tradition of ancient China, and had a long history originating with the religious sacrificial activities of the ancients in remote antiquity. We know that Chinese civilization was already highly developed by the time Confucius was born. In the *Analects*, Confucius praised a number of legendary sage kings of antiquity—Yao, Shun and Yu—who were traditionally assigned reigns in the third millennium BCE. As early as 2100 BCE, music emerged as a “mixed form of art” that included three main components: music, dance and poetry. Music was an indispensable accompaniment for performance and presentation of sacrifices to the primarily ancestral spirits. Just as the ancient kings established sacrificial practices which assisted in the maintenance of cosmic harmony, music at that time played a profound spiritual role of pleasing cosmic gods for their blessings of better human life and prosperous harvests. In the mean time, music brought about joy and happiness through performances, and was regarded as the most direct channel for ancient Chinese to communicate with cosmic gods. In remote antiquity, musical dances already began to present primitive elements of ritual principles and aesthetics. A shared theme of these musical performances was natural phenomenon, such as dances of clouds, sun, etc. Scholars argued that musical dances in this period of remote antiquity were a typical natural totemism.¹

The notion of Yue Jiao was closely related to a ritual and music culture in

¹ Chen Wangheng 陈望衡, *Zhongxi Gudian Meixue Ershiyi Jiang* 中西古典美学二十一讲 [Twenty-one lectures on Chinese and Western Classical Aesthetics], (Changsha: Hunan Education Publisher, 2007), p.31.

ancient China, a tradition which also had its origin long before Confucius's time. In Chinese cultural tradition, ritual and music were organic constituents that had an important influence to continue and further develop Chinese civilization. And it still has strong vitality now after thousands years of influence in this history of Chinese civilization. The earliest connection between these two elements started in sacrificial activities of primitive religion, because it contained the significant meaning of entire human activities in the archaic period. These activities included primitive forms of politics, ethics, war, etc. When the society became gradually civilized, various human activities started to separate themselves from primitive religion and developed, though not completely, their own purposes. Art, likewise, became less subordinate to primitive religion, and gradually attained its independent position. As for ritual and music, although their bond with religion was weakened, their inherent political and ethical signification was strengthened. Therefore, the two elements became inseparable from each other, and finally formed a ritual and music system.

The actual formation of the ritual and music system was not established until China became a slave society, a period in Chinese history known as the Three Dynasties of Xia, Shang, and Zhou. As early as the Xia and Shang Dynasties, ancient Chinese wisdom, literature and thought had already laid down ritual rules and music to maintain social order and promote ethical principles. Especially during the Zhou Dynasty, the ritual and music system shaped distinctive qualities that differentiated it from mere sorcery. As the product of primitive religion, sorcery's primary role was to entertain gods; ritual and music, on the other hand, carried a major function of

coordinating social relations so as to promote the ultimate harmony of society. They set up their goal as cultivating humanity, and thus laid more emphasis on moral ethics. The ritual and music system of the Zhou Dynasty regulated people's conduct to follow the moral and social order, which not only maintained the dynasty for 800 years, but also laid a solid foundation for the ultimate founding of a unified culture fixed by the Qin and Han empires.

1.1 Music—a Basic Form of Spiritual Activity Including Religion, Politics, Ethics and Aesthetics

First of all, music was seen as being natural to human life. Ancestors were born with vocal abilities. They shouted aloud and made sound without external tools. Hitting stones with sticks, they could produce sounds of rhythm. When they were merry, their body movements became dances. A combination of quiet/loud voices and slow/fast rhythm made a harmonious tone. When a group of people sang and shouted together, that gave the birth of a form of music. Secondly, music was created for practical needs of communication in human life. When people were working, music coordinated their movement along with the pace of work, thus became the direct organizer of their work. In fall, when people celebrated harvest, they danced and sang to express happiness. When there was a drought, people also danced and sang in order to pray for rain.

Changes in the Chinese character of “music” had interestingly witnessed the transition of the meaning of music from concrete to abstract. Ancient Chinese

characters were pictographic characters whose shapes usually represented the appearance of things referred by those characters. According to the oracle bone inscriptions where earliest Chinese written language was found, the word “music” in its earliest written form represented the shape of a musical instrument. And archeological records found in Shang Dynasty (ca. 1600-1050BCE) demonstrated a history and development of traditional Chinese music and musical instruments dating as early as circa 2100 BCE. When China adopted slavery, music played a major role as both form and content in two predominant performances, which were, sacrificial activities and celebrations of war victory by slave masters. And the word “music” obtained two extended meanings: the first, related to instrumental music, was a comprehensive form of art that included poetry, music and dance. All three components were intimately connected to each other and functioned as one because they moved audience to respond in similar ways, creating a human community. The second meaning of music was aesthetic pleasure. Whatever things that could bring joy as well as sensual pleasure and enjoyment, they were called “music.”

Music was closely linked to ritual for it was an essential part of religious rites from the time of primitive worship. Compared with the origin of music, ritual propriety came into history at a later stage. This was proved by the fact that the Chinese character for “ritual” appeared much later in ancient literature than the character for “music.” Accordingly, many ideas about ritual were enlightened quite late, and Yue Jiao (Music Education) was for a long time an education of both ritual and music. The Chinese pictorial character for the word “ritual” was originally a

utensil consecrated to worship services for spiritual gods. The meaning was then developed, at first referring to the sacrificial ceremony for gods and then to all kinds of ceremonies for ancestors and ancient kings. At a later stage of development, the meaning of the word “ritual” was so broad as to cover all traditional habits, norms of rules in human life and production.

1.2 The Birth of Yue Jiao (Music Education)

Chinese education in remote antiquity was primarily known as “Yue Jiao (Music Education) of predecessors.” It was often said that “there were no other things called education besides music.” Yue Jiao (Music Education) had its influence in all activities where music was played, for instance, sacrificial services for spiritual gods, celebration ceremonies for kings’ characters and accomplishments, etc. Ancient Chinese ancestors relied on music not only to sing of rulers’ merits and praise virtues, but also to cultivate morals for children from noble and ordinary families. Therefore, music, dances, singing and poetry were all closely connected to those meaningful events concerning a nation’s existence and prosperity. They became a form of praying for harvest and entertaining gods. In this sense, they were significant tools for ancient Chinese predecessors to govern and rule their nations.

Yue Jiao (Music Education), from its beginning, had attained a clear social function that played a role in religion, politics, ethics, etc. The notion of Yue Jiao was a holistic set of ideas with multiple layers. For it was not merely an idea of art education in the modern sense; rather, it was a complex system that was

interdependent with religion, politics, ethics, philosophy, and other aspects of society. These connections gave Yue Jiao an unparalleled priority in ancient China. Accordingly, officials in charge of music held a crucial position in royal courts.

1.3 Yue Jiao in Three Dynasties—Xia, Shang, Zhou

During the Xia Dynasty (2100 BCE—1600 BCE), with the rise of slavery in China, slave owners monopolized two major social events of sacrificial activities and wars. Consequently, ritual and music, the two basic elements in these social events, were also monopolized by the slave-owned class.

The Shang Dynasty (1600 BCE—1100 BCE) was well-known for the invaluable creation of the oracle bone inscriptions (Bone and Shell Script) that marked the beginning of Chinese writing. Large amounts of recorded literature show that music started to divide into different genres for various purposes. For instance, there were spontaneous and impromptu group dances by ordinary people; there were musical dances for the ruling class' recreation; there were also dance performances at sacrificial ceremonies in order to chant ancestors' praises and sing of their virtues. All these signaled that the class of slave owners began to deliberately engage in Yue Jiao (Music Education).

Besides the division of music for different purposes, the content of music and ritual gradually changed from totemic sacrificial rites to eulogizing rulers' governance and characters. Moreover, the function of music and ritual was no longer connected only to social production activities and tribal existence. Rather, the major role was to

meet the needs of entertainment and government for the ruling class.

It was not until the Western Zhou Dynasty (ca. 1046-771 BCE) when the Duke of Zhou² advocated the significance of ritual propriety in association with music. Since then, the original gene of ritual-musical tradition had started to develop and become institutionalized, serving political and ethical purposes. On the political side, ritual propriety regulated in detail those meaning-invested roles, relationships, and institutions that facilitated communication and fostered a sense of community. It covered a broad range: all formal conduct, from table manners to patterns of greeting and leave-taking; from gestures of deference to ancestral sacrifices. With music being subordinate to the role of rites, ritual propriety became an increasingly important political tool for propagandizing rulers' achievements and maintaining social stability. The Duke of Zhou had importantly transformed a religious culture of ritual and music into a political system, which brought Chinese civilization to an unprecedented period of great prosperity.

On the ethical side, ritual and music functioned as a social grammar that provided each member with a defined place and status within the family, community and society. A hierarchical political and social system gradually came into shape with the Zhou royal house at its apex: power was bestowed upon aristocratic families as lords of their domains or principalities. Although often compared to European "feudalism," what actually gave the system cohesion was a hierarchical system of

² In addition to those legendary rulers, another three figures need to be introduced here because of the esteem in which they were held by Confucius. They were the founders of the Zhou Dynasty: King Wen (whose name means "culture" and "literature"), his son King Wu (whose name means "martial"), and the latter's younger brother, the Duke of Zhou. It was the Duke of Zhou that Confucius appeared to admire most.

ancestral clans based on family units. The family was the foundation of social structure, and the state was an organization called “united families.” Traditional Chinese society was organized with five pairs of social relationships: sovereign and subject, father and son, husband and wife, elder and younger brothers, and friend and friend. These relationships have constituted a hierarchy of propriety that regulated all the acts of an individual. With the strengthening of this hierarchical system, the major function of ritual and music was no longer to please gods, but rather to teach people to moderate their likes and dislikes and thus to moderate the social relationships as a whole. The ritual and music system reinforced and stabilized this patriarchic clan hierarchy. Every person of each status in the hierarchy enjoyed the types of rites and music assigned to his particular grade.

Differences between the ritual-musical system established in the Western Zhou Dynasty and the role of ritual and music in previous dynasties are worth our attention here. First of all, the Zhou Dynasty was the first dynasty to lay down rules of rites and music which were focused mainly on humanistic aspect of social relationships, and thus we saw an increasing number of rituals of intersubjective communication during that period of time. The second difference was the function of Yue Jiao. It played two major roles in the Western Zhou Dynasty: to govern and to educate. Unlike its early goal of “serving the gods” in the Shang Dynasty, Yue Jiao became more oriented toward human relationships and cultivation of character. Accordingly, the third difference was found in the degree of complexity of Yue Jiao. In the Western Zhou

Dynasty, music became highly compartmentalized. According to *Ritual of Zhou*³, there were nine classifications of music and six types of dances, each of which needed to match different poetry in performance based on their content. Meanwhile, the royal court established large-scale musical institutions and hired many musical teachers. The items of music and dance, the types and number of musical instruments, and the number of musicians for each grade were strictly limited, and to exceed the limits was considered a grave offense.

As our discussions above shows, the Duke of Zhou established the ritual-music system as a national educational system. The intellectual foundation of this system was the idea of respecting virtues. Interpreted as kings' behavior, virtue was understood at two levels: firstly, virtue was embodied in a kings' political behavior when they attended sacrificial ceremonies or went out to battle. Secondly, virtue was related to ethical behavior contextualized in the patriarchal clan system. This was the earliest appearance of humanistic spirit in ancient China, and was often referred to as "spiritual conscientious." Different from humanism in the West, this humanistic spirit in ancient China was motivated by a respectful attitude which later became characteristic of the morals of Chinese people. Emphasizing the notion of virtue and the humanistic aspect of ritual, the Western Zhou Dynasty entered a period of "ethical religion" that distinguished itself from the earlier type of primitive "natural religion."

³ One chapter in *Liji*

1.4 Yue Jiao in Transition

The Zhou Dynasty system eventually broke down into a competition for power between rival semi-autonomous states in what became known as the Spring and Autumn period (ca. 770-475 BCE) and the Warring States (ca. 475-221 BCE) period. The disintegration of the Zhou Dynasty marked not only the disintegration of the political power of a particular royal house, but, more importantly, of an entire social system. There were aristocrats who through the wars of the time lost their lands and titles, and thus fell to the level of the common people. There were also common people who became high officials of the state. It was a tumultuous time which historians often described as a time of collapsing ritual proprieties and deluded music. The aesthetic of musical and ritual values then was directly affected by the historical vision common to early thinkers of the pre-imperial age. These thinkers looked back to the Western Zhou Dynasty, a legendary period which they praised as a “golden age” of political and cultural unity when virtuous kings created the ritual-music tradition for the general good of later generations.⁴ This sacred tradition was presented as utopia against the “encroachment of mere entertainment music.”⁵

History shows us that a politically turbulent time is often accompanied with cultural openness and prosperity. Likewise, the Spring and Autumn Period in ancient China witnessed an open environment among intellectuals who debated the role music and ritual could play under new political and social conditions. These heated debates

⁴ Haun Saussy and Susan Bush “Chinese Aesthetics”, *Encyclopedia of Aesthetic* (e-reference edition). Michael Kelly. Oxford University Press, Arizona State University. 3 February 2010. <http://www.oxford-aesthetics.com/entry?entry=t234.e0109-s0001>

⁵ Ibid.

promoted a vogue among intellectuals for discussing ritual and music. Reflections on early ideas, such as heavenly fate, values, religious beliefs, etc, were deepened and started to go beyond the boundary of patriarchic clan systems based on blood lineage. Historians commented on this period as a revival of humanistic spirit. Compared with the Western Zhou Dynasty when spiritual conscientious was still limited to a few thinkers or rulers with foresight—the Duke of Zhou, for example—the Spring and Autumn Period began to see an awakening among progressive social intellectuals as a whole. In other words, the revival of the humanistic spirit became a wide-range social trend that influenced various aspects of culture, especially ideas of ritual and music. The notion of Yue Jiao, as a result, received much attention.

More importantly, it was during this important transitional period that Confucius (551-479 BCE) lived and to whom we shall now turn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

CONFUCIUS—DISCOVER AESTHETIC SPIRIT THROUGH YUE JIAO

2.1 The Social and Historical Environment of Confucius's Time

Confucius, also known as Master Kong, was born during the late Spring and Autumn period (ca. 770—475 BCE), a transitional period between the old “golden age” of the Zhou Dynasty (ca. 1100—771 BCE) and the start of feudal society in the state of Qin. According to historians, Confucius's ancestors were originally from royal families in the Shang Dynasty; however, by the time of his birth, the family had lost their previous noble status due to political fights and was forced to move from the state of Song to Lu. Confucius was poor in his youth, and worked as a junior official in charge of warehouses and livestock farms.

As a descendent of a noble family, Confucius learned rituals at an early age and founded an academy in his own state to teach students. He entered the government of Lu and by the time he was fifty had reached high official rank. As a result of political intrigue, however, he was soon forced to resign his post and began to practice as an independent philosopher who travelled to different states for thirteen years. Hoping to persuade political leaders to adopt his ideal of political and social reformation, Confucius failed in his political dream and returned to his hometown in Lu at the age of sixty-eight when he decided to devote himself exclusively to writing commentaries on history. Shortly after his death, disciples began to compile teachings and stories of Confucius which finally made up the volume we now know as the

Analects—or “Sayings of Confucius.” The text was read very closely, and in fact, usually memorized by virtually every educated Chinese for two millennia.

Confucius’s life witnessed political changes with social and cultural turmoil emerging. Looking upon the degenerating political chaos and brutality of his day, Confucius turned back toward the ancient past when music and ritual were once closely related and served the purpose of securing social harmony and order. History showed that the Duke of Zhou, the great ruler of the Zhou Dynasty, once promulgated rules of rituals and music. The Duke synthesized ritual rules from remote time to the Shang Dynasty, reconstructing and developing them into a course of action and framework for the State’s laws. Confucius’s view a century later was that music best reflected a nation’s manners, and that in the good old times, authority was manifested quite as much in rites and ceremonies as in laws and pronouncements. Confucius looked to the ancient classics of the old Zhou dynasty and saw in them evidence of an ancient ideal society that placed the heart of personality in musical harmony with Nature. The problem for Confucius was therefore the problem of restoring the peaceful, harmonious social order of the Zhou Empire and recovering the true, original nature of our personality in our hearts.

Confucius argued that music was desired by man, and that music of the right type was desirable. In taking this position, Confucius set himself apart from his rival schools, especially Daoism, Legalism, and Mohism. The Daoist and Legalist schools rejected ritual propriety and held that it was not desirable for man to indulge in sounds. The Mohist attitude towards music was also negative. With a utilitarian spirit, Mo Zi,

the representative of the Mohist school, was so concerned with the economic welfare of the people that he severely criticized the Confucian view of music as dangerous since making musical instruments distracted people from productive activity and was a waste of time.¹ In response to these schools, Confucius argued that desires and emotions were neither good nor bad in themselves; the problem was how to regulate them.² Seeing ancient sage kings governed by observing ritual propriety and pursuing musical harmony rather than by law and force, Confucius called for a restoration of their ways of maintaining the harmony between social community and the rest of the natural order.

2.2 The Cultural Origin of the Confucian School: the School of Ru or Literati

In the last chapter we mentioned that during the transitional Spring and Autumn Period in ancient China there were many intellectuals of various schools of thought, referred to as the “hundred schools”. Later historians classified these thinkers into six major schools, and the Confucian school was the most influential one. This school was known in Chinese as the School of Ru, and the word “Ru” literally meant literatus or scholar. As the name indicated, the followers of this school were thinkers and, mostly “teachers of the ancient classics and thus the inheritors of the ancient cultural legacy.”³ Although Confucius was regarded as the founder of this school, the notion of “Ru” had a wider implication and a longer history of development before

¹ See Siu-Chi Huang, “Musical Art in Early Confucian Philosophy,” in *Philosophy East and West* 13, No.1 (1963): 52

² *Ibid.*,

³ Yu-Lan Fung, *Selected Philosophical Writings of Fung Yu-Lan*. (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1991), 224.

Confucius. It revealed social, political and educational conditions in the early Zhou Dynasty when there was no separation between officers and teachers. As Chinese philosopher Feng Youlan explained, “the officers of a certain department of the government were at the same time the transmitters of the branch of learning pertaining to that department...Hence there was then only ‘official learning’ but no ‘private teaching.’”⁴

The complete dominance of “official learning” over “private teaching” was characteristic of ancient Chinese social, political and educational circumstances. Teaching then was taken over and carried on by officers who were members of governmental departments. This educational environment in the pre-Confucian age was largely influenced by the political and social structure around the tenth century BCE. As Chinese philosopher Feng Youlan describes,

At the top of the political and social structure, there was the King of the Zhou royal house, who was the “common lord” of all the different states. Under him were hundreds of states, each of which owned and governed by its Princes... Within each state, under the Prince, the land was again divided into many fiefs, each with its own feudal lord, who were relatives of the Prince. At that time, political power and economic control were one and the same... The aristocrats were not only the political rulers and landlords, but also the only persons who had a chance to receive an education. Thus the houses of the feudal lords were not only centers of political and economic power, but also centers of learning. Attached to them were officers who possessed specialized knowledge along various lines. But the common people, for their part, had no chance to become educated, so that among them there were no men of learning. This is the fact behind Liu Xin’s⁵ theory that in the early Zhou Dynasty there was “no separation between officers and teachers.”⁶

According to Liu Xin, the Confucian school had its origin in the Ministry of

⁴ Ibid., p. 226

⁵ Liu Xin (ca. 46 BC—AD 23), was one of the greatest Chinese historians of his day. He made a collation of books in the Imperial library with his father Liu Xiang.

⁶ Fung, *Selected Philosophical Writings of Fung Yu-Lan*, 229.

Education. Distinguished from other schools, members of this school were specialists who taught the six classics or the six liberal arts, i.e., rites, music, archery, charioteering, literature and mathematics. Feng Youlan further argues that the Confucians were also specialists in the practicing of ceremonies and music. Yan Buke, a contemporary Chinese historian develops an interesting theory that traced the cultural origin of the Confucian school to governmental officers of music, i.e., music teachers.⁷ His argument is that most of the teachings of classics, ritual and music were undertaken by music teachers who also held official positions at that time. These music teachers were educators of future political leaders as well as officers as well. According to Yan Buke's view, the Confucianist school not only took over from music teachers the mission of cultural transmission and social education, but more importantly, they developed the social ideal of a political blueprint centered on education and transformation.

Although this feudal educational system of “no separation between teachers and officers” was formally abolished in 221 BCE by the first emperor of the Qin dynasty, the cause of its disintegration started as early as between the seventh and third centuries BCE, one of great ages of social and political transformation in Chinese history. A sign of this disintegration was that the former official representatives of the various branches of learning, who had been actual nobles themselves, became scattered among the common people. As Feng Youlan argues, “Thus when these former nobles or officials scattered throughout the country, they

⁷ Yan Buke 阎步克, *Yue Shi Yu Shi Guan—Chuan Tong Zheng Zhi Wen Hua Yu Zheng Zhi Zhi Du Lun Ji* 乐师与史官—传统政治文化与政治制度论集 [Music Teacher and Officer of History—Essays on Traditional Political Culture and Political Institutions], (Beijing: San Lian Publisher, 2001)..

maintained a livelihood by carrying on, in a private capacity, their specialized abilities or skills. Those of them who expressed their ideas to other private individuals became professional ‘teachers,’ and thus here arose the separation between the teacher and the officer.”⁸ These wandering specialists may be divided into two groups: one was the professionals of ceremony and music; the other consisted of the specialists in fighting.⁹ And the Confucianists were of the former group.

Before the time of Confucius, the only establishments that came anywhere near our modern definition of a school or campus were the so-called “official school” and “country school.” Still, they were not singularly employed for education purposes. In the case of the former, which was an expansive compound, Zhou emperor made it a place both to train royal clans in war combat arts and to perform religious ceremonies. As to the latter which was developed by minor clans and rising landowning interests, it functioned not just as a venue to instruct their sons in etiquette, music, and the techniques of driving and shooting from the horse-driven chariot, but as a sacred ground for religious congregations.

It was not until the launching of Confucius’s private education hub that there started in China the tradition of a systematic formalized transmission of values, knowledge and skill. There is no question that Confucius had his school assume a distinct social function, and made teaching a profession of its own, hence creating in Chinese history an independent educational institution.

⁸ Ibid., 230

⁹ Ibid., 621

2.3 Confucius's Development of Yue Jiao—Notions of Benevolence and Harmony

Confucius was a pious transmitter of the rich Chinese cultural past and an original thinker on rejuvenating human personality through a humanistic life of aesthetics. He developed the ancient ritual (*li* 礼) and music (*yue* 乐) tradition which has become an essential Chinese aesthetic principle.

2.3.1 Ritual (*Li* 礼): a Precondition for Social Fabric

Confucius's thought is imbedded into a very traditional concept of *li* which, from the perspective of Chinese Confucianism, is similar to "ritual". Often translated as a principle of ritual and its practices, *li* is an overarching determinant since it is the goal and function of every single action that goes into ritual. And music is integrately connected with a large theme of *li* as religious rituals are accomplished through music.

An etymological examination of the ancient Chinese character of *li* would give us a better understanding of its essential role in Confucius's thought of Yue Jiao. According to the ancient Chinese oracle bone inscriptions, the right lower part of the word "禮" (*li*) took the shape of "豆" which signified the sacrificial vessel. Practiced through Three Dynasties of Xia, Shang, and Zhou, *li* meant to respect the ancestors and gods by offering sacrifice to them. For Confucius, a person is a vessel in ancient rituals only because others are too. There were many vessels used in ancient ritual, and a vessel only functioned in the inseparability of the context and participants. As a historically important performance, ritual unites individuals and serves to distinguish human beings from other animals by defining one's personhood as her vessel-hood,

that is, she has a function in that ritual. This is demonstrated in *the Book of Rites* when Confucius claimed that it is by ritual that human beings exist as human beings. There are also well-known sayings of Confucius in *the Analects*: “someone who does not understand the observance of ritual propriety (*li*) has no way of knowing where to stand.”¹⁰ *Li* expresses a fundamental Confucian idea that an individual is recognized as one, and would feel as well as function as one only in the context of others.

For pre-Qin Confucianism, *li* is interpreted as an ambiguous term. It can be interpreted at religious level in which each person is like a vessel. But Confucius reads *li* as having a more content-full meaning than the term of religious ritual. He takes out the very ritualistic interpretation of *li* and shifts the emphasis to the social realm by claiming *li* is really the social order. Confucius interprets the notion of *li* as essential to social fabric in which each person has a function and each exists as a person in the society only if that person is connected with everyone else. Read in this context of interpersonal phenomenon, *li* is also interpreted at social level as courteous, polite, protocol, and a system of behavioral norms. In other words, in Confucian interpretation, ritual *li* is closely connected with social *li*. It keeps the political and social order in place by restraining people’s behavior to meet the regulations of communal life. When following *li*, individuals usually keep a self-restraint on their feelings, emotions, desires, gestures, and conducts in accord with appropriate social norms. Therefore *li* constitutes the structure of Confucian ideal of society. For him, nothing is better than *li* at keeping the state in order and governing the people.

¹⁰ *The Analects*, 20.3

Confucius not only offers us a richer interpretation of *li* as a social ritual, but more importantly, he develops a theoretical foundation for *li* as well as Yue Jiao, that is, the concept of benevolence (*ren* 仁). Centered on *ren*, *li* is not just an external and coercive set of norms, but the real embodiment of the value and dignity of human beings who have an innate ability of *ren*, according to Confucius. The importance of *ren* is that it acknowledges the moral dimension of ritual without which *li* would only become empty forms due to their lack of value of humanity. He treats ritual and music as two fundamental means of both governing the state and cultivating a moral sense for the goal of realization of *ren*.

For a close examination of the concept of *ren*, I will now turn to the two creative contributions that Confucius made to the idea of Yue Jiao: (a) innovating the idea of benevolence as the inner source for ritual propriety, (b) advocating the concept of harmony as the essential characteristic of music.

2.3.2 Benevolence (*Ren*)—Inward Center of Ritual

“*Ren* 仁,” most often translated as “benevolence” or “humanity,” was the foremost project taken up by Confucius, the word occurring over one hundred times in the Analects. The character is made up of the elements “person”, and the number “two.” This etymological analysis underscores the Confucian assumption that one cannot become a person merely by oneself. In other words, we are, from our beginnings, irreducibly social. Benevolence is one’s entire person: one’s cultivated cognitive, aesthetic, and moral responsibilities as they are expressed in one’s

ritualized roles and relationships.¹¹ Benevolence is not only mental, but physical as well: one's posture, gestures and bodily communication. It is noteworthy that ancient Chinese tradition does not rely upon the notion of psyche as a way of defining the human existence.¹² Confucius gave a concise definition of *ren*—*ren* consists in loving others.¹³ Loving others is the material essence of the duties of man in society. The person who really loves others is one able to perform her duties in society. By introducing the idea of benevolence, Confucius has broken the pure family bond underlying the ancestral clan system from the Zhou Dynasty. For Confucius, one should not only love those to whom she had close family relationship, but love members in the larger social community as well. The key to developing benevolence is forgiveness or reciprocity (*shu* 恕) for which Confucius provided concise guidelines. Positively speaking, reciprocity expresses an idea that “Exemplary persons establish others in seeking to establish themselves and promote others in seeking to get there themselves.”¹⁴ Understood from the negative perspective, forgiveness is “do not impose upon others what you yourself do not want.”¹⁵

In Confucius's thought, *ren* also connotes inward nobility of character: human-heartedness. As American scholar Thomas Alexander read it, *ren* is a “fundamental concern for the ‘aesthetics of social existence’—a concern that human life and its dignity, value, and web of meaningful interrelationships, is foremost in our

¹¹ *The Analects*, p.49

¹² *Ibid.*,

¹³ *The Analects*, 12.22

¹⁴ *The Analects*, 6.30

¹⁵ *The Analects*, 12.2

hearts.”¹⁶ Alexander’s rendering captured Confucius’s intention of connecting the inward value of benevolence (*ren*) with the external demand of ritual propriety. Confucius explicitly articulated the indispensable role of benevolence (*ren*): “What has a person who is not benevolent got to do with observing ritual propriety? What has a person who is not benevolent got to do with playing music?”¹⁷ These questions delivered to us an idea that *ren* “signifies one’s moral-aesthetic comportment to other people,”¹⁸ and thus provided a substantial foundation for people to observe ritual propriety. When his disciple Yan Hui inquired about *ren*, Confucius replied that “Through self-discipline and observing ritual propriety one becomes benevolent in one’s conduct.”¹⁹

The idea of benevolence was thus regarded as the essential foundation for the entire teaching of Confucius.

2.3.3 Harmony (*He* 和)—Essential Characteristic of Music

Confucius’s other creative achievement is his concept of “harmony” (*he* 和). For the ancient Chinese, harmony was a notion derived from music and later developed by Confucius as the essential characteristic of music. Harmony applied to the musical arts with instruments and voices combining together to form an aesthetically satisfying whole while each element yet retains its uniqueness. This idea of harmony embodied three levels of significance for the Confucian aesthetic thought.

¹⁶ See Thomas Alexander, “The Music in the Heart, the Way of Water, and the Light of a Thousand Suns: A Response to Richard Shusterman, Crispin Sartwell, and Scott Stroud in Symposium: A dialogue between the East and West,” *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 43, No.1 (2009): 45

¹⁷ *The Analects*, 3.3

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 45-46

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.1

Firstly, a musical harmony was significant for ancient sacrifices and performance. As we mentioned earlier, ancient Chinese music in its origin was a “comprehensive art” instead of a “single form of art,” since it was intended to be sung and as an accompaniment for dance and poetry. It was thus a requirement of musical performances that different elements go along with each other in this “mixed art.” Harmony, therefore, became an aesthetic criterion at its most basic level. In the same spirit, harmony could be seen as a desired condition with respect not only to members of families, but to relations between families and offices of government. Thus, the second level significance of harmony refers to its social/political implication. For a clearer elucidation of this point, let us turn to one related passage in the Analects:

Achieving harmony is the most valuable function of observing ritual propriety. In the ways of the former kings, this achievement of harmony made them elegant, and was a guiding standard in all things large and small. But when things are not going well, to realize harmony just for its own sake without regulating the situation through observing ritual propriety will not work.²⁰

This passage expressed a crucial Confucian belief that harmony, when applied to a wider realm of social/political environment, could contribute to achieving the ultimate ideal social order. Because for Confucius, society, as a larger family unit, was the institution in which the members gave themselves most fully to the group nexus in interactions that were governed by those roles as well as by ritual observances most appropriate to the occasion. A harmonious society depended on cooperation and coordination among different members. Confucius offered a further principle of this social harmony, “Exemplary people seek harmony not sameness; petty people, then,

²⁰ Ibid., 1.12

are the opposite.”²¹

The idea of a social harmony echoes Confucius’s philosophy that is always firmly grounded in the human. Harmony, at the third level, refers to a quality of life that requires the full expression of personal worth and values, and thus becomes the context in which one can most effectively pursue her true personality. To harmonize one’s emotions and therefore to direct one’s desires is held to be the foremost principle for the well-being of a person. Again, Confucius offered us his criteria—“pleasing without being excessive” and “mournful without being injurious.”²² More importantly, harmony understood at this level raises the bar of aesthetic judgment to a higher standard by which beauty is applauded along with goodness, and external adornment is evaluated together with internal quality.

With Confucius’s creative elaboration, the idea of harmony (*he*) established its irreplaceable position as an artistic criterion and aesthetic ideal for many artists and aestheticians that came after.

2.4 *Yue* as the Meaning of Music—Ultimate Perfection of Personality and Education

Confucius himself was said to be fond of music. He often sang. It was recorded in *Analects* that when Confucius was with others who were singing and they sang well, he would invariably ask them to sing the piece again before joining in the

²¹ Ibid., 13.23

²² Ibid., 3.20

harmony.²³ “On a day when Confucius had wailed in grief, he would not sing.”²⁴ In other passages of the text, we read that he played the stone chime and the lute. “Just as the envoy carrying the message was about to depart, Confucius got out his lute and sang, making sure that the message heard him.”²⁵ In addition, Confucius was said to be an art critic with good taste in music. For instance, he once commented that “In the Grand Musician Zhi’s overture and in his crescendo to ‘The Cry of the Osprey,’ what a flood of music fills the ear!”²⁶ In another passage, it was said that:

Confucius talked to the grand music master of Lu about music, and said “Much can be realized with music if one begins by playing in unison, and then goes on to improvise with purity of tone and distinctness and flow, thereby bringing all to completion.”²⁷

According to the Book of Rites, there are three kinds of expressions of the voice, namely, mere sound, modulations or tones, and music. It was said further that animals know only sound, the common people know only modulations or tones but not music, and it is only the exemplary man who is able to understand music itself.

Music features prominently in Confucian aesthetics. The idea that sound, rather than sight, touches the innermost core of human sensitivity occurred frequently in classical texts. The “attuned ear,” a spiritual realm that Confucius attained at the age sixty²⁸ is attuned to the meaning of the rhythm of the cosmic order in a fashion that

²³ Ibid., 7.32

²⁴ Ibid., 7.10

²⁵ Ibid., 17.20

²⁶ Ibid., 8.15

²⁷ Ibid., 3.23

²⁸ This referred to the one of the most well-known passage in *the Analects*. The whole text is as follows: Confucius said: “From fifteen, my heart-and-mind was set upon learning; from thirty I took my stance; from forty I was no longer doubtful; from fifty I realized the propensities of heaven; from sixty my ear was attuned; from seventy I could give my heart-and-mind free rein without overstepping the boundaries.” (*The Analects*, 2.4)

the fleeting images caught by the eye can never grasp. This way of privileging audio perception is vividly displayed in the etymology of the character “sage” (*sheng* 聖) with a built-in “ear” (耳). And the Sinologist William Boltz goes even further to offer a translation of the sage as the “audient.”²⁹ The art of listening is such a cherished value in Confucian aesthetics that an artist (a painter and a writer as well as a musician) learns to hear the sound of the world and of nature by listening not only with ears but the whole body (eyes, heart, mind, and the spirit).

At the heart of Confucius’s restoration of tradition is the idea of Yue Jiao (Music Education). The term is capitalized to indicate its difference from mere music education since Confucius’s Music Education refers to a range of arts and cultural education consisting of poetry education, ritual education and music education. The three came as a sequence of the development of one’s personhood. As the famous passage in *the Analects* read, “Let a man be first incited by the *Poetry* (The Book of Poetry), then given a firm footing by the study of rites, and finally perfected by music.”³⁰ There is a similar passage: “Set your sights on the way (*dao*), sustain yourself with virtue excellence, lean upon benevolent conduct, and sojourn in the arts.”³¹ Poetry enlightened a person’s sensibility to righteousness, while ritual propriety further reinforced moral sentiments into a course of action following institutionalized requirements. Music, as Confucius stated, elevates a moral personality to an aesthetic personality which ultimately frees us from the

²⁹ William Boltz, *The Origin and Development of the Chinese Writing System* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1994), 115-116.

³⁰ *The Analects*, 8.8

³¹ *Ibid.*, 7.6

inside—where our feelings and emotions reside—so that we can follow all the desires of our hearts without breaking any rule.

The central message of the role of Yue Jiao (Music Education) is that the development of society comes about first by developing humanity in our hearts. And this is done through an interaction between the modes of feeling and thinking. We learn to think rationally but we are naturally endowed with feelings and emotions. Our humanity expresses itself naturally in affective terms. It was firmly held by Confucius that human affectivity underlies all other dimensions of humanity: rationality, sociality, just to mention a few. Aesthetics, therefore, is the minimum condition for and maximum realization of learning to be fully human. Aesthetics, so conceived, is personal as well as communicable, shareable, and publicly accountable.

Music Education contributes not only to developing humanity but also to one's social and political life. One passage in the *Analects* on poetry nicely illuminates this idea: "Reciting the Poetry can uplift your spirit; strengthen your powers of observation, enhance your ability to get on with others, and sharpen your critical skills."³² There is a pervasive assumption in the Confucian tradition that the highest priority in human experience is the quality of relationships that locate one in community and constitute one as a human being. The culture of ritual and music was formed based on how ancient Chinese people looked at the place of ritual and music in social, political and ethical relations. This tradition not only sought to provide each person with a defined place and status within the family, community and society, but

³² Ibid., 17.9

also, more importantly, emphasized the power of art in shaping-educating us about the way we feel about other human beings and ourselves. The goal of aesthetic education was to further social harmony and personal happiness to the extent that one's life and all social interactions were recognized as carrying an aesthetic dimension.

2.5 Another Meaning of *Yue*—Uplifting Aesthetic Emotions

For Confucius, music education is always an enjoyable learning process, for in Chinese written language, the word for “music” is the same character assigned to the word for “enjoy”. Therefore the meanings of “music” and “enjoyment” can both be rendered by the same word. Indeed, the ancient Chinese were very conscious of the emotional joy obtained from music and the powerful effect it had on the emotions. It is that quality of happiness which is felt when the continuities of one's existence are consummated within the relationships of family, community, and cosmos. There is a pervasive assumption in the Confucian tradition that the most important thing in the human experience is the quality of the relationships that locate one in community and constitute one as a human being. This quality of happiness is also crucial for the Confucian notion of education as he said “To truly prefer something is better than just to understand it, and to enjoy it is better than simply to prefer it.”³³ Put in another way, virtue and benevolence are not merely things to know and to prefer, but things that we should delight in.

In dealing with issues surrounding art, Confucian aesthetics also stresses its

³³ Ibid., 6.20

essence of expressing human feelings and aspirations in practical activities as well as in social/political life. For example, the very function of poetry is to make one uplifted (*xing* 興). According to the studies of philologists, the original meaning of *xing* was “dancing while holding plates on hands.” This rendering reminds us of the mixed art originating in remote time when the three—music, poetry, and dance—were inseparable. The peculiarity of the idea of uplifting one’s spirit, as Confucius highlights, is that poetry explores the impalpable sphere of human feeling, the areas of consciousness in which human emotions take form and the poetic sense of things emerges. In other words, poetry arouses in us the sense of wonder, excitement and purification by which every poetic event is illuminated.

Here Confucius touches on an intriguing point. The ways in which the modes of feeling interact with the modes of thinking and the heart-and-mind connection have been at the center of understanding Confucian aesthetic tradition, which is oriented in a direction different from the Greek epistemological direction. Unlike the Greek mind that was inclined to see abstract thoughts as the most comprehensive way to explore outer and inner reality, for the ancient Chinese mind, it was rather the sensitivity to things that was the most comprehensive way to become aware of the world and to discover infinite worlds within ourselves. The Chinese character for “mind” (*xin* 心) is the same as that used to denote the word of “heart” (*xin* 心). In early Chinese physiology, humans have a single organ, the “heart-mind” or “xin” that feels and thinks, interweaving rational and emotional powers. According to *the Book of Poetry*, poetry expresses the heart’s intent. As in the case of aesthetic activity, our feeling

expands, so our thought is uplifted from the heart and in the heart intention shapes ideas and meanings. The contribution of Confucius was exactly that he synthesized these interactive elements—emotional feelings as well as rational thoughts, cognitive activities as well as sensational interactions—within one whole system of aesthetic activity with equal importance attached to each one. Understood in this line, a great artist in the traditional Chinese sense is one who thinks by way of her feeling. And this unique heart-and-mind aesthetic tradition of Confucius has been cherished by artists afterwards and passed on through generations.

2.6 Nature—Aesthetic Ideal for Human Life

The tradition of an aesthetic attitude towards nature dates from ancient China. As early as in the time when *the Book of Poetry* was composed, there were poems in praise of natural landscapes. Many more are found devoted to the analogy drawn between natural beauty and the moral virtue and manner, as well as disposition of an exemplary person. This is especially evident in the Confucian view of aesthetics: “The wise enjoy water; the benevolent enjoy mountains.”³⁴ The wise are active, the benevolent are still. The wise find enjoyment, the benevolent are long-enduring. As I read it, the underlying assumption here is that nature can serve as the criterion for one’s aesthetic judgment, and more importantly, as a mirror for one’s self-examination. The beauty found in mountains and rivers becomes the analogy to and witness of the ideal of human life. For Confucius and the Chinese people at that time, nature was not

³⁴ *The Analects*, 6.23

simply a supplier of resources for survival, nor was nature merely mystic and adversary force. Rather, nature sustained the environment humans relied on and felt an intimate connection to, because it was the place where human spirit and soul took refuge.

Along with this line of the intimate connection that ancient Chinese felt for nature, the Confucian ideal for life was an aesthetic living that did not intend to conquer nature, but to live with nature on equal footing and develop an appreciative intimacy towards nature. The dialogue of “I am with Dian” in the Analects vividly delivers this idea that the Confucian ideal of life came closer to the aesthetic dimension rather than a social or moral one. The scenario for the dialogue is a discussion between Confucius and his four disciples who were asked by their master to talk about their ideal of a person’s worth—

...

Confucius: “Dian, what about you?”

Dian plucked a final note on his zither to bring the piece to an end, and setting the instrument aside, he rose to his feet, “I would choose to do something somewhat different from the rest.” he said... “At the end of spring, with the spring clothes having already been finished, I would like, in the company of five or six young man and six or seven children, to cleanse ourselves in the Yi River, to revel in the cool breezes at the Altar for Rain, and then return home singing.”

Confucius heaved a deep sigh, and said, “I am with Dian!”

—Analects, 11.26

In comparison with other three disciples, Dian’s ideal was not to attain some great social position. He did not want to become a minister or general, nor did he want to become a diplomat or a priest. It seems that Confucius, though emphasizing the importance of restoring ritual propriety, still resorted to an aesthetic freedom in nature

as the ideal expectation.

2.7 An Exploration of Confucius's Educational Thought

From fifteen, my heart-and-mind was set upon learning; from thirty I took my stance; from forty I was no longer doubtful; from fifty I realized the propensities of heaven; from sixty my ear was attuned; from seventy I could give my heart-and-mind free rein without overstepping the boundaries.³⁵

Confucius is most well-known as an exemplary thinker, politician, and educator. Confucius's primary role as a teacher was to interpret to his disciples the ancient heritage. That is why, in his own words as recorded in the Analects, he was "a transmitter and not an originator." But this describes only one aspect of Confucius. The other part is that, while transmitting the traditional institutions and ideas, Confucius gave them interpretations derived from his own moral concepts. This section is thus an attempt to explore the educational tradition developed and philosophized by Confucian thought.

2.7.1 Confucius—the First Private Teacher in China

Confucius's approach to education was conservative on the surface, since as he remarked, he meant to be "a sheer transmitter not an innovator." However, when his "let's save it through the school" principle brought him to the task of leading the people of his time through his school to the pristine virtues of the Zhou house, he inadvertently violated the Zhou system itself. "In education, there is no social class

³⁵ Ibid., 2.4

distinction”³⁶ This comment made by Confucius openly affronted the Zhou order under which learning was a privilege confined to the young noble. More important, The “tuition” of Confucius set a quite low bar—“I have never failed to instruct students who, using their own resources, could only afford a bundle of dried meat.”³⁷ A bundle of dried meat was an extremely humble offering, which showed that Confucius was prepared to teach anyone who showed a genuine willingness to learn. The principle that education should be readily available to all indicates a Confucian belief that men are naturally close to each other and are set far apart from each other by their different experiences of life.³⁸ In pre-modern conditions in ancient China, this principle of “education available to all” could never have led to a serious attempt at the introduction of universal education, but it gave a stimulus to the widespread establishment of schools in response to imperial exhortations.

More important, Confucius was a pious transmitter of the rich cultural Chinese past and an original thinker on rejuvenating human personality through a humanistic life of aesthetics. He developed the ancient ritual-music tradition which has become an essential Chinese cultural character trait.³⁹ The great significance of Confucius in Chinese history is that in many different ways he served as an example for his fellow-countrymen to follow; and his educational thought, particularly the fashion of learning, is the vital ingredient of the Confucian teaching.

³⁶ This quotation from *the Analects* was so condensed that its meaning is not entirely clear. The original Chinese word “lei,” translated as “social class distinctions,” has a wider sense and literally means “categories” or “classification”. A generally adopted reading of this saying was to understand it as a slogan for classless education.

³⁷ *The Analects*, 7.7

³⁸ “Human beings are similar in their natural tendencies, but vary greatly by virtue of their habits.” (*The Analects*, 17.2)

³⁹ The spirit of originating through transmitting was perpetuated by the followers of Confucius, as the classical texts were handed down from generation to generation. A great portion of what in later times came to be known as the Thirteen Classics developed as commentaries in this way on the original texts.

In eating, exemplary persons do not look for a full stomach, or in their lodgings for comfort and contentment. They are persons of action yet cautious in what they say. They repair to those who know the way (dao), and find improvement in their company. Such persons can indeed be said to have a love of learning.⁴⁰

It is noteworthy that “learning” in Confucius’s philosophy of education was usually associated with cultivating appropriate conduct in affairs of the world rather than simply book learning. It entailed both learning and teaching. More specifically, learning did not merely mean the accumulation of facts for their own sake. It rather meant the gathering of knowledge for the sake of one’s conduct. Therefore, a person who had shown she has learnt certain moral lessons could be described as “fond of learning.” Confucius himself was later seen as the kind of moral exemplar who was fond of learning. This being said, the main object of learning was the imitation of models, and an important part of a teacher’s role was to act as a model himself and to provide an example of what the morally conscious human being should be like. That was what we called the two independent roles a teacher played in ancient China—language transmitter and embodied moral model.

2.7.2 Four Subjects of Confucius’s Teaching

Confucius taught four categories: culture (*wen*), proper conduct (*xing*), doing one’s utmost or loyalty (*zhong*), and making good on one’s word (*xin*).⁴¹

First, the word “wen,” translated as “culture,” originally meant “patterned, decorated, or adorned.” The word came to be applied to things which were not mere

⁴⁰ *The Analects*, 1.14

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 7.25

necessities of existence, but which gave beauty and variety to civilized life and distinguished it from barbarism⁴². The content of “wen” is rich: the appeal of fine arts, of grand ritual celebrations and musical performances, of the Chinese script and the literature written in it. As far as the Chinese were concerned, the difference between civilization and barbarism was neither merely a matter of social or political organization, nor a question of race or religion. It was rather more of a matter of cultural attainment.

The second important subject of Confucius’s teaching is proper conduct. When teaching his course, he would drive his students home to demonstrate that to be right in social interaction was the first and foremost step toward appropriateness in manners.

The course on loyalty was closely related to the training program on ideal social interaction patterns and to Confucius’s emphasis on personal commitment to their underlying values. Interpreting loyalty as a key link joining the various parts of the Zhou society into a cooperative enterprise, Confucius meant to provide the context in which people could be expected to work out a world of harmony along with royalty, filial piety and family relationship.

The standard content of education in antiquity was known as the six arts. These were rites, music, archery, charioteering, literature and mathematics. Confucius’s curriculum of four categories was not only different from the modern curriculum, but was also different from the usual training of the young aristocrat of

⁴² See Raymond Dawson, *Confucius (Past Masters)* (USA: Oxford University Press, 1983), 15.

that day. A principal difference was its exclusion of archery and charioteering. These exercises, useful in war, were studied as polite arts. Confucius did not decry these skills, but he did not teach them. Here we see a symptom of “the shift away from a military aristocracy to an aristocracy of merit and of virtue.”⁴³ This shift actually echoed a commonly held educational principle in ancient China equating education with moral training. In *the Book of History* and also in the *Mencius*⁴⁴ it is reported that the legendary sage-emperor Shun appointed a Minister of Education to give instruction to the people because they were not observing the five relationships with which traditional Chinese society was organized. These were the duties involved in the relationships between sovereign and subject, father and son, husband and wife, elder brother and younger brother, and friend and friend. These five social relationships constituted a hierarchy of propriety that regulated all the acts of an individual. Emphasizing moral cultivation, Confucius aimed to teach people to moderate their likes and dislikes and thus to moderate social relationships as a whole.

When it comes to his view of the nature of knowledge, Confucius presented to us an image of a humble educator. He once said, “I am not the kind of person who has gained knowledge through some natural propensities for it. Rather, loving antiquity, I am earnest in seeking it out.”⁴⁵ These “natural propensities” would include both one’s natural abilities and the specific conditions into which one is born such as family and community. It did not refer to some a priori category of understanding or wisdom.

⁴³ See H.G. Creel, *Confucius and the Chinese Way* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), 82

⁴⁴ One of the four Chinese classic books, with other three being *The Analects*, *The Book of the Mean*, and *The Great Learning*.

⁴⁵ *The Analects*, 7.20

Here Confucius was against the claim to a priori knowledge, but he did not deny that the circumstances of one's birth such as family and community as well as native ability have a direct yet often imperceptible bearing on one's education. This recognition is evident in another passage:

Confucius said "Knowledge acquired through a natural propensity for it is its highest level; knowledge acquired through study is the next highest; something learned in response to difficulties encountered is again the next highest. But those among the common people who do not learn even when vexed with difficulties—they are at the bottom of the heap."⁴⁶

Confucius denied that he himself belonged to the first category, which led to his emphasis on the significance of education.

2.7.3 Methods of Confucius's Teaching

Though in his teaching Confucius saw no distinctions among different social classes of students, his teaching methods were intensely individual, different for each student since everyone presented a different problem.⁴⁷ Thus the first task was to take the measure of each student. Confucius was a careful student of character. One of his teaching methods was to put his students at ease and then ask them to state their ambitions, freely and without reserve. Once having made his analysis of the individual, Confucius shaped his instruction accordingly. He sometimes gave different students entirely different answers to the same question. In one case, student Zilu asked Confucius whether on learning something, he (Zilu) should put it into practice. Confucius told him no, that he should consult his father and his elder brothers. Later

⁴⁶ Ibid., 16.9

⁴⁷ Creel, *Confucius and the Chinese Way*, 79

when another student Ranyou asked the same question, Confucius's answer was yes that he should act upon what was taught. The disciple Gongxi Hua, knowing of the two answers, was confused and asked the reason for the difference. Confucius replied, "Ranyou is diffident, and so I urged him on. But Zilu has the energy of two, and so I sought to hold him back."⁴⁸ As we have seen, this did in fact correspond to the characters of the two students.

A significant aspect of Confucius's teaching methods was the interaction between learning and reflection. As Confucius once commented, learning without due reflection leads to perplexity, and reflection without learning leads to perilous circumstances. Furthermore, in Confucius's teachings, it was not enough to be sincere merely in thought and in speech. It calls for action. One who enters government service should give his whole thought and effort to the task to be accompanied. To see what is right yet not do it is cowardice.

The essence of Confucius's teaching consisted in encouraging a fondness for learning, for learning is close to wisdom because it can remove the six obstacles to and deficiencies in virtuous conduct. These six obstacles, or, six flaws, had their full explanation in the following passage:

The flaw in being fond of acting authoritatively without equal regard for learning is that you will be easily duped; the flaw in being fond of acting wisely without equal regard for learning is that it leads to self-indulgence; the flaw in being fond of making good on one's word without equal regard for learning is that leads one into harm's way; the flaw in being fond of candor without equal regard for learning is that it leads to rudeness; the flaw in being fond of boldness without equal regard for learning is that it leads to unruliness; the flaw in being fond of firmness without equal regard for learning is that it

⁴⁸ *The Analects*, 11.22

leads to rashness.⁴⁹

In teaching proper ways of learning, Confucius enumerated the virtues—benevolence, wisdom, faithfulness, straightforwardness, courage and firmness—and explained that their cultivation depended on learning. In the *Doctrine of the Mean*⁵⁰ it is said that the superior man “honors his virtuous nature and maintains constant inquiry and study.” Important as virtuous nature is, one must constantly inquire and study to determine the rules of conduct. Only then can all things be compatible with equilibrium and be close to wisdom. This is why everyone should be fond of learning. As Confucius nicely put it, “In strolling in the company of just two other persons, I am bound to find a teacher. Identifying their strengths, I follow them, and identifying their weaknesses, I reform myself accordingly.”⁵¹

2.7.4 The Goal of Confucius’s Teaching

A passage in Analects 5.26 recorded the following dialogue:

Yan Hui and Zilu were in attendance on Confucius when the Master asked what it was that they each would most like to do. For Zilu, he would like to share belongings with friends, and Yan Hui wished to refrain from bragging about his own abilities. Confucius’ answer was “to bring peace and contentment to the aged, to share relationships of trust and confidence with my friends, and to love and protect the young. (Analects, 5.26)

We saw that Confucius was not merely teaching scholars, but educating gentleman capable of playing decisive roles in the country. At the core of the Confucian notion of a gentleman is the idea of benevolence or humanity (*ren* 仁).

⁴⁹ Ibid., 17.8

⁵⁰ One of the four Chinese classic books.

⁵¹ *The Analects*, 7.22

More importantly, this educational goal bridges a connection among individual, society and nature as a whole. As Tu Wei-ming, a Chinese Studies scholar at Harvard University, suggests, inner transformation through education is the crucial “precondition for us to participate in the internal resonance of the vital forces in nature.”⁵² We have to first harmonize our own feelings and thoughts before we are ready to follow the spirit of heaven and earth.⁵³ This emphasis on an inner transformation through self-cultivation is at the core of Confucius and other Confucians views of education and ethics. Harmony, in the context of Confucian thought, is given a moral interpretation.⁵⁴ What then is the distinction Confucius makes here between exemplary person and petty person? A Confucian harmonizing will require a person to show true respect for others without losing one’s own critical thinking and independent judgment. This way of harmonizing carries a significant meaning for education in our times, for it is a moral requirement for self-cultivation as well as for citizenship in a liberal, democratic society.

Conclusion:

Confucius was the first philosopher in Chinese history who explicitly taught us the importance of aesthetic education. Confucian aesthetics is an integral part of human flourishing. It involves the sensuality of the body, the sensitivity of the heart-and-mind, the purity of the soul, and the luminosity of the spirit. The purpose of Confucian self-cultivation is not to overcome sensuality, but to deal with inertia (bad

⁵² See Tu Wei-ming, “The Continuity of Being: Chinese Visions of Nature,” in *Chinese Aesthetics and Literature*, ed., Corinne H. Dale (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), 39.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *The Analects*, 13.23: “Exemplary people seek harmony not sameness; petty people, then, are the opposite.”

habits), limitation, and self-deception (confusing the selfish desires of the private ego for true pursuit). Given aesthetics' critical role in his philosophy, Confucian philosophy is, in my view, an aesthetic philosophy. Without an aesthetic perspective in studying Confucius, one may inevitably face the challenge of making a profound, deeper sense of his rich thoughts. Likewise, a study of Chinese culture and philosophy would be inaccurate if we left behind the study of the history of Chinese aesthetics.

“Following the proper way, I do not forge new paths; with confidence I cherish the ancients—in these respects I am comparable to our venerable Old Peng.”⁵⁵. Old Peng is said to have been a historian and writer in the Shang Dynasty (ca. 1600—1050BCE, the sovereign before the Zhou Dynasty), known for his profound scholarship. Confucius, who was fond of antiquity, sought diligently to obtain new judgments by studying old learning. Thus, he advised us to acquire new knowledge from the study of the old. Though he confined himself to a restatement of old laws, customs, and institutions, Confucius was in fact a creative transmitter. He not only carried on earlier traditions, but opened up new roads to knowledge. He organized and clarified the material he studied, developing his own theories from these sources. Despite his reverence for the past, Confucius did not believe in a blind and unthinking traditionalism. By keeping the old, one can provide understanding of the new. Although Confucius disclaimed creativity, there is a sort of creativity in using the past to serve the present. This theme echoes down through the ages, for throughout imperial Chinese history, men looked back on the feudal period of the Zhou Dynasty

⁵⁵ Ibid., 7.1

as a Golden Age. And at the forefront of scholarship there stood a tradition of scholarly commentaries on the ancient texts, interpreting their message for contemporary readers. In the common Chinese metaphor history is a mirror through which men can see their own actions, understand their own motives, and judge their own behavior. So Chinese history-writing ideal is that the past should be thoroughly transmitted, and the past should be used to understand the present.

As Kenneth Dorter pointed out in his comparison between Confucius and Plato, “Confucius may not have been a gadfly in Socrates’ sense (Apology 30a), but for all his espousal of the learning of traditions rather than the challenging of them, his disciples were told by an official that ‘Heaven shall use the master as a wooden bell’⁵⁶, a metaphor not unlike that of the gadfly since the function of such a bell is to rouse or awaken the people.”⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Ibid., 3.24.

⁵⁷ See Kenneth Dorter, “The Concept of the Mean in Confucius and Plato,” in *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 29:3 (2002): 317.

CHAPTER 3

XUNZI'S *YUE LUN* (*DISCOURSE ON MUSIC*) AND *YUE JI* (*RECORDS OF MUSIC*)

3.1 Xunzi and his *Discourse on Music*

The two essential concepts in Chinese political culture were ritual and music. They were at the heart of social institutional culture and the spiritual culture of feudal society respectively. In its long development, three individuals made significant contributions to this culture. The first was the Duke of Zhou, who established the basic position of ritual and music culture as a national culture. The second was Confucius, who introduced and developed the idea of benevolence (*ren* 仁) which became the essence of ritual and music culture. The third important thinker was Xunzi, who deeply elaborated a cultural foundation of human nature and its connection with ritual and music.

Xunzi (circa 328 BC—235 BC), lived in the Warring States Period (475 BC - 221 BC), and was one of the most important Confucian thinkers in the pre-Qin age. Though he is less known to the West, Xunzi occupies an important place in Chinese philosophy. He was a systematic thinker whose works sum up and extend the ideas and arguments of Confucianists in pre-Qin time. Xunzi was a native of the state of Zhao in the southern part of the present Hebei and Shangxi provinces. Since his early childhood, Xunzi travelled frequently to Qi where he achieved a high reputation. He was given an official rank in the state of Qin at one time, and served the state of Zhao

at another time. He also served the position of officer of Lanling in the State of Chu where he finally settled down during his later life and devoted himself to writing.

The end of Warring States period was filled with signs of a disordered age: customs were lascivious, minds were set on profit, music was depraved, and conduct was erratic. People longed desperately for a political unification that would bring all wars to an end and establish a federal empire. In the meantime, the intellectual requirement of the time was for a systematic theory that could take the essence of ideas of various intellectual schools. In his book titled *Xunzi*, this Confucian thinker reflected on the spirit of this troubled age and criticized philosophical systems of different intellectual schools. He said:

In the past, there was the blindness of senior retainers, of which the disordered schools are examples. Mo Di was blinded by utility and was insensible to the value of good form. Song Xing was blinded by desire and was insensible to satisfaction. Shen Dao was blinded by law and was insensible to worth. Shen Buhai was blinded by technique and was insensible to knowledge. Hui Shi was blinded by propositions and was insensible to realities. Zhuang Zhou was blinded by Nature and was insensible to men. Thus in a doctrine called the Way grounded on “utility,” everyone will be consumed with seeking profit. In a doctrine called the Way grounded in “desire,” everyone will concentrate on seeking satisfaction. In one that grounds everything in “law,” every decision becomes wholly a matter of calculation. In one that grounds everything in “technique,” every action becomes wholly a matter of adaptation. In one that grounds philosophy in “propositions,” thinking becomes entirely a matter of assessing things through logical argumentation. And in a doctrine called the Way grounded in “Nature,” everything becomes wholly a matter of “relying on things as they occur in nature.”¹

Like Confucius, Xunzi also taught that music as an expression of human emotion had a transforming influence on man’s life. By criticizing Mo Di’s condemnation of music, Xunzi brought Confucius’s concept of a culture of ritual and

¹ John Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*, volume III (Stanford university press, 1994), 102.

music to a fuller shape. As we know, in Confucius's philosophy, ritual and music as twin arts were important institutions for the regulation of man's conduct. In the two chapters "Discourse on Rituals" and "Discourse on Music" in his book, *Xunzi* developed a theoretical analysis of the nature of ritual principles and music, as well as the relationship between two. As one of the Six Arts cultivated by the Zhou aristocracy, music had an indispensable position in the classical curriculum. Unfortunately, the Zhou classic of music, one of the classical canons, was lost to posterity. Only one chapter survived in the works of *Xunzi*. That was the chapter 20 "Discourse on Music." It was the first theoretical and systematic treatise on the Confucian idea of Yue Jiao. The writing style of *Xunzi* was a contrast to that of Confucius whose arguments on ritual and music were suggestive but not articulate, because they did not represent concepts in the form of deductive reasoning. *Xunzi* excelled at developing theoretical and analytical arguments. The depth and perceptiveness of *Xunzi*'s analysis ensured his position in the canon of Confucian thinkers. Discussions in "Discourse on Ritual" and "Discourse on Music" had an important influence on scholars after him. For example, the spirit of his rationalism and humanity was reflected in historian Sima Qian's book *Shiji* (Record on History).

3.1.1 Foundation of Ritual and Music—Human Nature

(1) Ritual

For *Xunzi*, the role of ritual and music was to transform human nature into culture through Yue Jiao (Music Education) and towards achieving the ultimate goal

of a harmonious, balanced social organization. Xunzi's distinctive emphasis on ritual and music was connected with his view of human nature which claimed that "the nature of man is evil; his goodness is acquired training."² According to Xunzi, "Nature is the unwrought material of the original; what are acquired are the accomplishments and refinements brought about by culture. Without nature there would be nothing upon which to add the acquired. Without the acquired, nature could not become beautiful of itself."³ On the surface, it may seem that Xunzi had a negative opinion of human nature, yet the truth is that he held a positive view of a philosophy of culture. He argued that every valuable thing was the product of human effort, and culture was the achievement of human being. Human nature, too, should be cultured for otherwise it could not be good.

He further asserted that every person on the street has the capacity of knowing human-heartedness, righteousness, obedience to law and uprightness, and the means to carry out these principles. How was this possible? Xunzi argued that men cannot live without some type of a social organization because in order to enjoy better living and dominance over their environment, men need cooperation and mutual support. For this reason, men must have a social organization and need rules of conducts. Therefore ritual—including rites, ceremonies, and customary rules of living—held an important place in Confucianism.

A question then arises with regard to the origin of ritual. Xunzi argued that man was born with desires, and when these desires couldn't be satisfied, there would

² Burton Watson, trans., *Hsun Tzu: Basic writings*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

³ *Ibid.*

inevitably be contention and thus disorder. In order to avoid these disorders, the ancient kings established ritual to put an end to this confusion.⁴ The function of ritual, therefore, was to set a limit on everyone in the satisfaction of their desires. Relating the origin of ritual to a theory of human nature, Xunzi further claimed that when there was ritual, there was morality which distinguished human beings from birds and beasts.

For Confucian thinkers, ritual (*li* 礼) could be translated as ceremonies, rituals, or rules of social conduct. Xunzi's interpretation of ritual as rules of social conduct emphasize two primary functions of ritual: the first is to regulate, that is, to provide regulation for the satisfaction of man's desires as well as for the harmony of an ordered hierarchy of a social organization. Xunzi advocated for governing states based on ritual principles. He argued that "Ritual principles have three roots. Heaven and earth are the root of life. Forebears are the root of kinship. Lords and teachers are the root of order...Were even one of these three lost, there would be no peace and security for man. Thus, rituals serve heaven above and earth below pay honor to one's forebears, and exalt rulers and teachers, for these are the three roots of ritual principles."⁵ Xunzi's arguments revealed the multiple connections between ritual and cosmos, human being and society. It outlined a basic strategy for governing the nation and maintaining social order.

⁴ Knoblock, *Xunzi*, 55. The translation went as follows: "How did ritual principles arise? I say that men are born with desires which, if not satisfied, cannot but lead men to seek to satisfy them. If in seeking to satisfy their desires men observe no measure and apportion things without limits, then it would be impossible for them not to contend over the means to satisfy their desires. Such contention leads to disorder. Disorder leads to poverty. The ancient kings abhorred such disorder; so they established the regulations contained within ritual and moral principles in order to apportion things, to nurture the desires of men, and to supply the means for their satisfaction."

⁵ Knoblock, *Xunzi*, 58.

The second function of ritual is to nurture. The ancient kings established ritual and moral principles in order to nurture the desires of men, and to supply the means for their satisfaction. In the view of Xunzi, when a gentleman had been nurtured by ritual and moral principles, he would also be fond of ritual distinctions about “the graduations of rank according to nobility of baseness, disparities between the privileges of old and young, and modes of identification to match these with poverty of wealth, insignificance or importance.”⁶ Xunzi’s idea of nurturing one’s desires implied that a good social state consisted in an appropriate portion of different human desires. Xunzi did not seek to eliminate the human desires, but rather to moderate them and offer appropriate satisfactions.

(2) Music

The origin of music, according to Xunzi, was also based on a theory of human nature. He interpreted music as joyful emotion that man can not help but feel at times. This was both a necessary and an inescapable part of our inborn nature. In the chapter on music, he argued that “since man cannot help feeling joy, his joy must find an outlet in voice and an expression in movement. The outcries and movements, and the inner emotional changes which occasion them, must be given full expression in accordance with the way of man.”⁷ The ancient kings created the musical forms of the odes and hymns for the purpose of guiding the expression of man’s joy by the principles of the Way. Thus the function of music was to prevent human emotional

⁶ Ibid., 56.

⁷ Watson, *Hsun Tzu*, 112.

expressions from becoming wild and disordered.

Xunzi introduced a few key words to describe features of music: joy, emotion, voice, expression, and the Way. When he made the important observation that music meant joy and expressed emotions, he exploited the fact that in Chinese, the character of 乐(music), was used for at least two phonetically similar words. One is *yue*, the performance of music and musical theory. Another word is *le*, referring to enjoyment and pleasures. Perhaps because of its association with music, ancient Chinese philosophers often suggested that music had a rudimental relation with human emotions.

As a temporal art, music relates its ultimate goal to cosmic ontology—the Way. “He who curbs his desires in accordance with the Way will be joyful and free from disorder, but he who forgets the Way in the pursuit of desire will fall into delusion and joylessness.”⁸ What Xunzi meant by the notion of Way was a kind of humanity that embodied ethical and political principles. Since the ontological meaning of Way can moderate and direct desires, music attained a connection with morality. Here Xunzi touched upon the spirit of Chinese philosophy. For Chinese philosophers, the highest form of achievement for a person was becoming a sage. And the highest achievement of a sage was the identification of the individual with the universe. A superficial reading of Confucianism might hold the view that it was concerned mainly with society, not with the universe; with the daily function of human relations, not with hell and heaven; with men’s present life, not with life in a world to come. However,

⁸ Ibid., 117.

according to Confucianism, the daily task of dealing with social affairs in human relations is not something alien to the sage. Carrying on this task is the essence of a balanced development of one's personality.

The significance of discussing the origin of both ritual and music was to draw out the connection between what is of nature and what is of culture. With regard to the natural aspect, the origin of ritual and music was to meet the needs of human life. Xunzi's important contribution was to relate this natural aspect of ritual and music to the role of transforming human nature to civilized culture. And this role was performed by human effort with self-consciousness. This notion of transformation was at the heart of Xunzi's discussions of Yue Jiao and his thoughts on politics and ethics. When it came to the cultural aspect, the cultural transformation took place at multiple levels: on the social level, social relations were conceived as products of civilized culture. In the view of Xunzi, social relations were not gifts of nature, but achievements of human spirit. In this reading, ritual and music both offered refinement and purification to human emotion. And on the individual level, this cultural transformation was a personal educational growth from a natural being to a social being. The goal was to cultivate oneself as a moral person who not only possessed a benevolent personality but also performed appropriate actions in accordance with social ethics norms.

3.1.2 Difference between Ritual and Music

For Xunzi, although both ritual and music contribute to moral cultivation,

there is a difference in the way they affect this transformation. He made this point nicely in the following quote: “Music embodies an unchanging harmony, while rites represent unalterable reason. Music unites that which is the same; rites distinguish that which is different; and through the combination of rites and music the human heart is governed.”⁹

Ritual contributes to making social distinctions. In Xunzi’s view, man should have social relations and the ritual for these distinguishes her from birds and beasts. Ritual is essential for governing a state since it divides people into different social classes and rules accordingly, but it also has the disadvantage of severing the tension between different social groups. This is where music’s function of harmony comes in. A musical harmony has its expression in various occasions from the ancestral temple to the household and community:

When music is performed in the ancestral temple of the ruler, and the ruler and his ministers, superiors and inferiors, listen to it together, there are none who are not filled with a spirit of harmonious reverence. When it is performed within the household, and father and sons, elder and younger brothers listen to it together, there are none who are not filled with a spirit of harmonious kinship. And when it is performed in the community, and old people and young together listen to it, there are none who are not filled with a spirit of harmonious obedience.¹⁰

Music brings about unity and induces harmony in human relationships. This arranges the social environment for moderation. According to John Knoblock, the English translator of *Xunzi*, social harmony had three bases: strict reverent care taken in the execution of one’s duties as a member of society; the development of bonds;

⁹ Watson, *Hsun Tzu*, 177.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 113.

and an attitude of obedience to those more senior to one's self.¹¹ By regulating music, the ancient kings aimed to “cultivate feelings of reverence in ritual ceremonies, of kinship between families and communities, and of obedience between young and old.”¹²

Xunzi's arguments of the difference between ritual and music were echoed later in another Chinese classic *Li Ji* (Book of Rites):

Music leads to common union; *li* leads to distinction. From common union comes mutual affection; from distinction, mutual respect. When music predominates, there is weak coalescence; when *li* predominates, there is a tendency to separation. It is the business of both—*li* and music—to harmonize man's feelings and give elegance to his outward manifestations...Music comes from within, and *li* acts from without. Music, coming from within, produces serenity [of the mind], while *li*, acting from without, produces elegance [of the manner]...Lawless people do not appear, feudal lords are courteously submissive; arms and armors are not practices; the five penalties are not used. On this account, the effects of music are realized. The affections of father and son are harmonized; the ranks between seniors and juniors are distinguished; then reverence prevails within the four seas. On this account, the Emperor practices *li*.¹³

The central theme is that ritual and music are two important governing means of maintaining an orderly and harmonious society. Ritual's function, as noted above, is to secure the mean in man's desire and thus to regulate an individual's conduct. The function of music, on the other hand, is to regulate one's emotion and so to purify her feelings in accordance with the right principle.

3.1.3 Aesthetic and Moral Goodness

¹¹ Knoblock, *Xunzi*. 79

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Legge, *Li Chi (Book of Rites)*, volume II, 97-99.

Xunzi followed Confucius when he defined the criteria of music as both moral and aesthetic goodness. In the *Analects*, Confucius detested the unorthodox music of the State of Zheng as it threatened the traditional music of the court (*Analects* 17:18). Xunzi offered his own interpretation of this idea: “Seductive looks and the songs of Zheng and Wei cause the heart to grow licentious, while the donning of court robes, sashes, and formal caps, the Shao dance, and the Wu song, cause the heart to feel brave and majestic.”¹⁴ These remarks illustrated an early Confucian belief that music is capable of affecting its audiences either positively or negatively.

The gentlemen utilizes bells and drums to guide his will, and lutes and zithers to gladden his heart. In the movements of the war dance he uses shields and battle-axes; as decorations in the peace dance he uses feather ornaments and yak tails; and he sets the rhythm with sounding stones and woodwinds. Therefore, the purity of his music is modeled after Heaven, its breadth is modeled after the earth, and its posturing and turnings imitate the four seasons. Hence, through the performance of music the will is made pure, and through the practice of rites the conduct is brought to perfection.....All the world becomes peaceful and joins together in the joy of beauty and goodness. Therefore I say that music is joy.¹⁵

The passage above expresses a significant thesis of Xunzi’s aesthetics that the world enjoys beauty and goodness together. According to Xunzi, musical performances are the means of guiding enjoyment.

Beauty and goodness is an important pair of concepts in the history of Chinese philosophy. Confucius was among the earliest thinkers who discussed this pair of concepts. There are some passages in the *Analects* where beauty and goodness are used interchangeably. Yet there are other cases when the two had different interpretations, for instance, goodness is referred to the content of something or a

¹⁴ Knoblock, *Hsun Tzu*, 116.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 116-117.

person's personality; whereas beauty is more focused on the external form of a thing or a person's appearance. It is thus clear that in Chinese classic philosophy, beauty and goodness could be rendered either differently or similarly. For Confucius, goodness in general held a higher value than beauty: "The Master said of the *shao* music that it is both superbly beautiful and superbly felicitous. Of the *wu* music he said that it is superbly beautiful but not superbly felicitous."¹⁶ The priority between beauty and goodness is the opposite in Mencius' discussion, however. Xunzi brings this discussion to a higher level by arguing that the world joined together in the joy of beauty and goodness.

The uniqueness in Xunzi's arguments is that his approach to the unity of aesthetic and moral goodness is not merely metaphysical. Rather he interprets the unity as is achieved in the context of a musical performance. Of course this unity did not take place automatically. It is in musical appreciation that a magic scenario is created where people are allowed "to cultivate the self, to find a place within a historical tradition, and to benefit from relationships with others who likewise pursue the goods of artistic self-expression."¹⁷ Music affects both individual and the state in multiple ways: for the former it balances human mind and body; for the latter, it reforms social customs and manners. Proper music, according to Xunzi, sharpens the sense organs ("eyes and ears become keen"), enhances mental conditions ("the temper becomes harmonious and calm"), and appropriately cultivates an individual's personhood.

¹⁶ *The Analects*, 3.25

¹⁷ Eric C. Mullis, "The Ethics of Confucian Artistry," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 65 (1) (2007): 106.

3.2 *Yue Ji*: Records of Music

Xunzi's arguments on ritual and music are further developed in *Li Ji* (Book of Rites, or Records of Rituals), one of the ancient Chinese Five Classics. The ancient works of China are commonly classified into four categories, namely, Jing (Classics), Shi (History), Zi (Philosopher's writings) and Ji (Miscellany). *Li Ji* is a commentary on religious ceremonies, mourning rites, and social etiquette. This book consists of the "records composed by the pupils of the seventy [Confucian] disciples," and represents "an encyclopedia of Confucian teachings" of late Zhou, Qin, and Han times.¹⁸ The exact date when the *Li Ji* was written is still a matter of debate. Some scholars hold the view that it was compiled by the Confucian school in the Han Dynasty from 202 B.C to 220 A.D. Other scholars argue that *Li Ji* was compiled during the first century B.C. from various documents of different periods.¹⁹ A commonly accepted view agrees that *Li Ji* was written after Xunzi's works since many arguments in the book, especially in the chapter of *Yue Ji*, were very close to those of Xunzi.

The Yue Ji (Records of Music, chapter 19), included in *Li Ji*, was one of the most influential treatises on aesthetics in ancient China. It is generally considered to be a primordial expression of the spirit of Chinese art. It has exerted a profound influence on the history of Chinese aesthetics and art criticism, similar to that of Aristotle's *Poetics* on Greek aesthetics. At the rise of the Han dynasty, *Yue Ji* inherited

¹⁸ Legge, *Li Chi (Book of Rites)*, vol. I, liii.

¹⁹ Legge, *Li Chi (Book of Rites)*, vol.II., x.

from Confucian thinkers the idea of Yue Jiao (Music Education) as well as the practice of art. It further emphasized aesthetic qualities of music and the relationship of music to cosmos, society and the human mind. The significance of *Yue Ji* as a great work on music lies in the fact that it provided the rich material for the study of Confucian teachings and the stages in the evolution of Confucian thought as well as its relation to the development of Chinese civilization. We find in *Yue Ji* a continuous correlation between ritual and music in building the framework of society. As mentioned above, the whole book of *Li Ji* was constructed not by the writing of original articles on the subject treated, but by compiling various texts of different periods written by different authors. The *Yue Ji* (Records of Music) was believed to contain eleven records which reflect the thinking of Xunzi and embody quotations from his work. Therefore when we read *Yue Ji*, we are not surprised to find many similar arguments between *Yue Ji* and those in Xunzi, with some passages almost being identical. To avoid repeating what we have already explored in the section of *Xunzi*, in what follows, I will focus on the difference between *Yue Ji* and *Xunzi*.

3.2.1 The Origin and Nature of Music

In comparison with Xunzi's discussions, *Yue Ji* puts more emphasis on the aesthetic qualities of music. The following are two well-known paragraphs from *Yue Ji*:

- (a) All the modulations of the voices arise from the heart, and the various affections of the heart are produced by things (external to it). The affections thus produced are manifested in the sounds that are uttered. Changes are produced by the way in which those sounds respond to one another; and those

changes constitute what we call the modulations of the voice. The combination of those modulated sounds, so as to give pleasure, and the (direction in harmony with them of the) shields and axes, and of the plumes and ox-tails, constitutes what we call music.²⁰

(b) All modulations of the voice spring from the heart of men. When the feelings are moved within, they are manifested in the sounds of the voice; and when those sounds are combined so as to form compositions, we have what are called the modulations of the voice.²¹

In these two passages, there is an inner structure of the origin of music which can be illuminated by the following diagram: **Things (external to one's heart)→Heart→Feelings→Sounds→Compositions of Sounds→Modulations of the Voice→Music**

The connection between the first two elements—external things and the human heart—sets up a realistic foundation for the origin of music, according to *Yue Ji*. When the heart is stirred by external things, it spontaneously expresses them in modulations of voice. This connection is further elaborated at three levels:

First of all, it rejects the idea that music is created from a person's psychological instinct. Rather, external things, materials, substance, and conditions in the real world cause feelings and emotions to arise in the human heart.

Secondly, the human heart is not a passive receiver of the affections caused by external things; it plays a positive role in turning affections into music for the purpose of expressing human feelings and emotions. It is said in *Yue Ji* that different affections arising in one's heart would have different manifestations in sounds and musical styles: "When the mind is moved to sorrow, the sound is sharp and fading away; when

²⁰ Ibid., 93.

²¹ Ibid.

it is moved to pleasure, the sound is slow and gentle.....These six peculiarities of sound are not natural; they indicate the impressions produced by (external) things.”²²

Thirdly, as the diagram shows, the origin of music encompasses a process of transformation from natural sounds to aesthetic voice. Compared with Confucius and Xunzi, *Yue Ji* for the first time nicely differentiated between sound, voice, and music. A few key notions need further elaboration here: feelings, sound, compositions, and modulations of the voice. First of all, feelings, as the main content of music, are the primordial criteria for differentiating artistic music from other modulations of the voice, for instance, languages. Secondly, feelings need an external expression to deliver, i.e., sound. But not all emotional expressions, for instance, cry or laughter, are taken as music, according to *Yue Ji*. Sound unconsciously uttered is not really music. The unique type of sound of music has to “respond to one another” by creating changes and being combined so as to form compositions. Modulations of the voice are therefore regulated sounds composed in accordance with rhythm, tones and rules. Finally, various composed voices, together with dance, constitute music. The examples of “shields and axes,” “plumes and ox-tails” remind us that in ancient China, music was a mixed form of art that included music, poems, and dance.

3.2.2 The Social Role of Music

The formation from natural sound to musical performance implies that music possesses not only formal, artistic properties, but also norms of social ethics.²³ Music

²² Ibid.

²³ For this important comment, please see Ye Lang 叶朗, *Zhongguo Meixueshi Dagang* 中国美学史大纲 [the

is the intercommunication of human hearts in their relations and differences.²⁴ Based on differences between sound, voice, and music, *Yue Ji* further discusses epistemological criteria for understanding these three types of expression of the voice. According to *Yue Ji*, “even beasts know sound, but not its modulations; and the masses of the common people know the modulations, but they do not know music. It is only the superior man who can (really) know music.”²⁵ “Voice of virtue is music” is stated as a distinctive criterion because music relates the human heart to morality and humanity.

More important, music carries a deeper symbolic meaning as an embodiment of the spirit of the times. There is an interaction between music of the people and the character of their government.²⁶ *Yue Ji* illuminates this idea sharply in the following argument: “the modulations of the voice of an age of good order indicate composure and enjoyment. The modulations of the voice of an age of disorder indicate dissatisfaction and anger, and its government is perversely bad. The modulations of the voice of a stage going to ruin are expressive of sorrow and (troubled) thought.”²⁷ Music indicates the aesthetic style and value orientation of the times for two reasons. On the one hand, as Chinese aestheticist Gao Jianping points out, both natural environment and social conditions stimulate the heart.²⁸ He argues that various affections of heart are produced by substances referring to social conditions.²⁹ In

Outline of the History of Chinese Aesthetics] (Shanghai: Renmin Publishing House, 1985), 148-158.

²⁴ Legge, *Li Chi (Book of Rites)*, vol II., 95.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 95.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 94.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Gao Jianping, “Man and His Relations with Society and Art: A case Study of *On Music*,” in *International Yearbook of Aesthetics* 14 (2010),

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 113.

other words, sound and voice are connected with social and political situations. When the feelings are moved within, they are manifested in the music.

On the other hand, the ancient kings understood this social role of music and placed their highest priority on it because music composed in times of peace and prosperity can teach people to improve their behavior. Music, therefore, performs a crucial social and political function in changing the customs and order of society. This is the function of Music Education, the meaning of which is not to train people to play or enjoy music, but to instruct them with music. As *Yue Ji* explained, “the end to which ceremonies, music, punishments, and laws conduct is one; they are the instruments by which the heart of the people are assimilated, and good order in government is made to appear.”³⁰ When ceremonies, music, laws, and punishments perform their full function, the method of governing is complete and perfect.

Thus we see that the ancient kings, in their institution of ceremonies and music, did not seek how fully they could satisfy the desires of the appetite and of the ears and eyes; but they intended to teach the people to regulate their likings and dislikings, and to bring them back to the normal course of humanity.³¹

When one has fully understood music, noble people nourish their love of what is good, and others hear the correction of their errors. So it is said that “for the courses to be pursued by men the influence of good music is great.”³²

3.2.3 Music's Relation with Cosmos

Yue Ji is considered a systematic summary of the Confucian notion of Yue Jiao

³⁰ Legge, *Li Chi (Book of Rites)*, Vol.I, 93.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 96.

³² *Ibid.*, 113.

(Music Education), with an emphasis on the relationship between nature, music and human being.

According to *Yue Ji*, the harmony of music is a manifestation of the inner cosmic order of nature, because the principle of movements and changes prevailing in nature, society, and individual is similar. Ancient Chinese thinkers insightfully point out that the likeness between cosmic order and music is that both demonstrate the harmonious nature and qualities of all things. Music achieves its remarkable effects because its inner structure contains the integration and compensatory balancing that exist in the whole universe as well. Musical notes, to some extent, are conceived as mirrors of natural phenomenal and objects—“in the fine and distinct notes we have an image of heaven; in the ample and grand, an image of earth; in their beginning and ending, an image of the four seasons; in the wheelings and revolutions (of the pantomimes), an image of the wind and rain.”³³ A similar point was made in the following paragraph:

.....there ensures the manifestation (of the inward thoughts) by the modulations of notes and tone, the elegant accompaniments of the lutes, small and large, the movements with the shield and battle-axe, the ornaments of the plumes and ox-tails, and the concluding with the pipes and flutes. All this has the effect of exhibiting the brilliance of complete virtue, stirring up the harmonious action of the four (seasonal) energies; and displaying the true natures and qualities of all things.³⁴

This being said, when the harmony of music performs its full function, all things will be nourished and thrive, just as the functions of cosmic order will.

Besides the principle of harmony, there is another similarity between human

³³ Ibid., 111.

³⁴ Ibid.

beings and nature: both require regulation in order to keep a balance. As for nature, the flourishing of all things rests on the principle of natural law. With regard to human being, it takes a joined performance of ritual and music. Similar to the point discussed in *Xunzi*, *Yue Ji* distinguishes different roles played by ritual and music. The function of ritual is to secure the mean in man's desire and so to regulate that person's conduct. The function of music, on the other hand, is to regulate man's emotions, and direct them to be expressed in accordance with the proper mean. Instructions of the government "are the people's cold and heat; if they are not what the time requires, an injury is done to society."³⁵ Understanding this, when the ancient kings created ritual and music, they aimed to bring their government into harmony with those laws of heaven and earth.

3.2.4 Music and Emotion

One distinctive feature of *Yue Ji* is its emphasis on the central position of emotion in *Yue Jiao*. When the emotions are stirred by sounds, the body spontaneously expresses them in gestures and various body expressions. This is both a necessary and an inescapable component of our inborn nature. According to *Yue Ji*, the sounds give expressions of our emotions in diversity: for example, sorrow is expressed by "sharp sounds that break"; pleasure by "drawn out sounds that are relaxed"; etc. The most direct relation between music and emotion lies in the fact that in Chinese the same character for music was used for the phonetically similar word *Le*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 106.

(enjoyment, joy). *Le* denoted the state of joy, cheerfulness and happiness.

Take one of the famous passages in *Yue Ji* as an illustration of the relationship between music and emotion:

Virtue is the strong stem of (man's) nature, and music is the blossoming of virtue. Metal, stone, silk, and bamboo are (the materials of which) the instruments of music (are made). Poetry gives expression to the thoughts; singing prolongs the notes (of the voice); pantomimic movements put the body into action (in harmony with the sentiments). These three things originate in the mind, and the instruments of the music accompany them. In this way the affections (from which comes the music) are deeply seated, and the elegant display of them is brilliant. All the energies (of the nature) are abundantly employed, and their transforming power is mysterious and spirit-like. A harmonious conformity (to virtue) is realized within, and the blossoming display of it is conspicuous without, for in music, more than other things, there should be nothing that is pretentious or hypocritical.³⁶

More important, in Chinese culture, the emotional side of human nature is emphasized much more than its rational side. The mainstream of Chinese philosophy tries to find the governing principles of human life and the world primarily from emotion. Confucian thinkers, in particular, interpreted emotions not as the rigid, fixed, abstract principles based on or known by logical thinking, but as the dynamic, concrete principles rooted in the and embodied by emotional activities. I will discuss this point more in details in next chapter.

3.2.5 Educational System

There are three important chapters on education in books of *Xunzi* and *Li Ji*: *Wei Xue* (the beginning chapter in *Xunzi*), the *Xue Ji* (Records of Study, chapter 18 in *Li Ji*), and the *Ru Xing* (Behavior of a Confucian, chapter 43 in *Li Ji*). *Xue Ji* is an

³⁶ Ibid., 112-113.

eloquent exposition of the educational system, learning process, and teaching method of the imperial institution. Take, for example, the following passage:

When the *junzi* [superior man] knows what is difficult in learning and what is easy, when he knows what is beautiful and what is ugly, he is able to teach with comprehensive illustrations. When he can teach in this manner, he is qualified to be a teacher. After he has become a teacher, he is qualified to be an official. After he has become an official, he is qualified to be a sovereign. Thus, from teaching one learns how to be a sovereign. For this reason care must be exercised in selecting teachers.³⁷

The central thesis in Confucian scholars' elaboration on education is self-cultivation. The steps following self-cultivation, such as investigation of things, extension of knowledge, regulation of the family and so forth, are the means for cultivating the self to its highest perfection. These illuminate the same principle as the manifestation of virtue. Here we note the unity of ethics, politics, and education, which is characteristic in Confucianism.

The goal of education in Chinese context is to enhance moral and ethical being. For Confucians, the ideal of art is concerned with an aesthetics of living harmoniously. The arts have their ultimate beauty in moral goodness; therefore the ideal of art is suggestiveness, not articulateness, whether it is music, poetry, painting, or anything else. The role of art education is to refine our moral feelings, enhance our powers of benevolence, and actualize our genuine human nature. What underlies the Confucian thinkers' notion of Yue Jiao is an interesting perspective of seeing music as the axis of two sides: objective knowledge and also subjective experience—together consisting in the process of self-cultivation. Understood in this way, the notion of harmony has

³⁷ Legge, *Li Chi (Book of Rites)*, vol. II, 88.

to be first experienced instead of objectively studied. Evidently, the link between embodiment and moral education is explicitly recognized in Confucianism. As social and cultural beings, we do not have privileged access to the great cosmological harmony and can never get outside ourselves to study nature from neutral ground.

CHAPTER 4

MUSIC AS AN INDISPENSIBLE COMPONENT OF EDUCATION—THE MODEL IN ANCIENT GREECE

While I focus on the thought of Confucian school on Music Education, I will also explore, in this chapter, those discussions of the value of music and the role of music education by three key figures in early Greek thought—namely, Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle.¹ During the fifth to the third centuries BCE, there were important writings in both China and Greece on the notion of music in its broad sense. Attention to the Greek discussions serves to facilitate comparisons and contrast with the Chinese discussions. It is my hope that a cross-cultural conversation will enable us to see that music emerged as an indispensable component of education at the very beginning of both ancient Chinese and Greek civilization.

As will become clear, there was significant resonance as well as considerable differences between the two cultures. Both the ancient Chinese and Greeks recognized the immense impact that music has on the development of one's personality, and both regarded it as an important means for proper education to cultivate the people of a well-ordered society. The notion of music in both traditions had a wider meaning than is allowed today. Neither of these traditions looked at music as merely a single acoustic form of art, or a simple technical matter. Rather, music covered a broad range

¹ When focusing on these two Western philosophers in my discussion of Confucian educational thought, I am fully aware of the danger of taking a somewhat eclectic approach that might be vulnerable to the charge that I have taken some concepts out of the context of these two philosopher's whole system. However, since I am attempting to bring Chinese thought into the wider philosophical conversation, what I have decided is to take a few aspects from these two philosophers that I think are more easily aligned with Confucius's thought, and also explore these connections. And in the course of exploring these connections, I will introduce the concepts from their own thoughts that will serve to further clarify the significance of this choice.

of educational means and subjects, including speech, stories, reading, mathematics, painting, poetry, and songs. For the ancient Chinese, music was a multiform of art consisted of poetry, dance and music. Similarly in Greece, music had many branches, especially with an indispensable connection to dancing and poetry. Plato referred to the three of them, music, dance and poetry, as “the art of Muse.” Musical training (*mousikê*) included poetry and stories, as well as music proper.² More important, both traditions regarded music as embodying the highest value among all the arts. In ancient Greece, music was given a position even higher than the epics and tragedies. Ever since Pythagoras, almost every Greek philosopher or artist commented on music and its influence on an individual or a *polis*.

Yet despite their similar views about music, there were, between the two cultures, underlying differences whose significance should never be underestimated. And this is exactly my intention in this chapter: to show that even in vastly different cultures, the educational power of music was emphasized to a similarly great extent at the origin of two great civilizations. I hope, therefore, that an observation of how the two cultures conceived the value of music may give us some insight into music’s role in aesthetic education among modern readers.

4.1 The Meaning of Harmony in Confucius and the Pythagorean School

At the origin of both civilizations, we see a common emphasis on the notion of harmony. In the west, the term “harmony” was first introduced and analyzed by

² In Plato’s *Republic*, the effects of music was characterized at 401d5-402d9, 410b10—412b1, 522a3-b1. See *Republic*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2004). Hereafter cited as *Republic*.

Pythagoras. It means “fitting together,” a rhythmic and balanced flow of lines, colors, shapes, words or written actions from one part to another.³ This idealized “balance” is imprinted on early fifth-century Athenian sculptures. It gives them the serene, lofty beauty and grandeur of a rational construct.

For Pythagoras, the term “harmony” was more properly used to describe an ideal state of music. He explained harmony in terms of mathematics since numbers, measure and proportion were contributing factors to the final harmony. He argued that number is the fundamental language of reality. It is the essence of all things, and consists in their organizing principles. Pythagoras further identifies harmony with the structure of eternal numbers, which determines their nature. The notion of “harmony in numbers” became influential in pre-Socratic time. It was taken to be present in all things as the cause of the world and of all its order.

Notice a first similarity between Pythagoras and Confucius is that they both endow the term “harmony” with the sense of attunement and unification which signifies conformity and unity of the constituents. For both philosophers the harmony of sounds is a manifestation of a deeper harmony; that is, a representation of an intrinsic order in the very structure of things. But there is a difference in their interpretations of the meaning of the notion. For Pythagoras, music serves as an image of numerical rationality which performed its function in the context of human reality. The mathematical nature of music is constructed by means of human reasoning, and thus marks human efforts to make systematic sense of the world. As Kathleen Higgins

³ Aphrodite Alexandrakis, “The Role of Music and Dance in Ancient Greek and Chinese Rituals: Form Versus Content,” in *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 33, no.2 (2006): 268.

points out, “the association of reason with measure—and indeed with numbers generally—was an innovation of Pythagoras and his school of thinkers...The Pythagoreans took the practical power human beings achieved by means of measure as evidence that number provided the secret code to the truth about the world.”⁴

Confucius, in contrast, is very particular in interpreting musical harmony by looking into the inner self and searching for its fundamental source. The harmony of music comes from the harmony of everyone’s heart, which prescribes an emotive property rather than a mathematical property to music. While the Pythagorean School studies music from a scientific, acoustic perspective, Confucius is more interested in the relation between music, human emotion, and human life in general. This difference became the two general orientations of aesthetics in the subsequent development of the two traditions. It also contributed to two different views of reality. For the ancient Greeks, the reality conceived in Pythagoras’ investigations was the numerical reality of experienced auditory harmony. The ancient Chinese, on the other hand, looked at reality as something more sensible, tangible, and emotive.

A second similarity between ancient Chinese and Greek traditions consists in a shared belief that music has a uniquely direct connection not only with the numbers, but more significantly, with the cosmos. Pythagoras holds that the whole universe produces a “music of the spheres,” a harmonious symphony that we do not hear only because it sounded continuously. Apparently, there was much enthusiasm of music in his argument as Pythagoras was said to be fond of music, and was regarded as one of

⁴ Kathleen Marie Higgins, "Apollo, Music, and Cross-Cultural Rationality," *Philosophy East & West* 42, no. 4 (1992): 623-41.

the greatest musicians in the pre-Socratic period. He developed a theory of aesthetic cosmology which connects music with mathematics and the cosmos altogether. Pythagoras made two significant contributions: (a) he applied the principle of numbers to musical research and developed a set of acoustic rules. One example, for instance, was a rule that musical harmony is dependent on the ratio of the length of strings; (b) he interpreted musical harmony as a reflection of the order of the inner structure of all things since the literal meaning of cosmos (kosmos) is “order.” This idea is related to Pythagoras’ theory of cosmology according to which the whole universe is constituted by eternal numbers.

As we recall from *Yue Ji*, the treatise maintains that heaven and earth have their own harmony which is shared by grand music. On the surface, it seems that the *Yue Ji* expresses a very similar idea to those we see in Pythagoras’ cosmology. Nevertheless, the nature of the connection between the universe and music has different meanings in the two traditions. For Pythagoras, music and the universe are related because they both are organized in an orderly fashion. For the ancient Confucians, the nature of this connection is more sociological rather than merely cosmological. The Chinese relate musical harmony to that of heaven and earth in such a way that express their wish of establishing an orderly society. In this ideal society, different classes correspond to different positions.

Both ancient Confucians and Pythagoreans share a third similarity in their understanding of the effect of music on people’s spirit, but from different intellectual backgrounds. In ancient Greece there was the religious Orphic belief that the soul was

imprisoned in the body for its sins, and that it would be liberated when it was purified. Pythagoras described the main property of music as “psychagogia”, i.e. “the guidance of soul.” Music could exert an effect on one’s soul and guide it to its liberation. Pythagoras sees in music a “cathartic” power that is ethical as well as religious. This understanding affected the later Greek aesthetics through Plato and Aristotle. In comparison, the Confucian discussions on music imply that a good social and psychological state consists in an appropriate balance of desires, emotions, and reason. A piece of good music does not seek to eliminate human desires, but rather to channel these in such a way as to moderate them and make them useful to society. Again, we see here the Confucian focus emphasizes the emotive property rather than the mechanical property of music.

The Pythagorean discussion of music had great influence on Plato who accepted two claims and brought them to further development: the first is that musical harmony is based on proportion, and the second claim is that music has a power of purification upon one’s soul. We will now look more closely at Plato in the next section.

4.2 Plato: Music Education Welcomes the Reason

David Cooper makes an interesting observation that in both ancient Greece and China, during the fifth to the third centuries BCE, the discussions of the value of the arts reflected the turbulent social-political contexts by which reflection on the value of the arts was partly shaped: this was the period of the Warring States in China,

and in Greece, of the Peloponnesian Wars, the Thirty Tyrants, and the Macedonian conquests.⁵ The importance of the above observation lies in the fact that thinkers or philosophers in each culture addressed a society or way of life in decline, but their writings on philosophy and education provide the script in which they imagined the ideas and values upon which a new age might be built. In ancient China, Confucius looked back to a legendary period of political and cultural unity as the utopia, when kings created institutions of ritual and music for the general good of the body politic. It was with this historical vision that Confucius's aesthetic of musical values was bound up. In the case of ancient Greeks, for Plato, the situation he confronted was a city-state defeated in war.⁶ In his mind the goal of education, including art education, was to harmonize capacity, habit and desire so as to bring about the just individual in the just society.

Plato's arguments on the arts and beauty were collected in works such as *Republic*, *Symposium*, *Ion*, *Hippias Major*, *Laws*, *Phaedrus*, *Gorgias*, and *Philebus*. He discussed music in particular in book II, III and X of *Republic*, as part of his program for primary education, and in book VII of *Laws*, devoted to considering the "nurture and education" of children. In what follows, I will focus on three aspects he argued about music: music elements, music education, and aesthetic pleasure.

⁵ David E. Cooper, "Music, Education, and the Emotions", *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 36:4 (2009): 642.

⁶ Plato's life (427 BCE—347 BCE) began near the start of the Peloponnesian War (431 BCE—404 BCE), at a time when Athens was starting its decline. Some sixty years earlier, Athens had almost single-handedly defeated the Persian Army of Darius in the battle of Marathon, a victory which Athenians always referred to proudly. The Periclean age began after that. It was a golden time in the history when Athens was led by the Democrat Pericles. But with the Peloponnesian war begun in 431 BCE, Sparta invaded Attica, ravaging the land and crops, forcing a mass influx of farmers into Athens itself.

4.2.1 Three Elements of Music

Inquiry into music, for Plato, is associated with his understanding of the meaning of art (*techne*). Influenced by the early Greek tradition, Plato did not consider art in its narrower, modern sense. Rather, art in his interpretation could be any craft that aim to bring about advantageous results. In this sense, activities such as house-building, planting, and so forth, could all be broadly categorized as art. Werner Jaeger, noted in his illuminating work *Paideia: the Ideals of Greek Culture* that in Greek culture, the same Greek word—music—designated both poetry and music since the two “blest pair of sirens” were inseparable sisters.⁷

The close relationship between music and the moral qualities is explicitly announced in Plato’s analysis of three elements of music: speech, harmony, and rhythm.⁸ Among the three, speech takes the essential position, and harmony and rhythm must conform to the speech. With regard to harmonies, there are four types of harmonies that are named after their regions of popularity. Different regions had their own featured harmonies which were characteristic of different moral qualities. The Lydian—the mixo-Lydian, the syntono-Lydian, and some others—were the lamenting harmonies. The soft harmonies were those Ionian ones called “relaxed.” In Plato’s view (using Socrates as his mouthpiece), both the Lydian and Ionian harmonies were too soft and idle, and therefore inappropriate to help city guardians to be as good as they should be. Two other harmonies, the Dorian and Phrygian, were regarded as useful for Plato’s city since they would best imitate the voices of temperate and

⁷ Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, trans. Gilbert Highet, vol. II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). 224.

⁸ *Republic*, 398d.

courageous men.⁹ The moral qualities represented in these two harmonies, according to Plato, were discipline, resolution, and composure, all of which were admired for a good guardian.

As for rhythms, Plato also made distinctions between good and bad ones. On his view, good rhythms should express valuable moral qualities such as being courageous and ordered. He disapproved of those rhythms with too much complexity or multifariousness in the basic elements.¹⁰ His disapproval was grounded on an argument that good rhythm goes with grace and fine speaking, while bad rhythm goes along with the opposite sort.¹¹ In his detailed discussion about musical elements, Plato set up his main goal to identify those good qualities of music with a fine mind and a fine character since proper music cultivated virtuous qualities such as peacefulness, compassion, and honesty. On his account, fine speeches, harmony, grace and rhythm went along with equally good character that young people in the city must try to achieve. More specifically, music “educated the guardians through habits, conveying by harmony a certain harmoniousness of temper, not knowledge; and by rhythm a certain rhythmical quality. Its stories, whether fictional or nearer the truth, cultivated other habits akin to these.”¹²

In addition to its moral contribution to educating the fine character of young people, music also reflects the regular movement of the cosmos. In *Timaeus*, Plato claims that there is a kinship between the sound and the orbits of movement in the

⁹ *Republic*, 399c

¹⁰ *Republic*, 399e6-8

¹¹ *Republic*, 400d

¹² *Republic*, 522a4

universe, because sound and hearing are “the god’s gifts.”¹³ And “all such composition as lends itself to making audible music sound is given in order to express harmony...And harmony, whose movements are akin to the orbits within our souls, is a gift of the Muses...”¹⁴ On this account, music is at the top of all the art forms.

4.2.2 Music Education and Artistic Mimesis

Plato's discussion in *the Republic*, Books II, III, and X concerned the complicated role of music in education within the *polis*. There is seemingly a conflict in Plato's attitude towards the function of music and music education. On the one hand, Plato makes it clear from the start that music is necessary to a healthy city. He claims we need to fill the city with a multitude of things, for instance, “many with music—poets and their assistants, rhapsodes, actors, choral dancers, theatrical producers.”¹⁵ The educational ideals of early Greece were always represented by poetry, music, and rhythm. On the other hand, however, Plato argues against arts in general in Book X of *the Republic*, with a focused criticism of poetry and the visual arts. He criticizes poetry and drama, especially tragedy and Homer, on the grounds that, an imitative poet produces things that are inferior as regards truth and are far removed from the Form of the reality. He was concerned that poets were regarded as possessing and conveying knowledge in the sphere of ethics, when in fact they had only an ability to produce pleasurable and convincing “images of virtue” without

¹³ See Plato's *Timaeus* 47c8 in *Complete Works (Plato)*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 47d.

¹⁵ *Republic*, 373 b4

touching the truth.¹⁶

To better understand this latter part of his criticism, we need to first of all bring Plato's theory of mimesis into discussion. The notion of mimesis, which emerges in *the Republic* as a wider concept of artistic representation, is applied to the production of poetry and the visual arts. In Book X, Plato considers these productions as the shadow of things. His famous example of three sorts of couches makes a clear point: one couch is in nature made by god; one made by the carpenter is a work of the craftsman. The third couch made by a painter is regarded as an imitation of the craftsman's work. This couch of the painter is not the real couch, but only its appearance or image. According to Plato, the third couch is "three removed from the natural one."¹⁷ Therefore, the painter is an imitator and is "by his nature third from king (the God) and truth."¹⁸ The practitioner of mimesis makes no real thing, according to Plato, but only the image or appearance of a thing of some kind. The painter and artists in general choose to take a mirror and carry it about everywhere so as to produce the appearance of the things around. Thus Plato argues against the painter of the couch for the painter is unable to contribute anything to the creation of the ideal Form of the couch. The mimetic art in which artists engage produces neither knowledge in the philosophical sense nor true opinion like practical wisdom. Moreover, that work of imitation lacks the true art of measurement, instead they really consort with "an element in us that is far from wisdom, and that nothing healthy or

¹⁶ *Republic*, 600 e5.

¹⁷ *Republic*, 597b.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

true can come from their relationship or friendship.”¹⁹ On the basis of epistemological and psychological arguments, mimetic poetry is banished from the Platonic ideal city.

But I want to argue that these claims against mimetic art are not necessarily applicable to music for two reasons.²⁰ First of all, the relationship between music and human soul is uniquely different from that between other art forms and the human soul. From the educational point of view, Plato’s chief objection to poetry in *the Republic* is that poetry is not directed to the best part of the soul, i.e. reason, but to the emotions and passions which lack understanding and can’t distinguish bigger from smaller.²¹ In engaging the emotions, poetry and drama appeal to the unstable and inferior part of the soul and subvert reason, while yet seeming to proceed from, and transmit, knowledge. But music plays a different role in educating our soul, according to Plato. Influenced by Pythagoras, Plato regarded music as a reflection of not only the mathematical foundation of all reality, but also the rational principle of the movements of the cosmos. Music, on this account, is linked to reason. So is the principle of musical harmony. Based on this understanding, Plato advocated music training as an indispensable component of education in his republic.

In our previous section on music’s three elements, we discussed Plato’s idea that all audible musical sounds have motions akin to the orbits of our soul. It was further argued that these sounds are not to be used, as is commonly thought, to give

¹⁹ *Republic*, 603a 11-12.

²⁰ A similar position was held by Iris Murdoch who argues that Plato did not banish artists, and was genuinely interested in music in which he recognized considerable value. See Cooper, “Music, Education, and the Emotions,” 643, note 3.

²¹ *Republic*, 605a 10

irrational pleasure. Rather, they contribute to maintaining order and harmonizing any disharmony in the revolutions within us. Plato's philosophy of music education is centered on the aim of cultivating a good soul. Unlike other art forms, music is naturally capable of providing people a kind of training that pursues what is fine and graceful in their work. Under this education, young people would live in a healthy place and be guided toward the beauty of reason. The following dialogue in Book III of *the Republic* between Socrates and Glaucon illuminates this argument and is worth quoting in full:

Socrates: Then aren't these the reasons, Glaucon, that musical training is most important? First, because rhythm and harmony permeate the innermost element of the soul, affect it more powerfully than anything else, and bring it grace, such education makes one graceful if one is properly trained, and the opposite if one is not. Second, because anyone who has been properly trained will quickly notice if something has been omitted from a thing, or if that thing has not been well crafted or well grown. And so, since he feels distaste correctly, he will praise fine things, be pleased by them, take them into his soul, and, through being nourished by them, become fine and good. What is ugly or shameful, on the other hand, he will correctly condemn and hate while he is still young, before he is able to grasp the reason. *And, because he has been so trained, he will welcome the reason when it comes and recognize it easily because of its kinship with himself* (my italics).

Glaucon: Yes, it seems to me that these are the goals of music training.²²

Music education for Plato thus involves impressing graceful form and orderliness upon the soul. It trains us to feel aesthetic pleasure but with a strong emphasis on good proportion, rhythm, and harmony. Educated through music, the individual would courageously be engaged in battle or in peaceful enterprises in a disciplined manner. The community would consolidate its values in works of

²² *Republic*, 401d4-402a4

celebration and solemnity governed by the same considerations. It is on this basis that Plato speaks of musical training as an indispensable education necessary for a healthy city. And by music, he means an education of musical training in contrast to a physical training:

Socrates: What, then, will the education be? Or is it difficult to find a better one than the one that has been discovered over a long period of time—physical training for bodies and musical training for the soul?

Adeimantus: Yes, it is.

Socrates: Now, won't we start musical training before physical training?

Adeimantus: Of course.

Socrates: And you include stories under musical training, don't you?

Adeimantus: I do.²³

Plato considered musical training as the most important and effective means among all art forms for educating virtuous citizens. He argues that the most beautiful sight is when the fine habits in one's soul are in concord with those in one's physical form.²⁴ Thus a truly musical person would love people who are mostly like that.²⁵

An important assumption underlying the above argument is Plato's view on rationality and its relation to knowledge. As he argues, art, as an imitation, is the domain of irrationality, inspiration, and genius rather than the application of generalizable, rational principles. In the case of music, Plato makes an important point that "reason mixed with musical training...only it dwells within the person who possesses it as the lifelong preserver of his virtue."²⁶ He conceives of the insights of forms of music as the precondition for a life regulated by harmony and reason. Thus

²³ *Republic*, 376e2--e9.

²⁴ *Republic*, 402d.

²⁵ *Republic*, 402d8.

²⁶ *Republic*, 549b6.

music is fundamental to proper education.²⁷ In contrast, Plato gives a low evaluation to poetry because of its alleged distance from rational, rule-governed, and generalizable knowledge. Hence for Plato poetry is difficult to teach and transmit.

Plato has a conflicted attitude toward poets in his *Republic*. Even though he praises many things in Homer, Plato criticizes Homer for depicting god as someone who was not perfect. To guard his republic, Plato claims that he would not allow teachers to “use what he says for the education of the young—not if our guardians are going to be as god-fearing and godlike as human beings can be.”²⁸ Therefore, he advocates widespread censorship of poetry, including the works of Homer, on the grounds that poetry should represent only the truth and be conducive to developing a moral character that fits the young rulers or guardians in the city.

The second reason that differentiates music from other forms of art is its relationship with philosophy. According to Plato, there was an ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy.²⁹ Werner Jaeger explains that for the Greeks, poetry was the chief vehicle of their culture and civilization. The opposition between poetry and philosophy consisted in the Platonic belief that “those forces in the soul which create law and order, and are embodied in philosophy, are unquestionably superior to those that represent and imitate, from which poetry originates.”³⁰ This opposition was brought to the front when Plato attacked the early Greek view of the educational value of poetry in general and of Homer in particular. But Plato considered music as fully

²⁷ For a nice discussion on music and cross-cultural rationality, see Higgins, “Apollo, Music, and Cross-Cultural Rationality,” 623-41.

²⁸ *Republic*, 383c.

²⁹ *Republic*, 607b4.

³⁰ Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, vol II, 359.

justified in “holding the traditional supremacy among the arts which is assigned to it by Greek paideia.”³¹ Music did not merely have psychological power. Moreover, after music has “moulded” the guardians “into a certain intellectual pattern, philosophical teaching will later reveal to them in full consciousness the highest knowledge; and so philosophical knowledge presupposes musical education.”³²

Although the arguments against mimetic art in *the Republic* are limited to poetry and the visual arts instead of music, Plato lays down the supreme rules for combining the three elements of music. For instance, in his republic, he would like to preserve the kind of music whose tones and accents imitate those of a “courageous person engaged in battle...and faces wounds or death or some other misfortune”³³ or of a man of sober character and decent behavior. Under these conditions, the mixed Lydian and hyper-Lydian harmonies were to be banned on the grounds that they were more appropriate for lamentations. Likewise, the soft Lydian and Ionian modes were to be banned because they were more suitable for drinking parties.

4.2.3 Aesthetic Pleasure and the Theory of Ethos in Music

Plato had the beginnings of a conception of aesthetic pleasure, but he did not use it to assign autonomous value to the arts—as we have come to do since. Art aims to provide a certain characteristic pleasure or satisfaction³⁴, which on Plato’s view was related to repression. Art enables us to satisfy without shame those desires we

³¹ Ibid., 229.

³² Ibid., 229.

³³ *Republic*, 399a7.

³⁴ *Republic*, 606b.

must repress in real life. The underlying idea here is that ethically good people do not indulge in the kind of pleasure or satisfaction that art typically produces. In his *Gorgias*, Plato also argues that rhetoric and music are not genuine exercises of craft-like expertise (*techne*) because they do not work on general principles that can specify what is a good outcome and which steps will achieve it. Instead, he alleges, these art forms too often simply aim at providing pleasure or gratification to their audience. In other words, aiming at pleasure is seen as a haphazard enterprise, quite distinct from aiming at the good, which, for Plato, requires generalizable knowledge rationally applied. In the later dialogue *Philebus*, Plato gives a complex account of pleasure, including some discussions of a “pure” pleasure that is arguably “aesthetic” in the philosophical sense and is distinct from pleasure as pure gratification.

In the *Republic*, Plato's concerns regarding aesthetic pleasure are moral and political. He wanted to build a model of the best-organized community and of the healthiest type of human being, founded on a system of education that would enable both to exist. His question is always: What do the arts contribute to these endeavors? Aestheticism would say that the real value of art as art is solely aesthetic, concerned with a kind of pleasure taken in an object for its own sake and independently of any moral or political considerations. Plato, on the other hand, maintains that nothing about an artistic product can be discounted as ethically or politically neutral, a view that succeeded in making aestheticism seem at best a partial view.

It is important to bring back here the topic of harmony, because at the basis of Plato's choice of harmonies is a theory that harmony and rhythm can have an ethos, a

moral character. Only those modes which express the ethos of brave or temperate men were allowed. The significance of the theory of ethos, according to Plato, is the fact that the best way to sharpen the eye of the mind is to train the character. This training is a process during which spiritual forces change one's nature. More importantly, musical training is not merely a basic foundation for one's education, but also marks a mature, advanced stage of one's growth where she has learned different forms of goodness and their opposites. This idea echoes an early Greek belief that education itself is a process of growth. As Werner Jaeger points out, "the words for *education* and *child-rearing*, which originally were almost identical in meaning, always remained closely akin."³⁵ This interpretation of music reflects a deeper meaning of the synthetic function of music. As Plato wrote, "neither we nor the guardians we claim to be educating will be musically trained until we know the different forms of temperance, courage, generosity, high-mindedness...and see them in the things in which they are, both themselves and their images; and do not disregard them..."³⁶

4.3 Aristotle: Music Education as a Noble Leisure

Aristotle's professional life can be roughly divided into three periods: (a) a thirteen years in the Academy where he studied with Plato; (b) from 347 BCE to 334 BCE, another thirteen years devoted to research and teaching in Asia Minor and Macedonia together with Theophrastus; and (c) the spring of 334 BCE when he returned to Athens until twelve years later in 322 BCE when he fled to Chalcis.

³⁵ Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, vol II, 228.

³⁶ *Republic*, 402c.

Aristotle's most important writings on music are in book VIII of *Politics*, where he discusses the training of youth in the *polis*. There is also his intensive discussion of the value of the arts, tragedy in particular, in *Poetics*. The main controversy between Plato and Aristotle is centered on the latter's criticism of the theory of ideas. As shown in last section, Plato establishes the "two worlds" system: the intellectual world vs. the visible world. As his student, Aristotle develops his own philosophy in which the main goal is to reconcile these two worlds in such a way that the intellectual world of ideas and the observable world are identical. In fact, he is not opposed to ideas themselves, but rather challenges the theory that ideas are solely in the ideal world, while the individual things in this world are only imitations or copies of them. In Aristotle's view, the ideas are still the ideals, but they must also exist in the world. He criticizes the Platonists thusly:

For they at the same time treat the ideas as universal, and again as separable and individual...The reason why those who say the substances are universal combined these two views in one, is that they did not make them identical with sensible things. They thought that the sensible particulars were in a static of flux and none of them remained, but the universal was apart from these and different.³⁷

The goal of Aristotle's art theory is to discuss the role of education, especially art education, to the cultivation of civic person. In contrast to Plato's arguments of subsuming arts into reason, Aristotle advocates for art's functions on two basic grounds. First, he proposes that art educates emotion. In his view, it is part of everyone's nature to be angry, joyful, or emotional, and one should learn appropriate

³⁷ See Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, 1086b15-b21. Hereafter cited as *Metaphysics*. The numerical reference uses the Immanuel Bekker's standard edition of the Greek text of Aristotle of 1831. The Bekker page, column, and approximate line numbers are from *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (the Revised Oxford Translation), ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984).

ways to respond to emotional situations. Aristotle posits that art, and music in particular, can be very useful in training emotional responses, and therefore, he is opposed to driving artists away from Plato's republic. Aristotle links reason with emotion.

The second ground is the rejection of the idea that "imitation is bad." According to Aristotle, imitation is part of human nature, an epistemological argument that has become one of his most well-known philosophical contributions. He argues that reason is the essential feature that differentiates human beings from animals. It expresses itself firstly in our capacity for imitation. Unlike Plato, Aristotle holds an opposite view of artistic nature of imitation, arguing that since reality is real, art that imitates reality is real as well.

He further claims that imitation is a type of creation. In *Poetics*, he develops the view that art is not an imitation of what has happened; rather it imitates what is to happen. Furthermore, art doesn't merely imitate the appearance of the sensible world, as Plato argues, rather it reveals the necessary principles and general qualities of our real world. Aristotle goes even further and suggests that art is in a sense more real than our reality since in imitating an individual subject, it reveals a generality.

4.3.1 Beauty and the Good

Both Confucius and Aristotle avoided talking about the notion of beauty in itself since, for them, the origin of beauty, or put another way, the origin of goodness, lies in experience in the world. Aristotle stepped away from Plato's emphasis on

forms as ontological, abstract existence. Rather he saw these forms, as well as the notions of truth, justice, and goodness, emerge out of our interaction with the world. For both philosophers, beauty was discussed in relation to ethics. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle presents us with an ethics of aesthetics in contrast to the ethics of utilitarianism. He argues that the agent is moved by an act because of its beauty rather than its reasonableness. He gives us three examples of how a virtuous person detects beauty (*kalon*)³⁸, arguing that all *kalon* actions share a form to be comprehended with the heart instead of mind. In his view, art is always nature's best ally in the realization of the beautiful and the good. In his work *Rhetoric*, Aristotle describes beauty as something good which thus brings pleasure to its beholders.

In Confucian aesthetics, we also see a moral foundation that is centered on the notion of "benevolence" (*ren* 仁). As the American scholar Thomas Alexander explains, *ren* is a "fundamental concern for the 'aesthetics of social existence'—a concern that human life and its dignity, value, and web of meaningful interrelationships, is foremost in our hearts."³⁹ *Ren* signifies "one's moral-aesthetic comportment to other people,"⁴⁰ and provides a substantial foundation for people to observe ritual propriety. In Confucius's words "If a man is not humane (*ren*), what has he to do with rituals? If he is not humane, what has he to do with music?" (Analects 3.3)

Virtue ethics, grounded in the concept of *aretē*, was translated as "virtue" in Greek, but a better translation is "excellence." For Aristotle, the major concern is not

³⁸ A notion that means both beautiful and functioning excellently

³⁹ See Alexander, "The Music in the Heart," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 43, no.1 (2009): 45.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 45-46.

what one does, but what kind of person one should strive to become and what defines a good life for human beings. He poses the question: What aspects of character should one cultivate and how? One must engage in much work individually to achieve excellence of character. According to his definition in *Nicomachean Ethics*, excellence is, generally speaking, the balance between two extremes. For instance, the virtue attached to the mean between gluttony and starvation is temperance. It is linked to the animal part of the soul—the original word for psychology. He also points out that we are individuals, but we live in a social setting. This results in tension between how to fulfill oneself as oneself, and how to balance that fulfillment with others in the context of a social group.⁴¹

Aristotle's teleological view of virtue ethics holds that things are imbedded by purposes. There is just one type of activity for the sake of which we do everything else, and which makes one's life worthwhile.⁴² Put in Aristotle's words, a life of *eudaimonia*, which is often translated as a life of happiness, success, well-being, etc, is the ultimate *telos* of our behaviors. Whatever we do is ultimately explained in terms of its contributions to living a life of *eudaimonia*. A simple example of this notion is: the *telos* of the growth of acorn is to become an oak tree. When it comes to the *telos* of a person, Aristotle argues, "human good turns out to be activity of soul in conformity with excellence, and if there are more than one excellence, in conformity with the best and most complete."⁴³

⁴¹ Aristotle's social group was male Greek citizen warriors. Those were the one who can vote.

⁴² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1097a24-1097a35 (hereafter cited as *NE*). The Bekker page, column, and approximate line numbers are from *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (the Revised Oxford Translation), ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984).

⁴³ *NE*, 1098a14-1098a16.

Aristotle takes human virtue to be the excellence of the soul,⁴⁴ and happiness is therefore an activity of the soul.⁴⁵ Looking at the soul as a combination of two elements, one irrational and one rational, Aristotle divides virtue into two categories respectively, moral virtue and intellectual virtue.⁴⁶ According to him, “Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do excellences arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit.”⁴⁷

4.3.2 Music Education and Leisure

Aristotle introduces the importance of music education in relation to his discussion of the *polis*. According to Aristotle, only in the state can man have full development since the state is a natural institution and man is naturally a political animal. It is men’s nature to band together and form unions. Book VIII of *Politics* begins, “No one will doubt that the legislator should direct his attention above all to the education of youth; for the neglect of education does harm to the constitution.”⁴⁸ More importantly, this education, according to Aristotle, should be public, and not private. He devoted the whole of Book VIII to articulating the character and content of this public education.

The customary branches of education are four subjects—reading, writing,

⁴⁴ *NE*, 1102a14-1102a15. For Aristotle, the soul has three parts, and there are major virtues attached to each one: (1) the soul for biological egos, called the appetitive soul/animal soul, corresponds to the virtue of temperance; (2) the animated soul, the soul that moves us, corresponding to the virtue of courage; (3) the unique human soul, the virtue for which is wisdom, the achievement of truth.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*,

⁴⁶ *NE*, 1103a5.

⁴⁷ *NE*, 1103a23-1103a25.

⁴⁸ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1337a10 (hereafter cited as *Politics*). The Bekker page, column, and approximate line numbers are from *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (the Revised Oxford Translation), ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984).

gymnastic exercises, and music.⁴⁹ From the beginning, Aristotle makes it very clear that he considers the goals of individuals to be the same as those of states. Within a public education, these goals can be achieved only by freemen in the exercises of virtues/excellence. Following this prescription, any educational subjects that make the body, mind, or soul of the freeman less fit for the practice of excellence is regarded as “mechanical.” According to Aristotle, music, seemingly distinct from other subjects in utility, should be included in education because Nature itself requires that “we should be able, not only to work well, but to use leisure well” since “the first principle of all action is leisure.”⁵⁰

Aristotle’s discussion of “leisure” introduced the teleology of music education for the first time in Western history. He claims in *Politics*, “leisure is better occupation and is its end.”⁵¹ As he argues, the whole of life is divided into two complementary parts; for example business and leisure, and war and peace. War exists for the sake of peace, and business exists for the sake of leisure.⁵² In Aristotle’s *polis*, the best men and best institutions must possess the virtue of leisure, on the ground that leisure is the end of toil.⁵³ This assertion begs the question of the benefits of leisure. To address this, Aristotle introduces various functions that music produces. First of all, leisure brings pleasure, happiness, and enjoyment of life to those who engage in it.⁵⁴ Opposite to toil and business, leisure brings amusements and relaxation. It functions

⁴⁹ *Politics*, 1337b23.

⁵⁰ *Politics*, 1337b32.

⁵¹ *Politics*, 1337b33.

⁵² *Politics*, 1333a31-36.

⁵³ It was clearly observed from Aristotle’s discussions in *Politics* that there was no leisure for slaves, as he made the arguments explicitly in Book VII and VIII of *Politics*.

⁵⁴ *Politics*, 1338a1.

as medicine for one's appetite/animal soul since it creates the pleasure where we obtain rest. Music, by the same token, produces amusements for the sake of relaxation. Since relaxation always feels sweet, it is the remedy for pain caused by toil. Music is generally acknowledged as one of the most pleasant things, hence it is included in social gatherings on the grounds that it lifts the hearts of men.

Secondly, leisure is viewed as an intellectual activity that provides intellectual enjoyment. Music, in Aristotle's view, is useful for intellectual enjoyment in leisure, and therefore is a required subject for education from the very beginning. This argument emphasizes that the notion of "intellectual enjoyment" is essential to Aristotle's discussion of happiness. The greatness of Aristotle lies in his sophisticated claim that happiness is made of both noble and pleasant elements.⁵⁵ He illustrates this idea nicely in the following statement in *Politics*: "It is evident, then, that there is a sort of education in which parents should train their sons, not as being useful or necessary, but because it is liberal or noble...music is one of the received and traditional branches of education."⁵⁶ Therefore music education is required for instructing how to spend one's leisure time in intellectual activity. To Aristotle, this education was indispensable for freemen in the development of reason.

4.3.3 Musical Pleasure

When we examine Aristotle's ideas about music more closely, it plays three major roles—to produce amusement, education, and intellectual enjoyment. All these

⁵⁵ *Politics*, 1339b19.

⁵⁶ *Politics*, 1338a31.

roles are centered on the concept of musical pleasure which embodies three levels of meaning. First, as discussed in previous section, music is pleasant in its essence. Music produces natural pleasure felt and shared by people of all ages and characters. Like sleeping and drinking, music provides relaxation and amusement. It is included in entertainment because common pleasures are in harmony with the goals of life. People seek happiness in musical pleasures. But according to Aristotle, musical pleasure is not simply an innocent or ordinary pleasure. Music is not only “an alleviation of past toils and pains,” but also provides intellectual stimulation in recreation and has a nobler use.⁵⁷

This leads to the second level of the meaning of musical pleasure: music is conducive to virtue because it can form minds and character by habituating one to true pleasures. Music can influence character in many ways. In his detailed discussion, Aristotle analyzes the nature of musical pleasure from the physiological and psychological perspectives. He argues that music inspires enthusiasm, which is an aspect of the character of the soul. To make his arguments more clearly, Aristotle follows Plato in relating the effects of music to rhythm and melody:

Rhythm and melody supply imitations of anger and gentleness, and also of courage and temperance, and of all the qualities contrary to these, and of the other qualities of character, which hardly fall short of the actual affections, as we know from our own experience, for in listening to such strains our souls undergo a change. The habit of feeling pleasure or pain at mere representations is not far removed from the same feeling about realities; for example, if any one delights in the sight of a statue for its beauty only, it necessarily follows that the sight of the original will be pleasant to him. The objects of no other sense, such as taste or touch, have any resemblance to moral qualities...and all do not participate in the feeling about them.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Politics, 1340 b40

⁵⁸ Politics, 1340 a19-32

One well-known example of the effects of music is the power of the songs of Olympus that form the character of the young. Even in mere melodies, as Aristotle argues, there is an imitation of character as well, for different musical modes would cast different influence on those who hear them. In his *Republic*, Plato discusses various ways musical melodies affect the listener. In a similar vein, Aristotle claims that some musical modes “make men sad and grave, like the so-called Mixolydian, others enfeeble the mind, like the relaxed modes, another, again, produces a moderate and settled temper, which appears to be the peculiar effect of the Dorian; the Phrygian inspires enthusiasm.”⁵⁹

Aristotle is trying to emphasize the essential point that musical pleasure possesses natural sweetness and harmony. Relying on the effect of its two languages—rhythm and melody—music influences the listeners’ feelings and forms their characters in natural and intimate ways. Musical “affection” is penetrating because music is a method of imitation. Unlike figures and colors, which he considers signs of character rather than imitations, Aristotle argues that music expresses character much more vividly. On this ground, the connection between musical pleasure and morals is significant because music education pursues the excellence of rejoicing, loving, and hating justly. It is in this sense of excellence, as I read it, that Aristotle claims musical pleasure has a nobler use than ordinary pleasure. This type of pleasure is enduring instead of transient, and intellectual instead of purely physical. This musical pleasure, or enjoyment, is itself a kind of virtue.

⁵⁹ *Politics*, 1340b1-b6.

The third nuance of musical pleasure is that music can promote cheerfulness and refined intellectual enjoyment. As Aristotle argues, happiness is made up of both the noble and the pleasant. The power of musical pleasure is to purge the passions and to provide an opportunity for intellectual enjoyment. He posits that “those who are influenced by pity or fear, and every emotional nature, must have a like experience, and others in so far as each is susceptible to such emotions, and all are in a manner purged and their souls lightened and delighted.”⁶⁰

It is noteworthy that Aristotle’s ideas about music education applied not only to the governor or leader of a society, but also to the larger population of freemen. Both he and his teacher Plato discussed music’s social value from the perspective of politics and morality. Nevertheless, the two were speaking to different audiences. For Plato, his judgment of music education was based on the interest of the governor or guardians in his republic. For Aristotle, his major concern was to educate the souls of freemen in his *polis*. Music education was a means of spending leisure in intellectual activities. Holding a wider vision, Aristotle maintained that there ought to be contests and exhibitions instituted for the relaxation of the second class, i.e. the class of a rough crowd composed of artisans, laborers, and the like.⁶¹ Unlike Plato who rejected explicitly the relaxed modes in education for the reason that they had no strength in it, Aristotle allowed employing different modes of melodies and rhythms. He argued that a man received pleasure from what was natural to him. Even for those minds perverted from the natural state, modes of music existed that corresponded to them.

⁶⁰ *Politics*, 1342a11-a14

⁶¹ *Politics*, 1342a14.

Therefore, a mature governor or leader should allow different modes of music to be practiced for different audiences.

4.4 Comparative Remarks

I'd like to begin with an acknowledgement of two foundational elements in ancient Greek aesthetics that are not present in the Chinese context. The first is the notion of the divine, or absolute form, as an ultimate source of artistic inspiration. In contrast, in Chinese history, the shift from pleasing the gods to cementing social relations occurred as early as in the Western Zhou dynasty (ca. 1046—771 BCE, the dynasty before Confucius's time) and marked a major break in the formation of Chinese philosophical as well as artistic tradition. Related to this difference, the subject of artistic activities, i.e. the person, or the self, was seen in Chinese thoughts as embedded in ethical relations and not as transcendent or prior in the metaphysical sense to them.⁶² Unlike the Greeks, the ancient Chinese did not separate immediate reality and ontological existence into two distinct worlds. Rather, they integrated nature, society and humans into one system, and regarded the three as a whole. Therefore, Chinese people in their spiritual pursuit had far less intention to unearth the thing-in-itself outside this world. On the contrary, they tried to look back to the process of life and this world in order to comprehend the meaning and value of life as it was lived. Accordingly, the infinite was to be obtained in the finite and transcendence was to be achieved in the immediate reality. Accordingly, the Chinese

⁶² Steven Burik, "Self and Other: Continental and Classical Chinese Thought," *Philosophy Compass* 9, No. 5 (2010): 735-44.

way of spiritual transcendence took root firmly in the process of living to be sensed at the moment, to be experienced in everyday life.

The second foundational element in ancient Greek aesthetics that stands in contrast to Chinese aesthetic philosophy and Confucian aesthetics in particular is a clear distinction between reason and emotion. This distinction relies on fairly tightly drawn boundaries between reason and emotion within which aesthetic practices were predominantly discussed, and aesthetic education regulated, within the western context. The ancient Chinese, on the contrary, were also very conscious of, but valued highly, the emotional joy obtained from art and the powerful positive effect it had on emotions. Confucius claimed that paying attention to and developing our sensibility to things was the most comprehensive way for us to become aware of the world and to discover infinite worlds within ourselves. Confucian aesthetics, therefore, attached great importance to cultivating the traditionally accepted connection between feeling and thinking. Chen Chungying, an American Chinese scholar, compares the aesthetic criteria in the Western and Chinese traditions and characterizes the former as onto-epistemological, and the latter as onto-cosmological.⁶³ He holds that Western criteria for beauty tend to be explicit and reductive, as Western aesthetics are more focused on seeking knowledge and presenting external entities. Chinese criteria, on the other hand, tend to be implicit, non-reductive and synthetic, seeking human participation and realization of internal feelings.

Ancient Greek philosophers and Pre-Qin Chinese Confucians are rooted in

⁶³ Cheng Chungying once gave a speech titled “Western Aesthetics versus Chinese Aesthetics” at the 18th International Congress of Aesthetics, Beijing, 2010.8. 9—13.

very different traditions of culture, philosophy, and politics. I do not think it is appropriate to simply judge either one using the framework that underlies the other tradition. Different origins define basic presuppositions such that it is difficult even for those within the tradition to notice them. However, if we see the goal for contemporary educational philosophers as well as aesthetic educators as collectively creating a better educational environment for the growth of human existence, then the effort to engage in understanding issues from two, or even more, different traditions is encouraging. In both ancient Greek and Chinese canonical writings on music, I see a shared recognition of the close association between music and dispositions, education, and government.

Both traditions favor the idea that good music represents virtue for the ancient rulers. In *Yue Ji* and Xunzi's *Yue Lun*, music of various qualities affects people differently. It is explicitly announced in the above writings that when proper music is performed, it helps cultivate people's virtuous qualities, and further equips them with spiritual power. The fundamental assumption in early Confucians' discussions is that music as an expression of people's inner feeling is of different types. In contrast, Plato described music's effect on people's dispositions in much more explicit terms. He offered a more detailed description of the various stages through which individuals are affected by music, and indicated how the same music may exert both positive and negative effects if listened for different length of periods of time.

In her investigation on the ethical power of music in ancient Greek and Chinese thoughts, Yuhwen Wang finds that the Chinese writings concern themselves

less about “the relationship *per se* between music and ethos than about the practical effects of music’s power in such areas as education and statecraft.”⁶⁴ This was evident in Confucius’s reading of the musical harmony with a social, political meaning. For him, harmony was in essence a social ideal because the existence of a well-ordered society was based on harmonious inter-personal relationships. After all, the state and the society had their origin in the existence of these human relationships. Confucius pictured this social ideal as having existed in an idealized past. Thus music’s power of harmonizing one’s disposition had a social function for Confucius; that is, rejuvenating the civilization and humanity that was handed from the past but was somehow lost in the society of his own times. Seen in this way, music’s real role was to connect inner harmony of individual feelings with outer harmony that sustains a good society.

The educational value of music is equally highlighted in Plato and Aristotle’s writings. Plato emphasizes music had a place in education since it contributed positively to the improvement of the soul and thereby was needed for the stability of a good society. In the *Politics*, Aristotle advises that music had pedagogical value because it can help form character and exerted its power in three aspects: amusement, education, and intellectual enjoyment. He introduces music into the curriculum not only because music is an ingredient in one’s culture, but more importantly and uniquely, music provides a source of intellectual culture in leisure hours. In my earlier discussion of Aristotle, I note that Aristotle did not mean by “leisure” what we tend to

⁶⁴ Yuhwen Wang, “The Ethical Power of Music: Ancient Greek and Chinese Thoughts,” *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 38, no. 1 (2004): 91.

understand now—merely entertainment for relaxation. Rather, leisure for him had a teleological meaning as the aim of all human work. Music, understood as a leisure activity, was practiced for a noble educational implication on the one hand, and related to pleasure and happiness on the other. As I read him, Aristotle's contribution here exceeded those of both Plato and early Confucians.

There is a difference in the emphasis of education in two ancient traditions. In the ancient Greeks' discussions of music education, they focused particularly on the learning process through which rational thinking is gradually developed. While Plato's advocating of music was used as a tool to promote people's rational thinking and elevate the soul, early Confucians' interest in the nature of music was an emotive one. What one acquired, according to Platonic discussion of music's power was a proper training to restrain unstable emotion so as to welcome reason. Additionally, early Confucians' views suggested music education could bring forth a transformative power to channel our moral feelings into right action. Through music education, a virtuous person has not only cultivated a strong will to be able to control herself, but also harmonized emotions to be able to choose to perform rightly. Unlike those who restrain their feelings by force, a virtuous person possesses good will and well-tuned emotions.

The significance in Confucians' discussions of music education is the transformative capacity it presents in the process of actualizing human nature through self-cultivation in one's heart. The central message of Confucian philosophy is the elevation of the heart—developing humanity in one's heart for the ultimate goal of

transforming into a moral self. In the *Analects*, this idea is delivered in shortened, but meaningful prose: “Let a man be first incited by the Poetry (The Book of Poetry), then given a firm footing by the study of rites, and finally perfected by music.”⁶⁵ For Confucians, the transformative capacity of music is applied to a larger social realm as well. When proper music is given the right emphasis in education, the customs and manners of a society are affected and a social order is regulated.

⁶⁵ *The Analects*, 8.8.

CHAPTER 5

CONTEMPORARY SIGNIFICANCE AND CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, I will focus on the contemporary educational implications of Yue Jiao. I will begin with a comparison between Confucius and Greek discussions of music education on two aspects: (a) music as a medium of group, collective consciousness; (b) the nature of knowledge in music education. In the second section, I will argue that there are three problems with thinking of the role of music education in the modern age in the way that pre-Qin Confucians did in ancient times. Given the prevailing individualistic influence in the world today, I will argue that music education can play a significant role in the following three ways: firstly, music provides an effective entry into moral education; secondly, music expresses emotional principles of reasonableness; and finally, music is the ultimate perfection of one's personhood as an integrated whole. In the end of this chapter, I will discuss the cross-cultural educational significance of my project.

5.1 Further Remarks

5.1.1 Music as a Medium of Collective Consciousness

The function of education, at the origin of both traditions, is inseparable from the role of music since it is considered to be an important medium of collective consciousness. In both traditions, music was not a practice that concerned the individual alone; rather, it was essentially a function of the community. And the basis of music was a general consciousness of the values that governed human life.

Perceived in this way, the development of music throughout history was affected by changes in the values current within the community. In ancient China, the consciousness of ancestors developed through different stages: from heaven to the fate of heaven, then to virtue and finally to music and ritual. During this development, music played a role as the medium of changes in consciousness. The unique position of pre-Qin Confucianism in the history of Chinese civilization was due to its specific perceptions of each individual as belonging to a larger part of the community. For Confucius, the nature of a person was determined by her position in a group and her relation to those group members. A person's value of existence was achieved in the recognition of her social relationships. In the *Analects*, when Confucius's disciples ask about his ambition, he gives the following answer: "I would like to bring peace and contentment to the aged, to share relationships of trust and confidence with my friends, and to love and protect the young."¹ This response expresses Confucius's belief of always taking responsibility for others. His ideal model, i.e., the noble man, would never live a solitary life cut off from all connections with others and the world. A person establishes an internal and fundamental relationship with others when living in a community, which is in turn confirmed through her actual life. This supreme idea of regarding every individual as subordinate and thus relative to a societal whole has governed the philosophy of Confucius and his successors. Xunzi, for example, argues explicitly that the ability of recognizing one's own relationship with a society is the distinctive feature of human beings.

¹ *The Analects*, 5.26.

At the center of the Confucian idea of Yue Jiao, the principle of “harmony but not sameness” expresses a social and cultural ideal that provided each individual in the community with an ultimate value. Harmony is given a moral interpretation: “The gentleman harmonizes, and does not merely agree. The petty person agrees, but he does not harmonize.”² To harmonize is to require respect for others without losing one’s own position and judgment. The ancient Chinese evolved a holistic view towards reality which considered social existence and nature to be connected with each other. Any change in heaven or in the cosmic order would be interpreted as reflecting a change in society. Therefore, the social meaning of musical harmony, according to the ancient Chinese, expressed an important belief that the natural law is inseparable from the human law. The spirit of Chinese culture, derived from these ancient tenets, is thus characteristic of emotive and embodied life experience.

For the ancient Greeks, music functioned as a medium of community consciousness as well. According to Werner Jaeger, the Greeks “established an entirely new set of principles for communal life,”³ and their philosophical development was formulated to “solve the problem of the individual’s place in the community.”⁴ At the core of the ancient Greek consciousness were a peculiar philosophical sense of the universal as an ideal whole, and a perception of the profound laws of human nature. Ancient Greeks believed that *paideia*, or education, embodied the purpose of the justification for the existence of both the individual and

² *The Analects*, 13.23.

³ Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, vol. 1, xiv.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xix.

the community.⁵ For Greek ancestors, music was often found in myths and regarded as a medium to keep balance between human beings and nature. While Confucius extended the musical meaning of harmony to social implications, the early Greek philosophers, following Pythagoras' interpretation, regarded musical harmony as mainly an outcome of numerical reality. The ancient Greeks believed that the harmony in music expressed a consciously pursued ideal of reason that governed the law of the cosmos. Holding an organic point of view of nature, they regarded any part of the world as an element in a living whole from which it derived its position and meaning. Although similar to the Confucian view of taking music as a medium for expressing collective consciousness, there is an important but subtle difference between the two views, that is, a rational vs. an emotive foundation of musical value.

5.1.2 The Nature of Knowledge in Music Education

The nature of knowledge sought respectively in ancient Chinese and Greek traditions is different. Socrates searched for the knowledge of the essence of the virtues, which he believed would necessarily transform those who possess that knowledge. Confucians did not search for knowledge in any abstract sense, but for a historical paradigm of goodness. They taught traditionally fixed but neglected truths, which Confucius phrased in seemingly tautological maxims: "the ruler must rule, the minister minister, the father father, and the son be filial."⁶ The Confucian theory of knowledge started from a different premise compared with that in early Greek thought;

⁵ Ibid., xxii.

⁶ *The Analects*, 12.11.

that is, to the early Greek philosophers, the theory of knowledge was inseparable from virtue ethics at the very fundamental level. Knowledge acquisition and virtue ethics converged on the same mission of cultivating one's heart for the purpose of improving one's humanity. In contrast, the pursuit of knowledge in ancient Chinese tradition was in this sense an embodied education.

The notion of embodied education had two dimensions. First, an actualization of knowledge was achieved through embodied practice. The body concretized moral knowledge by contextualizing it in a whole set of rituals, rules of social behavior and individual cultivation. Moral knowledge was a fundamental project in Confucian philosophy that encouraged the self-cultivation in body, mind, thoughts, and action. One Confucian tradition regarded the human body as a sacred heritage that one inherits from her parents. This tradition was evident in *the Analects* in which it was stated that one cannot have her hair cut without her parents' permission. Although this disallowance may sound bizarre to people today, it does exemplify the high respect the ancient Chinese had for physical bodies. This respect of body was not merely derived from the primacy of piety that a family-based society values highly, but was related to the basic belief that a self, as an embodied living existence, found the dwelling space in the body.

The second meaning of embodied education was that the body possessed and presented the transformative capacity in the course of actualizing human nature. This process was carried out through self-cultivation in one's heart. As early Confucians argued, human feelings provided one with an embodied and intuited feeling of moral

goodness. Based on this intuition, a bodily self needed to be further transformed to a moral self through an inward self-cultivation. This whole process reached its ultimate goal when extended to the larger social realm. According to Confucianism, the practice of being a good ruler or a good citizen in a society was not something alien to human nature, but was rather the direct outcome of the development of one's feeling of commiseration. One distinctive feature of Chinese philosophy was to encourage the pervasiveness of self-cultivation in all aspects of Chinese society. Seen in this way, knowledge acquisition is not merely the increase of objective know-how, but the elevation of the heart through embodied experience—a reaching out for what is beyond the present and for the values that connect inner harmony of individual feelings with outer harmony that sustains a good society.

5.1.3 Further Remarks

In the *Analects* Confucius says, “The wise man delights in water; the good man delights in mountains. The wise move; the good stay still. The wise are happy; the good endure.”⁷ This saying suggests some geographical and cultural differences between ancient Chinese and Greeks. China is a continental country where the ancient Chinese made their living by the land and agriculture. When referring to the world, the most popular expression in the Chinese language was “all beneath the sky.” Ancient Greece, in contrast, was a maritime country. They maintained their prosperity through commerce and were primarily merchants. Chinese scholars Feng Youlan

⁷ *The Analects*, 6.21.

observes an interesting contrast between the ancient Chinese engaged mostly in the occupation of farming and the ancient Greeks who were mostly merchants. He comments,

What merchants have to deal with first are the abstract numbers used in their commercial accounts, and only then with concrete things that may be immediately apprehended through these numbers...Hence Greek philosophers likewise took the concept by postulation as their starting point. They developed mathematics and mathematical reasoning. That is why they had epistemological problems and why their language was so articulate.⁸

In Feng Youlan's view, the lifestyle of ancient Greeks was largely dependent on this economic condition. Since the merchants' activities demand that they live together in towns, they had a form of social organization not based on the common interest of the family so much as on that of the town. This is the reason why "the Greeks organized their society around the *city* state, in contrast with the Chinese social system, which may be called that of the *family* state, because under it the state is conceived of in terms of the family."⁹

5.2 The Role of Music Education in the World Today

Given the 2500 or so years that have elapsed since Confucius wrote his philosophical and educational work, it would be surprising if we did not find justifiable changes in the idea that music is a medium of collective consciousness. There are three problems in thinking of the role of music education in the modern age in the way that pre-Qin Confucians did in ancient times. The first problem is that the large-scale collective consciousness has collapsed in modern and post-modern times.

⁸ Fung, *Selected Philosophical Writings of Fung Yu-Lan*, 219-20.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 220.

The classical idea of the public is replaced by the overwhelmingly difficulties that the individual is facing. The second is that in modern situations, the ultimate goals of life are strongly identified with the satisfaction of individual desire. People care less about community interests or social welfare. The third problem is that the pursuit of one's life ideal in the classical sense has disappeared. This becomes the major distinctive contrast between the society of today and of the ancient world. As a consequence, the development of a personhood is becoming imbalanced and incomplete.

Given these constrains, one way to think of music education is not as early Confucianists did, as a medium of collective consciousness committed to a unilateral ideal for the royal house. Nor is it practical to regard music, as Greek philosophers did, as an expression of the ideal of reason. Rather, we may look at music and music education today as an emotive means that enables a group of independent individuals, tied together by consciousness of common fate,¹⁰ and engaged in direct or indirect communication with one another to go about the process of re-exploration of the meaning and value of life. In this sense, music education is not only an effective entry for moral education, but more importantly, music expresses emotional principles of reasonableness and can lead to the ultimate perfection of one's personhood as an integral whole.

5.2.1 Music provides an Effective Entry into Moral Education

¹⁰ Melisa Williams, "Citizenship as Identity Melisa Williams, Citizenship as Identity, Citizenship as Shared Fate, and the function of Multicultural Education," in K. McDonough and W. Feinberg, eds., *Citizenship and Education in Liberal-Democratic Societies: Teaching for Cosmopolitan Values and Collective Identities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 208-47.

For Confucians, the ideal of music harmony is concerned with an aesthetics of living harmoniously. What underlies the Confucian notion of Yue Jiao is a nuanced view of seeing body and heart as two aspects of one process of self-cultivation. Here, we see an important difference between early Confucian and Greek traditions in that the link between moral education and emotive sensibility was more positively recognized in Confucian tradition than it did in early Greece. As social and cultural beings, we do not have privileged access to the great cosmological harmony and can never get outside ourselves to study nature from neutral ground. Confucius taught us to look not far away or abstractly, but right here and concretely in order to define oneself as a unique human being.

As I have discussed in previous chapters, both traditions prioritized music education because it embodied the aesthetic idea that beauty produces good relationships. A simpler formulation of this belief is the unity of beauty and goodness. In ancient China, Confucian aesthetics grounded this belief on the juxtaposition of ritual and music. These two cultural tenets performed their functions and brought out the best in each other for a higher purpose of combining music education and moral education. It should be clarified here that the Chinese character “goodness” (*shan*) is “first a relational term” which means “good at, good to, good for” and only derivatively an essential attribute.¹¹

The following two quotations, from the *Analects* and *Discourse on Music* respectively, have nicely demonstrated this unity:

(a) The Master said of the *shao* music that it is both superbly beautiful and

¹¹ *The Analects*, 234, endnote #39.

superbly felicitous. Of the *wu* music he said that it is superbly beautiful but not superbly felicitous.¹²

- (b) When music is performed, the inner mind becomes pure; and when ritual is cultivated, conduct is perfected. The ears become acute and the eyes clear-sighted...manners are altered and customs changed. The entire world is made tranquil, and enjoys the harmony of beauty and goodness.¹³

The ancient Greek philosophers also discovered the educational function in the idea of uniting beauty and goodness. Early in the 6th BCE, the Pythagoreans introduced the idea that music more than anything else served to purify the soul. The unity of beauty and goodness was also highly respected by Socrates since he argued that what is good must surely be beautiful. In the *Republic*, whenever Plato discussed aesthetic education, his concerns were always moral and political. It was from his dialogues that we learned that the Greek word *kalon*, often translated as “beautiful,” can also be rendered as “fine,” and applied to a kind of value that is not exclusively aesthetic. In other words, Plato would not consider musical beauty or musical pleasure as an object for its own sake, independent of any moral or political considerations. With regard to Aristotle, beauty was discussed in relation to ethics. Aristotle presented us with an ethics of aesthetics in contrast to the ethics of utilitarianism. He argued the agent was moved by an act because of its beauty instead of its reasonableness. He gave us three examples of how the virtuous person detected beauty (*kalon*),¹⁴ arguing that all *kalon* actions shared a form that had to be grasped with the heart instead of mind.

There is also a particular reason that ancient thinkers felt music education to

¹² *The Analects*, 3.25.

¹³ Knoblock, *Xunzi*, vol. III, 84, 20.3.

¹⁴ For Aristotle, this Greek notion means both beautiful and functioning excellently.

be so influential, for music contains a humanistic element that is conducive to the process of educating a person in her real and genuine human nature. This noble sense of humanism was expressed in its Chinese character that consists of two words—*ren* (人, refer to a person)¹⁵ and *wen* (文, translated as culture). The notion of *wen* originally meant “patterned, decorated, or to inscribe, to embellish”, and by extension, “culture.” It referred to things that were not mere necessities of existence, but which gave beauty and variety to civilized life and distinguished it from barbarism.¹⁶ The Greeks also expressed an anthropocentric attitude to life. They laid out what they perceived to be the universal laws of human nature and the natural principles governing human life. They argued that the real forces, which could form the soul, come from the words and sounds as well as rhythm and harmony. That’s why music education took the essential position in the Greek *paideia*.

In post-industrial societies, with the emerging unbalance between the material life and the spiritual life, material pursuits have surpassed spiritual needs and become dominant. Solutions to such a contradiction might be suggested in the humanistic concern that attached importance to one’s cultural life, encouraging people to improve their spiritual state of being and to seek for something profound beyond simple, materialistic satisfaction. In this way, music education may help people caught up in this cultural trend to redeem the spiritual from the material, technological and utilitarian dominance.

¹⁵ The word “*ren*” (人, person) here should be distinguished from another Confucian concept “benevolence” which is also spelled as “*ren*” and share the same pronunciation. The two words had the same pronunciation, but differed in writing characters.

¹⁶ Dawson, *Confucius*, 15.

5.2.2 Music Expresses Emotional Principles of Reasonableness

The charisma of music derives from the fact that it holds the noblest balance of both emotion and rationality. The Confucianists believed that the true representations of Chinese culture were music and ritual. The ancient Greeks utilized musical and athletic competitions for educating the early city-state members, since these competitions were the reflections of the spiritual and physical culture of that age. The aesthetic image of music embodies a rich content in which various elements—such as the emotions, the appetites, and the rational—function together on a balanced basis. In her essay “Apollo, music, and cross-cultural rationality,” Kathleen Higgins proposes music as a different metaphorical image of a richer conception of rationality. She makes the following claim:

Music is rational, for it is constructed by means of human reasoning and is an outgrowth of human efforts to make systematic sense of the world. Nevertheless, music fuses the “rational” (in the Enlightenment sense) with the other human characteristics involved in our experience of the world: our senses and appetites, our emotions, our awareness of temporality, and our spirituality. Music serves as an image of rationality functioning in context, the context of human living.¹⁷

This claim was made, according to Kathleen Higgins, based on Nietzsche’s observation of the ancient Greek model. The close relationship of music to the numerical laws was an innovation of the Pythagoreans who thus created a philosophical theory of the educational influence of music. Plato, a member of the Pythagorean elite himself, conceived of music as the “precondition for a life regulated

¹⁷ Higgins, “Apollo, Music, and Cross-Cultural Rationality,” 627.

by harmony and reason, and therefore fundamental to proper education.”¹⁸

Higgins’ characterization of the power of music and its rationality is contextualized in ancient Greek culture. Confucian tradition, in contrast, emphasized the role of music in regulating emotions for a higher purpose of social, political as well as ethical significance. The positive influence of emotions in music was given high respect in Chinese tradition of Yue Jiao. This has caused a continuing debate among scholars on whether Chinese culture and philosophy have the Western concept of reason. Max Weber described Chinese culture as “practical rationalism” and credited the appropriate usage of the name “Confucian rationalism.”¹⁹ David Hall and Roger T. Ames, on the other hand, hold that “it would be an error to suppose that order in Confucius’s thinking meant anything like the rational order.”²⁰ Chinese scholar Qingping Liu suggests the possible answer to this debate might be found in the translation of Yutang Lin, a contemporary Chinese thinker, who interpreted the Chinese term “qingli” (emotionale) as reasonableness.²¹ Dr. Liu quoted the following remark from Yutang Lin:

The Chinese word for “reasonableness” is ch’ingli [qingli], which is composed of two elements, ch’ing (jengch’ing) [renqing], or human nature, and li (t’ienli) [tianli], or eternal reason...By the Chinese, reasonableness is placed on a higher level than reason...The Chinese are willing to do anything against reason, but they will not accept anything that is not plausible in the light of human nature.²²

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Max Weber, *The Religion of China*, trans. Hans H. Gerth (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1964), 151-152, 226.

²⁰ David L Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking through Confucius* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 16.

²¹ Qingping Liu, "Emotionales in Confucianism and Daoism: A New Interpretation," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 38, no. 1 (2011), 118-133.

²² Yutang Lin, *My Country and My People* (Hong Kong: Heinemann, 1977), 85-86. Quoted in Liu, *Emotionales*, 118.

As Qingping Liu points out, the mainstream of Chinese philosophy believed that the governing principles of human life and the world were primarily from emotion, the Chinese character of which usually refers to “various emotional or sensual activities of human beings in broad sense, including corporal desires, sensory feelings, general moods, specific passions, and even moral affections such as filial piety (*xiao* 孝) and humane love (*ren* 仁).”²³

The power of music, according to pre-Qin Confucianists, was that it expressed the emotional principles that were based not on logical thinking, but rather on the living, concrete situations embodied by various activities. Understood in this way, the emotional principle advocated by Confucian music education has a much deeper and broader social foundation. Therefore, music education does more than encourage musical taste and express personal feelings.

5.2.3 Music is the Ultimate Perfection of One’s Personhood as an Integral Whole

In the introduction of this dissertation, I quoted from the *Analects* a passage by which I have always been inspired, “Let a man be first incited by the *Poetry* (The Book of Poetry), then given a firm footing by the study of rites, and finally perfected by music.”²⁴ Confucius’s ideal of a perfect man depicted a versatile, brave and resourceful person full of lofty characters as well as appropriate social behaviors. Two questions that I raised at the outset need to be reiterated: why is individual personhood as an integrated whole achieved eventually through music? Furthermore, why is the

²³ Liu, *Emotionales*, 119.

²⁴ *The Analects*, 8.8.

study of music given a more important position than the study of rites?

I suggest we read Confucius's argument that music (*yue*) is more essential and primeval than rites (*li* 礼) from an educational perspective. In other words, it is a great insight of this foundational educator that prioritized aesthetic education (or art education) other than moral education. Confucius firmly believed that education as well as the ultimate perfection of personhood is eventually achieved through aesthetic and art education. This idea has been highly praised by Chinese scholars of aesthetics. Baihua Zong, the well-established contemporary scholar who studied aesthetics in Germany, once commented that Confucius has not just established the rites-governed lifestyle for Chinese society. More importantly, he has gone further to find the root of rites in the spirit of music as well as in the notion of benevolence. "The ideal personality should be a soul of music,"²⁵ Baihua Zong remarks. Fuguan Xu, another famous scholar of ancient Chinese aesthetics, also points out that the aim of Confucius's *Yue Jiao* is to "obtain equal attention for ritual and music while music is placed on a higher position than ritual, because the former is the completion of a perfect personality."²⁶ This belief is held as the mission of Confucius's educational system. In the book of *Yue Ji* (Record of Music), different origins of ritual and music were elaborated: music rises from internal, whereas ritual is enforced from external. Music education exerts the positive motivation from the bottom of one's heart, and develops a truthful pursuit of what is meaningful and valuable. Compared with music

²⁵ Zong Baihua 宗白华, *Meixue Yu Yijing* 美学意境 [Aesthetics and Its Artistic Realm] (Beijing: Renmin Publishing House, 1987), 239-240.

²⁶ Xu Fuguan 徐复观, *Zhongguo Yishu Jingshen* 中国艺术精神 [Chinese Artistic Spirit] (Taipei: Taiwan Central Publishing House, 1966), 15.

education, ritual education stresses on an enforcement of moral education that might not be necessarily a heartfelt commitment.

In his essay “The Aesthetic Revelation of the World,” written in 1804, German aesthetic educator Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841) explores the origin of morality in aesthetics. He emphasizes that moral education can achieve its real effect only by an indirect instruction through aesthetic education.²⁷ Herbart advances a theme that the primary mission of education is the aesthetic revelation of the world. In this manner, the educator can therefore force the children into freedom without coercion. American scholar Bennett Reimer raises a similar argument in his book *A Philosophy of Music Education* that although music education has an ethical dimension, it amounts to achieve a higher and more authentic goal of not merely being moral and ethical.²⁸ As I read him, this ultimate goal is a development of the personhood as an integral whole.

5.3 Diversities of Aesthetics vs. Aestheticized Diversities

In the *Book of Poetry*, one of the Confucian classics, there is a line that reads, “Although Zhou is an old nation, it has a new mission.” China is an ancient nation that has a new mission of modernization. The traditions in both ancient China and Greece are of great significance in view of contemporary cultural construction. Comparing Greek philosophers with pre-Qin Confucians, I see they all embodied their historical moments and brought emerging ideas to fruition in an image of a new era

²⁷ Johann Friedrich Herbart, *Collected Works of Herbart*, trans. Qilong Li, vol. 3 (Zhejiang: Zhejiang Educational Press, 2002).

²⁸ Bennett Reimer, *A Philosophy of Music Education*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1989).

with a new form of relationship between art and one's life and society. The needs of a social, cultural environment determined the mission of arts and education of that time.

It is important to talk about this subject in the context of our times today that is characteristic of "diversities of aesthetics." It is hard for anyone to take up the issue of "diversities," as it is hard to deny that one of the most important tasks in our time is to face diversities, not necessarily of aesthetics but diversities among different cultures and various ways of life. However, notions like diversity and pluralism would lose their theoretical significance if they are deprived of their disputable quality and changed into a spectacle celebrating the globalizing world. If we look around the social environment today, this is how industry deals with these notions, and we are constantly exposed to these ideas in everyday life. One of the predominant images \ in the present consumer-driven society all over the world is not "diversities of aesthetics" but "aestheticized diversities." In short, my basic position in regard to the issue of aesthetic diversities and cultural pluralism is that they are all crucially important and should be regarded as hopeful features, but unfortunately we still do not face them in a true sense. What we are doing about art now might be, to use an old expression, "putting new wine into old wineskins."

It is in this recognition of current prevailing trends that I want to discuss the educational significance of music education that was central to civilizations in both ancient China and ancient Greece. I argue that in the context of transformative diversities, a harmonious attitude towards different relations in education becomes crucial, for without it, students will feel too fragmented to understand the world and to

share the experience of individual growth and flourishing with others. Thus, I consider the notion of musical harmony as not merely a property of music, but a quality of the relationships between people. Teachers and student achieve this interaction through music education. Thus, where music education takes place, deeper learning is a possibility.

In my view, aesthetics should be a study not only about beauty and what appears as “art,” but about the fundamental relation of a person to herself and to her environment. I hope music education in our world today will recover sensation from the state of anesthesia. It is not enough for aesthetics to update itself by paying attention to new media arts or information culture. Aesthetics has to get deeper into the inner value of being an integral person that is disappointingly missing in many aspects of life today. One significant educational function of Chinese ritual and music tradition was to teach people to moderate their likes and dislikes and thus to moderate social relationships as a whole. Musical practices were not only metaphors for harmony but also worked as the potential link among particular kinds of aesthetic practices, socializing into cultural practices and relations as well as pedagogical implications of all of this. Confucian aesthetics is therefore an integral part of social flourishing.

5.4 Cross-Cultural Educational Significance

Up to the second half of the last century, the most fruitful result of the introduction of Western philosophy in China has been the revival of the study of

Chinese philosophy. Because when one encounters new ideas that are unfamiliar, it is natural for one to turn to familiar ones for illustration, comparison, and mutual confirmation. This way of integration and analysis of the old ideas through use of the analytic method characterized the spirit of the age up to the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war in 1937.

Wang Guowei (1877-1927), one of the most influential Chinese intellectuals in the 20th century who introduced into China the Western theory of aesthetics and aesthetic education—mostly the works of Schiller, Kant, and Schopenhauer—had the following comment on Confucian education:

The Confucian way of teaching starts and ends in aesthetic education. It thus leads to the personality of the gentleman (junzi renye) amounting to either “the beautiful soul” (Schiller) or “the pure subject of knowledge.” (Schopenhauer) The state of mind at this level is free from expectations, fears, conscientiously conforms to moral imperatives without any feeling of being coerced by any rules...Hence whoever is concerned about education must put this aspect into full consideration.²⁹

There are two special challenges our world faces today and to which Confucian idea of music education could contribute. The first challenge has to do with the effect of human action itself. Prior to this century, mankind has been able to flourish and expand without giving much thought to the limits of natural resources. Today, however, we realize that there is a global and objective limit to human action itself. If we do not organize our resources in a wise way, we will destroy all living conditions by our own action and will make human life impossible. Educational philosophers have to investigate the moral principles that are applicable in such a

²⁹ Wang Keping, “Art Education with Social Commitment,” in *International Yearbook of Aesthetics* 13 (2009): 179. Originally Quoted in Wang Kuo-wei’s *Kongzi zhi Meiyu Zhuyi* 孔子之美育/王国维 [Confucius’ Aesthetic Educationism], 1904.

situation. So far, the appeal in ethics to universal principles has been guided by abstract considerations of equality. Today, these principles have to be grounded in the global condition of humankind as a whole and in concrete justice. The task I have set for myself in elaborating the classical Confucian thoughts is to show that the ethic dimension in Yue Jiao is a moral and spiritual, but godless and non-transcendental, belief system. It is this uniqueness that gives Yue Jiao something important to say today in the construction of more adequate cross-cultural dialogues on what it is to be human, and what a good education might be like. The uniqueness of Confucian thought is that it does not require the existence of an individual self, isolable from all others, to ground it. Rather it is grounded very much in a sense of human existence and human becoming.

The second challenge for educators today is to show how people with different cultural foundations can live together. In earlier times, conflicts between different groups of people with different worldviews and forms of life could be resolved geographically, at least in principle: each group settled in its own territory, whether by their own will or not. In today's global village, the worldwide reach of economic action and the efficient means of traveling makes this option possible. Educators have to propose and discuss the principles that should guide our living together.

Therefore, teachers must be seen as more than just founts of wisdom to the students of today, but as shaping awareness in such a way that allows students to understand that their identity extends beyond the culture and the nation. In particular, educators need first to help students establish a self-understanding, an awareness with

which we come to think ourselves as members of a species with global responsibilities, in addition to members of a culture, religion and nation. This is a requirement put forward by our world today. On the one hand, people in today's world fight hard for personal freedom and development, and on the other hand, they are interconnected with each other through technologies, and are unable to live out of the society. Therefore, people today live in a giant web of systems, regulations, laws, etc. Everyone should take the responsibility for her part of weaving so that we can collectively make the web complete.

Wittgenstein famously claims in his *Philosophical Investigation* that the task of philosophy is to show the fly the way out of the fly bottle. This articulates an important moral task for philosophy. In the context of education, likewise, an effective political transformation sets up a crucial moral agenda for educators. Some exposure to multicultural experience is not in itself sufficient to meet all the demands arising in moral education in our society. One merit of rethinking moral education in the light of Confucian thought is that it opens spaces for non-Western intellectual and educational systems to enter more centrally into dialogues with other moral belief systems. Indian, Chinese, and many other moral belief systems might be, upon analysis and investigations, deemed as worthy of being reasonable moral codes as others.

Cameron McCarthy points out the difference between a new framework of critical multiculturalism and “lukewarm curriculum of cultural pluralism that are associated with some models of multiculturalism education.”³⁰ The former, which

³⁰ Cameron McCarthy, “Multicultural Discourses and Curriculum Reform: A Critical Perspective,” *Educational Theory* 44, No. 1 (1994): 83.

McCarthy prefers, engages teachers and students in critical reflection about “the organization and the arrangement of knowledge in schooling and the connection between the curriculum and the differential experiences and futures of minority and majority youth beyond the school door.”³¹ In the same critical vein, I suggest that in order for a multicultural experience to be educational, it should be different than mere representations of different cultures for exclusively political, economic, or psychological purposes.

Confucius’s exhortations are not at all abstract moral principles being proclaimed. Rather, the ancient Chinese were educated behaviorally, cognitively and effectively to follow the way a moral exemplar would behave. Pre-Qin Confucianism offers a different view of what it is to be a human being, which may perhaps be well suited for the global village of diverse cultural heritages the world is rapidly becoming. I take it is incumbent upon us to see commonly shared principles and values, applicable to all peoples. Otherwise the hope of a world at peace, devoid of group conflicts, racism, sexism, and ethnocentrism could never be realized. As a consequence, I suggest a cross-cultural dialogue may contribute to a global ethics for our world today. I must note here that the idea of a global ethics is not mere camouflage for a universalist ethics that have dominated Western philosophy for centuries.

A cross-cultural dialogue may contribute to a global as well as a contextual ethics that affirms the identities of persons and institutions in their concrete local,

³¹ Ibid.

cultural, religious, economic and political situations. This contextual orientation is grounded in the assumption that cultural diversity is no less integral to human flourishing than genetic diversity is to all living things. The ideal of a global and contextual ethics requires a deep sensitivity to the particularities of diverse cultural norms around the world. At the same time, attending only to, and living in the midst of, solely specific cultural particularities will make for an isolationist orientation, or worse than that, will impoverish thinking in each isolationist culture itself about the range of possibilities of what might be true or beautiful for its own people. Confucianism obliges us to attend carefully to what it is proper for each of us to do, within the tradition of rituals and customs of our culture. In the same time, it provides a common basis for dialogue and critique as a follower of Confucian thought is capable of sensitivity to particular cultural norms without becoming morally relativistic.

The history of human ideas has shown that a culture or a nation's self-renovation is not entirely independent as it is often inspired by the wisdom from other nations. I am convinced that human knowledge and experience in the world is always limited by one's individual perspective. This limitation gives cross-cultural exchange and dialogue an important and necessary role. It would thus be a mistake to see the synthesis of the ancient Greek and Chinese aesthetics as resulting in a final, complete system. On the contrary, that will provide a new basis for further questions to arise. Global ethics, or aesthetics, must on the one hand endeavor to do the good work that universalism did without the bad side affects, and yet have a significant

contextual component in order to have an impact on the lives of actual persons and social institutions without sinking into relativism. Comparative research on pre-Qin Confucian aesthetics and ancient Greek aesthetics may be capable of effecting an appropriate integration of global and contextual aesthetics because the locus for both traditions is the human well-being as a whole, In this way, we may come to see, feel, and understand different human beings as inextricably interrelated.

Conclusion:

Why did both Eastern and Western traditions observe the importance of music education at very beginning of their cultures? If we see the goal for educational philosophers as collectively creating a better educational environment for the growth of human existence, then the effort to engage in understanding issues from two or more different traditions is encouraging. In both traditions, I see a shared educational concern of how a human being should refine one's morality, reflect on one's behavior, and develop one's personhood.

Confucian's focus on Yue Jiao is valuable for our education today. To value this merit is not to say we entirely agree with ancient Chinese scholars' theory of human nature. In fact, the issue of whether human nature is good has been one of the most controversial topics for Confucian scholars. For educators, the nature of human nature is less an urgent problem than the practical issue of what role education, especially moral education plays in contemporary society. This is related to the issue of the sustainability and contextualization of our education. Confucian avocations of

Yue Jiao suggest we transform our moral feelings into action. In education, a virtuous person has not only a strong will to be able to control themselves, but also possesses harmonized emotions to choose to perform right actions willingly. Unlike those who restrain their feelings by force, a virtuous person possesses good will and well-turned emotions.

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