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Diogenes 2008 55: 108

DOI: 10.1177/0392192108096836

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Optimal Harmony, Mutual Enrichment and Strangification

Vincent Shen

Build up a harmonious society

'Build up a Harmonious Society' is the political program recently proposed by China's President Hu Jintao (胡锦涛) as the major political guideline for today's Chinese society in an amazing economic boom where people are competing for economic profits on the one hand and falling into a demoralizing space of ideological and ethical void on the other. President Hu defines his concept of harmonious society as 'a society with socialist democracy and rule of law, fairness and justice, integrity and friendly love, fullness of vitality, social stability and orderliness, and harmonious interaction between human and nature'.¹ Since it targets both social cohesion and ecological harmony with Nature, it could be read as a Confucian Program with a certain Daoist overtone. From the vehement and hostile class struggle during the cultural revolution period to today's political program for a harmonious society, China seems to be fulfilling the historical process predicted in Zhang Zai's (張載 1020–1077) saying 'when there are struggles there are hostilities, while all hostilities are at the end to be solved in harmony'.²

More than this, China's harmonious social program might also be useful on the international level to dissolve or at least sooth the anxiety or irrational feeling against the so-called 'China's menace to the World'.³ Harmony should be meaningful for a China that is now rising to become one of the world's great powers, in which China is facing a contrasting situation of abundant possibilities of mutual enrichment as well as antagonistic conflict on the global level. As China is insisting on a mode of development proper to its own, the so-called 'socialism with Chinese characteristics', its actual practice of economic decentralization with stronger political control is obviously not yet ready to develop itself into a democratic country in the western sense, such as democracy in the form of parliamentary system or opposition party politics. We understand that harmony may not mean democracy, or vice versa. In fact, the

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DOI: 10.1177/0392192108096836

diversity of all kinds released by the process of democratization, such as differences in gender, family background, profession, scientific discipline, ethnic group, value and belief system . . . etc., though potentially providing for a better mutual enrichment, in reality might burst into more vehement conflict, especially when provoked by the dualistic and antagonistic political confrontation.

Democracy in the form of opposition party politics and a parliamentary system is now under serious question. In origin, both the party and the representatives in the parliament were conceived and organized to represent people. However, this idea of representation is now in serious question because of the fact that the political parties and parliamentary representatives are looking to their own interest instead of representing people. The violence of the majority happens all the time to the detriment of the real common good. Also the hostile opposition between parties sometimes goes too far so as to compromise social cohesion. Nevertheless, there is one essential component of democracy which should never be denied: the process of communication and conversation that bring different people to a certain level of consensus as to the making of policy related to the common good of all people. I would say that deliberative democracy with free and responsible communication and conversation of all kinds of people is still a must for today even when party politics and the parliamentary system are in serious question.

Generally speaking, difference and otherness are present everywhere today. We are living in a world where there is no place without the presence of Multiple Others having different perspectives of otherness: in gender, in family and educational background, in profession, in scientific discipline, in ethnic group, in value and belief system, in cultural traditions, in ways of life, etc. Especially in today's globalization process in contrast with localization, homogenization in contrast with diversification, we are now at a moment of human history where people in the world feel so close to each other on the one hand, and so vulnerable and susceptible to conflicts of any kind on the other. In responding to today's urgent situation full of conflicts created by the self-enclosure of different parts such as different disciplines, cultures, political parties and religious groups, etc., indeed the ideal of harmony should be treated as an urgent issue, and we humans should be more concerned with one another and look for the possibility not only of peaceful coexistence, but also an optimal situation of mutual enrichment. Experience tells us that difference of all kinds may lead, in the worse case, to conflict and war; in a normal case, to peaceful coexistence; and in the better case, to mutual enrichment. Peaceful coexistence, kept as such and in itself static, though necessary for further enriching experience of interaction, is only a minimal state and an ideal form of coexistence. What I am advocating here is a dynamic concept of optimal harmony, not that of perfect and therefore static harmony. We should act for mutual enrichment rather than mere co-existence, not to say conflict and war, especially in a time when the world is in the process of globalization.

As stated, 'Building up a Harmonious Society' is a Confucian political program, with some Daoist components as regards the human relation with Nature. This is made conceivable because of the value of harmony developed by Confucianism in the long historical tradition. It is therefore reasonable to discuss here the idea of harmony proposed by Confucianism and Daoism for a deeper understanding of the

value of harmony in Chinese tradition. Though we should understand that, in the political process, as if in a game, the issue is not how to restore the initial state or any particular previous state of the game, but rather the stake at play now resulting from its 'historical' process. Even if this does not mean what the dead have thought might not be effective to those still living, nevertheless those ideas and values cherished in the long history of the past might show a core of meaningfulness for the historical being that is properly human. It is in this sense that the values and wisdom proposed and formed by Confucianism and Daoism, repeatedly studied and proclaimed by political leaders and scholars throughout the pre-democratic history of China, might still have some importance for today's Chinese mind-set.

Let me recapitulate right from the start the idea of optimal harmony that both Confucianism and Daoism in the best case could agree upon, what the *Yijing* 易經 (*Book of Changes*) says, 'While each one fulfills his/her/its true nature and destiny, all together they achieve an optimal harmony.'⁴ For me, what is at stake in the drive for social cohesion is a dynamic optimal harmony, not an ideology of static harmony as a pretext for political domination. The problem here is: if each and every person is allowed to fulfill his/her own nature, how as an entirety they can come together to achieve an optimal harmony? Here Confucians and Daoists answer differently in the sense that Confucians attempt to achieve harmony by appealing to the ethical ability of humaneness *ren* in each person and to the coordination by *li*, the ritual, that is to be transcendently founded on it, whereas Daoists refer to a deeper compliance with the Heavenly *Dao* (laws of nature) and the spontaneous coordination of all beings by their following *Dao's* original generosity in working for the goodness of Multiple Others.⁵

Optimal harmony, ritual regulation and reciprocity

Right from its beginning, Confucians understood that human beings were born among Multiple Others and therefore at risk of all kinds of conflict, but they would make an ethical effort to obtain an optimal harmony, especially through the mediation and regulation of *li* (the ritual). The concept of harmony is essential in the Confucian understanding of the role of the ritual. As Youzi, a disciple of Confucius, said

Of the things brought about by the rites, harmony is the most valuable. Of the ways of the Former Kings, this is the most beautiful, and is followed alike in matters great and small, yet this will not always work: to aim always at harmony without regulating it by rites simply because one knows only about harmony will not, in fact, work. (Lau, 2000: 7)

In this text, the ritual, *li*, as an overall concept of cultural ideal, could be understood as a graceful order of human actions leading to optimal harmony. Confucius lived in a state of political disorder in which *Zhouli* 周禮 (the ritual of Zhou Dynasty) was losing its deeper meaning of cosmic origin and social harmony while still keeping its formalistic meaning and practice, as the code of behavior, as the social and political institution and as religious rituals. Confucius tried to revitalize *Zhouli* by tracing its

transcendental origin in human nature as expressed by the concept of *ren* (仁), which signified and represented the sensitive interconnectedness among human beings, between human beings and nature and even human beings and the Heaven. *Ren* manifests human subjectivity and responsibility in and through its sincere moral self-awareness, and the inherent intersubjective tie giving support to all social and ethical life.

And then, from the concept of *ren*, Confucius derived the concept of *yi* (義), rightness or righteousness, which represented for him the respect for and the proper action towards other people. On rightness were based all moral norms, moral obligations, our consciousness of them, and even the virtue of always acting according to them.

Then, from the concept of *yi*, Confucius derived that of *li* (禮), the ritual, or the propriety, which, as an overall concept of cultural ideal, meant ideally a graceful order leading to harmony, or a harmonious order with a sense of beauty. Confucius said, 'A wise and good man regards righteousness as the substance of everything. He practices it according to the principle of propriety. He brings it forth with modesty. And he carries it to conclusion with faithfulness. He is indeed a superior man!' (Chan, 1963: 43)

Accordingly, from the Confucian view, social cohesion targeted an optimal harmony only to be maintained by *li*. The function of *li* as order with beauty leading to harmony depends on the one hand on people's self-awareness to ground *li* in one's sense of rightness, *yi*, and the sense of rightness *yi* in one's humanity *ren*; and, on the other, the moral effort to manifest one's moral ability of *ren* to *yi*, then from *yi* to the harmonizing *li*. Confucian ethics is a dynamic model of coming and going within these two moral movements, extending thereby to larger and larger social units such as family, community, state, and all under heaven. For Confucianism, the dimension of meaningfulness in human existence is to be understood within the context of ethical relations among human beings, nature and heaven, in a pattern of life imbued with a sense of beauty in an orderly ensemble that is harmony.

Different from Daoism that tries to obtain harmony by way of coordinating oppositions in strife, Confucianism tries to obtain optimal harmony by way of extending each person's virtuous life. Besides virtues such as *ren*, *yi*, *li*, *zhi*, people can enlarge their existence, by way of *shu*, to larger realms of existence from oneself to many others, to family, to social community, to the state, to all under heaven. Confucius sometimes understood both *ren* and *shu* in the spirit of the negative golden rule, 'do not impose on others what you yourself do not want' (Ames and Rosemont, 1998: 189). We should note the close relationship between *ren* and *shu*, given the fact they are both defined by the negative golden rule. Also, a positive golden rule was given by Confucius as an answer to the question about the concept of *ren*, 'A man of humanity, wishing to establish his own character, also establishes others, wishing to be prominent himself, also helps others to be prominent' (Chan, 1963: 31). Both the negative and positive versions of the golden rule are, in Confucian eyes, based on a reciprocal basis as to the relation between self and Multiple Others. A Confucian existence is an ever-expanding life based on self-cultivation. In this process, authenticity and perfection of self are in priority over dependence on others. For that reason Confucius emphasized learning for perfecting oneself.⁶ While self-cultivation and

self-perfection are more on the part of the individual, the harmonious relation with many others should be achieved in the social context. In short, according to Confucianism, the tension between self and Multiple Others is to be solved in reference to the golden rules, both negative and positive, based ultimately on the principle of reciprocity. In this sense, we can say that, in the Confucian world, in which human behaviors have to be regulated by *li*, even the act of going outside oneself to the other launched by *shu*, and the original generosity it implied, have to be regulated by reciprocity.

The principle of reciprocity becomes a guiding principle of social and political philosophy in the *Great Learning*, where it is called the principle of measuring the square (*Jieju zhidao* 絜矩之道). There we read first a positive version of the principle, followed by a negative version. They are put in the context where the extension from governing the state to making peace within all under heaven is explained, which, in today's terms, could be interpreted as 'globalization'. The Confucian major concern here is the governance by *ren* (humanity): when the ruler governs his people by respect and humanity, people will respond with peace and harmony, in the form of filial piety, brotherly respect and harmonious agreement. The positive reciprocity is therefore expressed in terms of virtuous life among many others such as filial piety, brotherly respect and compassion for the young and the helpless, etc., initiated by the political leader. On the other hand, there is also the negative version of the measure of the square:

What a man dislike in his superiors, let him not show it in dealing with his inferiors. What he dislikes in those in front of him, let him not show it in preceding those who are behind; what he dislikes in those behind him, let him not show it in following those in front of him; what he dislikes in those on the right, let him not apply it to those on the left; and what he dislikes in those on the left, let him not apply it to those on the right. This is the principle of the measuring square. (Confucius, 1837: 75)

As it is clear in this text, the reciprocity is enlarged analogically from one side to the opposite side: from superior to inferior, from inferior to superior; from right to left, from left to right; from front to behind, from behind to front, and thereby forming a Confucian cubic relationship with Multiple Others, not merely a square, of reciprocity, though always taken in a negative sense. Within this cubic structure of reciprocal relationship, more attention has been paid to the horizontal, that is, from right to left, from left to right; from front to behind, from behind to front, than the vertical relation between superior and inferior, mentioned only once. Nevertheless, the concept of 'extended reciprocity' plays a major role in this largest extension of human relation – from the state to all under heaven, described today as 'globalization'.

Optimal harmony and original generosity

Confucianism looks for optimal harmony by ritual regulation with the principle of reciprocity, whereas Daoism looks for optimal harmony by letting all beings unfold their being fully and freely with the principle of original generosity prior to

reciprocity. Laozi understood well the Confucian project of transcendental derivation of *yi* from *ren* and *li* from *yi*, had well pinpointed the regressive degeneration of *ren* to *yi* and *yi* to *li* and *li* to social conflict. This does not mean Laozi paid no regard to harmony. Laozi uses the metaphor of sound to represent harmony. First, musical sounds, 'Refined notes and raw sounds harmonize with each other' (Chapter 2, Roger Ames, 2003: 80). Second, the innocent crying of a newborn baby, who 'screams through the entire day, and yet his voice does not get hoarse. Such is the height of harmony' (Chapter 55. Ames and Hall, 2003: 163). On the ethical and political level, Laozi criticized Confucian values as resulting from the loss of deeper solidarity in human relationship.⁷

For Laozi, there was a deeper solidarity among human beings, even among all things, by the fact that all were given birth by *Dao*, as the outcome of its original generosity, much more profound than mere filial piety and loyalty. Laozi's idea of harmony had its cosmological and ontological foundation. *Dao* as the original harmony was itself the original generosity that gave birth to all things. 'Dao gave birth to One, One gave birth to Two. Two gave birth to Three. Three gave birth to all things. Everything carries *yin* on its shoulders and *yang* in its arms, and blends these vital energies (*qi*) together to make them harmonious' (Chapter 42). On the ontological and cosmological level, *Dao* as the Origin launches the process of differentiation and complexification that might cause strife and therefore harmony emerges from them only by way of coordinating the rhythmic interaction of contrasts or oppositions such as *yin* and *yang*, and harmony is the optimal coordination of the opposites.⁸

Optimal harmony is also a political ideal for Laozi: 'Governing the nation through intellectual discrimination is harmful to it. Not governing the nation through intellectual discrimination is a blessing to it. Knowing the difference between these two sets a standard. To be aware of this standard is profound attainment. Profound attainment is deep and far-reaching. It is the reversal of ordinary things, yet it leads to *optimal* harmony with Tao' (Chapter 65, Chan, 1975: 174, my correction in italics). Not to impose on others, but to let others be themselves, this is the way to optimal harmony. Freedom and creativity are therefore seen as the key to optimal harmony. This idea was further developed by Zhuangzi by his concept of freedom and equality of all things.

I would like to feature here the Daoist idea of original generosity which was not at all limited to Confucian ethics and politics of reciprocity. According to my reading, Laozi presented to us an ethics of generosity par excellence, and the Daoist generosity was based on its ontology and cosmology. Laozi showed that *Dao* is the unfathomable, inexhaustible Ultimate Reality that took the first initiative to go beyond itself to give birth to myriad things in its act of giving birth. This is textually supported by the recently discovered bamboo slips text named *Heng Xian* 恆先 (The Constant precedes), arguably produced at a time shortly after the *Laozi* and before the *Mencius*. There we read, 'The Constant precedes *you* (being) and *wu* (non-being). It is simple, quiet . . . and, tired of staying in itself, and not tolerating being itself, it rises and creates space . . .'⁹ Classical Daoism expressed the idea that the *Dao* was generous in taking the initiative to give birth to all things, and this was done by several acts of generosity. In the *Laozi*, the first act of generosity was that by which the *Dao* showed itself in the infinitely marvellous possibilities, which, because of its

intangibility, was called *wu* 'non-being'. Then, the *Dao* allowed some among the infinite possibilities to take the form of body and be realized as *you* (being). This was the *Dao*'s second act of generosity. Then, with the process of differentiation and complexification, myriad things came to be produced endlessly, which was the *Dao*'s continuous and endless act of generosity within heaven and earth. Here the term 'myriad things' represented the Daoist concept of 'Multiple Others.' After having produced myriad things, *Dao* still gave itself to all things, and became *de* in each particular being. *De* was there in each being to be unfolded fully by each so as to bring them to return to the Origin.

On the level of human beings, the sage, taking the generosity of *Dao* as his/her exemplary model and incarnating the way of *Dao* in his/her person, was also generous to all things with gratuitous gifts and taking generous giving as the way to enrich his own life. 'The sage never accumulates for himself, he takes it to be more in himself in doing more for others; he takes it to be richer in him in giving more to others (Chapter 80). Even if it was not excluded that what he did and what he gave are related to material goods, but, since material goods would become less when divided, shared and given, it is more likely that what the sage did and gave were more of a spiritual character, especially by his acts that created and gave all things including human beings their chances of uncovering and unfolding their own *de* and thereby in due course to return to the *Dao*.

Basing upon these ontological, cosmological and ethical levels, generosity showed itself also on the level of political philosophy. For Laozi, the highest virtue incarnated was concretely manifested in the person of a sage, who employed him/herself generously for the world. 'The sage has no fixed (personal) ideas. He regards the people's ideas as his own' (Chapter 49). 'Therefore, the sage is always good in saving men and consequently no man is rejected. He is always good in saving things and consequently nothing is rejected' (Chapter 27). The sage, a paradigmatic individual both in self-cultivation and in political philosophy, was therefore not only an ethical and moral figure as in the eyes of the Confucian sage, but as the incarnation of the *Dao* and its generosity.

Communication in the forms of recognition and dialogue

Taking the Confucian and Daoist concepts of optimal harmony as a background ideal value in pre-democratic Chinese tradition, hopefully with a certain potential for understanding and therefore universalization also for other traditions in the world, I would now like to turn to today's democratic situation and examine some contemporary western political theories in regard to their possibilities of mutual enrichment and achieving optimal harmony: Charles Taylor's politics of recognition and dialogue as constituting democratic harmony; Husserl and Habermas's concepts of communicative actions, and my concept of communication as mutual strangification, as leading to an optimal harmony.

'The politics of recognition', the title of a paper presented by Charles Taylor, was formulated within the context of the antagonistic tension produced by the nationalist movement, minority groups, feminism and multiculturalism. There Charles

Taylor has well analyzed the historical development by which the Western world has arrived at its modern preoccupation with identity and recognition. There was first the collapse of social hierarchy based upon honor, followed by the switch from honor to dignity, which led to a politics of universalism, emphasizing the equal dignity of rights and entitlement (Guttmann, 1994: 37). Then came the second change, the development of the notion of dignity depending on individual identity, defined by Charles Taylor as authenticity. Now the ultimate reference is switched from God or the idea of the Good to the fulfillment and realization of one's own true self or originality. This gives rise to a politics of difference, in which we are asked to recognize 'the unique identity of this individual or group, their distinctness from everyone else' (Guttmann, 1994: 38).

Therefore, Charles Taylor's politics of recognition plays within the contrasting tension of a politics of universalism and a politics of difference. On the one hand, under the name of recognition, we should all be treated as equals, regardless of our particular ethnic, religious, racial or sexual identities. 'Treating as equals' should be concretized in the basic needs such as income, health care, education, freedom of conscience, speech, press, association, due process, right to vote, right to hold public office, religious freedom, etc. On the other hand, the differential originality or distinctiveness of each individual or social/cultural group should be respected and satisfied. We should be recognized in our innermost difference, from which are derived all cultural expressions and ways of life. Recognition plays therefore with the dialectics of equality and difference.

With recognition, there could be dialogue leading to possible harmony or disharmony. Charles Taylor, following M. Bakhtin's model of dialogue, has well emphasized the formation of one's authenticity in the process of dialogue: 'Thus my discovering my own identity doesn't mean that I work it out in isolation, but that I negotiate it through dialogue, partly overt, partly internal, with others. That is why the development of an ideal of inwardly generated identity gives a new importance to recognition. My own identity crucially depends on my dialogical relation with others' (Guttmann, 1994: 34).

Even if Charles Taylor sees human authenticity as formed through a process of dialogue, still there is no true recognition of the Multiple Others as the unfathomable, irreducible to any mode of my own constitution of it. For me, we humans are born into 'Multiple Others,' which are not limited only to human beings, given that it refers also to Nature and the transcendent. Multiple Others, in dialogue with me as they might be, are not reducible to my construction. Also there must be an original generosity to go outside of myself to Multiple Others, otherwise there will be no reciprocity and reciprocal recognition, and therefore no dialogue possible at all. If one loses sense of this irreducible Otherness in multiplicity and one's potential for original generosity, there will be no authentic dialogue for the formation of one's authentic self. In short, without a politics of generosity, Charles Taylor's politics of recognition tends to be constrained within the philosophy of subjectivity and the framework of reciprocity, and thereby it could be seen as only an English version of the Hegelian *Anerkennung* in the context of today's society of differences and multiculturalism.

Now, identity and reciprocity, though to be posited as necessary for a minimal

politics, does not constitute an optimal politics. For me, an optimal politics should be a politics of generosity that leads to mutual enrichment, which constitutes a dynamic concept of harmony.¹⁰ Every one of us can learn from each other and contribute to the benefit of each other and be mutually enriched thereby. That is why difference is an occasion of creativity rather than an excuse for conflict. Without a virtue of generosity and a process of mutual enrichment, we do not even know what the use of dialogue is and what authenticity means in emphasizing each and everyone's difference.

Communicative action and consensus

Habermas's theory of communicative action is a philosophical proposal, in today's pluralist society, of a feasible way of obtaining consensus, considered a condition *sine qua non* in a democratic society. The argumentative communication he proposes emphasizes the priority of linguistic communication. Habermas derives his notion of communicative competence from what N. Chomsky calls 'linguistic competence'. Intersubjectivity is for Habermas to be constituted by linguistic communication in the form of argumentation, in the process of which the opposing sides such as different political parties, different interest groups, etc., propose their own reasons and reasons-against by referring to robust facts and justifiable arguments in a process of debate that arrives finally at a certain kind of consensus based on a higher-level proposition both parts could agree upon. The so-called 'truth' is to be arrived at only by intersubjective consensus obtained through the process of argumentative communication, and not based on any previously accepted ontological foundation, or on any human subjectivity.

Habermas's theory of communicative action uses the linguistic model to replace the consciousness model developed since Descartes. Rationality is not considered now as constituted by the transcendental structure of human subjectivity as in Kant's case. On the contrary, it is considered as the outcome of the act of rendering reason (*Begründung*) through argumentative communication. Only through this process could one legitimately obtain intersubjective recognition of valid statements or propositions.

Is Habermas's model indeed capable of bringing out the consensus urgently needed in today's society full of conflicts? It is hard to say that people can obtain consensus simply by arguing with each other. There are people indeed very skillful in argumentation, but still without any ethical concern for Multiple Others, or paying no regard to their *liangzhi* 良知 (inborn moral knowledge) in the Confucian term.¹¹ Without a common concern with the pre-linguistic life-world, or in other words, without a tacit consensus based on one's ethical openness and generosity to Multiple Others, and without reference to the life-world both oneself and one's opponents are living in, there will be no consensus to be obtained by way of argumentation.

Furthermore, the Habermasian argumentation tends to fail, if in the process of *Begründung* and in the act of searching for consensus, there is no effort of strangification, that of expressing one's proposal(s) in others' language or in language understandable to others. Without the effort of strangification, there will be no real mutual

understanding and no self-reflection in the process of argumentation. In this sense, strangification should be seen as a prerequisite for any successful communication and coordination.

Indeed, communication is the most important process for the co-construction of a socially and politically meaningful existence. That is why it should be taken into account in considering the politics of social cohesion. It is true that critical reflection and responsible communication are needed for a commonly meaningful social life, but in reality quite often they are distorted by ideological dispute and power struggle, if only limited to the level of argumentation such as debate over public issues, while the pre-linguistic and ethical level of communication is neglected. My criticism here of Habermas's theory of the communicative act is also applicable to Karl-Otto Apel's idea of argumentative communication, with which Apel radicalizes Heraclitus's principle of arriving at a new harmonious order through strife by what he calls 'the strife of arguments' (Liu and Allinson, 1988: 18). I would agree with Apel's distinction between 'strategic use of language' and a 'consensual-communicative one' (Liu and Allinson, 1988: 12). This means, for me, that the ideal of building up a harmonious society should not be used strategically as a means of social control or social engineering, but should rather be seen as resulting from a process of consensual communication, not limited to the one understood by Habermas and Apel, but to be further determined by the following considerations.

We should point out here that Husserl, much earlier than Habermas, has this idea of 'communicative act' proposed in his *Ideen II*, which is not limited to the linguistic and intellectual level, but includes also the evaluative and practical process such as love and counter-love, hate and counter-hate, confidence and reciprocal confidence. For Husserl, it is by abstracting from mutual understanding and communicative acts that one thinks of a sheer solitary subject and therefore also of his purely egoistic surrounding world. For him, the communicative act is situated in the relation of a person-to-person relationship. Husserl therefore makes explicit the ethical dimension of communication, not limiting it to argumentative debate as Habermas does. The term 'communicative act' is used by Husserl to express the social co-construction of a meaningful existence:

Sociality is constituted by specifically social, communicative acts, acts in which the Ego turns to others and in which the Ego is conscious of these others as ones towards which it is turning, and ones which, furthermore, understand this turning, perhaps adjust their behavior to it and reciprocate by turning toward that Ego in acts of agreement or disagreement . . . etc. (Husserl, 1989: 204)

Different from Habermas's four ideal claims of communicative act, somehow too formal to be actually effective, Husserl proposes in *Ideen II* the act of empathy as a substantial condition of communication. Husserl's concept of empathy is the dynamic and somehow transparent overlapping among human minds, similar to the Confucian concept of *ren* and *shu* through which human beings could easily understand the others' mind. In *Ideen II*, empathy not only constitutes interpersonal relationships, it could also be extended to the relations of marriage, friendship and social community. On this point, Husserl's concept of social co-construction of meaning is

quite similar to that of the Confucian extension of *ren* by way of *shu* from interpersonal relationships to family, community, states and all under heaven.

Strangification and mutual enrichment

Now we may ask by what strategy could a politics of generosity and mutual enrichment be made possible so as to achieve an optimal harmony? Two consecutive strategies could be suggested here. First of all, the strategy of language appropriation, which means more concretely learning other ways of expression or the languages of many others or understandable to many others. Since, as Wittgenstein has well suggested, different language games correspond to different life-forms, the appropriation of another language would give us an access to the life-form implied in that specific language. In our childhood, we have appropriated language by the generosity of significant others talking to us and thereby opening to ourselves a world of meaningfulness. When grown up, we learn more by appropriating different kinds of expression and language, such as those of the scientific, or political, or sub-cultural world, or of everyday life. By appropriating different ways of expression or languages, we could enter into different worlds and thereby enrich the construction of meaning of our own world.

Based on the appropriation of language, we can move on to the strategy of strangification. By 'strangification'¹² I mean the act of going outside of oneself and going to many others, from one's familiarity to the unfamiliar and to strangers. There are three types of strangification.

The first is 'linguistic strangification', by which we translate a supposedly true proposition of one's discipline, research program or a cultural expression or value in one's culture, social group or even a belief system in one's religion, into the language/cultural expression/value/religious belief understandable to another discipline/culture/social group/religion, to see whether it thereby works or becomes absurd. If it does work after the translation, it means that this proposition, expression, language, value or religious belief, may to that extent be commonly shared. If it thereby becomes absurd, then its limitation should for that reason be recognized and reflection must be made accordingly upon its principle and validity.

The second is 'pragmatic strangification', by which we draw a proposition, a supposed truth or a cultural expression/value or a religious belief out from one's own social, organizational and religious contexts, to put it into another social, organizational and religious context. If it is still valuable, then it may to that extent be commonly shared. Otherwise reflection and self-critique must be made on one's own proposition, supposed truth, cultural expression/value or religious belief. This is the process by which one could test and extend their validity in other pragmatic contexts.

The third is 'ontological strangification', which, for me, is the act by which we enter into another's scientific micro-world or cultural world or religious world through the detour of a direct experience with the Reality Itself, such as a person, a social group, Nature, or different ways of experiencing the Ultimate Reality.¹³

In the politics of generosity and mutual enrichment there is an incessant openness

to Multiple Others. Our search for meaningfulness begins with our act of going outside of ourselves and going towards Multiple Others. I understand meaningfulness as the outcome of this act of going to Multiple Others. This act presupposes an original generosity otherwise there will be no reciprocity and dialogue at all. Therefore I would not be satisfied with what Marcel Mauss proposes in his *Essai sur le don* that reciprocity is the principle by which society is made possible. I want to point out here that, prior to every situation of reciprocity, there must be already the act of going outside of oneself to the other, the act of strangification, as the act of original generosity, which accordingly makes the reciprocity possible.

Conclusion

The politics of generosity and the strategy of strangification are proposed here as a means of facing the challenge of globalization and the novel situation brought to us by the post-modern world. They are applicable to today's world situation, in particular to Chinese culture. I do trust that the dynamism in Chinese culture is able to go outside of its familiarity and to go to the strangers, to Multiple Others. But I still cannot say that today's China is playing a politics of generosity and strangification. We can see instead many self-defenses and excuses, based on some specific characteristics of Chinese culture and history in the past, in matters such as human rights, ecological commitment and democracy. We do not yet see much Chinese commitment to today's more universalizing ideal values such as world ecology, global citizenship and world peace, even if it is true that, in a certain sense, the politics of reciprocity and even that of recognition are beginning to function in today's China. China is today beginning to play in world politics the game of the great powers. However, one becomes really great only by being generous, to one's own people and to many other peoples in the world. China should learn more from Multiple Others and also be more generous towards Multiple Others. China should keep on appropriating Multiple Others by translating unceasingly their strangeness into familiarity, and, in the opposite sense, by unceasingly going outside of itself, its familiarity, to the side of Multiple Others, of strangeness and alterity in multiplicity, with an original and unconditional generosity.

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Notes

1. My English translation of the Chinese original: '民主法治、公平正義、誠信友愛、充滿活力、安定有序、人與自然和諧相處的社會'. See: www.china.org.cn/chinese/news/789914.htm.
2. The complete saying of Zhang Zai is '有象斯有對，對必反其為；有反斯有仇，仇必和而解' 'When there are concrete manifestations, there are oppositions, while all oppositions will struggle against what others do. When there are struggles there are hostilities, while all hostilities are to be solved in harmony' (Zhang Zai, 1972: 10).
3. This feeling was articulated in an essay bearing that title by Thomas Magee published in the Forum in 1890 (though handwritten in 1878), to which Sun Yat-sen answered, in 1904 in New York in his

- talk on 'The Real Solution to China's Problems (中國問題之真解決)', by the peace-loving nature of the Chinese nation, its contribution to world peace, and replaced the concept of China's Menace (*huanghuo* 黃禍) by the concept of 'China's Benefit to the World' (*huangfu* 黃禍).
4. My translation. In a language more understandable today: While each attains his/her excellence, all come together in an optimal harmony. Baynes' English rendering of Richard Wilhem's German translation reads 'The way of the Creative works through changes and transformation, so that each thing *receives* its true nature and destiny and comes into permanent accord with Great Harmony.'
 5. I use the term 'Multiple Others' or 'Many Others' to replace the concept of 'the Other' of French philosophers such as Levinas, Derrida and Deleuze. For me, we humans are born into Multiple Others and are always living and facing with Multiple Others. There is no simplified case in which the self is living and facing with simply the Other.
 6. For example: 'Don't worry about not being recognized by others; worry about not having any reason for them to recognize you' (*Analects* 14.30, Ames and Rosemont: 179) 'Exemplary persons are distressed by their own lack of ability, not by the failure of others to acknowledge him' (*Analects* 15.19, R. Ames and H. Rosemont: 188). 'Exemplary persons (*junzi*) make demands on themselves, while petty persons make demands on others' (*Analects* 15.21, R. Ames and H. Rosemont: 189).
 7. Such as 'When the six family relationships are disharmonious, that filial piety and parental affection appear. It is when the state has fallen into troubled times that upright ministers appear' (Chapter 18, Ames and Hall, 2003: 103).
 8. In this sense, we can say that Laozi's cosmology offers a good Chinese example of what K-O Apel calls 'harmony through strife' (Liu and Allinson, 1988: 3–5).
 9. In Chinese: 恆先無有、朴、靜、虛...自厭不自忍, 或作。...」 See (Ma Chengyuan 2003: 105).
 10. We should mention that Charles Taylor proposes also some norms of cross-cultural interactions, such as dialogue and overlapping consensus, and deeper mutual understanding on the philosophical and metaphysical levels. He even thinks of the expansion of one's own standard of value, in using Gadamer's term, 'fusion of horizons', first applied to the relation between a text and a reader, now used by Taylor to cross-cultural interaction. All these are quite sound visions. Here I merely wish to point out that with its philosophy of self and without the act of original generosity and the act of strangification there will be no such kind of cross-cultural fusion of horizon and no real mutual enrichment.
 11. The concept of *liangzhi*, proposed by Mencius (372–289BC) and developed fully by Wang Yangming (1472–1528), represents the moral feeling and knowledge that human beings are naturally capable of by being given as innate, and defines what is properly human.
 12. Originally proposed as an epistemological strategy for interdisciplinary research by Fritz Wallner, the term was extended by myself to serve as a strategy for intercultural exchange and religious dialog. This term in Chinese could be worded as '外推', very much related to the Confucian '推己及人' and '恕者善推'.
 13. Shen 1994: 126–129. By different ways of experiencing Ultimate Reality I mean for example *ren* (humanity) and *cheng* (sincerity) in Confucianism, the *dao* and *de* in Daoism, or the emptiness in Buddhism, God in Christianity, Allah in Islam . . . etc.

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