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Dossier

Estudios sobre China desde (Latino) América en conmemoración de los 160 años de la llegada de los chinos a Costa Rica

I Sección: Filosofía de China

El Paradigma de Armonía en la tradición Confuciana

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El concepto de armonía es una de las ideas centrales de la tradición filosófica confuciana. Armonía, en los *Clásicos* Confuciano, ha siempre representado el ideal último que el hombre necesitaba perseguir. También, este concepto y paradigma ha sido empleado por los Confucinaos en diferentes disciplinas desde la política a la ética, la estética y más. Lo de armonía se puede así entender como un concepto exhaustivo, y sólo a través de su completa comprensión se puede captar la base del sistema de pensamiento Confuciano. Este ensayo pretende analizar y definir el concepto y el paradigma de armonía dentro de la tradición Confuciana. En primer lugar, analizaré directamente el término armonía, mostrando las raíces y el desarrollo del concepto desde la China preimperial hasta la dinastía Han. En segundo lugar, voy a definir el paradigma general de armonía: la armonía representa el proceso de interacción entre polaridad. Eso implica dinamismo, creatividad y exhaustividad como elementos necesarios.

Palabras Clave: Filosofía; China; Confucianismo; armonía; Yin-Yang; *Clásicos* Confucianos;

THE PARADIGM OF HARMONY IN THE CONFUCIAN TRADITION

Harmony is one of the most important concepts of the Confucian tradition. Along Confucianism, harmony represented most of the time the ultimate ideal that man needs to pursue. Confucians employed the concept and paradigm of harmony in several fields from politics to ethical, aesthetics and so on. Hence it can be said that harmony is one of the most comprehensive concept within the Confucian tradition, and without a proper understanding of it, it is not possible to entirely grasp the essence of Confucianism. This essay aims to analyze and define the concept and the paradigm of harmony within the Confucian tradition. First, I will deal directly with the term, showing the roots and the development of the concept from pre-imperial China to Han dynasty. Second, I will define the general paradigm of harmony: harmony depicts the ongoing triadic process of polarity interaction that implies dynamicity, creativity and comprehensiveness as necessary elements.

Key words: Philosophy; China; Confucianism; harmony; Yin-Yang; Confucian *Classics*;

Introduction

Harmony and its idealization are among of the most important concepts in Chinese cultures. Throughout Chinese history, harmony has generally been represented as the supreme ideal that men need to pursue; harmony and its quest involve not merely political issues, but also ethical, aesthetical and so on. It can be said that, without a proper understanding of harmony, it is not possible to entirely grasp Chinese cultures and its traditions. If we are forced to find a single concept that can synthesize Chinese -especially Confucian- thought, this concept will probably be harmony[1].

In his last comprehensive work on the Confucian concept of harmony, the Chinese scholar Li Chenyang (2014, p.18) raises the question:

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[1] Here for Chinese cultures I generally refer to Confucian tradition. Even if the philosophy of harmony could probably be extended to the entire Chinese philosophy, my analysis is confined mainly in Confucian tradition.

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"Given the comprehensive and penetrating role of harmony in Confucianism, isn't it appropriate to claim that harmony is one of the most important concept?[2]"

My claim here is not to directly answer this question, but rather to outline a general feature of this concept within the Confucian tradition.

Setting harmony as the main object of this investigation, we need first to outline what we mean with the term harmony; and secondly, how it is employed within the Confucian tradition. Finally, I will outline the very structure of harmony. I will demonstrate that Confucians understood harmony as the ongoing triadic process of relationship between polarities which implies dynamicity, creativity and comprehensiveness as its necessary elements.

The Confucian idea of Harmony

Starting from the character, Chinese language expresses something similar to our idea of harmony by the ideograph he 和[3]. The character is composed by two radicals: the grain (he 禾) and the mouth (kou 口) that suggest an intimate link with the gustatory experience. This link is strengthened by the etymology: *he* is likely connected with two other ancient words, 龢 and 盉, with the same pronunciation. The first homophone, 龢, seems to pinpoint the mixing or the harmonizing of sounds; while the second, 盉, seems to represent an utensil used to mix wine with water[4]. Furthermore Ancient Chinese seem to associate the

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[2] Li Chengyang (2014, p.18) has pointed out that even if ren 仁, humaneness, is probably the most important concept within the philosophy of Confucius, whereas harmony is probably the most important within the Confucianism.

[3] Besides, he 和, there are other Chinese characters that could be translated into harmony. The most employed terms are xie 協, mu 睦, xie 諧. In this study I will primarily refer to *he* since it is the most common one.

[4] An interpretation of the character he 龢 is given by the Chinese scholar Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978) who makes no distinction between he 和 and he 龢. Guo (2002, pp.93-106) bases

concept of harmony with two different kinds of experience: food and music[5]. This association is also described by the pre-Confucian scholar and minister of Qi 齊, Yan Ying 宴嬰 (?–500 BCE):

和如羹焉，水火醯醢鹽梅以烹魚肉，燀之以薪，宰夫和之，齊之以味，濟其不及，以洩其過。 君子食之，以平其心 (…) 聲亦如味, 一氣, 二體, 三類, 四物, 五聲, 六律, 七音, 八風, 九歌, 以相成也. 清濁大小短長疾徐, 哀樂剛柔, 遲速高下, 出入周疏, 以相濟也. 君子聽之, 以平其心. (*Zuozhuan*)[6] "Harmony is like making soup. One needs water, fire, vinegar, sauce, salt, and plum in order to cook fish and meat. One needs to cook them with firewood. The cook needs to mingle (*he*) ingredients

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his theory primarily on the ancient Chinese lexicon *Shuowen*《說文解字》. The text interprets he 和 in term of "corresponsiveness of sounds", and he 龢 as "to mix". The close relationship between the two characters stand on their direct reference to music/sound: while the first *he* is understood as sounds relation; the second *he* it is formed by the radical yue 龠 that probably represents a musical instrument made of bamboo pipes.

The other etymological reference is he 盉: in the study of the Chinese scholar Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927), he 盉 refers to a wooden utensil used to mix water with wine. The *Shuowen jiezi* seems to support this interpretation understanding *he* as a verb with the meaning of "to mix flavor". (In Li 2014, p.23) For a deeper analysis of the etymological roots of the term *he*, see Ibidem (2014, pp.23-25).

[5] Among these human activities, music seems to be one of the most important because it reveals harmony in its intrinsic structure: The musical system is based on a cooperative relation between different sounds and different instruments; each sound (or instrument) gains its proper value through mutual relationship and by connecting with the whole structure in space and time.

Regarding the intimate relationship between music and the concept of harmony, Li Chenyang (2014, p.47) states that there might will be historical reasons which music became such an important model of the Confucian ideal of harmony. He refers to the idea of the great Chinese philosopher Hu Shi 胡适 (1891–1962) that sees the origin of Confucianism (rujia 儒家) came from an early profession bearing the same name. Confucians were teachers and experts of religious rituals and music. "It is therefore not implausible to think that the professional characteristics of early Ruists may have contributed to grounding the ideal of harmony on music."

[6] Throughout this essay there are several other quotes from both pre-Qin and imperial China. The Chinese texts from these quotes are generally taken from the digital library *ctext.org* unless otherwise noted. The Chinese Text Project is an online open-access digital library edit by the English scholar Donald Sturgen. All quotes reported from this digital library are also located in a standard printed edition such as the Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series (哈佛燕京學社引得), and the ICS Ancient Chinese Texts Concordance Series (逐字索引叢刊).

together in order to balance the taste. He needs to compensate for deficiencies and to reduce excessiveness. In eating [such balanced food], the good person achieves a balanced heart mind.(…) Sounds are like flavors. Different elements complete each other: one breath, two styles, three types, four instruments, five sounds, six measures, seven notes, eight winds, and nine songs. Different sounds complement each other: the pure and the impure, the big and the small, the short and the long, the fast and the slow, the sorrowful and the joyful, the strong and the tender, the late and the quick, the high and the low, the in and the out, and the inclusive and the non-inclusive. The good person listens to this kind of music in order to balance his mind[7]." (Trans. by Legge, 1861, p.684)

Yan Ying presents us with the general features of harmony, and outlines the kind of experience it conveys.

First. From both food and music examples, we can infer a similar model: we have different elements that are not only connected, but they somehow complete each other producing something which is greater than the sum of its constituents. A soup is something more than the sum of its ingredients; and a piece of music is clearly something more than the sum of its parts (notes, tune, rhythm and so on). Moreover, the experience we can derive from it, is that of a coherent and balanced whole, an internal togetherness where all parts contribute to the formation of its totality[8].

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[7]　Alan Chan (2011, pp.37-62) argues that these two sources (music and food) have different implications. The employment of the term *he* in musical metaphors expresses a sense of hierarchy: the model is that of a ruling and leading tone which harmonize the other notes. While the food metaphor offers a pluralistic connotation of different elements that contribute equally to the whole. Besides, we will see below how these two metaphors seemed to be used without different implications in Confucian texts such as the *Zuo Commentary* (*Zuozhuan* 《左傳》) and the *Discourses of the States* (*Guoyu* 《國語》).

[8]　In archaic China, the word for music, yue 樂, was used in a broad sense: *yue* included different activities such as dance, singing lyrics poems, instrumental music; it was an integrated activity that involved different abilities. Following the logic of harmony we can say that *yue* was an integrated oneness of different performances. The *Record of Music* (*Yueji*《樂記》) shows: "Hence the bell, the drum, the flute, and the sounding-stone; the plume, the pipe, the shield,

Second. The other important aspect is that *he* does not just describe a result, but it primarily describes a process [9]. The cook goes through a process of harmonization of the ingredients to obtain a harmonic/flavorful soup. Moreover, in order to harmonize them, the cook brings together opposite elements such as water and fire[10]. Very similarly in music, different sounds respond to each other and cooperate[11].

Third. These experiences go beyond pure aesthetic pleasure, but are important means for self-cultivation. Harmonic experience seems to have the power to balance one's heart-mind. For instance, music not only can manifest harmony

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and the axe are the instruments of music." (故鐘鼓管磬，羽龠干戚，樂之器也。屈伸俯仰，綴兆舒疾，樂之文也). (Trans. by Legge, 1990, p.100).

Very similarly, in the *Xunzi* 《荀子》: "Hence, when we listen to the sounds of the Odes and Hymns, our aspirations and sense of purpose gain breadth from the experience. When we observe the way the shields and battle-axes *are brandished and* the repetitive episodes of the dancers gazing down and lifting their faces up, bending and straightening their bodies, our demeanor and bearing acquire dignity from it." (故聽其《雅》、《頌》之聲，而志意得廣焉；執其幹戚，習其俯仰屈伸，而容貌得莊焉). (Trans by Knoblock, 1994, p.81).

Moreover, the etymological root of *yue* is worth noting. The *Shouwen* affirms: *Yue* corresponds to the five sheng (tones/sounds) and the eight yin (timbres/voices) (五聲八音總名。象鼓鞞). *Yue* resembles a drum post. In the Oracle Bone Scripts it is probably represented as two strings on the top of a wooden sounding board. In the Bronze Scripts the character resembles a dancer. Another interpretation is that *yue* represents an ancient instrument predating the se 瑟 and the qin 琴. For some etymological interpretations of *yue* see DeWoskin (1983, p.58); and Li (2014, p.40).

[9] One should bear in mind that in archaic Chinese nouns and verbs are often interchangeable. It is common for a noun to indicate the function, and thus becomes a verb. Hence we can understand harmony as both the ideal state or the ideal result of some process, and also as the process itself, thus with the verb to harmonize. In this work we will interpret harmony in this broad meaning.

[10] Li Chenyang (2014, p.26) has pointed out that the word geng 羹 does not mean just any kind of soup. It is rather an sophisticated soup that includes meat or fish, and vegetables. Since it contains meat or fish, the flavor can be strong and needs to be balanced out. Hence, *geng* is an excellent analogy for harmonization.

[11] In several Chinese ancient classics there are many examples employing harmony in term of sounds cooperation. The *Discourses of the States* (*Guoyu*) states: "When sounds correspond and mutually *bao* one another it is called harmony" (聲應相保曰和). Here Li Chengyang (2006, p.584) explains that bao 保 has a large number of interrelated meanings such as: protect, nurture and rely on. In the *Zuo Commentary*: "The male and female phoenixes fly together and their sounds harmonize with vigor" (鳳凰于飛，和鳴鏘鏘).

due to its intrinsic harmonic structure, but it has even the power to harmonize people's heart-mind through sound[12].

Music has a direct influence on heart-mind because sounds arise from human feelings[13]. The author(s) of the *Record of Music* (*Yueji*《樂記》) remarks this idea:

故樂也者，動於內者也；禮也者，動於外者也。樂極和 禮極順，內和而外順, 則民瞻其顏色而弗與爭也 (*Yueji*) "Therefore the sphere in which music acts is the interior of man, and that of ceremonies is his exterior. The result of music is a

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[12] The Chinese character for music, *yue*, and the word *le*, also pronounced *luo,* are homographs. The meaning of *le* is close to our idea of joy, happiness; this suggests a close connection between music and emotions. Xunzi expressed this idea: "Music is joy. Being an essential part of man's emotional nature, the expression of joy is, by necessity, inescapable. This is way man cannot do without music. Where there is joy, it will issue forth in the sounds of the voice and be manifest in the movement of the body. And it is the Way of Man that singing and movement, which are excitations of man's emotional states according to the rules of inborn nature, are fully expressed in music." (夫樂者、樂也，人情之所必不免也。故人不能無樂，樂則必發於聲音，形於動靜；而人之道，聲音動靜，性術之變盡是矣). (Trans. by Knoblock, 1994, p.80).
In the Guodian 郭店 excavated text *Xingzi mingch*u《性自命出》, which is probably a text belonging to the Confucian tradition, the belief of a direct correlation between musicians inner feelings and listener response through music is reported: "It is generally the case that sounds, when they exit sincerely via the emotions, they enter and take profound hold of one's heart-mind. When you hear sounds of laughter, you will feel freshness. This is happiness. When you hear singing and chanting, you will feel jovial. This is excitement When you listen to the sounds of the lute and zither, you will feel stirred. This is distress." (凡声，其出于情也信，然后其入拨人之心也厚。闻笑声，则鲜如也斯喜。闻歌谣，则陶如也斯奋。听琴瑟之声，则悸如也斯叹.) (Trans. by Brindley, 2006, p.251)

[13] The idea of an intimate link between music and emotions is not exclusively a Chinese idea, and it is not merely an ancient belief. Today several scholarships on this topic are accomplished in the field of both aesthetical and analytical philosophy. There are mainly three explanations in Western philosophy linking music with emotions: the first is that music imitates or represents emotion; the second is that music arouses emotions; the third is that music expresses emotions. The idea that music represents emotions goes back to Plato and Aristotle. Music imitates a particular state of mind and thus arouses the same state in the listener. In the medieval period the "arousal theory" replaced the "imitational" one. Music was understood to have the ability to arouse emotions due to its imitative power. One of the earliest and most important exponent of this theory was Saint Augustine. The theory that music could express emotions emerged during the Enlightenment. The "expression theory" located the emotional meaning of music in the individuality of the musician, but this meaning is universally accessible. Each of these three theories has been recovered in the twentieth-century theory of music and emotion principally proposed by philosophers such as: Susanne Langer, Leonard Meyer and Peter Kivy. See in Higgins (2011, p.79).

perfect harmony, and that of ceremonies a perfect observance (of propriety). When one's inner man is (thus) harmonious, and his outer man thus docile, the people behold his countenance and do not strive with him." (Trans. by Legge,1990, p.225)

The Chinese Confucian philosopher Xunzi 荀子(312 B.C.-130 B.C.) also affirms that the power of music is of harmonizing people's heart-mind, that's why it was chosen by ancient kings as one of the most powerful political means.

聖王之所樂也，而可以善民心，其感人深，其移風易俗。故先王導之以禮樂而民和睦。(*Xunzi*) "Music was enjoyed by the sage kings; it can make the hearts of the people good; it deeply stirs men; and it alters their manners and changes their customs. Thus the Ancient Kings guided the people with ritual and music, and the people became harmonious and friendly." (Trans. by Knoblock, 1994, p.83)

The above example show how the model of harmony was extended to different kinds of human activity and experience. Moreover, Confucians associate the concept of harmony with rituals as the most important means for the cultivation of morality[14].

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[14] Besides Confucius, several ancient Classics show the association between music and rituals. The Chinese philosopher Li Zehou 李泽厚 (2010, p.19) affirms that this relationship can be understood on three different levels: the first level understands music and rites as basically the same things. In the second level of understanding we have an important division: music is an internal guide; music can communicate, coordinate and harmonize emotions. Rituals are outward manifestation and work through difference and distinction.
The *Record of Music* states: "Music embraces what all equally share; ceremony distinguishes the things in which men differ." (樂統同，禮辨異) (Trans. by Legge, 1990, p.114); and: "So it is, when one by his mastering of music regulates his mind and heart. When one has mastered completely (the principle of) ceremonies so as to regulate his person accordingly, he becomes grave and reverential." (致樂以治心者也。致禮以治躬則莊敬). (Ibid, p.224).
Music refers to the intimacy, the human inner soul, while the rites guide external actions. In the third level, music not only seeks the harmony between individuals and society, but throughout the entire cosmos, amongst heaven and earth. In Li Zehou's interpretation this happens because: "since music originated with the sacrifices, and also has an effect on human

禮之用，和為貴。先王之道斯為美，小大由之。有所不行，知和而和，不以禮節之，亦不可行也 (*Lunyu* 1.12) "In the practice of the rites harmony is regarded as the most valuable thing, and in the ways of the ancient kings this is regarded as the most beautiful thing. It is adopted in all matters, both small and great. But sometimes it does not work. If you behave harmoniously because you understand harmony, but do not regulate your conduct with ritual, surely that cannot be made to work." (Trans. by Dawson, 2008, p.4)

In the *Analects*, the idea of harmony also describes the ideal State:

蓋均無貧，和無寡，安無傾 (*Lunyu* 16.1) "For when there is even distribution there is no poverty, and when there is harmony there is no under population, and where there is contentment, there will be no upheavals." (Ibid, p.65)

Harmony was considered also a moral quality by the Confucian philosopher Mencius (Mengzi 孟子) (372 B.C-289 B.C.). For instance he indicates that the moral quality of Liu Xiahui 柳下惠 was that of harmonizing people: "Liu Xiahui was the sage able to harmonize" (柳下惠, 聖之和者也)[15].

Hence we can affirms that Confucians award a very broad meaning to the concept of harmony: it was firstly a political and individual moral goal; but it was even an ability that man could achieve, and an intrinsic quality of some human

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relationships, it follows that its goals would include this harmonious unity between heaven and humankind as well as that among humans themselves. See Ibidem.

[15] In the *Mencius* 5B it is stated: "Mencius added, Po Yi was the sage who was unsullied; Yi Yin was the sage who accepted responsibility; Liu Xiahui was the sage able to harmonize; Confucius was the sage whose actions were timely" (孟子曰：伯夷，聖之清者也；伊尹，聖之任者也；柳下惠，聖之和者也；孔子，聖之時者也). (Trans. by Lau 2004, pp.112-113 slightly modified).

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activities such as cooking, music and rituals. Moreover, in several texts dating back to the end of the fourth century B.C. and the beginning of the third century B.C., harmony begins to be often identified with the ideal feature of the cosmos.

The American scholar Erica Brindley (2006, p.16) dates this expansion of the concept of harmony around 325 B.C.:

"Harmony no longer referred primarily to that which individuals could achieve through music, ritual, their behavior, or good rule. It was no longer more exclusively used to describe a goal of human attainment; rather, it became more universally regarded as a fundamental characteristic, pattern, and even structure of the cosmos. This new articulation of harmony appears more prevalently in text that can be dated within a period starting from around 325 BCE."

Several texts, dated around the third century, express cosmic feature and functionality in term of harmony and harmonization such as:
The *Commentary on the Words of the Text* (*Wenyan*《文言》) of the *Yijing*[16] :

乾道變化，各正性命，保合大和，乃利貞。首出庶物，萬國咸 (*Book of Changes*)
"The Way of *qian* works through change and transformation so every thing follow its own rightful nature and destiny. It safeguards things in their grand harmony. It

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[16] The *Commentary on the Words of the Text* is one of the *Ten Wings* (shiyi 十翼) of the *Yijing*. The *Ten Wings* are seven pieces of commentarial material divided into ten documents: the *Commentary on the Decision* (*Tuanzhuan*《彖傳》) divided into first and second part; the *Commentary on the Images* (*Xiangzhuan*《象傳》) divided into great (daxiang 大象) and small (xiaoxiang 小象); *The Great Commentary* (*Xici*《繫辭》) divided into first and second part; The *Commentary on the Words of the Text* (*Wenyan*《文言》); the *Discussion of the Trigrams* (*Shuogua*《說卦》); the *Order of the Hexagrams* (Xugua《序卦》) and the *Miscellaneous Notes on the Hexagrams* (Zagua《雜卦》). The *Wenyan*, attributed directly to Confucius, offers additional explanation to the first two hexagrams, qian 乾 and kun 坤.

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is harmonious and upright[17]. It generates everything and brings peace to all nations." (Modified from Wilhelm/Baynes, 2003, p.371)

In the *Lüshi Chunqiu* 《呂氏春秋》[18]:

天地有始。天微以成，地塞以形。天地合和，生之大經也 (*Lüshi Chunqiu*) "Heaven and earth had a beginning. Heaven was subtle so as to complete, and earth blocked so as to give form. Heaven and earth combining and harmonizing is the great alignment (*jing*) of generation (*sheng*)." (Trans. by Puett, 2002, p.145)

In both the examples quoted above, *he* describes the feature and the functionality of the cosmos. Here *he* can be translated as a verb (to harmonize) or as noun (harmony). Heaven and earth (cosmos) are in a state of harmony and therefore everything is in the right position, and can develop and achieve its completion. In the *Wenyan,* the Supreme Harmony is the ideal state that ought to be preserved, in the *Lüshi, he* describes the dynamic action emerged from the cooperation between heaven and earth: the natural pattern. And, most importantly, this action is generative: harmony produces all things.

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[17] The Tang dynasty philosopher Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574-648) interprets the third characteristic of *qian*, li 利, in term of harmony: "The Book of Zixia states that *yuan* means beginning; *heng* means moving forward; *li* means harmony; *zhen* means upright" (《子夏传》说：元，始也；亨，通也；利，和也；贞，正也).In Li (2014, p.66). As Li Chenyang (ibidem, pp.76-77) has pointed out: "This interpretation of *li* is consistent with the *Shuowen*, where *Xu Shen* explains, 'when the knife is harmonious', it is *li*. *Li* literally means sharpness. Presumably, when the knife can move smoothly (harmoniously, that is, without becoming stuck halfway), it is sharp. Derivatively, *li* also means enabling things or people to move smoothly. It thus acquires a meaning in close connection to harmony."

[18] The *Lüshi Chunqiu* 《呂氏春秋》 is a comprehensive work written just before the establishment of China's first imperial dynasty by Lü Buwei 呂不韋 (290 B.C-236 B.C.) probably along with a group of scholars. The text is an eclectic philosophical work that contains several ideas and theories from a numbers of thinkers and schools of the past three centuries. About the purpose and the structure of the texts see Cook (2002).

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In the *Discourses of the States* (*Guoyu*), the scholar Shi Bo 史伯 (date unknown) of the Western Zhou period, remarks the idea of the generative power of harmony:

夫和實生物，同則不繼。以他平他謂之和，故能豐長而物歸之；若以同裨同，盡乃棄矣 (*Guoyu*) "Harmony is what bring fruition and life to things, while sameness leads to no progeny or continuance. To balance the different with the different is called harmony; this is why it can flourish and grow, and why things all return and converge around what has this harmony. But if you take the same and just add it on the same, this leads to extinction." (Trans. by Ziporyn, 2012 , p.66)

The *Huainanzi* also shows the generative capacity of harmony: "From the harmonious union of yin and yang, the myriads things were produced." (陰陽合和而萬物生) (Trans. by Liu, 2012, p.46) On the one hand, cosmic harmony is the ideal state where things can be generated and naturally develop; but on the other, harmony constitutes the generative process itself. To harmonize is to let things grow and complete their lives[19]. Therefore, around the third century harmony expresses the Way of the cosmos that has full correspondence to the ideal Way of man.

The Confucian text the *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong*《中庸》) shows this direct connection between human being and cosmos through the concept of harmony:

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[19] Chinese general tendency to see generation in term of change and growth it is shown by the character shi 始 (beginning). The character *shi* is constituted by the radical nü 女, woman, and tai 台, fetus. Kim Junyuep (2008, p.47) points out that: "In Chinese thought, as a baby is not created from nothing, but grows from a fetus, all creations are nascent in and emerge from a prior ongoing process… this process conveys the image of a new relation growing from a prior relation, that is, the relation between mother and daughter (or son) emerging from the relation between mother and fetus."

喜怒哀樂之未發，謂之中；發而皆中節，謂之和；中也者，天下之大本也；和也者，天下之達道也。致中和，天地位焉，萬物育焉。(*Zhongyong*) "The moment at which joy and anger, grief and pleasure have yet to arise is called a nascent equilibrium (*zhong*); once the emotions have arisen that they are all brought into proper focus (*zhong*) is called harmony (*he*). This notion of equilibrium and focus (*zhong*) is the great root of the world; harmony then is the advancing of the proper way in the world. When equilibrium and focus are sustained and harmony is fully realized, the heavens and earth maintain their proper places and all things flourish in the world." (Trans. by Ames, Hall, 2001, pp.89-90)

By the time of the *Zhongyong*, the idea of harmonic continuity between different realms was attested[20]. The *Zhongyong* pictures harmony in two different but interconnected levels: the individual human subjective world, and the cosmic objective world. In the first, harmony shows the harmonization of feelings; feelings that are in a state of total equilibrium before being stirred outward. On a pre-shaped state, feelings are in a condition of full-potentiality, without contrasts or conflicts. This state of balance is called zhong 中. Finally, forced by external stimulus, joy and anger, grief and pleasure emerge and conflicts arise. The sage is the one who is able to handle his inner emotional experience, without discarding his connection and implication with the world. Here harmony indicates

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[20] Several texts dated around the third century show the tendencies to see the whole reality as a web of interconnections where each part is somehow related to others. Western sinologists call this kind of thinking "correlative thinking". But as John Henderson (1984) has pointed out, "correlative thinking" is not a single and united system, homologies by which those systems were built were different in kinds: from the simple one to the complex one, from a simple human-cosmos relationship to complex number systems, and so on. One of the most important and most implied homologies was the human-cosmos relationship. Before the third century B.C. some Classics occasionally linked humans with natural objects. In the *Analects*, Confucius compare the ruler ideal act to the polar star (*Lunyu* 2.1); in the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing*《詩經》) a bride is compared to a blooming peach-tree (the peach-tree 桃夭). But these analogies seem to be far from being systematic, they probably represents simply poetical analogy. For an interesting survey on Han correlative cosmologies see Henderson (1984).

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the balanced completion of those potentialities, and the sage exploits them in order to create novel patterns.

The second part shows the implication of harmony in the natural world. Here *zhong* is the foundation of the world, in other words, the same state of full-potentiality showed before. *He* is equivalent to *Dao*: the natural pattern, or the structure of reality, *modus operandi* of the cosmos. From the *Zhongyong* we can grasp the twofold relationship between *zhong* and *he*: on the one hand, *zhong* is the foundation of *he* since it describes the potentiality of reality and thus of harmony. On the other, *zhong* expresses the ideal result of *he*, since it describes the proper result of the harmonizing process[21].

From the above examples we have some important accounts about the meaning and the structure of harmony: first. We can talk about harmony when we have a relationship between different elements (different sounds, different ingredients or different feelings). These relationships need to form a coherent and unified whole in the sense that we primarily perceive the whole (the relationship) over the differences. We taste primarily the soup as a whole, we listen to the whole song (the relationship between all notes) over each single note, and we feel in balance when no single feeling prevail over the others. Second. This unity is made by differences that have some degree of conflict or at least some degrees of tension. The examples show that the harmonizing process is principally made by opposites such as water and fire in the food example, fast and slow in the music

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[21] We can also understand zhong 中 as the necessary unity among differences. In this case, we can understand *zhong* and *he* as polar categories of *ti* and *yong*. (see below note 42). For instance, Li (2014, p.79) interprets *zhong* and *he* in the *Zhongyong* as the same notion, impossible to separate: "the cosmic order is actualized through centrality and harmony. Here, centrality and harmony are promoted together as one integrated ideal. They should not be treated as two separate notions, nor can they be defined as independent of each other. We may call this joint conception "centrality-harmony.""

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example, pleasure and sorrow, and even yin 陰 and yang 陽[22] just to quote some of them. The difference between a state of total equilibrium (*zhong*) and harmony (*he*) seems to stand in the tension between differences. Third. In the former there is no tension and thus the model structure is static, while the second model implies dynamicity. Harmony focuses primarily on the process of harmonization. Above we had a similar example in the process of making food, or in music spatial and temporal relationship. The *Zhongyong* expresses the association between harmony and process directly by referring *he* to Dao 道, the Way[23]; the *Huainanzi* by referring to yinyang's cooperation[24]. The fourth aspect implicit in the structure is creativity. By creativity I mean that to be harmonic the result of relationships needs to create/produce a unity which is qualitatively better than the simple sum of the parts. When ingredients are harmonized, they produce a tasty soup; when sounds are harmonized, they produce a great piece of music; and when feelings are balanced, the cultivation of the person will be fulfilled. This creative model was applied on the level of cosmos where harmony expressed the generative power of cosmic forces. Fifth. Harmony is a comprehensive idea. We have seen that Confucians had the tendency to extend the model of harmony from human

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[22] Yin and yang are two of the most well-known Chinese philosophical terms in the Western world. To this day there is no exhaustive translation for these terms and the pinyin transliteration is usually employed. Yin and yang are broad concepts that have a long history in Chinese philosophy since ancient times and became central during the Han period. About the meaning of the terms, as Robin Wang among others has pointed out, the idea that they express specific entities with specific essential characteristic such as masculine, hot, strength and so on for the yang; and feminine, cold, weak and so on for yin is not correct and it is now overcame. Yin and yang express a paradigm of relationship which is always contextually related. See Robin Wang (2012).

[23] The other term which is broadly known in the West is dao 道 which is usually translated as the Way. As it was for yin and yang, even *dao* has a long history in Chinese philosophy and represents a broad concept. Robin Wang (2012, pp.44-45) synthesize its original usage into two basic meanings: first it indicates the path upon which one walks; second, *dao* is associated with guidance, to follow a path with mindfulness. Later the concept of *dao* developed into a broader and more complicated term acquiring cosmological, metaphysical and even ethical connotations.

[24] The close relationship between *dao* and yin and yang is thus expressed in the *Great Commentary* (*Xici*) of the *Book of Changes*: "One yin and one yang are called dao" (一陰一陽之謂道).

activities to human feelings, up to the cosmos itself. We can say that Confucians believed in some kind of continuity underlying the world. Harmony is thus a comprehensive concept. Within these broad meanings, harmony represents the ideal state of cosmos that human beings ought to achieve, and at the same time, it describes the process through which one can reach this ideal state: once the cosmos has harmonized, all things will be nourished and will flourish; the balancing the heart-minds of human beings can harmonize oneself, others therefore the whole society[25].

We can synthesize the general structure of harmony within these five aspects: unity, differences, dynamicity, creativity and comprehensiveness. Below I will try to further explain these aspects.

1.2 The Paradigm of Harmony

The first two aspects listed above (unity and differences) seem to be the very constituents of the structure of harmony. But what kind of unity do we need in

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[25] Harmony will be understood here as the source, the process and the result of the process of reality which include human activities. Employing a Neo-Confucian couple of terms we can say that harmony is the inseparability of ti 體, usually translated with substance, and yong 用 translated into function. *Ti* represents the ultimate reality of harmony, the process of creative formation and transformation (using Cheng definition of benti 本體); *Yong* is the purpose of this process, the way entities respond (or should respond) to it. *Ti* and *yong* form both an inseparable unity and even interchangeable couple. Quoting Cheng Chung-ying (2002, p.154) example, in the *Commetary* on the *Book of Changes*, *Yizhuan*《易傳》, taiji 太極, yin and yang, the four seasons and the eight trigrams and so on are considered as *ti* (the substance) of different levels of reality. But at the same time each one will be considered the function of the previous level. Yin and yang are the functions of *taiji* but are also the *substance* of the four seasons, but the four seasons can be thought as the *substance* of the eight trigrams and so on. Here *taiji* represents the oneness, the way things change, the inseparability of *ti* and *yong*. Within the logic of correlative thinking the cosmic realm is strictly connected to the human one, they cannot be conceived separately and thus they influence each other. The unity between *ti* and *yong* is applied in the human world, for instance in the theory of knowledge and practice: to know the substance of a situation is to know how to respond (*yong*) in order to achieve the desired goal. The situation already includes the way to respond to it, but the way someone will act lies on his/her understanding and his/her free will.

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order to have a harmonic system? And why are differences necessary to create harmony?

When we talk about harmony we are often inclined to think about harmony in term of agreement. When we agree with something or someone, we are in harmony with it or him/her. In this state of total agreement or accord there is no space for tensions or conflicts, and we can easily say that the result will be a mere replication of the former idea, maybe stronger than before, but essentially the same. However, this does not seem the case we have showed above. We have seen that harmony implies some degree of difference[26].

In the *Analects* (*Lunyu*《論語》), Confucius (Kongzi 孔子) (551 B.C.- 479 B.C.) underlines the fundamental diversity between simple agreement (tong 同) and harmony (*he)*:

君子和而不同，小人同而不和 (*Lunyu* 13.23). "The moral person harmonizes and does not seek conformity; the small man seeks conformity and does not harmonize"[27].

Confucius is saying that the moral person does not simply receive and repeat the previous model, but creates something more, he/she gives his/her contribution to a new development.

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[26] Li Chengyang (2014, pp.7-8) outlines the difference between harmony achieved through total accord (sameness), and harmony achieved through differences. He called the second kind "deep harmony" such as an "harmony with difference and creative tension, and without a pre-set order." He describes "deep harmony" as a comprehensive process of harmonization, encompasses spatial as well as temporal and metaphysical as well as moral and aesthetic dimensions. This is in contrast with the first kind of harmony which is based on pure accord. To define this kind of harmony, Li employs Martha Nussbaum definition of "innocent harmony" or "consistent harmony". In Li's words, the concept of innocent harmony is traceable to Plato's forms and it has been used as paradigm of harmony in most of Western philosophical discourse.

[27] The translation of this passage from the *Analect*s is mine.

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In the *Discourses of the States* (*Guoyu*) Shi Bo unravels the differences between *he* and *tong*:

夫和實生物，同則不繼。以他平他謂之和，故能豐長而物歸之；若以同裨同，盡乃棄矣。故先王以土與金木水火雜，以成百物。是以和五味以調口，更四支以衛體，和六律以聰耳…聲一無聽，物一無文，味一無果，物一不講 (*Guoyu*) "Harmony is what bring fruition and life to things, while sameness leads to no progeny or continuance. To balance the different with the different is called harmony; this is why it can flourish and grow, and why things all return and converge around what has this harmony. But if you take the same and just add it on the same, this leads to extinction. Thus the former kings used soil to mix together minerals, plants, water, and fire so as to produce various types of things. Hence they blended the five flavors to provide fitness for the mouth, strengthened each of the four limbs to protect the body, harmonized the six tones to sharpen the ear's hearing…Sound that is monolithic is unlistenable; objects that are monolithic make no pattern; flavor that are monolithic bring no satisfaction; things that are monolithic bear no discussion." (Trans. by Ziporyn, 2012, p.66)

The *Discourses of the States* (*Guoyu*) shows that the main difference between harmony and sameness is the capacity of the former to create, to bring life and increase pleasure. On the contrary, sameness not only leads to extinction, it gives no pleasure at all. We can notice that the character used with the meaning of sameness is tong 同. *Tong* is usually translated with sameness or accord. Contemporary Chinese easily shows this particular meaning of *tong* in the expression "tongyi" (同意): to be in accord with. Confucians here are saying that harmony is not only something quite different than the sense of accord, but it is in fact opposite to this idea. *Tong* needs to be refuted.

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Is this correct? Are *he* and *tong* radical opposites? Can *tong* be totally rejected to achieve harmony?

Li Chenyang (2014, pp.11-12) has insightfully shown that the term *tong* has also a second meaning: along with the first meaning as opposite of difference, *tong* can also express togetherness and unity[28]. Following this interpretation, *tong* cannot be omitted in the paradigm of harmony; to the contrary it seems to represent a key element for harmony[29]: there is no possibility of harmony without some degree of identity, without some common features we cannot form a whole. We do need to share something or have something in common to form a whole. Harmony is thus directly connected with oneness; harmony is the integration of parts into a single whole. But on the other hand, Confucians are saying that things cannot be in a relation of total identity, which would lead to mere conformity therefore, to extinction. Conformity is not creative; it does not lead to something new. Total conformity leads to a replication of a single pattern[30]. Conformity does not imply any development and dynamicity, as Shi Bo has pointed out: "Take the same and just add it on the same, this leads to extinction." (若以同裨同，盡乃棄 矣) (see above). Hence, Confucians do not mean to totally refuse sameness, they want to show that harmony is something more than mere conformity, but they do not deny that harmony implies a level of sameness in the first place.

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[28] The *Shuowen* lexicon is in tune with this interpretation: "tong is to gather" (同:合會也.

[29] The excavated Guodian text *Wuxing* 《五行》 shows the direct and positive association between *tong* and *he*: "with harmony there is *tong*, with *tong* there is goodness" (和則同,同則 善).
For a more comprehensive survey on this second meaning of tong, see Li (2014, pp.10-11).

[30] The Chinese philosopher Mozi 墨子(470 B.C.-391 B.C.) understands harmony in term of conformity. The idea of Mozi is that through conformity one can achieve order in society. But Mozi's idea of *tong* is not that of mere and simple conformity. In the *Mohist Canon* (*Mojing*《 墨經》) there are four kinds of identity: the identity of names (zhongtong 重同); the identity of the body (titong 體同); the identity of space (to be part of the same group) (hetong 合同); the identity of the type (leitong 類同). Accounting these distinctions, we can easily grasp that to be *tong* is not to exclude differences at any level. We can form a harmonious body by forming an organic unity where differences are required.

As the American scholar Brook Ziporyn (2012, p.69) has pointed out: "When Confucian thinkers emphasize harmony, they do not mean to exclude any possible form of sameness, which would make now sense, but just the 'over-presence' of sameness[31]."

Therefore, on the one hand, a level of sameness is required to form a coherent and harmonic whole; on the other, there cannot be a relation of total sameness; we need differences in order to have dynamicity and creativity.

How can we integrate differences into unity and achieve creativity and dynamicity? Shi Bo is saying that harmony is to balance differences with other differences, this let things grow. Here, differences are the principle for dynamicity and creativity within harmony. But mere differences are not enough to be part of harmony, differences need to be related. They need to become part of the same system. When differences begin to interact (by being placed in the same whole), tensions and oppositions naturally arise, and without control, tensions can even become conflicts. But interactions can however produce common grounds where differences can cooperate. Sharing common goals, can transform tensions into mutual support and mutual promotion, a relationship where each part achieve its proper value and goal through interaction. Harmonization is thus conceived as the process that changes tensions and oppositions into cooperation and mutual support. Tensions and oppositions, through transformation, give new life and

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[31] Ziporyn (2012,p.67) explains that instead of thinking harmony as a subset of sameness, Chinese idea of harmony seems to imply a reversed relationship: "We tend to think of harmonizing as implicitly appealing to a second-order requirement for conformity…this would be a sameness governing the realm of harmonizing. My suggestion here is that the second order of sameness-oriented laws and rules is precisely what we do not seem to find in most Chinese conceptions of harmony. Rather, the relations are reversed: instead of harmony being a subset, a special case, of sameness (precise instantiation of a rule), apparent sameness are subset of the broader demand for harmony, a special case of harmony."

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dynamicity to the whole system. Opposed forces become productive forces rather than destructive[32].

Is this the case in the above examples?

Taking the food example, we can taste opposite flavours such as acid and sweet, and perceive the contrast between them. But when we blend the ingredients to serve a common goal (a soup), we can harmonize them to achieve something new. The contrast between elements can create a new development (if they are rightly harmonized). However harmonization does not necessarily imply an exact balance between them (there is not such a thing as objective harmony), it is not a matter of quantity, instead is primarily a matter of quality: for instance a specific soup recipe could require more acid or sweet flavours. Here the context[33] and

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[32] When conflicts arise the possible choices are to get rid of them or employ them to evolve the system. We can again employ the music example to explain this difference. Think about a song that imply dissonances within is melodic structure. Dissonances do not naturally please the ear and thus one needs to solve the problem. The first obvious solution will be to get rid of all dissonances and thus create a simple and quite boring music, where the structure is highly predictable since all tensions have been deleted. The second solution will be to employ dissonances and harmonize them (by letting them be functional) within the song's structure. This will give a new prospective and energy, and nonetheless creative tension. The former solution (getting rid of dissonances) will be categorized on the level of total sameness and will not lead to any further development of the system, while the second solution seems to be coherent with the above understanding of harmony that can be highly generative.

I am not suggesting that Confucians never consider suppression a possible solution, but that this is not part of the paradigm of harmony. For instance, Confucius never supported the execution of criminals as a means of harmonious society. (see *Lunyu* 2.3). However there are cases where some level of destruction is unavoidable in order to achieve a larger harmony. Li Chengyang (2014, p.13) provides an insightful example: "Wolves eat sheep. Their relationship is not only one of difference or tension, but conflict. Even this kind of conflict is not completely disconnected with harmony, however. Whereas a large population of sheep tends to increase the population of wolves, the population of wolves will fall when they overeat the sheep, causing a shortage in food supply. Eventually, the wolves and the sheep have to strike a balance through some kind of natural "negotiation." When harmony is achieved, the sheep provide food for the wolves, while the wolves weed out the unhealthy individuals and keep the sheep population in check… While harmony is achieved and maintained on the population level, destruction on the individual level is inevitable. Wolves have to eat sheep in order to survive, and sometimes they starve when food is not available."

[33] Here context has a broad meaning: it can be though as the soup we have in mind on that precise moment; or what is required in that precise occasion and so forth.

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the whole interact fully with the parts, the whole is not just the result of their interaction, but it is rather an active aspect of the process itself.

Professor Cheng Chung-ying (2009,p.27) insightfully recognizes that the deepest level of harmony is the results from a full interpenetration of each part and the whole. This kind of full harmony can be called creative and dynamic.

"When the interdependence becomes interpenetration in the sense that the parts of a whole are interfused and the whole becomes also actively participating in the parts as the parts in the whole, the relation of harmony will become productive and creative in the sense that a new order of differentiation resulting unity takes place, without, at the same time, losing the ground of the unity governing the parts of the original whole…This state of harmony is creative because it is dynamic: It always involves change and transformation in a process of time as illustrated in the production of life."

This kind of unity made by the interpenetration between parts and whole is called by Robin Wang (2012, p.84) "holographic unity", in the sense that "hologram is a multidimensional entity where even the smallest part of entity contains, in condensed form, all of the information necessary for a detailed and complete expression"[34].

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[34] The term "hologram" or "holographic unity" is employed also by Cheng Chung-ying (2009). Cheng Chung-ying has insightfully synthesized three main ways to form one within a totality: "Unity can be thought a prevailing thread linking all parts, a kind of unity that can be found in hierarchical structure. Unity could be an interrelatedness among all parts, as a single organic system. And Unity could be as a kind of holographic unity. A state of interpenetration among parts and whole, in which wholeness of parts and partiality of whole are equally present." (Ibid, p.23).
Ames and Hall (1987, pp.16-17) outlines Chinese (primarily Confucian) distinctive world's view within this last interpretation. They define this kind of unity as aesthetic: "Aesthetic order is achieved by the creation of novel patterns. Logical order involves the act of closure; aesthetic order is grounded in disclosure. Logical order may be realized by the imposition or instantiation of principles derived from the Mind of God, or the transcendent laws of nature, or the positive laws of a given society, or from a categorical imperative resident in one's conscience. Aesthetic

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Unity is not conceived as something independent from its parts, it is not the mere product that can be cut off from the generative process. Unity is an ongoing process that expresses the relationship between parts within a specific evolving context. Each part contains and is contained by the whole. If we lose a part we can lose the whole as well. Again we can further explain this with the example of music. A piece of music is a totality of different parts; each part is related to other parts and to the whole. Each part acquires its proper value from this relationship (the single note does not have value itself outside of its relationships); the relationship between parts must be of mutual support in order to create a totality. If we just simply change one aspect of this relationship, the whole will suddenly change.[35]

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order is a consequence of the contribution to a given context of a particular aspect, element, or event which both determines and is determined by the context (…) In the Western philosophic tradition, informed by the Judaeo-Christian notion of *creatio ex nihilo*, creativity is often understood as the imitation of a transcendent creative act. In Confucian terms, creative actions exist *ab initio* within the world of natural events and are to be assessed in terms of their contributions to the order of specific social circumstances."

[35] The American scholar Philip Ivanhoe (1998, pp.63-65) outlines four different degrees to be and feel "one". The first and weakest sense of oneness is to be part of the same group. For example I am member of the University of Michigan's faculty and in this sense I am "one" with the university. "In the same way, human beings might be thought of as one with nature, and yet nature existed before they evolved into the present form and will likely exist long after they are extinct." (ibid. p.63) The second way is slightly stronger, is when a thing is part of a given ecosystem: "crocodile is part of the ecosystem of the Nile River. This sense of oneness is stronger than the first in that the crocodile interacts and affects the rest of the system in extremely complex ways, both directly and indirectly."(Ibidem) The third is called organismic ecological view. For example, one might argue that we and the earth's biota constitute a single organism in the same way that my arm is "one" with the rest of my body. If you cut off my arm, you radically and directly affect the rest of my body. The fourth sense of oneness: "These involve the claim that we both are part of nature and at the same time share significant constituents with the biota…hypothesis speak not only as if they were part of a planetary-wide system (a large-scale ecological view), and not only as if this system were a single body (the "one-body" view), but as if they and the rest of the planet were in some deep sense co-extensive, as if they were inseparably intertwined and able fluidly to pass into one another ." (Ibid. p.64) The fifth and strongest sense of being one is by being identical: not only are we and the rest of the world inseparably intertwined, not only do we share significant constituents, we have the same fundamental nature."(Ibidem) Ivanhoe further identifies this last sense of oneness belonging with Hua Yan and Neo-Confucian understanding of oneness.

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The contemporary Chinese philosopher Qian Mu 錢穆 (1895-1990) suggests an insightful analogy that depicts the Confucians idea of harmonious interpenetration between parts and whole. Qian Mu (2000, pp.36-37) affirms that this view of reality resembles a pendulum:

凡属圆周的，或是摆幅的，必有一个所谓中。这一个中，不在两边，不在四外，而在内里。一个摆动，或一个圆周的进行，并没有停止在那中之上，但那中则老是存在，而且老是停停当当地是个中。好像那个中在主宰着那个动。那个无终无始不息不已的动，好像永远在那中的控制下，全部受此中之支配。所以说至动即是至静，至变即是至常…于是我们称此变异中之恒常，在此不息不已的变动中之中，这一个较可把握较易认识的性向而谓之曰善。善只是这个动势中一种恒常的倾向。既是一个恒常的倾向…离他远远的便认为只是恶。善是此一动之中，恶只是过之与不及。…人事界虽亦千变万化，不居故常，但亦有个恒态，有个中。若要脱离此恒态与中而直向前，到底不可能。举一例言之，和平与斗争，是人事中更互迭起的两形态。常常循环往复，从和平转入斗争，又从斗争回归和平。这里面便有一个中势与恒态。斗争须能觅取和平，和平须能抵挡斗争（即不怕斗争）。所以接近斗争的和平，与接近和平的斗争，都是可继续的，都可称为善。若远离了和平的斗争，和远离了斗争的和平，则距中势皆远，皆将不可成为一种恒态而取得其继续性。如是则过犹不及，皆得称为恶，恶只是不可常的. "Wherever there is a circle or a pendulum range, there will be what can be called a center. This center is not on the two sides, nor anywhere outside, but rather lies within [the range of the swing of the pendulum]. A pendulum swing or a cyclic process never actually comes to rest at that center, but the center is always there , and is always still and solid as a center. It is as if the center were controlling the motion. The ceaseless and infinite motion seems eternally to be under the command of the center, completely controlled by the center, and thus we can say that it is perfectly moving and perfectly still, perfectly changing and perfectly constant…

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"The Good" is what we call the constancy in this eternal change, the center in this unceasing motion, this relatively easily grasped and known nature. Good is just the constant tendency of this motion. Since it is the constant tendency, it emerges in the constantly movement of changes, going on constantly, that no movement can be go too far from it. No matter what change, no matter what move, in the end ought to go back to it and be close to it… Whatever is separated from it by a great distance is called bad. Good is just the center of this motion, evil is nothing but going beyond it or not coming up to it… Although human affairs also go through endless transformations and never stay the same, there is a constancy or a center to them. If you try to separate yourself from this constancy or center and just move straight forward, you will find that it is impossible. For example, peace and struggle are phenomena that arise alternately in human life; they usually form a cycle, a back and forth, moving from peace to struggle and then from struggle back to peace. Within this process too there is a center or a constancy. Struggle must search for peace, and peace must resist struggle (that is, must not to be afraid of struggle). So peace which is close to struggle and struggle that is close to peace are both capable of continuing, and both can be called good. But struggle that is far removed from peace and peace that is far removed from struggle are both far removed from the center, and so neither can form a constancy or attain any continuity. Going too far and not coming up to it are equally bad, and both of these can be called evil. Evil is just whatever cannot be constant." (Trans. by Ziporyn ,2012, pp.77-78)

Qian Mu's analogy gives us insightful ideas:

First. He depicts reality as an ongoing process made by the interaction between contrasting forces. Interaction here must be understood also as mutual interpenetrations between the center and the parts (parts and whole). In this system both unity and differences are necessary: on the one hand, unity is the

continuity of the "swinging" back and forth movement. There is unity not by sharing certain characteristics, but by the non-exclusion of the other, by their complementarity. On the other hand, differences are necessary and ontologically required since with total sameness there can be neither the swinging nor the center. The center is defined by the two extremes. Recalling Robin Wang's (2012) idea, we can say that this system expresses the idea of holographic unity: each element is linked to others through a mutual inclusion on different levels[36]. Each notion, event and/or action is relational dependent. Its value and its direction depend on a larger context in/by which emerges (or acquire value)[37]. Unity is what connect each different levels and the all whole, and becomes the single and unique intelligibility of the entire system[38].

What Qian Mu seems here to depict is a triadic structure of reality, a process in which both unity (the center) and the parts (polarities) are in constant and mutual interconnection. This idea of a triadic harmonious relationship of reality is widely discussed in the *Book of Changes* and particularly in the *Ten Wings* section. For instance, in the *Great Commentary* of the *Book of Changes*: "The movements of

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[36] Brook Ziporyn (2012, p.82) defines this system of interactions "nested identities". He further clarifies this definition employing the atomic structure: "the cloud of vibrating electrons is knowable only as a unit, which is located at and as the nucleus. But if we focus on trying to identify any further component, say an electron, on this model we will find another swarm of vibrations grouped around a virtual center, as which this swarm is identified. Expanding outward, we will find that the entire "atom" is an electron—in this case, one of two extremes of a pendulum swing—in a larger "atom". Each element is a vortex. Its center is the vertex by which it is grasped and known." Here sameness will always be on the level of single reference the vertex, each component acquire value (thus knowable unity) only through the relationships with others and thus with the center. Differences cannot but be referential to the center as the two extremes and keep the eternal motion of the system. One of the two extreme will always be the center of two other extremes and so on.

[37] Qian Mu (2000, p.38) affirms: "to rest so much you can no longer work is evil and not good, and to work so much you can no longer rest is equally evil and not good." (休息过分不能工作，是恶不是善，工作过分不能休息，同样是恶不是善). Therefore both rest and work acquire their values only through the balance within their relationship; outside this relationship no absolute value can be thought as good.

[38] We can understand a piece of music only by its whole rather than by each single note.

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the six lines contains the ways of the three primal powers" (六爻之動，三極之道也). (Trans. by Wilhelm, Baynes, 2003, p.289)

Very similarly in the *Discussion of the Trigrams*:

是以立天之道曰陰與陽，立地之道曰柔與剛，立人之道曰仁與義

"The yin and yang are the foundations of the Way of heaven, the soft and hard [of the hexagram lines] are the foundation of the Way of earth, and the humaneness and appropriateness [among human beings] are the foundation of the Way of humankind. (Ibid, p.264 slightly modified.)

Second. The pendulum analogy suggests another important aspect about the process of harmonization: harmonization is a process of integration where differences must be blended into a unity. Qian Mu calls this process of integration "the Good". Things that cannot be integrated are evil since they will lead to radical and unsolvable conflict. The Good will be the integration of differences into a coherent whole by giving them a contextual reference. Within this common ground, differences can become polar forces and cooperate for a common goal. Again the *Great Commentary* of the *Book of Changes* clearly expresses this idea: "one yin and one yang are called *Dao*, the continuity of their interaction is goodness" (一陰一陽之謂道，繼之者善也)[39]

Cheng Chung-ying (2009, p.30) insightfully affirms that the integration of opposites into a unity is the essential requirement for the full development of harmony:

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[39]   Translation is mine

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"The reason why unity of opposites is essential for harmony is that differences must be integrated into a system of mutual support and mutual complementation. But there is no better integration in this sense than integration of opposites into a unity, where differences become opposites and complement each other.[40]"

Conclusions

In this essay I have tried to outline the general paradigm of the Confucian idea of harmony.

First I showed how the term *he* was employed by several pre-Confucian and Confucian thinkers to explain and describe different human activities and experiences. Later, around the third century, *he* was extend to depict cosmic feature and functionality.

In the second part of this essay, I have tried to outline a general feature of this paradigm viewing harmony in terms of a triadic process of polar interrelation. This process seems to include five aspects: differences, unity, dynamicity, creativity and comprehensiveness. Besides the first two that are implicit in the definition, the other three require some clarification.

First. Unity of opposites system implies dynamicity since it requires constant integration of contrasting forces, and alternation as its natural development. Integration implies transformation and growth: unity will be always something more than the sum of its parts[41]. Dynamicity is clearly showed in all examples

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[40] Cheng (2009, pp.33-34) further recognizes two principles within unity of opposites: the first is the creative principle, which consists of the integration of opposites into a unity. The second is the creative process, which is the process of differentiation of unity dividing in opposites, and further forming other type of unities.

[41] Robin Wang (2012, p.52) pinpoints two kinds of transformation in the natural process: "one kind of change or transformation is growth, which is a movement toward increasing complexity. Things grow up from seeds, and sexual intercourse generates offspring who grow into adults… The other kind of change is a cyclical alternation. Summer follow spring, and fall follows from summer in an endless cycle. These two kinds of change are closely related – the progression

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above. In the Qian Mu's (2000) model of dynamicity is the very essence of the interaction between opposites and the center.

Second. Unity of opposites implies creativity in the sense that the process of integration will always produce something new. Since the process is also dynamic and contextually dependent, it will always involve new oppositions and thus create novel unities[42].

Third. Comprehensiveness. Within the holographic view of reality, harmony is comprehensive since it represents the paradigm, the lens through which we can grasp the coherence of reality. This model of harmony is thus extended to every realms: from human activities to cosmic feature and functionality.

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of the seasons is a pattern of growth (and death) for living things, and the reproduction of things creates recurring cycles that form generations."

[42] In this understanding, unity does not only express the potentiality of the process of changes and transformations, but also the new result of each temporal process.

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