

WITTGENSTEIN, DEWEY AND CONFUCIANISM ON AESTHETIC ETHICS OR ETHICAL AESTHETICS

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Abstract: As a practitioner of “Constructive-Engagement Methodological Strategy” in comparative philosophy, I will place the Anglo-American analytic tradition, Pragmatism and Chinese Confucianism within the same philosophical framework so as to work out the distinct styles underlying their “common concerns”. My hope is that this undertaking can lead to a constructive exchange between these influential philosophical traditions: between Wittgenstein’s “Ethics and Aesthetics are One” and Confucianism’s “Perfectly Good and Perfectly Beautiful”, between Dewey’s aesthetics on the emotional in “an experience” and the Confucian’s the unity of daily rituals and ordinary emotions constitutes. Based on the discussion above, it can be argued that Wittgenstein, Dewey and Chinese early Confucianism all move towards a living aesthetic ethics or ethical aesthetics, or in other words, all of them are in essence an ethical-aesthetic art of living, which is quite close to my proposal of “Living Aesthetics”. It is exactly in the framework of living aesthetics that we try to work on a sort of aesthetic ethics or ethical aesthetics that returns us to the life-world.

IT HAS BEEN noted that comparative study of Chinese and Western philosophy has gone beyond traditional parallelism towards a Constructive-Engagement Methodological Strategy (Mou, 2001, 337-364) . The fundamental agenda of this new movement is “to inquire into how, via reflective criticism and self-criticism, distinct modes of thinking, methodological approaches, visions, insights, substantial points of view, or conceptual and explanatory resources from different philosophical traditions and/or from various styles/orientations of doing philosophy (including those from the complex array of distinct styles/orientations of doing philosophy within the same tradition), can learn from each other and jointly contribute to the common philosophical enterprise and/or a series of common concerns and issues of philosophical significance. In this way, the issues and concerns under its reflective examination are eventually general and cross-tradition ones instead of idiosyncratically holding for Chinese philosophy alone” (Mou, 2008). As a practitioner of this approach, I will place the Anglo-American analytic tradition, Pragmaticism and Chinese Confucianism within the same philosophical frame so as to work out the distinct styles underlying their “common concerns”. My hope is that this undertaking can lead to a constructive exchange between these influential philosophical traditions.

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I. Wittgenstein and Confucianism

It is commonly known that Wittgenstein noticed the identity of ethics and aesthetics in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (Wittgenstein, 1955, 183). But as early as July 24th, 1916, he already had a famous statement in his notebook: “Ethics and aesthetics are one” (Wittgenstein, 1961, 77). With very few exceptions, in dealing with the relationship between ethics and aesthetics, western scholars resort to Wittgenstein’s writings, in particular, his later works on action and intention. However, a reconsideration of Wittgenstein from a comparative philosophical approach may lead to new discoveries.

I.1 “Ethics and Aesthetics are One” and “Perfectly Good and Perfectly Beautiful”

In *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (§4.003), Wittgenstein touched on beauty and goodness. He wrote, “Most propositions and questions that have been written about philosophical matters are not false but senseless. We cannot, therefore, answer questions of this kind at all, but only state their senselessness. Most questions and propositions of philosophers result from the fact that we do not understand the logic of our language. (They are of the same kind as the question whether the Good is more or less identical than the Beautiful)” (Wittgenstein, 1955, 63). This paragraph reveals the theme of the book: instead of being a totality of things, the “world” is made up of “*Sachverhalt*” (i.e. “atomic fact”, or “state of affairs”, which seems to be a more popular rendering). For Wittgenstein, a proposition is nothing other than a picture of atomic facts, which is essentially “a model of reality”(Ibid., 39). In this sense, language is the “pictures of facts” that we make to ourselves. Thus, the task of philosophy is to conduct a logical analysis of propositions. As propositions correspond to facts, all that is beyond the limits of language is senseless.

In the ending part of *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (§6.421), Wittgenstein made another famous statement concerning ethics and aesthetics: “It is clear that ethics cannot be expressed. Ethics is transcendental. (Ethics and aesthetics are one)” (Ibid., 183).¹ Since aesthetics and ethics are one (and the same), it certainly follows that aesthetics is also transcendental. The idea that ethics is transcendental can be traced back to as early as July 30, 1916, when Wittgenstein, in his notebook, put down the sentence: “Die Ethik ist transcendent” (Wittgenstein, 1961, 79). It is noteworthy that Wittgenstein was discussing a “happy life” at that time (Ibid., 78). He pointed out that the mark of a happy life can be described, but it cannot possibly be given a physical mark, but only a metaphysical one or a transcendental one (Ibid., 78). Obviously, how so aesthetics was originally related to ethics in the context of “life”.

On July 24, 1916, Wittgenstein explained in his notebook why ethics is transcendental. The reason he gave is that “Ethics does not treat of the world. Ethics must be the condition of this world, like logic” (Ibid., 77). But in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (§ 6. 41), Wittgenstein simply mentioned “that life is the

¹A more recent translation of this sentence is: “It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is transcendental. (Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same.)” This translation seems more appropriate in that it puts the stress on “words”. (Wittgenstein 1961, 86)

world” without further development (Wittgenstein, 1961, 73; 1955, 183). Here, what is crucial is his conclusion: “Hence also there can be no ethical propositions. Propositions cannot express anything higher” (Wittgenstein, 1955, 183). Wittgenstein first asserted that “all propositions are of equal value.” He continued, “The sense of the world must lie outside the world. In the world everything is as it is and happens as it does happen. In it there is no value -- and if there were, it would be of no value. If there is a value which is of value, it must lie outside all happening and being-so. For all happening and being-so is accidental. What makes it non-accidental cannot lie in the world, for otherwise this would again be accidental. It must lie outside the world” (Ibid., 183).

Wittgenstein distinguished between the “speakable” world and the “unspeakable” world. The former is the world of facts related to language, propositions and logic, and is what philosophers aim to analyze, while the latter is the mysterious world of which we must be silent, to which aesthetics and ethics belong. For Wittgenstein, thought does not go beyond language, so the distinction between what can be thought and what cannot be thought is simply the distinction between what is speakable and what unspeakable. To speak of the world is to reveal the world in words; whereas, the world depends upon words being meaningful. Therefore, it follows that ethics and aesthetics are “transcendental” in that they go beyond the limits of the world.

Likewise, primal Confucianism also distinguished between the “speakable” and the “unspeakable”, as is illustrated by what Confucius said, “If you understand it, say you understand it. If you do not understand it, say you do not understand it. This is wisdom” (*The Analects*, 2. 17). On the one hand, Confucius was indeed “silent” about something. For he “would not discourse on mystery, force, rebellion, and deity” (*The Analects*, 7. 20). In explaining why, Zhu Xi, a celebrated Neo-Confucian scholar, stated it was because “the Master discoursed on the constant rather than the mysterious, virtue rather than force, good government rather than rebellion, the affairs of man rather than those of the unknown.” (*Si Shu Jijie* [Collected Commentaries on the Four Books]) Evidences for such explanation can be found in a dialogue between Confucius and one of his pupils, Zi-gong:

The Master said: “I wish to speak no more.”

Zi-gong said: “Sir, if you do not speak, what shall we, your pupils, abide by?”

The master said: “What does Heaven say? Yet the four seasons revolve and a hundred things grow. What does Heaven say?” (*The Analects*, 7. 19)

So, it seems safe to say that Confucius was far more concerned with constancy, virtue, good government and human affairs. Yet this does not mean that Confucius denied the existence of the mysterious, force, rebellion and the divine. Instead, he said, “When offering sacrifices to the gods, he felt as if the gods were present” (*The Analects*, 3. 12). And, when Confucius asked what Heaven says, he was just suggesting that the Way of Heaven is unspeakable, and that it is all that one can do to feel awe in silence. So Confucius was silent. However, although Confucius himself was silent about transcendental things, he seemed to believe that “if one finds a way for what one wants to say, then the unspoken meaning is established (Wang Fu-zhi,

the “Inner Chapter” of *Thoughts and Questions of Chuan Shan*). That is to say, one can grasp the unspeakable by finding a way to say what one wants to say.

In contrast to Confucius, when discussing the “unspeakable”, Wittgenstein had in mind the basic relationship between language and world. We still remember that he said: “The limits of my language mean the limits of my world” (Wittgenstein, 1961, 88; 1955, 149). Of course, Wittgenstein did not deny the existence of “another world”. This may be due to the influences he came under. As someone said, “one must mention the following as having played their varying roles in stimulating Wittgenstein’s mind: the writing of Schopenhauer; and as mediated through the latter, the essential ‘message’ of Kant’s philosophy as well as that of Buddhism; the novels of Dostoyevsky; Tolstoy’s writing and preachment in behalf of the Gospels; some of the writing of Søren Kierkegaard, the Danish theologian and a founder of modern existentialism; and William James’s *Varieties of Religious Experience*” (Munitz, 1981, 191). However, Confucius’ vision of the world was obviously different, for it was “one that had to be felt, experienced, practiced and lived. He was interested in how to make one’s way in life, not in discovering the ‘truth’” (Ames and Rosemont, 1988, 5). This accounts for Confucius’ suspension of the judgment of the “mystery and force.”

In the post-Kantian tradition, the distinction between morality and aesthetics still works. While morality is believed to involve practical purposes and activities, aesthetics is purposeless and purely disinterested. In this way, ethics and aesthetics are completely separated. It is clear that Wittgenstein’s view of ethics and aesthetics as one and the same has broken away from the post-Kantian tradition, and thus, is enlightening. At least on the surface, it is similar to Confucian doctrine’s view that beauty and goodness are identical, notwithstanding Wittgenstein has his footing in the mysterious, unspeakable world, while Confucius in the everyday world.

For Confucius, although beauty and goodness are distinct, they need to be united to restore the lost tradition of “rituals and music assisting each other”. So he advocated that which is at the same time “perfectly good and perfectly beautiful”. In the *Analects*, Confucius said of *Shao*, a piece of dance music in praise of the ancient sage king *Shun*, as “perfectly beautiful! And perfectly good!”, and said of *Wu*, a piece of dance music in praise of King *Wu* of *Zhou*, as “perfectly beautiful! But not perfectly good!” (*The Analects*, 3. 25) Based on his doctrine of *Ren* (humanity), Confucius considered *Shao* to be perfectly beautiful and perfectly good because it represented the ancient Chinese sage king *Yao* yielding his throne to *Shun* voluntarily due to his greater worth and sagacity. In contrast, the dance music of *Wu* is perfectly beautiful but not perfectly good because King *Wu* obtained his throne through warfare. Obviously, there is a moral concern here. It is such a moral awareness that enabled the earliest Confucianism to demarcate beauty and goodness, far more clearly than any predecessors did. For Confucius, he was living in an age that witnessed the “collapse of rituals and corruption of music.” In other words, the tradition of “rituals and music assisting each other”, first found by Duke of *Zhou*, had degenerated. Music was no longer limited by moral codes and was reduced to a sort of sumptuous, purely aesthetic form for princes. Likewise, rituals became empty ideas that failed to enlighten. In response to such a historical dilemma, Confucius wanted to return to the

abandoned tradition where rituals and music were harmoniously united. On this basis, Confucius further put forth the idea of uniting goodness and beauty. Therefore, it is justifiable to say that, what is fundamental to the unity of beauty and goodness is the very idea that rituals distinguish that which is different, and music unites that which is the same.

I.2 “The Beautiful is what Makes us Happy” in Contrast with “Ramble Among the Arts” and “Perfect Yourself with Music”

Although Wittgenstein had been obsessed with the “fixed structure” of the world, whether in his *Notebooks 1914-1916* or in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, he did not cease to look for the dynamic relations between ethics and aesthetics. For example, he said, “Art is a kind of expression. Good art is complete expression” (Wittgenstein, 1961, 83). And, “the work of art is object seen *sub specie aeternitatis*; and the good life is the world seen *sub specie aeternitatis*. This is the connexion between art and ethics.” (Ibid., 83) Nevertheless, who is the agent that mediates between beauty and goodness, and art and morality? Wittgenstein’s answer seems to be based on his wisdom of life, for he claimed that beauty is closely related to man’s happiness. He said, “there is certainly something in the conception that the end of art is beautiful. And the beautiful is what us makes happy” (Ibid., 86).

In contrast, what is fundamental to Confucianism is the aspiration to “contain beauty in the good”, and ultimately to perfect the good in beauty. This is a state of happiness. From Mencius’ treatment of “humanity and righteousness as beautiful” to “Confucius and Yan Yuan’s pleasant place” in Song and Ming Neo-Confucianism, they were in essence pursuing an ideal life that integrates rituals and music, beauty and goodness. That is to say, Confucian moral self-cultivation inevitably contains aesthetic elements. However, for this Confucius had a rather different recommendation. He said, “Inspire yourself with poetry; establish yourself on rituals; perfect yourself with music” (*The Analects*, 8.8). This implies that, on the one hand, the inspiration of poetry prepares one for rituals, and on the other, it is only through music that both rituals and humanity can be perfected. As Xu Fuguan said, Confucius meant by this to stress the importance of both rituals and music, especially the role of music in the formation of a wholesome personality (Xu, 1987, 4). If such a reading is correct, then Confucius had in mind the highest value of arts to man.

Confucius also said, “Aspire after the Way; adhere to virtue; rely on humanity; ramble among the arts” (*The Analects*, 7.6). It is clear that, for Confucius, only the arts, to which poetry and music belong, can offer autonomous aesthetic activities that fully realize his aesthetic ideal. Here, beauty is not only contained in the good, but also permeates the acts and movements of a free defined personality. As Confucianism attaches the greatest importance to the “perfection of man”, morality naturally constitutes the basis of aesthetic engagement, which, however, amounts to the highest stage of morality. Perhaps, this is exactly what is meant by “rambling among the arts” and “perfecting yourself with music”.

Some scholars believe that Wittgenstein mainly drew on ancient Greek philosophy in his treatment of ethics and aesthetics (Dickinson, 1909). But this is not the case. As a matter of fact, Wittgenstein was more influenced by G. E. Moore.

Although in *Principia Ethica* Moore regarded the term “goodness” as indefinable, he still thought of beauty and goodness as the most valuable things in life. Wittgenstein followed Moore in understanding beauty and ethics in terms of the meaning of life.

Sometimes, Wittgenstein was also confused by questions like this: “Is it the essence of the artistic way of looking at things, that it looks at the world with a happy eye?” (Wittgenstein, 1961, 86) When dwelling on this question, Wittgenstein displayed a tendency to identify beauty with goodness. He first asserted that “aesthetically, the miracle is that the world exists. That what exists does exist” (Ibid. 86). Then he added, “Life is grave, life is gay” (Ibid., 86). While the former statement shows that Wittgenstein described in a phenomenological sense—though within the limits of language—the function of arts in revealing the world, the latter arises from his understanding of life: art is different from life, and it can make us happy by being satisfying.

I.3 “Live Happily” and “Enjoy Beauty and Goodness Together”

For Wittgenstein, it is only in the sense of happiness that ethics and aesthetics are one and the same. Yet we still remember that for Kant “beauty is the symbol of morality”(Kant, 1987, 228). It is clear that Kant relates beauty and goodness to something transcendental. In contrast, Wittgenstein brings them back to life in this world. That is to say, it is happiness that mediates between beauty and goodness, and ethics and aesthetics. What is “happiness”? Wittgenstein explained, “And in this sense Dostoevsky is right when he says that the man who is happy is fulfilling the purpose of existence” (Wittgenstein, 1961, 73). In other words, “in order to live happily I must be in agreement with the world. And that was what ‘being happy’ means” (Ibid., 75). Here, the crucial words are “life” and “world”. Wittgenstein had only a few words regarding life and world: “The world and life are one” (Ibid., 73). It is clear that, on the one hand, Wittgenstein wants to stress the importance of realizing the purpose of life, but on the other, he also wants to stress the agreement between the realization of the purpose of life and the world as the “objective mark” of a happy life. Yes, a happy life already justifies itself, and it is not necessary to ask what a happy life is. The crucial point is that, the issue of life is solved once it is dismissed.

By relating beauty and goodness to life, Wittgenstein proposed that, in pursuing happiness, we should bear in mind that the world is not subject to our will; on the contrary, we should conform to the world. Take a literary work for example. If a literary work X increases our understanding of the existence of this world, and to the same extent, increases our affinity with the world, then still to the same extent, it will increase the totality of happiness in our life. It is in this sense that we say “X is beautiful.” After all, beauty should be something that “makes us happy.”

In advocating that which is perfectly beautiful and perfectly good, Confucius also emphasized the harmonious unity of beauty and goodness. Xun Zi developed this thought by saying, “when music is performed, the inner mind becomes pure; and when rituals is cultivated, conduct is perfected. The ears become acute and the eye clear-sighted; the blood humor becomes harmonious and in equilibrium; manners are altered and customs changed. The entire world is made tranquil, and enjoys together beauty and goodness”(Xun Zi, 1944, 84). Here, the “enjoyment of beauty and

goodness” together points to a happy feeling that arises from the unity of beauty and goodness. As it is, the “enjoyment of beauty and goodness” is an extension of the tradition of “rituals and music assisting each other”. The enjoyment brought by the unity of beauty and goodness is in essence a sort of aesthetic satisfaction that is imbued with human emotions. At any rate, it must be remembered that, in the Confucian aesthetic ideal, beauty and goodness occupy equally important positions, no more this than that.

II. Dewey and Confucianism

II.1 Empirical Naturalism and the Biological Basis of Humanity

John Dewey labels his philosophy “empirical naturalism” or “naturalistic empiricism”(Dewey, 1958, 1). He treats experience as being “of as well as in nature.” (Ibid., 4) That is to say, experience is within nature, on the one hand, and on the other, it is also about nature. For Dewey, “experience” is what William James calls a double-barreled word. It is “double-barreled”, because “it recognizes in its primary integrity no division between act and material, subject and object, but contains them both in an unanalyzed totality” (Ibid., 8). So, experience is a unity of “doing” and “undergoing”, and “knowing” and “having”. “Every experience is the result of interaction between a live creature and some aspects of the world in which he lives” (Ibid., 43-44). Further, the pattern and structure of experience does not only consist in the alternation between active “doing” and passive “undergoing”, but also in the interaction of the two, where the uncertain elements of experience gradually complete themselves through a series of events.

To be brief, Dewey’s experience is a sort of activity that does not merely exert its influence, but also is exposed to external influences, due to the fact that human organisms are both an agent and acted upon due to the unity of “doing” and “undergoing”. Dewey’s conception of “experience”, for that matter, is somewhat similar to that of classic Chinese Confucianism. Take, for example, one of the key concepts of Confucianism: “*Ren*” (humanity). Confucius demonstrated his understanding of the relation between individual experience and humanity by saying, “If I desire humanity, there comes humanity!” (*The Analects*, 7. 30) It implies that, in the experience of humanity, the individual is both an active agent and a passive recipient. Another story: When asked to define humanity, Confucius said: “Loving men” (*The Analects*, 12. 22). This amounts to placing humanity in the social perspective of inter-subjectivity. More importantly, as in the mainstream of Chinese thought, it has been found that Confucian ethics has a profound biological basis, which explains the ever-lasting popularity of Confucianism. There is even research on the biological basis of Confucianism by western scholars, represented by a well-noted sinologist, Donald Munro, son of the famous philosopher Thomas Munro (Munro, 2005, 47-60). Donald Munro rightly points out that in contrast to the emphasis on rationality by the mainstream of Western thought, emotions are held in due regard by Confucianism. Nevertheless, Donald Munro’s view is still one-sided in that he fails to see that the Confucian scholars are appealing for an encultured define practice on the basis of natural emotions, and that the encultured practice must agree with moral

principles, in particular, the principle of humanity. So, it should be remembered that Confucian ethics places equal emphasis on sentiments and morality, and tries to achieve a dynamic balance between them.

II.2 “An Experience” and “Consummation of Humanity”

Dewey suggests that when an experience is consummate, it becomes “aesthetic”. This means that his *Art as Experience* is more than an aesthetic work. Instead, it concerns the nature of experience itself. In defining “aesthetic experience”, Dewey invented the concept of “an experience”. From the many examples that Dewey takes from daily life, such as games, talks, writing and other artistic activities, it is clear that “an experience” comes from daily life, but has its own character. As Dewey said, “Such an experience is a whole and carries with it its own individualizing quality and self-sufficiency” (Dewey, 1934, 35). On the other hand, Dewey insists that the unity is a necessary quality for any experience to become “an experience”, for it gives the experience a pervasive singleness. So, “The *form* of the whole is therefore present in every member. Fulfilling, consummating, are continuous functions, not mere ends, located at one place only” (Ibid., 56).

As a matter of fact, the experience of humanity that Confucianism advocates is mostly a Deweyan experience. For one thing, Confucian moral experience is right in daily life. For another, the Confucian ideal moral state has all the qualities of an experience, such as an individualizing quality, self-sufficiency, completeness, etc. The ethical aesthetics of Confucianism does not stop here, though. It is well-known that Confucius offered a curriculum of “Six Arts” for the moral cultivation of the common people. Not his own invention however “Over his lifetime, Confucius attracted a fairly large group of such serious followers, and provided them not only with book learning, but with a curriculum that encouraged personal articulation and refinement on several fronts. His ‘six arts’ included observing propriety and ceremony (*li*), performing music, and developing proficiency in archery, writing and calculation, all of which, in sum, were directed more at cultivating the moral character of his charge than at any set of practical skills. In the Chinese tradition broadly, proficiency in the ‘arts’ has been seen as the medium through which one reveals the quality of one’s personhood” (Ames and Rosemont, 1988, 3-4).

As indicated above, whether it be the state of “rambling among the arts” or that of “perfecting yourself with music”, both have amounted to the highest stage humanity”. In Dewey’s words, both belong to “consummatory experience”. Just as Dewey himself said at the end of *Art as Experience*, “art is more moral than moralities. ... Were art an acknowledged power in human association and not treated as the pleasuring of an idle moment or as a meaning of ostentatious display, and were morals understood to be identical with every aspect of value that is shared in experience, the ‘problem’ of the relation of art and morals would not exist” (Dewey, 1934, 348). Similarly, the highest stage of Confucian ethics is an aesthetic life that is made possible by long and profound artistic education.

II.3 “Emotions” in Experience and Ethical *Qing*

For Dewey, however, an experience itself is not necessarily an aesthetic experience. He makes a distinction between “an experience” and “aesthetic experience”, though at the same time connects them. He claims that an experience must have the aesthetic quality, or “its materials would not be rounded out into a single coherent experience”(Ibid., 54-55). It is not possible to divide in a vital experience the practical, the emotional and the intellectual and to set the properties of one over against the characteristics of the others. But it is clear that Dewey tries to include “emotions” in his theory. He protests that “‘intellectual’ simply names the fact that the experience has meaning,” and that “‘practical’ indicates that the organism is interacting with events and objects which surround it.” Further, Dewey said, “I have spoken of the esthetic quality those rounds out an experience into completeness and unity as emotional” (Ibid., 41). It may follow that aesthetic experience must be emotional. Yet, although “emotion is the directing force of aesthetic experience”(Mathur, 1992, 389), an emotional experience does not necessarily have aesthetic character. After all, emotion in a Deweyan sense is “total undergoing of the experience” (Alexander, 1987, 205), and thus, is by no means confined within the field of aesthetics. Dewey certainly has a broader understanding of the functions of emotions. For example, he said, “Yes, emotion must operate. But it works to effect continuity of movement, singleness of effect amid variety. It is selective of material and directive of its order and arrangement” (Dewey, 1934, 69). Besides, an emotion “reaches out tentacles for that which is cognate, for things which feed it and carry it to completion”(Ibid., 67-68).

As “the experience itself has a satisfying emotional quality because it possesses internal integration and fulfillment reached through ordered and organized movement” (Ibid., 38), Dewey’s concept of emotion is essentially similar to the concern for *Qing* in early Confucianism, though *Qing* is such a broad term as to comprise the meanings of “sentiments”, “feelings”, “emotions” and even “affections”. Etymologically, *Qing* refers to a clear and pure heart-mind. In Confucianism, it includes such feelings as love, sympathy, benevolence, etc. that serve as the foundation of interpersonal relations in the society. Confucian scholars also base their knowledge and understanding of life on such “naturalistic” sentiments or emotions, as they lead to reciprocal acts such as filial piety. For example, Mencius worked out a unique doctrine of “Four Seeds”: “A heart of compassion is the seed of humanity. A heart of conscience is the seed of righteousness. A heart of courtesy is the seed of ritual. And a heart of right and wrong is the seed of wisdom. These four seeds are as much a part of us as our four limbs” (*Gongsun Chou*, Book One). This paragraph is the best testimony to the idea that Confucian ethics began with emotions.

In short, when considering the relation between aesthetics and ethics, Confucianism displayed a line of thought similar to Dewey’s: firstly, the concept of experience in Confucian ethics is much closer to Dewey’s; secondly, Confucian ethical aesthetics also comprises a concept of “an experience”; and finally, the stress of Confucian aesthetic ethics and Dewey’s aesthetics on the emotional in “aesthetic experience” is nearly the same.

III. Confucianism: Civilizing through *Shen Qing* (Deep Emotions)

The previous section has shown that, contrary to what many scholars have assumed, Confucian ethical aesthetics and aesthetic ethics are both *Qing*-Oriented rather than *Ren*-Oriented. Evidences can be found in *Guodian Chu Slips*, a Confucian work that was written over two thousand years ago. For example, a piece of writing entitled “Human Nature Derives from Mandate” goes: “Human nature (*Xing*) derives from the Mandate (*Ming*); the Mandate comes from heaven (*Tian*); the Way starts with emotions (*Qing*); emotions arise out of human nature.” (“Human Nature Derives from Mandate” in *Guodian Chu Slips*) Here, “*Qing*” is more likely to refer to the “facts” (Graham, 1990, 59-65; 1989, 98). But how could the term “*Qing*” come to designate “state of affairs”, “event instance” or “condition of things” at the same time that it refers to the emotions that comes from within? The reason is this. Although “*Qing*” mostly happened in concrete contexts, it sometimes acquired a metaphysical sense, and came to mean something ontological, say, the contexts where emotions arise. Here, the complex relations between *Qing* and other key concepts, such as *Ren*, *Li* and *Xing*, come to the foreground.

III. 1 “*Ren*” and “*Qing*”

As for the connection between *Ren* (humanity) and *Qing* (emotions), there is a reference to rituals and music in *Guodian Chu Slips*: “Humanity is internal. Righteousness is external. And Ritual-Music is both (internal and external).” (“Six Virtues” in *Guodian Chu Slips*) This is analogous to what Confucius said: “If a man is not humane, what can he do with the rituals? If a man is not humane, what can he do with music?” (*The Analects*, 3. 3) Yet Humanity should not be seen as the essence of rituals and music, for both quotations only discuss the basic relationships among rituals, music and humanity. Humanity is not singled out as something higher above the other two. A functional approach is found in *Guodian Chu Slips*: “Rituals work for the order of communicative acts, while music gives birth to humane emotions or civilizes men.” (“Sentences Series, One” in *Guodian Chu Slips*) At any rate, rituals, music and emotions cannot be said to be caused by humanity alone. Since “humanity is born among men,” it certainly follows that emotion is also a defining element of man.

III. 2 *Li* and *Qing*

In terms of the relationship between *Li* (rituals) and *Qing* (emotions), there are the following points in *Guodian Chu Slips*: (1) “Rituals arise out of emotions and get incited by them.” (“Human Nature Derives from Mandate” in *Guodian Chu Slips*) (2) “Rituals are performed out of human emotions.” (“Sentences Series, One” in *Guodian Chu Slips*) (3) “Rituals come from emotions, and obtain reverence from rituals.” (“Sentences Series, One” in *Guodian Chu Slips*) All these points emphasize that the rituals had their origin in human emotions, such as joy, anger, sorrow and

happiness. The verb “incite”, which is used as a predicate of “emotions” in the second point, is especially revealing. For Chinese aesthetics, the most significant legacy of *Guodian Chu Slips* is its reasonable treatment of rituals and emotions. This legacy, however, was neglected in the succeeding millennia. Ever since Confucian scholars in Han dynasty preached that “human nature is good, and emotions are bad”, human desires and emotions had been unduly suppressed.

III. 3 *Xing* and *Qing*

Concerning the relationship between “*Qing*” (emotions) and “*Xing*” (human nature), there are two statements in *Guodian Chu Slips*: one, “emotions come from human nature, rituals from emotions;” (“Sentences Series, Two” in *Guodian Chu Slips*) and the other, “truthfulness is the direction of emotions. Emotions arise out of human nature.” (“Human Nature Derives from Mandate” in *Guodian Chu Slip*) That is to say, man’s emotions are determined by his inner nature. When man’s inner nature receives stimuli from outside, it will be externalized as emotions, which in turn will give rise to rituals. Besides, it is also stressed that “so long as one is sincere, his mistakes are not evil; so long as one is insincere, even his painstaking efforts will not be appreciated; with sincerity, man does nothing to win trust”(Ibid.). It implies that only sincere emotions can reveal men’s true nature. After all, “desire arises out of human nature”, “evil arises out of human nature”, and “joyfulness arises out of human nature.” (“Sentences Series, Two” in *Guodian Chu Slips*) In *Li Ji* (The Classic of Rites), the *Qing*-orientation of the aesthetic ethics and ethical aesthetics in Confucianism can essentially be summarized as follows: “When emotions are deeply seated, the elegant display of them is brilliant. When all the energies (of the nature) are abundantly employed, their transforming power is mysterious and spirit-like. When a harmonious conformity (to virtue) is realized within, the blossoming display of it is conspicuous without, for in music, more than other things, there should be nothing that is pretentious or hypocritical.” This amounts to saying that those emotions coming from the depths of men make possible a richer, fuller life, flowing with rhythmical movements of music. With some variation, this paragraph was later cited in *Shi Ji* (The Historical Records) for the purpose of highlighting the civilizing function of “deeply seated emotions”, from which comes music (“Book of Music” in *Si Ma-qian, Shi Ji*).

Simply put, only when emotions are deeply seated can they civilize. This is the very motivation of both the aesthetic ethics and ethical aesthetics of Confucianism. On the whole, the fundamental idea of Confucianism is this: emotions arise out of human nature, and then they give birth to rituals and music. These three are in charge of both the internal and the external aspects of men, combining to make a perfect personality.

III. 4 The Unity of Daily Rituals and Ordinary Emotions

As early as Confucius’s age, the unity of rituals and music were the dominant trend of thought in both Confucian aesthetics and ethics. However, ever since the corruption of music, more importance had been attached to the unity of rituals and emotions; more than that, more people agreed that the source of music lies in the

emotions that are produced when human nature is influenced by external things. So, it is well argued that the very cornerstones of both the aesthetic ethics and ethical aesthetics of Confucius is nothing else but the unity of daily rituals and ordinary emotions.

Why was music replaced by emotions? A historical explanation may be that, as time passed by, the concept of music became too generalized to retain its importance. But there was also a psychological answer: since emotions belong to the deep psychology of men and thus give rise to music, they are certainly more revealing. Such an idea owes a great debt to the findings of the *Guodian Chu Slips*. According to a Chinese scholar, Li Xue-qin, of the 67 bamboo slips under the title of “*Xing Ming Zi Chu*,” 36 mainly discuss “music”, while the other 30 are on “nature and emotions” (Li, 2006, 260, 265). This discovery somewhat alters people’s traditional thinking on the relations between music and emotions. But why is music so closely related to emotions? The answer may lie in the prevailing idea expressed in *Yue Ji* (Discourse on Music): emotions arise when human nature is influenced by external things, and it is from emotions that music comes. So, emotions are more fundamental than music (and rituals). This determines that the aesthetic ethics and ethical aesthetics of Confucianism are both emotion-oriented.

Of course, just as rituals and music support each other, rituals and emotions can also support each other. Interestingly, in reflecting on the issue of “aesthetic experience”, some Western scholars suggest a distinction between two modes of aesthetic engagement, namely “being” and “doing” (Cometti, 2008, 166-177). If we adopt this suggestion, then the emotions that Confucianism advocates can be said to both a being and a doing. That is to say, they are not only the emotions with which we practice the rituals on special occasions, but also the most ordinary emotions one is likely to have in daily life. In other words, instead of being special, detached aesthetic experiences, such emotions always maintain continuity with daily, ordinary experiences.

Conclusion

Based on the above discussion, it can be argued that Wittgenstein, Dewey and early Chinese Confucianism all move towards a living aesthetic ethics or ethical aesthetics, or in other words, all of them are in essence an ethical-aesthetic art of living, which is quite close to my proposal of “Living Aesthetics”. It is exactly in the framework of living aesthetics that we try to work on a sort of aesthetic ethics or ethical aesthetics that returns to the life-world (Liu, 2005; 2007).

In his notebook, Wittgenstein wrote on July 8, 1916, that we should “live happily” (Wittgenstein, 1961, 75) . He made that point again on July 29th, saying, “It seems one cannot say anything more than: Live happily ! (Ibid., 78) As a matter of fact, this is another key to understanding Wittgenstein’s aesthetics and ethics, for *Ein Ausdruck hat nur im Strome des Lebens Bedeutung*. It is enough to repeat “Live happily”. We do not need to say more. After all, the world of the happy is different world from that of the unhappy. The world of the happy is a *happy world* (Ibid., 78) . Likewise, Deweyan experience is mainly about “a social context and the ability to

regard themselves from the social perspective”, hence, also about a “life-world” (Alexander 1987, xviii). Dewey’s aesthetics points to the “Art of life” (Alexander, 1988, 1-22), where beauty and goodness, aesthetics and ethics are coalesce. As is noted, “This kind of Art of life is the goal behind Dewey’s ethics, his philosophy of democracy, and his theory of education” (Alexander, 1987, 269). In explaining experience itself, Dewey once said, “Because the actual world, that in which we live, is a combination of movement and culmination, of breaks and re-unions, the experience of a living creature is capable of esthetic quality”(Dewey, 1934, 16) . It is clear that Dewey said it in view of the important role that the aesthetic plays in life. Just as a critic pointed out, “The essential artistic criterion for Dewey is a heightened, intensified, and deepened experience of the qualities of things and events”, and “make life precious, worthwhile, and meaningful”(Mathur, 1992, 372).

By the same token, Confucianism can be seen as a form of meliorative aestheticism. It tries to confer value on the world by making an affectionate community. More importantly, it takes the rituals to be the basic aspect of the interpersonal communication and interaction, while concrete emotions, which are refined by rituals, are the locus in realizing this world (Ames, 2003). Due to its emphasis on the unity of well-practiced rituals and daily, ordinary emotions, Confucianism has suggested a different path to return to the life-world.

According to Wittgenstein’s well-noted account of “life-form”, “our form of life is foundational in that it sets the scope of our various practices and yet can only be characterized by exploring the full range of practices in which we engage” (Hutto, 2004, 28). This underlies a sort of “aesthetic life-form”, described by Wittgenstein himself as an “everyday aesthetics itself” (Gibson and Hueme, 2004, 21-33). For that matter, the “aesthetic life-form” constitutes in essence a “pattern of life”. If all this taken into account, there is a “Third Wittgenstein” (Hark, 2004, 125-143) who proposes a sort of aesthetic ethics and ethical aesthetics with a view of returning to the “life-world” (*Lebenswelt*) . Therefore, it can be concluded that Wittgenstein, Dewey and Chinese early Confucianism follow the same path in their “aesthetics of life”. They not only advocate the ideal of returning to life on the doctrinal meaning, but they also strive to realize it in everyday life.

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