

Confucian Harmony:

From Social Inclusion to Cosmopolitanism

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The Challenge of Inclusiveness

- **Key Argument:** Early Confucian thought emphasized the importance of social and political harmony, calibrated through a recognition of individual diversity and delineation of social roles. Politically, it was most inclusive through the world-ordering concept of *Tianxia* (embracing 'All-Under Heaven' but also creating a 'World' for human engagement). However, debates have emerged as to how far this concept can be mobilized in the current multicultural, multi-religious global order. Can modern forms of Confucianism engage in a pluralist vision of cosmopolitanism?

The Importance of Harmony

- **Harmony (*hé*, 和) is a core doctrine in Chinese culture and Confucian thought,** found in early Chinese art, literature, historical texts and philosophy. (Keightley 1990)
- **Harmony requires regulation by ritual and controlled social interactions:** “Of the things brought about by the rites, harmony is the most valuable. Of the ways of the Former Kings, this is the most beautiful, and is followed alike in matters great and small, yet this will not always work: to aim always at harmony without regulating it by the rites simply because one knows only about harmony will not, in fact, work.’ (*Analects* I.12, trans D.C. Lau)
- **Leads to idea of equilibrium and harmony as extending out through human relations to the universe itself** (*Doctrine of the Mean; The Great Learning*)
- **Harmony and Equilibrium as the Way:** “Before pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy have arisen, this is called centrality. After they have arisen and have attained their appropriate degree, this is called harmony. Equilibrium is the great root of the world, and harmony is the pervasive Way of the world. Once centrality and harmony are realized, Heaven and Earth take their proper places and all living things are nourished.” (*Doctrine of the Mean* 1, trans in De Barry & Bloom 1999)

Harmony Requires Diversity

- **Harmony cannot be between things that are identical: diversity and difference are required for the proper functioning of society.** Rulers, teachers, farmers, soldiers, merchants have different roles; even more diverse roles in modern society.
- **Metaphors** used to explain this: a soup is made of diverse ingredients, a chord is made up of unique notes, parallel Greek concept of *harmonia*.
- **Root meaning goes back to singing patterns in which one singer replies to another** and thus can be said to be in harmony; Root character is indicative of grain and the mouth conjoining, and as a concept indicates the proper preparation and taste of food as a balance of elements that is satisfying and health-giving. (Zhang 2005; Cheng 1989)
- **Modern Political Usages:** ‘Harmonious Society’ (*hexie shehui*) as developmental model to avoid recreation of class structures and reduce gap between rich and poor; ‘Harmonious World’ (和諧世界 *hexie shijie*) as key aspect of Hu Jintao’s foreign policy and vision of global order mobilized since 2005.
- [Cheng Chung-Ying 1989; Joseph Wu 2004; John Delury 2008; Guo Zhenyuan 2006; Yu Bin 2008; Chan Wing-Tsit 1963; right, Pipa, 19th century]



Problem: Regulation of Roles and Power

- **Emphasis on social harmony and the regulation of human roles** as the basis of family, society and government, including a harmonious differentiation of class roles.
- **Key relations that are formally regulated**, e.g. ruler to minister, father to son, husband-wife, elder-younger, friendships, with their reinforcement through rites, ritual and modes of social conduct (*Analects* 1.2)
- **Human society should be “an ordered hierarchy of unequal components”**, resulting in a “co-operative human harmony”. (Bodde 1953)
- **BUT Rectification of names (*zhengming*) needed to control relationships: names and roles should match, in the end behaviour is regulated to match normative expectations** – role failure problematic, means that even rulers have to be educated or in the worst case removed from power. (*Analects* 12.11; Mencius 5A.5)
- **Supports idea of the cultivated person (*junzi*) as fit leader of society** and able to conduct a fair and harmonious government – problem of choice of administrators.
- **Debate of whether education, moral exemplars, persuasion vs strict laws and punishment** best means to enforce social functioning. (Mencius vs Legalist traditions; *Analects* 12.17)
- **Society tends towards the hierarchical, structured and paternalistic**, with limited ability to cope with radical change, problems of failed leadership, social mobility or structural violence due to misuse of power.
- **Efforts to use moral persuasion and education; censors and remonstrance officials** to shape leadership - but uneven in outcomes, dangerous to officials.
- [David Keightley 1990; Cheng Chung-ying 1989; Tu Wei-ming 1990; Li Yi-Yuan 1995; Chuang-Tzu 18, Part II, Section XI.1]

Partial Solution: Understanding Others

- **Analects has reciprocal formulations:** e.g. *Shu* as analogy and reciprocity, e.g. ‘do not inflict on others what yourself would not wish done to you’. (*Analects* 15.24, trans. Raymond Dawson)
- **Positive formulations of mutual development:** ‘Now, on the other hand, a benevolent man helps others to take their stand in so far as he himself wishes to take a stand, and gets others there in so far as he himself wishes to get there. The ability to take as analogy what is near at hand can be called the method of benevolence.’ (*Analects* 6.30, trans. D.C. Lau)
- **Sincerity and Reciprocity:** “The way of the Master consists in doing one's best and in using oneself as a measure to gauge others. That is all.” (*Analects* 4.15).
- **Idea of *Zhong* (Chung) as balance or equilibrium, centrality of mind or heart, doing one's best, loyalty and *Shu*, a deep understanding that helps others through reciprocity, kindness and forgiveness:** Knowledge of oneself gives you a starting point to understanding and help others: genuine cultivation requires this deep social interaction and encounter. (*Analects* 15.24; *Doctrine of the Mean* 22)
- ***Ren* (仁, humanity, benevolence) is developed through human encounters.**
- **Ideal of ‘Grand Harmony’ (大同, Datong) encompasses idea of a just, inclusive society but acts as a utopian ideal,** projected back to foundational dynasties rather than applicable for periods of conflict (Qu 2013, following *Book of Rites* 1.1)
- [Chen Yudan 2014; Shan Chun 2009; Donald Bishop 1985; Cheng Ching-Ying 1989 & 2006; Reischauer & Fairbank 1960; Malpas 2014]

Partial Solution: Inclusive Politics

- **Tianxia (天下)** : ‘all under heaven’, implies a world or moral order.
- **Tianxia doctrine has three main meanings:** 1) geographically refers to the earth or all lands under the sky; 2) psychologically, a common choice made by all peoples in the world, or a universal consensus in the ‘hearts’ of all people; and, 3) institutionally a political system for the world with a global institution to ensure universal order. (Zhang 2010; He 2015)
- **Idea of Confucian world order as attractive to those living in disorder:** even the barbarian would be ‘come and be transformed’, *lai-hua*, by a superior and attractive culture, *wen*; *wenhua*, 文化 implies transformation by written language (*Analects* III.5; IX.14; XVI.1)
- **Inclusive pattern of governance based on a common humanity;** avoids narrow patterns of racism or nationalism.
- **Tianxia as shared human world generates the beginnings of a necessary Chinese cosmopolitanism** as China’s geographical and cultural horizons expanded, reaching out to diverse tribes and ethnic groups, engaging with distant states and empires.
- **Tianxia concept useful in allowing diverse cosmopolitan elements within a complex, evolving imperial system,** e.g. in the Tang, Song, and Qing periods.
- **Concept helped formalise the idea of the empire as ‘a public good** that transcended and negated the parochialism of family ties’. (Lewis 2009)
- **In 21st century viewed as supporting an attractive and tolerant Chinese culture, extending harmonious world concept and Chinese ‘soft power’** = influence and attraction as culturally-based (see Zhao Tingyang 2006)

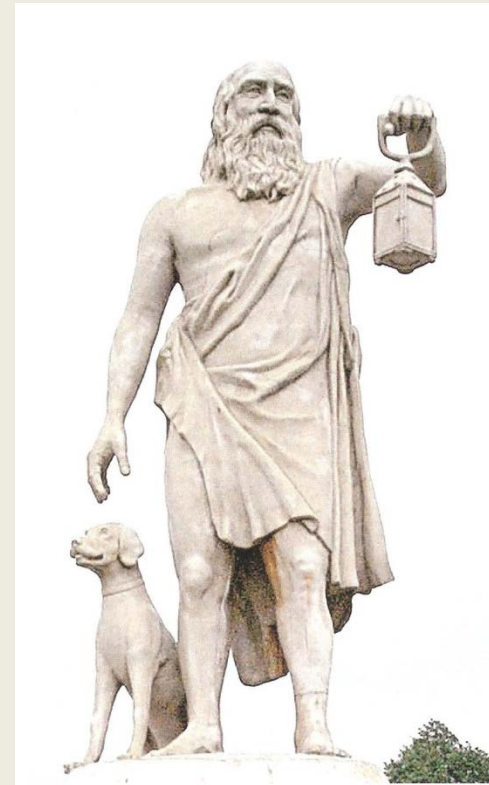
[Chen Yudan 2014; Carlson 2011; Shan Chun 2009; Barabantseva 2009; Callahan 2008; Zhao Tingyang 2006; Rossabi 1983; Crump 1970]

The Limits of *Tianxia*

- **Seen as basis for inclusive and harmonious world order focused on 'cooperation without hegemony'**; mutual gain mechanisms and dialogue to engage shared values (Zhang 2010)
- **BUT, 'No strangers, all are persons of concern' assumes a shared human nature** and the ability to assimilate to shared rituals, social conduct and values (see 'The Citizen of the World, *The Intrigues of the Warring States*).
- **Distinction between hierarchical regard for others vs indiscriminate, universe love as basis** for cosmopolitan order. (Mencius vs Mozi)
- **Differences among classical Chinese thinkers as to whether the right to rule 'all under heaven' was based on 'humane authority' versus a 'hegemonic authority'**, while Taoist thinkers such as Laozi would see true rulership as based on 'a form of prestige that makes all under heaven submit and obey', i.e. true kingship verses rule by force (Yan 2011)
- **May presume a strong world order; = "possessing all under heaven", having world leadership; represent a new universal claim** that 'encourages a conversion of difference' rather than allow for a genuine tolerance of pluralism. (Yan 2011 following Xunzi; Callahan 2008; Carlson 2011)
- **Controlled Cosmopolitanism: Tianxia not originally framed for modern interstate order or inter-civilizational dialogue**; assumes extension of values from family, to state, to world as circles of humanitarian engagement and governance (Chen 2014).

Evolving Cosmo- Politanism

- **Cosmopolitan thought goes back to the Hellenic and the Stoic philosophers who argued that humans were citizens of the universe (cosmos) as much as they were citizens of an individual city or state.**
- **Shared vision of rational human sharing understanding of ordered cosmos – allows humans to live together in harmony as fellow citizens of the universe** - developed by Diogenes of Sinope, Epictetus, Chrysippus, Cicero, Seneca and Marcus Aurelius (Chen 2014; Qu 2013)
- **Needed in periods of social and religious diversity,** Hellenistic period and Roman empire as expanding domains of cultural interaction.
- **In the 21st century this has been taken up as the idea of all humans as citizens of a global community** which in turn has some responsibilities towards this wider notion of a shared but diverse humanity. (Held 1995)
- **Viewed as 'a set of international societal processes and values, cosmopolitanism is a humanist counterpart to globalization'** (Cartier 1999).
- **Tianxia seen as inclusive basis for Chinese tradition of cosmopolitanism;** shared heaven (*tian* as nature) and humanity (*ren*) leads to harmonious world. (Chen 2014)
- **Moral cosmopolitanism; persons stand in moral relations with one another as members of a universal community:** – Confucianism and classical Western cosmopolitanism share this focus (Hayden 2004; Qu 2013)



Universal but Based on Public Debate

- **Institutions and Global Order:** “Legal cosmopolitanism contends that a global political order ought to be constructed, grounded on the equal legal rights and duties of all individuals.” (Hayden 2004).
- **Moral and legal cosmopolitanism share a commitment to at least three fundamental tenets:** “individualism, in that individual human beings are the ultimate units of concern; universality, in that all human beings possess equal moral status; and generality, in that persons are subjects of concern for everyone, that is, human status has global scope.” (Hayden 2004).
- **Problem of Universal Claims:** both Confucian and Classical European cosmopolitanism have universalistic claims concerning the nature of human being and the universe, underpinning normative moralities; does not solve problem of cultural hegemony or clash of ideologies.
- **Immanuel Kant, John Dewey, John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas developed ideas of relative autonomy, procedural public reason and subsidiary** to arrive at collective problem solving; mutual recognition of others needed as part of communicative rationality (Habermas 1995).
- **Deliberative Democracy and Consultative Approaches:** Cosmopolitan traditions try to sustain a notion of global citizenship and widely based human rights, emphasize democratic procedures based on open public debate where real agreement is reached rather than simply an aggregation or compromise of interests. (Smith & Brasset 2008).

Solutions: Timeliness and the 'Wide Horizon'

- **Universalistic claims tend to be assimilative rather than accommodative of difference:** need to add process of engagement, communication and dialogue.
- **Goal of harmony, inclusiveness, or cosmopolitanism not enough:** political processes, correlative concepts and institutions needed to support these ideals.
- **Cosmopolitanism provides one avenue for improved cross-cultural and civilizational dialogue,** but requires deep knowledge of alternative cultural systems and sustained bottom-up dialogue (limited in global developmental, aid and reform agendas).
- **Cosmopolitan Pluralism:** project to shape a shared conception of humanity while valuing difference and particularity, based upon well-informed, reflexive knowledge of diverse cultures and communicative approach to solving problems (Lawson 2011)
- **Obligations to, and engagement with, others as basis of cosmopolitanism,** not presumption of shared nature or same type of rationality. (Chen 2014)
- **Idea of 'fusion of horizons' between diverse viewpoints (East and West, ancient and modern) to construct a genuinely cosmopolitan and 'international political thought'** – allows widening of perspectives and 'rehumanization' of politics; process of engagement and dialogue (Chen 2014; Lee 2006 following Hans-Georg Gadamer)
- **Confucianism includes the idea of timeliness or being timely (*shi*, 時),** adapting to changing circumstance – allows us to consider how Confucianism can enter into dialogue with global diversity and positive multiculturalism; emphasis on human relationships, building communities, complementarity as part of learning are useful starting points (*Analects* 2.13; 2.21; 4.14; 5.2; 7.11; 9.5; Dallmayr 2012)

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