

## On the aestheticization of Chinese ethic culture<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Wisdom regained through perspective has become a significant mission of cross-cultural teaching and communication. It's urgent for Chinese aesthetic conception to merge into cross-cultural teaching in the trend of cultural globalization, in which the aestheticization of Chinese ethic culture is often ignored. This paper is to rediscover new light for today's humanity in the traditional notions of wisdom from the aestheticization of Chinese ethic culture to enrich people transculturally. It is herein argued that Chinese culture, especially the ethic culture, conveyed aesthetically, can enhance wisdom in the perspective of a new enlightened attitude to life and nature. Correspondingly, two essential aspects are emphasized: (1) Aesthetic thinking images and poetic expressions serve as the cognitive media to convey moralities; (2) balanced moral personalities contributing to both individuals' spiritual life and sustainable development of social culture are cultivated through artistic and aesthetic circling path between coordinating Confucian culture and Taoist thought.

**Key words:** aestheticization, moral personalities, Confucian culture, Taoist thought

### Introduction

The predominant conception of traditional Chinese culture is often practiced in an aesthetic perception in terms of its embodied poetic expressions, image thinking, holistic reference and circulating flux, etc., which are “unique to” China and “different from” non-Chinese cultural traditions, the western cultural traditions in particular. Therefore, in the West, Chinese philosophical and cultural thought was once ignored or regarded as mysticism. For example, citing Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* as a typical representative that regards “Confucian thought was originally presumed irrelevant to serious philosophical study”(as cited in Eric C. Mull, 2007), R. B. Blakney considers many ancient Chinese philosophers and wise men such as Chuang Tzu and Lao Tzu as mystics. In the introduction to his translated work *The Way of Life* (the classical Chinese philosophical work *the Tao Te Ching* by Lao Tzu), R. B. Blakney (1995) maintains Taoist thought is to express a way of life that is a mystic religion and philosophy and claims: “*The Tao Te Ching* is classed as first rate among mystic writing.” It's not difficult to infer that there is a sharp contrast between Chinese and western culture.

In the past decades of years, with the poetic wisdom reviving through classical works, Chinese culture has drawn resurgent interest among the scholars both in the East and West. For example, The Chinese scholar Chung-ying Cheng has done his utmost as a chief editor to advocate the Chinese culture in *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* and did specific research into “Dynamic Process of Beauty in Chinese Aesthetics: Creative Harmonization as Interpenetration of Poetry and Painting”; Karl-Heinz Pohl suggests the approaches to studying Chinese Culture by way of “translating the untranslatable”. In 2010, the 18th International Congress of Aesthetics was held in Beijing, China, whose theme is to promote “diversities in Aesthetics”, which is an upsurge of studying Chinese aesthetics. Its anthology of *Diversities in Aesthetics: Selected Papers of the 18th Congress of International Aesthetics* focuses on comparative study of aesthetics between the West and China and specific research into Chinese aesthetics and arts with two special chapters. In recent years, research into Chinese culture not only includes the poetic wisdom of nature, cultural characteristics and basic forms of Chinese poetics, Taoist thought, interactions between Western and Chinese aesthetics, Confucian culture and other aspects of Chinese aesthetics and culture, but also arts like Chinese calligraphy, painting, brush work and other visual arts and cultural practice.

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Despite the limelight on the examination of Chinese culture and arts home and abroad, the aesthetic dimensions of Chinese ethic culture—the core conception of Chinese culture and ethics—has not been paid enough attention to. Research into such subjects has not highlighted the effective aesthetic approaches to Chinese ethic culture and its far-reaching influence, especially the cooperative and interactive moral generation between Confucian culture and Taoist thought ignored. Since it beckons poetic cognitive power in cultivating moralities and personalities, the aestheticization of Chinese ethic culture with emphasis on moral cultivation of Confucian culture and Taoist thought will provide the grist for novel discussions concerning rediscovering in them the new light for today's society.

Confucian culture and Taoist thought are two final winners in the competition for cultural authority to exert influence on current politics and the trend of Chinese culture with their original thought in its decisive historical period from 770 B.C. to 221 B.C. A logical conclusion with regard to the intersection between these two mainstream Chinese cultures has been drawn for the sake of explaining their relationship. In essence, the Confucian culture mainly supplies Chinese people with moral principles to identify the relationship between society and individuals while Taoist thought contributes to the coordination of the relationship between man and nature. Due to the complementarity and mutual transformation of Confucian culture and Taoist thought, the aestheticization of Chinese ethic culture not only accelerates the process of person-making, but also contributes to the ultimate social consolidation and political orders, which is consciously or unconsciously melting into people's mundane life and activities.

Li Zehou (2008) puts it: “‘Making perfect the whole empire’ while ‘cultivating oneself’ has often been practiced by the traditional Chinese literati as complementary career ideals. Moreover, ‘taking serving the state into account’ despite ‘being far away from the political arena’ has become a moral convention and an artistic goal for generations of Chinese intellectuals.” Such ideas adequately signify the oneness of home and state. Confucius, the founder of Confucianism, believed it was necessary for one to dwell in such a place where there were humaneness and beauty taken as the universal reasoning for the sake of seeking harmony. Hence, he often required his disciples to strive for the universal reason, act upon morality, rely on the human heatedness, and play with the six arts (referring to rites, music, archery, chariot-driving, reading-writing and numbers in traditional Chinese arts). In Confucian thoughts, it is indispensable that all members be participants of the self-mastery up for the social framework to match aesthetic self-cultivation with the social order in the appropriate authorities. Obviously, the ultimate objective of the aesthetic cultivation of individuals' moral personality is to serve the State.

Mencius, another Confucian representative, insists that a good man's virtues lie in the coordination of goodness and beauty. When his words, actions and appearance are filled with benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom, he can be called a beautiful man, or vice versa. In such cases, “being beautiful” is an intermediate stage for one to accomplish the cultivation of goodness and serve the state, in which individuals' moral cultivation should conform to the dominant virtual guideline required by the authorities. Doubtlessly, the over-emphasized social and political dimension of moral personalities stays in insufficiency. To obey the Confucian doctrines, individuals' nature and talents may be covered in the shadow of moralities and politics.

On the contrary, a proper balance between nature and man is advocated by Taoists in quite a free and relaxing way. Daoism maintains that to accomplish one's personal fulfillment, the first and foremost prerequisite is a free state or way of human life itself in harmony with nature, and that three principles should be followed: “freeing oneself from his body”, “discarding his reasoning powers”, and “being void and tranquil”. Lao Tzu upheld cleansing away the sights and understanding, maintaining keeping the state of vacancy to the utmost degree and being still guarded without interruption. He intended to convey the idea of “following the law of being what it is” and “taking no actions yet leaving nothing undone”. To follow them as the paradigm of the human existence, a great balance is kept between nature and man. “Tao embody his appearance, Heaven embody his form. He should not permit liking and disliking to disturb his internal balance” (Chuang Tzu, trans., 1983). In Taoists' view, the conception “beauty” does not refer to the so-called beautiful or pleasant objective attributes, but the aesthetic attitude and status, first and foremost the free state or way in harmony with nature. The “Wholeness”, “Simplicity”, “Primitive Chaos”, and “Bigness” are the cultural archetypes that are held by the intellectuals who believe in returning to ancients. It runs after merging the true with the good and the beautiful, which integrates individual into all living creatures and the universe. In this sense, both public and private business is coming side by side in correspondence to the oneness of home and state in Confucian notions and the complementarity between Confucianism and Daoism is achieved, which can be seen as the essence of Chinese aesthetics and ethics.

Owing to the complementarity between Confucian culture and Taoist thought, a circling path—the mutually transformative and interactive moral generation in the aestheticization of Chinese ethic culture—has come into being. It is significant to articulate the circling path with two essential factors: (1) Aesthetic thinking images and poetic expressions serve as the cognitive media to convey moralities; (2) balanced moral personalities negotiating both individuals' spiritual life and maintenance of social stability are cultivated through artistic and aesthetic coordination of Confucianism and Taoism. An exploration of all the aspects leads us to draw a conclusion that the aestheticization of Chinese ethic culture contributes not only to our reflections on the significance of keeping a balance between nature, man and society, but also to our rediscovery of the aesthetic approach taken as the efficient way of guiding and evaluating morality development.

### **Materials and Methodology**

The source materials used for arguments in this research are mainly the classical Chinese writings: Confucius' *The Analects*, Lao Tzu's *The Tao TeChing*, Chuang Tzu's *Chuang Tzu* and Mencius' *The Works of Mencius*. Other works like *The Way of Life: Tao TeChing: The Classic Translation and Introduction* by R. B. Blakney, Li Zehou's *Chinese aesthetics & Four Essays on Aesthetics*, Stephen Owen's *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, *Aesthetics and Culture: East and West* edited by Gao Jianping and Wang Keping, Hu Shih's *the Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China* have also been used as reference sources. Every effort has been made to cite sources that the corresponding author of this paper has actually read. When taking methodologies of this study into account, the author maintains that it is beneficial to have a broad map of the terrain, a general context, in reference to which the detailed analysis makes sense. Related to the larger view, close scrutiny is designed to make particular enquiry as accessible as possible to people who have no prior knowledge or don't have specialized enquiry into the subject. All the materials in this study are guided and organized with the insights drawn from the theories of the analytic aesthetics, psycholinguistics and social psychology.

### **Discussion**

Chinese culture is essentially an ethical culture, in which, ethics and morality become the essence of its being and development. The particularity of this convention features its cultivation in the aesthetic sensitivity with image thinking mode and poetic expressions as the cognitive media to guide the moral orientation of the people. Since poems do specifically tell manifestations of Chinese culture, certain aspects and qualities of Chinese poetry might help us understand particular aspects of Chinese culture. Karl-Heinz Pohl (2006) claims:

“The magic of Chinese classical poetry is the result of an interplay of two seemingly contradictory (but complementary) forces: (1) a sense of form or rather a love of regularity, rules and regular patterns; (2) an open, ambiguous or oblique way of communication/expression, i.e. a suggestive quality. One may also say, it is an interplay of rule and freedom”.(96)

Karl-Heinz Pohl points out Chinese people's particular preference for specific poetic thinking and expressions. The peculiar interplay between regularity and ambiguity is reconciled in their image thinking mode and poetic expressions, which forms one important element in the so-called “cultural-psychological structure”. Consequently, with image thinking mode and poetic expressions as the cognitive media, traditional Chinese arts and culture embody inspiring aesthetic perceptive experience in the moral conceptions in terms of symbolic and metaphorical reasoning.

The association of ethics with the poetic wisdom should be traced back to *the Book of Songs*, the earliest collections of poems in China, written by authors arranging from kings, princes and aristocrats to common folk people from Zhou Dynasty to the medium Spring and Autumn times (from the tenth to the sixth century B.C.). The book reveals great concerns of everyday life and public awareness of politics and ethics, which are entailed in ritual ceremonies and the performance and appreciation of arts such as poems and music. The far-reaching impact of *the Book of Songs* still lies in the popularity of its so-called six classical arts (six styles of expressions in writing and communication among literates) that are indispensable in later argumentation and exposition of ethics: Folks Songs of States with its local music (feng), Epics with music popular in the areas under kingdom Zhou's direct governing (ya), and Odes with the music played at sacrifices of the temples and altars (song), which stand for the three artistic styles of poems, and magnificent elaboration (fu), metaphor (bi) and symbolization (xing), which stand for the three main rhetoric. Written mostly in four-word lines with four lines to a stanza, *the Book of Songs* is rich in refrains and recurrent songs, rhythmical and musical, easy to recite and relish. Both moral and aesthetic dimensions are perfectly integrated in the poems of the book.

Confucius, the preserver and restorer of the Zhou culture, often referred to *the book of songs* as a textbook to conduct his teaching of politics, ethics, aesthetics and natural philosophy. Confucius (trans., 1980) insisted: “One can learn poems to cultivate their imagination, to improve their ability of observation, to unite people and express complaints. In the family, they teach you about how to serve your parents, and in social life they teach you about how to serve your emperor.” In this sense, the poems, often performed as songs, were applied as instrument to cultivating one’s morality both for individuals’ person-making and for the establishment and maintenance of a good state. Hence, in the tradition of Confucian interpretation, *the Book of Songs* gave rise to the view of “poetry expresses will” in the mainstream tradition of literary discourse and artistic creation and criticism.

The other origin of the aestheticization of Chinese ethics should be the book *the Songs of Chu*, a new style of poetry that emerged in the State of Chu in South China in the 4th century B.C., mainly upholding traditional Taoist thought and retaining vital for its charming features and powerful influence on Chinese culture. With rich witchcraft as the original religious background and folk songs, music and the folk literature of the southern State of Chu as its literary forms, this genre of poetry was also called “Southern Style” or “Southern Sound”. *The Songs of Chu* consists of poems with less regular rules and prose with relatively looser sentences, in contrast with *The Book of Songs* that features the poetry in North China. As the creator and most outstanding writer of *the Songs of Chu*, Qu Yuan was also known as a loyal representative of cardinal principles of Chinese moral cause concerning his illumination of the political and ethical issues in this book. Consequently, the poetic image thinking mode and expressions of *the Songs of Chu* become one of the classical styles to convey the moral doctrines, the other being *the book of songs*. These two books exert great impacts on the content and styles of the mainstream Chinese arts and art criticism, known as Rhythmic prose popular in Han Dynasty (hanfu), poems in Tang Dynasty (tang shi), ci Poetry in Song Dynasty (song ci) and drama in Yuan Dynasty (yuanqu), etc..

Hence, in later centuries, the poetic cultivation adds artistic appeal to the moral doctrines and has profound influence on the spread of ethic conceptions. *The book of songs* and *the Songs of Chu* become important references in the development of Chinese ethical thoughts, mainly in the following three aspects: (1) The style of language expressions and mode of thinking set a classical paradigm for the upper-class men to follow, not only in their frequent quotation of the classical poems in social communication, but also in practicing them as their literary and art creation and criticism; (2) the poems are not only presented in diverse ceremonies and celebrations both for the ruling classes and the ordinary people, but also popular in the daily life, which has become an essential part in private life and in their collective life for their socialization; (3) the classical poems and prose serve as key media to conduct aesthetic and ethic education for self-enhancing and maintenance of a good society in Chinese ethic culture.

Consequently, the image thinking mode and poetic expressions are indispensable for circulation of ethic culture. To convey and transmit ethical doctrines, works of philosophy and ethics have been written in poetic styles, such as in ballad, parallel prose and poems, and the literary criticism has been written in poetic notes. Quite different from Western philosophical writing, Chinese philosophical texts have a suggestiveness, paradoxical, aesthetic and concise quality. In this sense, an aesthetic state or way of human life is achieved and highly appreciated in classical Chinese philosophy, literature and aesthetic criticism.

In the aestheticization of Chinese ethic culture, one of the most important means is to take up literary works and aesthetic image as its approaches to cultivating virtues for pursuing the realm and the inspiration comes in this way, which has great power for the sake of internalization of moral conceptions. Consequently, it works in a spectacular way just as Yan Yu (trans., 1992) put it: “Where they are subtle, there is a limpid and sparkling quality that can never be quite fixed and determined like tones in the empty air, or color in a face, or moonlight in the water, or an image in a mirror. The words are exhausted, but the meaning is never exhausted.” These remarks suggest that the unique Chinese cultural reasoning and judgment underlie in the poetic and symbolic languages through the poly-semantic and fuzzy aesthetic implications, which has become the cognitive media to convey ethics.

The illustration above describes the cognitive basis and conventional practice of the poetic way for the aestheticization of Chinese culture. Emphasis is placed on multi-dimensional orientations of ambiguous and connotative images. For the sake of both person-making and stability of the state, this way of thinking is not only sort of reflective awareness in speculative philosophy, but also a style of aesthetic living for the governing class, scholars and average folk people.

Due to the aesthetic approach, paradoxical multi-dimensions of poetic wisdom make it possible and reasonable to bring the Daoism and Confucianism together to cultivate people's morality for the coming into being of a "good" person and for the final establishment and maintenance of a good state. The bottom line of this approach is the possibility that the Confucians and Taoists contribute to the regulation of moral personality through aesthetic means in different domains on the basis of complementary advantages. Definitely, cultivating the moral personality through aesthetic means is not limited to Chinese traditions. In the extremely complicated longstanding cultures of China, however, it gives rise to a unique circulating personality by the cooperation and interaction of the two seemingly paradoxical schools, in which, the notion of Confucian home-state oneness works for the harmony between individuals and society, and the Taoist freedom mentality for building the harmony between human beings and the nature. In this way, the final being of a harmonious personality and an inclusive national culture are accomplished through the holistic mentality transferring between the two.

To Confucians, moralities are idealized as "the true gentleman personalities": a kind of spirit to shoulder the social responsibility, whose gradual undergoing can be formulized as "rectifying their heart, cultivating individuals, regulating their families, ordering their states and illustrating their virtues throughout their kingdom". Such a doctrine emphasizes the process of person-making, and ultimately the establishment and maintenance of a good state, which is based on the moral principle of the oneness of home and state as the core of Confucian ethical politics. Right for such a destination, since Zhou Dynasty, the association of rituals and art has been institutionalized as the proceedings of moral cultivation to serve politics. The reason why Confucius often referred to *the book of songs* as a textbook to conduct his teaching is that the book had established the paradigm of the perfect ethical model to serve his State in Zhou Dynasty. For Confucianism, ritual propriety and the practice of arts such as music and poetry mainly assume the political functions: the implementation of moral cultivation, conveying the state kingcrafts and the evaluation of political policies rather than artistic appreciation. It is in this sense that their aesthetic strategies are engaged, which is typically revealed in Confucius's three teaching stages: to find inspiration in the Odes, to take your place through ritual, and to achieve perfection with music. In essence, through such three hierarchies of artistic nurturing for the final being of Confucian moralities, such factors as the odes, songs, melodies and rhymes are related to the ethical conceptions: benevolence, harmony, mean, piety, ethical order of importance or seniority so that people's thought and behavior can be regulated through the aesthetic enlightening. Eric C. Mullis (2007) put it:

"For Confucius, since ritual was essential in bringing about social harmony and since the arts were seen as an important component of ritual, the arts, too, were seen as instrumental in actualizing two interrelated social ends: self-cultivation and social harmony".(100)

For the sake of the interaction between music, odes and rituals, the three elements are integrated in rituals and ceremonies; in everyday life, the former two elements are often melted together. In this process, the presupposed moral principles are reaching the bottom of one's heart so it can quickly cultivate his soul. In Confucian view music must follow rules, that is, the cry of the osprey expresses joy without becoming licentious, and expresses sorrow without falling into excessive pathos. Such a prototype of music performance is viewed as the proper ethical standard to convey the conception of the Golden Mean (zhongyong) or to be the normal scale of the stressed harmony between body and mind, between individuals, between nature and man, and between individuals and society.

In this sense, the process has internalized the morality to achieve the finish of his ethical personalities, even the ideal personalities, which drives one to become the person instructing the ordinary people and guiding social morals, arranging from the social moral trend to the national security and orders.

If Confucian moral practice is taken to be ideal of ethics, its inadequacy is thereby revealed: The political and social orientation will make it an insufficient condition for the multi-dimensions of one's morality and nature. What's more, with arts and aesthetics descended as appendage of parochial political utility, its moralization is sure to stifle the development of Chinese arts and become the lulling instrument of the governing class.

To be against Confucian moral values such as benevolence (humanity), righteousness, and propriety, Taoists take a subversive stand to the Confucian social norms and ritual proprieties. They intend to rise above the narrow and restricted homo- and anthropocentric view of life, art and ethics so that man and nature will merge to reach the understanding of the infinite, the living soul of world. Only in this way, can the beauty in nature and the elegance in spirit merge.

For Taoists, a virtue, which is essential to any practice whether it is in arts and aesthetics or in life experience, should be consistent with law of nature based on the following philosophical logic: “The more restrictions and prohibitions there are in the world, the poorer grow the people. The more inventions and weapons the people have, the more troubled is the State. The more cunning and skill man has, the more startling events will happen. The more laws and mandates are enacted, the more there will be thieves and robbers. Therefore the wise man says: I practice non-action, and the people of themselves reform. I love quietude, and the people of themselves become righteous. I initiate no policy, and the people of themselves become rich. I desire nothing, and the people of themselves become simple.” (Hu Shih, 1922) In these circumstances, human and nature constitute a harmonious wholeness, which has become our tradition to worship heaven and consider nature as our guide.

Nature fosters the virtues for human beings. In essence, “nature” has two senses: “following the law of being what it is” and “taking no action yet leaving nothing undone”, illuminating a natural human existence of living an aesthetic and free life. The first sense is the basic law to obey, for Daoism worship the doctrine of “Man follows the law of the Earth; the Earth follows its law of Heaven; Heaven follows its law from the Tao. The law of the Tao is its being what it is.” Such a tenet was intended to instruct that human beings should live with heaven, earth and other living beings harmoniously without attempt to conquer and control nature, and regard everything as an equal being as it is “Heaven and Earth coexist with man, and all creations are one with him.” These remarks reveal all creatures are equal beings with “anybody” only as one member of the same kind, sharing the absolute equality. Such a view is perfectly illustrated in the mutual transformation between man and nature in a story: Once Chuang Chou dreamt he became a butterfly, proud and self-satisfied, flitting and fluttering around. He didn’t know he himself was Chuang Chou. Waking up all of a sudden, he found he was Chuang Chou, sure and unmistakable. But he wondered whether it was Chuang Chou who had dreamt to be butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming to be Chuang Chou. Between Chuang Chou and a butterfly there must be some distinction! This is called the Transformation of Things. In this sense, it tends to tell that Daoism embodies the equilibrium in an integration of ethics and aesthetics, in which, mutual love, sincere respect and real equality are not only enjoyed, but also are aestheticized and sublimated in the bilateral communication.

On such philosophical basis, the human-world relationship is above all stressing on the good terms on the contrary to anthropocentrism in the modern Western culture, which has been based on an oppositional view “man against the rest of the world” (Wolfgang Welsch, 2006). In Taoist sense, all things have their proper positions and become their own owners, which can be seen as the prerequisite for the establishment of real equal relationship between man and nature. Only under such circumstances, can the real harmonious relationship among human beings be established.

As far as *how to live* as the Grand Basic Question of ethics is concerned, the Confucianism develops rituals and arts to convey social ethical culture for its political utilization while the Daoism follows a nature-obeying doctrine toward life and arts with emphasis on the balance between humankind and nature. It seems that the two schools are concerned about the different direction towards its ideal ethical orders. However, their different moral cultivation can create an all-embracing mix through aesthetic and artistic transformation for both of them taking the establishment and maintenance of a good person and a good state as an ideal of social harmony. Karl-Heinz Pohl’s (2006) notes may well unfold the logical basis and the essence of the inclusive cultural pattern of China:

“(1) A tradition of expressing things and reasoning issues by way of analogue. (2) We can observe a balancing or harmonizing quality everywhere in Chinese ways of communication, such as the love for parallelisms. This also entails the tendency of not seeing things as mutually exclusive according to the either/or dichotomy, but inclusive according to the both/both pattern (Yin-Yang pattern). (3) This inclusiveness, finally, concerns another amazing ability ..... depending on the point of view—of seeing identities where we inclined to see differences.” (106)

Right in this sense, we see both Daoism and Confucianism takes harmony as the guiding standard in all things large and small in spite of treading different paths; right in this sense, it provides the possibility for both of the schools to act complementarily and interactively to achieve the flexible and fluxional personalities and tolerant nationalities, because they rationalized each symbolized virtue entailed in the poetic images. For example, they both take “water” to exemplify virtues. Lao Tzu holds “The highest virtue is like water. Its benevolence lies in its benefitting all things without striving for its own, to the contrary, tending to be at the lower place which everyone dislikes.”

Such a retreating standpoint was empowered with moral privileges embodied in the image of “water”. In Lao Tzu’s further reiteration, with its gentleness one can be bold; with its economy one can be liberal; shrinking from taking precedence of others, one can become a vessel of the highest honor. The possessors of such three virtues can achieve the greatness of Dao and even guarantee the national peace. This is what they called the Taoist spirit of “taking no action yet leaving nothing undone”. As for Confucianism, Confucius once said the wise take joy in rivers (referring to “water” in the original term of Confucius), while the Good take joy in mountains. In brief, “water” symbolizes the entrepreneurial spirit, the open conception and active mind in social and official affairs, while “mountain” symbolizes inclusiveness and stability. Only by possessing such two kinds of virtues can the real moral personalities come into being. Here, “water” and “mountain” do not only stand for the exact virtues but also a thinking of analogue, a balance of rhetoric and complementary inclusiveness, which emphasize a reconciled spirit of enterprising and consolidation. Hence, the conceptions of Confucian and Taoist ethics co-exist in the same metaphorical image, by which man tend to attain the fundamental cultivation alternatively in the process of person-making for the final being of a good person and a good State.

On the most fundamental level, three meaningful dimensions are indispensable, cooperative and interactive, contributing to circulations and transformation of morality between Daoism and Confucianism. First, the Confucianism emphasizes aesthetic strategies to meet the social requirement based on the conception of home-state oneness of molding the consistency of the national spirit while the Daoism emphasizes a natural lifestyle of human existence: the equal relationship between man and nature and the spiritual transcendence to uplift oneself and go beyond secular life. The two schools are not towards two absolute counterposing extremes. Instead, they will transfer into the other side accordingly: When the Confucians feel frustrated or be amid the disastrous circumstances in the pursuit of their official career, they will choose Daoism as thinking mode to settle down and calm down their ambition while Taoists will choose to serve the government when in need.

Second, both of Confucian culture and Taoist thought intend to better the society. Confucianism tend to maintain a sort of social collectivism, in which individuals must be subject to the collective, partial and local interests to the overall situation and the national interests, best illustrated in the motto: “If poor, they attended to their own virtue in solitude; if advanced to dignity, they made the whole kingdom virtuous as well.”(Mencius, trans., 2011) Taoists take the individual as a thing in itself, regarding the perfectness and freedom of his life as the highest spiritual pursuit, which can be seen as a proper individualism in pursuit of rational self-interest without injury to the public interest, that is, never seeking personal ends at the expense of others and the state. As a matter of fact, in most cases, man may regulate himself between individuals and the society and strike a balance in the right situations if possible.

Third, Confucianism tends to stress on the humanization of nature while Daoism tends to put the naturalization of human beings into practice, both leading to the social stability and national security. Confucianism reinforces the way of aesthetic cultivation to serve the hierarchical institutions through etiquette education and artistic enlightenment. Against the constraints of the social hierarchy, Taoists advocate the moral principles of equality, offering as a tribute without struggling to get anything in return, being tolerant and making a concession, and living harmoniously among all creatures. The naturalization of human beings means real equality, respect and care between man and nature, the appreciation of the great nature and enjoyment of man, oneness of society and nature. In this sense, nature, society and man are integrated into one, in which, an amazing equilibrium is established between the Dao of nature, moralities and social politics in the free state of aesthetic existence. Consequently, such equilibrium is supposed to become a kind of huge cohesive force to guarantee social stability in the long term.

### ***Conclusion***

Shown from the Confucian and Taoist stance mentioned above on the relationship between aesthetic and ethic values in Chinese culture, the distinctive way of looking may arouse the awareness of the conceptions specific to China, the non-western themes in the intersection of aesthetics and cultures that have been omitted or marginalized in the West, which would enrich the conceptions of cross-cultural communication in the era of globalization.

In essence, the Confucian school mainly tends to cultivate “true gentleman personalities” who can unify their home and the State through the notion of “sageliness with and kingliness without” while the Taoist school contributes to natural existing law between man and nature.

The aestheticization of Chinese ethic culture plays a major role in accelerating the process of person-making and integrating the paradoxical ideological moral conceptions advocated by the two schools, whose doctrines are actually meeting the inner needs of human beings as part of the natural motivation. The absence of each will result in the ultimate malposition of true spiritual refuge in the internal level. On the one hand, such aestheticization demonstrates the efficient ways of seeking balanced moral personalities for both individuals' poetic dwelling and maintenance of his social relationship. To respond to the challenges of how to guide and mold our morality and how to evaluate what is "good" life in this postmodern society, the aesthetic approach may be or should be one of the critical, or perhaps the most crucial strategies. On the other hand, the aestheticization of Chinese ethics embodied in both Confucianism and Taoism as the poetic way has great and everlasting power concerning how to live a life aesthetically.

From the perspective of the complementary moral personalities transformed between Taoism and Confucianism discussed above, it is evident that the aestheticization of ethics in Chinese culture is an essential part in the personality-cultivation process instead of abstract moral didacticism. Furthermore, it functions more significantly for cultivating the sense of the individuals in the society to serve the national dominance and social stabilities as the mainstream ideology. Emphasis is placed on the maintenance of national consolidation and the well-being of individuals in the central aims. In this way, the process of person-making remains an open conception of circulating in flux interchangeably. Investigating the essential component of such an aesthetic strategy is of value to make one's existence beautiful and prosperous through affection-practical and spontaneous activities to reach the moral regulation.

On this account, Daoism tends to regard the humankind and nature as a whole through integration of individuals, society and nature. Chuang Tzu described a lot of disabled but respectable persons, tending to tell us, beautiful or ugly, complete or defected, gains or loss, blessing or misfortune, all are the result of "the law of the Tao follows its being what it is", and any one is not bestowed the right to impair the free state and completeness of other beings and himself. Should we devote our cultural research to larger public concerns and to the universe as a whole, animate or inanimate?

Confronting a radically different culture, we become conscious that culture itself is a semiotic system of all sorts of interrelated elements that can be, that even need to be, translated or interpreted well. As a consequence, the values, models and ways of aestheticization of Chinese ethic culture should be emphasized in cross-cultural teaching and communication concerning bridging it with other cultures.

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