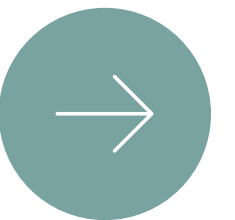


Philosophy as an Art of Living

An interpretation of Confucianism from an Aesthetic Approach

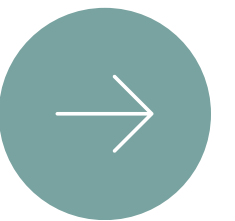
Gloria Luque Moya
(Universidad de Málaga, Spain)



Introduction

- Confucian philosophy is often regarded as a moral tradition and closely identified with a small set of ethical concepts based on a limited interpretation of a long-standing tradition.
- However, we can reconsider Confucianism as a school of thought concerned with the interaction of specific people in particular contexts, which involves the human creative dimension.
- The aim of this presentation is to analyze the reinvention of the Confucian tradition from its origins.

The role of creativity



The role of creativity

- Confucian philosophy is not systematic thinking, but open, emergent and contextual, where creativity plays an important role.
- There is a sense of creativity expressed in "the continuity of personal experience and the world" through terms such as *dao* (道), *cheng* (誠), *chengyi* (誠意), *xiushen* (修身), *tian* (天), *taiyi* (太一), *taiji* (太極), *yinyang* (陰陽), and so on.

The role of creativity

Dao
(道)

"The active project of road-making"

Chengyi
(誠意)

"A creative world requires human creativity as self-actualization"


Xiushen
(修身)

a creative way of interact with the world.



The role of creativity

Dao can be defined as the active project of road-making. And this process has two broad meanings: firstly, it alludes to “the origin of everything”; and secondly, it implies “the paths that people later walked on.”



The role of creativity

- The first meaning implies the Confucian ontology: a view of nature as a cosmos, a process by which the universe is continually self-generating.
- That is, Confucianism has no need of the idea of God, but a concept of the world as an ongoing process of creativity itself.

"The method of *Qian* is to change and transform, so that everything obtains its correct nature as appointed (by the mind of Heaven); and (thereafter the conditions of) great harmony are preserved in union." (*Yi Jing* 1:1)

The role of creativity

- And creativity is not only the main feature of nature but also the fuel for civilization.
- Human beings are continually realizing oneself as a person, and this kind of realization is fundamentally creative.
- For Confucius, the human model of action is ritual. However, this is characterised by its plasticity, its constant change.

“Someone who does not understand the propensity of circumstances (*ming*) has no way of becoming an exemplary person (*junzi* 君子). (不知命，無以為君子也。)” (Confucius 1999, 20:3).

The role of creativity

This kind of purposeful creativity can be found also in the *Daxue* and the notion of *chengyi* (誠意):

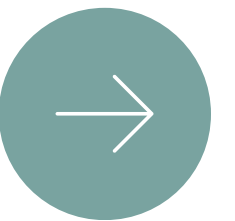
Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere (creative) in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere (creative) in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things. Things being investigated, knowledge became complete. Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere (creative). Their thoughts being sincere (creative), their hearts were then rectified. (*Daxue* 2)

The role of creativity

The notion of *xiushen* also introduces the creative character of Confucian thought:

Thus, exemplary persons (*junzi*) cannot but **cultivate their persons. In cultivating their persons, they cannot but serve their kin. In serving their kin, they cannot but realize human conduct. And in realizing human conduct, they cannot but realize tian.** (*Zhongyong*, 21)

Philosophy as a *modus vivendi*




Philosophy as a *modus vivendi*

- For the Greeks and Romans philosophy was not merely a subject of study but a way of life.
- Confucianism can be understood a *modus vivendi* from an aesthetic approach.
- Hall and Ames were the forerunners of this type of interpretation, defending that Confucius develops an aesthetic understanding of the world, an *ars contextualis*, in which all things are in mutual interdependence in particular contexts.



Philosophy as a *modus vivendi*

- Haiming Wen has proposed an interpretation as a *creatio in situ*, that is, thinking every event emerges through an unfolding process. (Wen, 2009, 15)
 - Firstly, creation comes from the interaction between yin and yang.
 - Then, the process continues with the birth of human beings and their creative interactions with the world.
- 

Philosophy as a *modus vivendi*

- Recently Peimin Ni has researched about the Confucian aim of learning from an aesthetic appreciation.
- The highest aim of Confucian learning is an aesthetic ideal, “is to reach a state of aesthetic enjoyment and creativity.” (Ni, 2021, 170)
- Confucian thinkers wants to cultivate a lively way of life which follows his or her heart’s wishes and hit the proper target all the time.

Philosophy as a *modus vivendi*

- These kinds of interpretations advocate that the relationship between human beings and the world is an ongoing process, characterized by the creativity of contextualizing intentions and events.
- Therefore, we do not have a speculative theory, but a philosophy as a *modus vivendi*.
- Confucianism is a dynamic school of thought which attempts to understand its present.

Philosophy as a *modus vivendi*

- Confucian thinkers are thus involved in a participatory process in which they seek to achieve a harmonious relationship.
- And not only Confucius or Mencius, who are considered to be the founding fathers of Confucianism, but Confucianism itself can be seen from this creative approach, which brings continuity to its thinking.

Conclusions

Confucian

1. The role of human creativity
2. Confucian History revised
3. A global philosophy?



Thank you

Gloria Luque Moya (University of Málaga, Spain)

(glorialm@uma.es)

