

Behind Harmony and Justice

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Abstract

The proposition of “harmony higher than justice” was initiated by Li Zehou in 2007. It implies a hierarchical consideration rather than value assessment, thus schemed to reveal at least five aspects: (1) Harmony on this account is to be preconditioned by justice. (2) Harmony largely stems from human emotion instead of human rationality. (3) There are three forms of harmony in the societal, personal and eco-environmental domains. (4) What makes the three forms of harmony possible involves some key notions that vouchsafe a theoretical ground and a primary part of the “Chinese religious morality”. (5) The morality of this kind procures a regulative principle to facilitate an appropriate constitution of “modern social ethics” with regard to harmony as the ultimate destination of the future society and world alike. Accordingly, the proposition can be employed to further develop “the Chinese application” and impact “the Western substance”.

Keywords: Li Zehou, harmony, justice, three forms of harmony, Chinese religious morality, modern social ethics

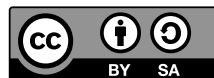
Onkraj harmonije in pravičnosti

Izvleček

Predpostavko o tem, da je »harmonija višja od pravičnosti«, je Li Zehou izpostavil leta 2007. Bolj kot vrednostno sodbo pomeni ta predpostavka zlasti hierarhično vzpostavitev, ki se deli na pet vidikov: (1) V tem kontekstu je pravičnost predpogoj harmonije. (2) Harmonija izhaja predvsem iz človeških čustev in ne toliko iz racionalnosti. (3) Obstajajo tri vrste harmonije na družbeni, osebni in okoljski ravni. (4) To, kar te tri vrste harmonije omogoča, je povezano z določenimi ključnimi pojmi, ki zagotavljajo vzpostavitev teoretske podlage in primarne vloge »konfucijanske verske morale«. (5) Tovrstna moralnost predstavlja regulativni princip, ki olajšuje ustrezno konstituiranje »moderne družbene etike«, ki se nanaša na harmonijo kot najvišji cilj za prihodnost družbe in sveta. V skladu s tem lahko to predpostavko uporabimo tudi za nadaljnji razvoj »kitajske funkcije« in za vpliv na »zahodno substanco«.

Ključne besede: Li Zehou, harmonija, tri vrste harmonije, kitajska verska moralnost, moderna družbena etika

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In his recent ponderings over East-West ethics from a transcultural horizon, Li Zehou brings forth the proposition of “harmony higher than justice” with reference to the ideal of classical Confucianism and the future of human society. Following Li’s line of thought, it is assumed that the proposition refers to at least five things: (1) Harmony is to be preconditioned by justice. (2) Harmony largely stems from human emotion instead of human rationality. (3) There are three forms of harmony in the collective, personal and eco-environmental spheres. (4) What makes the three forms of harmony possible involves some key notions that vouchsafe a theoretical ground and a primary part of the “Chinese religious morality” (*zhong guo zong jiao dao de*). (5) The morality of this kind procures a regulative principle to facilitate an appropriate constitution of “modern social ethics” (*xian dai she hui lun li*) with regard to harmony as the ultimate destination of the future society and world alike.

What is the ultimate *telos* then? Pragmatically speaking, the proposition itself is schemed to shed light on two entities: the “Chinese application” (*zhong yong* 中用) and the “Western substance” (*xi ti* 西体). That is to say, it is employed to further develop “the application of Chinese learning” (*zhong xue wei yong* 中学为用), and exert more impact upon “the substance of Western learning” (*xi xue wei ti* 西学为体) according to specific situations and contexts. This discussion looks at the subtle connections and interactions between harmony and justice in view of Li’s philosophical ethics and ontological approach. In addition, it is intended to reveal what matters behind the hypothesis of harmony in light of some key elements of “Chinese religious morality”.

Harmony and Justice in Question

The idea of “harmony higher than justice” (*he xie gao yu zheng yi*) was first advocated by Li Zehou in 2007 (Li 2010, 158).¹ He then briefly discussed it during an interview that appeared in his *Ethics* (2010, 188–95). In his publication *A Theory of Anthropo-Historical Ontology* from 2016, it is slightly modified in Chinese by changing “*zheng yi*” (正义) into “*gong zheng*” (公正), and it hitherto appears as such (*he xie gao yu gong zheng*) (Li 2016, 151–57).² This modification attempts to deprive “*zheng yi*” (文本) of its emotional implication rooted in the word *yi* (义) as righteous obligation,³ and to justify “*gong zheng*” (justice) in terms of impartial

1 “*Tan ‘ce yin zhi xin,’*” 谈“恻隐之心” (*Of ‘Compassion’*) (in Li 2010, 158). The original expression is “和谐高于正义” in Chinese.

2 The modified expression is “和谐高于公正” in Chinese.

3 According to Li Zehou, the Chinese notion of *yi* (义) is inaccurately translated into either righteousness or justice. It might be better rendered as obligation. Such obligation must be appropriate above all because it is associated with reasoning but stems from emotion. (see Li 2010, 190)

reasoning and impersonal judgment without any emotional engagement. As noted in his new book, *A Sequel to Ethics*, it is rephrased as “emotion-based harmony higher than rationality-based justice” (*qinggan hexie gaoyu lixing gongzheng*), and further explained during a series of related seminars and interviews (Li 2017, 55–59).⁴

The given proposition is most likely conducive to two main interpretations: One may take it as a value assessment on an ethical basis, which gives more credit to harmony than justice. For it assumes that harmony, as a supreme paradigm of the political ideal in Confucianism, is more significant and difficult to attain than justice, a cardinal imperative of social ethics. The other may treat it as a hierarchical consideration, which claims justice as a principle of “modern social ethics” and a prerequisite for harmony in the network of human relationships. That is to say, only when justice is full-fledged in practice can harmony be feasible and attainable to a significant extent. Frankly speaking, Li’s proposition strikes me as a hierarchical consideration rather than value assessment. By “hierarchical consideration” I mean placing the role of harmony on a level over that of justice according to the hierarchy of human needs. In other words, it does not really present a value judgment with the intention of figuring out which of the two concepts is more important or noteworthy than the other. Instead, it implies a critical necessity with regard to the human condition in one sense, and in another a hypothetical sequence wherein the attainment of harmony presupposes the exercise of justice in its all-round range.

The inherent logic between harmony and justice can be sorted out amid a number of explicative statements. According to Li Zehou, the notion of harmony is drawn from classical Confucianism with regard to its rites-music tradition and socio-political *guanxi-ism* as relationism.

Although it is somewhat idealized, harmony is characterized with a clear and final goal, emphasizing that humans are not merely rational and social beings constrained by norms and institutions, but also emotional and relational beings in favour of psychological concordance. “Justice” comes from “rationality” whereas harmony from “emotion”. Without being normalized by this “rationality”, such “emotion” could be in no way acquirable at all. This can be termed as “moderated emotio-rational synthesis” (*he qing he li*) that corresponds to assurance of “emotional understandability and reasonable acceptability” (*tong qing da li*). (Li 2010, 190)

4 The rephrased expression is “情感和谐高于理性公正” in Chinese.

In any case, “emotion” is normalized by “rationality” such that it is no longer primordial and instinctive at all. It stands for human emotion instead of its animal counterpart. It is therefore alleged to be unattainable in a humanized manner resulting from human enculturation.

Further on, Li points out that the proposition is directed to the future of human society, and meanwhile proclaims it as part of China’s contribution to the future of the world. Its philosophical basis is “the emotional root” as he articulated in the late 1990s. Still, he is aware of the fact that “the right is prior to the good” in respect to the views of the good and the evil promoted in various religions, cultures and philosophies. This is chiefly because justice, public reason and “modern social ethics” are rather elusive in the socio-political life of individual citizens in China. On this account, people must keep alert against utilizing the doctrine of harmony to conceal or prevent the solid development of justice-based “modern social ethics” and its institutional system (Li 2010, 194).

As discerned in his argument, Li seems to be preoccupied with a transcultural reflection in this domain. He links harmony with “emotion” and “situation” from the Chinese sources, and identifies justice with “rationality” and “social contract” from the Western ones. Deliberately, he makes a particular reference to the Dao for further rectification. The Dao as human way is presented as originating from emotion as the most essential aspect of human nature. With the passage of time, the Dao has evolved into a total sum of rites comprising laws, regulations, propriety rituals, social mores, codes of conduct and so forth. Simply put, “rites” also stem from “emotion”, and are taken as precepts to shape the moral acts of human individuals. In a gregarious society, “rites” are adopted and exercised as social norms and ethical principles to coordinate human relationships. As regards the mind-heart of every human being, such “rites” are there to have a commanding influence upon one’s “emotion” and specific “situation” altogether.

As a rule and over a long history, harmony has been recommended as an ideal paradigm of good governance in Chinese heritage, and justice has been worshiped as the most important foundation stone of good governance in the West. For example, Confucius celebrates harmony as the final objective of wise leadership. Aristotle respects justice as comprehensive of all other cardinal virtues. In reality, what is comparatively weaker in China now is persistently stronger in the West with respect to justice, public reason and “modern social ethics” overall. Noticeably, justice is most elementary in that it provides human society with an ontological basis with regard to its organization and administration alike. In the long course of human history, the vital role of justice has been ostensibly evinced and embraced ever since the milestone of the ancient Athenian polity and its healthy democracy. It has proved to be the keystone for both reciprocal

collaboration and the common good. Hence without an adequate exercise of justice, a human community could neither last long nor retain its order. Still, justice is not enough to ensure the efficacious management of human affairs in their entirety. For humans are both rational and emotional beings by nature. Their varied needs range from low to high, encompassing the physical, social, affective, cognitive, aesthetic and spiritual aspects. As ascertained in principle, justice is grounded on rationality and helps secure social order in particular; harmony is grounded on emotion and facilitates human affinity in essence. Both of them are desirable in light of the varied human needs. However, it follows that justice is to be taken up as the first priority to secure social order, and harmony is to be pursued afterwards as a *promis-de-bonheur* for the future of human society and the world alike.

In practice in the *status quo* of China, what is more than necessary first of all is to reinforce justice and apply it to harnessing the frequency of wrongdoings and consolidating the foundation of social order, especially in the rural regions across the country. In my view, it would be better to think about how to exercise justice before harmony in the present-day context. Otherwise, it will be less constructive than expected. If it is necessary to deploy the general guideline of harmony prior to the solid operation of social justice, then the possible outcome will be like building a castle on the sand, as well as creating obstacles on the path to justice-based social institutions and “modern social ethics”. This is dramatically exemplified through the lessons gained from the large-scale experimentation of “constructing a harmonious society” launched in the past decade in China (Wang 2019, 131–34).

It is argued that Li seems to hold a paradoxical stance to justice on the one hand, and keeps himself in favour of harmony on the other hand. Thus he affirms the inevitable service of rationality-based justice in the scope of public reason and “modern social ethics”. He even proceeds to identify justice as the determinant premise of approaching harmony. Yet he remains rather sceptical about rationality supremacy in the Western mentality. He never hesitates to criticize the negative and rampant aspects of instrumental rationality, and claims, implicitly or explicitly, that it is not enough to have rationality-based justice alone to cope with all human affairs in the most appropriate manner possible. In order to address this problem, he moves on to formulate a deliberate extension of his theory of emotion as substance, and develops an alternative to counterbalance rationality-oriented supremacy and justice-bound worship. He repeatedly proposes the conception of emotion-based harmony, and stakes out its unique role in the enrichment of human relationships and the construction of social symbiosis. As far as I have seen, Li thinks over all this with reference to his final purpose. That is, he tries to render the positive aspects of the Chinese

way of thinking and value system into an indispensable and complementary part of today's social ontology. Moreover, he takes it as a fruitful contribution to humankind at confrontation with varied challenges in human encounters. In short, he attempts to develop a holistic paradigm of human co-existence by virtue of transformational creation from a transcultural outlook.

Li's constant efforts in this regard are partly embodied in his pragmatic consideration of the interconnection between harmony and justice, as is more clearly expounded in his work from 2017. Here he affirms that harmony is higher than justice in view of the reciprocity of human relationships and the future of human society. But at the current stage of social reality, justice stays in the first priority as it bears a clear-cut distinction between right and wrong, and produces the virtues of equity and reasonability, among others. That is why harmony can neither substitute for nor manipulate justice, because harmony is only attainable on the basis of justice *par excellence*. However, harmony can be utilized as a principle to regulate an appropriate constitution [of "modern social ethics"], and attributed to educating people by morality in contrast with justice that is used to govern the state through rule of law (Li 2017, 49). Subsequently, Li goes further to clarify the point as follows: The link between harmony and justice is the same as that between the rule of law and rule by humans. Harmony can be considered only when justice has come into effect. Likewise, rule by humans can be deployed only when the rule of law has been carried out in practice. It could be rather dangerous to advocate harmony and rule by humans at a time when justice and the rule of law have not yet been actualized (*ibid.*, 60). As for "rule by humans" in a positive sense, it is intended to be humane governance by wise and virtuous leadership, which has been glorified as a political ideal of "sageliness within and kingliness without" (*nei sheng wai wang*) in Confucianism. With regard to the potentially "dangerous" tendency, it is supposed that this approach might go astray so far as to interrupt or suspend the ongoing legal reform to modernize China, and eventually prompt a throwback to a semi-feudal past. To note in passing, what Li Zehou emphasizes is his constant concern for the "rule of law supplemented by human emotion" (Li 2010, 193).

Notwithstanding the explication given above, what haunts us again on this occasion are such queries as the following: why does "harmony" count so much in the time to come? What does it mean specifically to human becoming and social development? To what extent is it related to the "emotio-rational structure"? What "guiding service" is it referring to when compared with the social function of justice? How is it possible to apply it to human relationships and human-nature interactions? So on and so forth. Naturally, all this leads to the question of what "harmony" is in Li's philosophizing, and we will consider this below.

The Three Forms of Harmony

Reconsidering what John Rawls (1971) and Michael Sandel (2010) have argued about the modes and limits of justice, Li Zehou outlines his “philosophical ethics” with particular reference to the Confucian tradition. In contrast to the “common good” and the “good life” promoted by Sandel, Li himself champions three forms of harmony (文本), as follows:

It pertains to the harmony of human relationships, the harmony of body and mind, and the harmony of Heaven and humankind (i.e. natural eco-environment and human race). They are associated with “emotio-rational structure” and “guanxi-ism” that serve to “regulate an appropriate constitution” of “modern social ethics”. Moreover, they help maintain the “common good” and the “good life” that stand for the highest level and most fundamental dimension of the continuing human existence. They are therefore the “telos” itself. (Li 2010, 193)

To my understanding, the three forms of harmony hereby represent a critical necessity to improving the *status quo* of the human condition at confrontation with numerous challenges and crises, for instance, social fractures and political in-fights, psycho-cultural problems and suicide, global warming and eco-environmental damage, among many others. In addition, they provide an alternative framework that is not solely teleological in a theoretical sense, but also desirable in a pragmatic one. As for the two assumptions mentioned, the “emotio-rational structure” (*qing li jie gou*) and “guanxi-ism” (*guan xi zhu yi*), they are an important foundation of “Chinese religious morality” in classical Confucianism. In Li, this kind of morality can foster a regulative principle for an appropriate constitution of “modern social ethics” that is rationality-based, instrumentality-oriented, and utility-ridden by nature. Now leaving this topic for later examination, let us focus more on the three forms of harmony and their theoretical grounds.

In my observation, “the harmony of human relationships” can be seen as a remedy to resolve social fractures and political in-fights, “the harmony of body and soul” as a therapy to reduce psycho-cultural problems and suicide, and “the harmony of Heaven and humankind” a solution to global warming and eco-environmental damage. The three forms of harmony appear to engage in three domains: the societal, the personal and the eco-environmental.

First and foremost, let us look at the societal domain in light of “guanxi-ism” underlying Confucian heritage. The new coinage “guanxi-ism” can be well

rendered as “moral relationism”, which conceives of human relationships as moral ones. As applied to the treatment of these relationships in complex social networks, it is deeply rooted in the Chinese mentality and social reality alike, and therefore adopted to contrast with the stereotyped usage of “collectivism” and “individualism” (Li 2017, 27). In short, “guanxi-ism” is emotional and affectionate in kind when directed to the “harmony of human relationships”. Its origin can be traced back to the ancient culture of rites and music that was designed to govern the state and educate the people. As acknowledged in the past, the rites would be a comprehensive synthesis of laws, regulations, propriety rituals, social mores, moral codes and so on. Moreover, they would be a sophisticated system of tenets to set up class stratification and social stability. Some of the tenets still remain influential today. Some examples are the primordial hierarchy of “Heaven, Earth, ruler, ancestors and teachers”, the “five human relationships” (*wu lun*) between “father and son, husband and wife, ruler and minister, elder and younger brothers, peers and friends”, and the “ten moral obligations” (*shi yi*) demanding that

the father be kind to the son; the son be filial to the father; the husband be gentle to the wife; the wife be obedient to the husband; the elder brother be friendly to the younger brother; the younger brother be deferential to the elder brother; the senior be generous to the junior; the junior be compliant with the senior; the ruler be humane to the subject; the subject be loyal to the ruler.

The primordial hierarchy is highlighted in terms of the “three bases” (*san ben*) entrusted to the rites proper. According to Xunzi,

Heaven and Earth are the basis of life, the ancestors are the basis of the family, and rulers and teachers are the basis of order. If there were no Heaven and Earth, how could man be born? If there were no ancestors, how would the family come into being? If there were no rulers and teachers, how would order be brought about? If even one of these were lacking, there would be no safety for man. (Hsun Tzu 1963, 91)

Therefore, the rites advise people to serve the Heaven above and Earth below, respect their ancestors, and revere their rulers and teachers. Noticeably, the act to “serve the Heaven above and Earth below” calls for the virtue of piety, the act to “respect the ancestors” the virtue of filialness, and the act to “revere the rulers and teachers” the virtue of reverence. They are all emotion-based, indicating relational levels of social structure with a quasi-religious touch. Deliberately, Li

replaces “the rulers” by “the nation-state” that requires “the act to love” instead of “the act to revere” (Li 2010, 187–90).⁵ This replacement is more suitable to modern people and social life, for “the rulers” (*jun*) denotes no other than a feudal legacy and historical era.

As it occurs to me, the “five human relationships” are extended from the “three bases”. They form a more sophisticated social network. Respectively, the relationship between father and son is grounded on the virtues of kindness and filial piety, the relationship between husband and wife on the virtues of gentleness and obedience, the relationship between ruler and ministers on the virtues of politeness and devotion, the relationship between the senior and the junior on the virtues of generosity and compliance, and the relationship between peers and friends on the virtues of sincerity and trustworthiness. They are sustained by “human emotions” that are socialized and normalized. Accordingly, human individuals are living intimately within this “*guanxi*” (network of human relationships) without equality. Therein they discover and experience life-meaning, life-value and life-style. The “ten moral obligations” involve more people and more relationships. The scope is tremendously expanded to sustain the harmonious atmosphere in a large community. The virtues are multiplied but remain emotion-based and affection-oriented. They turn out to establish a kind of *guanxi*-ist ethics. If the “three bases”, “five human relationships” and “ten moral obligations” are properly managed through emotional and virtuous bonds, the “harmony of human relationships” is to be effectively nurtured and secured. Even though the social structure or network is consisted in inequality amid family and societal members, it keeps a constant stress on harmony *per se*. According to Li, harmony is emotional. And it is only by means of harmony that the human relationships can truly continue and endure for long. The “ten moral obligations” help rationalize and normalize the physical *eros* of people, thus bringing an “emotio-rational structure” into the “human relationships” in a deontological and reciprocal manner. Naturally, this “emotio-rational structure” varies in accord with different sets of “human relationships”, relationships that are apparently unequal but harmoniously coexistent. In short, Chinese *guanxi*-ist ethics is distinguished from both Greek virtue ethics and Rawls’ “sense of justice”, as both of these are premised by equality and individualism (Li 2017, 54–55).

Nevertheless, Confucianism upholds that the “harmony of human relationships” cannot be completely cultivated on a single track. In actuality, the culture of rites

5 The old hierarchy of “Heaven, Earth, rulers, ancestors and teachers” (*tian di jun qin shi* 天地君亲师) is replaced by a new hierarchy of “Heaven, Earth, nation-state, ancestors and teachers” (*tian di guo qin shi* 天地国亲师). The new hierarchy is taken as part of Chinese religious morality. (see Li 2010, 187–90)

and music is characterized with a two-dimensional service. It is thus convinced that rites impose from without whereas music cultivates from within. Music entails harmony, for music comes from the inner being and originates in the emotions that have been evoked by external things. Then the harmony sought by music has multiple functions. For instance, it underlies the concrete examination of the emotions aroused by things, satisfies the human need for happiness or joyfulness, and facilitates the harmonious concomitance of human relationships for the sake of social order. For this reason,

When music is performed in the ancestral temple of the ruler, and the ruler and his ministers, superiors and inferiors, listen to it together, there are none who are not filled with a spirit of harmonious reverence. When it is performed within the household, and father and sons, elder and younger brothers, listen to it together, there are none who are not filled with a spirit of harmonious kinship. And when it is performed in the community, and old people and young together listen to it, there are none who are not filled with a spirit of harmonious obedience. Hence music brings about complete unity and induces harmony. (Hsun Tzu 1963, 113)

Observably, the three kinds of spirit are endowed with the potential to harmonize human beings from all walks of life. In this regard, musical harmony is structurally similar to the “harmony of human relationships”. The music education in Confucianism works complementarily with the rites education in order to produce harmony. This harmony, according to Li, is very much concerned with its actualization through human emotion. It is not only rational order, but also emotional logic, serving to retain both familial harmony and social harmony (Li 2017, 56–57).

As regards the personal sphere, the “harmony of body and mind” is cultural-cum-psychological on its own. It is largely dependent upon the “emotio-rational structure” that is furnished within human individuals. In Platonism, the body-mind dichotomy stays strong and persistent. Owing to its physical mortality and negative constraint, the body is conjectured as the prison of the mind whereas the mind is assumed to feature immortality and reincarnation according to the “Orphic-Pythagorean conglomerate” (Morgan 1999, 236). Conversely in Chinese tradition, the concept of body-mind oneness (*shen xin he yi*) is always approved of and highly celebrated despite the distinction between them. Such oneness implies body-mind concordance or harmony not only in a psychomotor sense, as is demonstrated in performing martial arts, but in a cultural-psychological sense, as is exposed through the development of “emotio-rational structure”.

According to the Chinese mode of thought, the human body is allegorized as the fountainhead of physical desires for one’s daily necessities, living conditions

and procreation, which may produce problems if not satisfied. The human mind is coupled with the human heart, which serves as the faculty for such cognitive activities as reasoning and thinking. When individuals are dominated by physical desires alone, they will become so greed-ridden and self-centred that they will see themselves but not any others in their own eyes. However, such desires can be enculturated into human emotions by means of human rationality and human culture. Then human emotions get rationalized, moralized or socialized in general, because people are rational, moral and social beings above all. When human emotions are cultivated to a sufficient degree, human individuals will become so considerate and thoughtful that they can see not only themselves but also many others from a reciprocal perspective. When such emotions are exalted to a noble degree, they will most likely become so selfless and altruistic that they will focus more on others than themselves. This process of transforming physical desires into human emotions is the remoulding of the “emotio-rational structure”.

In Li’s opinion, the “emotio-rational structure” is peculiar to human beings alone. It is complex on its own and underlies human nature or human psychology (Li 2016, 648). By the same token, human nature is not physical nature, but humanized nature as an outcome of human culture and human capacity. It is therefore as a matter of “emotio-rational structure” in principle. This structure that is hereby internalized in human nature coordinates human emotions, human capacity, and notions of good or evil (Li 2017, 64). This being the case, the remoulding of “emotio-rational structure” is no other than the building of human nature, because it determines the becoming of the human as human. Human nature is primarily tripartite, involving three interactive and inter-permeating dimensions known as the cognitive, emotional and volitional. The cognitive dimension is chiefly epistemological, the emotional dimension aesthetic, and the volitional dimension moral. They are subtly inter-related to different areas inside the human brain, usually functioning in varied modes, types and manners at distinct levels (*ibid.*, 400).

As a result, these three dimensions lead to the growth of human capacity out of three components. The first is the “construction of reason (rationality)” (*li xing nei gou*) with reference to the epistemological power that enables humans to tackle numbers, logic and so forth. The second is the “solidification of reason” (*li xing ning ju*) with reference to will power that enables humans to behave properly. And the third is the “melting of reason” (*li xing rong hua*) with reference to aesthetic sensibility that enables humans to feel into the beautiful and find out the good and the true (Li 2010, 163). These three components are closely related to the complicated and interwoven connection between emotion and rationality, which in turn enhances the development of the “emotio-rational structure”.

The “emotio-rational structure” of human individuals is regarded as the deep structure of Confucianism. It is a conscious and unconscious complex that mingles

the emotional and rational aspects of human nature into a complicated whole. The two aspects are therefore interacting, interweaving, and inter-permeating (Li 2017, 368). In Li Zehou, the methodology of remoulding the “emotio-rational structure” is chiefly based on a due consideration of “historical specifics” (*li shi ju ti*) and a good command of “proper measure” (*du de ba wo*). In contrast with the “rational supremacy”, the methodology itself neither shares any sympathy with the abstract rational principle that is directly applied to all specific things and situations, nor does it agree with the ethical standards that originate from abstract rationality with so-called universal applicability (Li 2017, 25). As far as I can see, “historical specifics” vary from time to time as well as from situation to situation. They are related to the Chinese idea of emotions evoked by or experienced in specific situations. Hence there are far more specifics than universals in human life, culture, history, and practice. As regards the “proper measure”, it is employed to do right things for particular reasons in specific situations. It is a kind of art, working to coordinate and procure an appropriate proportion of the key elements in order to achieve a good consequence. In this way, when it is applied to remoulding the “emotio-rational structure” of human individuals, for instance, it is prone to create a moderated “emotio-rational” synthesis, say, a harmonious integration of the emotional aspect and its rational counterpart. All this is presumed to make possible the “harmony of body and mind” mentioned above.

To extend the scope of our understanding in this regard, it is worth sparing a few minutes on the Platonic conception of justice with reference to harmony. Herein justice is practically acted out through the just person, and harmony is psychologically displayed through the harmonious personality. The argument is as follows:

One who is just does not allow any part of himself to do the work of another part or allow the various classes within him to meddle with each other. He regulates well what is really his own and rules himself. He puts himself in order, is his own friend, and harmonizes the three parts of himself like three limiting notes in a musical scale—high, low and middle. He binds together those parts and any others may be in between, and from having been many things he becomes entirely one, moderate and harmonious. Only then does he act. And when he does anything, whether acquiring wealth, taking care of his body, engaging in politics, or in private contracts—in all of these, he believes that the action is just and fine that preserves this inner harmony and helps achieve it, and calls it so, and regards as wisdom the knowledge that oversees such actions. And he believes that the action that destroys this harmony is unjust, and calls it so, and regards the belief that oversees it as ignorance. (Plato 1997, 443c-e)

A surface reading of the above-cited passage may lead some people to take the just person as a harmonious being, and correspondingly, to perceive justice as a container of harmony. But this perception appears so ambiguous that it demands clarification at this point. With regard to justice, what threads through *Republic* is how to address and rectify the issue of justice as the most cardinal of all virtues concerning both the character building of the guardians and the good governance of the *kalipolis* as a beautiful city-state. In Plato, justice is essentially two-dimensional: psychological and political. In its psychological dimension, justice seems to be the most important craft of virtue as it includes all other key virtues, including courage, temperance and wisdom. It is principally directed towards one's own self for the sake of becoming a just citizen. In its political dimension, justice is by nature directed towards others involved in the enterprise of the community. It entails the most fundamental craft of ruling in the *kalipolis* and thus points to a regulative principle of the division of labour, a principle that enables everyone to do what he is good at without trespassing into other professions or trades. As hinted in the quote above, the craft of ruling is believed to procure an art of administration and ensure the social order. Teleologically, the craft of ruling and the craft of virtue seem to be distinct from one another, but in practice they are interrelated to some extent because they share something in common. That is, they "both have as their goal the happiness of the one on whom they work. The virtue conferred by the ruling craft is explicitly identified with happiness; the advantage conferred by the craft of virtue is also happiness" (Parry 1996, 91). Moreover, they both take the *psyche* as mind or soul to be their object in spite of their differences in dealing with certain desires.

The *psyche* as their object is no easy matter to handle due to its complicated formation. It therefore calls for harmony to assist them. In a specific formulation, at *Republic* (1997, 435c–441d), Plato reveals the three parts of the *psyche*: reason, appetite and *thymos*. Reason is the first part, associated with one's cognitive ability that is designed to learn the truth and wisdom as real knowledge. It is apt to calculate long-range consequences and consider what should be done or what actions to be taken. The appetite is the second part, and this does not calculate at all. It simply desires what it wants for the sake of immediate satisfaction. It is thus identified with desire or desires. More often than not, reason finds itself at odds with appetite. The *thymos* is the third part, which is usually termed as the spirit. It conventionally mirrors the character of Greek warriors and serves as an aggressive principle impelling one to adventure across rough seas or to fight bravely in a terrible battle. It is purposely made an ally of reason in its conflict with the appetite.

This being the case, there arises the need for harmony. In other words, Plato's tripartite *psyche* requires the role of harmony in order to coordinate and integrate the three parts into a harmonious unity. Otherwise, no craft of virtue could be

produced out of the conflicting parts within the *psyche*, not to speak of the craft of ruling pertaining to the good governance of the whole community. In plain language, if the appetite of the *psyche* wants what it wants as much as each member of the community wants what he or she wants, what will most likely happen to them all in the end? Rampant chaos or awful disorder for certain. Plato is highly aware of the classic conflict between the three parts as one of the fundamental issues of ethics in his worldview, and wishes to provide a resolution of the conflict with his account of virtue. Thus he strongly suggests that the reason do its job to guide the appetite and ally itself with the *thymos*. For reason is related to cognitive ability and knows the Idea or Form of justice as the paradigm of proportion and harmony. Having this knowledge, reason can find out that the proper arrangement of the *psyche* under its guidance is the one that not merely represents the authentic image of the Idea of justice, but also allows each of the three parts to fulfil its appropriate service. In order to attain such objectives, Plato resorts to the notion and function of harmony (*harmonias*) to synthesize (*synarmosanta*) all the three parts of the psyche by having them fit together in unison (*sōphrona kai hērmosmenon*) (Plato 1963, 443b–444c). By so doing, a person is able to “bind together those parts” or integrate the three parts into a whole, “put himself in order,” and “become entirely one, moderate and harmonious”. In addition, one is able to realize the value of being just in the social context. As noted at the end of Book IV of *Republic*, Plato comes along with his spokesperson Socrates to put an emphasis on the value of justice in the *psyche* (ibid., 435b–448e). He reconfirms that justice is valuable in itself for human individuals and in its consequences for the social community. In order to illustrate this, he goes on to analogize the *psyche* to the *polis* by portraying the former as having the same parts as the latter, the same structure, and the same virtues. This eventually leads to class stratification, the division of labour and social ethics depicted in *Republic*.

In the final analysis, the Platonic conception of justice pertains to the craft of virtue and the craft of ruling in the main. The former is mostly psychological whereas the latter political. However, both of them are also ethical or moral. As for the Platonic notion of harmony, it is functionally psychological as is deployed to synthesize the partition of the *psyche* into a harmonious whole under the guidance of reason. On this account, justice cannot be perceived as the container of harmony. Instead, it can be understood as the teleological fruit of harmony as a medium to make the three parts fit together.

Now turning back to the foregoing citation for a second reflection, we can see that justice is the most distinguished craft of virtue and craft of ruling embodied in the person who is just in the pure sense of this term. Being just as such, he is so fair-minded and righteous that he keeps himself in order and harmonizes his own tripartite *psyche*. For example, he works as a musician who harmonizes

the three parts of his *psyche* in either the individual or the social context. Under such circumstances, he seems to bear a sort of “emotio-rational structure” inside himself since the appetite and the spirit are attributed to the emotional category in contrast to its rational counterpart. Nevertheless, in Plato, the rational category is identified with the leading element of controlling whereas the appetite and spirit are identified with the subordinate elements of being controlled. This means the three parts have no equal footing at all. The harmonization of them is accordingly defined as “a natural relation of control and being controlled” in Plato’s terminology.

Then, in Li Zehou, the “emotio-rational structure” indicates a kind of causal relation in one sense, and in the other the emotional and rational are conceived to be synthetic or inseparable, as though they share an equal footing and interdependent connection. When it comes to the “harmony of body and mind” in Li, it is apparently in opposition to the “dichotomy of body and mind (soul)” in Plato. The former emphasizes the oneness between body and mind as it threads through the Chinese heritage of personal cultivation, but the latter denounces the body as “the prison of the mind”, as it exists in the Hellenic tradition of philosophical learning. However, the Platonic mode of thought is more dialectical than straightforward in most cases. In his empirical elucidation, for instance, Plato compares the way of producing justice with that of producing health, and draws out the resemblance between them. In order to produce justice, it is necessary to establish the three parts of the *psyche* in “a natural relation of control and being controlled”; in order to produce health, it is necessary to establish the components of the body in “a natural relation of control and being controlled” (Plato 1963, 444d-e). Even though he distinguishes between the two teleological pursuits, he seems to know that they enlighten each other as though a complementary link arises from the harmonization of the parts of the *psyche* and the harmonization of the components of the body. Yet, one must remember that the two types of harmonization are definitely characterized by “a natural relation of control and being controlled”.

Now let us turn to the eco-environmental realm. The “harmony of Heaven and humankind” is conceptually hidden in the “oneness between Heaven and human” (*tian ren he yi*). In Chinese heritage, the notion of Heaven is used for the Heaven and Earth, cosmos, universe, nature, Heavenly Dao or principle. Nowadays it is extended to cover a most important item of natural eco-environment in particular, because people are growing more and more conscious of global warming and thus the need for eco-environmental protection for the sake of all beings on this planet.

The “harmony of Heaven and humankind” points to the harmonious coordination of the human-nature relationship, which leads to taking care of nature and a better quality of life for all people in its entirety. According to Li, it involves an “affective view of the cosmos” (*you qing yu zhou guan*) in contrast to

the “scientific view of the cosmos” (Li 2016, 393). This view denotes a positive stance to the physical world, human life and human existence. It therefore links the human body and mind-heart with natural things in an analogical way. Accordingly, it tends to affirm, emphasize and sublimate the physical needs and human emotions of rational human beings, but not strive to have the soul free from the body and fly up to the Heaven, as is expected in Christianity (Li 2017, 62). As proposed in Confucianism, the meaning of life lies in human affairs. In order to find such meaning, humans must live between Heaven and Earth (the cosmos or nature). It is no easy matter for humans to live under such circumstances, because to live often means to struggle and even fight against endless difficulties and hardships of all conceivable kinds. On this account, Confucianism gives credit for the meaning of human life in terms of the affective view of the sublime and eternal Cosmos. Actually, the cosmos is extra-emotional and nature is neutral as well. Yet, Confucianism claims that the “greatest virtue of Heaven and Earth is to beget life” (*tian di zhi da de yue sheng*), “humaneness is the heart of heaven” (*ren, tian xin ye*), and “the action of Heaven is strong and dynamic; in the same manner, the noble man never ceases to strengthen himself” (*tian xing jian, jun zi yi zixiang bu xi*). “Heaven and Earth” or “Heaven” alone here denotes the cosmos or nature. “To beget life” means to give birth to all beings and things alike. This capacity of the cosmos is respected as the “greatest virtue” identified with “humaneness or benevolence”. Apparently, such virtue is affective in essence. It serves not merely to make “human life” worthwhile in light of the pan-affective cosmic, but also to wrap up the cosmos in warm and affirmative human love (Li 2016, 393). Hence humans are encouraged to pursue the full development of their own natures and help other fellow beings to do the same. Moreover, they are advised to know and assist the transforming and nourishing operations of Heaven and Earth. By so doing, they may with Heaven and Earth form a ternion.⁶ By “ternion” it is meant that the three entities of Heaven, Earth and humankind are united into one. It is the same with the “harmony of Heaven and humankind”, when “Heaven” is identified with Heaven and Earth. Then, in an eco-environmental sense, it requires both relevant consciousness and concrete action on the part of humans to look after the myriad things and protect the eco-environment for all people.

What Matters Behind Them?

Pragmatically speaking, what matters behind the three forms of harmony? That is to say, what facilitates their attainability after all? In Li Zehou’s opinion it is the

6 *The Doctrine of the Mean (Zhong yong)*. 1992. In *The Four Books*, translated by James Legge, 22(49), 32 (59). Changsha: Hunan Press.

“Chinese religious morality”. The morality of this kind comprises the four given notions, namely the primordial hierarchy, “guanxi-ism”, “emotio-rational structure” and “affective view of the cosmos”. In addition, it involves more elements such as the “concordant coexistence of humankind with the cosmos” and “celestial people”, among others.

The “concordant coexistence of humankind with the cosmos” (*ren yu zhou xie tong gong zai*) (Li 2017, 142) is occasionally shortened to the “coexistence of humankind with the cosmos” (*ren he yu zhou gong zai*) in Li’ usage (Li 2005, 53). It is an extension of the “affective view of the cosmos”, working towards the becoming of the human and the preserving of nature in a concomitant mode. Genetically, it is drawn from the conventional idea of Heaven-and-Human Oneness (*tian ren he yi*) that signifies the interdependence between the two sides. Philosophically, it is considered to be a metaphysical assumption with reference to the “thing in itself”. Without this assumption, there is neither the source of perception-based experience nor the cause of form-based power and feeling. The cosmos itself is conducive to an unknown object *a priori*, whereas the man-made operational and symbolic system is creating a cognitive subject *a priori*. Both are unified on the basis of human praxis from the outlook of historical ontology. By means of “illuminating the true through the beautiful” and “free intuition”, human beings manage to glimpse the mysteries of the cosmos, and thus locate a position for their becoming therein. Thanks to their active life saturated with contingency and spontaneity, they proceed to make possible their communication with the cosmos. They therefore find it necessary to have a metaphysical hypothesis of the “thing in itself” in the name of “physical concordance and coexistence of humankind with the cosmos”. This hypothesis will change into an indispensable premise that enables people to bestow kinds of order to the cosmos (Li 2005, 53–54). Notwithstanding the fact that “kinds of order” vary historically, culturally and conceptually, they are all inclined to acknowledge the dynamic, constant, and significant interaction between human beings and the myriad things within the cosmos as a whole. In this respect, they seem to manifest a principle of symbiosis in a physical and metaphysical sense.

The “celestial people” (*tian min*) are proposed as the supreme model of human becoming in Mencius. They are literally referred to “those who first apprehend the principles and then instruct those who are slower to do so” (Mencius 1992, 9.7). Furthermore, they are commissioned to shoulder a sense of mission for their own. They will “promote the principles throughout the world, and proceed persistently to carry them out” (*ibid.*, 13.19). The “principles” in this case stand for either the “Heavenly principles” or “moral principles”. According to Mencius, the “celestial people” are virtuous and noble, even higher than the “great men” (*da ren*), and ready to “serve Heaven” (*shi tian*) by fulfilling their inborn nature

and looking after the myriad things. Then, from a pragmatic viewpoint, Mencius seems to identify them with those who are warm-hearted towards their fellow beings and the myriad things under Heaven. In other words, they would devote themselves to the ideal of “loving humans and treasuring things” (*ren min er ai wu*) (ibid., 13.45). “Loving people” (*ren min*) is the result of extending affection from one’s kin relatives to other community members in general. “Treasuring things” (*ai wu*) signifies the taking care of all things according to the law of reciprocity. For instance,

If the farming seasons are not interfered with, the grain will be more than can be eaten. If close nets are not allowed to enter the pools and ponds, the fishes and turtles will be more than can be consumed. If the axes and bills enter the hills and forests only at the proper time, the wood and timber will be more than can be used. (Mencius 1992, 1.4)

Consequently, things are protected and multiplied at the same time, and people are, in turn, enabled to enjoy sufficient means and live a reasonably good life. Otherwise, it would bring about a detrimental outcome of abusing the natural resources and depriving Nature of its generative capacity. This is often metaphorically described in Chinese as though a greedy farmer kills the hen for its eggs.

Then, one may wonder what other contribution the “Chinese religious morality” can make to the human condition at large? In Li’s opinion, it elicits a kind of “transformational creation” that aims to develop a new style of ethics and politico-economic institution. It can be therefore deployed as a regulative principle, a principle that will be applied to regulating or adjusting an appropriate construction of “modern social ethics” and politico-economic institution at its best. All this is to be tried first in China, and then promoted gradually across the globe by adapting it to meeting the needs of humankind in general (Li 2016, 140–41). In other words, it can be employed to upgrade “the application of Chinese learning” (*zhong xue wei yong*) on the one hand, and to impact “the substance of Western learning” (*xi xue wei ti*) on the other.

Teleologically, what Li Zehou tries to pursue is at least three-dimensional along his line of thought. First of all, he conceives religious morality as a “regulative principle”, and “modern social ethics” as a “constitutive principle”. Religious morality from Chinese sources consists in the leading notions given above, and concerns “the three forms of harmony”. In contrast, “modern social ethics” from the Western sources is primarily composed of liberty, equality, human rights and democracy, and principally preoccupied with the efficiency of justice (Li 2016, 391; Li 2017, 63; Li 2010, 33, 190). Pragmatically, “Chinese religious morality” is aligned with the “proper measure” (*du*) as a practical art

and the “emotional root” (*qing ben ti*) as its philosophical basis. When utilized as a “regulative principle”, it can serve to “regulate an appropriate constitution” of “modern social ethics”.

Clearly, social life today relies on a diversity of rules from the warehouse of “modern social ethics”, legal codes, formal justice, individualism, utilitarianism, liberalism, and public reason that upholds the precept of “right prior to the good”. These rules are not to be put into practice in any abstract and mechanical fashion. Otherwise, they would either spur something harmful or plunge social encounters into jeopardy. For this reason, they should be introduced into social life with due consideration of specific situations, and modified by “Chinese religious morality” from classical Confucianism. They may help reduce the negative effects caused by rigid rules, because they pay more heed to harmony than to any other values. If “Chinese religious morality” can be adaptable to different circumstances across the world, I think it fairly possible to enrich global moral standards in favour of “transnational beneficence”. According to Richard W. Miller, the real demands of transnational beneficence go hand in hand with the moral demands of transnational interaction and transnational responsibility. These demands could not be met without such conditions as mutual reliance, mutual trust, equal respect for all and appreciating the equal worth of everyone’s life. Beneath such conditions are partly the principles of sympathy and sacrifice. Faced with these two principles, genuine practitioners should ground the former in the latter. By so doing, they can make the most of the merits of the two principles so as to foster great concern for and responsiveness to those in need (Miller 2010, 6, 17–18, 23–25). However, there are limits in this moral field, and legal protection is therefore indispensable in most cases, because “the implementation of demands for beneficence by laws rather than private initiative protects responsible people from comprehensive defeat by those who do not live up to their own duties of beneficence” (*ibid.*, 212).

In the second place, “Chinese religious morality” can help build up a humanized world (*ren xing hua shi jie*) that features harmonious interaction and emotion-reason synthesis (*qing li jiao rong*) amid human beings and their relationships. This humanized world parallels the thing-in-itself world (*wu zi ti shi jie*) that features human-nature coexistence and rational mystery (*li xing shen mi*). As observed in current social life, human relationships are becoming increasingly thin, like the rare air at high altitudes. This phenomenon is rather universal, as a consequence of excessive individualism and inadequate compassion. Fortunately, the Confucian “guanxi-ism” can play a crucial role in this regard. With a reciprocal concern for personal lives, human relationships and family-like climate in communities, it is possible to have social encounters and human affections interwoven to a sophisticated degree. It can therefore be implemented to rebalance rampant individualism

when used as a principle to regulate the proper construction of “modern social ethics”, and provide emotional support to public reason along with the rationalized social order. In short, Confucian “guanxi-ism” is both moral and affective concurrently. It works to overlap and reinforce the emotional basis of social ethics. Naturally, it cannot evade contradictions and even conflicts between the two arenas. It needs therefore to be analysed and treated in accord with the specific situations or contexts (Li 2017, 58–62).

Finally, the “Chinese religious morality” is emotion-based and humanity-oriented, but not rationality-denying at all. It calls for a moderated emotio-rational synthesis in praxis. On this account, it can be employed to counterbalance the excess of instrumental rationality in the Western mainstream. As is often detected in the problematic human condition and social life of today, the excess of instrumental rationality is utility-directed and self-interested in most cases. It remains rather detrimental to human relationships and social interactions altogether. Hence what is greatly needed is an alternative remedy with reference to the “Chinese religious morality” in general, and moderated emotio-rational synthesis in particular.

Plausible as this might be as a theoretical vision, it is demanding in practice, from my observation. The prerequisite is none other than justice on which “modern social ethics” is founded, because the priority of the right over the good cannot be passed over at all. In present-day China, this ethics is not solidly established such that there is an occasional violation of civil rights and duties. This being true, the Chinese religious morality cannot work as a regulative principle in an adequate sense, even though the moral sense is deeply rooted in the Chinese mentality. Hence I share some sympathy with Rawls’ conception of “justice as fairness”. For it is related to the original position of equality and the traditional theory of the social contract. Characteristically, according to Rawls,

Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought. A theory however elegant and economical must be rejected or revised if it is untrue; likewise laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust. Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override. . . . Therefore, in a just society the liberties of equal citizenship are taken as settled; the rights secured by justice are not subject to political bargaining or to the calculus of social interests. . . . an injustice is tolerable only when it is necessary to avoid an even greater injustice. Being first virtues of human activities, truth and justice are uncompromising. (Rawls 1971, 3–4)

Moreover, in practice justice involves a series of leading principles. Some of them include, for example, the rule of law to constitute a well-ordered society, democratic equality in the assignment of basic rights and duties, and the institutional principle of fair opportunity for personal development, among others. In short, justice is social justice by nature. As the most cardinal virtue of social institutions, it entails the most decisive way in which “the major institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation” (Rawls 1971, 7). All this turns out to be critical for the sake of social development and legislative reform in China.

However, when it comes to the construction of a just society in the full sense of this term, it is not sufficient to confine the concept of justice to political discourse in terms of utilitarian and liberal perspectives alone. The utilitarian approach conceives justice as maximizing utility or welfare. However, it has two defects: First, it makes justice and rights a matter of calculation instead of principle; and second, it flattens all human goods and takes no account of their qualitative differences by translating them into a single, uniform measure of value (Sandel 2010, 260). As for the liberal approach, it perceives justice as respecting freedom of choice, and thus it takes rights seriously and insists that justice is more than calculation. But it tends to accept people’s preferences as they are, and not to require us to question or challenge the preferences or desires brought to public life. According to the freedom-based theories, “the moral worth of the ends we pursue, the meaning and significance of the lives we lead, and the quality and character of the common life we share all lie beyond the domain of justice” (*ibid.*, 260–61). Hence it calls for a third approach to deliberating about justice by taking into due consideration of how a just society is associated and interacts with the cultivation of virtue and the common good. This leads to the robust position of Michael Sandel. To his mind,

a just society can’t be achieved simply by maximizing utility or by securing freedom of choice. To achieve a just society we have to reason together about the meaning of the good life, and to create a public culture hospitable to the disagreements that will inevitably arise. ... Justice is inescapably judgmental ... questions of justice are bound up with competing notions of honor and virtue, pride and recognition. Justice is not only about the right way to distribute things. It is also about the right way to value things. (*ibid.*, 261)

This being the case, the political discourse of liberal neutrality needs to be compensated for or complemented by moral and religious judgments with reference to the civic virtues for character building, and the common good for the good life. Positively speaking, this communitarian approach is assumed to help people to go beyond “the complacent way of life” embroiled in self-satisfaction and material

preoccupations, and to embrace a public life of larger purpose that is to be sustained by political rights, moral and spiritual aspiration, among others. Negatively speaking, in Sandel's opinion,

the attempt to detach arguments about justice and rights from arguments about the good life is mistaken for two reasons: First, it is not always possible to decide questions of justice and rights without resolving substantive moral questions; and second, even where it's possible, it may not be desirable. (ibid., 251)

And on this account, he proceeds to arrive at this conclusion: "A politics of moral engagement is not only a more inspiring ideal than a politics of avoidance. It is also a more promising basis for a just society." (ibid., 269)

Taking Sandel's stance of justice as a whole, I find it to some extent a modern echo of Aristotle's voice. Sandel himself is inclined not only to emphasize the connection between distributive justice and the common good, but to insist on the teleological and honorific aspects of justice. Moreover, he reveals the primary cause of the "impoverished public discourse" that is "lurching from one news cycle to the next, preoccupied with the scandalous, the sensational, and the trivial" (ibid., 268). Sure enough, the prevailing surface reading of such discourse serves to create a kind of social ambiance, which will in turn sway, confuse, dominate, and even distort the public opinion, if not the public reason, under certain circumstances.

Noticeably, in this respect Li Zehou shares some sympathy with Sandel, for both of them address the question of justice from political, teleological, moral and religious perspectives at once. What rounds their viewpoints out is their tendency to take justice as the means for an ends instead of the other way round. In addition, they maintain that the principles of justice are practically fundamental, but not enough, to attain the final *telos*. They therefore propose the complementary or regulative principles of moral and religious judgments in order to secure a complete vista of a just society in search of the common good for the good life. Quite distinctively, Li steps forward along the Confucian line of thought against the background of East-West meeting, and Sandel goes ahead along the Aristotelian line of thought against the background of American *status quo*. In spite of that, Li differs from Sandel in his anthropo-historical ontology. In Li, people are historical beings, and human nature is the outcome of human culture. As the fruition in part of human culture, morality or ethics not merely points to the codes or mores about what one ought to do, but also to the emotion-rational structure and cultural-psychological formation of what one should become. When applied to human practice in the social domain, the ontology will have an impact upon the framework or organization of social institutions.

A Closing Remark

To sum up, the proposition of “harmony higher than justice” is a hierarchical consideration instead of value assessment. Harmony is preconditioned by justice in principle, and thus exemplified in the three forms of harmony that are lined with the “Chinese religious morality”. Within the framework of Li Zehou’s “philosophical ethics” (Li 2017, 63), morality as such is schemed to “regulate an appropriate constitution” of “modern social ethics”. That is, it resorts to emotion and faith so as to adjust the cold reasoning, legal rigidity, rampant individualism and calculated utilitarianism that underlie such ethics. However, they can neither replace nor determine one another. They are conducive to the main content of “psychological substance” that resembles “cultural-psychological formation”. As a matter of fact, Li uses these two terms (“psychological substance” and “cultural-psychological formation”) interchangeably, and confirms their equivalent identity on some occasions. For instance, the “cultural-psychological formation” is peculiar to humans alone, and identified with the “psychological substance” from a philosophical perspective. On this account, what is attributed to the human race (as a historical whole) is sedimented into human individuals; what is rational is sedimented into what is perceptual; what is social is sedimented into what is natural. At the same time, the originally animal faculties that *homo sapiens* used to have are already humanized, which means the natural psychological formation has been transformed into its human counterpart. The process of sedimentation results from the construction of human nature. It lies in fact in the “humanization of internal nature”, “cultural-psychological formation”, and “psychological substance”. These terms bear the same content but different names, for they are related to the three spheres known as the cognitive (logical), volitional (ethical), and emotional (aesthetic) (Li 2016, 475).

In Li’s ethics we are exposed to such concepts as “philosophical ethics”, “philosophical psychology”, “psychological substance” and “ethical substance”, among others. Then, there arise two issues: one is about the connection between the “philosophical ethics” and the “philosophical psychology”, and the other about the linkage between the “psychological substance” and “ethical substance”. In order to better understand these, two quotes are offered here for reference:

The theory of “humanization of the inner nature” results from the synthesis of the “anthropo-historical ontology” with Chinese classical Confucianism. It strives for the “supreme wisdom of the golden mean”. First of all, it takes the Kantian absolutism of practical reason (e.g. categorical imperatives) as a foundation stone for the construction of human ethical substance (*lun li ben ti*), and then proceeds to specifying it into the remoulding of human “cultural-psychological formation”. What is meant

by “psychological” herein is a philosophical assumption instead of a positivistic study of empirical science. Secondly, it helps inculcate the emotionality of “humaneness” from Chinese Confucianism into **the ethical substance** through psychological channel, and facilitates the “transcendental” reason to develop a possibility of empirical operation. In other words, it pertains to “pragmatic reason” instead. Thirdly, it provides a theoretical foundation for a relevant distinction between “religious morality” and “social ethics”. This theory may be named “philosophical psychology” or “transcendental psychology”. (Li 2010, 14–15)⁷

The religious morality bears two wings: one is the Confucian notion of “making one’s home in a sense of spiritual belonging”, and the other is the Western idea of “ultimate concern”. The morality of this kind is used to “regulate the appropriate constitution” of “modern social ethics”. Moreover, it thus serves to bring body, desire, personal interests and public reason back to emotion and feeling, and enables human beings to move from the empty concept of man as purpose (Kant) and the empty idea of man as *Dasein* (Heidegger) and step into the concrete and specific human beings in the human world that is saturated with a variety of rich, complex and detailed emotional settings. It requires an intellectual digestion of Kant, Marx and Heidegger with the help of Confucius, and strives to approach the global centre. This is what the anthropo-historical ontology explores. (Li 2010, 195)

To my mind, Li’s “philosophical ethics” seems to overlap with his “philosophical psychology”. It is the same case with the “psychological substance” and “ethical substance”. Even though they all appear to be notionally distinctive, they remain functionally interrelated in search of similar objectives. Moreover, they turn out to be a matter of ontology related to the becoming of human perfection or the tendency of human fulfilment. They thus pertain to the investigation of “anthropo-historical ontology” that provides a bigger umbrella and covers a life-long mission in Li’s philosophizing.

7 The statement is made available in Li’s essay on “The Humanization of the Inner Nature” delivered in 1999.

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