

NOTIONS OF HARMONY IN  
CLASSICAL CHINESE THOUGHT

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction to the Paper

Harmony is a concept often said to be central in Chinese culture, yet it is surprising that this concept has not been thoroughly studied for there is more that can be said about this. The Merriam-Webster English Dictionary defines harmony as “a pleasing or congruent arrangement of parts,” “correspondence,” “accord,” and even as an “internal calm.”<sup>1</sup> The ancient Chinese lexicon, the *Shuowen Jiezi* (說文解字) describes 和 *he*, the word primarily used to articulate the notion of harmony, as “mutually responding (相應也 *xiang ying ye*).”

The problem with existing scholarship on harmony is the tendency for scholars to portray the concept of harmony either as a homogenous notion across the various Chinese thinkers in history,<sup>2</sup> or as a coherent “Confucian” concept that cuts across the various thinkers traditionally regarded as “Confucians” (i.e. *Confucius*, *Mencius*, *Xunzi*).<sup>3</sup> The reason for this problem lies in the methodology used, as these scholars have assumed a coherent line of thought across the various texts, which they have cited in order to reconstruct an account of harmony. Alan Chan and Li Chenyang are perhaps one of the few scholars to point out significant differences between philosophers or philosophical schools. Li Chenyang argues that there are differences between Confucian, Daoist, and

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<sup>1</sup> Merriam Webster English Dictionary. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/harmony> Accessed 7 Apr 2013.

<sup>2</sup> For examples, see David Wong, *Agon and He: Contest and Harmony*, pp. 163-180; and Stephen C. Angle, *Sagehood: The Contemporary Significance of Neo-Confucian Philosophy*, pp.61-67.

<sup>3</sup> For examples, see Stephen Angle, *No Supreme Principle: Confucianism's Harmonisation of Multiple Values*, pp.35-40; and Li Chenyang, *The Confucian Ideal of Harmony*, pp.583-603. Even though Li treats Confucian harmony as a coherent notion across the “Confucian” thinkers, he does point out the differences between Confucian, Daoist and Mohist notions of harmony. (See Li Chenyang, *The Ideal of Harmony in Ancient Chinese and Greek Philosophy*, pp.82-90, for more information.)

Mohist notions of harmony,<sup>4</sup> while Alan Chan argues that there is a significant difference even between “Confucians” like *Mencius*, and the *Analects* and the *Xunzi*.<sup>5</sup>

What is interesting about Chan’s and Li’s works is the relation between the culinary and the musical models of harmony and how these sources have influenced the development of the concept of harmony in pre-Qin thought. Li argues that ancient cooking and music were sources that led to the development of the philosophical concept of harmony, merging from two separate sources into one a single model of harmony.<sup>6</sup> Chan, however, argues that the culinary and musical models are so radically different, they could not have develop into a single account, but remain as two distinct models in their development in time.<sup>7</sup>

In this paper, I will set out to explore the various notions of harmony employed by the different pre-Qin thinkers in discussions of harmony (both explicit and implicit) scattered throughout the various texts, and study the relationship between the culinary and musical models in these various accounts of harmony. I argue that there is absolutely no homogeneous concept of harmony throughout the classical period. There are, however, three broad categories of harmony that can be identified from surveying the various pre-Qin philosophical texts. I will further demonstrate the significant differences within each category of harmony, and how these differences arise from modelling after different aspects of the culinary and musical models of harmony.

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<sup>4</sup> See Li Chenyang, *The Ideal of Harmony in Ancient Chinese and Greek Philosophy*, pp.82-90.

<sup>5</sup> See Alan Chan, *Harmony as a Contested Metaphor*, pp.37-62.

<sup>6</sup> See Li Chenyang, *The Ideal of Harmony in Ancient Chinese and Greek Philosophy*, pp.82-86.

<sup>7</sup> See Alan Chan, *Harmony as a Contested Metaphor*, pp.43-46

## Chapter 2

### The Pre-Beginnings of the Philosophical Concept of Harmony (和 *he*)

In this chapter, I will discuss the pre-beginnings of the philosophical concept of harmony as articulated primarily through the word, 和 *he*. Scholars argue that the word, 和 *he*, is derived from two sources: food and music.<sup>8</sup> I will discuss the beginnings of harmony in its historical culinary and musical contexts, and then proceed to discuss the relation of culinary and musical harmony with self-cultivation and its subsequent influence in the socio-political realm.

In the culinary context, 和 *he* was derived from the word, 盃 *he*, which referred to a wine-mixing utensil used to adjust the thickness and concentration of rice wine (which was often consumed) by diluting it with water.<sup>9</sup> It was necessary to dilute the wine to make it palatable to the tongue, as it was very thick and strong in taste.<sup>10</sup> In the musical context, 和 *he* was derived from the word, 龠 *he*, which referred to a specific bamboo pipe instrument used to accompany the main melody. It was later used to refer to any instrument that fulfilled the function of accompanying the main melody.<sup>11</sup>

Though these words were originally used to denote specific instruments for mixing flavours and sounds, these words were also used verbally to denote the general action of mixing flavours and sounds, and thus came to be associated with the action of

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<sup>8</sup> See Li Chenyang, *The Ideal of Harmony in Ancient Chinese and Greek Philosophy*, pp.82-86; and Guo Qi 郭齊, *The Formation of the Philosophical Category of he in Chinese History (中國歷史上哲學範疇和的形成)*, pp.451-466

<sup>9</sup> Li Chenyang, *The Ideal of Harmony in Ancient Chinese and Greek Philosophy*, p.84

<sup>10</sup> Mu-Chou Poo, *The Use and Abuse of Wine in Ancient China*, p.126

<sup>11</sup> Li Chenyang, *The Ideal of Harmony in Ancient Chinese and Greek Philosophy*, p.83. For example, bronze bells were also known as 龠鍾 *hezong* as they were used to harmonise with the sounds of the main melody.

mixing sounds and flavours. Interestingly, the various words for *he* (盃, 餸, and 和) also came to be used interchangeably simply to denote the action of mixing.<sup>12</sup> But what does it mean to mix sounds or flavours?

### Culinary Harmony: The Art of Mixing Flavours

The ancient Chinese referred to the entire process of cooking (from the preparation to the cooking) as 割烹 *gepeng* (literally: cutting and cooking).<sup>13</sup> The art of mixing flavours involves knowing the right “proportions of ingredients” required for a particular dish, “the amount and length of heat applied to each [ingredient], and the proper seasonings applied at each stage.”<sup>14</sup>

There is a special emphasis on the cutting aspect. The chef must be able to cut the ingredients, especially meat, evenly and of sizes depending on the cooking method or seasoning.<sup>15</sup> The even proportions and the size of the cuts would affect how the ingredient’s flavours would interact with the other flavours in a dish.

But cutting and setting aside the right proportion of ingredients are not sufficient to produce a harmony of flavours. The chef must also be in control of the amount of heat and length of heat to apply onto each ingredient, and when to apply the appropriate seasoning.<sup>16</sup> Yan Ying (晏嬰), a scholar-minister, best describes how the process of cooking achieves this harmony of flavours:

和 *He* is like making soup (羹 *geng*). One needs water, fire, vinegar, sauce, salt, and plum in order to cook fish and meat. One needs to cook them with firewood.

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.84.

<sup>13</sup> Chang Kwang-chih, *Food in Chinese Culture*, p.31.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.31-32.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.32: “If dried, it was cut into squares or oblong strips, seasoned with ginger, cinnamon, and the like, and then dried. If cooked, the meat was cut in one of three ways: pieces and chunks with bones, slices, or mince. It was then boiled, stewed, steamed, or roasted.”

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p.32.

The cook has to mingle (和 *he*) the ingredients together in order to balance the taste. *He* needs to compensate for deficiencies and to reduce excessiveness.<sup>17</sup>

This 羹 *geng* soup perfectly illustrates how the right preparation and cooking can result in a harmony of flavours. Despite being a soup commonly prepared and consumed by many, this soup is complex because of the usage of meat and vegetables. Meat tends to have strong flavours, and some skill is required to balance the strong flavours of the meat with flavours from other ingredients, added at the appropriate time into the pot, with the appropriate amount of heat just enough for the interaction of heat and the other ingredients to produce the perfect harmony of flavours. By acting in this manner, the chef is able to compensate “for deficiencies and to reduce excessiveness” in the myriad flavours present in the soup.<sup>18</sup> Towards the end of the cooking process, the chef must add a starch solution and mix it well to give the soup a thick consistency that complements the soup’s harmonious flavours.<sup>19</sup> Despite the presence of many different flavours and textures, when this soup is properly cooked, the consumer would experience the soup as an organic whole – as delicious soup – and find no flavour or texture of any particular ingredient to be in excess.

To reiterate, the art of harmonising flavours involves: (1) properly and evenly cut ingredients, (2) the addition of ingredients at the appropriate time, (3) the right amount of heat applied to ingredients (the amount of heat and the duration), and (4) the action of stirring to evenly distribute the flavours and textures. When the chef fulfils these conditions, he will be able to achieve a harmony (a well-blended mix) of flavours.

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<sup>17</sup> *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu* 春秋左傳注, “Shaogong 昭公”, “Year 20”, p.1419.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*



## Musical Harmony: The Art of Mixing Sounds

There are two broad categories to ancient Chinese music. The first type is court music that served ritual functions. Such music was often performed as an ensemble that comprised of bells, drums, chimes, stringed instruments and wind instruments.<sup>20</sup> Often, such music was accompanied by sung-poetry and dance.<sup>21</sup> The second type is personal music that was usually a solo performance using a five-stringed zither (古琴 *guzhen*). For the purposes of this paper, I will focus primarily on court music.

There are many factors that distinguish ancient Chinese music from the contemporary music that we are familiar with. Firstly, there is no fixed rhythm in ancient Chinese music. It was thus possible for a mixture of fast and slow melodies to co-exist at the same time. Secondly, Chinese instruments are capable of resounding the same pitch in different ways. There are different ways of blowing a wind instrument or plucking a stringed instrument to produce variants of the exact same pitch. It was therefore possible for an orchestra to produce a variety of sounds though all instruments are playing the same tone. Thirdly, ancient Chinese music was entirely a pentatonic scale.<sup>22</sup> The five tones were always considered to be in harmony with regardless of how they were arranged. Bronze bells were set to regulate the tones of the pentatonic scale; pitch-pipes (律 *lü*) later fulfilled the same purpose. Fourthly, the *Zhou Li* describes the office of the “Grand Director of Music” (大司樂 *dasiyue*) whose role was to educate the musicians under him,

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<sup>20</sup> Lothar Von Falkenhausen, *Suspended Music*, pp.6-9; p.215

<sup>21</sup> See *Liji* 禮記, “Yueji 樂記,” trans. James Legge, 2.21, p.68 (Unless stated otherwise, all translations of the *Liji* will be taken from Legge’s translation.): “Metal, stone silk, and bamboo are (the materials of which) the instruments of music (are made). Poetry gives expression to the thoughts; singing prolongs the notes (of the voice); pantomimic movements put the body into action (in harmony with the sentiments).”

<sup>22</sup> For more information about the pentatonic scale and its use in ancient Chinese music, see John Hazedel Levis, *Foundations of Chinese Musical Art*, pp.63-68.

teaching them how to play the instruments assigned to them.<sup>23</sup> On solemn occasions, a Grand Director of Music may be present to supervise the entire performance, to ensure that the musicians performed harmoniously.<sup>24</sup>

For a court orchestra to achieve musical harmony, several aspects of music had to be regulated either by the Grand Director of Music. First and foremost, the Grand Director of Music (or his highest subordinate) must ensure that the musicians abide by the five tones of the chosen pentatonic scale, since these five tones are the fundamental components of the melody itself.

Secondly, the other aspect of music, which the Grand Director of Music had to regulate, was the interaction between the tones (and between instruments). This can only be achieved through musical training and by rehearsal. It was the duty of the Grand Director of Music to train the different musicians on when to play loudly or softly, quickly or slowly, when to start and when to end. Good harmonious music requires such variations, as described by Yan Yin (晏嬰), the ancient scholar-minister:

Sounds are like flavours. Different elements complete each other: one breath, two styles, three types, four instruments, five sounds, six measures, seven notes, eight winds, and nine songs. Different sounds complement each other: the pure and the impure, the big and the small, the short and the long, the fast and the slow, the sorrowful and the joyful, the strong and the tender, the late and the quick, the high and the low, the in and the out, and the inclusive and the non-inclusive.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, in order to harmonise the sounds of music, the following must be done:

- (1) that the five tones of the chosen pentatonic scale are regulated and set for all to follow;
- (2) that musicians involved know how to complement each other with variations in their performance, with a well-balanced mix of ascending, descending, and level melodies; variations of loud and soft, and variations of fast and slow. Only when musicians know

<sup>23</sup> Édouard Biot, *Le Tcheou-li*, Tome I, p.375.

<sup>24</sup> Lothar Von Falkenhausen, *Suspended Music*, p.64.

<sup>25</sup> *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu* 春秋左傳注, “Shaogong 昭公”, “Year 20”, p.1420.

how to interact with each other's instruments and melodies, will musical harmony be attainable.

### Harmony, Self-Cultivation, and the Socio-Political Dimension

However, there is still more to this picture of harmony. In both the culinary and musical contexts, a harmony of flavours or sounds leads to some kind of internal harmony within the heart-mind (心 *xin*), which in turn would lead to harmonious conduct in society. Shi Bo 史伯, an ancient scholar minister during the Western Zhou period, praised the early sage-kings for harmonising the five flavours and for harmonising the six sounds, and in so doing, they achieved the highest level of harmony in society (和之至也 *he zhi zhi ye*).<sup>26</sup>

According to Yan Yin, an ancient scholar minister, consuming harmonised foods are beneficial for a person's heart-mind: "the good person (君子 *jun zi*) eats [such balanced food] in order to achieve a balanced mind."<sup>27</sup> Food is capable of influencing the internal harmony within the body, specifically the harmony in one's heart-mind (心 *xin*). With a balanced heart-mind, such a person will be capable of acting in ways that will be harmonious with others. This is more important especially for the ruler. A well-balanced mind will enable the ruler to make decisions that will help to achieve harmony in his kingdom.<sup>28</sup> Conversely, when this delicate balance is disrupted, not only will a person's health be affected, but his heart-mind too will be affected. His desires and emotions will

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<sup>26</sup> *Guo Yu* 國語, "Zhengyu 鄭語," p.516.

<sup>27</sup> *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu* 春秋左傳注, "Shaogong 昭公", "Year 20", p.1419.

<sup>28</sup> Li Chenyang, *The Ideal of Harmony in Ancient China*, p.x; More sources to be included here.

be in excess, and he will not act nor make decisions that will help to achieve harmony in society.

As for music, the ancient Chinese believed that the type of music a person produces is a reflection of his own morality (and psychology).<sup>29</sup> A chaotic person produces chaotic music, while a person of order produces harmonious music. The music produced has the power to effect change in the listener's morality and psychology. "Whenever notes that are evil and depraved affect men, a corresponding evil spirit responds to them (from within); and when this evil spirit accomplishes its manifestations, licentious music is the result."<sup>30</sup> This feedback loop between the producer and consumer of music has the power to quickly propagate harmony or disorder within a state. Because of music's tremendous power to achieve harmony or disharmony within a state, music was regarded as a very essential moral and political instrument for governance. Music was an essential part of state rituals (禮 *li*) for the worship of ancestors/spirits and the regulation of society, that the two are almost synonymous with one another. For the sake of harmony in his kingdom, every aspect of music had to be regulated. The ruler had to regulate both the tones and the melodies (the interaction between the tones). He had to ensure that only orthodox, morally-conducive music was performed (especially in state rituals).<sup>31</sup> For even if orthodox music were performed, if the tones were out of pitch, the discordance that one hears in the melodies will have a disharmonious moral/psychological effect on its listeners, and can thus bring about disharmony in society. By regulating music, the ruler was able to moderate people's desires, and so keep them in harmony just as how the various instruments, pitches, and playing styles are in harmony with one another.<sup>32</sup> In the

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<sup>29</sup> See *Liji* 禮記, "Yueji 樂記," 1.4, p.56.

<sup>30</sup> *Liji* 禮記, "Yueji 樂記," 2.14, p.66.

<sup>31</sup> See John Hazedel Levis, *Foundations of Chinese Musical Art*, pp.63-68

<sup>32</sup> See *Liji* 禮記, "Yueji 樂記," 1.13, p.58.

words of Yan Ying, “The good person listens to this kind of music in order to balance his mind.”<sup>33</sup>

It was important for harmonious music to have such a mix, as the ancient Chinese believed that music could influence the internal harmony within a person’s body as well as the harmony within his heart-mind. Music that had too much of a particular playing style would induce too much of a certain desire or emotion. Harmonious music with the different styles well distributed/mixed would help to keep all desires and emotions in moderation, thereby keeping a person’s heart-mind calm and harmonious, allowing him to act and decide in harmonious manner.

Seeing how food and music have the power to sway our moods and the decisions we make, the ancient Chinese placed a huge moral burden on cooks and musicians to ensure that foods are properly cooked (i.e. that flavours are well harmonised), and harmonious music performed. In this way, cooks and musicians play a vital role in building up the moral strength of the society they serve. More importantly, cooks and musicians possess great power and influence over the ruler, and have the power to keep him in harmony so that there will be harmonious rule in the kingdom. On the other hand, they too have the power to morally corrupt their ruler, and thus bring about disharmony within society. Due to this close connection between food/music, morality, and the overall state of society, the action of mixing flavours and sounds came to have this added dimension of bringing about harmony in a social setting.

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<sup>33</sup> *Chunqiu Zuo Zhuan Zhu* 春秋左傳注, “Shaogong 昭公”, “Year 20”, p.1420

## Chapter 3

# The Three Broad Categories of Harmony and their Variations in Classical Chinese Thought

In this chapter, I argue that there is no homogeneous notion of harmony throughout the classical period from the *Analects* to the *Xunzi*, nor is there a coherent notion of harmony among the traditionally regarded “Confucian” thinkers. I will demonstrate this by discussing three broad categories of harmony that I have identified in my survey of the various texts, and highlight the differences between the various thinkers. The three broad categories of harmony that I have identified are what I have termed as: (1) pre-existing harmony, (2) internal harmonising, and (3) external harmonising.

### Methodology

One difficulty with studying the various Chinese philosophical texts lies in the fact that harmony, 和 *he*, is not used specifically as a technical term (such as 道 *dao*, 仁 *ren*, and 禮 *li*). Instead, 和 *he* is often used as a passing word to describe states of affairs or to prescribe certain actions. The only exception to this is the *Xunzi*, where 和 *he* is used very frequently.<sup>34</sup> Thankfully, all is not lost. I will attempt to study and reconstruct the various notions of harmony by analysing the way in which 和 *he* is used in the context of its passage, as well as in the broader context of the philosophers’ theories, while bearing in

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<sup>34</sup> 和 *he* occurs 8 times in the *Analects*, 32 times in the Early Chapters of *Mozi*, 8 times in the *Daodejing*, 3 times in the *Mencius*, 15 times in the Inner Chapters of the *Zhuangzi*, and 76 times in the *Xunzi*.

mind the musical and culinary models and their historical contexts. I will focus primarily on passages where the word, 和 *he*, appears. This will be my primary heuristic for analysing and reconstructing what these thinkers mean when they speak about harmony. I will also pay special attention to references made to food and music, especially passages where these references are made in conjunction with 和 *he*. Since the classical Chinese language has the flexibility of allowing words to be read interchangeably as a noun (*he* as an ideal state of affairs – state of harmony), or as a verb (*he* as a process – harmonising), I will here state that I will read *he* primarily as a verb since harmony (as a state of affairs), in most cases, can only be achieved through a process of harmonising. Nonetheless, it will be good to remain open to the possibility of reading 和 *he* as a noun (a state of affairs). When I use the word, “harmonising” or “harmony,” throughout this paper, it will be useful to bear in the mind the possible reading of 和 *he* as either a noun or a verb.

Other than explicit statements of harmony, there are also passages that seem to allude to some idea of harmony, even though there is no explicit mention of the word or idea. I will only consider these passages relevant to this paper if the following conditions are met: (1) there is explicit mention of opposing elements/forces/values that are in conflict with one another, or (2) there is some kind of resolution involved whereby these opposing elements/forces/values are now somehow able to co-exist without the original conflict/strife, or (3) or a close synonym of *he* is used. If all these conditions are not met, I will err on the side of caution and discount them as irrelevant because of limitations to this paper, which prevents me from engaging in a lengthy discussion to justify their relevance. This method will thus provide me with sufficient resources to reconstruct the various notions of harmony, specifically, what constitutes harmony, and how to achieve it.

I will now begin my survey of the three broad categories of harmony in the next three sections, and I will end this chapter with a discussion of the interaction between notions of harmony.

### Pre-existing Harmony

Pre-existing harmony is a very unique category of harmony that can only be found in the *Daodejing* and in the *Zhuangzi*. Here, I define pre-existing harmony as an initial state of affairs where certain things co-exist without conflict, strife, or opposition, in such a way that they can be perceived as a single whole (or a oneness). What makes this category of harmony unique from the other two categories is that disharmony is a cognitive problem that causes one to perceive conflicts and opposition in the world. Since this is a cognitive issue, the only way to restore this harmony requires cultivating a change in perception, a change in how one sees and understands the world, so as to recognise the harmony that has always been present from the very beginning.

#### **The *Daodejing***

According to the *Daodejing*, all things are originally in harmony with one another. The beginning of disharmony arises when language is used. When one uses language to identify something as X, one inevitably conceives of its opposite (~X) at the same time. “Once human beings appeared, though, there arose names, and with names came opposition. Since there were now names for ‘beautiful’ and ‘good,’ there were also names for ‘ugly’ and ‘bad.’”<sup>35</sup> Even that which we call music (音 *yin*) and noise (聲 *sheng*)

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<sup>35</sup> Gao Ming 高明, *Boshu Laozi Jiaozhu* (帛書老子校注), p.229, cited in Edward Slingerland, *Effortless Action*, p.80; cf. *Daodejing*, 32.



mutually harmonise one another,<sup>36</sup> but through the use of language to identify what counts as music, we have created an artificial dichotomy between the two, putting these two concepts at odds with each other, and we have come to prefer one (music) over the other (noise). The *Daodejing* tells us that “as human civilization progressed, these interrelated connections became more and more complex, and opposing names became more and more numerous. Since this time the world has been thrown into confusion and turmoil, and human beings have not known a moment of silence or peace.”<sup>37</sup> With the increased use of language to identify things of value and interest, we have at the same time created more disharmony by inevitably settings these things of value at odds with its apparent opposite (the ~X).

The reality, however, is that these opposites that arise from the use of language are like “the ten thousand things [that] carry Yin on their backs and wrap their arms around Yang.”<sup>38</sup> Everything has a shadowy side and a bright side as a result of light shining upon things. Whenever you have light shining on one side (i.e. “Yin on their backs”), you will always have a shadow on the other side (i.e. a Yang side). These two sides (X and ~X) have always co-existed harmoniously at all times and have never really been at odds with each other. However, in identifying something of value (good or bad), one inevitably creates desire for one and aversion for its opposite. And thus, the false knowledge that arises from the use of language gives rise to false desires.<sup>39</sup> “Desire is in a sense secondary to the knowledge upon which it is dependent. It is through knowledge of what is desirable that desire is excited. It is also through knowledge that new objects of desire are

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<sup>36</sup> *Daodejing*, 2: “音聲相和.” Translation mine.

<sup>37</sup> Gao Ming 高明, *Boshu Laozi Jiaozhu* (帛書老子校注), p.229, cited in Edward Slingerland, *Effortless Action*, p.80; cf. *Daodejing*, 32.

<sup>38</sup> *Daodejing*, 42, trans. Robert Henricks, p.11. (Unless stated otherwise, all translations of the *Daodejing* will be taken from Henricks’ translation.)

<sup>39</sup> *Daodejing*, 46, p.15: “There is no crime greater than giving assent to desire; there is no disaster greater than not knowing contentment; there is no calamity more serious than desiring gain.”

devised.”<sup>40</sup> It is this that puts pairs of opposites at such great odds with one another, thereby resulting in disharmony, as people enter into conflict with one another while trying to fight over (and avoid) the same sets of things. Such false knowledge and desires have distorted people’s perception of the world, preventing them from seeing the pre-existing harmony in things.

Since disharmony is a cognitive problem, the *Daodejing* warns that positive action will never achieve harmony: “To make peace where there has been great resentment, there is bound to be resentment left over. How could this be regarded as good?”<sup>41</sup> Such actions only serve to perpetuate the oppositions (and conflict) that occur whenever language is used, while still leaving the root problem untouched, i.e. the false knowledge and false desires that perpetuate the conflict between opposites. Therefore, the only way to achieve harmony is by acting without acting (無為 *wuwei*), i.e. instead of acting to deliberately bring harmony into the world, one instead must undergo a process of unlearning false knowledge and getting rid of false desires (that led to the perceived disharmony in the first place) within one’s self.<sup>42</sup> By doing so, one begins to see that sets of opposites resulting from the use of language are actually in a pre-existing harmony with one another – a oneness like soup where the different flavours are so well-harmonised that one is only able to discern the oneness of the soup rather than of the individual flavours.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> D. C. Lau, *Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching*, p.35, cited in Edward Slingerland, *Effortless Action*, p.80.

<sup>41</sup> *Daodejing*, 79, p.50.

<sup>42</sup> For more information about the methods involved in using *wuwei* to unlearn false knowledge and desires, see Edward Slingerland, *Effortless Action*, pp.77-117.

<sup>43</sup> On the surface, I have not found any implicit or explicit notion of an internal or external harmony in the *Daodejing* based on the methodology that I have set out. While I am not ruling out the possibility of such accounts within the text, due to limitations in this paper and time constraints, I am not able to engage in a more in-depth study of the text, nor am I able to engage in a lengthy discussion on the many different interpretations of the *Daodejing* in order to justify an account of internal or external harmony. This is why I am unable to provide an account of the relation between pre-existing harmony with internal/external harmony in the *Daodejing*.

## The *Zhuangzi*

The *Zhuangzi*, on the other hand, conceives of this pre-existing harmony in a very different manner. The *Zhuangzi* tells us that everything exists in a pre-existing harmony with one another because everything is made up of *qi* (氣 vital energy). *Qi* has an empty and formless nature that waits “for the presence of beings.”<sup>44</sup> This feature allows *qi* to transform into anything, so as to give rise to the myriad things. When *qi* blows through the pitch-pipes of Man, not only does it give rise to sounds, but it also sets the pentatonic scale for a musical performance, which describes and prescribes what tones are good, right, desired, and appropriate; and what tones are bad, wrong, undesirable, and inappropriate. The pentatonic scale is like a human standard for judging things descriptively and prescriptively as good/bad, right/wrong, true/false.

On the grand scheme of things, all possible pentatonic scales and human standards are actually subsets of the pitch-pipes of Heaven. The *Zhuangzi* metaphorically describes *qi* passing through the pitch-pipes of Heaven, bringing into being the “ten thousand differences, allowing each to go its own way.”<sup>45</sup> The pitch-pipes of Heaven are so widely encompassing that it permits *qi* to transform into the myriad things, but most importantly, the pitch-pipes of Heaven, are so widely encompassing that it permits all the metaphorical pentatonic scales. Heaven allows all these tones to be used in the musical performance of Heaven because these tones are all in harmony with one another. In the same way, all human standards for judgement are actually in a pre-existing harmony with one another.

Disharmony arises only because most people are unable to hear the pitch-pipes of Heaven, nor even the pitch-pipes of Earth. Most easily heard are the pitch-pipes of Man, and so people regard only one particular metaphorical pentatonic scale (i.e. a standard of

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<sup>44</sup> *Zhuangzi*, 4.8, trans. Brook Ziporyn, p.27. (Unless stated otherwise, all translations of the *Zhuangzi* will be taken from Ziporyn’s translation.)

<sup>45</sup> *Zhuangzi*, 2.4, pp.9-10.

judgement) as their guide. And because they are unable to hear the widely encompassing pitch-pipes of Heaven, they assume that the standard they each hold mutually excludes the standards other people hold (just like how in the musical model, a chosen pentatonic scale necessarily excludes other tones permitted by other pentatonic scales).

The reality is that these standards exist in harmony with each other not only because they arise from the one same *qi*, but also because differing standards co-exist harmoniously as two sides of the same coin. In a hypothetical situation where we disagree with each other because we each hold different standards of judgement, we both have the concepts of right and wrong. What is interesting is that what you regard as right is a subset of what I regard as wrong, and vice versa. What initially seems like mutually exclusive opposites in fact co-exist on the same conceptual level. This is how the myriad standards, descriptions and prescriptions, though different and apparently conflicting, are in a pre-existing harmony with each other.

In order to realise the pre-existing harmony between standards, i.e. to hear the pitch-pipes of Heaven, one needs to cultivate more than just a change in perception. This technique is known as the “fasting of the mind,”<sup>46</sup> which trains a person not only to recognise this pre-existing harmony of standards and of things that arise because of the transformation of *qi*, but to learn not to hold on to any specific idea or standard, for doing so would be to stick to a particular pentatonic scale set by the pitch-pipes of Man (which is a stumbling block to perceiving this pre-existing harmony). To be clear, the “fasting of the mind” should not be confused with mere flexibility to adapt to different circumstances, as the *Zhuangzi* says that such flexibility is only external which still holds on to “the ways of man,”<sup>47</sup> clinging on to something fixed, without being open to the transformation of all things including one’s own self. To engage in the fasting of the mind, one must first learn

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<sup>46</sup> See *Zhuangzi*, 4.8, pp.26-27.

<sup>47</sup> *Zhuangzi*, 4.6, p.25.

to “sit and forget,”<sup>48</sup> to stop clinging on to the judgements made by one’s senses and one’s mind. In doing so, one will then be able to see the constant transformation of *qi*, and to see that all things, including one’s own self, are participants of this on-going transformation.<sup>49</sup>

It is clear from the use of the musical metaphors that the *Zhuangzi* follows the musical model of harmony to demonstrate how things are all in harmony with one another according to the grand standard of Heaven (i.e. the pitch-pipes of Heaven). While conceivably, the *Zhuangzi* could have employed the culinary model instead, the musical model of harmony is useful for prescribing a theory of external harmony (which I will describe later). Unlike the *Daodejing*, the *Zhuangzi* goes a step further: despite the presence of a pre-existing harmony, one still has to somehow live according to some standard and interact with people who do not share the same point of view. The *Zhuangzi* thus prescribes a theory for harmonising with others in one’s day to day interaction (which I will elaborate later in this chapter).

### Internal Harmonising

Internal harmonising refers to a process of self-cultivation so as to achieve some kind of harmony within the body. To be clear, internal harmonising is not self-cultivation per se, but a portion of each thinker’s overall self-cultivation theory. I have found that all the various notions of internal harmonising are modelled after different aspects of the culinary model of harmony. Since the art of harmonising flavours requires actions to bring flavours to an appropriate degree to balance with other flavours, the categories of “excess” and “deficiency” are relevant only to this category of harmony to describe undesired states

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<sup>48</sup> *Zhuangzi*, 6.53, p.49.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

and to prescribe action for bringing internal balance to the body. Accounts of internal harmonising can be found in all the pre-Qin thinkers, from the *Analects* until the *Xunzi*, with the exception of the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*.<sup>50</sup>

### **The *Analects***

Like the culinary model of harmony, the notion of internal harmony in the *Analects* involves methods for reducing excesses of desires in the heart-mind just like how a chef would act to reduce strong flavours by means of other ingredients and seasonings. The methods for achieving harmony in one's heart-mind are: (1) moderate consumption of well-balanced food, and (2) listening to harmonious music that does not promote excesses of desires.

The *Analects* cites Confucius as the moral exemplar when it comes to consuming well-balanced foods in a moderate manner: “Even when there was plenty of meat, he avoided eating more meat than rice. Only in the case of wine did he not set himself a rigid limit. He simply never drank to the point of becoming confused.”<sup>51</sup> The reason for moderating one's consumption is to preserve the internal harmony of one's heart-mind, so that no desire goes into excess or confuse the heart-mind.

It is interesting that Confucius adheres to a rigid limit for consuming rice and meat. Chang argues that there is a system of balance in the consumption of food.<sup>52</sup> Food (食 *shi*) and drink (飲 *yin*) balance one another, with rice and water as the basic items to preserve one's internal harmony. Both Confucius and his disciple, Hui, were able to preserve their

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<sup>50</sup> Please refer to n.38 (above) for an explanation on why there is no such account in the *Daodejing*. I have not included the *Zhuangzi* here because its account of internal self-cultivation does not involve a notion of harmony. The *Zhuangzi*'s “fasting of the mind” seems like it would fit here, but I have chosen to classify it under pre-existing harmony, as the “fasting of the mind” has more to do with adjusting one's perception and cognition to see the pre-existing harmony in things rather than cultivation a kind of harmony or balance within the body or the heart-mind.

<sup>51</sup> *Analects*, 10.8, trans. D. C. Lau, p.103. (Unless stated otherwise, all translations of the *Analects* will be taken from Lau's translation.)

<sup>52</sup> Chang Kwang-chih, *Food in Chinese Culture*, p.40.

joy despite this frugal diet.<sup>53</sup> Within the category of food is a further dichotomy of grain and dishes. If any non-grain dish is to be eaten, it must be complemented with a matching proportion of grain. Chang suggests that this might have been a means for ensuring people “refrain from overindulgence in the dishes.”<sup>54</sup> Over-indulgence would supply too much of a good thing, and spur desires in excess within one’s heart-mind.

Similarly, listening to music conducive to the promotion of a harmonious heart-mind is just as essential for internal harmony. Confucius praised the *Guan Ju* (關雎), a musical instrument, for its ability to express “joy without wantonness, and sorrow without self-injury.”<sup>55</sup> In the *Analects*, Confucius condemns other kinds of music for being excessive, as these kinds of music promote excesses of desires in a person’s heart-mind.

Having achieved internal harmony in one’s heart-mind, the harmonious person will then be able to harmonise externally with the rest of the world. With a sound mind, such a person will be able to make harmonious decisions and act harmoniously too.

### **The *Mozi***

Though the notion of internal harmony in the *Mozi* is different from the *Analects*, it is still modelled after the culinary model of harmony. Good health is like soup, and the excesses of the environment are like the strong flavours of meat. In order to achieve good health and strength, one must seek to harmonise the external environment with one’s body in order to achieve a medical balance like a chef adding other ingredients to adjust the excessive flavours of the meat. The “ingredients” required to achieve an internal bodily harmony are clothing, shelter, and food.

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<sup>53</sup> See *Analects*, 6.11 and *Analects*, 7.16

<sup>54</sup> Chang Kwang-chih, *Food in Chinese Culture*, p.41.

<sup>55</sup> *Analects*, 3.20, p.70.

“Clothes and hats, belts and shoes” are important as they are meant “to protect the body” from the excesses of the environment.<sup>56</sup> Likewise, houses ought to be “built high enough to avoid the damp and moisture,” “the walls thick enough to keep out the wind and cold,” “roof strong enough to stand snow, frost, rain, and dew.”<sup>57</sup> Houses, like clothes, were originally made to “fit [their] bodies and to harmonise [their] skin and flesh (適身體和肌膚而足矣).”<sup>58</sup> Housing and clothing were made to balance opposites with opposites, so as to eliminate excesses. When these are used moderately, the body’s internal balance/harmony is preserved, and the individual experiences comfort and health in his body.

As for food, the *Mozi* does not require a consumption of a well-balanced meal, nor does it require the flavours of food to be well harmonised.<sup>59</sup> Instead, the *Mozi* argues, “The sole purpose of securing food is to increase energy, satisfy hunger, strengthen the body and appease the stomach.”<sup>60</sup> Once hunger is satiated, the benefit food brings is that a person’s “breathing becomes strong, limbs are strengthened and ears and eyes become sharp,”<sup>61</sup> thus keeping him healthy and strong.

Not only will an internal harmony enable a person to have the necessary physical strength and good health to work and contribute to society, a moderation of consumption also means that others will not be deprived of the resources necessary for their own health and survival. There is also a religious dimension in cultivating internal harmony. *Mozi* tells us that, “When husband and wife do not indulge in excess, Heaven and earth will be

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<sup>56</sup> *Mozi*, “Indulgence in Excess,” trans. Y. P. Mei, p.22. (Unless stated otherwise, all translations of the *Mozi* will be taken from Mei’s translation.)

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Mozi*, “Indulgence in Excess”, p.23, translation mine.

<sup>59</sup> *Mozi*, “Economy of Expenditures II”, p.120: “There is no need of combining the five tastes extremely well or harmonizing the different sweet odours.”

<sup>60</sup> *Mozi*, “Indulgence in Excess,” p.25.

<sup>61</sup> *Mozi*, “Economy of Expenditures II,” p.120.



harmonious; when wind and rain are not in excess, the five grains will ripen.”<sup>62</sup> Practicing moderation is an act loved and desired by Heaven. When people act in this way, Heaven blesses them with what they desire and need, i.e. good weather, good growth of crops. Failure to cultivate this internal harmony by indulging in excesses will displease Heaven and thus lead “the people into calamities and misfortunes.”<sup>63</sup> By engaging in internal harmonising (of moderating one’s consumption and ensuring a healthy medical balance), one is capable of influencing harmony on a societal level through one’s actions and through the blessings of Heaven.

### **The *Mencius***

Internal harmonising in the *Mencius* models after the culinary aspect of ingredients mutually interacting and influencing each other until their flavours have harmonised. In the same way as how ingredients mutually interact and influence one another in a pot, for Mencius, the heart-mind (心 *xin*) and *qi* (氣 vital energy) are involved in a similar type of mutually influential relationship within the body. *Qi* represents the animating energies of the living body, and it concentrates in living things as kind of vital fluid.<sup>64</sup> It has the power to move the heart-mind by setting its aims and direction, which in turn would find expression in thoughts words, appearance, deeds, commands, policies and other practical outcomes.<sup>65</sup> A person’s *qi* has a natural liking for goodness, but it can be easily distracted as it likes many other things such as material goods and non-material goods. *Qi* has the power to move a person, but when one’s *qi* is left uncontrolled, it can be fixated upon many things and thus become scattered.<sup>66</sup> While the heart-mind (*xin*) and the *qi* can mutually influence one another, it is ideal for the heart-mind to be firmly resolute in its

<sup>62</sup> Mozi, “Indulgence in Excess,” p.27.

<sup>63</sup> Mozi, “Will of Heaven I,” p.136.

<sup>64</sup> James Behuniak Jr., *Mencius on Becoming Human*, p.1.

<sup>65</sup> For more information about the workings of *qi*, see Alan Chan, *A Matter of Taste*, pp.50-55 and Edward Slingerland, *Effortless Action*, pp.132-165.

<sup>66</sup> Edward Slingerland, *Effortless Action*, p.155.

intention (志 *zhi*) so as to take charge and unite and guide the flow of *qi* in the body, just as how a commander commands his troops in battle.<sup>67</sup> (Though it is important to note that a resolute heart-mind may not necessarily be set on a moral direction.) However, just like growing sprouts, one's resolute heart-mind (*zhi*) cannot force one's *qi* to move, as it will lead to self-injury.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, though one may know what is the right thing to do, it is not necessarily the case that the person has the motivation (from one's *qi*) to act accordingly.

What is needed is a balanced approach between using one's resolute heart-mind to guide one's *qi* towards a moral direction, but not too forceful as to injure one's self nor too lightly as to allow one's *qi* to scatter. For this to be achieved, Mencius recommends a method of moral self-cultivation called, *tui* (推 pushing).<sup>69</sup> According to Mencius, all humans share the same moral "taste" for goodness, though for many, the sprouts of virtue are still in their infancy or misdirected. It is thus necessary for one to *tui* one's moral inclinations from the small things to the big things, just as how Mencius advised the King Xuan of Qi to *tui* his feelings of commiseration for the ox to the people under him.<sup>70</sup> Admittedly, it is almost impossible to instantly apply moral feelings and actions from a small scale to a large scale. It would be analogous to pulling sprouts to make them grow. It is thus necessary for one to *tui* one's moral feelings and actions gradually, moving from a smaller scale to a slightly bigger one, until one is capable of acting morally to the masses.

The dynamics here is that of a mutual influence between *qi* and the resolute heart-mind (*zhi*), where one proceeds from an increased resolution of the heart-mind to provide a yet stronger influence on one's *qi*. This is repeated until one develops a very strong and firm resolution to act morally towards others, and more importantly, to have cultivated

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> See *Mencius*, 2A2; Alan Chan, *A Matter of Taste*, p.54

<sup>69</sup> See *Mencius*, 1A7; Edward Slingerland, *Effortless Action*, p.144.

<sup>70</sup> See *Mencius*, 1A7.

such a strongly united *qi* inclined towards acting morally, that one possesses what Mencius refers to as “flood-like *qi* (浩然之氣 *haoran zhi qi*).”<sup>71</sup> Once a person begins this moral self-cultivation, a person will be more inclined and more effective in acting harmoniously with others (which I will discuss in detail later).

### **The *Xunzi***

Like the Analects, the *Xunzi*'s notion of internal harmonising follows the culinary model of harmony by aiming to achieve a harmony in the heart-mind where no desires are in excess. The difference is that the *Xunzi*'s account does not place emphasis on food at all. Instead, it places great emphasis on the role of music and rituals along with a developed medical theory. Music and ritual are efficacious as they are “forces that can harmonise and settle the physiological forces within the self.”<sup>72</sup> With music and the rites, people can be transformed from within by inducing an internal harmony within them. According to *Xunzi*, “When music is performed the intention is purified, and when ritual is cultivated, conduct is perfected. The ears become acute and the eyes clear, the blood and *qi* are harmonized and put into equilibrium, and manners are altered and customs changed.”<sup>73</sup> *Xunzi* tells us that lewd music has the power to induce a rebellious spirit (*qi*) within a person.<sup>74</sup> When this happens, a person's blood humours are drawn into excess in a particular direction, thus inducing a spirit of rebellion and chaos. On the other hand, music and the rites have the power to bring the blood humours and desires into harmony, by reducing excess and restoring a balance within one's heart-mind.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> *Mencius*, 2A2, trans. D. C. Lau, p.33 (Unless stated otherwise, all translations of the *Mozi* will be taken from Mei's translation.)

<sup>72</sup> Slingerland, p.247

<sup>73</sup> *Xunzi*, 20.3, trans. John Knoblock, Vol. III, p.84. (Unless stated otherwise, all translations of the *Xunzi* will be taken from Knoblock's translation.)

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> See *Xunzi*, 2.4, Vol. I, pp.153-154.

## External Harmonising

As the name suggests, external harmonising deals with the interaction of the person (or body) with the external world, either on a day-to-day social level of interaction or on a political level of regulating a society of people. Political harmonising can be found in three texts: The *Analects*, the *Mozi*, and the *Xunzi*. These thinkers agree that the root cause of disharmony stems from the chaotic competition over scarce resources.<sup>76</sup> The only way to remedy this problem will be to organise society by establishing rules for conduct and interaction so as to eliminate the unnecessary conflict over scarce resources. This approach of harmonising society resembles the musical model of harmony very closely. The ruler is like the Grand Director of Music (大司樂) who trains the musicians under his care on how to interact with the other instruments and sounds, and supervises their performance to ensure harmony in their cooperative efforts. And just as how musical harmony requires musicians to adhere to a standard (the pentatonic scale), political harmonising also involves the ruler ensuring that the populace adheres to a particular standard of conduct. I will show below how these notions of political harmonising, as conceived by these three thinkers, revolve around this musical model.

### **The *Analects* and the *Xunzi***

As the *Analects* and the *Xunzi* are very similar in their prescriptions for external harmony, I will discuss them together in this section.

In the musical model, harmony can only be achieved when the tones are regulated and set as the pentatonic scale, and when the musicians of the court orchestra know how to interact with one another. Similarly, in both the *Analects* and in the *Xunzi*, external political harmonising involves two aspects: (1) the regulation of social roles, which both

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<sup>76</sup> Cite passage from *Analects*, *Xunzi*, *Mozi*.

texts refer to as the “Rectification of Names (正名 *zhengming*)”, and (2) the regulation of the interaction of these social roles, i.e. regulating the rules of conduct pertaining to the human relationships, through the rules of ritual propriety. The *Xunzi* differs from the *Analects* in this aspect as it includes the use of law (法 *fa*) as an important aspect of regulating the relationships.

To regulate the “tones,” the ruler must regulate the various social roles in society. Social roles are like the tones of a melody, while ritual rules are like the musical rules (or theory) that guide and instruct performers on how to interact with other tones and instruments in order to harmonise with them. If the tones are not regulated, the musical piece will sound awful. Similarly, if social roles are not regulated, the performance/conduct of a society of individuals will be just as awful and chaotic. It is therefore necessary for the ruler to rectify names (正名 *zhengming*) otherwise “people will not know where to put hand or foot.”<sup>77</sup> According to Sima Qian, the grand historian, the rectification of names that the *Analects* prescribes, refers to the rectification of “the station or social role (名份 *mingfen*)” relationships such as that between ‘father’ and ‘son.’<sup>78</sup> A person, by virtue of living in a society of other human persons, will have more than one social role in relation with other people. And since ritual prescribes the rules of conduct and interaction with people of other social roles, when these social roles are not properly defined, the ruler will not be effective in governing the peoples using rituals, since “people will not know where to put hand or foot.”<sup>79</sup> Hence, it is necessary to rectify names so that rituals may be effective in regulating conduct and guide people on how to interact with others.<sup>80</sup> Only then can the ruler effectively harmonise his kingdom.

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<sup>77</sup> *Analects*, 13.3, p.120.

<sup>78</sup> See discussion of Sima Qian’s account in Loy Hui-Chieh, “*Analects* 13.3 and the Doctrine of “Correcting Names,” pp.22-23.

<sup>79</sup> *Analects*, 13.3, p.120.

<sup>80</sup> See *Analects*, 8.2; and *Analects*, 12.11.

The *Xunzi* goes a step further and argues that it is necessary to rectify the various social roles because these different social roles are normative and pedagogical.<sup>81</sup> Because of the ritual rules surrounding the different social roles, these social roles, when properly rectified, have pedagogical and normative value desirable for harmonising a state. From these social roles, the people learn about who to obey and respect, their place in society, and what they ought to do with their lives. And since people in different social roles perform different tasks in society, the ruler can employ ritual to “nurture the harmonious accord of the people with the season, restrict the outflow of property, open up its sources, and distribute or dole out goods as the occasion requires,” thus distributing resources according to the different needs while moderating people’s desires and consumption, and slowly cultivate a surplus of abundance.<sup>82</sup>

The use of rituals to regulate the masses has an additional quality. Rituals have the power to transform people from within. Just as how internal harmony is able to make a person more inclined towards acting harmoniously towards others, ritual rules help to promote internal harmony within a person. Apart from moderating people’s consumption by means of ritual rules, the rites (and music) have the ability to also reduce excess of desires and are thus capable of bringing internal harmony within a person’s heart-mind.

### **The *Mozi***

The *Mozi*, on the other hand, prescribes imposing a common standard on the masses so as to effectively regulate society following the musical model of harmony of imposing a standard pentatonic scale for all musicians to follow. It is like a situation where every musician insists on using their favourite pentatonic scale, but in the end it is up to

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<sup>81</sup> See *Xunzi*, 10.4, Vol. II, p.124.

<sup>82</sup> *Xunzi* 10.13, Vol. II, p.135.

the Grand Director of Music (or the limitations of the bronze bells) to impose a common scale for all to follow.

According to the *Mozi*, apart from the conflict arising from the scarcity of resources, and the tendency that people have to care more for themselves than for others, the root cause for all the disharmony lies in the fact that no one can agree on what is right or wrong. Different people have different standards of righteousness (義 *yi*), that there can be no common agreement on any issue whatsoever.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, the only way to bring about harmony would be to impose a common standard of righteousness onto everyone within the kingdom. Since people cannot agree with one another, they should identify and use their superior's standard. But even superiors will disagree on which standard to use, and so the ultimate standard that all ought to follow comes from the highest superior – Heaven.<sup>84</sup> This is the standard of universal concern (兼愛 *jianai*). Since Heaven treats everyone equally, everyone should adopt this as their common standard and treat one another equally too.

By universal concern, what the *Mozi* means is that one ought to apply the concerns and treatment that one has for one's own self (and kin) onto everyone else. People moderate themselves when they are concerned for the people closest to them, but such moderation takes place on a small scale and does no good for everyone in society. As concern for everyone is not in the minds, the resources consumed within this small group may be rather immoderate and lavish. Therefore, when people begin extending their concern to cover everyone, they will cease to indulge but instead moderate themselves to

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<sup>83</sup> See *Mozi*, "Identification with the Superior I," p.55: "Each man had his own idea, [...] the more people the more different notions. And everybody approved of his own view and disapproved the views of others, and so arose mutual disapproval among men. As a result, father and son and elder and younger brothers became enemies and were estranged from each other, since they were unable to reach any agreement."

<sup>84</sup> See *Mozi*, "Will of Heaven II," p.152.

ensure that everyone has enough for their sustenance, and work hard for the betterment of society by treating everyone like their own kin.

While this may seem more like an act of making everything uniform rather than harmonising (which preserves diversity), the reality is that the *Mozi*'s method for external harmony does preserve the diversity. Each individual is allowed to express their concern and treatment for all in their own personal way, just as how they would treat their kin. Where disputes may arise from differences of opinion over what is the best way to express one's universal concern, the *Mozi* prescribes using the measure of profitability/benefit (利 *li*) like the measuring square and compass of a carpenter and a wheel-right, to measure and accept what is a correct and reject what is not.<sup>85</sup> With the imposition of a common standard and measure of an action's goodness, the ruler can eliminate conflict and regulate the masses by appealing to and promoting this common standard of universal concern.

The effects of external harmonising feeds back into a person's internal harmony. When people abide by the standard of universal concern, they will moderate their consumption and ensure that everyone will have the resources needed for sustenance and good health. The masses will thus have sufficient resources such as food and even materials for clothing and housing, thereby equipping them with the means necessary for maintaining an internal harmony within the body (i.e. medical balance).

### **The *Mencius***

The *Mencius*' account of external harmonising is very unique, not only because it has nothing to do with political harmonising, but it is also the only one that is based on a culinary model of harmony. In fact, accounts of internal and external harmonising in the *Mencius* are both based on this culinary model. Perhaps one explanation for this approach lies in the fact that Mencius believes that righteousness (義 *yi*) is internal and must be

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<sup>85</sup> *Mozi*, "Will of Heaven I," p.140.



cultivated and nourished just as how sprouts are cultivated. For even if the heart-mind were to understand the teachings of what counts as right or wrong, it would not suffice to unite and motivate a person's *qi* to act in a moral manner.<sup>86</sup> Forcing others to conform to this external standard of righteousness would be injurious to their nature just like how pulling sprouts to force their growth would destroy the sprouts. One must therefore engage in the process of internal harmonising (as described earlier in this chapter) to become moral.

As I have mentioned earlier, *qi* has a liking for goodness (amongst many other things), specifically, four broad categories of goodness, which Mencius describes as the four sprouts of virtue. The practical difficulty with acting morally is that there are times where one gets stuck between a rock and a hard place, where the two available choices contain as much goodness as there are problems in them. It is in the resolution of these cases where one has to somehow harmonise the different good values.

In 5A3, Mencius illustrates a situation where three values are at odds with each other: “love for one’s brother, a more general compassion for the people of Youbi, and just or equitable treatment for criminals.”<sup>87</sup> In the end, Shun resolved the dilemma by choosing to banish Xiang, the brother whom he loved. In doing so, Shun was able to harmonise and preserve the three values that were originally at odds with each other.

Here, the culinary model of harmony is employed, and values that seem to be at odds are like ingredients of a soup. The reason these values appear at odds with one another is because of a tendency to consider a type of binary yes-no decision, where each value mutually excludes the other. Instead, the *Mencius* employs the culinary model of harmony where each value is like an ingredient for soup. Rather than having to choose only one value, the agent, like a chef, has to decide what is the appropriate degree of each

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<sup>86</sup> James Behuniak Jr., *Mencius on Becoming Human*, pp.40-41.

<sup>87</sup> Stephen Angle, *No Supreme Principle – Confucianism’s Harmonisation of Multiple Values*, p.2.

flavour/value to use to harmonise them in one's action with others. "Once he finds the harmony, we are not tempted to say that some saltiness was sacrificed in order to preserve the right amount of pepper,"<sup>88</sup> but instead we will be able to see and say that the different values have been preserved in just the right amount.

Mencius even praises Liu Sha Hui, the sage of harmonising for his amazing ability to do just that. With this excellent ability, Liu was able to not be affected by the reputation of others, nor be affected by the position of one's appointment. He could continue doing his best regardless of the situation he was in, and be unaffected by external circumstances.<sup>89</sup> However, for Mencius, this is not enough, for Confucius has one additional element, which Liu does not possess – the element of timeliness,<sup>90</sup> which is also another important aspect in the culinary model of harmony. Even if the right action were done at the wrong time, harmony would not be achieved.

Therefore, to harmonise externally in one's daily actions with other people, one must be able to harmonise the different values in the same way a chef decides what is the appropriate amount of each ingredient to add to a soup, while also taking note of when is the appropriate time to act.

### **The *Zhuangzi***

The *Zhuangzi* applies the musical model of harmony in a very different manner. In the *Zhuangzi*, external harmonising consists of this method which he refers to as "walking

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, p.38

<sup>89</sup> *Mencius*, 5B1, p.112: "Liu Hsia Hui was not ashamed of a prince with a tarnished reputation, neither was he disdainful of a modest post. When in office, he did not conceal his own talent, and always acted in accordance with the Way. When he was passed over he harboured no grudge nor was he distressed even in straitened circumstances."

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*. The text uses the metaphor of music to describe Confucius' virtue of timeliness. However, I am not inclined to say that Mencius' notion of external harmony uses a musical model. I argue that this notion of harmony is still a culinary model, as timeliness is a quality that is also essential to the culinary process, and there is no other evidence in the text that suggests neither a musical model nor a hybrid of the two models. What I have described here are textual materials in support of the culinary model.

on two paths” (兩行 *liangxing*).<sup>91</sup> As I have mentioned earlier, all things and all standards of judgements are in a pre-existing harmony with one another. However, one still has to inevitably use a standard in one’s daily social interaction with the world. I recognise that you have your own standard of judgement, and this standard is already in harmony with whatever standard I use. By walking on two paths (兩行 *liangxing*), I do not cling on to my standard nor to yours, but instead learn to echo the song of others (in this case, learning to echo your song). But in order to know how to echo your song, I must first learn and understand the pentatonic scale (i.e. the standards of judgement) that you use. While the example of the monkey trainer adjusting to the demands of the monkeys appears very much like one flexibly adapting to the requirements of others,<sup>92</sup> the *Zhuangzi* asserts that this is not merely about adapting to others. Instead, walking on two paths requires being able to see how one’s own standard is a part of the other person’s standard. Since all perspectives and standards co-exist in harmony on the same conceptual plane, one can echo the song of the other, using the standards of the other, while also hearing one’s own song expressed in the other’s song, and one’s own standard expressed in the other’s standard.<sup>93</sup>

On a Heavenly level, though there may be two pentatonic scales, these two pentatonic scales actually belong to the same Heavenly melodic scale, and each scale is an expression of the other. The music performed using one of these human pentatonic scales is also music performed using the other pentatonic scale, and thus an expression of both. It is only when one has successfully practised the fasting of the mind that one is able to see one’s own standards expressed wholly and harmoniously in the standards of others, and thus be able to harmonise the two different points of view into one.

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<sup>91</sup> *Zhuangzi*, 2.24, p.14.

<sup>92</sup> See *Zhuangzi*, 2.24, p.14.

<sup>93</sup> For more information about how this might be possible, see Brook Ziporyn, *How Many Are the Ten Thousand Things and I?*, pp.33-60.

## Chapter 4

### Conclusion and Future Directions

As I have shown in the previous chapter, throughout the entire pre-Qin period, the two models of harmony continued to exist as distinct and separate notions that never merged. Alan Chan was right in arguing that the two models of harmony are so radically different that they persist as two contested models within classical Chinese thought. The musical model of harmony requires compliance to the main melody and pentatonic scale, and discordant tones must be done away with in order to preserve the delicate harmony; while the culinary model of harmony, on the other hand, involves “making full use of the strength of each individual element in reaching an optimal outcome” – even if “possibly conflicting elements” are present, though this requires an understanding of “the properties of the different elements and how they play their unique roles in creating and sustaining a rich and balanced whole.”<sup>94</sup> Due to the vast differences in the conceptual framework by which these models operate, the two models did not merge into a single hybrid notion.

Yet, despite the distinct differences between these two models of harmony, there is, at least in the *Analects*, the *Mozi*, and the *Xunzi*, an interaction between internal harmonising and external harmonising involving the interaction of the culinary and musical models<sup>95</sup>. What is interesting about this is that the interaction between these two models resembles the culinary model of harmony. In these three texts, the culinary and musical models interact with each other in a mutually influencing manner in the form of an internal harmony that nourishes the person’s ability to externally harmonise, and an external harmony that nourishes a person’s internal harmony. This mutual influence

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<sup>94</sup> Alan Chan, *Harmony as a Contested Metaphor*, pp.41-43

<sup>95</sup> As I have shown in the previous chapter, the *Mencius* and the *Zhuangzi* too have interactions between two different notions of harmony. However, they do not have the kind of mutually influencing interaction which I am currently describing here.

between internal harmony and external harmony is similar to the cooking of soup, where ingredients in a simmering pot interact with one another, mutually influencing and affecting each other's flavours.

Moreover, in these texts, external harmony consists of methods of regulation to moderate (節 *jie*) people's consumption and their desires. When done properly, these external methods of moderation influences the internal harmony of a person's heart-mind or bodily health. Likewise, the internal harmony that a person cultivates positively affects the person's ability to act harmoniously/morally in the world. I say that this resembles the culinary model of harmony as the moderation of people can be liken to the preparation of food, where it is necessary to cut the ingredients into the appropriate sizes. Here, external moderation "cuts" people's desires into an appropriate "size" that best facilitates internal harmonising.

This culinary-like model of harmony between internal harmonising and external harmonising does not contradict Alan Chan's argument (above) because the conceptual frameworks underlying both models still remain intact and have not in any way merged to form a hybrid concept of harmony.

In conclusion, I have shown how the concept of harmony developed from culinary and musical contexts into two very distinct models of harmony, and how aspects of these two models have given rise to different notions of harmony that can be categorised into three broad categories: (1) pre-existing harmony, where all things already co-exist harmoniously but do not appear that way due to cognitive obstacles that prevent us from perceiving the state of harmony; (2) internal harmonising, a self-cultivation process by which one aims to achieve some kind of balance/harmony within the body or the heart-mind; and (3) external harmonising, a process by which one aims to achieve harmony on a socio-political level. I have also shown that despite the distinct qualities between the two

models of harmony, the two models can still interact in a broader theory of harmony involving the interaction between internal harmonising and external harmonising. Internal harmony contributes to a person's ability to effectively harmonise in the socio-political realm, and similarly, certain notions of external harmonising help to bring about an internal harmony within people.

While this paper is not a definitive survey of all the various notions of harmony in classical Chinese thought, it is my hope that this paper plays a significant contribution to the study of harmony. As I have mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the problems with many of the existing (yet few) works on harmony tend to assume a homogeneous or coherent line of thought across thinkers. I hope that by showing the various notions of harmony throughout the classical period, and even within each thinker, more in-depth research can be done on the various notions that I have identified, and perhaps even a more thorough study of the mutual interactions between notions of harmony within specific thinkers.

Moreover, I think that this new awareness of the mutual influence between internal harmonising and external harmonising, which I have raised here in this paper has the potential to change the way we conceive of ethics in Chinese philosophy. Much of the ethical and political discourse on Chinese philosophy has been influenced largely by Western analytic philosophy, and many of these theories are also based on a Western analytical framework. Personally, I am very excited by the thoughts of reconceptualising many of these ethical and political theories, now bearing in mind the mutual influence between internal harmonising and external harmonising.

There are other issues worth pursuing that I was unable to pursue here due to the limitations of this paper. One of them would be to explore the possibility of an internal and/or external notion of harmony in the *Daodejing*, perhaps studied alongside with the

*Neiye* (內業). As I have mentioned in Chapter 3, there is no explicit or implicit mention of anything resembling an external or internal harmony in the text, and one big challenge to this (which thus requires a whole dedicated paper) is the fact that there are too many divergent interpretations of the *Daodejing*. Generally, there is the Huang-Lao interpretation and the Lao-Zhuang interpretation. Having put much thought and research into this, I realised that both interpretations would yield different results about internal/external harmonising, which would be far too lengthy for this paper. Nonetheless, this would be something worth exploring in the future.

Another area worth exploring deeper (which I am personally very interested in) would be to engage in further study on the notion of external harmonising in the *Mencius*. On a very practical level, there are times in life where we are faced with having to make difficult decisions, and we find ourselves trapped between a rock and a hard place. External harmonising in the *Mencius* provides us with a radically different way to engage these problems. We often tend to frame decisions in a binary manner as if each choice mutually excludes the goods/value of the other choice. But as Mencius' method of external harmonising suggests, we can reconceptualise the entire decision framework to produce creative solutions where different goods/value are simultaneously preserved by means of their degree (i.e. how much (or to what extent) of each good/value do we wish to preserve here?). This would be similar to how a chef prepares soup when deciding how much of each ingredient to add. It would be interesting to determine if we can derive some guiding principle underlying this notion of external harmonising.

I hope that this paper has contributed significantly to the study of harmony in Chinese philosophy, and inspire further study in this area.

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