

Notes to follow Wai-lim Yip's Lecture "Why Daoism Today?"

1. 두 가지 경고

*Karl Jaspers: 과학기술을 앞세운 서구문명은 위대한 고대 아시아 문명들을 뿌리째 뽑고, 무력케 만들며, 휩쓸어 버린다.

*Octavio Paz: 각 민족과 문화의 차이들의 소멸은 문화적 다양성이 근절됨을 의미한다.

2. 道家의 교훈을 요약한다면 다음과 같다. "우리에게 썩워진 언어적 장벽을 제거하고, 마음의 족쇄로부터 탈출하여, 活潑한 전체적 생명세계를 회복하고, 自然的 自生的 自律的 自化的 운행과 작용을 유지한다."

3. 도가철학은 근본을 일깨우고, 전방을 주시하는 지평(horizon)으로서, 이는 영어에서 두 가지 의미로 쓰이는 'Radical' 이란 단어로 가장 잘 특징 지워진다. 우선 도가는 언어가 세계에 대한 개념화와 그 세계 속의 존재로서의 우리 자신에 대한 개념화에 어떻게 영향을 주는가라는 근본적인 질문을 함으로써, 개념들의 제한과 왜곡으로부터 자유롭게, 서로 뒤섞이거나 드러내며 제한하는 실재로서의 전체적 현상에 대한 새로운 인식을 열어준다. 다른 한편으로는, 도가는 우리가 자유롭게 움직일 수 있는 공간을 회복하고 새로이 만들기 위해, 급진적이고 전위적이며 파괴적인 전략들을 제공한다. 이러한 고대 중국의 (역설적이고 전위적인) 언어적 전략과 행위들은 다다이즘(Dadaism) 이래의 서구 전위 예술에서 종종 사용되는 세 단계의 공격, 즉 To Disturb(교란), To Dislocate(轉位), To Destroy(파괴)을 앞서 시연해 보였다. 주목해야 할 것은, 이러한 세 단계의 도가적 공격이 자연과 인간성의 자유로

운 흐름을 온전히 회복하고자 하는 목적과 분리되지 않는다는 점이다. 이러한 이해 없이는, 탈구조주의와 포스트구조주의적인 시도들을 포함한, 다다이즘 이후의 전위예술운동에서의 모든 교란시키고, 轉位하며, 파괴하는 시도들은 단지 그저 그러한 충격적인 기법들에 지나지 않게 된다.

황제를 '하늘의 자식(天子)' 라 하고, 군주들, 아버지들, 남편들에게 신하들, 자식들, 아내들로부터 도전받지 않을 권위를 주며, 그리고 장자에게 특권을 부여하는, 주나라 봉건체제의 名教(Naming System) 아래에서, 도가는 자연적 존재로서의 인간의 천부권이 제한되고 왜곡된다고 느꼈다. 정치적으로 그들은 소위 王道, 天道, 그리고 그 名教를 무너뜨림으로써, 억압되고 추방되고 소외된 자연적 자아에 대한 기억을 완전하게 새로이 일깨울 수 있었다. 도가적 프로젝트는 언어의 독재를 해체하는 반-담론(counter-discourse)적인 것으로, 정치적이면서도 미학적이다.

4. 중국 회화와 중국 시가 예시.

境界(중국 시가와 회화 속에서 환기되는 그런 세계)

風範(자연의 자유로운 흐름을 갈망하는 삶의 방식)

胸懷(하나의 지배적 체계 안에 갇히지 않는 자유로운 공간 안에서 수많은 사물과 수많은 변화들을 감싸 안는 의식의 영역 혹은 흉금)

5. 체계들에 대항하여 끊임없이 재창조하고 해체하는 힘으로서의 도가의 역사.

6. 포스트모던의 예술과 문학의 특징들

(a) 평면성과 깊이없음, 가장 문자적인 의미에서의 새로운 형태의 피상성; 상업적 세계의 광채를 가진 생명력 없는 대상들(Jameson), simulacra(환영 혹은 모조품)로서의 대상들(Baudrillard). 물신주의의 시대(Arnold Hauser).

(b) 진정한 예술과 대중 예술 사이의 붕괴, 결과적으로 일상 세계의 美學化라고 불릴 수 있는 예술의 脫崇高化(desublimation)(Russell Berman).

(c) 근대적 내향성과 고뇌의 추구는 더 이상 없다; 외부 대상들에 대한 쾌락주의, 오직 바깥만 있고 내부는 없으며, 단지 표면만 있고 본질은 없으며, 단지 보여주기만 하고 함축된 주체성은 없으며, 단지 기표(signifier)들만 있고 기의(signified)가 없는 광경(Jameson).

(d) 조직적 관료주의와 High-tech 기계들의 세계에 의해 해체된 주체의 파편화와 종말, — 개별적 스타일과 통시적 의미에서의 시간의 상실(Jameson)과, 공통 언어의 상실(Lyotard's "loss of metanarrative").

(e) 통시적 시간의 상실은 하나의 공존하는 표면의 여러 사건들을 단조롭게 한다, — 파편화된 채 혼합되는 특이한 형태의 역사: 과거 스타일들과 음성들의 뒤죽박죽된 혼합체. 역사의 문맥은 경시되고 거부되며, 예술의 상충하는 형태들과 생산물의 상충하는 양식들은 뒤죽박죽된 혼합체로 잘못 융해된다(Hal Foster). 모든 것은, 의미의 사슬이 끊어지고 언설이 언어적 기능불량이 되는, 무질서하게 이질적이고 파편화된 일종의 라캉적인 정신분열증세의 상태로서, 우리에게 다가온다.

(f) (1) 구성적인 주관성과 수반하는 작품들의 개별성의 포기; (2) 상품 물신주의와의 화해; (3) 확고한 의미에서의 정치문화적 포기(Hauser).

7. Key phrases from Adorno's essay "Culture Industry Reconsidered" (1967):

문화 산업은 이전의 그리고 친숙한 것들을 질적으로 새롭게 융합시킨다. 모든 부문들에서, 대중의 소비를 위해 손질된 생산물들, 그리고 그 소비의 본성을 결정할 만큼 계획에 따라 제품화된 생산물들 ... 이는 경제적 경영적 집중과 더불어 현대의 기술적 능력에 의해 가능하게 되었다. 문화 산업은 의도적으로 소비자들을 위에서부터 통합시켜버린다. 문화산업은 그 양쪽의 회생을 통해 높은 질의 예술과 낮은 질의 예술을 합쳐 버린다 ... 대중들은 계산의 대상이고, 기계 장치의 부속이다 ... 대중들은 문화 산업의 표준이 아니라 문

화산업의 이데올로기이다 ... 문화산업의 총체적 실행이란 이윤동기를 문화적 형태들로 옮겨놓는 것이다 ... 작품들의 자율성은 문화 산업에 의해 소멸된다 ... 진정한 의미에서의 문화는 단순히 인류에 순응하는 것이 아니라, 인류가 살고 있는 생기 잃은 관계들에 대한 항의를 동시에 제기한다 ... 문화산업에 전형적인 문화적 실체들은 더 이상 또 하나의 상품들이 아니라, 철두철미하게 상품들이다.

8. 발전으로서의 근대성에 대한 혼합적 비판(Yip과 John Tomlinson): 제1세계에 의해 전파된 근대화이론은 두 가지 모두로 해석될 수 있는(예를 들어, 해방적이면서도 억압적인) 근대성의 불명료한 성격을 피하고, 인간의 행복과 완성을 가져올 것이라는 그 능력에만 초점을 맞춘다. 제1세계가 제3세계에 팔려고 하는 이 발전이론은, 전통적이고 전-자본주의적이며 전근대적인 사회들을 자기발전의 가능성들을 크게 제한하는 모든 형태의 사회적 물질적 병증과 부자유로 구성된 것으로 본다. '계몽' 과 연합된 과학적 합리성과 자유민주주의적 정치 프로젝트는 '이러한 여러 형태의 지배로부터의 해방을 가져올 것이다.' 고도로 계층화된 관리적 경영적 구조들로 특징지워지는 부르주아 경제 이론과 함께, 그리고 산업화와 도시화와 더불어, 진보와 번영이 성취될 것이다. 그러나 이 이론은, 축소된 인간성-소외되고 구상화되고 상품화되고 "식민화된"-즉, 또 다른 형태의 지배를 초래하는 도구적 이성의 "철창"인 생활세계의 편제를 가져온다는, Baudelaire, Marx, Weber, Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse 등등의 경고들을 그럴싸하게 일버무렸다.

9. 송영배의 도구적 이성에 대한 한걸음 더 나아간 언급.

10. 식민지개척자들이 식민지를 지배하기 위해 사용하는 전략들: 민족적 자기의의식의 억압. 원거리의 대도시에 대한 경제적 문화적 의존도 강화. 식민화된 사람들의 역사의식, 공동체 의식, 그리고 문화적 정체성이 둔감해지는 심리적 문화적 환경 창출. 예를 들어, 구체화와 적응화를 통해 소비자들의 필

요에 적합하도록, 전통적이고 혹은 새로운 문화적 활동들을 재단함. — 어떠한 자기 의식적인 개입의 충동이 없어질 정도의, 그리고 모든 높은 질의 문학과 예술의 형태들이 가벼운 소비주의적 문학, 가벼운 포르노그래피적인 관능주의, 결혼기의 서정시조 혹은 명백한 선정주의들로 대체될 정도의 상업주의의 상승을 그 토대가 포함하는 문화 산업.

11. 그렇다면, 진정한 독립은 경제적이며 문화적이어야만 한다.

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Why Daoism Today?

Wai-lim Yip*

1

"Today" in the title of my talk is not "today" in the calendar sense. "Today" refers to the cultural ecology, the radical changes and displacements, brought about in China since the Opium War first by attendant colonizing activities of the Western powers and Japan and recently by their geopolitical influences camouflaged under the pretext of "cooperative" globalization.

What kind of world and cultural ecology will globalization deliver? Are we to believe that a real global village is almost, or even already, here, a world of seamless unity in which every one equally participates in formulating economic, political, and cultural agenda that would allow all the unique differences of each of its individual members play out its share? Globalization is naively utopian and comes to us as a form of euphoria and mirage trembling with prospects and promises that are eventually treacherous and even catastrophic. The prophetic words of Karl Jaspers and

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Octavio Paz are now apocalyptically darker and truer than ever.

The age of technology [we might now add “high-tech] ... uproots us, and it does so all around the globe. And to the great Asian cultures it does so more violently, since they lack the transitional period in which the West was producing the technological world — a world now finished and overpowering, engulfs people whom their past culture has neither prepared nor disposed toward it. (Jaspers)

We are condemned to be modern [We might now add “postmodern”]. We cannot (should not) dispense with technology and science. ‘Turning back’ is both impossible and unthinkable ... [T]raditional societies must be defended if we wish to preserve diversity ... The extinction of each marginal society and each ethnic and cultural difference signifies the extinction of a survival possibility for the entire species. With each society that disappears, destroyed or devoured by industrialization [We might now add the word “globalization”], a possibility of mankind disappears — not only the past but also the future. History has been, until now, plural: diverse visions of man, each with a distinct version of his past and his future. To preserve this diversity is to preserve a plurality of futures — which is to say life itself. (Paz)

The present paper is triggered by the fear that this diversity of cultures, of which East Asian cultures represent some of the most brilliant paradigms, would dissolve into a nondescript sameness.

What kind of intervention can we, as cultural workers, suggest as a possible measure to resist the eradication of diversity of cultures? I want to follow up and expand on a statement I made on other occasions: The Daoist

lesson offered some twenty centuries back, here in my shorthand summary — “To deframe language’s grip on us for the liberation of the prison of mind leading to the retrieval of the vivid, virgin and vivacious (w)holistic lifeworld and the full function of the self-generating, self-transforming, self-sufficient Nature (去語障、解心囚，收復活潑潑的整体的生命世界和维护自然自生自律自化的运作) — has yet to be learned by the West, and it seems to me now that this lesson has been largely forgotten by most of our fellow country citizens in recent decades.

2

Before I expand on this Daoist lesson, I need to point out some current misconceptions about Daoism as a horizon. First, the conflation, by Westerners for a long time, and by some native scholars, to a lesser degree, of the Dao Jia, 道家, or Philosophical Daoism of Lao Zi (cir. 6BC) and Zhuang Zi (3BC) with the Dao Jiao 道教, the at root anti-Daoist religious Daoism, which usurped the name from Lao Zi and deviated greatly in substance from his philosophy. I want to make sure that by Daoism we mean the original teachings of Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi. A second misconception is more serious. Many people view the Daoist project with a certain amount of reservation, taking it as more or less a passive and even escapist philosophy or act. This phenomenon is the result of their having internalized for centuries the perceptions of Daoism pounded into their minds by the dominant ideological orientations (mainly Confucian-Legalist)

of the ruling institutions. It is worth for us to step back for a moment to remind ourselves the loss of a significant sensitivity. When we say that certain phenomena, events, actions or words are “deviant”, we base such conclusions according to the sense of norm/ normalcy/ constancy that we have internalized as something unquestionable. But deeper reflection will disclose that such norms or constants are not absolute and are, in most cases, a measure of cultural constructions out of subjective choices driven by certain political interests under the pretexts of societal “effectiveness” made prevalent by a dominant and dominating ideology. To retrieve this sensitivity and awareness, we must constantly question these frames as we encounter them. Daoism is a project to help deframe this grip of language and concept on us.

Daoism is a root-awakening forward-looking horizon, which can be best characterized by the double meanings of the English word “Radical”. On the one hand, it attacks the root questions of how language affects our conceptions, both of the world and of our selves as beings in the world, leading to opening up a new perception of total phenomena as an interweaving, inter-disclosing, and inter-defining entity free from the restriction and distortion of ideas, on the other, it offers us radical, avant-garde subversive strategies to retrieve and re-inscribe such a space in and out of which we are empowered to move freely. In the Taoist discourse, we often find words, phrases, statements, or stories of actions that take us by surprise, unconventional, strange forms of logic, or anti-logic, teasing language and rhetoric, including paradoxes and attacks by way of using off-norms to re-inscribe off-norms as possible norms, and challenging norms to

expose their acceptance as absolute as treacherous. In the neo-Taoist developments, we find further the use of actions or activities to tease and assail the life-imprisoning institutions, including technique of shouting and beating in Chan (Zen) Buddhist kongan or koan. These language strategies and actions or activities of ancient China have anticipated and previewed the three stages of attack often used in Western avant-garde art events since the Dadaist movement, namely, TO DISTURB, TO DISLOCATE, and TO DESTROY. It is important to note that these triple stages of the Daoist attack are inseparable from their target vision of retrieving the free flow of Nature and humanity to the full. Without this understanding, all the “disturb-dislocate-destroy” attempts in avant-garde art movements since Dadaism, including deconstruction and poststructuralist attempts, will remain merely shock techniques as such.

The Daoists felt that under the Naming System of the feudalistic Zhou Dynasty (such as calling the Emperor the ‘Son of Heaven’, investing lords, fathers, and husbands with unchallenged power over subjects, sons, and wives, and giving special privileges to first males over other males) the birthrights of humans as natural beings were restricted and distorted. Politically, they intended to implode the so called “Kingly Dao”, the “Heavenly Dao” and the Naming System (“The speakable Dao is not the constant Dao,/ The namable Name is not the constant Name”) so that memories of the repressed, exiled and alienated natural self could be fully reawakened; thus leading to recovery of full humanity. The Daoist Project is a counter discourse to deframe the tyranny of language; it is at once political and aesthetic.

This political critique of language opens up larger philosophical and aesthetic dimensions. From the very beginning, the Daoists believed that the totalizing compositional activity of all phenomena, changing and ongoing, is beyond human comprehension. All conscious efforts to generalize, formulate, classify and order it will result in some form of restriction and reduction. We impose these conceptions, which, by definition, must be partial and incomplete, upon total phenomena at the peril of losing touch with the concrete appeal of the totality of things. Meanwhile, the real world, quite without human supervision and explanation, is totally alive, self-generating, self-conditioning, self-transforming and self-complete (*wuyan-duhua*). Inherent in this recognition of the inadequacy of language is the acceptance of humans as limited and the rejection of the idea of seeing humans as preeminently the controller or orderer of things. To re-present the original condition in which things and men can freely emerge, first and foremost, humans must understand their position in and relation to the Great Composition of Things. Humans, being only one form of being among a million others, have no prerogative to classify the cosmic scheme. We should understand that “Ducks’ legs are short; lengthening them means pain. Cranes’ legs are long; shortening them means suffering” (2:317). We must leave them as they are in nature. Each form of being has its own nature, has its own place; how can we take this as subject (principal) and that as object (subordinate)? How can we impose “our” viewpoint upon others as the right viewpoint, the only right viewpoint? “Not to discriminate this and that as the opposite is the essence of Dao. There you get to the Axis. There you attain the Center of the Ring to respond to the endless ... Obliterate the

distinctions and view things as things view things from both this and that (liangxing, to travel on two paths) (2:66) is called the Balance of Tao (2:70)

It is not hard to realize that what is called this (the so-called subject, determining and dominating agent) is really also that (the so-called object, dominated and determined), for when I say this, is it not also that from your point of view? Thus, only when the subject retreats from its dominating position — i.e. not to put “I” in the primary position for aesthetic contemplation — can we allow the Free Flow of Nature to reassume itself. Phenomena do not need “I” to have their existences; they all have their own inner lives, activities and rhythms to affirm their authenticity as things. Authenticity or truth does not come from “I”; things possess their existences and their forms of beauty and truth before we name them. Subject and object, principal and subordinate, are categories of superficial demarcation. Subject and object, consciousness and phenomena inter-penetrate, inter-complement, inter-define, and inter-illuminate, appearing simultaneously, with humans corresponding to things, things corresponding to humans, things corresponding to things extending throughout the million phenomena. Accordingly, we must be aware that each of our perceptual acts, i.e., each of our makings of meaning is provisional and it has to wait for the presence of, and modification by, other angles, other perceptions, in order to be free from the fetters of naming, while using them.

To eschew the domination of things by human subjectivity now also means that we must view things as things view themselves. It is no accident that most Chinese landscape paintings use aerial, mid-air, and ground perspectives simultaneously and freely. Front mountains, back mountains,

front villages, back villages, bay in front of mountains, and bays behind mountains are seen simultaneously. This is because the viewers are not locked into only one viewing position. Instead they are allowed to change positions constantly to undo viewing restrictions, allowing several variations of knowledge to converge upon their consciousness. Take Fan Kuan's "Travellers in the Valley". In this large vertical hanging scroll, a caravan of travelers, appearing very small, emerge from the lower right corner with large trees behind them. This means that we are viewing this unit from a distance. But behind the trees, a very distant mountain now springs before our eyes, huge, majestic and immediate as if pressing upon our eyes. We are given to view the scene simultaneously from two distances and from several altitudes. Between the foreground and the background lies a diffusing mist, creating an emptiness out of its whiteness, an emptiness which has physicality in the real world. It is this whiteness, this void which helps to dissolve our otherwise locked-in sense of distances, engendering a free-floating registering activity. One may also notice that the speck of human existence, the travelers in the lower right corner, instead of dominating Nature, merges with, and has become part of the Total Composition of all phenomena. This strategy is paramount in Chinese landscape paintings. Witness, for example, this frame [Slide 2], which seems to suggest a perspective of the Western kind, but this is only a detail of the next painting by Dai Jin (1390-1460) [Slide 3], in which we are drawn into Nature in its cosmic totality. Please remember this feeling of moving freely toward limitless space, which is closely related to the aesthetic-cultural staples of "jingjie境界", "fengfan风范", and "xionghuai胸怀" to be discussed

below. The Daoist idea of “Let Nature be” in its fullest without human makeover is too obvious to need comment here. The use of emptiness as a negative space, a silent, meditative condition through which Nature emerges in its full brilliant innocence, is continually employed in Chinese landscape painting in general, in Daoist/ Chan-Buddhist paintings in particular.

There are two directions in which the use of emptiness was developed in China, and both have played an important role in the development of Japanese versions of Chinese suiboku paintings. One is represented by Mi Fei and his son Mi Yu-jen’s use of clouds to diffuse the distances [Slides 4 & 5], allowing mountains in the far distances, seen from aerial perspective, to appear closer. This cloud/ mist space, visually void an empty, has been extensively used by later painters, by Mu Chi and Yu Jian in particular [Slides 6 etc]. Many painters expand the emptiness to occupy almost two-third of the total space, thus enhancing greatly the meditative condition to become the dominant object of our perceptual act.

The other use of emptiness is represented by the paintings of Ma Yuan (c. 1150-1225) and Xia Gui (1190-1230), referred to as the Ma-Xia School. Ma Yuan’s paintings are famous for his anchoring the scene on one corner leading through mountain lines or tree shadows between seen and unseen into the mysterious Void and Stillness of the immensity of Nature. This practice is effectively used by Xia Gui, not only in creating a silent, meditative condition, but also in blurring out the intrusive restrictive perspectives.

A similar free-floating activity is reinvented in the poetic language in classical Chinese poetry. Language now can be used to avoid being locked

into one stationery, restricted, subjectively dominated, directed and determined position; this is to be achieved by adjusting syntactical structures to allow objects and events to maintain their multiple spatial and temporal extensions, and by providing a gap between objects, events, or frames of meanings, an emptiness, a subversive space, so to speak, whereby one can move back and forth between or among them to evoke a larger sense of what is given so as to constantly remodify, and, at the same time, deframe and reframe anything that gets stuck.

For example, although the Chinese language also have articles and personal pronouns, they are often dispensed with in poetry, opening up an indeterminate space for the reader to enter and re-enter for double to multiple perception. Then, there is the absence of connective elements (prepositions, conjunctions), and these, aided by the indeterminacy of parts of speech and no-tense declensions in verbs affords the reader a unique freedom to consort with the real-life world.

These facts quite often leave the words in a loosely-committed relationship with the reader, who remains in a sort of middle ground between engaging with and disengaging from them. This syntactic freedom promotes a kind of prepredicative condition wherein words, like objects in the real-life world, are free from predetermined closures of relationship and meaning and offer themselves to us in an open space. Within this open space around them, we can move freely and approach them from various vantage points to achieve different shades of the same aesthetic moment. We are given to witness the acting-out of objects and events in cinematic visuality, and stand, as it were, at the threshold of various possible

meanings.

These “engaging-disengaging”, “framing-unframing” language strategies achieved by the gaps between objects or visual events made possible through asyntactical and paratactical structures in classical Chinese poetry or the free-floating perspectives through the diffusion of distances in Chinese paintings, it is apt to note here, have helped stimulate syntactical innovations by a huge number of modern American poets since Pound to use space breaks and syntactical breaks to achieve similar aesthetic effects of simultaneity, montage, and visual perspicuity, including elaborate extensions of these techniques in the juxtaposition of luminous cultural moments on a large scale (as in Pound’s *Cantos*), leading to a polyphonic or orchestration of patterned energies.

But the complexity of the Daoist aesthetic is not fully shown until we confront the subtle interplay of the built-in contradictions throughout the Daoist texts, and until we try to see in what way the decreative process leads to or becomes the creative. This decreative-creative dialectic appears on the surface in the form of negation or renunciation: The Dao (Way of Nature) is ineffable; language is inadequate; we should take no action (*wuwei*); we have no mind (*wuxin*); no knowledge, no self (*wuwo*); we should not speak about Dao; Dao is void and there is nothing in it. Paradoxically, in this seeming renunciation is the affirmation of the concrete total world, a world free from and unrestricted by concepts. The renunciation then is not negation, but a new way of repossessing this original concrete world by dispossessing the partial and reduced forms the process of abstract thinking has thus far heaped upon us. Thus, without taking actions as those defined

by a closed system of abstract thinking, everything is done in accordance with our instinctive nature. Without exercising our conscious mind, we can respond fully to things that come into our ken. With conceptual boundaries removed, our consciousness is thus open, unblocked, a center of no circumference into which and across which a million things will regain their free flow and activity.

But the ideal Daoist poet, when pushed to the logical end, should be silent and seek no expression, for the affirmation of the nonverbal world cancels out such a possibility. Both Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi were fully aware of this. Dao cannot be told and yet Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi cannot help but use the word Dao to circumscribe it. While using it, they remind us that it should immediately be forgotten so that we can be one with Nature again. The word Dao is used as though it were merely a pointer, a spark toward the original real world. Thus, the Daoist artist stresses also the emptiness of language. What is written is fixed and solid; what is unwritten is fluid and empty. The empty and fluid wordlessness is the indispensable cooperator with the fixed and solid word. The full activity of language should be like the co-presence of the solid and the void in Chinese paintings, allowing the reader to receive not only the words (the written) but also the wordlessness (the unwritten). The negative space, such as the emptiness in a painting and the condition of silence with meanings trembling at the edge of words in a poem, is made into something vastly more significant and positive, and indeed, has become a horizon toward which our aesthetic attention is constantly directed. By continually decreasing discursive and explanatory elements and procedures in the poetic line, by promoting the co-extensive

presencing of objects, the Chinese poets help bring forth a type of non-mediating mediation, by way of deframing-as-framing, leading to an art of noninterference akin to the workings of Nature, and a use of language as a pointer toward the finer interweaving of the unspeaking, concrete, changing Nature (ziran), like the word Dao which we are to forget once it is pronounced, like the fish trap which can be forgotten once the fish is caught (2: 944). The words become a spotlight which lights and brightens up, in full brilliance, objects emerging from the real world.

This paper, as I said earlier, is triggered by the fear that the diversity of indigenous cultures might be eradicated by the relentless onslaught of globalization. The Chinese like to use the phrase “jingjie境界” (a world such as that evoked in Chinese poetry and painting), “fengfan风范” (a mode or way of life that aspires to the free flow of Nature) “and” “xionghuai胸怀” (a bosom or sphere of consciousness that embraces “a million things, a million changes” in the free-floating space that allows one not to be locked into one hegemonic system” to lip-service Chinese culture. How many still understand the parameters of these terms? Worse still, how many still have any trace of these sensibilities in their minds/ hearts? Will the residues of these forms of consciousness totally disappear in the globalization of cultures. I asked in my *Diffusion of Distances: Dialogues between Chinese and Western Poetics* (1993): “Are we to condone mapping a course for modern world culture, literature and history solely through the coding interests of the West, namely the appropriation of non-Western world in terms of the interest of multi-national or transnational corporatism, or TNC as charted out by the consumer-oriented, goal-directed, instrumental reason of

the post-Enlightenment West?" Should we allow us to be swept into the crushingly stark globalized culture dictated by the rules of the game largely dominated by the agenda of the TNC's? Here, a word about the role Daoism has played over the centuries may be helpful for us to regain a new focus on this native strength.

While Daoism had not literally overturned the Confucian orthodox as it was deified in Han Dynasty, as a counterdiscourse at such an early date, it has continually challenged the orthodox to question and modify itself, where possible, to become a cultural force with new syntheses from the Daoist project. Indeed, the Daoist counterdiscourse, which continues to resist the divisive functions of language so as to evoke the return to the Uncarved Block, has been playing a pivotal role in balancing the dominatory and exclusionary activities of the dominant ideology. For example, aside from the fact that this counterdiscourse has helped to reinvent language in several significant ways, the Daoists also remind us that all systems are problematic and will continue to frame and distort the natural being as well as the larger Composition of things. Thus, Daoism never wants to offer another system. Strictly speaking, Daoism is not a philosophy as conventionally conceived; instead, it must be considered as a continually reinventing, deframing force to reawaken humans' memories to return to a larger humanity (the Uncarved Block) to remind them constantly the pitfalls of language and conceptions so that they can undo them as they come.

This counterdiscourse and its deframing strategies have been continually employed in Chinese cultural and aesthetic projects to invigorate the creative impulses throughout the centuries. Here, I can only offer large outlines.

As reflected in documents, the Confucian appendixes to the I Jing or The Book of Changes, the Confucian classic Zhong Yong or The Doctrine of the Mean and most, if not all, of the writings of neo-Confucianists of the Song (960-1279) and Ming (1368-1643) Dynasties have made significant adjustments to include substantial dimensions of Daoist strategies. In fact, many Buddhist texts during the Six Dynasties (221-589), too, have appropriated both deframing strategies and phraseology from Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi, leading to the emergence of the most radical, indigenous project of Chan (Zen) Buddhism. The latter has been the central transformation of the American avant-garde artists John Cage and Allan Kaprow.

As reflected in poetry, painting, calligraphy and other life arts (Tai Ji, garden arts), Daoist perceptual-expressive strategies form the center of the aesthetic horizon, offering fluid and free entrances and reentrances to consort with the uncarved natural humanity and Nature, forming an important creative force to play against the repressive and distortive institutional structures.

As reflected in the life of intellectuals, Daoist dimensions were often adopted to go hand in hand with their institutional commitments. It is a both/and, not an either/or situation. A good example is found in statesmen-scholars like Su Dongpo (1036-1101). A famous Confucian statesman, Su's Daoist writings on poetry and art influenced centuries of poetic and art theories out of which much of the artistic sensibility and taste formed continues to play out in Chinese culture to this day.

As reflected in philosophical and political discourses, from Han scholars like Wang Chong (27- ca. 100) to the neo-Daoists like Wang Bi (226-249) and

Guo Xiang (died 312), attempts have been made to challenge the power structures of Dong Zhongshu by appealing to the Daoist ways of recovering the natural (as in Wang Chong) or to transform, through the subversive uses of language found in Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi, the Confucian concepts with Daoist parameters (such as Daoisizing the Confucian Sage). These strategies help to rechannel discourses on Dao away from framing functions, and in doing so, they open up fluid imaginative spaces whereby the poets, artists, and critical theories can successfully reinscribe a larger network of communication with the natural self and the unblemished Nature. There is also this to be noted: these strategies found in the annotations of Daoist texts by Wang Bi, Guo Xiang and others have prepared, in many ways, for later thinkers, such as the neo-Confucianists, to make significant syntheses.

3

What has happened that this same native strength has not functioned similarly in recent centuries as a counter-balancing discourse? We need to retrace some of the tropes of the trajectory that led to the present condition in order to fully understand what is at stake. We will begin by examining one line of answers to the question: "What kind of world will globalization deliver?" and work our way back.

Many attempts have been made to distinguish the postmodern from the modern. The stylistic markers offered by Fredric Jameson, for example, are quite cogent. Let me summarize his arguments here and correlate some of

his points to those made by other critics where I see fit.

Postmodern art and literature, according to Jameson, is characterized by a flatness or depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality in the most literal sense; objects stripped of life come to us with a luster of the commercial world, objects merely as what Jean Baudrillard would call simulacra. Or, as Arnold Hauser's would say, this is period of 'commodity fetishism'. The supreme position accorded advertisement and commercialism now leads to the breakdown of the dividing line between serious art and mass art, a breakdown, in Russell Berman's words, that leads to the desublimation of art which in turn can also be called the aestheticization of the daily lifeworld. The art gallery is looking more and more like a boutique shop and a boutique shop is looking more and more like an art gallery. The kind of inwardness and questing agony so central to modernism is gone; what is left is a hedonism of external objects, a spectacle with only outside, no inside, only surface, no essence, only show, no implied subjectivity, or, to change the jargon, only signifiers, no signified. The consequences are unprecedented: The absence of anxiety of the ego, the kind that we find in modernistic works in their quest for the untarnished earthly paradise, now also means the fragmentation and death of the subject as it is constantly being dissolved by the world of organizational bureaucracies and high-tech machines, resulting in the loss of individual styles, the diachronic sense of time, and the loss of a common language (Lyotard's "loss of metanarrative"). Echoing Lyotard, Jameson says: "Faceless masters continue to inflect the economic strategies which constrain our existences, but no longer need to impose their speech (or are henceforth unable to); and the

postliteracy of the late capitalist world reflects, not only the absence of any great collective project, but also the unavailability of the older national language itself." The loss of diachronic time flattens out events on a coextensive surface, resulting in a strange form of cannibalizing history: past styles and voices are lifted out from history and treated as pastiches. In the words of Hal Foster, the context of history is disregarded, its continuum is disavowed, and conflictual forms of art and modes of production are falsely resolved in pastiche . Now that the subject has lost its capacity to actively extend its pro-tensions and re-tensions to organize its past and future into coherent experience, everything comes to us as randomly heterogeneous, and fragmentary, a kind of Lacanian schizophrenic condition where the signifying chain is broken and where our speech becomes a kind of linguistic malfunctioning. The postmodern mentality, according to Hauser, can be summarized into three points: (1) the renunciation of constitutive subjectivity and concomitant individuality of works; (2) the reconciliation made with the world of commodity fetishism, and (3) a pronounced sense of political-cultural resignation .

Is this the culture we must embrace?

Deeper groping into the condition will reveal that the postmodern is nothing but an acceleration of a priority that has been in motion in the West for a long time, namely the privileging of humankind's domination over phenomena through linguistic and conceptual framings according to their subjective interests, often driven by power-wielding agenda very much at variance with the project proposed by the Daoists. Adorno and Horkheimer were perhaps right when they suggested in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

that the modern condition began as early as the days of the ancient Greeks. When the latter ignored the interrelatedness of humankind with things in nature and did not recognize the self-sufficiency of things as things, they not only alienated themselves from Nature, but also from the natural impulses of their own humanity. Privileging the humanmade over the naturegiven, rationality over intuitive impulses, achievers in the Western world have not only made themselves master object of their idolatry, but also exulted over their own products at the expense of eclipsing their brothers and sisters (i.e., not only other humans, but also animals, plants, mountains, and rivers.) In the height of industrialization and urbanization, poetry, as the “quintessence” and “ambrosia” of humanity, what Benjamin and Adorno in their correspondences call the “aura”, has been reduced to almost nothing in the process of fragmentation, reification, commodification, alienation brought on by instrumental reason ordained by scientism. Both the natural root of humanity and the aura-carrier language have been vulgarized and instrumentalized to the point of becoming objects stripped of sensibility and sensitivity. This is what Habermas called the colonization of humanity. Modernism, as a counterdiscourse to this colonization, has been considered by the Frankfurt School critics Adorno and Horkheimer as positive challenges to the incremental process of commodification, alienation and reduction leading to possible recovery of the repressed, forgotten humanity.

It was Adorno's view that true art must possess power to liberate us from the above-described form of domination. True art must in its sublimating process that transcends society assert its unique political position. Modern poetry, modern art, and modern music insist on their spontaneity as such a

form of tension against the regimentation of society. Not implicating in society as it were, they successfully reflect the complex truth of society's repression of nature and human nature. Sublimation is the exposure of the mask of culture industry (i.e. the process of tailoring culture to economic impulses). Culture industry is repression, not sublimation. To understand the seriousness of this statement, it is worth quoting here key phrases from Adorno's essay "Culture Industry Reconsidered" (1967):

The culture industry fuses the old and the familiar into a new quality. In all its branches, products which are tailored for consumption by masses, and which to a great extent determine the nature of that consumption, are manufactured more or less according to plan This is made possible by contemporary technical capabilities as well as by economic and administrative concentration. The culture industry intentionally integrates its consumers from above. To the detriment of both, it forces together the spheres of high and low arts ... the masses ... are an object of calculation; an appendage of the machinery ... The masses are not the measure but the ideology of the culture industry ... The entire practice of the culture industry transfers the profit motive naked onto cultural forms The autonomy of works are ... eliminated by the culture industry ... Culture, in the true sense, did not simply accommodate itself to human beings; but it always simultaneously raised a protest against the petrified relations under which they lived Cultural entities typical of the culture industry are no longer also commodities, they are commodities through and through.

If works of modernism are responses to, and protests against, the colonization of Nature and the eclipse of full humanity during the height of

industrialization and urbanization, shouldn't works of postmodernism attempt to survive as a thinking, living organism by responding to, and protesting against, the colonization of the last bastion of our natural connection, Imagination, instead of politically and culturally surrendering to the Power of Econocracy? Many postmodern/ postcolonial theorists are of the opinion that with the death of the concept of nation-states there is going to be only one global culture. The question is: according to whose model? All symptoms overwhelmingly point to the consumer-oriented, goal-directed, instrumental reason of the post-Enlightenment West which has been quietly eradicating the diversity of cultures, as Jaspers and Paz feared. The so-called loss of metanarratives is perhaps an illusion. The fabric of globalized postmodern culture is shot with power-craving. The hedonism of fetishizing objects is only a form of anaesthesia to an angst buried deep in the hearts of postmodern humans, an angst which has been quietly crying out for a new form of emancipation.

Here, let me use the effects of modernity and postmodernity on modern China as an example. China, driven by the aggressive colonizing Western powers to rush through both the modern and the postmodern periods in a matter of a few decades, began in the May 4th Era in an all-out highly emotional iconoclastic attacks on traditional systems and vast indiscriminate transplantation of Western ideologies. The intellectuals find themselves in a situation in which the rise of Mr. Science (together with its not-yet-understood reifying, commodifying and dehumanizing culture industry that often produces what Marcuse called "one-dimensional man") has significantly eclipsed indigenous counterdiscourses, those in the high arts

(such as classical Chinese poetry and paintings) that once cultivated and maintained the deeper sense of (w)holistic sentient beings, and in the Daoist power-deframing, subversive perceptual-expressive strategies and their concomitant suggestions of noninterference and nonintrusiveness. I have written extensively on this predicament in my essay "Colonialism, Culture Industry and the Technology of Desire"; let me offer here instead the composite view of John Tomlinson and my own work to trace China's rugged course through these two periods. Briefly, the modernization theory propagated by the First World often eschews the ambiguous (i.e., at once liberating and repressive) character of modernity and highlights its capacity to deliver human happiness and fulfillment. This theory which the First World attempts to sell to the Third World as development theory, sees traditional, pre-capitalist, and pre-modern societies as consisting all manner of social and material ills and unfreedoms which greatly limit the possibilities of self-developments. "People were held in thrall to a variety of superstitions or dogmatic religious beliefs; civil and political rights were few and authoritarian rule is the norm." Modernity, according to this theory, in particular, "the scientific rationality and the liberal-democratic political projects associated with 'Enlightenment' "will deliver emancipation from many of these forms of domination. With a bourgeois economic theory characterized by highly stratified administrative and management structures, coupled with industrialization and urbanization, progress and affluence will be achieved. But this theory chooses to gloss over the warnings of Baudelaire, Marx, Weber, Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse and many others: that modernization comes with regimentation of the lifeworld, an "iron

cage” of instrumental reason leading to a reductive humanity — alienated, reified, commodified, and “colonized” — in other words, another form of domination. As I pointed out elsewhere, Plato’s elevation of the ego’s domination of Nature was transposed to the human realm: “Humans dominated other humans on the principle of exchange value (the use value of an object.) ... With industrialization, which capitalized on the domination and exchange principles, the function of language, which had been suffering from the Platonic-Aristotelian process of abstraction, had been further reduced to serving the ideology of a society which puts in its forefront the instrumental importance of things and men, such as seeing a tree not as a tree, but as lumber, and seeing a man, not according to his natural being, but according to his production potentials.” Here the critique of instrumental reason by Young-bae Song of Seoul National University, coming from the Confucian Ethnics, is of particular relevance here:

Two problems need to be noted ... The first is a certain loss of humanity in the aftermath of a radical “rationalization” of the production process. The second is the degradation of traditional ethical norms and spiritual values. Human labor was not organized with due consideration of each person’s special abilities and interests in mind, but rather viewed in an abstract and quantitative manner as an expedient in the radical pursuit of the rational ordering of the modes of production. Due to the artificial and willful restructuring, human labor came to be subdivided into various specialities. The ensuing result has been that humans are unable to effectuate their ideals or values into practice through their labor. Because humans are denied making use of, and working upon, nature in a conscious, autonomous and free manner,

they are unable to have the life proper to their sort.

The development theory inflates the promised euphoria in an effort to facilitate the First World's project to globalize their economic deployment. Now, it is this theory brimming with euphoric promise that the Chinese leaders and elites have internalized, seeing modernization and now globalized postmodernization as an inevitable course all Third World developing countries are "condemned" to pursue without any active, critical reflection to question any of these consequences. They look only toward affluence and do not know, or choose not to know, that Chinese culture has been either altered or marginalized to the degree of slowly becoming a near-empty shell; they proudly compare themselves with the indices of Western life styles and material conditions. Intoxicated by the myth of progress rife with consumerist desire and fetishization, they have brought about a form of homogenized culture to the exclusion of high culture and art. Contrary to the Chinese emphasis of "humans modeled after Nature", they repeated the gross Western mistakes of utilitarianism and unprecedented destruction of environment with all imaginable forms of pollution, creating huge numbers of "economic humans" that are often crude and brute. Have the Chinese elites ever reflected upon these catastrophic changes? Should they allow their culture and literature to become low-brow, tawdry, and desensitized? With the ever-increasing globalization, the radicalization of indigenous cultural and artistic ecology is even more devastating.

Many are the strategies the colonizer uses to achieve control over the colonized: suppression of national self-consciousness, enforcement of an

economic and cultural dependency on a distant metropolis, the creation of a psychological and cultural ambience whereby the historical consciousness, sense of community and cultural identity of the colonized can be desensitized such as tailoring traditional and new cultural activities through reification and commodification to fit in with consumers' needs — a culture industry whose infrastructure includes the elevation of commercialism to such a high degree that any residual self-conscious interventionist impulse would be wiped out and that all high literary and art forms would be replaced by some form of "soft" consumerist literature, soft-porn sensationalism, surface-scratching lyricism or outright tabloidism. We can now see that in China, without using a single bullet, the hegemonic economic powers (the West and Japan) offer a palatable rhetoric of the so-called transnational co-operations, and achieve similar goals described above. The key to this bloodless conquest is the full internalization of the Western modernization and development theory, including its newer guises in the hyperspace, by the elite leaders of developing countries and their willful disregard of the devastating effects of globalization.

True independence must, then, be both economic and cultural. True freedom can only be achieved by the intermediary elite classes embarking on a process of self-reflection and question those internalized alien structures of consciousness. This process acknowledges the real problems in imported systems of ideas and actions as well as the largely-ignored strengths in their indigenous culture, such as the power-deframing, Nature-based Daoist project. In the making of a new Chinese culture in which the complete sense of a lifeworld must be preserved, they must neither accept the

dominator' s present systems, nor to return to traditional modes uncritically, but rather explore the battles and negotiations of heterogeneous elements from two competing cultures at once destructive and creative in the hopes of catching a "spark" of the possibility of self-liberation and transcendence from internalized modes in the midst of restless dialogues between two systems. And it is from this understanding that we should proceed to rethink the role of East/ West comparative literature.

4

Twenty-seven years ago, I asked: Is it possible to obtain the so-called "essentials" shared by other cultural models? Is the so-called "universality" feasible? Is it correct to proceed only from the rationalist positions of Plato and Aristotle, Kant and post-Kantian thinkers? These are still the questions to be asked. Central to these questions is the attempt to widen the circumference of our consciousness and our cultural horizon (different from Goethe' s "Europe as World" and from Eliot' s "historical sense" that excluded even the two greatest traditions he knew: China and India) by bringing together differing cultures to engage in a form of tensional dialogue in which the indigenous aesthetic horizon of each culture (e.g. East Asian literature) is allowed to represent itself as it is , and not as it is framed within the hermeneutical habits and the poetic economy of one privileged, dominant culture. There is not one center, but many centers, not one interest, economic or otherwise, but many interests, that make up this

world. For us, the word “international” should mean, literally, international, interperception, and interreflection; it should mean that we must not see other cultures from one master code or one hegemonic center of concern but from several differing codes and several centers of concerns. The goal of cultural exchange, like economic exchange, should not be to conquer one mode with another but to provide an open forum for dialogue through interreflection and “double/triple perception” — that is, a gap or rift created by the copresence of two or three sets of provisional responses to two or three cultural “worlds”. This gap or double/triple perception allows us to mark the coding activities of one system by those of the others so as to understand more fully the making and unmaking of discourses and hierarchies of aesthetics and power. Different critical and aesthetic positions will have a chance to look at each other frankly, to recognize among themselves potential areas of convergence and divergence as well as their possibilities and limitations both as isolated theories and as cooperative projects to extend one another. To create a truly open dialogue, we must preserve the tension between cultural differences.

If we are to construct a workable narrative for discussing poetics, we must, therefore, recognize, first, the impossibility of arriving at such common grounds if we restrict ourselves to only one cultural model; we must avoid privileging the so-called “universality” or “universalism” proposed from a monocultural perspective, which often becomes a form of unwarranted reductionism and distortion of other native cultural/aesthetic horizons. To put it in more precise terms, to break the monocultural perpetuation of certain critical and theoretical hypotheses as being the sole authority on the

subject of literature, we must philosophically question the bases of theories from different cultural systems, how and under what sociopolitical conditions were they constructed and from where they evolved. Special attention is called for in this process of questioning: that our analyses, being themselves also forms of framing driven by our own positions as unavoidably dictated by the contestatory discursive field in which we find ourselves, we must try to avoid constructing “essentialized”, transhistorical truths either of the East or of the West.

We must, in other words, achieve a delicate marriage between aesthetics and history. However, we must caution critics to be sensitive to the slippery nature of these terms. Similar stylistic markers between works of two different cultural systems do not necessarily mean or function the same way. All aesthetic positions are discourses deeply entrenched in morphologies that are culture-specific. The question of history is equally problematic. First of all, we must understand that no history can claim to be objective or can claim to be innocent. Not only historical totality and objectivity is not achievable, but even within a segment of relatively “controllable” history, one’s writing is always conditioned by one’s philosophy of history. In the words of Hayden White, there are at least three types of limitation: ideological, moral and aesthetic, the last of which can be most intriguing and complex. All histories are partial versions because certain specificities, in the process of writing, will be sacrificed to accommodate a certain ideology. Modern Chinese history is a case in point: out of the same events emerge from the Nationalists and the Communists two very different histories. So is the case of the Rape of Nanking which is still waiting to be written properly

by the Japanese Government. Another case would be the history of the Hsiung-nu (the Huns). We only have the Han Chinese perception of the Hsiung-nu; we have no sense of the Hsiung-nu's own perception of their history. The ruptures of history open up the whole question of authenticity and validity of historical writing. Strictly speaking, no aesthetic agenda can be formed or discussed independently of the larger socio-historical fabric. Works of art and literature must be considered as forms of socio-political imaginary significations; all artistic representations are always predicated upon or implicated in their dialectical transformations, either as discourses for, or as counterdiscourses to, some form of hidden socio-political agenda — the latter must not be posited and contextualized in the midst of their dynamic form of becoming and not in the static form of being. Take Confucianism. There have been too many discussions of Confucianism at work in a modern Chinese context, using summaries of kinds its tenets from ancient conclusions as if these ideas remain unchanged throughout the centuries. This is simply untrue. One must understand the specific psychological complexity with which Confucianism was appropriated for local and modern use.

The true meaning of the interflow of cultures is, and must be, a mutually expanding, mutually adjusting, and mutually containing activity in the midst of high tension and confrontation toward a wider circumference of understanding. It is this interreflective, inter-examining open dialogue between and among cultures that will perhaps help us disclose more fully the complex hidden treacheries and dangers in the grand euphoric rhetoric of globalization, and thus empower us to resist its bloodless, brutal, and

sweeping eradication of cultural differences and diversity.

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