

DEMOCRACY AND CLIMATE CHANGE: A CONFUCIAN PROPOSAL

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Abstract: Democracy is one of the West's most important contributions to universal human heritage. Still it presents some drawbacks in the ways it relates to certain global problems, especially climate change. In this paper we claim that these drawbacks can be ameliorated by turning to a non-Western tradition, specifically to Confucianism. A tradition that, first of all, we will have to analyze in its proper terms – i.e. in ideographical ones –, in order to relate it, afterwards, to democracy in what concerns climate change. Finally, we will propose a synthesis – what we call 君人, individual and king –, introducing in the concept of democracy the idea of harmony between nature and society. In other terms, we will defend a royal/real democracy, in which the political subject would be individual 人 and king 君 at the same time.

Keywords: climate change, Confucianism, democracy, harmony, nature.

INTRODUCTION

Although democracy was considered the worst form of government until the French Revolution (Arblaster 1992: 19), nowadays is widely recognized one of the West's most important contributions to universal human heritage. Still it presents some drawbacks in the ways it relates to certain global problems because democracy – at least in the way we nowadays understand it –, is based on a conception that does not interrelate “nature” and “society” at all.

In fact, the literal definition of democracy emphasizes the subject (δημος, *the people*) of power (κράτος). A subject not specified because the definition of democracy does not say anything about who is included in “the people”. It only indicates that the holder of power is the people. Therefore, it is obvious that democracy is acting in a semantic universe in which it only appears as an alternative among other ones. The people appear as one possible holder of power among other possible ones: monarchy, oligarchy, tyranny etc. without any allusion to the context in which such power is exercised; without any allusion to any connection, sympathy, interrelation, harmony etc. between nature and society.

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This feature of democracy seems especially relevant when facing problems like climate change. A problem, by the way, whose very approach in such terms is a perfect example of the conception that does not interrelate nature and society; a conception that is at the very basis of democracy as we have just seen.

Indeed, we do not need to emphasize that it is in no way the same to talk about “climate change” rather than “climate alteration”. In the first case we are excluding any allusion to human action as a cause of that change. In other words, we are introducing a conception in which nature and society are not interrelated. However, if we put the problem in terms of “climate alteration”, we are suggesting implicitly a subject that alters climate and, therefore, we are defending implicitly the interrelation between nature and society.

It goes without saying that we would arrive at the same conclusions if we were to talk about *global warming* rather than *climate change*. Once again, we are excluding the one who is responsible for or cause of that *global warming* and therefore, again, are denying any connection between nature and society.

But at this point it is important to highlight that, as is well known, there is scientific agreement regarding “global warming” and “climate change” and so, from a scientific point of view, the accurate expressions would be “*global warming induced by human action*” and “*climate alteration due to human action*”. Consequently, scientific consensus obliges us to make use of conceptions interrelating nature and society. Put in other terms, scientific agreement obliges us to rethink democracy so that we can get a conception of democracy including some kind of connection, correspondence, sympathy etc. between nature and society.

Taking all this into account, in this paper we will defend that such a conception of democracy could be achieved by turning to a non-Western tradition that, incidentally, seems to be able to fulfill the requirements the scientific agreement has stated. A non-western tradition with drawbacks, on its side, but paradoxically, those drawbacks could be solved taking into account democracy.

METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

We are talking about Confucianism the philosophy, the religion, the politics etc. that is at the very basis of Chinese culture but, first of all, we have to pay attention to a methodological question which obliges us to examine it in Chinese and not in English. Something that, without going further, we can deduct from the analysis of 儒家, *rú jiā*, characters which are usually translated into English as “Confucianism” or “school of the scholars”.

In fact, there would be no problem in translating the second character as “school” as it is a composition of 豕/*shǐ* pig, (one can easily imagine the head, the body, the legs and the tail) under a 宀/*bǎogài* shed, roof. The pig hangs from the roof, that is to say, house, and home¹ and from there, by extension of meaning, “household”, “company” the people who are around the pig, and also “school” the people who are around a teacher, a master, a “pig” in the Chinese sense. It does not seem so easy, however, to translate the first of those characters.

儒 *rú*, literally must be translated not as “scholar” but as “the man who invokes the rain for the newly sprouted plants”² given that this character is composed of three other ones. The first, on the left, 亻 *rén*/man and the other two characters, on the right, 雨 *yǔ*/rain (one can envision the clouds and even see the drops of rain and light) on top of the character 而 *er*/ “newly sprouted plant from the earth” (again envision the roots, the soil, and the plant above the soil).

Following all this, the translation of the whole character would be “the school of the necessary men”. Necessary men in both senses: the natural and the social one as long as the rain is necessary for the newly sprouted plants and the plants are necessary for society to survive. In other words, the school of the men who harmonize 和 *hé* nature and society as far as they have the skill of eliciting the necessary rain for the newly sprouted plants 禾 (rice) which are necessary for the survival of any member of society, of any mouth 口 *kǒu*.

So if we accept the translation of *rú jiā* 儒家 as “Confucianism”, we would be twisting the expression completely, given that the name of Confucius, as we have just seen, does not even appear in the name of “his” school. If we prefer the trans-

lation “school of the scholars”, we would lose the entire semantic universe that incorporates the union of the characters 仁 *rén*, man, 雨 *yǔ*, rain and 萌 *ér*, plant recently sprouted from the earth, and that carries, in a first level of abstraction, as we have just seen, to the idea of necessity, natural-social necessity, and, in a second level, to the very idea of harmony between nature and society.

This being said, and with minimal methodological rigor, if we intend to analyse the point of view of Confucianism³, we are obliged to first analyse each one of the characters which are expressed to capture, as much as possible, all their semantic universe and then relate it to the concept of democracy in what here concerns.

Something that, by the way, we can do right now, because, as we have just seen, the mere denomination of Confucianism includes an interrelation between nature and society. There are men who can – in the factice sense of the term – harmonize both spheres: nature and society if we can put it in clear and distinct terms. There are men able to get from nature the necessary rain, i.e. the necessary food for the survival of society.

In other words, in Confucianism would be included the very basis of the question of climate change *due to human action*. We – the mankind – can, in the factice sense of the term, alter the harmony between nature and society. Something that once again highlights the drawbacks of democracy we mentioned above.

But it does not make any sense to go further in this point since so far we have analysed only the mere denomination of Confucianism and we must examine in detail all the discourse that Confucianism incorporates in order to see whether it can ameliorate or not the drawbacks of democracy in what concerns climate change.

THE FRAME OF CONFUCIANISM

We say Confucianism yet once again we are not being precise because, besides the meanings we have just pointed out, we have not mentioned that Confucius did not consider himself an innovator, an inventor but only “devoted to antiquity” (Confucius 2006: VII, 1), and certainly his thoughts or, better said, his

teachings are within a previous vision of the world (Folch 2001: 138), a previous frame, so to speak, that consequently we need to analyse. This is not really very difficult because that frame can be seen in the Confucian temples (Cheng 2007: 29):

天
地
君
親
師

These characters can be translated – and actually they have already been – as “heaven, earth, king, family and teachers” (Cheng 2007: 29) but as we have seen before, it is not enough for our proposal to apply the mere translation into English and we must try to capture the semantic universe incorporated in each one of these characters and so we need to analyse them one by one.

Beginning with the first character 天 *tiān*/ heaven, day etc. it has an evident anthropomorphic basis – present too, in our cultural tradition. The character represents what is above the head of a big man, or, if you prefer, what is bigger than a big man. In fact the character is composed of three parts. The first part is the character 人 *rén*/man, person, individual, with his arms outstretched to either side, something that makes him 大 *dà*/ big and finally the character 一 *piě*/roof. In conclusion the meaning of the character is literally “heaven”, i.e., what is bigger than a big man, what is on top of him.

The second character 地 *dì*/ earth, is composed of two other ones. The first, on the left, 土 *tǔ*/ soil, ground, and in fact one can imagine the subsoil, the soil and a plant sprouting. The other character 也 *yě*, has a very complicated history (McNaughton, Ying 1999: 32) and it is the pictogram of an uterus, in such a way that it has the meaning of “increase” and, by extension, the meaning of “also”. This being said, the translation of the whole character would literally be “the soil that is at the same time a uterus”, the Mother Earth. Something that really is not foreign to our cultural tradition⁴.

The third character 君 *jūn*/monarch, king is composed of two other ones. The first, the upper one, 尹 *yǐn*/ is a hand that holds a sceptre, symbolizing the power to control the common people and the second one, the lower one, 口 *kǒu*/mouth, an open mouth as we saw above. Thus, the translation of the whole character would literally be “the mouth of the man who holds a sceptre”, i.e. the mouth of the man who has the control, who gives orders, and so, with a slight abstraction, the monarch, the sovereign. Once again something that is not so distant to our own culture, where the sceptre too figures as a true symbol of power (Ullmann 1985: 131).

The fourth character 親 *qīn*, parents, relatives is composed of two others, each one composed of another two. The first one on the left, 亲 *qīn* is composed of the character 立 *lì*/ a person above a pedestal (it is not difficult to imagine the head, the body and the legs of a person and the pedestal). This can be found above the character 木 *mù*: “tree” as you can see immediately so that, the complete character means literally the people who are standing up on the same tree, the ancestors. We do not need to emphasize that it is a pictogram quite close to our genealogical tree.

The second character that composes 親 *qīn* is on the right 見 *jiàn* “to see”, as we can conclude immediately from the character above 目 *mù* “eye” and it is indeed the stylization of a person’s eye that – after being moved 90 degrees – held in a vertical position, suggests the idea of seeing, perceiving. With reference to the lower character there are different interpretations.

For some authors, *jiàn* would not be composed of two characters but would be the drawing of a man reduced to an eye over legs, the eye running out to gather information for the on-looker” (Mcnaughton, Ying 1999: 73). In our opinion, however, it is possible to defend that it is not one character but two because under *mù*, “eye” would be the character 儿 *ér*/ son – male son – a pictogram of a baby’s fontanel not yet closed, and so *jiàn* would mean literally the baby with a great eye, the baby which is looking at or, if you prefer, the person who looks at someone, because, when *ér* forms part of another character it means “person” (Mcnaughton, Ying 1999: 73).

This interpretation seems especially relevant in order to translate the complete character, which literally means the big

eye with which the child looks at the members of his genealogical tree, at his parents or, in a wider sense, at his ancestors. The alternative interpretation that we are proposing does not change the meaning but in some way is reinforcing it because we have to assume that the eye running to gather information runs – comes back, returns – to “his” tree.

Things being the way they are, we are obliged to conclude that 親 *qīn* must be translated as “family” in a wide sense, including the past generations that, in one way or another, are still present. They are literally being seen by their sons, their successors, who, even in the alternative interpretation to ours, are walking towards them in order to “gather information”. Once again it is not necessary to outline that the idea of temporal continuity, of actual presence of the ancestors, included in *qīn*, is not absent at all in our cultural tradition⁵.

When talking about the last character 師 *shī*/ teacher, model, it is also composed of two other ones. The one on the right *shuài* means first of all, general, commandant or chief, as it is the representation of a flag that leads the soldiers, two of which can be seen on the left. However, by translation it also means “beauty”, “model”, something that is followed so that, the whole character must be translated as teacher, the person who conducts the pupils under a roof, acting as their model. Once again we can see a pattern of similarity to our cultural tradition because as is well know⁶ the original meaning of *magister* was “boss”, “commandant” and from there by extension, teacher, the person who educates his scholars being a role model for them.

With this analysis, we have presented the semantic universe incorporated in the world’s vision in which Confucianism moves. A vision in which the elements, as we have seen, are not distant to our cultural tradition in relation to the anthropomorphic representation of heaven (Hesiod 2006: 9), the conception of Mother Earth (Hesiod 2006: 16), the monarch with a sceptre (Ullmann 1985: 131), the genealogical tree with the presence of the ancestors (Coulanges 1979: 51) and also the *magister*. With all these elements, it seems that Chinese traditions and ours are not so far apart as one would imagine in the first place.

But it does not make any sense to go further with this comparison between Chinese traditions and ours because what here

really matters is whether Confucianism includes or not the idea of harmony between nature and society and whether that idea can be included or not in the current conception of democracy in order to solve its drawbacks regarding climate change. And really in the analysis of the frame of the Confucianism we have not found that idea so that we should conclude that Confucianism is useless in what here concerns.

But this conclusion is too hasty, because up until here we have not analysed properly the frame in which Confucianism moves and in fact our analysis of the characters “heaven”, “earth”, “king”, “family”, and “teachers” can be regarded as incomplete as we have been working character by character forgetting an essential dimension of that frame: the sequential one. That is to say the dimension that remarks the interrelation among those characters.

Moreover, for Chinese thinking the concept of relationship is not a single tie that is established among different elements, but the tie, or the bond is something from which the elements are created, or born, “it’s constitutive of the beings in their existence and their becoming.” (Cheng 2002: 37)

Regarding this, the sequence should not be just red in “clear and distinct” terms (Descartes 1981: 15), but we should rather consider using “holistic” terms. The elements are not previously differentiated but constituted in “their” relationship and are creating at the same time the sequence in which they are included. “Heaven” and “earth” are not separate elements, rather they are shaped, so to speak, in their interrelation and, by interacting, generate the monarch and from there down the family and the teachers and these new elements take part, interacting in the sequence “finishing it” (Cheng 2002: 37).

But with this explanation we do not clarify properly the sequence that is not at all static, generated only once because it is actually dynamic, regenerating itself continuously⁷ in such a way that there is certainly, so to speak, a point more important than the other ones – the key point, the central point, or the middle point – the one allowing the constant dynamism of the sequence.

Something that, by the way, is emphasized by the Chinese language and in fact 中 *zhōng* middle/centre, is not only a nominal term but also a verbal one; it refers not only to the central space that is occupied but also to the dynamic and active virtue

that corresponds to that place: the virtue of the arrow in the centre of the target (Cheng 2002: 38) – We do not need to remind ourselves at this point that China in Chinese is 中国, the country 国 *guó* in/from the centre, 中 *zhōng*.

Therefore, it is possible to see two worlds in the series of characters we are analyzing: the natural one formed by the first two characters of the sequence – 天地 heaven and earth – and the social one, formed by the last two characters – 親師 the family (ancestors and present generations) and the teachers – and also the central point that integrates, harmonizes these two worlds, the monarch. Heaven's son holds the scepter with his hand 尹 immediately below heaven and earth, meanwhile with his "mouth" 口, gives orders, organizes the social world, integrating it in the natural-social continuum.

It goes without saying that this kind of correspondence, of sympathy, of interrelation between the natural world and the human world, between nature and society, is also present in the European tradition (Hesiod 2006: 76 -77; Kelsen 1979: 29), as well as the way in which these two worlds are integrated by the king (Sophocles 2009: 204; Ullmann 1985: 131). Of course it is not necessary to highlight that it is neither strange to the western political tradition the idea of the "centre" understood as the arrow that reaches the target (Aristotle 1981: 1).

But all this does not help the compatibility we are examining and that is because in Confucianism "monarchy" appears within a frame – as the centre of a sequence that includes nature and society granting the harmony between them – whereas "democracy" appears completely decontextualized, so to speak. It is the power of the people without any reference to the field – natural or social –, in which that power is exercised as we saw above.

As a result, we must conclude that not only from the mere denominations but also from the frame in which Confucianism moves, Confucianism and democracy are not compatible. In what here concerns, Confucianism cannot ameliorate the drawbacks of democracy regarding climate change.

However, this conclusion is not definitive, because, in fact, until here we have carried out an analysis of the vision of the world in which Confucianism is inserted from an external point of view, as Hart would say (Hart 1980: 110-111). We have forgotten the very fact that the dynamic sequence of characters is

not a mere object of intellectual analysis, but something alive, something literally present to the believer's eyes, to the loyal follower of being in the world that way (Cheng 2007: 29).

Furthermore, the sequence does not only have a living presence, but also literally includes, unites the believer, the loyalist inside it. The believer, 忠 *zhōng*, is the one who has the centre in the middle of his heart. In fact, the character is composed of two others. The one above, 中 *zhōng*, is already known to us and as we have seen is of crucial significance in defining Chinese civilization. On the other character, below, 心 *xīn*/heart, it is easy to imagine three drops of blood moving across the ventricles.

Thus, and although our analysis is and cannot be any other way but external, we must try to include the internal point of view: the point of view of the believer, of the *zhōng*. Something that we can do ideographically by placing the believer in a space below the sequence in order to illustrate his tie to it and at the same time his internal point of view:

天
地
君
親
師

忠

Once again it goes without saying that this is not foreign to our cultural tradition, and, more than that, it is not strange to any religious experience. For example – speaking in Christian terms –, the experience of a catholic in the Sistine Chapel, in Rome, feeling himself as a part of “the history of salvation” he is looking at. As well as this, that visualization is not even strange to our political tradition in the literal sense of the term “polis”, (πόλις). In fact, *mutatis mutandis*, the visualization could be seen as being perfectly parallel with the experience of a member of a Greek “polis”, feeling that “the polis is by nature prior [...] to each of us” as Aristotle says (Aristotle 1976: 4).

Even more, needless to say that it is not strange to the natural law tradition, at least in the stoic version: a dog tied to the

back of a cart and being pulled along. The dog is the man, whereas the cart symbolizes fate, universal reason, the eternal law which determines the criteria of behaviour. If clever, a man does not resist and follows the direction of the cart, if a fool, the only thing he gets is to be dragged after the cart. *Fata volentem ducunt, nolentem trahunt* (Welzel 1979: 35).

Yet now is not the time to dwell on this point extending it, for example, to the magnificent construction of the “*domini canis*” – “dog of the Lord”–, Thomas of Aquinas, because this visualization is completely strange to the idea of democracy – at least in its modern version – where you cannot talk about a loyal citizen, a *πολίτης* *polites*, or a dog that appears as a mere part of a previous whole to it, but only about “individuals”, elements previously isolated among themselves – worthy in themselves, with “human rights” – that constitute the “whole”, the social building in which they integrate themselves; the “people”. Something we can see immediately in one of the greatest Western political theorists: J.J. Rousseau, for whom the social contract is the act by which a people becomes a people (Rousseau 1979: 406).

Certainly it is not the time to persist on the incompatibility between Confucianism and democracy we have just arrived at, nor to put more pressure on the rupture inside the Western tradition that seems to derive from the previous analysis, and according to which there would be two kinds of citizens, two concepts of citizenship – the ancient and the modern (Constant: 1988), corresponding to two concepts of democracy and liberty.

And, in fact, in the previous analysis, we have underlined the similarities between our own cultural tradition and the characters, as well as the sequence (the way the natural and the social world are integrated) and finally the internal point of view. Therefore, and as paradoxical as it may seem, the analysis of the compatibility of the frame in which Confucianism moves and democracy has become at the same time, the analysis, so to speak, of one part of our cultural tradition since the similarities observed in the former analysis lead to conclude that the frame in which Confucianism moves would be perfectly comparable to what has been called the “Aristotelian model” (Bobbio: 1997: 99).

But really it is not the time to go further into all these conclusions, taking into account that up to this moment, we have only examined the frame in which Confucianism moves without

having mentioned any of the contributions that it has made to it. So, we are obligated to not consider, at least at the moment, these developments because we must see the modifications that Confucianism introduces in that frame, therefore we must see the Confucian way, the Confucian 道.

DEMOCRATIZING MONARCHY?

This is something that is not difficult to overcome as we have the use of one of the “Four Books” included in the “Confucian Canon”: the *Analects* or Conversations, terms which tend to be translated as the Chinese expression 論語 *lún yǔ*. The main theme of the *Analects* is to define the qualities which correspond to the 君子 *jūnzǐ* in contradiction to the 小人 *xiǎo rén* to the “small”, not worthy man. By the way this contradiction still exists in contemporary China⁸.

But it does not proceed to go over this point, but rather, we must examine the semantic universe of 君子 *jūnzǐ*. To begin, the first of the characters, 君 on the left, as seen previously, is found in the middle of the series “heaven, earth, king, family and teachers” and can be translated as king. In what concerns the second character 子 *zi*, it is translated as son (it is easy to imagine the baby’s head, the arms and the body wrapped in nappies). Thus, the whole character means the king’s son, the prince and by extension, noble.

In fact, 君子 *jūnzǐ* is not an expression created by Confucius, but rather, it had already appeared in previous texts to designate whichever member of the nobility (Lao Tse 2006: 82)⁹. Confucius continues to use the expression but gives it a completely new meaning: whoever, being noble or not, can become a prince by means of an appropriate education (Eliade 1979: 37).

This is a new meaning we must comprehend in its entirety, taking into account the historical context in which Confucius expresses it: the period immediately before the chaos of the Warring States: 战国 *zhàn guó* (463-221 b. C.) A time in which the rupture of the frame of Confucianism starts, when there was not a king to maintain the natural-social harmony, but rather, different kingdoms, the future Warring States fighting against

each other¹⁰. Various 君子 *jūnzǐ*, various kings' sons, each one with a sceptre, fighting in a state of war in which everybody was against everybody to put it in Hobbesian terms (Smith 2001: 189; Hobbes 1979: 228).

The solution to that collapse of the harmonizing centre of the natural social world is what we could call “democratization of the monarchy”. The solution is not to restore the centre but to move it, so to speak. To move the centre, the power to whichever of the believers whom now, independently from their birth and by means of an appropriate education, are given the sceptre and that is what is making them literally princes.

Thus the previous vision of the world, the frame of Confucianism, results slightly changed:

天
地
君
親
師

君
子

We have a slight change here, but very important. Now the centre is occupied by the loyalist, the 忠 properly educated man, who is transformed into a prince 君子. Therefore, at this point, even from his very home, he can influence the kingdom (Confucius 2006: 310). He can contribute to the harmony of the whole sequence.

A natural-social harmony as we saw above and as you can corroborate, taking into account another book of the “Four Books” included in the “Confucian Canon”: 中庸 *zhōng yōng* “The Doctrine of the Mean”, whose main subject is precisely the interrelation, the unity of the natural-social world (Oldstone Moore 2008: 83). Now the loyalist 忠, becomes *ru* 儒, becomes a man naturally and socially necessary: the one that invokes the rain for the newly sprouted plants; that harmonizes nature and society.

“Democratization of the monarchy” we said, and we were not right because after this last analysis we have to conclude,

once again, that Confucianism and democracy are not compatible. Contrary to the Confucian “centre”, extended to all educated believers so that the harmonizing action can be acted out from even the very home, arises democracy as the mere affirmation of the abstract power of “individuals” – worthy in themselves, independent from of any natural or social consideration, with “human rights” –, that constitute the “whole”; the social building in which they integrate themselves, the “people”, requiring no previous education.

A power usually delegated to representatives either, because we do not want or because we cannot wield it (Constant 1988: 89). As a result of that we would pose as “the idiots” of contemporary democracy in front of “the princes by education of Confucianism”. Idiots in both senses of the term “ιδιώτης” – first in the sense of private individuals who do not want to exercise their political rights and prefer to devote themselves to their own particular business. Then, in the sense of an ignoramus, an “idiot” that not only renounces to assume his or her political rights, by delegating them over to their representatives, but recognizes him – or herself, more or less explicitly, as inferior to those representatives – as an “idiot” – permitting for example, a popular legislative initiative which limits itself to the less relevant questions¹¹.

In regard to all that we have seen so far, we have no other possibility but to embrace the conclusion that democracy and Confucianism are in no way compatible. That not only from the mere denominations or from the frame in which Confucianism is included, but also from the change Confucius makes to that frame. Incompatibilities that can be summarized in the contraposition between “princes by education” – who are part of a whole, a natural-social continuum that is previous to them and whose harmony they can contribute to even from their very home, and “individuals”, worthy in themselves, independent of any previous whole – natural or social – who rather become “idiots” by letting their representatives exercise the power and accepting themselves as inferior to those representatives.

TO CONCLUDE: MAKING DEMOCRACY REAL, 君 人,
INDIVIDUALS AND KINGS

But once again this conclusion is provisional, because it is possible to propose a synthesis between Confucianism and democracy, between princes by education, 君子 , and individuals, 人. More than that, the synthesis is not only possible but necessary in a moment in which, as is well known, the common “home” – our planet Earth –, is losing the conditions that support the survival of mankind/the human race, whose loss calls for a more than urgent action on stopping climate change as scientific consensus has stated.

And, as a matter of fact, that synthesis is really possible following the next steps. First of all, as we have seen, Confucianism is just a solution to the collapse of the previous model – the frame of Confucianism – which, as we have seen, could be compared perfectly to the Hobbesian state of nature of war of every man against every man.

But, as is well known, the “state of nature” constitutes one of the capital parts of the “iusnaturalistic-individualistic model” (Bobbio 1997: 99), that ended up in the emergence of the “individual” and, consequently, in the consideration of democracy as the best form of government along with the invention of human rights (García de Enterría 1994: 57). Taking all this into account, rather than talking about an incompatibility between Confucianism and individualism (democracy and human rights, included), we should speak of two different solutions before the same problem.

Said ideographically, the frame of Confucianism and the “Aristotelian model” equivalent to *mutatis mutandis* as we saw above,

天
地
君
親
師

忠

are not more than what would have been found in a situation of collapse (Warring States and state of nature) and which would have been responded respectively by the Confucian solution and the individualistic one. Once again, ideographically:

天
地
君
親
師

君 人
子

With all this we have a comparative vision which does not only illustrate the point of collapse but the advantages and disadvantages of each solution. In fact, the Confucian solution is conservative; it maintains practically intact the frame of Confucianism, the previous vision of the world in which it is inserted to, with the only – even revolutionary – modification of transporting the centre/sceptre, turning anyone who is properly educated into a “son of a king” 君子, a *rú* 儒 able to harmonize nature and society.

On the contrary, our solution – the individualistic one – is revolutionary and only revolutionary. It means the rupture of the natural social continuum which disappears and which gives us only one element to play with: the power, the right of every individual, i.e. democracy and human rights, without any connection, sympathy, interrelation, harmony etc. between nature and society.

An “individual” that, by the way, appears with the abolition of the *Ancien Régime* and, in fact, we can situate this historical rupture without any problems in the execution of Louis XVI. A “cathartic act” (García de Enterría 1994: 115) which when it breaks with the sacredness of the king, it destroys the previous “whole” and permits the apparition of the individual, of the human body isolated from the others, valued on its own, with dignity, independently of any natural or social consideration.

So, a natural-social, conservative-revolutionary solution and an individualistic-revolutionary solution with their disadvantages and advantages, based on two incompatible principles: the affirmation of belonging to a whole which one forms part of, and on which the whole depends, contrary to the intrinsic affirmation of individual dignity independently of any natural or social consideration, and, therefore, without any any connection, sympathy, interrelation, harmony etc. between nature and society.

Two solutions based, thus, on two antagonistic anthropologies. However, maybe they are not so opposed and we can establish a synthesis between them which compensates the respective advantages and disadvantages; maybe this antagonism hides, in a Hegelian way, a hug: “Those who fight, embrace” (Hegel 1970: 382).

And the point is, from what we have seen so far, that we can simplify the Confucian solution without any major problems. In fact, given that *jūnzǐ* 君 人 includes in it the centre, 君, and, therefore, the whole natural-social sequence, we can reduce the ideographic comparative representation between Confucianism and individualism leaving it simply as follows

君子 / 人

Thus, we can synthesize immediately both solutions as grammatically there is not any problem in substituting the character 子 “son” from 君子 *jūnzǐ* for the character 人 “individual” given place to 君 人 *jūnrén*, an “individual and king”, to put it in alphabetical, English terms.

This synthesis supposes, certainly, a revolutionary change in both perspectives which embrace. In what concerns our perspective, the individual, 人, without losing its condition, without losing its dignity independently from any other consideration, without losing its “human rights”, passes to become integrated in a sequence in which it occupies the central place as, by means of an appropriate education, it turns into a king, it is given the sceptre 尹 and is able to harmonize nature and society.

In what concerns Confucianism, the change of 君子, *jūnzǐ* for 君 人 *jūnrén*, is also revolutionary. It supposes the acceptance of the intrinsic value of the human being, the dignity

of the “individual” with independence from any other consideration. It means the acceptance of the fact that, even though the individual 人 forms part of a sequence, it is worthy in itself, it has “human rights”.

So, summing up, we, the individuals of contemporary democracies, should renounce our “idiocy” and, by means of an appropriate education, to recognize ourselves as a part of a previous natural-social whole, becoming in that way “kings” that even from their very home, from their own “οἶκος, *oikos*” assure the harmony of that whole previous to us.

Kings that, of course, would not renounce but, on the contrary, embrace the intrinsic value, the dignity of the individual human being with independence of its belonging to a previous whole. They would not renounce the human rights, they would not renounce the very condition of individuals, solving in such a way one of the main drawbacks of Confucianism.

But to make explicit the main features of that harmonizing nature and society, of that making democracy “real” in the sense of “true” and in the sense of “royal” as well¹² becoming so individuals and kings 君 人, is something that goes beyond the scope of these lines.

NOTES

¹ In order to translate the Chinese characters we have made use of P. Ceinós (2006), *Manual de Escritura de los Caracteres Chinos* (Madrid); L. Li (1993), *Tracing the roots of Chinese Characters: 500 cases* (Beijing) and W. Mcnaughton, Y. Li (1999), *Reading & Writing Chinese* (Singapore: Traditional Character Edition).

² Regarding the relation of the 儒 / *rú* with the rainmaking rituals, vid. Xingzhong 2001: 41.

³ An expression that we will use here because of its commodity and extensive use, although we must understand that it incorporates the meanings we have just pointed out.

⁴ In Greek mythology, Gea would be the equivalent representation.

⁵ Vid. for example, the second chapter of F. de Coulanges (1979), *La ciudad Antigua* (Barcelona), p. 51.

⁶ Vid. *Diccionario Ilustrado Latino-Español, Español-Latino* (Barcelona 1971), p. 288.

⁷ Vid. the introduction of R. Wilhem to Lao Tse (2009), *Tao Te King* (Barcelona), p. 8 and J. Vilá (2006), *Introducción al YIJING. El libro de los cambios* (Girona).

⁸ One of the worst insults that can be aimed at any Chinese person, man or woman, is: 小人.

⁹ Vid. L. Lanciotti (1971), *¿Qué ha dicho verdaderamente Confucio?* (Madrid), p. 61; A. Cheng, cit., p. 60, and B.W. Van Norden (2002), *Introduction*, in *Confucius and the Analects* (Oxford: New Essays), p. 25. The term appears also in Lao Tse (2006), *Tao Te King* (Madrid), p. 82, and plays a central role in I. Ching.

¹⁰ H. Smith (2001), *Las religiones del mundo* (Barcelona), p. 189.

¹¹ Referring to the article 87.3 of the current Spanish Constitution.

¹² In Spanish, the word “real” has both senses: true and royal.

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