

Philosophy of Translation

An Interdisciplinary Approach

Filosofia della traduzione

Un approccio interdisciplinare

T E O R I A

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Contents / Indice

Adriano Fabris, Seung Chul Kim

Premise / Premessa, p. 5

Seung Chul Kim

Homo Translator: Traditions in translation, p. 7

Zbigniew Wesółowski

Hermeneutics of Understanding the Confucian Idea of Truth:
Junzi 君子 as a Truth-bearer in the *Lunyu* 論語, p. 13

Jorge Martínez

What do we translate when we translate?, p. 35

Paul L. Swanson

Context, Logosyllabary, and Multiple Choices.
Reflections on 30+ Years of Translating Chinese
Buddhist Texts, p. 49

Alicia M. de Mingo Rodríguez

Desafío de confianza y traducibilidad crítica.
Notas para una ética de la traducción, p. 63

Carlo Chiurco

Mediare l'incommensurabile.
Note sul rapporto tra filosofia e traduzione, p. 83

Elinor Hållén

Making the Unconscious Conscious:
A Reflection on the Concept Translation in Freud, p. 101

Elena Nardelli

Se il filosofo si fa traduttore.
Note a partire da Martin Heidegger, p. 121

Alberto Martinengo

Ermeneutica filosofica e filosofia politica.

Il paradigma della traduzione in Paul Ricoeur, p. 141

Saša Hrnjez

Traduzione, negazione, riflessione:

sulla natura negativo-contraddittoria della traduzione, p. 163

Maria Benedetta Saponaro

La traduzione algoritmica del pensiero relazionale, p. 187

Premio di Studio «Vittorio Sainati» 2019-2020**Giulia Battistoni**

La polivocità di *Schuld* nella Moralità hegeliana:

un contributo agli studi sulla traduzione di un concetto portante della filosofia hegeliana dell'azione, p. 209

Guglielmo Califano

Scientia intuitiva?

Intuizione, idea ed empiria nella scienza di Goethe, p. 221

Filippo Nobili

Husserl e il punto di vista dell'*Allsubjektivität*, p. 233

Hermeneutics of Understanding
the Confucian Idea of Truth:
Junzi 君子 as a Truth-bearer
in the *Lunyu* 論語

Zbigniew Wesolowski SVD

And for their sakes I sanctify myself,
that they also may be sanctified through the truth.

John 17: 19

*Introduction: Does Classical Chinese Philosophy Has the Concept
of Truth?*

I do believe that the concept (not the idea) of truth, especially in its logical and epistemological dimension, did belong to «Western concerns»¹. The discovery of the threefold dimensionality of the concept of truth developed in Western philosophical tradition, i.e., its ontological, epistemological, and ethical aspects of truth, were like the first rays of dawn in my search to uncover the idea of truth in classical China. From the very beginning, the ontological and ethical dimensions of truth seem to have been the right direction to me. Furthermore, it has proved to me necessary to search in view of Western philosophical tradition for a kind of hermeneutics of understanding a Chinese quest for truth, and then as a result I tried to exemplify the Confucian idea of truth in the *Lunyu*. I also had to look at many historical

¹ D.J. Munro, *The Concept of Man in Ancient China*, Stanford University Press, Stanford (CA) 1969, p. 55. See also Ch. Hansen, *Chinese language, Chinese Philosophy, and 'Truth'*, in «The Journal of Asian Studies», 3, 44 (1985), pp. 491-519 and Ch. Harbsmeier, *Language and Logic in Traditional China*, in J. Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, vol. 7, part I: *Language and Logic*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, pp. 1-479.

and systematic perspectives of Western investigations on truth by means of which we can understand more deeply these concerns². However, not all was possible to present in this contribution³.

1. *Hermeneutics and Sinology: Quest for Truth in Classical China*

Hermeneutics as the theory of interpretation, originally especially as the interpretation of biblical texts (exegesis) and philosophical ones, has become nowadays a wider discipline which includes written, verbal, and non-verbal communication. Its methods of interpretation have been applied in many disciplines of the humanities, especially in law, history, philosophy, and theology. With the help of some tenets of hermeneutics, I will below attempt to work out a hermeneutical and methodological horizon in order to look better at the idea of truth in classical China.

1.1. *Historicity of Understanding as the First Hermeneutic Principle*⁴

Gadamer's philosophical work *Truth and Method* (first published in 1960: *Wahrheit und Methode*) elaborated on the concept of philosophical hermeneutics. Gadamer's goal was to uncover the nature of human understanding. In his book, Gadamer argued that "truth" and "method" were conflicting with each other. He was critical of two approaches to the humanities (*Geisteswissenschaften*), that is, one being objective and the second – more subjective. Thus, he was critical of approaches to human sciences that modeled themselves on the natural sciences with their rigorous scientific methods. He also reconsidered the traditional German approach to the humanities (such as that of Friedrich Schleiermacher [1768-1834] and Wilhelm Dilthey [1833-1911]), the aim of which was the correct interpretation of a text as the recovery of the original intention of its author.

² In the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (hereafter: *HWPh*), it seems that the concept "Wahrheit" (truth) in its basic form takes the third place after the concept "Philosophie" (philosophy) and "Gott" (God), as far as the length of a given article is concerned. The concept of philosophy has 308 columns (vol. 7: P-Q, cols. 571-879), the concept of God 92 columns (vol. 3: G-H, cols. 722-814), and the concept of truth 75 columns (vol. 12: W-Z, cols. 48-121). The length of the articles on these three concepts surely reflects their importance in Western philosophical tradition.

³ This is so especially because of the limited space given me for this contribution.

⁴ H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2004, pp. 267-306: «The elevation of the historicity of understanding to the status of hermeneutic principle».

To reconcile these two positions, Gadamer argued that human beings have 1) a «historically effected consciousness» (*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*; Gadamer 2004: 298-306) and that they are 2) embedded in the particular history and culture that shaped them. Thus interpreting a text involves 3) a fusion of horizons⁵ where the scholar finds the ways that the text's history articulates with his own background. Thus, with the help of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, I could set up some hermeneutical requirements which could be helpful for the interpretation of Chinese classical works:

1. A requirement concerning a text itself:
 - 1.1. Focus on a text itself, «... (so) that our first, last, and constant task in interpreting is never to allow our fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception to be presented by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make a scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves (*Being and Time*, p. 153)» (H.-G. Gadamer, *op. cit.*, 2004, p. 269).
 - 1.2. «A text must be understood in its own terms» (H.-G. Gadamer, *op. cit.*, 2004, p. 292).
 - 1.3. «In interpreting, the questions a text puts to us can be understood only when the text, conversely, is understood as the answer to a question» (H.-G. Gadamer, *op. cit.*, 2004, p. 578).
2. Let us try to be open in front of, and listen attentively to, and let us be addressed by the traditionary text⁶ (den überlieferten Text), a Thou (a kind of a rehabilitated authority and tradition) (H.-G. Gadamer, *op. cit.*, 2004, pp. 295, 298, 300, 302, 321, 324, 330, 335, 458, 468).
3. Let us avoid arbitrary and preminent prejudices, but simultaneously recognize that there are some legitimate ones, as for example «the fore-

⁵ The term «fusion of horizons» (*Horizontverschmelzung*) is a dialectical concept of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics (cf. for example H.-G. Gadamer, *op. cit.*, pp. 301, 305) which results from the rejection of two positions. On the one hand, we have objectivism, by which the objectification of any object is premised on the forgetting of oneself; and on the other, the conception of absolute knowledge, by which universal history can be articulated within a single horizon. Our modus of existence is an on-going fusion of horizons.

⁶ Cf. H.-G. Gadamer, *op. cit.*, 2004, p. XVI: «This ongoing conversation ist Überlieferung, 'a tradition'. English has no verb, nor any adjective that maintains the active verbal implication, nor any noun for what is carried down in the tradition. We have therefore admitted the neologism 'traditionary text', and have sometimes used the phrase 'what comes down to us from the past' or 'handed down to us from the past' to convey the active sense from German» (translators: J. Weinsheimer and D.G. Marshall).

conception of completeness» (der Vorgriff der Vollkommenheit; H.-G. Gadamer, *op. cit.*, 2004, p. 294)⁷.

4. By all means let us attempt to understand the whole in terms of the parts and the parts in terms of the whole (H.-G. Gadamer, *op. cit.*, 2004, p. 291; Schleiermacher's hermeneutic circle). Furthermore, let us harmonize all parts and details within a whole; this is the criterion of correct understanding.
5. «*Understanding is to be thought of less as a subjective act than as participating in an event of tradition*, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated. This must be validated by hermeneutic theory, which is far too dominated by the idea of procedure, a method» (H.-G. Gadamer, *op. cit.*, 2004, p. 291).
6. Let us try to establish meaning as a «shared meaning» that emerges between (or in-between) author (presenter) and reader (audience) through an interpretive process of what has been written down (presentation) and reception (recognition). For Gadamer it is the starting point of his enquiry into the condition of possibility of understanding itself. This can be done by strengthening the arguments from a text itself (H.-G. Gadamer, *op. cit.*, 2004, pp. 181, 238, 292).
7. Let us be always aware that we have a «historically effected consciousness» (wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein).

I am convinced that a careful reading of Gadamer's *Truth and Method* can provide us, Sinologists, more help for reading and interpreting of classical Chinese works.

1.2. *Authentic Existence as a «Shared Meaning» in Quest for Existential Truth within a Spiritual Tradition: The Second Hermeneutic Rule*

In 1982 Frederick J. Streng published a remarkable contribution with the title *Three Approaches to Authentic Existence: Christian, Confucian, and Buddhist* (pp. 371-392). Although his main concern was the comparison

⁷ *Ibidem*: «The circle, which is fundamental to all understanding, has a further hermeneutic implication which I call the fore-conception of completeness. [It] ... is ... a formal condition of all understanding. It states only that what really constitutes a unity of meaning is intelligible. So when we read a text, we always assume its completeness ... The fore-conception of completeness that guides our understanding is, then, always determined by the specific content. Not only does the reader assume an imminent unity of meaning, but his understanding is likewise guided by the constant transcendent expectations of meaning that proceed from the relation to the truth of what is being said».

of thought among the three 20th-century thinkers, that is, Paul Tillich⁸, a Christian, Tang Junyi⁹, a Confucian, and Keiji Nishitani¹⁰, a Buddhist, he also explicated the concept of authentic existence. «To live authentically human being must know and actualize the ‘the nature of things’» (p. 371). Streng elucidated through the comparison among the above-mentioned thinkers the philosophical implication of this two-sided existential concern, the content of which is as follows: 1) «the object of this knowledge is the reality which is prior to, and will remain after one’s existence» (ontological-epistemological aspect) and 2) «the recognition that living in or in relation to that reality requires a change – a deepening, an enlightening, a revelation in the way one usually apprehends the world» (*ibid.*; axiological-spiritual aspect). In every form of authentic existence, we have a tension between ontology and axiology through the lenses of epistemological dimension, that is, the relation of subject and object in knowing reality.

Thus, the quest for truth as authentic existence is a kind of «shared meaning» of all human beings in search for existential truth within a spiritual tradition or a quest for an existential truth of a given person¹¹. In view of the Confucian idea of truth in the *Lunyu* it will especially turn out as an enquiry into a mode of ontological (nature of things / ultimate reality) and axiologico-spiritual process.

1.3. *The Understanding of the Difference between a Notion and an Idea/Theory and Attitude as the Third Hermeneutic Rule*

Here we would like in the first place to understand an idea as a content that is already in human mind when we begin to think about something¹². Normally, ideas are construed as representational images (mental pictures), i.e., images of some concrete contents, such as objects. In Western philosophy, there has already been a controversy over innate ideas. I am sympathetic with innatism as a philosophical doctrine that holds that the mind is

⁸ Paul Johannes Tillich (1886-1965) was a German-American Protestant theologian and Christian existentialist philosopher.

⁹ Tang Junyi 唐君毅 (1909-1978) was a Chinese philosopher, one of the leading exponents of contemporary Neo-Confucianism.

¹⁰ Nishitani Keiji 西谷 啓治 (1900-1990) was a Japanese philosopher of the Kyoto School and a disciple of Kitaro Nishida.

¹¹ Cf. D. Cannon, *An Existential Theory of Truth*, in «The Personalist Forum», 2, 12 (1996), pp. 135-146.

¹² For the whole range of conceptual history of *idea* in Western philosophy, please cf. article *Idee* (idea), in *HWPPh*, vol. 4, cols. 55-134.

born with certain inborn ideas such as truth, and that therefore the mind is not a “blank slate” (*tabula rasa*) at birth, as early empiricists such as John Locke (1632-1704) claimed. The position of innatism asserts therefore that not all knowledge is obtained from experience and the senses. Nowadays innatism is mostly understood in the form of nativism.

However, it would be more correct to see innatism in reference to such philosophers as Plato who considered ideas as eternal forms (gr. εἶδος [eidos] / ἰδέα [idea]), and Descartes, who assumed that innate ideas and principles are placed in the human mind by God. Nativism is a rather scientific development of innatism, grounded in the fields of genetics, cognitive psychology and psycholinguistics. Nativists, like Noam Chomsky¹³ and Jerry Fodor¹⁴, hold that innate beliefs are in some way genetically programmed to arise in our mind, that is, innate contents are the phenotypes (as observable characteristics or traits) of certain genotypes that all humans have in common. Thus, nativism postulates the innateness of many cognitive functions and ideas. Nonetheless, nativism is also criticized as being too vague to be falsifiable, as there is no fixed definition of when some ability is supposed to be judged «innate»¹⁵.

In its modern psychological development, ideas can also be understood as pre-conceived content of mind, that is, schemata¹⁶. As examples of innate ideas there have been already proposed many ideas, such as the idea of good and evil, other ethical truths, logical and mathematical truths, metaphysical ideas concerning transcendent objects like God, soul, the idea of freedom (these three come from Kant), the idea of causality (in the sense that all events and/or everything that exists have a cause), and the ability of language. In the context of our research on the idea of truth in classical China within the *Lunyu*, I express my conviction that human beings as human beings necessary have the idea of truth or of that which is true, the reflexivity of which can have various grades with different individuals and peoples.

¹³ He argues that we are born with certain cognitive modules (specialized genetically inherited psychological abilities) that allow us to learn and acquire certain skills (such as language), cf. J. Elman *et al.*, *Rethinking Innateness: A Connectionist Perspective on Development*, MIT Press, Cambridge (MA) 1996.

¹⁴ He supports the idea of psychological nativism. For Fodor, this position emerges naturally out of his criticism of behaviorism and associationism. These criticisms also led him to the formulation of his hypothesis of the modularity of the mind; cf. J. Fodor, *Modularity of Mind: An Essay on Faculty Psychology*, A Bradford Book-MIT Press, Cambridge (MA)-London 1983.

¹⁵ Cf. J. Elman *et al.*, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ D.E. Rumelhart, *Schemata: The Building Blocks of Cognition*, in R.J. Spurio *et al.* (eds.), *Theoretical Issues in Reading Comprehension*, Lawrence Erlbaum, Hillsdale (NJ) 1980, pp. 33-59.

1.4. *The Triple Dimension of the Notion of Truth in the Western Philosophical Tradition as the Fourth Comparative Hermeneutic Rule*

In Western philosophical tradition¹⁷, it is with Parmenides' poem *On Nature* that we find a kind of ontological-epistemological concept of truth. Thus, truth was identified with a being (ontological aspect of truth), insofar it is cognizable (epistemological aspect of truth). Such a theory of cognoscible truth is connected with the knowledge of some necessary characteristics of being (in the case of Parmenides, they were for example the impossibility of becoming and change and oneness). With Plato we have an adumbration of the concept of a truth as transcendental which is a deepening of an ontological aspect of truth. Truth as a transcendental means a necessary property of each and every being. The other two transcendentalia are the One and the Good. In the epistemological context of Plato's dialogues, *aletheia* denotes a cognitive constitution of one who has reached a stage of (true) knowledge. In this sense, truth is not only a true judgment, but more an insight which contradicts an opinion (*doxa*).

With Aristotle, the Western philosophical quest for truth reached another significant aspect which is connected with his doctrine on virtue (ethical aspect of truth). He considers truth as a specific accomplishment of dianoetic (intellectual) virtues.

Aristotle differentiates between two fundamental cognitive aspects of human beings: a philosophical/scientific knowledge (*theoria*), the subject matter of which is a necessary state of affairs (the ability to think correctly about the nature of the world), and a practical ethical competence (*phronesis*: "prudence" or "practical wisdom") which acts among the changeable and contingent. These two fundamental modes of life orientation belong to the highest cognitive virtues of (theoretical) wisdom (*sophia*) and practical wisdom (*phronesis*) on the basis of which a man has got the most and "closest" participation in truth.

Thus, it is since Aristotle that we can find three-dimensionality of truth problematic in Western tradition, that is, its ontological, epistemological and ethical aspects which then have been continually discussed to the present day. In addition, in review of historical development of the idea of truth in the West, I found a help with Bonaventura (1221-1274: an Italian medieval Franciscan, scholastic theologian and philosopher) who divided philosophical knowledge into three realms, that is, "scientia naturalis", "scientia

¹⁷ Cf. *Wahrheit* (truth) in *HWPh*, vol. 12, cols. 48-121.

rationalis”, and “scientia moralis”¹⁸. Thus, we have accordingly threefold truth, i.e., the truth of things (“veritas rerum”), that of language (“veritas sermonum”) and the truth of morality (“veritas morum”). The truth of things consists in undividedness of being and a being (metaphysical/ontological truth), that of language in the adequacy between word and intellect (epistemological/logical truth), and the truth of morality in the moral integrity of human life (moral truth). With this threefold division, Bonaventura wanted to present an integrating and comprehensive understanding of the idea of truth in human life. In view of our quest for the Confucian idea of truth in the *Lunyu*, so-called moral truth comes to the fore.

1.5. *Hermeneutic Truth as a Continuous and Never-ending*

Self-understanding in the Understanding the Others and the World: The Fifth Heuristic and Hermeneutic Rule

Our Sinological journey of the investigation of the idea of truth in classical China is a kind of a participation in hermeneutic truth of Chinese philosophical tradition as discovery and elucidation of its various modes of experience and thought¹⁹. In the introduction to his *Truth and Method*, Gadamer said as follows:

The understanding and the interpretation of texts is not merely a concern of science, but obviously belongs to human experience of the world in general. The hermeneutic phenomenon is basically not a problem of method at all. It is not concerned with a method of understanding by which means of which texts are subjected to scientific investigation like all other objects of experience. It is not concerned primarily with amassing verified knowledge, such as would satisfy the methodological ideal of science – yet it is too concerned with knowledge and with truth. In understanding tradition not only texts are understood, but insights are acquired and truths known. But what kind of knowledge and what kind of truth? (2004: XX-XXI).

To understand oneself is thus to understand the genealogical roots of one’s own intellectual horizon. This perspective grants a new urgency to historical sciences. In addition, it offers a model of truth and objectivity that is different from that developed by the natural sciences. In a hermeneutic phenomenon – such as a quest for truth –, understanding and self-understand-

¹⁸ J.A. Aersten, *Wahrheit. B. Hochmittelalter*, in *HWPh*, vol. 12: W-Z, 2004, cols. 64-68, here cols. 65-66.

¹⁹ Cf. M. Lu, *The Confucian, Taoist and Augustinian Approaches to Truth and Their Contemporary Implications*, in «Journal of Chinese Philosophy», 1, 21 (1994), pp. 71-92.

ing cannot be sharply kept apart. Self-understanding does not culminate in statements similar to the propositions of natural sciences. Being a part of our daily life, self-understanding is oriented towards who we are and what we do, that is, within a given historical context of practice and understanding.

2. *The Junzi as a Truth-bearer according to the Lunyu*

The present-day version *Lunyu* (translated in English as the “[Confucian] Analects”) is a collection of sayings of Confucius (551-478 BC) and dialogues with his more important disciples. It consists of 20 chapters (497 verses), written by Confucius’ disciples, probably already of the second or third generation²⁰. The current Chinese title *Lunyu* appeared during the Han dynasty (206 BC-220 AD)²¹. This work is characterized by its considerable fragmentariness and aphoristic nature. It is a collection of not always essentially connected and coherent statements which in turn are often difficult to understand and interpret. However, they are linked by the key concepts of Confucius’ thought, i.e., *ren* 仁 (humanity). *Ren* is rooted in *xiao* 孝 (filial piety; love of children to parents) and *ti* 悌 / 弟 (brotherly obedience; the love of younger brothers to the older). There are also other important concepts, such as *zhong* 忠 (loyalty to the ruler) and *li* 禮 (ritualized norms of behavior, ritual). The process leading to the achievement of *ren*-humanity is related to one’s education (*xue* 學: learning) and compliance with (in conformity with) the social moral code and binding customs, i.e. *li*-ritual. Especially the relationship between *ren* and *li* seems to be the most interesting aspect of *Lunyu*, and the discrepancies in the meaning of these two basic categories of Confucius seemed to have lead Confucian disciples to a split among themselves during the editorial work of *Lunyu*²².

In addition, Confucius believed that Heaven (*Tian* 天²³) is by nature good

²⁰ C. Hansen, *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought: A Philosophical Interpretation*, Oxford University Press, New York-Oxford 1992, p. 58: «The adulation of Confucius continued to the second or third generation of disciples, who introduced the next innovation. They began collection memorable conversation fragments attributed to Confucius into a text, which became the famous *Analects of Confucius* ...».

²¹ Cf. J. Makeham, *The Formation of Lunyu as a Book*, in «*Monumenta Serica*», 44 (1996), pp. 1-24.

²² C. Hansen, *op. cit.*, p. 60: «The *Analects* is not Confucius’ *dao*, but at least two warring theories of Confucius’ *dao*». These differences appeared most conspicuously in later history of Confucianism in the examples of Mengzi (371-ca. 289 BC), later viewed as “orthodox”, and Xunzi (ca. 298-ca. 238 BC) as “unorthodox Confucian”.

²³ It is one of the oldest religious Chinese concepts for Transcendence. It denotes the

and that it only wants what good is for all men. He had a deep trust in Tian and believed that Tian could always overrule human efforts. Confucius was also deeply convinced that he himself was carrying out the will of Heaven, and that Heaven would not allow its servant, Confucius, to be killed until his work was done (*Lunyu* 7/23²⁴). There are, however, situations marked by difficulties, in which a “noble man” (*junzi*) must suffer even death. In this situation, the basic task of noble men was to recognize the plan of Heaven. This could be learned from Confucius, i.e., to learn what is in agreement and what is not with the Heavenly order (*Tiandao* 天道). It was basic “experiential” knowledge, coming only from observation and learning the effects of his and other people’s actions and the proofs of acting in accordance with the Heavenly order was the fact that with time such actions brought a positive effect.

During the Spring and Autumn period, which is characterized by a deteriorating socio-political situation, the disciples of Confucius were through their own perfection of moral life and solid efforts in learning to put into action the program of building a happy human community as a rebuilding of the Heavenly order (*Tiandao*). They were to be educated and spiritually prepared for this by Confucius. They were not, as it was so far, aristocrats of birth or blood (*junzi* 君子, lit.: son / sons of a monarch or ruler), but *junzis* of Confucius, i.e., «aristocrats of the spirit»²⁵, destined to moral self-cultivation and self-perfection. They were supposed to be masters of moral self-improvement and promoters of the virtuosity of human life which brings aesthetics and ethics together. Thus, this way of life would mean a harmonious combination of the perfect virtue of *ren*-humanity with the *li*-ritual as a virtue regulating the external manifestations of the human heart. The instructions and example of life of such *junzis* of Confucius were to heal the disintegration of the traditional values of the Zhou Dynasty during the Spring and Autumn period.

highest god among polytheistic beliefs of the ancient Chinese. During the Shang dynasty (17th-11th centuries BC), the Chinese referred to their supreme god as Shangdi 上帝 (Lord on High / Supreme Deity / Highest Deity / the Highest Divine Ancestor [?]) or Di 帝 (Lord). During the following Zhou dynasty (11th-3rd centuries), Tian as the highest god of the victorious Zhou replaced or became synonymous with Shangdi. Tian worship was done by *tianzi* 天子 – the Son of Heaven (this was the sacred imperial title of the Chinese emperor) until the beginning of the 20th century. This worship constituted an orthodox state religion of China.

²⁴ The Master said: «Heaven gave birth to the *de*-virtue within me. What can Huan Tui [a high official of the Song, who was trying to assassinate Confucius] do to me?» (子曰天生德於予桓魋其如予何).

²⁵ *Lunyu* 15/39: *Teaching should be without any discrimination* (有教無類). All citations come from *A Concordance to the Analects of Confucius* 1940. In not otherwise stated, all translations come from the author of this contribution.

Of particular importance was studying the effects of actions of previous generations on the one hand in order to avoid duplicating their mistakes, and on the other, to repeat as often as possible those activities that brought good results in the past. Once established, the compliance of a given action with the Heavenly order becomes in Confucian thought a kind of holiness, which should be reproduced in the future as accurately as possible²⁶. Let us here take the first quotation from the *Lunyu* 15/32 which makes us concentrate on the Dao-truth:

The master said: «A noble man (*junzi* 君子) is in search of the Dao 道-truth. Food is not his concern. Farming does not guarantee that there will be no lack of it. Learning can provide in certain circumstances a salary. The noble man is anxious to lose the search for Dao-truth, and not that poverty could hurt him»²⁷.

Junzis are bearers/carriers of Dao-truth. What does it mean? In the Western philosophical tradition, the Stoics deepened the problem of truth by introducing the category of Truth-bearer (carrier of truth; German: Wahrheitsträger²⁸). Human reason has the capacity to judge – to recognize or refuse – sensations/perceptions, having the power to distinguish the true reflection of reality from the false one. However, concepts (images, reflections) are true or false only in a derivative sense. For Stoics, declarative sentences (*axiomata*) are the first bearers/carriers of truth, because only they can build contradiction. Due to the fact that a declarative sentence (proposition) belongs to the category of what can be predicated (*lekta*) or what is denoted (*semainomena*), it is immaterial. The characteristic feature of declarative sentences-*axiomata*, in contrast to what can only be predicted, is that what can be predicted can only achieve a different degree of truth or falsehood, becoming a conviction or opinion, while sentences-*axiomata* are only true or false. Stoics, similarly

²⁶ Therefore, Confucian tradition has always been in danger of becoming transformed into a rigid ritual (*lijiao* 禮教). In this case, the Confucian way of life and thinking with its aesthetico-ethical dimension would lose its value and become an empty and rigid etiquette. *Lijiao* included not only basic ethical principles or socio-technical knowledge, but also determined the most precise behavior in a given situation, including prescribed gestures, fashion, and even facial expressions.

²⁷ 子曰：「君子謀道不謀食。耕也，餒在其中矣；學也，祿在其中矣。君子憂道不憂貧」。 *A Concordance to the Analects of Confucius* 1940:2. Dao-truth is encountered in the learning process, so it is a cognitive category. For the Confucians, the learning process was mainly based on two sources. First of all, it was reading classical Chinese works and learning six arts (as the basis of education in ancient Chinese culture in the times of Confucius), and secondly, it was one's own effort to learn as a collection of introspective experiences (moral self-cultivation) and observation of other people.

²⁸ J. Szaif, *Wahrhaftigkeit, I. Antike und Mittelalter*, in *HWPh*, vol. 12, pp. 12-52.

to Aristotle, adopted the principle of the bivalence of speech and the non-graduality of truth, i.e., rejected the idea that it could be more or less true.

Thus, in the Western philosophical tradition, the candidates for possible truth-bearers in logico-epistemological perspective are declarative sentences, i.e., propositions, statements, and judgments. To a lesser degree, these are ideas, convictions, and beliefs or intuitions, etc. However, we can also – in view of the daily context of human life, thus, referring to the ultimate source of the life attitudes of human beings etc. – in human existential perspective talk about us humans as «living truth-bearers»²⁹. Hence it is my understanding of the *junzi* as the bearer of the Dao-truth. Who and what is a *junzi*? In what relation does he stand for Dao-truth? We will try to answer these questions on the basis of the *Lunyu*. The term *junzi* occurs in *Lunyu* up to 105 times³⁰. Of course, not all instances of using the word *junzi* refer to our sense of a “noble man”. In addition, not all uses of *junzi* come from Confucius or even his disciples. Therefore, we will not quote every word *junzi* here, but we will concentrate on the more important statements of Confucius himself. In the following I have chosen 10 instances according to the order contained in the 20 chapters of the *Lunyu* (the first number point to the respective chapter and the second – to the verse) which should let us better understand a *junzi* as a Truth-bearer (a carrier of the Dao-truth).

1) 1/2: 君子務本，本立而道生。孝悌也者，其為仁之本與³¹?

A *junzi* takes care of what is basic. Having established what is basic, the Dao-course of things will go on [naturally]. Is not the basis of *ren*-humanity *xiao*-filial piety and the *ti*-love of younger brothers to the older (fraternal submission / brotherly obedience)?

The teachings of Confucius are primarily family and individual ethics. In these two core family virtues of *xiao* and *ti* is the *locus classicus* for so-called Confucian role ethics as moral thinking based on family, family members,

²⁹ Pope Benedict XVI called often Jesus Christ as «die Person gewordene Wahrheit» / «Truth in a Person» (see his *Address of Benedict XVI to the Participants of the General Assembly of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith*; Clementina-Saal, Friday 10 February 2006; cf.: https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/de/speeches/2006/february/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060210_doctrine-faith.pdf; retrieved 21 January 2020). Thus, Christianity believes that Jesus is the Incarnate Word and Truth of God for us humans. It does not present truth merely as an abstract idea, but as a person who can be known. Truth is much more than a mere abstract fact or concept, or a declarative sentence or statement; it is undeniably relational. For Christians, truth is a person and this person is Jesus of Nazareth. Something similar it can be said about all true witnesses of all religions.

³⁰ *A Concordance to the Analects of Confucius* 1940: 142-143.

³¹ *A Concordance to the Analects of Confucius* 1940: 1.

and their roles (so-called Confucian familism)³². Confucius understood man as a being who cannot live fully, and consequently, which cannot be fully understood outside of the family. He attributed to the family a huge social role, and in its hierarchical dependencies he saw the organic and natural origin of the life beyond the family, i.e., socio-political. That is why the *junzi* began his education with what is first and foremost for human life, that is, our family relations.

2) 2/12: 子曰:「君子不器。」³³

The master said: «A *junzi* is not a device».

This enigmatic understanding of a *junzi* is very interesting. We have here a negative comparison of a *junzi* to a device, equipment, a utensil or even a machine which has always a very specific and limited use. Thus, the *junzi*'s learning is not limited to any particular way of acting, but is open to anything that could benefit the common good. The *junzi* should actually be an example and embodiment of aesthetico-ethical virtuosity of human life.

3) 2/13: 子貢問君子。子曰:「先行其言,而後從之。」³⁴

Zi Gong asked [how to become] a *junzi*. The master replied: “Before you say words, act according to what is their content, and then, after doing this, you can talk about it”.

A very important place in the *Lunyu* talking about the relationship between deed and word in life of a *junzi*, i.e., there should be agreement between them, that is, between action and word, action being more important than the word (the phrase *cong zhi* 從之 means here: «words flow out of the action»)³⁵. Here we find a typical example of the Confucian attitude of unity of knowledge and action (*zhixing he yi* 知行合一)³⁶.

³² R.T. Ames, *Confucian Role Ethics: A Vocabulary*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu 2011. The Chinese Confucian familism, understood by the author of this contribution is a tendency of humanity as co-humanity only through family, which as such has also its limits both in theoretical (i.e., ethical and political) and practical (historical) dimension.

³³ *A Concordance to the Analects of Confucius* 1940: 3.

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

³⁵ This is also a *locus classicus* for the Confucian concept of *zhixing heyi* 知行合一 (the unity of knowledge and action). This is the problem of the relationship between knowledge and action which pertains to the relationship between knowledge about moral matters and doing what this knowledge calls for. The very concept was coined by the Neo-Confucian scholar Wang Yang-ming (1472-1529) who imbued this idea with his special theory. However, the traditional Confucian thought in general maintained that once one acquired knowledge, one should do one's best to put such knowledge into practice.

³⁶ Cf. W.G. Frisina, *Unity of Knowledge and Action: Toward a Nonrepresentational Theory of Knowledge*, State University of New York Press, New York 2002.

4) 2/14: 子曰：「君子周而不比，小人比而不周。」³⁷

The master said: «A *junzi* is impartial [living in harmony with all people], and not biased [to be in arrangements with interest groups of people]. A petty man is biased, [and therefore] he is not impartial».

Here is a *junzi* understood in opposition to a “petty man” who is his real reverse. The *xiaoren* is mentioned in the *Lunyu* 25 times³⁸. From this contrast, we can get a lot of new knowledge about a *junzi*. Here, this opposition could be generalized to the tension between the public domain (public interest) and private domain (self-interest, egoism). It should thus be related to the attitude and virtue of justice.

5) 4/5: 子曰：「富與貴是人之所欲也，不以其道得之，不處也；貧與賤是人之所惡也，不以其道得之，不去也。君子去仁，惡乎成名？君子無終食之間違仁，造次必於是，顛沛必於是。」³⁹

The master said: «Riches and honors [i.e., a noble social status] are what people desire. If you cannot get them in the proper way, you should not use them. Poverty and a low social status are what people do not like. However, if you cannot avoid them in the proper way, you do not leave them. If a *junzi* abandons *ren*-humanity, how can he deserve his name? A *junzi*, even for the length of a single meal, does not act contrary to *ren*-humanity. In moments of haste, he adheres to it. In times of difficult experiences, he is adamant in it».

The fundamental role of *ren*-humanity exists in the fact that a *junzi* must not lose it in any life situation. The following is the *conditio sine qua non* for the life of a *junzi*: to be totally opened to *ren*-humanity and to try to get close to it (*jinren* 近仁⁴⁰: get closer and closer to *ren*-humanity.) Approaching *ren*-humanity means also to come closer to *de* 德-morality, and in turn to Dao-truth. Such *ren*-humanity is to be realized in the human world, in which natural desires (after wealth, honors and social status) collide with the existing socio-economic situation. The basis of any social mobility should only be *ren*-humanity.

6) 4/16: 子曰：「君子喻於義，小人喻於利。」⁴¹

The master said: The *junzi* is knowledgeable about and experienced in *yi*-obligations, and a petty man is well versed in gaining benefits.

³⁷ A Concordance to the Analects of Confucius 1940: 3.

³⁸ A Concordance to the Analects of Confucius 1940: 68-69.

³⁹ A Concordance to the Analects of Confucius 1940: 6.

⁴⁰ A Concordance to the Analects of Confucius 1940: 27.

⁴¹ A Concordance to the Analects of Confucius 1940: 7.

This is in the Confucian tradition a well-known contrast between a *junzi* and a petty man with these two categories, i.e., *yi*-obligations and *li*-benefits. Of course, we must think about *yi*-obligations as a family-rooted and -oriented morality and socio-moral duties in classical China, which society was very hierarchical. The three basic relationships in the family, understood as instincts, feelings, values, and obligations, are: 1) dependence of the son on the father (*fu zi you qin* 父子有親) – there is a blood kinship between the father and the son); 2) wife’s dependence on her husband (*fu fu you bie* 夫婦有別) – there are differences between husband and wife); 3) dependence of a younger brother than an older one (*zhang you you xu* 長幼有序) – there is a seniority relationship between the elder and the younger. These are three out of five interpersonal relationships (*wulun* 五倫) that form the basis of Confucian thought. The nation, conceived by the Confucians, was a family writ large. Therefore, with time the first of these five relationships became the dependence of the subordinate (minister) on the ruler (*jun chen you yi* 君臣有義) – there are *yi*-obligations between the ruler and the subordinate, in analogy to the relationship between the father and the son. These four relationships form hierarchically unchangeable positions; they are the basis for relations based essentially on the orders of one side and on obedience on the other. The ruler is by nature a commanding person, and the subordinate is listening and executing his ordinances. The rule regulating these relations is authority. The fifth relation concerns relations between friends (*pengyou you xin* 朋友有信) – mutual trust reigns among friends⁴².

7) 6/26: 宰我問曰：「仁者雖告之曰，井有仁焉，其從之也。」子曰：「何為其然也。君子可逝也，不可陷也。可欺也，不可罔也。」⁴³

Zi Wo asked: «A man full of *ren*-humanity, when informed that in the well there is another human being full of *ren*-humanity, [will he be immediately] going to the well [to save him]?» The master replied: “And why should he do so? A *junzi* can go to the brink of the well [and see what can be done here], but he should not jump in [risking his life]. [A *junzi*] may be cheated, but not fooled.

It is a difficult place to interpret, because there is no expected unconditional readiness to save another human being! The author of this contribution interprets these words of Confucius in a spirit of goodwill: This would

⁴² This is the only equal human relationship among *wulun* which in the political life of China has not played a great role because from the political viewpoint it had always been associated with cabal, intrigue, coterie, and fractiousness.

⁴³ A *Concordance to the Analects of Confucius* 1940: 11.

mean that the *junzi* should not act on the hooray, without thinking, but he has to use practical wisdom (*fronesis*⁴⁴) in solving difficult life situations, especially where he would have direct expose your own life. Such a translation seems to have its support in the words of Confucius in this context on cheating and being fooled.

8) 9/14: 子欲居九夷. 或曰:「陋, 如之何?」子曰:「君子居之, 何陋之有?」⁴⁵

The Master wanted to go to nine tribes of Yi [barbarians from the east]. Some [wanting to dissuade him from this intention] told him that this is a backward [i.e., uncivilized] region, so why would he go there? The master replied: «Where a *junzi* is, is there any place of backwardness?»

This fragment is interesting for two reasons. On the one hand, Confucius identified himself with the *junzi*, i.e., he treats himself as one of them. On the other hand, one can see here the cultural role of a *junzi*, which has two foundations: *ren*-humanity and *li*-ritual. On them the virtue of *yi*-obligation rise, and further *de*-virtue as the virtuosity of aesthetico-ethical human life. This is the epitome of Confucian Dao-truth.

9) 12/4: 司馬牛問君子. 子曰:「君子不憂不懼。」曰:「不憂不懼, 斯謂之君子已乎?」子曰:「內省不疚, 夫何憂何懼?」⁴⁶

Sima Niu asked about the *junzi*. The master replied: «The *junzi* does not feel [excessive] anxiety or fear». [Sima Niu] replied: «Do not feel excessive anxiety or fear: How can a *junzi* be described by this?» The master replied: «If, after the examination of conscience, nothing reproachable is found, how can [the *junzi*] feel anxiety and fear?»

Here we have a basic strategy for the moral self-cultivation of the *junzi* – this is the psychological-spiritual function of *neixing* 內省 (examination of conscience, literally: internal examination, internal reflection [self-reflection]; nowadays we would even say: introspection). The correspondence (agreement) of one's own interior (conscience) with one's own external action and behavior removes psychological and spiritual states of inner anxiety and fear!

10) 13/3: 子路曰:「衛君待子而為政, 子將奚先?」子曰:「必也正名乎!」子路曰:「有是哉. 子之迂也, 奚其正?」子曰:「野哉! 由也. 君子於其所不知, 蓋缺如也. 名不正, 則言不順; 言不順, 則事不成. 事不成, 則禮樂不興; 禮

⁴⁴ *Fronesis*, translated also as prudence or mindfulness, is a type of wisdom relevant to practical action, implying both good judgment and excellence of character and habits, or practical virtue.

⁴⁵ *A Concordance to the Analects of Confucius* 1940: 16.

⁴⁶ *A Concordance to the Analects of Confucius* 1940: 22.

樂不興，則刑罰不中；刑罰不中，則民無所措手足。故君子名之必可言也，言之必可行也。君子於其言，無所苟而已矣。」⁴⁷

Zi Lu said: «The ruler of Wei has been waiting for you, Master, to help him lead the government. Master, what would you suggest at the beginning [of this help]? »The master replied: «It must be the rectification of names». Zi Lu replied: «Is it really like that?! The master must be exaggerating. Why is rectification?» The master replied: «How uncouth you are, You! The *junzi* is reserved with what he does not know. If the names are not rectified, the words will not be understood; but if the words are incomprehensible, then you will not be able to act [in society]; and if society does not function, then *li*-ritual and music will not flourish; and if they do not thrive, the punishment will not be adequate, and in this case, people will have no idea how to behave at all. Therefore, the *junzi* considers it necessary that the names he says are spoken accordingly, and the words thus spoken are also properly implemented. In relation to his words, the *junzi* cannot behave irresponsibly».

This fragment is important first of all because of the notion of rectification of names, which Confucius himself introduced to the discussion. The rectification / correction of names (*zhengming* 正名) means knowledge about one's social role, which knowledge flows from the Heavenly order (*Tiandao* 天道), and its implementation leads to social harmony. For Confucians, social roles based on the family structure express the eternal Heavenly order, which is close to the concept of European natural law (law of nature / Latin *ius naturale* as asserting that certain rights are inherent by virtue of human nature, endowed by nature – traditionally by God or a transcendent source – and that these can be understood universally through human reason). Because social harmony is the goal of Confucian activities, they could not miss the implementation of rectification of names in their social actions, and above all in view of the five basic interpersonal relations (*wulun* 五倫), which has already been mentioned above. Everyone should know what it means to be a father, son, elderly and younger brother, wife, ruler, minister, etc.

In the *Lunyu*, the concept *dao* occurs 75 times⁴⁸, *Tiandao* 天道 appears only once (see 5/13:8⁴⁹) in the sense of “Heavenly order”. Also once we

⁴⁷ A *Concordance to the Analects of Confucius* 1940: 25.

⁴⁸ Cf. A *Concordance to the Analects of Confucius* 1940: 84-85.

⁴⁹ 子貢曰：「夫子之文章，可得而聞也；夫子之言性與天道，不可得而聞也。」
(Zigong said: «As to the Master's six arts [Rites (禮)/Music (樂)/Archery (射)/Charioteering (御)/Calligraphy (書)/Mathematics (數)] and the traditional texts on self-cultivation, binging family in order, reigning society, and pacifying all under heaven (修齊治平), we can hear and learn from them. The Master's statements concerning human nature and the *Tiandao* are things which are very difficult to understand, and that is why we cannot understand and learn of»).

have *daolu* 道路 (see 9/12:18) as a “road”. As in the case of the *junzi*, we will quote only three relevant uses of *dao*:

1) 3/24: 儀封人請見。曰：「君子之至於斯也，吾未嘗不得見也。」從者見之。出曰：「二三子，何患於喪乎？天下之無道也久矣，天將以夫子為木鐸。」⁵⁰

The border guard in Yi asked to be introduced [to Confucius]. He said: «Whenever *junzis* came all the way to this land, I never refused [a privilege] of seeing them». Accompanying persons led [Confucius] to him. After leaving, the guard said: «Disciples [of Confucius], why you are grieving because he lost [the office]. Under heaven (*tianxia*) there has been for a long time no socio-political Dao-truth (rules of order and law), in the future Heaven (Tian) will make your Master a bell with a wooden tongue»⁵¹.

The idea of *dao* in the socio-political sense of truth is the most important and frequent use of this word (see 5/2: 7, 5/21: 8, 8/13: 18, 14/3: 27, 14/1: 27.15 / 7: 31, 16/2: 33, 18/6: 38). The realization of this socio-political Dao-truth was believed to lead to a perfect harmony, which is also harmony with *Tiandao* – the Heavenly order and the way of the earlier kings (*xianwang zhi dao* 先王之道: 1/22: 1, see 3/16: 5). This truth, as already stated above, can be learned by the *junzi* on the one hand by reading classical literature, which reports on the implementation of this socio-political truth and on the other by observing what is happening around it, while comparing it with the already realized *Tiandao*.

2) 4/8: 子曰：「朝聞道，夕死可矣。」⁵²

The master said: «If a man hears Dao-truth in the morning, he may die in the evening without regret».

Here *dao* can be first translated as today’s *daoli* 道理, which is understood as “truth”, “principle”, and also as “a reason”, “an argument”, and even as “a way”, “a method”. What is this Dao-truth, who?/which⁵³ exceeds the value of the life of man? Even hearing Dao-truth in the morning makes worth leaving the human world without regret on the same evening. In this sense such Dao must certainly be of transcendent character.

⁵⁰ *A Concordance to the Analects of Confucius* 1940: 5.

⁵¹ «A bell with a wooden tongue» used to be carried by night watchmen in ancient China in order to arouse and warn townsmen when danger was present. Even the Tianzi / emperor would use such a bell to gather their ministers. Thus, such a bell means here to be an important instrument in the hands of Heaven.

⁵² *A Concordance to the Analects of Confucius* 1940: 6.

⁵³ My reading of Tian and Dao in the *Lunyu*, leaves me with the conviction of the lack of their personal nature, which is known, e.g., in view of Christian God.

3) 15/29: 子曰：「人能弘道，非道弘人。」

The Master said: “Man can increase Dao-truth, but not the Dao-truth – man”.

This surprising statement by Confucius has a very simple explanation: First, one – especially *junzis* – must apply for moral self-cultivation, give a daily testimony to the example of living in harmony with Dao-truth. In this way, this truth will be enlarged with another example of living in harmony with it. Here we have a similar situation to the lives of Christians, whom Saint John the Evangelist and Saint Paul encouraged not only to know the truth (which is in the first place a religious and revealed one), but also to do the truth! And if one only preaches truth, without practicing it, the same proclamation cannot increase man! There must be an agreement between knowledge and action (*zhi xing heyi*: unity of knowledge and action; see above), otherwise the preacher of such truth will be preposterous and ridiculed by others!

Conclusion

Above, we have tried to discuss the issue of the idea of truth in classical China with the help of hermeneutics and to exemplify it within the *Lunyu*. In regard to the general idea of truth, both cultures, i.e., Western and Chinese, differ from each other in the sense that for Western culture this category is obvious, in Chinese it does not seem to appear, i.e., it is there more implicit. That is why in the first part of this contribution we sought first to develop a hermeneutical-methodological horizon of looking at the idea of truth in classical China, and then by means of the example of the *Lunyu* we presented the *junzis* – the noble men – as carriers/bearers of the Dao-truth. There is no doubt that this Confucian idea of truth in the *Lunyu*, like in ancient Greece, was based on the category of conformity (correspondence theory of truth⁵⁴):

⁵⁴ In ancient Greece it is in first place the correspondence theory of epistemological truth which states that the truth or falsity of a statement is determined only by how it relates to the world and whether it accurately describes (i.e., corresponds with, conforms with, mirrors a relation with) that world. The correspondence theory is traceable to Aristotle's definition of truth (*Metaphysics* 1011b25): «To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true» – but very similar formulations we can find in Plato's *Cratylus* (385b2) and *Sophist* (263b), without – however – taking account of our everyday intuition of truth as correspondence and conformity. The example of a classical correspondence theory is the explanation by the philosopher and theologian Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274): «Veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus» («Truth is the adaequation of things and intellect», *Summa Theologiae*, I. Q.16, A.2 arg. 2.) Cf. W. Lan, *Aristotle and Confucius on Rhetoric and Truth: The Form and the Way*, Routledge, London 2016.

true is what is in correspondence (between something and something else), conformity with, the agreement (of things) with (one another) or in “a mirroring relation” to the external ultimate reality (here: Tian, *Tiandao*, in the West: objective morality / natural law). Confucius was convinced of the possibility of *Tian*-Heaven’s direct and non-verbal intervention in human affairs through concrete events – phenomena in nature and cosmos. This Confucian correspondence theory of moral truth was a part of his philosophical concept of *Tianming*. The course of things and events in the natural and human world was done in Confucius’ belief according to the *Tiandao*, which seems to have been in Confucius’ understanding a favorable concern of *Tian*-Heaven for humanity to create a perfectly peaceful human world. In full cooperation with *Tian*-Heaven, this would lead to total harmony in the entire cosmos. Of course, in this utopia – in the sense: there is no place and time in human history where and when this ideal has been realized – there is always place for the good will and respective actions of people living on earth and the choice between good and evil. Thus, in view of the *junzi*, this idea of truth in such a context pertains only to the ethical-moral dimension of truth. In the *Lunyu* we can surely speak of the correspondence theory of moral truth.

Within the correspondence idea of truth in the *Lunyu*, we can further distinguish its three aspects: (1) the individual-moral truth, i.e., the life of the *junzi* as a match with *ren*-humanity (human nature) and *li*-ritual (adequately expressing *ren*-humanity and other moral attitudes in the community), (2) the correspondence idea of socio-political truth, i.e., the compatibility / conformity with *Tiandao* – the Heavenly order which Confucius believed had already been realized a long time ago in ancient Chinese past (the Chinese golden age), and (3) Confucius’ faith in *Tian*-Heaven as the reality which was prior to him and would remain after his existence (ontological aspect) and only “private” knowledge of *Tianming* (the mandate/will of Heaven; *Lunyu* 2/4: «at fifty I knew the mandate of Heaven») which was difficult to transmit to his disciples (5/13: a weak epistemological aspect in the *Lunyu*; in 16/8 we see a general attitude: [the *junzi*] stands in awe of the mandate of Heaven 畏天命; it is more an attitude of admiration, respect, and veneration⁵⁵). According to my reading, *Tian*-Heaven seems in the *Lunyu* to be omnipresent,

⁵⁵ We could probably use in this context the term of Rudolf Otto (*Das Heilige*, 1917), i.e., the experience of Confucius was a *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* (a mystery that repels and attracts). This concept expresses the double form of human religious experience in front of the Transcendence (God; the numinous), i.e., we experience both dreadful, fearful, and overwhelming aspects of the Transcendence and its aspects which irresistibly draw us to the glory, beauty, adoration, blessing, redeeming, and salvation.

omniscient, and omnipotent, however, also more impersonal than personal. The lack of the personal character of *Tian*-Heaven with Confucius amounts to me as a Christian to a difference between Christian revelation and “natural theology” in Confucius’ *Tian*-faith⁵⁶. This third aspect of this triple dimension is the ultimate source of the standard for this conformity and agreement. As above already mentioned, both forms of this Confucian correspondence idea of truth, i.e., the individual-moral truth and socio-political truth, belong to the ethical-moral dimension of truth.

In the *Lunyu*, we find nothing like truth as a necessary property of being or a being, i.e., truth as a transcendental (Latin: *transcendentalium*). As for the epistemological-logical dimension of the idea of truth, it would seem that we could find it in the concept of rectification of names (*zhengming*: correction / adjustment of names), mentioned by Confucius (see *Lunyu* 13/3 [above: example 17] and 12/11⁵⁷)⁵⁸ in the sense that all names which can be truly attributed to a person and his conduct should correspond to the true significance of these names (here it is also about correspondence). Through accurate modeling of linguistic socio-political differences, the authorities strive to follow the traditional cultural codes. If the rectification of names means knowledge about one’s social role, which flows from the Heavenly order (*Tiandao*), as Confucius and his disciples believed, and its implementation leads to social harmony, then we can deal here in the first place with the sociology of knowledge as the theory of the relationship between human thought and the religious and socio-political context within which it arises, and as that of the effects that predominant and pivotal ideas have on societies. Thus this kind of knowledge is eventually sociology, and not epistemology or logic. Here I want to draw a line leading from the thought to Confucius as a thinker and his social world, and this is visible when the

⁵⁶ Cf. S.C. Cline, *Religious Thought and Practice in the Analects*, in A. Olberding, *Dao Companion to the Analects*, Springer Dordrecht, Heidelberg-New York-London 2014, pp. 259-293, here p. 283.

⁵⁷ «Duke Jing of Qi made an enquiry with Confucius about government. Confucius replied: ‘Let the ruler be ruler, ministers ministers, fathers fathers, sons sons’. The Duke said ‘Well said! Indeed, if the ruler is not ruler, ministers not ministers, fathers not fathers, sons not sons, though I have grain, will I be able to eat it?’» (齊景公問政於孔子。孔子對曰：「君君，臣臣，父父，子子。」公曰：「善哉！信如君不君，臣不臣，父不父，子不子，雖有粟，吾得而食諸？」 *A Concordance to the Analects of Confucius* 1940:23).

⁵⁸ However, this idea has probably originated in Mozi’s 墨子 (ca. 470-ca. 391 BC) thought and had its further development by the legist statesman Shen Buhai 申不害 (400-337 BC; A.C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China*, Open Court, La Salle (IL) 1989, p. 284). W.E. Steinkraus, *Socrates, Confucius, and the Rectification of Names*, in «Philosophy East and West», 2, 30 (1980), pp. 261-264.

thought serves the sanctioning of a specific social situation by means of explanation, justification or sanctification. It must be remembered that for Confucians, social roles based on the family structure⁵⁹ express the eternal Heavenly order (*Tiandao*) in the sense of the Western understanding of the law of nature (natural law). In this case, the notion of *zhengming* would also have to do with the general idea of moral truth as conformity, agreement, and correspondence. As such it also possesses a semantic dimension.

At the end we still want to stress the following aspect: In view of the Stoic understanding of the “truth-bearer” which was neutral, i.e., either true or false, we could also differentiate in this light among the *junzis* between true ones and false ones. The former live in accordance and in compliance with the *Tiandao* and Confucius’ teachings and the latter not!

Abstract

In order to work out the hermeneutic and methodological horizon to look at the idea of truth in classical China (i.e., before the influence of Buddhism there), the first part of the present contribution contains hermeneutic and methodological problems, such as the historicity of understanding as the first hermeneutic rule, authentic existence as a “shared meaning” in quest for existential truth within a spiritual tradition etc. In the second part, on the basis of the Lunyu, the author explores the Confucian idea of junzi 君子 (the noble people) as the Dao-truth bearers. What we deal here with is first of all the correspondence theory of individual and moral truth, i.e., a junzi as being in a compliance with ren 仁-humanity (human nature) and li 禮-ritual (the appropriate expression of ren-humanity and other moral attitudes in a society) as well as with the correspondence theory of social and political truth, i.e., as being in compliance with Tiandao 天道 – the Heavenly order.

Keywords: Truth; The correspondence theory of truth; Hermeneutic rules; Lunyu; Junzi.

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⁵⁹ R.T. Ames, *op. cit.*

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