

**Dialogue among Civilisations - the Key to a Safe Future
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**THE “CIVILISATION OF STRUGGLE” IN THE WEST
AND APPRECIATION OF HARMONY IN EAST ASIA:
PHILOSOPHICAL AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS
OF THE TWO APPROACHES**

ABSTRACT

Dialogue among civilisations requires mutual respect, willingness to understand a partner, and readiness to acknowledge that there could be different points of view. However, the Western economic, military and political domination results in beliefs, diffused in particular in the West itself, that the West is supreme in all respects, including ideological and cultural. Therefore, Western values, institutions and fundamental social and political concepts are presented as the “most advanced” and universal.

The Westerners are usually ready to tolerate merely “folkloristic differences”, known to them from Europe, not fundamental differences in the vision of the world and of the individual. For centuries Western thinkers and scholars described an individual and societies of their own civilisation presuming that they analyse “human being” and “society” in general. An idea that there are different “cultural forms of human condition” was and still usually remains alien to them. Moreover, the Christian tradition promotes an idea of “mission”. Therefore, numerous Westerners are sincerely convinced that an imposition of their own values and systems constitutes their religious/moral duty and serve the best interests of their non-western “brothers”. So, it is very difficult to the Westerners to perceive their own civilisation as one among numerous other, not necessarily superior in all respects.

In order to illustrate the particular characteristics and traditions of the West, and complex interrelations among its values and norms, the problem of conflict and struggle could be presented. It is crucial to Western civilisation, and essential for understanding of its profound differences with other civilisations. East Asian civilisation is analysed here, since it offers an entirely opposite approach.

As G. Dumézil indicates, warriors constituted the ruling class among the Indo-European peoples since the dawn of history. Struggle was considered by them a truly noble task, sometimes almost sacral. Such concepts have been reflected even in philosophical and religious thought. Therefore, struggle was presented as the essential principle of the universe, and of the social, as well as political order. It was also re-

flected in the Christian concepts of the struggle of the forces of Evil and Darkness against Good and Light. This concept generated the idea of “mission”: to eliminate the forces of Evil.

For almost three millennia in the West struggle constituted a universal paradigm, that shaped relations of the states, of political groupings and of individuals. Struggle was considered a “natural state of affairs” and a fundamental “mechanism of development” (or of “reaching a more perfect state”). This facilitated and justified conquests, brutal oppression, enslavement or even genocide. On the other hand, it resulted in an particular appreciation of freedom for the groups and individuals, and in the ideas of democracy (as institutionalised and non violent, continuous political struggle).

In East Asia the opposite views prevailed. Since the 1st millennium BC harmony and equilibrium were considered there central values and the essential principles of the cosmic, political and social hierarchical order. Even one’s own self was portrayed as “harmonious”, whereas the concepts of “spiritual struggle” and of “choice” were unknown. Self-perfection and adjustment to the outside world determined behaviour of groups and of individuals, not the “struggle for freedom”. The society and its members were duty not rights-oriented. Instead the dualism of Evil/Good there was used a bipolar scheme of Yin and of Yang, which complement each other and born one another. War and military conquests were condemned, and military victories considered “dangerous” even to the victorious party, whereas warriors constituted a low stratum of the society.

In both civilisations different, or even contradicting elements could be found, as well as various temporal and local fluctuations. Complementing opposite tendencies could also be detected. Nevertheless, the paradigms of a “harmonious entity” and of “fighting enemies/partners” respectively shaped their evolution, institutions and ideals.

At the end of the 19th century East Asia initiated to adopt Western concepts and institutions, but at the end of the 20th century started to return to Confucian ideas. On the other hand, the West, in particular after the World War II, started to condemn struggle and the use of force. Thus in the last decades both civilisations started to appreciate much more co-operation and harmony. In the West these changes constitute the greatest spiritual and political revolution in its history, but old tendencies die hard.

Key words: American foreign policy; Asian values; Confucianism; Democracy; Dialogue among civilisations; Freedom; Fundamental principles of East Asian civilisation; Fundamental principles of the West; Heraclitus; Huntington’s theory; Individualism; Struggle and competition; Struggle *versus* harmony; The East and the West; War; Warriors; Western supremacy.

1. THE WESTERN DOMINATION AND THE PROBLEM OF DIALOGUE AMONG CIVILISATIONS

Dialogue among civilisations requires mutual respect, willingness to understand a partner, and readiness to acknowledge that there could be different points of view. Dialogue is impossible when even one partner insists that he

posses the absolute truth, and the other side merely has to accept it.¹ It happens that one side makes recourse to force and constrains the other to adopt its opinions on the subject and to act accordingly. One side could even compel another to adopt entirely its own opinions, values, and norms, in practice demanding the rejection of partner’s own identity.

It is true that in the past there were numerous tragic conflicts between various tribes, peoples or states, in which one side tried to impose its own norms, customs or beliefs on the other, or even tried to exterminate the enemy. One could also notice that such actions happened with an exceptional frequency in Europe and were carried there with a particular zeal, and that the Europeans applied similar, or even more drastic, measures on the continents they were conquering. Nevertheless, it was the evolution of the new industrial-and-scientific civilisation in Europe that changed entirely the situation and relations among cultures and civilisations. The Western domination, granted by this civilisation, posed an unknown military, technological and cultural challenge to all non-Western cultures and to the peoples that elaborated or adopted them. Material supremacy of the West required not only adoption of its technologies and knowledge, but also of its institutions, concepts, ideologies, etc. In the 19th century East Asians presumed that it is possible “to maintain Eastern Learning as fundamental principles, while adopting Western Learning for practical applications”, but they realised very soon that they must adopt Western civilisation in a much broader scale, if they want to survive.²

Today Western civilisation still predominates in the world in the scientific and technological aspects, as well as in economy, politics, and military affairs. After the World War II the racist concepts of the supremacy of the “white race”, the policy of military conquests and of colonial rule were eventually abandoned, but numerous Western politicians, intellectuals, and large segments of their societies consider “obvious” Western supremacy in all respects, including ideological and cultural. In their opinion, Western values, institutions and fundamental social and political concepts are the “most advanced” and universal, and have to be adopted by all non-Western nations, which should simply abandon their native “backward” traditions and practices.

The Westerners are usually ready to tolerate merely “folkloristic differences”, known to them from Europe, in tales, customs, dances, songs, music or cuisine, not fundamental differences in the vision of the world and of the indi-

¹ This aspect of dialogue among cultures indicates rightly Karl-Heinz Pohl, see: *Introduction* to the book edited by him: *Chinese Thought in a Global Perspective*, Leiden, E. J. Brill 1999, p. x.

² In China Feng Guifen (1809–1874) and later on Zhang Zhidong (1837–1909) referred to the “Chinese learning”. See: Ssu-yü Teng, John K. Fairbank, eds, *China’s Response to the West, A Documentary Survey, 1839–1923*, Cambridge, Mass. London, Harvard University Press, 1979, pp. 50, 164. In Japan Sakuma Shōzan (1811–1864) promoted a more general concept: “Eastern Ethics and Western science”. See: J. K. Fairbank, E.O. Reischauer, A.M. Craig, *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co. 1989, a revised edition, p. 486.

vidual. For centuries Western thinkers and scholars described an individual of their own civilisation presuming that they analyse “human being” in general and its condition in the world. An idea that there are different “cultural forms of human condition” was and still usually remains alien to them. It is also beyond their imagination that there could be different principles of social and political organisation and that other, non-Western criteria could be applied for their evaluation. Until today numerous Western intellectuals and politicians are convinced that all human beings in the world are of the “Western kind”, share the Western structure of values and fears, and face the same dilemmas. Fundamental differences of non-Western cultures still are very often presented and imagined merely as resulting from “backwardness” of the peoples that adopt them. Hence numerous Westerners, with Samaritan naivety, want to bring them “progress” and liberate them from “sufferings” provoked by their native social and political systems (for instance, by the norms of *shari’a*).

Such an universalistic worldview, characteristic for the Christian tradition, according to which our own religious and moral doctrines are valid for entire mankind, is not by any way exceptional. Islam, Buddhism or Confucianism also are of universalistic nature. The West with its Christian tradition is exceptional in two essential aspects: 1) it promotes, with a particular insistence, an idea of “mission”, presuming that the state, the church or even an individual should propagate their own faith, notwithstanding the willingness of others; 2) it possesses material means that allow an efficient imposition of its own norms and values, or even uses such imposition for strengthening its political and economic domination. Many Westerners are sincerely convinced that such imposition of their values and systems serve the best interests of their non-Western “brothers” and teaching them constitutes their moral or even sacral duty. In the colonial period the West propagated first of all Christianity “for salvation of the pagans” spirits’, although introduction of “civilised norms” was also promoted. In the post-colonial period numerous Westerners, with a similar fanatic zeal, propagate Western democracy, the Western standards of human rights, the Western ideas of individual freedoms, and various other political ideas and institutions considered by them “most progressive” and “most beneficial” to all human beings. Sometimes such a “moral mission” has obvious religious roots. One could easily detect them, for instance, in Western statesman’s declarations that God had given freedom to all human beings, so it is duty of their country to grant it to a certain nation, or that “we” should fight against the “empire of Evil” or the “axis of Evil”.

A significant part of non-Western elites and societies accepts Western supremacy and are ready to adopt Western ideas and standards, usually in a modified forms, adapted to their own circumstances, or at least try to create an illusion of an “apparent civilised existence”. One could face rarely those who openly reject the Western supremacy, the Western values and the way of life as “harmful” to their societies. The majority accepts some elements of Western

civilisation, rejecting others and defending some of their native values and traditions.³ For a long time merely the most conservative groupings resisted Westernization. Now, when the process of modernisation already advanced, numerous countries mastered Western technology and adopted essential Western political institutions, when TV brought Western movies and advertisement even to distant villages—the situation changes. In the non-Western world new tendencies appeared: the revival of native traditions and “cultural identities”. With an increasing insistence the opinions are presented that Western civilisation should be adopted in a selective way even in the political and social spheres, that many native traditions deserve protection, and that the West could also learn something from the non-Western countries. Such opinions acquired popularity in East Asia and even some governments support them.⁴ By strange coincidence similar appeals to “return to the roots” and to the “traditional values” appear in the Western countries as well, together with increasing criticism of their present state (the pope, John Paul II, is the most prominent example). Thus, as it seems, we enter into a new era of a much more unified but differentiated world.

Notwithstanding such complications, an adoption of Western civilisation by non-Western elites (even partial or merely apparent) strengthened at the West an illusion that its values, norms and standards are truly universal. Therefore in the past all concepts that contradicted such principles provoked anger and irritation. The most significant is a common quite hostile attitude towards Moslems’ claims that Islamic values, institutions and style of life deserve cultivation and may be even superior to the Western ones, at least for the Moslems. A real fury provoked the concept of “Asian values” promoted by Malaysia and Singapore. It is irrelevant here to which degree such concepts are substantiated, or which political intentions are hidden behind these concepts, the most essential is their rejection at the West, immediate and without deeper consideration.

Even knowledge of other cultures and civilisations that has been accumulated for years in the West and contradicts its universalistic pretences—did not

³ Various approaches to the West in China are presented in: Luo Rongqu, red. *Cong “Xihua” dao xiandaihua, Wusi yilai youguan Zhongguode wenhua quoxiang he fazhan daolu lunzheng wenxuan* [From “Westernization” to Modernisation; Selected Papers of the Disputes concerning the Direction and Development of Chinese Culture since the May 4th Movement], Beijing, Beijing Daxue Chubanshe, 1990. This collection present papers and statements published there between 1919 and 1948. For the earlier period see: Ssu-yü Teng, John K. Fairbank, op. cit.

⁴ See, for instance, David I. Hitchcock, *Factors Affecting East Asian Views of the United States; The Search for Common Ground*, The Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington D.C., CSIS Report, March 1997, p. 45 (he quotes there opinions expressed to him by intellectuals from Japan, Thailand, and Indonesia. See also a brochure published in Peking: *Civilizations: Clash or Fusion?* Beijing, New Star Publishers 1996 (the authors not indicated). In fact, it is based on two articles: Wang Jisi, Zou Sicheng, “Civilizations: Clash or Fusion?”, and She Duanzhu, “East and West Mutually Complementary”, *Beijing Review*, vol. 39, no. 3 (Jan. 15–21, 1996). For the similar Taiwan authorities’ opinion see: Chen Chien-jen, “Modern Values Rooted in the Past”, *The Free China Journal*, July 31, 1998, p. 7 (the author was the Head of the Government Information Office of a ministerial rank).

shake these predominating opinions.⁵ The complex realities of almost two hundreds states that exist in the world usually are perceived in the West by the “Western glasses”. Perhaps, the first significant break in this wall of the Western arrogance constitutes the famous book by Samuel P. Huntington: *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996). In the past the future world was usually presented as a “giant New York”, with persons of various races working in the same institutions and structures, with the same—Western—habits and mentality. Huntington for the first time presented to the reading public a new concept: that there are numerous civilisations, with their distinctive religions, structures of values, and forms of human existence, and that they may be modernised, but will not cease their existence. Hence they will exist side by side with the Western one for a long period. And he indicated that the West, in particular the United States, must not impose their own values on other, non-Western civilisations, since such actions will inevitably provoke their hostile reactions. However, this aspect of his book passed almost unnoticed, whereas attention was concentrated on “struggle” between them and on “dangers” and “challenges” posed by them to the Western world.

Dialogue among civilisation and cultures is of particular significance to the West and to the world dominated by the West. It could help the West to understand better its non-Western partners as well as the historical and cultural limitations of its own norms and ideals. Such dialogue, based on mutual respect and understanding, is also necessary for peaceful and fruitful co-existence and cooperation among nations. One of the most difficult task for the Westerners constitutes understanding of their own civilisation, perceiving it as one among numerous other, with its advantages and shortcomings, to realise fully that it is not universal by any way.

In order to illustrate the particular characteristics and traditions of the West, and complex interrelations among its values and norms, the problem of conflict and struggle could be presented. It is crucial to Western civilisation, and essential for understanding of its profound differences with other civilisations. Here East Asian civilisation is analysed, since it offers an entirely opposite approach.

⁵ Among innumerable books on the East Asian ways of “being a human” one could mention: Derk Bodde, *Essays on Chinese Civilization*, Princeton University Press, 1981; the series of collected studies published by State University of New York Press, Albany, ed. By Roger T. Ames, Thomas P. Kasulis and Wimal Dissanayake: *Self as Person in Asian Theory and Practice* (1994) – with, perhaps, the most enlightening study on the nature of Chinese personality by Ames (pp. 187–212); *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice* (1993); *Self as Image in Asian Theory and Practice* (1998). Deserve also attention: Tu Wei-ming, “Selfhood and Otherness in Confucian Thought”, in: Anthony J. Marsella et al., eds., *Culture and Self: Asian and Western Perspectives*, New York, Tavistock Publications 1985 (pp. 231–51); Richard W. Wilson, *Learning to Be Chinese, The Political Socialization of Children in Taiwan*, Cambridge, Mass., The M. I. T. Press 1973; and the collection of studies. Nancy R. Rosenberg, ed., *Japanese Sense of Self*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992; C. Fred Alford, *Think No Evil: Korean Values in the Age of Globalization*, Ithaca—London, Cornell University Press, 1999.

Knowledge of the Eastern approach could also be useful to Western scholars to realise that the numerous problems faced by them in their societies result merely from distinctive features of Western civilisation, and that even their scientific theories and interpretations are often shaped by Western paradigms.

2. GLORIFICATION OF STRUGGLE IN THE WEST AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

As Georges Dumézil indicates, at the dawn of history a particular social and religious structure evolved among the Indo-European peoples. The priests were a highest social class, the lower but highly respected class constituted warriors who fought and ruled, whereas at the bottom were the common people who had to work and provide all necessary goods and services to the two upper classes. The hierarchy of gods corresponded to this tripartite division: the highest gods maintained order through their sacred power and established laws, the gods of lower ranks were warriors, and the lowest ones were responsible for fecundity, good harvests and material well-being. Such a social and religious hierarchy characterised, according to him, exclusively Indo-European peoples and originated in the remote period preceding their migrations from the common motherland⁶. This concept raised various objections concerning some details, but reflects essential characteristics of the Indo-European traditions. This division shaped mentality of these peoples, as well as their mythology, political institutions and structures. Hence struggle was considered by them a truly noble task, sometimes almost sacral. Such concepts have been reflected even in philosophical and religious thought. Therefore, struggle was presented as the essential principle of the universe, and of the social, as well as political order.

Heraclitus (6–5th century BC) expressed these ideas as follows:

War (*Polemos*) is the father of all things and governs all things; it reveals ones as gods and others as humans, determines that ones are slaves and others free men (fragment 53).

War must be common to all things; the supreme justice (*dike*) and strife (*eris*) and the all things arise and pass away through strife and according to destiny (fragment 80).

Aristotle (384–322 BC) summarises this concept in such a way:

Heraclitus states that “the oppositions—merge and from the divergences emerges the most beautiful harmony; all things come into being through strife.”⁷

⁶ See: Georges Dumézil, *Aspect de la fonction guerrière chez les Indo-Européens*, Paris, PUF, 1956; *Les Dieux souverains des Indo—Européens*, Paris, PUF, 1977.

⁷ These quotations have been translated here according to their interpretation by Romano Gasparotti. See: Massimo Cacciari, Massimo Dona, Romano Gasparotti, “Se è pensabile la pace”,

As Romano Gasparotti points out, Heraclitus' concepts are even more elaborate. War must not and cannot be stopped, since exclusively in war *philia*, i.e. "friendship" is born, that constitutes the source of harmony and cohesion of the *polis* (city-state). The most beautiful harmony consists in an eternal conflict of the opposition. And war itself grants real peace that is based on balanced oppositions, each part of which could flourish without reaching predominance. Moreover, Heraclitus presumes that there are two kinds of harmony: one visible and another—invisible that is much more beautiful and powerful, and the latter determines the former.⁸

Thus the eternal conflict constitutes the very essence of the universe and merely its forms change: the violent struggle produces peace based on a kind of coexistence of oppositions, although their struggle never ceases, as war between humans and gods. One could notice that an idea of a particular "partnership" of foes constitutes an age-old tradition of the Indo-European peoples already present in their ancient myths. Rüdiger Safranski concludes that the *universum* for the ancient Greeks constituted the *pluriversum*, since the universe was essentially divided and of pluralistic nature. He also points out that contradictions and conflicts, resulting of this pluralism, constitute the basis of politics for many contemporary Western thinkers, as Carl Schmitt or Helmuth Plessner. Where there are no contradictions—no politics.⁹ This explains why since the ancient times Western thinkers treated with such a contempt the political systems in which such struggle was absent. They simply could not understand the systems based on the principle of unity, which appeared to them "contrary to the human nature and to the nature of the universe". For them such regimes must be highly oppressive, since merely force could halt the opposition to manifest itself. Primordial pluralism and strife, which result of it, were simply "natural" and "obvious".

In the Indo-European cultures of warriors-conquerors one could distinguish two particular traits. First of them concerns "struggle in the world". It has a sacral nature, identified with sacrifice and praying, through which one reach communion with transcendence. It is "great" by itself and grants "eternal glory" even without victory. This tradition significantly differs from that of the Near East. In the ancient Egypt, Babylon or Palestine gods could support one side against another, grant victories to their own people, or even warriors could act as their embodiment, but it was victory that counted, not struggle as such. In the Indo-European cultures, on the other hand, an action, a deed, acquired a particu-

in: Carlo Jean (ed.), *La guerra nel pensiero politico*, Franco Angeli Libri, Milano 1987, p. 156. The last quotation derives from *Nicomachean Ethics*, ch. 8. Slightly different translations of Heraclitus' statements are given in: M.C. Nahm (ed.), *Selections from Early Greek Philosophy*, New York 1945, pp. 91–2.

⁸ Gasparotti, op. cit., pp. 155, 158–9.

⁹ See: Rüdiger Safranski, *Das böse Order das Drama der Freiheit*, München—Wien, Carl Hanser Verlag, 1997, ch. 7–8.

lar significance, whereas its results were less important for the noble class. Hence their gods grant a battle in which a warrior could manifest his virtues and reach transcendence. Who will win—it is another problem and the gods could give victory to one or another noble part. The dead reaches the Heaven, and the victor “happiness of the Earth”, so a victory or defeat should be treated equally.¹⁰

It seems that the concept that the gods grant victory to the party that is “right” and punish the “wrongdoer” is of a later origin (it is, in fact, absent yet in the *Bhagawatgita* and in the *Iliad*). It seems to be related to the second, much more general concept: the struggle of the gods introducing Order and defeating Chaos. In a later version of crucial importance it was the struggle of the forces of Darkness and Evil against the forces of Light and Goodness. Its elaboration is attributed to Zoroaster (ca 628–551 BC), although some simpler ideas could be even earlier. It was further elaborated by Christians, in the form of the opposition of God and Devil. It is interesting to notice, that in the dualistic religious concepts, that evolved in the Mediterranean, the humans-believers play an important role in this cosmic struggle, and even a figure of a “Savior” appears that eventually defeats the Evil. In this way struggle and conflict were raised to the level of the almost eternal principle of the universe.

Of course, in European thought one can find different concepts as well, that put an emphasis on a harmonious order in the universe. They usually refer to its Creator. Among philosophers who promoted such concepts there were Pythagoras (ca. 580–500 BC), Epictetus (ca. 50–130 AD) and St. Thomas Aquines (1224–1274), who contributed so much to the late mediaeval thought. They usually adopted, however, the path indicated by Plato (428–347 BC): the separation of a harmonious ideal/divine order from the real one, always imperfect, of this world. Such concepts acquired popularity in Christian thought at least from St. Augustine (354–430). In the West rarely appeared thinkers, like Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), who considered possible a social unity without hatred and strife.

However, the tendency expressed so clearly by Heraclitus undoubtedly predominated, and similar ideas, with various modifications, can be found in innumerable philosophical, political and literary works until the 20th century. For instance, ancient Lucretius (ca. 96–55 BC) and St. Augustine (354–430) already presented the social and natural world as based on strife. Among later followers of such concepts one can enumerate Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), Georg W. F. Hegel (1770–1831) and numerous other Western thinkers of more recent times. A particular popularity acquired Hobbes’ concept that the “natural state” of the human beings is “struggle of everybody against everybody”, which could only be artificially restricted by a political power.

¹⁰ It had been expressed in the most eloquent way in the Indian *Bhagawadgita* (2. 37).

Christian thought added to such social and political ideas a supernatural dimension. Behind the mundane events and conflicts one could detect the struggle of the forces of Evil against goodness of God. Thus our earthly conflicts have often be presented as “holy wars” and political leaders presented themselves as acting with a divine mission. This allowed the use of the most brutal means, even an extermination of the enemy’s civilian population (already recommended by the *Bible*). War and struggle become a “mission”, that could be carried out even without direct references to the “God’s will”. In the modern period instead of the “spreading out Christianity and an annihilation of pagans (as Devil’s sons)”, one can see struggle in the name of “civilisation”, “progress”, Communism, or ‘freedom and democracy’. Sometimes national interests were promoted with a similar, almost mystic, zeal, and such ideologies usually assumed that one nation has a particular, noble or divine, mission to introduce a just order to the world. The Westerners usually aimed, as Heraclitus indicated, at achieving a “harmonious moral order” (which could be based on struggle by itself, as a multi-party democracy) through struggle by eliminating or subduing the enemy, who according the Christian tradition was depicted as “evil”. The author does not evaluate such concepts or political declarations, the most recent ones or these of the distant past, but simply tries to explain how they evolved in the West, since it is usually very difficult to non-Western intellectuals and politicians to comprehend them.

Glorification of war and struggle sometimes reached even extreme forms. For instance, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) in his apotheosis of war appealed:

Ye shall be those whose eyes ever seek for an enemy—for your enemy. And with some of you there is hatred at first sight. Ye shall love peace as a means to new wars—and the short peace more than the long. You I advise not to work, but to fight. You I advise not to peace, but to victory. Let your work be a fight, let your peace be a victory.¹¹

It seems that the idea of development or of achieving a “perfect order” through conflict and struggle constitutes an age-old paradigm of the Western thought, and in the modern period it shaped even sciences. So, Charles R. Darwin (1809–1882) promoted the idea of the “struggle of individuals and species” as a general mechanism of evolution, whereas Karl Marx (1818–1883) developed a concept of the “class struggle” as the mechanism of social progress in history, with an ideal Communist state of mankind at the end. There also appeared the theories of struggle of races, of struggle for survival, etc. Historians widely assumed that wars were essential to the development of the states and to

¹¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, in: *The Philosophy of Nietzsche*, New York 1924, part 10, p. 47.

the fate of civilisations. Struggle was even considered a very nature of civilisation as such.¹² Many thinkers, as John Ruskin (1819–1900), maintained that the development of arts and noble virtues “is based on battle”, stimulated by the drive to domination and power, thus only the “nations of warriors” are creative and noble, whereas peace inevitably brings degeneration and decadence. Some contemporary scholars, as Irving L. Horowitz, even conclude that:

It sometimes appear that struggle within society is the deciding factor in social growth itself. To maintain that the progress achieved through raw conflict could have been gained otherwise in the long run, does not solve the issue of peace and growth so much as avoid it. For what we are confronted with is the historical fact that the progress of society in the past often proceeded through a test of armed might, rather than by an avoidance of it.¹³

Thus he worried how in the intended peaceful world growth and development could be ensured, suggesting that even without inter-state wars there will be conflicts, which will grant development. The idea of a ‘beneficial conflict’ through which societies develop and civilisation progress seems to be essential to the contemporary Western political thought and it was further elaborated in the theory of conflict (see, for instance, Ralf Dahrendorf’s works).

According to this intellectual tradition the free market and competition are considered essential to economic and technological progress. In science truth is also supposed to win through competition and struggle of ideas (and now labs as well). In fact, modern concepts of democracy are also based on struggle and competition: of candidates during the elections, of the parties—the ruling and the opposition, of the press free to attack the government, of the free trade unions struggling against the owners of the enterprises, etc. Therefore the “democratic order” (in the West often treated with almost religious reverence), is based on struggle from which social harmony emerges. There were other concepts as well: of “struggle against the nature”, of “struggle of generations”, of “struggle for human rights”, of “struggle of women for equal rights”, of “struggle against malaria or AIDS”, and even the “struggle for peace” promoted with a great zeal by the Communists and by their allies in the West. The word “conquest” is also very popular. The Westerners tend to perceive almost all their actions as aiming at conquering (or subduing) something: Mt. Everest, depths of oceans, cosmos, the Moon, Nature in general. They could not even imagine that such “Western conquests” do not impress many people in Asia and Africa, and

¹² See, for instance, Arnold Toynbee, *War and Civilization*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1950.

¹³ Irving L. Horowitz, *War and Peace in Contemporary Social and Political Theory*, New York, Souvenir Press 1956, p. 17.

simply do not interest them much. Without the context of “noble struggle”—they lose their significance.

A contemporary Italian philosopher writes:

War is a central phenomenon of the human existence. Ever since it outbreaks measures the rhythm of history. Being a midwife and a cradle of the civilisation, it determines development, paths and potential of the civilisation (...) Almost all gods are warriors. Even Jahve of the Bible, is the “God of the hosts”. As *Ramayana* states “the earth smiles with the semi-open mouth of the future warriors” (...) And the *Koran* convinces warriors of the Islam “you are not killing but the God”. Our civilisation is dominated by the sentence of Heraclitus; “War is the mother of all things” and constitutes the supreme justice.¹⁴

He supposed that by quoting *Ramayana* and *Koran* he refers to the “heritage of the mankind”, although in fact he restricted his sources merely to the Indo-European and Mediterranean heritage, to the works that share a similar approach to war. It would be much more difficult to him prove such a concept with quotations of Buddhist or Confucian scriptures. And he could not imagine, that he speaks in fact about the cultures from which the Western civilisation evolved, not on a universal human condition.

Such concepts shaped the Western vision of the world and even of an individual. According to this concept an internal spiritual struggle constitutes the very essence of the individual. Such ideas were already common in ancient Greece and Plato considered “victory over oneself” the most beautiful and essential for all other successes. The Christian thinkers promoted the idea of the struggle between our body and its sensual desires and the noble spirit, or between Devil’s temptations and love for God, as a way for perfecting oneself and reaching unity with Christ.¹⁵ So, an individual appeared to be a kind of “battlefield” of contradictory forces, that determined particular “depth” and “tragic split”. St. Augustine became a great master of such descriptions. Hence the concept of the “free will” acquired a particular importance, since it determined decisions made by a human being and his moral choices. Innumerable writers have described such struggle as the very essence of human existence. Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466?–1536) devoted to its description his didactic work *The Soldier of Christ*, while Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749–1832) his *Dr. Faustus*. Robert L. Stevenson (1850–1894) in a popular novel *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* illustrated the dualism of human nature by the two personalities of one person, whereas Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) in line with these concepts promoted an

¹⁴ Emanuele Severino, *La guerra*, Milano, Rizzoli 1992, p. 9.

¹⁵ See, for instance, the classical Christian work: *Il combattimento spirituale* [The Spiritual Struggle], by Lorenzo Scupoli (1530–1610). First edition 1589.

idea of consciousness and subconsciousness in an eternal conflict, and considered Eros and Thanos, love and destructive instincts, as both determining human nature.

These spiritual conflicts determined a particular "anxiety", lack of "tranquility" that led to frequent migrations, travels, that are in fact an "escape" not only from the restricting conditions, but even "from oneself". On the other hand anxiety and frustration result in an aggressive behaviour towards others and sometimes towards oneself, it also produces attempts to dominate others in order to confirm one's own value. One could summarise this approach, travesty-ing the famous Cartesian statement: "I'm struggling, so I am". Thus in the West life was portrayed as an eternal "travel" and eternal struggle. "Self" was imagined as "unchanging", but one tried to transform (i.e. subdue) the world or change his environment. Development of an individualistic self and autonomy of an individual were closely related to these phenomena. In the West self was treated as "absolute" and so important that it could be opposed to the world.

Therefore the concept of the struggle of Satan against God, forces of Evil and Darkness against Good and Light, not only symbolised and justified the universal and almost eternal struggle. It also characterised the spiritual life of an individual and determined the way in which an individual perceives oneself. The idea of religious or moral mission of combating the forces of Evil had its metaphysical, terrestrial and social dimensions, but also determined life and behaviour of an individual. All of them were rooted in an antagonistic vision of the universe, and such tendencies are of a pre-Christian origin.

In the West innumerable concepts and theories appeared, in which human aggressiveness was over-emphasised and presented as "natural" biological heritage, in particular for men.¹⁶ Since the times of the ancient Greece and Rome man was depicted as a "warrior" or a "fighter", since their political systems were based on the free citizens-soldiers. These concepts have been promoted again by Nicolo Machiavelli (1469–1527) and have been adopted by the modern states in the form of the universal and obligatory military service of their masculine citizens. Thus the contemporary feminist movement raised the demand of the right of women to serve in the army as necessary for their "full citizenship" and the real equality with men.

Maria Ossowska indicates the following characteristics of the heroes of *Iliad* inherited by the latter European nobility: a noble origins, high-mindedness and an acute sense of one's own dignity, physical strength with a muscular complexion essential to "masculine beauty", elegance of manners and speech. Courage was considered the principal characteristics, and blaming somebody as "coward" constituted the greatest offence, since the social position and prestige had to be won on the battlefield. Even in peace a noble man should always be

¹⁶ See, for instance, an outline of these concepts and discussions in: Erich Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, New York 1973.

ready to confront with force everybody who harmed his dignity. The institution of duel originated from such an approach. Generosity was also one of principal virtues of a noble warrior, and it was combined with contempt for labour, in particular physical, and for trade. Thus the noblemen hold in contempt the common people. Bourgeoisie has absorbed many of these characteristics and even in the countries that have not the knight tradition, such as modern America¹⁷.

Already in ancient times such warriors enjoyed admiration of women and were ready to fight for them. But in the Middle Ages, in the knight culture that developed these ancient traits, an embryo of “macho” ideal evolved: of a strong man ready to combat everybody, but highly sensitive to woman’s charm, ready to defend every woman in trouble and to “conquer” almost every beauty he met. On the other hand, such a “macho”, by definition a “hero”, deserved to be admired by women.

Thus, for more than three millennia in the West struggle constituted a universal paradigm, that shaped relations of the states, of political groupings and of individuals. Conquests and booty-taking, enslavement and subduing others were admired and glorified. This facilitated and justified conquests, brutal oppression, enslavement or even genocide. On the other hand, it resulted in a particular appreciation of freedom for the groups and for individuals. And such freedoms had to be defended at all costs. It appears that the most fundamental ideas of political power and of the society had been shaped in the West at the primitive stage of “military democracy”: of a party of noble warriors who elect their leader among themselves and rule together the subordinate people, subdued by force. It was possible, because the Western warriors considered themselves essentially equal. Hence they elaborated a particular concept of political power: as given to an elected ruler, *primus inter pares*, who was responsible for his decisions and obliged to listen to the opinions of his noble colleagues. An autonomous, egocentric, bellicose individual was praised by them and the most essential for them were freedoms to fight each other (as individuals or parties), to elect and to criticise their leaders, to attack and dominate other groupings or political entities, and to move/migrate. Christianity added to the concept of equality a new touch: every human being who received his spirit from God possesses a particular human dignity.

It appears that until the very end of the 20th century the main efforts of the Western thinkers and politicians concentrated on “civilising” struggle and restricting the use of force on both international and national levels. Thus various concepts, customary norms and institutions emerged: “chivalrous struggle”, legal order, human rights, multi-party democracy, division of powers (with the “check and balance” principle, trade unions fighting for employees’ rights, etc.),

¹⁷ Maria Ossowska, *Ethos rycerski i jego odmiany* [Chivalric Ethos and its types], Warszawa, PWN 1973.

the international order based on the UN system, etc. After the World War II a new phenomenon appeared: wars, conquests, enslavement and genocide—were condemned, whereas the concept of human rights gained recognition. In fact, it was a turning point in entire history of the West, but these new concepts, new visions of the world-order and of society are in an embryo form, and also require a new vision of an individual. However, the traditional appreciation of struggle and of heroic deeds are not forgotten yet. One can notice that Europe, which suffered so much from wars, is much more advanced in the revision of the Western traditions in this respect than the US.

3. APPRECIATION OF HARMONY IN EAST ASIA

In East Asia civilisation evolved in an opposite direction: towards appreciation of harmony and peace, and towards social, not individualistic, model of an individual. It is true that at the dawn of Chinese history the ancient states were ruled by a nobility of warriors, but eventually civil virtues prevailed and armed struggle was condemned. The political power was acquired by civil bureaucrats and arts of government concentrated on administration. Since the 1st millennium BC, in particular since the 5th century, harmony, equilibrium and peace were considered central values and the essential principles of the cosmic, political and social order. Even one’s own self was portrayed as “harmonious”, whereas the concepts of “spiritual struggle” and of “choice” were unknown. Self-perfection and adjustment to the outside world determined behaviour of groups and of individuals, not the struggle for freedom to act as one likes. The society and its members were duty not rights-oriented. Instead the dualism of Evil/Good there was used a bipolar scheme of Yin and of Yang, which complement each other and born one another. This was combined with a relativistic not an “essentialist” approach, which characterise Western thinkers.

War and military conquests were condemned, and military victories considered “dangerous” even to the victorious party. Warriors were considered lower than civil bureaucrats, and subordinate to them. Soldiers could even be considered a particular, intermediary stratum: below the peasants – free citizens, but above the slaves. This approach illustrates well the proverb: “good iron isn’t used for nails, a good man does not become a soldier (*hao tie bu dang ding, hao nan bu dang bing*)”.¹⁸ Although in earlier times a combination of civil and military virtues was sometimes appreciated, at least since the 10th century AD the “brush” predominated in the official culture, whereas the “sword” fascinated

¹⁸ Tong Yubin, Tong Zhou, *Junshi chengyu cidian* [A Lexicon of Military Proverbs], Beijing, Changcheng Chubanshe, 1997, p. 122. The older version speaks about man (*nan*), whereas the recent version about a “human being”, but most probably a man (*ren*).

merely the simple folk, in particular in the cities.¹⁹ As Lei Haizong indicates, in China a “non-military culture” evolved to which the concept of “citizen” was also alien.²⁰

The Confucian culture that eventually prevailed promoted respect for elders and for superiors, and obedience to them, appreciation of harmony and co-operation, and condemned violence, struggle, competition, and the use of force. The essential principles of social and political systems were based on such value system. Paternalist authority and “fiduciary communities” (following Tu Weiming’s expression) characterise the Confucian tradition.²¹ Such social systems were based on the concept of duty, not on freedoms and rights. Individual actions were restricted not by the state, but mainly by clan or local communities to which one belonged. Individualism was condemned there as egoistic and selfish, whereas collective identities and social bonds were strengthened and promoted. Consensus was required as essential to a group and to the proper social order, whereas open discussions or open protests were blamed. Struggle or open criticism were also avoided among the separate groups or political entities.

From the very beginning the tradition of village communes was of a crucial importance, and since the middle of the 1st millennium BC it was complemented by two other social structures: courts of the rulers and aristocratic clans that adopted similar communal principles. These structures shaped the Chinese civilisation, whereas the aristocratic warriors’ culture, with its chivalric norms of fighting, in its embryo form disappeared in the last centuries BC. In the second half of the 1st millennium AD the clans became the universal form of organisation, although communal institutions were preserved to some extent. However, the fundamental ideas of East Asian civilisation and statehood had been shaped at the stage of “village communes” with their charismatic leaders. In the West the political leadership and administration were separated from the religious functions (at least in an embryo form) since 2nd–1st millennium B.C. In East Asia, on the other hand, functions of the leader and of the priest were usually combined in one person who was responsible for the maintenance of harmonious moral and social order, as well as for harmonious relations with tutelary spirits and forces of nature. *Sacrum* and *profanum* were combined there

¹⁹ See for more details author’s study: “The Concept of Two Fundamental social Principles: *Wen* and *Wu* in Chinese Classical Thought”, *Annali* (Istituto Universitario Orientale, Napoli, Italy), vol. 47, fasc. 4, pp. 397–433; vol. 48, fasc. 1, pp. 35–62.

²⁰ See: Lei Haizong, *Zhongguo wenhua yu Zhongguode bing* [Chinese Culture and Chinese Soldiers], Changsha, Yuelu Shushe 1989, 1st edition 1939. The author is also known under another name: Bolun. He uses an ambiguous term: *wu bing wenhua* that could be understood in a more abstract sense, as above, or as a “culture without soldiers”.

²¹ See, for instance, his paper: “A Confucian Perspective on the Rise of Industrial East Asia”, in: Silke Krieger, Rolf Trautzettel, eds, *Confucianism and the Modernization of China*, Mainz, Hase & Koehler Verlag, 1991, pp. 36–7. This term means communities of “mutual confidence”, in which leaders believe that their subordinates will serve the community up to the utmost, whereas the subordinates believe that their leader serves the community in the best way he could.

into one undivided whole. Each social entity and even an individual had both characteristics. An individual was bound to the group, and the community was bound to its locality. So, moving was restricted to particular cases (and practised merely by some “travelling peoples” like Proto-Malays and Proto-Viets).

The main stream in the evolution of the Chinese civilisation constituted “socialisation of the individual” and formation of the socio-political structures rooted in the communal traditions, not the “individuation” (indicated by Erich Fromm)²². The authority of the commune’s elders and elders of the clans was based on unconditional respect and obedience to them. Their leadership was based on their moral authority, on teaching *mores* and on their religious functions. They also embodied group values and protected them, and took care for group survival and welfare. They, and later the kings and the emperors, served as “mothers and fathers of the people”, combining religious, moral and political authority, and ruling in a paternalistic way. Therefore the state that evolved was simultaneously a supreme political framework of the hierarchy of communal structures (more or less autonomous), a Church, an institution for education, and the organiser of the economic life. It was guided by the Son of Heaven (*tianzi*) who almost to the last days of the Empire, to the very beginning of the 20th century, was responsible for announcing the agriculture calendar and initiation of field works. His mysterious power granted good harvest, protected against natural disasters and evil forces maintaining the “order of the universe”, simultaneously it generated human nature and an “intelligent-moral soul” (*hun*) in all his subjects.

Their “spiritual potential” (obtained through self-perfection) and dedication to the moral perfection of the society—in theory—granted them an adequate position in the social and political life, and in the “cosmic hierarchy of beings”. Thus the most eminent among them could become true “giants” receiving even the status of “Heavenly sages” (*sheng ren*), like Confucius, or gods (of various ranks), like Guan Yu, or buddhas. The emperors themselves were supposed to be “living buddhas”, bodhisattvas, or semi-divine beings since they could give orders or nominations to spirits and gods. The possibility of reaching such a giant, super-natural dimension by humans deserves a particular attention since in the common opinion the “collectivist” East Asian civilisation, that originated in China, depreciates and diminishes the role of an individual. In reality it also offers to an individual greatness unimaginable in the West, since human condition was considered “graded” and the most perfect humans could reach even various levels of divine status. In the West “human nature” is “given” at birth and is essentially equal for all humans, whereas in East Asia it should be acquired, elaborated in each individual and can be achieved in different extent, hence must be graded.

²² See: Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, New York, Avon Books 1969, chapter 2.

In traditional China the concept that self is constantly changing predominated, and one was supposed to perfect oneself and adapt to the circumstances. Whereas it was the world that was perceived as more or less “constant”, changing only in the great cosmic cycles. Travelling appeared a “dangerous” and unhappy experience undertaken merely by the force of necessities. One was supposed to achieve a “spiritual tranquillity”, an “internal equilibrium” and “harmony with the world”. Thus the Chinese self could not be treated as a “partner” of God, opposed to the world, etc., as in the West. In China self was considered merely a centre of social relationships, a part of the “social net”, of family and clan, and a small temporary particle of the world. So, the Western-type egocentrism and bellicosity appeared absurd.

Herrlee G. Creel rightly indicates that the concentration and fervour that the Ancient Romans devoted to war, in Ancient China were channelled into administration of the country. Thus they offered almost “divine” honours and ranks to “sage governors” instead of “great commanders”, as it was practised in Rome. In the result in the world no other system evolved that “continued in operation over so large an area embracing such a large population for so many centuries”.²³ Even today China’s territory is almost equal to that of entire Europe and her population is more numerous than of all Western countries together. One should keep in mind that he analysed the archaic period of the Chinese history, when the aristocratic warrior culture reached its apex. So, his conclusions are of particular significance and later on, with the domination of the Confucian ideology in the Empire, this “administrative” orientation of the Chinese civilisation became even more evident.

The central values constituted there Harmony (*he*), Equilibrium (*zhong*), Concord (*he*—but written with another character) and Peace (*an*). Hence the universe was portrayed as a gigantic “harmonious organism”. Joseph Needham who introduced this concept to sinology writes:

The Chinese world-view depended upon a totally different [from the Western] line of thought. The harmonious co-operation of all beings arose, not from the orders of a superior authority external to themselves, but from the fact that they were all parts in a hierarchy of wholes forming a cosmic pattern, and what they obeyed were the internal dictates of their own nature.²⁴

He, as many other Western sinologists, points out that the idea of the universe created by God who exists beyond the world and serves as the supreme external authority constitutes the crucial difference with China. The absence of the idea

²³ See: Herrlee G. Creel, *The Origins of Statecraft in China*, vol. I, *The Western Chou Empire*, The University of Chicago Press 1970, pp. 251, 27.

²⁴ Joseph Needham, “Human Laws and Laws of Nature in China and in the West”, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. XII (1951), p. 230.

of Gods had tremendous consequences. So, Frederick W. Mote calls it a “cosmological gulf” that separates the Western from the Chinese vision of the world.²⁵ First of all, for the Chinese there was only one universe and nothing beyond it was imaginable, and all beings, spirits and gods included, were considered the parts of “our universe”. Therefore the Western concept of “ontological pluralism” (of the temporary world, transcendent God and “intermediate” Devil) was unknown there. As Derk Bodde indicates:

The universe, according to prevailing Chinese philosophical thinking, is a harmoniously functioning organism consisting of an orderly hierarchy of interrelated parts and forces, which, though unequal in their status, are all equally essential for the total process. Change is a marked feature of this process, yet in it there is nothing haphazard or casual, for it follows a fixed pattern of polar oscillation or cyclical return.²⁶

The *Tao* constitutes a “universal course” or supreme, impersonal hidden order of changes of such universe. Thus nobody could venerate it, prayer to it, or ask for a favour as we ask our Western God. Moreover, our God created all things and beings, thus the universe is first of all composed of “material things”. Only humans that receive the soul from God are material-and-spiritual beings.

For the Chinese all things and beings are made of various kinds of *qi*, less and more subtle, and are material-and-energetic/spirited objects. Thus the universe is understood first of all as forces and *process*, with things and beings in an eternal changes of becoming, maturing and decaying, according to the principles of transformation and transmutation. Everything is relative and interrelated to other things through a mechanism of “mutual action and response”. There is no absolute good or evil: something is beneficial to one and harmful to another, something is right in one situation and wrong in another. Thus in the West the holly *Bible* describes the Creation and the deeds of “holy men” or “prophets” who guided the “chosen nation”, and who acted on God’s orders. On the Chinese part we have *The Book of Changes* that offers to mankind the keys to understand the rules of changes and the nature of the momentum about which one inquires.

Bodde further indicates that:

According to Chinese thinkers, the world of man is, or should be, a reflection of the nonhuman universe (...) Society, in Chinese eyes, consists of a large number of small social units (the family, the village, the guild, etc.),

²⁵ See: Frederick W. Mote, “The Cosmological Gulf Between China and the West”, in: David C. Buxbaum, Frederick W. Mote, eds, *Transition and Permanence: Chinese History and Culture*, Hong Kong, The Kathay Press 1972, pp. 3–17.

²⁶ Derk Bodde, *Essays on Chinese Civilization*, Princeton University Press 1981, pp. 285–6.

each of which consists in turn of individuals varying greatly in their intellectual and physical capabilities. Because of these inequalities, it is inevitable that class differences should exist. The social order, in other words, is a rationalization of existing human inequalities.

It does not follow, however, that there should be conflict between social classes. On the contrary, the welfare of the social organism as a whole depends upon harmonious co-operation among all of its units and of individuals who comprise these units. This means that every individual, however high or low, has the obligation to perform to the best of his ability those particular functions in which he is expert and which are expected of him by the society.²⁷

One could notice that all social units had an internal hierarchical structure and were placed according to a hierarchic order. As Chie Nakane points out, even in a contemporary Japanese society the relations based on equality are almost unknown: everybody is “lower” or “higher” from somebody else.²⁸ Moreover all communities indicated by Bodde comprise persons belonging to various classes. And all groups and states compose one “human organism” which had its place in the universal “organic order”.

Therefore it was harmony that was treated as “mother of all things and beings”, life-giving and granting development. In the classic Confucian work *The Doctrine of the Mean* one can read:

While there are not strings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy, the mind may be said to be in a state of EQUILIBRIUM. When these feelings have been stirred and they act in their due degree, there ensues what may be called the state of HARMONY. This EQUILIBRIUM is the great root of the world, and this HARMONY is the universal path (*dao*). Let the state of Equilibrium and Harmony exist in perfection, and a happy order will prevail throughout Heaven and Earth, and all things and creatures will be nourished and flourish.²⁹

²⁷ Ibid., p. 264.

²⁸ She promoted the concept that the Western societies are “organized horizontally”, that is are based on the principles of equality, whereas the East Asian societies are „organized vertically”, in a hierarchical order. See: Chie Nakane, *Japanese Society*, Berkeley, University of California Press 1970, pp. 40–63.

²⁹ *Zhong yong* [The Doctrine of the Mean], in: *Si shu* [The Four Books], selected and commented by Zhu Xi (1130–1200), Jiulong, Taiping Shuju 1964, p. 2. This work was traditionally attributed to Zi Si (ca. 483–402 BC), a Confucius’ grandson and an outstanding philosopher himself. Now his authorship is questioned and numerous scholars presume that was written or edited around 200 BC. Here Legge’s translation is adopted with minor modifications. See: James Legge, transl., *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 1–2, *The Four Books*, Taipei, Wenshizhe Chubanshe 1972, p. 384 (the original edition by Clarendon Press appeared in Hong Kong in the years 1861-

In the famous *Book of Changes* in the explanation to the hexagram 1 *Qian*—“The Creative”, a condensation of the Yang, one can read:

Vast indeed is the [sublime] Creative, it generates all things and beings, and its [power] permeates even Heaven. It causes the clouds to come forth, the rain to bestow its bounty, and all objects and beings to flow reaching their [respective] forms. Its dazzling brilliance [leads them] from their end to the [new] beginning (...) The Way of the Creative consists in alternations and transformations, [granting] to each [object and being] its right nature and destiny. Then it preserves their conformity with the Great Harmony [of the universe].³⁰

In the explanation of the hexagram 11 *Tai*—“Peace” it is stated:

[With] the Little gone and the Great come, good fortune and success [are granted]. It is so when Heaven and Earth are in intercourse, and all beings are in communion with one another (i.e. in a state of harmonious relatedness). The upper and lower (i.e. ruling and the ruled) unite and have the same will. Inside (i.e. in the Middle State) the Yang prevails and Outside (i.e. on the barbarian periphery) Yin remains. [Thus] the Interior is strong and the Exterior follows it. Inside the noble men [rule] and Outside the people of the low moral standing [obey]. The way of the former waxes, and the way of the latter wanes. [But eventually] walls [that protect] will fall back into the moat and disorder and wars will inevitably follow.³¹

In the Chinese thought the Yin and the Yang, the Receptive and the Creative, identified respectively with Earth and Heaven, are not opposed one to another as God and Devil in the Christian thought, but complement each other. The process of change consists in eternal cyclical transmutations from Yin to Yang and again to Yin. All beings are generated through their union. Thus cooperation, communion, fertile intercourse—constitute the fundamental principle of the universe and of the society. Harmony, unity and conformity are the ideal and the most beneficial state, whereas conflicts, strife, disorders and wars are

1872). For a detailed analysis of the text and its dating see: Tu Wei-ming, *Centrality and Commonality, An Essay on Confucian Religiousness*, Albany, The State University of New York Press 1989.

³⁰ *Zhou yi zheng yi* [The Correct Meaning of the Book of Changes of the Zhou Epoch], in: *Shisanjing zhushu* [The Thirteen Classics with Commentaries and Explanations], Beijing, Zhonghua Shuju 1985, p. 14 (ch. 1). The two translations have been used here to some extent: Richard Wilhelm, *I Ching or the Book of Changes*, trans. From German into English by Cary F. Baynes, London, Routledge & Kegan 1983, pp. 4–5; John Blofeld, *I Ching, The Book of Change*, New York, E. P. Dutton 1968, p. 85. Here I follow its classical interpretation by Wang Bi (226–249).

³¹ *Zhou yi zheng yi*, *op. cit.*, pp. 28–9; cf. Wilhelm, pp. 48–9; Blofeld, p. 110.

disdained, and in the eyes of East Asians deserve merely contempt as breaking this unity and harmony. They are inevitable, since the peace and order could not be preserved for ever, but man should restore order as soon as it is possible, since peace and harmony constitute the “proper” order and are “fertile” and “creative”, not chaos and strife.

In *The Book of the Way and the Virtue* one finds such statements:

He who assists the ruler according to the Way does not [seek]
to dominate the world with arms.
The use of arms usually brings requital.
Wherever armies are stationed, briars and thorns grow.
Great wars are always followed by famines.
A master [in generalship] achieves [with arms] the purpose
and stops,
But dares not to dominate the world (...)
He achieves his purpose but does not boast about it.
He achieves his purpose but is not proud of it.
He achieves his purpose [using force] but only when it is
unavoidable.

Fine weapons are instruments of bad luck,
And all beings hate them.
Therefore those who follow the Way turns away from them (...)
Only when it cannot be avoided, [the ruler] makes recourse to them,
and regards calm restraint the best.
Even when he is victorious, he does not regard it as
praiseworthy,
For to praise victory is to delight in the slaughter of men.
He who delights in the slaughter of men will never get what he
looks for [out of those that dwell] in the world (...)
The army that has slain men is received with grief and
mourning;
[The commander] who won in battles is received with rites of
mourning.³²

Thus in Old China there were no monuments or arcs of triumph built up to celebrate military victories and no commander could hope for “eternal glory”, or a

³² *Laozi dao de jing* [The Book of the Way and the Virtue by Laozi], in: *Zhuzi jicheng* [The Collection of the Works of the Masters], Zhonghua Shuju, Beijing 1957, vol. 3, pp. 17–8 (paragraphs 30–31). This collection is abbreviated later on to ZZJC. Wing-tsit Chan’s translation was adopted here with some modifications. See: Wing-tsit Chan, *The Way of Lao Tzu (Tao-te ching)*, New York, Macmillan 1963, pp. 152–4.

triumphal reception in the capital with his victorious army, which the Romans would offer him.

According to the concepts that predominated at least from 4th century BC, the recourse to the arms was considered a political failure, since the dangers should be prevented or eliminated in their embryo forms by political and diplomatic means. Thus a military campaign demonstrated that the ruler and his advisors were not enlightened enough or not versed in the subtle art of politics. Moreover, as the Confucians maintained, the Son of Heaven should possess the True Virtue and administer his empire so well, that everybody would subdue to him and recognise his superiority. Thus voluntary obedience confirmed his Virtue and legitimised his power, whereas the necessity to subdue somebody by force could put under question the legitimacy of his power. Therefore a defeat could result easily in widespread rebellions.

It was a duty of the Son of Heaven to punish the “rebels” and restore order within the empire and on its frontiers. But according to this logic a “military punitive campaign” was considered the most severe punishment, and the commander who executed such “rebels” and restored order could not count on the “fame of hero”. His action was not a duel with a noble foe, like these of Homeric heroes, or medieval European knights, but was rather similar to police suppression of riots and disorders. War offered no “divine glory” and did not involve deep feelings related to “a communion with transcendence”. Conquests were condemned as “wrong” and “dangerous”. At least since the times of Wu Qi (d. 381 BC), one of the greatest Chinese military theoreticians, it was known that numerous victories weaken the winning state. As he indicated “those who [successfully] conquered the world through numerous victories are extremely rare, whereas those who thereby perished are many”³³. It was also known that it is relatively easy to conquer a new land, but it is difficult to maintain it.

Therefore the Chinese rulers and commanders never dreamed of conquests similar to these of Alexander the Great, Julius Cesar, or Napoleon. Moreover, for millennia they should resist figures like Chingis-Khan, his predecessors and his successors, with their cavalry armies. Rejection of the policy of military conquests, as immoral and impractical, is one of the reasons why China survived until now, whereas all other ancient empires disappeared.

Moreover, the Confucians elaborated a particular concept of “civilisation” that contributed much to the common disdain for violence. Its essence constitutes *wen*—that originally meant, “design”, “ornate”, but later on literature, culture, and moral education. Its antonym or counterpart is *wu*—bellicose, martial,

³³ *Wuzi zhijie* [The Book of Master Wu with Straight Explanations], in: *Wujing qishu zhijie* [The Martial Canon in the Seven Books with Straight Explanations], by Liu Yin (completed in 1398), reprint in *Zhongguo bingshu jicheng* [The Collection of the Chinese Military Books], Beijing-Shenyang, Jiefangjun Chubanshe 1990, p. 384 (ch. 1). This collection is abbreviated later on to ZGBS. Sawyer’s translation was adopted here with minor modifications. See: Ralph D. Sawyer, *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China*, Boulder, Westview Press 1993, p. 208.

and violent (with the original meaning “protecting with arms”). Hence “civilisation” by its very nature was considered “peaceful”, whereas the “barbarians”—bellicose and violent.³⁴ The process of “civilising” (*wen hua*) was understood as “cultural transformation of human beings”, that is absorption of “culture” with its ritualised norms of behaviour, restraint of biological, “animal” impulses, and cultivation of virtues. It was presumed that individuals and entire societies could be “transformed”, although it was the Centre of the world where Yin and Yang and the Five Agents (*wu xing*) remains in harmony. So, only there the civilisation could evolve, flourish, and radiate towards the peripheries.³⁵

These concepts and a profound disdain for bellicosity were rooted in particular social and historical conditions. The agricultural Chinese civilisation was shaped in the opposition to the aggressive nomadic tribes and states of the northern steppes. Continuous defensive wars against their raids produced hatred and disdain for their customs and way of life that embodied “barbarity”. Moreover, similar cultures prevailed in the western frontier, whereas in the eastern coast and in the South the Proto-Chinese were confronted with different but also bellicose cultures (of the Proto-Malay, Proto-Vietnamese and Proto-Thai type). On the other hand, the peasants of the Central Plain suffered much during raids of these bellicose neighbours and during the military campaigns against them. Military service constituted a heavy burden for them and disrupted their peaceful life and work in their village communes.³⁶

Violence and the use of force were disdained in various particular fields and forms. For instance, the people who worked with the physical force were ruled by those who worked “with mind”, cultivated culture and virtues. Thus the “use of force” belonged to the “lower classes”, whereas the recourse to violence, killing and robbery—to criminals and “barbarians”. The Confucians (*ru jia*) promoted an idea of governing and even winning in war merely with Virtue, maintaining that harmony and peace cannot be granted only by force. The schools of the Taoists (*dao jia*), the Strategists (*bing jia*), and the Geopoliticians (*zongheng jia*) elaborated general principles and various practical recommendations why achieving something by force is counterproductive and harmful, and how to resolve problems and achieve one’s own aims without force but with apparent weakness and gentleness. Thus Sun Wu (6th–5th century BC), the greatest theoretician of strategy in China and in the world taught:

³⁴ See: K. Gawlikowski, “The Concept of Two Fundamental Social Principles...”, quoted edition, pp. 398–433.

³⁵ One of the earliest description of this kind is contained in *Huainanzi* [The Book of the King of Huai Nan], ch. 4; see: ZZJC, vol. 7, pp. 57-8. This work has been compiled at the court of Liu An (179?–122 BC).

³⁶ See still valuable study of cultural images that resulted from this experience: Vasilij M. Aleksiejev, “Otrazheniye bor’by s zavoyevateliyami v istorii i kulturie Kitaya” [An Image of the Struggle against Foreign Aggressors in Chinese Histories and Literature], *Izvestia AN SSSR*, vol. 4, no. 5 (1945), pp. 187–99; reprinted in: V. M. Aleksiejev, *Trudy po kitajskoj literaturie* [The Works on Chinese Literature], Moskva, Vostochnaya Literatura 2002, vol. I, pp. 516-533.

In general, according to the rules of recourse to arms, it is the best to maintain [the enemy] state intact, whereas to ruin it [at the course of armed struggle]—is worse; it is the best to maintain [the enemy] army, division, battalion or even the smallest five-men unit intact, whereas to destroy them [at the course of armed struggle]—is worse. It is why winning of one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the best of the best; the best of the best is subduing the enemy soldiers without fighting against them (...). Hence the best struggle consists in an “attack on [enemy’s] plans and intentions”; a disruption of his alliances takes the second place; the worse is to attack his military forces; and the worst is to attack enemy’s strongholds [that always involves heavy losses].³⁷

Thus he promoted a diplomatic warfare, secret actions of spies and agents, a psychological warfare, recourse to stratagems and disinformation, and so on, intending to subdue the enemy, or eliminate a danger, through various manipulations and negotiations. According to him “struggle is based on cunning” and the crucial element for achieving desired results is “artful planning” (*mou*). One of the central points of his theory is the principle: “strike with Fullness (*shi*) into Emptiness (*xu*)” illustrated with a metaphor of “striking with a stone into an egg”. The second essential principle was: “to engage in struggle by a Direct Attack (*zheng*) but to win with Manoeuvre (*qi*)”³⁸. Therefore he rejected completely the Western principle of struggle: “force against force, feast against feast”. Western model of struggle is essentially similar to boxing, whereas the Chinese—to *kungfu*. Although the concept of minimising the use of force was widely accepted, there also were, however, other orientations: of achieving victory through an exceptional courage based on acceptance of death (a prototype

³⁷ *Sunzi shi jia zhu* [The Book of Master Sun with the Commentaries by the Ten Authors], in: ZZJC, vol. 6, pp. 34–8 (sect. 3). There are numerous recent translations of the text, but I prefer the older one: Lionel Giles, *Sun Tzu on the Art. of War, the Oldest Military Treatise in the World*, London, Luzac & Co 1910. Here author’s own translation is given.

³⁸ It is difficult to translate precisely these terms into a Western language. *Shi* means something hard, solid, full of energy, whereas *xu* means something soft, “empty”, weak. But both are relative. An egg is “soft” when confronted with a stone, but hard when strikes a caterpillar. Thus they are often translated as “strong and weak points”, although it is not precise. During the World War II general Zhu De recommended to the Chinese guerrillas to use these concepts against the Japanese army in such a form: artillery is *shi* on a distance and on a fortified position, but becomes *xu* when attacked at hand to hand attack or on the way to its positions. Then a small squad with knives could easily defeat an artillery unit. See: *Zhu De xuan ji* [Zhu De’s Selected Works], Beijing, Renmin Chubanshe 1983, p. 52. The concept of *zheng* and *qi* is relativistic in a similar way and essentially depends on the enemy: this what he already knows and expects is *zheng*, whereas that what is unexpected, unknown to him, or misunderstood—becomes *qi*. Hence *zheng* could be transformed into *qi* and *vice versa*.

of the Japanese *kamikaze*) or through particular “magical operations” and the use of mysterious forces of the universe.³⁹

It had been repeated since the ancient times that the true master of war does not send the army in the field; when it is in the field—does not need to form it for the battle; and even when it was necessary to form it into battle arrays—he would find the way to avoid the real struggle. The best is to resolve the problems at the banquet hall of the ruler’s palace and to break the opposition at a distance, i.e. through artful manipulations and diplomatic means, not in the field.⁴⁰ Wu Qi promoted an idea of a “humane warfare” recommending a good attitude to the civilian population, prohibiting destruction of houses, crops, mulberry and fruit trees, robbery, etc.⁴¹ Other writers enlarged this on the enemy soldiers prohibiting taking as prisoners youngsters and gray-haired, recommending incorporation of the enemy soldiers to the own army or pardoning them and making them free; only the leaders of the “rebellious act” deserved to be executed.

If one compares all these concepts with the Western and Central Asian tradition of destruction of entire cities and annihilation of their population, the difference will be obvious. The Chinese theoreticians just promoted the standpoint blamed by Clausewitz:

Kind-hearted people might of course think there was some ingenious way to disarm or defeat the enemy without too much bloodshed, and might imagine that this is the true goal of the art. of war. Pleasant as it sounds, it is a fallacy that must be exposed: war is such a dangerous business that the mistakes which come from kindness are the very worst (...) If one side uses force without compunction, undeterred by the bloodshed it involves, while the other side refrains, the first will gain the upper hand (...) each will drive its opponent toward extremes, and only limiting factors are the counterpoises inherent in war.⁴²

And numerous contemporary military theoreticians consider Sun Wu and other Chinese theoreticians right, not Clausewitz, whose concepts resulted in horrors of the two world wars.

³⁹ See a more detailed description of the classic Chinese military literature and the concepts promoted there in: Joseph Needham, Robin D. Yates (with collaboration of K. Gawlikowski), *Science and Civilization in China*, vol. V, part 6, *Military Technology, Missiles and Sieges*, Cambridge University Press 1994, pp. 10–100.

⁴⁰ See: *Yan tie lun* [the Discourse on Salt and Iron], in: ZZJC, vol. 7, part 1, p. 1; Esson M. Gale, *Discourses on Salt and Iron*, Leiden, E. J. Brill 1931, pp. 4–5 (this translation is rather imprecise as far as military matters are concerned. A similar statement can also be found in *Yi Zhou shu* [The Lost Books of the Zhou Period], sect. 8.

⁴¹ See *Wuzi*, ch. 5, in: ZGBS, vol. 10, pp. 464-5; Sawyer, op. cit., p. 223.

⁴² Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. By Michael Howard and Peter Paret, Princeton University Press 1984, pp. 75–6.

One has to acknowledge that Sun Wu and other Chinese theoreticians accepted the use of force in war, but as the means of the last resort. It has also been pointed out that “war” and the “use of arms” were often treated in China as a model of conflict or of “achieving results”. Hence the recommendations formulated in military works were applied for millennia to all other spheres of social life as general “principles of efficient action”. On the other hand, such general principles of “efficient action” were applied to military sphere as well. In the *Book of Master Sun (Sunzi)* one can find the earliest presentation of the principles of efficient action. Thus Sun Wu could be considered the founder of Chinese praxiology that in Europe evolved only in the 20th century.⁴³

The second most important text that developed this theory is the *Book of the Way and the Power (Dao de jing)*, already mentioned. It is attributed to Laozi, a contemporary to Confucius, although it was completed several centuries later, probably at the end of the 3rd century BC. Its central idea is to act according to the Way, never contrary to it, with the minimal use of force, like water, the softest and the most adaptive substance in the world, although it destroys and moves even the great boulders. As the best illustration of such a type of action could serve Mr. Ding, the royal cook, a well-known figure of ancient literature. He explained his art of cutting corpses of oxen in such a way:

What I care about is the Way (...) I rely on natural structuring, cleave along the main seams, let my [knife] be guided by the main cavities, go by what is inherently so. A ligament or tendon I never touch, not to mention the solid bone.⁴⁴

Mastering such an art of “entering with knife into emptiness” he could act very efficiently, almost without efforts and after nineteen years his knife remained as sharp as it originally was, whereas a mediocre cook must change his chopper at least one a year.

⁴³ See my study: “Sun Wu—Zhongguo xingweixue, douzheng zhexue he kexuede chuanshi ren” [Sun Wu as the Founder of Chinese Praxiology, Philosophy of Struggle, and Science], in: Yu Rupo ed., ‘Sunzi’ *xin lun jicui* [The Selected New Studies on the “Book of Master Sun”], Beijing, Changcheng Chubanshe 1992, pp. 303–16. For an English version see: *Hemispheres* (Warsaw), no. 9 (1992), pp. 9–22. For a detailed discussion of my concepts see: Niu Xianzhong (Niu Hsien-chung), *Sunzi san lun, cong gu bingfa dao xin zhanlue* [Three Studies on the Book of Master Sun, From the Ancient Art. of War to the Modern Strategy], Taipei, Maitian Chuban 1996. On the use of the strategic concepts in everyday social relations see my study: “‘Hongloumeng’ zhongde zhanlue sixiang yu Zhongguo chuantong junshi wenhua” [Strategic Concepts in the “Dream of the Red Mansions” and the Traditional Chinese Military Culture], in: Huang Pumin *et al.* Eds, *Sunzi bingfa ji qi xiandai jiazhi* [Master Sun’s Art of War and Its Contemporary Value], Beijing, Junshi Kexue Chubanshe 1999, pp. 409–16 (no English version available yet).

⁴⁴ *Zhuangzi* [The Book of Master Zhuang], attributed to Zhuang Zhou (369?–286? BC), ZZJC, vol. 3, p. 19 (ch. 3). See: A.C. Graham, *Chuang-tzu, The Inner Chapters*, London—Boston, Unwin Paperbacks 1989, pp. 63–4. His translation was adopted here with minor modifications.

Cheng Yi (1033–1107), the great Confucian philosopher, in his commentary to the *Book of Changes* writes:

A hog is a strong and fierce animal. If one tries to control its teeth by force, one will have to work hard and still will not be able to stop its fierceness. But if one removes its tendency to use its teeth, although the teeth remain, its fierceness will stop by itself. A superior man follows the principle of “taking away the force of the hog’s teeth”. He knows that the evils of the world cannot be suppressed by force. Therefore he examines their subtle origins, gets hold of their essential elements and stops up their sources. Consequently, although he relies on no severe punishment, evils will stop by themselves.⁴⁵

This could serve as an excellent illustration of the principles elaborated in China.

Under such circumstances in old China soldiers and their commanders did not enjoy prestige comparable to this enjoyed by their colleagues in the West. “Hereditary soldiers” as it was mentioned, were considered a lower class deprived of various citizen’s rights, whereas the ranks of “military officials” were considered always “lower” than corresponding ranks of the “civil officials”. Fighting in war had rarely been presented as “heroic” and did not involve anything “divine”. Military men were always subordinate to the civil scholars-officials who ruled the country, and were commonly disdained.

As Stephen Owen notices, having analysed the *Book of Songs* (*Shi jing*), the oldest collection of Chinese poetry, in comparison to the *Illiad*, there is noticeable lack of violence. One can find there some glorification of the king’s military power, admiration for battle chariots and for splendid appearance of the warriors, with a particular emphasis on their ranks, but the bloodshed is not mentioned. A kind of “military heroism” can be found there but it is directed to public rather than private, personal glory of the fighter. The commanders are praised for their valour, but first of all for their sagacious and loyal execution of the state policy. The army—as he indicates—is presented there as an essentially collective force, “the king’s claws and fangs”. The ancient kings there, although they actually made recourse to violence, tried to conceal this in their royal propaganda, since it was not “glorious”. He also rightly indicates that the soldiers’ poems complaining on military service much outnumber ballads glorifying royal campaigns.⁴⁶ One should keep in mind that these songs originated in the period when the hereditary aristocracy ruled the ancient states and admired

⁴⁵ This concept was popularized by Zhu Xi (1130–1200), who quotes it. See: Wing-tsit Chan, *Reflections on Things at Hand, The Neo-Confucian Anthology, compiled by Chu Hsi and Lü Tsu-ch’ien*, New York, Columbia University Press 1967, p. 208.

⁴⁶ See his introduction to Arthur Waley, *The Book of Songs, The Ancient Chinese Classic of Poetry*, New York, Grove Weidenfeld 1987, pp. xiv–xvii.

to some extent military virtues and achievements. In the later poetry condemnation of war is even more evident.

In order to illustrate a particular atmosphere of such poetry three fragments from the *Book of Songs* can be quoted:

How few of us are left, how few!
Why do we not go back?
Were is not our prince and his concerns,
What should we be doing here in the dew?

The cloth-plant on that high mound,
How its joints stretch on and on!
O my uncles, o my elders,
Why so many days?

I climb that wooden hill
And look towards where my father is.
My father is saying, “Alas, my son is on service;
Day and night he knows no rest.
Grant that he is being careful of himself,
So that he may come back and not be left behind!”⁴⁷

Then the soldier recalls his mother and his elder brother imagining how they worry about him. There are also numerous poems concerning a yong wife for whom a soldier hankers.

Could somebody imagine Homeric heroes or mediaeval Western knights complaining during a military campaign, that it is so far to the house, there is no mummy nor daddy, no elder brother, who takes care of, no uncles or the dear wife? The only intention of the Chinese soldiers appear to be the return to home as soon as possible, whereas victory no bothers them at all. In the best case they express their readiness to fulfil their difficult duty towards the king or the emperor, but without enjoying the struggle itself.

There were several types of the Chinese “heroes” of war. In the most popular Chinese novel *The Tale of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi*), written by Luo Guanzhong (ca. 1330–1400) but based on much earlier tales, one can find three kinds of figures. The first is an able strategist who plans his artful actions and invincible stratagems, but never touches the sword (Zhuge Liang). On the second place there is a field commander, clever and loyal to his ruler, who is brave but never enters the battle without careful planing in order to diminish blood-

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 113–5. These poems in the standard Chinese editions are numbered as 36th, 37th, 110th. See the standard translation with the parallel Chinese text in: James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. IV, *The She King*, quoted edition.

shed (Guan Yu). Merely at the third place there is a “real fighter” (Zhang Fei), somewhat similar to his Western counterparts. He is described as a strong man who likes to drink, highly emotive and irascible. He is always ready to fight and to sacrifice his life for a right cause or defence of an oppressed or offended party. He first initiates struggle, and later thinks; is naive, a little bit stupid and rude, but a nice fellow. Only later on a forth type appeared: an honest and brave commander who is ready to sacrifice his life in defence of the motherland.⁴⁸ To these one could add “folk heroes”: boys or maidens who mastered the “martial arts” (*wu shu*), and often some magic methods, who defend the oppressed and punish the strongest “bullies” or the hosts of enemies.⁴⁹

The Chinese civilisation was, however, much more complex than it may appear from this description. As mentioned above, its neighbours had much more bellicose cultures. At the course of millennia they become sinicised, at least partially, but when they conquered the Chinese land, they also promoted their values and styles of life, influencing the Chinese culture, at least temporary. Moreover, the popular mass culture differs significantly in this respect from the official one. It also shared the Confucian values of harmony, respect for the elders, and so on, but on the other there one can notice a certain fascination with military heroes who are brave and fight against the oppressors defending the ‘just cause’. Under the shadow of Confucian ideals of harmony and peace there were various conflicts and struggle among individuals and groups, about which one can find complains from ancient times until today.⁵⁰ The efforts to ensure peace and harmonious co-operation through a strict hierarchical social order, ritualisation of behaviour, the principles of consensus and obedience to the elders or superiors were not as efficient as it was hoped. They certainly granted, however, a more serene and tranquil way of life than that of the West. Usually struggle was carried out in a covered way, with maintenance of apparent harmony, through schemes and secret intrigues. Outbreaks of violence and open quarrels happened rarely.

Thus a particular phenomenon of the Chinese social and political life evolved: an alternation of the two extremes—of the “normal state” of almost perfect control and self-control followed by almost uncontrolled outburst of hatred and open struggle. It is quite different from the West where predominates a “controlled and restricted struggle”. Under such circumstances a particular “social paranoia” of aggressive intentions of the others (first of all of the “strangers”) evolved. According to the widespread opinions, merely the state

⁴⁸ See: Robert Ruhlman, “Traditional Heroes in Chinese Popular Fiction”, in: Arthur F. Wright ed., *The Confucian Persuasion*, Stanford University Press, 1969, pp. 150–5

⁴⁹ See James J. Y. Liu, *The Chinese Knight Errant*, London, Routledge & Kegan 1967. One can find there other types as well.

⁵⁰ See: Burton Watson, *Mo Tzu, Basic Writings*, New York, Columbia University Press 1963, p. 39 (sect. 16); Bo Yang, *Chouloude Zhongguoren* [The Ugly Chinese], Taipei, Linbo Chubanshe 1985, p. 25 (it was a Chinese bestseller of the 1980’s).

authorities could prevent a struggle of the stronger against the weak and unbearable oppression.⁵¹ Notwithstanding such phenomena, one has to acknowledge that a particular “group culture” more or less efficiently functions in East Asia, and this grants much more harmonious and smooth operating of the collectives, and diminishes the number of open conflicts.

The East Asian civilisation underwent tremendous changes at the end of the 19th and in the 20th centuries, when the Westernization changed the native traditions. One of its principal effects was an absorption of the Western “bellicose culture”, another—the development of individualism. Mao Zedong promoted the principle of struggle and the Western bellicose culture, but with a collective spirit. Deng Xiaoping initiated the return to Confucianism, and condemnation of struggle, but promoted a “reasonable individualism”. So, these processes were very complex. Nevertheless, the Confucian mentality and traditional values survived to a large extent. Conflicts and struggle remains condemned, and the typical Western “bullying” of the male teenagers until recent times was almost unknown, as well as open challenge and criticism to the superiors and authorities.

As David I. Hitchcock indicates, having made extensive interviews among intellectual elite of the several East Asian nations (China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia and Philippines), there is an evident reluctance to confront problems or people directly and resentment towards confrontation or threats by other nations. They prefer instead consultations, secret negotiations and compromise solutions. Harmony remains highly valued, and the individual freedoms are considered of a secondary importance.⁵²

One has to point out that in China “conflict” and “struggle” were understood in another way than in the West. In the latter, with its bellicose, knight traditions, “conflict” was usually perceived as “absolute”, irreconcilable, in which one must win and other be defeated. “Struggle” should be carried out openly, so both parties mutually fight one another. In China, where organicistic concepts prevailed, the opposition was relative and could always be mitigated, since both parties belonged to a broader community, and the enemy could also be considered a “partner”. Moreover, as the explanations to the hexagram no. 6 *Song—Conflict* in the *Book of Changes* indicate—“conflict” appears when there are two opposite tendencies, or when an action is obstructed. It is an image of firmness and danger. Thus it is understood in a dynamic way. The *Book* recommends two solutions under such circumstances: to beat a hasty retreat to escape harm or to restrict one’s aims to these, which could be permitted by the opposition. The commentaries warns as well that affairs must not be pressed through

⁵¹ See an excellent analysis of these attitudes and opinions in: Richard H. Solomon, *Mao’s Revolution and the Chinese Political Culture*, Berkeley, University of California Press 1972, pp. 99–150.

⁵² See: David I. Hitchcock, op. cit., in particular p. 48.

to the end, that one must never try to achieve everything originally intended, since this would bring to struggle and a final disaster. One should never put himself against a superior strength, but by the will of Heaven “a peaceful determination could lead to the final triumph”.⁵³ Hence a conflict must not be resolved by confrontation and open struggle. Considering that in the Chinese civilisation the best attack was considered this unknown to the opposition, struggle was often “one sided” and covered with smiles and apparent friendliness.

Concluding these remarks it may be stated that the Chinese found a place for “war” in their worldview, although it was restricted to the “punishment of the rebels”, whereas a rebellion against the authorities and an invasion on a peaceful and ordered country were definitely condemned. Great conquests were not only condemned but also considered dangerous. Internal conflicts, on the other hand, were condemned even more, as well as disobedience to one’s own superiors. Worse of all was an open struggle. These concepts had and have far-reaching consequence to the entire social and political life.

As it was mentioned above, in both civilisations different, or even contradicting, elements could be noticed, as well as various temporal or local fluctuations. Complementing opposite tendencies could also be detected that balanced individual cultures or ideologies. Nevertheless, the paradigms of a “harmonious entity” and of “fighting enemies/partners” shaped respectively their evolution, institutions and ideals. The approach to struggle and war appears to be a cornerstone of their particular characteristics and their social and political structures. And this could explain numerous essential differences among them.

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⁵³ See Blofeld, pp. 100–1; Wilhelm, pp. 28–31.

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