

Ezra Pound's 'Poetico-Political Mission' and the Revival of Confucianism in Modern China

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Abstract

The following essay attempts to compare and collate Ezra Pound's poetico-political 'mission' of redeeming the West through his interpretations, translations and commentaries of the Confucian system of thinking with the ongoing revival of Confucius in China. Did Pound's poetico-political visions of a Confucian framework for the Western world consider whether or not Confucianism had ever taken root in Ancient China much less in modern China? Is present day China's return to the Old Master a re-idolisation of him or a promotional stimulus to her globalising crusade? Or can this return be interpreted as the spiritual and cultural asset to sustain and nurture her global *élan*? Where does the 'real' Figure of Confucius lie between Pound's poetico-political 'mission' and China's own mission to influence the world? Indeed, my readings of Pound's meditations on Confucian thinking, and their poetic and political implications in today's ever-expanding Chinese economy, may explain, relatively speaking, the Chinese Communist Party's need to accompany its economic and technological discourses, challenges and drives by a Mentor whose towering momentousness, however 'ancient' or 'antiquated', confers to these discourses, challenges and drives, a powerful civilising Figure, whose rectitude, probity and virtue quell or mitigate any untoward consequence of these economic and technological adventures, purvey them a sound and stable humanised or enlightened resource.

Keywords: Confucius-Ezra Pound-Cantos-globalization-mission-Order-Beauty-Harmony-Analects

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I.0 Confucian Humanism

Since the late 1990's, after a rather long period of dormancy during which time Confucius or Kong-Zi had become associated with a retrograded elitist political regime, and whose 'religion' had been taxed as undemocratic, poisonous to the youth of the Republics of China, be it Sun Yat-sen's or Mao Zedong's, the Old Master has again become a prominent Figure in Chinese education and thinking.¹ Yet, what does History tell us about this Figure? Much can be gleaned from Se-ma Ts'ien's *Annals*², and from the old Master's disciples' ruminations and commentaries, they who 'quote' him rather freely, combining their meditations with his. Confucius' *Analects*, albeit implicite, betokens a mundane wisdom drawn from Heaven's (天 *tiān*) spiritual enlightenment: «*Heaven produced the virtue that is in me.*»³ A spiritual enlightenment which Kong-Zi transmits to the educated of his society because it is this inspiration that edifies man's social organization in conjunction with mundane wisdom. The man of virtue -the complete man (文人 *wén rén*)- must explore his true nature (性 *xìng*) -a nature in conformity with the higher principles of man- in order to grasp the nature of Heaven's boon to him, and with that grasping, set out to organize a society worthy of that bestowed boon⁴. This is Confucius' message to Humanity; not initiatory rites for occultists, but a sagacious method that imparts to Man the need to know his *xìng*; that is, his unconditioned, true or absolute nature before any social undertaking be effected. Confucius said himself: (I am) «*a transmitter and not a maker* (不作 *bù zuò*),...»⁵ because Heaven is the Primary Maker. This virtue combines the mundane reality of daily existence, or the conditioned existence, and the unconditioned nature that the Great Ultimate (上帝 *shàng dì*) or the Supreme Deity of the Vast Heaven (昊天上帝 *hào tiān shàng dì*) has bequeathed to each and every human being. In the words of Mou Zongsan (1909-1996) «*Confucius taught a humanism without cutting off its ties with a transcendent creative source in Heaven.*»⁶ There can be no social organisation without self-cultivation which draws its energy or force from the Source of that energy or force: the Heavens ... It is not a question of metaphysics, but of a consciousness of an individual's 'debt' to his or her benefactor. We read in the *Analects*, Book IX, chapter I, the sinogram (命 *mìng*) that James Legge translates as 'appointments of Heaven' (page 283), and which he explicites as «*not our fate,*

¹ BILLIQUOD Sabastien and THORAVAL Joel (2015) *The Sage and the People: The Confucian Revival in China*, England, University Press Scholarship Online.

² CHAVANNES, E. : *Mémoires Historiques*, 138-188.

³ LEGGE, James, (2016) *Confucian Analects*, Book VII, 22, Liaoning People's Publishing House, China.

⁴ «*Mencius said: 'Those who know exhaust their minds know their xing. If they know their xing they know Heaven. Preserving one's mind and nourishing one's xing is how one serves Heaven.'*» Cited from *Confuciansim*, GOLDIN Paul R. Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon 14 4RN 2014, 54.

⁵ LEGGE, James. : *Confucian Analects*, Book VII, I.

⁶ Cited from SHU-HSIEN Liu's (1998) *Understanding Confucian Philosophy: Classical and Sung-Ming*: Westport CT: Praeger, 114.

unless in the primary meaning of that term, *'Fatum est quod dii fantur'*. Nor is it *decree*, or antecedent purpose and determination, but the decree embodied and realized in its object. » (page 284). Mencius (372-298 B.C.) spoke of *Destiny* (命 *míng*) as : « *Mencius said : 'There is nothing that is not destined. One should compliantly receive one's proper (destiny).*

'Therefore those who know destiny do not stand by a precipitous wall. To die having exhausted the way is proper destiny. To die in manacles and fetters is not the proper destiny'¹.

Man must labour to discover his *Destiny* that lies within him. Without this consciousness or cognition, no social Order, Harmony or Beauty is possible. This mission, that Confucius heralds to mankind, is an ontic and an existential one because fundamentally socio-religious ; that is, it serves both the individual being and the community of beings as a whole, for his wisdom, mandated from or appointed by Heaven, and cultivated by the individual, transcends the individual in order to attain the Whole. We shall see that Ezra Pound's poetic visions of Confucian wisdom for the Western world cohered man's higher spiritual order, through the creative Art of writing and reading poetry, to his mundane or political order. A coalescence that transcends one's small self in behalf of the community.

Kong-Zi's wisdom admonishes an individual that he or she cannot construct a reality of him or herself without being subordinate to a higher or superior reality outside of him or herself, and without this superior reality (the unconditioned or absolute) neither can he or she build an harmonious society. The old Master's code of ethics (名教 *míng jiào*) melds the heart and the intellect into one existential *élan*, revealing thus the ubiquitous presence of the One Who Is On High (高高在上着 *gāo gāo zai zhāng zhě*)² within the society that mankind edifies. In short, it is Man's nature, the most precious gift offered by the Heavens, once dominated by acts of virtue, that will serve as the interpretor of a morally-bound society. Confucian wisdom not only lays the foundation of a virtuous society, but guides man, architects of that society, with the instruments of a redemptive force.

A transmitter from the Heavens (天 *tiān*) committed to disseminate Heaven's sagacity amongst the peoples of China, and surely beyond amongst the peoples of the world, Kong-Zi has become a Figure-head for today's globalising China. For economic expansion without spiritual values, without a celestial voice towards which man turns his ear when the emptiness of leading a material life alone begins to haunt his daily routine and pique his self-assumed security, will deprive communities what is basically human in them : their ability to seek the meaning of life beyond the mere material exploitation of it³. Indeed, man must navigate his quest into more spiritual waters, periodically leaving the *terra firma* of rationality behind, and charter his route by the stars of higher virtues ...

Kong-Zi teaches us a Humanism founded on these socio-religious universal values : man attains his virtuous Self by navigating on the high seas of introspection, of self-cultivation. On the other hand, if man does receive energy and force from Heaven, with this boon he is also beholden to improve the quality of Mankind's material existence, correlated with social correctness, respectability, propriety, and above all moral-uprightness, all of which are absolutely essential within the framework of Confucian thinking and a Confucian-based society. It is this very 'boon' and its 'material' correlative that the Chinese Communist Party is exploiting today, flaunting it as the device of the New China.

The Chinese Communist Party's appropriation of Kong-Zi's as a Figure-head in China's globalizing crusade, and this in spite of his image having been episodically trampled underfoot, is interesting to analyse in light a rising nation's need to project a 'positive image' of itself as it seeks to gain sympathy whilst conquering the hearts and markets of the world. That Kong-Zi has proudly emerged, revived from the debris of his own scraped image, can strike the observer as rather opportunist ; it smacks of political and economic stratagems which exploit the Master simply for that 'cultural touch' within the vortex of galloping globalisation. This being said, however paradoxical it may appear, it was outside of China that Kong-Zi had been posed as a potential 'globalising Figure'.

In the nineteen thirties, the American poet Ezra Pound began meditating on Confucian sagacity as a redemptive force for the West. Influenced by Ernest Fenollosa's translations and knowledge of Chinese and the Chinese Sage, he set out to interpret Confucian wisdom, moulding it within his own poetic form, then spreading it throughout the Western world as the panache of all its woes and set-backs. Pound was fully convinced that Confucian values as he understood them were universal ones, and once cast in a westernized poetic framework would seize and radiate that union of self-governance and social harmony, that principle of individual

¹ Cited from GOLDIN, Paul R. *Confucianism*, loc. cited. 54.

² The Deity or Meister Eckhart's *Gottheit* in Western theology. Whether this Deity be a personal or impersonal God is subject of debate, and has no relevance in my exposition. The expression 高高在上着 specifies 天 in the *Confucian Analects*. See Legge, loc. cit. page 87.

³ It has become obvious that the Falun Gong movement of the 1990's, although asserted to be, to a certain extent, Neo-Buddhist by its founder Li Hongzhi, did not quite measure up to that spiritual accompaniment required by the rampant globalisation programme set down by Chinese officials. The members of the movement were accused of unwanted innovation. The unrelenting ferocity with which the movement was repressed by Chinese authorities appeared commensurate to the ferocity of that very globalizing movement.

responsibility and collective adhesion. For Pound truly believed that Poetry was the great transformer of Being ...¹

It was Pound who composed these principles of ontic and existential transformation in a poetic form so that Westerners would learn from them and strive to emulate them in order to resolve the deepening moral, thus social problems of the West in the first half of the twentieth century. Again, Pound firmly believed that Chinese or Han values, once draped in Western meed, could be perfectly understood by Westerners, and consequently, applied to their culture. This belief led Pound to posit the union between Poetics and Politics, a position that he expressed poetically and transhistorically in *The Cantos*.

Be that as it may, and so as not to be misunderstood, if Pound did interpret and transmit Confucian thought to the Western world with the clear and firm intention of revolutionising poetic and political thinking, Chinese scholars of the diaspora were forging a more philosophical 'Confucian revival' which had been gaining momentum both in the East and in the West since the end of the twentieth century. Chinese philosophers such as Xiong Shili (1885-1961) revived the Confucian doctrine, promoting a spiritual morality that drew inspiration from the Neo-Confucian movements of the Song dynasty, which he called 道統 (dào tǒng) 'Confucian orthodoxy' or a traditional heritage of 'moral truth'. His student, Mou Tsang-san, known as a 'New Present Day Confucian' 当代新入教 'dāng dài xīn rùjiào', translated Immanuel Kant's three *Critiques*, and integrated the Kantian concept of intellectual intuition into Confucian thinking, constructing a vast metaphysical system of Western and Oriental values. Liang Shuming (1893-1988), a reader of Henri Bergson, integrated Bergson's notion of cultural intuition into Confucian thought, forging thus a synthesis of the two thinkers, and by this synthesis, advocated Confucianism as the ethical religion of China. More recently, Wen Haiming has been pursuing and elaborating the efforts of these philosophers by his conferences and writings, after having obtained his doctrinal thesis at the University of Hawaii in 2006 in the field of comparative philosophy. Since, his books and articles have centred on Western metaphysics and Confucian thought².

It should be noted that several of these Chinese philosophers studied in the West, and in doing so, sowed the philosophical seeds of an ecumenical dialogue between a Western metaphysical discourse and a religio-social Confucian one. A dialogue that spread to Korea, Japan and Southeast Asia, there consolidating an East Asian identity of Chinese thinkers of the diaspora, which indeed has had a 'globalising effect' of extending Confucian thought beyond its primary cultural soil. In sum, these New Confucian Revival Chinese philosophers, by studying and teaching in the West and in China, achieved two goals³: they introduced Confucian thought to the Western academic world framed, however, within a Western metaphysical discourse which could be analysed by Western philosophers and professors of philosophy; second, and perhaps more important, they re-introduced Confucian thought in Communist China, perhaps dispirited somewhat of its spiritual support, yet profound enough, socially to arouse political attention and a pragmatic use by the members of the Communist Party for the ever-evolving Chinese society. As a result, the first International Conference of Confucian thought was held in Beijing in 2004 ...⁴ This being said, it should be remarked that none of these 'revivers' of Confucian wisdom was or is a poet.

As to Ezra Pound, he seemed to have ignored these seeds of revival, and the excellent fruits that they bore; his 'mission' neither accompanied nor prolonged the philosophical pursuits stirring within the walls of Academia. Pound's poetic exploits of the Chinese sinograms and more precisely, of Confucian discourse, posited a poetic and a political stance that was bent on revolutionising Western thinking, and consequently, Western social policies. For Pound, Poetry is to Politics as Politics is to Poetry. And this indeed was his revolutionary 'mission' ...

2.0 Ezra Pound's 'Mission': Poetry responds to Wisdom

To read Zhaoming Qian's *Ezra Pound and China* is an enlightening lesson in Pound's Poetico-Political alliance. According to the authors of this edition, it was the dynamic tandem of Poetics and Politics, as expounded by Ezra Pound, that was to salvage Western civilisation from its inexorable decline⁵. Confucianism, for Pound, was to act as a medicinal treatment to restore and heal Western woes. This medicine would cure the disorder,

¹ In the words of Lucans Hees: « Pound a sa conviction que la littérature est du langage chargé de sens, qu'elle a sa fonction ou sein de la communauté humaine, qu'elle-même est un organisme vivant. » In *Moi, Ezra Pound déjà pendu par les talons à Milan*: (Paris, Editions de Rocher, 2005) 46.

² HAIMING, Wen, *Confucian Pragmatism and the Art of Contextualizing Personal Experience and Making One's Intentions Concrete: Dimensions of Confucian Ethics*.

³ Whether these goals were intentional or not is difficult to surmise.

⁴ Much of my information was gleaned from HAIMING, Wen, *Philosophie Chinoise*. Also consulted was the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (IEP).

⁵ A Western civilisation by which its traditional Greco-Latin foundation and renewed Renaissance legacy were slowly being eroded away, assailed on all quarters by war and the brutal policies of capitalism. T.S. Eliot also deplored and lamented this end-of-civilisation tendency. Read his *The Waste Land* (1922) London, Criterion, and Pound's *Mauberley* (1920) London, Ovid Press.

impairment and ugliness that had been gnawing away at the Western social tissue since the dethronement of Tradition¹. In the words of Chungeng Zhu :

'Confucianism, he believes (Pound)², is totalizing in the sense that "Confucius offers a way of life, an Anschauung or disposition toward nature and man and a system for dealing with both". Because of Confucianism, he maintains, "I fail to see that the history of China, or Chinese historic process, suffers a dichotomy or split into two opposite forces, as does that of Europe"³.

According to Pound, Order, Harmony and Beauty -that existential triad upon which all high civilisations have been founded- has its seminal seeds in Kong-Zi's teachings. He states this quite emphatically in his *Immediate Need of Confucius* : 'If only for the sake of understanding and valuating our own European past, we have need of the master Kung.'⁴

Pound, like Kong-Zi, becomes the harbinger of good news, the transmitter of a doctrine that would save Western civilisation from decay and waste, the poet whose medicinal Poetics would transcend the individual creator or reader and like a wake fan out to the whole of a community or society. For Poetics, like wisdom, acts as a transcending force⁵. For Lucas Hees : 'Le poème est pour Pound un outil [...] avec lequel il entend changer la société, ...'⁶

Be it as a tool (*outil*) or as a transcending force, hence, Pound begins his poetic redeeming mission by probing the iconic world of the sinograph, his ideogrammic method or imagism. He translates the Chinese sinographs of Confucius' writings into a poetic form by which *The Cantos* becomes the *vade-mecum* (the Western *Analectis*?) of redemption ! His translation-interpretation of the beginning of *Da Xue* [*The Great Digest*] imparts to the reader his knowledge of Kong-Zi when correlating the individual with his or her society. His rendering is an urgent appeal to the West :

'The men of old wanting to clarify and diffuse throughout the empire that light which comes from looking straight into the heart and then acting, first set up good government in their own states ; wanting good government in their states, they first established order in their own families ; wanting order in the home, they first disciplined themselves ; desiring self-discipline, they rectified their own hearts ; and wanting to rectify their hearts, they sought precise verbal definitions, they sought to extend their knowledge to the utmost. This completion of knowledge is rooted in sorting things into categories.'⁷

There can be no harmony of State without harmony within the family. Similarly, and subsequently, there can be neither harmony of State nor of family without harmony of one's heart by self-cultivation. Confucian maxims of good have been condensed into this pithy enunciation : '*Perspicax qui excolit se ipsum*', 'perspicacity is from self-knowledge'(Canto CX and CXVIII). Note that the Chinese maxim is translated into Latin, the language of those bred and cultivated in the 'true Tradition' of Western civilisation ...

Self, Family and State compose the foremost triad of Pound's Confucian message to the West⁸, of which love is the binding spiritual light : 'If love be not in the house there is nothing'. (Canto CXVI) If, as some critics have written, the preciseness of Pound's translations leaves much to be desired⁹, the preciseness of his message to the West is quite clear : Is it then paradox or poetic force which convinces, no matter how laden with rhetoric and mistranslation ?

This being said, the poetic prowess of *The Cantos* is by no means a rhetorical exercise, *l'art pour l'art*, a bombastic *tour de force* : Pound's Poetics vehicles the political message which seeks to persuade his readers of the urgency of Order, Harmony and Beauty, first laboured by the individual, then reaped within the family before inseminated throughout the whole of society. For it is this second triad -Order, Harmony and Beauty- that engenders and moulds the Confucian model of moral and social order. Indeed, this triad has always been the founding principles of Chinese authority, be it imperial, republican, communist or liberal. An interesting lesson of this founding principle is to be read in *Journey to the West*. Whenever the mischievous Su Wukong -the Monkey-King- disrupts the triad by his unwonted doings or pranks, subsequent action is taken against him : he is either cajoled into accepting a position within authority, or on refusal, is violently punished for upsetting it. As to Chinese Authority today, any rogue, erratic or uncooperative element within the New China's economic-political programme must also be either cajoled into submission or severed from it ! It is in fact this triadic

¹ Let me stress here that Tradition for Ezra Pound meant Greco-Roman and Renaissance.

² My parentheses.

³ ZHU, Chungeng : *Ezra Pound's Confucianism*, 57-72.

⁴ Published in 'The Aryan Path', Vol. VIII, 1937.

⁵ Transcending force towards what ? The Protestant God or the gods of Greek and Roman culture ? The dogmatic ecclesiastical God, be He Protestant or Catholic, or the Grecian gods of Love, Song and Dance ? Or could it be a transcendence that touches a Divine Energy of Light ?

⁶ *Moi, Ezra Pound déjà pendu par les talons à Milan* (2005) Paris, éditions de Rocher, 179-180.

⁷ *Confucius, the Great Digest and Unwobbling Poet.*, New York, A New Directions Book, 1951.

⁸ The second being Order, Harmony and Beauty.

⁹ For example, KENNEDY, G. A., Fenollosa, Pound and the Chinese Character. In *Yale Literary Magazine*, Vol. 126, Number 5, 1958, 24-36, and WILLIAMS, J. R., Modernist Scandals: Ezra Pound's Translation of The Chinese Poem. In *Orient and Orientalisms in American Poetry and Poetics*, 145-165.

concentration of Authority, indivisible and immutable in nature, that fascinated Pound, and which certainly explains his adherence to Italian fascism¹, whose underlying doctrines also laid claim to Order, Harmony and Beauty (Greco-Roman). A doctrine which discloses his unremitting compliance to it even after his release from St. Elizebeth Hospital and return to Italy : it was a compliance which he never forswore ...²

Neither poetic device nor abstract rationale, Pound's two triads act as a *Manifesto* to provoke or prompt a radical change in Western political thinking ; it is hence this dual triadic Figure that would spawn social awareness of the individual's role in his or her society. Interesting enough, Pound's was a mission analogous to André Breton's and the Surrealists' own redemptive mission as announced in their *Manifesto*, published and diffused following the débâcle of the First World War. The French Surrealists declared that Poetry and Politics are inseparable, and because they are, henceforth, must act as a driving social force in the transformation of a society weakened and debilitated of its own traditional energies due to political corruption, economic cupidity, irresponsibility, war and social injustice. Pound's convictions echo the same struggle : In the words of Chungeng Zhu :

'Confucianism, Pound believes, offers a solution to the West that, from its political institutions to its economic system, has fallen into chaos and disorder. Ideology and aesthetics are inextricable. Pound also sees in Confucianism a way of making poetry in articulating his vision of a new earthly paradise.'³

An 'earthly paradise' may be a bit overstated, but the point is clear : 'ideology (or politics) and aesthetics' are inextricable, and being so, a veritable arm for that struggle !⁴

Pound's linguistic experiments and poetic transpositions are meant to infuse new forms of political thinking through and by the novel forms of poetic expression that he couched in *The Cantos*. His poetic forms are ones that steer the reader towards a social or political commitment in his or her environment by the wisdom that the poetic forms emit, all the moreso since the founder of this wisdom, albeit not a poet himself, was a Sage, and his wisdom, hence reactualised poetically by a 'disciple' of his, enhances and multiplies the myriad possibilities of this wisdom's social or political function, the first and foremost being the vital or radical transformation of the Western reader's vision of his or her own world. The Order, Harmony and Beauty of Confucian wisdom would gradually penetrate into the social tissue of the degenerating West to revive it by way of the Western readers' interpretation and application of this wisdom within their own social environment. This penetration is facilitated by Pound's visual or iconic rendition of Chinese sinographs as he read them in Confucius' works (through the prism of Ernest Fenollosa's translations, notes and commentaries⁵), then revisualized in the *Cantos* where he often juxtaposes a hand-written sinograph to its translated or interpreted word, phrase or formula, a 'scientific method' which he coined as '*phanopeia*' ; that is, the production of images or visions. It is a pedagogical method that adumbrates by 'pictorial' or 'iconic' support since, according to Pound, the 'image' or a series of 'images' of sinographs strike(s) the reader physically as well as mentally, its (their) signification impressed upon him or her directly by the signifier or signifiant. I shall briefly comment on a few salient examples.

Pound writes 正名 'zhèng míng' when transposing the concept of the 'true name' (Canto LI) or 'true definition' (Canto LXVI), or simply writes 正 when he impresses the idea of 'true' or 'clear', (Canto LXVII). It is one of Pound's most versatile and used sinographs since 'truth', 'clearness', 'rightness' must be the foundation of Poetics, hence Politics, in a civilisation that cultivates Order, Harmony and Beauty as the highest values of that civilisation. Originally, 'zhèng' was a footprint which pointed to a city or settlement with the intention of conquering it⁶, which Pound might have interpreted as 'a step in the right direction' towards the 'conquering of one's Self' ...

明 'míng', too, is drawn quite frequently throughout the *Cantos* and has been formulated : 'the light of light is the *virtù*' (Canto LXXIV) since the figure combines the 'sun' (日)⁷ and the 'moon' (月). This light of light or dual light here reflects what is morally correct ; however, since the Italian form *virtù* is written, it also conveys the meaning of 'pride' (but not vanity) and 'dignity', which was the signification of *virtù* during the Renaissance period⁸. Elsewhere, Pound has translated it as 'clarity' (Canto LXXXIV) because this clearness enlightens the essence of a man's true nature (*xìng*) and the essence of a true civilisation, without whose guiding or distinctive light both man and his civilisation would sink into a dark age of ignorance and chaos.

¹ His anti-Semite and anti-American radio broadcasts between 1940 and 1945 in Rome.

² « Il mio amico Pound ha ragione. La rivoluzione è guerra all'usura. È guerra all'usura pubblica e all'usura privata. » said Mussolini. (My friend Pound is right. Revolution is war against usury. Is war against public usury and private usury. (Author's translation). Note the « il mio amico » ! Cited from *Ezra fa Surf, come e perché il pensiero di Pound salverà il mondo*, SCIANCA, Adriana. (2000) Milano, Altaforte Edizione.

³ ZHU, Chungeng ; *Ezra Pound's Confucianism*, 57-72.

⁴ « La poésie devrait dire ces lois, dégagées du « fatras » de la culture universitaire- et ainsi oeuvrer au bien commun, à la civilisation. » Minière Claude, loc. cited. 80.

⁵ Fenollosa calls the sinograph a "thought-picture".

⁶ HONGYUAN, Wang : *The Origins of Chinese Characters*, 60.

⁷ Or the 'lateral radical' ; in Chinese, '旁' (páng).

⁸ Read as such in Machavielli's works, especially *The Prince*.

In Canto LXXVIII, Pound formulates 道 'dào' as : 'inside the nation or system' ; a transposition of Lao Zi's 'Way' upon which the wayfarer wends his or her way of Self-cultivation, Pound cohering the individual's quest to that of a nation's, read in the combined graphs of the radical, semantic or head component ('部首' bù shǒu) : he who 'walks' (走), and of the phonetic or sound component ('首' shǒu) the 'head' ; for he who is the head of something visualizes a movement towards the heights of leadership¹.

The sinograph that is drawn most often is '中' (zhòng) and defined as 'in the middle' (Canto LXXVII), or 'It is hard to stand firm in the middle' (of the kingdom)' (Canto XIII). '中'(zhòng) visualises the *Unwobbling pivot*, the *vorticism* whose axis (|) runs through the centre (口) of the square projecting the idea of balance and stability, for according to Pound, Confucianism is founded upon a balanced system. The balance and stability begins in the individual's heart then radiates out to trace and fashion society's centre of activity, an activity which is not linear but progresses in cycles (*periplum* : canto LXXXII) or in widening circles, fanning outwards. And indeed, in Canto LXX, Pound writes quite expressively 'I am for balance', alongside of which has been drawn '中'. In *Cantos* LXXXIV '中', is drawn under, alongside and above this avowal: '*John Adams, the Brothers Adam/ there is our norm of spirit our '中' whereto we may pay our homage.*'² The possessive pronom 'our' voices Pound's commitment to the norm of spirit that is reflected in Confucian thinking which he has transposed to those thoughts and writings of John Adams, a sort of Western homologue to the oriental Master, and to whom Pound acknowledges his intellectual debt. Pound, like Confucius (and John Adams and Thomas Jefferson)³, wends the 'middle' road, avoiding thus those two extremes that favour the conditioned or mundane nature of man (sensualism), or his unconditioned or divine nature (asceticism); an extremism that jumps and shifts haphazardly between what 'is' and what 'is not' ...⁴ Thinking in extremes excludes because it spurns the other's thinking⁵. In sum, the sinograph is a medium for poetry, an axis (|) that traverses the centre of the world (口), both stabilizing it and allowing it to emit its civilizing virtues ...

These are but a few examples of Pound's linguistic meditations on Chinese sinographs in relation to his Poetics and Politics 'pedagogy' for Western readers. There is no doubt that his 'pedagogy' has been criticized due to the numerous mistranslations and ambiguous intentions behind his interpretations ; criticized, too, because of his purely 'visual' or 'iconic' method of translating sinographs⁶ into Western languages, and more important still, in transposing a Confucian orientalism on to Western values, whose foundations, in spite of its cracks and fissures, continued to be upheld, none the less.⁷ How many readers really believed in his 'mission' to reconcile and unite (reunite?) Poetics and Politics at that time is difficult to assert.

However justifiable these critics be⁸ or however utopic his mission may appear, Pound's analogy between the visual effect of the sinograph and its poetic effect on a given society forged a veritable poetic pedagogy to and for the Western world : the *Order* of the strokes is cognate to the society that the order mirrors ; *Harmony* emerges from the ordered strokes ; an aesthetic *Beauty* is spawned when the sinograph has been completely drawn, especially in its calligraphic form. For Pound, a sinograph is a poem in itself, a mirror or reflexion of the society that has invented and written it ; that serves as an example of Order, Harmony and Beauty because it acts as a synecdoche of that society. Poetry, maxims, dialogues, aphorisms ; Art as a whole, must penetrate and cohere with the activities of a society. It must become a veritable social habit or practice if it is to become a civilising, political value. The sinograph is not in the words of Claude Minière : 'un élément décoratif dans la poésie de Pound, il aura été un moment de vérité, moment de la vérité métaphysique, sur les décombres de l'Europe, de la guerre' l'autre.⁹

In the same pedagogical vein, Pound reproduces nineteen sinographs in the *Pisan Cantos*, (Canto LXXVII), with a dictionary definition for each. Just as a concluding remark, all the sinographs read in *The Cantos* were

¹ This being said, the pilgrim, either Taoist or of another denomination, would 'translate' the graphs as the 'questor' wending(走) his Way to Self-Accomplishment, the 'head' (首) depicting both the means and the goal.

² Page 118.

³ Pound reread and interpreted Adam's and Jefferson's political, economic, juridical and historical works in light of and through the prism of Confucius' writings.

⁴ This type of ignorance is voiced today in formulae such as 'you are with us or against us' !

⁵ As to the sinograph 中 (zhòng), Claude Minière has another interpretation : « ...,le centre n'est pas stable, ou inerte ; c'est une flèche qui frappe le cible. La cible qui veut atteindre le poète, vers laquelle il tend ses forces critiques, et vers laquelle il fera constamment retour ... » in *Pound caractère chinois*, Paris, Gallimard, 2006, 33.

⁶ T.S. Eliot calls these 'translations' 'translucencies' in his introduction to Pound's *Selected Poems*, in the 1959 edition. George A. Kennedy was very critical of this visual method of reading Chinese sinographs. According to the author, and I quote : 'Contrary to impressions current among westerners, only 364, or 3.9 percent of the characters, could at that time be traced to a pictorial origin.' *Fenollosa, Pound and the Chinese Character* (1958) Yale University Magazine, Vol. 126, N° 5, 24-36.

⁷ On the contrary, Claude Minière's work cited above exposes Pound's use of Chinese sinographs as a revolutionary act of poetry and politics.
⁸ This is not an issue to be taken up and pursued here. Related to it, however, is FROULA, C. : *The Beauties of Mistranslation : On Pound's English after Cathey*. In *Ezra Pound and China*, 49-71.

⁹ Loc. cited. 98.

hand-written¹.

The intimate correlation between Poetics and Politics should not be understood as a dual force ; that is, of one reflecting the other, as for example, poetic wisdom reflecting, like a mirror, the society or political structure that nurtured it. It should be understood as a non-dual force, a combination of complementary values, equivalent to the intimate and necessary correlation between the conditioned and unconditioned nature of man, practiced and voiced by Confucius and his disciples. It is thus not a question of dichotomy or dialectics, nor of opposing contrary forces : but of intermending complementary values bound into a unified One.

This unified One seemed to originate in Pound's belief that ancient Chinese society had attained a 'religious'² unification founded on the principles of Confucianism. And yet, if one peruses a History of China, Kong-Zi's teachings never really inaugurated complete Order, Harmony and Beauty in China. It is true that Ezra Pound knew relatively very little of Chinese History, and his 'mission' remained one basically for the Western society that he represented ; a rather paradoxical situation given the fact that if a Confucian ideal had never been fully embraced by the Chinese society as a whole, even ignored by large swathes of that society during long periods of time, how could the Confucian doctrine accede to a Western civilisation that ignored, disregarded or slighted not only Oriental Order, Harmony and Beauty, but the very existence of such a doctrine and its presumed author ? Neither the *élite* nor the masses were potentially apt or disposed to 'leap backwards' into their traditional modes of thinking and social behaviour. It remains to be seen whether the wisdom of Confucius spurns a purely materialistic society or, on the contrary, actually favours and encourages it, potentially ...

3.0 Globalising China : Confucius at the Helm ?

Has modern China, thanks to Deng Xiaping's socialist market economy or socialism with Chinese characteristics, sounded her *xing* ? Had Deng explored his Self and brought to light his *ming*, a light that he then cast or imposed on the population of China ? It seems very obvious to me that the introspection, contemplation and perspicacity that Kong-Zi had practiced and disseminated as a means of self-discipline or self-improvement was, and still is, reserved for an *élite* ; that is, those who do not have to work fifteen hours a day to survive, nor have denounced the errors and oftentimes ugly results of modern industrialisation and globalisation, yet have not the opportunity to voice their opinions in a country like China whose very immenseness dwarfs the individual within the maelstrom of the swirling masses, unable to be heard above the monotonous, droning and din of respiteless production. The enriching of the individual for the welfare of all has little to do with adherence to Confucian values. The obsession of infinite progress, be Communist- or Market-orientated, whose obtuse and insensate means of production implies the use of dangerous pesticides, the polluting of air and water, the imposed change in traditional dietetic habits, the dumb submission of millions of men and women whose incomes, however slight or weighty, count more than any quest for self-cultivation, have prompted a dreadful predicament : the more China reaches out globally, the more she tightens the grip of control and surveillance within. As production augments, spiritual or religious practice is stifled, even punished. Political opponents of the Party disappear or are sent to reeducational centres. In the light of modern China's brusque awakening, and the ecological results of that awakening, Pound's 'mission' of a Confucian revival in the West becomes somewhat odd, even irrelevant. For ironically, modern Communist China is imitating those Western-born economic values that Pound overtly despised and condemned.

To be fair, however, Ezra Pound's restorative poetic and political efforts should not be written off as utopic phantasies or a fool's illusions : his 'mission' was sincere ; yet he lacked existential experience. If Pound had lived in China during those years of his meditations and writings would he have engaged 'Master Kung' as the saviour of the Western world ? Indeed, his *Immediate Need of Confucius* lacks historical probity and political knowledge, especially twentieth century Chinese history. Could Pound have been perspicacious enough to foresee the brutal and rapid awakening of China from a closed Communist economy to an open-market, globalising one ? It is true that he had not lived to witness China's Great Liberal Opening ; yet, he was very much alive during Mao Zedong's 'A Hundred Flowers campaign' (1956), his 'Great Leap Forward' (1958-1962) and the outbreak of the 'Cultural Revolution' (1966);³ adventures that manifested political and social confusion within Communist China. Did he ignore these events ? Did he feel concerned about them ? Was Mao Zedong's actions induced by the importance of social Order, Harmony and Beauty drawn from the Confucian doctrine ? Undoubtedly, the Chinese Communist Party had other enlightened heroes to erect, and with which to educate and greaten Chinese society rationally and scientifically. Pound's existential ignorance of China, ancient or modern, points to the fact that wisdom cannot be transposed from one culture or civilisation to another unless this wisdom has withstood the traumas, tribulations and transmutations within the society of its own cultural soil ; has survived the political vicissitudes since the days of its own founders and pursuers.

¹ By his wife Dorothy and by himself.

² Again, 'religion' in the Latin sense of the word '*religare*' 'to bind'.

³ Pound passed away in 1972. Was he then not at all interested in these major upheavals during the time spent at St. Elizebeth Hospital in Washington (13 years) and during his final years in Venice, returning there in 1961 until his death ?

And that indeed appears to be the crux of the question : Has Confucianism withstood and survived the myriad transformations, upheavals and revolutions throughout its long history ? At a superficial glance one must be affirmative : In 213 B.C., during the Qin dynasty (211-206), Emperor Qinshihuang ordered an autodafé of Confucian inspired writings, and had buried alive four-hundred and thirteen (or four-hundred and sixty) Confucian scholars, the majority of whom were teachers¹ ! Emperors of the Han dynasty promoted Confucianism as the state doctrine, but with the slow and steady penetration of Buddhism a religious rivalry ensued, which reached its apex during the Buddhist-dominated society of the Tang dynasty. A Neo-Confucian movement promulgated proscriptions against the political encroachment of Buddhism (and against Taoism to a certain extent), organising the spiritual and political force of the Song and the Ming dynasties. There then followed a long period of decline of and indifference to the Confucian doctrine by the Mongol rulers of the Yuan dynasty, who had been converted to Buddhism, and by the Manchu emperors of the Qing dynasty², also of Buddhist faith. The two Republics, Liberal and Communist, inveighed and lambasted against Confucianism, the last onslaught being the *Pilin Piko Movement* of 1973, orchestrated by Mao Zedong and his wife Jiang Qing against the Vice Premier Lin Biao, accused of neo-Confucianism and of fomenting a *coup d'État*³. And yet, notwithstanding these oftentimes dreadful turmoils, it appears that since the 1990s, Confucianism has experienced a remarkable political revival, and is continuing to do so. Yet China's august awakening and its Confucian revival, when ruminated within Pound's poetic and political interpretations of Confucianism for the Western world, it cannot but strike the observer as the very paradoxical inversion of the poet's aspirations !

Fundamentally, Pound's drives and desires to transplant Confucian thought in the West appear to project his animosity against economic *laissez-faire*, usury, wild consumerism and interest on bank loans, ironically enough those very 'Western values' that mark China's awakening today. When Pound writes *Contra Naturam* in *The Cantos* as the evil which has caused the decline of the West, it is this very *Contra Naturam* that is galvanising China's globalising course, spurring her export production, laying the foundations for her Silk and Belt Road Project. In sum, the 'New China's' policies are precisely what Pound had excoriated, and whose only 'medication'⁴, according to Pound, was to be found in Confucius' wisdom ; that very wisdom to which the 'New China' has revived and is currently exploiting in her global adventure.

The irony of Pound's desires may or may not have its roots in his total inexperience of Chinese History It is primarily due to his handling of Ernest Fenollosa's notes and writings, his iconic or pictorial inspiration drawn from sinographs and especially his aversion of Western economic policies, all of which laid the foundation upon which Pound erected his ideals of Confucianism : ideals that reflected or projected his own psychological state and political position. The reality of modern China held little interest for him since his psychological need to project a Classical China, however artificial, illusionary or exotic, proved to be a greater incentive and a more potent reality because this reality would save classical European culture from desuetude. To infuse a Chinese classical culture as a medication into a waning Western one is like building a gigantic supermarket in the jungles of the Amazon or in the Sahara desert : it serves no purpose but to defend the architect's own ideological blueprint, prop up his own dogmatic edification. Bai Xiao has called this infusion '*myth-making*', by which the '*ideogrammic myth of the Chinese language*' initiated an '*idealization of the Confucian ideology*'⁵.

Ezra Pound, whilst imprisoned in Italy by the American army for his support of Fascist Italy during the Second World War, said himself that the reading of Confucius' *Analects* assuaged his trials and tribulations, both mental and physical. Did he collate his own mental and physical breakdown to the West's, and by this vast transfer, believe that the *Analects*, if read by Western leaders (and the masses?), would cure their nations' deepening pathological state because it would cure theirs ? In Pound's editing of Ernest Fenollosa's *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*, he condones Fenollosa's grandiose project in the name of Culture not only to Western intelligentsia, but to her politicians :

'The duty that faces us is not to batter down their forts or to exploit their markets, but to study and to come to sympathize with their humanity and their generous aspirations. Their type of cultivation has been high. Their harvest of recorded experience doubles our own. The Chinese have been idealists and experimenters in the making of great principles; their history opens a world of lofty aim and achievement, parallel to that of the ancient Mediterranean peoples. We need their best

¹ This event is called '焚书坑儒' fén shū kēng rú, 'autodafé, buried alive'. The *Book of Songs* and the *Book of Documents* were particularly targeted. For Confucianism during the Han period see LOEWE, M. : *Faith, Myth and Reason in Han China*.

² A dynasty that was very anti-Han, thus anti-Confucian.

³ In Chinese : 批林批孔运动, literally 'Criticize Lin (Biao), criticize Kong (Zi) Movement. Kong-Zi was treated as 'the archenemy great bastard' by all the social classes of China : 头号大混蛋 tóu hào dà hùn dàn. Temples dedicated to Confucius were defiled, his statues decapitated and even his tomb was profaned. This movement was Mao's idea of 're-examining' Chinese History through the prism of Maoism ! How ironic that the same tomb today at Cufu has been completely restored and is under the aegis of UNESCO. More ironic still is the nineteen metre statue that has been erected to Confucius' memory at Beidahe, the summer resort of the executive members of the Communist Party, ordered by the president himself, Xi Jinping !

⁴ SUN, Hong, 'Pound's Quest for Confucian Ideals : The Chinese History Cantos'. In *Ezra Pound in China*, 96-119.

⁵ *Making it New : Ezra Pound's Luminous Mythmaking*, 69.

ideals to supplement our own-ideals enshrined in their art, in their literature and in the tragedies of their lives.¹

Ezra Pound's enthusiastic note rings of a project that seeks to attain lofty political levels: his 'us' (Westerners) and 'their' (Orientals : both Chinese and Japanese) creates a dichotomy that places him now in the camp of 'their', now in the camp of 'us' ; not exactly in the middle of them, but in each camp simultaneously, alternatively, as if he were a bit reluctant to be that politician 'go-between', or that artist 'middle-man', choosing both camps simply because he as a 'translator' could not position himself otherwise, however superficial, unempirical or 'bookish' these positions appear to us. Can and should one pose then as a 'middle-man' or an 'interpreter' whose erudition and transmission of it has been gleaned only from books, and not from periods spent living amongst the populations whose ideals are 'enshrined in their art, in their literature and in the tragedies of their lives'²? Populations whose 'great principles' would undergo radical mutations, and whose 'idealists and experimenters' would experiment other ideals, modern ideals, notably Westernized Liberalism under the guidance of Sun Yat-sen, and Western-imported Marxism under the command of Mao Zedong : the two very ideals that Pound loathed and debunked ? Perhaps it is easier to elaborate an ideal from ancient scripture, itself idealised since it eulogizes rather than bears witness to an ever-changing reality, thus unpredictable³. Here another problematic arises : Can or should one disinter classical texts to apply them to a modern State (Europe) suffering from cultural 'decrepitude' ? Can or should one attempt to 'redeem' modern values (Western) from political and economic decadence -due to the advent of modernity- by the therapeutic usage of these venerable and hoary texts ? Pound's 'redemptive mission' is purely textual ; a textual attitude that suffused him more with a scholar's or an erudite's discursive authority on Confucius than with the reality of Master Kung's impact on the reality of China (especially modern). For indeed, between Pound's textual representation of Confucius and the reality of twentieth century China the rent is enormous.

These problematic questions solicit another : Do the Chinese today really believe Confucianism to be the founding wisdom upon which their material and social progress has been elevated ? Do they believe his religious-social system to contain the seeds of what would blossom into a Socialism with Chinese characteristics ? Has the 孔子学院 (kǒngzǐ xuéyuàn) -the Confucius Institute- afforded the Chinese an economico-cultural trade-name or logos like the Italian Dante (Istituto Dante), the German Goethe (Goethe-Institut), the Spanish Cervantes (Istituto Cervantes), the Russian Pushkin (институт русского языка имени А. С. Пушкина) ? Or has the hoary wiseman's name been idolized or re-idolized to spread the image of a sagacious, just and morally-bound China to the outside world rather than one of a rampaging capitalistic machine, running amok in Africa, South America and in Eurasia, bent on overcoming the West in its own game ? These questions are of course very much open to debate. On the other hand, it is quite evident that China's explosive production, and exportation of it to all the continents of the world, has been marketed without military threats, embargoes, ideological sabotage, moralistic-mongering or instigated *coups d'État*, very much unlike what the West has practiced for centuries, and is still practicing today. Indeed, China's anti-bellucose principles are quite unique in our globalising world : Is then the Confucian doctrine of self-cultivation and social harmony responsible for such 'pacific' means of business transactions and commercial engagements ? The Confucian values of pragmatism, cultivated through self-restraint and introspection, may have laid the foundation of a rational pattern of give and take without the need for threats, economic sabotage or military bravado. Indeed, self-restraint and introspection are values which Pound felt traditional China had achieved by adhering to the principles of Confucius. For example :

'If a man have not order within him

He can not spread order about him;
And if a man have not order within him
His family will not act with due order;
And if the prince have not order within him
He can not put order in his dominions.⁴

Inversely, is social order and harmony achieved through an individual's own nurtured self-determination, or one that is imposed by Authority ? Does the Chinese citizen today have the will or the time to cultivate or develop his or her 'Self' so as to achieve collective social Order, Harmony and Beauty ? Or is it the task of the Communist Party of China to hammer out social order and directives to the producing and consuming masses ; masses, who as far as I have seen, do not enjoy enough time to cultivate or develop their 'Self' ? If anyone is grooming his or her 'Self', it is not the *nouveaux riches*, but the residue or marginals of a claustrophobic system,

¹ FENOLLOSA, E. *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*, 2.

² Note that these populations are again compared to those of the Greeks and the Romans : '... the ancient Mediterranean peoples'.

³ Pound's infatuation with the grandness of Greco-Roman and Renaissance culture undoubtedly led him to support Mussolini's delirious quest to re-enact the vertiginous heights of the glories of the Roman Empire ; a nostalgic, almost fantastic quest that stimulated the manufacturing of Italian fascism which Pound not only endorsed but espoused, becoming an active, contributing agent.

⁴ *The Cantos*, XIII.

the majority of whom had been adhering to the principles of Falun Gong.

It appears to me that China's social philosophy today hardly differs from that of the Western world's : production and consumerism being the shibboleth to individual happiness and social well-being. The masses who lead miserable, moiling lives are either too busy 'making ends meet' or have jumped on the band-wagon of frenetic consumerism, consuming to their hearts' content without a thought to any spiritual need of self-cultivation¹. The reality of modern China coheres not to Pound's understanding of the Confucian (文人) 'wèn rěn'² as read in the *Analects*, translated by Pound as either 'the real gentleman' or the 'proper man' in his *Great Digest*. Did Pound, like René Guenon³, believe that only an *élite* could and should be liberated from the toils of time-consuming daily labour, whereby he or she would benefit from a wisdom that would lead him or her to self-development, and consequently to social harmony ? Was Pound's 'mission' intended for the 'cream of the crop' who would raise the level of Western civilization to the one that had existed in Antiquity and the Renaissance, and whose regeneration would draw inspiration from the traditional Chinese civilisation that Confucian principles had expounded ?

It would seem that a European revival required the revival of an *élite* modelled on the Oriental principles of Confucianism, which does indeed echo Guenon's own 'mission', in which any European revival would have necessarily depended on a Western *élite*, albeit one that needed the aid of an Oriental (Hindu or Muslim) *élite*. This being said, Guenon's revival presupposed an *élite* versed in metaphysics or in esoteric science (Sufism), whereas Pound's 'real gentleman', was nurtured and versed within the higher spheres of Poetics, exoterically ! Pound had no great love either for the Buddhist or Taoist systems of thought, both being much too esoterically-instituted (mystically-minded) for his idea of true social intercourse. Pound's social aspirations for the Western world were basically founded upon the Chinese socio-ethical values that the sinogram 礼 (lǐ) carries as taught by Confucius ; namely, and I quote :

'a system of behaviour devised to improve the lot of humanity and the quality of living. One of its functions was to establish a permanent framework for human activity that outlasts the frail and short-lived aspirations for the individual man or woman.'⁴

And it is within this ethical system that Pound's Poetics fits in nicely, for Poetics outlives he or she who composes, invents or creates it ...

Be that as it may, undoubtedly the naivity of Pound's 'mission' to promote Confuciansim in the West is proportionate to China's appropriation or re-idolisation of Master Kung to promote his Figure as the spiritual light of lights of globalization ; a light that spreads Order, Harmony and Beauty throughout the world ; that illumines the way for the establishing of a myriad global shopping malls through whose shiny doors every nation will step with glowing smiles, consuming cheerfully and delightfully ; that radiates a *Pax Sinica* by which every creature on earth becomes a happy client, be they seller or buyer, surveyed and manipulated by a handful of 'self-cultivated' economic and political decision-makers. Will Confucius escort (export!) China to the centre of the globalising world, and thus confirm her assertion as the Middle Kingdom ? It is ironic that Pound's 'mission', however illusionary, does refract a glimmer of success. For unlike the fifteenth century, when the emperors, for reasons quite unexplainable, decided to recall the junks that had been exploring and accosting South-East Asian and Indian coasts, the globalising China of today has absolutely no intention of recalling her junks ; they are well nigh maintaining steady courses on high seas, and are resolute to steer for higher ones and engage in more exotic adventures (the Artic Road?), whether the West welcomes them to their ports or not.

It certainly appears that Confucius has become the energizing helmsman, the Figurehead at the bow of an enormous vessel circumnavigating the waters of our globalising world. And this Chinese vessel flies not the battle ensign : China does not preach from the pulpits of self-righteousness, nor does she evangelize against rogue states in favour of her own self-righteousness. In fact, much to a distraught West, China has not only joined the globalised navy, she is presently at the helm of the flotilla ...

Globalising, too, are the mushrooming Confucius Institutes throughout the world ;⁵ they blossom out discreetly, humbly. They are growing as quickly as Chinese business communities are. There, Chinese is learnt as a spoken language ; as a language of business communication. It is taught as the language of Confucius : harmony without uniformity, albeit whose tones, accents and modulations are resolutely modern : social Order, Harmony and Beauty can only be secured when every being on earth has enough to eat, clothes to wear, home to

¹ On the other hand, the Chinese assiduously practice collective physical and mental exercises : dancing, band music, Tai Chi Chuan, Lian Zi (shuttlecock), ping-pong, etc.) in public parks or where space permits. These exercises, however, are not Confucian inspired.

² 文 means 'literature', writing, culture, language'. The 文人 is a highly cultivated man, hence a superior man.

³ To list Guenon's books on this lengthy subject would be space-consuming. All his books purported this intellectual élite as the foundation for social and cultural revival. Two books, though, should be consulted : *Aperçus sur l'Initiation* (1946) Paris, Editions Traditionnelles, and *Autorité spirituelle et Pouvoir temporel* (1984) Paris, Trédaniel, Edition Vêga. This last being the new edition.

⁴ Loewe, Michael, *Faith, Myth and Reason in Han China*, 174. 礼 (lǐ) as read in the dictionary means 'rites, ceremonies, salvation.' Oddly enough, Pound makes no mention of 礼 in his poetic compositions.

⁵ There are to date 548 Confucius Institutes located in 154 countries of the world.

live in. These Confucian values are building or rebuilding African nations' infrastructures : ports, railways, depots, airports, etc. These Confucian values are laying out pipelines to the West through Central Asia and Pakistan, and a refurbished Silk Road across the length and breadth of Eurasia. Where Western material prosperity has failed to succour the nations that she once so brutally colonised, where the United State's technology has failed to subdue, tame and domesticate the nations that she has incessantly embargoed, bombed and humiliated, China has adopted the role of the peaceful mediator ; that is, a business partner and not the smug mentor or lofty master¹ !

Again I must pose the question : is China's course today Pound's poetic ideals of yesterday ? Are the Confucius Institutes there only as ideological showcases for the naïve European or African ? Are they mere façades to entice and lure the foreigner, and there become potential clients to an ever-expanding consumerism with Chinese characteristics² ?

On the other hand, there is no doubt that Confucian ideals, since the 1990's, when the Falun Gong movement was mercilessly uprooted and eliminated from the New China's Socialist landscape, that Confucian ideals or values have been integrated into the programme of the Chinese Communist Party. Perhaps these Confucian ideals or values had always been of Communist stamp *avant la lettre* ? It should be remembered that this new-found Confucian wisdom in Communist China had long been a philosophy of life for the Taiwanese, the Koreans and the Japanese : How ironic that after centuries of dormancy the Sage of China has finally been welcomed back to his own homeland ! Irony or strategy ? Spiritual revival or marketing ? Falun Gong decimated, Catholic churches demolished and its clergy and parishers dispersed, the Uyghurs checkmated in the Xinjiang :³ the tempest has now been calmed for Confucius to take the helm and steer westwards, not so much to conquer the West, but to imitate⁴ then cultivate it with the three-thousand years of Confucian wisdom so indefatigably gleaned. If this be the case, and I am not pretending that it is, Ezra Pound would surely cry out : « Set sail ... heave ho ... anchors away ! » Would this then be a genuine revolution ?⁵ Albert Camus had the occasion to write :

« Les grandes révolutions sont toujours métaphysiques »⁶

And I fully agree with him. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that mass consumerism has certainly caused the twain to meet between East and West. Yet it is far from a metaphysical revolution. Is the miracle of mass consumerism revolutionary in the New China because it is of Confucian inspiration, or has China constructed bigger and better junks than the West to cleave the high seas ever since Europe lay the keel of economic capitalism ? Do the Communist Chinese authorities believe that the doctrine or ideology of consumerism will lead to social Order, Harmony and Beauty, whereas in fact, this doctrine or ideology, that has been experimented in the West for centuries, has not yet provided the social Order, Harmony and Beauty to which it makes such pretense ? Or do those same Chinese authorities believe that where the West has pitifully failed, they will keep on a more even keel and invariably reach the chartered port since Chinese History has three thousand years of Confucian wisdom behind her⁷ ?

¹ This being said, especially in Africa today, China is making the same ecological blunders and errors as had England, France, Belgium and Portugal (and more recently the United States) during the heyday of colonialisation ! Although the Chinese do not practice cannon law, nor treat the 'natives' *in statu pupillari* (a childlike status) as Lord Cromer had so indelicately characterised the British 'subject races' . in Evelyn Baring, *Lord Cromer, Political and Literary Essays 1908 - 1913* (1969) New York, Books for Library Press. Their exploitation of natural and human resources fares no better or worse than their Western rivals.

² The Confucius Institutes, according to Zhou Weisheng, are guided by the Confucian saying : « *the superior man on literary grounds meets with his friends, and by their friendship helps his virtue.* » Zhou Weisheng then lists the five pillars of the Confucius Institutes' educational programme ; and I quote : « *that they should adopt a differential approach to suit each host country's condition ; that they view language teaching and cultural exchanges as the two wheels of a cart that should move simultaneously ; that China should conduct two-way cultural exchanges through the Confucius Institutes so they become a window on not only China, but also other countries' languages and cultures ; that China should follow the philosophy of developing a cause and adopting an industry-like operation model to realize sustainable development, while optimizing its limited resources by preventing overlapping of functions and unnecessary competitions* ». WEISHENG, Z. (2019) 'Confucius Institutes promote UNESCO vision' in *China Daily*, May 15. The paradox here lies in the fact that the courses offered at the Confucius Institutes do not meet on 'literary grounds' but more on 'business contact' ventures, whose marketing slogans are 'win-win cooperation' and competition performances that serve as a model, although the Institutes' statute be non-competitive. The Confucius Institutes are State-run whose primary bureau is located in Beijing. The first Confucius Institute to open was in South Korea.

³ Is the Chinese Communist Party bent on eradicating exogamic religious practice from China in promoting Confucianism ? The question is not absurd : since the China-Vatican Agreement of 2018, hundreds of churches have been destroyed, and the annual pilgrimage to Donglu (near Beijing), where the Virgin Mary appeared to more than 30,000 people, has been cancelled, considered as an 'illegal gathering' (*rassemblement illégal*) ! Its church -Our Lady of China- had already been demolished in 1996. The government claims that these churches and their worshippers are 'clandestine'. So who are the 'real' Christians ? As to the destruction of mosques in the Xinjiang, that has also been on the rise. Reported by Shen Xinran for Agence FIDES (in French).

⁴ The strong desire to imitate in order to recover or innovate, for example, failing economies, has always been an initiatory process in newly expanding economies and cultures.

⁵ Did Pound expect Westerners to imitate Confucian teachings so that Western culture could gradually rejuvenate and attain creative levels of literary production ?

⁶ CAMUS, A. ; *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*. [Great revolutions are always metaphysical]. (Author's translation).

⁷ My maritime spun metaphor is not gratuitous : When referring to the United States' and China's business relations, Craig Allen, president of the US-China Business Council has been quoted as saying that business is the 'ballast' of US-China relations which keeps the boat steady,

If Socialism with Chinese characteristics has created a landscape of which Confucius is the newly recruited architect, and consumerism be the construction materials of this architecture, then I may conclude that not only Ezra Pound's efforts failed, but that those Confucian values he so lauded, and which are presently being flaunted in China and across Eurasia, have been emptied of their sound and simple wisdom, and since have become another trade or brand name in the globalising arena of selling and buying, another 'logos' on commercial ads to ensure clients of product quality, another pretext to convince the New China -and the world- that there is always room for 'the cultural touch' within the maelstrom of global consumerism.

Indeed, we are not witnessing a metaphysical revolution but a highly techno-materialistic, legalist system of thinking by which the State outweighs the individual, and by domesticating Nature the State purveys the wealth extracted from it to that individual for his or her own welfare. And where does Ezra Pound stand in all this domestication for China's or for the world's welfare ?

Pound set his eyes towards the future by the modernity of his poetry and by his vociferations against certain dogged and intractable western economic practices (usury) which needed radical emending. The Chinese Communist Party's appropriation of Confucius is currently setting its course for bright, new horizons *per aspera ad astra*, formula which could respond to Pound's call to arms for radical renewal : 新日新 xin ri ri xin 'Day by day make it new' (*Cantos* LIII) !..

4.0 Conclusion

In 1999 the 18th Ezra Pound International Conference was held in Beijing presided by his daughter, Mary de Rachewiltz. Could this be a sign of mutual recognition, whereby the twain has indeed met ? Many readers of Pound and researchers of Chinese culture may or may not today be convinced of the American poet's efforts to adapt Confucian wisdom to the faltering Western economic system at the time of his writings. Yet, China's burst upon the global scene, and the agitation and alarm that this has caused with many Western heads of state, could induce researchers to read or reread Pound in light of these tumultuous political and economic mutations both in China and in China's relationship to the West. Literature on these mutations is plentiful in English and in French. One has only to peruse the contributor's essays and foot-notes of Zhaoming Qian's *Ezra Pound and China* evoked oftentimes in my article. In this wonderful book, it is quite clear that the weal of information given and depth of meditation and reflection provide not only a stimulus to explore Pound's 'theories' and gauge his intuitive powers of interpreting Confucius, poetically and politically, but more importantly, an incentive or stimulus to re-situate these 'theories' in China's outward impetus. It is thus a question of acknowledging the intimacy of poetics and wisdom as a driving political force, a force that might have changed the course of History, and may continue to do so. It is indeed this dual force -poetics/wisdom- that should be investigated and re-investigated by historians, sociologists, philosophers, and of course poets in order to understand better the psychological drives and impulses behind emerging civilisations and cultures. And also those in decline ...

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