

Chapter 10

Art and Aesthetics of Music in Classical Confucianism

Johanna Liu

1 Introduction

When we look into the classical Confucianism for its interest in art and aesthetics, what immediately comes to our attention is its emphasis on music and poetry, as shown in the fact that both the lost *Yuejing* 樂經 (*Classics of Music*) and the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Classics of Poetry*) were regarded as belonging to the six fundamental Confucian Classics, *liujing* 六經. It is also confirmed in the recently unearthed *Kongzi Shilun* 孔子詩論 (*Confucius on Poetry*) and the *Xing zi ming chu* 性自命出 (*Nature comes from Mandate*). This chapter will focus on the philosophical issues of music (*yue*) as discussed in the recently unearthed *Xing zi ming chu*, in reference to the *Yueji* 樂記 (“Record of Music”) chapter in the *Liji* 禮記 (*Book of Rites*).¹

Yue 樂, as one of the six arts (*liu yi* 六藝) pertaining to the classical training of Confucian scholars, has a rather ambiguous feature as to its theoretical status, especially when compared with *shi* (poetry). The difficulty consists not only in the historical fact that the *Classics of Music* was lost after the burning of books in Qin Dynasty, but also due to the complicated relationship between *yue* and *li* 禮 (ritual). Besides, on the linguistic and semantic level, the Chinese character *yue* 樂, which represents music, is endowed with the double pronunciations *yuelle* and the double meanings music/pleasure. The recently unearthed *Xing zi ming chu*, among other bamboo slips unearthed at Guodian 郭店, with a major treatise on *yue*, provides us with a new clue to re-think the aesthetic meaning of *yue* in classical Confucianism. This is the main purpose of this chapter. By the strategy of intertextuality, which is applicable to the reading and interpretation of text, the first part of this chapter will contrast the texts on *yue* in the *Xing zi ming chu* with other ancient texts in the *Liji* 禮記, the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (*Zuo's Commentary on Spring and Autumn Annals*), the

¹The *Liji* has been translated by James Legge, titled as *Li Chi: Book of Rites* (Legge 1967b).

J. Liu (✉)

Department of East Asian Studies, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
e-mail: chienm.liu@gmail.com

Xunzi 荀子, the *Shiji* 史記 (*Record of the Grand Historian*), etc., to identify the problems to be re-defined and re-understood, such as the ideas of music pursued by Confucian scholars, the crisis produced by Zheng 鄭 and Wei 衛 music as new sounds and melodies criticized by the Confucians, the place of music in the self-cultivation of *junzi* 君子, etc. The second part of this chapter will focus on the aesthetic meaning of music by referring to the Confucian theory of *qing* 情 (sentiment, affection, situation), also based on the *Xing zi ming chu*, which has dealt with the in-depth relation between *yue* and *qing*.

2 Intertextuality and the Interpretation of *Xing zi ming chu*

The text entitled *Xing zi ming chu*, written on bamboo slips discovered at Guodian in 1993, has been considered by contemporary scholars to be one of the most important unearthed documents pertaining to the theory of music in pre-Qin Confucianism. Researchers could find, in its transcribed version established by the Jingmen 荊門 Museum and published by Wenwu 文物 Publisher in 1998, that one third of the text, distributed among 67 pieces of bamboo slips, is devoted to the discussion of music. It would be probably too rash to claim that a new theoretical understanding of classical Confucian music could be built upon this newly unearthed text, because of the fragmentary character of the text itself and the uncertainty of its authorship. Nevertheless, it undoubtedly provides us with at least a new view and a critical reflection on the insufficiency of the received theories, which have been based on other conventional texts that consider Confucian music mostly from its cultural ideological function in keeping peace and harmony in the society, rather than as an art with which people can enjoy more or less purely aesthetic value.

A comparative study of the similarity between the text of *Xing zi ming chu* and other known texts in the *Liji* and *Yueji*, the *Zhongyong* 中庸, the *Xunzi*, etc., has led many scholars to infer that the *Xing zi ming chu* could be attributed to the so called Si-Meng *Xuepai* 思孟學派 (Zisi 子思 and Mencius' 孟子 School). One of the contributions of this line of research consists in having traced some texts in the *Liji*, especially that of the *Yueji* chapter, back to the period of Warring States. It concerns also some problems involved in the debates between scholars of *jinwen* 今文 (New Text) and *guwen* 古文 (Old Text) about the authorship of the *Yueji*.²

The main focus of this chapter is not to get involved in the debate about the authenticity and authorship of these unearthed texts. Instead, the problem with

²In the compilation of the Five Classics of Confucianism, the theory of music was arranged in the *Liji* (*Book of Rites*). According to the explanation of *guwen* scholars, it was due to the disappearance of the *Yuejing* (*Classics of Music*) after Qin's fire. Nevertheless, according to *jinwen* scholars' understanding, a book on the theory of music never existed before. What have really existed were the documents on the rules of music sound. Since there is not enough documentary evidence to certify the original source of the texts in the *Yueji*, some scholars claimed that the *Yueji* was created by Han scholars and falsely attributed to Pre-Qin Confucians. Others claimed that the writer of *Yueji* was named Gongsun Ni 公孫尼, a Confucian scholar in the Spring and Autumn period. For detail see Cook 1995: 3–10.

which we are concerned is how to achieve an in-depth understanding of the aesthetic/artistic meaning of music (*yue*) in classical Confucianism, through the application of the reading strategy of intertextuality or intertextual analysis to the *Xing zi ming chu*. The term “intertextuality”³ was coined by Julia Kristeva in 1967 and later developed by Roland Barthes. According to Julia Kristeva, every text is “constructed as a mosaic of quotations,” and “absorption and transformation of another.” (Kristeva 1986: 37) Kristeva claims that reading is an on-going dialogue between the writing subject, the addressee (or ideal reader), and other exterior texts, and she suggests that the text be viewed by both horizontal and vertical axes, since “the word’s status is thus defined horizontally (the word in the text belongs to both writing subject and addressee) as well as vertically (the word in the text is oriented towards an anterior or synchronic literary corpus)” (Kristeva 1986: 36–37). Roland Barthes develops this idea of textual intersection and considers every text as the outcome of interconnection of cultural artifacts. He says,

One of the paths of this deconstruction-reconstruction is to permute texts, scraps of texts that have existed or exist around and finally within the text being considered: any text is an intertext; other texts are present in it, at varying levels, in more or less recognizable forms: the texts of the previous and surrounding culture. (Barthes 1981: 74)

That is to say, a text is never a solitary or isolated work done by an isolated writer, but a network of writings by quoting one text from another, or by alluding one text to another, through and by which a continual deferment of an idea or a meaning in a particular culture would be able to continue.

In view of the literary texts in Chinese classics, this type of intertextuality could be found almost everywhere since the time of Confucius, who claims that: “I transmit but do not innovate” (*Analects* 7.1, my translation). In this chapter, the study of *Xing zi ming chu* could be seen as a good example for decoding Chinese textual meaning by intertextual analysis, which takes the *Xing zi ming chu* as an interconnected body of cultural texts from both synchronic (horizontal) and diachronic (vertical) views. According to the results of scientific examination of all excavated relics in the Guodian Chu tomb, it is supposed that those bamboo slips and their writings were transcribed presumably no later than 300 BC, that is, in the middle-late period of Warring States. The owner of these scripts was supposed to be a Confucian scholar of Chu 楚,⁴ arguably a teacher of the crown prince Heng 橫, skilled at reading both Confucian Classics and Daoist texts, as evidenced by the co-existence of fragments related to both Zisi and Laozi 老子. Some parts of the unearthed texts, including the *Xing zi ming chu*, are apparently related to other Confucian Classics. Some scholars assume that the author was a follower of Zisi and Mencius. The text, supposed to have been used by the owner as teaching materials, could be viewed horizontally, as having a dialectic relation between addresser (compilers/teachers), addressee

³The word intertextuality was used by Julia Kristeva to explain the transposition in textual system. Cf. Kristeva, Julia. 1969. “Le mot, le dialogue et le roman.” *Recherches pour une sémanalyse*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil. P. 146. English translation as “Word, Dialogue and Novel.” *The Kristeva Reader*, edited by Toril Moi. Oxford: Blackwell. 1986.

⁴The owner of the tomb was presumably related to Chen Liang 陳良, a Confucian scholar, recorded in the *Mencius*.

(readers/students), and vertically, as interacting with previous texts and various forms of its contemporary cultures.

By contrasting the text on music in the *Xing zi ming chu* with other texts quoted from other Confucian Classics, or when alluded to in other texts, or otherwise in connection with the cultural form of the day, two main questions remain to be asked and examined: (1) What is the artistic meaning of music in classical Confucianism? (2) How is the aesthetic foundation of Confucian music related to the concept of *qing* 情 (sentiment)? Some other issues relevant to the Chinese aesthetic of music will also be discussed, such as the ideal of music that Confucian scholars were pursuing; the symbolic meaning of ritual music; the crisis of Zheng 鄭 and Wei 衛 music as new sounds and melodies criticized by early Confucians, and the place of music in the four ways of self-cultivating of a *junzi* 君子.

3 The Artistic Meaning of Music in Classical Confucianism

Generally speaking, the *Xing zi ming chu*, as one of the Confucian teaching materials, is an article in which we find major discussion of the means of self-cultivation to become a *junzi* by way of music, given that music is supposed to contain spiritual power that may have influence on the formation and transformation of human nature. In it, there is a particular paragraph that elucidates the educational role of music as one of the three arts by which the Sages teach the way of realization of the Dao in humans that allows them to get along harmoniously with all things. It reads,

The Dao is a way of getting along with all beings. The major concern of Dao consists in the art of mind. Among the four arts/ways to the Dao, only the Art/Way of being human is the way through which Dao could manifest itself. The other three arts/ways (e.g. the art of poetry, the art of history, and the art of ritual music [*liyue*]) are human ways of expressing the Dao. Poetry, history and ritual music, all these three are originally produced by human beings. Poetry is versed by capable persons, history is narrated by capable persons, ritual music is performed by capable persons. (*Guodian [Guodian Chu mu zhu jian] 1998: 179*)

Under my textual analysis, there are three points implied in this paragraph that deserve our attention:

1. Dao means the human Dao by which one is supposed to get along well with all beings, including those from Heaven, from Earth, and among people.
2. The ways of Dao contain two levels: human Dao and three arts (*san shu* 三術), including poetry (*shi* 詩), history (*shu* 書) and ritual music (*liyue* 禮樂).⁵
3. The three arts (*san shu*) are originally produced by those who are capable of carrying out the human Dao.

⁵According to the annotation by Li Ling, here “*dao si shu* 道四術” should be understood as consisting in four arts, say, art of mind, art of poetry, art of history and art of ritual music; whereas “*san shu*” (three arts) means, respectively, *shi* (poetry), *shu* (history), and *liyue* (ritual music). For the coherence of meanings, the two characters “*liyue* 禮樂” should be read together as one way/art, instead of being read separately as two different arts: art of *li* and art of *yue* (Li Ling 2002: 70).

Our further question now is how to understand the formational meaning of *liyue* in the context of Confucian culture. How should we understand the meaning of *liyue*: *li* of *yue*, or *yue* of *li*? What kind of music does the *liyue* refer to? Why do Confucian scholars emphasize the self-cultivating function of *liyue*? What have they learned from *liyue*? Furthermore, what is the artistic meaning of *liyue* from the viewpoint of Confucian aesthetics?

4 Religious Function of Ritual Music in Zhou Dynasty

It was an old tradition in Confucian culture to consider music as having a transforming power on the individual heart/mind and on social customs. Since Zhou Dynasty, music had been considered as one important topic in the educational curriculum including four disciplines for cultivating the sons of the royal family and eminent people selected from the State to be trained as prominent future leaders. In the *Liji* it was said in the chapter “On Royal Regulation” (*Wangzhi* 王制) that,

The (board for) the direction of Music gave all honour to its four subjects of instruction, and arranged the lessons in them, following closely the poems, histories, ceremonies, and music of the former kings, in order to complete its scholars.... The eldest son of the king and his other sons, the eldest son of all the feudal princes, the sons, by their wives proper, of high ministers, Great offices, and officers of the highest grade, and the eminent and select scholars from (all) the states, all repaired (to their instruction), entering the schools according to their years. (Legge 1967a: 232–233)

Also in Chap. VII, “King Wen as Son and Heir” (*Wenwang shizi* 文王世子), it was said that, “In the education of the crown princes adopted by the founders of the three dynasties, the subjects were the rules of propriety and music” (Legge 1967a: 349).

According to the chapter “Spring Ministry” (*Chunguan* 春官) in the book of *Zhouli* 周禮 (the *Rituals of Zhou*), it was the director of music (*dasiyue* 大司樂) who took charge of the school of grand studies (*chengjun* 成均), and taught the heir-sons and the young generations the six ways of music performance with ethical values,⁶ that is, centrality, harmony, respect, moderation, piety, and friendship, and taught them the six artistic forms of musical language, that is, figurativeness (*xing* 興), discourse (*dao* 道), ironic (*feng* 諷), narrative (*song* 頌), speech (*yang* 言), and wording (*yu* 語). After they became capable of performing music with ethical values and expressing music in various forms of musical language, the heir-sons and eminent young scholars were taught the six pieces of ritual dance inherited from previous dynasties: *Cloud Gate* (*Yunmen* 雲門) and *Grand Scroll* (*Dajuan* 大卷), *Grand Concord* (*Daxian* 大咸), *Grand Shao* (*Dashao* 大韶), *Grand Majesty* (*Daxia* 大夏),

⁶According to the commentary of Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 BC), quoted by Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200) in his annotations on *Liji*, the meaning of *dezhe* 德者 could be understood as the person capable to perform. Here I follow Zheng Xuan’s commentary that understands the *yuede* 樂德 as a way of music performance.

Grand Exaltation (*Dahuo* 大濩), and *Grand Warrior* (*Dawu* 大武) (see *Zhouli*).⁷ The objective of teaching the heir-sons to play short flute and string music and to perform the various kinds of ritual dance consisted in cultivating their capacity to conduct ceremonies with ritual music, rather than to become professional musicians such as vocalists, instrumentalists, or composers, all these roles often being played by the so-called *gu meng* 瞽矇 (the blind).

As to the value of music, what has been stressed in the *Zhouli* and *Liji* was its religious function in the rituals of sacrificial offering, such as the sacrifice to Heaven and Earth offered by Son of Heaven, that to the spirits of the land and grains by princes of the states, and the five sacrifices of the house offered by great officers.⁸ All ceremonies of offerings were accompanied by performances of different kinds of ritual music, songs, and dances.⁹ The six pieces of ritual dance are accompanied by the ritual music of the six dynasties in ancient China. As with other ancient civilizations in the world, the complete repertoires of their music performance were lost, but in China some textual descriptions of the titles, the performances, and the religious and social-political functions of its ancient ritual music still remained and could be read in some texts in the *Zuozhuan*, the *Analects*, the *Liji*, the *Zhouli*, the *Guoyu* 國語, the *Lü shi chun qiu* 呂氏春秋, etc., which could still serve as textual evidence revealing to us a certain idea about the function of music in pre-Qin China.

Apparently, in referring to the above texts, the *Xing zi ming chu*'s mention of watching the ritual dances of *Lai* 賚 and *Wu* 武, *Shao* 韶 and *Xia* 夏, could be understood as dealing with and manifesting the religious value of ritual music from an aesthetics point of view. As it reads,

In watching the dance of Lai and that of Wu, there arises a feeling of being well arranged in order. In watching the dance of Shao and that of Xia, there arises a sense of beauty of simplicity. (*Guodian*: 180)¹⁰

Now we can be sure that, in classical Confucian education, learning ritual music, for the heir-sons, is different from learning music for self-entertainment and for passing leisure time. For them, the purpose of learning music is to cultivate their spiritual sensibility, with heavy aesthetic and ethical implications, to the revealing of Heaven, Earth, and ancestors, through their training in the art of sounds. This means the religious function of ritual music has its aesthetic foundation in the human mind, as expressed by the word “*qing*” in the *Xing zi ming chu*. Before we

⁷Cf. “Spring Ministry with the Overseer of Ritual Affairs” (*Chunguan Zongbo* 春官宗保) in the *Zhouli* (1815).

⁸Cf. “Royal Regulation” in the *Book of Rites*, “The son of Heaven sacrificed to Heaven and Earth; the princes of the states, to the (spirits of the) land and grain; Great officers offered the five sacrifices (of the house)” (Legge 1967a: 225).

⁹Cf. “Spring Ministry” (*Chunguan*) in the *Zhouli* (1815).

¹⁰I translate this passage in reference to Confucius' words about Shao and Wu in the *Analects* translated by James Legge: “the Master said of the *Shao* that it was perfectly beautiful and also perfectly good. He said of the *Wu* that it was perfectly beautiful but not perfectly good.” (*Analects* 3.25; Legge 1960: 164).

discuss in more detail the relation between music and *qing*, we have to review briefly the shift of musical value in Confucian thought from religious function to more humanistic concerns.

5 The Confucian Idea of Music as a Way of Self-Cultivation to be an Integral Person

Along with the collapse of Zhou aristocracy and the rise of various schools of thought in the periods of late Spring and Autumn and early Warring States, the right to receive education was no longer the privilege of royal family members. In this process, the value of music in the cultivation of the human heart/mind degenerated. For example, the *Laozi* emphasized the quietness and silence of Nature, and claimed that too many sounds (five tones) would make people deaf. In the *Mozi* 墨子 we find a chapter that criticizes music and there we read the claim that indulgence in the pleasure of music was a cause of corruption. Among various intellectual schools, classical Confucianism was the only school that kept the traditional idea of education and put the emphasis on the important cultural meaning of music. Confucius himself was a man of music; he used to sing, play musical instruments such as *qing* 磬, *qin* 琴 and *se* 瑟, and he even knew how to compose a piece of musical work.¹¹ He had put to right order the repertoires of music for the Odes, and corrected their tones after his trip from Wei 衛 back to Lu 魯.¹² He had discussed issues related to the performance of music with the Grand Music Master of Lu saying, “How to play music may be known. At the commencement of the piece, all the parts should sound together. As it proceeds, they should be in harmony while severally distinct and flowing without break, and thus on to the conclusion” (*Analects* 3.23).

Confucius taught his disciples music as one of the six arts, and considered music an essential element in the completion of cultivation of a *junzi* or a condition *sine qua non* of a complete (integral) person.¹³

¹¹ In the *Qin Cao* 琴操 (a collection of ancient tunes of *qin*), Cai Yong 蔡邕 (132–192 CE) noted that Confucius composed the *Yilan Cao* 猗蘭操 (Tune of Elegant Orchid) to convey his poetic mood, on the returning road from Wei to his native state Lu, when he passed a hidden vale and observed a fragrant orchid flourishing alone (see Cai Yong 2002: 147). In the *Analects*, Confucius played the *qing* 磬 (a sounding stone) while traveling in Wei. It is read, “The Master was playing, 1 day, on a musical stone in Wei when a man, carrying a straw basket, passed door of the house where Confucius was, and said, “His heart is full who so beats the musical stone” (*Analects* 14. 40).

¹² Confucius said, “I returned from Wei to Lu, and then the music was reformed, and the pieces in the royal songs and praise songs all found their proper places” (*Analects* 9.15).

¹³ Confucius said, “It is by the odes that the mind is aroused. It is by the rules of propriety that the character is established. It is from music that the finish is received” (*Analects* 8.8). In answering Zilu’s question about a complete person, Confucius said, “suppose a man with the knowledge of Zang Wu-Zhong, the freedom from covetousness of Gong Chuo, the bravery of Bian Zhuang Zi, and the varied talents of Ran Qiu; add to these the accomplishments of the rules of propriety and music; such a one might be reckoned a complete man” (*Analects* 14.12).

Music, considered as essential to the formation of a complete (integral) person, did not consist merely in musical performance such as playing an instrument, but in the realization, through music, of the human Dao, i.e., the virtue of humanity (*ren*), without which music, as an art of sound, would become meaningless. Confucius said: “If a man be without the virtues proper to humanity, what has he to do with music?” (*Analects* 3.3) Only with the human Dao of *ren*, would music become properly a human art of playing with sound, and thereby the following question, proposed by Confucius himself, would have the possibility of finding an answer: “Ritual, ritual, does it mean no more than gems and silk? Music, music, does it mean no more than bells and drums?” (*Analects* 17.11)

Basically, this question touched upon a crucial problem in Chinese aesthetics of music, and would prompt a series of questions on the essence and existence of music as an art. How could the sounds of bells and drums be musical and be considered as belonging to the art of music? If the answer is that their sounds are produced merely by the performance of a musician, then, what kind of music player could be considered a musician-artist? If the answer is that those who know how to play bells and drums and perform in a way that is proper to music, then the question will turn back to the original question: What is music? Who is a musician?

In contemporary Western philosophy, Martin Heidegger has taken “the Coming of Being/Truth in things” as the starting point for answering questions on the origin of a work of art (Heidegger 1971: 17–76). In comparison, classical Confucians would take a different approach than the ontological one taken by Martin Heidegger in answering these questions. They took an ethico-aesthetic approach to consider the artistic value of “music” and “musician.” For example, the passage on the origin of music in the “Record of Music,”¹⁴ emphasized the moral relation between music and the human mind, rather than the technique of composing the sounds in music. Thus only *junzi* can understand the profound meaning of music as art. It read,

All modulations of sound take their rise from the mind of man; and music is the intercommunication of them in their relations and differences. Hence, even if beasts know sound, but they know not its modulations; and masses of the common people know the modulations, but they do not know music. It is only the superior man who can (really) know music. (Legge 1967b: 95)

In Confucian thought, music should always go along with the practice of *li* (ritual, propriety). Anyone who is good at musical sounds, but not familiar with *li*, won't deserve the name of a good musician, that is, a musician as a complete (integral) person. This is illustrated by a story that was told about Kui 夔, who was reputed at the practice of musical sounds, but there was a rumor that he had only one leg

¹⁴Before the discovery of the unearthed bamboo slips, “The Record of Music,” compiled in Western-Han as a document of Confucian lineage, has been considered as the unique clue to the understanding of Confucian thought on music. For example, Xu Fuguan, in his *Zhongguo yishu jingshen* (*On Spirit of Chinese Art*), contributed a chapter to investigate the spirit of Confucian thought on art through music, where he claimed that the theory of music in the “Record of Music” transmitted the legacy of Confucian thought on music that highly valued the relation between morality (Xu Fuguan 1966: 12).

(*yizu* 一足). Duke Ai of Lu 魯哀公 doubted it and went to ask Confucius. Confucius explained that Kui was not a person with one leg, but a man who was capable only of playing sounds, which was insufficient, or one-legged (*zu* 足) in metaphor, for a good musician. That is to say Kui is merely sufficient (*zu* 足) as a musician, not a “good” musician.¹⁵

In a dialogue on the virtue of *li*, during Confucius’ leisure time at home, Zi Gong 子貢 asked a similar question about whether Kui was a good musician. Confucius explained, “To be versed in the ceremonial usages, and not versed in music, we call being poorly furnished. To be versed in music, and not versed in the ceremonial usages, we call being one-sided. Now Khuei [Kui] was noted for his acquaintance with music, and not for his acquaintance with ceremonies, and therefore his name has been transmitted with the account of him (which your question implies)” (Legge 1967b: 275–276).

It is clear then, for Confucius, Kui was a man who knew enough musical sounds and performed music well, but his one-sided knowledge was not enough for him to become a good musician in the sense of having a real knowledge of music as completing his human personality.

6 *Qing* as the Aesthetic Foundation of Confucian Music

The purpose of learning music was not merely to know musical sounds, but, more than that, to cultivate the capacity of realizing human Dao in its completeness. The humanistic meaning of music is therefore based on the Confucian theory of self-cultivation, which now gradually takes on a more significant role than its religious function.

In the *Xing zi ming chu*, the cultivation of music as an art should go along with the cultivation of *li* 禮 (rule of propriety), *shi* 詩 (poetry), and *shu* 書 (History), considered as the *san shu* 三術 (three arts), constituting thereby an integral way of orientating toward the human Dao. By learning *shi*, *shu*, *liyue* 禮樂, the ability of *junzi* would gradually develop under the teaching of the Sages, which consisted in the formation of a complete (integral) human ability of unifying all things by analogy, learning lessons from observing the sequence of things, measuring human activities by examining the righteousness of will, and ordering human feelings in receiving them in and in expressing them out (*Guodian*: 178).¹⁶ The ability was obtained from the training of *shi*, *shu*, *liyue* functions as a whole, without neglecting one or the other, no matter by way of *san shu* (three arts) or *liu yi* (six arts). It makes

¹⁵This story can be found in the *Han Feizi jijie* 韓非子集解 (*The Collected Annotations of Han Feizi*) *juan*12: 33 “Waichu Shuo Zuo Xia 外儲說左下” (Wang Xiangshen 1896: 465).

¹⁶With different translation on the text of this passage, Michael Puett makes a comment with pedagogical meaning of the learning the *san shu*: “The sages took the worthy traditions from the past, organized them, patterned (*li*) their *qing*, and thereby made them available to educate the latter-born” (Puett 2004: 50).

sense that in the *Xing zi ming chu*, the emphasis on music's value in self-cultivation in no way neglected its relation with poetry (ability of using language), with ritual propriety, and with history.

According to the *Xing zi ming chu*, the realization of human Dao should start from cultivating the ability of feeling (*qing* 情). The *Xing zi ming chu* said: "The Dao begins with *qing* (*dao shi yu qing* 道始於情)" (*Guodian*: 179). As Tang Yijie 湯一介 has well pointed out, "It makes sense to say 'dao begins with *qing*' rather than 'dao arises from *qing*,' because *dao* exists from the start on account of human *qing* rather than emerging out of *qing*" (Tang 2003: 271). Tang Yijie explains in his notes that, "This is not to say that it cannot emerge at all, for it can also emerge out of rationality or study" (Tang 2003: 279).

Most of scholars' discussions on *qing* in the Confucian classics focus on the status of *qing*, referring generally to the various psychological forms of emotion, such as the seven *qings* (joy, anger, sadness, fear, love, disliking, liking) in the *Liji*,¹⁷ or the six *qings* (likes and dislikes, delights and angers, grieves and joys) in the *Xunzi*,¹⁸ in the context of their ethical discussions about the relation between the human mind (*xin* 心) and human nature. The explanation of the moral function of *xi* 喜 (pleasure), *nu* 怒 (anger), *ai* 哀 (sorrow), *le* 樂 (joy) in the *Zhongyong*,¹⁹ and the annotations on the concept of *zhonghe* 中和 (equilibrium and harmony) in Zhu Xi's 朱熹 *Zhongyong Zhangju* 中庸章句 (*Commentaries on Chapters and Sentences in the Zhongyong*) have well provided us with the ethical model of interpreting the meaning of human affectivity (*qing*), but unfortunately all of them have left the aesthetic dimension of feeling untouched. However, this aesthetic dimension is always there in the creativity of poetry and music, and also, we should say, it exists vividly in the daily life of all people.

The interpretation of *qing* in the *Xing zi ming chu*, following the *Zhongyong*, has also laid the foundation of feeling (*qing*) on human nature (*xing* 性),²⁰ but its emphasis was put on the aesthetic function of *qing* in its expression through *yue/le* (music/pleasure) and *li* (ritual/propriety). In the *Xing zi ming chu*, the term "*qing*" is understood as the beginning of openness to the other in terms of "all things," and "*yi*" as the ending, the final fulfillment, toward which human feeling tends; and "those who understand feeling can express it properly, and those who understand *yi* can realize it in oneself properly" (*Guodian*: 179).

In short, according to the Confucian tradition, the learning of music and ritual propriety is to cultivate the capacity of a complete person as to his/her aesthetic

¹⁷"What are the feelings of men? They are joy, anger, sadness, fear, love, disliking, liking. These seven feelings belong to men without their learning them" (Legge 1967a: 379).

¹⁸It is read in the "Rectifying Names" (*Zhengming* 正名) chapter in the *Xunzi*: "The likes and dislikes, delights and angers, grieves and joys of the nature are called emotions" (Watson 1963: 139).

¹⁹"While there are no stirrings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy, the mind may be said to be in the state of Equilibrium. When those feelings have been stirred, and they act in their due degree, there ensues what may be called the state of Harmony" (Legge 1960: 384).

²⁰"*Qing* arises from *xing* (*qing sheng yu xing* 情生於性)" (*Guodian*: 179).

feeling, which is rooted in human affectivity (*qing*), to be integrated with his/her moral feeling and religious sentiment, which are expressed through *yi* 義 and *li* 禮.

7 The Aesthetic Dimension of *yue/le* in the *Xin zi ming chu*

Apart from its ethical function in Confucian culture, music, together with the ritual propriety with which it operates, has an aesthetic dimension as well. This consists in the pleasure (*le*) obtained by a sympathetic feeling that is able to share the world of other people by apprehending various affections communicated through sounds produced by other people.

7.1 Sounds and Music, Music/Pleasure and Ritual Propriety

The “Record of Music” said that “music produces pleasure;— what the nature of man cannot be without” (Legge 1967b: 127). Enjoying the art of music by singing songs, playing musical instruments, or simply listening to a beautiful melody, is the common aesthetic experience of music among people. A famous story about Confucius studying the Chinese lute from Shi Xiangzi 師襄子 tells us that for Confucius, the aesthetic pleasure of music as art does not consist only in the rhythm and melody, or only in playing with the mathematically intelligible structure of sounds, but, more so, in the existential meaningfulness conveyed through the sounds of the music, understood in a humanistic way.²¹ This does not mean that the Confucian theory of music has neglected the embodiment of music in sounds. On the contrary, it claims that only those who know sounds are able to talk about music and understand it. The “Record of Music” said, “Hence with him who does not know the sounds we cannot speak about the airs, and with him who does not know the airs we cannot speak about the music” (Legge 1967b: 95).

²¹ Cf. Sima Qian 1967: Book 47: “Confucius studied [the tunes of] *qin* from Shi Xiangzi. For 10 days [Confucius] did not advance. Shi Xiangzi said, you may go on studying more. Confucius said, I have learned the *qu* 曲 (melody) [of this tune] but I haven’t get the *shu* 數 (mathematic structure). Later [Shi Xiang Zi] said, you have learned the structure you may go on. But Confucius said, I haven’t learned the *zhi* 志 (ideal/poetic meaning). Later [Shi Xiangzi] said, you have learned the ideal/poetic meaning, you may go on. But Confucius said, I have not yet got the demeanour of the author. Later, getting a feeling of a person characterized by majesty with profound thoughts, a gentle, venerable person but with lofty ideal, [Confucius] said, I learned the demeanour of the author, it was someone of very dark appearance, large in size and looking far off at the sea, like the king of four countries. If it isn’t Wen Wang, who else could it be? Shi Xiangzi stood up, bowed and said, the tune you were talking is exactly the *Wen Wang Cao* 文王操.” This narrative can be read also in *Hanshi waizhuan*, *juan* 5 and in *Kongzi Jiayu* 孔子家語 (*The school sayings of Confucius*) Chap. 35 *Bianyue* 辯樂解 (Explanation about Music). The *Jiayu* has been proved as authentic rather than pseudographic after the unearthed documents excavated in China since 1970s. For example, see Li Xueqin (1987).

Through the aesthetic feeling produced by musical experience, a human being is given access to various kinds of pleasure in sounds as well as in music, and enjoys the experience of values revealed through them. The *Xing zi ming chu* has vividly described the variety of pleasures in the aesthetic experience of listening, such as listening to the sound of laughter that makes one feel lively and happy; in hearing the ballad, which makes one feel contented and excited; in listening to the melody of *qin* and *se*, when a profound feeling of praise is inspired; in watching the dance of Lai and the dance of Wu, when there arises a feeling of being well arranged in order; in watching the dance of Shao and the dance of Xia, when there arises a sense of beauty of simplicity.²²

The pleasure obtained from sounds can stay no longer than the echo of laughter in the air; whereas the pleasure obtained from a musical melody will last as long as it resounds in one's own mind/heart. The experience of Confucius in hearing the music of Shao in Qi State makes him ignore the taste of meat for 3 months (*Analects* 7:14). This is a typical aesthetic experience of musical art.

Concerning the relation between the aesthetic pleasure of music and the self-cultivation of a *junzi*, the *Xing zi ming chu* pointed out that learning spiritual pleasure through music would be the faster way to reform one's heart.²³ The longer the mind keeps the spiritual pleasure of music, the more serious it would be in returning to its own original good nature and its original *qing*, and the more smoothly it would be in expressing outward and in receiving inward. This is the way of realizing one's virtue (see *Guodian*: 180).

One of the meanings of connecting *li* with *yue* consists in the fact that the practice of ritual propriety should be realized with spiritual pleasure in heart/mind, given that the true meaning of *li* is based on the feeling of respect. In daily life, sincere smiling is enough to display the pleasure of heart/mind in the friendly exchange of agreeable words. As to the diplomatic meeting among states or nations, a concert in the state or national banquet represents the magnificence of the diplomatic rituals. We need not mention again the pious feeling in the performance of ritual music during the sacred offerings in a temple. Therefore, it makes sense for the *Xing zi ming chu* to claim that "smiling is the superficial side of ritual propriety, whereas music/spiritual joy is the deep side of ritual propriety" (*guodian*: 180).

Confucius once described the presentation of music in diplomatic courtesy and explained the symbolic function of music performed in the diplomatic ceremony during the visit of a ruler. This happened in Confucius' leisure time at home, after

²²"When you hear singing and chanting, you will feel jovial. This is excitement. When you listen to the sounds of the lute and zither, you will feel stirred. This is distress. When you watch the Lai and Wu dances, you will feel confrontational. This is being incited. When you watch the Shao and Xia dances you will feel focused. This is frugality" (*Guodian*: 180; translation in Brindley 2006b: 25, 28–29).

²³"In general the difficult thing about learning is 'seeking one's heart-mind.' If one follows from what one has done, one is close to obtaining it, but it is not comparable to the speed with which music achieves the same end" (*Guodian*: 180; translation in Brindley 2006a: 248).

he had talked to his disciples Zizhang 子張, Zigong 子貢 and Yan You (言游 or Ziyou 子游), on the value of *li*.

When one ruler is visiting another ruler, they bow to each other, each courteously declining to take the precedence, and then enter the gate. As soon as they have done so, the instruments of music, suspended from their frames, strike up. They then bow and give place to each other again, and ascend to the hall, and when they have gone up, the music stops. In the court below, the dances Hsiang and Wu are performed to the music of the flute, and that of Hsia proceeds in due order with (the brandishing of feathers and) fifes. (After this), the stands with their offerings are set out, the various ceremonies and musical performances go on in regular order, and the array of officers provided discharge their functions. In this way the superior man perceives the loving regard (which directs the entertainment). They move forward in perfect circles; they return and form again the square. The bells of the equipages are tuned to the Khai-khi [采齊]; when the guest goes out they sing the Yung [雍]; when the things are being taken away, they sing the Khan-yu; and thus the superior man (sees that) there is not a single thing for which there is not its proper ceremonial usage. (Legge 1967b: 274–275)

In reading Confucius' detailed description of the diplomatic courtesy and music performance in the court today, we still can feel the magnificence of *li* and *yue* in ancient China. The focus of Confucius was the symbolic function of music in showing cultivated good feeling, virtue and historical knowledge, as the text goes on to say,

The striking up of the instruments of metal, when they enter the gate, serves to indicate their good feeling; the singing of the Khing Miao [清廟], when they have gone up to the hall, shows the virtue (they should cultivate); the performance of the Hsiang to the flute in the court below, reminds them of events (of history). Thus the superior men of antiquity did not need to set forth their views to one another in words; it was enough for them to show them in their music and ceremonies. (Legge 1967b: 274)

7.2 *Music, Qing, and the Sentiment of Grief*

It is by the aesthetic feeling, i.e. the sense of beauty, and the moral feeling, i.e. the sentiment of respect, that superior men of antiquity could set forth their views and communicate with each other without the necessity of using verbal language. That is why the *Xing zi ming chu* says, “Being in trust without saying a word are those who have the sense of beauty” (*Guodian*: 181).

The temporary pleasure brought about by the musical sounds is not enough to carry on the formation of an individual's virtues and a group of people's ethos. There is no need to say it is not good enough for the good governance of a country. Confucius' criticism of the songs of Zheng and Wei was in the context of his reply to Yan Yuan's question on the government of a State. For the purpose of serving as Music of a State, Confucius recommended the dance of Shao and he alerted rulers to keep away from the sounds of Zheng, due to the latter's excessive indulgence in the pleasures of sounds, which was unqualified to serve in the ritual ceremony in a temple or in the court (*Analects* 15.11). It seems that Confucius didn't deny the

cognitive value of the sounds of Zheng that revealed a local people's ethos. What made Confucius discontented was the mixture of the court music of *ya* with the popular music of Zheng (*Analects* 17.18).

Although the purely melodic aspect of music is not enough to be qualified for being performed in the sacred ritual, as music of *ya* is thus qualified, it is still quite practical for the training of musical skill of an instrumentalist or vocalist. That is why the *Xing zi ming chu* says, "The ancient music is good for mind/heart, and the new sounds are good for the fingers, both are for the cultivation of the people" (*Guodian*: 180).

Along with its affirmation of the aesthetic value of music, *Xing zi ming chu* did not ignore the aesthetic quality of the feeling of grief. In this sense it is quite different from Zi Zhang who took grief and joy as belonging to two separate categories of crying and music: "to grief, there belong crying and tears; to joy, songs and dancing" (*Zuozhuan*: 708). By contrast, the *Xing zi ming chu* considered pleasure and grief as a pair of feelings that produce each other: "The extreme development of music/pleasure accompanies itself certainly with grief. Crying, with grief, too. All of them touch human feelings" (*Guodian*: 180).

The aesthetic pleasure produces a sense of openness to other people's joy, whereas the feeling of grief produces a sympathetic feeling for other people's sorrow. The sound of crying expresses the feeling of grief as well as that of pleasure. It is only in the highest form of music that brings the highest pleasure that one would be able to convey a comprehensive feeling of sympathy capable of discerning various states of mind from sounds produced by other people. The human mind tends to play with various kinds of sounds, in which crying is but one kind of decipherable sound among others. Moreover, the great music conveys the sentiment of sadness, similar to the sound of crying. And the great pleasure in music will not be separated from the sentiment of sadness. That is to say, the sentiment of grief, as the deepest feeling (*qing*) of the human heart/mind, plays an important role with a primary value in the aesthetics of Chinese music since the pre-Qin period.²⁴

However, the extreme happiness in the heart/mind of a *junzi* caused by a melody with the sentiment of grief has nothing to do with the psychological emotions, which are changing all the time with the transient process of myriad things. It refers rather to the *qing*, the ability of human *dao*, inherent to the heart/mind of a *junzi*. The following passage in the *Wuxing Pian* 五行篇 (*The Five Actions*) reveals the deep concern of the grief embodied in *junzi*'s mind. "While I do not see *junzi*, my grief heart cannot but agitated. Now that I have seen *junzi*, my heart cannot be but happy" (*Guodian*: 149). This passage is followed by the verses quoted from the *Shijing*, "While I do not see *junzi*, my grieved heart is agitated. Now that I have seen this *junzi*, my heart cannot be happy [like others]" (Legge 1960: IV. 23–24). This song is an *air* of the *Zhaonan* 昭南 chapter in the *Shijing*, singing on the ascent of the southern hill for the gathering of ferns, when one is surrounded by the sounds of grass-insects and the leaping of grass-hoppers. The song should be happy, evoking

²⁴The discussion on the primary value of sadness in the aesthetics of Chinese music, see Egan 1997: 5–66.

delightful images of the excursion and a sense of love and satisfaction. However, paradoxically, the song also transmits a mood of grief to the audience. According to the commentary of Confucian tradition, for example in the *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳 (*Outer Commentary to the Classics of Poetry by Han Ying*),²⁵ the grief conveyed in this poem is an allegory of the sorrowful feeling of a *junzi* who is worried about the lack of discontentment in his daily life full of pleasurable satisfaction. In the *Hanshi waizhuan*, Confucius says that a *junzi* has three kinds of grief: the lack of knowing, the lack of learning caused by self-contented knowledge, and the lack of action after learning.²⁶ His saying “not seeing a *junzi*” does not only mean the missing of someone who is away and absent, but the missing of someone who lacks the sentiment of grief, which is necessary for being a *junzi*. In short, the didactic function of music has its ground in its cultivation of the *qing* of the human heart/mind, which operates with the dialectic interaction between *yue/le* (happiness) and *bei* (grief).

8 The Ethico-aesthetic Theory of Chinese Music and the “Record of Music”

The problems of authorship and time of composition have been issues of long debate among scholars. Nevertheless, most contemporary scholars have now agreed that the *Yueji* (Record of Music) chapter in the *Liji* was compiled in Western Han by Liu De 劉德, Mao Chang 毛萇 and other Han Confucian scholars, therefore much later than the period of classical Confucianism and should not be our main concern in this chapter.²⁷ However, since it has been claimed by scholars to be an important Confucian work on music, we will say a few words about it here at the end of this essay. In continuity with the *Xing zi ming chu*, the *Yueji* emphasized the educational, political, and moral function of music as based on the relation between *qing* and *yue*. The statements such as “the *yue/le* 樂 (music/pleasure) is something unchangeable of *qing* 情” (Legge 1967b: 114; translation modified);²⁸ “to go to the very root of [the things] and know the changes [which they undergo] is the *qing* (sentiment/

²⁵The *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳, attributed to Han Ying 韓嬰 (active. 200–130 BC), was one of the four schools (Mao 毛, Lu 魯, Qi 齊, Han 韓) of *Odes* learning in Han dynasty. The *Hanshi waizhuan* was the longest surviving document of the *Odes* interpretation outside the tradition of the *Maoshi* 毛詩.

²⁶Cf. *Hanshi waizhuan*, *juan* 1: 18. This paragraph has been literally translated by James Robert Hightower: “Confucius said, ‘The superior man has three worries: That he does not know—can he not but worry? That he knows but does not study [what he knows]—can he not but worry? That he studies but does not practice what he has studied—can he not but worry? The Ode says: When I have not yet seen the superior man./My sorrowful heart is very sad’” (Hightower 1952: 26).

²⁷Concerning the studies on the problem of the authorship and the time of composition of the *Yueji*, see Scott Cook (1995: 3–10).

²⁸James Legge translated this passage with a different interpretation: “In music we have the expression of feelings which do not admit of any change” (James Legge 1967b: 114).

essence) of pleasure in music (*le/yue*)” (Legge 1967b: 114; translation modified); all indicate the essential role of *qing* for understanding the meaning of music. Today, it is arguable to state that the *Yueji*, as a representative work of Han Confucian scholars, has integrated various pre-Qin schools’ thoughts on music, including Daoism, Legalism, Mohism, Yin-yang School and Miscellaneous School, into Confucian thoughts to establish its own theory of music (Cai Zhongde 2003: 252). This syncretistic discourse on the origin of music, on the relation between rites and music, on the cultural function of music, has been an undeniable contribution to the ethico-aesthetic theory of Chinese music in the Confucian tradition.

On the one hand, the *Yueji* follows Confucius’ thought in taking music as an ideal way to self-cultivation, to improving quality of state governance, and rectifying the folklore customs; indeed an ideal way of pursuing a happy life that embodies the aesthetic value of music/ritual music in basing it on moral righteousness. On the other hand, it follows Xunzi’s thought on music in epitomizing his theory and in quoting a lengthy text directly from the *Yuelun* 樂論 (Treatise on Music) chapter from the *Xunzi*, to explain how musical sounds penetrate into the human mind with deep moral affections and political consequences. From Mohism, it adopts the criticism of the decadent music of Zheng and Wei in order to propose a theory on the mutual communication between musical sounds and quality of governance. For example, it says, “The airs of Zheng and Wei were those of an age of disorder, showing that those states were near such an abandoned condition. The airs near the river Pu, at the mulberry forest, were those of a state going to ruin. The government (of Wei) was in a state of dissipation, and the people were unsettled, calumniating their superiors, and pursuing their private aims beyond the possibility of restraint” (Legge 1967b: 94). Since the airs of Zheng and Wei allude to a kind of decadent life, therefore they are not suitable to serve as State Music. That’s why when Yan Yuan asked how the government of a country should be administered, Confucius advised, “Let the music be the Shao with its pantomimes. Banish the songs of Zheng, and keep far from specious talkers. The songs of Zheng are licentious; specious talkers are dangerous” (*Analects* 17.11).

Thus the Confucian concept of music does not confine itself to the perception of fluency of melody, but sees in it the pursuit of the ideal state of harmony, including the cosmological harmony between Heaven and Earth, moral harmony between heaven and the human heart/mind, and political harmony between individuals and society. In this sense, the role of *qing* playing on the level of emotions should be transformed and harmonized through music in order to purify the desiring heart. Thus the *Yueji* says, “Hence the superior man returns to the (good) affections (proper to his nature) in order to bring his will into harmony with them, and compares the different qualities (of actions) in order to perfect his conduct” (Legge 1967b: 112). Thus the emphasis is put on the aspect of social harmony rather than on the aspect of art. The *Yueji* says, “Therefore, when the music has full course, the different relations are clearly defined by it; the perceptions of the ears and eyes become sharp and distinct; the action of the blood and physical energies is harmonious and calm; (bad) influences are removed, and manners changed; and all under heaven there is entire repose” (Legge 1967b: 112).

9 Conclusion

It is a common sense to say that, in general, Chinese culture as defined by classical Confucianism and reputed as a *liyue* culture, has always put its emphasis on the educational function of music in forming individual moral characters and people's ethos. Most of the discussions on music in ancient Confucian documents have been focused on the educational and ethical effect of music, especially in emphasizing the grandiose music of *ya*. In this historical and ideological context, the newly unearthed *Xing zi ming chu* shows us a very interesting example, in which we find a continuity of the same Confucian stereotypical idea that considers music as one of the three arts (*san shu*), as an important way of realizing human Dao. This represents the mainstream ideas of Confucius' legacy. On the other hand, *Xing zi ming chu* also provides us with something new, that is, the aesthetic value of *qing*, the artistic value of musical sounds, and the dialectical relation between the feeling of pleasure and that of grief in music. It considers the aesthetic quality of musical sounds, as different from other kinds of sounds, both physical and human, and relates them to the irreducible moral and affective dimensions of human existence, all in promoting them with ethical and religious values. In this sense, even if the *Xing zi ming chu* may not be taken as great as other Confucian classical texts, nevertheless, it can inspire us with a remarkable aesthetic of music, and convey to us the richness of Confucian music culture in the pre-Qin Era.

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