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HOW TO UNITE A SOCIETY WITH DIVISIONS AND DIFFERENCES

Two Visions of *Tong* 同 in Early Chinese Political Thought*

HE FAN 何繁

The concept of tong played an important role in early Chinese political thought, as in the “Shangtong” chapter of the Mozi and the “Liyun” chapter of the Liji. Nevertheless, tong as a political thought has received little scholarly attention. In this article, I diverge from the common understandings of tong as sameness or unity and call on etymological and textual evidence to suggest that tong fundamentally refers to “difference to one.” In light of this understanding of tong as “difference to one,” I focus on the “Shangtong” and the “Liyun” and compare the two visions of political tong that the two chapters present. With this research, I argue that the “Shangtong” and “Liyun” represent two different political streams as to how to unite a society with early China’s differences and divisions.

KEYWORDS: *concept of tong, “Shangtong,” “Liyun,” datong, early Chinese political thought*

ABBREVIATIONS

DTO	“difference to one”
LJJJ	<i>Liji jijie</i> 禮記集解
LY	“Liyun” 禮運
MZJG	<i>Mozi jiangou</i> 墨子閒詁
ST	“Shangtong” 尚同

I. INTRODUCTION

The Warring States period (475–221 BC) witnessed great disorder and divisions in Chinese history. Fights and wars deeply divided society. In the face of the chaos, thinkers proposed various ways to address this difficult condition, and conceived of what an ideal society should be. A well-known conception of an ideal society is *datong* 大同 in the “Liyun” 禮運 (Evolution of Rites, henceforth LY) chapter of the *Liji* 禮記 (Records of Rituals). In the anecdote, Kongzi 孔子 narrates the conception of *datong* in response to his disciple, Yan Yan 言偃:

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The practice of the Great Way, the illustrious men of the Three Dynasties – these I shall never know in person. And yet they inspire my ambition! When the Great Way was practiced, the world was shared by all alike. The worthy and the able were promoted to office and men practiced good faith and lived in affection. Therefore they did not regard as parents only their own parents, or as sons only their own sons. The aged found a fitting close to their lives, the robust their proper employment; the young were provided with an upbringing and the widow and widower, the orphaned and the sick, with proper care. Men had their tasks and women their hearths. They hated to see goods lying about in waste, yet they did not hoard them for themselves; they disliked the thought that their energies were not fully used, yet they used them not for private ends. Therefore all evil plotting was prevented and thieves and rebels did not arise, so that people could leave their outer gates unbolted. This was the age of Grand Unity.¹

In the *datong* society, the government is well ruled by worthy men, every individual is carefully tended, and each person's ability is thoroughly developed. People in such a society would live a peaceful life. The ideal of *datong* is so appealing that it has attracted numerous thinkers and politicians, particularly over the last century, to reinterpret or even devote their lives to pursuing its realisation in society. For example, Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927) formed his political thought in the *Datong shu* 大同書 on the basis of the conception of *datong*. Sun Yat-sen 孫逸仙 (aka Sun Zhongshan 孫中山, 1866–1925) also associated *datong* with his political theory of the Three People's Principles (*sanmin zhuyi* 三民主義), in which the ultimate goal of Guomindang's 國民黨 cause is to realize the society of *datong*.² The *datong* ideal has deeply influenced Chinese political thought. Therefore, the LY chapter, from which this idea derives, has drawn particular academic interest.³ However, scholars have invested little attention in the meaning of the word *tong* or in inquiring why the ideal society is termed *datong*.

Datong has represented a political ideal for some thinkers – perhaps most of them are Ru 儒 scholars – since the Warring States period. Around the same time, another text, the “Shangtong” 尚同 (Worthy Conformity, henceforth ST) chapter of the *Mozi* 墨子, also proposed an ideal society of *tong* 同, although in a different manner, by

¹ 大道之行也，與三代之英，丘未之逮也，而有志焉。大道之行也，天下為公。選賢與能，講信修睦，故人不獨親其親，不獨子其子，使老有所終，壯有所用，幼有所長，矜、寡、孤、獨、廢、疾者，皆有所養。男有分，女有歸。貨惡其棄於地也，不必藏於己；力惡其不出於身也，不必為己。是故謀閉而不興，盜竊亂賊而不作，故外戶而不閉，是謂大同。 *LJJJ*, pp. 581–582. This translation is borrowed from De Bary – Chan – Watson 1960, p. 175.

² For a discussion of *datong* in Chinese history, particularly the Modern China, see Dessein 2017, pp. 83–102. Xiao Gongquan also discusses Kang Youwei's conception of *datong*; see Xiao Gongquan 2001, pp. 642–653. Tony Swain's recently published book, *Confucianism in China*, has a chapter that provides a detailed account of how *datong* has been discussed in Chinese history, and particularly how it is discussed by Kang Youwei; see Swain 2017, pp. 169–202.

³ However, western scholarship on this issue is scarce. For philosophical analysis, see Christensen 2014, pp. 279–293; Chen 2013, pp. 85–102. The majority of Chinese works on the LY center on its textual history or its significance in Chinese thought; see Wang E 2004; Liang Tao 2005, pp. 2037–2047; Jin Chunfeng 2015, pp. 35–40; Lü Simian 2018. Close readings of this text are also scarce.

emphasizing absolute conformity to the ruler.⁴ At first glance, the LY's and ST's meanings of *tong* appear to differ. The LY's *tong* is usually translated as "unity" or "harmony,"⁵ while the ST's version is often understood as conforming or identifying.⁶ Why, then, is *tong* adopted as a core concept associated with the ideal societies of the LY and ST?

In this article, by focusing on the concept of *tong* in the LY and ST, I present two visions of *tong* in early Chinese political thought, that is, two divergent perspectives in early China as to how a society should be ruled, or more specifically, how a disordered and divisive society should be regulated into oneness. Concentrating on the LY and ST, I am not going so far as to claim that there is a direct dialogue or debate between the two texts, or between Ru scholars and Mohists. I only make a minimal claim that the two texts emerged from a broader context of shared concerns and assumptions. In the second part of this article, I provide justifications for examining the two texts together. I begin by giving an etymological analysis of *tong*, then sketching out two understandings of political *tong* in early China, and dealing with some textual issues surrounding the LY and ST. In the third part, I investigate the divergence between the LY and the ST as to how a society should be ruled and united. In the conclusion, I further probe into the dynamic relation between the two political theories that had deeply influenced and shaped the political agenda in the Qin (221–207 BCE) and the Western Han (206 BCE – 9 CE) dynasties.

2. JUSTIFICATIONS FOR COMPARING "LIYUN" AND "SHANGTONG"

2.1 The Etymological Accounts of *Tong*

Let me first probe the meaning of *tong*. In addition to *tong*'s various translations in the LY and ST as shown above, the meaning of the graph *tong* itself seems elusive. There are numerous renditions, including sameness, togetherness and obeying.⁷ Despite these variations, however, almost no renditions accurately correspond to this graph. In the following, I will demonstrate this point from an etymological perspective and based on textual evidence.⁸

The records of the graph *tong* 同 in oracle bones, the earliest material available, are often indicated as .⁹ This inscription consists of two parts, and upper  and a lower . The combination of the two parts can be read in two different ways. In the first reading, the upper part is explained as a tool used for four people to carry things, and the lower part represents a mouth (*kou* 口). The combination of upper and lower part refers to a state in which four people work together to

⁴ MZJG, pp. 73–97.

⁵ For "unity," see De Bary – Chan – Watson 1960, p. 175; for "harmony," see Christensen 2014, p. 279.

⁶ For "conformity," see Perkins 2014a, p. 508; for "identifying," see Maeder 1992, p. 61.

⁷ Li Chenyang points out that *tong* has two related meanings: sameness and unity or togetherness; see Li Chenyang 2014, p. 11. Brook Ziporyn translates the *Mozi*'s *tong* as "sameness" or "conforming"; see Ziporyn 2012, p. 68. Alan Chan takes *tong* in the *Lunyu* 論語 as "sameness"; see Chan 2011, pp. 46–47. In addition, Allyn Rickett translates *tong* as "obeying"; see Rickett 1985, p. 236; Ian Johnston translates it as "unity," see Johnston 2010, p. 91.

⁸ For related discussion, see my other article, He Fan 2019.

⁹ See Li Pu 1999b, p. 79; Li Xiaoding 1965, p. 2527.

complete one task by following one oral command.¹⁰ This reading connotes that different people, following an oral command, make up a group to complete one task.

The second reading also interprets the lower part as a mouth, but reads the upper as the graph *fan* 凡,¹¹ which means “in all” or “together” (*zuikuo* 最括).¹² Made up of 口 and 凡, the graph 同 can be understood as “different sounds being together.”¹³ On this reading, *tong* means that different sounds, as in respect to tones or melody, are forming one.

However it is read, the graph *tong* connotes that different entities (i.e., people or sounds become one by sharing some aspect (e.g., a command, a tone, or a melody). The first part (*shang* 上) of *Mozi*’s chapter “Jing” 經 (Canon) summarises such a connotation as “being different but in this (aspect) being one” (shortened as “difference to one,” hereafter: DTO).¹⁴

The “Jing’s” definition is also echoed by the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字, a Han dynasty lexicon dated to approximately 100 CE, which defines *tong* as *he hui* 合會.¹⁵ It is worth noting that in the oracle bones the graph *he* 合 is inscribed as , and *hui* 會 as . Both *he* and *hui* describe a state in which the upper part , symbolising a bronze cover, is matched with the lower part , which represents a bronze vessel.¹⁶ *He* and *hui* differ in that the graph , which stands for some things that are stored in the bronze vessel,¹⁷ is only in the middle part of *hui*. Evidently, both graphs signify a match between the upper bronze cover and the lower bronze vessel. Therefore, both *he* and *hui* refer to a state in which different entities (in this case, the upper cover and the lower bronze vessel) become one by sharing some aspect (say, the size of the contact part between the upper cover and the lower bronze vessel).¹⁸ In other words, both graphs denote the same sense of different things being one as *tong*.

In addition to the *Shuowen jiezi*, another lexicon, *Guangya* 廣雅, which is dated appropriately 227 CE, also supports the “Jing’s” definition by following the *Shuowen jiezi*’s account to explain *he* as *tong*.¹⁹ The lexical evidence indicates that the understanding of *tong* as DTO had already been well accepted and prevalent by the Eastern Han dynasty (25–220 CE).

¹⁰ Li Xueqin et al. 2012, p. 680.

¹¹ For detailed discussions, see Li Pu 1999b, pp. 81–84.

¹² For this explanation, see *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 681; Xu Zhongshu 1989, p. 1450.

¹³ Yang Shuda explains that “sounds from different mouths are coming together is called *tong*” (*fan kou wei tong* 凡口為同). See Yang Shuda 2007, p. 92. Tadachika Takada also suggests that *tong* refers to “many mouths are in harmony” (*zhong kou tong he* 眾口同和) and “different mouths are in a tone” (*yi kou tong yin* 異口同音). See Li Pu 1999 b, p. 82.

¹⁴ 異而俱於之一也。See MZJG, p. 315. Sun Yirang suggests that *zhiyi* 之一 of this phrase should be explained as *shiyi* 是一, see MZJG, p. 315. In another article, I argue that DTO can be more accurately described as “when different X, where X can be properties, characteristics, entities, etc., share at least a Y, where Y can be property, characteristic, entity, etc., the different X become one with respect to Y.” For the discussion, see He Fan 2019.

¹⁵ 同，合會也。 *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 353.

¹⁶ Detailed discussions on *he* and *hui* are provided in Li Pu 1999a, pp. 381–384, 402–406, respectively.

¹⁷ Li Pu 1999a, p. 405.

¹⁸ It should be noted that the meanings of *hui* and *he* in the *Shuowen jiezi* appear synonymous, for Xu Shen 許慎 (ca. 58 – ca. 147 CE) explains *hui* as *he*. See *Shuowen jiezi zhu*, p. 223.

¹⁹ 合，同也。 *Guangya shuzheng*, p. 116.

According to the etymological accounts and lexical evidence, *tong* basically refers to DTO. Thus, although the words such as “sameness,” “conformity,” “unity” or “obeying” can be related to *tong*, none of them accurately corresponds to DTO’s meaning. In the following discussion, I draw on the account of DTO to understand both visions of early China’s political *tong* to involve a process of uniting a society with divisions or different opinions.

2.2 Two Understandings of *Tong* in Early Texts

Let me consider the first understanding of the political *tong*. This understanding is on the basis of a recognition that different opinions would never lead to agreement but only give rise to divisions, fights and disorders. To avoid such a possible situation, rulers used *tong* to eliminate different opinion – people were to conform to the rulers’ orders. The ST poses this argument:

If there was one person, there was one principle; if there were two people, there were two principles; and if there were ten people, there were ten principles. The more people there were, the more things there were that were spoken of as principles. This was a case of people affirming their own principles and condemning those of other people. The consequence of this was mutual condemnation. In this way, within a household, fathers and sons, older and younger brothers were resentful and hostile, separated and dispersed, and unable to be in *harmony and oneness* [...]. *Tianzi* issued his *decrees* to the people of the world, saying: “On hearing of good or evil, all must inform their superior. What the superior takes to be right, all must take to be right. What the superior takes to be wrong, all must take to be wrong.”²⁰

The ST’s authors recognised that the disorders and divisions in household or society arise from different principles or opinions held among people, and hence developed the political thought of *tong*. *Tong* involves two stages: The first is to eliminate different opinions; the second results from the first, in which different opinions are reduced to a single one and people only conform to the ruler. The decrees are crucial in the first stage, because it is by the ruler’s decrees that people are instructed to conform to the superior absolutely. The *Guanzi* 管子, an early philosophical text attributed to Guan Zhong 管仲 (ca. 723 BCE - ca. 645 BCE) shares the ST’s argument, contending that different opinions would inevitably bring failure and that the failure can only be avoided by the use of decrees. It reads:

In ancient times, the sage kings, in governing men, did not value broad learning among their people. They wanted men to be *in a harmonious whole to follow decrees*. “The great Declaration” says: “Zhou had countless ministers; they also were of countless opinions. King Wu had three thousand ministers, but they were of one mind.” Therefore Zhou with his countless opinions lost, while King Wu with one opinion survived.

²⁰ 是以一人則一義，二人則二義，十人則十義，其人茲眾，其所謂義者亦茲眾。是以人非其義，以非人之義，故交相非也。是以內者父子兄弟作怨惡，離散不能相和合。...。天子發政於天下之百姓，言曰：“聞善而不善，皆以告其上。上之所是必皆是之，所非必皆非之。...” MZJG, pp. 73–74. I have borrowed all *Mozzi* translations in this article from *The Mozi: A Complete Translation* (Johnston 2009) with slight revisions, emphasis mine.

Now, if the prince who possesses a state is unable to *unite the opinions of people*, concentrate the power of the state [in his hands alone], spread the righteous conduct of gentlemen everywhere, and extend his government on high to become the law among those below, then even though his territory be vast and his population large, he still cannot be counted safe.²¹

If different opinions are not united into one, namely, *tong*, society remains trapped in division and disorder. The *Guanzi* maintains that a good government must be able to unite different opinions to command everyone to follow the ruler's decrees. The phrase *tong ren xin* 同人心 could be interpreted in two different ways: either in the sense of the *Mozi* as eliminating different opinions, or as a process of harmonisation, namely, coordinating different opinions into unity.²² The latter interpretation can be backed by the example of King Wu, who achieves a perfect ruling by coordinating and uniting different opinions as one.

Given the *Guanzi*'s central thesis, however, I favour the first interpretation. I am arguing that uniting different opinions neither values nor relies upon broad learning (*boxue* 博學) from the people but merely upon the ruler's decrees. Broad learning involves knowledge and different opinions and probably gives rise to divisions; a decree, meanwhile, requires no more of the people than obedience. If the phrase *tong ren xin* were defined as the second interpretation, namely, a process of coordinating different opinions, then knowledge and learning, which are closely associated with broad learning, must be necessary and essential in such a process. Therefore, the second interpretation appears contradictory to the central thesis that broad learning should not be valued. According to the first interpretation, *tong ren xin* is a process of eliminating different opinions. The ruler does not require broad learning to accomplish this – he merely needs the people to follow his decrees. This interpretation is consistent with the central thesis of the *Guanzi*. Hence, *tong* in this text should be interpreted as in the ST, that is, reducing different opinions to a single one by following the ruler's decrees.

The *Lüshi chunqiu*'s 呂氏春秋 understanding of *tong* is also in line with the ST and the *Guanzi* use of *tong*, arguing that “ruling a state by consulting opinions from people would immediately incur danger.”²³ Different opinions should be eliminated and only a single one be retained, because “one [opinion] leads to order,

²¹ 昔者聖王之治人也，不貴其人博學也，欲其人之和同以聽令也。《泰誓》曰：「紂有臣億萬人，亦有億萬之心。武王有臣三千而一心。」故紂以億萬之心亡，武王以一心存。故有國之君，苟不能同人心，一國威，齊士義，通上之治，以為下法，則雖有廣地眾民，猶不能以為安也。 *Guanzi jiaozhu*, p. 275. The translation is borrowed from Rickett's *Guanzi* with slight revisions, emphasis mine. See Rickett 1985, pp. 236–237.

²² It is worth noting that *tong* could be associated with a negative sense, e.g., in the expression of *he er bu tong* 和而不同 ([Noblemen are] in harmony but not in sameness) of the *Lunyu* or in a political discourse of the *Zuozhuan*. See *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, p. 147; *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu*, pp. 1419–1420. *Tong* in these examples is used in a narrow sense, which, as opposed to harmony, involves a process of excluding differences and becoming identical with others. But given that *tong* in the general sense represents DTO, and that harmony in fact involves a process of different entities becoming a harmonious whole, harmony can be conceptually considered as a particular type of the general sense *tong*. For a detailed discussion of the relation between harmony and *tong*, see He Fan 2019.

²³ 聽群眾議以治國，國危無日矣。 *Lüshi chunqiu xinjiaoshi*, p. 1134.

whereas difference leads to disorder.”²⁴ Furthermore, the *Lüshi chunqiu* contends that “it is by the unity of laws and decrees [for people to follow] that different opinions can be united as one.”²⁵ The laws and decrees are not only used to eliminate different opinions but also to instruct people to conform to the ruler. Hence, *tong* in the ST, *Guanzi* and *Lüshi chunqiu* refers to the use of decrees or laws to exclude different opinions to achieve a state in which people are united under a single one.

The first vision of *tong* depends upon external forces, such as decrees, to rule out different opinions. The second vision, however, relies upon a dynamic process of coordinating different opinions. The *Shangshu* 尚書 (Book of Documents), for instance, maintains that:

When you [the king] have great doubts, consult your heart-mind, consult your ministers and officials, consult the common people and consult divination. If your heart-mind agrees [with your opinion], the tortoise agrees, the stalk agrees, the ministers and officials agree, the common people agree, it is called *datong*.²⁶

Any cautious decision can only be made after a process of consulting with different opinions. *Tong*, therefore, is associated with a process of coordinating different opinions. *Datong* in this sense refers to a state that results from consulting and adjusting different opinions to eventually form a wise one with which everyone agrees – rather than using external forces, such as laws or decrees, to remove the diverging opinions. Diverse opinions are essential for the process of such a vision of *tong*.

In addition, the “Jingfa” 經法 chapter of the *Huangdi sijing* 黃帝四經 (Four Canons of Yellow Emperor) of the *Mawangdui* 馬王堆 silk manuscripts follows the *Shangshu*’s interpretation, saying that “[the acts of a ruler should be] in oneness with heaven and earth, in accordance with the people’s heart-minds. [Because of this] the civil administration is appropriately operated, and the bans and punishments are executed in a timely fashion. [Such a state can be] called grand unity (上同 *shangtong*).”²⁷ A ruler should consult and unite everything in the cosmos, including heaven, earth and people, before forming his opinions and taking actions. This will make his decrees and actions appropriate and reasonable. The term *shangtong*, which is literally translated as “grand unity,” refers to a grand state of oneness between the ruler, the people, heaven, and earth. In such an ideal state of *shangtong*, every act is properly carried out after the comprehensive consultation and coordination of different opinions in the cosmos.

The first vision of *tong* requires a ruler to use laws or decrees to remove different opinions. In the second vision, meanwhile, the ruler depends upon a dynamic process

²⁴ 一則治，異則亂。 *Lüshi chunqiu xinjiaoshi*, p. 1135.

²⁵ 同法令所以一心也。 *Lüshi chunqiu xinjiaoshi*, p. 1134.

²⁶ 汝則有大疑，謀及乃心，謀及卿士，謀及庶人，謀及卜筮。汝則從，龜從，筮從，卿士從，庶民從，是之謂大同。 *Shangshu jinzhu jinyi*, p. 80. According to Qu Wanli, this text was formed in the Warring States period. See *Shangshu jinzhu jinyi*, p. 74.

²⁷ 參于天地，合于民心。文武並立。命之曰上同。 *Huangdi sijing jinzhu jinyi*, p. 103. *Wen* 文 and *wu* 武 in this context refer respectively to a state where a ruler’s acts are in oneness with heaven and earth and to a state where punishments and bans are executed on time and appropriately. See *Huangdi sijing jinzhu jinyi*, p. 103. It is worth noting that Chen Guying fails to interpret *tong*, for he explains *shangtong* 上同 as “the King will obtain approval from people” (君上得到人民的拥戴). See *Huangdi sijing jinzhu jinyi*, p. 105.

of coordinating and uniting different opinions to generate decrees. Furthermore, the two visions of *tong* can be respectively described by two phrases. The first is “laws and decrees are united to make heart-minds into oneness,”²⁸ which is put forth by the *Lüshi chunqiu*, while the second is suggested by the *Liji*, stressing that “the people’s heart-minds are united to generate the Way of ruling.”²⁹ It should be pointed out that both uniting the people’s heart-minds and uniting laws and decrees are essential for society’s oneness. The two are indeed associated: the oneness of the people’s heart-minds could produce a state in which the laws and decrees are more effectively carried out, while the unity of laws and decrees would in turn unite heart-minds as one. Nevertheless, early thinkers were concerned about which vision should take priority for social unity. I will discuss this complementary yet competing relation in my conclusion. In the next section, I compare the *Mozi*’s ST and the *Liji*’s LY to argue that the ST’s political thought represents the first vision, that is, emphasizing laws and decrees, while that of the LY belongs to the second, which focuses on the people’s heart-minds.

2.3 Textual Issues of the “Shangtong” and the “Liyun”

Before analyzing the two texts, I will consider the textual issues surrounding them. Neither the LY nor the ST appears to have been compiled or completed by a single person, but rather by many hands through a period of time.³⁰ I would admit that the concepts expressed in both texts may not always be consistent, and that a text may perhaps even contain different layers of thoughts.³¹ Nevertheless, I can read and

²⁸ 同法令所以一心。 *Lüshi chunqiu xinjiaoshi*, p. 1134.

²⁹ 同民心而出治道。 *LJJJ*, p. 977. It is worth noting that the *Liji*’s authors recognized the importance of external factors such as ritual, music and the penal code in ruling and uniting people’s opinions. Nevertheless, these factors are not used to eliminate different opinions.

³⁰ For discussions on the LY’s compilation, see Wang E 2004, pp. 138–142; Wang E 2006, p. 142; Riegel 1993, pp. 293–297. Wang argues that the LY was not completed by one hand and that there was a continual process of compilation. See Wang E 2004, p. 142. For discussions of the *Mozi*, see Maeder 1992, pp. 27–82; Graham 1993, pp. 336–341. Maeder claims that the ST chapter may originate from different sources and that there was a continual process that developed into the received text: “Instead of a single ‘Urtext’ for a triad (of the ST), we have to consider several. And as the texts or ‘internal’ documents the different chapters draw upon are varied and of altogether different dates [...] ancient Mohists did indeed draw on ‘written’ materials and probably never ceased, in turn, to record in writing the arguments they developed from them.” See Maeder 1992, p. 68. Carine Defoort also endorses the evolution theory of the *Mozi* text. See Defoort 2013, pp. 1–34. For other works discussing the textual nature of ST, see Desmet 2005, pp. 99–118; Loy 2005, pp. 141–158. Furthermore, an increasing number of scholars argue that it is impossible for the majority of the assumed pre-Qin works to have been authored or completed by a single person. Texts such as the *Zhuangzi* and the *Mengzi* may not have been completed until the Han dynasty. For those discussions, see Hunter 2014, pp. 33–79; Klein 2010, pp. 299–369.

³¹ For example, the LY is usually considered as a Ru text, but three paragraphs of this chapter probably belong to Yinyang wuxing 陰陽五行 thought, a correlative thought which perceives each and every thing in the universe as interconnected. See Wang E 2004, pp. 141–142. Chen Zhengyan and Lin Qitan argue that the LY represents a social ideal for thinkers from different schools such as Ru, Dao and Yinyang wuxing. See Chen Zhengyan – Lin Qitan 1988, pp. 92–93. It should be noted that the three paragraphs related to the Yinyang wuxing thought are usually believed to have been added to the LY text by Han dynasty Yinyang wuxing thinkers and are inconsistent with other parts of LY. See Ren Mingshan 1982, p. 25; Wang E 2004, p. 141. Moreover, Yinyang wuxing thought is not as essential as other concepts, such as *tian* 天, in the political theory of LY. Therefore, although Yinyang wuxing thought played an important role in Han thought, it is not the focus of the present article, in which I discuss the LY’s political theory. For the *Mozi*, Defoort argues that “[s]ince these

infer philosophies from the received texts while keeping in mind that other interpretations may exist. Given these textual concerns, I intend to treat the two texts as reflecting two different perspectives of political *tong* in the Warring States period instead of philosophies of two particular schools, namely, Mohist and Confucian.³²

I have put the ST and the LY's discourses of *tong* in the same context for the following reasons. First, the two texts share an obvious commonality in their practical concerns. In the face of the rifts and wars that derive from social division and disorder, the ST's authors suggested using *tong* to heal such a society from the great disorder. The LY's authors also attempted to address the same issue of how to unite a society that had been trapped in division and wars, and thereby eventually realize an ideal society of *datong*.

Second, both texts maintain that an ideal government should rule all under heaven as a family and all people as a single person.³³ This understanding basically involves a theoretical concern as to how differences – such as different states or different people – are united as one – say, into a family or person. This is the political *tong*. In addition, the LY and ST both take *tian* as the ultimate authority for their political thoughts. The ST suggests that the will of *tian* must be followed by all of the political acts; the LY claims that the rule must be based on *tian*.³⁴ The two texts' understandings of *tian* are in sharp contrast with the *Mengzi*'s view, which treats people and *tian* as equally important to political decision-making.³⁵

sources (of the text of the *Mozi*) were written by different authors at different times and in various places, one aspect of the sources' historical grounding lies in their reflection of these authors' own concerns and views, and not merely in their recording facts about the supposed master Mo." See Defoort 2014, p. 369.

³² Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Michael Nylan argue that the ascription of philosophical schools in early history, prior to and including Western Han, is an anachronistic imposition of a set of Eastern Han and post-Han concerns onto earlier periods. See Csikszentmihalyi – Nylan 2003, pp. 89–99. Christoph Harbsmeier holds a close view, particularly on Ru. See Harbsmeier 2013, pp. 1–19. The same argument can also be found in Smith 2003, pp. 129–156; Sivan 1978, pp. 303–330; and Boltz 2005, pp. 50–78.

³³ LY says that "a sage can look on all under heaven as one family, and on all in the Middle States as one man" (聖人耐以天下為一家，以中國為一人). *LJJI*, p. 606. ST makes the same point, saying that "bringing order to the states of the world is like bringing order to a single family. Making uses of the people of the world is like making use of one person" (治天下之國若治一家，使天下之民若使一夫). *MZJG*, p. 95.

³⁴ ST: "When the people of the world are all in unity with the son of heaven, but not with heaven, calamity is still not done away with" (天下之百姓皆上同於天子，而不上同於天，則菑猶未去也). *MZJG*, p. 76. LY: "The principles of ruling must originate from heaven" (夫政必本於天). *LJJI*, p. 604.

³⁵ That is, "what heaven sees originates from what the people see; what heaven hears originates from what the people hear" (天視自我民視，天聽自我民聽). See *Mengzi zhengyi*, p. 646. I must admit that the nature of *tian* in the *Mengzi* is difficult to identify; as Franklin Perkins points out, the *Mengzi* does not argue for any potential vision of heaven. However, Perkins also remarks that several passages juxtapose heaven and humans as if they were analogous. See Perkins 2014b, p. 117. In this sense, such a relation between heaven and humans is different from those indicated in the ST and the LY. Hence, I suggest that the view that treats people and *tian* as equally important in political decision-making can be found in the *Mengzi*, but this does not mean that the *Mengzi* text as a whole holds only such a view. In addition, for discussion of the political concept of "the people" in the *Chunqiu* 春秋 era, see Pines 2009, pp. 187–197.

The LY and ST share those commonalities in both practical concerns and theoretical assumptions. In the following, I compare how they develop their political thoughts of *tong* in divergent manners.

3. THE POLITICAL THOUGHTS OF *TONG* IN THE “SHANGTONG” AND THE “LIYUN”

Let me first discuss the ST’s understanding of *tong*. Faced with social rifts and disorder, the ST authors proposed a system to remove different opinions to unite the people. The primary concern is establishing government leaders. The text says:

It is quite clear that what is taken as disorder in the world arises from lack of “government leaders.” Therefore, the one who was the worthy and able in the world was selected and established as being *tianzi* 天子 (the son of heaven). When *tianzi* was established, because his strength alone was not sufficient, there was also selection and choice of the worthy and able of the world who were set up and established as the “Three Dukes.” When *tianzi* and the “Three Dukes” were already established, because the world was vast and wide and there were people of distant countries and different lands, the distinctions between right and wrong, and between benefit and harm could not be clearly understood by one or two people. There was, therefore, division into ten thousand states with the establishment of feudal lords and rulers of states. When feudal lords and rulers of states were already established, because their strength alone was not sufficient, there was also the choice and selection of the worthy and able of the states and their establishment as government leaders.³⁶

Government leaders play a central role in maintaining the order of society. First, those who are able and worthy, such as the *tianzi* 天子, the Three Dukes (*san gong* 三公) and feudal lords (*zhu hou* 諸侯), are selected to take the different positions. Second, the world is vast and wide, and hence a person’s strength is limited. To rule more effectively, the world is divided into small parts: the world divided into states, the state divided into villages and the village divided into districts. Then, a political system is established: *tianzi* in the highest authority ruling the whole world, then the Three Dukes who help *tianzi* address daily affairs, the feudal lords ruling the states, the village heads ruling villages, and finally the district heads ruling districts. In this system, government leaders (*zheng zhang* 正長) rule as follows:

When the government leaders were already all in place, the *tianzi* issued his decree to the people of the world, saying: “On hearing of good or evil, all must inform their superior. What the superior takes to be right, all must take to be right. What the superior takes to be wrong, all must take to be wrong. If those above have faults, then admonish and remonstrate with them. If those below do good, then enquire

³⁶ 夫明慮天下之所以亂者，生於無政長。是故選天下之賢可者，立以為天子。天子立，以其力為未足，又選擇天下之賢可者，置立之以為三公。天子三公既以立，以天下為博大，遠國異土之民、是非利害之辯，不可一二而明知，故畫分萬國，立諸侯國君。諸侯國君既已立，以其力為未足，又選擇其國之賢可者，置立之以為正長。MZJG, p. 74. For the translation, see Johnston 2009, pp. 91–93.

about and recommend them. *Tong* 同 (conformity) with superiors and aligning with inferiors – that is what superiors reward and what inferiors praise. If one hears of good or evil and does not inform one's superiors; if what ones' superiors take to be right cannot be taken to be right and what one's superiors take to be wrong cannot be taken to be wrong; if superiors have faults and one does not admonish and remonstrate with them; if those below are good and one does not enquire about and recommend them; if those below align [with one another] and are unable to *tong* with their superiors – these are what those above censure and what the ordinary people speak ill of." It was on this basis that those above carried out rewards and punishments.³⁷

Ruling relies upon the *tianzi*'s decree, who through rewards and punishments requires absolute conformity from the people. Inferiors must conform to their superiors by following the *tianzi*'s decree: what the superiors take to be right or wrong, the inferiors must take to be right or wrong. Although inferiors may admonish or remonstrate their superiors, they have no right to actually participate in political decision-making. They are thus unable to prevent in advance the faults or mistakes that the superiors may make, nor can they offer their opinions to the superiors for consideration. The right to participate in political decision-making is the superiors' exclusive remit. Furthermore, people's right of admonishment or remonstrance with the superiors is permitted or conferred by the decree of *tianzi*. Without the permit or conferment, people would have no such right. This again indicates that the *tianzi*'s decree is the ultimate political authority.

Different ranks of officials in the political system also issue decrees to their immediate inferiors, such as the ruler of the state to the people of the state, the village head to the people of the village, and the district head to the people of the district.³⁸ All of these decrees share the same concern as the *tianzi*'s: eliminating different opinions to require inferiors to conform absolutely to their superiors. Because all these decrees ask everyone below to obey those above, the *tianzi* is the ultimate authority in this system. Therefore, the ST's goal is to reach a state in which people follow the *tianzi* absolutely, as it says "it is only the *tianzi* (son of heaven) who is able to *yi* — (unify) and *tong* 同 (unite) principles of the world."³⁹ Both *yi* and *tong* refer to a process of removing different opinions to achieve a state in which only a single opinion – namely, of the *tianzi* – is retained and absolutely obeyed.

The *tianzi* is the political system's highest authority, whose legitimacy theoretically originates from the anthropomorphic *tian*. The ST claims that if the people of the world are in oneness with the *tianzi* but not with *tian*, calamities will remain and be unleashed through natural disasters, such as storms or heavy rains.⁴⁰ To avoid the calamities from *tian*, *tianzi* must lead the people of the world to "serve ghosts

³⁷ 正長既已具，天子發政於天下之百姓，言曰：「聞善而不善，皆以告其上。上之所是必皆是之，所非必皆非之。上有過則規諫之，下有善則傍薦之。上同而不下比者，此上之所賞，而下之所譽也。意若聞善而不善，不以告其上，上之所是弗能是，上之所非弗能非，上有過弗規諫，下有善弗傍薦。下比不能上同者，此上之所罰而百姓所毀也。」上以此為賞罰。MZJG, pp. 74–75. For the translation, see Johnston 2009, p. 93.

³⁸ Among the ST's triad, the first part's description of orders from different ranks of officials in the system is identical with that of the second part. See Johnston 2009, pp. 90–115.

³⁹ 天子唯能壹同天下之義。MZJG, p. 75.

⁴⁰ MZJG, p. 76.

and spirits” (*shi guishen* 事鬼神).⁴¹ “Serving ghosts and spirits” not only requires the *tianzi* to offer sacrifices appropriately and in a timely fashion, but more generally it involves the *tianzi*’s administrative affairs and daily behaviours, such as hearing lawsuits, distributing wealth, ordinary dwellings and more.⁴² Nearly every act of the *tianzi* in daily life is related to “serving ghosts and spirits.” Nevertheless, neither ghosts and spirits nor the anthropomorphic *tian* plays any role in political decision-making. Although every political principle or order should be carried out in accordance with the anthropomorphic *tian*, the ST contains no indication that any political decision-making has been made or partly influenced by mystic powers such as divination, as recorded in the *Shangshu* and the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (Zuo’s Commentary).⁴³ In other words, *tian* is thought to only be able to respond retroactively to bad political activities through natural omens, and it is the *tianzi* who holds the exclusive and highest authority in politics. Therefore, even though *tian* is theoretically the ultimate authority in politics, the *tianzi* is the real authority and takes the central position in the political system.

The ST’s main points are as follows. First, to unite the people of the society, the *tianzi* excludes different opinions by issuing decrees that everyone must conform to. Second, although admonishing or remonstrating with the superiors is permitted and *tian* is considered able to respond to acts of bad rule through calamity, neither people nor *tian* can participate in political decision-making, which is exclusively conducted by the *tianzi*.⁴⁴

The ST advocates a political system that depends upon the *tianzi*’s decrees. The LY, by contrast, proposes another system in which *li* 禮 (ritual) plays a central role. *Li* has two features. First, it is a tradition that was not invented by a particular ruler but had been used by ancient kings to follow the Way of *tian* through a long period,⁴⁵ and therefore is independent of any political systems of the world. According to the LY, *li* begins with handling of foods and drinks, because these are often used to offer reverence to ghosts, spirits and forebears.⁴⁶ It is then applicable to everything that relates to the living and dead.⁴⁷ Everyone, including a political system’s ruler, must follow *li* – making *li*, not the ruler, the political system’s highest authority.

Second, *li* is comprehensive and all-encompassing, involved in every part of life from public conduct on occasions such as funeral rites and sacrifices, archery and chariot-driving, capping and marriage, audiences and friendly missions, and eating and drinking, to personal behavior such as means of offerings and acts of strength, words and postures of courtesy.⁴⁸ Furthermore, *li* exists in every aspect

⁴¹ MZJG, p. 81. The expression “ghosts and spirits” is often used to generally refer to supernatural beings in the universe such as gods and deceased ancestors.

⁴² MZJG, pp. 81–82.

⁴³ The *Shangshu* suggests that actors should consult divination before making crucial decisions. For example, see *Shangshu jinzhu jinyi*, p. 80. The *Zuozhuan* also records various examples. See *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu*, pp. 1392–1393.

⁴⁴ According to this theory, all political powers are actually concentrated on the *tianzi*. In this sense, I disagree with Xiao Gongquan’s argument that the ST’s theory does not advocate autocratic monarchy. See Xiao Gongquan 2001, pp. 127–132.

⁴⁵ LJJJ, pp. 585, 616.

⁴⁶ LJJJ, p. 586.

⁴⁷ LJJJ, pp. 586–587.

of politics to “distinguish what is doubtful and illuminate what is abstruse, intercourse with ghosts and spirits, examine all statutory arrangements, and identify (conduct of) benevolence and righteousness, thereby making the government ordered and the ruler secured.”⁴⁹ In addition, producing a harmonious society, either by regulating *qing* 情 (emotion) such as joy, anger, love and dislike, or by instructing one’s relationships with others, say, family members, friends and one’s superiors, relies upon *li*.⁵⁰

Li’s role in uniting a society lies in two aspects. First, with respect to its authority, it should be followed by each and every one, from the *tianzi* to society’s common people, and regulate their every act in daily life. Second, *li* is comprehensive, for it is not only closely associated with political conduct but also with every aspect of personal life.

The LY and ST differ in four ways as to how a society should be united. First, the LY proposes that *li* unite the world, while the ST emphasizes decrees. The LY contends that *li* is the highest authority in the political system, which everyone, including the *tianzi*, should follow. The ST does not deny *li*’s necessity for uniting a society; its goal indeed is to recover *li*, e.g. between family members.⁵¹ Nevertheless, the text does not view *li* as essential for society as the LY does. In the *Mozi*, *li* only represents a series of basic norms that are applicable to the regulation of social or personal conduct, but any of its decoration is considered superfluous and unnecessary;⁵² therefore, *li* does not play a central role in regulating and uniting a society but merely serves as a minimal norm for people to obey. Uniting society simply lies in, as the ST proposes, the *tianzi*’s decrees.

Second, whether *li* or decree is the central means for uniting society leads to different views on the ruler’s role in the political system. In the LY, as *li* is the highest authority in political system, the ruler is viewed as *li*’s highest executor. For the ST, the *tianzi*, whose decrees everyone in society must obey, possesses the exclusive power to issue decrees and is therefore the ultimate authority and the system’s lawmaker.

Third, the political systems are accordingly different. In the ST, maintaining a political system depends upon a rigid system, in which every rank of governmental officials demands absolute conformity from their people by issuing decrees to their inferiors. Such a hierarchy, therefore, is used to unite everyone in this system to follow the *tianzi*’s decrees. The LY’s system does not rely upon such a rigid method, instead requiring those of all ranks to play their due roles in accordance with *li*.⁵³ This view proposes that a society should be united through everyone’s

⁴⁸ *LJJJ*, pp. 616, 585.

⁴⁹ 別嫌明微，儻鬼神，考制度，別仁義，所以治政安君也。 *LJJJ*, p. 602.

⁵⁰ *LJJJ*, p. 607.

⁵¹ The ST maintains that society’s disorder is associated with the condition that “there is no *jie* (principles) between the ruler and his subjects, between the higher and the lower, and between the older and the younger, and no *li* (rituals) between father and sons and between brothers” (無君臣上下長幼之節、父子兄弟之禮)。 *MZJG*, p. 77. In other words, recovering social order lies partly in the recovery of *li* between family members.

⁵² For example, the *Mozi* claims that “the decoration of elaborate ritual and music would only lead people to indulging” (繁飾禮樂以淫人)。 *MZJG*, p. 291.

⁵³ This point can be inferred from the claim “what is called the appropriateness of man? The ten aspects, namely, the father being caring, the son being filial, the old brother being amicable, the younger brother being obedient, the husband being righteous, the wife being compliant, the older being kind, the younger being submissive, the ruler being benevolent, the subjects being loyal, are called the appropriateness of man [...] Therefore without *li*, how can the sage regulate the seven

participation – from *tianzi* to governmental officials and to common people – in political decision-making, rather than merely through the decrees issued from the superiors to the inferiors.

The LY's and ST's different understandings of political systems reflect the fourth and fundamental divergence, about how to treat *qing* for an individual. *Qing* is a polysemic word, which could refer to emotion or, in some early Chinese literature, refers to genuineness or fact.⁵⁴ In the ST, *qing* specifically refers to the genuine expressions that the ruled show to their ruler;⁵⁵ the text employs this term to denote genuineness or fact rather than emotion. Paying no attention to *qing*'s emotional aspect, the ST focuses more on regulating people's conduct by decrees instead of regulating emotional activities through self-cultivation. In contrast, the LY adopts *qing* to mean emotions such as joy, anger, sadness, fear, love, disliking and desire.⁵⁶ It says:

A person's great desires lie in drinking, foods, [sexual relationships between] man and woman; the great dislikes lie in death, exile, poverty and suffering. So desires and dislikes are great inclinations in heart-minds, and man hides them in his heart-minds, so they cannot be fathomed or measured [by others]. With the good and bad [of emotions about things] being hidden in heart-mind, but not manifested outside, if one wants to determinate [others' desires or dislikes], how can one achieve this without *li*?⁵⁷

The LY claims that *qing*, which is generally divided into two kinds, namely, like and dislike, is inevitably involved in daily life. Because the heart-mind, from which every emotion directly issues, cannot be fathomed or measured, external expressions or conduct cannot truly reflect the internal genuine emotions. Thus, why is *li* the fundamental way to determine the heart-mind's inclinations? In another place, the LY suggests that regulating emotions relies on *li*.⁵⁸ Given that emotions issue directly from the heart-mind, regulating emotions boils down to regulating the heart-mind through *li*. That is, when we use *li* to cultivate and transform the heart-mind, emotions would be issuing appropriately from the heart-mind and in accordance

emotions of man and cultivate the ten kinds of appropriateness?" (何謂人義? 父慈、子孝、兄良、弟弟、夫義、婦聽、長惠、幼順、君仁、臣忠十者, 謂之人義 ... 故聖人所以治人七情, 脩十義 ... 舍禮何以治之?). *LJJJ*, pp. 606–607. In other words, a sage practices *li* to regulate people's emotions and cultivate roles such as father, son, brother or official.

⁵⁴ For discussions, see *Graham 1986*, pp. 7–66; *Bruya 2010*, pp. 151–176. Graham points out that *qing* in pre-Han literature never means passions but connotes genuineness or essence. Bruya admits that Graham is correct in observing that *qing* can and often means genuine and fact, but he argues that the term *qing* is polysemic and includes a sense of emotions in early thought.

⁵⁵ For example: "The rule of the ruler is to obtain the genuineness of those below [which involves conduct that is genuine rather than hypocritical or artificial]" (上之為政得下之情). *MZJG*, p. 89.

⁵⁶ "What can be considered emotions of man? [They are] joy, anger, sadness, fear, love, disliking, and desire" (何謂人情? 喜、怒、哀、懼、愛、惡、欲). *LJJJ*, p. 606.

⁵⁷ 飲食男女, 人之大欲存焉。死亡貧苦, 人之大惡存焉。故欲惡者, 心之大端也。人藏其心, 不可測度也。美惡皆在其心, 不見其色也。欲一以窮之, 舍禮何以哉! *LJJJ*, p. 607.

⁵⁸ That is, "how to achieve that which is used by the sage to regulate the seven emotions of man, cultivate the ten kinds of appropriateness to achieve a state of promoting truthfulness and maintaining harmony, showing consideration and complaisant courtesy, putting away quarrelling and plundering, without *li*?" (聖人之所以治人七情, 脩十義, 講信睦睦, 尚辭讓, 去爭奪, 舍禮何以治之?). *LJJJ*, p. 607.

with *li*, and accordingly external conduct would be performed in a consistent way. Consequently, external conduct would be consistent with inclinations of the heart-mind; we can therefore determine people's internal emotions by observing their external conduct. In contrast, if people are forced by external factors such as decrees or orders, as the ST proposes, to conduct themselves properly; they may be unwilling to conform, external conduct may not reflect inclinations of the heart-mind, and we cannot determine the real inclinations of the heart-mind through external expressions.

The ST suggests achieving social unity through decrees regulating individual conduct, while the LY proposes *li* to fundamentally regulate the heart-mind to reach a harmonious society.⁵⁹ The LY's approach is mirrored in another chapter of the *Liji*, the "Daxue" 大學 (Great Learning). The "Daxue" argues that society's oneness lies in the self-cultivation of everyone, from the *tianzi* to the common people, which boils down to "regulating the heart-mind" (*zhengxin* 正心).⁶⁰ This way contrasts sharply with the opinion proposed in the *Mozhi*. Interestingly, the *Mozhi* also has a chapter titled "Xiushen" 修身 (On Self-Cultivation). However, this chapter focuses on external conduct rather than the regulation of the heart-mind.⁶¹ The cultivation of the heart-mind is completely ignored in the *Mozhi*.

Another Confucian text, *Xunzi* 荀子, also considers self-cultivation central to uniting society and suggests that it lies simply in learning and practicing *li*.⁶² A society in which people follow *li*, play their due roles and are "harmonized into oneness" (*beyi* 和一) is called *zhiping* 至平 (extreme tranquility).⁶³ The society of *zhiping* reminds us of the society of *xiaokang* 小康 (small prosperity) that the LY describes. Both *zhiping* and *xiaokang* highlight *li* in uniting society's divisions, such as the public and the private, into a harmonious one.⁶⁴

However, according to the LY, neither *zhiping* nor *xiaokang* can be considered ideal, because a *zhiping* or *xiaokang* society still relies upon external forces, namely, *li*, in regulating people's conduct. By contrast, *datong* is an ideal society in which distinctions between the public and the private would disappear; people live harmoniously with one another, their conduct is spontaneously carried out and in accordance with *li*.⁶⁵ In the *datong* society, *li* would never have been viewed as external forces enforced upon people but rather as internal principles that the people have already internalized in their hearts and follow spontaneously.

A small but not unimportant question then arises: why is the ideal society called *datong*? I believe that this term is perhaps used in contrast with *xiaokang* and the political theory of *tong* in the ST. *Xiaokang* is a society that depends upon *li* enforced on people. *Kang* means prosperous, so *xiaokang* refers to a society that becomes

⁵⁹ See the cited text in note 58.

⁶⁰ *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, p. 3.

⁶¹ It maintains that "for a noble man, learning is important, but conduct is more fundamental" (士雖有學，而行為本焉). *MZJG*, p. 7.

⁶² See the "Xiushen" 修身 chapter, *Xunzi jijie*, pp. 21–36.

⁶³ *Xunzi jijie*, pp. 70–71.

⁶⁴ *Xunzi jijie*, pp. 70–71; *LJJJ*, p. 583.

⁶⁵ See the paragraph cited in note 1. It should be noted that one feature of *datong* society is *jiangxin xiumu* 講信修睦. This feature is also of a different society in which the sage use *li* to reach it. See note 58. As *li* is not mentioned in *datong* society, we can assume that in *datong* *li* would never be enforced upon but followed spontaneously by people.

prosperous by relying upon *li*. Yet, in contrast with *da* 大 (great) of *datong*, which implies an extremely perfect society, *xiao* 小 (small) of *xiaokang* does reveal a society that is far from perfect because it still relies upon external regulations.

Both the LY and the ST present their ideal societies in association with *tong*. In terms of a process of DTO, both theories can be viewed as *tong*, because they are concerned with how to unite a society trapped in disorders and divisions into oneness. Yet, the political system in the ST appears so rigid that people are constrained and forced to follow the ruler's decrees. *Tong* is the very method to sustain the system by eliminating different opinions to arrive at a single one. Presumably, the LY's authors considered the ST's vision of *tong* as neither desirable, for it excludes society's diversities and differences, nor sustainable in practice, because the ruler's decrees would not always be reasonable if the people are barred from participating in political decision-making, more likely leading to failure or even disaster for society as whole. A *datong* society, on the contrary, would never rule out differences or require absolute conformity from people; it is a society in which people live spontaneously and harmoniously with others. Therefore, perhaps, by combining *da* with *tong* to coin a new term, *datong*, the LY's authors deliberately distinguished their understanding of an ideal society of *tong* from that presented in the ST.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The LY and the ST present two distinct understandings of how a society is united from differences and divisions. The LY contends that uniting society should not sacrifice differences but should focus on personal self-cultivation; *li*, which is used for self-cultivation, would lead people to eventually live harmoniously with one another. The ST suggests that a society can only be united by removing differences, and accordingly designs a political system that requires people's absolute conformity to the ruler. A crucial issue then lies in front of us: how do we understand the relation between the two visions of *tong* in early China?

Before approaching this issue, I intend to introduce Mou Bo's insightful work on the methodology of how to engage in comparative philosophy today. Though Mou's work primarily concerns the methodology for cross-cultural philosophical comparisons,⁶⁶ it is quite helpful for us to compare different philosophical currents within Chinese tradition. The example that Mou provides to explicate how doing comparative philosophy is possible is particularly illuminating for our accounting for the two visions of *tong*. Mou's example is as follows:

[C]onsider our comparative examination of Confucius' and Socrates' methodological perspectives in dialogue on the issue of (filial) piety. One might raise a good question: "When we are conducting comparative philosophy, how can we know that different thinkers from different traditions are talking about the same object? In other words, the same 'house'⁶⁷ in my metaphor?" When we carry out this comparative

⁶⁶ I particularly thank one of the anonymous peer reviewers who reminded me of Mou's work. For Mou's methodology, see [Mou Bo 2016](#), pp. 265–277; [Mou Bo 2010](#), pp. 1–32; and [Mou Bo 2015](#), pp. 303–337.

⁶⁷ The "house" metaphor means that when a person intends to approach her house (the object of study), which has several entrances (various aspects of the object of study), she needs to choose a

examination of Socrates' and Confucius' distinct approaches to how to understand '(filial) piety', the addressed general 'same-object' issue shows up here as follows: "Were both thinkers talking about the same 'piety'?" Well, both people in the West and people in the East have parents (instead of the guys in one location being produced from nowhere and thus having no parents), and both can know they are talking about the same issue of filial piety and the same (type of) object (a kind of respect feeling) that both groups of guys are really experiencing in their real lives towards their parents (if they do have parents). By looking at the *Euthyphro* and Confucius' 2.5–2.8 of the *Analects*, both talk about what constitute the sons'/daughters' "reverence" feeling, emotion, and attitude towards their parents; in this way, though this emotion/attitudes is labeled 'filial piety' in English and '孝' in Chinese, clearly they are talking about the same object in human society on this same earth.⁶⁸

A cross-cultural comparison – in this case between Confucius' and Socrates' methodological perspectives on the issue of (filial) piety – must satisfy two conditions. First, people in both the East and West must know the same issue, e.g., filial piety. Second, both must possess the factors that the issue fundamentally involves. For the issue of (filial) piety, they must have parents and meanwhile in real lives have experiences in living with their parents.

If two distinct perspectives on a subject do exist, how do we recognize their respective eligibilities? Mou proceeds to explain:

[C]onsider the two samples of methodological perspectives, namely, the Socrates-style being-aspect-concerned perspective and the Confucius-style becoming-aspect-concerned perspective. The two kinds of methodological perspectives point respectively to the two most basic modes of existence (being and becoming) of things in the world that are typically possessed simultaneously by most things in nature. Now the object of study under Socrates' and Confucius' examination is (filial) piety. If piety as the object of study genuinely possesses both its being and becoming aspects, Socrates' and Confucius' are both eligible in regard to our reflective examination of piety.⁶⁹

Only if a perspective points to the most basic aspect that the object of study genuinely possesses can it be considered eligible for the object's study. If two eligible perspectives exist, how does an agent then adopt his/her working perspective, or how can one evaluate the validity of some other agent's working perspective? Mou furthermore suggests that this depends on the agent's purpose or his/her own focus on which aspect of the object s/he wishes to capture in a certain context.⁷⁰

The above work by Mou has provided enough insights into our following discussion of the two visions of *tong*. Philosophically, comparison between the LY and the ST became possible, because both texts met two conditions. First, both

path (methodological perspective), wield a certain tool (a methodological instrument), and have a certain idea in her mind (methodological guiding principle). For a detailed account of the "house" metaphor, see Mou Bo 2016, p. 268.

⁶⁸ Mou Bo 2016, p. 270.

⁶⁹ Mou Bo 2016, p. 270.

⁷⁰ Mou Bo 2016, p. 271.

texts' authors are concerned with the same issue of how to unite a society as one, that is, *tong*. Second, both texts' authors live in a society that is trapped into divisions and even chaos and wish to unite such a divisive and chaotic society into oneness. To reach the oneness, the two texts' authors point to different approaches: the ST's authors advocate decrees or laws, while the LY's authors focuses on *li*. Nonetheless, they hold the same goal, that is, to attain a society of *tong*.

Are both visions of *tong* then eligible? As I have discussed, the LY presents a vision of uniting differences through a bottom-up approach of self-cultivation, which boils down to *li* regulating and transforming the heart-mind; the ST suggests a top-down approach to social unity, focusing on decrees or laws issued by superiors to obtain absolute obedience from inferiors. Though the two approaches are quite distinct ways for a society to achieve oneness, they point respectively to the most basic aspects, i.e., *li* and *fa* 法 (law, method), that early Chinese society simultaneously possesses.⁷¹ Therefore, both visions are eligible in regard to early Chinese thinkers' reflection on society's *tong*. And because *li* and *fa* are essential to society, the ruler would not choose between two visions by adopting one and completely abandoning the other. The two visions, in other words, are complementary in ruling a society; but which one should be taken as priority – as manifested in the competing relations between the two in the Qin and Western Han dynasties – does matter to people in politics, and depends on a certain context for political decision-making. The complementary and competing relations between the two visions both greatly shaped the early Chinese political agenda.

Let us first consider how the competing relation had proceeded in the Qin and Western Han political debates. After the unification of all under the heaven, the First Emperor (*shihuang* 始皇) of Qin (259–210 BCE) still encountered challenges and disagreements from people. To eliminate differences and thereby recover the oneness of society, his Chancellor Li Si 李斯 (284–208 BCE) argued that all under the heaven should be unified, and that laws and decrees should come from a sole source, namely, the First Emperor; private learning, he maintained, only incited people to use their own opinions to debate, to disagree with and even to slander the Emperor's laws and decrees. To recover oneness from such divisions, Li suggested that all private learning should be banned, and that anyone wanting to learn about laws and decrees should turn to legal officials.⁷² Clearly, Li's standpoint is akin to that of the ST: only when different opinions are removed and people absolutely obey the ruler's laws and decrees can the oneness of society be recovered and maintained.

The Emperor eventually accepted and adopted Li's advice, which thenceforth dominated the political discourse until the fall of Qin.⁷³ The competition between the two visions of *tong*, however, continued into the Western Han. Many of early Han thinkers reflected upon Qin's demise. Jia Yi 賈誼 (200–168 BCE), for example, argued that Qin ultimately failed because it ruled by countless laws and decrees, but

⁷¹ For detailed discussions of the relation between *li* and *fa* in Chinese history, see Bodde 1963, pp. 386–291; Qu Tongzu 1981, pp. 303–325.

⁷² *Shiji*, pp. 254–255.

⁷³ For the discussion, see Bodde 1963, pp. 386–387.

not by benevolence and righteousness.⁷⁴ To avoid Qin's tragedy, Jia suggested that *li* is the means to regulate the conduct of people, to unite them and create social stability.⁷⁵ Jia's thought is evidently along the lines of the LY.

Between laws and punishments on the one side and benevolence and *li* on the other, the debate over which should take priority in ruling further culminated in the reign of Han Zhaodi 漢昭帝 (94–74 BCE). In a meeting (81 BCE) held to debate the national policy, officials argued that laws and punishments should be the government's priority, while literary scholars on the other side contended that benevolence and *li* should be more essential.⁷⁶ Such a consequential debate is usually viewed as a representation of the divergence between Confucians and Legalists on how to rule a society.⁷⁷ Again, as I have demonstrated in this article, the divergence can be traced back to the LY's and ST's differing visions of *tong*.

Let us turn to the complementary relation. Notably, even when the competition between the two visions had become fierce in such a time as the Qin dynasty, the complementary mode still existed. The bamboo slips and stone inscriptions from the Qin, for example, indicate that even when the vision related to *fa* dominated Qin's politics, Ru principles such as *li*, loyalty or reverence and others still played a remarkable role in the people's regulation and cultivation.⁷⁸ In the following Han dynasty, the vision related to *li* had gradually displaced that related to *fa*; but *li* and *fa* were always adopted in a complementary manner by Han rulers, exactly as Han Xuandi 漢宣帝 (91–49 BCE) claimed that the Han family had its own principles in ruling, which at all times synthesized different ideas, such as *li*, *fa*, etc.⁷⁹ The complementary relation can be furthermore manifested in the process of the "Confucianization of the law"⁸⁰ since the Qin. Paul Goldin gives a precise account of this term:

[It] is a process by which the legal system, comprising not only statutes and ordinances, but also principles of legal interpretation and legal theorizing, came to reflect the view that the law must uphold proper interactions among people, in accordance with their respective relationships, in order to bring about an orderly society.⁸¹

Goldin incisively grasps the two basic aspects that *li* and *fa* respectively involve in bringing about an orderly society. *Fa* is the pillar bearing a whole legal system,

⁷⁴ *Xinshu jiaozhu*, pp. 3, 16.

⁷⁵ *Xinshu jiaozhu*, pp. 214, 380, 378. For recent works on Jia's political thought, see Sabattini 2017, pp. 263–284. It should be noted that Jia does not suggest completely abandoning *fa*, merely putting *li* first. See Goldin 2012, p. 3.

⁷⁶ This debate can be found in *Yantielun jiaozhu*, pp. 565–566, 568.

⁷⁷ For example, Lao Gan holds such view. See Lao Gan 2006, pp. 231–232. It should be noted that the Confucian tradition had never considered *fa* unimportant and disregarded it. On the contrary, both Confucius and Mencius, for example, regarded *fa* as necessary in ruling; Xunzi sees *fa* as almost as important as *li*. Nevertheless, Confucius, Mencius, Xunzi and other Confucians view *li* as more essential than *fa*, and thus deserving of priority. For discussion, see Qu Tongzu 1981, pp. 308–311.

⁷⁸ For discussions, see Wang Jian 2012, pp. 51–56; Jin Tengfei 2016.

⁷⁹ *Hanshu*, p. 277.

⁸⁰ This term was first coined by Qu Tongzu. For detailed discussion, see Qu Tongzu 1981, pp. 328–346.

⁸¹ Goldin 2012, p. 6.

while *li* operates fundamentally in interpersonal relationships. Both *li* and *fa* are essential and complementarily contributing to bringing about and moreover sustaining the unity of society.

Thus far, I have discussed the dynamic evolution of the relation between a vision connected to *li* and a vision connected to *fa* in the Qin and Western Han dynasties. We may relate a particular view close to the ST to the Mohist or Legalist stance,⁸² or attribute a perspective close to the LY to a Confucian perspective or others. Nevertheless, the two distinct visions of uniting a society with divisions and differences had been rooted in early political thought. They had competed with and more importantly complemented each another, thereby shaping not only the early Chinese political agenda but also the history that followed.

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⁸² It is worth noting that Goldin questions the usage of term legalism (*fajia* 法家), for although the word *fa* can include the sense of “law,” *fa*’s basic meanings are “method” and “standard.” See Goldin, 2011, p. 91. However, the problem of legalism’s naming is not my focus here. It should be noted that thinkers who are usually attributed to the category of legalism, such as Han Fei 韓非 (280–233 BCE) and Li Si, take *fa*, namely, decrees or laws, as priority for ruling, which is akin to the view in the ST. For a discussion on Han Fei’s political order in relation to *fa*, see Galvany 2013, pp. 92–95.

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CHINESE ABSTRACT

如何統合一個分裂與異議並存的社會？——早期政治思想中「同」的兩種解讀

「同」在中國早期政治思想史中是一個非常重要的政治觀念。比如，在《墨子》的〈尚同〉與《禮記》的〈禮運〉章節中，一個理想的社會都與「同」密切關聯。但是，作為政治觀念的「同」卻缺乏相應的學術關注。相對於一般將「同」理解為「相同」或者「同一」，本文基於「同」的語源學含義與文本中的表達，認為「同」的基本意涵是「異而合一」。本文將聚焦於〈尚同〉與〈禮運〉，分析並比較兩文本所呈現的對「同」的理解。本文將表明，早期政治思想中對於如何統合一個分裂與異議並存的社會問題，這兩文本正代表兩種不同的思考趨向。

關鍵詞：同的觀念、〈尚同〉、〈禮運〉、大同、早期中國政治思想

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