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# The Voice of Peace: Philosophical Musicality as a Promoter of Peace in Confucianism

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**Abstract:** The main focus of this article is the explanatory power that music has in Confucianism according to the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語) and *The Classic of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記), which is reaffirmed in the Song Dynasty by Zhou Dunyi in the chapters on music in *Tongshu* ( 通書, *The Penetrating Book*). The article suggests that *Tongshu*'s chapters on music demonstrate the non-linear and non-metaphysical musical nature of Confucianism. According to this suggestion, the chapters introduce a dynamic, living model for the Confucian Way, on its own terms. This musical model supports the early Confucian vision of a multifaceted person, progressing in a multi-dimensional Way within a multi-layered polysemic world. Progressing along the Way, self-cultivation appears as one's task to develop the various musical potentialities inherent in her or himself. The article opens with the epistemological idea of "musical knowledge" acquired by attuned hearing that winds up in a creative, peacemaking heart. Next, it introduces the ontological idea of a government that models cosmic harmony, depicting the leader as having an orchestral conductor's aptitude; last, it presents a pragmatic perspective on the idea of musical education through the rules of propriety, depicting the practitioner as a skillful music player.

**Keywords:** music; harmony; peace; perception; Confucianism; *Analects*; Zhou Dunyi; *Tongshu*

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> Music is the language of the spirit.
> It opens the secret of life bringing peace, abolishing strife.
>
> Kahlil Jibran

## 1. Introduction

Exactly five weeks after he took office, Israeli prime minister Yair Lapid faced his first security crisis. Needing a boost to the credibility of a leader who had no military record or experience in senior security posts, with elections nearing again, he proved his ability; the Gaza Strip was attacked again, and in return, sirens cut the daily hustle of Tel-Aviv as well as other communities around the country, warning of approaching missiles and bringing us back to the shelters as a matter of familiar summer routine. They called this military attack "Breaking Dawn"—how much more cynical can politics be regarding human life?

While these days make it seem impossibly naïve to imagine a politics that is based on a musical model and guided by harmony and peacemaking rather than strife and victory, it can be beneficial, at least, to reflect on this Confucian suggestion. It might be considered utopian, but this utopia is in fact extremely practical and requires daily attunement in every minor decision; while the aspiration is an ideal that cannot be fully attained, striving toward it through human daily deeds is an essential requirement, and the realization of such an ongoing striving is in human hands.

This article presents the Confucian suggestion for a politics with no cynicism that is based on music and harmony leading to peace. Broadly speaking, it presents the Confucian understanding of auditory perception, in particular through music, as enhancing harmony and promoting peace. As suggested here, in the Confucian world, the Way (*dao*, 道) inherently conveyed as music (*yue*, 樂) and modeled on harmony (*he*, 和), works wonders in the cosmic, socio-political, and personal realms.

The focus of this article is neither how music is treated in Confucianism nor its conceptions in China, nor the wide range of texts on music, their cultural and political significance, the uses of music for state unification or imperialism, or how music is related to religious, cultural, and medical practices in China.[1] Rather, it is the musicality of Confucianism being suggestive of all times. The article takes its cue from early Confucian sources, mainly the Confucian *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語 1936) and *The Classic of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記 n.d., hereafter abbreviated *Rites*). It then moves on to the chapters on music in *Tongshu* ( 通書, *The Penetrating Book*) by Zhou Dunyi, 周敦頤 (1017–1073) (Zhou 1937), the so-called "pioneering neo-Confucian," who reaffirmed Confucian ideas in the China of the Song Dynasty (960–1279) using systematic terminologies and discourse. The rest is organized in three parts: The article opens with the epistemological idea of "musical knowledge" acquired by attuned hearing that winds up in a creative, peacemaking heart. Next, it introduces the ontological idea of a government that models cosmic harmony, depicting the leader as having an orchestral conductor's aptitude; last, it presents a pragmatic perspective on the idea of musical education through the rules of propriety, depicting the practitioner as a skillful music player.

## 2. An Epistemology of Auditory Knowledge in a Hearing Heart-Mind

Music, as a form of knowledge that is based on audition rather than vision, plays a major role in the Confucian art of peace. Indeed, proper hearing is a precondition to the musical understanding that following the Confucian Way necessitates. When Confucius says that "hearing the Way in the morning, one may die in the evening" ( 朝聞道，夕死可矣, *Analects* 4:8), he accentuates the uniqueness of knowledge attained through hearing (*wen*, 聞) becomes evident. When the Way fills him, Confucius truly hears; that is, he hears beyond words and sounds. As we shall see in the next sections, he attunes his ears to heaven and earth, where cosmic, harmonious creativity inspires peacemaking through acting according to propriety in the world under heaven. Therefore, despite the fact that other Chinese words (most commonly *zhi*, 知) denote knowledge, and notwithstanding the centrality of the Way, which is naturally depicted through visual images, "hearing" is the ultimate way of knowing, and, in particular, it is the only way that opens up to the musicality of knowledge, as the graph of "sage" (*sheng*, 聖) implies, having "ear" as the radical (*er* 耳) next to "mouth" (*kou*, 口), which, together, crown a "king" (*wang* 王).

The *Rites* say that when an exemplary person hears musical instruments, he does not hear only the sounds that they emit; rather, there are associated ideas that accompany these sounds (*Rites* 19.42).[2] Indeed, appreciating music is appreciating the complexity of ideas brought by sounds, sequences, arrangements, and structures, as well as the creative temporal aspects of the auditory experience. Music demands hearing in a way that abstracts from environmental influences and from the specific sources of its sounds (Scruton 1997, pp. 2–3). We then experience sounds in a way that is "detached from the circumstances of their production" and reach profound meanings (Hamilton 2007, p. 58).

The varieties and spans of hearing In Confucianism appear in *Analects* 6:9, when Confucius asks his disciple, Zigong, about his abilities as compared with those of Yan Hui. Zigong honestly replies that Hui hears one point and knows all about a subject, while he only knows a second. Apparently, Zigong differentiates his own linear analysis, which takes him from one point to the next, from the expansive musical hearing of Hui that brings him to full understanding. True hearing expands direct auditing activity, in particular, in the context of learning and self-cultivation. The ability to truly hear what one listens to is not a trivial attainment; rather, it demands ongoing practice, nurturing, and refinement, as acknowledged by Confucius' description of his own progression along the Way. Starting at fifteen by setting his heart on learning, and then, at the age of thirty, establishing his base and being able to take a firm stand, followed, at forty, by freeing himself from doubt and establishing trust; later on, at fifty, he knows heaven's mandate, and only at the age of sixty has his ear became attuned (*ershun*, 耳順). The relatively late achievement of Confucius should not be taken as coincidental; the nuanced ability of the ear is an attainment

that goes beyond specific verbal expressions or tunes, which then allows one to follow the heart without transgressing the moral boundaries set by propriety (*Analects* 2:4.). The ability to truly hear what one listens to is an attainment reached in the ongoing process of self-cultivation and is not an easy task. Attuned hearing demands awareness of the source of the sound and is loaded with information that has to be deciphered regarding that which has been heard.

This Confucian understanding is particularly interesting when compared with the world of Western philosophy, in which we tend to discuss epistemology mainly through the role of vision; for example, just think of Plato's Allegory of the Cave or Descartes's light of reason. Generally speaking, the philosophy of perception is the philosophy of visual perception. While seeing is considered fundamental to our perception of an object or event, hearing is almost completely neglected in familiar epistemological doctrines. The Confucian philosophy of the Way suggests that auditory perception reaches nuances that are beyond vision. Hearing *extends* vision-based impressions and *challenges* vision-based claims; it improves cognitive sensitivities, it refines the heart-mind's (*xin*, 心) feelings and sensitivities, and it contributes to a comprehensive understanding. An example of this comprehensiveness appears in *Analects* 7:14, describing how music influenced Confucius when he visited Qi, and after hearing the Shao music, he was unable to taste meat for three months. His reaction was that "it is inconceivable that music reaches this height." Indeed, without 'conceiving,' music affected him immensely; it went directly to his heart-mind and touched his innermost feelings.

While we tend to refer to the sounds we hear as *sensations*—internal and private—we do hear *things* in the world by hearing their sounds. Sound and hearing reveal that perceiving involves the awareness of sensations in the first instance and only indirectly the external world. Perceiving through hearing is also focused on that which is present, and in this sense, a sound is "purer" than a vision (cf. Nudds 2001). Moreover, experienced sounds have temporal characteristics, as they persist through time and require time. While vision's objects are extended in space and are individuated and recognized primarily by virtue of spatial characteristics, audible ones are extended in time and are perceptually individuated and recognized primarily by virtue of temporal characteristics (see, e.g., Bregman 1990; Kubovy and Van Valkenburg 2001). We may then learn about space on the basis of hearing in a more intimate way: For example, I can say if some sound is close or at a distance; I can even be guided by sound when I hear a siren and know whether an ambulance is asking for yielding and giving way or the alarm system went off, directing us to find shelters; an orchestral sound may teach a trained ear about the size of the room in which it is played and its material. Knowledge through sound is concrete and yet always leaves some mystery unresolved, some secret to keep aspiring to. In music, there is an understanding that is beyond direct sounds.

An impressive example of the time that is present in music and the learning of things through hearing can be found in the *Family Sayings of Confucius* (*Kongzi Jiayu* 孔子家語 n.d.). The story goes that when Confucius arrived at the great Master Xiang for learning to play the Qin, 琴, he did not progress after ten days. Master Xiang then said, "You must practice more." Practicing more, Confucius was able to master the melody, yet the Master remarked that his technique was still insufficient. After improving the technique with more practice, the Master guided him to try another direction; this time, Confucius kept practicing in order to grasp the interpretation of the work. When Master Xiang said: "You master the interpretation, you have to try more," Confucius replied that he had not yet grasped the personality of the creator. With more practice, Master Xiang acknowledged Confucius's depth of thinking and of understanding, when Confucius said:

> I have grasped the personality of the creator. He is dark and tall, and strives to distance himself, as if he wanted to reign over the four winds. This is the work of King Wen.
>
> Master Xiang got up from his rug and bowed twice and said, "The great teachers believe this is King Wen's creation. (*Kongzi Jiayu*, p. 35)

Skillful listening to music arouses feelings, develops nuanced sensitivity, and brings decorous conduct. As Hall and Ames note, unlike words, music does not represent; it presents. It is a primary mode of communication that allows a deeper understanding of language and communication (Hall and Ames 1987, pp. 275–76, 281). The music itself tells everything we wish to know if we hear it with an *attentive* heart.

Taking up from the description of how music influenced Confucius, the emotional impact of music is resounded in *Tongshu* 17, focusing on the effect of the sound of music on the human heart-mind. The emotional influence of music having a pragmatic value of striving for the realization of harmonious living is depicted in the chapter, when Zhou follows the early idea in regard to the moral model that music proposes, with particular regard to its educational virtue. The intentional formation of music by past sages connects present practitioners to the way of ancient kings, who modeled harmony by creating music that influences people in all times. The chapter provides an explanation of how music is created and how it affects the human spirit and moral mind:

> [t]he sound of music is mild and harmless, harmonious and not seductive, enters the ear and moves the heart-mind. . . . It becomes mild and harmonized. Moderate—it pacifies heart's desires; Harmonious—it relieves an unsettled mind. Calmness and moderation, are the height of virtue. (ibid.)

According to Zhou, balanced and moderate music penetrates the heart-mind, moves emotions, and advances one's well-being. This is even more obvious when one realizes that music, through sound, tone, and pitch, touches the human heart in ways that words and intellect can never attain. *Tongshu* 19 also refers to the emotional effect of music and its straightforward influence on peacemaking, defying politics that encourage dispute and struggle:

> When the sound of music is mild, listening to it pacifies the heart-mind.
>
> When the lyrics of music are good, then those who sing are respectful.

The power of music lies in its unique ability to attune the human heart-mind. Music regulates emotions when they are excessive, releases tensions, directs imagination, and brings joy. The fact that "music" (*yue*, 樂) and "joy" (*le*, 樂) share the same Chinese graph is an indication of the association of harmony with its immediate manifestation, as actualized in the human deed and not in a remote future outcome of the deed (Hall and Ames 1987, pp. 275–76, 281). Importantly, joy, as the immediate response to music, functions in Confucianism as a sign for morality, whereas, according to Confucius, a benefit can be reaped as secondary (*hou*, 後), only after completing the act (*Analects* 6:20), and is unwished for and unnecessary, as it increases conflict, according to *Mengzi* 1A (see Patt-Shamir 2005, pp. 455–76). When the essence of Confucian humanism is fully depicted in musical terms, the exclusiveness of "musical knowledge" (distinguished from knowledge of music) for social balance, and the moral mind is vibrant.

As we will soon see, according to *Tongshu* 19, when later generations exchanged sounds for seductive ones, they lost music that follows harmony and were led to growing lust that increased a lack of satisfaction and, therefore, amplified pain and strife. First, rulers abandoned ancient music; then, harmonious ways of governing were replaced by severe and arbitrary punishment, and the people were oppressed and suffered. Then, on top of the pain caused by law, people abandoned their families, lost relatedness, disgraced life, rebelled against their non-musical rulers, and, thus, inflicted on themselves more pain. The loss of a hearing heart is, thus, a loss of the Way. Zhou then offers a comparative critique of then—the times in which music prevailed—and now—the time of its absence. The harmonious music of ancient times brought peace to minds. In the past, music inspired and transformed minds in contrast to present times, where it is reduced to a tool in service of lust that increases unease (ibid.). The implied recommendation is that music can serve as a model of proper world order.

Accordingly, the only model that works to fully understand the multi-dimensionality of the human creative mind is a musical model that cannot accept the inner paradox of

stagnantly ruling dynamic living beings. The dynamism of music gives hope and pacifies the heart. The chapter ends with a way of attaining a harmonious world in which both one's heart-mind and social relationships are balanced: "To hope for perfect government without restoring ancient propriety and returning to music is a far cry" (ibid.).

## 3. An Ontology of Cosmic Harmony as Musical Governing

The significance of hearing and, in particular, hearing music becomes evident in political life as rooted in heavenly harmony. *Tongshu* 18 opens:

> Music is root for government.
>
> When a government is moral, the people are at peace, then the hearts-minds of all under heaven are harmonious.[3]

Before moving on, in accordance with the passage, as to the effects of music on moral conduct and on the harmony of the inner self of "all under heaven" (*tianxiazhi xinhe* 天下之心和), one has to inquire: How can music be a root for government? Responding to the question requires us to acknowledge the implicit presupposition that the Confucian Way inherently conveys music as the primary manifestation of harmony in the cosmic, sociopolitical, and personal realms (See Randel 2003, pp. 260–62). According to the Confucian view, music influences the person and can be used to educate, teach, and transmit values that benefit the moral and social development of individuals, societies, and governments, and it can then lead the multitudes in non-coercive, voluntary ways.

The relatedness between the cosmos and government is already found in the early *Classic of Rites*, referring to music as the cosmic harmony between heaven and earth (*Rites*, 17.I: 19.23). Accordingly, the natural flow of heaven and earth ensures creation and change, and moral virtues follow from this natural order such that moral deeds are the human manifestation of spring and growth (*Rites*, 17.I: 19.28). As moral order is based on appropriate relationships, harmony best depicts it; harmony reflects relationships with consonant pitches that are perceived as pleasant, euphonious, and beautiful in contrast to dissonant relationships. Music can serve, in this way, as a model for human morality, which, like the Chinese pentatonic scale, admits no "off-key" situation as part of the paradigm.[4] Accordingly, when the whole is in harmony, each pitch—representing a single person, event, or conduct—derives its special significance from the entirety of the music.

Importantly, it is the nature of harmony to require plurality and diversity, which allow a proper place for each individual component; a single note or pitch is meaningless alone, yet each is crucial in making music. As harmony involves a plurality of instruments, sounds, techniques, and players, which, together, create one resonating whole, we read in *Rites* about a "great stew" (*dageng*, 大羹), the view that a harmonious creation is self-sufficient and self-sustained (*Rites* 17.I: 19.6). According to *Analects* 13:23: "the exemplary person considers harmony and not uniformity, while a petty person considers uniformity rather than harmony."[5] Pointing to the significance of each person in creating appropriate relationships within the whole, harmony requires the knowledge to set the variety of different ingredients in proper order, which enriches and empowers each individual, as distinguished from uniformity (*tong*, 同), in which there is no variety and, hence, no mutual enrichment. *Yanzichunqiu* 晏子春秋 captures this beautifully:

> Harmony is analogous to a stew. The cook uses water, fire, vinegar, minced meat sauce, salt and sour plum to cook fish and meat over firewood. The cook harmonizes these ingredients and orchestrates them by means of flavors. He accentuates the slight and attenuates the excessive. When a man of noble character consumes it, it calms his heart-mind. (*Yanzichunqiu* 7.5, Li 2006, pp. 585–86)

Taking up from the "great stew" in the *Rites*, this passage emphasizes the leader's role by depicting the leader as a graceful cook who orchestrates the ingredients into one harmonic dish. The harmonious stew gives special significance not only to the plurality of ingredients but, moreover, to the cook as a caring leader who seeks the education of his people:

> Thus we see that the ancient kings, in their institution of ceremonies and music, did not seek how fully they could satisfy the desires of the appetite and of the ears and eyes; but they intended to teach the people to regulate their likings and dislikings, and to bring them back to the normal course of humanity. (*Rites*, 17. I: 19.10, Legge 2003, p. 96)

The ancient kings taught the people the art of regulating the various "social ingredients." This higher concept of harmony functions, as explained here, in a way that none of its individual ingredients can achieve: Only when all of them together are regulated by a sagely musical leader can harmony then be attained as an emergence. According to Confucianism, this is *Tianrenheyi*, 天人合一, the interaction between heaven and mankind that generates the Oneness of heavenly and human realms. In this line, Confucius's disciple Zigong describes the leader's relationship with his people:

> . . . [h]e would lead them on, and they will follow him; he would bring them peace, and they will return, he would stimulate them, and they will respond in harmony. (*Analects* 19:25)

In a harmonious community of this kind, there is trust, well-being, and confidence, and, as Cheng Chung-ying explains, there is neither doubt nor fear.

[t]he individual self is cultivated to make changes in one's behavior toward others with the vision that when everyone does this, the society will be transformed into a state of mutual respect and reciprocal empowerment. It is a social vision in which the harmony of the society is created from the *ren* -motivated individuals and the potential of an individual will be fully realized in a state of this human mutuality. It is a state of harmonization by mutual comprehension in which no misgiving, no fears and no doubts will arise, for the conditions for their manifestation will be eliminated in the process of mutual transformation (Cheng 2000, p. 33).

The Confucian ideal of harmony and reciprocal empowerment defines human relatedness (*ren*, 仁), guided by a caring leader who has the ability to harmonize and bring his people to mutual support and balance with no dissonance.

Turning back to *Tongshu* 18, it reaffirms the old idea that harmony unifies all parts of the world, this time with a clear ontological flavor. Harmony is the unifier of *qi*, 氣, the "vital energy that functions as the essential matter that constitutes everything that exists":[6]

> Therefore, the sages created music to free hearts-minds in harmonious tune. Penetrating heaven and earth, the *qi* of heaven and earth is moved by it and becomes greatly harmonized. When heaven and earth are in harmony, then the myriad things are in accord.

The rootedness of government to music is explained here through the connection between cosmic harmony and human harmony as one *qi*. Accordingly, music is the creation of human sages to follow cosmic harmony in the sphere of myriad things (*wanwu*, 萬物), among which, all humans live. When a government is led by a musical virtuoso, the harmonious action of heaven and earth can be modeled by the multitudes. Moreover, when the chapter importantly adds that humans model heaven and earth, human harmony then affects the motion in heaven and earth so that sagely created music can move *qi* itself and take an active role in creation. In the way a good conductor leads the music, both as a manifestation of *qi* and as a catalyst of it, so does a musical government lead the state. Music, in this way, not only reflects heavenly harmony but it also creates earthly accordance, transforms unfavorable circumstances, and is, thus, revealed as a leading force to which the world responds.

Relating the earthly–political with the cosmic and non-human in one harmonious continuity of nature and environment allows everyone to know their places and realize themselves accordingly. Inspired by cosmic harmony, the leader-as-conductor sets the tempo, ensures correct entries and exits, interprets the score in a way that reflects specific indications, and constantly keeps attunement as the most basic musical demand. In line with

this understanding, music was performed in the royal court and regarded as a symbol of good and stable governance (Jie 2011, pp. 6–7).

## 4. Pragmatics of Attaining Order through Skillful Ritualistic Practice

In *Analects* 1:12, the Confucian disciple Youzi says that harmony is the most valuable in adhering to the rules of propriety (*li*, 禮)[7], as followed by sage kings in matters great and small, and adds that it is impossible to attain harmony without following propriety. Apparently, the ontology of harmony, tightly related to an epistemology of hearing, receives its practical significance through the practice of propriety. To obtain a fuller picture of the human ways of applying cosmic harmony to the socio-political realm, we are called to delve deeper into the Confucian understanding of the rules of propriety and Confucian ritualistic education.

*Tongshu* 13, titled "Propriety and Music" (*Liyue*, 禮樂) takes up the idea of cosmic harmony as an order (*li*, 理)[8] that is modeled through propriety and music in the social realm to create social harmonious order. Opening by stating "propriety is Order; Music is harmony" (*liliye yueheye*, 禮理也 樂和也), Zhou brings the relatedness of cosmic regularity and human practical stability to the forefront. The defined rules of propriety reflect the boundless cosmic order, and human-created music reflects endless cosmic harmony embedded in the finitude of human life. As every ritual has its own music, it has an instrumental role in socio-political, practical, and emotional harmonies. According to *Tongshu* 13, through the ongoing practice of propriety, harmony is attained in concrete social and political relationships such that "a governor is a governor, a minister is a minister, a father is a father, a son is a son, an elder is an elder, a younger is younger, a man is a man, and a woman is a woman" (ibid.).

The practice of propriety enables human self-realization, as it keeps the dynamic balance of various roles, types, and classes, bringing everyone to their proper positions. When a ruler performs his duty in a moral way and conducts himself appropriately, his officials, and all people under him, follow. Any diversion from this "social music" disturbs the harmony and destroys the desired order. Through propriety, music acts as an actual harmonizing force. According to the text, as the cosmic process is singular, it culminates with various realizations such that the myriad things are harmonious when each attains its order: "therefore propriety is first and music follows" (ibid.). *Tongshu* 17 expands the significance of propriety in the context of music, reflecting ideas of self-realization, balanced feelings, and the human spirit in terms of motion and rest, which leads to harmonious living. Grounded in the polar (*Yinyang*, 陰陽) ongoing motion of *qi*, it introduces the practical perspective of music and its power to influence society, exemplifying the Confucian mindset as set by the rules of propriety, referring to an ideal past in which harmony prevailed at all levels of human existence:

> In ancient times, the sage-kings established the rules of propriety and perfected self-cultivation. . . . The people were in great harmony, the myriad things moved smoothly. (*Tongshu 17*)

The Confucian placement of the utopian society in the past opens the ideal past to the present and allows it to penetrate the living world.[9] By inciting action, it reminds practitioners that re-attaining harmonious socio-political organization is within the reach of humanity's ability; as it once existed, it can be reconquered by following the rules of propriety, if only we invest ourselves in realizing this embedded harmony. While Cosmic harmony is natural, the human world requires a human deed for its realization. If the cosmos is spontaneous, in the human world, harmony can only exist as intentional, as an outcome of human-created propriety paired with music. Through propriety, music models greater harmony in the human world. The moderation and balance that music brings forth characterizes, according to the next lines in the chapter, the moderate and balanced way of sages:

> When the world transforms and attains centrality,[10] then government is supreme. This is the significance of saying that when the Way accords with heaven and earth, it is the climax of past generations. (ibid.)

The achievements of musical living are depicted above as analogous to living according to the Way. The attainment of centrality (*Zhong*, 中) is naturally associated with harmony as the essence of Confucian spirituality, as originated in the *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong*, 中庸).[11] In this way, centrality, together with harmony, elucidates that, in the Confucian world, musicality manifests human beings as integral components of nature. Zhou then presents a warning through a critical perspective on the outcome of governments that did not follow ancient music, which thereby led to social chaos.

> Later generations did not refine their methods of propriety. Governmental penal law became harsh and disordered, and they even let their desire go without restraint. The people below, were afflicted and suffered. Rulers said that ancient music is not worth listening to. It was replaced by new sounds, seductive and resentful, which aroused desires and increased sadness. Therefore, there were those who rebelled against their rulers, discarded their fathers, did not care about life, and ruined human relations with no ability to stop. (ibid.)

Abandoning music is explained in the passage as neglecting propriety, which amounts to neglecting morality. The deviant present, ruled by disharmony and arbitrariness, brings about suffering and loss of the Way, and it then responded with penal law (*xing*, 刑), which increases pain.

To understand the roots of this line of thought, let us first turn to the *Rites*, according to which animals know sound and human beings are sensitive to tones, yet only the exemplary person (*junzi*, 君子) understands music itself (*Rites* 17.I: 19.7). Attributing music to the exemplary person alone demands musical skillfulness from a practitioner of a musical instrument. In this context, a distinction has to be made between the Western notion of music and Chinese *yue*, 樂, which, already in the Zhou Dynasty, was conceived as "mixed art," connected with words and actions as both instrumental and vocal, and often associated with ritual performances and dancing (Huang 1963, p. 50; Fei 2002, p. 3). "Hearing" Confucian music is, therefore, a multi-dimensional task that includes other senses too.[12] Confucius considered "elegant music" (*yayue*, 雅樂) proper music, that is, morally uplifting, keeping social balance and political stability, and essential in cultivating and refining the person.[13] Music, paired with the rules of propriety as ritualistic practices, was a performative art and an integral part of the Confucian moral structure.

The *Analects* offer an "education program" to reach the complete effect of music: "Be stimulated by poetry, take your stand on propriety, and be perfected by music" (*Analects* 8:8).[14] Beginning with learning poetry, one refines linguistic competence, which is the accepted human means of understanding. Lyrics, in addition to the harmonious sound, cultivate aesthetic–poetic sensitivity, which provides humans with skills that require special attention to the subtleties of language, including syntax, rhyme, similes, and analogies. Beginning with poetry and developing linguistic aesthetics, learning continues with propriety as Confucian "rule-following" and only then perfects with music. The practice of propriety serves as a foundation for the desired musical convention, and it is acquired in this way as Confucian "knowhow." Significantly, the *Analects* consider music and propriety as equally constituent elements, without which, human moral relatedness cannot be complete (*Analects* 3:3). The *Rites* elaborate on this idea by saying that "music comes from within, and propriety from without" (*Rites*, 17.I: 19.17). Music expresses inner feelings and is initiated within us to be integral to us (*Rites*, 17.II: 19. 9–10); propriety completes its workings by moving inward from without. Also see (Barry 2012, p. 7). Music and propriety form, together, an ongoing and inseparable dynamic, with one supporting the other.

Accordingly, socio-political life attains order through propriety and music, which free governments from the use of penal law and coercive sanctions. As Confucianism acknowledges the significance of political order, it does not completely defy penal law as being sec-

ond best. However, as stated already in the *Analects*, the flourishing of propriety and music is a precondition for penal law to be effective. Accordingly, when propriety is not practiced, music is forgotten, and penal law that is stagnant and blind prevails such that "the people are not able to move hand or foot" (*min wusuo cuo shouzu*, 民無所措手足) (*Analects* 13:3). Law sees apparent order as being prior to subjects and brings about an apparent order by punishing after the deviation is committed, in contrast to propriety, which reflects harmonious cosmic order by acting together with music as preventive care, as rooted in *Analects* 2:3, which says that people avoid law and punishments, while they naturally go along with virtue and propriety. As propriety opposes law, music opposes punishment and cures its damage; while law manipulates by inflicting punishment, propriety educates through music. This idea is, in fact, inherent to the dynamism of Confucian humanism: Penal law operates mechanically, manipulating rather than educating; it can organize society but does not transform one's personality; it enforces ways to overcome conflicts but does not solve them, and societies are left open for generations of war and strife. Musical propriety facilitates self-transformation and reflects morality; it reflects heavenly order and harmony, and it educates people to have better personalities through change rather than force. The musical self is, therefore, a creative source of values, whose musical deeds bring an internalization of harmony and lead to peace.

## 5. Finale

In Confucianism, music directly reaches the soul and goes from heart to heart, directly influencing how we perceive the world. Confucius hears the Way, discusses propriety and music as alternatives to penal law, and believes in the possibility of harmonious governing. Zhou Dunyi reaffirms the Confucian Way with an onto-cosmological standard of creative cosmic harmony that inspires leadership; an epistemological–aesthetic perspective as musical knowhow through rules of propriety; and a moral-psychology-based on heart-mind attentive attunement defined by peacemaking.

Musical thinking is not a simple task to attain. It requires a composer's creativity; a conductor's harmonious leadership; an auditor's attentiveness to sounds, instruments, and melodies; and a player's ongoing practice, which includes rule-following, skillfulness, and technique mastery. Following all of the above will lead to moral musical virtuosity and more nuanced understanding. Accordingly, a more musical attitude to life may bring better attentiveness to human orchestral faculties and virtuoso leadership.

Coming back to the brief opening of this article, I want to say that it is not just Prime Minister Lapid's leadership being tested in the disturbing, disharmonious acts in Gaza, but the entire vision of Israel's government, and in this sense, Israel is not alone. Thus, I believe that Confucian musical understanding is more pertinent than ever in the present times of political turmoil in Israel and Palestine, the USA, China and Taiwan, Ukraine and Russia, and throughout the world. At least as a source of hope.

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## Notes

[1] For a comprehensive discussion on the various perspectives of music in early China, see (Brindley 2012).

[2] The passage employs *ting*, 聽, for "hearing," which demands a direct presence unlike the more abstract *wen*.

[3] *Tongshu* translations are mine.

[4] While the Western term "harmony" derives from the Greek ἁρμονία, *harmonia*, meaning agreement, concord, or "join," similarly to Chinese *he*, 和, it has special significance in the Chinese context of the pentatonic scale, which, by definition, has no dissonant intervals (as there is neither a triton nor a seventh, which are both dissonant intervals and are non-harmonious).

[5] In this context, Li Chenyang distinguishes the harmonious system as echoing a plurality of sounds from a uniformity (*tong*, 同) (Li 2006, p. 584).

[6] Trying to capture its essence as a substance that is not solely physical, *qi* has been rendered as "ether" (T'ang 1956; McMorran 1975), "matter energy" (Needham 1956), y "essential matter" (Chow 1993), "passion-nature" (Legge 1961), "material force" (Chan 1963), "vital force" (Huang 1968), "ether of materialization" (Metzger 1977), "pneuma" (Henderson 1984), and "psycho-physical force" (Smith et al. 1990). For more, see (Patt-Shamir 2020, pp. 2–3).

[7] *Li*, 禮, is one of the Chinese notions that resists translation into Western languages since there is no word that embodies the multi-dimensionality that *li* arouses. In general, I use "propriety" or "rules of propriety" to translate *li* (stressing moral–practical aspects), but in some cases, it is my choice to stress the ritualistic perspective by translating it as "ritual" or "ritualistic practice." When I quote from Western translations, I follow the translators' choices. In addition, I use the accepted translation of *Liji*, 禮記, as *The Classic of Rites*. See (Patt-Shamir 2007–2008, pp. 156–73). The next section focuses on the idea of rules of propriety.

[8] *Li*, 理, is translated hereafter as "order". This choice of translation seems to best reflect both the metaphysical and moral aspects of the idea of an organization, which is in accordance with rules, principles, and intentions. It is a pattern in both normative and constitutive senses, as well as "reason" itself and "form" in its Aristotelian sense. For more on translations of *li*', see (Needham 1956, pp. 557–58). In addition, see (Patt-Shamir 2020, pp. 245–52).

[9] For more on the Confucian ideal, see (Patt-Shamir 2005, pp. 455–76).

[10] I follow Tu Wei-ming's translation of *zhong*, 中, as centrality; see (Tu 1989).

[11] Accordingly, as a state of equilibrium (in which emotions are not yet aroused), centrality functions as the foundation of the universe (*Zhong Yong* 中庸, pp. 19–21). Humans are endowed with centrality by nature—the most refined quality of the universe. Heaven endows the person with the task of transforming cosmic processes into their actualization as a "center" for the continuity of being (Tu 1989, pp. 114–17). See *Zhong Yong* 1.11–18 (Plaks 2004, p. 65).

[12] Moreover, in the early Chinese context, musical mastery aligns with the understanding of music as one of the Six Arts (*liuyi*, 六藝, including propriety, music, archery, charioteering, calligraphy, and mathematics), which were introduced to ancient China as, primarily, the mastery of artistic techniques that produce creativity.

[13] *Ya*, 雅, refers to "song-texts" used in court and collected in *The Book of Poetry* (*Shijing* 詩經). The term *yayue* appears in *Analects* 17:18 in contrast to corrupting popular music. Proper music involves instruments correlating to the five phases of nature and bringing harmony to nature. The pentatonic scale was derived from this system (see Ko et al. 2003, p. 85).

[14] One should note that, according to Confucius, it is poetry, propriety, and music, as recommended by the respective classics.

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