

CONFUCIUS AND THE RECTIFICATION OF NAMES

– Abstract –

The *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Chunqiu*) or *Annals of the Spring-Autumn Period* had been indited according to the textual pattern of a Court chronicle which describes the autocratic regime of the twelve dukes who governed the State of Lu from the Shan-tung (Shandong) region, a vassal-state of the Eastern Chou (Zhou) dynasty (770-256 *B. C. E.*), during the period 722-481 *B. C. E.*. The syntagm “Spring-Autumn” is a standard synecdoche which designates an entire calendarial year, or, through a semantic extension, a chronicle the textual continuity of which is structured according to the calendarial continuity of the yearly intervals which include diplomatic dialogues, political intrigues and feudal wars, in the framework of the relationships developed by the State of Lu with the neighboring states, as well as testimonies concerning eclipses, floods, earthquakes and wonders of nature.

The decadence of the Chu-hsia (Zhu Xia) civilization, under the Eastern Chou (Zhou) dynasty (770-256 *B. C. E.*), could have been prevented only through the establishment of a new political order, conformably to the Confucianist ritual ideal, capable to mirror the celestial will in the rigors of an ascetical monarchic regime and in the necessity of the rectification of names (*cheng-ming; zhengming*).

In spite of the fact that he defended the political-moral order of the Eastern Chou (Zhou) dynasty, Confucius traversed the experience of the disintegration of this order and of the transition towards an unknown epoch. Even if he was a loyal subject of the State of Lu, Confucius was forced to admit that Lu “has only the name, not the substance of a great State”, and the ideal of the rectification of names (*cheng-ming; zhengming*) did not mold in a lasting manner the immediate historical time. The purity of the unicorn did not preserve his liberty as against the violence of the hunters, its wonderful nature did not preserve his existence as against the ignorance and brutality of human beings. The coming of the unicorn presaged, simultaneously, Confucius' unfulfilment as a statesman, his imminent death and his investiture as an “uncrowned monarch” (*su-wang; suwang*).

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Venerated as religious scriptures and studied as philosophical works, the *Five Classical Books*¹ (*Shih-ching* or *Shijing*, the *Book of Songs*; *Shu-ching* or *Shujing*, the *Book of Documents*; *Li-chi* or *Liji*, the *Book of Rites*; *I-ching* or *Yijing*, the *Book of Changes*; *Ch'un-ch'iu* or *Chunqiu*, the *Annals of the Spring-Autumn Period*)² were adopted as official teaching (*kuan-hsüeh; guanxue*) of the Chinese State in the year 136 B. C. E., under the dynasty of the Western Han (206 B. C. E. – 9 C. E.), and the *ju-chia* (*rujia*) system of thinking, "Classicism" or "Confucianism", had been developed and refined under the dynasty of the Eastern Han (25-220 C. E.). The organization of the *Five Classical Books* into a "canon" or a "collection" dates from the IIIrd century B. C. E., and the hypothetical reconstitution of the spiritual history of the "Central States" or *Chung-kuo* (*Zhongguo*) indicates the possibility according to which some of the fragments included in these writings were used as models for the moral education of the circle of disciples led by K'ung Fu-tzu (Kong Fuzi; 551-479 B. C. E.)³, or the possibility of the partial inditement, compiling or editing of these writings by K'ung Fu-tzu (Kong Fuzi) himself. The literary paternity of the *Five Classical Books* is situated *in illo tempore*, in the golden age of the kings-sages of the Hsia (Xia; ca. 2070-1600 B. C. E.), Shang (ca. 1600-1100 B. C. E.) and Western Chou (Zhou) (ca. 1100-770 B. C. E.) dynasties. The moral wisdom conceived by the kings-sages established the spiritual model of the human civilization, structured and unified the periods of the historical time, from the archaic past to the remote future, and had been treasured in the "subtle writing" or the "esoteric teachings" (*weiyen*) preached by K'ung Fu-tzu (Kong Fuzi) in his

¹ Concerning the Chinese names of persons, names of places and technical terms, the Wade-Giles transliteration is accompanied by the Hanyu-Pinyin transliteration, when the two differ from each other.

² Cf. Rodney L. Taylor, *Confucianism*, Philadelphia, Chelsea House Publishers, 2004, pp. 32-38.

³ Spiritual Master and politician born in the State of Lu, in the capital Ch'ü-fu (Qufu), K'ung Fu-tzu (Kong Fuzi) put a mark, through his visionary wisdom, on the end of the "Spring-Autumn Period" (ca. 770-475 B. C. E.), under the dynasty of the Eastern Chou (Zhou) (770-256 B. C. E.). He is venerated as the founder of Confucianism.

capacity of prophet inspired by divinity or “uncrowned monarch” (*su-wang*; *suwang*) of the entire history of the Chinese realm⁴.

The *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Chunqiu*) or *Annals of the Spring-Autumn Period* had been indited according to the textual pattern of a Court chronicle which describes the autocratic regime of the twelve dukes who governed the State of Lu from the Shan-tung (Shandong) region, a vassal-state of the Eastern Chou (Zhou) dynasty (770-256 B. C. E.), during the period 722-481 B. C. E. The syntagm “Spring-Autumn” is a standard synecdoche which designates an entire calendarial year, or, through a semantic extension, a chronicle the textual continuity of which is structured according to the calendarial continuity of the yearly intervals which include diplomatic dialogues, political intrigues and feudal wars, in the framework of the relationships developed by the State of Lu with the neighboring states, as well as testimonies concerning eclipses, floods, earthquakes and wonders of nature⁵. As a writing attributed to K'ung Fu-tzu (Kong Fuzi), the *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Chunqiu*) is a manual for the philosophy of history concerning the exercise of the legitimate power

⁴ Cf. Michael Nylan (trans.), *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2001, pp. 1-59. The historians Ssu-ma T'an (Sima Tan; ca. 165-110 B. C. E.) and Ssu-ma Ch'ien (Sima Qian; ca. 145/135-86 B. C. E.) mentioned in *Shih-chi* (*Shiji*) or *Historical Memories* (ca. 109-91 B. C. E.) that the author or editor of the *Five Classical Books* is K'ung Fu-tzu (Kong Fuzi). Their statement is probably founded on a tradition antecedent to their own time, nevertheless this very statement emphasizes an estimated four centuries posteriority in relationship to the end of the “Spring-Autumn Period”, and consequently does not elucidate the problem of the literary paternity of the *Five Classical Books*. Ssu-ma T'an (Sima Tan) and Ssu-ma Ch'ien (Sima Qian) defined the *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Chunqiu*) as a “study on the government of the human species”, which distinguishes between what is just and what is unjust. Cf. Ssu-ma T'an (Sima Tan), Ssu-ma Ch'ien (Sima Qian), *Shih-chi* (*Shiji*), Dzo Ching-chuan (trans.), *Sseu-ma Ts'ien et l'historiographie chinoise*, Paris, Publications orientalistes de France, 1978, p. 146. However Meng-tzu (Mengzi, Mencius; ca. 385/372 – 302/289 B. C. E.) designates with certainty K'ung Fu-tzu (Kong Fuzi) as the author of the *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Chunqiu*). Cf. Meng-tzu (Mengzi), *Meng-tzu* (*Mengzi*), James Legge (trans.), *The Chinese Classics*, vol. II – *The Works of Mencius*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1895, pp. 281-283: “Again the world fell into decay, and principles faded away. Perverse speakings and oppressive deeds waxed rife again. There were instances of ministers who murdered their sovereigns, and of sons who murdered their fathers. K'ung Fu-tzu (Kong Fuzi) was afraid, and made the *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Chunqiu*). What the *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Chunqiu*) contains are matters proper to the sovereign. On this account, K'ung Fu-tzu (Kong Fuzi) said: Yes, it is the *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Chunqiu*) which will make men know me, and it is the *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Chunqiu*) which will make men condemn me. (...) K'ung Fu-tzu (Kong Fuzi) completed the *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Chunqiu*), and rebellious ministers and villainous sons were struck with terror.”

⁵ Cf. Burton Watson, *Ssu-ma Ch'ien, Grand Historian of China*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1958, pp. 75-76. See also, Henri Maspero, *Le taoïsme et les religions chinoises*, Paris, Gallimard, 1971, pp. 70-72.

and the legitimate transfer of power, in concordance with the perpetual remembering of the necessity to perfect the inter-human relationships through “profound empathy” (*shu*), capable to regenerate the “humanity” (*jen; ren*) of individuals and communities alike through the reciprocity of altruism.

The text of the *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Chunqiu*), penned by an archivist (probably Confucius, according to Mencius' testimony) or by a group of archivists employed by the Ducal House of Lu, generated three commentaries built on the foundations of three different versions of the “received text”, in agreement with the traditions elaborated by three hermeneutical schools: the *Kung yang* (*Gongyang*), which contains words of the Ch'i (Qi) dialect; the *Ku liang* (*Guliang*), which contains words of the Lu dialect; the *Tso chuan* (*Zuozhuan*) or *Tso shih* (*Zuoshi*), which contains words of the Chin (Jin) dialect.

The *Kung yang* (*Gongyang*) and the *Tso chuan* (*Zuozhuan*) were penned, probably through successive re-writings, between the end of the “Warlike States Period” and the middle of the Western Han dynasty (206 B. C. E. – 9 C. E.), and the *Ku liang* (*Guliang*) is a late version of the *Kung yang* (*Gongyang*; ca. 100 B. C. E.).

The *Kung yang* (*Gongyang*) and the *Ku liang* (*Guliang*) have a catechetical structure, they were penned in the “modern writing” (*chin-wen; jinwen*) of the Han period (206 B. C. E. – 220 C. E.) and represent the “New Text School”.

The *Tso chuan* (*Zuozhuan*) is founded on a version of the *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Chunqiu*) penned in the “archaic writing” (*ku-wen; guwen*) which is antecedent to the Ch'in (Qin; 221-209 B. C. E.) dynasty and represents the “Old Text School”.

These exegetical traditions accompany the *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Chunqiu*) according to the model “*lemma* and commentary”⁶ and define the inner coherence of the Confucianist text from the perspective of the adherence of political actions to the ritual order of the human society and of the universe, a background capable to reward these actions by eulogy or to condemn them by blame.

Confucius' “esoteric teaching” (*weiyan*) projects the ideal of the “Just Empire of the Great Peace” (*t'ai-p'ing; taiping*) from the archaic historical time to the historical time of the future. In his capacity as an “uncrowned monarch” (*su-wang; suwang*), animated by the theocratic investiture to establish paradigms worthy

⁶ Ho Hsiu (He Xiu; 129-182) interpolated the paragraphs of *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Chunqiu*) with the paragraphs of *Kung yang* (*Gongyang*). Tu Yü (Du Yu; 222-284) interpolated the paragraphs of *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Chunqiu*) with the paragraphs of *Tso chuan* (*Zuozhuan*). Fan Ning (339-401) interpolated the paragraphs of *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Chunqiu*) with the paragraphs of *Ku liang* (*Guliang*).

of eulogy or blame, the sage-prophet exercises the power to metamorphose the spiritual order of the textual realm in the political order of the historical realm.

Through the elaboration of a complex hermeneutical scaffolding, the *Kung yang* (*Gongyang*) reveals or builds within the laconicism of the historical chronicle included in the *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Chunqiu*) an ideal political order, which is represented as hypostasis of a cosmic principle which precedes and circumscribes the historical time, which had been postulated by the kings-sages of the golden age as essence of the spiritual-moral-political truth and governs the realm of human ontology as part of the realm of cosmic ontology.

Each and every political regime edified during the past or the future on the basis of this theocratic-cosmocratic ideal remembers the harmony of the ritual equidistances which situate the human being as an ontological chain loop between the Earth and the Sky⁷.

The power of language, manifested through the adequacy of “names” (*ming*) to “reality” (*shih; shi*), has a determining rôle in the preservation of the ritualistic landmarks of the human society, between the Earth and the Sky.

A community where the names coincide with the realities which are expressed by them, and the realities coincide with the names through which they are expressed, tend to the ideal cosmic-political order.

On the contrary, a community where the political actions do not concord with the titles of the political characters, and the words pronounced by the human beings do not express the truth of the actions which are accomplished by them, will disintegrate through the metamorphosis of the ritualistic order into moral-political chaos.

Consequently, the safeguarding of the cosmic-political order is achieved through the perpetual semantic-ontological harmony of names and realities, denominated in Confucianism as “rectification of names” (*cheng-ming; zhengming*). Mencius’ testimony about the inditement of the *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Chunqiu*) by Confucius is simultaneously a testimony about the Confucianist identity of the *cheng-ming* (*zhengming*) doctrine. This doctrine is clearly expressed in the *Lun-yü* (*Lunyu*) or *Analects*, apophthegms penned through successive re-writings in the “Warlike States Period” (475-222 B. C. E.) and under the Han dynasty (206 B. C. E. – 220 C. E.).

⁷ Cf. Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, pp. 253-268. See also, Anne Cheng, “*Ch'un-ch'iu, Kung yang, Ku liang and Tso chuan*”, in: Michael Loewe (ed.), *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, Berkeley, University of California, the Society for the Study of Early China and the Institute of East Asian Studies, 1993, pp. 67-76.

In the *Lun-yü (Lunyu)*, XII, 11, the Master K'ung Fu-tzu (Kong Fuzi) phrased in axiomatic manner the ritual-political equilibrium of the ideal society through the ontological identification of the social rôles and of the reality determining the exercise of the attributions which define these rôles: "Duke Ching (Jing) of Ch'i (Qi) asked Confucius about governing. Confucius responded: Let the lord be a true lord, the ministers true ministers, the fathers true fathers, and the sons true sons. The Duke replied: Well put! Certainly if the lord is not a true lord, the ministers not true ministers, the fathers not true fathers, and the sons not true sons, even if there is sufficient grain, will I ever get to eat it⁸?" The perlocutionary dimension of language defines the noble man's conduct in the *Lun-yü (Lunyu)*, XIII, 3: "Tzu-lu (Zilu) asked: If the Duke of Wei were to employ you to serve in the government of his State, what would be your first priority? The Master answered: It would, of course, be the rectification of names (*cheng-ming; zhengming*). (...) If names are not rectified, speech will not accord with reality; when speech does not accord with reality, things will not be successfully accomplished. When things are not successfully accomplished, ritual practice and music will fail to flourish; when ritual and music fail to flourish, punishments and penalties will miss the mark. And when punishments and penalties will miss the mark, the common people will be at a loss as to what to do with themselves. This is why the gentleman only applies names that can be properly spoken and assures that what he says can be properly put into action. The gentleman simply guards against arbitrariness in his speech⁹."

Liu Hsin (Liu Xin; 46 B. C. E. – 23 C. E.) discovered in the archives of the Han dynasty a version of the *Ch'un-ch'iu (Chunqiu)*, accompanied by a version of the *Tso shih (Zuoshi)*, the chronicle-exegesis which covers the events comprised in the period 722-463 B. C. E., both works being penned in the "archaic writing" (*kuwen; guwen*): "When Liu Hsin (Liu Xin) examined the books of the secret archives, he found a *Ch'un-ch'iu (Chunqiu)* and *Tso shih (Zuoshi)* in ancient characters and was delighted with them. (...) Originally the *Tso shih (Zuoshi)* had many ancient characters and ancient expressions, and scholars had done no more than transmit explanations of their meaning. When Liu Hsin (Liu Xin) put the *Tso shih (Zuoshi)* in order, he quoted the words of the commentary in order to explain the text of the

⁸ Cf. K'ung Fu-tzu (Kong Fuzi), *Lun-yü (Lunyu)*, XII, 11, Edward Slingerland (trans.), *Analects*, Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2003, p. 130.

⁹ Cf. K'ung Fu-tzu (Kong Fuzi), *Lun-yü (Lunyu)*, XIII, 3, Slingerland, *Analects*, p. 139. See also, Anne Cheng, *Histoire de la pensée chinoise*, Paris, Seuil, 1997, pp. 180-190.

Ch'un-ch'iu (*Chunqiu*), thus getting them to clarify each other. From this time onwards, the chapters and clauses and their meanings were complete¹⁰.”

The *Tso chuan* (*Zuozhuan*) interpreted the *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Chunqiu*) from the perspective of the decadent historical continuity of four periods defined by the extension of the hiatus between names, titles, ranks, on one side, and their corresponding actions, attitudes, behaviours, on the other side.

The first period is constituted by the first three decades of the Eastern Chou (Zhou) dynasty (770-256 B. C. E.) and preserves the precepts of the Chu-hsia (Zhu Xia) civilization, according to which the ritual order governs the aristocratic families, the altars placed under the State's patronage, the ranks of the human beings and of the future generations. During this period, the cosmic-political ideal order was founded on the consubstantiality between the names “sovereign” and “father” and the actions accomplished by the persons in whom the monarchic-paternal authority was embodied.

During the second period (*ca.* 740-660 B. C. E.), the actors on the political scene privileged the pragmatic advantages of virtue in comparison with virtue in itself. In this context, the reality of what is good undergoes a metamorphosis: defined and represented in the past as a consequence of virtue, it becomes a consequence of the holding and exercise of political supremacy. The necessity to re-establish trust and equilibrium in interstate relationships determined the institution of the rank of hegemon (*pa; ba*).

During the third period, dominated by the first two hegemon, Duke Huan of Ch'i (Qi; d. 685-643 B. C. E.) and Duke Wen of Chin (Jin; d. 636-628 B. C. E.), virtue and rectification of names had been perceived as instruments, stratagems or pretexts of State politics. At the level of the vassals, the behavior determined by non-rectified names concretized in numerous usurpations, clothed in the perfidious hypostasis of the appearance of just rhetoric. The lack of honesty, generated by the illusion of super-human power, and the effort to elude the constraints imposed by inter-human coexistence undermined the texture of civilization by the possibility to use the ritual-political language as double language.

During the fourth period, all along the last century comprised in the “Spring-Autumn Period” (*ca.* 770-475 B. C. E.), duplicity and usurpation transformed the social rôles triggered by names and the art to give names in

¹⁰ Cf. Pan Ku (Ban Gu), *Han-shu* (*Hanshu*) or the *History of the Western Han Dynasty*, XXXVI, p. 1967, source quoted by Cheng, “*Ch'un-ch'iu*, *Kung yang*, *Ku liang* and *Tso chuan*”, in: Loewe, *Early Chinese Texts*, p. 69.

instruments of the brutal political-military power, controlled by the interests of the leaders or by the interests of the aristocratic clans.

In this tragic historical context, the *Tso chuan* (*Zuozhuan*) formulated four remedies determined by the exigencies of the rectification of names (*cheng-ming*; *zhengming*), for the purpose of instituting a new moral-political order, capable to safeguard the ideal of the Chu-hsia (Zhu Xia) civilization: the necessity to find true leaders, the political actions of whom must have as a model the archaic rites and the ethical principles of an austere life; the true leaders have the duty to appoint true ministers, by the intermediary presence of whom the civilizing virtue of the leader will spread in the entire social-politic realm; in this way, the political elite becomes a moral elite, and the access to a privileged status is determined by the accomplishment of exemplary actions; centered round the human-celestial paradigm of the illumined monarch, the political regime built by the new Confucianist order is predestinated to restore the rhetoric of truth instead of the double dealing rhetoric of the usurpers, so that the ranks, enunciations and actions may reveal the immanent truth of the cosmic and human ontology through the semantic-historical continuity¹¹.

The diplomatic dialogue founded on the rectification of names (*cheng-ming*; *zhengming*) is exemplified by the rôle played by Confucius during the meeting between the Duke Ting (Ding; 509-495 B. C. E.) of Lu and the Marquis of Ch'i (Qi), which took place in Chia-ku (Jiagu), in the year 500 B. C. E.. This event is mentioned laconically in the *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Chunqiu*), XI, 1-3: "In the duke's (Ting; Ding) tenth year, in spring, in the king's third month, we made peace with the State of Ch'i (Qi). In summer, the duke had a meeting with the Marquis of Ch'i (Qi) at Chia-ku (Jiagu). The duke came from Chia-ku (Jiagu)."

The corresponding fragment in the *Tso chuan* (*Zuozhuan*) accompanies this testimony according to the model "lēm̄ma and commentary". The goal of the meeting from Chia-ku (Jiagu) was to confirm the peace between the States of Lu and Ch'i (Qi), concluded after ten years of war. In this context, Confucius accompanied the Duke Ting (Ding) in the capacity of master of ceremonies and he was on the lookout, on one side, that the negotiations were conducted in conformity to the ritual ethics and to the adequacy between names and reality, and on the other side, that the political interests of the State of Lu prevailed, in spite of the intrigues contrived by the officials of the State of Ch'i (Qi): "Limi had said to the Marquis of Ch'i (Qi): Confucius is acquainted with ceremonies, but has no courage. If you employ some of the natives of Lai to come with weapons and carry off the Marquis of Lu, you will get from him whatever you wish." The Marquis of Ch'i (Qi) decided to put this plan

¹¹ Cf. Nylan, *The Five "Confucian" Classics*, pp. 275-289.

into practice, but Confucius withdrew together with the Duke Ting (Ding) and said: “You and the Marquis of Ch’i (Qi) are set on terms of friendship, and for those captives from the distant barbarous East to throw the meeting into confusion with their weapons is not the way to get the States to receive his commands. Those distant people have nothing to do with the Chu-hsia (Zhu Xia) civilization (with our great land). Those wild tribes must not be permitted to create disorder among our flowery States. Captives in war should not break in upon a covenant. Weapons of war should not come near a friendly meeting. As before the Spirits (Gods), such a thing is inauspicious. In point of virtue, it is contrary to what is right. As between man and man, it is a failure of propriety. The ruler of Ch’i (Qi) must not act thus!” As a consequence of Confucius’ pleading, the Marquis of Ch’i (Qi) abandoned the stratagem suggested by his counselor, Limi. The inditement of the alliance treatise offered to Confucius a new opportunity to invoke the principles of his ritual-moral-cosmic code, in order to assert and protect the sovereignty of the State of Lu: “When they were about to covenant together, the people of Ch’i (Qi) added to the words of the covenant these sentences: Be it to Lu according to the curses of this covenant, if, when the army of Ch’i (Qi) crosses its own borders, it do not follow us with three hundred chariots of war! On this Confucius made Tzu Wu-huan (Zi Wuhuan) reply with a bow: And so be it also to Ch’i (Qi), if without restoring to us the lands situated to the north of Wen River, you expect us to obey your orders!” Once the alliance treaty had been signed by both parties, the Marquis of Ch’i (Qi) announced his intention to offer a banquet in honor of Duke Ting (Ding), but Confucius firmly opposed this prospect and delivered a discourse to Liang Ch’iu-ch’ü (Liang Qiuqu): “Are you not acquainted with former transactions between Ch’i (Qi) and Lu? The business is finished, and now to have an entertainment besides would only be troubling the officers. Our cups of ceremony, moreover, do not cross our gates, and our admirable instruments of music are not fit for the wild country. An entertainment at which things were not complete would be a throwing away of the proper ceremonies. If things were not complete, it would be like employing chaff and unripe grain (instead of the good grain). Such employment would be disgraceful to our rulers, and to throw away the proper ceremonies would be to bring a bad report upon our meeting. Why should you not consider the matter? An entertainment answers the purpose of displaying virtue. If that be not displayed, it is better to have no entertainment.” As a result of this discourse, the idea to offer a banquet had been abandoned, and the officials of the State of Ch’i (Qi) restored to the State of Lu the territories Yün (Yun), Huan and Kuei-yin (Guiyin). Confucius’ latent spiritual superiority dominated the preliminaries, the development and the closing of the

diplomatic meeting from Chia-ku (Jiagu). Untroubled by a political climate which privileged military violence in comparison with transcendental wisdom and prophetic clairvoyance, the Master K'ung Fu-tzu (Kong Fuzi) asserted with courage and intransigence that the dynamics of monarchical power has the archaic rites and the rectification of names (*cheng-ming*; *zhengming*) as its foundation. Contemplative and pragmatic at the same time, his sight penetrated beyond the surface of circumstances and understood the reality of events in their entire profoundness. In this way, the potential dangers represented by the interference of the soldiers, the signing of the covenant and the celebration of the banquet had been avoided. The State of Lu increased its political power through the revelation of its moral authority, and this ascendancy over the State of Ch'i (Qi) permitted to the State of Lu to recover its territories and to conclude a real alliance, not a superficial accord, undermined by the acceptance of the vassalage status¹².

Paradoxically, the monarchs at the end of the "Autumn-Spring Period" (ca. 770-475 B. C. E.), inclusively the dukes of Lu, appealed to Confucius' advices, but very rarely put them into practice. The decadence of the Chu-hsia (Zhu Xia) civilization, under the Eastern Chou (Zhou) dynasty (770-256 B. C. E.), could have been prevented only through the establishment of a new political order, conformably to the Confucianist ritual ideal, capable to mirror the celestial will in the rigors of an ascetical monarchic regime and in the necessity of the rectification of names (*cheng-ming*; *zhengming*), so that the notions of "sovereign", "minister", "subject", "father" and "so" may not be titles devoid of meaning, manifested through blamable actions, but titles brimming of reality, manifested through actions inspired by the moral-cosmic truth, the human-divine truth.

The "Way" of Confucius did not meet its triumph within the immediate historical time, but in the infinite of the cosmic time, through the theocratic mandate due to which the Master K'ung Fu-tzu (Kong Fuzi) had been recognized as an "uncrowned monarch" (*su-wang*; *suwang*) of the "sub-celestial realm", *t'ien-hsia* (*tianxia*). Confucius' investiture with the celestial *imperium* had been presaged by the apparition of a unicorn (*lin*), in the year 480 B. C. E., under the reign of Duke Ai of Lu (494-468 B. C. E.), an event mentioned in the *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Chunqiu*), XII, 1: "In the duke (Ai)'s fourteenth year, in spring, some hunters in the west captured a unicorn (*lin*)." The corresponding fragment in the *Tso chuan* (*Zuozhuan*) describes,

¹² Cf. K'ung Fu-tzu (Kong Fuzi), *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Chunqiu*), XI, 1-3, James Legge (trans.), *The Chinese Classics*, vol. V/I, vol. V/II – *The Spring and Autumn Annals*, Hong Kong, Lane, Crawford & Co.; London, Trübner & Co., 1872, V/II, pp. 774-777. See also, Nylan, *The Five "Confucian" Classics*, pp. 293-298.

according to the model “*lēmna* and commentary”, the tragic symbolism through which Confucius’ historical destiny interpenetrated with the destiny of this miraculous animal: “A waggoner of Shu-sun’s was gathering firewood in Ta-yay, when he found a *lin*. Having broken its fore left leg, he carried it home with him in a carriage. Shu-sun thinking it inauspicious, threw it away outside the suburbs, and sent a messenger to tell Confucius of it, saying: What is it? It is an antelope and horned. Confucius went to see it, and said: It is a *lin*. Why has it come? Why has it come? He took the back of his sleeve and wiped his face, while his tears wet the lapel of his coat. When Shu-sun heard what it was, he sent and had it brought to the city. (...) Confucius said: The *lin* comes only when there is an intelligent king. Now it has appeared when it is not the time for it to do so, and it has been injured. This is why I was so much affected.” Two complementary exegetical traditions affirm either that the closing of the *Ch’un-ch’iu* (*Chunqiu*) by Confucius coincided with the apparition of the unicorn, or that the Master K’ung Fu-tzu (Kong Fuzi) put the *stylus* aside after the coming of the unicorn. In spite of the fact that he defended the political-moral order of the Eastern Chou (Zhou) dynasty, Confucius traversed the experience of the disintegration of this order and of the transition towards an unknown epoch. Even if he was a loyal subject of the State of Lu, Confucius was forced to admit that Lu “has only the name, not the substance of a great State”, and the ideal of the rectification of names (*cheng-ming*; *zhengming*) did not mold in a lasting manner the immediate historical time. The purity of the unicorn did not preserve his liberty as against the violence of the hunters, its wonderful nature did not preserve his existence as against the ignorance and brutality of human beings. The coming of the unicorn presaged, simultaneously, Confucius’ unfulfilment as a statesman, his imminent death and his investiture as an “uncrowned monarch” (*su-wang*; *suwang*)¹³.

The ideal existence, at the biological, historical and cosmic levels, reveals itself as harmonious immersion in *Tao* (*Dao*), as homogeneity of individual or collective thought, will and action with the ontological continuity of the Way in which the words are absorbed by the contemplative silence of Heaven and Earth, the seasons pass by conjoined with the beings, and the unicorns arrive as messengers of the uncrowned monarchs: “The Master sighed: Would that I did not have to speak! Tzu-kung (Zigong) said: If the Master did not speak, then how would we little ones receive guidance from you? The Master replied: What does Heaven ever say? Yet

¹³ Cf. K’ung Fu-tzu (Kong Fuzi), *Ch’un-ch’iu* (*Chunqiu*), XII, 1, Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. V/I, vol. V/II – *The Spring and Autumn Annals*, V/II, pp. 833-835. See also, Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, pp. 299-301.

the four seasons are put in motion by it, and the myriad creatures receive their life from it. What does Heaven ever say¹⁴?”

¹⁴ Cf. K'ung Fu-tzu (Kong Fuzi), *Lun-yü (Lunyu)*, XVII, 19, Slingerland, *Analects*, p. 208.