

Philosophy of Virtue as Universal Religion

I can now dare a broad association between Taoism, Stoicism and Transcendentalism. Academically it would be inconceivable to do so as many would be the notions and the arguments already opened within minor aspects of this practice. However, given the anti-academic spirit of these practices and given the urgency today of thinking outside both intellectual, but also political, economical, technical as well as religious dogmas, or at least any top down imposition, I find it necessary to bring the ascetic voice of these practices back on the table.

In the first place it is important to acknowledge that these practices are not only distant in time, dating, in a Western reference before, during and after Christ, but they are also distant in space, being respective a Chinese phenomenon then a European and lastly an American. This very fact is augmented by the impact they had on other currents of thoughts or better personages as for example on Tolstoy in Russia, Gandhi's in India and so forth.

Given this broad disconnection in time and space there are some common factors that my mind has retained while being attracted to Taoist, Stoic and Transcendentalist writings. First and foremost these practices mature as a break with society and self-guided rediscovery of one's own nature. The breaking with human society comes with an acknowledgement that human corruption is cyclical. It is not worth to fight against regimes of power; power comes and goes, there will never be an ultimate solution to it.

It is also important to notice that the practitioners of these rather ascetic movements, were not the least living moments of heavy historical transitions and crisis. Their lives were often times a precarious one; even though they were often accused to have properties and social advantages (e.g. I am thinking now of the accusations moved to Seneca as well as Thoreau), the embracers of these movements lived through heavy historical periods which costed their lives. An important factor among these movements is thus, on one hand, the discomfort that their philosophy of life brought about (exile, suicide etc.) but also a underlying poetic of living very spartan lives with only the strictly necessary and no superfluous richness.

These men of virtue have lived up the turmoil of their time. Rather than taking refuge in a metaphysical world, they took refuge in the world and embraced the turmoils around them. Why then read a German scholar of the 19th century when we have a first person account of a Thoreau experiencing the advance of progress and technology? I can now tell you why we should not go for any such theories and stick to the world of Lao Tsu, Seneca or Thoreau. They have exposed themselves to human nature and they have

retreated to their own nature to examine it.

What can a man whose soul is charged by the neurotism of social debates can teach us? He might be able to come up with an opinion on who to take up the reins of society at large, repeating with a certain variations and with a more or less amplified power what other men have already tested. Theories can be drawn and evidences can be used to enforce them however the truth stays among those who develop with their own intuition a discipline to come closer to human nature.

Only feeling in depth the nature with one's own heart one can be of any valuable guidance to humanity. Dogmas in this respect should be only seen as a way to make sure one keep in constant touch with nature, particualrly as automations erradicate the necessary human effort that brings human to be in fact part with nature. In this respect new religious of no fix gods and dogmas should be conceived.

These movements distant in time and space could be brought together under a new tendency which should provide the new generations to come with a renewed driving force, disarming effectivly contemporary societies of the now meaningless pool of no longer felt for meanings with the world. A feeling for our body and emotions is not what I am after. I am talking about disciplines to device a feeling with human nature at large and these can be only developed slowly, inuitively and from within, facing the tragic to bring a kid to life and having to sustain it and constantly take care of it but also from which we can be assured to bring new life onto the increasingly mecchanized unhuman situation engulfing those who accept to conform.