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Language and Politics in India and China: A Cross-Cultural Comparative Study¹

Abstract: This paper provides insights into the relationship between language and politically relevant aspects of culture in India and China which are as follows: attitude toward revolution and tradition, the domination of politics over religion or vice versa, and a concern for the liberty of the individual. The paper introduces a novel approach to the comparative study of civilizations by advancing the political-linguistic explanation. In so doing, it combines Hajime Nakamura's hypothesis of the strict connection between language and culture (understood as a way of thinking) with Samuel P. Huntington's emphasis on the impact of cultural differences on the political dimension of society – so that our explanatory model can be expressed as follows: language→culture→politics. As far as language is concerned, the focus is on the basic structure of Sanskrit and Chinese; besides, special attention is given to Indian and Chinese philosophies of language. Culturally, the most relevant schools of Hindu philosophy may be called “ultraconservative” since they tend to ground unchanging meaning firmly in metaphysics and rely on the supreme authority of ancient religious texts. In contrast, the Chinese typically considered language a social mechanism for shaping our behavior (so the relation of language and society is the most crucial); they also expressed clearly divergent views on naming. In short, at least four distinctive perspectives are essential: (1) conservative Confucianism, (2) anti-traditional and highly authoritarian Legalism, (3) egalitarian and linguistically skeptical Laozian Daoism, (4) nonconformist and proto-libertarian Zhuangzian Daoism.

Keywords: *China, India, philosophy of language, linguistic relativity, political culture, comparative perspective, left-libertarianism, Taoism*

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Introduction: Politically Relevant Aspects of Language and Culture

This paper explores the interdisciplinary terrain where political science meets linguistics, philosophy, Asian studies, and cross-cultural psychology. The authors advocate comparative research (in some respects, preliminary) based on qualitative data on India and China (Hopkin, 2006). We focus on both of them because they are the world's most populous countries, the two most influential cultural traditions in Asia, and the most ancient civilizations, which retain distinctive features to this day. This paper's primary goal is to analyze some of the intercultural differences and explain their probable causes. To achieve this goal, we propose an explanatory model of how language, culture, and politics impact each other. In so doing, we focused on Hajime Nakamura's insights, which reflect the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Nakamura, 2005, pp. 21–28, 48–49). The authors share Benjamin Lee Whorf's (1982) focus on linguistic features such as grammatical forms, even though our view on language's power is not as strong as his linguistic determinism. The weaker version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis claims that language does not determine but influences our thinking (linguistic influence); much recent research provides empirical evidence for its accuracy and validity (Kövecses, 2011, pp. 461, 474–475).

In connection with this, we will outline some relevant properties of the grammars of Sanskrit and Chinese. As far as language is concerned, we take a broad perspective because our focus is also on two phenomena connected with the system of communication in speaking and writing: (1) writing systems and (2) linguistic thinking (theories of language and meaning). Hence, the paper pays attention to both relatively stable (e.g. grammatical) and more variable (philosophical) aspects of language, i.e., its structure and interpretation. For practical reasons and following Nakamura's approach, in this article, we treat way of thinking, culture, and civilization synonymously and interchangeably (Huntington [2008] does almost the same – see pp. 15, 22–23, 48). Furthermore, ways of thinking influence ways of behaving. In terms of the culture – politics relationship, Samuel P. Huntington was one of the most provocative, well-known, and recent proponents. His insights are inspiring, although we put less emphasis on international affairs and religion. In particular, we recognize the substantial changes in Western civilization since the Enlightenment as well as the significant contribution of Chinese culture to them (Enlightenment sinophilia has influenced the development of Western secularism) (Puett & Gross-Loh, 2017, pp. 186–192; Nakamura, 2005, p. 32).

In short, the explanatory model can be simplified as language→culture→politics. Thus, language influences politics indirectly, and culture is the mediating factor. We assume that languages shaped core elements of civilizations in ancient and early medieval times (historically, the *early medieval* period lasted until the 6th century CE in China and the 12/13th century CE in India). Since then, these well-developed cultural elements have gained some independence from the language in influencing power relations, political thinking, behavior, and identities. It is why grammar or vocabulary changes do not need to have an

immediate effect on political cultures. It can take a lot of time to discard old ways of thinking and behaving through language reform or adopting a non-indigenous language.

Although the paper explores one particular direction of influence (as seen above) because of its importance from a civilizational perspective, it does not preclude class analysis and reverse/mutual influence such as language policy (politics→language). It is intended to complement them. The authors do not underestimate human agency (e.g. people can decide to change their understanding of meaning). They would be willing to consider more factors affecting culture and politics: geographic, economic, technological, etc. That being said, the fundamental position of language and its philosophy can be inferred from at least two facts: (1) chronological – humans used language to communicate even before the emergence of a distinctive and developed culture; (2) functional – except for the prelinguistic stage of infancy and rare medical cases, our private thoughts are very often constructed in public language. The picture of the world painted in our minds-brains by our native language seems like obvious common sense. We hardly ever question the interpretation of reality contained in language because we tend to think that it is wholly “natural” mistakenly. This paper is intended to shed some light on it in the context of political science.

In terms of politically relevant aspects of culture, the paper rejects the traditional, right-authoritarian preoccupation with the “national” (state) interest, nations, and order. Here, from a left-libertarian perspective, the focus will be on attitude toward revolution and tradition, the domination of politics over religion or vice versa, and a concern for the individual’s liberty. Finally, as far as politics is concerned, the relevant aspects are summed up from the point of view of history and political thought.

Sanskrit, Chinese, and Culture

Sanskrit belongs to the Indo-European language family and was the main language of Hindu texts in ancient and medieval times (*Vedas*, *Bhagavad Gita*, *Ramayana*, *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, *Manusmṛiti*, *Brahma Sūtras*, *Nyāya Sūtras*, *Yoga Sūtras*, etc.), but also of *Mahāyāna* Buddhist texts (such as *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* and *Abhidharmakośakārikā*) as well as some important Jain ones (*Tattvārtha Sūtra*). Many other languages in India, including Prakrit and Hindi, evolved from – or were heavily influenced by – Sanskrit. Therefore, even if it is no longer as widely used as in the past, Indian culture remains profoundly shaped by this ancient language. One might counterargue that the majority of the Indian population did not speak Sanskrit. However, it was said by – and was very important to – the very influential, educated, culture-forming elite segment of the society. Indeed, Sanskrit has shaped Hinduism and, through it, ordinary people in India (including South India) – under the explanatory model “language→culture” (Sanskrit and linguistic thinking→Brahmanism and Hinduism as a culture and way of thinking in general). For instance, even a South Indian (Dravidian and not Indo-Aryan) text, the *Tirukkural* (“Sacred Couplets”) in Old Tamil, contains many Sanskrit loanwords and accepts traditional Hindu beliefs such as *Śaṃsāra*,

rebirth, *karma*, *devas*, Hindu gods and goddesses. Moreover, contrary to the assertion that the *Tirukkural* is an example of secular ethics, the text begins with an invocation of God, who is perceived as the primary force in the world. It also emphasizes the importance of worshipping God (Thiruvalluvar, 1998).

Two of the essential features of Sanskrit are its unlimited possibilities for creating abstract nouns from any noun or adjective (using *-ta* or *-tva* suffix²) and its immense inclination to use abstract nouns even in everyday conversation (Nakamura, 2005, pp. 55–56). For instance: “He becomes old” translates to “He goes to *oldness*” in Sanskrit, “The fruit becomes soft” translates to “The fruit goes to *softness*”, and “He goes as a messenger” – “He goes with *the quality of messenger*” (*gacchati dautyena*) (Nakamura, 2005, p. 55). Furthermore, a deity very often becomes the agent and the subject, e.g. “It is raining” (in English) translates to *devo varsati*, i.e. “*The god of rain* causes rain” (and, similarly, “*God* makes the thunder roll”) (Nakamura, 2005, pp. 25, 161). Other politically relevant features of Sanskrit are: (1) minimizing individuality and specific particulars (emphasizing the species); (2) static aspects of language, i.e. nouns express more stable (even unchanging) aspects of things, and nouns (or verbal nouns) are used more often than verbs in Sanskrit sentences (especially in the case of Classical Sanskrit in early medieval India); and (3) the unlimited extension of the self in the language (the supremacy of the “universal Self” over the individual self) (Nakamura, 2005, ch. 4, ch. 6, ch. 8).

Therefore, Sanskrit most probably contributed to the Indian metaphysical belief that only the permanent (such as the Absolute and the “essence” of things/the “eternal form”/something behind appearances) is real, which supports the ultraconservative mindset, including contempt for changes inherent in the empirical, natural, economic, and political world. We can infer that Sanskrit undermines individuality (and thus also individualism), implies distrust of the senses, and induces the reification of words, thereby uncritically transforming abstractions into physical entities or concrete real events. It created the metaphysical core of Indian thought, which is tantamount to India’s highly religious culture. Indeed, metaphysics depends on the language one uses, not vice versa. It should be added that alphasyllabaries (such as Brahmi, Bengali, and Devanagari), whose nature is purely phonetic, were used for writing Sanskrit; especially the Devanagari script could (and still can) be easily perceived as divine since it is composed of the word *deva* – a deity.

As is well known, the Chinese language is entirely distinct from the Indo-European languages. It is not easy to write about “Chinese” because of its many varieties (Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka, etc.), which differ primarily in their phonology but generally share a single written form. The nonalphabetic, highly visual nature of Chinese writing is the most noticeable feature of “Chinese”. Unlike the Hindus, who tend to perceive writing script creation in religious/metaphysical terms, the Chinese see it as a bureaucratic/political invention.

² “The philosopher David Moser has noted that this practice may foster thinking about properties as abstract entities that can then function as theoretical explanations” (Nisbett, 2003, p. 156).

This paper will focus on some features of Classical/Old Chinese (hereafter Chinese) as it is the most philosophically (and thus also culturally) significant style/stage.

In Chinese, almost all words were written with one character only, nouns (e.g. *dao*) were commonly used as verbs, and the subject of a sentence was often omitted. Besides, verbs were much more salient in Chinese than in Sanskrit (Nisbett, 2003, pp. 149–150). Since nouns are naturally static and verbs are inherently dynamic, this feature could prevent ontologization of language (such as the one expressed in Sanskrit) by making the linguistic world and the physical world look dynamic to the Chinese, and by helping them to accept changes. According to Hansen (2000, p. 49), “Chinese theorists, accordingly, draw no explicit distinction between nouns and adjectives. Adjectives, in turn, are not clearly distinct from intransitive verbs” (clearly distinct adjectives encourage making properties into real objects [abstract nouns] when one can add a special suffix, such as *-tva* in Sanskrit or *-ness* in English). Therefore, the blurring of grammatical boundaries between parts of speech in Chinese made it difficult to imagine and distinguish an unchanging form (or substance), changing appearance, and fixed attributes. As Franklin Perkins (2019) sums it up, “it is sometimes said that Chinese philosophy lacks ontology (and, thus, also metaphysics) because philosophers were never concerned with being as such. It is more accurate to say that Chinese philosophers took dynamic organization as implicit in the very nature of being, rather than positing an external source for motion and order. It means that ontology is also cosmology, even biology” (ch. 3.2). Hence, it can be said that ancient Chinese thought was merely quasi-ontological (even classical Daoism) in comparison with so clearly ontological ancient Indian thought. It must be emphasized that the Chinese language did not facilitate the reification of abstractions³. In other words, the philosophers of ancient China did not know the Indo-European reality/appearance dichotomy, i.e. the dichotomy which induces a metaphysical (and religious) detachment from observable facts. In general, even those Chinese thinkers who were interested in “metaphysical” speculation sooner or later returned to the practical betterment of the world.

According to Nakamura (2005), one of the essential features of Chinese is an emphasis on the perception of what is concrete (stemming from the graphic character of Chinese writing); hence, “the Chinese esteemed the data of direct perception, especially visual perception, and [...] were concerned with particular instances” (pp. 189, 181–199). This point will be illustrated below with several examples. First, Chinese characters stand for physical objects and resemble what they signify (see Table 1A). Second, Chinese characters stand for properties and convey meaning through visual resemblance to a physical object (see Table 1B). Third, Chinese characters add more entities to concretely express an image of a

³ “There is the whiteness of the horse or the whiteness of the snow in ancient Chinese philosophy, but not whiteness as an abstract, detachable concept that can be applied to almost anything” (Nisbett, 2003, p. 153); “This degree of theorizing about abstractions was never characteristic of Chinese philosophy” (Nisbett, 2003, p. 157).

particular place (see Table 1C). We hypothesize that this kind of “linguistic visual stimulation” could help the Chinese (and literate elites) to rely primarily on the world we see rather than on purely metaphysical speculation (which is closely associated with religion). As is well known, unless we are blind, sight is our dominant sense, i.e. the most important human sense in the perception of the empirical world in which we live.

However, one might argue that Egyptian hieroglyphs were very similar to Chinese characters, but ancient Egyptian culture was strikingly more religious than the Chinese one. Such a seeming problem can be easily solved. There are three points which should be borne in mind. First, regardless of the writing systems, Egyptian and Chinese were utterly different. The Egyptian language belongs to the Afro-Asiatic (Chamito-Semitic) language family. Therefore, it shares some structural similarities with Hebrew and Arabic – the very religious cultures’ languages. Second, unlike the Chinese, the ancient Egyptians traditionally perceived their writing and the word itself as sacred, closely associated with religion, and having a divine origin (hieroglyphs as “God’s words;” Ptah, Seshat, and Thoth; see Dolińska, 2005, pp. 11, 26). Third, Egyptian hieroglyphs only *seem* to be similar to Chinese characters. Some hieroglyphs were indeed logograms, so their nature was mostly visual. Nevertheless, many other glyphs were alphabetic (uniliteral, e.g. horned viper = *f*; the abjad), biliteral (e.g. face = *hr*), and trilateral (e.g. scarab beetle = *hpr*), which means that their nature was mostly phonetic (phonograms) (Dolińska, 2005, pp. 17–20, 22, 40). It differs from Chinese characters (logograms) since these logograms lacked any kind of alphabet and were predominantly visual (even if some characters had “phonetic indicators”). Logograms are closely associated with images (rather than pronunciation), whereas phonograms are closely associated with speech sounds. In short, Chinese characters were not (and still are not) alphabetic, while the ancient Egyptians created the so-called hieroglyphic alphabet. This clearly shows a significantly more phonetic nature of the Egyptian script (hieroglyphs and their derivatives, more commonly used and each subsequent being less pictorial: cursive hieroglyphs, hieratic, and demotic; Dolińska, 2005, pp. 26–27, 256).

Thus, Indian scripts (alphasyllabaries) are more phonetic than Egyptian hieroglyphs, and Egyptian scripts are more phonetic than Chinese characters. Furthermore, languages contain some words which sound a bit like what they refer to in the physical world (onomatopoeic words, such as “meow”, “crash”, and “whisper” in English; the bouba-kiki effect; etc.), although it is rare, and it is difficult to achieve (and detect) this result. In general, phonetic (alphabetic) languages can evoke only this weak kind of resemblance to the physical world, whereas the Chinese unique, nonalphabetic, essentially logographic writing system referred much to the most important human sense, which focuses our attention on the empirical reality⁴. For

⁴ “In Western language socialization, for example, spelling accuracy plays a more important role in our evaluation of a person’s linguistic competence than does calligraphy. [...] In Chinese language socialization, good calligraphy plays a much more important evaluative social role; their training theory emphasizes calligraphy more than our own” (Hansen, 2000, pp. 35, 44).

example, there is nothing resembling rain in nature in the Sanskrit word *varṣa* (“rain”). But one can compare *varṣa* with the Chinese character *yu* (“rain”), i.e. a cloud with drops of water falling from it (see Table 1). As a result, in contrast to Chinese, Sanskrit made visual skepticism more likely to develop. It will also be shown in the following section that the Indians invented and emphasized the metaphysics and theologies of sound.

India: Philosophy of Language, Culture, and Political Thinking

In contrast to pre-Buddhist (indigenous) Chinese philosophy, Indian philosophy focused on metaphysics, epistemology, and logic. Moreover, India is known for its traditional emphasis on the soul (Radhakrishnan, 2017, pp. 56–57; Burns, 2006, pp. 11, 15). However, some people perceive Buddhism as anti-traditional, anti-essentialist, anti-caste, egalitarian, revolutionary, and democratic. It does not seem to be a plausible assumption because Indian Buddhism was *very otherworldly* and increasingly Hinduized (and sanskritized, brahmanized, etc. – especially in the *Mahāyāna* tradition), so it could not lead to deeply radical, anti-traditional consequences for power relations in this social world. It was not even focused on politics in general (with the possible exception of welfare-oriented Ashokan Buddhism) and radical politics in particular⁵. For example, the Buddhism: (1) relied from the beginning upon the traditional Indian concepts of *karma*, *Samsāra*, and rebirth; (2) was strongly influenced by the *Upanishads* and could even be regarded as reformed Brahmanism, especially when the differences between Hinduism and Buddhism disappeared (Burns, 2006, pp. 13–16, 25; Radhakrishnan, 2017, pp. 312–316, 361–368, 389–391, 493–495, 553, 558); (3) incorporated many supernatural, metaphysical, and/or otherworldly beliefs such as hell, *Brahmāloka*, heavens, *pretas*, popular Hindu deities of the Vedic pantheon, *asuras*, *bodhisattvas*, *Dharmakāya*, *Bhūtatahatā*, *Dharmadhātu*, *Tathāgatagarbha*, *Ālayavijñāna*, and *Amitābha* (Radhakrishnan, 2017, pp. 326–327, 379, 383–385, 484–490); (4) did not attempt to overthrow – or even just to condemn – the caste system because Buddhism was not revolutionary at all, but was rather intensely focused on otherworldly goals and social escapism (Radhakrishnan, 2017, pp. 366–369); (5) used sacred words and believed in the efficacy of mantras; (6) paid great attention to semantics (the relation of language and the world) and did not abandon the correspondence theory of language. As Johannes Bronkhorst (1996) points out, “we should not forget that the belief in the close relationship between language and the phenomenal world is particularly prominent in, and essential to, Buddhist thought” (p. 135). “Nāgārjuna merely extends this belief, by including whole statements. Subsequently he shows that the belief in the precise correspondence between statements and phenomenal reality leads to unacceptable contradictions. He does not conclude from this that there may not, after all, be such precise correspondence between statements and phenomenal reality, as we perhaps would. Quite an

⁵ In this category, one might mention B.R. Ambedkar’s [1891–1956] *radical reinterpretation of Buddhism* (Ambedkarite Buddhism, Neo-Buddhism, *Navayana*) in *modern* India.

the contrary, he sees this as a confirmation of his conviction that the phenomenal world does not really exist” (Bronkhorst, 1996, p. 125). In other words, Nagarjuna (fl. 2nd century CE), who was one of the most important Indian Buddhist philosophers, expressed more trust in language than in sensory perception.

Even though Buddhism was prevalent in India for several centuries, its only remnants – namely animal welfare, immense this-worldly pessimism, and extreme antimaterialism – have not been radical in a socio-political sense as well as in terms of linguistic thinking (Radhakrishnan, 2017, pp. 314–316, 496). Furthermore, after centuries of decline, Buddhism was almost entirely extinct in India at the end of the early medieval period. Its adherents now constitute less than 1% of the Indian population. Therefore, it can be omitted as not significant enough for analysis purposes.

As a result, only orthodox (*astika*) Indian thought will be discussed. Culturally, the most relevant schools of Hindu philosophy, which developed interesting views concerning language, appear to be as follows: Nyaya, Mimamsa, and Advaita Vedanta (Radhakrishnan, 2017, pp. 589, 593, 840; Deshpande, 2016; Burns, 2006, pp. 75, 80). Nyaya was the most logical, Mimamsa was the most orthodox, and Advaita Vedanta is currently the most popular school. The Hindu philosophies (*astika darsana*) accept the unquestionable authority of the Vedas (referred to as *Śruti* – “that which is heard” in Sanskrit), which are traditionally seen as having a divine (or at least not human, *apaurusheya*) origin and being the direct revelation of absolute, unchangeable Truth (Radhakrishnan, 2017, pp. 137–138, 583)⁶. Since only Sanskrit is the language of God, the deification of language, speech, and religious intolerance toward other languages occurred subsequently⁷. The Vedic speculations on language were based on the divine (*Daivi*) nature of speech (*Vak*) as well as on the eternal relationship between word (*śabda*) and meaning (*artha*) (Beck, 1995, pp. 23–32).

It is important to note that the Indians developed a kind of sonic theology, i.e. the one in which sound (Sanskrit: *śabda*) occupies a central place (e.g. OM-focused meditations, recitations without omitting even a single word, relentless mantra repetitions – *japa* – such as *Mahāmṛtyuñjaya*, *Gāyatrī*, *Om Namaḥ Śivāya*, *Hare Kṛṣṇa*, etc.) (Burns, 2006, p. 71; Nakamura, 2005, p. 162; Beck, 1995). The earliest layer of the Vedas – *Samhita* – contains numerous sacred formulas known as mantras (“ritually applied *Vak*”). The *Chandogya Upanishad* of the *Sama Veda* emphasizes speech, language, chants, and songs. Indeed, Hinduism is essentially a sonic theology, and the world is believed to originate from *śabda* because,

⁶ “The human authorship of the Vedic texts has long been rejected, and they are now perceived either as being entirely uncreated and eternal or created by God at the beginning of each cycle of creation” (Deshpande, 2016, ch. 1); “Since they [the Vedas] were not created by human beings, they were free from the limitations and faults of human beings. [...] The human sages only received the words of God in their meditative trances, but they had no authorship role” (Deshpande, 2016, ch. 3).

⁷ “Just as the language used by the Vedic poet-sages is the divine language, the language used by the non-Vedic people is said to be un-godly (*adevi*) or demonic (*asuryā*)” (Deshpande, 2016, ch. 1).

according to tradition, sounds found in the religious texts of the Vedas possess the power of creation in the universe. It is widely accepted that the most sacred cosmic sound in the Indian tradition, which represents *Brahman* (the Absolute), is *OM (AUM)*. Other examples of mystical syllables – used for magical purposes – are *HUM* and *PHAT* (in Sanskrit). It all relates to the fact that Indian scripts are purely phonetic. As a consequence, the development of highly religious approaches to language can be observed in the most ancient literature of India. In contrast to the Vedic onto-theologies of language and sound, the Chinese preferred to use magical bureaucratic spells (in Daoist religion and Chinese folk religion), which emulated administrative language and emphasized the importance of the political sphere.

The influential *sphota* theory of language, developed by Sanskrit grammarians, is based on the assumption that there exists an eternal *sphota* (i.e. the metaphysical conveyor of a fixed meaning) revealed by speech sounds (Radhakrishnan, 2017, pp. 641–642; Nakamura, 2005, pp. 157–158). Moreover, the great grammarian Panini (circa 5th century BCE) perceived Sanskrit as being atemporal, and a later grammarian-philosopher Bhartrhari (c. 5th century CE) claimed that language constitutes the ultimate principle of metaphysical reality (*Śabda-Brahman*) (Deshpande, 2016, ch. 2; Radhakrishnan, 2017, p. 905). Patanjali (c. 2nd century BCE), another commentator on Panini's grammar, followed the grammarian Katyayana (c. 3rd century BCE) and asserted that Sanskrit “words in reality are eternal (*nitya*), and that means they must be absolutely free from change or transformation and fixed in their nature” (Deshpande, 2016, ch. 2). In short, according to most Sanskrit grammarians, (1) the word, (2) the meaning (*artha*), and (3) the relationship between Sanskrit words and their meanings are eternal and natural (*siddha*); they are not a result of human convention. (However, according to Bhartrhari, what is really fundamental is the sentence-meaning [*vakyartha*], and not word-meaning.)

Naiyayikas and Mimamsakas often disagreed with each other, even though both schools accepted the Vedas as a source of authoritative knowledge (*śabda-pramana*) (Deshpande, 2016, ch. 3; Radhakrishnan, 2017, pp. 599–600, 641, 849–852; Burns, 2006, pp. 51–52). Also, “for both *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas* and *Mīmāṃsakas*, language refers to external states of the world and not just to conceptual constructions” (Deshpande, 2016, ch. 4). There is a direct correspondence between words and things. Indeed, the logical-epistemological school of Nyaya argued – together with the Vaisheshika school of Hindu philosophy – that a valid sentence was a true picture of a state of reality and the Vedas were words of God (Deshpande, 2016, ch. 3, ch. 8). It is noteworthy that the notion of God plays a central role for Naiyayikas as they believe that “God willfully established a connection between each Sanskrit word and its meaning, saying »let this word refer to this thing«” (Deshpande, 2016, ch. 3; Radhakrishnan, 2017, p. 642)⁸. Therefore, logically, altering the word-meaning relationship would be tantamount to acting against God's will.

⁸ “The relationship between a word and the object it refers to is thought to be the desire of God that such and such a word should refer to such and such an object” (Deshpande, 2016, ch. 4).

Mimamsakas defended the Vedic scriptural texts even more strongly considering them eternal and uncreated, not just the words of God (Deshpande, 2016, ch. 3–4; Radhakrishnan, 2017, pp. 849–852). Logically, then, “meaning for *Mīmāṃsā* had to be eternal, uncreated, and unrelated to the intention of a person, because its word par excellence, the Vedic scripture, was eternal, uncreated, and beyond the authorship of a divine or human person” (Deshpande, 2016, ch. 8). Also, “the word and the meaning both being eternal, the relation between them also is necessarily so” (Deshpande, 2016, ch. 3; Burns, 2006, pp. 51–52). This relation is independent of any human agency. As a result, people do not give or assign particular meanings to the words. It is not a matter of convention or agreement; the meanings are natural and innate to all Sanskrit words (which signify eternal universals) (Deshpande, 2016, ch. 3–4; Radhakrishnan, 2017, pp. 850–851). It is the reason why the traditional use of language cannot be contested. Language is beyond human influence.

In contrast to ritualistic and language-oriented Mimamsakas, Advaita Vedantins focused much more on contemplative spirituality and theology. Advaita Vedanta refers to the Vedas in the school’s name (*Veda-anta*) and shares many above-mentioned, Brahmanical views on language, including the absolute priority of eternal universals over individuals (Radhakrishnan, 2017, p. 923). Besides, as might be expected, the great Advaitin teacher Adi Shankara (c. 8th century CE) advocated the epistemic priority of *śruti* (scriptural revelation) over our reason and our senses (Radhakrishnan, 2017, pp. 936–937).

The most relevant schools of Indian philosophy tend to ground unchanging meaning firmly in metaphysics and rely on the supreme authority of ancient religious texts. Furthermore, as described above, the classical Indian – or rather Indo-European – theory of language (which may be called “logical-semantic-representative-mirroring theory”) assumes that language mirrors the external world⁹. Since Indian rationalism also takes that reality is permanent and “anything that changes is, to that degree, unreal” (Hansen, 2000, p. 17), the real meanings should generally be traditional and unchanging. It is worth pointing out that the idea of almost purely descriptive language, which just communicates reliable information, hides the fact that language is also political as it often is connected with social structures (hierarchies) and power relations. Hence, the correspondence theory of language, together with the privileged position of “divine” (or “sacred”) Sanskrit, may have contributed to the deeply conservative core elements of Hindu civilization. These cultural features make it very difficult to reveal power relations, challenge them, and undermine traditional hierarchies.

⁹ “At root, Indian thought views the function of language as primarily representative or descriptive” (Hansen, 2000, p. 16).

China: Philosophy of Language, Culture, and Political Thinking

At the outset, it is important to note that only pre-Buddhist Chinese thought will be analyzed as it is of truly indigenous origin. Thus, the three included periods are as follows: (1) the ancient (pre-imperial, classical) period, (2) the Legalist and Confucian-Legalist suppression of unorthodox views during Qin and Han dynasties, and (3) the Wei-Jin period of early medieval times. The first one was the most philosophically fruitful and famous for the “one hundred schools (of thought)” (*baijia*). For this reason, it will be given special attention. After the Han empire’s fall, the Wei-Jin period revived unorthodox ancient views, although with a relatively ontological (or meontological as in the case of Wang Bi) approach. This period led to the integration of Indian (Buddhist) and Chinese thought in later times. Hundreds of years of Buddhist intellectual domination in China have left the Buddhist – and thus indirectly Indian – influence on Chinese culture (the Lingbao School, the Three Teachings, Chinese Buddhism, etc.). One of the manifestations of this influence may have been the rising popularity of anti-individualism among the Chinese, since “Buddhism is the doctrine of *no* self, and Buddhist practices as a whole are designed to do away with the notion that any sort of individual self exists” (Puett & Gross-Loh, 2017, p. 193).

Moreover, it should be borne in mind that this paper opposes identifying Chinese philosophy only with Confucianism. Confucianism, also known as Ruism (*Rujia*), was just one of competing schools of thought in the ancient period. It was most probably the first school but not hegemonic yet, not the state’s official doctrine. The early Confucian scholar Mencius (Mengzi) complained that “the words of Yang Chu [Yang Zhu] and Mo Tzu [Mozi] fill the world. Those who do not turn to Yang Chu turn to Mo Tzu” (Schwartz, 2009, p. 265). As far as giving arguments is concerned, the Mohist school (*Mojia*) was more important than Confucius in the pre-Qin period: “Mozi, the first opponent of Confucianism, starts the process of philosophical reflection. [...] Mozi’s arguments forced Confucianism into a philosophical debate, forced it to learn a little philosophy. Without Mozi’s provocation, Confucianism might never have progressed beyond the *wise saying* style found in *The Analects*” (Hansen, 2000, pp. 95–96). Also, it is said that Mozi was the only ancient Chinese philosopher to deal with the philosophy of religion. Still, Mohist statements about conscious ghosts and spirits – which reward the good and punish the evil – were merely instrumental (utilitarian, pragmatic) and not metaphysical at all (Liu, 2010, pp. 112, 127–130; Hansen, 2000, pp. 118–120). The Mohists were well-organized, although they did not survive long. Nevertheless, Mohist pragmatism and authoritarianism flourished in the “Legalist” school (*Fajia*), which created the imperial system and shaped its *praxis* (Liu, 2010, pp. 24–25, 188; Puett & Gross-Loh, 2017, p. 191).

Together with Confucianism and the Legalist *realpolitik*, the third highly influential school that survived long enough to be worth analysis is Daoism (Taoism). Laozi and Zhuangzi are usually seen as like-minded thinkers (from text-based communities) who accepted the same core views, except for some details. Thus, they both are widely considered to

be early Daoists. They probably inherited anti-conventional and anti-authoritarian attitudes from the “proto-Daoist” Yang Zhu, mentioned by Mencius (as noted above). Nonetheless, “Laozian Daoism” and “Zhuangzian Daoism” can be easily distinguished based on writing styles. The *Laozi* (*Daodejing*, *Tao Te Ching*) is a concise text based upon aphorism and poetic imagery; in contrast, the *Zhuangzi* is long and filled with parables (*yuyan*), fables, sophisticated arguments, and anecdotes. It is the most significant linguistic difference between them.

Although early Daoists were not as well-organized as the Confucians or the Mohists (*Ru-Mo*), Daoism and Confucianism are the two most important Chinese philosophical schools (Liu, 2010, p. xii; Feng, 2001, p. 34). Historically, Daoism’s focus gradually turned from philosophical to religious, from the Lao-Zhuang tradition (including post-Han Neo-Daoism) to the Huang-Lao tradition with its final stage – Daoist religion (*Daojiao*). Therefore, it has heavily influenced China’s spiritual and artistic life. At present, religious Daoism is most common among the Chinese in Taiwan (about 33% of the population) and Hong Kong. Furthermore, this paper agrees with Chad Hansen that the traditional view of Daoism is filled with pro-establishment biases and Buddhist influences, which distort Daoism and undervalue it. For example, the *Laozi* should not be interpreted as significantly similar to Western (Christian, Platonic, etc.) or Buddhist mysticism.

On the one hand, it is widely accepted that Chinese philosophy (especially the ancient one) is characterized by the this-worldly, ethical-political emphasis on the good life and practical social problems (Liu, 2010, p. 25). On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that the philosophy of language was also very important in pre-Buddhist Chinese thought. The pragmatic rather than semantic character of the classical Chinese philosophy of language is revealed by paying much more attention to the characters or words than sentences (Hansen, 2000, p. 146). The semantic truth-value of a sentence is the preoccupation of logic detached from social context¹⁰. As Hansen (2000) sums it up, “even when Chinese thinkers did turn to semantic issues such as reference, they retained the pragmatic focus” (p. 50). It differs considerably from the Indo-European cultural tradition¹¹.

In contrast to the logical-semantic approach, the pragmatic one: emphasizes the practical-prescriptive role of language, focuses on the effects of usage on the users, and examines the relation of names and how we act (Hansen, 2000, pp. 139–140). “The Chinese philosophers approached language pragmatically [...]. A pragmatic tradition concerns mainly the relation between words and society. It views language as a social practice with

¹⁰ One may recall, for example, that Bhartrhari’s theory of *sphota* treats sentences as fundamental, and words as merely abstract. Sinologically, one can note that there were no punctuation marks used in Chinese to separate sentences.

¹¹ “In philosophical terms, the Chinese theory of language starts from pragmatics – the relation of language and user; Western theory focuses first on semantics – the relation of language and the world” (Hansen, 2000, p. 42).

social effects” (Hansen, 2000, p. 139). From this perspective, names are socially created; they are not of divine or inhuman origin.

Therefore, by and large, the Chinese usually considered language a social mechanism for shaping personality and guiding action, which helps to notice power relations and avoid religious metaphysics. They also expressed divergent views on naming. In short, at least four distinctive perspectives are important: (1) Confucianism (the “rectification of names” by settling “correct” language use); (2) Legalism (full control over discourse in the ruler’s interest to wipe out interpretive subjectivity); (3) Laozian Daoism (freedom from socially constructed distinctions which control people by controlling their desires and serve to privilege or discriminate against different groups); and (4) Zhuangzian Daoism (anti-conventional attitudes associated with analytic–relativistic–humorous–deconstructive approach to language, since ultimately there are no constant names).

(1) Confucianism

What is necessary is to rectify names. [...] Therefore, a superior man considers it necessary that the names he uses may be spoken appropriately, and also that what he speaks may be carried out appropriately. What the superior man requires, is just that in his words there may be nothing incorrect (*Confucian Analects*, 1893, book XIII, ch. 3).

There is broad agreement that Confucian political theoretical interest was the “rectification of names” (*zhengming*) – especially role names and the names of social statuses (Feng, 2001, p. 47; Burns, 2006, pp. 169, 172–174). According to the *Analects of Confucius* (as can be seen above) it is the first thing to be done in the administration of a state, and its goal is to promote the complex traditional hierarchy based on social obligations. Despite what it may appear to us at first sight, the Confucian policy of the rectification of names has little in common with the Socratic (or even Western in general) pursuit of definitions. Confucius (Kong Fuzi) and his immediate disciples did not focus on them. Clear-cut, logical, unequivocal definitions are normally very rare in the Confucian tradition (Jacoby, 2016, pp. 159–160; Nisbett, 2003, ch. 1; Liu, 2010, p. 48; Feng, 2001, p. 89).

“The core of his [Confucius’] policy recommendations is *follow tradition*. He assumed that current social problems stemmed from departure from the ancient ritual model and theorized mainly about how to resurrect and then preserve the traditional social order” (Hansen, 2000, p. 62). As a result, for example, the Confucian rectification of names would oppose *same-sex marriage* because it undermines an “orderly” social hierarchy, deviates from the intentions of the sage-kings of antiquity, and can destroy the unequal roles of men and women in the family. In other words, the name “marriage” should now be “rectified” in the traditional way. This name conservatism of the Confucian ethical-political project firmly connects “correct” language use and “correct” behavior, since names (*ming*) are prescriptive

and should conform to the normative tradition (*li*) of the early Zhou dynasty (*Zhouli*) (Cheng, 2013, pp. 870–871; Liu, 2010, pp. 48–52, 61–64)¹². In addition, *zhengming* was not a decentralized social task because “the core assumption of the Confucian policy of rectifying names was that the ruler [...] was supposed to settle correct language use” (Hansen, 2000, p. 348). Hence, from the point of view of the early Confucians, the role of the monarch is crucial, even though it is tradition that sets the standards of discourse (traditionalism). Both subjects and rulers should not deviate from past language use.

Rectifying names was fully developed by the Confucian philosopher Xunzi (c. 3rd century BCE), who was influential in the Han period and wrote the essay “On Rectifying Names” (*Zhengming pian*). According to him, state regulation of language is necessary to re-establish the old names and for social programming in the customary language, since “name giving can only be done by legitimate political authority and under strict, conservative principles” (Hansen, 2000, p. 328). We can assume that Xunzi, as a member of the Jixia Academy, internalized the ruler’s perspective. Indeed, the philosopher was concerned with maintaining social order; therefore, he defended legal punishment, justified control of discourse, and perceived permitting an illicit change in discourse as enabling linguistic anarchy (Burns, 2006, p. 201; Feng, 2001, pp. 165, 176; Hansen, 2000, pp. 372, 374). Moreover, “Xunzi’s position is that the only standard for the use of terms is *convention* and the only *fa*^{standard} for the *correct interpretation* of convention is the *junzi*^{superior man}” (Hansen, 2000, p. 348). Thus, he privileged the Confucian elite (*junzi*) in service to the ruler. Since “names have no intrinsic relation to stuffs” (Hansen, 2000, p. 328), the meaning of words is a matter of human convention, not divine metaphysics. This descriptive claim entails a normative claim – following the convention is appropriate, whereas violating it is inappropriate. “Any skepticism of conventions is simply an invitation to conceptual anarchy, which Confucians equate with social anarchy” (Hansen, 2000, p. 317).

In short, Xunzi’s writings constitute the most obvious expression of conventional authoritarianism in ancient Confucianism. Nonetheless, his name conservatism has its limits. It applies mainly to the names which are value-based and morally relevant, and not necessarily to the others as the philosopher allowed their development based on sensible similarities (and differences) (Hansen, 2000, p. 320). Some new, fact-based names can be created. His nominalist theory of naming, which states that names reflect social conventions, is supplemented with a naturalistic philosophy of language, which rejects superstitions (afterlife, ghosts, etc.) and states that all names should be based on sensory perception and empirically verifiable (Liu, 2010, pp. 89–94). However, “this progressive wrinkle in Xunzi’s political naming theory is still authoritarian. He allows *only* the king to do this. [...] There can be new factual terminology but it must come from the central authority, not from disputing schools of philosophers. [...] He simultaneously insists on preserving old names

¹² “Confucians assigned names prescriptively, basing them on tradition and intending them to guide proper behavior according to a traditional code” (Hansen, 2000, p. 240).

and allowing kings to create new names” (Hansen, 2000, p. 324; Feng, 2001, pp. 174–175). In addition, despite the popularity of nominalist theories of naming in ancient China and Xunzi’s influence on later Confucian thinkers during the Han dynasty, the imperial unification of China in the late 3rd century BCE gave some strength to essentialist theories of naming which connected names with fixed, identity-determining essences; essentialism and metaphysics were the most evident in the *Guanzi* and the thought of Dong Zhongshu (c. 179–c. 104 BCE) (Makeham, 1991; Burns, 2006, p. 173; Feng, 2001, pp. 217–230).

If by “conservative” we mean emphasizing the social order in everyday life and the attitude of conformity to a non-egalitarian tradition, then Confucianism is overtly conservative. On the other hand, as is well known, although Confucianism is conservative, it is *primarily* a *secular* social theory that lacks faith in a supreme personal God, the idea of otherworldly salvation, and the practice of monastic life¹³. Indeed, the Confucian theory of language and the well-ordered society served to promote some progressive ideas. First, even though Confucius and Mencius used the feudal words *junzi* (translated as “lord’s son,” “noble man,” “gentleman,” or “superior person”) and *xiaoren* (petty, small-minded person), they turned them from names of hereditary social statuses to names of individual moral qualities which can be cultivated by everyone (Feng, 2001, pp. 188–189, 242). Together with Legalism (and indirectly, Mohism), it helped lay the foundations for the success of exam-based meritocracy in China later. Second, what stems from the rectification of names in Mencian thought is the right to overthrow an evil ruler (a tyrant) through the political revolt of the ministers (but not through a radical social revolution, even though Mencian thought has inspired revolutions) (Cheng, 2013, pp. 870–871; Feng, 2001, pp. 84–85; Liu, 2010, p. 85; Schwartz, 2009, p. 289). The Confucian idea that “the ruler should be like a ruler”, i.e. that he must comply with his monarchical role’s moral requirements, implies that not fulfilling these demands deprives him of the title of king. In this sense, Mencius perceived the killing of a wicked ruler as not regicide. He even asserted (in *Mengzi* 7B/14) that the people are *the most* important element in a state, whereas the ruler is *the least* important. Therefore, Confucianism is not as conservative as the most relevant schools of Hindu philosophy.

(2) Legalism

The First Emperor of Qin (259–210 BCE) burned many old books and killed many conservative scholars. This violent removal of the ancient regime and the Emperor’s attempts to establish a completely new order embodied the spirit of revolutionary change. It must be emphasized that the Qin dynasty was founded on Legalism. Like Mohism, Legalism was anti-traditional and highly authoritarian. To create social homogeneity within Chinese society, the Qin Dynasty began serious language planning and established a uniform writ-

¹³ “Confucius’ policy conclusions do differ from those of other philosophers. His prescriptive views are refreshingly free from supernaturalism and yet classically conservative” (Hansen, 2000, p. 62).

ten language (the *Shutongwen* policy). Moreover, like Xunzi, the Legalists did not tolerate skeptical-logical linguistic doctrines. Some Legalists are even thought to be Xunzi's students (Han Fei and Li Si).

Han Fei (c. 280–233 BCE), the most prominent Legalist thinker, separated politics from ethics and instead of looking backward to a lost golden age, he advocated an innovative, forward-looking view of history (Feng, 2001, pp. 181–182; Liu, 2010, pp. 24, 192, 198; Schwartz, 2009, p. 341). Likewise, “the source of correct usage and content [of language] is not historical, conventional agreement, but the ruler's authority and interest” (Hansen, 2000, p. 367). Standards of language use should be objective and publicly accessible (*fa*), as opposed to mere conventions interpreted by the traditionalists. Han Fei wanted to wipe out the conventionally cultivated, intuitive, interpretive subjectivity of Confucian scholars (and to marginalize them) because “there should be only one guiding discourse and one standard of interpretation” (Hansen, 2000, p. 361). The authoritarian methods of controlling how people use names have to be used to maintain uniformity. However, unlike the Mohists who took a universal social point of view (the “benefit of all”), Han Fei and other Legalists wanted to benefit mainly state power and the ruler (for example by increasing his effective total control over the government and the population); in short, any discourse which is useful to the ruler should be promoted, whereas all others should be banned (Hansen, 2000, pp. 5, 12, 351, 360; Liu, 2010, pp. 207–208).

The thinker placed his theory of naming in the context of the strictly institutionalized system of centralized bureaucracy, which must not rely on family ties or nepotism. The political and administrative focus is reflected in the Legalist idea of *xingming* (“performance and title/office/job description/tasks”) (Feng, 2001, pp. 183–184; Liu, 2010, p. 202; Schwartz, 2009, p. 345). As Hansen (2000) sums it up: “Han Feizi still portrays the bureaucratic structure as a system of roles – names. The ruler *names* people to positions. Their responsibility is to play the role associated with the name. The ruler metes out punishment and reward as this job description is satisfied or not. [...] The ruler controls his bureaucracy, then, using reward and punishment and the language of roles and promises or pledges” (p. 365). Moreover, the implementation of the Legalist policies is based on equality before the law for all people (legal egalitarianism) (Feng, 2001, p. 189). In this regard, it is essential to recognize that “laws that apply to everyone equally originated in China [...]”; also, “much of what Europe inherited – and, by default, our twenty-first-century world, too – has its roots in China”, since “Legalism became a key ingredient in the rise of what we think of as the modern, rational state” (Puett & Gross-Loh, 2017, p. 191). However, in building an innovative and rational administration, and enabling upward social mobility, Westerners have overlooked the important Chinese cultural principle, namely separating wealth from political power (Feng, 2001, p. 242; Puett & Gross-Loh, 2017, pp. 191–192).

(3) Laozian Daoism

Against the Legalists' brutality, the Confucians resorted to self-righteous moralizing, whereas Daoists developed an anti-authoritarian ethos. Xunzi (and his branch of Confucianism), the Mohists, and the Legalists were authoritarians who placed their trust in language adequacy (Schwartz, 2009, pp. 318–320). It was their way of manipulating people for political ends. In contrast, the ancient Daoist sage Laozi was skeptical of the linguistic ability to express the truth of reality: "I do not know its name; I call it Tao [*Dao*]" (ch. 25); "The Tao that can be told of is not the eternal Tao; the name that can be named is not the eternal name" (ch. 1); "Tao is eternal and has no name. [...] As soon as there were regulations and institutions, there were names. As soon as there were names, know that it is time to stop" (ch. 32); "He who knows does not speak. He who speaks does not know" (ch. 56); "Therefore the sage [...] spreads doctrines without words" (ch. 2) (Laozi, 1963; Liu, 2010, p. 6). In short, instead of providing a true picture of reality, language tends to distort it. But writing a book, even if a very short one, to promote linguistic skepticism is a seemingly paradoxical task. Laozi was aware of this: "the sage desires to have no desire [...]. He learns to be unlearned, and returns to what the multitude has missed (Tao)" (Laozi, 1963, ch. 64). We just need to resort to language first to comprehend its severe limitations in the end.

It should be borne in mind that the main problem with language is not of a semantic nature. It is pragmatic: "The Taoists further, reflecting the general Chinese concern with the regulative function of language, associate both the names and the distinctions with behavior-guiding attitudes (desires) which are also creations of convention" (Hansen, 1981, p. 335)¹⁴. First, following ancient Chinese nominalist theories of naming, the names are conventional. Even the distinctions represented by the names may be conventional. Second, we are controlled by language, especially by socially constructed distinctions, because they often instill unnatural desires, shape evaluative perspectives, and develop biased attitudes. Since through *learning* language one internalizes society's preferences, Laozi wanted to *unlearn* name-induced distinctions. The strong connection between names (*ming*) and harmful desires (*yu*) is revealed in Laozi's concept of the nameless *pu* ("simplicity"/"uncarved wood"): "Simplicity, which has no name, is free of desires. Being free of desires, it is tranquil" (Laozi, 1963, ch. 37). This freedom from superfluous hierarchical distinctions and conservative desires (which are products of authoritarian socialization/"carving") transforms human behavior from coercive and interfering (*you wei*) to a non-coercive one (*wu wei*, often translated as "no-action")¹⁵.

¹⁴ "Language is a regulative, conventional activity which carries most of the burden of »socializing« us – generating in us and reinforcing attitudes and patterns of action" (Hansen, 1981, p. 327).

¹⁵ "The pursuit of learning is to increase day after day. The pursuit of Tao is to decrease day after day. It is to decrease and further decrease until one reaches the point of taking no action. No action is undertaken, and yet nothing is left undone" (Laozi, 1963, ch. 48). It should be remembered that (1) *learning* a language instills many *action*-guiding distinctions, and (2) what Laozi condemned were aggressive measures, i.e.

The ills of discrimination are deeply embedded in language. For example, “when all the people of the world know beauty as beauty, there arises the recognition of ugliness” (Laozi, 1963, ch. 2). According to Laozi’s contrast theory of names, “knowing any term is knowing how to distinguish. Thus, we learn each word and its opposite together” (Hansen, 2000, p. 211). However, names “A” (e.g. “noble”, “human”) and “not-A” (e.g. “ignoble”, “inhuman”) are not treated by society as having equal value: “A single distinction creates both names. We learn some pattern of preference or desire for one and aversion for the other” (Hansen, 2000, p. 223). Furthermore, since a “*tao (dao)* (i.e. an objective reality) that can be told of (*dao*) is not an eternal, objective reality (*chang dao*)”, it is interesting to note that *dao* – when used as a verb – includes both “to tell”/“to speak” (to use language) and “to follow”/“to guide” (to act in a certain way) among its meanings (Liu, 2010, pp. 6, 135, 137, 142–143). Hence, it can evoke the pragmatic approach, which emphasizes the relation between language and how we act. Language is prescriptive and guides action, so it can never be separated from unstable, partial, dichotomous value systems. It is the reason why language legitimates and supports value discrimination: “When certain things or features (e.g., precious stones, reputation, being slim, skin color) are regarded as »beautiful« or »worthy« – i.e., desirable – other things will inevitably be deemed »ugly« and »unworthy«, with serious social, economic, and political consequences (ch. 3)” (Chan, 2018, ch. 7). In other words, the misery is man-made and rooted in communal language itself. Since the Daoist wants to avoid such consequences (social ills), he advocates *Dao* that cannot be told of and named. Moreover, as the whole of nature, *Dao* is eternal (*chang*), whereas language-based values are temporary and baseless (they usually do not accord with nature).

In modern terms, people usually desire what society labels as “useful”, whereas they loathe what is labeled as “useless;” girls and boys are traditionally taught that they should be “straight”, since being “queer” is not valued at all (heteronormativity); and so forth. Such labels are merely conventional, but they lead to serious social problems, such as ruthless rivalry, oppression, and unhappiness. For instance, the negative (even sinister) connotations of “dark” and “black”, and the customary preference (privilege) for *white* skin (or at least *lighter* skin tones), may have contributed to racism by fostering racist attitudes. But the *Daodejing* says that: “He who knows the white and yet keeps to the black becomes the model for the world” (Laozi, 1963, ch. 28). Indeed, Laozi’s philosophical view of language becomes ethical-political. The philosopher wants us to find value in what convention makes us undervalue (or even disvalue).

Ethically, the *Daodejing* rejects conservative Confucian virtues, such as *ren* and *yi* (translated below as “humanity” and “righteousness”): “When the great Tao declined, the doctrine of humanity and righteousness arose” (Laozi, 1963, ch. 18). Likewise, the book rejects the Confucian *li* (translated below as “propriety”), since “propriety is a superficial

the *actions* such as war, exploitation, death penalty, etc. As many scholars have remarked, *wu wei* does not mean total passivity, *status quo*, quietism, or laziness. It even appears in the phrase *wei wu wei* in the *Laozi*.

expression of loyalty and faithfulness, and the beginning of disorder” (Laozi, 1963, ch. 38). As a natural and moral alternative, Laozi offers, for example, an equalizing principle: “When it is excessive, reduce it. When it is insufficient, supplement it” (Laozi, 1963, ch. 77). Politically, it can be applied to gender relations to undermine androcentrism and make women feel empowered: “The *Daodejing*, believed to be the earliest Daoist text, provided a challenge to the patriarchalism prevalent in ancient Chinese society, in a way that other existing schools of thought, including Confucianism, did not” (Lai, 2000). Indeed, the Daoist book stands in contrast to other ancient texts of many cultures in its very positive evaluation of femininity, which is even portrayed by the Daoist sage as morally superior and primary; therefore, Laozian thought can be seen as an early example of anti-patriarchy (Burns, 2006, p. 184).

It is essential to recognize that the Daoist skepticism found in the *Daodejing* is *linguistic* instead of *sense* skepticism found in the Indo-European cultural context. For instance, the linguistic skepticism of Laozi would reject the “God’s Word” theory, which applies to the Bible (the inspired word of God), the Quran (the literal word of God), and the Vedas (the words of God – according to many Hindus). As Hansen (1981) sums it up, “the *Tao Te Ching* does not reflect any direct skepticism of the senses, that is, the suspicion that the senses might be giving us an incorrect picture show. But it does suggest that our conventional categorization of sensible qualities constrains and restricts the range of our ordinary sense capacity. [...] Except for attacking such limitations introduced into our experience by language, the *Tao Te Ching* exhibits no direct distrust of the senses themselves” (p. 328). Therefore, in general, Laozi trusted what is individual and biological, whereas he distrusted what is predominantly social and conventional (e.g. language)¹⁶. Language structures our thoughts, making them obey mere conventions, and the distinctions by which our hearts-minds (*xin*) work tend to be artificial products of our own making. The words, the distinctions, and the social practices are subject to change¹⁷. These are some of the reasons why the radical change is justified: “He [Laozi] shows us that we *can* reverse all these conventional *preferences*. They do *not* provide constant guidance. There are cases where opposite guidance (reversing the value assignments) is better” (Hansen, 2000, p. 223). Likewise, according to Karyn Lai (2000), a “more general interpretation of the major task of the *Daodejing* is that it seeks to overturn existing contemporary norms and values”. In short, the Daoist advocates the policy of a complete reevaluation of values. We can assume that it was intended to have a therapeutic effect, thereby promoting freedom from prejudice and indoctrination.

¹⁶ For the discussion of the social and conventional nature of language, see Hansen (1981, 2000). For example: “Learning a language is learning to make distinctions and discriminations that the other language users make and also to recognize and respond to others’ uses of language” (p. 327).

¹⁷ “The pattern of word use – the discriminatory *boundaries* – may change over time. The words may change and the distinctions they mark are not constant. So the social practices triggered by names will also change” (Hansen, 2000, p. 216).

It can now be understood that there is no mystical metaphysics or theology at the core of the philosophy of the *Daodejing*: “Being one with Dao does not describe any mystical union with a divine source or sacred power, but reflects a mode of being that accords with the assumed original nature marked by natural goodness and the absence of excessive desire” (Chan, 2018, ch. 7). When ancient Daoists were against “knowledge” and “desires”, they repudiated the learned dichotomies and socio-linguistic value discriminations instilled by a highly hierarchical society (these are what should be forgotten). Thus, the early Daoist practice of emptying one’s heart-mind could be individualistic in the sense that it was intended to remove such socially induced, cognitive-emotive content, and not to remove very individual experiences, perceptions, and values. The *Daodejing* was critical of the internalization of conservative, consumerist, and authoritarian values (all three conducive to effective social control) through language.

It reminds us that much of what we think of as reality is actually a naming convention that we can change. Indeed, Daoists made such attempts. Whereas the Confucians and the Mohists revered Heaven (*Tian*) as one of the key concepts, it has been displaced in Daoist discourse by *Dao* (*Tao*). Besides, before Zhuangzi and Xunzi imitated it, Laozi had naturalized *tian* and changed its meaning, i.e. he had interpreted *tian* as “nature” (Schwartz, 2009, pp. 201, 206, 315, 317). Moreover, as is well known, metaphysical and theological visions of the world almost always entail a highly hierarchical structure, whereas Laozi has coined and advocated the term *ziran*, i.e. self [*zi*] so [*ran*] (translated as “self-so”, “spontaneously”, “being free”, etc.). For example: “Tao is esteemed and virtue [*de*] is honored without anyone’s order! They always come spontaneously [*ziran*]” (Laozi, 1963, ch. 51). Daoist philosophers undermined the idea of coercive authority and emphasized unforced natural harmony in the world of *ziran*. It encourages us to reject strict hierarchical subordination and the social identities imposed on individuals. At the same time, one should note that early Daoists did not reject all ethical know-how, true wisdom, and the existence of reality outside of thought and discourse.

(4) Zhuangzian Daoism

In general, Hindu speculations on language were based on the divine nature of speech (*Daivi Vak*). In contrast, such strong religious views were uncommon in Chinese intellectual circles. As might be expected, together with other Chinese philosophers, “Zhuangzi explicitly asserts the conventional nature of language...” (Wang, 2003, p. 99). Since he approached language pragmatically, language is – according to him – a means or a tool: “Words exist because of meaning; once you’ve gotten the meaning, you can forget the words. Where can I find a man who has forgotten words so I can have a word with him?” (Zhuangzi, 1968, ch. 26). Therefore, words are useful, but the attachment to words can be pointless. Zhuangzi did not deny the necessity of using them – he just rejected a logocentric approach to reality. It is important to note that the Daoist philosopher was influenced by his friend Hui Shi (or Huizi, i.e. “Master Hui”) from the School of Names (*Mingjia*, also known as the “Logicians”

or debaters, *bianzhe*) (Feng, 2001, pp. 92–93, 96–100, 106, 129). During a funeral Zhuangzi said: “Since you died, Master Hui, I have had no material to work on. There’s no one I can talk to any more” (Zhuangzi, 1968, ch. 24). As a result, unlike Laozi who had avoided resorting to language as much as possible, Zhuangzi debated with other intellectuals, formulated sound arguments, and was deeply engaged in the philosophical analysis of language. According to Hansen (2000), the *Zhuangzi* belongs to the analytic period of linguistic thinking in China, whereas the *Laozi* belongs to the anti-language period.

For example, Zhuangzi (c. 4th century BCE) refuted cosmogonic¹⁸ and monistic¹⁹ speculation through reasoning. He used *reductio ad absurdum* and an interlocutor’s presupposition in “the happy fish debate” (Zhuangzi, 1968, ch. 17). Besides, Hui Shi tried to demonstrate the relativity of time and space, and we can read in the *Zhuangzi*: “If we say that a thing is great or small because it is relatively great or small, then there is nothing in all creation which is not great, nothing which is not small” (Zhuangzi, 1889, p. 206). Indeed, the Daoist philosopher expressed such views (especially in chapters 2 and 17), and he probably accepted even aesthetic and moral relativism, although his relativism applied mostly to conceptual schemes (the relativistic quality of language) and was not radical (Liu, 2010, pp. 163, 170–171). According to Yong Huang (2018), Zhuangzi was not a moral relativist of a familiar type (because, for him, moral judgments were relative to the patients’ standards). The Daoist thinker was even more unconventional when it came to his literary style – humorous, witty²⁰, and imaginative – and thus very different from the prevalent one. He often ridiculed uncritical conformity, conceited narrow-mindedness, and service to the state. Zhuangzi’s doubtful approach to traditional values acquired through language and culture learning can lead to taking them much less seriously. Hence, the philosopher wants us to question our conventional ways of thinking (Puett & Gross-Loh, 2017, pp. 141–142, 161). This therapeutic method liberates human minds by destroying all uncritical attachments to egocentrism, anthropocentrism, dogmas, and mores. From a left-libertarian perspective, as expressed in “Linguistics and politics” by Noam Chomsky – and following Zhuangzi’s

¹⁸ “If there was a beginning, then there was a time before that beginning. And a time before the time which was before the time of that beginning. If there is existence, there must have been non-existence. And if there was a time when nothing existed, then there must have been a time before that – when even nothing did not exist. Suddenly, when nothing came into existence, could one really say whether it belonged to the category of existence or of non-existence?” (Zhuangzi, 1889, p. 23).

¹⁹ “We have already become one, so how can I say anything? But I have just said that we are one, so how can I not be saying something? The one and what I said about it make two, and two and the original one make three. If we go on this way, then even the cleverest mathematician can’t tell where we’ll end, much less an ordinary man. If by moving from nonbeing to being we get to three, how far will we get if we move from being to being? Better not to move, but to let things be!” (Zhuangzi, 1968, ch. 2).

²⁰ See, for example, the passages on dragging tail in the mud and on the young boy of Shou-ling who went to learn the Han-tan Walk (Zhuangzi, 1968, ch. 17).

attitude toward language – it is very important to use language in a creative and free way which can result in greater self-fulfillment (Chomsky, 2007, p. 206).

Indeed, it is possible and justifiable because “speech has no constancy” (Zhuangzi, 1968, ch. 2). For this reason, contrary to the Confucian-Mohist-Legalist obsessive goal of “social order”, there are no constant names, and language cannot be a continuous guide to behavior. Words have no fixed meanings in an endlessly changing world. As a consequence, there is no fixed correspondence relation between names and the world. The word is not the thing. Thus, instead of labeling ourselves and solidifying our self-definition expressed in language (and thereby limiting our potential for self-improvement according to a very narrow understanding of ourselves, which may become a self-fulfilling prophecy), we should consider engaging in a lifelong and dynamic process of self-cultivation. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that there were clear signs of Daoists’ individualistic tendencies: Yangists – proto-Daoists, the classical-philosophical Daoists (e.g. the author of Chapter 8 of the *Zhuangzi*), and Neo-Daoists such as Guo Xiang (Komarzyca, 2019, pp. 107–111). In particular, “the *Zhuangzi* views human beings as variegated individuals instead of a totality” (Hsu, 2019, ch. 3). Also, “it deconstructs moral-essentialist theories which views »humans« as a unified whole [...] and argues for a return to the respective essentials of innate and authentic nature...” (Hsu, 2019, ch. 5).

In earlier times, Laozi deconstructed the most conventional conceptual schemes; the *Daodejing* undermines many dichotomous binary systems in which “superior” values are antithetical to “inferior” ones (the hierarchies of dual oppositions). However, Daoist deconstruction’s best example is Zhuangzi’s deconstructive strategy. Many scholars – such as Michelle Yeh, Robert Shepherd, Youru Wang, Hongchu Fu, Mark Berkson, and Steven Burik – have compared Jacques Derrida and the ancient Chinese philosopher. First, deconstruction starts with the political critique of strict and unequal binary divisions (*shi-fei*) of Confucians and Mohists. Second, its aim is the destabilization of the authoritarian discourse and the *status quo*. Third, there are always *third* possibilities (Wang, 2003, pp. 1–51). For instance, Zhuangzi exposed the arbitrary nature of people’s categorization based on their adherence, or lack thereof, to conservative Confucian ideals. In the Confucian social order, a *junzi* (“a gentleman”) governs a *xiaoren* (“a petty man”) both axiologically (as a moral term) and politically (as the core of the ruling bureaucracy). But for Zhuangzi, the *junzi* and the *xiaoren* are the same from a third (i.e. neither the *junzi*’s nor the *xiaoren*’s) and higher (i.e. not overly narrow-minded) point of view:

Everyone in the world risks his life for something. If he risks it for benevolence and righteousness, then custom names him a gentleman; if he risks it for goods and wealth, then custom names him a petty man. The risking is the same, and yet we have a gentleman here, a petty man there. In destroying their lives and blighting their inborn nature, Robber Chih and Po Yi were two of a kind. How then can we pick out the gentleman from the petty man in such a case? (Zhuangzi, 1968, ch. 8).

On the one hand, Zhuangzi fostered the dereification of words, as opposed to traditional ways of using language, which, in most cases, support reifying views of the social world. On the other hand, although the Daoist philosopher rejected moral absolutism and distrusted metaphysical claims to absolute truth, he was not an anti-realist because – unlike many Buddhists and postmodernists who are anti-realists – he accepted that there *is* a mind-independent and language-independent world (Liu, 2010, p. 161). Similarly, Huang (2018) analyzed the Zhuangzian patient moral relativism and found that it was a kind of moral *realism* (which is incompatible with moral skepticism and anti-realism). Zhuangzi developed a practical, this-worldly philosophy. As a constructive social thinker, he proposed a positive ethical ideal and an alternative political vision. Indeed, there is broad agreement that the Zhuangzian ideal of a human being is the “Genuine Person” (*zhenren*), who is not identified through social roles or mores. Moreover, “the goal of the Daoists, and all libertarian utopian thinkers, is to debunk and deconstruct the statist utopias by contrasting them with a stateless ideal” (Rapp, 2012, p. 63). For instance, in Chapter 9 of the *Zhuangzi* which – along with four other chapters – tries to delegitimize the state, one can find evidence for a long history of anti-statist thought in China (Rapp, 2012). Hence, the Daoist says that in the “age of Perfect Virtue men live the same as birds and beasts, group themselves side by side with the ten thousand things. Who then knows anything about »gentleman« or »petty man«?” (Zhuangzi, 1968, ch. 9). Unlike Derrida, Daoists saw the possibility of detaching from dichotomic language, and the Zhuangzian project of freedom was not merely negative (in other words, it was also positive).

Zhuangzi’s philosophy of language is profoundly anti-authoritarian and anti-conservative, and so are many socio-political as well as ethical-political ideas in his book. Indeed, Chapter 10 sounds even more radical – almost revolutionary – as in the following passage: “Destroy and wipe out the laws that the sage has made for the world, and at last you will find you can reason with the people. [...] Wipe out patterns and designs, scatter the five colors, glue up the eyes of Li Chu, and for the first time, the people of the world will be able to hold on to their eyesight. [...] When men hold on to their eyesight, the world will no longer be dazzled” (Zhuangzi, 1968, ch. 10). Here, Daoist nonconformist attitudes become a radical call to action. In this regard, Chapter 9 (the previous one) argues for an ecological, libertarian, classless, stateless society in the age of Perfect Virtue (*de*).

In conclusion, contrary to the widespread mistaken assumption that the concepts of *yin* and *yang* form the foundation of Daoism, the key concepts in this philosophy (*Daojia*/*Daodejia*) are as follows: the *Dao-De* relation, *ziran*, *wuwei*, *pu*, and *wanwu* (“myriad [living and non-living] things”). *Wanwu*, which was first introduced in the *Daodejing* and developed in the *Zhuangzi*, is the distinguishing feature of Daoist thought according to Chiayu Hsu. Moreover, “as a concept that safeguards individual particularities, the use of »myriad things« in the *Zhuangzi* serves to counterargue against the essentialist tendency to treat »humans (*ren*)« as a collective of moral agents with a singular and identifiable moral essence” (Hsu, 2019). Therefore, Daoist philosophy has an anti-authoritarian and individualistic dimension (in the sense of horizontal individualism), which is very close to

modern left-libertarianism, especially when early Daoist texts advocate egalitarian values and want to minimize constraints on individual freedom (Komarzyca, 2019). As is demonstrated throughout this paper, language played a major role in the classical period of Chinese philosophy, and the Daoists' views of language reinforced their ethical-political teachings.

Furthermore, both the *Laozi* (*Daode-jing*) and the *Zhuangzi* (*Nanhua zhen-jing*) were recognized as "classics" (*jing*) and thus worthy of canonical status; also, they were widely read by the educated elites, who had an impact on the uneducated masses. In particular, Laozi's thought had a strong impact on the Huang-Lao school, which dominated "liberal" political discourse in early Han China, and on the Daoist religion (*Daojiao*), which was keenly supported by at least three emperors: Tang Xuanzong (713–756), Song Huizong (1100–1125), and Ming Jiajing (1522–1566). The religious Daoism has retained gender egalitarianism, as well as some economic and moral equality, whereas it has de-emphasized the importance of political and ecological egalitarianism. The teachings of Laozi and Zhuangzi have influenced Chinese Chan Buddhism (better known as Zen), which still manifests linguistic skepticism (or at least a critique of the conventional use of language), iconoclasm, and a rather this-worldly attitude. Daoist philosophy and linguistic analysis were revived and became dominant in early medieval times; Wei-Jin Neo-Daoists advocated *ziran* and criticized the Confucian orthodoxy (*mingjiao*, i.e. "the teaching of names/the Confucian ethical code") (Feng, 2001, pp. 245–246, 265, 272).

It is noteworthy that some of the Neo-Daoists, such as Ruan Ji (210–263 CE) and Bao Jingyan (fl. c. 300 CE), expressed anarchist views; John Rapp (2012) points out that Daoist anarchism was a long-lasting way of thinking which had started in the ancient times of Laozi and Zhuangzi, and its elements appeared even in Tao Qian's "Peach Blossom Spring" (c. 421 CE) as well as in the *Wunengzi* (9th century CE). For example, we can observe the Daoist-anarchist attitude toward language and politics in the way Ruan Ji: (1) describes a Confucian gentleman: "his words obey prescribed rules; his conduct is according to prescribed models. [...] In his conduct he wants to be a model to the present world; in his speech he wants to set up eternal standards;" and (2) comments on him: "Your rites and laws are indeed nothing more than the methods of harmful robbers, of trouble-makers, of death and destruction. And you, you think they form an inalterable way of excellent conduct: How erroneous you are!" (Ruan, 2012, pp. 223–224, 227). Similarly, in his essay titled "Treatise on Not Having Rulers" (*Wujun lun*), Bao Jingyan skeptically argues that:

The Confucian literati say: »Heaven gave birth to the people and then set rulers over them«. But how can High Heaven have said this in so many words? Is it not rather that interested parties make this their pretext? The fact is that the strong oppressed the weak and the weak submitted to them; the cunning tricked the innocent and the innocent served them. [...] Thus, servitude and mastery result from the struggle between the strong and the weak and the contrast between the cunning and the innocent, and Blue Heaven has nothing whatsoever to do with it.

When the world was in its original undifferentiated state, the Nameless (*wu-ming*, i.e., the Tao) was what was valued, and all creatures found happiness in self-fulfillment (as cited in Graham, 2005, pp. 1–2).

Concluding Remarks: Political Culture Shapes Politics

It is essential to recognize that the famous Chinese teacher Confucius (6th century BCE) was perhaps the first thinker in Eurasia to reveal the importance of language in politics. Indeed, for the reasons discussed above, one should be aware of language's political role in maintaining – or undermining – power relations in society. A left-libertarian approach to language rejects three basic assumptions of conservative-authoritarian thought: (1) that language and/or script have a metaphysical-religious ground; (2) that meanings should be traditional and unchanging; and (3) that individuals must not have the freedom to promote nonconformist uses of language which challenge the hierarchical order of power and privilege. In this sense, Daoist philosophy is the closest to the left-libertarian ideal, whereas the Hindu philosophies are its opposites. Moreover, by and large, the Chinese were able to have a positive attitude toward revolution, usually promoted the domination of politics over religion, and, in many cases, had a concern for the liberty of the individual (e.g. Yangists, some early Confucians such as Mencius, the early Daoists, and the Wei-Jin Neo-Daoists; at present – mainly in Taiwan and Hong Kong). In contrast, Indian culture instilled an extremely negative attitude toward all revolutions, usually defended the domination of religion over politics, and showed almost no concern for the individual's liberty. China has been analyzed more closely than India due to the much greater political-linguistic diversity of thought in China and the major differences between this thought and our familiar Indo-European semantics (as well as between Chinese and Indo-European languages).

On the one hand, it does not mean that civilizations can be entirely monolithic. On the other hand, both civilizational scale and cross-cultural comparisons need some simplifications and generalizations (such as the deep structure of cultural values) to draw meaningful conclusions. The postmodern celebration of the fragmentation of culture and the dissolution of systems would not be useful here, even if Huntington's *overgeneralizations* and *oversimplifications* should be treated with caution. If we define a traditional world as “one in which social positions and political power were determined solely by birth” (Puett & Gross-Loh, 2017, p. 185), then we have to admit that it was generally rejected by Chinese empires (Qin, Han, Sui, Tang, Song, etc.) and the most important Chinese philosophies. In contrast, the hereditary social world was not significantly undermined in India during the same period. As observed by other researchers, political thought in India has been commonly subjugated and deprived of its capability to transform the social world, which differs considerably from the Chinese way of thinking and behaving (Schwartz, 2009, pp. 421–422). Rephrasing Marx, we can say: “The Indian philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point in China, however, has been to change it”.

Historically and politically, it is very probable that the first radical revolutionary movement on Earth was inspired by Daoism. The first such revolution was the Yellow Turban Revolution/Rebellion in China (2nd century CE) (McPartland, 2013, pp. 17–18)²¹. Later examples of revolutionary changes or such attempts in China include, among possible others, the Taiping Revolution, the Xinhai Revolution, the Chinese Communist Revolution, and the Cultural Revolution. Gandhi's passive resistance campaigns in India were not so radical. All in all, Indian culture advocated a solid attachment to tradition. Moreover, as is well known, the Chinese are one of the least religious ethnicities worldwide, whereas the Indians are one of the most religious. Four of the world's major religions originated in India: Hinduism, Buddhism (the largest ones), Sikhism, and Jainism (the medium-sized ones). Indian culture had a religious impact on China through the spread of Buddhism – for instance, it gradually turned Daoism into an organized religion – but no such impact was seen in the opposite direction (i.e. China→India). Also, it can be said that the Brahmins (priests) were at the top of the social hierarchy in India and other Indians (those below in the hierarchy, except for Muslims) wanted to be reborn (reincarnated) as a Brahmin. In contrast, the Chinese wanted to live long and join the scholar-official elite if they (or their relatives) only had the chance to do so in this life here and now (a primarily “this-worldly” orientation).

Furthermore, whereas the caste system in India is an extreme example of collectivism (and anti-egalitarianism), it has been claimed that “the Chinese developed an individualism of their own which goes back to ancient times” (Nakamura, 2005, p. 246, ch. 22; see also publications by Erica Fox Brindley and Keqian Xu). As might be expected, native Chinese anarchism dates back to late ancient (Zhuangzi) and early medieval times (*wujun lun*) (Rapp, 2012). Indeed, in terms of political thought, the greatest defense of the individual's liberty is expressed in anarchist and other libertarian ideas. Both *Libertarianism: A Primer* and *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas (Vol. 1)* do not include any Indians, but they find pro-liberty thinkers in China (Boaz, 2005, pp. 39, 44; Graham, 2005, pp. 1–4, 336–366). There were no recorded proponents of clearly anarchist ideas in India before the influence of Western socialism (it seems that one of the first was Bhagat Singh [1907–1931]. However, even this was a weak phenomenon, especially in comparison with early 20th-century Chinese anarchists). A sense of freedom in India was associated mostly with religious goals and social escapism (ideally, one might become *sadhu* and dedicate oneself to achieving *liberation* from *Samsara*/reincarnation). Hence, such purely “spiritual freedom” (from the “bondage” of earthly existence) was disconnected from political matters in a similar way as in the case of Indian “individualism” of thought (Radhakrishnan, 2017, pp. 217–220, 563–564, 830–831). An Indian individual should not only sacrifice himself or

²¹ “... perhaps the first such radical revolutionary movement on record, that of the Yellow Turbans in Han China, who were fueled by literalist belief in the restoration of the Golden Age, or *Tai Ping*, mentioned in Taoist scripture. [...] The Yellow Turbans had all the classical features of a radical revolutionary movement...” (McPartland, 2013, p. 17).

herself for others but also for “higher” spiritual reasons (such as a good rebirth or *moksha/kaivalya*). India has not had fertile cultural soil for the development of revolutionism, secularism, proto-libertarianism, and real individualism.

Table 1. Chinese characters and Sanskrit words

<p>A) e.g. 門 <i>men</i> (“gate”); 山 <i>shan</i> (“mountain”) – three mountain peaks; 口 <i>kou</i> (“mouth”) – an open mouth; 龜 <i>gui</i> (“tortoise”); and 目 <i>mu</i> (“eye”)</p>	<p>B) e.g. 大 <i>da</i> (“big”) – a human being 人 with her / his arms stretched out as far as possible; 凸 <i>tu</i> (“convex”); 凹 <i>ao</i> (“concave”); and 中 <i>zhong</i> (“middle” / “center”)</p>	<p>C) e.g. 木 <i>mu</i> (“tree”); 林 <i>lin</i> (“grove,” i.e. a small forest) – two (more) trees; and 森 <i>sen</i> (“forest”) – three (even more) trees</p>
<p>Sanskrit words: Chinese characters: (pronunciation in <i>pinyin</i> without tone marks)</p>		
<p><i>deva</i> देव; <i>varṣa</i> वर्ष; <i>OM</i> / <i>AUM</i> ॐ; <i>HUM</i> ह्रुम्; <i>PHAT</i> फट्</p>	<p><i>dao</i> 道; <i>yu</i> 雨; <i>baijia</i> 百家; <i>zhengming</i> 正名; <i>junzi</i> 君子; <i>xiaoren</i> 小人; <i>fa</i> 法; <i>xingming</i> 刑名 / 形名; <i>pu</i> 樸; <i>you wei</i> 有為; <i>wu wei</i> 無為; <i>wei wu wei</i> 為無為; <i>chang dao</i> 常道; <i>tian</i> 天; <i>ziran</i> 自然; <i>shi-fei</i> 是非; <i>zhenren</i> 真人; <i>de</i> 德; <i>wanwu</i> 萬物; <i>ren</i> 人; <i>jing</i> 經; <i>wujun lun</i> 無君論</p>	

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