



Absolute Values and The New Cultural Revolution

Fifteenth International Conference on the Unity of Sciences
November 27-30, 1986 • J. W. Marriott Hotel

COMMITTEE VI

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Eastern Approaches to Knowledge and
Values: With an Emphasis on "QI"

For Conference Distribution Only

Discussion Paper on Frank R. Flinn's Paper

TECHNE AND QI

by

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Eastern Approaches to Knowledge and
Values: with Emphasis on "Qi"

Response to: Frank K. Flinn's "TECHNE AND QI"

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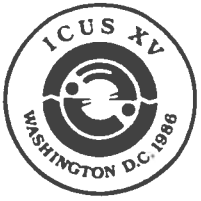
Dr. Flinn's paper deals mainly with technology and Qi-thought as a way of knowing and doing, as world view, as a set of attitudes that dictate a comprehensive lifestyle, as an epistemological framework bordering on a metaphysics of life and the cosmos, a drive or a purpose or a will to mastery.

His paper does not touch upon Qi as such: as energy or as energy field, with material and/or spiritual characteristics.

Yet Dr. Flinn's thesis remains a valid and significant one in that the epistemological problem is central to the Committee's topic. I shall therefore pay particular attention to this dimension of the problem. The main items, I believe, in "Techné and Qi" are: (1) inclusivity vs. exclusivity in the cognitive framework of eastern and western cultures, and (2) the monological dynamics of techné vs. the polylogical/dialogical nature of Qi-thought.

Historical considerations.

Dr. Flinn has traced for us the historical roots of the western drive to mastery over nature from the Novum Organum



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of Bacon, ^{and} then the theological conception of technology of the Puritans of North America and of eupyria, also of the Puritans. Subsequent developments may be regarded as evolutionary outcomes of the Baconian and Puritan origins of the conception that knowledge and technology constitute power over nature and circumstance. At one point, therefore, the secular had become sacred, but as Dr. Flinn points out also, the will to power over the external world through the instruments of technology had become the substance of man. The ideology towards self-alienation was set into motion when everything was reduced to technical action. Dr. Flinn's remarkable observation that this "technological manism" has become the metaphysical set-up for exclusivity (a fixated drive and instrumental attitude of subordinating and categorizing under it every dimension and aspect of human life.

Yet, I view the eastern historical development in the same vein. Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhistic and Hindu teachings may be regarded as several species of problem-solving projects, instrumental projects if you wish, towards the mastery, not primarily of the external world, but of the innerworld of man, as means (instrument) towards liberation from pain and suffering, conflict and sorrow. The bodily and meditative exercises in the Patanjali Aphorisms and Buddha-gosa's Vissudhimagga sprang from efforts to solve the problem of the meaning of life and suffering and were developed to a level of perfection — authentic examples of technology, we call them nowadays "behavioral technologies", as authentic as the "technologies" of the west that Dr. Flinn expounds on in his paper. The west is now trying to reconstruct and reformulate these behavioral technological achievements of the east in a



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modern language, in terms of the grammar of science in many of its parts, ever mindful of the fact those achievements were embedded in a cultural matrix that gave them life. The modern temper^{rightfully} ~~ever~~ reminds us that Yoga is ^{an} entire way life, and so it is with meditation and tai-ichi, or kendo and judo and tea-ceremony. Buddhist and Hindu conceptions of right thought, right action, right speech and right livelihood, and the general principles of bodily exercise and management that express the spirit of the Golden Mean are as true to the pragmatic spirit of "techné" as anything I can think of, ^{it is} a pragmatism ^{however} that was more global and organic and less ego-centered in character.

The will-to-mastery of the east had turned inwards and targeted itself on the individual man and his inner world, not on the external world and the mighty forces of the environment. The experiments of Galileo that, only over two hundred years ago, unleashed the extraordinary forces of human intelligence towards the material environment, were really preceded by those remarkable experiments (in the larger sense of scientific practice itself) of sages and philosophers of the east several thousand years ago. These were experiments on the nature and possibilities of man himself, which we are now ^{trying} to reconstruct and reformulate in terms of Galilean-type experiments. Hundreds of laboratories all over the world, ^{for example} are investigating the basic nature and applications of breathing, relaxation and meditative techniques of the east. We are re-discovering the ancient world view through a new grammarology and methodology and slowly appropriating and assimilating its life skills into our own experience.

As one may by now realize, techné has ran full circle from the philosophia naturalis of a Pre-Newton Age, thru



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Newton, and now back again to a more integral and organic conception of the human condition, which includes above all a new awareness of the inner imperatives of man. Indeed, however, techné is a true child of the humanities, of Di-thought, of the ancient and medieval worlds of both east and west - a noble offspring that refuses to recognize its parental origins.

Actually, the dialogic/polylogical nature of the human enterprise remains in this style "in life as lived in communities" all over the world. At another level, the arts and literature, philosophy of diverse kinds and the religious impulse sustains, preserves and transmits the intuitive, dialogic and wholistic capacities and traditions of man, both in the east and the west. We have been threatened by a more recent grammarology of life and ontological Set-up in techné, but there are more established and enduring Set-ups in the humanities and the basic will to meaning in life in the classical philosophical ^{sense} meaning of this term. And they provide a happy counterpoise to techné. These other "ontological Set-ups" are intuitive in approach, open and creative, more spontaneous in spirit and inclusive (in the sense of Dr. Flinn), dialogic and polylogical, and above all, inner-directed in the human person. Each of them aim, in varying degrees, at harmony and spiritual enlightenment, are experientially oriented, in some partly through appropriate exercises/training procedures (behavioral technology), and, in some, with an over-arching cognitive, life-framework which constitutes its way of knowing the self and the external world.



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Contemporary examples of Di-like thought.

- 1) Mathematics of hyperspace, of quantum mechanics, topology
- 2) Quantum physics, theory of relativity
- 3) Lewins field theory in psychology
- 4) Gestalt psychology, Gestalt therapy, experiential psychology
- 5) Habermas' Lebenswelt
- 6) The arts, literature especially poetry.
- 7) Psychology of discovery, creativity, Polanyi's theory of tacit knowledge.
- 8) Wholistic medicine, psychosomatic medicine, biofeedback methods
- 8) The dialogue and all dialectical human contacts:
games, and festivities, democratic face-to-face relationships
- 9) Phenomenological and ethnomethodological research.

The environment is filled with Di-like thought, but as Dr. Flinn rightly points out, Techné is upon us and is also everywhere now, almost in some places, but not quite in others as in many parts of our country, the Philippines, where Techné has not as yet set foot. I formulate this problem somewhat differently: with all the paraphernalia and force of Techné in our blood and guts, how do we recover and sustain ~~our~~ the innocence of our childhood?