

THE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT WHICH MOTIVATES DU FU SILENTLY TO WRITE POEMS ON GEESE

論潛在地激發杜甫創作咏鵞詩的基督精神

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Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770) is the greatest poet of China, and he enjoys the high reputation of “poetic sage.” On 15 December 1956 the World Peace Council held the meeting of presidium in Stockholm, Sweden, at which Du Fu was placed in the list of the world cultural celebrities to be commemorated in 1962. China has the largest population in the world, yet only a few personages enjoy such a special honor. Du Fu belongs to China, and he also belongs to the world. All his life, Du Fu composed a lot of poems. His poems handed down to this very day, after a strict textual criticism, come up to 1 458. Du Fu’s some poems are on geese. Although they do not belong to the mainstream of his poetry, they embody his ardent love of life, his inflexibility to life, and his thinking over the ultimate concerns of humankind. Du Fu’s poems on geese are significant.

DU FU’S POEMS ON GEESE

All his life, Du Fu composed a lot of realistic poems on the theme of historic issues, to be sure, but he also composed some poems on the theme of a leisurely life, of which some are on geese. In the *Complete Works of Du Fu, Acting Vice-Director in the Ministry of Works* 杜工部集, there are five poems in which geese are mentioned.

In Book 3, *The Complete Works of Du Fu*, there is a poetical cycle *Seven Poems at Gonggu County Composed in the Qianyuan Reign* 乾元中寓居同穀縣作歌七首. Below is Poem 3.

**My brothers, my younger brothers, you’re far away;
You three, so gaunt, cast adrift all the way.
No chance of our meeting, with the dust raised
By Tartars, dark is sky, long is the way.
Harness geese fly east, followed by bald cranes;
Bald cranes sign our reunion in no way.
Alas! This is my third song, thrice aggrieved,
Pick my bones, if I die somewhere someday! ¹**

In the second year of the Qianyuan reign (759), the outskirts of the capital were in disorder, the price of grains rose up, so Du Fu and his family had to make their home in Tonggu County, Chengzhou Prefecture (within the present-day Chengxian County, Gansu Province). According to historical data, Du Fu himself cut firewood and collected wild rice, nevertheless his several sons and daughters died of hunger. In the eleventh month this year, Du Fu Composed this poetic cycle of seven poems. Poem 3 laments for the separation of brothers. In this poem, Du Fu mentions “geese.” It refers to a kind of wild goose, *jia’e* 駕鵞, whose literal meaning is “harness goose.” In Book 3, *Du Fu’s Poetry Annotated by Qian Qianyi* 錢注杜詩, there is a note: “Hermit Tao says. It is a kind of wild goose, whose body type is larger than the wild goose in general, but it looks like the tamed dark green goose very much, and people usually call it harness goose.”² In short, the “harness goose” is a kind of wild geese with a much larger body. A large body usually means more physical strength, and therefore people use it to convey letters traditionally.

In Book 13 there is a poetical cycle *Five Poems to Yan the Duke of Zheng Composed on My Way the Thatched Hall in Chengdu* 將赴成都草堂途中有作先寄嚴鄭公五首. Below is Poem 2.

**Whitish duckweed floats on the pure river;
In my old home there’s the spring remainder.
Rebels can’t be seen in the snowy hills;**

**The Lord comes back! One joyful neighbor shrills.
Children love each and every vulgar guest;
Ducks and geese, you can' my neighbors molest!
The fairness of Xi Pond can be felt here;
Great General! It seems that I've heard your cheer.³**

In the second year of the Guangde reign (764), Du Fu composed this cycle of five poems. This year Yan Wu 嚴武 (726-765) was appointed the military commissioner of the Circuit South of Sword-Pavilion Mountain 劍南道 for a second time, and he invited Du Fu to return to Chengdu. Du Fu composed the cycle midway from Langzhong to Chengdu. In Poem 3 he imagines what may happen when he comes back to Chengdu. Over there he will meet his neighbors, and Yan Wu, his old pal, will visit him in the Thatched Hall. This poem writes about the spiritual manners of ducks and geese. As is known to all, both duck and goose are in the habit of greeting strangers in this way: they come to the strangers tottering. The goose is a large-bodied domestic fowl. Its carriage is noble, but it likes to bully strangers. Whenever seeing any strangers, a goose uses its hard bill to poke them. Therefore Du Fu says to himself: I should never blame those children if they invite any vulgar guests to my home; and I must take good care of my ducks and geese lest they should trouble my neighbors. In this poem he succeeds in a vivid depiction of the spiritual manner presented directly by geese.

In Book 15 there is a poem *Shaky Trees* 搖落.

**At dusk in Mount Wu the trees are shaky;
The cold Yangtze flows northeast rapidly.
In smokes and dusts battle drums are beaten;
On the rough river few ships can be seen.
A goose may exchange Xizhi's character;
A broken fur coat may help me winter.
I harbor our wise emperor always,
In autumn, ill in bed, I pass each day.⁴**

In the second year of the Dali reign (767), Du Fu lived in Kuizhou (its prefectural site is the present-day Fengjie County, Chongqing Municipality), and he composed this poem. In the ninth month that year, Tibetan troops attacked Bingzhou (its prefectural site is Xinping, the present-day Binxian County, Shaanxi Province) and Lingzhou (its prefectural site is Huile, southwest of the present-day Ningwu County, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region), and therefore the curfew is imposed on the capital. Facing such a situation, Du Fu worried a great deal for his country, and he composed this poem. In Book 19, *Fully Annotated Du Fu's Poetry* 杜詩詳注 by Qiu Zhaoao 仇兆鼈 (1638-1717), there is a passage as follows. "Standing on the top of Mount Wu at dusk you see a vast piece of smokes and dusts, which are in such a movement that you cannot hold them up. The river flows by itself, and stormy waves prevent you from escaping them. Some scholars care only for the ink and a writing brush, and they think only of a fur coat. Are these objects really helpful to the state affairs? Du Fu was determined to serve the ruler, but he could only look far into the autumnal mountains, because he was then bedridden. To serve the wise ruler is the respected Mr. Du's great ambition all his life."⁵ In this poem Du Fu expresses the determination which he has harbored for a long time. He wants to serve the country, even if he is ill in bed at a bleak house surrounded by hills, from which the autumnal wind blows. The poem is subtle in that two historic allusions are interwoven in it, one being Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (AD 303-361) and the fat goose, the other being Su Qin 蘇秦, a strategist active in the Warring States Period (475-221 BC), and the marten coat. The first alludes to the goose. Wang Xizhi loves goose for two reasons, one being that he likes watching the carriage of a goose, the other being that he likes hearing the goose cackle. The goose is, in Chinese classics, also called the stretched-out goose, and Wang Xizhi likes its long neck. When a goose sleeps, its long neck is inserted under in its wing, as is its constant habit. In the *History of Jin • Book 80 • Biography of Wang Xizhi* 晉書王羲之傳 there is a passage, which says,

By nature he loves the goose. In Huiji there used to be a lonely granny who raised a goose. The goose is good at cackling, the granny hoped to sell it to a suitable person but she failed. One day she asked his relatives and friends to watch the goose. When she heard that Wang Xizhi would come, she killed the goose and cooked it for him. Now Wang came, and he pitied for it a whole day. Another story says as follows. In Shanyin there was a Taoist who liked raising geese. One day, Wang went there to watch them. He was so glad that he firmly asked to buy all of them. The Taoist said, "If you give me a copy of *Tao Te King* you yourself handwrote, I shall send all of them to you as a gift." Very glad, Wang handwrote it. After he finished writing, he carried all the geese home, full of happiness.⁶

The reason why Du Fu uses such an allusion lies in that he himself is also a good calligrapher and he often likens himself to Wang Xizhi. The other allusion comes from the *Strategies of the Warring States • Book 3 戰國策卷三*, in which a passage runs as follows.

Su Qin sent his written statement to the king of Qin ten times, but his persuasion was not adopted. Now his marten coat became broken, a hundred pieces of gold was used up, and his maintenance fee was used up, too. He could do nothing but leave the Qin for his home. Gaunt and spare, puttee-equipped, sandaled, he carried his books back home. He was facially languid and darkish. He was eager to go home now. ⁷

From here we may see how deep Du Fu worries for his country and people.

In Book 13 there is a poem *Small Goslings Facing the Bulky Boat 舟前小鵝兒*.

Goslings are yellow as the millet wine;

**Drinking, I love new-born goslings so fine.
They stretch their necks to poke a boat bravely,
They protest; such a scene moves me deeply.
Spreading wings wetted by last night shower
They strive to swim on waves brightly azure.
It's dusk; from the tower tourists go away;
Before small goslings foxes find no way.** ⁸

Below the title, there is a note the poet himself made. “It was composed in the public pond northwest of the Hanzhou city.” Hanzhou is a prefecture set up in the second year of the Chuigong reign (686). Hanzhou is made up of five counties originally of Yizhou, whose prefectural site is Luoxian County (the present-day Guanghan City, Sichuan Province). Fang Guan used to be the prefect there. Going in for water conservancy, he built a lake west of the city, which was usually called the Esteemed Mr. Fang’s Lake. The public pond refers to it, for this lake belongs to the state-owned properties. In the first year of the Guangde reign (763), Du Fu toured Hanzhou at the end of spring, and he composed this poem there. The first couplet writes about how the poet drinks wine while watching some goslings. The next two couplets write about the attitude the goslings hold towards a boat advancing on the lake. It is a bulky boat, and those goslings are small. Now we see small goslings do not fear the bulky boat at all. Angrily they stretch out their necks to protest against the coming boat. The poet is not glad, either. This is because such a boat spoils the show too much, for it obstructs the view of the poet who is watching the goslings. Though those goslings are brave, they have to try their best to struggle bitterly in the waves raised up by the advancing boat, for they are small in size, and their wings are wetted by the rain in last night. At dusk tourists gradually disperse, while the foxes, which hide themselves in the thick growth of grass, think that their chance has finally come. Of course they harbor evil intentions. They have made up their mind to kill the goslings for a big dinner. As for the goslings, they pay no attention to the foxes, and they continue to swim in the lake proudly and leisurely. We may as well compare these foxes with the foxes described in the Bible. Song of Solomon 2: 15: “Catches us the foxes, /the little foxes, /that ruin the vineyards - /for our vineyards are in blossom.”⁹ Herein the vineyards stand for a quiet and happy life. As for the foxes, they intend to sneak into the vineyards where they may eat grapes by stealth. In short, they are the breaker of the peaceful life. These Biblical lines contain a deep layer of significance. The term “vineyards” is likened to the body of a girl who is in ardent love. The term “foxes” is likened to the destroyer of love. The term “blossom” is likened to the strong affections of partners. The girl in ardent love produces a request: Please catch the foxes for us! The term “us” refers to two sides, one being the girl in ardent love, the other being her bridegroom in future. To whom does her request refer? The context gives a hint that her request refers to God on High.

The artistic feature of this poem lies in a real extension of the poet’s mental state. In Book 12, *Fully Annotated Du Fu’s Poetry* by Qiu Zhaoao, there is a passage as follows.

In Du Fu’s poetry there are instances like this. Some common words are used to convey a rather interesting nuance. Take, for example, goose, and wild goose. They are very common words. Once an excellent poet uses them, they become components of fine lines. Let’s see some examples. “Goslings are yellow as the millet wine; /Drinking, I love new-born goslings so fine.” “Wild geese peck at water scorpions so fast, /And swallows the weather-crow on the mast.” They are all fine lines. ¹⁰

Why do great poets like to use common words in their works? Common words are possessed of a special advantage, that is, they may express the mental state of poets most suitably. I myself know such a matter as follows. There was such a Chinese as is my father’s cousin. At the age of 12 he went to Japan and lived there over a year. After that he went to USA where he was educated and finally he was awarded a master’s degree in the specialty of electro-mechanics. After that he worked first as truck driver and

then engineer of electric power. When the Anti-Japanese War broke out, he came back to China. In China he went all out to the industry of electric power. He set up thermal power plants, and he presided over many water conservancy projects. When he first came back to China, he spoke English completely, and many Chinese expressions seemed to be strange to him. What's more, on many an occasion he had to rely on a translator! This Chinese accomplished a great deal of good things all his life, and he cultivated a large number of talents in sphere of electric power and water conservancy. Nevertheless, in his late years he spoke only the dialect of his hometown, in which there are many words and expressions very common in the time when he was young. Why is it so? This is because the memory of his childhood emerges at old age. And it grows stronger and stronger as the time passes by. Finally these common words and expressions occupy the mainstream of his thinking. I once asked him why he uses those common words and expressions. He smiled at me, and then he told me the truth. This is the best way to express what he thinks really. In Book 13 there is a poem entitled *Having Obtained Those Geese Once Raised on the Esteemed Mr. Fang's Lake* 得房公池鵝.

**A team of geese is raised in the Fang Lake,
So you may see white clouds sleep on the shoal.
Though away, hereto Fang a glimpse should take;
Now these geese must follow me when I stroll.** ¹¹

This poem was composed in the first year of the Guangde reign (763). In spring that year, Du Fu once again toured Hanzhou. The prefect gave him a special gift, that is, a team of geese which was raised on the Esteemed Mr. Fang's Lake. The poem writes about the pleasant feelings of Du Fu when he obtained those geese. The last line is an allusion to Wang Xizhi, who carried some geese home, as is legendarily said. The tone of the whole poem is humoristic.

THE REAL EXTENSION OF DU FU'S MENTAL STATE

In Du Fu's poetry there are altogether five poems in which geese are mentioned. Of these five, the *Small Goslings Facing the Bulky Boat* is what exhibits Du Fu's mental state in the fullest way. Its secret lies in a special formative mode of a literary work. *Small Goslings Facing the Bulky Boat* is quite different from the majority of his poems. In this poem he does not write about his loyalty to the country, to the monarch, and to the gods of earth and grain. And does not write about his concerns and worries for the people's sufferings, either. In this poem Du Fu writes only about a team of goslings, and there is nothing more. Why is this poem so lovely? The loveliness owes to its compositional formative mode. What is the compositional formative mode of a work? Of this question, a passage from Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) is highly referential. In his masterpiece *Holzwege*, Heidegger points out as follows.

Schaffen ist hier immer in Beziehung auf das Werk gedacht. Zum wesen des Werkes gehört das Geschehen der Wahrheit. Das Wesen des Schaffens bestimmt mir im vorhinein aus seinem Bezug zum Wesen der Wahrheit als der Unverborgenheit des Seienden. Die Zugehörigkeit des Gescheffenseins zum Werk kann nur aus einer noch ursprünglicheren Aufhebung des Wesens der Wahrheit ins Licht gesteht werden. Die Frage nach der Wahrheit und ihrem Wesen kehrt wieder.¹²

This Heideggerian passage means as follows. Herein the composition is always thought relative to the work. The occurring of truth belongs to the essence of a work. As for the essence of a work, in my view, from the very beginning, it starts the relation between a work and the essence of truth, and it is prescribed as the unveiled state of what exists. To be composed is an existence, its attribution refers to a work. Only in a more primitive clarification of truth's essence can this be exposed. Once again it returns to the investigation into truth and truth's essence. (my translation) These words are just appropriate to be used to illustrate the situation in which Du Fu composed the *Small Goslings Facing the Bulky Boat*. In Heidegger's view, the fundamental significance of existence lies rightly in that the cognitive object shows itself in the intentional activity of the cognitive subject. The intentional activity includes twp aspects, one being the intentional direction, the other being the intentional object. The intentional direction is a kind of active orientation, and what's more, the mode of intentional direction decides both the significance and features of intentional direction. For this account, the significance of any beings whatsoever should be searched in as many modes of intentional direction as possible. Man has the ability to understand his own existence. It is more so with a writer, for writers are usually the especially bright beings in the mankind. When a writer observes any objects whatsoever, he not only sees the objects but also perceives his own ego. Man is a place in which everything appears to be clear. And it is more so with writers. As we often say in Chinese, such-and-such a person is "thoroughly transparent." When we say this way, we do not mean that his body is transparent. Instead we mean that he is able to observe myriads of things in a thoroughly clear way. When

we speak in this way, we in fact take the very person for the subject of cognition. And such a situation may be treated in another perspective. When we take a thing for the subject, we may feel that the very thing appears to be clear in a human being. Here a human being has become a place where things may show themselves. The showing of a thing may be either vague or clear. As for what a degree a thing shows itself to, this has much to do with the quality of a place. Take, for example, a room. If a room is clear and bright, then a thing shows itself in it is of course clear and bright. If a room is dim and filthy, then a thing shows itself in it is of course dim and unclear. And whatever good thing put in the room is unclear. In myriads of things in the world, only man is the starting point of such an enquiry as may answer the significance of existence. Man may serve as a place in which things show themselves, to be sure, but man is after all not an ordinary place. Man is a special place, in which man may understand that man per se is a place. In this sense, man is the Dasein. Dasein is a concept formed in the special word-building manner of the German language. The original meaning of its components means that [a thing] right here exists, namely, “indeed, really, sure enough something exist.”

Dasein the term reminds me of *Black and White Li Brothers* 黑白李 composed by Chinese fictionist Lao She (1899-1966). In this short story, the elder brother is fond of sing some lines from a certain work of Peking opera. Listen, he sings, “Deep in the boudoir - there is really - a piece of jade without any flaws whatsoever.” Perhaps, there is somebody who may ask a question as follows. What a sort of truth does Du Fu inquire into this poem on goslings? In this poem Du Fu writes only about some goslings, to be sure, but in this Heideggerian passage the key word die Wahrheit has two meanings. Firstly, it means an idea that is accepted by most people as being true (das Wahrsein; die Übereinstimmung einer Aussage mit der Sache, über die sie gemacht wird; Richtigkeit), simply, some true principle. Secondly, it means the actual facts or information about something (wirklicher, wahrer Sachverhalt, Tatbestand), simply, some true phase.¹³ Literary works play a double role. As regards their major function, they may expose some true principles. As regards their minor function, they may represent some true phases of life. When a work reaches either of them, it is considered a great work.

Nevertheless, Du Fu’s poem *Small Goslings Facing the Bulky Boat* is of an even greater significance of cognition. In his poem Du Fu directly exhibits the originally true state of living beings. The “originally true state” is what Heidegger calls die Unverborgenheit (unhiddenness). Then, we cannot asking a question. Who lie in the unhiddenness? There are two sides which lie in the unhiddenness, one being the goslings which swim by a boat, the other being the place in which these goslings show themselves, here such a place is Du Fu the poet. This is because from this poem we see not only those lovely goslings but also the special exhibitiv way of Du Fu’s mental state. It is noteworthy that Du Fu has never intentionally exhibited his mental state to any beholders whatsoever. His mental state itself is exhibited, while he does not know that there may be such an exhibition at all. He is like a house that stands rightly in front of us. In Chinese there is a word “mental house” 心房. It couldn’t be any more suitable that this word illustrates a special nature of man that serves as the place, in which things may show themselves. Such is a poet. When he composes a fine poem, his mental house shows itself. In Chinese, there is another word “flow [to the beholder] to show” 流露. It couldn’t be any suitable that this word illustrates a special nature of man that serves as the place, in which things may show themselves, while the place itself may be seen by the others. Such a state, in which the writer stands, corresponds to das Reichen of a thinking subject, as is discussed by Heidegger. Das Reichen is an unhidden exhibition, a direct exhibition, or a real extension. Since Du Fu the poet never covers his inner life up, his poem becomes the formation of a pure vision. This is the headwater of Du Fu’s poems full of picturesque charm. In this sense, we may say that Du Fu dwells on the land poetically.

Whatever relationship is there between those goslings and Du Fu the poet? This can be illustrated by means of a passage from *Chuang Tzu • Autumn Floods* 莊子 • 秋水篇.

Chuang Tzu and Hui Tzu were strolling along the dam of the Hao River when Chuang Tzu said, “ See how the minnows come out and dart around there they please! That’s what fish really enjoy!” Hui Tzu said, “ You’re not a fish-how do you know what fish enjoy?” Chuang Tzu said, “ You’re not I, so how do you know I don’t know what fish enjoy?” Hui Tzu said, “ I’m not you, so I certainly don’t know what you know. On the other hand, you’re certainly not a fish-so that still proves you don’t know what fish enjoy!” Chuang Tzu said, “ Let’s go back to your original question, please. You asked me how I know what fish enjoys-so you already knew it when you asked the question. I know it by standing here beside the Hao.”¹⁴

This is the fable “Watching Fish beside the Hao.” It tells us two things. Firstly, a real knower can know one thing from another. Secondly, a real knower has no need to become his opposite side. In the *Exegeses on the Book of Perfect Man Nan Hua • Book 6: Autumn Floods* 南華真經注疏秋水 : “The properties of one thing are different from those of another, as water is different from land. A real knower can reach his opposite side’s feelings. This is the reason why the man who strolls along the Hao knows

the enjoyment of fish. Such being the case, when we judge myriads of things, we needn't be so foolish as is the person, who dives himself into water to know the enjoyment of fish. Therefore in this fable two sages, Chuang Tzu and Hui Tzu, are used to illustrate the moral by which the reader may understand the great principle.”¹⁵ The “myriads of things” is “all the creatures” in line with the biblical terminology. As for two sides different in the physique, if they can know each other, there must be an intermediary between them. Look, such is the intermediary! He watches myriads of things, he understands their feelings, and he leads them to the ultimate principle. Then, who is this intermediary? It is God on High! There is an extremely special phenomenon in the cultural exchange between China and the foreign countries. Why can those missionaries wonderfully accomplish a very hard job including editing dictionaries and grammarian books of so many foreign languages? When we study a foreign language, we have to exert great efforts, as nine oxen and two tigers draw a bulky vehicle. Such is the missionary. He came to such-and-such a place, only in several years he finished editing dictionaries and grammarian books of the local language. As for the place, not only he himself knew very little of it, but also the society, which he came from, knew very little of it. Whoever helps the missionary? Such a helper is God on High. God, and God alone, has so great a power. The discourse system of Master Chuang is different from that of the Bible, to be sure, but the principles contained in these two systems are after all the same. We may say that God in Master Chuang's heart is God of Christianity. Du Fu is of course not a goose, but he knows, however, thoroughly the enjoyment of the goose. And what's more, in cognition we may as well go one step further on the basis of Master Chuang. At such an instant the goose in fact knows the enjoyment of Du Fu, too. This is because the goose is also a creature, a noumenon of life. What Du Fu expresses in his poem is a reciprocal theme, which embodies the inter-subjectivity. Du Fu knows the goslings' enjoyment in that Du Fu dwells on the land poetically and in the meanwhile those goslings swim carelessly in Du Fu's heart.

In the same cultural system, the goose described in Du Fu's poem may be traced back to the fish described in the fable “Watching Fish beside the Hao.” Herein the goose and the fish are mutually referential and comparable. In different cultural systems, the goose may be referred to and compared with birds and lilies discussed in the Bible. Matthew 6: 26-29:

Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life? And why are you about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.¹⁶

In Luke 12: 24-27 there is a similar version of these words. Some biblical musician has already adapted these words into a song. Listen! “Flowers on the land are brightly open; birds in the sky worry neither food nor clothing.” How sweet the melody is! A careless life is the best life. Life is above food and drink. Body is above clothing. How close it is to the realm of life which the Taoists pursue! Du Fu uses his absolute sincerity to realize the goslings which swim by the boat. And those goslings use Du Fu to be a place in which they show themselves. Thus a link-together is realized between the two noumena of life. I naturally think of the lines from a ci-poem in tune of “Congratulations to the Bridegroom” 賀新郎 by Xin Qiji 辛棄疾 (1140-1207). “In my eyes green mountains are charming. /Perhaps green mountains think that I am charming too. /Both in mood and mien, /We are alike.” (my translation) Such is the fusion of two noumena of life. Isn't it the best state in the world?

DU FU'S CHRISTIAN SPIRIT

Of Du Fu's poems on geese, two are the best. One is the *Small Goslings Facing the Bulky Boat*. And the other is *Having Obtained Those Geese Once Raised on the Esteemed Mr. Fang's Lake*. Du Fu composed then when he made a home in Hanzhou, which is the present-day Guanghan, north of the Chengdu Plains. The communication thereof is highly developed. An adage says, “It is the important thoroughfare of Shu, and the channel to the capital.” In 1983 it was annexed to Chengdu. And today it is a county-level city near to Chengdu. The highway between these two places is 23 kilometers only, so it is within the Chengdu half-an-hour economic sphere and the Chengdu urban sphere as well. The Thatched Hall in which Du Fu lived stands just in Chengdu, so Du Fu's thoughts must be soaked by the inside information of the Chengdu culture.

Chengdu is a place worth special concerning in the global dissemination of Christianity. Let's see a passage from the *Complete Tang Prose • Book 916 • Monumental Inscription to the Dissemination of Roman Empire's Nestorian Church in China*, which runs as follows.

Emperor Gaozong of Tang piously carried forth the tradition started by his ancestors, and he lifted it to a higher level. He ordered as follows. In all prefectures Nestorian churches should be set up. Abraham the Nestorian priest should be respected still as the arch bishop so that he might preside over all the churches in the whole

country. Such a religion should be spread to ten circuits, and the whole country should be filled with such a subtle doctrine. Churches should be set up in a hundred cities so that each and every family might be bathed in the happiness of Nestorian doctrine. ¹⁷

This inscription is usually called “Nestorian Monument in China” in a simplified way. Chengdu is the capital of an ancient state called Shu. When it was destroyed by the Qin dynasty, it became Shujun prefecture. In the Western Han dynasty, it became Yizhou prefecture. In the period of the three Kingdoms, the Shu Kingdom set its capital also in Chengdu. In the Sui dynasty, the area around Chengdu was called Shujun prefecture again. In the first year of the Wude reign of Tang (618), it was once more called Yizhou prefecture. In the first year of the Zhenguan reign (627), the Tang court divided the whole country into ten circuits. A vast piece of land south of the Sword Pavilion Mountain became the administrative region of the Jinnan Circuit, while Chengdu became the seat of the circuit government. The Jiannan Circuit covers a large part of the present-day Sichuan province and Chongqing municipality, the southern part of Gansu province, the eastern and northern parts of Yunnan Province, and the western part of Guizhou province. In short, the Jiannan Circuit of Tang covers the essential part of the present-day southwest of China. Economically speaking, Chengdu is highly developed early in the Tang dynasty, and its position is close to Yangzhou in the lower Yangtze, therefore among folks there is an adage, “Yangzhou is the first and Chengdu the second.” The royal family of Tang paid great attention to Chengdu. When a rebellion by An Lushan-Shi and Shiming broke out in 755, Emperor Xuanzong of Tang went to Chengdu where he set his temporary administration. This is because its geographical position is strategic and inaccessible. North of Chengdu there is the Sword Pavilion Pass, so Chengdu is easy to defend and hard to conquer. The Chengdu Plains is plentiful in products, developed in economy, and prosperous in culture. In the second year of the Zhide reign (756), Chengdu was established as the southern capital, and accordingly its administrative level was promoted to a municipal prefecture. Chengdu kept the title of the southern capital up to the first year of the Shangyuan reign (760). Later, the Tang dynasty appointed the military commissioner of east and west Sichuan to govern this area. To sum up, all the bygone prefectures here take Chengdu for the seat of government. In the Tang dynasty, quite a few of literati had something to do with the Western Regions, and some of them lived in Chengdu for a rather long time. Take, for example, Li Xun 李珣 (c.855-c.930), a ci-poet lived when the Tang changed into the Five Dynasties. Because of his Persian blood, people at that time called him Li the Persian. Li Bai 李白 (701-762), a great poet, is another example. Li Bai was born in Tokmok, a town of the present-day Kyrgyzstan in the Central Asia. He had the background of the Western Regions, too. Persia, the Central Asia, the Western Regions, or whatever, are the places that the missionaries had to pass through when Christianity spread to China via the land route. Jing Jing 景淨, the author of the *Monumental Inscription to the Dissemination of Roman Empire's Nestorian Church in China* is a Persian. The Nestorians are a branch of Christianity. And this inscription is the solid evidence that Christianity was prosperous and thriving in the Tang dynasty. In the “ten circuits” there must be the Jinnan Circuit. In the “hundred cities” there must be Chengdu. In Jing Jing's view, only by a nationwide advocacy of Christianity, can the economy develop and the social morals become good. This is what's meant by the proposition that “the whole country should be filled with such a subtle doctrine.” The reason why such a doctrine is subtle lies in that Christianity may bring about the good and the auspicious. Such a doctrine seems to be hazy. One can feel it by heart, but one can never touch it by hand. For this reason, it is called a “subtle doctrine.” When people believe Christianity, their mental state becomes peaceful. When people believe Christianity, their families have a harmonious life. This is what's meant by the proposition that “each and every family should be bathed in the happiness of Nestorian doctrine.” The inscription says that the happiness brought by Christianity is great. In fact it is very so. In Chengdu there is a bridge, Immortals-Sending Bridge 送仙橋, near to which the site of a Nestorian Church still remains.

Who can enjoy happiness? The answer may be found in Matthew 5: 3-10:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹⁸

In Luke 6:20-23, there is a similar version of these words. In a nutshell, only those who have the eight fine qualities advocated by Christianity can enjoy happiness. “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” This is a word-by-word translation of the New Testament in Greek. Its meaning is like this. Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor. In other words, only those who dare to acknowledge that they are spiritually poor can enjoy happiness. Du Fu is just a man who dares to acknowledge that in spirit he is not good enough. Therefore he always cultivates himself in morality. This may be seen clearly from his long poem *A Poem Up to Five Hundred Chinese Characters in Length to Pin My Thoughts on the Way from the Capital to Fengxian County* 自京赴奉

先縣詠懷五百字。Du Fu is a man who mourns from the depths of his heart, so he composes “ three functionaries,” “ three departures” and suchlike poetical cycles. Du Fu is a meek man, so he composes many poems which reflect family ethics. Du Fu is man who hungers and thirsts for righteousness, and all his life he runs after the justice. Du Fu is a merciful man, so he composes a large number of realistic poems in which he records the great historical events of his time. Du Fu is man pure in heart. Although he keeps titles such as the censor on the left, the acting vice-director in the ministry of works, and so on, he never fishes for fame and gains. Perhaps somebody may say that the “ acting vice-director in the ministry of works” is only a titular post. Haven’t you seen many selfish guys in the society today? Their title is as small as a sesame seed, but they toss about all day long, and they rack their brains to fish for fame and gains. Du Fu is a peacemaker, he loves his neighbors, and vice versa. Du Fu is also a man persecuted for righteousness’ sake. For truth he searches high and low, and therefore he spends much of his lifetime in roaming about.

Another outstanding feature of Du Fu’s characteristics is that he is loyal to the monarch very much. This is very important for us to understand Du Fu’s attitude towards Christianity. An edict of emperor Taizong of Tang is kept in the inscription as follows.

Below is the edict issued in the seventh month of the twelfth year of the Zhenguan reign. Principles have no constant name; the holy has no constant form. The religion is set up where people need be saved. Abraham, a priest from Roman Empire, having taken a long way, sent classics and holy icons to our capital. A study of its doctrine shows that it is profound, subtle and natural. An examination of its original purport shows that it is directed to the essence of life. Its classics are concise; its principles point to the truth. It is beneficial to both things and men, so it is suitable to prevail in the whole country. Officials must have a Nestorian church built in the Yining Street of the capital, where twenty-one clergymen may perform the service. When the Zhou dynasty declined, Laozi traveled west riding a buffalo. Now the great Tang shines in the east, so Nestorians come. Here is the order. The portraits of Tang emperors must be painted on the walls of the church so that their appearances may shine there. Be holy traces auspicious! Be the religious circle forever bright! ¹⁹

This year is AD 638. As for the religious situation of Tang, people usually think that the three religions namely Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism prevailed then. Such a view is not comprehensive. Since the edict is a kind of law in the Tang, therefore a religion set up through an edict belongs to the state religion. Obviously the religious situation of Tang is that Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism and Christianity stand side by side with one another. All of them are state religions, and all of them have the same position. Since Taoism traces itself back to Laozi as its founder, and the family name of the Tang house is also Li, so Taoism gains more support from the country. In the Tang dynasty, the worship of Laozi is very strong in Chengdu. In such atmosphere it is very hard for people to refuse any other formal religions. Accordingly they do not refuse Christianity, either. Confucianism is the core of Chinese traditional culture. Generally speaking, Confucianism is not a religion in strict sense in that it lacks a fixed place to preach, it lacks clergymen, and it lacks the fellowship. Taoism is the root of Chinese culture, and meanwhile it has a complete religious form. Buddhism is a religion which comes from India, it has a complete religious form, but it belongs to a special atheism, at least the Mahayana is so. Buddhism stresses *sūnyā* (void), whereas the thoroughly *sūnyā* will repel the deity. From this we may see that theism or atheism can’t be the reason to repel a certain religion. Merely because of theism one repels a certain religion, as is theoretically insufficient. In ancient times, in order to hold Confucianism in high esteem, “ clarifying halls” 明堂 were set up in the whole country. Nevertheless, the clarifying hall is not the church in strict sense in that it functions as the political hall in the meantime. When the system of clarifying hall declined, Confucianism has become a doctrinal system merely. In the Tang, generally speaking, Taoism was stressed, while the other three religions, namely, Confucianism, Buddhism and Christianity, were not be neglected, either. This is in accordance with the mental state of all the peoples who lived in a big power. In the Huichang reign under Emperor Wuzong of Tang (r. 840-847) occurred a religious disaster. This event started in the seventh month of the fifth year of the Huichang reign (845), in which Buddhism was persecuted. Nevertheless, one year later, when Emperor Wuzong passed away and Emperor Xuanzong ascended to the throne, Buddhism was restored and it gained some development. Since the Huichang religious disaster flowed over Nestorians, which belong also to a foreign religion, they disappeared in the area of Central Plains. Nevertheless, Emperor Wuzong’s original intention was not directed to repelling the Nestorians. After the Huichang religious disaster the Nestorians did not disappear within the boundaries of China. This is because Christianity exists among folks as a spontaneous faith of the Chinese people.

Most of Du Fu’s lifetime is spent in wars and chaos, and he has to roam here and there. Nevertheless, the years he spent in Chengdu are relatively stable. Although Du Fu’s life in Chengdu is rather stable, there are still some dangers and threats in it. The crisis of existence is like a dangling sword over his head. Many documents praise the friendship between Yan Wu and Du

Fu, to be sure, but Yan Wu is a hot-tempered military man. Du Fu used to be Yan Wu's private assistant. Du Fu must be very careful, for Yan Wu will fall out over trifles anytime. Economically, Yan Wu time and again supports Du Fu. In order to live on, Du Fu has to rely on Yan Wu. The time Du Fu spent in Chengdu comes up to five years, in which he composed a lot of poems on the leisurely life and on his mental state in such a life. Of the Tang poets, Bai Juyi is the poet who composed the largest number of leisurely poems. As regards the mainstream of their poetical composition, Du Fu and Bai Juyi are quite different in styles. Nevertheless, they are rather alike as far as the leisurely poetry is concerned. The difference between them lies in quantity. The number of Du Fu's leisurely poems is small, whereas that of Bai Juyi is very big. As a highly sensitive poet, Du Fu usually keeps a quiet and comfortable mind when he lived in Chengdu. Why is it so? Is it contradictory to the fact that Du Fu is known for his worries for the country and the people? How can he be far away from the major issues of times and the fate of the country? The answer is very simple: Du Fu is comparatively closer to the life existence of his own during his Chengdu years. In such circumstances, what a poet concerns for is naturally the existential state of his life. In perilous circumstances it is easy for a man to think over how to live on. This is an issue of the first importance. Honors, services, gains, losses, interpersonal relationships, or whatever, are considered seldom by those who live in perilous circumstances. Then, we cannot help asking a further question. Why does the individualized aspect of Du Fu's poetical composition become conspicuous during this period? This problem has much to do with the emergence of a work's essence. Of this problem, Heidegger has a pithy and wonderful discussion as follows.

Wohin gehört das Werk? Das Werk gehört als Werk einzig in den Bereich, der durch es selbst eröffnet wird.

Denn das Werksein des Werkes west und west nur in solcher Eröffnung. Wir sagen, im Werk sei das Geschehnis der Wahrheit am Werke. Der Hinweis auf Bild van Goghs versuchte dieses Geschehnis zu nennen. Im Hinblick darauf ergab sich die Frage, was Wahrheit sei und wie Wahrheit geschehen könne.²⁰

This passage means as follows. Whereto does a work attribute? A work belongs merely to the sphere which it opens by itself. The work-properties become its essence because they lie merely in such an opening. As we have said, the emergence of truth takes effect in a work. The hint to paintings by Van Gogh is directed to such an emergence. Thus occur the questions what is truth and how the truth takes effect in a work. (my translation) The emergence of the work is after all a problem how the truth takes effect in a given work. When Du Fu composes his poems on the geese, he concerns himself for the genuine existence of living individuals in the universe. When Du Fu plunges into his poetical composition, what he faces directly is the supreme existence, that is, God. Du Fu's psychological starting point and destination are nothing but Christianity. Bai Juyi's leisurely poetry is benefitted by the contamination of Christianity, so also is the case with that of Du Fu. Essentially speaking, it is the Christian spirit motivates Du Fu silently.

Nevertheless, there is another problem we cannot avoid no matter how hard we may do so. That is, the representative poems by Du Fu are those highly realistic works instead of the works about small animals and suchlike creatures. For example, *Song of the Thatched Hut Broken by the Autumn Wind* 茅屋為秋風所破歌 is such a typically representative work. Similar works occupy a large proportion in his collection, and they are very popular as well. At the first glance, Du Fu's poems on the people's livelihood are quite different from his poems on geese, and they seem to be entirely unrelated. Actually, that is not the case. Du Fu's poems on the people's livelihood are often called masterpieces of realism in that they are possessed of strong people's affinity. As regards realism, Du Fu's poems on geese belong to the broad category of realism in the final analysis. As regards people's affinity, we must first of all make sure what the people's affinity is. The people's affinity means a writer's understanding of and sympathy to the broad masses of the people. Therefore, any work of people's affinity whatsoever centers around the everyday life of people. Such being the case, we have to ask another question. What is the basis of Du Fu's poems on the people's livelihood? Obviously it is the humanistic care advocated by Christianity. Plainly speaking, the so-called humanistic care means to love life. Christ exists wherever there are people. All the writers of the people have the Christian spirit more or less. The Holy Spirit works all the time. These are the fundamental cause why the people's affinity may occur. In this sense, both Du Fu's poems on the people's livelihood and his poems on geese are in accordance with each other.

Du Fu is a great poet. Du Fu sings all his life. Martin Heidegger becomes a mental-voice knower of Du Fu. He says, "Singen den Gesang heißt: Anwesen im Anwesenden selbst, heißt: Dasein."²¹ To sing such a song means that the present is in the present itself, this is called the factual reality. (my translation)

【 This essay is a stage achievement of a general item A History of Comparative Criticism of Du Fu's Poetry and the English Translation of the Complete Works of Du Fu, Acting Vice-Director in the Ministry of Work (No. 11BZW020), subsidized by the State Social Sciences Fund 】

Note:

- ¹ Zhang Shiming 張士銘 punctuated 李太白集/ 杜工部集 (Changsha: Yuelu, 1989) p. 55.
- ² Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 noted 錢注杜詩 (Shanghai:Guji,2009)106.
- ³ Zhang Shiming 張士銘 punctuated 李太白集/ 杜工部集 (Changsha: Yuelu, 1989) p. 226.
- ⁴ Zhang Shiming 張士銘 punctuated 李太白集/ 杜工部集 (Changsha: Yuelu, 1989) p. 272.
- ⁵ Qiu Zhaoao 仇兆鼈 noted 杜詩詳注 (Shanghai:Guji,1992), p.683.
- ⁶ ESSS in simplified script 二十四史簡體字本 Jinshu 晉書 (Peking: Zhonghau,2000) p. 139.
- ⁷ Liu Xiang 劉向 compiled 戰國策 (Shanghai: Guji, 1985), p. 85.
- ⁸ Zhang Shiming 張士銘 punctuated 李太白集/ 杜工部集 (Changsha: Yuelu, 1989) p. 227.
- ⁹ National Council of the Churches of Christ, *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments*, RSV2 (New York: William Collins Sons &Co. Ltd. 1971) p. 595.
- ¹⁰ Qiu Zhaoao 仇兆鼈 noted 杜詩詳注 (Shanghai:Guji,1992) p. 398.
- ¹¹ Zhang Shiming 張士銘 punctuated 李太白集/ 杜工部集 (Changsha: Yuelu, 1989) p.228.
- ¹² Martin Heidegger: *HOLZWEGE*, in: *GESAMTAUSGABE*, Band 5. (Frankfurt/Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997) p.44.
- ¹³ *Duden Deutsches Universalwörterbuch*. 6. Auflage (Mannheim/Leipzig/Wien/Zürich: Dudenverlag, 2006) p.1884.
- ¹⁴ Burton Watson, tr., *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968) p.188.
- ¹⁵ Guo Xiang 郭象 noted, Cheng Xuanying 成玄英 commentated 莊子注 (Peking: Zhonghua, 2011) p. 330.
- ¹⁶ National Council of the Churches of Christ, *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments*, RSV2 (New York: William Collins Sons &Co. Ltd. 1971) p. 6.
- ¹⁷ Dong Gao 董誥 compiled 全唐文 (Shanghai: Guji,1990) p. 4232.
- ¹⁸ National Council of the Churches of Christ, *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments*, RSV2 (New York: William Collins Sons &Co. Ltd. 1971) p. 4.
- ¹⁹ Weng Shaojun 翁紹軍 collated and noted 漢語景教文獻詮釋 (Peking: Sanlian,1996) p. 54.
- ²⁰ Martin Heidegger: *HOLZWEGE*, in: *GESAMTAUSGABE*, Band 5. (Frankfurt/Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997) p. 27.
- ²¹ Martin Heidegger: *HOLZWEGE*, in: *GESAMTAUSGABE*, Band 5. (Frankfurt/Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997) p. 316.