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# THE MAKING OF THE *JÊN HSÜEH*

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## 1. The setting

After the suppression of the Hundred Days Reform at the end of September 1898, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao 梁啟超 (1873–1929) fled to Japan. K'ang Yu-wei 康有為 (1858–1927), followed shortly thereafter. In November 1898, Liang founded the political journal *Ch'ing i pao* 清議報, "Journal of Pure Criticism" in Yokohama, with which Liang and K'ang launched their attacks on the Ch'ing-court.<sup>1</sup> On the eleventh day of the eleventh month, i.e. the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December of the same year, the first issue of the periodical appeared.<sup>2</sup> In the journal's preamble, Liang defines its purpose as "to uphold pure criticism (*ch'ing i* 清議) in China and to rouse the nation's upright vigor (*chêng ch'i* 正氣)."<sup>3</sup>

The expression "pure criticism" is highly suggestive of Liang's political thinking and agenda during this time. It conjures up the spirit of the honest, reform-minded officials after the T'ai-p'ing rebellion in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and conveys the semblance of political and moral authority to Liang's group who opposed the party of officials around the Empress Dowager Tz'û-hsi

- 1 The *Ch'ing i pao* was supported by a Chinese merchant living in Yokohama. The journal bears the English title "The China Discussion". Some accounts in Liang's own writings, which talk about the founding of the journal, are collected in Ting Wên-chiang 丁文江 and Chao Fêng-t'ien 趙豐田 (eds.), *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao nien-p'u ch'ang-pien* 梁啟超年譜長編, Shanghai 1983, 171–72. See also Joseph R. Levenson, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China*, Cambridge, Mass. 1959, 62–64.
- 2 If not otherwise indicated, all further dates will be given according to the Western calendar. However, editorial dates of some publications will be given in both calendars. The abbreviation KH for the reign Kuang-hsü 光緒 of emperor Tê-tsung 德宗 is used in the dates of the traditional Chinese lunar calendar, followed by the reign's year, month, and day. For example, KH24/11/11 means the eleventh day of the eleventh month of the 24<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Kuang-hsü.
- 3 *Ch'ing i pao* 清議報 1, 1b [reprinted edition in 12 volumes, Taipeh 1967, vol. I, p. 4].

慈禧 (1835–1908).<sup>4</sup> Tzû-hsi forced the emperor to relinquish control of the government and had him confined in a pavilion on an island in the Imperial Park. Immediately, K'ang Yu-wei and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao recognized the necessity for "protecting the emperor" (*pao huang* 保皇). By appealing to the "upright vigor" of the people of China, they hoped to overthrow Tz'û-hsi's rule.<sup>5</sup>

Liang used the first issue of the journal to continue the work of his previous publication, the so-called "General Propositions of Reform" (*Pien-fa t'ung-i* 變法通義). Several parts had already appeared in the *Shih wu pao* 時務報 ("The China Progress") in Shanghai in 1896 and 1897, which distinguished Liang as one of the main intellectuals of reform policy.<sup>6</sup> While looking back on the failure of the Hundred Days Reform, Liang felt that propaganda for reform ideas was still needed, even if the difficulties of carrying them out were greater than before. Now in Japan, Liang toned up his voice. In his first article, he demands equality between Manchus and Chinese.<sup>7</sup> In the second article, he treats the set-back of the Reform Movement, which becomes the part of a new serial, called "Account of the Coup d'État of 1898" (*Wu-hsü chêng-pien chi* 戊

4 For a discussion of the historical significance of the expression *ch'ing i* in political debates at the Ch'ing-court, see Lloyd E. Eastman, "Ch'ing i and Chinese Policy Formation During the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Asian Studies* 24 (1965), 595–611.

5 The term *chêng ch'i* goes back to Wên T'ien-hsiang's 文天祥 patriotic poems, "Songs of upright vigor" (*Chêng ch'i ko* 正氣歌), written after his seizure by the Mongols. For a discussion of its historical interpretation, see Horst Huber, *Wen T'ien-hsiang (1236–1283). Vorstufen zum Verständnis seines Lebens*, Ph.D. University of Munich 1983, 11–12, 55, 258 fn. 58. In the writings of Liang's contemporary reformers, *chêng ch'i* possesses a nationalistic meaning. See, for example, T'ang Ts'ai-ch'ang's (1867–1900) founding program of the "Association of Upright Vigor" (*Chêng ch'i hui* 正氣會) in February 1900, which includes *T'ang Ts'ai-ch'ang chi* 唐才常集, edited by the Research Department of the Hunan Provincial Academy of Philosophy and Social Sciences, Peking 1982, 197–199.

6 The preface of the *Pien-fa t'ung-i* was published in the first issue of the *Shih wu pao* (時務報 1, KH22/7/1 = 9. August 1896). After more than one year, the following twenty installments found their temporary end in the 43<sup>rd</sup> issue (KH23/10/1 = 26. October 1897). The last issue was published in March 1898 when Liang had already left the *Shih wu pao* for a lectureship at the newly founded Academy for Modern Affairs (*Shih wu hsüeh-t'ang* 時務學堂) in Ch'ang-sha. One reason for his leaving was his quarrel with Wang K'ang-nien 汪康年 (1860–1911), who was the other editor of the journal. After Liang left, the journal became less critical. An overview of the publication history of the *Pien-fa t'ung-i* is given by Li Kuo-chün 李國俊, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao chu-tso hsi-nien* 梁啟超著作系年, Shanghai 1986, 49; T'ang Chih-chün 湯志鈞, *Wu-hsü pien-fa shih* 戊戌變法史, Peking 1984, 174–76.

7 Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, "Hsü Pien-fa t'ung-i 續變法通義," *Ch'ing i pao* (fn. 3) 1, 3a [vol. I, 7].

戊政變記). This work—half documentation, half argumentation—is centered on the behavior and moral thinking of the individuals who have been involved in the Reform Movement. Liang weaves the biographies of the six “martyrs” of the Reform into his “Account”. In spite of some wrong dates, the *Wu-hsü chêng-pien chi* became one of the most cited historical documents of the Hundred Days Reform—thus exerting a strong impact on the historiography of modern China.<sup>8</sup>

T'an Ssü-t'ung's 譚嗣同 (1865–1898) major work, the *Jên hsüeh* 仁學, or “Learning of Mankind's Love”, is highlighted in the setting of Liang's semi-historical propaganda.<sup>9</sup> T'an had been Liang's friend and partisan, after T'an was executed on the 26<sup>th</sup> of September 1898, he became the most prominent of the six martyrs. Liang continuously gave T'an's death prominence by referring to T'an's endeavors to protect the life of the emperor and that of K'ang Yu-wei, and by citing T'an's intention to shed his blood for the Reform. Liang published some documents which show how the emperor, having a presentiment of the coup d'état, cautions K'ang to save his own life. The forgery of these documents could be proved easily.<sup>10</sup> However, it is more difficult to pass judgment

- 8 Its historical value is discussed by T'ang Chih-chün, “Jên-wu p'ing-chia ho shih-liao chien-pieh—tu ‘Wu-hsü chêng-pien chi’ 人物評價和史料鑒別—讀《戊戌政變記》,” re-published in the author's *K'ang Yu-wei yü Wu-hsü pien-fa* 康有為與戊戌變法, Peking 1984, 335–46; Luke S. K. Kwong, *A Mosaic of the Hundred Days. Personalities, Politics, and Ideas of 1898*, Cambridge, Mass., 1984, 5–6; Liu Fêng-han 劉鳳翰, “Liang Ch'i-ch'ao Wu-hsü chêng-pien chi k'ao i 梁啟超與戊戌政變記考異,” collected in the author's *Yüan Shih-k'ai yü Wu-hsü chêng-pien* 袁世凱與戊戌政變, Taipei 1969, 1–57. An overview of the editions of the *Wu-hsü chêng-pien chi* gives Chan Sin-wai in an endnote to his translation of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao's “A Biography of T'an Ssü-t'ung,” *Renditions* (Spring 1981), 150.
- 9 In Tan's thinking, *jên* 仁 should not be primarily understood as a human emotion or a Confucian moral value, but as an essential condition of human social life which also constitutes human individual personality. Therefore, it seems to be more appropriate to render it by “love” than by “benevolence” or “humanity”. For a discussion of the concept of *jên* in the context of late Ch'ing scholarship, see Takeuchi Hiroyuki 竹内弘行, “Tô Shitô ‘Jingaku’ to Shinmatsu no jin shisô 譚嗣同《仁學》と清末の仁思想,” *Tôhōgaku* 東方學 68 (1994), 91–105.
- 10 For a detailed discussion of this matter see Huang Chang-chien 黃彰健, *Wu-hsü pien-fa shih yen jiu* 戊戌變法史研究, Taipei: 1970, 429–57. The most prominent piece of forgery is a secret instruction from the emperor to K'ang transmitted by Yang Jui 楊銳 (1857–1898). Other forged documents are letters from T'an to Liang and K'ang which were published in the *Chih hsin pao* 知新報 (“Journal of the Intellectual Avantgarde”) in Macao (no. 75, KH24/11/11 = 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1898). The *Chih hsin pao*, formerly *Kuang Shih wu pao* 廣時務報 (“The China Progress of Kuangtung”), was the mouth-piece of K'ang Yu-



about Liang's assertions that T'an had the intention to die for the reform.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, Liang's efforts appeared to be very successful. The propaganda on T'an's fearless death for the sake of China's future inspired the future revolutionary youth.<sup>12</sup>

## 2. Making suggestions

Thus, the first edition of the *Jên hsüeh* became the first interpretation of T'an's work. T'an's martyrdom was woven into the reading of the work. According to Liang, the *Jên hsüeh* manifests the last will of T'an Ssü-t'ung, like a famous martyr's legacy, and he appointed himself its executor. T'an is presented as a highly gifted, patriotic and brave man who had a broad knowledge of traditional Chinese scholarship as well as of modern Western sciences. He is supposed to be full of compassion for his people, and his refusal to escape from the punish-

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wei's party in South China. Moreover, in his biography of T'an, Liang fabricates a secret instruction of the emperor to T'an, see *Ch'ing i pao* 4, 5a [vol. 1, 207].

- 11 Liang's main sources are: 1. Tan's poem written on the wall of his cell; 2. T'an's words to Liang refusing to escape; 3. passages of the *Jên hsüeh* describing T'an's devotion to release mankind from its social, political and ethical nets and fessels, and arguing for immortality; 4. T'an's letters to Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and to K'ang Yu-wei mentioned above. While the forgery of T'an's letters could clearly be shown, the authenticity of the poem seemed to be sustained by the discovery of the manuscript of the diary of the secretary of the Board of Punishments, who was given a copy of the poem on the wall. See K'ung Hsiang-chi 孔祥吉, "T'an Ssü-t'ung 'Yü-chung t'i-pi' shih hsing-pu ch'uan-ch'ao-pên chih fa-hsien chi ch'i i-i 譚嗣同《獄中題壁》詩刑部傳抄本之發現及其意義," first published in June 1995, and collected in the author's *Wan Ch'ing i-wên ts'ung-k'ao* 晚清佚聞叢考, Ch'êng-tu 1998, 194–209. Moreover, K'ung provides a new interpretation of the poem in "T'an Ssü-t'ung chih-yu Shih Chung-chi 譚嗣同摯友師中吉," published in the same collection, 1–12. K'ung argues against Huang Chang-chien 黃彰健, who cast serious doubts on the authenticity of the poem, see his *Wu-hsü pien-fa shih yen-chiu* (fn. 10), 531–38. Huang Chang-chien, however, does not see his claim refuted that Liang Ch'i-ch'ao retouched T'an's poem, see his reply to K'ung Hsiang-chi in "Lun T'an Ssü-t'ung yü-chung shih 論譚嗣同獄中詩," *Chin-tai-shih yen-chiu* 近代史研究 1995.2, 54–64. The fact, that the scholarly discussion has not yet reached a popular understanding of the poem, may be proved by Liu Yü-lai's 劉玉來 annotations in his recently published *T'an Ssü-t'ung shih hsüan chu* 譚嗣同詩選注, Peking 1998, 243–45.

- 12 See Teh-chao Wang, "T'an Ssu-t'ung and the Political Movement of the Late Ch'ing Period," in Laurence G. Thompson (ed.), *Studia Asiatica. Essays in Asian Studies in Felicitation of the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of Professor Ch'en Shou-yi*, San Francisco 1975, 125–55.

ment inflicted on him by the old authority, is constructed as his determination to die for the new society. For Liang, T'an's courageous and selfless mind is manifested in his book as in his deeds.

Liang's editing of T'an Ssü-t'ung's *Jên hsüeh* hides some hermeneutic clues for which later scholars were often indebted to. Its influence on the historiography of ideas of modern China was eminent. Furthermore, its status as a "legacy" gave and still gives this little tractatus importance and weight, which may lie beyond its ideas. A legacy is supposed to stimulate further treatment among the heirs. Some later discussion about the *Jên hsüeh* may directly be traced back to its historiographic significance—being a testimony to the thinking of the highly praised Chinese avantgarde whose merits laid the ground for the modern society.<sup>13</sup>

In the editorial setting of the *Jên hsüeh*, two features can be discerned that strongly influenced the history of its interpretation. Firstly, the ideological frame constructed by Liang's political purposes, making T'an a spokesman and pupil of K'ang Yu-wei, and, secondly, the psychological reading of the *Jên hsüeh* which grows out of T'an's impressive biography. Obvious discrepancies between Liang's presentations and the historical facts have already been pointed out.<sup>14</sup> In the present article, I will discuss how Liang's editing creates a psychological reading of the *Jên hsüeh*, and how the psychological reading favors certain suppositions about the composition of the text. Suppositions gradually proceed to statements, and since text criticism is used to differentiate the layers

13 The historical significance of the *Jên hsüeh* can be seen in the materialistic-idealistic controversy over T'an's philosophy, which arose during the fifties of the twentieth century (the main protagonists being Ch'ên Po-ta 陳伯達, Sun Ch'ang-chiang 孫長江 and Li Tsê-hou 李澤厚). The controversy was politically motivated by the question of how to define the role of the intelligentsia in the newly established communist society. The controversy is treated in length by Chan Sin-wai in the introductory chapters to his translation of the *Jên hsüeh*, see *An Exposition of Benevolence. The Jen-hsüeh of T'an Ssu-t'ung*, Hong Kong 1984, 25–34. See also Liu Wei 劉偉, "Chien-kuo i-lai T'an Ssü-t'ung chên-hsüeh ssü-hsiang yen-chiu kai-shu 建國以來覃嗣同哲學思想研究概述," *Wu-han ta-hsüeh hsüeh-pao—Shê-hui k'o-hsüeh pan* 武漢大學學報—社會科學版 1983. 2, 53–57.

14 Chang Tê-chün 張德鈞 demonstrated the want of historical proof in Liang's account of T'an. His research broke new ground for later studies, see his "Liang Ch'i-ch'ao chi T'an Ssü-t'ung shih shih shih pien 梁啟超紀覃嗣同事失實辨," *Wên shih* 1 (1962), 81–85. Moreover, Chang proved Liang's account is wrong that T'an went to Peking in 1895 in order to see K'ang Yu-wei. Further testimony is given by a letter of Liang to K'ang calling K'ang's attention on T'an, published by Su Yü 蘇輿 in a collection of his own and Yeh Tê-hui's 葉德輝 polemics against K'ang Yu-wei and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, *I chiao ts'ung-pien* 異教叢編, 461 (*Chin-tai Chung-kuo shih-liao ts'ung-pien* 近代中國史料叢編 edition).

of interpretation regarding their historical and sociological relations, statements about textual composition again contain hermeneutic issues. In the end, there will be no way to break through the vicious circle of assertion and evidence, unless one becomes aware of the starting point of reasoning.

At the beginning of editing the *Jên hsüeh*, Liang frequently calls notice to T'an's death. His foreword headed the first installment of the *Jên hsüeh* on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January 1899.<sup>15</sup> Liang makes two claims on how the *Jên hsüeh* should be read. According to Liang, T'an's teaching is an "effort to save all the people in the world". Liang explains that this effort requires the negation of one's conscious self. Liang hopes that T'an's martyrdom was not in vain, and that his book will "serve as a lantern for the Way [of truth] and the eyes for all sentient beings".<sup>16</sup> Three weeks later on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 1899, Liang's biography of T'an Ssü-t'ung appeared as part of the *Wu-hsü chêng-pien chi*. It contains a detailed description of T'an's endeavor to save the emperor and K'ang Yu-wei in the face of the threat.<sup>17</sup> T'an is depicted as a bodhisattva, who is willing to give up his life for the sake of others.<sup>18</sup> Liang concludes that by judging from the fundamental reality which penetrates every individual, and not admitting to any distinction, whether one dies for the sake of only one person or for the sake of the whole world,<sup>19</sup> what counts is not the effect of one's deed, but the attitude by which one performs it. This conclusion excuses the failure of T'an's efforts, while, at the same time, it directly delivers the message to turn one's mind to the destiny of one's country.

Liang acknowledges that the *Jên hsüeh* exerts a kind of psychological impact on its readers. Here lies the value of the book and one may say, Liang's political interests, too. Liang stresses T'an's ideological indebtedness to K'ang Yu-wei, and suggests that, since T'an admired K'ang Yu-wei, he must have written the book in order "to glorify K'ang's teaching". According to Liang, T'an's book is nothing else other than an amplification of the principles of K'ang's teaching, of the Great Unity (*ta t'ung* 大同), the dedication to save one's country, and rigid selflessness, and T'an worked towards their realization.

15 *Ch'ing i pao* 2 (KH24/11/21), 25a–b [vol. I, 115–116].

16 *Ibid.*, 2, 25a [vol. I, 115]. I cite Chan Sin-wai's translation of Liang's preface, see Chan Sin-wai (fn. 13), 51.

17 *Ch'ing i pao* 4 (KH24/12/11), 4a–7b [vol. I, 205–12].

18 *Ch'ing i pao* 2, 25b [vol. I, 116]; Chan Sin-wai (fn. 13), 53.

19 *Ch'ing i pao* 2, 25b [vol. I, 116], and *Ch'ing i pao* 4, 7b [vol. I, 212]; Chan Sin-wai (fn. 13), 53 and 47–48.

Later editions of Liang's foreword do not mention T'an's commitment to K'ang, but still maintains the conformity of their teachings.<sup>20</sup>

Announcing the monographic editions of the *Jên hsüeh* two years later, Liang introduces his readers to a "power which splits mountains and breaks stones". Based on Buddhism and Western natural science, T'an's book blends Eastern and Western thinking in one pot, extracts their essences to make a scholarship of its own. It is instructive, because it embraces many different sciences and methods. On the other hand, Liang openly defends shortcomings of the book by stating that it "is vast and huge, talks about nothing specific, and its beginning and end have no perfection". By this he means that the texture of the *Jên hsüeh* is not systematic and its argumentation inconsistent.<sup>21</sup> However, its lack of inconsistency may be excused as the outcry of a very gifted and ambitious, but deeply frustrated and suffering man. On the contrary, inconsistency strengthens its emotional force.

### 3. The psychological reading

Liang's claim that T'an was K'ang Yu-wei's student has already been refuted by some scholars.<sup>22</sup> But the rights and wrongs of Liang's suggestive comments on the genesis and the way to read T'an's book are difficult to prove. We can see how some of Liang's suggestions operate in Chang Hao's well-known study of "Chinese Intellectuals in Crisis." Chang maps the shifting of ideas around the downfall of the dynasty. T'an appears—besides K'ang Yu-wei, Chang Ping-lin 章炳麟 (1869–1935) and Liu Shih-p'ei 劉師培 (1884–1919)—as a representative figure for the world views of Chinese intellectuals in pre-modern China. In his discussion of the *Jên hsüeh*, by going back to the events of 1898, Chang underlines the consistency of the ideas expressed in the *Jên hsüeh* with T'an's death. At the end of his study of T'an, he concludes:

20 The Japanese monograph editions of the *Jên-hsüeh*, published two years later, already emendated these sentences in Liang's foreword, as well as the subsequent editions of the foreword in Liang's collected works, see, for example *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao ch'üan-chi* 梁啟超全集, vol. I, Peking 1999, 170.

21 Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, "Shao-chieh hsin-chu. Jên hsüeh 紹介新著—仁學," *Hsin-min ts'ung-pao* 新民叢報 1 (KH 28/1/1 = 8. February 1902), 4–5 [reprinted edition in 17 vols., Taipei 1966, vol. I, 116–17].

22 Chang Tê-chün samples some voices criticizing Liang for drawing T'an Ssü-t'ung to his own party (fn. 14).

When seen in the context of his *Jên hsüeh*, T'an's martyrdom clearly represents more than a dedication to political reformism. It also testifies to his devotion to a vision of reality that was the end result of a lifelong quest—a quest that not only compelled him to protest against the existing socio-political order, but also enabled him to accept death without fear.<sup>23</sup>

Chang's conclusion may be considered as a continuation of Liang's argumentation and likewise, as an inversion of Liang's perspective. Chang exhibits a single thread which runs through T'an's work and life, culminating in T'an's self-sacrifice—i. e. T'an's devotion to a certain vision of reality. It repeats Liang's statement that T'an's readiness to die for the sake of others can be seen in his words and in his deeds. Chang, however, has no interest to utilize the *Jên hsüeh* for a political program. T'an's work does not have to function as a “lantern shining the way for others.” Instead, Chang wants to lay out T'an's ideas in the broader context of modern Chinese intellectual history. For Chang, T'an's biography serves as a basis for interpreting the *Jên hsüeh*, but for Liang, the *Jên hsüeh* serves ideological purposes. In Liang's own words: “to let T'an's martyrdom not [having] happened in vain.”

Chang ascertains that T'an's unifying vision of reality “dominates the core of the text.” The composition, however, is unsystematic. This is due to the fact, that T'an “had little time to write.” Therefore, he concludes that “this haste may explain why the tract was not entirely of one piece and often marred by undeveloped themes, loose ends, stray statements, and even contradictory ideas.”<sup>24</sup> Chang does not go into detail, as he does not clearly explain which ideas mar or are mutually contradictory. His interpretation is centered on the main concept *jên* 仁 (“mankind's love”), which sets the basis for his vision of reality. Chang demonstrates T'an's new Mahayanistic notion of *jên* against the background of its Neo-Confucian understanding. Subsequently, he discerns an ambiguity between inner-worldly sentiments and transmundane pretensions in T'an's notion of *jên*. But the ambiguity gets dissolved in “the organic oneness of a selfless whole,” making his thinking a sort of mysticism. Chang proceeds to describe T'an's part criticism, part iconoclasm against Confucian ethics and society. At last, referring to Liang's foreword and T'an's own preface, he recognizes that T'an has adopted the ideal of a bodhisattva.<sup>25</sup> At the end, Chang excuses T'an for his inadequate descriptions of reality. According to him, “T'an's portrayal of

23 Chang Hao, *Chinese Intellectuals in Crisis. Search for Order and Meaning (1890–1911)*, Berkeley 1987, 103.

24 Ibid., 79.

25 Ibid., 89.



his vision of organic oneness leaves one with the impression that he had a strong sense of ineffability of what he attempted to describe. Thus, it is not surprising that T'an's vision of reality does not lead to any systematic depiction of the institutional structure of the ideal order he engaged." As a result, being a type of mysticism, T'an's thinking is ahistorical and futuristic.<sup>26</sup>

Chang Hao's interpretation has the advantage in bringing forth a consistent reading of the text. It harmonizes with T'an's biography. In fact, Chang Hao's conclusions rest more on the reading of T'an's biography than on the text. His approach has already been partly biographical. He is concerned with the question on how certain scholars, facing the cultural crisis, developed new ideas, in order to explore intellectual changes in a "transitional era".<sup>27</sup> His final conclusion that T'an's vision of reality sprung out of a lifelong-quest is repeated in the commencement of his study. Moreover, Chang extricates a unique vision of reality out of the text and T'an's death, by arguing that T'an was devoted to this vision in his mind when he wrote the book, thus making his biographically centered interpretation psychological. It shows that single ideas, although diverging, do not deconstruct the devotion. In his analysis, Chang does not go beyond this devotion. He does not discuss the philosophical content of T'an's ideas, nor does he consider much the argumentative structure of T'an's work. The neuralgic point of Chang's interpretation lies in the loss of the yardstick to reassure his results on the basis of the text. T'an's ideas are no longer distinctly present, but melted to a unique vision which expresses a particular state of mind, called "devotion". This single idea may be imperfect, but does not harm the whole. For Chang, imperfection reveals only an early stage of the ultimate vision of reality in T'an's thoughts, and disparities just mirror shades of clearness and distinctness of T'an's thought.

#### 4. The stock criticism of weak organization

Chang Hao gives little consideration to the composition of the *Jên hsüeh* in his attempt to exhibit T'an's devotion to a vision of reality. Detecting a loose organization in the work, he avoids dealing with its argumentative structure. Chang's neglect is repeated by Chan Sin-wai. As opposed to Chang Hao, Chan is not interested in the social context of T'an's ideas but in their intellectual origins. Chan has no need to harmonize T'an's death with the philosophy of his

26 Ibid., 103.

27 Ibid., 1.



book. The aim of his study is to prove the Buddhist impact on the *Jên hsüeh*. Anyway, Chan concludes that the Buddhist thinking can be seen in Tan's willingness to die, too.<sup>28</sup> Regarding the text itself, however, he presents a rather disappointing view of its composition at the beginning of his study. In his eyes, the *Jên hsüeh* is

haphazardly pieced together, what he had learned from earlier years and what he learned from missionary journals and from Buddhism to construct his own theory. The outcome therefore was not a work philosophically logical; however, the treatise did contain a few fundamental consistencies which revealed an effort to achieve a comprehensive understanding of life in all of its dimensions.<sup>29</sup>

Chan Sin-wai excuses this state of disorder by the fact, that the *Jên hsüeh* is "primarily a long, inspirational essay written by a patriotic Chinese youth at the close of the nineteenth century, a time when China appeared hopelessly unable to stand on her own feet in the face of Western and Japanese intrusions." T'an wished in "a hasty attempt to reach a solution to the many problems besetting China."<sup>30</sup> We can hear Liang Ch'i-ch'ao speaking in Chan's expressions. In his later writings, Chan repeats his impression saying, that the *Jên hsüeh* is "an attempt to solve many of the problems besetting China," and T'an had "pieced together what he had learned in his early years, and what he acquired from missionary journals and Buddhism to construct his own theory."<sup>31</sup> The *Jên hsüeh* "represents an effort to sort out and harmonize an extremely discordant conglomeration of intellectual influences."<sup>32</sup>

Chan's conclusions are quickly drawn—more by a first impression than by thorough reasoning. The conglomeration of ideas of different origin is Chan's methodological issue, and his study is meant to be used to resolve the intellectual entanglement. Therefore, in Chan's eyes, T'an brings together what originally does not belong together, making T'an's endeavor seem like an effort of harmonizing disparate concepts. Chan's statements on the composition of T'an's book is not surprising because of his own adherence to single concepts. For Chan, the main part lacks organization, and only a few fundamental consistencies hold the whole together.

28 Chan Sin-wai (fn. 8), 145 fn. 8.

29 Chan Sin-wai, *Buddhism in Late Ch'ing Political Thought*, Hong Kong 1985, 79.

30 Ibid.

31 Chan Sin-wai (fn. 16), 2.

32 Ibid., 12.

Both scholars, Chang Hao and Chan Sin-wai, seemed to have been content with the lack of logical structure. What prevents them from going further in their analyses may be caused by their methodological approach as well as by some suppositions they were clinging to. They both apprehended Liang Ch'i-ch'ao's verdict on the textual composition of the *Jên hsüeh*. Later scholars state a more differentiated view on the composition of the *Jên hsüeh*. In spite of its "potpourri of ideas" and "notwithstanding the stock argumentation of weak organization," Luke S. K. Kwong detects a definite structure in the *Jên hsüeh*.<sup>33</sup> He distinguishes a logical sequence of three parts: Firstly, the foundation of T'an's ideas, then social criticism, and lastly, the vision of an universal culture.<sup>34</sup> Wang Yüeh, also confesses that the *Jên hsüeh* as a philosophical work is relatively diffuse and vague,<sup>35</sup> and of miscellaneous content, but contains an identical structure in its different subjects.<sup>36</sup> As for answering the question on how we have to read the *Jên hsüeh*, it will be necessary to reconsider the text's history in comparison to Liang Ch'i-ch'ao's comments.

## 5. The writing

The textual history of the *Jên hsüeh* has been the subject of several studies and the most profound of them was written by T'ang Chih-chün.<sup>37</sup> My observations on the dating and publishing of the *Jên hsüeh* are indebted to these studies for the most part. As far as I know, there is no existing manuscript of the *Jên hsüeh*.<sup>38</sup> Considerations on the authenticity of the text have to be based on the

33 Luke S. K. Kwong, *T'an Ssu-t'ung, 1865–1898. Life and Thought of a Reformer*, Leiden 1996, 150.

34 Ibid., 155–162.

35 Wang Yüeh 王樾, *T'an Ssü-t'ung pien-fa ssü-hsiang yen-chiu* 譚嗣同變法思想研究, Taipeh 1990, 52.

36 Ibid., 61.

37 T'ang Chih-chün, "Jên hsüeh' pan-pên t'an-yüan 《仁學》版本探源," first published in 1963, re-published in the author's *K'ang Yu-wei yü Wu-hsü pien-fa* (see fn. 8), 301–28; Hsü I-chün 徐義君, "T'an Ssü-t'ung chu-tso hsieh-tso nien-yüeh k'ao 譚嗣同著作寫作年月考", attached to the author's *T'an Ssü-t'ung ssü-hsiang yen-chiu* 譚嗣同思想研究, Ch'ang-sha 1981, 171–220; Yin Yung-ch'ing's 印永清 introduction "T'an Ssü-t'ung yü Jên hsüeh 譚嗣同與仁學" to his edition of the *Jên hsüeh* 仁學, Chêng-chou 1998, 1–64. Yin's description is much indebted to Têng T'an-chou's 鄧潭洲 biography of T'an Ssü-t'ung, *T'an Ssü-t'ung chuan lun* 譚嗣同傳論, Shanghai 1981.

38 Compare the general remark of T'an Ssü-t'ung's nephew that a lot of the manuscripts of T'an Ssü-t'ung's writings were lost, in *T'an Ssü-t'ung ch'üan-chi (tsêng-ting pên)* 譚嗣同

published editions. The present editions contain T'an Ssü-t'ung's foreword, followed by a chapter called "Definitions" (*chieh-shuo* 界說), which introduces the main concepts in twenty-seven short paragraphs.<sup>39</sup> The core text includes fifty chapters divided into two parts. Chapter one to thirty inclusive belong to the first part, and chapter thirty-one to the end to the second. The volume of the present editions is consistent with T'an's own words in his preface.<sup>40</sup>

T'an wrote the *Jên hsüeh* during his stay in Nanking from August 1886 to November 1887. T'an's letters written to his teacher Ou-yang Chung-ku 歐陽中鵠 and to his friends are most revealing in this regard. Before T'an came to Nanking, he traveled to Shanghai, Tientsin and Peking where he befriended Wu Chia-jui 吳嘉瑞, Wu Tê-hsiao 吳德瀾 and his son Wu Ch'iao 吳樵 (1866–

全集(增訂本), edited by Ts'ai Shang-ssü 蔡尚思 and Fang Hsing 方行, <sup>2</sup>Peking 1998, 288.

- 39 The term *chieh* 界 was used by Hsü Kuang-ch'i 徐光啓 (1521–1593) and Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) for rendering the Latin word "definitiones" (Greek ὁρισμοί) of the *Elementa*, the Latin version of Euklid's *Stoichea*, in Chinese. There the "definitiones" are followed by "postulationes" (Greek ἀιτήματα, Chinese *ch'iu-tso* 求作) and "axiomae" (Greek κοινὰ ἔννοιαι, Chinese *kung-lun* 公論). T'an's use of the term *chieh-shuo* is very general, nowhere in a strict sense of a definition. Only a few of his "definitions" really define words, but still fail to be exact definitions. Translating *chieh-shuo* as "axioms" or "general principles" seems to be more appropriate to meet T'an Ssü-t'ung understanding, but in the present study, the literal rendering was preferred. Liang Ch'i-ch'ao also used the term *chieh-shuo* in the meaning of general principles in two publications in 1898. Euclid's presentation of science based on axioms had a tremendous influence on the scholarly world of the late Ch'ing era. K'ang Yu-wei's *Shih-li kung-fa ch'üan-shu* 實理公法全書 may count for that, probably written in the early 1890s (see Chu Wei-chêng's 朱維錚 preface to *K'ang Yu-wei Ta t'ung shu êrh chung* 康有爲大同書二種, Peking 1988, 3–5). On the other hand, concerning the way of defining terminology, Ma Chien-chung's 馬建忠 usage of the term *chieh-shuo* is more in conformity with Hsü and Ricci (see his well-known grammar *Ma shih wên t'ung chiao-chu* 馬氏文通校注, Taipei 1965, 1).

In 1607, Hsü and Ricci translated only the first six books based on Clavius' edition of 1574. In 1857, a completing translation was done. Tsêng Kuo-fan 曾國藩 (1811–1872) issued a corrected version of all fifteen books of the *Elementa* in 1875, see Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, vol. III, Cambridge 1959, 106; Peter Engelfriet, *Euclid in China. The Genesis of the First Chinese Translation of Euclid's Elements Books I–VI (Jihe yuan-ben; Beijing 1607) and its Reception up to 1723*, Leiden 1998, 114 and 132.

T'an Ssü-t'ung had studied Euclid's work in the early 1890s, see Kwong (fn. 33), 81 and 153–54. In his "Brush notes from the cottage 'Image of the Stone-Chrysanthemum'" (*Shih chü ying lu pi-chih* 石菊影廬筆識), compiled in 1894, he refers to the Chinese translation of Euklid's *Elementa* (*Chi-ho yüan-pên* 幾何原本), see *T'an Ssü-t'ung ch'üan-chi*, 118.

- 40 The present article refers to the edition of the *Jên hsüeh* in the enlarged version of T'an Ssü-t'ung's collected works, *T'an Ssü-t'ung ch'üan-chi*, see fn. 38, 289–374. This edition is based on the *Ya-tung shih-pao* 亞東時報 serial edition (see below).

1897), Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Sung Shu 宋恕 (1862–1910) and Hsia Tsêng-yu 夏曾佑 (1865–1927), who were all interested in Buddhist doctrines. Later in Nanking, he took up contact with them again. Then he traveled from Nanking to Shanghai, where Liang Ch'i-ch'ao ran the *Shih wu pao* together with Wang K'ang-nien 汪康年 (1860–1911). The journal became the central point for the circle of reform minded scholars during the late 1890s.<sup>41</sup>

By the intercession of his father, the acting governor of Hupeh province, T'an served as expectant appointee official (*hou pu kuan* 候補官) in Nanking. He soon became frustrated with his post. With much time on his hand, he tried to get in contact with the local officials, but had little success.<sup>42</sup> However, he got acquainted with the Buddhist lay devotee Yang Wên-hui 楊文會 (1837–1911) and subsequently devoted himself to the study of the Buddhist sutras. In between, with much time on his hand, he had the opportunity to visit Shanghai frequently. In October 1896, he left Nanking for Wu-ch'ang, Ch'ang-sha and his home county Liu-yang 瀏陽縣 in Hunan province, and returned only in January 1897. During the same year, he was involved with various reform projects in Hunan, Shanghai and Nanking. However, in November 1897, he left Nanking for a position in the reform-oriented provincial government under Ch'ên Pao-chên 陳寶箴 (1831–1900) of Hunan province.<sup>43</sup> T'an's ideas before and after his time in Nanking are centered on economic and educational reform of his home province. He was concerned with methods to exploit the natural resources. Later, in Hunan, he immediately became a leading member of the newly founded "Academy for Modern Affairs" (*Shih wu hsüeh-t'ang* 時務學堂), which was designed to give young people a modern education.

In a letter to Wang K'ang-nien from 17<sup>th</sup> of February 1897, T'an reveals some particulars about his intention to write the *Jên hsüeh*. A year before, Wu Chia-jui had conveyed to him a message from Liang Ch'i-ch'ao that a journal in Hong Kong shows interest in his work. Liang encouraged T'an to outline his

41 Liang Ch'i-ch'ao left Peking in April 1896, the first issue of the *Shih wu pao* appeared in August. In November, he returned to his home province Kuang-tung, passing through Hang-chou. Beginning of 1897, Liang came back to Shanghai, once more by the way through Hang-chou. In the same month, he went to Wu-ch'ang to meet with the governor Chang Chih-tung 張之洞 (1837–1909), see Ting Wên-chiang and Ch'ao Fêng-t'ien (eds.) (fn. 1), 51. Sun Pao-hsien 孫寶憲 gives an account of a meeting with Liang and T'an in Shanghai, see his diary *Jih i chai jih-chi* 日益齋日記, excerpts published in Chien Po-tsan 翦伯贊 et al. (eds.), *Wu-hsü pien-fa* 戊戌變法, 4 vols., Shanghai 1957, vol. I, 539; Kwong (fn. 33), 138.

42 See his letter to his teacher Ou-yang Chung-ku, in *T'an Ssu-t'ung ch'üan-chi*, 468.

43 Kwong (fn. 33), 128–29.

principal aims for publishing. T'an, however, did not immediately follow up on Liang's encouragement, but started only after his return from Hupeh. He complains that the task is not easy to carry out. One problem which he has to deal with is that "if one really wants to write about the catastrophes of the last several thousands years, it would be necessary to go back to the essentials of man and nature." The impression, however, "to sweep all fessels away and to break through all nets," did not allow him to rest. At this time, T'an had already finished more than ten chapters, and he promised Wang to him send his work soon.<sup>44</sup> In April 1897, he wrote T'ang Ts'ai-ch'ang 唐才常 (1867–1900), that he was worried by the contemporary situation and wished to establish a teaching, which "breaks through all nets." Thoughts and ideas were materializing so quickly that he could hardly write them down. Until then, he could only put his impressions in a simple straightforward manner, because he had no time to bring all his propositions together. As a result, shortcomings were inevitable.<sup>45</sup> The expression "breaking through the nets" became an epithet for his philosophy, and it influenced the writings of his friends.<sup>46</sup>

It is generally assumed that T'an finished writing the *Jên hsüeh* in the first months of 1897,<sup>47</sup> but opinions regarding the date he started are controversial.<sup>48</sup>

44 See T'an's letter to Wang K'ang-nien in *T'an Ssü-t'ung ch'üan-chi*, 493.

45 *T'an Ssü-t'ung ch'üan-chi*, 528.

46 Compare T'ang Ts'ai-ch'ang's small essay "Why one should read first the books of the old philosophers before one wants to start with the new learning" (*Chih hsin hsüeh hsien tu ku tzü shu shuo* 治新學先讀古子書說), in *T'ang Ts'ai-ch'ang chi*, <sup>2</sup>Peking 1982, 30–31.

47 The research results differs between February and March. Kondô Kuniyasu 近藤邦康, *Chûgoku kindai shisôshi kenkyû* 中國近代思想史研究, Tôkyô 1981, 23, Chan Sin-wai (fn. 13), 12, Chang Tê-chün 張德鈞, "T'an Ssü-t'ung ssü-hsiang shu-p'ing 譚嗣同思想述評," *Li-shih yen-chiu* 1962. 1, 43–44, stresses the first month of the new year (February in the western calendar) as the time when T'an wrote the main part. Hsü I-chün (fn. 37), 171–173, Kwong (fn. 33), 147, both argue that T'an must have continued writing during March.

48 Wang Yüeh, for example, argues that T'an had already started writing in August 1896 and finished a first draft in January 1897. Then, he discussed the matter with Liang Ch'i-ch'ao in Shanghai and completed a finished version. See Wang Yüeh (fn. 35), 37. Due to illness, Liang left his post at the *Shih wu hsüeh-t'ang* in Hunan, and went to Shanghai during January 1897. According to Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, T'an had written the *Jên hsüeh* during the years 1896 and 1897, see his announcement of the monograph editions in *Hsin-min ts'ung-pao* 新民叢報 1, 4 [vol. I, 116]. In his *San-shih tzü-shu* 三十自述, Liang says that T'an had hidden himself in Nanking to write the *Jên hsüeh*, see *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao ch'üan-chi*, vol. II, 958. In the literature about T'an, Liang's dates are most referred to. Yang T'ing-fu 楊廷福, for example, follows Liang in his chronological biography of T'an, see *T'an Ssü-t'ung nien-p'u* 譚嗣同年譜, Peking 1957, 78. For corrections of Yang's account, see



Liang says that after the completion of every chapter, they sat together and discussed it, thus implying that he himself was a co-author of the book.<sup>49</sup> However, Liang's accounts are not very trustworthy, because T'an had the idea for his book in mind already before he left Nanking for Wu-han and Ch'ang-sha. In a letter to T'ang Ts'ai-ch'ang from October 1896, before going to Hupeh and Hunan, T'an tells T'ang about his project to found a teaching which will "break through all nets." He expresses the wish to discuss the matter further with T'ang.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, some scholars date the commencement of the *Jên hsüeh* to autumn 1896. Some passages in the *Jên hsüeh* can be traced back to his earlier writings. A report from his journey to Peking and Tientsin, which he undertook before he arrived in Nanking, was repeated almost *verbatim* in the *Jên hsüeh*. Chapters 42, 43 and 44 are completely based on this so called "Report of my Journey to the North" (*Pei yu fang hsüeh chi* 北遊訪學記) which he recounted in a letter to his teacher Ou-yang Chung-ku.<sup>51</sup> Other passages in the *Jên hsüeh* also shows similarities with his letters.<sup>52</sup> Obviously, when writing the *Jên hsüeh*, T'an draws on material he has written earlier. Therefore, it might be possible that T'an wrote a first draft of his work before he traveled to Hupeh and Hunan in winter 1896. T'an might have discussed his plan with Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, T'ang Ts'ai-ch'ang and Liu Shan-han 劉善涵 (Sung-fu 淞芙) when he traveled to Hunan and Hupeh. His friends Huang Tsu-hsün 黃祖勳 (Ying-ch'u 穎初) and Liu Shan-han accompanied him back to Nanking.<sup>53</sup> T'an's letter to Wang K'ang-nien mentioned above, however, proves that in the first months of 1897, he made a new effort to sketch his plans. The existing *Jên hsüeh* seems to be the result of this effort.

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Ch'ên Kuang-ch'ung 陳光崇, "'T'an Ssü-t'ung nien-p'u pu-chêng 《譚嗣同年譜》補正," *Liao-ning ta-hsüeh hsüeh-pao* 遼寧大學學報 1983. 2, 62.

49 Liang in his biography of T'an, *Ch'ing i pao* 4, 4b, [vol. I, 206].

50 *T'an Ssü-t'ung ch'üan-chi*, 251.

51 The tenth letter to Ou-yang according to the enumeration of the *T'an Ssü-t'ung ch'üan-chi*, 458–468.

52 Reflecting on T'an's scholarship in his biography, Liang says that besides the *Jên hsüeh* T'an's learning can be found in discussion with his friends, see *Ch'ing i pao* 2, 7a [vol. I, 211]. This is the fact for some of his letters to Ou-yang Chung-ku, Wang K'ang-nien, T'ang Ts'ai-ch'ang, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Liu Sung-fu and Pei Yüan-chêng 貝元徵.

53 Teng T'an-chou (fn. 37), 41–42. Yin Yung-ch'ing 印永清 concludes that T'an has written drafts of the *Jên hsüeh* during his journey to Wu-han and Hunan and has discussed them with his friends in Wu-ch'ang and Ch'ang-sha. After his return to Nanking T'an pieced his articles together with the help of his friend Huang Tsu-hsün, see Yin Yung-ch'ing (fn. 37), 32–39.



A small essay of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, published in the *Shih wu pao* in May 1897, gives evidence that the title "Jên hsüeh" existed then.<sup>54</sup> In his preface, Liang confesses his indebtedness to T'an's work as well as to Yen Fu's 嚴復 (1854–1921) translation of Aldous Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*.<sup>55</sup> The reading of the two works allows Liang to detect a new meaning of K'ang Yu-wei's social theory of change, from which he formed a theory of the cohesive powers innate in human society. Liang obviously draws on T'an's ideas.

T'an did not publish his book during his life time. He neither was pleased with T'ang Ts'ai-ch'ang's imitation of his works,<sup>56</sup> nor willing to share his ideas with a study colleague, whom he once befriended.<sup>57</sup> Only in 1898, while teaching at the *Shih wu hsüeh-t'ang* 時務學堂, did T'an publish a small essay in the Hunanese reform journal *Hsiang pao* 湘報, called "On Ether" (*I-t'ai shuo* 以太說), in which he depicts some ideas from the *Jên hsüeh*. It is difficult to discern why T'an Ssû-t'ung did not want to publish his work. According to Liang, T'an only "secretly let other people see it, since he feared, it could become popular."<sup>58</sup> Liang wrote this statement in an announcement for the publication

54 Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, "'Shuo ch'ün' hsü 《說群》序," *Shih wu pao* 26 (KH 23/4/11 = 10. May 1897). The preface and the subsequent first part of the article is contained in *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao ch'üan-chi*, vol. I, 93–94. For a discussion of this work and its ideas, see Xiaobing Tang, *Global Space and the Nationalist Discourse of Modernity. The Historical Thinking of Liang Qichao*, Stanford 1996, 66–67.

55 Yen Fu has written his translation in 1895 and finished it in 1896. T'ang Chih-chün exhibited some facts that suppose 1897 as the year of its completion, see his *Wu-hsü pien-fa jên-wu kao* 戊戌變法人物稿, revised edition, vol. I, <sup>2</sup>Peking 1982, 183 fn. 10. Yen's translation saw his first publication in the *Kuo wên hui-pien* 國聞匯編 in 18<sup>th</sup> of December, 1897. Liang must have got a copy of it before Yen published it.

56 In T'an's letter to T'ang Ts'ai-ch'ang (T'ang Fu-ch'êng 唐紱丞) from October 1897, see *T'an Ssû-t'ung ch'üan-chi*, 262. T'an has read T'ang's "Doctrine that Material Elements form all Individuals" (*Chih-tien p'ei-ch'êng wan-wu shuo* 質點配成萬物說, included in *T'ang Ts'ai-ch'ang chi*, 66–68). T'ang's essay was published in three installments in the *Hsiang pao* 湘報 between the 31<sup>st</sup> of May and 20<sup>th</sup> of June 1897, see Ch'ên Shan-wei 陳善偉, *T'ang Ts'ai-ch'ang nien-p'u ch'ang-pien* 唐才常年譜長編, vol. I, Hong Kong 1990, 262. A little bit earlier, from 22<sup>nd</sup> of April until 22<sup>nd</sup> of May, T'ang already wrote an essay about the basic principles of Physics (*Ko-chih ch'ien li* 格致淺理), published in the same journal (not included in *T'ang Ts'ai-ch'ang chi*, but in Ch'ên Shan-wei's chronological biography of T'ang Ts'ai-ch'ang, see *ibid.*, 216–19). The arrangement of the two essays resembles the *Jên hsüeh* positioning of the *Chieh-shuo* in front.

57 Mentioned in T'an's letter to T'ang Ts'ai-ch'ang, see *T'an Ssû-t'ung ch'üan-chi*, 265–66.

58 *Hsin-min ts'ung-pao* 新民叢報 1, 4 [vol. I, 116]. The publication of the formerly almost hidden text became a matter which later Liang often refers to, see his *Ch'ing-tai hsüeh-shu kai-lun* 清代學術概論, <sup>2</sup>Taipeh 1985, 151. Liang's description in his historical drama

of the two monograph editions of the *Jên hsüeh* in 1902. In his letter to T'ang, T'an reproaches T'ang for popularizing his ideas. Liang may have praised himself for publishing a formerly almost unknown book. It is also possible that T'an foresaw difficulties with the Ch'ing authorities after the publication of his book. He thus abandoned this plan to publish it in Hong Kong. On the other hand, Lin Jui-ming argues that the absence of prospects to get his work published during his lifetime caused T'an to write down his ideas without any constraint or self-censorship.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, T'an's work obviously circulated only among few scholars around the *Shih wu pao* in Shanghai.<sup>60</sup> In a letter to Yen Fu, Liang refers to the *Jên hsüeh*, but says, that he has seen only the first part of it.<sup>61</sup> In Hunan, T'ang Ts'ai-ch'ang most probably got a copy from T'an.<sup>62</sup> It is said that T'an presented his book to Wu Chia-jui to be reviewed. Wu, deeply impressed, copied it.<sup>63</sup> Less impressed, however, was Chang Ping-lin. According to his words, Sung Shu showed him a copy in Shanghai in spring 1897. At this time, Chang was arguing against the propaganda of a Confucian religion, which K'ang Yu-wei and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and their adherents had in mind. In Sung Shu he found a partisan, but contrary to Sung, Chang was not very pleased with T'an's work. What fascinated Sung in T'an's book might have been its Buddhist content, and eventually a kind of nihilistic spirit, since Sung tried to convince Chang to read the *Mūlamadhyamika*. For Chang, however, the book was vague and incoherent.<sup>64</sup> To conclude, the *Jên hsüeh* was not known, except to T'an's friend and some reformers in Hunan and Shanghai. Liang Ch'i-ch'ao is right to say that the martyrdom of T'an Ssü-t'ung is known to many people, but his ideas only to a few.<sup>65</sup> The initial excitement about the book in 1897 soon calmed down. By 1898, before T'an's death, the *Jên hsüeh* is not mentioned anymore in the letters of T'an's friend.

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*Hsin Chung kuo wei lai chi* 新中國未來記, that Wang K'ang-nien copied the *Jên hsüeh* from Liang, is not trustworthy, see *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao ch'üan-chi*, vol. X, 5616.

- 59 Lin Jui-ming 林瑞明, "T'an Ssü-t'ung 譚嗣同," in *Hsien-tai Chung-kuo ssü-hsiang-chia* 現代中國思想家, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, Taipeh 1978, 218.
- 60 T'an in his letter to T'ang Ts'ai-ch'ang from October 1897, see *T'an Ssü-t'ung ch'üan-chi*, 266.
- 61 See *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao ch'üan-chi*, vol. I, 73.
- 62 See Yin Yung-ch'ing (fn. 47), 39; T'ang Chih-chün (fn. 37), 313.
- 63 See Ti Pao-hsien's 狄葆賢 notes, cited by T'ang Chih-chün (fn. 37), 327.
- 64 Chang Ping-lin 章炳麟, *Chang T'ai-yen tzü-ting nien-p'u* 章太炎自定年譜, Hong Kong 1965, 5.
- 65 *Ch'ing i pao* 2, 25a [vol. I, 115].

## 6. The process of publishing

In his biography of T'an, Liang reports that T'an handed his writings over to him when he was waiting for his persecutors in September 1898.<sup>66</sup> It is more likely, however, that Liang used a copy T'an gave him earlier.<sup>67</sup> Liang did not publish the whole text at once, but as a serial in different installments. Each installment consists in a fixed amount of rows and characters without regard to the beginning and end of a chapter or even a clause. The chapters bear no numbering or title, and the beginning of a clause in a new row marks a new chapter. In the first installment, the sequence of the chapters became distorted, but the second installment tried to correct this.<sup>68</sup> At the beginning, every issue, or every second issue, of the *Ch'ing i pao* published a new part, leaving ten days or twenty days respectively between them.<sup>69</sup> After nine installments, the publication of the *Jên hsüeh* was interrupted. According to Fêng Tzû-yü 馮自由, the first pause was due to the interference of K'ang Yu-wei, who objected publishing T'an's anti-Manchu-propaganda.<sup>70</sup> The interruption lasted one year (from the 10<sup>th</sup> of May, 1899 to the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, 1900), before it was resumed, but only another three installments appeared.<sup>71</sup> The reason for continuing to publish after the first pause was probably to support the insurrection of T'ang Ts'ai-ch'ang's Independent Army. After the failure of the insurrection, publication stopped once more, and this second interruption lasted one year and a half. Finally, in December 1901, the *Ch'ing i pao* printed the rest of the book, i.e. about two

66 *Ch'ing i pao* 4, 6a [vol. I, 209].

67 Liang in *Ch'ing-tai hsüeh-shu kai-lun* (fn. 58), 151.

68 *Ch'ing i pao* (KH24/12/1 = 12. January 1899), 25a [vol. I, 183], starts printing the first chapter, in the middle of the eighth row, and the text skips into the second half of the third chapter. It follows the whole fourth and most of the fifth chapter. The following issue, *Ch'ing i pao* 4 (KH24/12/11 = 22. January), 5a–8b [vol. I, 241–48], starts with the second chapter, which is followed by the third, and then a repetition of the fifth, continued by the first part of the sixth chapter, without marking the beginning of a new chapter.

69 *Ch'ing i pao* 3 (KH24/12/1 = 12. January 1899), 25a–26b; 4 (KH24/12/11 = 22. January), 5a–8b; 5 (KH24/12/21 = 1. February), 9a–12b; 7 (KH25/1/21 = 2. March), 13a–15b; 9 (KH 25/2/11 = 22. March), 16a–18b; 10 (KH25/2/21 = 1. April), 19a–21b; 12 (KH25/3/11 = 20. April), 22a–24b; 14 (KH 25/4/1 = 10. May), 25a–27b [vol. I, 183–86; 241–48; 303–10; 435–40; vol. II, 563–68; 629–34; 753–58; 889–94]. From the fourth installment onward, the *Jên hsüeh* gets a consecutive page-numbering of its own.

70 K'ang was about to organize a group for protecting the emperor in America. A letter of K'ang to Liang is cited by T'ang Chih-chün (fn. 37), 305.

71 *Ch'ing i pao* 44 (KH26/4/11 = 9. May 1900), 28a–29b; 45 (KH26/4/21 = 19. May), 30a–31b; 46 (KH26/5/1 = 28. May), 32a–34b [vol. VI, 2903–06; 2973–76; 3033–38].

fifths of the whole, which is almost identical with the second part of the text.<sup>72</sup> By this time, the *Kuo-min pao* 國民報 had already published a monograph edition of the *Jên hsüeh* in November 1901,<sup>73</sup> and it might have caused the *Ch'ing i pao* to publish the rest of the *Jên hsüeh* all at once. Otherwise, the completion of the serial edition might have been due to the anniversary of the *Ch'ing i pao*.

The *Ch'ing i pao* omitted two entire chapters. In one of them, T'an argues that the rule of the dynasties of the Mongols and Manchus was caused by China's deteriorated moral values, expressed in the Chinese discrimination of the female sex, as shown by the tradition of footbinding. Probably, Liang was not pleased with T'an's position in this chapter, or T'an's suggestions on how to overcome gender discrimination seemed too provocative for Liang.<sup>74</sup>

Ten days after the *Ch'ing i pao* had begun to publish the *Jên hsüeh*, the *Ya-tung shih-pao* 亞東時報 in Shanghai started publishing, too. At first, a big part was published (almost a fifth of the whole book), followed by shorter installments. The *Ya-tung shih-pao* had no long interruption, and altogether it took one year and two months to publish them all. Thus, the publication finished one year and ten months earlier than in the *Ch'ing i pao*. The *Kuo-min pao* first published a monograph in November 1901. In December 1901, the last installment of the *Ch'ing i pao* serial edition appeared. The *Ch'ing i pao* then published a monograph edition in the following year, followed by a reprint of the *Kuo-min pao* edition and two Japanese editions with movable types.<sup>75</sup> The emendations, the omitted chapters and the distorted sequence in the *Ch'ing i pao* serial edition were all corrected in the monograph edition. By publishing the *Jên hsüeh* in the *Kuo-min pao*, T'an Ssü-t'ung's work got accepted by a broader readership with different political views. Later, the *Kuo-min pao* became the journal of the more radical reformers, who proposed a nationalist government. In 1902, the radical magazine "Soul of the Yellow Emperor"

72 *Ch'ing i pao* 100 (KH27/11/11 = 21. December 1901), [vol. XII, 6441–84].

73 Sanetô Keishû 實藤惠秀 presents photographs of two Japanese editions from his own library dating both of them in the year 1899. One of the editions is the *Kuo-min pao* edition. Since the *Kuo-min pao* was founded in 1901, Sanetô's dates are obviously wrong. The other edition is a thread bound soft cover edition. It may be the edition T'ang Chih-chün identifies with the *Kuo-min pao* edition (fn. 37), 314 fn. 1. The cover, however, differs from the *Kuo-min pao* edition. See Sanetô Keishû, *Chûgokujin Nihon ryûgakushi* 中國人日本留學史, Tôkyô 1960, 304.

74 *Jên hsüeh*, chapter 10, in *T'an Ssü-t'ung ch'üan-chi*, 303. The other omitted chapter is the eighth chapter.

75 T'ang Chih-chün (fn. 37), 318.



(*Huang ti hun* 黃帝魂) printed the anti-Manchu chapters of the *Jên hsüeh*.<sup>76</sup> Thus the *Jên hsüeh* became the legacy for different political interests.

The four editions of the *Jên hsüeh*—the *Ch'ing i pao* serial edition, the *Ya-tung shih-pao* serial edition, the *Kuo-min pao* monograph edition, and the *Ch'ing i pao* monograph edition—show a lot of minor textual dissimilarities. Besides that, the two serial editions differ from each other as the *Ch'ing i pao* had not published T'an Ssü-t'ung's foreword, but had replaced it with a foreword from Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, followed by the 27 definitions. The *Ya-tung shih-pao*, on the other hand, published T'an's foreword, but not the definitions. It cannot be established whether the editorial of the *Ya-tung shih-pao* possessed the chapter with the definitions. Since T'an mentions the definitions in his foreword, one would expect they were included, but that there was no intention of publishing them. The publication of the definitions in the *Ch'ing i pao* monograph edition leads us to assume that Liang had Tan's foreword. His edition of the foreword is slightly different from that of the *Ya-tung shih-pao* edition.<sup>77</sup>

Liang Ch'i-ch'ao frankly claimed that he had selected the most comprehensible parts of the *Jên hsüeh*.<sup>78</sup> By emending two chapters of the *Jên hsüeh* (chapters 8 and 10 according to the numbering of the *T'an Ssü-t'ung ch'üan-chi*) he caused several of T'an's critics and principles got abandoned. Furthermore, the *Ch'ing i pao* serial edition replaces the names of the Manchu dynasty by blank boxes, apparently done in an act of self-censorship.<sup>79</sup> Yet, self-censorship is seen in the *Ya-tung shih-pao*, too, for example in the 33rd and 34th chapters where T'an deals with the cruelties of the Manchus conquest. All proper names, book titles and personal names are replaced by blank spaces, making the whole chapter a guesswork.<sup>80</sup> The editors of the journal obviously did not want to provoke the Ch'ing-government.

Some blank boxes might in fact stem from T'an's manuscript. One part is highly instructive: Someone is quoted that the military strength of the Western countries arose from their vision of society. While the *Ch'ing i pao*, as well as the subsequent monograph editions, replace the name of the speaker by blank

76 *Huang ti hun*, reprinted in the series *Chung-hua min-kuo shih-liao ts'ung-pien* 中華民國史料叢編, Taipei 1968, 7–19.

77 The most prominent difference is that the foreword of the *Ch'ing i pao* monograph edition prints T'an's colophon, the *Ya-tung shih-pao* did not.

78 *Ch'ing i pao* 4, 7a [vol. I, 211].

79 *Jên hsüeh*, chapter 13, *T'an Ssü-t'ung ch'üan-chi*, 309.

80 See *T'an Ssü-t'ung ch'üan-chi*, 341–42. The issue was published in August and September 1899.

boxes □ □ □, followed by *yüeh* 曰: “[he] says”, the *Ya-tung shih-pao* gives the name of T’an himself. Since a passage with the exact same wording exists in a letter of T’an to his teacher Ou-yang Chung-ku, citing Wu Yen-chou (吳雁舟, i.e. Wu Chia-jui) as the speaker, it seems reasonable to assume that the editors of the *Ya-tung shih-pao* mis-corrected the passage.<sup>81</sup>

T’ang Chih-chün argues that the *Ch’ing i pao* edition goes back to the manuscript of Liang Ch’i-ch’ao, but the *Ya-tung shih-pao* to a different manuscript—possibly that of T’ang Ts’ai-ch’ang.<sup>82</sup> The *Kuo-min pao* edition does not differ much from the monograph edition of the *Ch’ing i pao*, and may have stemmed from Liang’s manuscript, too.<sup>83</sup> Assuming that not only one copy of the *Jên hsüeh*, but two different copies had been published, the authenticity of the textus receptus can be ascertained to some degree. T’ang Chih-chün’s conclusion that two different copies of the manuscript of the *Jên hsüeh* existed—one in the possession of Liang Ch’i-ch’ao, the other in the possession of T’ang Ts’ai-ch’ang—seems reasonable, but fails to take the whole matter into account. The *Ya-tung shih-pao* was founded by Japanese. The office of the *Ya-tung shih-pao* served as an agency for the distribution of the *Ch’ing i pao* in Shanghai.<sup>84</sup> Thus, it cannot be excluded that a copy of the *Jên hsüeh* has been transmitted from one place to the other. Most of the textual differences in the two serial editions which according T’ang Chih-chün corroborate his conclusion might have been caused by copying or printing,<sup>85</sup> others are due to deliberate corrections and self-censorship. To conclude, judging from a conspectus of the various

81 *Jên hsüeh*, chapter 13, *T’an Ssü-t’ung ch’üan-chi*, 309. For T’an’s letter, see *ibid.*, S. 462. Chan Sin-wai corrected the edition of the *T’an Ssü-t’ung ch’üan-chi* in his translation, see Chan (fn. 16), 93–94.

82 T’ang Chih-chün (fn. 37), 310–314. T’ang also sums up his reasons in his *Wu-hsü pien-fa shih* (fn. 6), 261–66.

83 Chang Ching-lu 張靜廬 does not think it very plausible that the *Kuo-min pao*, which holds quite a different political view, would have received a copy from Liang, but from Ch’in Li-shan 秦力山, a former student of T’an’s in Hunan. It is possible that Ch’in secretly made a copy during his days working at the *Shih wu pao*, or got a copy by some other way. At the end of the reprinted version of his study of the textual history of the *Jên hsüeh*, T’ang Chih-chün convincingly refutes Chang Ching-lu’s views, see (fn. 37), 321–328.

84 See the back page of the journal, *Ch’ing i pao* 1 [I, 64]. The *Ya tung shih pao* was founded by the so-called “Society of 1895” (Itsubi kai or I-wei hui) in May 1898.

85 As a matter of fact, the text-critical remarks of the editors of the *T’an Ssu-t’ung ch’üan-chi* edition are far from being complete. Textual differences among the various editions, though of minor significance, are almost two times more than given in the editors’ annotations.



editions, there seems not enough evidence to settle the question of the authenticity of the text.<sup>86</sup>

## 7. The structure of argumentation

The discussion on how to date the *Jên hsüeh* reveals that T'an made a new attempt to express his ideas at the beginning of 1897. The most valuable source is T'an's letter to Wang K'ang-nien from April 1897.<sup>87</sup> Liang's statements about the genesis of the *Jên hsüeh* has been shown to be unreliable in detail. Instead, they manifested Liang's own political interests. Liang also boasts of his own role in the composition of the work. Moreover, he stresses T'an's personality by depicting him as a highly gifted man who had endured much hardship, and speculated that he drafted the *Jên hsüeh* during his time as a recluse and under the impact of Buddhist teachings.<sup>88</sup> Thereby, Liang strengthens the impression that the work arose from a psychical quarrel of the author with his own personality and biography. Chang Hao follows Liang Ch'i-ch'ao argument that T'an's devotion to a certain "vision of reality" manifests itself in his words and in his deeds. T'an's death and the *Jên hsüeh* are the result of the same "quest".

86 According to T'ang Chih-chün, T'ang Ts'ai-ch'ang's editorship of the *Ya-tung shih-pao* points to the fact that the journal's printing of the *Jên hsüeh* goes back to a manuscript which was in the hand of T'ang Ts'ai-ch'ang. On top of that, T'ang Chih-chün suggests that, owing to his "dowry", T'ang Ts'ai-ch'ang had been offered the editorship. But there is no evidence for T'ang Chih-chün's suggestion. On the contrary, the *Ya-tung shih-pao* as well as T'ang Ts'ai-ch'ang's activities were closely related to the Chinese organizations in exile in Japan around K'ang and Liang, as well as to Japanese organizations, implementing the Okuma doctrine. T'ang Ts'ai-ch'ang's editorship in the *Ya-tung shih-pao* seems partly to be intended for blinding the logistics for K'ang's "protection for the emperor" in China. The idea to publish the *Jên hsüeh* in Shanghai probably goes back to T'ang's first visit in Japan shortly after the suppression of the Reform Movement. Together with Liang, T'ang established an internal organization for the "Independence Society" (*Tzû-li hui* 自立會) in Japan, which later became active in Shanghai, see Hu Zhusheng, "A Fresh Investigation into the History of the Zili hui (Independence Society)", in *Social Sciences in China* 1991.2, 163–180. Furthermore, Liang's poem "Leaving my Country" (*Ch'ü kuo hsing* 去國行), expressing the cultural and racial bounds between Japan and China, was published in the *Ya-tung shih-pao*, before T'ang Ts'ai-ch'ang joined the journal's editorial board in March 1899. For the Japanese political attitude and their supporting of the Chinese organizations in exile, see Marius B. Jansen, *The Japanese and Sun Yat-sen*, Cambridge, Mass. 1954, 52–53 and 59–81.

87 See *T'an Ssü-t'ung ch'üan-chi*, 493.

88 Liang Ch'i-ch'ao in his biography, see *Ch'ing i pao* 4, 4a–b [vol. I, 205–06].

Chan Sin-wai relates T'an's death to the Buddhist thinking expressed in his work. Chang Hao, as well as Chan Sin-wai, excuse the lack of organization of the subjects of the *Jên hsüeh* by pointing out that T'an did not have much time for writing. Judging by some of the biographical sources, however, the lack of time does not immediately explain a haphazard composition. Actually, T'an had a precise concept for the organization of his book in his mind, but he was struggling to find the right expression for his ideas. In the end, T'an is not content with the result. After he had finished writing his work, he begs the reader to excuse the shortcomings of his work by referring to the inadequacy of human language to express reality.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, he had in mind not only a vision he wanted to put into words but a distinct approach to realize it.

Liang Ch'i-ch'ao encouraged T'an to develop his "principle concepts" (*tsung chih* 宗旨). The expression "principle concepts" was much used in the writings of the circle of scholars around Liang during this time. It is borrowed from religious usage and was used for distinguishing different Buddhist doctrines. Later it was made popular by Wang Yang-ming's 王陽明 (1472–1528) who demanded that "one has to set up a principle concept in one's words".<sup>90</sup> Concerning the *Jên hsüeh*, Liang says that "physics" (*ko chih hsüeh* 格致學) and Buddhism are the principle sources of T'an's ideas.<sup>91</sup> Their compatibility has been the subject for discussion among Liang's circle in Peking and Shanghai.<sup>92</sup> Apparently, for Liang and his friends, the *Jên hsüeh*, as well as Yen Fu's translation of Aldous Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*, held a peculiar fascination by interpreting social matters and ethics in terms of natural science.<sup>93</sup> In T'an's foreword of the *Jên hsüeh*, the dichotomy of *jên* ("mankind's love") and *hsüeh* 學 ("study") exhibits the same attempt.<sup>94</sup> The division of the *Jên hsüeh* in two parts, however, does not reflect this dichotomy. As it will be shown subsequently, a three-fold division would be more appropriate.<sup>95</sup>

89 See his foreword in *T'an Ssü-t'ung ch'üan-chi*, 290–91; Chan Sin-wai (fn. 13), 58–59.

90 On various places in his *Ch'uan hsi lu* 傳習錄, see for example *Wang Yang-ming Ch'uan hsi lu hsiang-chu chi-p'ing* 王陽明傳習錄詳註集評, edited by Ch'ên Jung-chieh 陳榮捷, Taipei 1983, 33–34, 302, 372.

91 Liang in his announcement in his of the publication of the *Jên hsüeh*, see *Hsin min ts'ung pao* 1, 4 [vol. 1, 116]. See also his *Ch'ing-tai hsüeh-shu kai-lun* (fn. 58), 152.

92 See Sung Shu account on a meeting of Liang with T'an and others, cited in Ting Wên-chiang and Ch'ao Fêng-t'ien (eds.) (fn. 1), 57.

93 See Liang's own attempt in this direction writing the essay "On Grouping", (fn. 54), 93.

94 *T'an Ssü-t'ung ch'üan-chi*, 289; Chan Sin-wai (fn. 13), 57.

95 In this context, it is interesting to call one remark of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao to mind. In a letter to Yen Fu, Liang says that until now he only has seen the first part of the *Jên hsüeh* which is divided into three parts, see *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao ch'üan-chi*, vol. I, 73. If Liang is right, this

The relationship between *jên* and concepts from natural science were discussed in the very early chapters. While *jên* is mentioned throughout the book, the relevance of natural science later diminishes. Instead, concepts which integrate *jên* and *hsüeh*, like equality (*p'ing têng* 平等) and communication (*t'ung* 通), take its place and are discussed throughout the book. Insofar, Wang Yüeh is right to detect a basic logical theorem repeated in different subjects.<sup>96</sup> The "Definitions" shows T'an's own effort to denounce a logical theorem. The arrangement of material, however, is not built up on a logical theorem.

In his letter to Ou-yang Chung-ku, T'an mentions an initial idea of a sequence of learning.<sup>97</sup> T'an argues that physics (*ko chih* 格致) has to be the basis for someone to proceed to political and social matters (*chéng wu* 政務), and only then can one take a view on the subtleties of religious matters (*chiao wu* 教務). Passages of this letter are repeated in chapter 41 of the *Jên hsüeh*. The composition of the *Jên hsüeh* shows that the sequence of the "three parts" (*san tuan* 三端) organizes the subjects.<sup>98</sup> T'an first deals with fundamental matter about ether, *jên* and its qualities, equality and universal communication. He ends the first part with a discussion about the value of the doctrines of the three teachings (Confucianism, Buddhism, and Christianity) in the light of the new insights into the structure of reality (chapters 26–29). This is followed by a discussion of social and political matters (chapters 30–37). Then, the traditional Confucian morality in regard to the present social conditions is discussed (chapters 38–40). Liang already mentioned the caesura at the beginning of the second chapter,<sup>99</sup> but there is another shift after eleven chapters in the sequence, now towards religious matter. This caesura is done in chapter 41 by a reflection on the way of teaching, followed by a discussion of the mental proposition of human beings for being released from the mundane world (chapters 42–46), and succeeded by a social utopia lacking individual states (chapters 47 and 48). The text ends with a vision of the salvation of all mankind (chapters 49 and 50).

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would confirm that during a certain time, T'an had a division in mind, which differs to the present edition.

96 Wang Yüeh, (fn. 35), 51.

97 T'an's letter to Ou-yang Chung-ku from 23<sup>rd</sup> of August, 1896, in *T'an Ssü-t'ung ch'üan-chi*, 464.

98 Luke Kwong exhibits in his interpretation a similar organization, but he does not make clear whether he goes back to T'an's scheme (see fn. 33, 143–145, and 155–162). Chang Hao mentions T'an's plan, too, but he does not refer to it as a structural organization of the book either (see fn. 23, 78).

99 Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, *Ch'ing-tai hsüeh-shu kai-lun* (fn. 67), 155.

The organization of subjects principally follows a linear pattern, which elaborated on T'an's thoughts on learning. Circular structures are not very dominant. The overall composition of the book may be expressed in a chain-link-structure, each subject being a link, making the whole sequence a didactic path of a new comprehensive teaching. Each link depends on a former one and is necessary for the next. The linkage of the subjects is not so much caused by considerations of logical coherence, but on didactic conditions. Lacking circularity, the diversity of the subjects seem to be "pieced together," unless one recognizes the linear form of composition. Furthermore, the argumentative structure of each chapter shows the overall principle of a linear composition. The theme of a chapter is placed at the top and repeated at the end in most of the chapters.<sup>100</sup> Some chapters introduce the subject in a twofold manner: a question followed by an answer, introduced by *yüeh* 曰, "I say". A similar pattern can be observed in the form stating the theme as an objection introduced by *nan yüeh* 難曰, "someone may object". Then, the next sentence gives the answer using *yüeh*. At the end of the chapter, the answer is repeated, sometimes introduced by *ku wei* 故謂, "therefore that means", by *wei* 謂, "that means", or by *ku yüeh* 故曰, "therefore it is said". Hence, the composition of each chapter shows discursive structures as in a lecture.

The three-fold hierarchy of the subjects, which may be the essential of T'an's didactic reasoning, is the subject of chapter 41. As already stated above, this chapter marks a caesura in the structure of the book, which leads to the religious subjects. The following chapter addresses *hsin li* (心力), "mental power", as a subject. At the beginning, in the 27<sup>th</sup> definition, *hsin li* correlates with other fundamental entities. The expression *hsin li* defines a psychic quality of men to practice *jên*, "mankind's love". Later, *hsin li* becomes the power of human beings to transcend the mundane world. In this usage, the meaning of *hsin li* comes close to "faith", which is the power to undertake a spiritual transformation. T'an goes back to the concept of faith (*hsin* 信) of the *Mahayana-samgraha* (*Ta sheng ch'i hsin lun* 大乘起信論, "The Awakening of Faith through the Mahayana"), in which faith is the individual's power to comprehend Buddha's teaching. Therefore, the *Jên hsüeh* teaches, first, how we have to comprehend reality, then it proceeds to discuss social and political matters, by calling the injustice of the present society to the mind of its readers. Finally, it sets forth a path on how to release all individuals, ending in an outlook of

100 The chapter division of the *Ch'ing i pao* serial edition differs in several cases, but still accords to the discussed form of composition.

*nirvana*. Reading the text according to this structure, the *Jên hsüeh* resembles a religious sermon, or a Buddhist *śāstra*.

At the end, T'an shows his adherence to Mahayanist thought by stating that the world of the absolute, *nirvana*, cannot be excluded from the mundane world, *samsara*. His argument to equalize *nirvana* and *samsara*, is based on a mathematical calculation:

If we say that sentient beings cannot all be saved, then their number will increase daily. If we say there is increase, there must also be decrease is not true. In reality, there are no sentient beings apart from Buddha, and no Buddha apart from sentient beings. [...] For sentient beings are at once saved and not saved.<sup>101</sup>

A similar calculation expressed in mathematical symbols is given as the 23<sup>rd</sup> definition, placed in front of the text. T'an states the relationship of *nirvana* and *samsara* in a manner of the philosophic problem of identity and difference. The subjective condition of men causes differences, and since subjectivity cannot be supported by a reality of its own, individuality will dissolve in the fundamental identity. Seen from the position of an individual in the mundane world, the relationship between identity and difference becomes a temporal distinction, expressed as having or not yet having attained Buddhahood. The temporal quality allows one to see the mundane world as a continuous flow of a single, constantly identical river:

The situation of the world can be compared to a flowing river. Once it has passed, it is never the same again. This is why the "Book of Changes" begins with the hexagram *Ch'ien* and ends with the hexagram *Wei chi*.<sup>102</sup>

According to the general interpretation of the "Book of Changes" (*I ching* 易經), the two hexagrams are metaphors for the process of life. *Ch'ien* 乾, "Creation", represents heaven as a primordial force bringing forth all individual things, and *Wei chi* 未濟, "not transgressing", the dynamic, unstable and actual state of life. In T'an's Buddhist outlook, *Ch'ien* represents Buddha nature, and *Wei chi* the mundane world. In its literal sense, *Wei chi* means "not yet transgressed", hence it expresses the individual human being who has not yet become Buddha.

101 *Jên hsüeh*, chapter 50, in *T'an Ssü-t'ung ch'üan-chi*, 372, English translations by Chan Sin-wai, (fn. 16), 225.

102 *Jên hsüeh*, in *T'an Ssü-t'ung ch'üan-chi*, 372; English translation by Chan Sin-wai (fn. 16), 225. The transliteration of the hexagram *wei chi* and Ch'an's English renderings have been dropped.



Therefore, besides the linearity of the chain-link-composition in the sequence of the chapters according to the hierarchy of the teaching path of “learning,” “society,” and “religion,” an all-embracing circular structure can be seen which connects the end of the text with its beginning, as well as the religious outlook with the fundamentals of learning. The connection of religion with science was already been expressed in the concept of mental power, *hsin li*, as an essential constitution of human mind and likewise, which is close to the meaning of faith, as the condition of spiritual release. The dichotomy of circularity and linearity resembles the concept of reality, either as a fundamental entity or as a constant process. The two hexagrams mentioned at the end, conceptualizing the dual character of reality, are likewise metaphors for the structure of the book.<sup>103</sup> The process of creation is caused by ether and directed by humankind’s love. The mundane world, however, being subjective and individual, appears in a state of “not yet transgressed.” T’an appeals to his readers to perform a “daily renewal” (*jih hsin* 日新), and he believes that this attitude towards life would be in conformity with the constitution of reality as a constant flux.

## 8. Conclusion

The opinion that the composition of the *Jên hsüeh* is loosely organized should be abandoned. Liang’s comments have furthered this wrong impression. Instead, two distinct structures of composition can be extracted. Firstly, a linear sequence connecting different subjects like links to a chain. This structure is built along reasons of didacticism. Secondly, a circular structure connecting the end of the text to its beginning. This structure mirrors the variety of semantic levels inherent in one of the essential concepts of the text, *hsin li* and *jên*. Moreover, the circular structure is expressed by *I ching* hexagrams. The determination of a certain structure of composition may help to further research in

103 The use of *I ching* hexagrams as means for conceptualization of complex relationships may also be seen in T’an’s interpretation of the six lines of the hexagram Ch’ien according to K’ang Yu-wei’s theory of three ages, see *Jên hsüeh*, chapter 48, in *T’an Ssü-t’ung ch’üan-chi*, 370. See Takeuchi Hiroyuki, *Chûgoku no jukkyôteki kindaikaron* 中國儒教的近代化論, Tokyo 1995, 168–72; Ingo Schäfer, “Breaking Through to the Other Side. Concepts of History in the Thought of Tan Sitong,” in Lutz Bieg et al. (eds.), *Ad Seres et Tungusos. Festschrift für Martin Gimm zu seinem 65. Geburtstag am 25. Mai 1995*, Wiesbaden 2000, 334–36.



the interpretation of the text. The composition of the text resembles that of a lecture, therefore, it sustained the view that T'an wanted to carry out a mission with his book.<sup>104</sup> On the other hand, it exhibits T'an's thinking to develop a consistent teaching. Therefore, to say that he only wanted to harmonize ideas of different origins at a time of cultural altercation falls short of its conceptual coherence. To explore a devotion to reality neglects the stress of realization which is given by T'an.

Reading T'an's *Jên hsüeh* as a textbook of the new learning of mankind's love seems to sustain Liang's assertion that it exerts a strong influence on the mind of its readers.<sup>105</sup> The conditions of its publishing reveal that Liang was not seriously interested in an accurate description of T'an's mission. Instead, he fabricates a close relation between the *Jên hsüeh* and T'an's martyrdom, by reducing the text's composition to a mere outcry of a patriot and by placing its significance in the realm of his own political aims and objectives.<sup>106</sup> But taking martyrdom as T'an's mission in the *Jên hsüeh* means a mis-interpretation of the text.

Liang's making the *Jên hsüeh* a testimony of a martyr may be more subtle—and less glaring in the contemporary realm of politics—than his making T'an's last poem a decision of a hero, proclaiming his will to sacrifice his life for the emperor's and K'ang Yu-wei's future.<sup>107</sup> But nevertheless Liang's suppositions exerted great influence on the intellectual history of modern China, by providing an interpretation centered on T'an's personality, which was fostered by some misleading biographical and bibliographical information. One would expect that Liang would be one of the best sources providing information about the *Jên hsüeh*. Instead, though some of Liang's remarks are rather instructive, he is better known for creating misleading preconceptions. Appearing as a witness of the history of the Reform Movement, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao is as remarkable for what he saw as for what he pretended to have seen.

104 Chang Ping-lin's mentioning of the *Jên hsüeh* can be seen in this context. Probably, the *Jên hsüeh* was discussed together with the question of how Confucianism could become a religion for China. Sung Shu may have seen in T'an's text a challenge to K'ang's more traditional moral views, due to its strong Buddhist content. See Chang Ping-lin (fn. 64), 5–6. For further biographical information which illucidate T'an as a founder of a new religious teaching, see Christoph Körbs, "Tan Sitong (1865–1898). Eine biographische Skizze mit bibliographischen Hinweisen," *Oriens Extremus* 36 (1993), 145–68.

105 Liang Ch'i-ch'ao (fn. 21), 5 [vol. I, 117].

106 In his biography of T'an, see *Ch'ing i pao* 4, 4a [vol. I, 205].

107 Cf. Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, *Yin-ping-shi shi-hua* 飲冰室詩話, Peking 1982, 14–15. According to Huang Chang-chien, T'an partly confesses to be at blame for his own death (fn. 10), 537–38.