

# Preface

The guiding theme of the book can be described as *expression in Asian cultures*. The phenomenon of expression can be conceived of in many different ways, which in some cases do not even overlap. For this reason, in editing the book we wanted to maintain a potentially wide margin of interpretation, so as not to petrify the understanding of expression into one specific form, or confine it to the realm of a particular discipline. The indeterminate character of the phenomenon beyond a specific definition is intentional, as it enables authors who represent different approaches to expression throughout cultures to encounter one another. Thus, the papers included in the book are not monolithic in their approach. Rather, they present different viewpoints focussed on the same subject matter.

The book attempts to apprehend the phenomenon of expression across a potentially wide range, in that the selection of papers is not confined to a particular culture or definition. An approach to the issue is approximated through various traditions of the Far East and India. It is more a rule than an exception that presentations not encapsulated within a unifying cultural or methodological paradigm give the impression of not covering the whole area of concern and therefore of being fragmentary. However, in transcultural studies, lack of continuity or the impossibility of filling blank spaces is often no less essential than finding common ground.

The wide scope of the presentation is also maintained by viewing expression through different disciplines. Some of these, such as poetry and art, are generally regarded to be connected with expression by definition. However, their overall transcultural character poses the question whether philological, and more especially philosophical, approaches cannot be perceived in a similar way, as more abstract expressions of the intellec-

tual traditions from which they stem. The book follows this assumption of cultural complexity and thus includes papers on poetry, music, performance art, philosophy and philology. The fact that these disciplines quite often pervade one another in the papers testifies to their significant and inseparable cultural contextualisation.

As regards composition, the book is arranged in four chapters, organised in terms of addressing similar aspects of expression in Asian philosophies and cultures.

The first chapter is devoted to poetry, most naturally associated with expression. However, the study of poetic texts in this chapter simultaneously asserts that literary discourse is not far from pondering questions usually ascribed to investigations of a philosophical nature.

Marina Kravtsova has recourse to the poetic expression of seclusion, presented by two types of imagery in Chinese poetry of the 2nd century and Tang dynasty poetry. In her thorough discussion of selected poems by various authors, including Wang Wei, interspersed with references to classical Chinese philosophy, she reveals that refraining from perception is thought to be conducive, if not essential, to self-reflection, tantamount to authentic and undisturbed unity with the world. The organising axis of analysis is based on the explication of emptiness and silence, the states which enable the most personal contemplation of one's feelings.

Sandra A. Wawrytko undertakes a challenging task by showing that we should not assume *a priori* that poetry is incapable of accompanying philosophical investigations. Her argument is intricately built on diverse literary, artistic, philosophical and even political references belonging to Chinese, Korean and Japanese traditions, in which the augmentation of a poet and philosopher has unquestionably been present over centuries. Her discussion provokes the reader to cast a suspicious glance at Plato's low opinion of poets and their inferiority to philosophers.

The second chapter focuses on artistic performance from two separate angles or media of expression: music and the body.

Rafał Mazur discusses the phenomenon of improvised music. He questions the status of free improvised contemporary European music or art in general, as they resort to previously prepared patterns or strategies. As an alternative, he proposes Chinese spontaneous expression, which is primarily concentrated on artistic creation directly related to the actual state of the artist's mind.

Jinli He and Rafał Banka discuss the perception of the body as a medium in contemporary Chinese art, on the example of Zhang Huan's artwork. The

roots of the Chinese conception of the body, or corporeality in general, can be traced back to classical Daoist and Confucian philosophies, which amalgamate what in Western tradition is viewed through the psycho-physical prism.

The third chapter explores ancient scriptures which belong to Indian and Chinese traditions.

Marta Kudelska is mostly concerned with the importance of both aesthetic and moral values, which, though relative, become indispensable when viewed from the ultimate perspective. To justify this statement, she analyses the relations between the three *gunas*, which are comparatively referred to as three cardinal transcendentals.

Katarzyna Pażucha in her philologically-oriented paper explores the identity of *śāstra* as a genre in Indian writing. The task is based on *Kāvya-mīmāṃsā*, written in the 10th century by Rājaśekhara, combined with other classical as well as recent Indological research into this subject.

The subject of Anna I. Wójcik's paper is the presentation of the classical Chinese worldview which underlies almost all intellectual traditions in China, the most prominent representatives of which are the Daoist and Confucian philosophies. The presentation of philosophical foundations in China with primary reference to the *Book of Changes*, comparatively complemented with Western tradition texts, encourages the interpretation that philosophies are particular expressions of intellectual reflections which cannot be completely disconnected from their original cultural contexts.

In her paper on the *Zhuangzi*, Agnė Budriūnaitė presents possible interpretations of the dream of the butterfly which can be found in the chapter *Qiwulun*. The discussion is based on selected translations of the classical text into English, which are treated as philosophical interpretations of the original.

The papers in the fourth chapter are predominantly focussed upon cultural interaction in life and society.

In his analysis of *Meditations* by Li Jiugong, a Catholic scholar from the late Ming period, Bin You examines the meeting of Confucian tradition and Catholic theology. The text study reveals the twofold cultural interaction which consists in the appropriation of Confucian harmony by the Christian doctrine, as well as reflecting which aspects of Catholicism were modified in Ming Chinese society.

Chengyou Liu discusses the importance of Humanistic Buddhism in China. His arguments are based on views concerning *samadhi* according

to the Venerable Yinshun (1906–2005), one of the most important figures in 20th-century Chinese Buddhism.

Leszek Sosnowski examines the cultural intersection of Shintoism, Confucianism, and Zen Buddhism on the example of the body in both private and public spheres of Japanese culture. Departing from the context of multiple-tradition influence, his paper addresses the issue: to what extent is individual expression genuine or socially disciplined?

The editors would like to thank the authors for their valuable contributions to the book as well as their patient collaboration throughout the editing process. The final form of the papers would not have been achieved without the valuable remarks and helpful advice of external reviewers Józef Bremer, Beata Szymańska-Aleksandrowicz, Łukasz Trzeciński, Anna I. Wójcik and Maciej St. Zięba, to whom we wish to convey our gratitude. We would also like to express special thanks to Paulina Tendera of the *Polish Journal of Aesthetics*, who has been of inestimable help in coordinating the formal side of the publication.

*Bin You, Rafał Banka*  
Beijing, Kraków 2014