Exploring the Possibility of East Asian Futures Studies: Reinterpreting Dator through Zhuangzi

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Abstract

This paper attempts to enrich the understanding of futures studies through a perspective from East Asia. More concretely, the paper analyzes the four images of the future (FIF) that make up the core method of Dator's futures studies through the lens of Zhuangzi, which is one of the most highly regarded Classical texts in East Asia. Through this project, this paper explores the possibility of East Asian futures studies that tailors Dator's futures method to East Asia or at least to Korea.

Keywords: Dator, four images of the future (FIF), Zhuangzi, Daoism, Holism, Eastern aesthetic.

Introduction

This paper attempts to enrich the understanding of futures studies through a perspective from East Asia. More concretely, the paper analyzes the four images of the future (FIF) that make up the core method of Dator's futures studies (Dator, 1979, 1981, 2002, 2009; Jones, 1992; and Bezold, 2009) through the lens of *Zhuangzi,* which is one of the most highly regarded Classical texts in East Asia. Through this project, this paper explores the possibility of East Asian futures studies that tailors Dator's futures method to East Asia or at least to Korea.

Zhuangzi is believed to live in the reigns of King Hui of Liang or Wei (370-319 BC) according to the *Historical Records* of Si-ma qian (145-89 BC). When I speak of Zhuangzi in this paper, I am referring not to the historic person known to us, but to Zhuangzi revealed

in the text called *Zhuangzi*. Zhuangzi represents Daoism – a rival philosophy to Confucianism – in pursuing interdependence of all that exists in the world (Ames, 1998) and leaning towards "the cult of intuitiveness and spontaneity in both political and private action" (Graham, 2001). *Zhuangzi* together with the *Daodejing* (道德經) can be considered the two primary texts of the classical Daoist tradition. Daoism has been associated with the aesthetic dimension of the human experience: an inspiration for art, calligraphy, poetry, and so on in East Asia. I can thus appeal to it as an authoritative statement of the East Asian aesthetic sensibility.

Jim Dator is my academic advisor and a great mentor in my life. In Korea where I am from, there is an old saying about academic advisors: your king, teachers, and parents are equally great (君 師 父 一 體). It is because they all heavily influence one's life.

For over three decades, Dator has taught students a 'four images' futures method that embodies the philosophy of the Manoa School[1] of futures studies. As Jones (1992) observed, a number of Dator's students learned FIF and have actively engaged in numerous futures research and workshops throughout the world. Bezold (2009) emphasized that FIF have "evolved over time…and had a significant effect on the growth of the Institute for Alternative Futures (IAF) and our development of aspirational futures[2]" (p. 123). Inayatullah (2008) specifically uses FIF as a method for creating alternatives in his integrated methodology, Six Pillars. Curry and Schultz (2009) favorably compare FIF with other futures scenario methods.

Appreciating these works on FIF, I attempted to re-conceptualize Dator's FIF through the lens of Zhuangzi in order to indigenize futures studies. Moreover, through using Zhuangzi, I want to suggest an idea that futurists put more efforts not to reduce but to expand the boundaries of the uncertainty of the future. As Dator aptly points out, wild cards imply that "some cards are not wild, but I think all cards are wild."[3] What Dator means by this is that an attempt to reduce the uncertainty seems to assert that some things are less uncertain than others. I learned from Dator that there is no less or more likely future. The strategy that expands the boundaries of the uncertainty assumes that the future is indeterminate and dynamic all the time. Given this assumption, in order to better prepare for the uncertainty of the future, we have to wander at ease in the future. Coutinho and Sigurdsson (2004) interestingly argue that Zhuangzi created a nomadic mode, which is "plural, unstructured, unbounded…unrooted, unsettled, resists stability, refuses to conform… challenges the familiar, adopts unconventional perspectives…playful, experimental, imaginative" (p. 79). In this sense, wandering at ease in the future implies going beyond the horizon that people rely on.

There is another reason to choose Zhuangzi as a comparative literature. Comparative studies have pervaded many academic fields. Futurists also have caught up with this trend in areas of decolonized futures (Dator, 2005; Nandy, 2004, 2006; Sardar, 1993, 1994), indigenous futures (Azam, 2002; Chen, 2002; Inayatullah, 2005), and comparing foresight (Alsan, 2004; Habegger, 2010; Keenan & Popper, 2008). Comparative studies are not new in the field of futures studies. In fact, futures studies has identified itself as a form of comparative studies that deals with diverse cultures.

However, it is found that few futurists have dealt with East Asian thought such as Confucianism or Daoism in order to shape a new way of thinking about the future. For example, in *Futures* there are only twenty-two articles between 1985 and

2011 that mention Confucianism; there are only thirteen articles between 1978 and 2011 with reference to Daoism (Taoism). Making matters worse, none of the articles that mention Confucianism seriously considered it to be a legitimate perspective that can provide a new way of doing futures studies. In relevant articles on Daoism, only Emblemsvag and Bras (2000) and Ramirez and Ravetz (2011) grapple with it. Emblemsvag and Bras (2000) say that Daoism can produce a new paradigm for science and engineering by providing awareness on how change is understood and managed. Ramirez and Ravetz (2011) also deal with Daoism to challenge what has been taken for granted by "letting go of a priori categories and established definitions" (p. 483). But, these articles are not enough to create indigenous futures studies. Additionally, the other eleven articles did not tackle how Daoism could contribute to creating alternatives to Western futures studies.

Holism among aesthetic preferences in East Asia is significant. Holism does not favor any component but appreciates and accommodates all parts in order to optimize the totality of the effect that all parts can produce collaboratively. Holism does not contrast with rationalism, but includes it as one element in the whole as reasonableness.[4]

Through this paper, I also raise a question of how Dator's futures studies can be re-interpreted by this holistic perspective, and based on the reinterpretation, how to shape an East Asian futures studies that embraces this holistic perspective. In order to answer this question, I will begin by understanding Dator with Zhuangzi and addressing their similarities and differences.

Understanding Dator and Zhuangzi

As I remarked, this paper aims to explore the possibility of an East Asian perspective that creatively accommodates both attributes of Dator's futures studies and Zhuangzi's Daoism. In order to achieve this goal, I have examined both of them by answering the following questions: (1) What do they look for? (objects of research); (2) How do they achieve their goals? (methods); (3) What are their goals? (purposes); and (4) How do they communicate with people? (language).

Objects of research

Dator forecasts four alternative images (ideas and beliefs) of the future, while Zhuangzi deeply understands interdependency of all that exists at present.

For Dator, alternative futures can be created not only by human will but also by social design or structural reformation. Dator particularly stresses the importance of social structure that pushes humans to behave in certain ways, which in turn, formulate the future. He often quoted the Canadian philosopher and futurist Marshall McLuhan's word, "We shape our tools and thereafter our tools shape us" (McLuhan 1967, in Dator 2002, p. 8). In this sense, Dator argues that humans always "change their understanding of what it means to be human, by interacting with their environment and themselves through technology" (Dator, 2002). Thus, Dator's alternative futures are social design-oriented, technology-embedded, and challengeable to the status quo.

Therefore, in his discourses of futures studies at the University of Hawaii Dator asks his students to create new governance that could cause humans' behavioral changes and result in self- and social-consciousness changes. New governance

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should embrace and realize sustainability, democracy, a non-killing society, social resilience, well-being of both the present generation and future generations, and fairness, by using new sciences and technologies. In short, Dator's object of research focuses on the question of what is next and what we can do for a better life.

Zhuangzi's thought on the interdependency is explained in a very interesting manner. In the Zhuangzi, there is a story as follows: "In the northern darkness there is a fish and his name is K'un. The K'un is so huge I don't know many thousand li he measures. He changes and becomes a bird whose name is P'eng. The back of the P'eng measures I don't know how many thousand li across and, when he rises up and flies off, his wings are like clouds all over the sky" (Watson [1964] 1996, p. 23). Zhuangzi seems to believe that fishes and birds do not exist by themselves. They need collaboration and are interwoven. If there is no fish, and then there is no bird. Like this, "humans are a part of the universe and are not isolated from the universe like a particle or a star" (Park, 2009, p. 453). Thus, Zhuangzi's object of research focused on how all that exits are interconnected.

Methods

In order to imagine the four alternatives, Dator uses futures methods, which identify continuity and discontinuity of issues and events that could change society. Identifying continuity is to analyze deep patterns that re-occur in the human history. For example, Dator uses age-cohort analysis, in which Dator forecasts futures by identifying the attributes of generations. The analysis is based on the fact that each generation grows up the same time span and shares ideas, beliefs, and values that are different from other generations. Strauss and Howe (1991) argue that four cohort-types can be found in the United State's history: Idealists, Reactives, Civics, and Adaptives. These types are cyclical in occurring with new idealists and then, new reactives, and so on.

Discovering discontinuity is to find out emerging issues that could stop social trends and lead to new trends. Dator spends enormous times almost every day on detecting emerging issues and sharing them with his colleagues and students for discussing what the emerging issues can imply and impact a society. It is never easy to identify emerging issues, because emerging issues are novel and unbounded, for example, the 911 terrorist attacks or the outbreak of SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome). Dator never stops identifying continuity and discontinuity and envisioning alternatives. Dator's alternatives are deeply associated with diverse values and new ideas in order for people to adapt to and create changes.

For Dator, to categorize all imaginations of what would happen into FIF is a reasonable way that grasps what will be changed from now: Continued Growth, Collapse, Disciplined Society, and Transformational Society. Based on research, teaching, and consulting on what people believe to be true about the future, Dator collected and analyzed as many images of the future as he could. Then, he condensed the diverse images to one of the four major (or generic) images of the future (Dator, 2002). One can say that FIF were empirically extracted from documented sources of people's ideas and beliefs about the future.

Figure 1 presents the diagrams of the four images of the future. The attributes and assumptions of Dator's FIF are succinctly explained (Dator, 1979 in Dator, 2002, p. 10) as follows:
  • Continued Growth (usually "continued economic growth");

- Collapse (from [usually] one of a variety of different reasons such as environmental overload and/or resource exhaustion, economic instability, moral degeneration, external or internal military attack, meteor impact, etc.);
- Disciplined Society (in which society in the future is seen as organized around some set of overarching values or another – usually considered to be ancient, traditional, natural, ideologically-correct, or God-given.);
- Transformative Society (usually either of a high-tech or a high spirit variety, which sees the end of current forms, and the emergence of new [rather than the return to older traditional] forms of beliefs, behavior, organization and – perhaps – intelligent life-forms).
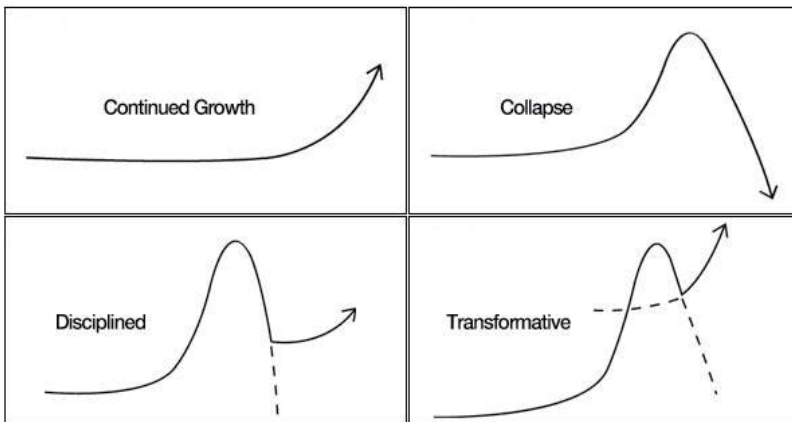

Figure 1. The Diagrams of FIF

Table 1 presents a simplified overview of the distinguishing features of each driving force for the four images of the future. For example, in a future of continued economic growth, the population increases and the usable energy are sufficient, while in the future of collapse, the population declines and energy is scarce.

Table 1. *Seven driving forces and their implications on each of the four images (Dator et al., 2011).*

Futures:	*Continue*	*Collapse*	*Discipline*	Transform
Forces:				
Population	Growing	Declining	Diminished	Post-human
Energy	Sufficient	Scarce	Limited	Abundant
Economics	Dominant	Survival	Regulated	Trivial
Environment	Conquered	Overshot	Sustainable	Artificial
Culture	Dynamic	Stable	Focused	Complex
Technology	Accelerating	Stable	Restricted	Transformative
Governance	Corporate	Local	Strict	Direct

The FIF are not only offering diverse futures and their attributes, but also a holistic view on what changes we can perceive. It is very important to understand that each future can be identified at present and can be true in the future. In other words, the four futures are here now and they will be evenly distributed to us. In

this sense, the FIF do not provide us with less or more likely future. Instead, the FIF gives us a balanced perspective on how we can perceive all changes.

As Curry and Schultz (2009) point out, the FIF provide "useful sorting and construction scaffolds for organizing a large variety of drivers and insights about change" (p. 55-56). The FIF offer not only a logical sorting process, but also enables users of the FIF to multiply their images of the future. Without multiplying images of the future, futures studies would be a mere rational-discourse, which mainly focuses on how to select the most rational choice. Van der Steen et al. (2010) also argue that foresight does not make choices for the future, but allows for "more space for interpretation, intuition, argumentations" than forecasting does (p. 43). In other words, as Carse (1997) points out, there are two types of game on life: one is a finite game; the other is an infinite game. In this sense, futures studies should be an infinite game for it is an ongoing process.

Regarding Zhuangzi's method, Zhuangzi reconceptualizes *dao* (道) in order to understand the interdependency of things at present. Ames and Hall (2003) translate dao as "the Way Making," because dao is "the ongoing field of experience" (Ames, 1998, p. 2). Coutinho (2004) interprets dao as "the manner of changes" (p. 31), and Graham (2001) interprets it as "what patterns the seeming disorder of change and multiplicity" (p. 7). For these Sinologists, the *dao* represents process-oriented, holistic relationships, harmony with particularism, correlativeness, and novelty that is not predetermined (Ames & Rosemont, 1998; Ames & Hall, 2003).

Based on the features of dao above, I can identify Zhuangzi's three methods, which has to do with the strategy to expand the boundaries of the uncertainty of the future, for better using dao in reality: seeing at a far distance, seeing with more eyes, and seeing for great awakening.

Seeing at a far distance implies how to come up to great understanding on changes. This seeing stresses the importance of developing a long-term perspective. Zhuangzi says, "The morning mushroom knows nothing of twilight and dawn; the summer cicada knows nothing of spring and autumn. They are the short-lived… The short-lived cannot come up to the long-lived" (Watson [1964] 1996, p. 24). In the field of futures studies, a long-term perspective is crucial for forecasting diverse futures and also leads to the consciousness of future generations, which considers well-beings of both the current generation and future generations.

Seeing with more eyes implies how to develop a more balanced perspective without being influenced by prejudice. Zhuangzi says, "When the monkey trainer was handing out acorns, he said, "You get three in the morning and four at night." This made all the monkeys furious. "Well, then," he said, "you get four in the morning and three at night." The monkeys were all delighted" (Watson [1964]1996, p. 36). What Zhuangzi means by this story is that "the sage harmonizes with both right and wrong and rests in Heaven the Equalizer. This is called walking two roads" (Watson [1964]1996, p. 36). Zhuangzi also says, "Everything has its "that," everything has its "this." From the point of view of "that" you cannot see it, but through understanding you can know it" (Watson [1964] 1996, p. 34). Based on these describes, we can understand that seeing with more eyes has to do with openness and flexibility. The monkey trainer does not have a fixed perspective on which way to treat monkeys is right or wrong. If you have a fixed perspective, you have difficulty understanding others' perspectives. For example, if you are a capitalist, you are not trying to see the world from a communist perspective and

vice versa. If you are an environmentalist, you are not trying to see the world from a developer's perspective and vice versa.

Moreover, walking two roads at the same time can be possible by using a bird's-eye view, which is, for Zhuangzi, the best way to see changes as they are. As Kohn (2011) points out, Zhuangzi provides a "bird's-eye view of how the universe functions" (p. vii). I will describe it later in detail, but this synoptic view sees all changes without favoring any thought, issue, or event in the world. As in Buddhism, this view reflects the idea of an absence of worldly desires in one's mind. It is indeed difficult to have this kind of bird's-eye view. According to the *Zhuangzi*, "Ordinary men discriminate among [things] and parade their discriminations before others. So, those who discriminate fail to see [the Way]" (Watson, 1996). Having a bird's-eye view comes from intellectual nomadism, in which the more eyes, different eyes, behold that very same subject, the more perfect becomes our concept" (Coutinho and Sigurdsson 2004, p. 74). In short, Zhuangzi tried not to support any idea and belief in order to see what are changes in the world without prejudice.

The third method that I identify Zhuangzi's method is seeing for great awakening. This seeing has to do with how to identify continuity and discontinuity in our daily lives. Zhuangzi says, "Once [Zhuangzi] dreamt he was a butterfly, a butterfly flitting and fluttering around, happy with himself and doing as he pleased. He didn't know he was [Zhuangzi]. Suddenly he woke up and there he was, solid and unmistakable [Zhuangzi]. But he didn't know if he was [Zhuangzi] who had dreamt he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming he was [Zhuangzi]" (Watson [1964]1996, p. 45). Generally, this story can be interpreted as one that when you wake up and realize it is a dream, you can be awakened and enlightened that life is like a dreaming at night.

However, for me, this story tells us something more profound on transformation. Coutinho and Sigurdsson (2004) argue, "For a creature to free itself from its own situatedness is for it to re-create itself. [This is like] the fish can free from the water only by transforming into a bird" (p. 70). This transformation from a fish into a bird reminds me of one of M.C. Escher's paintings titled "Sky and Water." In the picture, starting from the bottom, the fishes make a space between them and then the spaces become birds. The birds fly to the sky. Regarding this transformation, Coutinho and Sigurdsson (2004) point out that Zhuangzi attempted to go beyond the horizon by free and easy wandering. Zhuangzi looked for new horizons and boundaries, which provide Zhuangzi with great awakening, which leads to self-transformation.

Furthermore, Gratton (2012) argues that if you try to transform yourself, then you can find and develop a new community of practice. This community can help shape new values, norms, and futures, and in turn one can contribute to the community by providing his or her new awakening. Dewey (1927) calls this community as Great Community as a society which consists "in having a responsible share according to capacity in forming to which one belongs and in participating according to need in the values which the groups sustain" from the standpoint of the individual (Hickman & Alexander, 1998). In short, seeing for a great awakening aims at going beyond the boundary and finding new boundaries so shaping a great community which helps grow not only oneself but also a community.

Purposes and language

Regarding purposes, Dator facilitates people to reach their preferred fu-

tures in exploring four images of the future. Through this facilitation, Dator emphasizes the importance of creating desirable futures by thoughtful and considerate participation. Zhuangzi provides us with the "freedom to wander and roam about the world of diverse values, free to appreciate ways of life other than our own" (Wong, 2003, p. 406). This freedom enables us to make a distance from the values that one appreciates, and this distance in turn creates room for us to challenge our values and to make a balance between our values and other values. Through this process, one can achieve an enlarged and extended perspective of what is of value. In other words, one can get wisdom, which has to do with how to live in harmony with more values that exist.

How do they communicate with people? Dator offers logical, useful, and meaningful statements of the future in order for people to forecast diverse and practical futures whereas Zhuangzi presents somewhat vague, indeterminate, and non-principled conversations on *dao* in order for people not to assume any knowledge is fixed and given. In other words, Zhuangzi gives the benefit of the doubt as Dator always open the door for emerging issues and novelties. Table 2 presents the comparisons of Dator with Zhuangzi.

Table 2. *Comparisons of Dator with Zhuangzi*

	Dator	Zhuangzi
Objects of research	Forecasting four alternative images of the future	Deeply understanding interdependence of all that exists
Methods	Imagining continuity and discontinuity of issues that could impact society in the future.	Seeing at a far distance, seeing with more eyes, and seeing for great awakening
Purposes	Envisioning a preferred future	Freeing oneself from chaos; living in harmony with all that exits
Language	Logical, useful, meaningful, and diverse statements of the future	Vague, indeterminate, non-principled conversations on *dao*

While they look different, I can see Dator through Zhuangzi's lens and also see Zhuangzi through Dator's lens. In other words, I can better understand Dator with Zhuangzi and vice versa. Both of them attempt to grasp what are continuities and discontinuities in the world and like to play with uncertainties, complexity, and changes. I will discuss more on these similarities between them in order to shape an East Asian futures studies. Pierre Wack asserted that seeing changes consists of three elements: holistic perspective, interconnectedness, and accommodating new insights (Burt and Wright, 2006). Wack argues that through this seeing, one can anticipate events before they might happen. Regarding this seeing, Burt and Wright (2006) argue that there are three obstacles that prevent us from seeing: over-reliance on routines in thinking; psychological resistance; and refusal to harness diverse perspectives. Hence, the problem is how to overcome the obstacles. In my experiences, whenever Dator conducted futures workshops, he emphasized that in

order to see change, users of FIF should not favor any alternative image because each idea of the future had the same possibility and probability of occurring. It can be argued that the user's guide underlines the bird's-eye view for providing a more inclusive worldview.

I re-interpret Dator's FIF as a form of East Asian futures studies in part because the four images of the future are not exclusive but inclusive of each other. The images display where we live in and what changes that we will face in the future. Each image is different from one another but cannot be meaningful without other images of the future. What does this mean? As Choi et al. (2007, p. 692) argue, in the holistic approach of East Asians "attention tends to be oriented toward the relationship between objects and the field to which those objects belong. From this perspective, it would be less significant to focus attention on a specific alternative in East Asian contexts. Instead, East Asians want to see how each alternative is connected and detect relations among alternatives in order to map a bigger picture of what is going on.

In other words, as Giri (2011) aptly points out, through knowing together in compassion and confrontation "we realize that we are part of a bigger drama of co-realisation where we create a field, where transformation embraces self, other, and the world."[5] Based on the holistic approach, I can take Dator's FIF as a tool that helps individuals draw a better-informed map that accommodates optimally condensed elements, which would impact a society in the future.

I propose that the bird's-eye view can be a basis for scanning what changes are occurring in our local and global communities. In this view no alternative future should be considered better or more probable than any other. This bird's-eye approach attempts to put the future in more ambiguous situations where the future is dynamic and uncertain in order to stimulate diverse conversations and interpretations on the future. As Wong (2003) aptly argues on the implications of Zhuangzi's freedom to wander and roam, this open-end attitude can "clear the underbrush from our heads" (p. 409).

The holistic bird's-eye perspective (1) pursues appropriate rather than exclusive alternatives, (2) finds an aesthetic moment rather than a predetermined moment, (3) dances with chaos rather than controls it, and (4) uses both the useful and the useless.

Pursuing appropriate rather than exclusive alternatives

Appropriateness reflects a relation-centered paradigm, which is opposed to a substance-centered one. For example, if something is appropriate to two persons, the two persons agree that it is mutually helpful and beneficial. Thus, making appropriateness means making relationships more significant for better progress. In comparison, exclusiveness signifies a zero sum game, in which a winner takes all.

East Asians developed a relation-centered paradigm. The following example demonstrates how the relation-centered paradigm functions in Korean life:

> In Korean calligraphy, if a stroke is done wrong, the artist cannot erase nor correct it. He has no choice but to draw the next stroke so as to hide the previous mistake, to make the next stroke harmonize with the first unsatisfactory one. And if one line of characters is wrong, he must strive to make the next line free of errors, but the most important thing is that the next

line of characters should help and support the first one. On the finished page of a calligraphy piece, stroke and stroke, character and character, line and line should help each other. It is this relationship between lines, strokes and characters that helps to overcome any mistakes made in the work. (Young-bok Shin, 1998, p. 2)

As this text points out, Korean calligraphers do not erase or correct an incorrect stroke. Rather, they create harmony in between the past and the future, between what they have done and what they will do. The aesthetic creativeness is shaped by the context of the present. Moreover, values of life can be created by endless relationships with the past experiences, even though the past has flaws.

In order to practice a relation-centered paradigm in foresight activities, the holistic bird's-eye perspective can encourage citizens and stakeholders to participate in shaping futures research design processes. As Robinson (2003) aptly points out, one of the most important elements that enable a successful futures research is interactive social research that allows people to experience changes brought by themselves. When citizens and stakeholders are involved in forming the futures research process, they can increase self-efficacy towards the future. Individuals with self-efficacy toward the future can have beliefs that they effectively influence conditions that would (re)shape their lives in the future. It is worth noting that Cuhls (2003) argues, "[N]etworking and cooperation in identifying future options is as – in some cases even more – important than the tasks of forecasting" (p. 96). This mutual learning approach also allows for balanced negotiation, more openness, and thoughtful engagement upon a basis of perceived self-efficacy toward the future.

Finding an aesthetic moment rather than a predetermined moment

The Ease Asian futures studies waits for an aesthetic moment. It is very difficult to capture the aesthetic moment when one feels that something is beautiful. It is also difficult to say when the aesthetic moment is, because the moment appears and disappears in an instant. Regarding the aesthetic moment, Li Zehou (2006) interestingly posits that the excellence of the Zhongyong (中庸 : can be translated "to hit the mark in the everyday"[6] or "focusing the familiar"[7]; it is also one of the Four Books of the Confucian canonical scriptures) is to grab the aesthetic moment in which people feel good. According to Li, the moment that people feel good is when something seems to be appropriate in efficiency, for example, not too long and not too short. The Zhuangzi also explicates when the aesthetic moment is:

When I chisel a wheel,' says the carpenter to Duke Huan, 'if the stroke is too slow it slides and does not grip, if too fast it jams and catches in the wood. Not too slow, not too fast; I feel it in the hand and respond from the heart, the tongue cannot put it into words, there is a knack in it somewhere which I cannot convey to my son and which my son cannot learn from me. (Graham, 2001, p.6)

In this passage, Graham (2001) emphasizes spontaneity as a core concept that conveys Zhuangzi's philosophy. The optimal spontaneity comes from one's experiences, not from rules or manuals.[8] The experiences of the carpenter, for example, empower him to know what speed is appropriate for cutting the wood: not too fast and not too slow. This is an aesthetic moment.

How can one create the conditions for the aesthetic moment? Imagine that there is a four-string ukulele, a Hawai'ian musical instrument. Players can create musical harmony with the ukulele. No one can play well with a one-string ukulele. One needs four strings to play. Like the ukulele, the East Asian futures studies provides a well-tuned four-string ukulele for people to play themselves. Then, the player can focus on how to create musical harmony in plucking each string. The well-tuned four-strings imply four images of the future, which are impartially distributed for citizens to forecast their futures. Again, foresight activities should be initiated by and based on fairly diverse alternatives of the future.

In terms of the effectiveness of spontaneity, Su and Hung (2009) interestingly compare spontaneous clusters with policy-driven ones, arguing "spontaneous clusters have the capacity to evolve…spontaneous sources of order provide inherent order that evolution has to work with ab initio and always" (p. 618, emphasis in original). In this sense, it can be argued that spontaneity has to do with continuous adaptation to changing situations. It can be further argued that spontaneous organizations or groups are amorphous and endlessly moving. For these organizations and groups, adaptability is more important than adaptation to new situations in an assumption that the future is dynamic (Van der Duin and Den Hartigh, 2007). Thus, an aesthetic moment has to do with adaptability toward the future, in other words, self-efficacy toward the future.

Do not control chaos but dance with it

In the East Asian futures studies, chaos itself is not judged as one that should be controlled. Chaos is a process of change. There is an interesting story on chaos in the Zhuangzi:

> The emperor of the South Sea was called Shu [Brief], the emperor of the North Sea was called Hu [Sudden], and the emperor of the central region was called Hun-tun [Chaos]. Shu and Hu from time to time came together for a meeting in the territory of Hun-tun, and Hun-tun treated them very generously. Shu and Hu discussed how they could repay his kindness. "All men," they said, "have seven openings so they can see, hear, eat, and breathe. But Hun-tun alone doesn't have any. Let's trying boring him some!" Everyday they bored another hole, and on the seventh day Hun-tun died (Watson, 1996, p. 95).

This story illustrates that chaos should not be controlled but could be enjoyable. It would be better for humans not to disturb a process of change, but to utilize it. Dator has used the metaphor of "surfing tsunamis" for many years to describe "the magnitude of challenging forces sweeping towards us from the futures" (Dator, 2009, p. 34). The tsunamis are too large to avoid. The only way to survive the tsunami is to surf it. For a surfer, a big wave is enjoyable. In this sense, change can be pleasurable. The metaphor of tsunamis also connotes that the world that we live in consists of absurdity and craziness, which are not easy to understand rationally due to a lack of causality. In this kind of the world, we should endure the absurdity and craziness cheerfully.

However, one has to learn how to use the power of the change in order to create the future with pleasure and excitement. In order to learn it, it is necessary to understand that dancing with chaos implies awareness of the function of fluctuation.

Wheatley (1994) interestingly argues, "The things we fear most in organization – fluctuations, disturbances, imbalances – need not be signs of an impending disorder that will destroy us" (p. 20). Instead, she asserts that chaos is "the primary source of creativity" (p. 20).

In the field of futures studies, Ramirez and Ravetz (2011) interestingly understand one of the natures of chaos. The authors introduce the concept of being "feral," which means wild but once was domesticated. For example, feral species are ones that were tamed and lived in farms but become wild. Likewise, feral futures are ones that were prepared but become totally unexpected. There are examples: the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island in the United States of America in 1979 or the story of Taliban that was Mujahedeen, supported by the US, but becomes terrorists, attacking the US. Such feral futures were regarded as manageable in predictability but turn out to be totally unpredictable.

In order to prepare for feral futures, Ramirez and Ravetz (2011) suggest meta-rational approaches, which are different from a rational approach, in terms of how to tackle chaos. The meta-rational approaches are based on Zen and aesthetics. Zen is a Buddhist doctrine that enlightenment can be achieved by self-correction through meditation and direct intuitive insight. Thus, a Zen approach requests people go beyond epistemological agreements accepted in a society and practice paradoxical thoughts and ideas. The authors find an example in Daoism, arguing, "[Daoism] involves a not-to-be-defined experiential journey seeking Zen where, like in Zen, words are not of help" (p. 483). According to the authors, aesthetics deals with sensing and gut feelings.

In short, whereas a rational approach focuses on more data and modeling, meta-rational approaches "let go of the established epistemology…create the conceptual space to reconsider the situation anew…identify and seek and explore and begin to establish new connections…finally opt for those imagined futures whose meta-pattern best connects to those experienced as corresponding to those of the living, the viable, the vivid, the sustainable" (Ramirez and Ravetz, 2011, p. 484, quotes selected). In this sense, the meta-rational approaches are similar to that of the East Asian futures studies in terms of how to identify and prepare for chaotic situations.

The use of the useful and the useless

The East Asian futures studies is interested in how to use both the useful and useless, in other words, both acceptability and unacceptability. The reason for this is that today's usefulness (or acceptability) can turn out to be useless (or unacceptable) tomorrow, and vice versa. However, it is difficult to use both of them, as Zhuangzi said, "All men know the use of the useful, but nobody knows the use of the useless" (Watson, 1996, p. 63). Why is it difficult? Of course, no one wants to use the useless, which seems to be not-practical and less-effective at present. Thus, what does it mean by using the useless? Can it be a practical strategy?

The use of the useless has to do with indeterminacy. Coutinho (2004) argues that when a text is indeterminate, "knowledge of its context can help to delimit possible and probable meanings" (p. 8). Regarding indeterminacy, ponder what Zhuangzi said as follows: the sage "recognizes a this but a this is also that, a that which is also this. His that has both a right and a wrong in it; his this too has both a right and a wrong in it" (Wang, 2004). This statement sounds paradoxical and ridiculous. However, for Zhuangzi, to use ridiculous and absurd expressions is a strategy for accommodating

"the changes of all things and the shifts of meanings and viewpoints" (Wang, 2004, p. 197). Jullien (2000) also see this way of speech as "fluctuating speech" in the Zhuangzi, saying, "By oscillating according to the situation, fluctuating speech embraces reality from all angles, constantly espousing the spontaneous movement of things" (p. 13). In order to delimit possible meanings and to accommodate changes, the East Asian futures studies evenly spreads out diverse alternatives without prioritizing any alternative. Thus, people do not need to identify any alternative -- predetermined, fixed, or given. Due to this setting, the alternatives themselves become available as they are.

A number of authors studying the Zhuangzi propose that Zhuangzi had a strategy for using his indeterminate words (Coutinho, 2004; Wang, 2004; Wu, 1990). In chapter 27 of the Zhuangzi, one of the paragraphs states, "[Dwelling] words make up nine tenths of it; [double-layered] words make up seven tenths of it; goblet words come forth day after day, harmonizing things in the Heavenly Equality" (Watson, 1968, p. 303). In this passage, we can acknowledge that Zhuangzi used three kinds of words: dwelling, double-layered, and goblet words. Zhuangzi explained that dwelling words are like words for parables, figurative descriptions, and imaginary conversations, which, in turn, enable readers and listeners to create new ideas and meanings. Double-layered words are like quoted-words from what the wise or exemplary men said, such as proverbs or maxims. Goblet words reflect the core of Zhuangzi's philosophy of communication. A goblet is a wine cup that tips when is full and rights itself when is empty. Wu (1990) interpreted that goblet words are "tipping toward the situation so as to contain it as fully as [the goblet words] can" (p. 370). Therefore, goblet words imply endless changes, which Zhuangzi always adapted to. Wang (2004) aptly points out that Zhuangzi "enjoys staying with all possibilities, never attempting to close the door on any" (p. 204). This is how to use the useless.

The useless is typically seen as nebulous and ridiculous. However, the East Asian futures studies believes that any useful idea in the future should appear to be ridiculous (Dator's 2nd law of futures studies). Regarding how to gather ridiculous ideas, Zhuangzi suggested that "beggars, cripples and freaks [should be] seen quite without pity and with as much interest and respect as princes and sages" (Watson, 1996, p. 4). Zhuangzi attempted to listen to anyone, even though he or she was seen as a ridiculous or useless one. Both Zhuangzi and Dator underline the awareness of the useless.

FIF enables people to use both the useful and useless. Each image of the future has its own merits and demerits and has its own values and beliefs that could (or should) be realized. Even in Collapse, one can find some positive things to make a society better than other societies. For example, Cuba can be seen as an economically collapsed country due to the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the trade embargo enforced by the United States. However, Cuba has also become one of the healthiest countries (the average lifespan is 77.6 in 2006)[9] in the world, and "the only nation in the world which met the WWF's (World Wide Fund for Nature) definition of sustainable development."[10]

Each image can be seen as an alternative to the others. For example, Collapse and Disciplined Society and Transformational Society could all be alternatives to Continued Growth. The image of continued economic growth was shaped in societies in which people carried out projects of modernization and industrialization

in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Since the second half of the 20th Century, modernization has been blamed for causing environmental, ecological, economic, and energy crises. When we discuss disadvantages of modernism or industrialism, the three alternatives to Continuation should be seriously considered in order to re-orient the values and beliefs embedded in the Continuation future. In short, FIF are based on "historical archetypes, deep patterns that reoccur through time," which are distinguished from other futures scenarios (Inayatullah, 2009).

Moreover, in order to overcome the dichotomy between useful and useless, the East Asian futures studies is interested in multiplying alternatives. Nandy (2006) appropriately argues, "I consider all futures studies to be a game of design: When you multiply the number of designs you multiply your choices" (p. 91). Nandy's argument has to do not only with the freedom to explore alternatives, but also with the freedom to multiply them. By multiplying alternatives, a futurist can become a creative artist who wants access to "collective soul [and] tacit knowledge" (Nandy, 2006, p. 89). Based on multiple alternatives, humans can enjoy seeing more livable and exciting worlds. The more alternative images practitioners of futures research create, the better the results they can achieve in terms of the efficiency of a futures project. Beers et al. (2010) argue that an overarching vision that "incorporate[s] multiple, different images" of the future "may have better chance to escape becoming associated with negative imagery" (p. 730). Multiple alternatives give fewer concrete directions, which in turn, give individuals more freedom to choose what strategy is most appropriate.

Conclusion

As Inayatullah (2002) aptly points out, futures studies must be localized in the "language of participants, in their ways of knowing and experiences" (p. 115). Taiwanese futurist Kuo-Hua Chen (2002) also posits that the Taiwanese should find a "local version of futures studies" (p. 212).

A list of authors argue that East Asian aesthetic preferences are characterized as correlative, particular, polar, process-oriented, contextual, appropriate, relation-centered, accommodating, floating, holistic, and indeterminate (Choi et al., 2007; Hall & Ames, 1987; Jullien, 2000; Masuda et al., 2008; Nisbett, 2003; Shin, 1998). In comparison, aesthetic preferences in what Heidegger critiques as the "theo-ontological" tradition[11] tend to be unconditional, universal, dualistic, teleological, logical, alternative, substance-centered, exclusive, linear, analytical, and judgmental. In contrast to this theo-ontological tradition contemporary Western philosophical movements, such as pragmatism[12], phenomenology[13], post-structuralism[14], hermeneutics[15], and existentialism[16], do not agree with foundational thoughts which rationalize one's experience in order to make it teleological and systematic. Philosophers in these movements refuse the idea that there is a conscious agent who makes the grand design or the orderly progress in the world.

Table 4 presents the attributes, values, and applications of East Asian futures studies based on the understanding Dator and Zhuangzi.

Table 4. *Attributes, Values, and Applications of East Asian Futures Studies*

Attributes	Values	Applications
Appropriateness	Relationality	Encourage people to participate in shaping futures research design process
Aesthetic moment	Spontaneity (cultivated efficacy)	Make more space for interpretation, intuition, and arguments
Dance with chaos	Experimental spirit	Shape new meanings and challenge the *status quo*
Use of the useful & useless	Indeterminacy	Create an overarching vision that incorporates multiple, different images of the future

East Asian futures studies proposes that one has to (1) give the benefit of the doubt to our current visions, (2) invite more people to discuss and revise our visions, (3) continuously study diverse futures, and (4) make our relationships more significant in revising our visions.

Zhuangzi's synoptic view and Dator's FIF do not stop at only envisioning but go one step further and focus on the "very now" as a way of producing an optimal future. Ames and Hall (2003) interpret dao as way-making that connotes "a forging of an always new way forward" (p. 58) and de as "the particular as a focus of potency or efficacy within its own field of experience" (p. 59) when they translate a daoist' classical texts Daodejing (道德經). Thus, they want to point out that daoist not only understand the world, but also attempt to make life at present significant by generating "cognitive, moral, aesthetic and, spiritual meaning" (Ames & Hall, 2003, p. 60). Of course, imagining diverse futures should connect to a process that produces optimal, appropriate, desirable policy now.

Finally, I argue that East Asian futures studies based on Dator's and Zhuangzu's ways of thinking could provide not only an indigenized perspective of futures studies, which could tackle and resolve regional issues such as a conflict between the North and South Korea and peace-making among nations in East Asia, but also a useful way of how to decolonize the future although Dator (2005) and Sardar (1993) among others already developed.

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Notes

1 Wendy Schultz coined the term the Manoa School, meaning the futures studies programs initiated by Professor Jim Dator in the early 1970s at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Chris Jones also mentioned the Manoa School (C. Jones. 1992. The *Manoa* School of Futures Studies. *Futures Research Quarterly*, Winter 1992:19-25).

2 The aspirational futures are explained in detail in Bezold's article, "Aspirational Futures," *Journal of Futures Studies*, May 2009, 13(4):81-90.

3 Based on conversations with Dator through emails in April 26, 2013.

4 This is based on discussions with Roger T. Ames through emails on March 2012.

5 I refer to its excerpts available at http://www.livingindiversity.org/2012/04/13/knowing-together-in-compassion-and-confrontation/

6 Refer to Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr. 1998. *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation.* New York: Ballantine Books.

7 Refer to Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall. 2001. *Fucusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the Zhongyong*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

8 Regarding spontaneity, Su and Hung (2009) interestingly compare spontaneous clusters with policy-driven ones, arguing "spontaneous clusters have the capacity to evolve…spontaneous sources of order provide inherent order that evolution has to work with *ab initio* and always" (p. 618). In this sense, it can be argued that spontaneity has to do with continuously evolution.

9 Refer to the CIA's *the World Factbook*, available at www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cu.html

10 Quotation from the Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuba

11 This theo-ontological way of thinking is substance-oriented. Ames (2010) argues that from the 19th century, Western philosophy criticized its own ontological thinking – for example, "Heidegger uses the language of theo-ontological thinking, Whitehead criticizes misplaced concreteness, Dewey criticizes the philosophical fallacy, Derrida criticizes the logocentrism" (in Yu, 2010, p. 87).

12 Pragmatists like William James and John Dewey agree that experience is not given but processual, on-going, and evolving by re-clarifying questions (James's *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, 1907) and continuous inquiries on indeterminate situations (Dewey's *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, 1938). These authors fought dogmatic ideas.

13 In general, phenomenology studies passive and active experiences: perception, imagination, thought, emotion, desire, volition, and action. Phenomenologists like Merleau-Ponty argue that humans store and refine experiences through responding to and coping with diverse situations, and in turn, the situations "show up" for them as "requiring [their] responses" (Dreyfus, 2002, p. 368).

14 Post-structuralism also supports the idea that existence (or human experience) is made from mutually constitutive processes.

15 Regarding hermeneutics, for example, Gadamer (1976) casted a new understanding on the self by arguing that humans look at the present with patterns of behaviors in

history and explore the future through reflecting values or preferences so humans can form a "fusion of horizons" and make eyes open to "new possibilities that is precondition of genuine understanding" (Hans-Georg Gadamer. 1976. *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, translated and edited by David E. Linge. California: University of California Press, p. xxi).

16 In his book *Being and Nothingness* Sartre (1943) claimed as follows: "Existence precedes and rules essence." Sartre reputed the Cartesian view, which is to consider "the self" as a given and fixed substance. Instead, Sartre argued that the self is redefined as a self-making in situations. Regarding this argument, existentialists often say, "What I am cannot be separated from what I take myself to be" (refer to: plato.stanford.edu/entries/existentialism).

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