

A TRIBUTE TO SUNNIE D. KIDD: THE PERSON AND HER WORKS

Thanks to my good fortune, I have come to know both Sunnie and Jim for nearly twenty years, in the capacity of friends, colleagues and spiritual comrades. I can well claim to be in a position to bear witness to Sunnie firstly as a graceful person and then as a silent worker for life fulfillment.

Sunnie is a living example of a thematic way of thinking and living. Her style is her person. She is an exemplar of such a rare combination of multi-virtues: pristine, genuine, dedicated and unassuming. Nay, Sunnie is too genuinely great to be merely unassuming she is even beyond that! She is a prolific writer though not an academician in the technical sense, yet in pursuit of truth and wisdom she is no less dedicated and productive than any professional. Philosophy and education remains nothing to her until they can both contribute to the enhancement of value and fulfillment of nature, human as well as the cosmic. She is always a silent worker, an ardent pursuer of value and a fighter for goodness, against human silliness for lack of genuine understanding. Sunnie is, as the Buddhists call it, enlightened. Also for decades she has been a vegetarian, yet primarily for spiritual reasons, rather than for any denominational causes.

She stands above and aloof as naturally immune from the harness of glamour, glory, power, success or even achievement in the ordinary worldly sense. "These," as Confucius says about himself, "are but floating clouds." To her, they are too ephemeral to deserve her attention at all! Silently and creatively, she lives her philosophy more as a matter of conviction than as mere words of mouth. Unfortunately, we let such a Spinozistic or hermitic way of simple living but noble thinking slip away through our dirty fingers nowadays! Who cares?

What is this thematic way of thinking and living Sunnie embodies? One wonders. I venture to grasp its basics from a non-technical, non-jargonical approach, roughly like this: Life is for Sunnie a musical composition; there is a thematic movement throughout. Life is a philosophical poetical work; this is the main theme from the alpha to the omega. To put it bluntly, a non-thematic way of thinking and living is a miserable and pointless wandering drifting aimlessly in the abysmal gloom. As she is so fond of saying, "still water runs deep."

The thematic focused style of thinking and living has a great family resemblance with the value-centric existential-phenomenology of Nicolai Hartmann; the field-oriented way of philosophizing of Li-Kuen Tong. Yet more than those, sensitive readers may easily detect congenial trends of thought in Henri Bergson (intuitionism) and Stephen C. Pepper (contextualism), in addition to the common themes of William James and

Merleau-Ponty. Sunnie exemplifies such a philosophical temper of mind.

Sunnie's ability to synthesize thought can be viewed in terms she coined: "*Inbetweenness*," which is spiritual, which goes beyond any particular religion, based on the themes of movement and vibration; "Experiential Expressions" which is central to a qualitative method, *Experiential Method: Qualitative Research in the Humanities Using Metaphysics and Phenomenology*, she designed in which people have taken Ph.D.'s utilizing her work internationally; "Inspiration/Aspiration Dialectic" which is central to her work on *Person to Person Inspiration*.

In our co-written article "Chinese Ways of Living" published on Superdirector.com that is intended for the general readership, a word of clarification, perhaps, is necessary to avoid unnecessary misunderstanding. Why "Chinese Living?" As Bertrand Russell pointed out in the 20s, the term "China" signifies less a political entity than a civilization. Similarly, terms like "China" or "Chinese" are less and less geographical labels, while becoming more and more quality-terms. As the Buddha's pet metaphor illustrates, "Look at the purest lotus flower. It grows out of the muddy mud. Take the flower and forget the mud!"

What is the cream of Chinese culture? In one word, Creativism. Because it has Creativity as its basic concept. As H. G. Creel observes, Chinese philosophy does not provide the answer to every problem confronting human beings. Neither, for that matter does any philosophy. But the Chinese have seen some things and some things that we have missed with particular clarity and the things they have said about them are often helpful.

By the same token, we appreciate six themes in Chinese Living: empathy, sympathy, compassion, kindness, love and reciprocal benefit as measures of moral life and of integral harmonious relation.

Sunnie endorses such a way of living, not because it is simply a Chinese way, but because it is a creativist way. Moreover, she is a living example of it. Sunnie lives in her works. For those who seem to be skeptical about the possibility, let alone reality of such virtues, I must regret to say that it is because they have never seen such a remarkable person as Sunnie. In Sunnie's sharp eye of choice making, focal themes must pass the threefold quality test: perennial interest; universal appeal; and contemporary significance. Just once in a great while you know when you meet someone that you stand in the light of enlightenment.

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