

Tomasz R. SZYMCZYŃSKI

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

ORCID: 0000-0002-7935-1350

## François Jullien and the Methodological Viewpoint Presented in his *Detour and Access. Strategies of Meaning in China and Greece. Hermeneutical Perspective*

*The questions that interest me can be summarized thus: In what way do we benefit from speaking of things indirectly? How does such a distancing allow us better to discover – and describe – people and objects? How does distancing produce an effect? Westerners find it natural and normal to meet the world head-on. But what can we gain from approaching it obliquely? In other words, how does detour grant access? My starting point, in short, has to do with the subtlety of meaning.*

François Jullien<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** François Jullien's *Detour and Access. Strategies of Meaning in China and Greece* may be interpreted as an interesting example of the methodological challenge that arises around the question: to what extent does a specific strategy of meaning (*stratégie du sens*) taken as the subject of research influences the form and content of the results of this research? In addition, this may be viewed backward as well: to what extent a specific assumption regarding the form and content of research may affect its results? From this point of view, it is worth noting two fundamental tasks that constitute almost continuously double-intertwined obstacles in the narrative attempts of the Chinese cultural area. On the one hand, frequently observable chains of different proposals of translations of words and sentences. On the other hand, the presence of different strategies of meaning, which, in a way that is often not easy to grasp, influence the shape of “what” and “how” had been said, suggested, or maintained unexpressed at all. In this context, Jullien emphasizes the difference between “the word as definition” (*la parole de définition*) characteristic of the mainstream of Western culture and “the word as indication” (*la parole indicielle*), which the French philosopher attributes to articulations frequently occurring in the space of Chinese culture. Thus, there is a difference here within strategies that articulate meaning, which extends between what is general, and therefore abstract or abstracted, and what is holistic, and therefore constituting an inseparable unity. So, on the one hand, we are dealing with “knowing”, on the other hand, with “realizing”. This distinction underlines an extremely important challenge in the field of methodology, which should direct our attention to issues related solely to the scientific and philosophical thought devoted to human beings, and which is particularly clearly present with such attempts of interpretations at cross-cultural and multilingual insights.

**Key words:** François Jullien, China, Greece, Europe and the world, strategies of meaning, qualitative methodology, the hermeneutics of multilinguisticity

<sup>1</sup> Jullien (2004b, p. 7). In French version: « La question, au départ, pourrait se résumer ainsi: quel bénéfice trouvons-nous à parler indirectement des choses? En quoi l'écart que nous prenons vis-à-vis des êtres et des choses permet-il de les mieux découvrir – de les mieux évoquer? En quoi, par conséquent, un tel écart est-il source d'effet? Nous croyons courant et «normal» d'aborder de front le monde. Mais quel profit pourrions-nous tirer d'un abord *de biais*? Autrement dit, en quoi le détour donne-t-il accès? La question dont je pars, en somme, est celle de la subtilité du sens » (Jullien, 1995, p. 3).

**D***etour and Access. Strategies of Meaning in China and Greece* written by François Jullien, French political scientist, sinologist, and philosopher may be interpreted among other possibilities as an interesting example of the challenge that arises around the question: to what extent does a specific strategy of meaning taken as the subject of research influence the form and content of the results of this research?<sup>2</sup> In addition, this may be viewed backward as well: how a specific set of assumptions regarding the form and content of research may affect its results? In other words: to what degree did the in-depth reflection on the issue of the “indirect approach” affect the way the author wrote about this subject to articulate his observations? In what way was this result intended by the French author? And finally, if it was intended by him to a certain degree, for what purposes?

The strategy of meaning (*stratégie du sens*) is a concept which, according to Jullien, used in the plural in the title of the volume written by him, is primarily aimed at emphasizing the possibility of the existence of different perspectives for constructing, implementing and interpreting activities – including activities of a communication nature – which have a certain fixed meaning for representatives of specific cultural areas. Therefore, it is a term referring to the rudimentary meaning structures, which are not always fully realized, which are at the basis of actions (understood here in the broadest sense, both as possible acts and omissions), which for representatives of such particular cultural groups carry a specific sense, and which from their perspectives are present in this type of space as more or less “natural”, “proper”, “adequate”, “normal”.

In such a perspective, which consciously tries to avoid too hasty recognition of certain dimensions of social realities in their cultural and linguistic similarities and differences, it is naturally inevitable that the set of questions piles up. As a consequence, the author of such a study faces a continually vivid set of dilemmas regarding the selection of what should be included in the content of considerations and what should be omitted. This, in turn, suggests the adoption of criteria based on which such a choice should be made. And this is when another challenge arises. It is so that the fundamental problem here is how to avoid in this context the bipolar separation which imperceptibly demands application based on our habits of thought. Following the trail of this type of habits, one should therefore explicitly opt for one of such two options. Either assume a vision of a complete order of carefully selected definitions and division criteria. Or, not agreeing to such a scenario, automatically be assigned to the opposite set. And yet neither of such two scenarios outlined in this way should be considered satisfactory.

This is because, in this type of optics, there is still too rarely space for a constructive question about the conditions for the possibility of creating such an unquestionable categorical grid. Do we even have the realistic potential possibility of such arrangements at all? Is this not an assumption that in fact constitutes a particularly understood myth? Is it not becoming a myth to persist in the belief that one has the ability to directly access knowledge devoid of a subjective shade, even though such an option has long time ago

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<sup>2</sup> Some of the ideas presented here are related to the viewpoints given in: Szymczyński (2020). Particularly, the methodological proposal I am developing under the label of the hermeneutics of multilinguisticity, which is based to a large extent on the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Jean Grondin, could not be presented here in detail due to limitations resulting from assumptions about the size of this article.

been rejected both in the realm of exact sciences, as well as in the humanities and social sciences? In this context, in the introduction to the second, revised edition of his *New Rules of Sociological Method* in 1993, Anthony Giddens refers to the work of Kurt Gödel (1906–1978), when during demonstrating his viewpoint of the place of double hermeneutics in the scientific field he recalls: „Since Gödel, we know that even the most formal systems of mathematics presume «outside» concepts, and obviously ordinary language is the medium by which scientific procedures and discussions are produced and carried on. It is certainly not true that the thesis of the double hermeneutics as specific to social science implies a prohibition upon interactions between science and lay culture” (Giddens, 1993, p. 14).

Let us be absolutely clear here. If there is even no physical possibility to construct an independent from outside preliminary assumptions mathematical system, it is undoubtedly the same within any project reconstructing any aspect of social reality. These words of Giddens referring to those of Gödel may serve as a strong fundament of inevitably the hermeneutical-rhetorical consistency of any scientific project proposed by humans. And it is precisely therefore about allowing the voice of a middle way, the one somewhere between the radical “knowing everything” and the equally radical opposite of such an attitude. Therefore as well, it is not only about a specific transgression of the traditional *tertium non datur*, but also about taking into account this – resulting from always incomplete knowledge – inconvenience at the level of lingual articulation within the discourse present in science. And it is here that the greatest difficulty appears to be revealed. Once again, it turns out that the most general level, from which the preliminary arrangements of any scientific endeavor unavoidably begin, is the hermeneutical-rhetorical level.

The level at which the issue of how to submit to the art of understanding what the world articulates towards us (hermeneutics) and how to articulate towards this world what has been subjected to such understanding (rhetoric) is resolved. And this is what we may have learned already from the great hermeneutist and translator Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768–1834) and his famous statement: “Mutual adherence of hermeneutics and rhetoric consists in the fact that every act of understanding is the reversal of an act of speaking, within which it appears in consciousness what kind of thinking was present at foundations of the speech.”<sup>3</sup> („*Die Zusammengehörigkeit der Hermeneutik und Rhetorik besteht darin, daß jeder Akt des Verstehens die Umkehrung eines Aktes des Redens ist, indem in das Bewußtsein kommen muß, welches Denken der Rede zum Grunde gelegen.*” (Schleiermacher, 1977, p. 76; Grondin, 2001, p. 68)).

At least since the findings made by Thomas S. Kuhn (1922–1996), we have been aware that this type of concern does not create problems as long as there is broadly shared consent on the subject, methods of conducting research, and methods of communicating its progress and results. Otherwise, however, it becomes necessary to rethink the initial assumptions. This is precisely the situation we are dealing with today in the space of attempts to construct an area of discursive possibilities about such important, and at the

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<sup>3</sup> Translation from German by T.R.S. Compare with the translation made by Andrew Bowie: “The belonging together of hermeneutics and rhetoric consists in the fact that every act of understanding is the inversion of a speech-act, during which the thought which was the basis of the speech must become conscious” (Schleiermacher, 1998, p. 7).

same time burdened with an extremely large number of competing assumptions, cultural facts such as the East, the West, Europe, Eurasia, Asia, the Orient ... Like China, which would be seen from both outside and inside, from far and from near (Yao, 2000).

It is enough to point to the vast ambiguity of such terms as “Europe” or “China” from such perspectives as geographical-historical, linguistic-cultural, and practical-political, to leave no doubt about what challenges we are dealing with. So just to mention a few aspects of this intriguing problem, it is worth pointing out that differences between common sense language and scientific jargon would be one of the main sources of such challenges. And from a common sense language towards common sense languages would be another. Furtherly, another dimension important here would be tasks related to these more or even merely abstract concepts. We must not forget about the existing divisions between scientific disciplines and particular theoretical orientations, as well as about the tension between the scientific, philosophical, and non-academic perspectives. So, with such a sketched picture, is there any reasonable possibility of undertaking at all a task that is burdened with such a great degree of difficulty and risk? And if so, why would anyone be willing to do it?

Both of these questions are closely related. And both refer to the task undertaken by François Jullien in *Detour and Access. Strategies of Meaning in China and Greece*, which may be seen as a point of departure for presented here constructively critical rethinking of methodological assumptions remaining in the mainstream of social sciences endeavors devoted to the analyses and interpretations of social phenomena existing within other cultures. In addition, it is assumed here that for a better understanding of the perspective given in *Detour and Access...* it is reasonable to refer as well to the book written by Jullien a few years earlier: *In Praise of Blandness, Proceeding from Chinese Thought and Aesthetics*. Here French philosopher and sinologist shed light on the deeper understanding of the idea contained in the Chinese character dan (淡 dàn), which in French may be rendered as *fadeur* (Jullien, 1991). In English as *weak, watery, insipid, tasteless, indifferent, diluted, and mild*, while the author of the English translation Paula M. Varsano decided on the word *blandness* (Jullien, 2004a). The proposal of the authors of the Polish translation in turn is *nieokreśloność*, which could be presented as *indefiniteness* (Jullien, 2006a). It is important to underline here, that this aspect is not underlined here to judge directly which version would defeat the other. Such optics would frequently be material for more than often highly subjective esthetical viewpoints and as such in most cases would demand rather sophisticated ways of legitimization. It is emphasized, however, to acknowledge the fact of clearly different semantic fields, which are constituted between *blandness* and *indefiniteness*. This is precisely where mathematical language differs profoundly from that devoted to humanities and social sciences. This is as well exactly where in the context of natural sciences we may calmly get along with the vision of one language, whereas in the context of widely understood cultural studies, we should introduce the necessary image of languages. This is eventually where begins the foundation of the methodological proposal for humanities and social sciences entitled hermeneutics of multilinguisticity (Szymczyński, 2020).

Although the subject of these considerations is primarily an attempt to shed light on specific consequences of the methodological approach used by François Jullien in his book entitled *Detour and Access...*, it is his earlier essay on the place of indefiniteness

or blandness in the space of Chinese aesthetic thought contained in the ideogram *dan* (淡 dàn), that draws our attention to a clue that can be interpreted as one of the motives for writing the *Detour and Access...*, or at least as a viewpoint that certainly helps us to understand that text better. Jullien (Jullien, 2004a, p. 89; Jullien, 1991, p. 85; Jullien, 2006b, p. 68) expresses there:

“In the Chinese tradition, poetry criticism is often a poetic undertaking itself, reveling in allusive, even cryptic expression. Rather than reconstructing meaning through paraphrase, it tends to stimulate one’s receptivity in a broader sense.”

« Dans la tradition chinoise, la critique poétique est souvent elle-même affaire de poésie, elle se plaît à l’expression allusive, voire cryptique. Elle stimule les capacités réceptives plutôt que de reconstruire un sens. »

„W tradycji chińskiej krytyka poetycka często sama jest poezją i posługuje się stylem aluzyjnym, a nawet tajemniczym. Zamiast rekonstruować znaczenia, stara się pobudzać naszą receptywność.”

It is this extremely significant issue articulated in *Praise of Blandness...* that seems to be the crucial theme of the entire *Detour and Access...* or at least one of the fundamental aspects presented there. To grasp this, it is enough to treat the relationship between poetry and poetic criticism contained in this fragment as a discreet and restrained form of allusion to the need for systematical reflection on the relationship between the message that is the subject of specific reflections (or criticism) and the message that is by these thoughts (this criticism) formulated. It seems that the fundamental methodological assumption that comes to the fore during the analysis of the *Detour and Access...* should be to underline the special importance of paying constant attention to the mutual interdependence between *what* we talk about and *how* we do it (Szymczyński, 2020).

As a result, reading *Detour and Access...* may be interpreted as a process of following the footsteps of a certain conversation or talk, which, thanks to its French author, takes place in the space between the subject of consideration (interpretations of specific manifestations of the politics of strategy of meaning in ancient Chinese and Greek cultural areas) and the form in which the author of these conducts its deliberations (which, after all, by all means, and without exception is a subject to the laws of a more or less consciously adopted politics of strategy of meaning as well). On the other hand, taking seriously the relationship between the form and content of the narrative message directs our focus towards the challenges arising from both translations in their traditional form and multi-translations, which is the central proposition of the hermeneutics of multilinguisticity used here. As Hans-Georg Gadamer (Gadamer, 2000, p. 16; Gadamer, 1993, p. 360; Gadamer, 2003, p. 39) states in this context:

“Poetry, the lyrical poem, is the best instance for the experience of the particularity and foreignness of language. There are not so much degrees of translatability from one language into another language as degrees of untranslatability. The despair of every translator in working on a translation is that there are not corresponding expressions for the individual expressions in the foreign language. The theory of pure correspondence is evidently false. We must recognize a boundary here.”

„Da ist Poesie, das lyrische Gedicht, die große Instanz für die Erfahrung der Eigenheit und der Fremdheit von Sprache. Es gibt nicht so sehr Grade der

Übersetzbarkeit von Sprache zu Sprache als Grade der Unübersetzbarkeit. Es ist die Verzweiflung jedes Übersetzers im Anfertigen von Übersetzungen, daß es zu den einzelnen Ausdrücken der fremden Sprache keine korrespondierenden Ausdrücke gibt. Die reine Korrespondenztheorie ist offenbar falsch. Wir haben hier eine Grenze anzuerkennen.”

„Swoistości i obcości języka doświadczamy najmocniej w tłumaczeniach poezji, lirycznych wierszy. Istnieje nie tyle stopień przekładalności z języka na język, ile stopień nieprzekładalności. Zmorał tłumacza jest fakt, iż nie ma wyrażen rodzimego języka, które odpowiadałyby poszczególnym wyrażeniom języka obcego. Koncepcja czystej odpowiedniości jest jawnie fałszywa. Musimy zaakceptować ograniczenia.”

Let us add here, that both the words of the French sinologist on Chinese poetic criticism and the opinion of the German hermeneutist on the essence of translation in general quoted above in three language versions are intended to illustrate the dissimilarities that appear in each successive version. It is therefore about emphasizing the need to signal the aspect of narration about individual cultural areas also in a specific aesthetic dimension, which, in turn, are also the carriers of these narrations, which additionally results from the fact that the idea of the possibility of implementing an ideal translation can no longer be treated as even potentially present within the limits of what is possible.

Thus, juxtaposing translations performed this way is aimed not only at their mutual validation. Not only does it provide a field for capturing compromises that are often necessary for translation practice, which result from a whole set of possible causes, but it is also aimed at including into the space of interpretation that emotional background that is extremely difficult to define clearly, and which often plays a fundamental role for an adequate understanding of communication. The background, which Jullien brilliantly presented during his interpretation of reciting fragments of *the Book of Songs – Shijing* (詩經 Shījīng), as a crucial aspect of negotiation procedures in the realities of diplomacy described in *the Spring and Autumn Chronicles – Chunqiu* (春秋 Chūnqiū) and – which is too rarely emphasized enough – in the commentaries on these Chronicles as well.

In this horizon of reflection, *Detour and Access...* is also worth interpreting as an attempt to tackle the issue of whether it is possible at all to imagine honestly speaking directly about something which, by its very nature, is based on the foundations of discretion, restraint, tact, taste and allusiveness on the one hand, and on the other hand is based on the conviction that it is simply impossible to talk about extremely complicated issues from the field of human culture(s) directly, and in which the framework outlined in this way is based on ambiguities and understatements. There are simply such aspects of our perception of cultural reality that is based on different dimensions of reception than those that serve us while performing some of the most basic everyday mental functions. Thus, it is raising an issue that to the highest degree belongs to the sphere of methodological considerations, even if it is mainly focused on the serious treatment of matters inherently ambiguous, and therefore problems that may be present both within various scientific disciplines, as well as those that may refer to different times and different cultural areas. In this context, the introductory words of Douglas Northrop (2012, pp. 4–5) to *A Companion to World History* published under his editorship are significant:

„Scholars are of course situated culturally and historically, with predispositions and theoretical frameworks shaped by positions in a modern, especially Anglophone and capitalist West [...]. World history [...] is, therefore, neither objective nor value-neutral – and far from truly global.”

Northrop's statement additionally suggests not to underestimate the possible difference of the phenomenon of the inability to reach what is objective and value-neutral between (a) these present as a result of, so to speak, limited human cognitive competencies, on the one hand, and (b) these, which become more consciously applied due to some ideological assumptions on the other hand.

It seems that in this context however, the question should be asked whether the issue of the strategy of the sense of an indirect approach, a roundabout way, or an allusive distance – which, following the opinion of François Jullien, let us at this point consider at least tentatively as representative of the Chinese cultural area – should not be divided into two further types? A detour way thus understood – as a kind of opposite to the direct strategy of meaning – would then basically consist on the one hand of speaking indirectly, or not speaking at all on the other hand.

At the beginning of the book devoted to this issue, he articulates his reluctance to what he defines as predetermined categories (*catégories préétablies*). Drawing direct inspiration from ancient treatises devoted to military strategies, among which the Art of War by Sunzi (孫子兵法 Sūnzǐ Bīngfǎ) deserves to be emphasized, the French thinker focused on two pairs of opposing concepts. First pair: *zheng* (正 zhèng), which among many other options may mean *directly* and *straight*, and *qi* (奇 qí), which as well may be understood in many different ways including the meaning of *indirectly* and *detour*. Second pair: *zhi* (直 zhí), meaning *straight ahead*, and *qian* (迂 qiān), meaning *dodging*. With these two pairs of notions, Jullien offers his readers a journey through selected great works of art of Chinese culture, in such a way as to, as he emphasizes, by a detour way reach a more precise view of his own European culture. Here an important question arises: to whom Jullien is addressing his words? On the one hand, one can even suggest reading the entire monograph as an attempt to answer this question. On the other hand, at the outset we come across an important clue (Jullien, 2004, p. 8; Jullien, 1995, p. 8; Jullien, 2006b, p. VII) in this context:

“Will I successfully demonstrate how to decipher a discourse to someone who knows neither the language nor the context (for I consider the non-sinologist my primary audience)? How does one interpret «exotic» meaning?”

« Ce qui ne va d'ailleurs pas, pour moi, sans un certain pari : m'adressant au non-sinologue (car c'est d'abord à lui que je m'adresse), celui de réussir à montrer comment déchiffrer un discours à qui n'en connaît ni la langue ni le contexte. Car comment se faire l'interprète d'un sens « exotique »? »

„Co zresztą jest dla mnie pewnym wyzwaniem: zwracam się do niesinologa (ponieważ przede wszystkim do niego się zwracam), który nie zna ani języka, ani kontekstu, aby mu pokazać, jak skutecznie odszyfrowywać wypowiedź. Jak bowiem stać się tłumaczem «egzotycznego» sensu?”

Here as well, apart from presenting the interpretative challenges that result from the possible ambiguities of terms: *zheng* (正 zhèng), i.e. *straight*, *direct*, but also *classical*

or *orthodox* and many others, and: *qi* (奇 qí), i.e. “*detour*”, “*indirect*”, “*non-classical*”, “*unorthodox*”, and many others as well, it is also worth noting several other challenges that result from the presence of forms of translation and multi-translation within the basic scope of content related to intercultural issues, which in this particular case focuses on the challenges of interpretations of Chinese culture. Here, once again the need to confront the dilemma of fundamental importance that constantly appears in various forms becomes apparent: which of the cultural and linguistic facts the authors of specific texts – and then subsequent authors of translations – consider to be fundamental, and therefore the one that will serve as a kind of basis in translation as an inescapable source of understanding? It is about more or less strongly indicated starting points of specific forms of communication, which, especially when entering the area of translation, very often demand an increase in the precision of articulated assumptions. Thus, an extremely important and often overshadowed issue of the reception of important textual works of art across the line of time and space of cultures appears here, which, however, is still too rarely considered together with the role that translations of these works play in such a horizon of reflection.

François Jullien takes two important terms present in the Chinese ancient *Art of War* by Sunzi (孫子兵法 Sūnzǐ Bīngfǎ): *zheng* (正 zhèng), i.e. “*straight*”, “*direct*”, but also “*classical*” or “*orthodox*” and many others, and: *qi* (奇 qí), i.e. “*detour*”, “*indirect*”, “*non-classical*”, “*unorthodox*”, and many others as well, and applies it in the field of modes of communication as a strategy of a detour, or oblique (*détour ou de biais*) and strategy of access, or frontal (*l'accès ou de front*). The dilemma presented in this way ought to be confronted with the question: is it at all possible to think of the formula “*directly to the goal*” from the point of view of the multicultural dimension of social reality? Even if it occurs extremely often on the level of common beliefs about everyday social activities in the first person, both singular and plural? In addition, it is perhaps at this very moment when we consciously recognize the need to articulate a specific legitimization of our insights as having scientific features. Eventually, the question arises whether it is sufficient just to apply certain methodological assumptions, or whether a specific articulation on this subject ought to be indicated there as well.

Such an assumption leads us to the opinion that if in the optics of research on culture in its multidimensional specificity it is really not possible to imagine the existence of a preconditionless “*directly to the goal*”, then Jullien’s distinction between “*directly*” and “*indirectly*” may be worth to modify it slightly into “*politics of detour*” on the one hand, and “*politics of the rhetoric of silence*” on the other. Then we see a uniquely anthropological picture, which surprisingly opposes the initial intuitions inspired by the formula proposed by Jullien. As a result, what we have defined here as the rhetoric of silence is unexpectedly connected with Jullien’s “*directly to the goal*” rather than with his “*detour*”. Leaving aside at this point the attempt to list the various possibilities of the potential manifestation of social situations that would fit within the figure of the rhetoric of non-speaking, or silence, let us only emphasize here that what is subject to interpretative proposals as part of various types of activities that can be encountered in within the limits of the Chinese cultural area may also find its application to narrative attempts devoted to this fascinating topic.

Regardless of all the dilemmas mentioned above, however, it seems to remain outside the scope of the dispute that it may profoundly help the readers to be aware, that François

Jullien expects them to accept the method he proposes, which is based, among others, on a certain unarticulated agreement between the author and the recipient that the latter agrees that for her or him to understand certain issues there must come an appropriate moment, and that, therefore, it is impossible to communicate about such issues another way than in a peculiarly detour or roundabout way, which not only does not want but above all cannot offer any different type of narration. Jullien (2004, p. 11) expresses: “[...] I find it unproductive to list the effects of meaning in predetermined categories, such as by fields – political, poetical, philosophical – or by method: allusion, citation, image.” (« [...] je croyais stérile de ranger les effets de sens dans des catégories préétablies (par domaines: politique/poétique/philosophique, etc.; ou par procédés: allusion, citation, image, etc.) » (Jullien, 1995, p. 11)). In this context, Jullien emphasizes that he is not referring to a directly understood comparative perspective between China and Greece, but to a specific “setting of perspectives” (*mise en perspective*) and justifies his point of view as follows:

“[...] the other point of view that China offers is not immediately accessible and has to be constructed. I have attempted to construct a way to put China and Greece into perspective, on the level of discourse, rather than to trace a parallel between them, for I do not believe in the possibility of dividing the page in half with China on one side and Greece on the other. Or rather, I think that a broad comparison of this type, which immediately claims to situate differences, is unproductive. Strategies of meaning can only be understood from the inside, by following their internal logic. This explains the itinerant pace that reflection will assume here. Indirect and meandering, full of turns and returns, this work will be a circuitous journey. But from one station to the next, the landscape will change and a panorama will begin to take shape. This is the reason for my occasional appeals to the reader’s patience, for the effects of meaning cannot be summarized [...]” (Jullien, 2004, pp. 9–10).

« [...] cet autre point de vue que nous fournit la « Chine » n’est-il pas donné d’avance et faut-il réussir à l’édifier. Entre la Chine et la Grèce, à propos du discours, c’est une telle *mise en perspective* que j’essaie progressivement de « monter ». Plutôt que de tracer un parallèle. Car je ne crois pas à la possibilité de diviser la page en deux: d’un côté la Chine, de l’autre la Grèce. Ou plutôt je crois que ce genre de surplomb, qui prétendrait ranger d’emblée la différence, ne conduirait qu’à la stériliser. Car les stratégies du sens ne se comprennent que de l’intérieur, en épousant leur logique individuelle. De là résulte l’allure itinérante que prend ici la réflexion. Détours et retours – ce travail est un cheminement. Mais, d’une station à l’autre, le paysage se transforme, un panorama s’esquisse. De là, aussi, l’appel à la patience que j’adresse parfois au lecteur. Car les effets de sens ne peuvent se résumer » (Jullien, 1995, p. 10).

„Nie wierzę bowiem w możliwość podziału strony na dwie części: z jednej strony Chiny, z drugiej – Grecja. Czy raczej wydaje mi się, że taki rodzaj oczywistości, który rzekomo miałby natychmiast porządkować różnicę, pozbawiłby ją głębi, ponieważ strategie sensu można zrozumieć tylko od wewnątrz poprzez przyjęcie ich indywidualnej logiki. Stąd refleksja przybiera tu postać wędrówki. Okrążenia i zakręty – ta praca to pewna marszruta. Wszelako między jednym a drugim postojem zmienia się pejzaż, rysuje się panorama. Dlatego od czasu do czasu apeluję do Czytelnika o cierpliwość; efektów sensu nie da się bowiem streścić” (Jullien, 2006b, p. IX).

All the specificity of Jullien's style is emphasized here. He seduces the reader with an almost poetic form, and at the same time, the recipient expecting rather precise formulations may for example perhaps not be satisfied with the use of the terms "China" and "Greece" in the same point of reference. The unequivocal similarity of the formulas of the altering "landscape" or the "panorama" to the concept of the changing "horizon" developed in detail by the German philosopher and philologist, the creator of philosophical hermeneutics Hans-Georg Gadamer, may also be considered problematic, especially due to the fact that a reader is not going to find any referential acknowledgments to this source.

Whereas, without any doubts regarding the acceptance of the offer proposed by the French sinologist to wander in his *Detour and Access...*, it is worth remembering its author's appeal for the patience of the reader. Thus, on the one hand, it is undoubtedly worth unequivocally approving Jullien's idea underlining the need to view these effects of the meaning of another culture without abbreviations, which really helps in perceiving its multidimensionality, as well as in the same time in the formula of feedback, allows to capture one's own culture in a different light. On the other hand, however, appearing here and there gaps in the field of references, for example in the form of footnotes to sources and authors, based on which Jullien constructs his narration, should be classified as matters that may arouse justified controversies.

One of the most interesting aspects of the method used by François Jullien in the monograph discussed here is the effect he obtains as a result of using a specific narrative formula, inspiring his readers to try to construct their own thoughts and, as a result, their own opinions concerning the threads taken up in this book. In this sense, this book is indeed not the one that thinks for its readers, but the one which makes its readers think.

From this point of view, it is worth noting two fundamental challenges that constitute almost continuously double-intertwined obstacles in the narrative attempts of the Chinese cultural area. On the one hand, it is not seldom to be able to observe the whole chains of different proposals of translations of words and sentences, which indeed remind us from time to time of famous children's game of whispering from one ear to another a set of randomly selected communicate, which at the end of that process quite often doesn't resemble the original message at all.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, often these are those different strategies of meaning, which, in a way that is often not easy to grasp, influence the shape of "what" and "how" had been said, suggested, or maintained unexpressed at all.

These two main sets of challenges deliver a whole range of consequences. In the first place, the request for caution should be mentioned here as part of a too-hasty attachment to combining referents with their contents as forms that are invariable in

<sup>4</sup> It is worth adding here that being popular among different cultural-lingual areas of the world the game has many different names and some of which may be controversial in light of modern assumptions under the common banner of political correctness. Those independent from international stereotypes are: "Telephone", "Broken telephone", "Gossip", "Whisper down the lane", "The messenger game", "Secret message", and many others. On the other side, in some of the regions of the English language cultural area, one may find this game called: "Chinese whispers", but also "Russian scandal", to name only a few. In French: *Téléphone arabe* ("Arabic telephone") or *Téléphone sans fil* ("Wireless telephone") which especially contemporarily shouldn't be understood as a mobile phone, even if the latter one has no wire as well. "From ear to ear" – *Kulaktan kulağa* – in Turkish, "Quiet mail" – *Stille Post* – in German, and "Deaf telephone" – *Gluchy telefon* – in Polish.

principle. Of course, the issue of the specific liquidity of formulas describing particular types of phenomena or insights is obviously also present in the field of Western culture, but it seems that there is a significant difference in proportions here. The perspective developed by François Jullien perfectly reflects the source of this fundamental difference. He emphasizes the difference between “the word as definition” (*la parole de définition*) characteristic of the mainstream of Western culture and “the word as indication” (*la parole indicielle*), which the French philosopher attributes to articulations frequently occurring in the space of Chinese culture:

“While the word as definition strives for universality, the word as indication proceeds from universality. In the one case, universality constitutes the aim (*telos*), in the other, the source. Socratic generality or Confucian globality: definition, on the one hand, modulation, on the other; their differing strategies are based on this difference of modes of universality. Generality can be defined, globality cannot. Instead, one becomes aware of, realizes. Definition causes one to know, modulation brings about realization” (Jullien, 2004, p. 247).

« Tandis que la parole de définition tend à l’universalité comme à son aboutissement, la parole indicielle en procède. Dans un cas, l’universalité constitue le but (son *telos*), dans l’autre, elle est la source. Globalité confucéenne ou généralité socratique; modulation, d’une part, et définition, de l’autre: à partir de ce décalage dans le mode d’universalité s’éclaire la différence des stratégies. Car si on définit la généralité, on ne définit pas la globalité. Mais on s’en rend compte, on en prend conscience. La définition fait «connaître», la modulation fait «réaliser» » (Jullien, 1995, p. 285).

„Podczas gdy wypowiedź definicyjna dąży do powszechności jako celu, wypowiedź wskazująca z niej wypływa. W pierwszym przypadku powszechność stanowi cel (*telos*), w drugim zaś jest źródłem. Konfucjańska *całościowość* albo Sokratejska *ogólność*; z jednej strony *modulacja*, z drugiej – *definicja*: na podstawie tej rozbieżności w sposobie pojmowania powszechności wyjaśnia się różnica strategii. O ile bowiem definiuje się ogólność, nie da się zdefiniować całościowości. Zdajemy sobie jednak z niej sprawę, uświadamiamy ją sobie. Definicja daje «poznanie», modulacja pozwala «uświadomić sobie»” (translation by T.R.S. based on translation made by Maciej Falski: Jullien, 2006b, p. 166; Szymczyński, 2020, p. 133).

Thus, there is a difference here within strategies that articulate meaning, which extends between what is general, and therefore abstract or abstracted, and what is holistic, and therefore constituting an inseparable unity. So, on the one hand, we are dealing with “knowing”, on the other hand, with “realizing”. François Jullien underlines here an extremely important challenge in the field of methodology, which should direct our attention to issues related to the highlighted here peculiarities of scientific and philosophical thought devoted to human beings, and which is particularly clearly present with such attempts at cross-cultural insights. At the same time, in this way we obtain material that can be used in the area of attempts to improve that sort of conceptual box of tools, in order to continue this kind of journey, hopefully with a slightly more confident step, through the priceless creations of great different cultures.

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### François Jullien i optyka metodologiczna w jego *Drogą okrężną i na wprost. Strategie sensu w Chinach i Grecji*. Perspektywa hermeneutyczna

#### Streszczenie

*Drogą okrężną i wprost do celu. Strategie sensu w Chinach i Grecji* autorstwa François Julliena można interpretować jako interesujący przykład wyzwania metodologicznego, jakie pojawia się wokół pytania: w jakim stopniu określona strategia sensu (*stratégie du sens*) przyjęta jako przedmiot badań wpływa na formę i treść wyników tych badań? W dodatku, można tu również zastosować optykę odwrotną: w jakim stopniu określone założenia dotyczące formy i treści badań mogą wpływać na ich wyniki? Z tego punktu widzenia warto zwrócić uwagę na dwa fundamentalne wyzwania, które

niemal stale stanowią podwójnie splecione przeszkody w próbach narracyjnych na temat chińskiego obszaru kulturowego. Z jednej strony, są to często obserwowane łańcuchy różnych propozycji tłumaczeń słów i zdań. Z drugiej strony, to obecność różnych strategii sensu, które w często niełatwy do uchwycenia sposób wpływają na kształt tego, „co” oraz „jak” zostało powiedziane, zasugerowane lub w ogóle niewypowiedziane. W tym kontekście Jullien podkreśla różnicę między „wypowiedzią definicyjną” (*la parole de définition*), którą francuski autor uznaje za charakterystyczną dla głównego nurtu kultury zachodniej oraz „wypowiedzią wskazującą” (*la parole indicielle*), którą zalicza on do artykulacji występujących często w przestrzeni kultury chińskiej. Ukazuje się tu zatem odmienność w strategiach artykułowania sensu, która rozciąga się między tym, co ogólne, a więc abstrakcyjne czy wyabstrahowane, a tym, co całościowe, a więc stanowiące nierozzerwalną jedność. Mamy więc z jednej strony do czynienia z „poznaniem”, z drugiej zaś „uświadamianiem sobie”. To rozróżnienie podkreśla niezwykle doniosłe wyzwanie w dziedzinie metodologii, które powinno kierować naszą uwagę na zagadnienia związane z osobliwościami myśli naukowej oraz filozoficznej poświęconej człowiekowi, a które szczególnie wyraźnie uobecniają się wraz z próbami wglądów interpretacyjnych o charakterze międzykulturowym oraz wielojęzycznym.

**Słowa kluczowe:** François Jullien, Chiny, Grecja, Europa i świat, strategie sensu, metodologia jakościowa, hermeneutyka wielojęzyczności

