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Methods and Approaches

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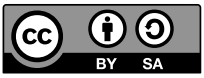

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Methods and Approaches

Editor's Foreword

Introduction

Jana S. ROŠKER, Editor-in-Chief

The present issue (Volume 10, Issue 3) of the journal *Asian Studies* is the first part of a double special issue on problems of transcultural (post)comparative philosophy. The two interconnected special issues deal with problems and developments in the methodology of (post)comparative approaches in transcultural philosophical dialogues between Asia and Europe. This double special issue is entitled *Transcultural (Post)Comparative Philosophy, Part 1* and *Part 2*, respectively. This first part of the double issue is subtitled *Methods and Approaches*. It focuses on methodological issues and innovative approaches and attempts to suggest new ways of engaging with transcultural philosophy. The volume addresses the relationship between Asian and global philosophy, issues of language and thought in a transcultural perspective, and theories of transcultural and (post)comparative approaches. Starting from an awareness of the multiple and often very complex problems associated with traditional cross-cultural and comparative philosophy, the authors aim to create new methods and approaches to develop new, more coherent and theoretically grounded models for the transmission of meanings and the exchange of knowledge and ideas between Asian and European philosophies. All these new methods and approaches are based on the awareness that we are dealing not only with different philosophical discourses, but also with structures and patterns of thought and language based on a different methodology and associated with different theoretical concerns.

In this sense, the first part of this double issue is divided into four parts. The first deals with issues related to *Chinese and Global Philosophy*, addressing in different ways the problems of the impact of globalization on the investigation, interpretation, and study of Chinese philosophy in the Western world. It contains four contributions and begins with Robert A. Carleo's entitled "The *Gongfu* Approach to Teaching and Doing Chinese Philosophy across Cultures". In this essay, a new method is proposed for studying and teaching East Asian philosophy, especially Chinese philosophy, transculturally. The method, which belongs to practice- and skill-based pedagogy, focuses on the practice, or *gongfu*, of studying and teaching philosophy with classical Chinese texts. The second article was written by Li Chenyang and deals with the current widespread ideas of "Chinese Philosophy as World Philosophy". The author explains his views on the question of the relationship between this culturally specific way of thinking on the one hand, and

other, especially Western philosophies, on the other. Since Chinese philosophy is for him not merely Sinophone thought, but one that is also marked by numerous methodological peculiarities, the author shows why and how it is by no means sufficient to rely exclusively on methods connected with the intellectual history of China in its "globalization process". Since there is an urgent need to make Chinese philosophy a world philosophy, we need to resort to conceptual approaches if we want to make real connections between the different philosophical discourses in the world today. In the next article, Vytis Silius argues for the use of translation to achieve similar goals. His article is entitled "Translation as a Philosophical Method: A Postcomparative Take on the Universality-Particularity Tension", pointing to the need for a more culturally oriented academic philosophy. The author suggests several advantages of using translation as a central methodological stance in intercultural postcomparative philosophy. A specific method of translation, which she calls "the method of discursive translation", is also introduced as an important tool for transcultural postcomparative philosophizing by Jana S. Rošker, the last author in this topic area. However, in her paper entitled "Sublating Sinic Relationism: On a Winding Path from Transcultural to Global Ethics", she also goes beyond the problems of translation and presents a new, dialectically defined method of so-called transcultural philosophical sublation.

The second part, *Language and Logic of Transculturality*, consists of three articles, all dealing with different issues of language and the logic of transculturality. This content section begins with David Bartosch's article on "Transcultural Philosophy and Its Foundations in Implicate Logic". The article focuses on transcultural, or as the author himself puts it, "transversal" studies. He starts from epistemological issues and their interpretations in Europe and China, respectively. In connection with the development of his new methodology, the author develops a new approach to transcultural (especially European and Asian) philosophy, which he tentatively calls a "meta-logical" approach. The next article in this part is Jaap van Brakel and Ma Lin's essay "Manifest Quasi-Universals and Embedding Conceptual Clusters: the Case of *Qing* 情". It begins with a critical review of the concept of translation as developed in the past by one of the authors of the previous part of this issue, namely Vytis Silius. Van Brakel and Ma accuse his method of overlooking the fact that meaning and translation depend on the predominant language used. On this basis, the authors discuss various important problems encountered in translating a Chinese text into modern English, focusing on the classical Chinese concept of *qing* 情. The third article in this part addresses the issue of language(s) in a completely different but also highly significant way. It is written by the internationally well-known scholar Bo Mou and is entitled "A Holistic Account of Adequacy Conditions for How to Look at Contraries: How

Cross-Tradition Engagement in Philosophy is Possible". Bo Mou's essay offers readers yet another and different meta-philosophical and meta-methodological characterization of comparative philosophy: it seeks to explain the importance of a holistic account of the conditions necessary for maintaining adequate methodological guiding principles when dealing with different approaches to the study and investigation of different philosophies.

All of these rich and varied approaches are followed by the third (and final) part, which contains even more heterogeneous contributions, but all of which can be grouped under the title *Comparative and Postcomparative Approaches*, since they all deal in one way or another with different models of comparing philosophies or ideas from different cultures. In their essay "Philosophy Pizza: On the Possibility of Trans-Cultural Pizzas and/or Philosophy", Dimitra Amarantidou and Paul D'Ambrosio confront their readers with a witty but critical look at how and why comparative philosophy was done (and is still done) as a method of approaching a supposedly objectively existing "truth", especially in the field of analytic philosophy, which tends to read and dialectically contrast philosophical texts in order to arrive at an "ever clearer understanding" of them. In contrast to the prevailing models and norms in Western academic discourses, they propose a different way of thinking about transcultural philosophy: Indeed, we might create new ideas through what they call *poeisis*, in the sense of "going with" tradition and "listening" to texts, rather than incessantly and paternalistically criticising them or even "speaking for" them. This essay is followed by an equally inspiring article by Hans-Georg Moeller entitled "Before and After Comparative Philosophy", in which the author starts from a critique of traditional intercultural philosophical comparisons and aims to develop some innovative forms of postcomparative philosophy that—in dialogue with traditional comparative philosophy—should go beyond difference and sameness and engage in different philosophical interactions by using different traditional sources without constituting a specific field based on culturalist distinctions. Such a postcomparative philosophy does not start from the distinctions between differences and sameness, it is not limited to a specific field, and it does not use a specific method as an authoritative guideline for investigating different ways of thinking or as a criterion for gaining new philosophical insights. The next contribution, entitled "The Problem of Ground in Comparative Philosophy. Quality, Quantity, Intensity" is by Margus Ott and deals with the philosophy of comparison in a different way. He applies a new distinction between qualitative, quantitative and intensive forms of philosophical comparison. On this basis, the author argues for exploring and creating new forms of philosophical comparison that allow differences between different philosophical traditions to develop in a renewed movement of thought in which

these developments receive their justification only from their own innate logical coherence, that is, from themselves. While the first three essays in this last scope of contents were concerned with the search for new forms of philosophical comparison, the last essay, entitled "Desire *Versus* Ego: On How Kaneko Fumiko Transcended Stirnean Egoism", aims to introduce a new form of comparison by means of a concrete example. In this final essay the author, Sašo Dolinšek, aims to show how Max Stirner's idea of egocentric individual anarchism was modified and transcended by Kaneko Fumiko, a female Japanese anarchist who lived on the threshold of the previous century.

The first part of this double special issue concludes with a short editorial survey on previous publications from the field of intercultural methodology in the journal *Asian Studies* itself.

The fascinating and extremely diverse contributions gathered in this first part of our "transcultural and postcomparative" issue do not stem from the traditionally dominant methodological discourses, but, on the contrary, challenge them to a great extent by confronting them with different approaches and new, alternative ways of looking at philosophies that have emerged in the course of different intellectual traditions. They can all be seen as distinct building blocks that constitute a process of reinterpretation that involves the construction of networks linking new terminologies, semantic structures, conceptual ideas, and normative frameworks. In this way, they aim to go beyond the traditional embedding of comparative intercultural philosophy in one-sided or even biased methodological and axiological predispositions.

SPECIAL ISSUE TRANSCULTURAL (POST)COMPARATIVE PHILOSOPHY, PART 1

Methods and Approaches

Chinese and Global Philosophy

The *Gongfu* Approach to Teaching and Doing Chinese Philosophy across Cultures

*Robert A. CARLEO III**

Abstract

This paper introduces a method of doing and teaching East Asian philosophy transculturally. The method underlies a pedagogy that has proven successful with students from diverse international backgrounds studying primarily in English, which suggests its potential for the wider scholarly community. The method centres on the practice, or *gongfu*, of doing philosophy with classical Chinese texts. The *gongfu* approach emphasizes the skill of interpreting and analysing texts within the context of the traditional works themselves. We have found that this skills-based approach to analysis bears much philosophical fruit. It does so, moreover, without subordinating the texts, their ideas, and their arguments to other more academically predominant frameworks. Or in more positive terms, it allows and encourages students to critically philosophize with the early Confucian and Daoist texts on their own terms, and to then creatively bring those unique insights and perspectives to bear on contemporary life.

This paper first introduces the *gongfu* approach to doing and teaching Chinese philosophy and its distinctive characteristics. It then contextualizes the value of this method through critically examining the nature of Chinese philosophy and how we can do *Chinese* philosophy in English. (How Chinese is it, and in what ways?) Throughout I offer short case studies from our program. I conclude by highlighting its promise as a mode (or valuable component) of transcultural philosophizing and briefly reflect on some reservations one might have.

Keywords: *Gongfu*, transcultural, methodology, Chinese philosophy, pedagogy

Gongfu pristop k poučevanju in izvajanju kitajske filozofije v različnih kulturah

Izvleček

Članek predstavi metodo transkulturnega izvajanja in poučevanja vzhodnoazijske filozofije. Metoda je osnova pedagogike, ki se je izkazala za uspešno pri študentih in študentkah iz različnih mednarodnih okolij, ki študirajo predvsem v angleščini, kar kaže na njen potencial za širšo znanstveno skupnost. Ta metoda se osredotoča na prakso oziroma *gongfu*

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izvajanja filozofije s klasičnimi kitajskimi besedili. *Gongfu* pristop poudarja spretnost interpretacije in analiziranja besedil v kontekstu tradicionalnih del. Avtor članka namreč ugotavlja, da ta metodološki pristop k analizi, ki temelji na veščinah, obrodi veliko filozofskih sadov, saj besedila ter njegove ideje in argumentacije ne podreja drugim okvirom, ki so akademsko bolj prevladujoči. Z drugimi besedami, metoda študente in študentke spodbuja, da kritično filozofirajo z zgodnjimi konfucijanskimi in daoističnimi besedili v okviru njihovih lastnih pogojev, ter nato ta edinstvena spoznanja in poglede ustvarjalno prenesejo na sodobno življenje. Članek najprej predstavi *gongfu* pristop k izvajanju in poučevanju kitajske filozofije ter njegove posebne značilnosti. Nato vrednost te metode kontekstualizira s kritičnim preučevanjem značilnosti kitajske filozofije in tega, kako lahko kitajsko filozofijo izvajamo v angleščini (kako kitajska je in v katerih vidikih?). V članku avtor izpostavi kratke študije primerov iz svojega pedagoškega programa. Na koncu poudari, da je lahko tovrsten pristop dragocena komponenta transkulturnega filozofiranja, in hkrati ponudi razmislek o nekaterih zadržkih, ki bi jih lahko akademska skupnost do te metode morda imela.

Ključne besede: *Gongfu*, transkulturnost, metodologija, kitajska filozofija, pedagogika

Introduction

After some years of experimentation in East China Normal University's graduate program in Chinese philosophy, we have settled on a practice- and skills-based pedagogy. Students learn through guided, collaborative reading of the traditional texts, relying on instructors to introduce and explain key concepts, contexts, and problematics but ultimately figuring out for themselves what to make of things. We understand this as a *gongfu* approach to learning. It encourages heuristic interpretation of passages and ideas through students' own informed reflection and discussion. The method thereby centres on creative exploration of philosophical meanings and possibilities within Chinese tradition, rather than on teaching, for example, who Zhuangzi was, what he thought, the meaning of his teachings, or even scholarly debates over interpretations of his teachings—the main foci of many courses and programs in Asian philosophy, especially those conducted in English. This method has proven fruitful specifically for our program, where self-motivated students from across the globe come together out of their shared interest in Chinese philosophical traditions. To us, this suggests that the *gongfu* method could be suitable for studying and doing Chinese philosophy across non-Eastern, principally Anglophone discourse more broadly. Our student body parallels the general composition of scholars in the field.

There are many methods to doing Chinese philosophy that, in their own ways, see much success. So, to be clear, this is not an argument for the superiority of a

single approach. Still, the present paper aims to depict unique strengths of doing and teaching Chinese philosophy this way, and specifically its potential for doing Chinese philosophy across traditions and languages. I argue that its inventive nature helps bypass questions of the legitimacy of doing non-Western philosophy in English—scepticism of which has developed for decades and remains an issue of significant academic concern. It does this by focusing on the practice—the *gongfu*—of doing Chinese philosophy rather than making claims about it. In this practice, we inherit and carry forward tradition. We carry it across eras and cultures as well.

This is possible through viewing philosophy as a craft and recognizing that crafts are simultaneously a matter of inheritance and creation. The craft of making good pizza, for instance, is acquired through learning methods that have been discovered and invented by others through experience and experimentation. One inherits others' experience and processes and puts them into practice for oneself, as suitable to one's own context, conditions, and preferences, in ways that differ from but remain deeply rooted in the pizza-making that came before. Hannah Arendt (1961) describes this as the nature of "education" generally, pointing out that such inheritance is itself inherently "new": it is not mere replication but the passing forth of particular forms of meaning-making through which successive generations give new life to the practices, and indeed the "world", they inherit. We may think also of the famous progression through which *The Karate Kid*'s Daniel-*san* inherits Japanese martial arts tradition in western California: Mr. Miyagi, his *sensei*, guides Daniel in self-discovery of basic karate techniques through familiar practices using local resources ("wash on, wash off"). That the practices travel fluidly across time and place is testament to their transcultural value, and yet these are not universal or generic skills, but distinctively karate skills, bound specifically to that tradition. Despite training in this new environment, through unique heuristics, the skills Daniel learns seem to be no less karate than if he had been a young man in Japan. There is something new, and yet it is also the old thing.

The skills-based approach to Chinese philosophy calls on us, as students of the tradition, to exercise and develop (in that order, because the development occurs through the exercise) capacities for critical reading, analysis, and interpretation of the classical Chinese as well as for evaluation of the practical and philosophical implications of various interpretations. Students of the tradition may be undergraduates, graduate students, or "life-long students" who work with the texts professionally.

This paper outlines the thinking behind the *gongfu* approach—a philosophy of doing philosophy this way. It first introduces this approach and its distinctive characteristics. It then contextualizes the value of this method through critically

examining the nature of Chinese philosophy and, specifically, how we do *Chinese* philosophy in English. (How Chinese is it, and in what ways?) Throughout I offer short case studies from our program. I conclude by highlighting its promise as a mode (or valuable component) of transcultural (or "global") philosophizing and briefly reflect on some reservations one might have.

The *Gongfu* Approach and Cuisine

The *gongfu* approach views Chinese philosophy as a practice and art rather than merely an object of study. We may think of this in terms of the difference between learning about food, learning to cook food, and training as a chef. (I fancy myself rather knowledgeable about food, and am even able to cook several things, but do not consider myself even an amateur chef.) The hope is to cultivate scholars of Chinese philosophy in a sense comparable to training chefs—developing a combination of skill, understanding, judgment, and creativity. Its aim is "mastery" of the craft in the sense of enabling inventive achievement[1]—specifically through exploration and analysis of the conceptual and value schemes put forth in traditional texts.

Let me begin with a (perhaps overly) simple example. Reading *Analects* 6.20, we have: "To know-*zhi* it is surpassed by liking-*hao* it, and to like-*hao* it is surpassed by taking delight-*le* in it." The text here distinguishes three things: to know-*zhi* something, to like-*hao* something, and to delight-*le* in something. Working with these distinctions, we can create meaningful potential interpretations of the three terms and their differences. Perhaps to *zhi* is merely cognitive, to *hao* involves a positive affective inclination, and to *le* combines both? Or perhaps *zhi* is passive, *hao* is motivational but competes with other motives, and *le* motivates action more fully? Or maybe the difference between *hao* and *le* is that *hao* is individualistic preference and *le* is shared communal enjoyment? Rather than working from the English terms, we bracket the three key verbs here—*zhi* as "knowing", *hao* as "liking", and *le* as "delighting in"—as terms with various possible meanings, and we then together explore their diverse interpretive possibilities. When we later encounter *Analects* 9.18, where Confucius tells us "I have yet to meet the person who is as fond (*hao*) of virtue as of lust and beauty", we (students, teachers, scholars) can carry over the possible readings of that term from passage 6.20 and consider whether they fit here and what the implications are of such readings. Through this manner of open-ended exploration, we consider possibilities such as: perhaps

1 Inventive achievement, of course, is more than mere creativity. My amateur cooking is sometimes quite creative, for example, but there is a large gap between that inventiveness and recognizable culinary achievement.

Confucius sees virtue as a matter of shared enjoyment (*le*) rather than individual predilections (*hao*)? We can also work back to 6.20, and ask: if *hao* can take better and worse objects, perhaps *le* can only take good objects?

This example highlights many of the key qualities of the *gongfu* approach. Firstly, it is closely tethered to the text and tradition, and yet also allows for—even fosters—consideration of novel readings. Certain interpretations we entertain will hold up well and yield interesting possibilities, and others will not. As with young chefs, some new dishes will taste better than others, and some need to go straight in the trash. But the creative practice is essential to future achievement, and merely following a recipe is not sufficient to develop skills of invention and judgement. In class, instructors must thus be authoritative while encouraging the presumption of authority, and to some extent also authorship, by the students.[2] This practice in the task of unpacking what a text gives us allows tradition to unfold anew. It is less pouring old wine into new bottles, and more making new wine from an old vine.

Compare this with other common approaches. Most common, in my experience, are pedagogies that present Eastern, Asian, or Chinese philosophies as objects of study rather than as discourses to engage in. This is how most Eastern Philosophy courses I know of are taught at American colleges and universities. Test questions ask: What school does Zhuang-tzu belong to? What are Buddha's Four Noble Truths? What are the differences between Daoist and Confucian views of the good life? This is, of course, valuable learning. In fortunate cases, it also lays the groundwork for further contextualization and discussion of Daoist, Buddhist, and Confucian ideas, aiming to bring greater relevance to the subject matter. This tends to rest on comparison and contrast: for example, in American culture the squeaky wheel gets the grease, while in Japan's Confucian ethic the nail that sticks out gets the hammer. Such methods of instruction can succeed in piquing students' interest in non-Western traditions of thought, showing they offer unique and exotic insights or outlooks. Even better, such comparison—for example, of ethics of individualism *versus* harmony, or identity frameworks of authenticity *versus* sincerity, or moralities of rights *versus* rites—can offer students deeper understanding of both their own cultures and the possibilities and practices that exist beyond them. In the best cases, these can be further brought to bear on contemporary life: What would Laozi think of global warming? What would Mencius think of the Black Lives Matter movement? Such engagement takes some aspect of traditional teaching and asks students to see its relevance today. This is undoubtedly valuable for learning comparative and non-Western philosophy, just

2 One anonymous reviewer notes that this presupposes a certain level of expertise on the part of *gongfu* instructor(s), a characteristic which distinguishes this approach from otherwise similar proposals for doing "global philosophy"—a helpful clarificatory point (and much appreciated).

as it is enriching to enjoy diverse cuisines.[3] It is also safe. Students acquire codified knowledge: they learn what Confucius taught, rather than rehearsing various potential (mis)readings of what he taught. This is quantifiable information they can be proud of, and which others can esteem—a core measure of successful education. This can also be understood as a consumption model. Students enjoy a nice meal rather than struggling, and potentially failing, to cook for themselves.

Another common approach is more advanced, and less dogmatic. We may read the texts through asking: Is there free will in the *Analects*? And by extension, also: How does Confucius conceive of moral responsibility? The nature of moral duty? What about moral reasoning? Emotions? Autonomy? The self? These are "philosophical" questions—and in an important sense they are the more "traditional" questions of Confucian *philosophy*, a discipline that dates back only a century or two. This is another highly valuable approach, one I use in my own scholarship and have adopted in teaching graduate courses. It is a close ally to the *gongfu* approach, in that it asks students to critically explore the nature of the teachings rather than just learn information about them. It is also undoubtedly essential and enriching work to undertake for both students and scholars. But it differs from the *gongfu* approach in first and foremost asking the texts to speak to an external discussion, that of modern non-Eastern philosophy, within the framework of that other discussion. We may think of it as following familiar recipes to cook up philosophy with Chinese ingredients.

The *gongfu* approach instead first seeks to gather what the texts can say to us on their own terms, which then may (or may not) bear on broader philosophical discussions and debates. The difference can be, in my own experience, profound. Again, a concrete example might help. We may consider: What does Confucius mean in famously stating that he differs from certain other exemplars by being *wu ke wu bu ke* (18.8)? Well, his diverse descriptions of the six exemplars each involves their sense of self (*shen* 身)—its purity or its disgrace. Another passage seems to further characterize Confucius as lacking a sense of self (*wu wo* 毋我) (9.4). So perhaps part of being *wu ke wu bu ke* is related to being *wu wo*—without a sense of self?[4] Why would that be? In tracing terms and ideas in this way, questions arise that bear on broader, familiar philosophical issues: identity, ethical flexibility, plurality, to name but a few. We may draw conclusions about autonomy from this investigation, but we do not frame our inquiry into the text in terms of autonomy or other established Anglophone concepts or problematics.

3 Paul D'Ambrosio and Timothy Connolly (2017) highlight the virtues of this approach.

4 Song commentator Xing Bing 邢昺 recognizes this connection between the two passages. See his commentary on C-Text: https://ctext.org/lunyu-zhushu/zi-han.

This helps thread the dual dangers of becoming untethered from the text and of losing philosophical interest. Disjunction from the text is difficult to avoid in analysing the passages in translation, and is exacerbated by approaching them through familiar Anglophone frameworks. *Wu wo* in translation becomes not being "egotistical" or "self-absorbed", and the key place of the self (*shen*) in 18.8, so present in the Chinese, fades almost entirely into the background, lost in the required convolutions of English grammar. So, while discussing the ideas in English, we tether that conversation closely to the terms and concepts of the original text so as to reduce the ease of moving accidentally or prematurely onto other grounds—analysing merely egoism and altruism, for example. We attempt to draw teachings and ideas out of the text by working within and across the vocabulary of the text, and then moving beyond it. This kind of work, I propose, puts us on the path to more than just cooking up familiar philosophical recipes using the classical texts.

This does not seek a "correct" reading of the text. It tells us not what the text means, or what Confucius thought, or what the distinctively "Confucian" philosophical views are, at least not definitively. We are instead engaging and honing skills for investigating and drawing out views from the texts—skills of creative exploration, analysis, and evaluation that allow for responsible and critical insight and innovation within the tradition. These are skills that Confucius himself seems to have expected, even demanded, of his disciples—and perhaps of people generally.

But is such free creativity enjoyed at the expense of academic and philosophical rigor? Of course, chefs do follow standard rules and procedures. The Associazione Verace Pizza Napoletana, for example, has codified "precise rules for the preparation and processing of 'veraci' (original) pizzas."[5] And yet the Associazione's President, Vincenzo Pace, tells us:

> The pizza secret lies all in the dough rising. Its recipe? It doesn't exist and I can tell you that, because I've learnt since I was a child that dough rising changes according to the weather, hot or cold, dry or dump. For instance if it's cold, you need hot water and a little salt, if it's hot you need less salt since it slows down the rising. These issues must be taken into consideration the night before, when preparing the dough. Ten to twelve hours are needed for a perfect rising. *You can standardize the process, but it is the experience that refines the art.* (Emphasis added)

5 https://www.pizzanapoletana.org/en/storia_avpn, accessed January 7, 2022. The pizza-based line of thinking is indebted entirely to Paul J. D'Ambrosio, who introduced it to me in discussion with a group of professors over pizza dinner. I owe my awareness of the AVPN, and the subsequent enjoyment of many extraordinary pizzas, to Chris Mulcahy and Laura D. Wade.

General standards offer important guides. But just following the rules is not enough. A true chef of Neapolitan pizza must exercise a cultivated artistic judgement. The official recommended rising time runs from 8 to 24 hours—you make the call. And a masterful chef may invent new versions of pizza Napoletana that will be officially recognized by the Associazione "if they are informed by the Neapolitan tradition of pizzas and are not in contrast with the rules of gastronomy". What makes a pizza Neapolitan? The designation "is characterised by ingredients, means and technologies of production". To be "veraci" is a matter of what you make it from and how you make it. But there is no one right way.

The *gongfu* approach views Chinese philosophy similarly, as a matter of masterfully combining certain ingredients in certain ways. Chinese philosophy is a tradition of thought distinguished by what it is made from and how it is made. But there is another, deeper connection between Napoletana pizza-making and Chinese philosophy: their shared component of decontextualization. The criteria for Napoletana pizza were established in the face of the globalization and commodification of the traditional dish. Only then did the question arise: What makes a pizza Neapolitan? Is it the shape? The person who makes it? Where it is eaten? The guild of pizza masters answered this question by recourse to tradition—traditional ingredients and practices. Eating a pizza in Naples, cooked by a local resident, does not make the pizza Neapolitan. It must be "produced and processed according to the old Neapolitan traditions and customs".

What makes this especially pertinent to Chinese philosophy today, then, is the transcultural potential of the Associazione's approach in the international forum of pizza-making. Pizza-makers are precluded from simply rebranding a regular, generic pie "Neapolitan" (e.g., as a marketing trick, to draw interest and increase sales) and as a result, customers enjoy an authentic product tied to the actual, rich culinary traditions of Naples—which they can now get around the world, from Hong Kong to Los Angeles, London, and New York. Chefs do not have to be Italian to make authentic Neapolitan pizza, or even to invent new ones. They just have to source their materials properly and use them responsibly, informed but not necessarily constrained by tradition.

What (is) Chinese Philosophy?

An ongoing, and perhaps inherent, identity crisis of Chinese philosophy parallels the questions the Neapolitan pizza guild faced. What counts as Chinese philosophy, and what makes it distinctively valuable? There has been much ado over the question of whether Chinese philosophy—what we call Chinese

philosophy, anyway—is properly considered "philosophy".[6] I here examine the other side of the equation: whether, or in what sense, Chinese philosophy is properly Chinese.

On this question, scholars have recently drawn a distinction between two senses of "Chinese" philosophy: philosophy done in the Chinese language, *Hanyu zhexue*, and philosophy done with sources from Chinese tradition, *Zhongguo zhexue*. The distinction frames a choice regarding what defines the Chineseness of Chinese philosophy. The established term at present is *Zhongguo zhexue*, which roots its Chineseness in "China" (*Zhongguo*). The proposed alternative seeks to shift that foundation to its distinctive linguistic medium (*Hanyu*). This would, of course, present a problem for doing Chinese philosophy across cultures and languages. It implies, for example, that doing Confucian, Daoist, and Chan Buddhist philosophy in another language is not properly considered "Chinese philosophy"—a troublesome prospect for our English-taught graduate program in Chinese Philosophy. At the same time, it is a proposal based in considerations that are not easily dismissed.

Yang Xiao notes that the term *Hanyu zhexue* can refer to either (i) the looser criterion of "any philosophy done in *hanyu*", the Chinese language, or (ii) the tighter criterion of "any philosophy done in *hanyu*, whose distinctive features are determined by the distinctive features of *hanyu*" (Xiao 2020, 151). The first sense, it seems, may not be substantively Chinese: we do not consider all philosophy done in English to be English philosophy in any meaningful sense. On the contrary, we generally find it perfectly fine to do Chinese philosophy in English without considering it English philosophy. The second sense, in contrast, offers a workable conception. It points to how doing philosophy in a given language tends to shape that discourse in certain ways. This draws its plausibility from the way distinctive features of traditional Chinese thinking seem essentially integrated with the language they are expressed through.

The proposal that we identify "Chinese philosophy" with the second sense of *Hanyu zhexue* rather than its predominant conception as *Zhongguo zhexue* understands its defining features less in line with the historical, geographical, political, ethnic, or even cultural components defining Chineseness and more in terms of Chinese philosophy operating as a distinct linguistic conceptual system. This turns on seeing philosophy and thinking as shaped by, or even products of, the structure of the particular language it operates in. Xiao points out that this argument for *Hanyu zhexue* is premised on a thesis of linguistic relativity that affirms linguistic determinism: that the characteristics of the language we think

6 Defoort (2001; 2006); Connolly (2015, 12–16); Lin et al. (1995).

in determines the kinds of thoughts we have (Xiao 2020, 142). This is also true of linguistic relativism generally, not just of the formulation Xiao attributes to the *Hanyu zhexue* discussions. It goes back to the origins of linguistic relativity in contemporary academia, with the Sapir-Whorf theory of linguistic relativity, which boils down to "the claim that what and how we see the world is determined for us by the overt and covert structures of our native language" (Rosemont 1988, 36). If this is true, one may presume it is generally reasonable to identify philosophic traditions with their distinctive determinative languages. At the same time, we cannot attribute too great a role to language, since it is not the exclusive determinant but at most one of many important factors in how ideas are shaped. Yang Guorong makes the point in a more general way, arguing that language is a crucial element in the ongoing process of human meaning-making but does not comprehensively encapsulate or determine that process (Yang Guorong 2021). If language is not fully determinative of thought, then it may make more sense to identify Chinese philosophy with its broader cultural tradition than merely with the linguistic system it (traditionally) trades in.

However, without seeing the second sense of *Hanyu zhexue* as the sole proper criterion of "Chinese" philosophy, we may still acknowledge and appreciate that philosophizing in Chinese operates—or at least can and sometimes does operate—in ways uniquely shaped by particular features of the language. For example, the term *qing* connotes (i) emotion, (ii) essence, and (iii) situated interconnection, three concepts quite independent of one another in English. Chinese philosophers, from classical to contemporary, have worked these overlaps so that their ideas, arguments, and theories cohere comfortably through the term in ways not possible in English. The Qing-dynasty scholar Dai Zhen, for example, explicates the term as essential stuff, and uses it to refer to our essentially human emotions (Dai 1961, §30). Li Zehou's theory of "emotion as substance" (*qing benti*) asserts the fundamentality of *qing*, understood as the lived and felt experience of human interrelations (Li Zehou 2011, 39–63). These kinds of connections are counterintuitive to many Europeans and Americans, who tend to think of emotion, essence, and concrete relations separately. This has even shaped modern scholarship, which includes significant discussion of which of these meanings to attribute to *qing* in the classical texts: Did Mencius and Zhuangzi use *qing* to refer to feelings, or to essence?[7] However, the seemingly independent meanings reveal close interconnections upon reflection: we often judge authenticity (essence, truth) through feeling and intuition, and our emotions arise precisely in and through our concrete

7 See e.g., Yang Bojun (1960, 241); Li Xueqin (1999, 11.300–301); Graham (1989, 98–99; 1990, 49–55).

relations and interactions with others. Thinking in English also has its distinctive conceptual interconnections. Consider the case of "freedom", which combines agency, non-interference, self-determination, and self-realization with a notorious ambiguity, and thereby pulls extraordinary weight in much Western thought.[8] A crucial upshot is this: we can manoeuvre in Chinese and English in certain ways more or less comfortably, which leads to particular ways of thinking and valuing in each.

So while language may not be fully deterministic, we can acknowledge it has some essential connection to the distinctive forms of Chinese philosophical thinking. It may be tempting, then, to shift the either-or *Hanyu-Zhongguo zhexue* framework to a both-and: Chinese philosophy both belongs to China's particular cultural traditions and incorporates distinctive nuances of the Chinese language. Moreover, the traditional Chinese sources were written both in Chinese and in China, so as regards traditional texts and thinkers the distinction is largely moot. However, for modern and contemporary philosophy, the difference becomes meaningful, even necessary. Especially as regards the international, primarily Anglophone discourse of "Chinese philosophy", the distinction may be of crucial consequence. And since Xiao lampoons the vagueness of the *Hanyu-Zhongguo zhexue* discussions, let me draw more clearly the distinction between "CP-Lang", as philosophy as distinctively shaped by the Chinese language, and "CP-Trad", as philosophical thought original to Chinese tradition.

A potential objection to the CP-Lang criterion for defining the Chineseness of Chinese philosophy is that much contemporary Anglophone Confucian moral and political philosophy would no longer count as "Chinese philosophy" under it. Even where these works are sensitive to the conceptual nuances of classical texts and terms—carefully explicating the nature of *ren* in Mencius, for example—the philosophy they do with Confucian sources often operates primarily on Western philosophical terms. Consider major works by leading contemporary political theorists such as Joseph Chan and Sungmoon Kim,[9] along with Zhouyao Li, Franz Mang, and others. These are "Chinese" or "East Asian" philosophy in working with materials that originated in and are associated with China and East Asia, with a focus on their contemporary relevance to these regions, but they speak entirely in and on the terms of modern Anglo-American political philosophy. By the same standard, most articles in volumes such as *Confucianism and Human Rights*, *Essays on the Moral Philosophy of Mengzi*, and

8 See Carleo (2021, esp. 12–15).

9 Chan (2014); Kim (2016); (2018).

Confucian Ethics[10]—collections I deeply admire, have learned a great deal from, and refer to frequently in my own thinking, teaching, and writing—fall beyond the pale of the CP-Lang definition. They cook up Chinese ingredients, but not with Chinese methods. They primarily do Anglophone philosophy with Chinese sources.

This helps show what is at stake with the CP-Lang/*Hanyu* condition of Chinese philosophy. On the one hand, I expect nearly everyone agrees that the aforementioned works are, in fact, properly considered Chinese philosophy, which suggests the CP-Lang criterion fails. Xiao makes this point in more general terms, noting "the scope of Chinese philosophy is obviously much larger than the scope of *hanyu* philosophy" since Chinese philosophy done in other languages remains Chinese despite not meeting the *Hanyu* stipulation (Xiao 2020, 152). Scholars can and do do Chinese philosophy in "Tibetan, Korean, Japanese, English, French, and German" (ibid.). On the other hand, however, this is where the value of the distinction itself arises. Certain works do CP-Trad but not CP-Lang. The usefulness of the two criteria may lie less in delimiting the proper scope of "Chinese" philosophy and rather in distinguishing different manners in which Chinese philosophy is being done.

Some works do CP-Trad but not CP-Lang. Other works do CP-Lang but not CP-Trad. I think here of modern philosophical texts that draw heavily or even exclusively on non-Eastern sources, yet in their reapplication of these sources to Chinese culture and society become distinctively Chinese. Within the particular problematics of Chinese intellectual tradition and through the conceptual frameworks of Chinese linguistic conventions, the foreign ideas are sometimes transformed. Such works can thereby be considered Chinese philosophy despite being rooted in or drawing heavily on non-Chinese sources. Mou Zongsan's revision of Kantian metaphysics and morality, which famously transforms Kant's metaphysics of morals into a moral metaphysics, is one example. A similar view may be taken of Yan Fu's adaptation (and perhaps even his translation) of J. S. Mill's philosophy of individual freedom. Both present non-Eastern philosophies through distinctively Confucian language, images, and conceptual schemes, and therein transform the theories into partly or even entirely novel sets of views. They do Chinese philosophy with non-traditional sources.

Generalizing these observations, we may say: rather than asking which standard, XP-Lang or XP-Trad, properly or better defines "X" philosophy, we can accept them both. Discussing sources from X tradition and doing so in ways distinctively shaped by X language constitute a pair of compatible but distinct conditions (or

10 De Bary and Tu (1998); Liu and Ivanhoe (2002); Shun and Wong (2004).

forms) of X-ness. Each concerns important components of what makes Chinese philosophy Chinese.[11] We may even see each as independently sufficient to validate the "X-ness" of a philosophy.

Two further observations tie back into the value of the *gongfu* approach for doing philosophy across cultures. The first point is the dynamic interrelation of the CP-Lang and CP-Trad criteria. Yan Fu and Mou Zongsan did Chinese philosophy with non-Chinese sources precisely by reconstructing those ideas in the language and concepts of neo-Confucian texts. We can go further: non-Chinese sources can become Chinese philosophy and thus incorporated into CP-Trad by being translated into and reconfigured in this way—through typically Chinese terms, categories, images, turns of phrase, and conceptual schemes. This is an essential part of how Buddhism became Chinese philosophy and central to the tradition. It shows that the linguistic and conceptual frameworks through which philosophy proceeds are themselves partly constitutive of its tradition. The second additional point follows: when we do philosophy with traditionally Chinese sources that is not informed by the nuances of their particular language, we are not *merely* doing CP-Trad without CP-Lang, as though this takes place instead in no language, on neutral terms. These are cases of CP-Trad done as (most often) AP-Lang, Chinese sources discussed on the terms of Anglo-American discourse. The predominant way of doing Chinese philosophy in English is this: cooking up American recipes with Chinese ingredients.

The value of the *gongfu* approach is that it does Chinese philosophy in English without shifting it as fully onto the grounds of Anglophone discourse. It recognizes that there are close, essential ties between the terms in which philosophical thinking proceeds and the tradition in which it is done.

Doing Chinese Philosophy through *Gongfu*

The moniker "*gongfu* approach" is adapted partly from Peimin Ni's *gongfu* or "Kung-fu" reading of the *Analects*. This takes Confucius's teachings as "*gongfu* instructions" and "a *gongfu* system" entailing a certain approach to practice (Ni 2018, 268). They present guides to living, without having too much to do with

11 Liangjian Liu (2015) explicates the "interactive relation between the content of philosophy done in the Chinese language (*Hanyuyan zhexue*) and the study of Chinese philosophy (*Zhongguo zhexue*)", therein identifying that Chinese thought has particular views of the nature of language; Liu also identifies that through translingual comparison we see the influence of structure of the Chinese language on Chinese thought; and finally that phenomenological description of the key terms of Chinese thinking (traditional and modern) allows for unique exploration of fundamental philosophical questions through the language and logic of Chinese thought.

abstract reasoning and propositional argument. Ni thus eschews attempts to "articulate Confucius' thoughts as a theoretical system of propositional knowledge", believing "the philosophy of Confucius does not focus on obtaining propositional truth, but instead on how to live one's life" (ibid., 268, 275).

Confucius, in the *gongfu* reading, offers guides much like the Associazione Verace Pizza Napoletana: the Master's "*gongfu* instructions are more like protocols, which can allow flexibility", and the teachings go "far beyond" rules and obligations, "into the realm of mastering the art of living" (Ni 2017, 27). Confucius intends to guide us in our practice, in how we live, and reading the *Analects* should thus include (and attend to) this broader array of interpretive possibilities. We should be careful to note this does not necessarily preclude reading Confucius through more analytic, argumentative, propositional, philosophical, critical, rationalist frameworks. Rather than reducing the number of possible interpretations by excluding such approaches, Ni admonishes us merely to not limit our readings to them, and not to take Confucius himself as primarily putting forth abstract, rational theories and arguments. This enriches and expands our interpretive horizon, asking us to take more into account when we read Confucius, not less.

It is important to emphasize that the *gongfu* approach outlined in this paper does not adopt Ni's *gongfu* reading of the *Analects*. It does not preclude or even discourage us from assessing the texts in terms of their logical propositions. So how and why call this a *gongfu* methodology? It is "*gongfu*" in the sense that Ni attributes to the *Analects* itself, in prioritizing the "art" of making meaning situated within a tradition. Rather than teaching propositions (e.g., "Confucius says X; which we can contrast with Laozi, who says Y, or with Kant, who says Z"), the *gongfu* method familiarizes students with effective (and justifiable, cogent, and contextualized) manners of creating meaning from the texts.

A key concern motivating Ni's advocacy of the *gongfu* approach is the modern move to read the *Analects* in abstract, intellectualistic rather than practical terms, so as to incorporate it into academic philosophical discourse. However well-intentioned this may be, in Ni's view it makes Confucianism less itself and more like mainstream Western philosophy.

The *gongfu* approach allows us to arrive at views that framing our study in other more common ways inhibits. We play with possible interpretations of *hao* and *le* rather than (or at least prior to) asking whether Confucian virtue is eudemonistic. But it does not foster untethered creativity. While inventive interpretation is encouraged, such interpretation should draw directly on and tie in closely with the specific terms and passages in the texts. This is in fact itself a typically,

substantively Confucian characteristic. Various Confucian philosophers, ancient and modern, practice precisely this sort of tethered creativity. Confucius himself famously edited the cannon, as did Zhu Xi. Arguments against competing thinkers are put in terms of "correcting" understanding of the meaning of terms and ideas in canonized texts.[12] More recently, contemporary scholars have offered various frameworks for conceptualizing and justifying this. Li Zehou links human thought and reason to culture, understanding Confucian tradition along with all theoretical and practical reasoning as constantly evolving through and adapting to human practice.[13] There is not one true Confucianism, but distinctively Confucian insights which can inform and enrich contemporary thinking and ways of life. Yang Guorong describes a similar dynamic in terms of world-making, offering a view in which humans continuously author their world through concrete interactive meaning-making—a view itself developed from the Confucian classics (Yang 2021). Henry Rosemont Jr. encapsulates this attitude in declaring the value of his own interpretation of Confucianism to be independent of its fidelity to classical thought, a useful "creative misreading of early Confucian writings" (Rosemont 2015, 9).

This way of interpreting Confucian teachings, based on Confucian tradition itself, is both conservative and progressive. It is a matter of preserving and saving culture and tradition precisely through their adaptation to the present. We do not need to—or want to—reinvent the pizza. As noted above, Hannah Arendt (1961) describes "education" in this vein, as a matter of both saving and creating "the world": the possessors of culture and knowledge, the masters of arts and sciences, persons of "authority" who take responsibility for this "world"—they preserve it by passing it on to younger, future generations. This inheritance by the new, meanwhile, carries the world forward in everchanging ways—building on, editing, and adapting what they have been given. This is what passing on the Way (*chuan dao*) has involved from Confucius through Han Yu to Mou Zongsan and Li Zehou. For all, where we go wrong is not in changing our inherited teachings, culture, "world", or "the Way" to suit the times and shifting circumstance. This is necessary, and is itself the nature of the Way. The call is not in substance to preserve or revive some "true" original meaning of the teachings, although it often takes this simplified outward form. It is rather for caution against straying too far from

12 This is central to the commentarial tradition of directly explicating texts, but also goes beyond it. For example, Qing Confucian Dai Zhen's treatise *An Evidential Study of the Meanings of Terms in the Mencius* goes through key concepts—including *li* (principle), *tian dao* (the Way of heaven), *xing* (human nature), *ren yi li zhi* (the cardinal virtues), *cheng* (sincerity), and *quan* (weighing)—in attempt to correct widespread misunderstanding of metaphysical, metaethical, moral, and practical components of Confucian teachings (Dai 1961).

13 See Li Zehou (2011; 2018); Rošker (2019; 2020, 14–20, 67–73).

the traditional teachings by accidentally grafting ideas from competing ways of thought onto our understanding of those texts, replacing one tradition with another. That is, we want to be careful about what we label "veraci" pizza. How to do this? Again, nearly all seem to agree, despite the diverse, incompatible philosophies each draws from the same tradition: we must return to the texts, they say, and look to the terms and concepts we find there. On that basis we can construct a truly Confucian philosophy for today.

Most scholars will agree that close reading of the texts and interpretation of them are essential, foundational to training in and doing Chinese philosophy. The *gongfu* approach proposes a way of doing so that helps carry more of what is substantively Chinese about Chinese philosophy, both as CP-Trad and CP-Lang, across languages and cultures. This functions similarly to the study and interpretation of the texts within Confucian tradition. At the same time, it also does not attempt to bracket the "undue" influence of familiar ideas from other traditions. We do not attempt to speak exclusively in Confucian terms or work solely within the conceptual realms of Chinese classics. On the contrary, the value and potential of studying these texts are enriched by working across traditions, vocabularies, and frameworks. It is simply that, working with texts and thinkers from Chinese traditions, we prioritize interpretation and discussion of the passages through the context, concepts, and terms of the original Chinese in order to keep the door to those connections as open as possible.

The premise is that working out the connotations and connections of the Chinese terms offers platforms for exploring interpretive possibilities, and that we need to be careful in working with English translations because CP-Trad operating in AP-Lang can prematurely restrain or shift the scope of interpretive possibility. Consider one more example: Reading Zhou Dunyi's *Taiji tu shuo (Explanation of the Diagram of* Taiji), we evaluate different potential interpretations of the nature of *taiji* and *wuji*—the supreme ultimate and the nothingness ultimate—within the passage's broader discussion of *tai*, *wu*, and *ji*, informed by the intellectual context of these concepts. Is *taiji* the ultimate limit of supremacy, and *wuji* the ultimate limit of nothingness? Or are they that which has the ultimate limit and that which has no limit? A related question: how does this pairing of *tai* and *wu* compare with the similar Laozian pairing of *you* and *wu* (roughly, being and nothingness)? We take into account the other forms or uses of *ji* in the text: *dongji* (the movement of the ultimate, or utmost movement?), *jingji* (utmost tranquillity, or the tranquillity of the ultimate?), and most importantly, *renji* (utmost humanity? the human ideal?). How does the discussion of cosmological generation and constitution in terms of *taiji*, *wuji*, *dongji*, and *jingji* connect with the ensuing discussion of *renji*, seemingly as an ethical ideal? We point out the relation to

Analects 2.1, where the ideal ruler is portrayed as *beichen*, the north pole star, and the deeper conceptual connection between polarity, the pole star, and human virtue within early Chinese thought.[14] Leading students into the texts, we explore the conceptual world through which the ideas originated and through which they unfold especially rich meaning.

This allows more CP-Trad to shine through, since it carries more of the CP-Lang elements of the tradition to the table. But it is not attempting to do CP-Lang. It is just drawing out conceptual and linguistic connections from the texts to enrich the *gongfu* practice of responsible, creative exploration of ideas and meaning by students and scholars around the world, in our case primarily in English. This may be considered "global philosophy", but more accurately is Chinese philosophy done globally. Nor does it view the Anglophone linguistic-conceptual system as an obstacle to the true meaning of the texts. Instead, it aims to work across several main linguistic systems of contemporary Chinese philosophy—traditional Chinese, modern Chinese, and English—in this practice. Again, following Ni (in a way), the *gongfu* approach aims to be more inclusive, not less.

There is one last question or concern I want to raise here: Some may be sceptical that we can work fruitfully across distinct, incommensurate conceptual systems. Is it possible? Don't we need a cogent, unifying framework within which to pose, address, and resolve philosophical questions? Henry Rosemont Jr. famously pointed out the incommensurability among conceptual schemes of such diverse languages and traditions as Chinese and English. He also distinguished the recognition of this incommensurability from the presumption that there exist "impassable barriers" between their ideas (Rosemont 1996). Rosemont believed that the pluralist recognition of diverse conceptual and value schemes among different linguistic-philosophical traditions "extends our intellectual horizons" and "can open up our vistas", and that in contrast "the impassable barriers claim can close them" (ibid., 164). While different conceptual schemes may allow us to view the world in different ways—and to even make different worlds for us—there is, he believed, translatability among the languages that allows for interchange between them, and thus also between the worlds (or less radically, views of the world) they present (Rosemont 1988, 42, 46–47). In this view, one can work fruitfully across philosophical traditions just as a chef can blend diverse cuisines. The *gongfu* view goes even further, recognizing that traditions and cuisines themselves originate and develop through such fusion. After all, Buddhist ideas were gradually, fundamentally incorporated into Chinese philosophical tradition from their origins in

14 For a thorough explication of these connection, see Jia (2009, 460–65, 479–86).

the West, just as the chili pepper was first brought to China from the Americas by European traders.

Transcultural, Comparative, and Incommensurable Systems

I hope to have shown the potential of the *gongfu* approach for doing Chinese philosophy transculturally, operating across multiple languages, conceptual systems, and intellectual traditions at once. It may be considered "postcomparative", in that it discards with separation between traditions and instead brings them together to bear on human issues (rather than Chinese, Asian, or Western issues) today. In this, it may be deployed as a method of doing "global philosophy", since it brings Chinese philosophy to bear on global philosophical issues and in global discourse. Of course, it is a specific manner of doing global philosophy, in that it centres on training in the particular skills of doing philosophy with, in, and through Chinese tradition.[15] I believe its traits have certain strengths compared with more common comparative approaches. In this final section, I suggest that it may be best taken to augment rather than compete with or seek to replace comparative study.

The incommensurability of different linguistic and conceptual systems has haunted comparative methods. Xinli Wang identifies the challenge:

> If two distinct c-p [cultural-philosophic] languages are incommensurable, comparative study between them is compromised such that rational philosophical comparison between them is problematic, difficult, and even in some measure unattainable. One needs to proceed with extreme caution. (Wang Xinli 2018, 580)

Wang's conclusion is that "meaningful comparison" between incommensurable systems is possible, but within highly restricted parameters.

> Systematic comparison, which requires the existence of a common language into which both languages to be compared can be translated without loss, cannot proceed in the case of incommensurability. Similarly, classical content-comparison based on the sameness of meaning/reference cannot be carried out between two incommensurable c-p languages. (ibid.)

15 A very helpful contextualizing review of "postcomparative" transcultural approaches to global philosophy, along with an alternative proposal centering on "sublation" rather than *gongfu*, is recently given by Jana S. Rošker (2022).

Wang's solution for arriving at "meaningful comparison" is to instead seek "rational comparison between *semantic contents*" of diverse schemes ("c-p languages") (ibid., 580, emphasis in original). He believes this can overcome obstacles to incommensurability by operating "at the *meta-theoretical level*, namely the comparison between distinct sets of cultural schemes, such as transcendentism *versus* immanentism and exclusive duality *versus* inclusive duality" (ibid., emphasis in original). Wang calls this "presuppositional comparison", since it compares two cultural schemes underlying the linguistic systems, citing David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames (1987, 1998) as models (Wang Xinli 2018, 581).[16] The virtues of this approach are "obvious":

> It does not require that there exist a neutral language into which both languages can be translated without loss. It does not require that there exist a unitary truth theory accepted by both languages. It does not require sameness or overlap of meaning or reference. Actually, it sidesteps many problems caused by meaning, reference, and translation.

Different systems can be meaningfully compared by levelling up (or ratcheting down?) to their disparate fundamentals.

Compare Wang's proposed "presuppositional comparison" with the *gongfu* approach. *Gongfu* does not seek a "meta-theoretical level" for comparison but rather operates within, or at least with continual reference and sensitivity to, the conceptual schemes of the classical texts. It seeks to move beyond the comparative project altogether, toward a synthetic one. This, however, in no way denies or devalues the comparative project. If anything, we find that it offers a more robust foundation for comparison. It facilitates, even motivates, the sort of "presuppositional comparison" Wang highlights the value of. It pushes us to consider (and operates through considering) the frameworks offered by the texts—the conceptual schemes and value systems they affirm and promote—and to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, practical and theoretical. Wang champions comparison of the overall frameworks of diverse conceptual systems, while the *gongfu* approach proceeds through syncretic exploration and evaluation of the conceptual systems of particular texts and traditions. *Gongfu* analysis and evaluation is fundamental and a prerequisite to the kind of comparison Wang advocates. From here, I must add one small objection to the way Wang puts things.

16 Interestingly, Wang does not cite the middle book of this Hall and Ames trilogy, in which they most explicitly put forth their comparative methodology. They explain this in terms of dominant and recessive modes of "problematic thinking", which is inverse between China and the West (Hall and Ames 1995, esp. xvi–xviii).

Wang champions "presuppositional" comparison, but this description is misleading. No comparison can proceed prior to accepting some suppositions from which to move forward. What Wang substantively describes is the attempt to proceed not from a place with no suppositions but rather from "pooling together" and working across all suppositions from both systems. This is "meta-theoretical" in that it works beyond each system *qua* system; however, it does not do so by taking up a third position, but rather by working through and across the components of both systems at once. We play neither rap nor rock'n'roll, but rather meld the two distinct genres. So one issue with the term "presuppositional" is that the approach it describes does not proceed prior to supposition but rather through embracing, exploring, and working across the diverse, conflicting suppositions of multiple systems. (It thus precedes total commitment to any foundational suppositions, and in this sense it might be better seen as provisionally suppositional rather than "presuppositional".)

Liangjian Liu and I have recently contrasted two levels of philosophizing: *yin* and *yang*. Drawing on Robin R. Wang's explication of these elements within traditional Chinese thought, we see *yang* philosophy as focused on "explicit order" and particular problematics, while *yin* philosophy directs us to examine the "underlying order" of foundational background elements on which particular problematics are based (Carleo and Liu 2021, 133–34; Wang Robin R. 2012, 145–48). *Gongfu* and the "presuppositional" approach commit us to exploring and reckoning with the *yin* factors as well as the *yang* components of multiple systems. We work forward from what resources we have, and from within that concrete, syncretic, historical position we evaluate which suppositions to value and hold to. The *gongfu* syncretism seeks a richer, more diverse field of premises and suppositions that offer a richer fabric from which to proceed with *yang* philosophizing.

We may understand this as exploring traditional Chinese lines of reasoning, brought into the modern international arena. Seeing philosophy as primarily the exploration of various lines of reasoning—especially on normative and existential topics—the *gongfu* approach places Chinese philosophy on equal footing to other discourses and traditions. Indeed, many philosophers question the predominance of familiar Western lines of thinking in philosophy. As Jana S. Rošker writes,

> It has become clear to most people that "Western epistemology" represents only one of many different forms of historically transmitted social models for the perception and interpretation of reality. Hence, polylogues between different forms of such intellectual creativity are not only possible, but also a most sensible thing to do. (Rošker 2021, 7; cites Ames 2015, 109–10).

Among the various manners of negotiating and renegotiating which epistemological models we adopt and deploy across traditions and languages—comparative and postcomparative—the *gongfu* method contributes a valuable, even crucial, instrument to the toolbox of global philosophy.[17]

Having touted its strengths, let me conclude by turning to some potential concerns about the *gongfu* method. One might object that this approach seems poised to relegate Chinese philosophy to the margins of philosophical discourse, if not banish it altogether. Philosophy departments are uninterested in this kind of loose "creative exploration", and demand analytic rigor.[18] While this approach might be common in or suited to East Asian institutions, it will hardly pique the interest of non-Eastern academic philosophers. The only places for such interpretive reading in American and European institutions are Sinology and comparative literature departments (and Sinologists might reject its insufficient rigor, as well).

This objection is premised on considerations both theoretical and practical. The theoretical side involves the question of the legitimacy of Chinese philosophy as philosophy. More practically, the question is one of publishing, jobs, and funding: Who gets what? Since scholars committed to certain conceptual frameworks and problematics stand as gatekeepers to the discourse and profession, even those hoping to diversify the field require new voices to speak meaningfully to and within those commitments. These practical dimensions of the objection are analogous to saying that training Daniel in karate will not prepare him for the boxing ring, where different rules apply and other skillsets determine success. Even if such *gongfu* training in Chinese philosophy is valuable in its own way, it is not valuable in the right ways—the most valuable ways.

17 One possible concern here is that the commitments and frameworks of global and comparative philosophy may prevent accepting or even recognizing the relevance and value of the *gongfu* approach. In other words, *gongfu* may be valuable on its own terms, but those terms may not speak to global or comparative thinking. Many thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out, and for offering a way to "objectivize" *gongfu's* contribution on a methodological "middle ground": the recent work of two Western neurologists, Morten H. Christiansen and Nick Chater (2022). Christiansen and Chatter offer scientific evidence for recognizing the *gongfu*-like nature of the evolution of natural languages, which occurs holistically *via* culturally (and historically) situated invention. As they describe it, the spontaneous, evolutionary development of languages is, indeed, world altering for us. Moreover, the meaning-making power of particular languages relies not on set epistemic or linguistic structures but on the interactive, imaginative communications of language users—particular humans creatively conveying understanding to one another in ever new ways that also rely on and inherit linguistic traditions and conventions. The objective (scientific) quality of this general property of language and meaning may help those with non-*gongfu* epistemic commitments to recognize the method's worth.

18 Indeed, nowhere here have I properly, analytically defined the *gongfu* approach itself—a stark violation of "philosophic" norms, yet fully aligned with the nature of *gongfu* practice and its descriptive, contextual, contingent approach to meaning and meaning-making.

What are the right ways to do philosophy generally, and specifically Chinese philosophy? I suggested that the ongoing, and perhaps inherent, identity crisis of Chinese philosophy parallels the questions the Neapolitan pizza guild faced: What counts as *Chinese* philosophy (or *Neapolitan* pizza), and what makes it distinctively valuable? For Chinese philosophy, however, the questions raise an additional hurdle not faced by the pizza chefs. No one would question whether Neapolitan pizza is legitimately pizza, only what makes a pizza distinctively Neapolitan. Chinese philosophy faces both questions: What makes it legitimately philosophy, and how is it distinctively Chinese? The dual demands, moreover, often conflict, creating the "double bind" on specialists in Chinese philosophy described by Amy Olberding: to be sufficiently philosophical requires trading in questions of established non-Eastern academic philosophy, yet to be distinctively valuable demands offering something uniquely Chinese (Olberding 2015, 15). We need to cook something palatable, but exotic.

So what to do in the face of this double-bind? Yong Huang argues that it necessitates we demonstrate Chinese philosophy can "help solve the problems that occupy current mainstream Western philosophers" (Huang 2016, 18–19). He thus proposes "while we let Western philosophy dictate what issues to talk about, we let Chinese philosophy have the final say on each of these issues" (Huang 2013, 133; cf. 2016, 19). The practical appeal of this approach is undeniable—if we want access to the kingdom, we must make keys that fit the locks. Another proposal is to drop the focus on being Chinese and simply philosophize along generic lines, using Chinese sources. The premise for this is that, for philosophy students and scholars, the "value of Chinese and other 'Non-Western' philosophies comes not from their being 'Chinese' or 'Non-Western,' but from being philosophical" (D'Ambrosio, Amarantidou, and Connolly 2021). Of course, the inverse move might work as well. We could drop the claim to being "philosophical" in the narrow sense of established discourses that dominate (non-Asian) academic departments, which tend broadly toward either Analytic or Continental, and this would reduce the pressure to conform to the norms of those discourses. Perhaps interpretation of the texts is better off elsewhere, avoiding the "violence in inclusion" that occurs at the hands of philosophy professors (Møllgaard 2021). There seem to be several decent solutions, and at the same time, no perfect one.

The *gongfu* outlook reframes these weaknesses—insufficiently palatable and/or insufficiently exotic, insufficiently philosophical and/or insufficiently Chinese—as strengths. We strive to be philosophical without sticking too closely to questions external to the texts, and we aim to move beyond the texts while remaining tethered to them. We seek to speak to matters of contemporary philosophical

interest and import without diving wholesale into the framework of other traditions and discourse. Seeing the task not as locking down a series of incontrovertible truths, but rather as exploring the insights of various traditional texts, and seeing tradition not merely as established by the past but also as carried forward in the present, we face neither of the theoretical components of Chinese philosophy's double bind. The practical components of institutional structures, incentives, and norms remain, but as a wise and successful philosopher once suggested, perhaps the most effective path to acceptance is paved by original, engaging work that gets people interested and excited.[19] The skills and learning achieved through the *gongfu* approach, I believe, are geared precisely to make that possible. In other words, we need more chefs to make new, delectable dishes.

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19 Paraphrasing Robert C. Neville, proposing the career of Roger T. Ames as a model.

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Chinese Philosophy as a World Philosophy

*LI Chenyang**

Abstract

I will argue for three points. The first is on the need to make Chinese philosophy a world philosophy. The second point is that, in order to promote Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy we should not historicize philosophy. Philosophy and history are two different disciplines. As important as historical context is, overemphasizing it or even taking philosophy merely as a matter of intellectual history makes it difficult for non-specialists to study Chinese philosophy, and is therefore counter-productive to advancing it as a world philosophy. A good balance is thus needed in order to develop Chinese philosophy in response to contemporary needs and not to exclude a large number of non-specialists from studying and drawing on it. My third point is that comparative philosophy is the most effective way to study, examine and develop Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy. Comparative philosophy provides a much needed bridge across different cultures for philosophy to connect on the world stage.

Keywords: Chinese philosophy, world philosophy, history, comparative philosophy

Kitajska filozofija kot svetovna filozofija

Izvleček

To, za kar se zavzemam, bom prikazal v treh točkah. Prvič gre za potrebo po tem, da postane kitajska filozofija del svetovne filozofije. Pri drugi točki gre za to, da kitajske filozofije ne smemo historizirati, če jo želimo promovirati kot svetovno filozofijo. Filozofija in zgodovina sta dve različni disciplini. Četudi je zgodovinski kontekst nadvse pomemben, ga ne smemo pretirano poudarjati ali celo reducirati filozofijo na objekt idejne zgodovine. V tem primeru bodo osebe, ki niso specializirane za zgodovino, kitajsko filozofijo zelo težko razumele, zato so taki pristopi za projekt uveljavitve kitajske filozofije kot dela svetovne filozofije nadvse kontraproduktivni. Če torej želimo kitajsko filozofijo razvijati kot odziv na potrebe današnjega časa, pri tem ne smemo izključevati velikega števila ljudi, ki niso strokovnjaki za področje kitajske idejne zgodovine, kajti tudi oni se morajo soočiti s kitajsko filozofijo, jo spoznati in razvijati naprej. Tretja točka, ki jo nameravam obravnavati v tem članku, pa izhaja iz prepričanja, da je primerjalna filozofija najučinkovitejša metoda za učenje, vrednotenje in razvijanje kitajske filozofije v ogrodju svetovne filozofije.

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Primerjalna filozofija ponuja zelo pomemben most, ki povezuje različne kulture in njihovim filozofijam omogoča, da se vzajemno povežejo na svetovni ravni.

Ključne besede: kitajska filozofija, svetovna filozofija, zgodovina, primerjalna filozofija

Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy can mean two related yet different movements. The first movement takes Chinese philosophy[1] as the representative philosophy of a geographical area, alongside philosophies from other parts of the world, such as Indian philosophy, African philosophy, and Japanese philosophy. In this sense, we can find Chinese philosophy in such venues as the *Oxford Handbook of World Philosophy* (Edelglass and Garfield 2011), where "world philosophy" means philosophies in or from various parts of the world. Understood this way, we could think of the panda in China and the koala in Australia as their counterparts in the animal kingdom. Chinese philosophy in this first sense stands for how the Chinese understand the world, or "how they do things over there". The second is an ambitious contemporary movement to extend the relevance of Chinese philosophy beyond its geographic origin, to be studied, examined, developed, and advanced anywhere in the world as a cross-cultural enterprise.[2] The second movement also includes taking insights from Chinese philosophy to construct contemporary world philosophy beyond any particular region. In this second sense, we can think of the current standing of Greek philosophy (e.g., Plato, Aristotle) as a counterpart. Rightly or not, Aristotle's theory of human virtues is not merely about Greeks—it is about humanity across the globe. Ideas from Plato or Aristotle have been drawn on to philosophize on current issues in our world, to enrich philosophical activities beyond any particular culture. For these reasons, we can say that Plato and Aristotle are part of our world philosophy today. Moreover, these two movements are closely related. For one thing, Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy in the second sense has its roots in the first and began with the first movement. I believe that in the first sense Chinese philosophy has already been established as a world philosophy. Whether one teaches a course on world philosophy or publishes a book on it, Chinese philosophy usually has a secure place in it. In the second sense, however, Chinese philosophy is still far from being a world philosophy. The process for it to happen has begun, but there is still a long way to go. In this essay, my focus is primarily on Chinese philosophy as a world

1 Chinese philosophy includes Confucianism, Daoism, Chinese Buddhism, etc. For the sake of simplicity, I will use "Chinese philosophy" in a singular form, even though it contains multiple perspectives and a large number of individual thinkers.

2 For such an example, see Neville (2000).

philosophy as understood in the second sense—that of a movement to extend the relevance of Chinese philosophy so that it can be studied, examined, developed, and advanced anywhere in the world, as a cross-cultural endeavour.

I will argue for three points. The first is on the need to make Chinese philosophy a world philosophy by extending the first movement into the second one. The second point is that in order to promote Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy we should not historicize philosophy. As a cultural product, philosophy cannot be separated from history. Being two disciplines, however, each should maintain its relative independence. As important as historical context is, overemphasizing it or even taking philosophy merely as a matter of intellectual history makes it difficult for non-specialists to study Chinese philosophy, and is therefore counter-productive to advancing it as a world philosophy. A good balance is thus needed in order to develop Chinese philosophy in response to contemporary needs and not to exclude a large number of non-specialists from studying and drawing from it. This point primarily aims to prepare Chinese philosophy materially as a philosophy to be presented to the world, and there is also a need to find a feasible way to draw a large number of philosophers to work with Chinese philosophy. Hence, my third point is that doing comparative philosophy is the most effective way to study, examine and develop Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy. Comparative philosophy provides a much needed bridge across different cultures for philosophy to connect on the world stage.

Studying Chinese Philosophy as a World Philosophy

Our world has irreversibly entered a global era, in which various cultures interact and co-exist through active encounters. Cultural isolation is no longer a viable option, and to live a meaningful life, a person must now be equipped with cultural competence. That is, one must understand various cultures in the world, especially the world's major cultural traditions. For this reason, we need to learn and understand other cultures and must learn and understand philosophies from other cultural traditions. A philosophy represents a general conceptualization of human experience in the world. As such, it not only reflects commonalities of human experience across cultures, but also manifests experiences of carving the world more or less in different ways across cultures. For instance, Confucian philosophy, which lies at the foundation of Chinese culture, has made *ren* (仁 humaneness, care) and *li* (禮 ritual propriety) among the leading factors that are needed for a good life. These terms have no exact counterparts in Western languages, even though they undoubtedly overlap with some Western concepts. Such leading

concepts are parts of a "final vocabulary" in the Confucian culture. The idea of a "final vocabulary" is traceable to the American pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty, who writes:

> All human beings carry about a set of words which they employ to justify their actions, their beliefs, and their lives. These are the words in which we formulate praise of our friends and contempt for our enemies, our long-term projects, our deepest self-doubts and our highest hopes. … I shall call these words a person's "final vocabulary". (Rorty 1989, 73)

Accordingly, a shared final vocabulary in a culture reflects a philosophy in that culture. In Confucian culture, *ren* and *li* belong to such a "final vocabulary". We praise actions as manifesting *ren* and complying with *li*; we condemn other actions as anti-*ren* (不仁 *bu ren*) and against *li* (非禮 *fei li*). As far as moral judgments are concerned, no more is needed beyond such evaluations within the culture.[3] Rorty's concept of a final vocabulary suggests that we cannot really understand a culture without learning its philosophy, as philosophy is the backbone of a culture. This is because shared final vocabularies indicate people's deeply held values and commitments, which reveal their cultural identities and their ways of life. In order to understand Confucian culture, one should understand why such concepts as *ren* and *li* carry such great moral force within the culture. This means one needs to learn its philosophy.[4]

The need to study Chinese philosophy has intensified due to the rise of China. Its expanding economic power, political influence, and military might give China tremendous clout in shaping the world that we live in. This reality makes it obvious that we cannot have a good understanding of today's world without understanding China. Of course, we cannot understand China without understanding its culture, and we cannot have a good understanding of Chinese culture without understanding its philosophy.

The above reasons not only justify studying Chinese philosophy as a cultural representation of an important region, but also as a world philosophy. Contemporary world philosophy should draw on resources from all over the world. Chinese philosophy is rich in cultural and philosophical resources. Each philosophical or

3 Rorty may have overstated it when he said that "Those words are as far as he can go with language; beyond them is only helpless passivity or a resort to force" (Rorty 1989, 73). Surely, we can always go further to elaborate and explicate why being un-*ren* or *fei-li* is bad, which is the task of philosophy, but usually such additional justifications are not needed for people who understand the same final vocabulary.

4 For a discussion of understanding cultural patterns through comparative philosophy, readers can see Li (2016).

cultural tradition is entitled to its own pride and can claim its own richness in cultural resources, but few can match Chinese culture in this regard. Its rich cultural resources have enabled it to exert influence in East Asia and Southeast Asia. Confucianism, Daoism, and Chinese Buddhism have already left important, even defining marks in these regions. These philosophical traditions are still alive and evolving today. The making of contemporary world philosophy without Chinese philosophy as a significant ingredient is thus fundamentally lacking, and so Chinese philosophy should be taken seriously, studied and developed in a global context, which means taking it as a world philosophy.

Let me be explicit that the need to study Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy does not imply a wholesale acceptance of traditional Chinese philosophy. By "wholesale acceptance" I mean embracing everything in it as truth, and taking it as a guiding principle in life and in handling world affairs. It is the nature of philosophy to involve disagreement. No philosophical theory is universally valid, and no philosophy is perfect for everyone all the time. Studying a philosophy does not mean taking it as one's ideology. In the same way, studying Plato and Aristotle does not require us to embrace their ideas even though we have much to learn from them. Taking Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy does imply, however, that we take its perspectives seriously and draw on its insights in philosophizing about world issues.

The very idea of Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy implies that it has something important to contribute to world philosophy from its own perspectives. Working with other world philosophical traditions, Chinese philosophy can provide philosophical recourses and contribute to producing new solutions to world problems. One such example is the Chinese idea of 和 (*he*), usually translated as harmony. The English word "harmony", however, expresses only one aspect of *he*. *He* is much richer than congruence or peacefulness, as usually conveyed by "harmony" and similar terms in Western languages.[5] Admittedly, *he* has been used in various senses over a long period of time in China, including the sense of peacefulness. As a philosophical idea, however, it is far richer than that. To put it in very brief terms, *he* stands for a dynamic process through which various parties join hands through interaction, coordination, collaboration, mutual enhancement, and mutual transformation in order to reach "optimal symbiosis", to borrow the term from Roger Ames (2020). We can translate it as "harmony" only in a rehabilitated sense of the word, to be understood as "dynamic harmony" or "deep harmony".[6] The difficulty with translation suggests that there is no close counterpart to this

5 For a thorough linguistic analysis of "harmony", see Oxford (2022).

6 For more discussion of this idea, readers can see Li (2014).

idea in Western philosophy. Heraclitus began to consider harmony (αρμονία) as generated from opposites in a dynamic process. However, his fragments contain little philosophical elaboration. Plato produced an elaborated account of harmony in terms of an orderly arrangement of the three classes of the guardians, auxiliaries, and producers in his ideal society. Yet his account is rigid and has oppressive consequences in practice. The Western philosophical tradition has no concept comparable to the transformative nature of *he* found in the Chinese tradition. Now, the philosophers' role is to develop and explicate a philosophy of *he* out of the rich resources of ancient Chinese philosophy. A contemporary philosophy of harmony should be developed in the context of world philosophy rather than merely as an idea for and within Chinese philosophy.

But what does it mean for Chinese philosophy to become a world philosophy? In practical terms, making Chinese philosophy a world philosophy includes two important aspects. First, it becomes a major reference point for philosophizing on the world stage. Philosophy is always done within a context, with its contextualized issues, considerations, and reference points. The philosophy or philosophies which are taken as major and frequent reference points reflect their perceived relevance and importance in philosophizing. We can take Greek philosophy as an example. Alfred North Whitehead once said, "The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato" (Whitehead 1979, 39). Claiming that the entire European (Western) philosophical tradition consists of mere footnotes to one ancient Greek philosopher is obviously an exaggeration, but it reflects the fact that Plato has been a frequent reference point in Western philosophy.[7] Whitehead's list of key names for Western philosophy can be extended to include Aristotle, Descartes, Locke, Kant, and so forth, whose ideas continue to live on today. Being Aristotelian is not merely about Aristotle, but also Alasdair MacIntyre; being Kantian is not merely about Immanuel Kant, but also John Rawls. Moreover, today such figures are not only important figures for those engaged in Western philosophy, they are also important reference points in works of non-Western philosophers, and are part of world philosophy. The idea of Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy thus implies that relevant figures or ideas from Chinese philosophy will become frequent and significant reference points for philosophizing on the world stage as well. For example, Confucius will be a reference point when virtue ethics is discussed, and *li* 禮 will be a comparative consideration as far as issues of rules in ethics and social philosophy are concerned.

7 In the view of Whitehead, Plato's philosophy stands for the worldview of a static and unchanging reality, the opposite of Whiteheadian process philosophy. I thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this point.

In close relation to the above point, another important indicator of Chinese philosophy becoming a world philosophy is to have a relatively large number of philosophers interested in, knowledgeable of, and frequently engaging with it. This includes Chinese philosophy specialists, but more importantly, there should be a large number of non-specialists engaging with Chinese philosophy, as this would be a major indicator of Chinese philosophy having become a world philosophy. How large a number is large enough is relative and an open question. Nevertheless, most people would probably agree that the current number is far from adequate. In this regard, specialists have a special task to promote Chinese philosophy to become a world philosophy by attracting non-specialists towards studying it. In recent years, an increasing number of philosophers outside China have engaged or begun to engage Chinese philosophy in their own work. Moreover, scholars of Chinese philosophy have actively sought to engage Western philosophers. The growing list of Western philosophers who have been in dialogue with Chinese philosophy includes Ronald Davidson (see Mou 2006), John Searle (see Mou 2008), Richard Rorty (see Huang 2009), Michael Sandel (see Sandel and D'Ambrosio 2019), Michael Slote (see Huang 2020),[8] and Ernest Sosa (see Huang 2022), but many more are needed. To move towards such a goal, Chinese specialists need to reflect on effective ways to promote Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy.

Resisting the Historicization of Chinese Philosophy

To be clear, by historicizing Chinese philosophy I do not mean the study of the history of Chinese philosophy, which is perfectly legitimate and extremely worthwhile. Rather, I refer to the tendency and practice to turn Chinese philosophy into merely a study of the history of philosophical ideas and to use the criteria of historical studies to evaluate and address philosophical inquiries. In other words, the process of historicizing turns the activities of philosophical inquiries into inquiries of history, be it the history of philosophy or the history of ideas. While the study of Chinese philosophy and the study of Chinese intellectual history obviously overlap, these are nevertheless two different disciplines and approaches, each with its own legitimacy. Using the methodology and evaluative matrix of one discipline to assess the other can have detrimental effects. This tendency, I argue, has become an obstacle to the development of Chinese philosophy in contemporary times, and hence a distraction to the movement of making Chinese philosophy a world philosophy.

8 Michael Slote is among the small number of Western philosophers who have philosophized in dialogue with Chinese philosophy (Slote 2018).

In China there has been a strong tradition of classic (scriptural) studies (*jingxue* 經學) since ancient times. An important feature of this tradition is a long-held practice of not differentiating literature, history, and philosophy (*wenshizhe bufen* 文史哲不分). The *jingxue* tradition carries with it a strong emphasis on historical context and textual exegesis, while depreciating philosophical innovation, as it is epitomized in the slogan "all six classics are history (*liujing jie shi* 六經皆史)". Its historical contribution to Chinese culture notwithstanding, this tradition prizes knowledge of the past rather than constructing and advancing philosophical arguments. The negative effect of this tradition on the work of Chinese philosophy has not been confined to China. The situation outside China has been exacerbated by the fact that, for a long time, Chinese philosophy outside the country has been located outside philosophy departments in universities, in departments of East Asian studies, history, or religious studies. While some scholars working in these are unquestionably outstanding philosophers, they are few and far between. This reality naturally brings with it a tendency in the West to study Chinese philosophy in the context of history, rather than philosophy. Against such a background, returning to history has become a deep-seated practice for many people who conduct research in the field of Chinese philosophy. A consequence of this conventional practice is to overemphasize historical studies and to under-appreciate philosophical inquiries. Or, to put it in another way, it is the tendency to place history above philosophy and to use historical studies to judge and depreciate philosophical studies.[9]

One common indication of this unfortunate situation is for scholars of Chinese intellectual history to attack philosophers by accusing the latter of misrepresenting the ideas of ancient Chinese texts. For instance, Ge Zhaoguang 葛兆光, a renowned scholar of Chinese intellectual history, recently criticized Zhao Tingyang 赵汀阳 for Zhao's philosophical work on the Confucian ideal of *tianxia* (天下 "all under Heaven") (Ge 2015). Zhao and others have attempted to draw on the ancient Chinese concept as a model to rethink a new world order for today. In Zhao's view, traceable to the ancient Zhou dynasty, *tianxia* stands for a proposed world system in which all parts of the world come under one umbrella as one large family, in contrast to the conception of the world as a collection of nation states (Zhao 2016). Ge criticized the philosophical theory of *tianxia* by Zhao and others as doing "unhistorical history" (*feilishi de lishi* 非历史的历史), and accused them

9 In his insightful book *Origins of Moral-Political Philosophy in Early China*, Tao Jiang discusses a somewhat parallel divergence between sinologists and philosophers in the context of studying Chinese philosophy in Western scholarship (Jiang 2021, 2). While I am sympathetic to his discussion, my concern is here not limited to Western scholarship and my focus is specifically on historical approaches to studying Chinese thought rather than sinology in general terms.

of implying that such an ideal world actually existed in ancient China, in which all tribes were in great harmony and that there was no division between "internal" and "external" or between "I" and "you", and that everyone in the world was treated equally. Ge argued that in the minds of the ancient Chinese there were actual distinctions between "I" and "others", "internal" and "external", "Chinese" and "foreigners", and between "China" and "the rest" (Ge 2015). As Ge wrote:

> Now some scholars think this way. They reformulated the imagined "*tianxia*" in ancient China for a *tianxia*-ism for the modern world order, thinking *tianxia*-ism can move the current world from disorder, to peace, and then further to grand harmony. These scholars think their theory has designed a world system in which there is no differentiation between large or small countries, no differentiation between advanced or backward civilizations, with no national borders and racial distinctions. They hold that such a system can not only lay the foundation for modern China, but also can legislate for the future world. Regardless of their motives, from a scholarly perspective, they have constructed an unhistorical history. (ibid.)
>
> 现在一些学者是这样想的. 他们把古代中国想象的"天下"改造成针对现代世界秩序的"天下主义", 觉得这个"天下主义"能够使世界从乱世、升平世到太平世 (三世说), 并且认为它已经设计了一个"不再有大国小国的区别, 也不再有文明落后的区别, 即消除了国界与种界"的世界制度 (远近小大若一), 因而它不仅为现代中国奠定基础, 而且为世界的未来立法. 这些想法无论其动机如何, 从学术角度看, 都是构造了一个非历史的历史.

Therefore, Ge concluded, Zhao and others are wrong.

I have absolutely no doubt that Ge's essay is an outstanding piece of work with regard to historical scholarship. His attack is misplaced, however. What Ge seems unaware of is that he offered a historical critique of a philosophical initiative. As Ge insisted, "the ideal of *tianxia* at best existed only in the writings of ancient thinkers; it was not a political reality in history (*zhezhong lixiang de "tianxia" chongqiliang zhishi gudai xuezhe de sixiang zhuzuo, que bushi lishi zhong de zhengzhi xianshi* 这种理想的"天下"充其量只是古代学者的思想著作, 却不是历史中的政治现实)" (ibid.). But being an idea in ancient works is more than what Zhao *et al.* need. In fact, strictly speaking, they even do not need it to have existed in ancient writings in a ready-made form, because what these contemporary thinkers have been doing is exactly developing and reformulating—therefore reforming—an ancient idea. Zhao never claimed that his *tianxia*-ism was a duplicate of

a historical reality.[10] To the contrary, Zhao explicitly characterized *tianxia* as an "idea", "the perfect conception for a thing to be", rather than something that had been actually realized (Zhao 2006, 30). Or, as he says, "*tianxia* is a theory" (Zhao 2016, 1). It is a constructed *ideal* rather than an already achieved reality. Nevertheless, the idea has the potential to be further explored, developed, and even implemented, as a candidate theory for today's world. Therefore, even though all of Ge's findings from history are correct, it does nothing to refute Zhao's proposal.

Ge's misplaced attack on Zhao and others is by no means an isolated phenomenon. In the English-speaking world, there is also a tendency towards confusing Chinese philosophy with the history of ideas, and hence judging works of Chinese philosophy in the Procrustean bed of the other disciplines. We see this tendency in scholarly articles and book reviews. One such example can be found in a well-researched article by Joachim Gentz, a brilliant scholar of Chinese intellectual history, who writes on the Chinese idea of *he* 和:

> Concrete visions of peace, harmony and proper order also differed greatly among these [ancient Chinese] thinkers, even among thinkers belonging to the same tradition. Their visions differed both in terms of the particular aspects that were emphasized and regarding the ranking of concepts and terms in their respective normative vocabulary. Reconstructions of "the Confucian concept of harmony" or "the Confucian philosophy of harmony" are thus not very convincing. (Gentz 2020, 39)

If Gentz launches his criticism against works of Chinese intellectual history his view may well hold, except that he specifically targets works on Chinese philosophy (ibid., 38). By explicitly using the consequent adverb "thus", Gentz claims that because there were diverse ideas and understandings of *he* in the Confucian tradition, reconstructing a contemporary version of the Confucian philosophy of harmony has to be unconvincing. On such reasoning, one can study Confucius's and other thinkers' philosophy in history, but one cannot develop a new Confucian philosophy today by drawing on their respective ideas. Gentz's assumption seems to be that because the idea in history was not presented in a unified manner, therefore contemporary thinkers cannot reconstruct it coherently today. Such reasoning is flawed. Gentz's misplaced criticism can only be explained logically by

10 Even if such a view was suggested by others, it is hardly worth Ge making such a big deal of it. After all, hardly any serious scholars have held such a view. Ge's main target is evidently *tianxia* as an idea proposed by philosophers, and he chose Zhao's book (2005) as his primary target. Although Ge also mentions technical difficulties with implementing Zhao's *tianxia* as an "idea", Ge's focus is how Zhao's idea is not based on historical facts, something which Zhao has never claimed. To be fair, Ge acknowledges the limitations of his approach to the issue in question.

a confusion of philosophical reconstruction with historical reconstruction. Confucian philosophy being a living and evolving philosophy under continuous construction simply does not appear on his radar.

Evidently, there exists a considerable gap between what philosophers do and what their historian critics believe they do. The historian critics often fundamentally misunderstand the nature of philosophers' work. Whereas historians are often concerned with whole pictures of ancient events or full articulations of ideas as originally presented in history, philosophers (rather than people merely doing the worthy work of the history of philosophy) are concerned with what is still alive from the rich resources of antiquity. For the purposes of philosophers, it matters little whether an idea was once tangled with dead and rotten elements, as long as the idea remains meaningful and can be reformulated for a good purpose today. Philosophers wish to produce new ideas or rework ideas traceable to antiquity in order to generate new theories to solve contemporary problems. Their historian critics—however well-intended but misguided—often operate on the assumption that ideas or theories generated in history must be treated as if they were in history.

In this regard, reconstruction means different things for historians than for philosophers. For historians, reconstruction means placing ideas back in their historical contexts and uncovering a version of the past that is as close to historical reality as possible. For philosophers, however, reconstruction is by no means mere restoration. We can use the example of reconstructing an ancient house to show the difference. Historians are concerned with going back to the original state of the house, including even the originally poorly designed, badly constructed, and even already rotten parts, for the sake of historical accuracy. For philosophers, reconstruction takes place with active construction. They are concerned primarily with the purposes of today. In the analogy of reconstructing an ancient house, philosophers do not have to include its originally poorly designed, badly constructed, and already rotten parts as long as the reconstructed one bears adequate resemblance to the old and enough original parts are used in the reconstruction. Philosophers are thus selective when using old parts, and can even alter these parts by bending, trimming, and cutting in order to fit in the newly constructed whole. As far as reconstruction is concerned, all they need is to be able to have appropriate connections to the past and to give it due credit. Reconstructing a philosophical idea initially proposed by the ancients is a way to draw on its potential and reformulate it in a new light. For example, if an idea is traceable to Mencius, then it is a Mencian idea, even though a reformed one. In our analogy of house-reconstruction, it can be done either as a historical project or a philosophical project—both can be legitimate and meaningful in their own right. A problem arises when one project uses its own standard to judge the other.

Historians like Ge Zhaoguang apparently do not understand an important difference, a difference between historians' efforts to figure out how ancient ideas were formulated and practiced on the one hand, and philosophers' effort to draw on ancient ideas in formulating new theories in order to solve contemporary problems on the other. It is a mistake to use the yardstick from one disciple to measure the value and legitimacy of the other.

The two groups thus talk past each other when historians take their enthusiasm from historical perspectives to criticize philosophers on their philosophical endeavours. Imagine that a Christian philosopher attempts to make a case for promoting the Christian ideal of love as a solution to our world's problems. And her critic counter-argues that Christian love is in fact racist, citing evidence from American history. Or a democrat promotes democracy while opponents cite the example of democracy in ancient Athens as a counterargument to prove that democracy was and therefore is exclusivist and divisive against women and working people. To be sure, people may or may not agree on whether Christian love is a good solution to our problems or whether democracy is the best form of government. Nevertheless, Christian philosophers do not have to show that the Christian ideal of love was practiced in perfect ways in history in order to promote it, and today's democrats do not need to presume that democracy in ancient Athens was already perfectly implemented or a perfect democratic theory had been articulated back then. Admittedly, it is definitely legitimate for historians to stand up when people fabricate history by claiming that the idea of Christian love was never practiced in racist ways, or that democracy in Athens was not discriminatory, or that the ancient Chinese idea of *tianxia* was already fully implemented in antiquity and that its original design was as what has been presented today. However, that is simply not the case here. Even if there have been sporadic misrepresentations of history, the main thrust of the *tianxia* philosophical discourse is not about history. In order to make their criticisms relevant, critics must show why the idea of *tianxia* cannot be formulated or reformulated the way some philosophers today have attempted to do, and why such a reformulated idea cannot in principle be applicable to today's world. Historians should do better in understanding the task of philosophy, to respect philosophers' space for their work rather than jumping too quickly to shout "ha, that's not history!" For philosophers, yes, the idea of *tianxia* was not perfectly conceived by the ancients, much less implemented in history. But so what? It does not mean the idea cannot be reworked for good use today.[11]

11 Just to be clear, I also think Zhao's *tianxia* proposal is fundamentally flawed and that it is a dangerous move at this time, and am sympathetic to Ge's concerns. However, Zhao's work is not a study of history, and arguments against his proposal have to be made in philosophy or political theory rather than history.

This tendency must be taken seriously, because it not only reflects simply a misunderstanding of the nature of philosophy by some historians[12]—however well-intended they are—but is also counterproductive to developing Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy for several reasons. First, historicizing Chinese philosophy distorts the nature of philosophy. If these historian critics were to succeed, Chinese philosophy as a living enterprise would become impossible, not to mention becoming a world philosophy. Such a tendency reinforces a bias that Chinese philosophy is merely a collection of ancient ideas with no new life. Such a characterization makes Chinese philosophy irrelevant to world philosophy. In order to become a world philosophy, Chinese philosophy must participate actively on the world stage in philosophizing on contemporary issues with its rich resources drawn from the past—it must resist various efforts, either conscious or not, in order to avoid being kept in the museum of ancient ideas.

Philosophy has its own evolving history, just like other subjects of study. But philosophy also has its own perennial topics of inquiry, even though the specific forms of these issues may change with the times. Past philosophical activities in specific forms can be subjects of study mainly for historians or scholars of the history of philosophy. Perennial issues of philosophy are subjects of study mainly for philosophers. It is against the very nature of philosophy to require philosophers to limit themselves to historical context, even though such a requirement may be suitable for historians of philosophy or ideas. For example, Mencius advocated a philosophy of *ren zheng* (仁政 "benevolent government"). In his view, *ren zheng* is a moral requirement of rulers. Of course, rulers for him were kings and princes, and they were by no means democratically elected government officials. Today, in the context of Chinese philosophy can we say that it is a Mencian idea that political leaders have such a moral obligation? In one sense, we cannot if we equate "Mencian" with "Mencius", because Mencius could not have thought of political leaders in democratic societies. In another important sense, however, there is a legitimate ground to make such a claim. Philosophers should be allowed to make such claims by argument without being accused of being unhistorical.

The second reason to resist historicizing Chinese philosophy is a practical one, as an overemphasis on historical context makes it difficult for non-specialists to engage with Chinese philosophy. Non-specialists of Chinese philosophy, by definition, are those who have not been able or are unwilling to train themselves as Chinese philosophy specialists. They are interested mainly in philosophical issues that are common across their own home tradition and Chinese tradition

12 By calling these scholars "historians" I do not mean they do not or cannot do philosophy. Some are well capable of doing philosophy. However, with regard to their works discussed here they are doing history, however wonderful that work may be.

when they engage with Chinese philosophy. For their purposes, shared concerns or commonality of issues between philosophical traditions are more relevant than specific differences. To use as an example Mencius's idea of *ren zheng* again, constructing a positive case for such a philosophy in contemporary times can be both a defence and a development of Mencius's philosophy. For this purpose, meaningful work can be done without returning to the historical context of Mencius's time. I am not claiming that there is no need to consider Mencius's idea in his historical context. However, it is not necessary for every kind of inquiry. As far as promoting Chinese philosophy to become a world philosophy is concerned, overemphasis on its historical context poses a major obstacle to achieving this goal. While we should always welcome historians of ideas to share their wisdom and insights with us, when they get carried away and overstep the boundaries between history and philosophy we must tell our overzealous historian friends to back off, and we must do this for the sake of Chinese philosophy.

Just to be absolutely clear, my argument in this section by no means denies that historians' scholarly work—including on the history of philosophy—is considered highly valuable in itself and that it can be valuable to philosophers. My point is that history should not be confused with philosophy and that historical studies should not replace philosophical inquiries. Instead, such work should be utilized to enhance the movement to make Chinese philosophy a world philosophy by providing a historical context for people to better understand Chinese philosophy as it was presented in history, not to replace philosophy or to undermine its contemporary development. In promoting Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy, historians of Chinese philosophy, thought or intellectual ideas should be allies with Chinese philosophers, not antagonists.

Advancing Chinese Philosophy through Comparative Philosophy

Promoting Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy calls for more people to study Chinese philosophy and to draw on Chinese philosophy in constructing contemporary philosophy across the globe. Achieving such a goal calls for two categories of philosophers. First, specialists of Chinese philosophy, who take Chinese philosophy as their primary subject of study. Philosophy communities across the globe have specialists on Greek philosophy, and as Chinese philosophy becomes a world philosophy we can expect more philosophers specializing in this area of study, especially in major research universities.[13] The expansion of this category of philosophers will increase the influence of Chinese philosophy on the world stage.

13 For a forceful appeal towards such a goal, see Garfield and van Norden (2016).

The second category is people with primary focuses on non-Chinese philosophy who study and draw on Chinese philosophy. The second category should include a much larger number of people than the first. To a great extent, this camp will decide the success or failure of the effort to make Chinese philosophy a world philosophy. Because most philosophers in the world will not be specialists in Chinese philosophy, engaging in comparative philosophy is a useful way to bridge the gap between Chinese philosophy and world philosophy. When specialists of Chinese philosophy engage in comparative studies, they make Chinese philosophy more accessible to non-specialists, and in doing so help to bring Chinese philosophy under the umbrella of philosophy across the world. For non-specialists, comparative philosophy provides a fertile ground for them to study and benefit from Chinese philosophy. The comparative study of Chinese philosophy by specialists does not diminish the value of Chinese philosophy, nor obscure its specific characteristics. On the contrary, it helps to highlight these characteristics, and realize how important these differences are in better understanding Chinese philosophy. Now we need to take a close look at comparative philosophy.

In his essay "Two Forms of Comparative Philosophy", published in the inaugural issue of *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, Robert Neville articulates two fundamental approaches to comparative philosophy, objectivist and normative. He writes:

> The objectivist approach treats the positions to be compared as finished objects, takes up a perspective of distance upon them, and measures its comparative judgments in empirical ways over against the evidence of the positions. The normative approach centers first on addressing contemporary philosophical problems and looks to the historical positions as resources for contemporary thinking, bringing them into comparative perspective against the contemporary background. (Neville 2001, 2)

Unlike the objectivist approach, the focus of the normative approach is not on discovering the philosophical positions of past philosophers. Rather, it involves "reconstructing the traditions, as any living tradition does in growing to meet new philosophical situations, and does so by bringing them into comparative interaction" (ibid.). Tim Connolly likewise argues that there are two dimensions of comparative philosophy. The first is the interpretative dimension, in which one compares in order to understand. He writes, "the interpretative dimension looks at the philosophies as historical objects, trying to get a sense of why they developed the way they did" (Connolly 2015, 30).[14] The second is the constructive

14 I would note that the category of "historical objects" does not have to mean ancient objects. It should include all worthy philosophies in existence, from antiquity to contemporary.

dimension. The constructive dimension is future-oriented, where "different cultural-philosophical traditions engage one another in order to make constructive philosophical progress" (ibid.). Presumably, one could engage in the first dimension of comparative work without extending to the second dimension, though that is not the whole picture of comparative philosophy. It is a mistake to take the category of comparative philosophy exclusively as interpretative while leaving out the constructive dimension.[15]

Similarly, I understand comparative philosophy as philosophizing through comparison and contrast across philosophical traditions in order to learn about other cultural traditions, to solve philosophical problems, to generate new insights, and to develop new theories. In other words, comparative philosophy is *philosophizing comparatively*. It includes but is not limited to the work of cross-cultural comparison. The enterprise of philosophizing includes what Connolly calls "the constructive dimension", or "comparative interaction" as Neville has characterized. Understood this way, there is no need to overcome comparative philosophy to stage a "post-comparative philosophy".[16] The "comparative philosophy" that appears in the names of academic journals must be understood as including both the interpretative and construction dimensions of comparative philosophy. These include *Philosophy East and West: A Quarterly of Comparative Philosophy*, *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, *Comparative and Continental Philosophy*, and *Comparative Philosophy: An International Journal of Constructive Engagement of Distinct Approaches toward World Philosophy*. These titles remain truthful to what these journals aim to accomplish.

Comparative philosophy is an effective way for non-specialists of Chinese philosophy to learn and engage with Chinese philosophy. In the past few decades, more and more philosophers have begun to incorporate Chinese philosophy in their work. It is probably safe to say that most philosophy departments in the United States, for instance, now include some form of Chinese philosophy in their course offerings, and that most teachers of these courses are non-specialists in Chinese philosophy. A large number of them study Chinese philosophy with a comparative approach, and this is different from Chinese philosophy specialists. While

15 Understood this way, on each dimension of comparative philosophy one can use different methodologies. On the interpretative dimension, for instance, one can choose one's conceptual framework for interpretation. For a criticism of relying on Western conceptual frameworks to interpret Chinese philosophical views, readers can see Rošker (2021), especially Section 1.1 "Problems of Transcultural Research" (ibid., 11–30). It is neither my intention nor necessary for the purpose of this essay to discuss a broad range of issues associated with the topic of comparative philosophy or cross-cultural philosophy.

16 For an example of the effort towards "post-comparative philosophy", readers can see Kahteran and Weber (2021).

non-specialists should be encouraged to study Chinese philosophy in depth and to develop expertise, we should keep in mind that their primary aim is not studying Chinese philosophy for its own sake, but to learn enough so they can borrow from Chinese philosophy for their own philosophical explorations. There is obviously a trade-off, and it should be balanced in accordance with personal interests and individual needs. Setting the bar unrealistically high is counterproductive. In comparison, professionally trained Chinese philosophers carry a strong background in the history of Chinese philosophy. They learn, understand, and interpret Chinese philosophy from within the tradition. This can be both an advantage and a disadvantage. The advantage is obvious. Professionally trained, they are equipped with philological tools for textual exegesis, know the history, and are familiar with traditional problematics. In the meantime, because of their close affiliation with the tradition, they can also overlook philosophically significant insights or problems. The special features of a thing are often in better view when compared with other things. A famous 11th century Chinese poem says that one does not see the real picture of the mountain because one is situated inside it.[17] However, people outside may be able to identify some of its important features and enjoy its beauty by viewing it from a distance. In this regard, philosophers trained in non-Chinese philosophy may have an advantage when they expand into Chinese philosophy. Non-specialists often approach Chinese philosophy selectively, with particular philosophical issues in mind. They want to learn how Chinese philosophy formulates or tackles an issue that has been a problem in non-Chinese philosophy. For example, how has freedom been conceptualized in Chinese philosophy? What is the role of virtue in Chinese philosophy? In approaching Chinese philosophy with pre-conceived questions, non-specialists draw Chinese philosophy into dialogue with non-Chinese philosophy. Their study has not been the mere passive absorption of information from the subject. An interesting consequence of this phenomenon is that the comparative study of Chinese philosophy by Western philosophers has shaped how Chinese philosophy is understood, interpreted, and presented. Non-specialists ask questions out of conceptual curiosity from their philosophical perspectives. Specialists then attempt to answer such questions. This "demand-supply" dynamic has helped to shape the current field of Chinese philosophy. As far as making Chinese philosophy a world philosophy is concerned, we may say that whereas Chinese philosophy specialists attempt to "push" Chinese philosophy onto the world stage, non-specialists through their engagement "pull" Chinese philosophy onto it. While they both contribute to the same process, it is often the latter that helps to present Chinese philosophy in ways that are more philosophically relevant to non-Chinese philosophers. In this

17 *Bushi Lushan zhen mianmu, zhiyuan shenzai ci shanzhong* 不識廬山真面目,只緣身在此山中.

regard, non-specialists are not passive learners of Chinese philosophy—they are also active makers of contemporary Chinese philosophy. The combined effects of these forces shape Chinese philosophy as presented on the world stage.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is a great need to make Chinese philosophy a world philosophy. Towards such a goal, we need to resist the tendency of historicizing Chinese philosophy—it should not be reduced to the history of Chinese philosophy, nor should it be confused with the history of ideas even though they are undoubtedly related. While working closely with other disciplines, Chinese philosophy should maintain its relative independence as a discipline in its own right. Today, one effective way to make Chinese philosophy a world philosophy is to study it comparatively, to make its rich content meaningful to non-specialists of Chinese philosophy, and to enhance its contribution towards constructing contemporary philosophy for the entire world.

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Translation as a Philosophical Method: A Postcomparative Take on the Universality-Particularity Tension

*Vytis SILIUS**

Abstract

The article aims for a critical reflection on the practices and methodology of the so-called comparative philosophy. It starts from an observation that the recent successful developments in comparative philosophy nevertheless have a very limited impact outside the discipline. The article argues that a specific universality-particularity tension is to blame. Because "comparison" as a method also inherently displays this tension, and thus cannot overcome it, the article suggests seeing translation as a method of philosophical thinking. It is argued that this constitutes a postcomparative take on universality-particularity tension and a postcomparative response to the need for a more culturally inclusive academic philosophy. The advantages of looking at translation as a core methodological stance in intercultural postcomparative philosophy are suggested.

Keywords: postcomparative philosophy, comparison, translation as method, universality, particularity

Prevajanje kot filozofska metoda: postprimerjalni pogled na napetost med univerzalnostjo in posebnostmi

Izvleček

Članek obravnava kritičen premislek o praksah in metodologiji tako imenovane primerjalne filozofije. Izhaja iz ugotovitve, da ima nedavni uspešen razvoj primerjalne filozofije kljub vsemu zelo omejen vpliv zunaj discipline. Avtor trdi, da je razlog za to posebna tenzija med univerzalnostjo in partikularnostjo. Ker »primerjalnost« kot metoda sama po sebi izkazuje to napetost in je zato ne more preseči, avtor predlaga, da bi na prevajanje gledali kot na metodo filozofskega mišljenja. To naj bi ustvarjalo postkomparativni pogled na tenzijo med univerzalnostjo in partikularnostjo ter postprimerjalni odgovor na potrebo po bolj kulturni vključitvi akademske filozofije. Predlagane so prednosti gledanja na prevajanje kot na osrednje metodološko stališče v medkulturni postkomparativni filozofiji.

Ključne besede: postkomparativna filozofija, primerjava, prevod kot metoda, univerzalnost, partikularnost

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Introduction

In this paper I want to develop some of the ideas that I have raised in my previous article on this topic, where I was attempting to find an answer to a curious paradox: why, in the West, the success of the academic field of *comparative* philosophy has not yet translated into a significant diversification of the curricula of academic *philosophy*, leaving it almost entirely Eurocentric (Silius 2020)? In that article I looked at various intersections of academic disciplines that might be helpful to overcome the existing monocultural parochialism of academic philosophy in the West. I contended that both academic philosophy and comparative philosophy are contributing to the apparent homogeneity of philosophy departments in the West. Here I want to expand my arguments, mainly directing my attention to a critical self-reflection of scholarly practices and the methodological assumptions of the so-called comparative philosophy. This is an attempt to argue for much-needed changes and improvements that can conveniently be subsumed under the umbrella term of *postcomparative* philosophy.

Instead of directly responding to the invaluable critical amendments and friendly suggestions raised in a reply to my paper by Rošker (2020), I want instead to address the role that philosophy's "universalist thrust" plays in keeping the academic discipline of philosophy a mainly monocultural activity in the West, and why comparative philosophy fails to challenge it. And I want to continue questioning if "comparison" is the most adequate formulation of the method and the goal of philosophical investigations that are undertaken in the field. My main position in this paper can be formulated as two interrelated assertions:

1. At the heart of the continuing monoculturalism of academic philosophy, despite the significant achievements of comparative philosophy, is a poorly articulated and unresolved tension between the *universal* and the *articular*, which results in a cultural parochialism of philosophy and a disciplinary parochialism of comparative philosophy.
2. Both these parochialisms can be addressed with a better understanding and more creative use of the fundamental method of comparative philosophy—that is, *translation*. Consequently, I propose to look at translation as *a method of philosophical thinking*, one that comparative philosophers have all the tools needed to be exceptionally good at.

What I refer to here as a tension between the universal and particular in any type of philosophical analysis (or the "universality-particularity tension"), stems from the unclear procedure and questionable justification of taking up some particular position (idea, concept, category) and treating it—implicitly or explicitly—as a

universal one. In the first section, I will present the problem, explain its weakness and how it manifests. In the second section, I will argue that comparison as a method is itself susceptible to the universality-particularity tension, and therefore cannot overcome it, so translation as a method is suggested instead. In the third section, I spell out the particular understanding of translation that is at the heart of the translation-as-method suggestion. In the last section, translation-as-method is discussed as a unique approach in transcultural postcomparative philosophy, and some advantages of such a meta-methodological stance are suggested.

The Limited Impact of Comparative Philosophy Outside the Field

As a way to highlight the problematic nature of the current state of the comparative philosophy in the English speaking academia—the limitations that I, admittedly, provocatively call the "disciplinary parochialism" of comparative philosophy—I want to start from an observation on the intersection of related academic disciplines resulting from my research in the field of ethics (moral philosophy).

Some 20 years ago anthropologists started the so-called "ethical turn" in their field, which is now a rapidly developing sub-filed of the anthropology of ethics[1]. Some of the central questions in this context are the meaning and definition of the concepts of ethics (or morality), and the role of a theory that it plays in ethical deliberations and actions in the everyday lives of people. It became increasingly apparent, that the mainstream established philosophical categories and frameworks in terms of the "Big 3" of utilitarians, deontologists, and virtue ethics did not fit particularly well and were not very useful, not only in terms of the study of non-Western people, but also in the study of the ordinary, everyday practices of any people, including Westerners (see, for example, Zigon 2008). To my surprise, to date in these discussions of anthropologists I have never seen any *comparative philosophers* or ideas coming from comparative philosophy be explicitly mentioned, despite the many similar concerns and overlapping interests of the two fields. For alternatives in understanding the concept of morality (or ethics), anthropologists have been looking to Hegel, Foucault, and sometimes Nietzsche (largely monocultural philosophers), or trying to redefine the concept of ethics themselves (in addition to Zigon 2008, see Howell 1997; Lambek 2010; Sidnell 2010; Faubion 2011; Laidlaw 2014). Why have none of the comparative philosophers attracted anthropologists' attention? Is there something in how comparative philosophers

1 For a short overview of the ethical turn in anthropology and how it relates to the field of moral philosophy, see Klenk (2019).

see and present themselves and in the way we do our scholarship that makes us virtually invisible to our colleagues outside the field?

It seems that the notable and significant achievements of comparative philosophy have not only so far failed to help the diversification of academic philosophy, but have also had a very limited impact on other related disciplines, at least in the field of ethics. I suggest that at the heart of this problem is a poorly articulated and unresolved tension between the *universal* and the *particular*, which results in a cultural parochialism of philosophy and a disciplinary parochialism of comparative philosophy. I will briefly recount how this tension manifests in philosophy generally, but it will be more important for my current purposes to demonstrate that comparative philosophy is especially susceptible to it.

The "universalist thrust", as Baggini (2018) puts it, has many merits and yielded many positive results for philosophy, and is justly recognized as a distinctive characteristic of philosophical activity. However, it can only be successful if there is enough acknowledgment and account of multiple *particulars* that exist in the world. Today's situation, however, is better described, paraphrasing Appiah, as parochialism posing as universalism,[2] when philosopher's claims to universality come exclusively from within a single cultural or linguistic environment. This means that academic philosophy as a discipline remains in a largely unacknowledged *cultural parochialism*, which stems from the inability—or unwillingness—to see one's own technical terminology, frameworks, and methodologies as "having a status of a folk model" (Strathern 1992, 119) in a larger setting of world cultures.

There could be at least two ways from within academic philosophy to correct this. A closer connection of academic philosophy with empirical sciences could enhance the possibility of a philosophy student being exposed to a multitude of cultural particulars. Such closer co-operation with empirical sciences can take the form of experimental philosophy (X-Phi), or could perhaps be facilitated by a stronger anthropological component to philosophical education and research. Arguing from anthropologists' point of view, Strathern says that any researcher naturally draws from her cultural environment. However, "to be an expert in anthropology is to demonstrate simultaneously the cultural origins of one's analytic constructs and their cross-cultural applicability" (1992, 119). Still, in academic philosophy the cross-cultural applicability of Western analytic constructs is too often assumed, rather than demonstrated.[3] A second way would be to rethink

2 Appiah criticized "Eurocentric hegemony *posing* as universalism" (1992, 58).

3 For a critical exposition of this point, see, for example, Berniūnas et al. (2021). The complicated disciplinary interrelations between philosophy and anthropology are a good illustration of the universalist-particularist tension that I am referring to. At least in research on ethics, some

the very concept of "universality" that presupposes "essences". Certainly, a deeper, broader, thinner structure of world phenomena should interest a philosopher, a structure that overcomes the boundaries of a particular instance of any given phenomenon. However, it is entirely possible that other concepts—like "transcultural" or some neologisms, such as "homoversal" (Rosemont 2015)—would be more helpful in articulating that thrust of directing our gaze from our own "particular" into other "particulars" and, eventually, outside of any specific particular, without supposing any shared essential unchanging core, not to speak of imposing it as "universal" to everyone at any time.

To be sure, the tradition of addressing this universality-particularity tension from within academic philosophy is long and rich, and is beyond the scope of this paper. For my current purposes is more important to point out that the so-called comparative philosophy is no less vulnerable to problems stemming from the universality-particularity tension, especially when comparison is seen as the methodological axis of such research. For this reason, the ability of comparative philosophy to facilitate diversification of the academic philosophy is very limited. Much of comparative philosophy is either trying to stay strictly within its geographical and cultural limits, basically functioning as "China studies" rather than philosophy. In this way, it is fixating on the *particular*. Weber has pointed out this problem in the practice of what he called inclusionary exclusion, when comparative philosophy stresses "excessively the cultural embedding of the philosophical texts they study" thus doing "a disservice to the philosophical relevance" that most of the comparative philosophy aspires to (Weber 2013, 601). Or it is trying to adapt to questions, frameworks, and concept clusters of the "true" or "proper" philosophy—that is, allegedly, a non-local or a-cultural philosophy—thus unintentionally falling into the trappings of the "universalist thrust". As a result, comparative philosophy often falls for the lure of only seemingly universal philosophical vocabulary and only seemingly universal categorizations. For example, the concepts of morals, virtues, motivations, or such categorical distinctions as the moral domain *versus* conventional or cultural domain, are mostly treated—without much empirical evidence—as psychological and/or linguistic universals, when they are in actuality fruits of a particular (Western) intellectual culture and tradition. In this way, comparative philosophy also fails to suggest the conceptual and theoretical alternatives needed in anthropology or psychology to

anthropologists argue they should engage more with philosophers (Zigon 2007, 134). Others seem to suggest that it is the philosophers who need to take anthropologists' "painstaking accounts of particular cultures, based on particular moral system" more seriously (Douglas 1983, 786). For an opposite view that anthropologists and philosophers don't have much to learn from each other on the issues of ethics, see Claes (1990).

challenge the mainstream Western positions, when these are questioned within those disciplines.

This limited impact of comparative philosophy both onto *universality*-oriented academic philosophy and to *culturally* sensitive and empirically oriented other disciplines in humanities and social sciences is what I call the relative disciplinary parochialism of comparative philosophy. This disciplinary parochialism is reinforced by the limited ability of comparative philosophy to address and resolve the universality-particularity tension inherent within the discipline. To my mind, it shows that there is a need to rethink the methodological foundations, practices, and self-image of the so-called comparative philosophy.

Methodological Difficulties in Comparative Philosophy

A strength of comparative philosophy is that it is a kind of cultural and philosophical hermeneutics committed to meeting the stranger, the Other, and it is usually done with an attitude of a "charitable interpretation". It is most often the case that the comparative philosopher implicitly holds or explicitly promotes the view that such openness can and will enrich the views of her own culture. For example, Rosemont suggests that we must "allow the other their otherness" to be able to "allow for the possibility not only that we don't have all the answers, but that we may not have been asking all the questions in as universal a vocabulary as has hitherto been presupposed" (2004, 51). The need for and possible advantages of the methodological and conceptual alternatives, and the understanding that these might come from culturally and linguistically very different environments, is also stressed by Rorty (see, for example, 1989b, 337).

However, this strength of the comparativist stance is not yet fully realized. Even when there is no explicit comparison, it is a usual practice in comparative philosophy to start from Western assumptions, concepts, and positions as a common (if not a universal) ground of analysis. This aspect has been discussed and criticized by Shun (2009) as an "asymmetry problem", and I will not rehearse these arguments here. Instead, I contend that the problems exist not only in practice, but come from a more fundamental self-positioning of a comparative philosopher, that is, from her understanding of what one is doing and how one is doing it. To use Ralph Weber's words (2013), these problems stem from a "meta-methodological issues" of comparative philosophy. In those cases when comparison is taken as a fundamental part or the method of comparative philosophy, it runs into methodological difficulties, inconsistencies, and contradictions. The use of comparison as the methodological axis of comparative philosophy cannot address nor solve

the inherent universality-particularity tension, because it runs into problems both intra-culturally and inter-culturally.

On the one hand, to compare one has to at least temporarily "freeze" the entities in question (concepts, ideas, texts, thinkers). So even if one agrees that, for example, concepts evolve and change, the process of comparison requires one, at least provisionally, to suspend and withhold (*epochē*) such fluidity. This results in an anachronistic treatment of concepts, ideas, or entire philosophical systems. A similar problem arises in the field of the history of ideas. Quentin Skinner (1969) makes some points about the process of understanding texts within Western culture (philosophy) that are extremely relevant for a comparative philosopher, in as much as the history of ideas is an integral part in formulating the ideas to be compared.

Skinner stresses that the history of thought demonstrates that there are no "timeless concepts, but only the various different concepts which have gone with various different societies" (1969, 53). That by no means diminishes the value of the history of ideas, but rather helps to rearrange the direction of an investigation. As there is no one objectively verifiable unifying meaning of any text, there are no "perennial problems" or "universal truths" (ibid., 50), neither can there be universally describable "timeless concepts" that such ideas could be expressed with. As Skinner insists, "There are only individual answers to individual questions" (ibid.). Any statement on the part of the comparer, following Skinner, "is inescapably the embodiment of a particular intention, on a particular occasion, addressed to the solution of a particular problem, and thus specific to its situation in a way that it can only be naive to try to transcend" (ibid.). It is thus one of the modes of how the universality-particularity tension manifests itself, this time intra-culturally:[4] which of the particular expressions throughout the history of a concept should one take as some sort of common (universal or unifying) expression to use in comparison?

The implication of this problem for Skinner is not that the history of ideas is not possible. It means that the history of ideas most meaningfully functions not as a recovery of the (previously) established meaning, but as a platform and context for the creation of new meaning. History, in Skinner's view, "provides a lesson in self-knowledge" (1969, 53). Anticipating our later argument about *translation* as a method of philosophical thinking, we can claim together with Andrew Benjamin

4 A similar point has been made by Rorty in his critical discussion of inter-cultural comparison: "Everybody who has ever compared a Western with a non-Western writer has done so by reference to a conceptual scheme, one drawn up to reflect his or her particular purposes, according to a principle of individuation tailor-made for those purposes" (1989b, 334).

(1989, 60) that the "practice of history involves translation because it concerns the re-expression of that which is past in the language of the present".

On the other hand, once the object of comparison is set, there is also a need to set a common ground regarding the two positions (cultures or traditions) that are compared. Arguing from a political science perspective, Behr and Roesh point out that in intercultural comparisons there is a "need of initial and hence necessarily universalized epistemological categories to start with" (2010, 73). They note that, according to Aristotle, we need a *tertium comparationis*, "a third component of comparison which comprises those elements which the phenomena to compare have in common", and which "thus founds the comparative method and guarantees comparability" (ibid., 76n1). At the same time, they point out that Aristotle "reminds us in Book I of his *Politics* (*Politeia*) that every research has to start with what is familiar and knowable to the researcher" (ibid., 75). Thus, Behr and Roesh seem to suggest that intercultural comparison already runs the risk of "epistemological imperialism" at the level of the methodology of comparison, because we have to start from a universalization that *ab initio* is only an expression of the limited viewpoint of the particular comparer.

Ralph Weber has also discussed methodological issues of comparison as a problem of *tertium comparationis*, or, in his words "the third of comparison" which helps to determine and conceptualize "what we compare with what, and in what respect it is done" (2014, 151; also see 2013). According to Weber, this denotes a point of commonality, the necessity of which in comparative studies "is usually taken for granted" (2014, 153). However, the theoretical grounds or the procedure of choice of such *tertium comparationis* is far from obvious. Even if one abandons ambition or doesn't even claim the necessity of a completely objective and neutral way of doing that, the comparison framework does not seem to have a way to explain what is the nature of the relationship between the two particular positions to be compared (the *comparata*), and the third position (the *tertium comparationis*). As Weber's analysis has convincingly shown, the common position has to be pre-assumed by the comparer (Weber called it a *pre-comparative tertium comparationis* (2014, 162)). This leaves comparison open to the criticism that the procedure for choosing the *tertium* is not explicit but is subjective, and therefore the results are open to manipulation and lack legitimacy. In a way, one can claim that the process of *pre-comparative tertium* and the results of comparison constitute circular reasoning that depends on the comparer, whose role, intentions, intuitions, and so on are not integrally accounted or sufficiently explicated within the field of comparative philosophy. The concept of *pre-comparative tertium* has helped Weber to argue against incomparability, but the problem of taking a particular as "universal" remains.

These critical reflections and an apparent dissatisfaction with "comparativism" as a meta-methodological stance highlight the necessity of rethinking the methodology of comparative philosophy.[5] Any philosophy or any way of thinking is indeed comparative in some sense, and thus the problems raised by Weber and others are important for all philosophical activity. But the extent of historical, cultural, and linguistic differences among distant cultures make it obvious that the theoretical and methodological issues with "comparison" hit comparative—that is, intercultural—philosophy harder than the monocultural version. One might argue that clinging to comparison as a meta-methodological stance weakens rather than strengthens comparative philosophy. It fails to give a solid ground and methodological clarity for intercultural philosophy, one that takes as its object of investigation sources from culturally and linguistically very distant cultures.

Despite some theoretical and methodological suggestions that philosophical comparison does not depend on "having some common measure or standard between and above the compared parts" (Zhang Xianglong, quoted from Weber 2014, 154n8), the opposite view is a much more widely held position. Rošker emphasizes that the "methodological problems within the general socio-political epistemology" are especially acute when one is dealing with the understanding of "terms and concepts, which have been raised in 'alien' cultures", at which point "people are always confronted with a need for of objectivity that could allow them to establish universally valid valuation criteria" (Rošker 2012, 29). However, Rorty bluntly states that we have to abandon the idea that what we call "philosophizing" should aspire at getting at "our common humanity" (Rorty 1989b, 337). Even less, it seems, can we hope to justify our understanding or comparison on anything objective or universal in any workable sense of these terms that wouldn't be so abstractly and thinly framed as to make them "foolishly and needlessly naive", as Skinner has put it (1969, 50). Rorty maintained that the most productive way would be to see "the people who read puzzling books in exotic languages" as those who are "occasionally and unpredictably *coming up* with suggestions about how to *renew* our sense of wonder and novelty" (1989b, 337; emphasis added). Thus, the question should be—is there an epistemological framework that requires us to listen to the culturally Other in our philosophical aspirations for the "tiny enlargements of our current horizon" (ibid.)—as comparative studies do—without first necessarily assuming any commonality (universality, objectivity), as the inner logic of comparison seems to require?

I propose that such an epistemological framework is *translation*. Consequently, I propose to look at translation *as a method of philosophical thinking*, a method that

5 On the other hand, Weber points out that not all comparativists see the need for theoretical explication of comparison and that "'comparative philosophy' has thus far shown little concern for the notion of 'comparison'" (2014, 154n8).

is unique to comparative philosophy as its basic meta-methodological stance. In other words, I suggest seeing everything that we do in comparative philosophy as a *translation*. For the theoretical basis for seeing *translation as a method*, I will now turn to the views on translation, thought, philosophy, and intersections of these, in the texts of Schleiermacher (2012 [1813]), Walter Benjamin (1997 [1923]), Steiner (1975), and Ricoeur (2006).[6]

Translation as a Progressive Transformational Creation of Meaning

Translation is a familiar practice in humanities in general, and in academic philosophy in particular, especially for those who come from cultures with smaller languages. Most philosophers do (and publish) translations of texts, or translate quotes and concepts to cite in their academic writings. Even more so, translation is so fundamental, so basic for any comparative philosopher in the West, that we rarely—if ever—notice that translation is not only something that we *do* but also the way of *how* we do what we do (as philosophers, we think and argue). I thus suggest seeing translation not only as a technical act of rendition of a particular text from a source to a target language but rather see "translation" *as a method of philosophical thinking*. Such a view implies that any study, research, interpretation, elucidation is—in the heart of it—a process of *translation*. There is a certain mode of thinking and speaking (in words or writing) that is necessarily present in the process of translation of texts. A conscious application of this mode would be a helpful methodological attitude in what we usually call comparative philosophy (and by extension any philosophy). I am also certain that at least some of the practical techniques of translation studies would be useful adaptations in philosophical thinking. While I completely agree with a common claim that every translation is an interpretation, here I want to explicate the idea that every interpretation (in terms of analysis or explanation) is a translation.

Note that I do not suggest any brand new methodology here. Rather, I suggest a somewhat novel explication of what we are already doing, as a different meta-methodological stance of comparative philosophy, one that is especially strongly felt in its postcomparative approach. If as philosophers we want to better grasp a human condition, to see our process of *Verstehen* and *Erklären* in terms of translation, could give us great advantages, an important—but not the only—part of which would be its ability to resolve the aforementioned universality-particularity

6 A similar suggestion to see "translation as method" has been recently made by Diagne (2022) in a volume that was not yet available at the time of finalizing this paper. I was not yet able to study Diagne's arguments, but it seems that we using a different set of authors to support our views.

tension. As we are already doing it, we should do it more consciously, more consistently, and more assertively.

As the understanding of translation (in theory and practice) has gone through many different phases, we first have to lay out some particular understanding of it that would be fitting as a meta-methodological stance in the postcomparative practice of intercultural philosophy.

In the most general terms, translation is a transposition of ideas from their given native intellectual environment to any other environment. This is very well captured in the German term for translation itself, *Übersetzung*, which literally means "positioning across" or "beyond", but also means "transformation". As Steiner (1975) puts it, "The schematic model of translation is one in which a message from a source-language passes into a receptor-language via a transformational process". We usually think of this schemata as involving two different mutually unintelligible languages. However, as Steiner notes, "the same model—and this is what is rarely stressed—is operative within a single language" (ibid.). Whyatt cites a seminal division of translation by Jakobson into three kinds: interlingual, intralingual, and intersemiotic, pointing out that it "showed the extremely wide scope of reformulating meaning into different forms and for different receivers" (Whyatt 2017, 176). Translation is a constant and ever-present mode of human cognition. It is essentially a type of activity that all academic philosophers and other academic scholars in the humanities and social sciences engage even in their intralingual exchanges when we use "reformulation, rewording, or paraphrasing" (ibid.).

This all-encompassing nature of translation as a mode of cognition is clearly stated by Walter Benjamin when he notes that "translation is a mode" (*Übersetzung ist eine Form* (Benjamin 1997, 152)). Benjamin does not explicate that concept of *mode* (*Form*), but we can gather, he means a *mode of existence* of a text (or of a thought, an idea, a concept). It is the existence that is marked by transformations, it survives because of transformations, and it aspires for transformation.[7] Translation is thus a mode of thinking, and we do and have to do it daily, even if we do not meet any foreigners. Schleiermacher notes this ever-present need for translation when he exclaims: "Yea, are we not often compelled to translate for ourselves the utterances of another who, though our compeer, is of different opinions and sensibility?" (2012, 43) Moreover, even when we do not meet any people there is a translation process involved when we rethink our previous thoughts, to "make them truly our own again" (ibid.). As such translation as a cognitive mode

7 For Benjamin, one sense of the question about work's translatability is whether "it *allows* itself to be translated, and hence—in accord with the meaning of this mode—also *calls* for translation" (1997, 152; emphasis added).

is so universal that it is present not only in dialogue with others but even in our subjective thought process when a *particular* idea that forms in *my* consciousness (thinking) is translated into a discourse of *shared* meanings in my speech or writing. As George Steiner said: to "understand is to translate" (1975).

An important part of thinking about translation as a method of philosophical thinking for our purposes has to be the possibility to avoid relying on some *pre-assumed* universals, or essences and shared meanings, as these can only be our own and thus particular. That would immediately throw us back into the universality-particularity tension. And indeed, the traditional theory of translation would make a similar assumption about the existence of some essence of the original text that the translation is supposed to recover.[8] Alternatively, it is argued that some universal conceptual scheme has to be assumed to explain how translation—from seemingly one conceptual scheme to a seemingly completely different one—is at all possible. Davidson (1973), for example, seems to be compelled to assume the existence of such a common system to make sense of the fact that we are translating each others' ideas across languages and cultures. But, as Andrew Benjamin notes, such an assumption of a foundational commonality (universality) is also driven by a rejection of relativism as supposedly the only alternative: "relativism is only avoided because the assumption of some type of universality precludes such an eventuality" (1989, 80). However, Andrew Benjamin is right when he points out that such a position runs into problems similar to those that we already saw in Skinner's critical assessment of the history of ideas. This is done at the expense of abstraction to the point of impracticality, which Skinner called "foolishly and needlessly naive" (1969, 50). In Andrew Benjamin's words: "universality in Davidson's system has the same mode of existence as nature in Kant's. The mode is the groundless ground" (1989, 80). Moreover, such a conception of universality grows "increasingly abstract as problems are posed for it" (ibid., 81). Thus, such a traditional theory of translation cannot serve our needs for translation-as-method, as it is also an expression of the universality-particularity tension.

Walter Benjamin suggests an alternative and very different vision of what is strived for and achieved in translation. He agrees that translation is "essential to certain works" (1997, 153), but on his account this translatability is not inherent in some essential meaning expressed in the original work, and it is not granted by any universal conceptual scheme that precedes the very act of translation. Instead, translatability is the function of a "specific significance inherent in the original

8 Walter Benjamin calls such traditional view a "dead theory of translation" (1997, 155–56). For a more in-depth critical discussion, also see Andrew Benjamin (1989, especially Ch. 1 and 3).

texts" (ibid.). That "significance" (*Bedeutung*[9]) is the vitality and openness to transformations grasped in the great works. Benjamin captures that vitality and openness in a neologism of his, the concept of *Fortleben*, or the "continuing life" of the text (or a thought, or an idea, or a concept).[10] Benjamin explicitly states that when he talks about the life and continuing life (*Leben und Fortleben*) of works of art, he does so "with completely unmetaphorical objectivity" (ibid.). This basically means that in translation meanings are not recovered and re-expressed with the utmost fidelity to an original, but instead that meanings are reformulated, extended, and, thus, created.

Moreover, the extension and reformulation of the meanings do not only come down in the form of translation, that is, in a newly produced text. This process also affects, in the most literal and straightforward sense, the original itself that precedes the translation (in some cases) by centuries or even millennia. In Benjamin's words,

> No translation would be possible if, in accord with its ultimate essence, it were to strive for similarity to the original. For in its continuing life [*Fortleben*], which could not be so called if it were not the transformation and renewal of a living thing, the *original is changed*. (Benjamin 1997, 155; emphasis added)

For Benjamin, the great texts do not *survive* by staying intact (*Überleben*), but rather continue their forward development, maintain their meaning-generating capabilities in their *Fortleben*, that assures and produces changes and transformations both in source, and in target languages: "translation is, of all modes, precisely the one called upon to mark the after-ripening [*Nachreife*] of the alien word, and the birth pangs of its own" (ibid., 156). There is always some indeterminacy and potency in the original. And the original text can keep changing and generating new meanings, because "Meaning is not *in* symbols. Meaning is in people", as the view from contemporary cognitive science attests (Alves and Jakobsen 2020, 7).[11]

9 This also means importance, relevance, and meaning in German.

10 See Disler (2011) for a critical assessment of a previously common "mistranslation", as she puts it, of Benjamin's *Fortleben* in terms of "afterlife". I follow Steven Rendall's translation of the term as "continuing life".

11 The same idea is expressed by Ricoeur: "each of our words has more than one meaning, as we see in the dictionaries. We call that *polysemy*. The meaning is thus defined each time *through usage*" (2006, 26; the latter emphasis added). A similar notion is also formulated in other areas of psychology and cognitive sciences. For example, Feldman Barrett (2017) suggests that emotions are constructed each time at each instance of sensing, rather than being built-in, universal, and triggered, as the classical view of emotion has suggested.

Such a dynamic and progressive nature of translation, one that is seen as the creation of new meanings, expansion of language and mind, is also attested by others. Andrew Benjamin starts his book about the relationship between translation and philosophy with the following succinct statement: "Translation is an act. It is also an enactment" (1989, 1). As such, translation is a deeply philosophical activity that strives to understand and explain, and through this translation also *creates*. As Walter Benjamin notes, good translations are more than "transmissions of a message" (1997, 154). In a way, they are "creative conjectures" (Steiner 1975) that we should boldly and enthusiastically embrace. For this reason, "Even the greatest translation is destined to be taken up into the growth of its language and perish as a result of its renewal" (Benjamin 1997, 156). But that allows us a constant expansion not only of our linguistic expressions but also of our understanding of ourselves and the world. As Alves and Jakobsen note

> Thinking about translation takes us to the core of some of the toughest philosophical questions about how we experience and know the world, how we build the assumptions by which we interact with other people and our environment, how we develop cognitive skills like communicating and speaking, and how we manage to understand each other across language barriers and cultural and personal differences by means of translation. (Alves and Jakobsen 2020, 5)

This is precisely the understanding of translation which is at the heart of my suggestion to see translation as a philosophical method[12]: an active, dynamic, and progressive change of form in formulation and expansion of the new meaning that doesn't have to assume any pre-given *universal* (essential, common) core, but rather openly commits to the creation of new *particular* meanings.

Translation-as-Method in Postcomparative Philosophy

Throughout the paper, I have suggested looking at translation as *a* unique method of comparative philosophy or, rather, what I then—after adopting such (self) identification—would like to call *postcomparative* philosophy. However, it is not a claim that translation is exclusively characteristic of postcomparative thought. The uniqueness of translation-as-method in such a postcomparative take on philosophy comes not from being employed only by the so-called comparative philosophers. After all, both translation and comparison permeate all philosophical

12 For a position similar in spirit, but somewhat different in its objectives, suggesting that we adopt translation as a method in philosophy education, see Saito (2007) and Ruitenberg (2009).

activity, as these are basic cognitive functions. Its uniqueness comes from a particular way in which comparative philosophers stand in relation to translation. Rorty has noted that

> interesting philosophy is rarely an examination of the pros and cons of a thesis. Usually it is, implicitly or explicitly, a contest between an entrenched vocabulary which has become a nuisance and a half-formed new vocabulary which vaguely promises great things. (Rorty 1989a, 9)

A "comparative" philosopher is especially exposed to the pressures of such a contest of vocabularies, and the need and difficulty of translation, as she is dealing with vastly different concepts (or traditions) that often do not have any (significant) shared cultural or linguistic background. In other words, so-called comparative philosophy is by definition multilingual, just as a comparative philosopher is a multilingual philosopher.

Schleiermacher remarked that the further languages are removed from one another in

> etymology and years, the more it will be seen that not a single word in one language will correspond perfectly to a word in another, nor does any pattern of declensions in the one contain precisely the same multiplicity of relationships as in another. (Schleiermacher 2012, 46)

This point is quite obvious and (probably) widely accepted in comparative philosophy. The comparativists are those who—by the nature of their object of study—are among those philosophers who are the most exposed to the inescapable nature of translation (or the primacy of translation). As Ricoeur notes, "The pretensions to self-sufficiency, the refusal to allow the foreign mediate, have secretly nourished numerous linguistic ethnocentrisms" (2006, 4). The same can be said about much of academic philosophy in the West, as maintaining a sort of philosophical "ethnocentrism" in the form of Eurocentric philosophy well into the 21st century. Comparative philosophy in this regard is more akin to anthropology, which makes the aforementioned virtual invisibility between the two disciplines even more bizarre. As Macdonald points out,

> Anthropology, as a discourse of disparate cultural communities, has always been concerned with translating the minds and behaviors of individuals and collectives within one culture, across to those from another context. (Macdonald 2020, 91)

Translation that is done by comparativists—compared to that done by monolingual and monocultural philosophers—requires more rigor, as most often there is no shared etymology or inherited common tradition between the philosophical terminologies in question. Thus, even if we have not yet explicitly formulated how translation *as* method works, comparativists inherently have their ideas and practices that could be potentially spelled out and generalized (to a certain reasonable extent) as a method of postcomparative philosophical thinking. I cannot flesh out the translation-as-method idea in practical details here—this is an objective for other time and place—but I will now turn to the formulation of the possible advantages of doing so.

First of all, translation-as-method has a way to reconceptualize and reframe the relation between the universal and particular, possibly relieving at least some of the aforementioned universality-particularity tension, something that comparison-as-method cannot. As *tertium comparationis* analysis has shown, comparison's inner logic requires the third part—the common ground on the basis of which we compare—to be assumed in advance. It cannot explain how (and with what justification) that third that is just another *particular* perspective could reliably claim the status of the *universal*. The classical theory of translation, on the one hand, has its version of the pre-assumed "third" in the form of essential meanings, timeless concepts, or universal conceptual schemes. On the other hand, translation theory has demonstrated methodological resources to eliminate the need for such assumptions. Translation does not have to assume commonality to exist *before* the act of translation. It didn't merely explain away or avoid the methodological and theoretical problem of the third. It fundamentally changed the direction of the thought process. Translation, understood in terms of Schleiermacher, Walter Benjamin, Steiner, and Ricoeur, is a method of thought that doesn't have to assume commonality to exist *before* the act of translation. Translation explains and facilitates transcending the *particular*, turning one *particular* into another *particular*, but one that creatively encompasses the previous, thus overstepping its limits and *constitutes* the shared—or the common, the transcultural, if not a "universal"—that did not necessarily exist before.

This is also true on the intercultural level, as seen when Chen Shaoming (2015) talks about Yan Fu's impact on developing contemporary Chinese philosophy and stresses his ground-breaking work in translating famous works and fundamental categories of Western science. In this context, Chen presents an interesting idea that he does not develop further, but which is very important in thinking in terms of translation-as-method. Particularly, he points at translation's role in implementing philosophy's universalist thrust—that is, the quest for transcending the limitations of one time and place, the limitations of particularity. As Chen writes of Yan

Fu: "The impact of his work is far-reaching. In the end, what probably was only a *particular* form of Western learning (西学) he turned into a form of knowledge and methodology with a *universal* significance"[13] (2015, 46; emphasis added).

Secondly, the translation-as-method approach facilitates the conscious creation of new philosophical positions out of the ideas or concepts under comparison, which I have been associating with a postcomparative (or fusion philosophy, transcultural philosophy) stance (see Silius 2020, 267–72), while also retaining the openness to the cultural and linguistic Other. Translation-as-method gives a good framework of how a multilingual, multicultural philosopher can contribute to the process of formulating questions that have not been formulated before or proposing solutions to the problems that have not been solved. Whereas comparison is a closed-ended activity in that it is retrospective, translation is open-ended and prospective. The tendency to essentialize the living nature of language by dealing with concepts and ideas (at least for the purpose of comparison) as relatively static and historically settled (the *comparanda*), is transformed in a translation-as-method approach into an instigation to reformulate and create new vocabularies better fitting a new reality. If comparison-as-method has to rely on the assumed commonality (*tertium comparationis*), translation-as-method openly admits to *creating* commonality by expanding the limits of language and mind. This idea is akin to what Macdonald called reasoning *towards* generalizations:

> Translation in this discussion has been used to illustrate the implausibility of the universalist approach that takes its standards for categorizing phenomena from a limited collection of linguacultures. Yet, by the same token, the attentive description of languages enables reasoning towards more general principles that do make certain translation options more suitable than others for a given target audience context. (Macdonald 2020, 98)

When Ricoeur, following in the steps of Schleiermacher and Walter Benjamin, rejects the idea that translatability between the two texts must be granted by some allegedly pre-existent (but in reality non-existent) common "third" text, he points out that to overcome that seeming paradox and daunting trappings of radical and toxic relativism, one has simply to turn to the creative powers of people and to rely on their creativity: "there is only one recourse, i.e. the critical reading of a few, if not polyglot then at least bilingual, specialists" (Ricoeur 2006, 7). Postcomparative philosophy could mark that area of philosophical thinking where this polyglot

13 其工作的后果影响深远，最终是把原本可能只是特殊形态的西学，变成具有普遍意义的知识与方法。

expertise is taken to formulate positions about the human condition that would have transcultural validity. In a way, it makes a postcomparative philosophy just that—just philosophy. But a just philosophy has to be *just* to the cultural and linguistic variety of this world, and can only be so in as much as it is global and inclusive.[14]

Comparative philosophy has always set as its goal the ability to foster and maintain openness to the Other. And the translation-as-method approach of postcomparative philosopher retains this openness. As Benjamin notes, translation is "a preliminary way of coming to terms with the foreignness of languages to each other" (1997, 157). This can be done by producing and retaining that ideal state of the translator's mind, in which, according to Schleiermacher's view "the spirit remains receptive even to what is most unlike itself" (2012, 44). At the same time, translation also fosters a self-critical stance towards one's language and culture. Walter Benjamin favourably cites Rudolf Pannwitz, who claims that a translator "must broaden and deepen his own language through the foreign one" (1997, 164). This sentiment is echoed in Ricoeur when he argues for "the ambition of de-provincializing the mother tongue, which is invited to think of itself as one language amongst others, ultimately to see itself as foreign" (2006, 9).

Thirdly, looking at translation as a method of philosophical postcomparative thinking opens up rich resources of translation studies for rigorous explication and refinement of methods in intercultural postcomparative philosophy. One of the problems that Weber (2013; 2014) points out is that there is no philosophy of comparison. So there is a lack of study and understanding of what comparison is and how it functions, and what is achievable with it. Weber critiques "the frequent but mistaken assumption that "'what comparison is' is sufficiently obvious that it requires little further attention" (2013, 599). In contrast, translation studies is a wide and diverse field that might be immensely helpful in trying to come to terms, paraphrasing Hans P. Krings, with "what goes on in comparative philosophers' head?" (in Chesterman 2020, 25).

To sum up, looking at translation as a crucial and fundamental philosophical method of postcomparative philosophy does not require abolishing comparison as an important and, in fact, integral part of the field. Translation is fundamental because we have to translate before we can compare. On the other hand, translation is fundamental, because it fully integrates whatever comparison is as a method (or, rather, an instrument). Translation, in this sense, is a fruitful comparison.

I would like to close with a short comment on the term postcomparative itself,

14 I have borrowed this idea about the double meaning of "just philosophy" from Chakrabarti and Weber (2022).

which is still a contested term within the comparativist field. I believe that this term has its place—not that so as marking a historical overcoming, and definitely not as a rejection of comparative philosophy (or comparison in general). Rather, I see it as indicating a certain web of specific attitudes, approaches, and methods, to work past comparison of seemingly discrete particulars (Chinese philosophy and Western philosophy, Aristotle and Kongzi, and so on) and to construct new comparables, that is, new philosophical positions oriented at the present issues and challenges. Comparative philosophy has had such postcomparative thinkers before (Graham, Fingarette, Rosemont, etc.), and has them now. Thus, the term postcomparative is not a call to arms and revolution, but rather an invitation to the discipline to engage in self-reflection, to strive for a better understanding of the particular strengths of the discipline, and the wider impact on a truly transcultural philosophical quest for realization of the human condition. So I see the term postcomparative as sort of a mnemonic device to remind oneself of a direction or to locate within the existing field that which seems to me as *philosophically* the most productive positions.

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Sublating Sinic Relationism: On a Winding Path from Transcultural to Global Ethics

*Jana S. ROŠKER**

Abstract

This paper aims to bring into the global ethics debate concrete alternative models of specific relational ethics developed in the context of Sinic traditions that have not yet been widely introduced into Western scholarship or integrated into the framework of global discourses on ethics and morality. Although much research has been done on certain elements and aspects of such ethical models, there have been no concrete attempts to incorporate them into a global axiological framework that could have helped humanity develop strategies for solving the current global crises we face.

The paper first provides a critical overview of the conceptual history, specific characteristics, and social relevance of relationism. It then addresses the question of how relational ethical models could be integrated into the value system of contemporary global ethics without reproducing the still dominant normativity of Western epistemology and its corresponding axiology. After highlighting some problems related to the methodology and structure of traditional models of comparative philosophy and ethics, the author suggests that this integration of relationism into the general framework of global ethics could be done by applying a new method, which can be tentatively called the method of transcultural philosophical sublation. Starting from different frames of reference that define the basic tenets of modern Western and traditional Chinese axiology, the author demonstrates the application of this method on the example of different conceptions of the human self.

Keywords: transcultural ethics, Sinic relationism, Ruism, Ruist role-ethics, post-comparative philosophy, sublation

Sublacija siniške odnosnosti: na ovinkasti poti od transkulturne do globalne etike

Izvleček

Pričujoči članek v diskurze o globalni etiki vnaša alternativne modele specifične etike odnosnosti, ki so se razvili v kontekstih siniške tradicije in v zahodni akademski sferi še niso dovolj znani, niti še niso bili integrirani v globalne diskurze etike in morale. Četudi so določeni elementi in vidiki tovrstnih modelov že razmeroma dobro raziskani, doslej še ni bilo poskusov njihove integracije v globalno aksiologijo, ki bi lahko človeštvu pomagala razvijati nove strategije reševanja aktualnih globalnih kriz.

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Članek najprej podaja kritični pregled idejne zgodovine, specifičnih značilnosti in družbenega pomena odnosnosti. Potem se posveča vprašanju, kako bi bilo možno etične modele odnosnosti integrirati v sistem vrednot sodobne globalne etike brez reproduciranja zahodne epistemologije in aksiologije, ki v njej še vedno prevladujeta. Potem ko izpostavi določene probleme, povezane z metodologijo in strukturo tradicionalnih modelov primerjalne filozofije in etike, avtorica predlaga novo metodo za integracijo odnosnosti v globalno etiko. To metodo preliminarno imenuje metoda transkulturne filozofske sublacije. Izhajajoč iz različnih referenčnih okvirov, ki določajo osnovna načela moderne zahodne oziroma tradicionalne kitajske aksiologije, avtorica prikaže uporabo te metode na osnovi različnih konceptualizacij človeškega sebstva.

Ključne besede: transkulturna etika, siniška odnosnost, ruizem, ruistična etika vlog, postprimerjalna filozofija, sublacija

Introduction: Clarifying Basic Notions

This paper will focus primarily on analysing the Sinic Ruist relational ethics and examining their broader, transcultural applicability.

The Sinic region refers to the geopolitical area that has historically been heavily influenced by Chinese writing and certain parts of the original Chinese cultures, such as the Ruist (Confucian) and Chan (Zen) Buddhist systems of ideas and, to some extent, Daoism. In addition to China itself and the main East Asian countries (Korea, Japan, Taiwan), it also includes some regions of Southeast Asia, e.g., Vietnam and, to some extent, Singapore.

The term Ruism is a phonetic translation of the Chinese term *Ruxue* 儒學, which usually refers to what is known in Western sources as "Confucianism". Literally translated, it means "the teachings of the scholars" and refers to the most influential philosophical current that originated in China and later spread throughout the East Asian region. Since the term Confucianism, first introduced by Jesuit missionaries, in Western countries primarily implies the institutionalized state doctrine and rigid, formally structured normative ethics based on autocratic hierarchies, it seems reasonable to use the term Ruist instead to emphasize that this paper will not be dealing with the official state doctrine and institutionalized national ideologies, but rather with the underlying traditional philosophies and systems of specific relational ethics. With this decision, I have taken a concrete position in the academic debates that are currently going on about which of the two English terms (Ruism or Confucianism) is more appropriate. Although the term "Confucianism" already has a relatively long-standing name recognition in the West, numerous experts on Chinese intellectual history and philosophy argue

for the change from "Confucianism" to "Ruism" with different, often convincing, arguments. David Elstein, for example, has repeatedly used the term "Ruism", (Elstein 2015a; 2015b), and Robert Eno argued for such a practice as early as 30 years ago in his book *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*. In 2016, Bin Song also made a strong argument for changing "Confucianism" to "Ruism" (Song 2017; 2019). However, in the present research paper I make some new arguments for the use of Ruism related to the necessary distinction between state doctrine on the one hand and proto-democratic ethics on the other. In this, I argue for the general use of both terms, Confucianism and Ruism, respectively, and suggest that the first term should refer to national ideologies (or the so-called "political Confucianism"), and the second to conceptual philosophical paradigms. In this way, this paper also aims to maintain the distinction between the two Chinese terms *rujiao* 儒教 and *ruxue* 儒學, both of which have previously been translated with the single term Confucianism, although their individual connotations are very different.

Moreover, in this paper I will argue for the use of transcultural approaches, because, unlike the more general notions of cross-cultural and intercultural philosophies, they explicitly aim at overcoming the traditional, i.e. static and immobile, notion of culture. Within this framework, I propose to critically modify traditional comparative methods, most of which still rely on Western evaluative criteria and methods, and to develop them by using what I tentatively call "the method of transcultural sublation". Although the term "sublation", like the term "synthesis", is also part of the Hegelian lines of thought and therefore could be problematic, it is much less invalidated. On the other hand, it encompasses all three concepts that are crucial to any process of creating something new from the interactions between two or more different objects or phenomena. In this philosophical sense, it has the three connotations of arising, eliminating, and preserving. Moreover, the term "sublation", as opposed to "synthesis", refers to a process rather than a phase. For all these reasons, I believe that a "philosophy of sublation" can better and more accurately denote new forms of cross-cultural philosophizing than any kind of synthesis or the notion of "fusion philosophy"[1] as proposed by Chakrabarti

1 Fusion refers to the process or result of joining two or more things together to form a single entity. It is often even associated with the process of melting, which normally results in a unity in which particular elements of the two or more entities that have been melted (or fused together) become completely unrecognizable and are essentially alienated. The amalgamated unity, which arises through a fusion, is, of course, a qualitatively new substance. Now, if we consider fusion as a metaphor for a certain mode of philosophical reasoning, then we have to admit that new philosophical insights are always based upon new cognitive substances. However, genuine philosophizing as a creative process can hardly be based upon an amalgamated unity of distorted elements, for it must be based upon certain discrete philosophical grounds.

and Weber (2016). The sublation method is tightly linked to two other methods that are, in my view, also important parts of transcultural discourses. The first is linked to the awareness of the different culturally conditioned frameworks of reference. Indeed, different cultures produce different referential frameworks, which are, on the other hand, linked to different methodologies applied in the process of perceiving, understanding and interpreting reality. A referential framework in this sense can be defined as a relational structure of concepts, categories, terms, and ideas, as well as values, which are applied in the cognitive processing of the objects of comprehension. It also includes paradigms and perspectives that influence and define the comprehension and evaluation of particular semantic elements within this structure, as well as the structure as a whole. The knowledge of these frameworks enables scholars to apply in their interpretations the method of so-called discursive translation, which is not limited to a verbatim linguistic transfer, but must include the interpretation of specific textual/speech structures, categories, concepts and values existing in diverse socio-cultural contexts.

Backgrounds

In recent years, much research has been done on different ethical models that have historically evolved in different cultural traditions, but without exploring how they can be integrated into a global axiological context still dominated by the (pre-)modern values of the Western Enlightenment and its paradigms of individual-based morality.

In today's world, however, these research agendas are of utmost importance because it is becoming increasingly clear that current crises, such as severe environmental disasters, inequitable distribution of resources, viral pandemics, etc., are global problems that cannot be fully resolved within the narrow framework of individual countries or nation-states.[2] They must also be addressed within the larger framework of global cooperation and solidarity. All this, of course, presupposes the development of a genuine intercultural dialogue, i.e., a dialogue that goes beyond the currently fashionable terminology of European Union (EU) administrative nomenclature and can lead to a transcultural exchange of knowledge and ideas.

2 This does not mean, of course, that nation-states should be abolished and a world government established. The nation-state mechanisms that enable us to legislate our actions under democratic self-determination and to put them into practice through appropriate administrative structures are still important. However, as long as we also think in terms of borders, which means that we do not give due consideration to the humanity of those who live outside our own borders, we are on the wrong path.

Indeed, debates about a new universal ethics are booming.[3] The idea of a global ethics that is supposed to function as an interculturally valid moral regulator of economic globalization is also currently enjoying much popularity. Against this rich, but simultaneously limited research background, it is certainly worthwhile to investigate new possibilities of integrating Sinic ethical paradigms into the global ethics discourse. Although some solid research has been done into Sinic, particularly Ruist ethics (see below), a new paradigm of incorporating its crucial elements into a global scale of ethical regulations on an interpersonal as well as broader social level has yet to be established.

The abovementioned lively interest in ethics and the search for binding standards for a global civil society also stands in sharp contrast to the erosion of social cohesion, traditional norms and standards within local societies that can currently be observed worldwide. The philosophical and political discourse on universally valid ethical standards for a humane civil society is thus intended to compensate for the moral and social disintegrations and aporias that have *de facto* emerged in the structure of today's post-industrial societies and in the wake of a now global capitalism. Even though the economic rationality of the global market economy has proven to be a powerful driver of social change and dissolution in this process, it can only be understood as a means to achieve higher-level goals of action and not as a goal or even an end in itself of human existence. It is obvious that economic globalization—also from the perspective of its actors—requires ethical regulation by superordinate horizons of meaning.

The theoretical search for global ethics thus ultimately arises from economic constraints, for the globalization of the economy, technology, and the media automatically requires a globalization of ethics in the sense of a necessary minimum of common ethical norms. This raises the question of where these norms or standards are to come from when economic-technological interdependencies, in their pervasive utilitarian logic, have dissolved local commitments and ways of life worldwide. In this sense, all references to the common moral substance of all theories with universal claims remain limited to the framework of global structures and relations of economic, political, and axiological domination, and thus these theoretical discourses raise more questions than they can answer.

3 These studies belong to different disciplines. In the fields of linguistics, cultural and cognitive sciences, anthropology of ethics, etc., many corresponding studies have been carried out. Although they do not explicitly aim at renewing a "global" ethics, the implications of such research may bring us closer to this goal than many purely philosophical studies. Indeed, the authors of these works do not base their research on "universal" concepts or problems, but rather seek naturalistic, empirically validated foundations for understanding human interactions that are crucial to any form of social ethics (e.g., Klenk, 2019; Lambek 2010). In particular, the "ethical turn" in anthropology clearly demonstrates the need for theoretical alternatives to traditional ethics research.

In this context, it is important to distinguish between the concepts of global ethics on the one hand and universal ethics on the other. We must critically question the project of a "universal" ethics, since it is inherently and (unnecessarily) unifying and slides into the search for some fundamental principles, values and virtues. In this regard, we need to find a way of deepening and broadening transcultural approaches, which means building the foundations of a global ethics on more inclusive forms of human interactions, such as Henry Rosemont's (2015) proposal to apply the concept of "homoversal" instead of "universal".

The problematic nature of "universal ethics" is already evident in the contemporary conceptualization of the term "moral values" as such. It originated in economics and was imported into moral philosophy only in the late 19th century, and since today it can no longer be associated with a positive historical goal, its function is rather negative and destructive. It is limited to the incessant defence against the constant threat of paternalistic systems of meaning based on the supposedly universal concepts of individual autonomy, freedom, and self-determination, as well as on all other central rights developed as part of the Western Enlightenment. On the other hand, this attitude has also led to the dangers of radical ethical relativism, which at first glance is based on principles of egalitarian diversity, but in reality—due to its fundamentally still Eurocentric criteria—is misleading, discriminatory, and therefore problematic.

As we will see below, the application of the method of sublation aims—*inter alia*—at overcoming such an impasse as the relationship between universal and relativistic ethics, a construct that can be observed in numerous contemporary research results. In fact, both categories are rooted in the established and still prevailing global power relations and their axiological implications. These power relations continue to manifest themselves in the West's dominance in epistemological, scientific, and ideational interactions and exchanges with Eastern Asia and the Global South. Although the majority of technological and economic power is shifting from Western to Asian regions, and although their rapid global rise has created new challenges for the United States, the EU, and individual European governments, the "East-West" dialogue is still dominated by the axiological, intellectual, and operational conceptualizations of Western traditions. The reason for the continued dominance of the West in this basic paradigm of exchange is related to the fact that modernization, which provided the epistemological and scientific foundations for today's global system, was "exported" from Europe to the rest of the world, including the Sinic regions. This process also entailed a "modernization" of knowledge and created an asymmetrical relationship between the two sides, in which European indifference to Asia and Asian interest

in Europe were anything but balanced.[4] The crucial question, then, is whether and how this epistemological asymmetry can be balanced. One of the reasons why contemporary Sinic philosophy deserves special attention from a European perspective is that, through the reception and transformation of Western sources (which it was actually forced to do two centuries ago), it has accumulated a transcultural potential that philosophy in Europe has yet to gradually develop. Indeed, we must realize that in the context of the current dynamics of progress, we can hardly think about "Europe" without adopting a global philosophical and ethical perspective. Yet, although much research has been conducted in recent decades on various issues of traditional East Asian, especially Ruist, ethics, only a few studies (e.g. Bell 2010; Elstein 2015a; Lee 2014) have focused upon a possible reconstruction and renewal of some of their basic principles in order to integrate them into a normative system suitable for contemporary societies. A tendency of such reconstructions was clearly visible since the dawn of the 20th century within the intellectual current of New Ruism (*Xin Ruxue* 新儒學), which was defined as the search for a synthesis between Western and traditional East Asian thought in order to develop a system of ideas and values capable of solving the social and political problems of the modern, increasingly globalized world. Philosophers belonging to this school of thought have attempted to reconcile "Western" and "traditional Chinese" ethical norms and principles to create a theoretical model of modernization that cannot be confused or equated with "Westernization". On such foundations, we need to build upon, develop, and upgrade the research already conducted by the major proponents of this school of thought, which was followed by a broader and more general development of the academic field known as the Ruist (or Confucian) revival.

Li Zehou also posited a number of important theories on specific Ruist ethical models and proposed several new, highly influential paradigms for interpreting classical Chinese ethical thought. For the main research agenda of the present article, his elaborations and explanations of the notion of relationism (*guanxizhuyi* 關係主義) are of crucial importance (see Li 1980; 1995; 2010).

4 In a personal correspondence that took place in February 2022, Vytis Silius has made me aware of the fact that this imbalance is problematic not only because of Europe's moral claim to Asian societies in terms of "fair play". We cannot limit our understanding of this asymmetry problem to the issue that it harms Asia (because it is unfair, (post)colonial, because it distorts Asian traditions, etc.). Even if such claims are correct, it is even more important to recognize (especially on a political, but also on a philosophical level) that such orientations are very harmful for Europe itself (and the West in general). Economic and technological power is shifting to Asia, whether we really understand how Asian societies work or not. However, if Europe continues to adopt such an ignorant and careless attitude towards Sinic societies, it runs the risk of finding itself in a world system whose deep foundations it does not understand.

A similar concept regarding classical Ruist ethics was proposed by Heiner Roetz, particularly in his studies on Chinese ethics of the Axial Age, and on the impact of its central tenets on Chinese and Sinic modernity (see Roetz 1993, 2017), and on the pragmatic character of Ruist ethics (see Roetz 2013). His work on Axial Age ethics is particularly important in the transcultural perspective, especially because of his important critique of Jasper's concept of the Axial Age in relation to the historical and social conditions of the establishment of ancient Chinese ethics, while his work on Ruist pragmatism is crucial for clarifying the question of the fundamental nature and social function of Ruist ethics and its possible transcultural connotations. Indeed, the latter category of Roetz's work serves as an important critique of the communitarian interpretation of Ruist ethics. According to Roetz, such an interpretation is part of a counter-discourse to the European Enlightenment. In his view, however, such explanations do not do justice to pragmatism's actual indebtedness to the Enlightenment. Therefore, these works propose a specific approach that differs from the prevailing ways of thinking in the study of classical Ruist ethics.

The most influential proponents of the opposite approach are David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames (see especially Hall and Ames 1987; 1995; 1998; 2018). In developing their "focus-field" model of the Ruist Self, they are more oriented toward pragmatic symbolic interactionism. Their model is based on the *ars contextualis* paradigm of Chinese philosophical thought, which in turn can be productively contrasted with Western systems of "general ontology" and a "science of universal principles".

Both of the above approaches (i.e., Roetz's along with Hall and Ames') are important and useful. In spite of their mutual differences, their respective basic systems should not necessarily be viewed as controversial opposites, but rather as complementary methods of analysis and interpretation. Both perspectives on the above material will therefore constitute parts of the basic theoretical framework of the proposed research, arguing—among other issues—for the relevance of pragmatist doctrines to the ongoing project of a critical modern "reconstruction" and not merely a restoration of classical Ruist ethics. Both approaches are important because they emphasize that Ruism, despite its ancient origins, is a living ethical tradition with contemporary relevance. These aspects were also highlighted in the collection of essays edited by Kam-por Yu, Julia Tao, and Philip J. Ivanhoe, *Taking Confucian Ethics Seriously* (2010).

Traditional Ruist ethics cannot be fully equated with any of the classical European ethical discourses, but on the other hand, it contains many of their respective elements and can be seen as a combination of several such disciplines—some

scholars see it as closely related to deontological ethics (e.g., Lee 2014), others to virtue ethics (e.g., Huang Yong 2016; 2020). As we approach the goal of this paper, we need to consider all of these aspects.

Proceeding from the relational character of the Ruist ethics, Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont developed the concept of so-called role-ethics, which is based on a careful analysis of classical Ruist moral philosophy and represents one of the most innovative and productive contemporary interpretations of the elementary structure and social connotations of Ruist ethics (e.g. Rosemont and Ames 2016). Although developed only recently, these fundamental works have already become classics in relation to the concept of role ethics, and inspired many other interpretations of certain aspects and consequences of this type of ethics. Within such a framework, the Ruist role-ethics is seen as an attempt to formulate a *sui generis* ethical system that gives this tradition its own voice. Both scholars emphasize that this processual, holistic philosophy is based on the primacy of relationality and therefore poses a challenge to the basic liberal individualism that has defined people as discrete, autonomous, rational, free, and often self-interested agents.

As mentioned above, further development of the comparative perspective is also important. In this regard, three edited volumes containing research results from many eminent scholars should be mentioned, namely the special issue of the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* on the comparative origins of classical Chinese and Greek ethics (see Cheng Chung-ying 2002), and an important book on classical Ruist ethics and its comparison with discourses based on the individual self and individual rights, with the title *Confucian Ethics: A Comparative Study of Self, Autonomy, and Community* (Shun and Wong 2004). An important anthology dealing with comparisons between ancient Ruist moral philosophy and ethics on the one hand and contemporary Western ethics on the other is also the book *Encountering China* (Sandel and D'Ambrosio 2018).

Since the paper deals with Sinic societies, we also need to be familiar with the historical and theoretical works that explored the process of spreading Ruist ethical thought and culture from China to other Sinic countries and regions. There is a large amount of literature in this research area, and in this regard, but I will mainly consider the works of the few main Sinophone theorists in this field. In this context, I will mainly proceed from the theoretical concepts developed by Huang Chun-chieh in his transcultural Sinic methodology (see Huang Chun-chieh 2005; 2014; 2018) such as the notions of "decontextualization", "recontextualization", and "*glocal* knowledge".

First Steps on the Path to Global Integration of Sinic Ethics

On the basis of this rich material that has already elaborated in many different ways on several of the most important questions of Sinic ethics and its relational models, I seem to be well-equipped enough to provide a critical introduction of Sinic ethical thought into Western scholarship and, more importantly, to incorporate it into discourses on new models of global ethics. However, these endeavours are far from reducing the complex relationship between "universalist ethics" on the one hand and local "Sinic ethics" on the other to some minimal moral standards, norms, or "values". It seems much more sensitive to discuss it from the perspective of alternative social structures and ways of life that resist the assimilationist tendencies of Western ethical discourses by offering new forms of intellectual and life-world experience—that is, a different ethos. Apart from the fact that the dominance of Western axiology is a relic of the colonial and postcolonial period, which was developed in the course of modernization along Western lines and has spread in this form to virtually all regions of the world, one of the main reasons why the Sinic model of relational ethics has been systematically marginalized and misinterpreted so far is the fact that it does not represent a system based on some "other moral values",[5] but is rather rooted in a different ontology of human and social existence.

I believe that Sinic ethical models could make an extremely valuable contribution to such a system of a new global ethics, which could better address the multiple cultural, socio-political, environmental, epistemological, and moral crises of the contemporary world. A transcultural approach can critically and constructively challenge prevailing models of social structure based on individualism. Elsewhere, I have already shown (2021) that traditional Sinic ethical models are not based on collectivist social structures, as is widely assumed in the West, but are rather rooted in relational ethics, which is based on the concept of an individual person whose identity is constituted by and emerges from relationships with fellow human beings. In this context, it is important to refer to the notion of "relational self" and introduce its significance to Western and global scholarship.

The reasons for our stepping onto this path of integrating relationism into the discourses on global ethics are tightly linked the general crises faced by humanity in today's globalized age. These various crises are, of course, interrelated. At the time of writing this article, the explosive spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Russian attack on Ukraine, have—each in their own way—underscored the

5 In this context, it is worthwile to elaborate and develop Henry Rosemont's (2015) critical notion of "value-orderings" which holds that differences between reasonable ethical systems are not due to "different values" but to different orders of those values.

urgent need to develop methods and forms of supranational collaborative models and problem-solving strategies. Among other things, this pandemic crisis has clearly demonstrated that one of the most effective tools in the fight against such diseases, taken by governments of all countries, is precisely interpersonal solidarity, which must also include a certain degree of self-discipline. Such attitudes play a significant role in all pacifist endeavours to make an end to military conflicts, and they have certainly played a role in the strategies used by Sinic societies to control, and in some cases even eliminate, the spread of the coronavirus. In this regard, most of the Sinic countries have been more successful and efficient than those nations in the Euro-American regions. In my previous work (e.g. 2021), I have clearly shown that the reasons for this difference are not related to the alleged "traditional obedience" of the Sinic population or to the autocratic nature of traditional Sinic state structures. Although it is clear that the autocratic systems of PR China and North Korea have used a range of repressive measures in dealing with the pandemics, we do not have enough reliable and transparent data on their effectiveness. On the other hand, the governments of several "soft" Sinic democracies, such as Taiwan, South Korea, post-colonial Hong Kong, and Singapore, have taken no such measures and yet have been extremely successful in containing the spread of the virus. It is therefore safe to assume that the reasons for the above-mentioned discrepancy have less to do with concrete current political orders than with traditional ethical systems that have emerged and prevail in the various cultural and linguistic areas studied and that normatively prescribe certain culturally conditioned patterns of interaction for large parts of the population.[6]

Here, the contrastive analysis, which represents (as will be shown below) the first segment of the sublation method, could prove itself as a useful tool. Indeed, a contrasting view of the model of individualistically defined ethics on the one hand and relational role ethics on the other may offer new opportunities to gain deeper insights into the general factors that determine the understanding of the relationship between the individual and society. Moreover, this type of analysis can provide us with an efficient differentiation tool for the theoretical selection of

6 In this context, I will start from my cross-cultural (Taiwan-Central Europe) empirical study (2012) of the respective understandings of the concept of autonomy. The results of this study clearly showed that even in the third millennium, there is a great discrepancy between these understandings in Europe and the Sinic region, respectively. While most European informants clearly postulate the importance of the individual before society, a large majority of the Taiwanese population remains convinced of the interdependence between the individual and society, which leads to the attribution of great importance to the latter. This instrumental function of society or community manifests itself in a better recognition of the need for social behaviour (e.g., cooperation, solidarity) when confronted with social problems, i.e., problems that affect not only the rights and interests of the individual but also society as a whole (see also Shun and Wong 2004).

positive factors and for the elimination or modification of those strategies that prove to be insufficient. These operational tools will serve us as valuation criteria for the creation of a theoretical framework that will not only provide a good basis for further research, but, above all, an effective method for putting this transcultural knowledge into practice, especially in the fields of legislation and education.

In the next step, we must consider that the classical Sinic model of the "relational self" is deeply embedded in traditional Ruist role-ethics, which is the fundamental paradigm of Sinic ethical relationism. We need to remember (see Rošker 2021) that such a model of social roles, which is informed by ethical normativity, shapes a relational network rooted in the specific, culturally conditioned ideals of individual moral emotions on the one hand and social empathy on the other. In this context, the specific features of Ruist models of hierarchy and their impact on existing patterns of social discrimination, e.g., in relation to gender roles[7] are also important.

Sublating traditional Ruist ethics and integrating them into global discourses also means shedding light on the current needs and demands of contemporary societies in order to find new ways of understanding interpersonal and intercultural interactions that could help us develop new models of cooperation and solidarity as new strategies against current and future global crises. These requirements are certainly linked to the urgent need to resolve the bankruptcy of the current model of liberal democracy and its close connection to the global economy, with its deeply unjust system of production and reproduction of wealth and poverty, freedom and chains, war and peace.

Sublation as an Innovative Method of Transcultural Comparisons

Undoubtedly, such a global perspective is of great importance for the development of all scientific and academic disciplines of our time. This is especially true for the humanities, which have hitherto developed in a fragmentary manner, within the

7 It is certain that the Ruist relational ethics involves hierarchies. Relational ethics is rooted in family relationships based on the structural inequality between parents and children. Analogously, such a hierarchical structure is also projected onto the relationships between superiors and their subjects in Ruist political philosophy. Theoretically, the structure of these hierarchical models is not based on attitudes or expectations of absolute authority and corresponding obedience, but on the responsibility of superiors to their subordinates, for it is modelled on the basic pattern of the parent-child relationship, in which the authority of the former is based on experience and loving care, while the attitude of the latter is grounded in natural dependence. But these are, of course, only the theoretical paradigms of Ruist ethics. In later Confucian practice, especially during the periods of autocratic regimes, they were frequently and continuously misused to legitimize absolutist rule.

framework of individual discourses isolated from one another, often confined to the framework of particular histories of ideas and languages. Therefore, we need to promote the transcultural exchange of knowledge and ideas, which is more important than ever in today's globalized world and in a time of widespread crises. As the central crises and problems of our time manifest themselves on a global scale, a globalization of epistemology is also necessary, since such crises and problems can only be solved through informed and up-to-date scholarship that takes into account the issues of equality and justice of all cultures and peoples while meeting the demands of our time. Importantly, this globalization of scientific discourse must not be based on standardization rooted (as it has been) in the economic-political supremacy of those regions that have established the current centres of global power and dominance, but on equality that is different from sameness because it is based on cultural, linguistic, and axiological diversity.

As we have seen, the traditional comparative methods have several shortcomings, concerning both their methodological and axiological principles. Therefore, the model of comparison must be developed in the sense that it overcomes these shortcomings and also the mere identification of similarities and differences between the two *comparanda*.

After months (if not years) of heated debates, it seems high time for scholars working on transcultural philosophy to develop certain methodological and theoretical innovations in this field of research. In this context, I propose to elaborate and apply a new methodological paradigm that can be used in transcultural philosophy and ethics. I tentatively refer to this paradigm as the method of transcultural philosophical sublation (see Rošker 2021). Here, this new method will be applied in the concrete procedure of integrating traditional Sinic relational ethics into current discourses and debates on the possibilities and methods of developing new models of global ethics and their productive transformation in light of current global developments in the search for global solutions to global crises.

Problems related to contemporary global ethics are thus viewed through the lens of transcultural philosophy in the narrower field of Sinic, particularly East Asian studies. As the prefix "trans-" of the term "transcultural" suggests, the methods employed in our research aim to "transcend", that is, to surpass and overcome the rigid, isolating, and essentialist notion of culture (Silius 2020, 275). At the same time, it points to the possibility of its transformation.

As already indicated, I will proceed here from the assumption that the ontology of culture is not based on an immutable substance, but on the relations between different factors that constitute it as a category. Such an understanding is based on the fact that different communities, shaped and developed in the course of their

respective historical and geopolitical developments, form different cosmologies, language structures, and frames of reference. Transcultural research is therefore a process that goes beyond the orthodox, static formulation of culture and thus opens up the possibility of creating new horizons for theorizing content that originally belonged to separate systems or categories.

However, this does not mean that there are no different cultures. Different cultures are still something real, just like different languages or grammatical and cognition structures. They are all dynamic, constantly evolving and changing entities that form the ideational context of human life in individual communities and societies. The same is true for the highly contested concept of cultural identity (see Jullien 2016; Heubel 2021). In our quest to integrate Sinic ethical models into the framework of global ethics, one must also critically question the prevailing argument that "a culture has no identity because it is constantly changing" (Jullien 2016, 20). Instead, I subscribe to Fabian Heubel's idea that a culture can only change if and because it has identity(ies) and constantly produces them (Heubel 2021). However, this does not mean that identity is a "phantasm". Rather, identities are ways of being, and denying their existence is not only naïve, but can also lead to a dangerous denial of reality.[8]

But my aim is not to limit transcultural philosophy to the level of such cultural identities, even if they are changeable and dynamic. I want to find out in what way we can integrate Sinic relationism into the field of global ethics, which I understand as a system of certain basic ethical standards that can connect and be shared by people from different cultures, religions, and nations enabling them to face global crises in a constructive way. In doing so, I would like to apply the methods recently developed within the framework of transcultural post-comparative philosophy (Kahteran and Weber 2021, 214), which aims to overcome certain problems associated with traditional intercultural comparisons.

As indicated at the beginning of this article, scholars see the main problem with such comparisons as having a unifying methodology and a single philosophical language and applying it to culturally concrete and diverse material. In my view,

8 This fact is of immense importance not only for the global exchange of knowledge, but also for Europe and our efforts to free it from the relics of its colonial history, which to some extent still manifests itself in the problematic nature of the current type of "intercultural dialogues" because they are often still based on (albeit mostly unconscious and latent) Eurocentric and Orientalist approaches. Europe, composed of different cultures that use different languages and have developed in different historical traditions, urgently needs to find a way to reflect self-critically on the notion of its own cultural identity. Therefore, a better knowledge of transcultural interactions is important not only for European international relations on a global level, but also internally, i.e. in terms of interactions among individual European countries.

however, the core problem is much deeper and much more complex, because the methodology in question is a system underlying one of the philosophies being compared, namely the Western one. There is no third, "objective" methodology. Thus, the *tertium comparationis* in terms of the methodology chosen and the axiological criteria for evaluating the two (or more) *comparanda* is determined by one of them, and usually by the one belonging to the Western philosophical discourses. On the basis of a thorough reflection and analysis of such problems inherent in traditional cross-cultural comparative procedures, I have tried to develop a method of transcultural sublation that belongs to the new models of transcultural philosophizing called postcomparative philosophies. Such methods aim to develop new forms of transcultural philosophizing and to overcome the impasses of traditional comparative philosophy through procedures of "conceptual comparison" instead of relying only on the "comparison of concepts".

As I have explained elsewhere (2022), the transcultural sublation method can be carried out in five steps:

- *Step 1: Similarities*—first we identify the similarities between the two comparanda.
- *Step 2: Differences*—then we identify the differences between them by looking at the main paradigms of the frame of reference to which they belong.
- *Step 3: Dialectic of eliminating and preserving*—in the next step we eliminate certain aspects of the two comparanda and preserve certain other elements.[9]
- *Step 4: Sublation*—the process established in steps 1 to 3 leads us to a cognitive shift that is the prerequisite for the possibility of realizing step 5.
- *Step 5: New insight*—this new insight is the result of the shift accomplished in step 4. This new insight may manifest itself in one or more new ideas, propositions, or theses. (ibid.)

Unlike most other elaborations and developments of the comparative method, and also unlike traditional dialectics, which follows more or less automatic principles, the sublation method is not guided by a programmed process of necessary change. It does not follow strict and unchanging regular principles. While steps

9 This decision does not arise automatically from the internal structure of dialectical thinking (as, for example, in Hegelian dialectics), but is the result of a conscious decision made on the basis of inspiration arising from the tension between the differences identified in step 2.

1 and 2 are still relatively clear, steps 3 and 4 are based on the subjective decision of the person using the method. This creative subjectivity allows for the emergence of additional, often unprecedented insights. Unlike most methods that follow the strict principles of formal logic based on the laws of identity, contradiction, and the excluded middle, and rooted in the ontology of being as substance, this method is based on the arbitrary decision made by a subjective (and free) mind. Drawing on Ralph Weber's conceptualization of the "*tertium*" (Weber 2014), Vytis Silius explains the position (and implications) of such "free" subjectivity as follows:

> What is important in this observation, is that if we keep in mind that this "third"— the comparer—can never be neutral, we better embrace that she is rather proactive, that is, that she intentionally directs her research. It means that such a proactive researcher is not "comparing" two external positions with respect to a neutral "third" position, but is really forging her own philosophical position. She might be drawing inspiration and insight from the first two (in positive or negative manner), but in the end—and most importantly—the outcome is a new and current (present) philosophical position. (Silius 2021, 268)

Here, of course, we are confronted with the old divide between the (natural) sciences and the humanities. Although both are academic discourses that must follow a coherent logic and certain principles, the former apply primarily a quantitative methodology, the latter a qualitative one.

Against this background, let us try to show in what way relationism could be integrated into the axiological system of global ethics through a process of sublation. Relationism is, of course, a broad category that includes various elements. It is a social model, comparable to individualism. Although in our attempt to integrate Ruist ethics into the framework of global ethical discourse we might try to sublate individualism and relationism, and in this way possibly arrive at a new, less rigid and more inclusive model of ethics suitable for today's world, the two categories are simply too broad to be sublated in their entirety and at once. Actually, individualism and relationism can be seen as two different frameworks of reference, which also include different semantic connotations of concepts and notions that are constituting the respective pattern or network of the two frameworks. Therefore, we must start from certain particular elements that make up these two systems, and then gradually work our way to the extremely complex entities that make up relationism as a totality of a social structure or system. In this essay, I begin by sublating two different conceptions of personhood that underlie individualism and relativism, respectively.

1. *Similarities:* The human Self as an individual person.
2. *Differences:* Self as abstract and independent individual vs. Self as relational and interdependent individual.
3. *Dialectic of elimination and preservation:* Elimination of independence, preservation of interdependence. From this arises the problem of human rights.
4. *Sublation:* Human rights are important and must be preserved, but there is no necessary and direct connection between the types of social structures on the one hand and the types of institutional orders on the other.
5. *New insight:* The concept of human rights must be expanded to include the rights of the interdependent relational Self.

Ad 1. Similarities: The human Self as an individual. In both systems, the importance of human beings is of central importance. They both proceed from human personhood as an individual Self. This is because the concept of personhood contains a general mode of self-reflection or self-understanding. In this sense, the similarity is that both systems include specific conceptualizations of what is called the human Self, which can be defined[10] by its ability to turn inward and engage in self-reflection, by its ability to form interpersonal relations with other human Selves, as well as by its executive function as an agent that makes choices, exerts control, and engages in self-regulation. The human Self as such always refers to an individual person. This is why it can be stated that individualism, as well as relationism, both proceed from the notion of the individual Self as regards the basic constitution of personhood.

Ad 2. Differences: Independent Self vs. relational Self. If we consider the frame of reference of individualism and relationalism, respectively, we can easily see the following differences in the conceptualization of the individual human Self. In the two systems considered, the individual human Self can be understood either as separate from other human beings (an isolated and independent individual) or as connected to them in a relational network that forms communities and societies. In the first case, the individual's identity is constituted by his or her pure self-reference (independent, isolated Self); in the second case, it is constituted by the relationships that the individual lives in society (relational Self). Let us briefly highlight the origins as well as the implications of these differences. The

10 There are many definitions of the human Self, but what most of them have in common are the three characteristics mentioned above; see, e.g., Schroeder (2013). This is also the definition based on the connotations in which the term is understood and applied in this article.

two systems are based on two possible ways of relating the individual to society. The first proceeds from a dialectics based upon a method, grounded in the strict Cartesian separation of *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, which has been placed into a model of mutually exclusive opposites. In this model, the individual Self is viewed as being in contradiction with society. In this view, the autonomy of the individual Self is possible only if it can maintain its independence from society, whose actions are considered heteronomous with respect to the Self. The second assumes a dialectic of correlative complementarity, in which the individual Self is in an interdependent and mutually complementary relationship with the social network in which it is embedded, that is, with the community and with society. In such a system, autonomy can only be achieved within this complementary relationship between the individual and society. This does not mean that the individual Self cannot be autonomous. Since the interests and concerns of the Self cannot be separated from the interests and demands of its relational social networks, the autonomy of the relational Self is also relational. As long as society is not something that is external to the individual Self, it is not considered a heteronomous entity, i.e., as something external.[11]

Ad 3. Dialectic of elimination and preservation: Independence vs. interdependence. Given these similarities and differences, we will retain the concept of the individual Self, which is central to both systems under consideration. On the other hand, we eliminate from this concept the character of independence, which is an important feature of the abstracted and isolated Self, and preserve the concept of interdependence, which is a main condition of a relational Self. In doing so, we start from the assumption that this independence is in fact an illusion, because no individual can survive completely outside society. Therefore, abstract concepts may not be an appropriate basis for real life decisions and actions. By taking away the very concept of independence from the individual, we have in effect eliminated the conceptual basis of modern Western individualism, whose relationship with society is contractual, as if they were partners in some kind of business relationship. In this context, we have actually eliminated this kind of individualism that underlies the constitution of liberal democracy. On the other hand, relationism, based on the interdependence we have retained, represents a

11 This does not at all mean that relational individuals cannot see themselves as separate from governments and rulership. If governments focus on the welfare of society and all individuals living in it, they can—in theory—become part of this relational network. When they do not, they are seen as a heteronomous entity that has to be eliminated from society. This important distinction was well described, for example, in the core definitions of the traditional Confucian concept of the Mandate of Heaven (*Tian ming*), which served as an evaluative criterion for legitimising rule. In Ruist philosophy, people have not only the right, but even the responsibility to overthrow a despotic ruler (Xunzi s.d., Wangzhi 5).

more realistic way of linking the individual and society, but one that can easily be abused for the interests of state and government precisely because the individual is so closely embedded in the social web. Relationism has often led to autocratic (or even totalitarian) social orders precisely because of its possible embedding in networks of hierarchical social structures.[12] In theory, relationism has been associated with meritocratic governments and political orders, but in practise they have never prevailed. We are dealing here with a somewhat paradoxical situation: the unrealistic conceptualization of the Self has led to the establishment of a real political system, while the realistic conceptualization of the Self and society has never been implemented in political practise. The abolition of independence and the maintenance of interdependence may therefore lead to various problems related to the issue of the protection of human rights. These problems arise because of the issue of social control, which is inherently present in relationism: its existence and its possibly all-pervasive function can threaten two important elements of human rights, namely human dignity (which manifest itself in the withdrawal of intimacy and privacy) and individual integrity, that can be threatened due to the high valuation of authorities.[13]

Ad 4: Sublation: In the context of our goal, these problems can be solved by sublating (and thus abandoning) the assumption of a necessary direct link between social (or communal) networks on the one hand and institutional orders on the

12 Not only many Orientalist and Eurocentric theorists, such as the author of *Oriental Despotism* (Wittvogel 1957), but also those who take in their analyses into account human and cultural, and not just ideological and utilitarian factors—often warn of the inherent connection between despotism and hierarchical, authority-based structures of familial relationships and corresponding norms (see, e.g., Arendt 1958, 26–27). This is of course true, although we must additionally point out that even in the broader community defined by what Arendt calls the public sphere, which is the social network of autonomous and free-thinking individuals, relations between individuals cannot be based on the realization of the principle of equality. Equality can only be realized at the level of moral or axiological equality, not in the sense of equal evaluation of deeds, practices and works of individuals. The model of equality presented in the ideologies of liberal democracies is therefore hypocritical in its essence.

13 (Also see footnote 7). Incidentally, the ideal of privacy or intimacy as a sphere protected from outside interference by other people or society as a whole took shape in Europe only at the dawn of the 18th century as a rebellious reaction against "what we would today call the conformism inherent in every society" (Arendt 1958, 39). Members of any social order are expected to behave in a certain way, prescribed by a myriad of different principles and rules that always serve to "normalize" people and their ways of acting. In this framework, the peculiarity of the so-called pre-modern societies is only that—with the aim of achieving such "normalization"—they tended to establish systems that eliminated or abolished all spontaneous or exceptional individual achievements (ibid., 40). Modernization, however, can also be defined—having left behind the semi-feudal structures of the 18th century and the class categories of the 19th—by the rise of the so-called "mass society", in which various social groups are absorbed into the social whole in much the same way that individuals were absorbed into traditional families.

other. Moreover, the third step of this sublation process has shown that our choice between preservation and elimination must be linked to our goal of establishing adequate first-order protection mechanisms, which—in the context of a global ethics—must be taken into account before applying the principles of particular socio-political orders or regimes that might be guided by the interests of particular institutions, social classes or economic considerations. In this context, we still start from the imperative of protecting human rights, one of the most important social and ethical mechanisms in this regard, whose consolidation has had (and should have in the future) a great impact on education, legislation and many other crucial areas that regulate social interactions. At present, however, the concept of human rights is closely linked to the notion of the independent and atomic individual.[14]

Ad 5: New insight. This sublation has led us to a new insight, a new understanding of the fact that the current concept of human rights—together with the principles that guide their protection—is problematic. Since personhood, which includes integrity and dignity as two of the central elements of any autonomous individual Self, cannot necessarily be separated from its fellow human beings, its protection (i.e., the protection of its physical life, dignity, and integrity) need not necessarily be limited to individualism and its contractual connection between the individual and society. *Ergo*, the concept of human rights, which is one of the central mechanisms for ensuring this protection, can no longer be limited to the rights of the individual as an independent Self, but must be extended to the rights of the individual as a relational Self.

14 This connection raises many problems. Unrestricted freedom of individual movement, for example, is one of the basic human freedoms, in part and precisely because Western countries are in a position where they can afford to guarantee such freedoms to their citizens. When it comes to freedom in the opposite direction, to the free entry of, say, people from the Global South into a Western state, the state has the right to close its borders without anyone being able to accuse it of violating human rights. At the same time, the individual nature of the concept of human rights leads to a situation in which the rights of social groups are left out. The exception is the right to national sovereignty under the doctrine of national self-determination, and this is the only collective right that has gained recognition in this discourse. Marginalized communities that would need more rights than other independent individuals within individual states include, for example, women, the elderly, minority groups of indigenous people, members of non-Western cultures, and members of the LGBTQ+ community who are at the bottom of the social ladder even in countries not accused of human rights violations. This individualizing perspective of human rights deprives discriminated groups of the basis of any political action, the subject of which is not the individual but the group. Thus, it is not surprising that a variety of rights that are fundamental to members of many non-Western cultures do not fall within the scope of what is defined as human rights. Among them, for example, is the right of the individual to grow old and die among his or her loved ones, and not in a designated institution (Rošker 2005, 213).

Conclusion

In this context, it should be emphasized that a personhood as an individual Self can have a relational character without losing its autonomy, integrity, or dignity. Since relationism consists of individual personhoods (although—or more precisely because—their identities are constituted by the relationships they live), it does not contradict the individual rights of the personhood, and does not necessarily constitute a heteronomous influence on individual personality. Therefore, their fundamental values can be integrated into the value system of global ethics. As indicated at the beginning of this essay, there are two main reasons why such an extension is necessary. First, we live in an era of globalization, which at the same time means that we face global crises, i.e. crises that need to be solved through global cooperation. Therefore, we cannot simply rely on the endless expansion of existing liberal political systems created by ideas and ideologies based on individualism but must strive to create new types of democracy (or even better, *politeia*) that would be truly capable of meeting our global (and globalised) needs. Second, such global cooperation (beyond the unequal structures of economic exploitation and the absolute obsession with material profit) can only be built on a solid foundation of mutual transcultural learning and exchange of knowledge and ideas, including patterns and models of ethical valuations, decisions and behaviour.

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SPECIAL ISSUE TRANSCULTURAL (POST)COMPARATIVE PHILOSOPHY, PART 1

Methods and Approaches

Language and Logic of Transculturality

Transcultural Philosophy and Its Foundations in Implicate Logic

*David BARTOSCH**

Abstract

This article provides a transcultural, "transversal" investigation. It starts from the philosophical problem of knowing non-knowing. In chapters 1 and 2, the first expressions of this problem by Confucius and Socrates are considered. Against this background, new transcultural working concepts are developed. A new key term to be established here is that of an "implicate logic". It refers to the reflection of unity of unity and difference and therefore to the very condition of the possibility of (differentiating) thinking as such. In chapters 3 and 4, this train of thought is further developed under the influence of Nicolaus Cusanus, by reflecting on the first chapter of the *Daodejing*, and in view of important remarks by Niklas Luhmann. In chapter 5, the outcome is related to the idea of transversal reason in the philosophy of Wolfgang Welsch. As the most basic principle of (self-referential) thinking, implicate logic is to be discerned from Aristotelian (or similar traditions of) logic and Hegelian dialectics—albeit both are being tied to the former's principle in one way or the other. In the end, an introductory outlook of a comprehensive work by the present author provides the starting point to validate the logical foundations of knowing non-knowing as a methodological foundation to further develop the fields of transcultural-comparative, trans-comparative, and global philosophy.

Keywords: knowing non-knowing, unity of unity and difference, implicate logic, transversal reason, transcultural

Transkulturna filozofija in njena osnova v implikativni logiki

Izvleček

Ta članek ponuja transkulturno, »transverzalno« raziskavo. Izhaja iz filozofskega problema poznavanja nespoznanega. V prvem in drugem poglavju obravnava izraze tega problema pri Konfuciju in Sokratu. Na tej osnovi razvija nove transkulturne delovne koncepte. V tem okviru avtor zasnuje nov termin »implikativne logike«. Nanaša se na enoto enote in razlike ter s tem na pogoje možnosti razlikovalnega mišljenja kot takega. Avtor to predpostavko razvija v tretjem in četrtem poglavju, in sicer pod vplivom Nikolaja Kuzanskega,

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skozi optiko katerega obdela prvo poglavje *Daode jinga,* pri čemer se opira tudi na opombe Niklasa Luhmana. V petem poglavju se rezultati teh študij navežejo na idejo transverzalnega uma v filozofiji Wolfganga Welscha. Kot najosnovnejše načelo (samoreferenčnega) mišljenja avtor izpostavi implikativno logiko in poudari, da jo je treba razlikovati od aristoteljanske logike, hegeljanske dialektike in podobnih tradicij, četudi so na ta ali oni način povezane s prej omenjenim načelom. Na koncu se avtor opre tudi na eno svojih prejšnjih del, ki ga uporabi kot začetek ocene logične osnove spoznavanja nespoznanega kot metodološke osnove nadaljnjega razvoja področij transkulturno-primerjalne, transprimerjalne ter globalne filozofije.

Ključne besede: spoznavanje nespoznanega, enota enote in diference, implikativna logika, transverzalni um, transkulturnost

"Do I Know?" Confucius' Reflection on the Source of Knowing

Philosophy can be defined as a methodologically supported awareness of posing questions,[1] namely in regard to the most fundamental and general problems. The following key philosophical question was posed by Confucius: "Do I know?" (*Lunyu* n.d., chapter "Zihan", § 8, tr. DB). The master provided himself with the most adequate philosophical answer: "(I do) not know" (ibid., tr. DB).[2] It *expresses the same undecidedness as his self-directed question* (Bartosch 2021, 130)—or to speak with Heidegger in the transferred sense: "[…] the answer to the question is *not* about a process of deductive reasoning but about demonstrative ground-exposure" (Heidegger 1977, § 2, 11, tr. and italics DB).[3] Confucius was not asking for a particular knowledge *of* something or *about something*, but in regard to *his* knowing as such, respectively, self-reflective knowing *per se*. While the former can result in an answer that can either be affirmative or negative, Confucius's question results in an aporia. The answer can neither be affirmative nor negative. On *this* most foundational level of self-referential thinking, it appears to be pending and unresolvable. But this aporia is not where the thinking ends. It reveals the "*implicate*"[4] *(logical)* foundation from whence all thinking and therefore also "thinging"

1 I owe this part of the definition to Johann Kreuzer (Oldenburg, the birthplace of Karl Jaspers).

2 Source text: "吾有知乎哉？無知也。"

3 Source text: "[...], weil es in der Beantwortung der Frage nicht um eine ableitende Begründung, sondern um aufweisende Grund-Freilegung geht."

4 This is a new philosophical expression. My use of "implicate" has been inspired by David Bohm (1917–1992), who has delivered the precedence with his philosophical term "implicate order". The use of the word "implicate" in the present paper (without referring to Bohm's philosophy, see below) is not to be mixed with possible meanings of "implicit". "Implicate" is related to the Latin noun "*implicatio*". It can mean "an entwining", "interweaving", or "entanglement" ("implicatio" n.d.). In

permanently start.[5] It underlies and transcends all forms of "*explicate*"[6] (truth value-based) logic, including modern dialectics (which, in contrast to the former, is at least already recognizing or "ratifying" its foundation). In this sense, "silence would stop speaking as soon as thinking would stop its work" (Wyller 1995, 46, tr. DB). In the following paper, this key problem is explored in *transversal* spotlights on key terms and passages in historical philosophies. "Transversal" means that these *transcultural* references can be situated in historically unconnected discourses of the world's histor*ies* of philosoph*ies*.[7]

Regarding Confucius' eminent self-referential question of knowledge *per se*, the *functional* difference of question (undecidedness) and decisive answer (either knowledge or non-knowledge, either yes or no) is *nullified*, while the different *forms* of question and answer are bridged by the *same* undecidedness. While the *form* of the question is indicating a "non-knowing"[8], the *form* of the answer is creating the expectation of a 'knowing'—which cannot be fulfilled here. The *self-reflected and therefore realized* nullification of the different *functions* of these forms of question and answer has *another (implicit) function* itself. It provides a *semantic "pointing rod"* (Scheler 1921, 546) concerning demonstrative ground-exposure—alluding to the underlying *unity* of both non-knowing *and* knowing. The "*and*" between "non-knowing" and "knowing" is expressing that, despite their opposition, both knowing and non-knowing cannot be thought of as independently of

its adjectivized use, "implicate", which is used as a verb in English, also connotes the meaning of a process. This is very fitting, because the implicate logic is *manifesting* itself *as* (all) *processes* of thinking. It might be added that the foundations of the present elaboration on the *implicate logic* of thinking as such could be discussed in relation to Bohm's philosophy. But such an endeavour does not lie within the scope of the present study.

5 The meaning of "*implicate* logic" is *not* to be confused with the form of a logical bi/implication, that is, a conditional or a biconditional statement in propositional calculus. In the sense of the present paper, these kinds of mental operations belong to the conceptual extension of *explicate* logic. Furthermore, the term "implicate logic" is not to be confused with the discourses on "metalogic" since the second half of the 20th century.

6 This is another expression that can be traced back to David Bohm. He used it in his term "explicate order". Like in the case of "implicate", I am using "explicate" in the exclusive sense of the present line of thought, without further reference to David Bohm's own theories. (Although a combined discussion would be possible in another context.) The adjectivizing use of the word "explicate" here is related to the meaning of the Latin noun "*explicatio*", which means "an unfolding" ("explicatio" n.d.). See also in this publication fn. 15.

7 Karl Jaspers's term "world history of philosophy" (Jaspers 1982) has been influenced by the older term "*Weltliteratur*" (world literature) by Goethe. Today we should apply the plural tense on "history" and "philosophy".

8 "Thought" means the *activity* of a self-*processing* consciousness. Furthermore, the know*ing* is not to be thought of as specified (in the sense of particular knowledge) here. Thus, I am using the gerund form for the negation as well ("non-knowing" instead of "non-knowledge").

each other. In Confucius answer "(I do) not know", thesis (knowing) and antithesis (non-knowing) coincide *without alternative* while the tension of the contradiction, that is, its undecidedness, is preserved. This *allusive* Confucian "*coincidentia oppositorum*" is hidden in the form of a negative answer. It is important to note that it *actually does not express a negation (of a particular knowledge) but complete abstainment from judgement instead*.[9] It cannot be decided in the form of truth values (true or false) either. Confucius is crafting the semantics in a way to *show* the ineffable "meta-*form*" of *knowing non-knowing* itself: his *self*-reflective and *self*-directed question-and-answer symbolism is *hinting* at the *unity of unity and difference* of *knowing* and *non-knowing* as the mental source-dimension of all possible (finite) knowledge. Its unresolvable undecidedness is alluded to as running through all thought processes (Bartosch 2017, 108). It means a hint at what is, *mutatis mutandis*, ineffably "wording" in all words (Nicolai de Cusa 1959, 54): an *implicate* foundation of all thought.

Socrates Joins: Meta-Reason and Logical Reasoning as its "Downstream"

Basically, philosophy has two "modes": (1) The one that is related to the source of thinking and has just been alluded to means the level of implicate (*en*folding) logical self-reflection. (2) The other, which is included in and from the latter's perspective (as meta-reason), has a conceptual and explicate (*un*folding) logical appearance. It means the process of differentiation *without* the possibility to reflect the (encompassing) pre-condition of differentiation itself. The implicate logical self-reflection of *knowing non-knowing* is *excluded* from it in terms *of its own* possibilities or capacities of reasoning.

The implicate logical mode of reflection (1) means a *meta-recognition*. It *includes the self-reflection of the thinking subject*, which apprehends[10] the *unity of unity and difference* of knowing non-knowing as the immanent source of all conceptualization itself. While this meta-recognition includes itself as a condition of the possibility of its products, (finite) concepts, their redirected application towards the source must fail. As in our initial example, it can only be semantically alluded to, namely by way of including the (unity of the) contradiction. After Confucius,

9 From a modern analytical position, one could say that the answer *could be* affirmative or negative, or even in the dialectical form of a double negation (synthesis of affirmation and negation), or triple negation (negation of synthesis of affirmation and negation).

10 The first apprehension in this sense can be characterized as an "aha-experience" (Karl Bühler) of the most basic intellectual relevance.

Socrates also *hinted* at this *knowing non-knowing*: "I neither know nor think that I know" (Plato 1892, St. 21[d], 113–14, tr. B. Jowett).[11] Socrates *knows* that he does not know whether he is knowing or not. This means a transcultural "family resemblance" (Wittgenstein 2009, § 67, 36, 36[e]) on the higher level of implicate logic.

(2) However, clearly this insight does not keep Socrates from thinking and arguing, especially when joyfully engaging in the deconstruction of alleged knowledge. Moreover, the insight into what the contradiction "*knowing non-knowing*" implies becomes Socrates' driving stimulus with regard to philosophizing in the other, more "exoteric direction" of reasoning (in the form of clear, finite distinctions of meaning). Philosophically speaking, we can only truly *always merely start to* know when we *know* what it means *not to know*—and to always proceed from there. So it is *not despite but because* of his *knowing non-knowing* that Confucius adds the following: "But if a mean person, who appears quite empty-like, asks anything of me, I set it forth from one end to the other, and exhaust it" (*Lunyu* n.d., chapter "Zihan", § 8, tr. J. Legge).[12]

This, metaphorically speaking, "downstream direction" of philosophical reasoning is originating in the former, albeit less easily "accessible", implicate (core-) dimension of thinking. As soon as the process of mind(*ing*) starts to differentiate "*things*", the implicate logical undecidedness of knowing non-knowing is transformed into its opposite. Now, logical decisiveness becomes the major hallmark: "You, shall I teach you what knowledge is? When you *know a thing*, to hold that you know *it*; and when you do *not know* (*a thing*), to allow that you do *not know* (*it*)—this is knowledge" (*Lunyu* n.d., chapter "Weizheng", § 17, tr. J. Legge, brackets added and italics DB).[13] As soon as the question is not related to knowing *per se* but is posed in regard to a particular "thing" (a respective content of thinking or a particular fact), we have to decide whether we know about it or not. Put differently: With regard to the possibility of knowing *something* or the "knowledge *of*" there is *either* a "knowing of" *or* non-knowledge, but not both at the same time. Those who are not aware that this, in a more or less implicit yet eminent fashion, *represents* the source of the *en*folding, implicate logical foundation *at the same time* will be merely caught up in the latter's logical exteriorization and conceptual creativity, that is, its *un*folding.

Self-reflective implicate logic and reasoning in the (unfolding) form of explicate logic can also be discerned in relation to the important expression "unity of unity

11 Source text: "ὅτι ἃ μὴ οἶδα οὐδὲ οἴομαι εἰδέναι."

12 Source text: "有鄙夫問於我，空空如也，我叩其兩端而竭焉。"

13 Source text: "由！誨女知之乎？知之為知之，不知為不知，是知也。"

and difference". As in regard to the question of knowing *per se*, the use of the word "unity" in that semantic constellation does *not* refer to "the unity *of* (something)" but to *the* unity *in and for itself*, that is, regarding the pure intension of its meaning (either by way of putting all possible conceptual extensions into brackets or by setting the extension *ad infinitum*). The designation of unity *per se* contains that it cannot be separate or different from anything. If it would be thought of as differing in at least one way, we would not have properly grasped it as *the* (uncountable) indeterminate unity but in the sense of a "unity of …", that is, in the sense of the *internal* coherence of a single (countable) *unit*. Therefore, the meta-intension of unity as such has to include the designation of difference, hence the formula "unity of unity and difference". To think in single units—that is, well-defined (finite) concepts (in the sense of a plurality of points and levels of reference)—on the other hand, means the *un*folding mode of thinking *of* something. In this common dimension, proper distinction—also of the *concepts* of unity and difference—is of course *necessary*. From the perspective of the implicate logic, this difference is "*en*folded" in the underlying unity of this difference, however.

Exploring Laozi's "Secret's Deeper Secret" with Nicolaus Cusanus

More than anyone else, the German-Italian Renaissance thinker Nicolaus Cusanus has focused on these insights of what is called *knowing non-knowing*[14] here. In contrast to the aforementioned unlimitedly self-containing (self-"*en*folding") meta-reason, Cusanus has described the differentiating mode of thinking (which is based on excluding the (unity in the) contradiction) as "*explicatio*", that is, as the self-*un*foldment of "our mind" (*nostra mens*) (Bartosch 2015, 503).[15] For Cusanus,

14 Cusanus himself has used the traditional term "*docta ignorantia*", which has been translated into German as "*wissendes Nichtwissen*" (literally "knowing non-knowing" in English). Although Cusanus emphasized to have had reached the insight of knowing non-knowing all by himself, he has picked up this term from others. He also said that he later found the knowing non-knowing represented in many earlier philosophers' works (Bartosch 2015, 429).

15 Regarding Cusanus's terminology, the translation terms "(to) enfold" (*complicare*) and "(to) unfold" (*explicare*), respectively, "enfoldment" (*complicatio*) and "unfoldment" (*explicatio*) relate to the German expressions "*einfalten*" (*complicare*), "*Einfaltung*" (*complicatio*), "*ausfalten*" (*explicare*), and "*Ausfaltung*" (*explicatio*), which are commonly used to translate Cusanus's Latin terms. The English expression "(to) enfold" has the same etymological origin as the German "*einfalten*". "(To) unfold" and "unfoldment" are related to German "*entfalten*" and "*Entfaltung*"—which have a very similar meaning or can even be used synonymously to "*ausfalten*" and "*Ausfaltung*". (Also, these words differ only in regard to the prefixes "*ent-*" and "*aus-*".) The English terms have also been used in the philosophy of David Bohm, which is related to modern quantum, respectively, relativity physics. Bohm has been influenced by Cusanus's terminology as well as by Hegel's use of the word "*entfalten*" in this regard (Bohm and Wilkins 1987, n.p.). Possible implications of the present chain of thoughts

to be valued as an aspect of science (*scientia*), particular knowledge must adhere to the principles of two-valued Aristotelian "either-or" logical progressions (ibid., 428). Cusanus identifies this process of *explicatio* (*un*foldment) as the working *ratio*. This has been correctly translated as *Verstand* in German. Hegel is using this word for exactly the same form of thinking (which adheres to Aristotelian logic). For theoretical intentions which will become clearer, I am using the word "reason" for it here (in correlation with the expression "meta-reason").

More importantly, *Cusanus has developed approaches to demonstrate the very foundation* of the delimiting formation of concepts as well as of all possible operations in the sense of Aristotelian logic *itself*. While the productions of the latter (reason) are *delimiting quanta* of knowledge and therefore can be explicitly communicated, the possible *tacit* insight of the implicate logical foundation (meta-reason) relates to that which is *without delimitation* (implicitly) "*en*folded" (Cusanus: *complicare*) in all aspects of particular knowledge (Duclow 2006, 231; Bartosch 2015, 514). The (self-) reflection of this unlimited *complicatio* of all *possible* knowledge means the same experience of an unlimited undecidedness and sameness (*aequalitas*) as an immanent and unchanging foundation that we have encountered earlier. I hasten to say that, while from the perspective of *explicatio* (or explicate logic), *complicatio* and *explicatio* have to be discerned, the actuality of self-reflexivity as meta-reason (implicate logic) means to view the *explicatio* as the major descending function and therefore as an intertwined mode—and even as an indispensable logical condition—of *complicatio* itself.[16] We might also imagine the implicate dimension of thinking metaphorically as an *imperceptible* yet all-consolidating "drone tone"[17] of meta-reason, which, in an ineffable way, is implicitly omnipresent *in* and *by* all thoughts, regardless of whether we are aware of it or not (Bartosch 2015, 233–300; id. 2021).[18] Cusanus is using the word "*intellectus*" to express

in regard to Bohm's philosophy are not the topic of this paper but could be discussed in follow-up projects.

16 Remember that "*implicatio*" originally means "an entwining", "interweaving", or "entanglement", see fn. 4.

17 In music, a drone means a note (or chord or tone-cluster) which is continuously sounded as a background in a musical piece and which is therefore characterizing the latter's experience as a whole. In the sense of the above-stated metaphor we have to envision an *imperceptible* "drone" consisting of all "sounds" that might possibly be played in the distinct development of the individually sounding notes, chords, or note-clusters in the "foreground" of the "music"—which metaphorically stands for the perceptible "appearance" of the infinite "drone".

18 Another philosophical enigma is that of the "surface" of an infinite "mirror". Although it is impossible to perceive this surface as such, it is *implicitly* reflected as the (self-reflective) condition of the possibility of any of the finite experiences (including all the possible processual forms involved) presently manifesting in this "mirror" (also Bartosch 2019, 56).

this implicate logical foundation[19] and to distinguish it from its explicate logical productivity, respectively, *explicatio* as *ratio* or *Verstand*. The most fitting translation for *intellectus* in German would be *Vernunft*. To avoid possible confusion in English, we can subsume *ratio* as a reflection under the comparative category of *transversal reason* and relate Cusanus's "*intellectus*" to the transcultural field of *transversal meta-reason*.[20]

In the first chapter of the *Daodejing* 道德經, the unity of unity and difference of meta-reason and reason, that is, the (self-reflexive) *en*folding unity of the "source-relatedness" and the "downstream direction"[21] of producing finite knowledge by way of differentiation, has been represented in an eminent fashion. Moreover, the *systematic implicate logical connection* between Laozi and Cusanus also becomes obvious. The paradoxical use of the word "*dao* 道" for that which cannot be named does not relate to a particular *dao*. It implies the "source-relatedness" of meta-reason: thereby "pointing towards" the ineffable source which enables the recognition and naming of "things" or "events" as such. Emerging from this implicate foundation of knowing non-knowing, *dao* might then be 'traced' back as *indiscernible process of discerning as such*, while "having (distinctive) names" (*you ming* 有名) means to reflect upon, to *un*fold the mutually delimiting productions of the former. In the sense of an implicate logical *tertium comparationis* (keywords: unity of unity and difference, ineffability problem), the nameless "*dao*" is just another semantic equivalent to Cusanus's ineffable "*complicatio*". "*You ming* 有名" relates to all possible processes of *particular* knowing, and it therefore becomes the "mother of the ten thousand things" (*Daodejing* n.d., § 1). *Mutatis mutandis*, that is, in this more general sense, it stands in analogy to Cusanus's use of terms "*explicatio*" and "*ratio*".[22]

19 Cusanus has also expressed this as the "the infinite unity (which), as a consequence of (its) infinity, precedes all opposites, where all (beings and things) are enfolded in the simplicity of unity (and thus) devoid of (any) composition, […] where man is not different from the lion and heaven is not different from the earth, and yet […] [where everything is itself] in the truest way—not according to (its) finiteness, but enfolded as the greatest unity itself […], which, in so far as it is to be unity, is all (beings and things) and which, in so far as it is the [infinite] minimum, is (thus) the [*same* infinite] maximum" (Nicolai de Cusa 1932, 49, tr. DB).

20 Apart from Cusanus and Hegel, the use of the words "*Verstand*" and "*Vernunft*", especially in the contexts of translating "*ratio*" and "*intellect*", can be quite confusing. Sometimes the meanings, or applications, or translations of the terms are reversed.

21 The image of the stream also alludes to the water-allusions of the *Daodejing* and to the fact that in ancient times a way (*dao*) could also mean a water*way* (*Shangshu* n.d., "Xia Shu", chapter "Yu Gong", § 3).

22 Of course, Laozi doesn't develop an approach of formal two-valued logic. The parallel is indicated by the more general term "particular knowledge" which implies finite and distinguishable meaning in a most general comparative sense.

Moreover, in relation to the *Daodejing* as well as, for example, in additional comparison with thinkers like Heraclitus of Ephesus (Wohlfart 2001, 165–78), we have to assume that the implicate (self-) *en*foldment of the "*supremae regionis*" (Bartosch 2015, 370, 812) *in which all logical oppositions coincide* must be older than the Aristotelian logic (also Günther 1976, 199 [75]). Like many philosophers who had approached the implicate logical foundation of knowing non-knowing had to develop their own ways of "eloquent silence" (*beredtes Schweigen*) (Kreuzer 2001; Bartosch 2021), we might work with particular forms of "dialectical" negations (starting from the double negation in the sense of a synthesis of affirmation and first negation) as, for example, in some Vedic, Buddhist, Neo-Platonist, or German Idealist contexts (Sturm 1996; 1998; 2002; 2004; 2014; Bartosch 2015, 233–300). From a transversal, transcultural perspective, the implicate logical foundation can be found in many civilizations independently of each other, especially also in the extended sense of "implicit philosophy" (Liat 1953, 72), that is, implicit philosophical *symbolism* which relates to the (self-) enfoldment of meta-reason. For example, in ancient Mesoamerican (Toltec) thinking, the implicate logic is symbolized by a highest "deity" which is "*at the same time unity and duality*" (Leon-Portilla 1970, 30, tr. and italics DB).[23]

This *symbolic* character is directly related to the basic problem that the limitless enfoldment of possible conceptualization (meta-reason), which is represented in the actual unfolding of processes of (finite) knowing (reason), cannot be expressed by these (de)limited products of itself. In this sense, meta-reason(ing) is (self-) experienced in a mode which Cusanus has called "intellectual vision" (*visio intellectualis*): a productive correlation of the faculties of *imaginatio* (imaginative power, German: *Einbildungskraft*) and the implicate logical faculty of *intellectus*. Put simply, and apart from negating finite designations as mentioned further above, one can also work *symbolically* (Friedmann 1949, 3), that is, with the help of philosophical similes. Cusanus has called this form of reflection "*aenigmatica scientia*" (Bartosch 2015, 512).

This form of meta-reasoning can lead to the (personal) insight that and how the *explicatio* of the *ratio* is integrated into and springing forth from the implicate logical realm of *complicatio*—or to transfer the same melody of the unity of unity and difference to a Daoist key: how "the mother of the ten thousand things" (*Daodejing* n.d., § 1) is one with the unnamable *dao* 道—or, *mutatis mutandis* again, how processes of conceptualization and even two-valued logic in the Aristotelian sense are an implicit "appearance" of the implicate logic.

23 This, in turn, presents us with many parallels, like, for example, the Roman god Cupid, symbolizing unity through the difference of male and female elements (Nicolai de Cusa 1932, 52). Also the symbolism of *yin-yang* 陰陽, which is a representation of the implicate logic, comes to mind, etc.

Walking on Cusanus's "Wall of Paradise" with Niklas Luhmann

Niklas Luhmann has provided a proper starting point for the present reflection on implicate logical foundations. It is related to the *philosophical problem of form*: "[The form] 'is' in any case *not only the boundary, it also contains the two sides that are separated by it*. It has, one could say, an open world reference, and perhaps this is underlying the enigmatic phrase 'distinction is perfect continence'" (Luhmann 2001, 245, insertions, italics, and tr. DB). Under this background, and in relation to the *ligation* of "every [present] elevation of the world into form" (Cassirer 1985, 52, insertions and tr. DB) to the dimension of time (Luhmann 2001, 245), namely as "a real act of world creation" (Cassirer 1985, 52, tr. DB), and, furthermore, also in view of the expression "*draw* a distinction" (Luhmann 2001, 247, italics DB), we can imagine the workings of the mind *in analogy to drawing a line*: "*The line or boundary which draws all individual forms is in itself without any limit; it is in* [*itself*] *undivided*" (Bartosch 2021, 136, insertion DB). The mental activity of distinction is in itself undivided, and only in this way enables differentiation: distinction presupposes non-distinctness in its act and regarding the relation of the distinguished at the same time.[24]

Luhmann himself was very fond of Nicolaus Cusanus and the latter's approach of *knowing non-knowing* (Rossbach 2004). Luhmann's illustration can be mapped on Cusanus's *aenigma* of the "wall of paradise" (*murus paradisi*) (Nicolai de Cusa 2000, 43, 71, 79), namely to elucidate how "split[ting] the world into two sides […] can only happen *in* the world [as a whole]" (Luhmann 2001, 245, insertions, italics, and tr. DB). The "wall of paradise" is an image to symbolize the difference between the infinite, that is, the indetermined implicate logical self-reflexivity of the mind, and its finite representations (the mental dimensions of *you ming* 有名, *explicatio*). The finite, respectively, its recognition as such in the form of explicate logical operations (reason), is only possible in a paradoxical self-distinction from the infinite (and everything else finite) in the sense that it can only be an expression of the infinite—while the latter cannot be distinct from that which is distinguished in the process of differentiation. Otherwise, we would have used the word "infinite" in relation to a finite designation (in the sense of a μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος, that means, a confusion of meta-reason with reason). Therefore, we have to think of the separating "wall" as that which is also bringing together the two sides at the same time. The *murus paradisi* is *creating both "paradise" and "non-paradise"*, the designation of infinity and that of finiteness as well as their unity and distinction.

24 Put differently: As the term "precision" derives from a transferred meaning in relation to "cutting off" (Bartosch 2015, 480), we might also think that in the act of scissoring a piece of paper, the cutting person, the scissor, the act of scissoring, and the paper that is cut actually form one unity, one "thing", in the process.

As, again, the "wall" is separating and connecting *at the same time*, its (self-) *en*-folding "secret" is that true "paradise" is not to be found inside of the *en*circulation of the wall of paradise, that is, on one side of it, but by "standing" or "walking" *on it*. It is, in the sense of *aenigmatica scientia*, symbolic reasoning, the "wall", the distinction, which is in itself not differentiated and which therefore differentiates two sides. The distinction is literally creating "paradise" (full and boundless self-integration of the mind) when we self-consciously "walk" on "it", that is, when we participate the implicate logical unity through difference.

Luhmann has referred to this when he said that "the distinction is containing itself" (Luhmann 2001, 245, tr. DB). If the distinction contains itself, which means infinite self-referentiality, it can itself not be separated from anything else in the world. Therefore, I have to mention this in passing here, it is a representation of what Hegel also evinced as the foundation of his particular way of dialectical reasoning, that is, *unity of unity and difference*. From the meta-*formal* view of implicate logic, infinite unity could not be properly reflected if we would exclude the element of difference from it. From this perspective, that is, "observed as a paradox, each [finite] form symbolizes the [infinite] world" (Luhmann 2001, 247, insertions, and tr. DB).

To observe the first chapter of the *Daodejing* in this sense means to "see" the unity of the unity and difference of (1) indefinite *dao* 道 (without name, *wu ming* 無名) ("source-relatedness" of philosophy) and (2) all name-bearing (*you ming* 有名), finite *appearances* of *dao*, that is, in the second "mode" as the "mother of ten thousand things" (*wan wu zhi mu* 萬物之母) (*Daodejing* n.d., § 1, tr. DB).[25] *These two aspects of dao have to be seen as one at the same time.* In analogy to the unity of unity and difference of "paradise" and "non-paradise", both have to be reflected *in their sameness*: the former means to "(meta-) observe its wonderful contrivance" (*yi guan qi miao* 以觀其妙) (ibid., tr. DB); the latter means to have intentions and therefore to think in terms of its distinctions, makes one see its boundaries (*qi jiao* 其徼) (ibid.), that is, its individual (and therefore nameable) "outside" forms: "Both emerge in sameness and yet (they) are named differently. Sameness is their secret, (and) the secret's deeper secret is the gateway of a massive and miraculous ingenuity (ibid., tr. DB)."[26] The "deeper secret" of the "secret" that implicate logical *dao* ("without name", *wu ming*) and "meaning-delivering" *dao* ("having names", *you ming*) emerge as inherently the same is that this very same sameness represents a boundless *unity of the unity and difference*. This "source dimension" of thinking is all inclusive: there are not two separate appearances of *dao*, the unnameable *dao* is ineffably producing itself as every word or name and therefore "thing". This is

25 Source text: "無名天地之始；有名萬物之母。"

26 Source text: "此兩者，同出而異名，同謂之玄。玄之又玄，衆妙之門。"

also the deeper meaning of the distinctive, adjectivized use of "implicate" in the present philosophical category of reflection "implicate logic": it implies the idea of an inseparable intertwinedness.[27]

Across cultures and times, this first paragraph of the *Daodejing* is very similar to Nicolaus Cusanus's understanding of the (self-) *en*folding *and* (self-) *un*folding "wall of the coincidence of (intellective) complicatio and (rational) explication" (*murus coincidentiae complicationis et explicationis*) (Nicolai de Cusa 2000, 40, tr. DB). To intellectively "envision" both major "directions" of the reflection—that which (1) indistinctly runs "through" all particularizing reasoning as well as (2) exactly this process in its distinction-boundness—*in their unity* means the same implicate logical insight: If we imagine ourselves walking on the ineffable "path" (*dao* 道) of the *murus paradisi*—not being part of either one or the other side of the distinction—all division becomes the unlimited connection at the same time.

Methodological Perspectives for Transversal Philosophizing

What can we derive from all this in a methodological perspective? Already in one of his earlier works, the transcultural philosopher Wolfgang Welsch, who coined the term "transversal reason", said: "Today, and in terms of plurality, we regard reason precisely as a capacity for connection and transition between forms of rationality. No longer cosmic, but earthly, no longer global, but linking functions shape its image" (Welsch 2008, 295, tr. DB). In my view, the logical meta-form of the unity of unity and difference presents us with the most basic *tertium comparationis* and permeability—a foundation that runs through everything and even connects the remotest 'regions' of global philosophy. In this sense, Welsch's concept of "transversal reason" (*transversale Vernunft*) has to be extended. It contains a distinction between *Vernunft* and *Verstand* which allows it to be, and which should also be exchanged with the *transcultural categories* "meta-reason" (in the sense of the implicate logic) and "reason" (in the sense of concept-formation and (two-valued) logic) which have been introduced on this occasion.

To defend the new term "implicate logic" against established designations like, for example, "dialectics" or "*Vernunft*", I hasten to add that the new expression refers to a dimension which is to be viewed as the *conditio sine qua non* of both Aristotelian two-valued logic *and Hegelian dialectics as well*. While the former is implicitly working with the contradiction by practically excluding it, the latter is still partly formal and two-valued (and also inspired by Aristotle) in the sense that

27 See also the information on the meaning of the Latin term "*implicatio*" in fn. 4 of the present contribution.

it works with *distinctly* opposing premises—while at the same time "keeping in view" the unity which *enables* the contradiction (Günther 1976, 199–200 [75–76]). This allows Hegel to develop the opposing meanings in an alternating mode of analytical differentiation and dialectical synthesis, as it has been called. However, the meaning of implicate logic is *more basic* than the *particular* form of systematic dialectical progression of concepts that Hegel has derived from it. To avoid confusion, I abstain from using the expression "dialectics"—and as I have done without the Hegelian term "*Vernunft*", also from operating with the transformative rendering of the term in Welsch's expression "*transversale Vernunft*". The meaning of "*meta-reason*" is more profound and more general than that of Hegelian *Vernunft*. Moreover, the latter term can become an object of analysis and transversal comparison in the sense of the former (but not vice versa). This is why I propose to "novate" the reading of Welsch here, that is, by including the new terms which have been developed in the present study (in an experimental fashion, so to speak):

> The decisive feature that distinguishes [meta-reason] from [mere reason] has been preserved [in the new concept of transversal meta-reason]: that of the greater reach, which is in principle not redeemable by rational understanding [in the sense of Aristotelian or comparable forms of logic]. […] [Reason] is called the faculty of concepts, which enables the exact comprehension and practice of an area. In this sense we still speak of cognitive, ethical, aesthetic, religious, technical etc. reason. In relation to such area-specific forms, [meta-reason] is the transcending faculty. This becomes relevant where the forms of rational understanding find themselves limited, meticulously confined to their domain. (Welsch 2008, 295, insertions and tr. DB)

We have seen that the implicate logical integration of "source-relatedness" and the "downstream direction" of philosophy are, for example, both represented in the *Daodejing* 道德經 and in the works of Nicolaus Cusanus. This provides an important starting point for further methodological considerations in regard to comparative and post-comparative approaches. It is this connection which then allows us to transversally differentiate between particular contents. For example, we have seen that Confucius and Socrates share a connection. Both are expressing their insight into the metalogical foundation of knowing non-knowing. From here, we would have to start looking for differences then. For example, (Plato's) Socrates viewed all knowledge as ἀνάμνησις (primordial reminiscence). In view of this, we could ask whether Confucius or other Confucian thinkers like Wang Yangming have advanced in a commensurate direction or not (Nivison 1973, 125–26; Bartosch 2015, 305).

Apart from this process of differentiation *in regard to specific contents of the analysis*, we then also even have to include *ourselves* into the equation: our *own* transcultural analysis itself shares its implicate logical foundation with the ancient texts that we are exploring. Despite different conceptual contexts, etc., the same meta-*form* of knowing non-knowing, which is the foundation of all thinking, including the actuality of our own thought processes, provides a "gateway" which connects our "research objects" *to us* and us with them in a most profound philosophical fashion—and, I repeat, *without* neglecting the respective differences on the level of the (differentiating) analysis.

In the author's book *"Wissendes Nichtwissen" oder "gutes Wissen"? Zum philosophischen Denken von Nicolaus Cusanus und Wáng Yángmíng* (*Knowing Non-Knowing or Good Knowing? On the Philosophical Thought of Nicolaus Cusanus and Wáng Yángmíng*), a basic approach has already been developed and also been applied. Despite the difference in terminology—instead of "implicate logic", I have used the term "*Grundlogik*" (foundational logic) at that time—(Bartosch 2015, 17), this approach already reflects the implicate logical foundations. On that basis, three basic perspectives have been intertwined: (1) an extensive analysis of the philosophy of Nicolas Cusanus, including perspectives on its inherent development as well as major contextual dimensions, (2) an in-depth investigation of Wang Yangming's 王陽明 philosophy, including the different phases, backgrounds and contexts, and (3) the theory and application of a new method of transcultural philosophical comparison.

This transversal perspective had been motivated by three general objectives: (a) to get away from merely theorizing about the method of comparison of remote or unconnected historical philosophies and to actually *perform* such a task on a rather extended scale, (b) to set an example to disprove the opinion that transcultural philosophy is superfluous, distorting, instrumentalizing, or decontextualizing, and (c) to hopefully establish the precedent of an analytical approach which helps to *learn to differentiate* on various levels and in a methodologically supported manner in that transversal scheme, while also developing the unifying ground of the *implicate* foundation of the actuality of (self-) enfolding meta-reason in transcultural thinking. In my view, this investigation has validated the applicability of the *implicate logic as tertium comparationis.*

How did I start? Despite belonging to discourse contexts which were not in contact at the time, both philosophers explored the same comparatively "permeable" problems. During the research phase, it became clear that both had addressed (1) the question of an all-encompassing creativity (*Kreativität*), (2) of consciousness (*Bewusstheit*), (3) generativity (*Generativität*), (4) ineffability (*Ineffabilität*), (5) knowledge and

insight (*Wissen und Einsicht*), (6) self-perfection (*Selbstperfektion*), (7) morality (*Moralität*), and (8) love (*Liebe*). This had been approached in different ways, in different linguistic contexts, and under contrasting philosophical-historical backgrounds, etc. Despite all this, those eight 'problem horizons' (*Problemhorizonte*) meant a first step towards the transcultural dimension of philosophies.

However, these above-stated fields had to be seen as comparative categories in the sense that they

> […] remain vague and logically indeterminate with respect to what is to be defined or specified by them. "Logical indeterminacy"—a term first analysed by Charles S. Peirce in the context of comparative sciences—means that a comparative category can admit incompatible applications in comparisons on an equal footing, because the argumentation-theoretical law of non-contradiction does not apply to what remains "logically indeterminate". (Neville 2009, 37–38, tr. DB)

Upon further reflection, it became clear that the application of such a comparative view would come with a major weakness. If *transversal reflection*, respectively, philosophical transculturality was only to be developed on the basis of *that* particular level of indeterminacy, it could merely be described as logically *under-determined*. Put differently: in the attempt to establish *transversal reason*, we would have to neglect reason—and therefore to incapacitate ourselves to achieve that very same objective. The obvious self-contradiction alludes to the fact that such an approach could not lead very far. Thus, in the context of the author's earlier investigation the following questions arose: If there is no logical determinacy attached to the categories, what could count as the foundation of the validity to view them as elements of thinking? How do we prevent ending up in mere 'transversal linguistic imagination'? It would not have been feasible to retreat to the false excuse of alleged incommensurability. What is the way out in this regard? Or to allude to Plato in the transferred sense: Where is the exit of this particular "cave", this basic problem of transcultural philosophy to be traced?

The solution is to render the status of the working categories from logical *under*-determination to that of an implicate logical *over*-determination. In my concrete case, this meant that the demanded feature of logical indeterminacy (in the sense of two-valued logic and the *principium contradictionis*) could be upheld—but in the different sense of the self-reflective, *en*folding foundation of meta-reason (as in Cusanus's "eloquently silent"[28] word use of *complicatio*, "*murus paradisus*", or

28 See further above.

the *Daodejing*'s semantic "pointing rod" of an ineffable "*dao* 道" as already indicated). The appropriate new form of indeterminacy did not result from ignoring the contradiction but by consciously folding the difference back onto itself (to speak in reminiscence of Luhmann). In particular this application became possible, because both Wang Yangming and Cusanus had consciously developed their way of thinking on the basis of meta-reason themselves: both thinkers had advanced their reflections in the same implicate logical fashion, namely that in discernment and in setting the differences, the unity in the distinction is still always in view.

As this utmost basic feature of thinking (*per se*) had been *explicitly* expressed in both philosophies and in the respective reflections of all the above-mentioned topics on both sides, it then became possible to view it as a consistent *tertium comparationis* in itself: in their own terms and under the background of their particular preferences in topical emphasis, both thinkers had always put the task of philosophical "ground-exposure" in the first place in a contrastable fashion. In their own respective ways, both Wang Yangming and Nicolaus Cusanus had reflected on *every* basic problem in the form of *unity of unity and difference*, namely in the sense that it is at least as important to be aware of the boundless unity in all processes of thinking as it is to just confine to the finite meanings and their distinctness (as an "appearance" of the former).

The related application of the implicate logical foundation on the level of the comparative categories (which, again, could therefore be reflected as indetermined in the sense of their implicate logical over-determinacy) has secured the comparability of these categories, namely in the sense of the most basic principle of (all) transversal meta-reason(ing) itself. By constantly basing their thinking in relation to the implicate self-enfolding meta-form of "unity of unity and difference", both Nicolaus Cusanus and Wang Yangming have nurtured the same foundations of all thinking when exploring the aforementioned eight problem horizons. This has enabled the author to analyse and compare (1) the major terms and concepts involved in both philosophies respectively, (2) both philosopher's developments as thinkers, and (3) backgrounds and influences in the respective histories of thought. Regarding the differences, each of the eight major fields had to be subdivided. This was done by the introduction of specifying working categories. For example, regarding the general comparative category of an implicate logic of an all-encompassing creativity, Cusanus's (implicate) logic of *creation* stands in contrast to Wang Yangming's (implicate) logic of *transformation*. Adding general specifying categories to the working terminology became the foundation to develop the respective corridors of parallel and contrasting analysis in relation to the respective conceptual networks and possibilities of both philosophies in a very detailed fashion.

Under the background of what has been said in the preceding chapter of this article as well as in view of the prior and much more comprehensive investigation on the philosophies of Nicolaus Cusanus and Wang Yangming, I hope that this method can now be developed further, that the scope of its application can be broadened, and that it can be established.

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Manifest Quasi-Universals and Embedding Conceptual Clusters: The Case of *Qíng* 情

Jaap VAN BRAKEL, MA Lin***

Abstract

We start this article with a discussion of the problematics involved in translating into modern English a (modern) Chinese text concerning a classical Chinese notion, namely *qíng* 情. Then, we suggest that it is *necessary* to distinguish between two levels on which a language is used. The first is the manifest level, where one finds family resemblance between, say, Chinese *nù* 怒 and English "anger". The second is the generic level, where one finds *qíng* in classical Chinese, *qínggǎn* in modern Chinese, and emotion(s) in English. We argue that the meanings of words at the generic level can only be accessed via the manifest level. It is misleading to directly identify and compare notions at the generic level (in this case, emotion(s) in English and *qíng* in Chinese). We call the connections at the manifest level "quasi-universals", and we refer to the notions at the generic level as "embedding conceptual clusters".

Keywords: translation, Chinese, *qíng*, quasi-universals, embedding conceptual clusters

Manifestne kvaziuniverzalije in vdelava konceptualnih skupkov: primer *qíng* 情

Izvleček

Članek začneva z razpravo o problematiki, ki je povezana s prevajanjem (sodobnega) kitajskega besedila v sodobno angleščino, in sicer na primeru klasičnega kitajskega pojma *qíng* 情. Nato predlagava razlikovanje med dvema ravnema, na katerih uporabljamo jezik. Prva je manifestna raven, kjer najdemo družinsko podobnost med, recimo, kitajskim *nù* 怒 in angleško besedo »jeza«. Druga je generična raven, kjer najdemo *qíng* v klasični kitajščini, *qínggǎn* v sodobni kitajščini in čustvo(a) v angleščini. Trdiva, da je do pomenov besed na generični ravni mogoče dostopati samo prek manifestne ravni. Zavajajoče je neposredno identificirati in primerjati pojme na splošni ravni (v tem primeru čustva v angleščini in *qíng* v kitajščini). Povezave na manifestni ravni imenujeva »kvaziuniverzalije«, pojme na generični ravni pa »vgrajevanje konceptualnih skupkov«.

Ključne besede: prevod, kitajščina, *qíng*, kvaziuniverzalije, vdelava konceptualnih skupkov

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Introduction

This article is motivated by observations such as the following. The entries on transculturalism and intercultural philosophy in *Wikipedia* do not contain the word translation or one of its congeners.[1] In a recent publication in this journal, subtitled "The Post-Comparative Turn and Transculturalism", we find the remark that translation studies might reveal the philosophical significance and uniqueness of non-Western texts or utterances (Silius 2020, 264). But this kind of statement concerning translation (or the absence thereof) on behalf of some post-comparative approach (in philosophy or elsewhere) overlooks the fact that meaning and translation are dependent on the dominant language being used. Whether it is traditional comparative (or area) philosophy or some post-comparative turn, it is almost always assumed that translation (if mentioned at all) may be difficult, but not problematic in any fundamental sense. That is to say, the fact that different traditions (or groups of people) employ different (and dynamic) languages is not taken seriously.

This is the background motivating the work on this article. We start with discussing a number of problems encountered when translating into modern English a (modern) Chinese text, dealing with the classical Chinese notion of *qíng* 情. By using as a foil the published translation (in English) of an article originally written in modern Chinese by Tang Yijie 湯一介,[2] we make some remarks concerning how to present some subject matter treated in a particular language in another language. Obviously, we assume that any kind of comparative study—postcomparative, transcultural or otherwise—must provide justification for the method used to say something in one language about what has already been said in another language. In this article we focus on Chinese (classical and modern) and English, but the principles of interpretation we propose apply to any other communicative interaction between different languages *cum* lifeforms.[3]

In particular, we argue that it is *necessary* to distinguish not only more than one language (for example, classical Chinese, modern Chinese, and modern English),

1 In Wikipedia the entry "comparative philosophy" redirects to "intercultural philosophy".

2 The translation of Tang's paper was first published in *Philosophy East and West* in 2003 and as part of a book in 2015. As translators of the text are given Brian Bruya and Haiming Wen. No information is given on a possible publication of an earlier Chinese text on which this translation was based, but we identified it as Tang (2001). The article in *Philosophy East and West* (Tang 2003) was reprinted without changes in Tang (2015). As our subject is "problems of translation" we will not consider the original Chinese version of the text (Tang 2001) except for saying that it seems easier to follow than the English translation.

3 In order not to make things overly complicated, in this article we will not consider other versions of the Chinese or English language(s)/dialects/idiolects.

but also two levels on which these languages are used. First, the manifest level, where one finds "family resemblance" (henceforth: FR) between, say, classical or modern Chinese *nù* 怒 on the one hand and English "anger" on the other. Second, the generic level, where one finds *qíng* 情 in classical Chinese, *qínggǎn* 情感 in modern Chinese, and "emotions(s)" in English.[4] We argue that in explaining, for example, the classical Chinese word *qíng*, there is no need to use the English word(s) emotion(s/al). With rare exceptions, words at the generic level should not (and cannot) be translated and must be accessed via connections between the manifest levels of the two (or more) traditions. It is more efficient and less imperialistic to establish connections between concrete manifestations that go under the generic label of *qíng* in classical Chinese (for example, a conceptual cluster embedding classical uses of *nù*) and emotions in English (in this case a conceptual cluster embedding "anger"). We have called these connections at the manifest level "quasi-universals" (henceforth: QUs) in earlier publications (van Brakel and Ma 2015). They can be justified in terms of the empirical fact (as well as transcendental precondition) of mutually recognizable human practices (Ma and van Brakel 2016b; 2018).[5]

Different (Meta-)languages

Tang's text focuses on the pre-Qin Ruist's view that "*xing* [性] is quiescent, *qing* [情] is active"—which, the author says, is an idea that is without a doubt of more profound theoretical value than "*xing* is good, *qing* is bad" [65].[6] Tang's text also contains an explanation of the passage "*Dao* begins in *qing,* and *qing* arises from *xing*" in the recently excavated text *Xing zi ming chu* (性自命出, henceforth: XZMC) as well as a discussion of classical *qíng* and desire (*yù* 欲). However, our interest in the main content of this text is limited. We try to find out how the words emotion(s), *qíng*, and congeners are used in the translated text.

4 There is no simple translation of *qíng* 情. In this article we will not address the very difficult question of whether *qíng* should be taken as a homonym or as a hybrid term. In terms of the "easy" homonym discourse favoured by all dictionaries we know of, we limit our discussion to one of the two meanings of *qíng*, not considering the fact that in many Warring States sources the translation of *qíng* should be something like circumstances, situation, fact, condition. See, for example, authoritative translations of *qíng* for the *Analects*, the *Zhuangzi*, the *Sunzi*, the *Mozi*, the *Shangjunshu*, the *Zuozhuan* and other sources.

5 For a summary of our approach, see Ma and van Brakel (2022).

6 Numbers in square brackets refer to page numbers in Tang (2015). Indented lines with number in square brackets on the right-hand side are citations from Tang (2015) as well. When citing from Tang's article and for Chinese names we do not give *pinyin* tone marks, but we do when the *pinyin* word is part of our own text.

In the first (translators') note of the article, we are told that "the terms *qing* and *xing* will remain untranslated throughout this article" [55]. To leave *qíng* untranslated can only mean that we must assume that emotion (or *qínggǎn* in modern Chinese) and (classical) *qíng* do not have the same meaning. Given the announcement that *qíng* will not be translated, it may come as a surprise that the text contains not only almost 200 occurrences of the word *qíng*; but also twenty-four times the plural "emotions", eleven times the singular "emotion", nine times "*qinggan* (情感)", two times "*ganqing* (感情)", two times "emotional" and one time "emotionlessness."

We will distinguish between the following (different) languages:[7]

L1. classical Chinese, which language contains the word and/or character *qíng* 情.

L2. modern Chinese, which contains, *inter alia*, the words *gǎnqíng* and *qínggǎn*, but not *qíng* on its own.

L3. the metalanguage at work in the published English translation of Tang's article. This language contains a number of Chinese words.

L4. our metametalanguage, in which we try to keep a strict distinction between L1, L2, and L3.

We will assume that *xìng* (also not translated in the article) may refer to either classical or modern Chinese. Consider examples from modern and classical discourse respectively:[8]

> Human emotion arises from one's inner *xing*. [59]
>
> *Qing* arises from *xing* 情生於性. [55, 56, 59, 65]

We will assume that *xìng* is one and the same word in both classical and modern Chinese.

Now first consider the title of the English translation: "Emotion in Pre-Qin Ruist Moral Theory: An Explanation of '*Dao* Begins in *Qing*'." What would have been the word corresponding to "emotion" in Tang's Chinese original of this text? Should it be *qíng* or *gǎnqíng* 感情 (or *qínggǎn* 情感)? It is not obvious how to answer this question. First of all, it cannot be *qíng*, because that word would not have been translated. Secondly, it cannot be *gǎnqíng* or *qínggǎn* either, because these are

7 In a metalanguage one talks about another language. For example, in L3 one talks about L1; in L4 we talk about L1, L2, and L3.

8 We assume that all uses of *xìng* assume that *xìng* means "inner *xìng*".

words in modern Chinese, whereas the title clearly points to classical Chinese as the subject matter. We will assume that Tang's article is about *qíng*, a concept in classical Chinese, not about emotion (*gǎnqíng*).[9]

Family-Resemblance-Concepts and Quasi-Universals

As we have argued in earlier publications, the necessary condition of interpretation that has most impact on the practice of interpretation is family resemblance. It consists of three interrelated parts:[10]

- The investigator *must* assume that *all* concepts in *whatever* tradition are FR-concepts. Concepts can be *stipulated* to be exact and precise, but the stipulation itself involves FR-concepts.[11]
- The investigator *must* assume mutually recognizable human practices (henceforth: MRHPs). Similarities and differences are grounded in FRs of forms of life. Considering a limited number of traditions at a time will always show some MRHPs.
- Extending FR-concepts across traditions forms the basis of quasi-universals (QUs). The latter are working hypotheses that connect conceptual schemes from a limited number of traditions. Assuming the availability across traditions of QUs is a *necessary* condition for the practice of interpretation.[12]

The phrase "family resemblance" and the implicit reference to Wittgenstein is omnipresent throughout the humanities and also in comparative philosophy.[13] Baker and Hacker (2009, 214) suggest that Wittgenstein's aim was only to provide a critique of essentialism of meanings—not to offer "family resemblance" as

9 Actually, the title of the original Chinese text (Tang 2001) is rather different from the translation. This is the first of many examples where the translation causes more trouble for understanding than the original.

10 Large parts of this section are borrowed from Ma and van Brakel (2022, 37–39). For an overview of the necessary conditions for interpretation, see Ma and van Brakel (2016b).

11 Limiting "meaning" to the extension of a word-meaning, one might argue that number words are universals (not FR-concepts).

12 For a detailed discussion of the variety of options for the extension of FR-concepts see van Brakel and Ma (2015, 483–94). Concepts of the other tradition can also be learnt in various ways from scratch, but this is only possible against the background of a host of extended FR-concepts.

13 See Ma and van Brakel (2016a, ch. 4; 2016c). We use the phrase "family resemblance" as a technical term (defined by us). It does not have the colloquial meaning of the resemblance of members of the same family.

an alternative. However, we do consider FR across the board a (necessary) alternative. Moreover, Wittgenstein's account of FR is restricted to a single language or form of life. We consider translation (interaction between different forms of life).

An FR-concept has no fixed boundaries, and this is already implicit in the notion of family resemblance. Moreover, our notion of FR-concept has no centre of meaning (essence or prototype) either. Centre and border are interdependent. Because FR-concepts have no essences (no "cores") and no strict borders, they can be extended across traditions, which makes it possible to construct quasi-universals. For example, both *nù* and anger are FR-concepts. There are many differences between *nù* and anger, but FR (anger) can be extended to include many features of *nù*, and FR (*nù*) can be extended to include many features of anger.

A quasi-universal, for example "*nù*//anger", has two sides, in (classical) Chinese and English respectively.[14] A Chinese concept shows similarities to a European concept as judged from the background of European conceptual schemes; and a European concept shows similarities to a Chinese concept as judged from the background of Chinese conceptual schemes. The similarities as seen from the Chinese and European side respectively are not the same, although there can be family resemblances.

Family resemblance between the MRHPs of a small number of traditions suffices to construct QUs that connect FR-concepts in these traditions. Very different practices can be recognized as human practices because they show some similarity to practices the interpreter is familiar with. No attempt is made to look for "universally" recognizable human practices.

Extension of *Qíng*: Five, Six, and Seven *Qíng*

Is the translation of Tang's article perhaps, *sotto voce*, presupposing that the meaning of *qíng* and emotion is the same (and similarly for *nù* and anger, and so on)? This seems to be confirmed by the following citation, which we will quote in full (including all characters, *pinyin*, and English emotion words):

> "*Qing*" typically refers to the "seven *qing*" (delight, anger, grief, fear, love, dislike, desire [*xi, nu, ai, ju, ai, wu, yu* 喜怒哀懼愛惡欲]), the "six *qing*" (delight, anger, grief, enjoyment [*le* 乐{樂}], fondness [*hao* 好], dislike) or the "five *qing*" (delight, anger, grief, enjoyment, resentment [*yuan* 怨]), ... [56–57]

14 In our text the symbol // refers to the relation in QUs between manifest concepts in two (very) different languages.

By specifying the correspondence of Chinese character, *pinyin* (without tone mark), and English emotion word, the author or translators, perhaps unintentionally, may suggest there is a one-to-one correspondence between Chinese characters, their *pinyin* renderings and specific English words.[15]

Note by the way that the way of writing in the citation seems to assume a standardized translation of the Chinese characters. For example, it is in fact *stipulated* that *xǐ* 喜 means delight, *nù* 怒 means anger, and so on. However, there is a range of alternative translations of these characters in the secondary literature. For example, not only *xǐ* but also *lè* is sometimes translated as delight and *xǐ* is sometimes translated as joy.[16] If we "correct" things by writing instead of delight, say, "whatever *xǐ* means", we are back at assuming one-to-one correspondence between elements of *qíng* and emotion, respectively.

The most often cited example of "six *qíng*" in classical sources is 好惡喜怒哀樂 (*hàowù xǐnù āilè*), mentioned in the *Zuozhuan*, the *Lunheng*, the *Guanzi* and the *Xunzi*.[17] This is the same list as the one Tang mentions, except for the sequence of the characters. Tang also notes that "Wang Chong spoke about the 'six *qing*' as follows: 'Of *qing*, there are fondness, dislike, delight, anger, grief, and enjoyment,' not listing desire as one of the *qing*" [62]. This is again the same list. Finally, Tang notes that the "Xing qing" chapter of the Han dynasty *Baihu Tongyi* 白虎通義 also mentions the "six *qing*" [62n16]. The latter is the only list of six *qing* we know of which contains *ài* 愛//love:[18] 喜怒哀樂愛惡 [*xǐnù āilè àiwù*].[19]

15 We are only saying that the text just cited *suggests* a one-to-one correspondence of "delight", "*xi*", and "喜", and so on. Formally, the simple fact that both the words *qíng* and emotion are used in the translated text (hence, presumably, not having the same meaning) suggests that no one-to-one correspondence is presupposed. However, as subsequent sections of our text show, the use of both *qing* and emotion in the translated text is not consistent. Anyway, we assume that writing things like "resentment [*yuàn* 怨]" seems to presuppose one-to-one correspondence.

16 Furthermore, using the *pinyin ai* is ambiguous. It can mean, in the present context, something like love (*ài* 愛) or something like grieve (*āi* 哀). In the translated text, *pinyin* is sometimes given without a character provided (as in the case of *bēi* 悲). Remember that the use of *pinyin* does not suffice to uniquely identify text. For example, the text under consideration contains several different characters for *wu*: *wù* 物, *wú* 無 [无], and *wù* 惡.

17 Translated works are listed in the list of references under the name of the translator. Classical texts are cited following the version in the Chinese text project (CTP: https://ctext.org/). Reference is made to chapter numbers and section numbers according to CTP.

18 As far as we know *ài*//love occurs in three lists of *qíng*—in the *Liji* 禮記, the *Baihutong* 白虎通 and the *Xunzi* 荀子. The latter is not mentioned in Tang's paper.

19 There are other lists of *qíng*, not mentioned by the author. For example: 善惡喜怒哀樂 (*shàn'è xǐnù āilè*); in the *Qian Han Ji* 前漢紀.

The character or word for love, *ài* 愛, also occurs in a famous list of seven *qing*,[20] which can be found in the *Liji* and in the following citations:[21]

> 何謂人情？喜怒哀懼愛惡欲七者，弗學而能。[*Liji*, chapter "Li Yun"]
>
> What is human *qing*? Delight, anger, grief, fear, love, dislike, desire. These seven are innate abilities. [61, citing the *Liji*][22]
>
> What are the feelings of men? They are joy, anger, sadness, fear, love, disliking, and liking. These seven feelings belong to men without their learning them. (Transl. Legge 1885 [in CTP])

In the *Xunzi* there is also a list of seven *qíng*:

> 喜、怒、哀、樂、愛、惡、欲，以心異。[*Xunzi*, 22.2]
>
> Happiness, anger, sorrow, joy, love, hate, and desire are differentiated by the heart. (Transl. Hutton 2014, 238)

However, it did not receive much attention, being overshadowed by the list of seven in the *Liji*.

Lists of eight *qing* occur as well, but they are better interpreted as lists of four binomes. For example:

> 其用於人理也， 事親則慈孝， 事君則忠貞， 飲酒則歡樂， 處喪則悲哀。[*Zhuangzi* 莊子, 31.2]
>
> Truth is to be prized! It may be applied to human relationships in the following ways. In the service of parents, it is love≈filial piety [*cíxiào*]; in the service of the ruler, it is loyalty≈integrity [*zhōngzhēn*]; in festive wine drinking, it is merriment≈joy [*huānlè*]; in periods of mourning, it is sadness≈grief [*bēiāi*]. (Transl. Watson 1968, 276)

Note that the *qíng*-binomes in this citation are near-synonyms, not contrasts such as like\dislike (*hàowù*) or sad\happy (*āilè*).[23] This will be called hendiadys, which is more common in (classical) Chinese than in European languages.

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20 This list of "seven *qing*" is also included in the citation at the beginning of this section without giving a reference.

21 Note that Legge twice inserts "feelings" in his translation. In the translation of Tang's article, *qíng* is left untranslated when citing the list of *qíng* from the *Liji*.

22 Using the phrase "innate abilities" in the translation might be disputable.

23 To indicate contrast between the two concepts we use the symbol \ and to indicate near-synonyms or hendiadys, we use the symbol ≈.

Tang mentions a list of five *qíng*, but this list does not occur in the extensive collection of texts in the Chinese Text Project available on the internet (*ctext.org*). It is mentioned in Lynn (1994, 13), but it is rare when compared with lists of six or seven.

In Tang's article there seems to be some emphasis on six *qíng*. The seven *qíng* in the *Liji* are mentioned only once. That the list of seven often occurs in a number of post-Han sources is not mentioned. Xunzi (with six *qíng*) is mentioned twice, Wang Chong and the *Baihutong* are both mentioned, also with lists of six. On the other hand, the author writes (as many other commentators do): "since ancient times, people have spoken of the 'seven *qing* and six desires'".[24] This seems to support highlighting seven *qíng*.

We suggest that there is consensus in the literature that "seven *qíng*" was the most influential list, perhaps adding Mengzi's four sprouts, but not "five *qing*" or "six *qing*". Chen Lai (2004, 93) wrote:[25]

> Chinese philosophy fundamentally considers the emotions to be happiness, anger, sorrow, fear, love, hate, and desire. Therefore, an important meaning of "emotion" is human emotional activity, considering the seven emotions to be the concrete content. (Transl. R. W. Forster)

Zhang Dainian (2002, 383) remarks: "Tradition provides two lists of emotions: one with seven members and another, found in the Mencius and promulgated by Zhu Xi with four." This is correct, but it is rarely emphasized that a list of "four emotions" can mean two different things. Either it might refer to the often-mentioned four-character list of *xǐ*, *nù*, *āi*, *lè* 喜怒哀乐 or it could refer to Mengzi's conceptually rather different list of *cèyǐn* 惻隱, *xiūwù* 羞惡, *círàng* 辭讓, and *shìfēi* 是非.[26] Mengzi did not refer to his four sprouts as *xìng* or *qíng*, but Zhu Xi did in his commentary on the four books (of which the *Mengzi* was one):

> 惻隱、羞惡、辭讓、是非，情也。 仁、義、禮、智，性也。 (Zhu Xi 2011, 221)[27]

24 Perhaps this saying derives from traditional Chinese medicine.

25 The name of the translator is added at the end of Chen Lai's text.

26 Chen Lai (2004, 94) suggests that the four sprouts are the manifestations of *lǐ* 理—the "seven emotions" the manifestations of *qì* 氣. Other commentators have suggested that Mengzi's four sprouts underlie moral emotions, whereas the list of seven would be non-moral emotions.

27 There are numerous alternative translations of the four sprouts [*duān* 端] and similarly for the four corresponding principles. There is no consensus as to what is *qíng* and what is *xìng*. Soon after Mengzi (well before Zhu Xi), the list of four *xìng* was extended to five *xìng*, with *xìn* 信 being added (Yang Xiong 揚雄 53 BCE–18 CE; Ban Gu 班固 32–92 CE).

> The seeds of compassion, disdain, respect and (dis)approving [*cèyǐn* 惻隱, *xiūwù* 羞惡, *círàng* 辭讓, *shìfēi* 是非] are *qíng*. The principles of benevolence, righteousness, ritual propriety, and wisdom are *xìng*. (Our translation)

Manifest and Generic Levels of Description

A second major assumption of our proposed approach to (post-) comparative philosophy is that we draw a crucial distinction between manifest QUs on the one hand (for example, {*nù*//anger}) and categorial or generic concepts on the other hand, for example, *qíng*. That is to say, we emphasize that the meaning of *qíng* can be addressed at two levels in Chinese: the embedment of *qíng* among *qì* 氣 ("energy field"), *xìng* 性 ("nature"), *dé* 德 ("virtue"), *shìfēi* 是非 ("right/wrong and or true/false"), and so on, its connotation on the one hand and, on the other hand, its extension (lists of specific *qíng* of which examples were given in the previous section). No connection should be imposed on *qíng* and emotion. The connection between the Chinese and English discourse is made via observed family resemblances at the manifest levels of concrete elements of *qíng* and emotions, respectively. That is to say, following Wittgenstein (2009, §66), we distinguish between FR-concepts fitting "in the small" and fitting "in the large". Similarities in the small refer to manifest similarities that can be referred to with reference to real or constructed (imagined) MRHPs. Similarities in the large refer to similar ways of fitting generic concepts in the relevant embedding forms of life. Usually generic concepts cannot be easily connected across traditions, and often are best left untranslated.

"Categorial" or "generic" may also be called "overarching", or, in some contexts "embedding". Examples of categorial or embedding concepts in English are "emotion" or "virtue". A straightforward explanation could also be put in terms of the qualifiers manifest and embedded. For the distinction small\large (manifest\embedded), one can also draw an analogy with the philosophy of science: the distinction of observation and theoretical language. Observation language is often assumed to be universal. Theoretical language is different in different paradigms or traditions.

When we compare the Chinese conceptual cluster of *nù* and the Western range of "anger" we can see that further sophistication of the functioning of manifest QUs illustrate their eventual dependence on embedding generic concepts. We consider that the connection of classic *qíng* and modern emotion (or *gǎnqíng*) can be made via the level of specific *qíng* and specific emotions. The meanings of one pair (say *nù* and anger) do not coincide, but in some cases we can find support

for discerning the family resemblance of manifest concepts across traditions, for example QU {*nù*//anger}.

There are no fixed rules to separate manifest and generic concepts. It is meant to be a helpful tool, which has to be adjusted for each particular investigation. Special discussion is due for {*yù* 欲//desire} and a few others, because they do not easily fit into either the manifest or the embedding generic level. That is to say, *yù* can be assumed either to be one of the *qíng*, or it can be regarded as an alternative expression for *qíng* (or even as a synonym of *qíng*).[28] Different language pairs usually allow the construction of different QUs.[29]

As interpretation of a particular tradition becomes more sophisticated, it may transpire that most (or all) of everyday language using only manifest concepts is "tainted" by the holism within ordinary language and the holism between ordinary and sophisticated language. For example, the apparently simple QU {*lè* 樂// happiness} will break down if the background of interpretations of *qíng* and of binomes containing *lè* are considered.[30]

Avoid Using the Root "Emotion"

The Word "Emotional" is not Needed

Consider the word emotional, which occurs two times in the translation of Tang's text, claiming that the XZMC is cited:[31]

28 The word "synonym" hides a number of differences between English and (classical) Chinese. The two characters, *yù* and *qíng*, may be considered a case of hendiadys: the use of two near-synonyms for stylistic reasons, although one character would suffice to convey the intended "literal" meaning (Rouzer 2007, item 65). For example, in a passage in *Zhuangzi* 31.5, Legge translated *bēi āi* 悲哀 as sadness and sorrow; the word "sorrow" would suffice in English (as in Legge's translation of the next clause). He could also have translated *bēi āi* as grief and pity or worry and anxious (instead of sadness and sorrow). There is interdependence of meaning between *bēi* and *āi*. The choice of particular English word(s) for the translation is rather arbitrary; perhaps guided by the particular context of use of *bēi āi* (which concerns the mourning rites).

29 Consider English "games", German *Spiele*, and modern Chinese *yóuxì* 游戲. Games//*yóuxì*, *Spiele*//*yóuxì*, and games//*Spiele* are three different quasi-universals.

30 Background of *lè* 樂 includes: binomes such as *āilè* 哀樂, *hàolè* 好樂, *bēilè* 悲樂, *yōulè* 優樂, *xǐlè* 喜樂; *lè*'s relation to music (*yuè* 樂); *lè*'s distinction from *xǐ* 喜 and other characters that are located in the (English) semantic field of "joy"; parallel constructions of the *qíng* and the four seasons; *lè*'s relation to *wúwéi* 無為 (or *wúqíng* 無情) and serenity (*tián* 恬); the distinction of *rénlè* 人樂, *tiānlè* 天樂, and *zhìlè* 至樂, and so on.

31 The character for *bēi* is not given in the text; we will assume it is 悲. We assume that on the line for [59] "*wu*" is a mistake and it should be "*xī*" (although it is true that the *qì* of *wù* is also *xìng*, assuming *wù* stands for 惡).

> Emotional (*wu, nu, ai, bei*) *qi* is due to *xing*. [59]
>
> Emotional (*xi, yue, nu, ai, bei*) *qi* is due to *xing*. [60]

For comparative purposes we add a third version, also a citation from the translation of Tang's article:

> The *Xingzi mingchu* says: "the *qi* 气 {氣} of delight, anger, grief, and sadness is due to *xing*." [57]

We think the third version is the (approximately) correct translation. The original text in the XZMC is, presumably,[32]

> 喜、怒、哀、悲之氣，性也。 [XZMC, slip 2]

The Chinese text brings out a serious issue. Why is the word "emotional" added in the English translation on pages 59 and 60? Compare some other translations in English (see below). Without exception, in these alternative renderings something is said about *xǐ*, *nù*, etc, not about emotions (or *qíng*, for that matter).

The citation from page 60 presents the same phrase as in the previous line ([59]), but now not only with *xi* replacing *wu*, but also with *yue* being added; hence a list of five *qíng*.[33] We have no idea where this *yue* comes from, as there is no reference to a source. The author is citing XZMC. Therefore, we think it is plausible that "(*xi, yue, nu, ai, bei*)" is a mistake and the reference, in all three cases, is to the passage on slip 2 of the XZMC text just cited.[34]

It is of some interest to give a few alternative translations of the Chinese text on slip 2 of the XZMC because it shows that one and the same Chinese text may lead to seven different translations, as one can see below. Note that the word "emotional" isn't used even once by any of the translators.[35]

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32 For the text of XZMC, we follow the version and its English translation in Middendorf (2008). As is well known, any "original" Chinese text of this period is already an interpretation. (The excavated text is damaged, etc.)

33 It is the only occurrence of *yuè* in the text; the character referred to might have been 悅 (although this is not relevant if it is a mistake).

34 Other issues may be raised. For example, one might wonder what the difference is between *āi* 哀 and *bēi* 悲—*both* might be translated as *either* grief *or* sadness (*āibēi* 哀悲 is a case of hendiadys or near-synonyms).

35 Notice the variety of translations of *qì*, *xìng*, *xǐ, nù, āi, bēi*.

喜、怒、哀、悲之氣，性也。及其見於外，則物取之。[XZMC, slip 2]

Andreini (2006, 154): Natural dispositions are made up of the vital breaths of pleasure, anger, grief and sadness. Having reached the moment when it ("*xing*" or "pleasure, anger, grief and sadness") become externally visible, it means that things have taken hold of it (or them).

Chan (2009, 365): The *qi* of happiness, anger, sadness, and grief is (called) none other than nature. When it (that is, the *qi*) appears on the outside, it is because (external) things have laid hold of it.

Cook (2012, 1058): The vital energies of joy, anger, grief, and sorrow are [human] nature; once they manifest externally, things take hold of them.

Goldin (2000, 119): The *qi* of happiness, anger, grief, and sorrow is the *xing*. Once it is apparent externally, objects take hold of it.

Middendorf (2008, 152): The energetic [constellations] of delight, grief and sadness are [part of human] nature. When it comes to their external manifestation, then it is because things (took hold of) evoked them.

Perkins (2009, 119): The *qi* of pleasure, anger, grief, and sorrow is *xing*. Their appearing on the outside is because things stimulate them.

Virág (2014, 214): The *qi* of joy and anger, sorrow and sadness (*xi nu ai bei zhi qi* 喜怒哀悲之氣) are the realm of the inborn nature. As for their becoming manifest outside, it is due to things grabbing hold of them (*wu qu zhi ye* 物取之也).

There is no need to add the word "emotional" in the translation, and doing so we may consider as an example of transcendental pretense.[36]

No Need for the Word "Emotions"

In the translation of Tang's article, the plural "emotions" is often specified with a list of particular *qíng* added in brackets, for example:

The *qing* of emotions (*xi nu, ai, le* 喜怒哀乐) emerges out of human *xing*. [56]

... and then the emotions (*xi, nu, ai, le*) are manifested externally ... [64]

36 See Ma and van Brakel (2016a, 215–18) for this expression.

Such an addition in brackets also occurs in citations incorporated in Tang's article. For example,

> "Fondness, dislike, delight, anger, grief, and enjoyment" refer to the emotions (*qinggan*) that naturally issue from within the person. [57, citing Xunzi's list of six *qíng*]
>
> He Yan [何晏] believed that sages do not have emotions (*xi, nu, ai, le*), and he discussed it with great precision [64, citing He Shao {何邵}]
>
> *Qing* is the category of the emotions (*xi, nu, ai, wu*); *qing* as such is human desire. [63, citing the *Da Dai Liji* 大戴禮記][37]

We wonder again why the word "emotions" is needed. The connection between modern English and classical Chinese can be made via QUs at the manifest level of MRHPs; not in saying something about *qíng* or emotion(s).

There are a few occurrences of "emotions" without a specification in brackets. We will assume that the meaning is still the same: "emotions" (plural) refers to an indefinite list of specific *qíng*. That is to say, we assume (the author must assume) that for the extension of classic *qíng* we can say that *qíng* includes (in its extension),[38] *xǐ* 喜, *nù* 怒, *lè* 樂, *ài* 愛, *sī* 思, *kǒng* 恐, *wù* 惡, *yuàn* 怨, *yōu* 憂, *huàn* 患, *fèn* 憤, *fèn* 忿, *bēi* 悲, ... which, via the respective quasi-universals, is also, at least partly, a list of specific emotions. That is to say, we assume that there is an undetermined list of *qíng*, which leaves open the possibility that a particular case of *qíng* is not recognizable as an emotion word in English.[39] The choice or construction of QUs is of a pragmatic nature depending on the particular investigation and specific decisions have to be made concerning the separation (or overlap) of QUs (hermeneutic relativity).[40]

No Need for the Word "Emotion(s)"

There are in total eight occurrences of *qínggǎn* appearing in brackets after "emotion(s)". We will assume that these cases should be taken as statements in modern

37 It is not clear how to understand *wu*. It could be *wù* 惡 ("dislike" or "hatred"); it could also be a mistake and the text in brackets should read: "*xi, nu, ai, le.*"

38 Cf. "human *xing* can express all manner of emotions" [60]. We assume "*ai, le*" is short for "*xi, nu, ai, le*," which is short for "*xi, nu, ai, le, hao, wu*" (or "*hao, wu, xi, nu, ai, le*") and all of them are short for an indefinite list of *qíng*.

39 There are a large number of occurrences of *qíng* in Warring States sources, where it means something like situation (see note 4).

40 For the phrase "hermeneutic relativity", see Ma and van Brakel (2018).

Chinese. That is to say: We assume that adding *qínggǎn* in brackets (after either singular or plural "emotion(s)") indicates that the statement has to be taken as an utterance in modern Chinese (or even modern "global" theories of emotion, *qínggǎn*). Hence, we assume that an important passage at the beginning of the article is a statement in modern Chinese:

> ... the human *dao* (the norms of personal and social conduct) exists from the start on account of shared emotions (*qinggan* 情感) among people. [56]

This sentence might be an interesting partial suggestion to provide a basis for explaining communicative interaction between people of different traditions or with different backgrounds, the suggestion being: people can always communicate (to some extent), because they share the same emotions (*qínggǎn*).[41]

Sometimes, "emotion [*qinggan*]" is added after *qíng* in brackets:

> "human desire" referred to selfish desire and differed from human *qing* (emotion [*qinggan*]) [65]
>
> There is no clear distinction made between *qing* (emotion [*qinggan*]) and desire. [65]

It seems a bit odd to claim that *qing* is not translated, but sometimes to specify in brackets that it should be taken to mean emotion.

We find the text easier to understand if in a number of cases the singular "emotion" is read as the plural "emotions" with the same meaning as in the previous section. For example (three times we add a capital "S" to change singular to plural),

> Someone who completely comprehends human *qing* is able fully to elaborate human emotionS, and someone who has a firm grasp of ritual propriety (*li* 礼) and *yi* is able to modulate human emotionS. Thus, ritual propriety and *yi* are intimately related to *qing* and are inseparable from the expression of human emotionS. [56]

In the translated text, the two options of adding a specification in brackets (either by a list or by the word *qínggǎn*) are not always clearly distinguished. Consider:

41 Cf. Mengzi's example of a child risking to fall in a well.

> The sage differs from others not in whether he has emotions (*qinggan*). [64]
>
> He Yan believed that sages do not have emotions (*xi, nu, ai, le*) ... [64][42]

These two citations come from the same page where the views of He Yan and Wang Bi 王弼 are discussed. Hence, it is assumed that "emotions" means *qínggǎn* and has *xǐ, nù*, and so on as its extension.

The author correctly notes that there is no record in the *Analects* of Confucius having ever directly discussed the topic of *qíng*.[43] However, the author comments: "the pre-Qin emphasis on *qíng* is built on the thought of Confucius" and the author claims that Confucius provides the rationale for saying that love is the most basic emotion. Maybe, but, as to *qíng*, this should be understood as Confucius's interest being in specific emotions such as referred to in the following: "when Yan Hui died, Confucius couldn't help but grieve" [64].[44] The word *qíng* (or the word emotion) should perhaps not be used at all when highlighting love or grief on behalf of Confucius.[45]

If it is correct that love is the most basic emotion, is it not strange that in lists of six *qíng*, a character for love (*ài*) occurs in only one out of five lists of six *qíng*?

In addition to nine occurrences of *qínggǎn*, *gǎnqíng* is used two times. For example:

> Based on natural human *xing*, *qing* is human emotion (*ganqing*) that "is aroused into action by contact with things" and expressed externally. [57; elucidation of Xunzi's "natural *qíng*"]

For present purposes, we will not make a distinction between *gǎnqíng* and *qínggǎn*. Although Chinese-English dictionaries tend to distinguish the entries for *gǎnqíng* (meaning: emotion, feeling, sentiments; affection, attachment, love) and *qínggǎn* (meaning either the same as *gǎnqíng or* positive or negative psychological

42 In his discussion with Wang Bi, the latter believed that the sage, like human beings, had five *qíng* (Zhang Dainian 2002, 385). He Yan disagreed with this.

43 Similarly, Ng (1998, 173–74) acknowledges that Confucius and Mengzi do not discuss *qíng* directly but nevertheless ascribes to them a commitment to the need of a full "emotional" life.

44 See *Analects* 11.10: "顏淵死，子哭之慟 (When Yan Hui died, the Master grieved for him with sheer abandon)" (transl. Ames and Rosemont). Note that in the *Analects* a different character is used for "grieved": *tòng* 慟 ("sadness, grief; mourn; be moved").

45 There are two occurrences of *qíng* in the *Analects*. Translations vary but will come in conceptual clusters of Western notions such as duplicitous or really (happened). In the context of the *Analects*, *qíng* certainly does not mean something like emotion or feeling, as distinct from a specific *qíng* being of importance to Confucius.

reactions to external stimuli), it is difficult to establish accurate distinctions in actual use. According to a recent study using large corpora (Zhang and Ooi 2008), the Chinese terms *gǎnqíng* and *qínggǎn* differ from their English near-equivalents, feeling and emotion, in terms of colligation, collocation, semantic preference and semantic prosody. Certainly, there is a difference in the contemporary use of the two words, but without detailed explanation, it cannot be considered in a comparison of classical Chinese and English and, for present purposes, we assume that both words mean "emotion(s)".

A Provisional "Universal" Model

We suggest that apparent repetition (such as "the *qing* of emotions" [56]) is due to the assumption that *qíng* can mean one of two things: either the unmanifested, passive, pre-activated *qíng* of our inborn nature (*xìng*) or the *qíng* that manifests itself as a result of contact with things, thus becoming active (activated).

We suggest the following model of human psychology on the basis of near-consensus in the discussions in English concerning the XZMC.[46] It would fit everything that is said in terms of emotions and/or *qíng* in Tang's article (and entailing an interpretation of the XZMC that might have been acceptable to Tang):

- Humans have *xìng*, inborn nature containing unmanifested *qíng*: *xǐ, nù*, etc.
- With respect to a particular language, say Chinese, one should distinguish between *xǐ, nù*, etc., the emotions (plural) or referents of *qíng* on the one hand, and generic concepts such as *qíng* or emotion on the other hand.
- The *qíng* (of *xǐ*, *nù*, etc.) can manifest themselves when triggered by the environment (by things [*wù* 物]).
- The word *qíng* (or *qínggǎn*) may refer to either activated or non-activated *xǐ*, *nù*, etc.
- The story can be told in terms of (modern) *qínggǎn* or in terms of (classical) *qíng*.

46 See for example (already cited), Andreini (2006); Chan (2009); Cook (2012); Middendorf (2008); Perkins (2009).

The first and third items are mentioned repeatedly in Tang's text. First of all, a number of things are mentioned that emerge or arise from *xìng*:[47] *qíng*, fondness, dislike, ritual propriety, desire, human emotion, and the *qíng* of emotions. Secondly, several times attention is drawn to the interaction with things that cause external manifestations (outward expression).[48]

The text contains several statements in which some sort of connection is made between *qíng* and emotion(s). We find it difficult to understand these "mixed" statements and would prefer to avoid them. Consider:

> "That emotions (*hao, wu, xi, nu, ai, le*) are stored [in the body] is called the natural *qing*." [citing Xunzi, ch. 17] The "natural *qing*" here [i.e. translating Xunzi's *tiānqíng* 天情] actually refers to emotions (*qinggan* 情感) within the natural *xing* (i.e., the *qing* of *xing*'s emotions [*hao, wu, xi, nu, ai, le*]). [60]

We would say: Xunzi's *qíng* refers to the elements of *qíng* (such as *xǐ*, *nù*, ...) that exist in pre-activated form in one's inner *xìng*; They may come out and enter into contact with *wù* 物, which results in their external expressions.

Qíng and *Yù* 欲 ("Desire")

A substantial part of Tang's article is concerned with the difference (if any) of *qíng* and *yù* 欲 ("desire"). Perhaps we can say that in the Warring States period *qíng* and *yù* were closely interdependent. That is to say, we agree that (as many other commentators do):

47 The list that follows is derived from the following passages: Human emotion arises from one's inner *xing* [59]; desire arises from *xing*, dislike arises from *xing*, delight arises from *xing*, etc. [60]; fondness and dislike are a matter of *xing* [57]; fondness and dislike are due to *xing* [60]; Yu cong no. 2 says: *Qíng* arises from *xing*; ritual propriety arises from *qing* [59]; Yu cong no. 2 very nearly takes all human emotions and desires to "arise from *xing*" [60].

48 Cf. the following passages: "What sets the *xing* to activity are things (*wu* [*sic*]). It is the outward expression of human *xing* excited internally by external things that manifests as the various emotions (and desires)" [60– we did not find this text in the XZMC]; "When human *xing* perceives (*gan* 感) things, the emotions (*qínggan*) that are thus aroused should tally with the cosmic patterning (*daoli* 道理)" [61]; "*qíng* and desire are both generated from activity resulting from the *xing*'s perception (*gan*) of things" [64]; "human *xing* is our inner quality, and *qing* is the revealing of *xin*'s emotions on becoming active in response to things." [61] [The text may make more sense if we assume that instead of "*xin*'s emotions" we read "*xing*'s emotions." However, assuming *xin* stands for 心, this is not impossible as intended meaning.]

> in the pre-Qin classics it is the case either that *qing* and desire have not been distinguished yet or that desire is seen as one way of expressing *qing* [62].[49]

However, there is an important proviso: in saying this, it is assumed that we focus on *yù*//desire as a QU at the embedding level; not the *yù* occurring in lists of *qíng* (which would be lists of *yù* if the latter is a synonym of *qíng*). Hence, we assume that there is a contrast between the following two situations:

> Emotion (*qinggan*) and desire (*qingyu*) are different. [65]
>
> In the pre-Qin classics, no clear distinction is made between *qing* (emotion [*qinggan*]) and desire. [65]

We assume that the first citation refers to modern Chinese society, and the second to classical sources (forgetting about the addition in brackets that seems to identify *qíng* and emotion).

If it is difficult to separate *qíng* and *yù* clearly in pre-Han times, it seems odd to categorically declare:

> Zhuangzi did not favor emotionlessness, but rather desirelessness. [64]

We suggest that the issues raised by this statement and ascribed to Zhuangzi should be addressed in terms of classical criteria. For example, does "emotionless" stand for *wúqíng* 無情 (no-emotion)?[50] Instead of advocating "desirelessness" (*wúyù* 無欲 does not occur in the *Zhuangzi*), perhaps Zhuangzi's advice was:

> 安時而處順，哀樂不能入也 [*Zhuangzi*, ch. 6.2]
>
> 故鹵莽其性者， 欲惡之孽 [*Zhuangzi*, ch. 15.2]
>
> Be content with this time and dwell in this order and then neither sorrow nor joy can touch you. (Transl. Watson 1968, 48)
>
> So, he who is slipshod with his inborn nature will find the evils of desire and hate affecting his inborn nature like weeds and rushes. (Transl. Watson, 1968, 220)

49 Cf. the *Han Shu* 漢書: 人欲之謂情 (Human desire I call *qíng*).

50 *Wúqíng* 無情 has been translated as: "having no emotions", "having no feelings", "having no affections", "emotionlessness".

The author seems to assume another case of interdependence with respect to *qíng*, *qì*, and *dé* 德.[51] Consider the following two text blocks:

> 民有好惡、喜怒、哀樂，生于六氣 [*Zuozhuan* 10.25]
>
> In the people there are liking and disliking, joy and anger, sorrow and pleasure, emotions that originate in the six vapours. (Transl. Durrant, Li, and Schaberg, 1639)
>
> 惡欲喜怒哀樂六者， 累德也。
>
> Dislike, desire, delight, anger, grief, and enjoyment—these six are obstructions of *de* (德). (*Zhuangzi*, "Gengsangchu") [62]
>
> Loathing and desire, joy and anger, grief and happiness—these six are the entanglements of virtue. (Transl. Watson 1968, 197)

It is correct to note that in these citations six *qíng* are mentioned together with *qì* and *dé*, respectively, and this may suggest interdependence, but it goes too far to say: "Mentions of the six *qíng* occurred as early as the pre-Qin era" [62], followed by references to the *Zuozhuan* referring to "six *qi*" and the *Zhuangzi* referring to six "obstructions of *dé* (德)." It is literally false that these sources say something about *qíng*, they say something about *xǐ*, *nù*, etc.[52]

The citation from the *Zuozhuan* is referred to in two places in the article as follows:

> The people have fondness and dislike, delight and anger, and grief and enjoyment, which are expressed in the six *qi*. (*Zuozhuan*, Duke Shao year 25). [62]
>
> The *Liyùn* chapter of the *Liji* quotes the *Zuozhuan*, "Duke Shao year 25", to say: "Nature has the six *qi*, which in people become the six *qíng* and are called delight and anger, grief and enjoyment, and fondness and dislike." [62n14][53]

51 The same "confusion" occurs in the other direction. For example, *liùqíng* 六情 is sometimes translated as "six desires" (of the people)—see Hightower (1952), *Hanshiwaizhuan* 5.16.

52 The occurrences of six *qíng* in the *Zuozhuan* and the *Zhuangzi* are not identical. The former list is the most common list of six *qíng* already mentioned. The latter is the same as the one that can be found in the *Lü Shi Chun Qiu* 呂氏春秋 [惡欲喜怒哀樂 *wùyù xǐnù āilè*]. In passing we may note that this list of 六者 is not referred to as *qíng* but as *dé* (德). This would further support, at the time, interdependence of *dé, qíng, qì* (and also *zhì* 志).

53 We overlook the different sequence of the binomes. We could not find this passage in the *Liji* (at least not in this form). Making the connection between six *qì* and six *qíng* on the basis of this passage may not be correct. See Durrant, Li, and Schaberg (1638n1010) and note that this recent translation inserts the word "emotions" in the translation (Legge did not).

Although the reference provided seems to be the same for both citations, it is not specific enough. Therefore, we cannot be absolutely sure that the two English texts go back to the same source. One wonders, because in note 14 [62] a connection is made between *qì* and *qíng*. If, as *is* plausible, the two citations do refer to the same original, we think the elaboration in the note is not a justifiable translation (perhaps based on a speculative interpretation of surrounding text).[54] We support the translation given on page 62, but not the elaboration in note 14.[55]

Xunzi's Lists of *Qíng*

A passage in the *Xunzi* from chapter 17 ("Tianlun") is cited twice in Tang's article:[56]

> Fondness, dislike, delight, anger, grief, and enjoyment are stored within (*zang* 臧 [= *cang* 藏]), and this is called the natural *qing*. [57]
>
> That emotions (*hao, wu, xi, nu, ai, le*) are stored [in the body] is called the natural *qíng*. [60]

We think the first translation is slightly better. The Chinese original is (plus two other translations):[57]

> 好惡喜怒哀樂臧焉，夫是之謂天情。[Xunzi, "Tianlun," ch. 17.4]
>
> Liking, dislike, happiness, anger, sorrow, and joy are contained therein—these are called one's Heavenly dispositions. (Transl. Hutton 2014, 176)
>
> Love and hate, delight and anger, sorrow and joy—these are described as "the emotions given us by nature." (Transl. Knoblock 1994, 16)

Apart from the translation on page 60, translators seem to agree that there is no need to insert the word "emotions" (or "feelings").

The author also cites two times from chapter 22 of the *Xunxi*. Consider the following passage and four slightly different translations:

54 Different editions provide different interpunctions. We think the text translated by Legge functions as a complete sentence and does not need the surrounding text to speculate on its meaning.

55 We assume "grief" is *āi* 哀, but if only the English word grief is given, it could also refer to *bēi* 悲 (or *tòng* 慟).

56 Compare the respective first sentences in the two citations that follow.

57 Note the difference in the translation of Xunzi's *tiānqíng* 天情, which we will not pursue.

> 性之好、惡、喜、怒、哀、樂謂之情 [*Xunzi*, ch. 22, "Zhengming"]
>
> The emotions (*hao, wu, xi, nu, ai, le*) of *xing* are called *qing*. [59]
>
> The feelings of liking and disliking, happiness and anger, and sadness and joy in one's nature are called "dispositions". (Transl. Hutton 2014, 236)
>
> The feelings of liking and disliking, of delight and anger, and of sorrow and joy that are inborn in our nature are called "emotions". (Transl. Knoblock, 1994, 127)
>
> The likes and dislikes, delights and angers, griefs and joys of the nature are called emotions. (Transl. Watson 1963, 139)

Hutton and Knoblock agree, inserting "feelings" in front of "liking and disliking", but we (and Watson) do not. Why insert words like emotions or feelings in front of a list of concrete *qíng*? As one can see from the (better) translation of Watson, there is no need to insert such words.[58]

Comparing the Chinese text and the translations, we can notice that Hutton translates *qíng* as disposition.[59] This was a significant change insofar as it avoids the "bias" of translating *qíng* as emotion. We suggest that adding "feelings of" or "emotions" to *xǐ* etc. is biased as well.

Rather surprisingly, soon after Hutton published his translation of the *Xunzi*, he changed his text in some places, substituting *qíng* for his innovative "disposition". For example in chapter 22:

> The liking, disliking, happiness, anger, sadness, and joy belonging to a person's xìng 性 ("nature") are called the *qíng*. (Hutton 2016, 203)

Hutton added the following comment:

> Since the examples in this list would normally be called "emotions" in English nowadays, thinking of *qing* as "emotions" can seem quite sensible, and perhaps even necessary.
>
> Yet, other uses of *qing* in the Xunzi do not fit such an understanding well. For instance, one passage remarks, "As for people's *qing*, their eyes desire the utmost in sights, their ears desire the utmost in sounds, their mouths

58 By not providing the Chinese text or different translations, one might miss, for example, that there are various options for translating *hàowù* 好惡; most pronounced is the choice between love\hate and like\dislike, but there are other options as well; for example, fondness\aversion.

59 Here Duyvendak translates *qíng* as sensations, but Knoblock does not agree.

> desire the utmost in flavors, their noses desire the utmost in smells, and their bodies desire the utmost in comfort." ... Likewise ... These examples of *qing* not only differ from those listed in chapter 22, but moreover they are not the kinds of things usually counted as "emotions" by English speakers. (Hutton 2016, 203)

A further discussion of Xunzi's contribution will follow at the end of the next section.

The Range of the Meanings of *Qíng*

There is not much consensus in the secondary literature concerning the range of meanings of *qíng*, but all commentators agree that it is much wider than the range of emotion (in English). It might include the range and meaning of all binomes in modern Chinese that include the character *qíng* (more than 20 common expressions in modern Chinese).[60]

Middendorf (2008, 128, 133–36) has suggested that *qíng* refers to "all types of affective responses as motivational-adaptational behaviour caused by some stimulation". This would include the most basic drives, sense perceptions, and instinctive responses, "reflexes, appraisals (preferences), dispositions, attitudes (desires, beliefs, judgments), moods, interpersonal stances, emotions", as well as "higher order functions such as aesthetic emotions and morality". Ye Zhengdao has claimed that *qíng* includes "feeling, wanting, knowing, thinking what is good and bad" (2006, 77). We think all conscious thought can be considered (part of) *qíng*. Concrete forms of *qíng* always include thought processes. There is no pure, "feel" of *qíng*.

What is perhaps common to all interpretations of *qíng* is that it is a response to a situation (or disposition to respond to a situation). In what follows, we will give two more examples of neglected passages supporting the wide range of *qíng* in Warring States texts.

In chapter 2 of the *Zhuangzi* the following passage occurs, which some translators and commentators have interpreted as including a list of twelve *qíng*:

> 喜怒哀樂， 慮嘆變慹， 姚佚啟態；... 旦暮得此， 其所由以生乎！
>
> Joy, anger, sorrow and happiness, worry and regret, hesitation and fear, frivolity and extravagance, relinquishment and affection ... Once we are

60 For example, *àiqíng* 愛情 (romantic love), *qíngdiào* 情調 (tone, mood), *qíngkuàng* 情況 (circumstances), *qíngxù* 情緒 (temper), *rèqíng* 熱情 (enthusiastic), *xīnqíng* 心情 (state of mind), *shíqíng* 實情 (fact).

> enlightened, we will understand from where they are born. But for all these emotions, we would not have existed; but for our existence, these emotions would not have appeared." (Transl. Wang 1963, 17 [ch. 2])

Although the list starts with the well-known *xǐ, nù, āi, lè*, a number of very rare characters appear in this list of twelve, and no two commentators have agreed on their translation. However, there remains the suggestion that the range of *qíng* may be wider than is generally assumed, and there is ample support for reading this passage as being about *twelve qíng*.[61]

There may well be more "hidden" references to a wider extension of *qíng* in various places in Warring States sources, which later commentators and editors have dismissed as being corrupt or not relevant. Consider the passage in the *Xunzi* that has been referred to as a list of seven *qíng*. Adding a few characters that occur before and after the list of seven *qíng* one can read:

> 說、故、喜、怒、哀、樂、愛、惡、欲，以心異 [*Xunzi*, ch. 22.2]
>
> Persuasions, reasons, happiness, anger, sorrow, joy, love, hate, and desire are differentiated by the heart. (Transl. Hutton 2014, 238)
>
> (Speech and phenomena [*shuōgù* 說故]), pleasure and anger, sorrow and joy, love and hate, and desire are differentiated by the mind. (Transl. Knoblock 1994, 129)
>
> Speech, events, delight, anger, grief, joy, love, hate, and desire are distinguished by the mind. (Transl. Watson 1963, 142)
>
> Cheerfulness and gloom, joy and anger, sorrow and delight, love, aversion and desire. ... (Eifring 2004, 28)

Knoblock wonders whether this passage contains corrupted or excrescent words. He briefly discusses the comments of some Chinese scholars (Yang Liang, Wang Xianqian, Yu Chang), who differ widely in their interpretations (Knoblock 1994, 336n29).[62] Knoblock prefers those options that "seem more harmonious with the other terms in the series". He also notes that "these characters are not included in the list of emotions given earlier in the book". We think that there is no need to restrict the meaning of *shuōgù* by trying to map it onto the more familiar

61 This was already suggested in the twelfth century (Luo Miandao 羅勉道; Lin Xiyi 林希逸; Zhao Yifu 趙以夫).

62 Knoblock follows Wang Xianqian who reads *shuō gù* 说故 as *yuè kǔ* 悦苦 ("enjoyment and grief" or "contentment and discontentment"). Fang and Li (2011, 361) translate "固" [same reading as 故 {phonetic loan word of 固}] as happiness.

expressions if one is considering the "forgotten" range of meaning of *qíng*. If one consults the wider context, one notices that the neat parallel between the cited sentence and the five preceding sentences supports that *shuō gù* is part of a list of *nine qíng*.[63] The cited sentence lists the emotions that are "differentiated by the heart/ mind". That fits with the insight that *qíng* "encompass various thought processes" (Chen Lai 2004, 93).

We conclude that Warring States *qíng* covered a rather broad range of meanings (certainly extending far beyond what are today considered as emotions).

Preliminary Conclusions

The foregoing discussion of *qíng* and emotion, using the translation of Tang's article as a foil, supports the following requirements (for scholarly work on *qíng*):

- strict conceptual separation of, for example, *qíng* and emotion is required;
- every bit of translated text must include the Chinese original;
- if possible, avoid dependence on one source for translations;
- carefully distinguish singular and plural;
- *qíng* on the one hand and *xǐ, nù, āi, lè* on the other should not be considered synonyms.

In order to avoid some of the pitfalls of translation, it is necessary to assume two levels of description. First, the manifest level, where one finds quasi-universals such as the family resemblance between classical or modern Chinese *nù* 怒 on the one hand and English "anger" on the other hand. Second, the generic level, where one finds *qíng* in classical Chinese, *qínggǎn* 情感 in modern Chinese, and "emotions(s)" in English.

In order to explain classical Chinese *qíng*, there is no need for the word(s) emotion(s, al). It is more efficient and less imperialistic to establish connections between concrete manifestations that go under the labels of *qíng* and emotions in classical Chinese and the English language, respectively, rather than directly identify these two labels.

63 These six sentences list the entities that are differentiated by, respectively, the eye, the ear, the mouth, the nose, the body, and the mind/heart.

Afterword: An Objection?

The most "fundamental" criticism of our general approach might be the objection that because it is rooted in the notions of family-resemblance-concepts and the mutual recognition of human practices, it leaves the application of a concept too unrestricted, not revealing which family-resemblance-concepts are the "objectively" relevant ones. We counter that the final justification of QUs can and must be situated in MRHPs, which is the final ground or justification for both the family resemblance approach to concepts and the construction of quasi-universals. That for any small number of traditions there always *are* some practices that are mutually recognizable is an indisputable fact of human experience, supported by first contacts (Ma and van Brakel 2016a, 123–38), and showing itself in every more or less successful communicative interaction. By considering MRHPs as the final ground of interpretation, we propose to resolve the alleged "problem of relevance". The application of *relevant* concepts is constrained by the MRHPs acknowledged and presupposed by parties participating in whatever process of communicative interaction that is occurring.

For interpretation to be possible, universality must be assumed for at least some similarities across traditions, based on the "essence" of human beings—always already assumed by classical Chinese scholars as well.[64] It is necessary to assume that the author or speaker is a human being and engages in practices many of which are immediately recognizable as *human* practices.[65] No attempt is made to find "universally" recognizable human practices. Family resemblance between the practices of a small number of traditions suffices to construct quasi-universals that connect FR-concepts in these traditions. There are always family resemblances between (human) forms of life, although what the resemblances are in a particular case is relative to the languages and conceptual schemes involved (and hence may be judged differently by different parties).

Elsewhere we have argued that family resemblance across traditions is grounded in the experiential fact and necessary transcendental precondition of the existence of MRHPs, at least for any small group of traditions at a time. It is these cross-culturally recognizable human practices or behaviors of, say, being angry, that justifies recognizing a quasi-universal across traditions, say, angry//*nù*. Note that this is not (yet) a universal. What is required for successful communicative interaction between

64 "四海之内其性一也，其用心各異，教使然也 (All within the four seas share the one nature. That they are different in applying their hearts is brought about by teaching)." (XZMC, transl. Chan 2009, 365)

65 The name of this principle derives from Wittgenstein's remark: "My attitude [*Einstellung*] toward him is an attitude toward a soul [*zur Seele*]. I am not of the *opinion* [*Meinung*] that he has a soul" (Wittgenstein 2009, §22). For more discussion of this principle, see Ma and van Brakel (2016a: 136–39).

particular groups of people is family resemblance of a substantial number of manifest concepts across these particular traditions (not for all manifest concepts). For another pair or small set of traditions what is workable (that is, what is recognizable in terms of family resemblances across traditions) may be different.

Resting one's case on a principle of MRHPs is not common. In support we give a few brief examples in support of this principle. Usually, the interpretation of MRHPs does not depend very much on the details of its description. In the *Zhuangzi* (ch. 24), meeting with a friend or with an old acquaintance is described as a source of joy (Despeux 2004, 83):

> 曰：子不聞夫越之流人乎？去國數日，見其所知而喜 [*Zhuangzi* 24.1]
>
> "Haven't you ever heard about the men who are exiled to Yueh?" said Hsu Wu-kuei. "A few days after they have left their homelands, they are delighted if they come across an old acquaintance. …" (transl. Watson 1968, 200)

A modern global citizen would have no problem recognizing this MRHP and can very well grasp the point of the story, even though the translation of *xǐ* 喜 as "delighted" hides many issues of how to delineate particular concepts.

Down-to-earth actions, crafts, and behaviors often have close resemblance across traditions, and are presupposed in more sophisticated interpretations of ancient texts. For example, there is an extensive literature on the story of the happy fish in the *Zhuangzi* (ch. 17), but these scholarly debates are only possible, partly, because people going for a stroll is a recognizable MRHP and the fish's swimming is a practice belonging to the fish's form of life. In the *Zhuangzi*, many human and animal practices are recorded. All stories in chapter 4 presuppose MRHPs: how to deal with people, how a cripple survives, how a tree survives, how a sage survives, and similarly for other stories, including magical stories such as a sacred oak tree appearing in a dream.

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A Holistic Account of Adequacy Conditions for How to Look at Contraries: How Cross-Tradition Engagement in Philosophy Is Possible

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Abstract

The aim of this essay is to give a meta-philosophical and meta-methodological characterization of some central characteristic features comparative philosophy as a general way of doing philosophy through cross-tradition engagement toward world philosophy. This is elucidated by presenting a holistic account of the conditions for maintaining adequate methodological guiding principles for appropriately and effectively considering different approaches to philosophy. This essay is meta-methodological in character: given that comparative philosophy sets out to explore how to adequately look at contraries (especially those from different philosophical traditions, but not limited to them, methodologically speaking), and given the self-reflective philosophical nature of comparative philosophy, exploring adequacy conditions for how to look at contraries is meta-methodological in character but also a significant part of comparative philosophy *per se*. This meta-methodological exploration in comparative philosophy is neither exhaustive nor exclusive: it is not exhaustive because comparative philosophy as a whole has other substantial contents; it is not exclusive because this suggested account itself is open-ended and can include further adequate conditions that would be complementary to the current set from the holistic vantage point, which is exactly one ending point of this essay.

Keywords: comparative philosophy, cross-tradition engagement in philosophy, holistic account, methodological guiding principles (adequate and inadequate ones), methodological perspectives (eligible and ineligible ones)

Celostni opis pogojev ustreznosti pri pogledu na nasprotja: kako je mogoče v filozofijo vključiti različne tradicije

Izvleček

Namen tega eseja je podati metafilozofsko in metametodološko opredelitev nekaterih osrednjih značilnosti primerjalne filozofije kot splošnega načina prakticiranja filozofije z

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vključevanjem različnih tradicij v smeri svetovne filozofije. To je pojasnjeno s celostnim opisom pogojev za ohranjanje ustreznih metodoloških vodil za ustrezno in učinkovito obravnavo različnih pristopov k filozofiji. Ta esej je metametodološke narave: glede na to, da si primerjalna filozofija prizadeva raziskati, kako ustrezno obravnavati nasprotja (zlasti tista iz različnih filozofskih tradicij, vendar metodološko gledano ne omejeno nanje), in glede na samorefleksivno filozofsko naravo primerjalne filozofije je raziskovanje pogojev ustreznosti obravnavanja nasprotij metametodološke narave in hkrati pomemben del primerjalne filozofije kot take. To metametodološko raziskovanje v primerjalni filozofiji ni niti izčrpno niti izključujoče: ni izčrpno, ker ima primerjalna filozofija kot celota še druge bistvene vsebine; ni izključujoče, ker je ta predlagani opis sam po sebi odprt in lahko vključuje nadaljnje ustrezne pogoje, ki bi sedanji sklop dopolnjevali s celostnega gledišča, kar je prav ena od zaključnih točk tega eseja.

Ključne besede: primerjalna filozofija, čeztradicijski angažma v filozofiji, holistični prikaz, metodološka vodila (ustrezna in neustrezna), metodološke perspektive (primerne in neprimerne)

Introduction

At the very outset of this essay, before its purpose and strategy is stated, two notes are due about how I intend to participate in and contribute to the discussion on the specific issue concerning two methodological approaches to Chinese philosophy, respectively labelled "comparative" and "transcultural" ones. First, my way of using the key phrase "comparative philosophy" is in accordance with the "constructive-engagement" strategy of doing comparative philosophy, as shown by a range of international collective projects on cross-tradition engagement in philosophy, in which I have participated as a contributing coordinator, during the past two decades since the beginning of this century, and clearly it is substantially different from the way the phrase is used in the discussion title. To avoid mere verbal disagreement, and to hit the relevant points home, one good strategy in my case is to directly and explicitly give a meta-philosophical and meta-methodological characterization of comparative philosophy toward world philosophy, which distinguishes itself from both what the phrase "comparative philosophy" used in an *ad hoc* narrow sense means and what the phrase "transcultural philosophy" means (as used in the discussion title), but transcends both in a way to be addressed in the next note. Second, in view of my research focus and interest, I think that one effective way to give such a meta-philosophical and meta-methodological characterization of comparative philosophy "as a general way of doing philosophy through cross-tradition engagement" is by way of explaining a holistic account of "adequacy" conditions for maintaining adequate methodological guiding principles concerning how to

adequately look at distinct approaches in philosophy and other intellectual pursuits ("how to look at contraries" for short). This systematic account has been explored, enriched and enhanced especially in three representative writings of this author in the past two decades.[1] This essay marks a momentous accumulating point of developing this account: instead of merely summarizing what has been explored regarding this account, one more substantial adequacy condition is emphatically added in this essay, which renders this account fundamentally "holistic", as highlighted in the main title of this essay. It is hoped that the resources in this account can be constructive to both sides of the debate.

In this way, the purpose of this essay is to give a meta-philosophical and meta-methodological characterization of comparative philosophy as a general way of doing philosophy through cross-tradition engagement by way of suggesting and explaining a holistic account of adequacy conditions for how to look at contraries. Given that comparative philosophy (no matter how one would preferably label it linguistically[2]) as a general way (methodology) of doing philosophy, this essay is meta-methodological in character: given that comparative philosophy sets out to explore how to adequately look at contraries (especially those from different philosophical traditions, but not limited to them, methodologically speaking), and given the self-reflective philosophical nature of comparative philosophy, exploring adequacy conditions for how to look at contraries is meta-methodological in character, but is also a significant part of comparative philosophy *per se*. This meta-methodological exploration in comparative philosophy is clearly neither exhaustive nor exclusive: it is not exhaustive because comparative philosophy as a whole has other substantial contents (for example and for illustration, the exploration on normative bases for cross-tradition engagement, the exploration on the issue of (in)commensurability, the exploration on the issue of philosophical interpretation, etc.)[3]; it is not exclusive because this suggested account itself is open-ended and can include

1 See Mou (2001; 2010; 2020). Mou (2020) is a monograph book that gives a systematic explanation of a range of theoretic and methodological issues in comparative philosophy as a general way of doing philosophy through cross-tradition engagement. Before that, to my knowledge there are two previous works at the research level of monograph books: one is David Hall and Roger Ames (1995), and the other one is Lin Ma and Jaap Van Brakel (2016). Both take a type of pragmatist approach on the issue (for my analysis of the pragmatic approach on the issue, see Mou (2020, sections 0.1 and 3.4.3)). For a recent monograph book that gives a systematic exploration of methodological issues involved in comparative philosophy, see Jana Rošker (2021).

2 It is noted that, given the widely recognized distinction between the "use" and "mention" of a linguistic item (as addressed in the philosophy of language), the phrase "comparative philosophy" here is "*used*" *to talk about what it is used to designate*, i.e., *a non-linguistic item* (the substantial general way of doing philosophy through cross-tradition engagement toward world philosophy), rather than being '*mentioned*' *to talk about this linguistic phrase itself*.

3 For this author's recent exploration of some of these issues, see Mou (2020, chapters 1, 2 and 3).

further adequate conditions (if any) that would be complementary to the current set from the holistic vantage point, which is exactly one ending point of this essay.

My strategy in this essay is this. Following this introductory part (part 1), in the next part (part 2) entitled "'Constructive-Engagement' Strategic Goal and Preliminaries", as the suggested holistic account itself is associated with and fundamentally guided by the "constructive-engagement" strategic goal and methodological expectations, I first briefly explain the "constructive-engagement" strategic goal and methodological expectations in comparative philosophy; I also introduce some preliminary conceptual and explanatory resources and a range of lexical distinctions that are needed. Then, in the major part of this essay (part 3) entitled "Adequacy Conditions for Methodological Guiding Principles on How to Adequately Look at Contraries: A Holistic Account", I suggest and explain a holistic account of adequacy conditions for maintaining adequate methodological guiding principles concerning how to adequately look at distinct approaches in philosophy.

"Constructive-Engagement" Strategic Goal and Preliminaries

In this section, first I briefly introduce "constructive-engagement" strategic goal and methodological expectations in doing philosophy comparatively; then I also introduce some preliminary conceptual and explanatory resources and a range of lexical distinctions in need of a clear and refined explanation.

The "Constructive-Engagement" Strategic Goal

One strategic goal and methodological strategy in cross-tradition engagement to bridge distinct approaches and resources from different philosophical traditions, generally and briefly speaking, can be summarized in this way. It is to inquire into how, by way of reflective criticism (including self-criticism) and argumentation and with the guidance of adequate methodological guiding principles, distinct approaches (even though not derivable from or reducible to each other) from different philosophical traditions (whether distinguished culturally or by style and orientation) or respectively from some (ancient) philosophical tradition and contemporary society ("from different traditions" for short)[4] can talk to and learn

4 Throughout this essay, the phrase "from different *tradition*" or "cross-*tradition*" primarily means the cases addressing the engagement between relevant resources from different *philosophical traditions* but also covers the cases addressing the engagement between relevant resources from some (ancient) philosophical tradition and contemporary society (say, a modern folk treatment or a modern profession). To this extent, in the subsequent discussion, when using such phrases as "from different

from each other and jointly contribute to the development of philosophy and contemporary society on a range of reflective (or reflectively worthy) issues of philosophical (or intellectual) value and significance, which can be jointly concerned and approached through appropriate philosophical interpretation and from a broader philosophical vantage point. The foregoing strategic goal and methodological strategy might as well be called the "constructive engagement" strategic goal and methodological strategy of cross-tradition engagement in philosophy (the "constructive-engagement strategy" for short).[5]

As suggested (explicitly or implicitly) in the forgoing brief characterization, the constructive-engagement strategy as a whole has six related methodological emphases concerning its strategic goal and methodology (as highlighted in italics below) in a coordinate way: (1) it emphasizes *critical engagement for the sake of pursuing truth*; (2) it emphasizes the *constructive contribution* of each of the distinct parties in critical engagement through their learning from each other (though they might be not derivable from or reducible to each other) and making joint contribution to jointly-concerned issues in a complementary way (thus they are not absolutely incompatible); (3) it emphasizes *philosophical interpretation* of the addressed thinkers' texts instead of mere historical description; (4) it emphasizes the *philosophical-issue-engagement orientation* that aims at making a *contribution to the contemporary development of philosophy* on a range of philosophical issues that can be jointly concerned and approached through philosophical interpretation and from a broader philosophical vantage point; (5) it emphasizes that the foregoing engaging exploration needs to be *guided by adequate methodological principles*; (6) it emphasizes *being open-ended and inclusive* regarding various (eligible) perspectives from distinct approaches in different traditions, especially through the foregoing emphases (1), (2) and (5), and thus providing an effective and inclusive meta-methodological framework and platform of constructive engagement.[6]

philosophical traditions" to address general cases, I employ it in its "generic" sense.

5 It is noted that exactly how to label this strategic goal and methodological strategy of cross-tradition engagement in philosophy is relatively unimportant; one can label it in some other way one would reasonably prefer. The methodological strategy is characterized in terms of "constructive engagement" with two major considerations. First, the key words in the phrase ("constructive" and "engagement") and the whole phrase literally capture some of its crucial features and emphases. Second, the label has been historically associated with the strategy both in relevant documents in print (such as the constitution of the academic association "International Society for Comparative Studies of Chinese and Western Philosophy" (ISCWP), the subtitle as well as the journal theme description of the international journal *Comparative Philosophy* (www.comparativephilosophy.org)) and in the reflective practice of the constructive-engagement strategy (especially in the past two decades) through a range of international collective projects that have been guided by the strategy.

6 For more explanation, see section 0.1 of Mou (2020).

Some Preliminary Conceptual Resources and Their Related Distinctions

In this sub-section, in an accessible way, I introduce some preliminary conceptual resources together with their associated lexical distinctions in need for two purposes: first, to have a refined understanding and characterization of some methodological concepts and their related distinctions (among others, "methodological perspectives" and "methodological guiding principles"); second, to more clearly and accurately characterize distinct dimensions of methodological approaches in philosophical inquiries and thus some related methodological points of the constructive-engagement strategy. These conceptual resources concerning the method or methodological approach to an object of study, together with their associated lexical distinctions, are rendered "preliminary" in a double sense. First, as addressed above, they are needed to refine our understanding of the distinct dimensions of a methodological approach for the sake of a sophisticated analysis and treatment of methodology in the subsequent discussion. Second, they do not result from mere armchair speculation but from reflective elaboration of what people actually look at things in their folk lives: this real-life source provides a solid basis for a refined elaboration of the meta-methodological resources in cross-tradition/cross-approach engagement and also have them easily understood when delivered in an accessible way.

It is known that the term "method" or "methodological approach" in philosophical inquiries can mean several things. Given that the term "method" or "methodological approach" means a way of responding to how to approach an object of study, there is the distinction between three kinds of ways or methods, which constitute three distinct dimensions of a methodological approach as a whole, i.e., a methodological perspective (or a perspective method), a methodological instrument (or an instrumental method), and a methodological guiding principle (or a guiding-principle method), as specified below.

1. *A methodological perspective* (or a perspective method) is a way of approaching an object of study[7] and is intended to point to or focus on a certain aspect of the object and capture or explain that aspect in terms of the characteristics of that aspect, given or assuming that the object possesses that aspect. There are two important distinctions concerning methodological perspectives. First, there is the distinction between *eligible* and *ineligible* methodological perspectives. If the

7 As indicated before, the identity of a (genuine) object of study in philosophical or other intellectual pursuits of "how things are" is understood broadly: as a naturally produced object in physical reality, a constructed object in social reality, a "linguistic" object (such as a word), an abstract object in philosophical theory, or an "issue" object in philosophy (such as the philosophical issue of truth with its distinct but related dimensions), referentially accessible and critically communicable among participants in philosophical dialogue. For more explanation on this, see Mou (2020, section 1.1.5).

object does possess that aspect to which a (token of) methodological perspective (type) is intended to point, the methodological perspective is considered *eligible* regarding that object. Otherwise, the methodological perspective is considered *ineligible* regarding that object. It is also noted that a perspective *type*, generally speaking, cannot be *indiscriminately* rendered *eligible* regarding *all* of the jointly concerned objects of study. Whether or not a specific *token* of a certain perspective type regarding one specific object of study is eligible depends on whether or not it really points to and captures some aspect or layer of the object of study.[8]

Second, there is the distinction between a methodological-perspective simplex and a methodological-perspective complex. A simplex is a single discernible methodological perspective, and a complex is either a combination of simplexes ("multiple perspective complex") or an association of one perspective (simplex) with a certain methodological guiding principle ("guiding-principle-associated perspective complex"). By "perspective" below I mean a methodological perspective simplex unless otherwise indicated.[9]

2. *A methodological instrument* (or an instrumental method) is a way in which to implement, or give tools to realize, a certain methodological perspective. Methodological instruments are largely neutral in the sense that they can serve to

8 Whether or not there can be an *eligible* perspective *type* whose designated "aspect" would be really possessed by *any* objects of study is largely a metaphysical issue which I do not intend to pursue here.

9 Here and below, for the sake of illustration of relevant methodological points, I use as examples of methodological perspectives two paradigm methodological-perspective models that appear to be so different but can be seen as rather complementary, i.e., the Socrates-style being-aspect-concerned methodological perspective, as suggested and illustrated through Socrates' characterization of virtue, justice and piety in some earlier Plato dialogues, and the Confucius-style becoming-aspect-concerned methodological perspective as suggested and illustrated through Confucius' characterization of *ren* (humanity) and *xiao* (filial piety) in the *Analects*. The two methodological perspectives respectively constitute the methodological-perspective dimensions of the two thinkers' methodological approaches, besides their respective methodological-guiding-principle dimensions and methodological-instrument dimensions. Though there are various aspects or layers of any object, what Socrates was concerned with is the aspect of the object that is stable, definite, regular, constant, unchanged or invariant (stably and invariantly existing in all things) and thus inter-subjectively accessible by any rational mind, as illustrated in his specified three conditions for any adequate definition of piety in the *Euthyphro* (cf., 5c-d). For convenience, a blanket term, "the being-aspect", can be used to cover those characteristics of the object, or to stand for the aspect of the object that is characterized in terms of the aforementioned characteristics. In contrast, what Confucius was concerned with in the *Analects* is the aspect of the object under examination that is particular, concrete, dynamic, ever-changing, as illustrated in his characterization of (filial) piety in the *Analects* (cf., 2.5. 2.6, 2.7 and 2.8). All those characteristics are intrinsically connected with various situations in which things reveal themselves. A blanket term, "the becoming-aspect", is used here to refer to these characteristics of the object that essentially involve dynamic change or becoming.

implement different methodological perspectives, though there is still the distinction between more and less effective instruments regarding a given perspective.

3. *A methodological guiding principle* (or a guiding-principle method) regulates and guides a certain methodological perspective (or perspectives) with regard to an object of study. Explicitly assumed or implicitly presupposed by the agent, it guides and regulates how the perspective should be chosen and evaluated and contributes to the establishment of its desiderata (especially the purpose and focus that it is to serve). There is the distinction between *adequate* and *inadequate* methodological guiding principles concerning methodological perspective(s) regarding an object of study. For example, in looking at the relation between the agent's current perspective in treating an object of study and other eligible perspectives (if any), a methodological guiding principle is considered adequate (in regard to recognizing perspective eligibility) when it allows in other eligible perspectives to complement the application of the current perspective and thus has the agent realize that these eligible perspectives do separately capture distinct aspects of the object and thus can jointly make complementary contributions to capturing the way the object is. It is considered inadequate if otherwise.

To help the reader capture their distinctions in a vivid way, let me use the following method-house metaphor to illustrate the relevant points. Suppose that a person intends to approach her destination, say, a house (the object of study), which has several entrances—say, its front door, side door and roof window (a variety of aspects, dimensions or layers of the object of study). She then takes a certain path (a certain methodological perspective) to enter the house, believing that the path leads to the entrance of this side (say, the front door) or the entrance of that side (say, a side door) of the house. If a path really leads to a certain entrance of the house, the path is called an 'eligible' one; if otherwise it is called "ineligible" (thus the distinction between eligible and ineligible methodological perspectives). When she takes a certain path to enter the house, she holds a certain instrument in her hand (a methodological instrument) to clear her path, say, a hatchet if the path is overgrown with brambles or a snow shovel if the path is heavily covered with snow. She also has a certain idea in her mind (a methodological guiding principle) that explains why she takes that path, instead of another, and which guides her to have some understanding, adequate or inadequate, of the relation of that path to other paths (other methodological perspectives), if any, to the house. Surely such a guiding idea can be adequate or inadequate (adequate or inadequate methodological guiding principle). For example, if she recognizes and renders other eligible paths also eligible and thus compatible with her current path, then her guiding idea is adequate; in contrast, if she fails to recognize that and thus renders her current path exclusively

eligible (the only path leading to the house), then her guiding idea is inadequate, though her current path *per se* is indeed eligible.[10]

Given the above specifications, there are two preliminary points concerning the relation between a methodological perspective and a methodological guiding principle that are especially relevant.[11] First, generally speaking, the merit, status, and function of a methodological perspective (a methodological-perspective simplex) *per se* can be evaluated independently of certain methodological guiding principles that the agent might presuppose in her actual application of the perspective. One's reflective practice of taking a certain eligible methodological perspective as a working perspective in itself is philosophically positive and innocent in the following senses, whether or not it is associated with or guided by an adequate or inadequate methodological guiding principle in one's application of the perspective. On the one hand, it is philosophically positive insofar as that perspective really points to or captures a certain aspect of the object and is thus eligible; on the other hand, it is philosophically innocent insofar as one's reflective practice *per se* of taking that perspective amounts neither to one's losing sight of other genuine aspects of the object nor to one's rejecting other eligible perspectives in one's background thinking nor to one's presupposing an inadequate methodological guiding principle that would render ineligible other eligible methodological perspectives (if any). In this way, even if an agent's methodological guiding principle is inadequate in her applying a certain eligible methodological perspective, the eligibility of the methodological perspective still needs to be recognized, and her reflective practice *per se* of taking that perspective still has its due value in philosophical inquiry.

Second, however, it is indeed important for the agent to have an adequate methodological guiding principle, which the agent is expected to presuppose in evaluating the status and nature of the eligible methodological perspectives, applying her methodological perspective, and looking at the relation between her current working perspective and other perspectives. For it does matter whether one's taking a certain methodological perspective is regulated by an adequate or inadequate guiding principle, especially for the sake of constructive engagement of seemingly competing approaches. When one's application of an eligible methodological

10 It is noted that I do not intend to use this method-house metaphor here to illustrate, and thus presuppose and advocate, any *ad hoc* conception of philosophizing; in the context of the preceding inclusive characterization of the identities of cross-tradition engagement in philosophy and its constructive-engagement strategy, one is expected to have one's inclusive understanding of this metaphor and the due meanings of its involved metaphoric terms like "taking a certain path".

11 These two points are further explained and illustrated in the cross-tradition case analysis of Socrates' and Confucius' distinct methodological perspectives in treating the issue of filial piety in chapter 5 of Mou (2020).

perspective as one's working perspective is guided by some adequate guiding principle and thus contributes to a holistic understanding of the object of study, one's application of that perspective would be philosophically constructive and perceptive insofar as one would constructively treat other eligible methodological perspectives (if any) and their relation to one's working perspective and thus have a comprehensive outlook for the sake of a complete account of the object of study. Otherwise, it would be philosophically less constructive and less perceptive (or even blind) in that connection—but, even so, the reflective practice taking that eligible perspective in itself can be still philosophically positive and innocent in the foregoing senses, as indicated before.

In the context of philosophical inquiry, for one thing there is the need to refine the notion of methodological approach into these three distinct but related notions of methodological approach for the sake of adequately characterizing the foregoing three distinct but related methodological ways (in philosophical inquiry). For another thing, in view of their distinction and connection at least at the conceptual level, we might as well regard the three methodological ways as three dimensions of (philosophical) methodology or of the concept of methodological approach, although this by no means takes for granted that any methodological way that has ever been historically adopted was actually presented in its agent's ideas and texts indiscriminately as a methodological approach that would manifestly reveal all the three dimensions.

Adequacy Conditions for Methodological Guiding Principles on How to Adequately Look at Contraries: A Holistic Account

The preceding discussion points to one central concern in the constructive-engagement strategy: how (for the agent of a cross-tradition-engagement project) to adequately look at the relationship between, and thus bridge, distinct approaches to an object of study or a jointly-concerned issue in cross-tradition engagement in philosophy and, more generally speaking, in philosophical inquiries ("how to adequately look at distinct approaches" of "how to look at contraries" for short). This central concern constitutes one core part of the issue of how the constructive engagement in doing philosophy comparatively is possible or how cross-tradition engagement in philosophy is possible. In this section, by means of the conceptual/explanatory resources and lexical distinctions introduced in the preceding section, and in a summary way, I highlight a set of "adequacy" conditions for maintaining adequate methodological guiding principles concerning how to adequately look at distinct approaches in philosophy and in other intellectual pursuits of

"how things are" (understood broadly in its philosophically interesting, engaging and significant way). This set of adequacy conditions constitutes the core of a meta-methodological framework suggested by the "constructive-engagement" account of cross-tradition engagement in philosophy.

(1) *The adequacy condition of recognizing the same object as a whole* (against the "anything-goes" orientation or radical relativism) ("the same-object-whole-recognizing condition" for short). A methodological guiding principle is considered adequate (in this connection) if, given an object (as a whole) of study, it enables the agent to recognize that there is a way that the object objectively is such that people can all talk about that same object as a whole even though they may say different things about the object (concerning its distinct aspects), neither resulting in "anything goes" nor thus bringing about radically different objects on their own.[12] In contrast, it is considered inadequate (in this connection) if otherwise.

Two notes are due here. First, this adequacy condition is intrinsically related to the two normative bases in cross-tradition engagement in philosophy[13]: for one thing, in a quite straightforward way, this adequacy condition is one significant variant of the "same-object-whole-recognizing" norm in addressing how to adequately look at distinct approaches; for another thing, due to the intrinsic connection between the "same-object-whole-recognizing" norm and the "way-things-are-capturing" norm, this adequacy condition may be also called the "way-things-are-capturing" condition. Second, this adequacy condition is the most basic among the subsequent meta-methodological adequacy conditions (2) through (10) concerning how to look at the relation between distinct (eligible) perspectives (on one given object of study) as the former is presupposed by the latter in two senses: 1—these other adequacy conditions presuppose that people can all talk about that same object as a whole even though they may say different things about it, rather than thus bringing about different objects on their own; 2—it is also presupposed by these subsequent adequacy conditions for the sake of capturing the way the object is (or is to be), given that the truth pursuit (i.e., the "way-things-are-capturing" pursuit) is one strategic goal for any reflective pursuits of "how things are" (instead of "anything goes" or "mere intellectual game playing"). In this way, this adequacy condition is also meta-methodological in nature concerning how to look at distinct (methodological) perspectives, and thus holistic in character at this meta-methodological level as well as at the methodological level directly regarding the same object as a whole. The addressed intrinsic relation between this

12 For the identity of a (genuine) object of study and the relation between a variety of objects and the inclusive natural world of which humans are parts, see this author's relevant explanations and discussions in Mou (2020, chapters 1 and 2, especially in section 1.1.5 and section 2.2.2).

13 See this author's detailed examination of them in Mou (2020, chapter 1).

adequacy condition and the two normative bases and the "presupposition" relation between this adequacy condition and the subsequent other meta-methodological adequacy conditions (2) through (10) are expected to be recognized by a meta-meta-methodological overall-holistic vision regarding the relationship among these meta-methodological adequacy conditions (1) through (10), which will be captured by the last (but not least) adequacy condition (12), the overall-holistic-vision-holding condition.

(2) *The adequacy condition of recognizing perspective eligibility* ("the perspective-eligibility-recognizing condition" for short). A methodological guiding principle that is held or presupposed by the agent who uses some *eligible* methodological perspective concerning an object of study as the agent's current working perspective is considered adequate (in this connection) when this guiding principle renders any other *eligible* methodological perspectives (if any) also *eligible* and somehow complementary to the application of the current working perspective. In contrast, it is considered inadequate (in this connection) if otherwise.

This adequacy condition may be called a 'minimal' condition for treating multiple (eligible) perspectives in the sense that it is "minimally" in need by the subsequent adequacy conditions (3) through (10) that somehow address multiple (eligible) perspectives in two ways. First, it is minimally presupposed by the subsequent types of adequacy conditions that directly address the relationship between multiple distinct (eligible) perspectives that are currently given, i.e., the adequacy conditions (3), (4), (7), (8), (9) and (10). Second, it is minimally pursued by the adequacy conditions (5) and (6), to be explained below. It is noted that it might be the case that a given object has only one aspect, and thus there is only one "eligible" perspective to capture the way the object is, although this is not a typical case concerning an object of study with its multiple aspects or layers, and thus can be looked at through multiple eligible perspectives.[14]

(3) *The adequacy condition of being sensitive to the agent purpose* ("the agent-purpose-sensitivity condition" for short). A methodological guiding principle is considered adequate (in this connection) if it enables the agent to have the agent's choice of a certain working perspective, among distinct *eligible* methodological perspectives concerning an object of study, being sensitive to the agent's purpose and focus (as shown either through distinct dialogue contexts or via distinct sentential contexts) and thus renders the most applicable or the most appropriate

14 For an earlier classical presentation of the point of this adequacy condition, see one key passage from the inner chapter 2 of the *Zhuang-Zi*, as explained regarding its methodological, metaphysical, and epistemological implications respectively in section 1.1.2 of chapter 1, section 6.2.5 of chapter 6, and sections 7.3.1 and 7.3.3 of chapter 7 of Mou (2020).

(the best relative to that purpose) the perspective that (best) serves that purpose. In contrast, it is considered inadequate (in this connection) if otherwise.

In view that the suggested meta-methodological framework concerning how to look at distinct perspectives can be viewed as one kind of "objective" perspectivism, this adequacy condition is fundamentally different from one crucial identity of "subjective" perspectivism in this connection. As emphatically explained before, the former holds that, once an object of study is given and thus people can all talk about that same object as a whole even though they may say different things about it, the *eligibility* of a perspective lies in its pointing to and capturing a certain aspect really possessed by the object, instead of "any perspective goes"; consequently, the agent's purposeful choice is not any perspective that she would subjectively prefer, but is restricted to one of those *eligible* methodological perspectives concerning the object of study. In contrast, the latter takes it that the eligibility of a perspective would lie just in its being projected from the subject.[15]

(4) *The adequacy condition of granting equality status* ("the equality-status-granting condition" for short). A methodological guiding principle is considered adequate (in this connection) if it renders all the *eligible* methodological perspectives (perspective simplexes) concerning an object of study equal in the following two senses: being *equally partial* and thus being *equally in need* for the sake of a *complete* account of the object, although one eligible perspective can be rendered more in need or in focus than others only relative to its associated purpose when it is taken in a specific project; thus none of them is *absolutely* superior (or inferior) to the others in the above sense. In contrast, it is considered inadequate (in this connection) if otherwise.

It is noted that the *equality-status-granting condition* in the foregoing sense does not necessarily render all eligible perspectives equally *local*, though all of them are partial, in the following sense: if the addressed eligible perspective does point to and capture a certain across-the-board "universal" or "essential" base layer (*if any*, thus as one "basic" part) of the object that gives one defining identity of the object (in view of the other objects of the same "universally-identified" kind and of this layer's "unifying" role), an adequate methodological guiding principle would render it *basic* instead of merely *local*, although one *basic* eligible methodological perspective is not necessarily or always in current focus (as the

15 The cases as examined in chapter 5 of Mou (2020) (Confucius' and Socrates' distinct purposes and emphases in taking their distinct methodological perspectives in their distinct dialogue contexts) and its chapter 8 (distinct purposes and focuses through distinct arguments as presented in distinct sentential contexts in Gongsun Long's argumentation for his "White-Horse-Not-Horse" thesis) well illustrate, and provide evidence as *explanans* for, this adequacy condition.

agent's current working perspective) in a specific project with its agent's distinct purpose.[16]

(5) *The adequacy condition of recognizing new eligible perspectives* ("the new-eligible-perspective-possibility-recognizing condition" for short). A methodological guiding principle is considered adequate (in this connection) if it enables the agent to have an open-minded attitude toward the possibility of a new eligible perspective concerning an object of study that is to point to some genuine aspect of the object but has yet to be realized by the agent because of the "unknown-identity" status of that aspect. A methodological guiding principle is considered inadequate (in this connection) if otherwise.

This adequate condition is more epistemologically oriented: an human agent is epistemically restricted (both in the agent's "objective" connection, say, some across-the-board human epistemic limits) and in the agent's "subjective" connection, say, failing to use her other available knowing-contributing organs, as explained in Mou (2020, section 7.3.3) and has yet to know more "unknown" aspects or layers (if any) of the object and thus the more prospective eligible perspectives that are to point to and capture those aspects or layers.[17] The point will be enhanced when the next adequacy condition is also considered.

(6) *The adequacy condition of being sensitive to dynamic development of the due coverage of eligible perspectives* ("the dynamic development-sensitivity condition" for short). A methodological guiding principle is considered adequate (in this connection) if it guides the agent to be sensitive to the dynamic development (*if any*) of an object of study for the sake of realizing and understanding which aspects are (still or currently) genuinely possessed by the object and thus which methodological perspectives are still eligible, on the one hand, and which previous aspects

16 Similar to the case of the adequacy condition (2), for an earlier classical presentation of the point of this adequacy condition, see one key passage from the inner chapter 2 of the *Zhuang-Zi* as explained concerning its methodological, metaphysical and epistemological implications respectively in section 1.1.2 of chapter 1, section 6.2.5 of chapter 6, and section 7.3.1 of chapter 7 of Mou (2020). The point is also highlighted in the title of the whole inner chapter 2 of the *Zhuang-Zi*: "On Equality of Things" (齊物論 *Qi-Wu-Lun*). The cases as examined in chapter 5 (Confucius' and Socrates' distinct purposes and emphases in taking their distinct methodological perspectives in their distinct dialogue contexts) and in sections 6.2.3 (part of its content concerning Aristotle and Zhuang Zi on identities of things) and 6.2.4 (on the relation between 有 *you* being and 無 *wu* non-being) in chapter 6 well illustrate, and provide evidence as *explanans* for, this adequacy condition.

17 The case addressed in section 6.2 of chapter 6 (each of the Quinean line and the Heideggerian line would have yet to know some distinct 'unknown' aspects of being, if Lao-Zhuang Daoist approach to the issue of being is on the right track) and the case addressed in section 7.3.3 of chapter 7 (on a variety of human organs contributing to knowing process) well illustrate, and provide evidence as *explanans* for, this adequacy condition.

are lost and thus which previous perspectives not currently eligible anymore, on the other hand. In contrast, it is considered inadequate (in this connection) if otherwise.

This adequacy condition calls the agent's attention and sensitivity to this: during the process of the dynamic development (if any) of an object of study, the object might develop some new aspect(s) while losing some of its previous aspects. Consequently, the methodological perspective regarding the previous aspect of the object might be not permanently eligible. A further development of the object might bring about a newly-generated eligible perspective, or a previously ineligible perspective might become eligible, because of its pointing to the new aspect. This adequacy condition highlights the need for the agent's sensitivity to the dynamic development (if any) of an object of study, one important front which can be easily ignored by an agent who is guided by an inadequate methodological guiding principle in this connection.[18]

There are two notes on the adequacy conditions (5) and (6) together. First, for the sake of pursuing the adequacy condition (2) in the sense of thoroughly fulfilling it, the adequacy conditions (5) and (6) need to be met if the object has its dynamic-development dimension that would bring about a new aspect of its identity and thus make eligible the new perspective that would point to and capture the new aspect, though this new perspective is not among the current given set of eligible perspectives. Second, these two adequacy conditions in particular can contribute to suggesting an 'objective' criterion for the identities of the issues that can (and should) be jointly concerned (through appropriate philosophical interpretation). It is important to note that the identities of the jointly-concerned issues of philosophy are not the same as, and cannot be exhausted by, the identities of those issues in the existing domain of inquiries: for their identities, the constructive-engagement strategy presupposes neither the current agents' subjective preferences nor the identities of the issues in the existing domain of inquiries; rather, as highlighted

18 This adequacy condition is implicitly yet unequivocally suggested in the *yin-yang* model and the Hegelian model of how to look at contraries as examined in chapter 4 of Mou (2020), both of which emphasize the dynamic change and development of all things in the universe. This adequacy condition can be illustrated by an example concerning widespread interpersonal relationship. Consider an imaginary case of a couple's interpersonal relationship. Suppose that at its earlier stage the couple's relation was good and harmonious, which would render a *yin-yang* perspective "eligible" in charactering their relationship and thus "eligible" in taking care of the "legal" dimension of their relationship: the couple then decided they (should) stay together with regard to their legal relationship. However, suppose that later on their relationship turned sour with some serious conflict; the conflict is so severe that the "harmony" aspect of their legal relationship is not there anymore; in this situation, the *yin-yang* perspective to look at the current situation is not "eligible" anymore, while the Hegelian model as one perspective to treat the current case has become "eligible", though it was "ineligible" to capture the earlier stage of their relationship.

in the preceding adequacy conditions (5) and (6), i.e., the "new-eligible-perspective-possibility-recognizing" condition and the "dynamic-development-sensitivity" condition, the constructive-engagement strategy is explicitly inclusive to cover both newly-identified aspects of an object of study during the process of our further exploration of the object and newly-developed aspects of an object of study during the process of its dynamic development, both of which are open to newly developed eligible perspectives. In this sense and to this extent, through the suggested set of adequacy conditions, the constructive-engagement strategy can positively contribute to characterizing some "objective" criterion for the identities of those issues that can be jointly-concerned (through due philosophical interpretation). Notice that some problems or issues that were previously identified as different or separate problems or issues, which were (in some cases) further taken to belong to different traditions, turn out to be distinct aspects or layers of a larger issue as a whole (whether it is given explicitly or implicitly).

(7) *The adequacy condition of capturing concordant complementarity* ("the concordant complementarity-capturing condition" for short). Given that multiple distinct yet eligible methodological perspectives concerning an object of study turn out to be mutually supportive and supplementary in a manifest consistent way (thus called "concordantly complementary"), *a methodological guiding principle is considered adequate (in this connection) if it guides the agent to capture such concordant complementarity of these perspectives for the sake of their working together and make joint contribution.* In contrast, it is considered inadequate (in this connection) if otherwise.[19]

(8) *The adequacy contradiction of capturing restrictive complementarity* ("the restrictive-complementarity-capturing condition" for short). Given that there are two (multiple) different methodological perspectives concerning an object of study which are eligible (i.e., capturing distinct aspects of the object) but which are genuinely contradictory (i.e., the captured distinct aspects are genuine internal contradictory aspects possessed by the object) and that this object with its internal contradictory constituent aspects exists still in a constructive way (rather than in destructive tension up to sublation), a methodological guiding principle would be considered adequate (in this connection) if it guides the agent to 1—recognize

19 Traditionally, complementarity is indiscriminately treated as concordant complementarity without involving any internal contradiction or self-contradiction but harmony. In his comments on the general significance of Niels Bohr's idea of complementarity in physics, Robert Allinson characterizes its key idea this way: "the core structure of the universe is not perceived of as self-contradictory, but as harmonious with itself" (Allinson 1998, 507); more generally speaking, he identified a complementarity principle with "a principle of harmony" (*op. cit.*, 513). Here I make the distinction between concordant complementarity, which is addressed in this adequacy condition, and restrictive complementarity, which is addressed in the next adequacy condition; for a detailed discussion of this distinction, see Mou (2020, sections 4.3 and 4.4).

the genuinely contradictory state of the involved aspects of the object and thus the eligibility of these "contradictory" perspectives that capture these aspects, and 2—capture *the "restrictive" complementarity of these contradictory yet eligible perspectives with their recessive mutual support for the sake of a complete understanding of the complete identity of the object*. In contrast, it is considered inadequate (in this connection) if otherwise.

(9) *The adequacy condition of seeking sublation and post-sublation complementarity* ("the post-sublation-complementarity-seeking condition" for short). Given that two seemingly competing contraries as a whole somehow cannot be mutually supportive and supplementary (neither in a manifest nor in a recessive way) and need their sublation (understood broadly, to be explained below) so that reasonable and valuable elements that are sublated respectively from the two contraries and incorporated into a new unity can be mutually supportive and supplementary (either in a manifest way or in a recessively way), a methodological guiding principle is considered adequate if it guides the agent to sublate these reasonable and valuable elements from the two original contraries, incorporate them into a new unity as new contraries and thus brings about their complementarity, and/or understand such sublation and post-sublation complementarity. In contrast, it is considered inadequate (in this connection) if otherwise.[20]

Now consider one typical case of two contrary approaches to an object of study *in cross-tradition philosophical engagement*: there are two (multiple) seemingly competing guiding-principle-associated perspective complexes concerning an object of study whose perspective parts are eligible (i.e., capturing distinct aspects of the object) but whose respectively associated methodological guiding principles are not only genuinely incompatible but also (one of them or both) inadequate in some other connection(s), either because one of them is inadequate or because both are inadequate, in the addressed other connection(s); then there is the need for sublation of these two perspective complexes.[21] Given this case, a

20 I give the due credit to Robert Allinson who perhaps first explicitly gives a joint examination of the *Yin-Yang* model as suggested in the *Yi-Jing* text (seeking complementarity) and the Hegelian methodological model (seeking sublation) as suggested in Hegel's works (such as Hegel 1967 [1807]) and how they can work together in Allinson (2003). My distinct work in this connection is two-fold. First, I make the distinction between two types of complementarities and explain how the two models can be intrinsically related through the relation of two types of complementarity. Second, I combine the adequacy conditions related to the two models, i.e., (7), (8) and (9), with the other adequacy conditions into a systematic methodological framework.

21 For the illustration of such a typical case, the reader can look at this sample example: there are two contrary guiding-principle-associated perspective complexes as two approaches to building up a social-economic community: one is the profit-seeking-only perspective complex (i.e., the profit-seeking perspective that is associated with a guiding principle which renders this perspective exclusively eligible); the other is the welfare-seeking-only perspective (i.e., the welfare-seeking

methodological guiding principle would be considered adequate (in this connection) if it guides the agent to sublate what is reasonable/appropriate from the two (multiple) guiding-principle-associated perspective complexes (i.e., their eligible perspective parts) while discarding what is not (i.e., the inadequate guiding principle(s) in one (or both) of the perspective complexes). In contrast, it is considered inadequate (in this connection) if otherwise.

There are two substantial notes on the set of adequacy conditions (7), (8) and (9) concerning seeking complementarity. First, the foregoing three "adequacy" conditions all address seeking complementarity, but *distinct types* of seeking complementarity: seeking concordant complementarity seeking, seeking restrictive complementarity, and seeking post-sublation complementarity. However, the complementarity resulting from seeking post-sublation complementarity might be either concordant complementarity or restrictive complementarity. As indicated above, they are treated as three substantial and significant instances and manifestations, in the context of cross-tradition philosophical engagement, of the more general "adequacy condition" schemas for how to adequately look at the due relation between contraries as given in an overall-complementarity-seeking account, presented and explained in section 4.4 of chapter 4. As explained there, the addressed overall-complementarity pursuit covers the three types of seeking complementarity in an inclusively disjunctive way ("either…or…" but possibly "…and…"); therefore, although an adequate methodological guiding principle can meet either (7) or (8) but not both, it can meet both (7) and (9) or both (8) and (9), sensitive to specific cases and situations.

Second, if the multiple distinct *eligible* methodological perspectives under examination concerning an object of study are concordant complementary in a manifest way of mutual support, then that is considered to meet adequacy condition (7). If they seem incompatible or contradictory but still constructively make joint contributions to a complete understanding of the identity of the object as a whole (thus having their complementary dimensions), then there is the need to further examine whether these perspectives are perspective simplexes or "guiding-principle-associated" perspective complexes.[22] If it is the former (i.e., they are different

perspective that is associated with a guiding principle which renders this perspective exclusively eligible).

22 As specified before, a "guiding-principle-associated" perspective complex is a combination of one perspective simplex plus its associated methodological guiding principle. The case of a "multiple-perspective-combination" perspective complex is trivial in this situation: it can be either reduced to the case of multiple distinct perspectives (perspective simplexes) under the current examination or treated as one result from sublation that has post-sublation complementarity as specified in the adequacy condition (8).

eligible perspective simplexes concerning an object of study which do capture distinct genuinely contradictory aspects of the object whose existence is constructive rather than being destructive and thus up to sublation), then that is considered to meet the adequacy condition (8). If it is the latter (i.e., they are "guiding-principle-associated" perspective complexes whose perspective parts are eligible), and if the associated methodological guiding principles are not only genuinely incompatible but also (one of them or both) inadequate in some other connection(s), then that is considered to meet the adequacy condition (9).

(10) *The adequacy condition of overcoming excessiveness and achieving constructive balance* ("the excessiveness-overcoming condition" for short). Given that there are multiple distinct yet eligible methodological perspectives concerning an object of study which are mutually supportive and thus complementary, whether in a manifest way (thus concordantly complementary) or in a recessive way (thus restrictively complementary), and whether such a complementarity is achieved directly by recognition or indirectly through sublation, *a methodological guiding principle is considered adequate (in this connection) if it guides the agent to maintain already-achieved complementarity by overcoming what is excessive (if any) and supplementing what is insufficient (if any) in treating these distinct eligible perspectives and thus bringing about their constructive balance (either in the form of "concordant" or "harmonious" balance for concordant complementarity or in the form of "restrictive" balance for restrictive complementarity).* In contrast, it is considered inadequate (in this connection) if otherwise.

(11) *The open-mind-oriented self-criticism condition*. A methodological guiding principle is considered adequate (in this connection) if it guides one to have a thorough open-minded and self-critical attitude towards one's own approach (including one's own methodological guiding principles as well as one's own methodological perspective simplex or complex). In contrast, it is considered inadequate (in this connection) if otherwise.

Though the foregoing adequacy conditions, especially (5), (6) and (9), implicitly point to this condition, it is worth highlighting and explicitly addressing it separately: this adequacy condition would fundamentally distinguish a genuinely philosophical attitude toward criticism and self-criticism from an absolutely faith-based attitude that would take its foundation thing just for granted and would not allow any criticism and challenges to it. The point of this condition is not that one cannot firmly maintain one's own foundational position or some axiom/norm-like basic principle(s)—it is clear that one has to stop somewhere in one's account or theoretic system. Rather, the point of this condition is this: one needs to always maintain an open-minded reflective attitude towards all critical challenges to the basic principle on which one's account or theoretic system is based, and be ready

to make self-criticism and modify, revise, or even give up an alleged basic principle if it turns out to be wrong or mistaken through critical examination and reasonable justification. This adequacy condition together with the next and also last one are meta-meta-methodological in nature as they are about the foregoing adequacy conditions (1) through (11)—they jointly guide and regulate how to look at the foregoing adequacy conditions at a higher and broader strategic vantage point.

(12) *The adequacy condition of holding an overall-holistic vision that coordinates the preceding adequacy conditions in distinct connections into a whole and captures the due relationship between them* ('the overall-holistic-vision-capturing condition' for short). A methodological guiding principle is considered adequate (in this overall-holistic connection) if, given an object of study, it guides the agent to strive for a (more) complete understanding of various aspects of the object together with its intrinsically related normative bases, its relevant background, and its possible development, and thus have an overall-holistic vision that reflectively coordinates the preceding meta-methodological adequacy conditions—(1) through (10)—in distinct connections into a whole and captures the due relationships among them. In contrast, it is considered inadequate (in this connection) if otherwise.

Though this adequate condition is the last one, it is not the least. If the preceding adequacy conditions (1) through (10) are meta-philosophical in nature, this adequacy condition, like the adequacy condition (11), is meta-meta-methodological in nature because it is about how to look at these meta-methodological adequacy conditions. This adequacy condition is significant in the following sense. It might be the case that one takes an adequate methodological guiding principle in one connection (i.e., meeting one adequacy condition) but fails to do so in another connection (i.e., failing to meet another adequacy condition). For example, given an object of study, one might adopt a methodological guiding principle that meets, say the "agent-purpose-sensitivity" condition but fails to meet, say, the "new-eligible-perspective-possibility-recognizing" condition. The constructive sentiment and expectation for the agent is to strive for a (more) complete understanding of various aspects of the object together with its relevant background so that the agent can have an overall holistic vision that reflectively coordinates the preceding adequacy conditions in distinct connections into a whole and recognizes the due relationships among them. This adequacy condition is to capture such an overall-holistic sentiment and expectation. Through its overall-holistic character, this adequacy condition explicitly points and contributes to the "direction" dimension ("toward world philosophy") of comparative philosophy (as a general way of doing philosophy through cross-tradition engagement toward world philosophy), a point that will be further elaborated in a separate essay of this author on the theme "comparative philosophy toward world philosophy".

Three notes are needed here. First, to the extent and in the sense as explained before, given an object of study, the adequacy condition (1) (i.e., the same-object-whole-recognizing condition) is meta-methodological due to the "presupposition" relation between the adequacy condition (1) and the other meta-methodological adequacy conditions (2) through (10) on how to look at the relations among various (methodological) perspectives. In this way, the apparent holistic character of the adequacy condition (1) is thus at the meta-methodological level. In contrast, the overall-holistic-vision-holding condition is overall-holistic in character at the meta-meta-methodological level, which is to guide the agent to see (say) the previously addressed intrinsic relation between the adequacy condition (1) and the two normative bases in cross-tradition engagement in philosophy, the "presupposition" relation between the adequacy condition (1) and the other meta-methodological adequacy conditions (2) through (10), etc.

Second, in the previous presentations of some of those preceding adequacy conditions, some meta-meta-methodological remarks regarding their status and relations with some other adequacy conditions have been made, though these remarks are not parts of these adequacy conditions *per se*. Rather, they are actually implied parts of the overall-holistic vision addressed in the current overall-holistic-vision-holding condition.

Three, the overall-holistic-vision-holding condition and the open-mind-oriented self-criticism condition are intrinsically complementary. On the one hand, the addressed open-minded self-criticism attitude needs to closely work with the holistic condition as one solid compass: one's being open-minded does not mean having no direction, but needs to move with the aid of a holistic vision of a due direction, due coverages/limits of the preceding meta-methodological adequacy conditions in distinct connections, and how to cross boundaries. On the other hand, a holistic vision does not mean indiscriminate inclusion; rather, a holistic vision *in philosophy* intrinsically points to a reflective or self-critical attitude toward itself. To this extent, the two meta-meta-methodological adequacy conditions are mutually supportive, supplementary, and interpenetrating. They are thus complementary in jointly guiding and regulating how to look at the preceding adequacy conditions. It is arguably correct that, more generally speaking, the adequate conditions (11) and (12), an open-to-criticism attitude and a holistic vision, actually constitute two distinct but complementary characteristic features of the adequate guidance for any philosophical exploration.

With the joint guidance of the adequacy conditions (11) and (12), one substantial point regarding the set of meta-methodological adequacy conditions is this.: any condition on the meta-methodological "adequacy-condition" list *per se* is open

to criticism, instead of being dogmatically imposed, and should be guided in an overall-holistic vision. Indeed, the set of meta-methodological adequacy conditions (1) through (10) have been suggested to serve two purposes. For one thing, it is to explain how it is possible to have adequate methodological guiding principles in cross-tradition philosophical inquiries. For another thing, it is to provide readers with an engaging starting point or an effective stepping-stone, which in itself is not intended to be dogmatically imposed on readers but expected to be a target of critical examination in their own reflective explorations of the issue. The set of adequacy conditions (1) through (10) are thus open-ended with an overall-holistic-vision guidance in two connections. First, any of these adequacy conditions is itself open to be further criticized, modified, or enhanced; second, this set of adequacy condition is open to be further expanded to cover more well-established ones if in need, which would be complementary to the current set from the holistic vantage point.

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SPECIAL ISSUE TRANSCULTURAL (POST)COMPARATIVE PHILOSOPHY, PART 1

Methods and Approaches

Comparative and Postcomparative Approaches

Philosophy Pizza: On the Possibility of Trans-Cultural Pizzas and/or Philosophy

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Abstract

The history of pizza is shrouded in mystery. Competing interpretations of the exact origin, development, and even etymology are as diverse as pizzas themselves. What is certain, however, is that from various types of flatbread meals popular among soldiers and poor workers emerged some standards. Certain experts were then able to refine the process and carefully combine ingredients. The key to this tradition, as well as its popularity around the world, is found in the core elements developed by such *pizzaiolos*. But this has all changed, and contemporary pizza is no longer topped with whatever just happens to be available, as in the flatbreads of old. Nor does it have to adhere to the standards set forth by experts on taste. Today there are Hawaiian, chocolate, and even fruit pizzas. There are pizzas with cauliflower crust, smashed chicken "bread" and pizzas topped with 24 karat gold. And perhaps most importantly, customized pizzas—pizzas that are designed by the consumer with no regard for anything but their own momentary desires. We think this represents a twofold problem, in terms of both approach and of carrying on tradition, and also think comparative philosophy is just like pizza.

In this paper we will thus address these problems through proposing a conception of the trans-cultural that is linked to the art of pizza. Moreover, we expand the scope of diversification to include methodology. Based on methodological insights derived from Chinese tradition and contemporary Chinese scholarship, we argue that comparative philosophy as an art (*poiesis*) could be a welcome alternative which involves: respect for authority (tradition), trust in tested methods and recipes as conditions for creativity and originality, recognition of the philosophical import of style (form is content) and the significance of inspiration and mastery of skills.

Keywords: comparative philosophy, trans-cultural philosophy, Chinese philosophy, methodology, diversity

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Pica filozofije: o možnostih transkulturnih pic in/ali filozofije

Izvleček

Zgodovina pice je ovita v skrivnosti. Nasprotujoče si razlage točnega izvora, razvoja in etimologije besede pica so tako številčne kot vrste pic. Gotovo pa je, da so se iz različnih tipov obrokov iz nizkega testa, ki so bili priljubljeni med vojaki in revnimi delavci, razvili določeni standardi. Določeni strokovnjaki so bili tako zmožni dodelati proces njene izdelave in pazljivo izbrati njene sestavine. Tisto, kar je bilo ključno za razvoj te tradicije in njeno popularnost vsepovsod po svetu, lahko najdemo v osrednjih gradnikih, ki so jih razvili takšni *pizzaioli*. Toda vse to se je tudi spremenilo; tako sodobne pice ne oblagamo več z vsemi sestavinami, ki jih imamo trenutno na voljo v kuhinji, kot so to počeli v preteklosti. Prav tako današnji pici ni treba slediti standardom, ki jih podajajo strokovnjaki na področju okusov. Danes imamo pice, kot so havajska, čokoladna in celo sadna. Obstajajo pice s skorjo iz cvetače, »kruh« z zmečkanim piščancem in pice, obložene s 24-karatnim zlatom; in morda najpomembnejše, pice po izbiri stranke – pice, ki jih zasnujejo stranke, ne zanašajoč se na nič drugega kot na svoje trenutne želje. Menimo, da to predstavlja dvojni problem, tako v smislu pristopa kot nadaljevanja tradicije, ter da je primerjalna filozofija prav takšna kot pica.

V članku bova obravnavala te probleme s predlogom koncepta transkulturnosti, ki je povezan z umetnostjo izdelovanja pice. Poleg tega bova razširila okvir diverzifikacije, in sicer tako, da ta vključuje tudi metodologijo. Na osnovi metodoloških uvidov, ki sva jih pridobila iz kitajske tradicije in sodobnih kitajskih študij, zagovarjava stališče, da je lahko primerjalna filozofija kot umetnost (*poiesis*) dobrodošla alternativa, ki vključuje: spoštovanje do avtoritete (tradicija), zaupanje v preizkušene metode in recepte kot pogoje ustvarjalnosti in izvirnosti, prepoznavo filozofskega pomena stila (forma je vsebina) in pomembnosti inspiracije ter obvladovanje določenih veščin.

Ključne besede: primerjalna filozofija, transkulturna filozofija, kitajska filozofija, metodologija, različnost

Introduction

For an appetizer let's have trust, something that is missing in much academic philosophy. Its lack is most conspicuous in the reading and writing of academic papers. If it is true that "what you say is how you say it", then it is equally true that "what you read is how you read it". Nowadays the trend is to approach academic philosophy in a way that is narrow and imaginative mainly in terms of thinking up "worst-case scenarios". Journals themselves systematically undermine trust. The much touted standards of "blind", "double blind", and "triple blind" not only foster overly critical evaluation, but also purposively reject even the possibility of "trust" between readers and authors. This is strange in a discipline which, when dealing

with primary texts, prides itself on being acutely attuned to history and context (who speaks to whom). There are other paradoxical attitudes on trust. At conferences trust is irrelevant or undermined. The Q&A sections are often dominated by the air of supposed objectivity of second-order evaluation. We often hear about how elements of a presentation "could be made clearer", "might be problematic for some listeners" or how others "would misunderstand what is being said". In both journals and conferences second-order evaluations replace actual engagement.

We think that trust is important in any endeavour in learning, and academia should be a space for cultivating trust, as we learn best from those we trust. We should trust our readers, and we should trust that our readers trust us in return. Accordingly, we should acknowledge that we cannot and should not explain everything. Here we put this into practice. We are thus not apologetic that this paper does not appreciate nuances and abounds with generalizations—it speaks to orientations, emphases, and overarching trends. We are also never speaking absolutely. There are countless counter examples to everything we say and certainly more problems than any reader can reasonably address. We trust that our readers will not read with the intention to find objections, however, and will instead feel free to add the caveat "very generally speaking" as much as they wish.

This paper is an attempt to rethink "diversification" and "inclusivity" by expanding their scope to include methodology. Recognizing the need to step back from our operative assumptions about appropriate philosophical study, we propose trusting the authority of the Chinese philosophical tradition and contemporary Chinese scholarship to inform our research attitudes and help us challenge the assumed infallibility of our academic norms. For this purpose, we reimagine comparative philosophy as the art of making pizza. Comparative philosophy thus conceived captures our understanding of philosophy as *poiesis*: as the art of making something that did not exist before, nevertheless heavily reliant on existing materials and tested methods. This is how we understand trans-cultural philosophy, or at least one orientation along which we think it is currently developing, and we hope it continues. Based on methodological insights derived from the Chinese philosophical tradition, this paper takes "going with tradition" and "listening to the texts" as the conditions of creativity, and accords an important role to style, inspiration, and the mastery of skill in philosophical study.

Authority: Trust the *pizzaiolo*

Traditional Chinese philosophical thought developed in a way that is quite distinct from the major trends in Western philosophy. For thousands of years

the main form of transmission and contribution made in Chinese thought was through commentaries, which can have a specious relation to the primary texts. Sometimes they are clearly an attempt to explain or elucidate major points, and can also provide important annotations to sentences or notes on the meaning and pronunciation of particular words, or information on particular characters and historical figures that have proven invaluable to the text's transmission. Indeed, many early Chinese classics would be all but unreadable without commentaries. Aside from this purely annotative function, what is known as "*shu* 疏", there are also explanations, or "*zhu* 注", which can take two major forms. Sometimes they simply seek to explain what the text says. The commentary to the *Analects* compiled by He Yan 何宴 (d. 249) is a good example of this. It is normally not referenced for philosophical content because it does little but paraphrase the text and provide background to figures, traditions, and rituals without venturing an interpretation of its own. This type of *zhu* is philosophically "dry". Others include simple explanations, but also provide robust philosophical reflections. Sometimes they are read as more or less in line with the "original meaning" of the text—at least one could argue that they attempt to do so. Much of what is found in Wang Bi 王弼 (d. 249) and Heshang Gong's 河上公 (d. 150? BCE) respective commentaries to the *Laozi* 老子 can be read this way. Though at times they greatly differ from one another, scholars can argue that they are simply explaining what they think the text says. Another type of *zhu* is also found here. There are comments where commentators display their own philosophical prowess—they are less commenting on the text than writing their own ideas and letting the authority of the text lend credence to them. There are places in Wang Bi and Heshang Gong that are like this, and even more prominently much of Guo Xiang's 郭象 (d. 312) commentary to the *Zhuangzi* 莊子is written this way, just as much of Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (d. 1200) work is clearly more centered on his own thought than what he might have thought the so-called "four classics" "originally meant".

Whether or not they ostensibly offer a new interpretation and clearly diverge from what we might call "the original meaning" of the text, commentaries display their unique contributions and become sources of authority in their own right. There are times where the commentator (creatively) adapts traditional ideas, which had proven efficacious in various circumstances and through different time periods, to present issues and conditions. There are also times when the commentator simply wanted to lend their own philosophical thought the authority of an established text or a "master" (*zi* 子). (One common joke about Guo Xiang's commentary to the *Zhuangzi* in China is that there should be versions where his work is in larger front and the *Zhaungzi* is in smaller front. In other words, Guo Xiang uses the *Zhuangzi* as a commentary to *his* thought.) There are also plenty of texts that

attribute ideas to famous persons or texts, and yet there is little evidence that they are in good faith. We also find that certain portions of received texts were sometimes corrupted, major terms were altered, sections added, and arguments reversed, based on the thought of some commentator, editor, or scribe. In any case, commentaries that are deemed authoritative are treated as indispensable to any new interpretation or new "corrected meaning" (*zheng yi* 正義) of a text.

Thus, in the majority of present-day Chinese-language monographs on a classic there is a section on the "authenticity" of the text that precedes the philosophical discussion. In this section the author must describe what portion of the text they find relatively cogent, what they ascribe to one or more core author(s), and what portions they think were added later, or are for whatever reasons "inauthentic" and therefore irrelevant. In other words, a great deal of work must be done to pull out those sections where some thinker tried to add their own ideas into texts through various forms of transmission or through making references as a way of giving authoritative weight.

This reverence for authority clarifies a few problematic aspects of studying Chinese philosophical thought today. For example, many Western scholars have difficulty understanding that commentators are not always simply commenting. Sometimes the commentators' obvious "misreadings" of texts are merely their attempts to make a new point plain. (Wang Bi's commentary to Chapter 5 of the *Laozi* is an excellent example.) Similarly, reading commentaries as mere "comments" vastly underestimates their value, purpose, and place in the development of philosophical thought in China. Fully appreciating this point helps us realize the importance of authority in this tradition.

It should be noted that authority is not respected "just because". Authoritative sources are taken seriously, referenced, and respected because they are models that have proved effective, they provide relatively stabilizing norms, and connect us not only with others, but also with the past. Adapting them, or even giving them up or going against them is allowable, but we should always proceed with the utmost caution. The first step is to take them seriously, and live with and through them as much as possible. In contemporary Chinese academia the same attitude persists, and, as we will discuss below, this puts Chinese academics at a severe disadvantage.

In the West we generally have the opposite type of model. Thinkers normally begin their books by challenging the work of others and set themselves the task of solving problems with unprecedented conclusions. The very history of Western philosophy is often described as a series of reactions to the work of predecessors in a quest for "truth". We thus tend to understand the development of thought in terms of dissonance rather than resonance. Aristotle is easier to pin down when

he is placed at the antipode of Platonism. In learning environments, students are praised as sharp critical thinkers when they prove their teachers wrong and propose innovative, more comprehensive or more "truthful" accounts on a given topic. (This quest is at the forefront of analytic philosophy, which reads philosophy as progressing towards ever clearer understandings of the truth.)

Another way to look at these two differing orientations can be classified as the difference between the "traditional" and "modern" approaches. When following traditions, authority is revered and valued as such, whereas modernity, generally identified with novelty and rupture with the past, in various ways asks us to depart from traditions and do something new. Here the relationship between one's work and authority is antagonistic. One should not rely on authority but become an authority oneself. This is clearly dangerous when it comes to building a house, and can be off-putting when it comes to making a pizza. What about philosophy?

What we are proposing is not simply to follow authority but to go *with* authority. In going with authority, we mean a two-directional process. If we place an authoritative resource in our contemporary discourse, we also need to recognize that this resource is already embedded in its own tradition. "Going with" also means that when we engage in more fundamental critiques we do not completely overturn others (at least not as a rule). We may seek to re-evaluate the roots, or critique others for focusing too much on the branches, but "going with" can mean working through those branches to get at the root.

Examining general attitudes can be illustrative. It is not uncommon to read Western scholarship on Chinese philosophy where some version of this is noted: "Here I read [this character] as [another character]". Compared to Chinese standards this phrase is far from innocuous. It would be strange—and actually disrespectful, or we could say "unprofessional"—for Chinese scholars to make the same comment. Instead they tend to say "following so-and-so I read [this character] as [another character]". The humility of admitting to following others, and working in this way with others, is, we think, a better practice than the now popular call for "original contributions".

Original Contributions: What Types of Pizza Aren't Allowed?

What does it mean to make a contribution? According to the editorial practices of many major Western journals, this question is answered in terms of increasing something. To publish something is of course the first step, but the work itself has to represent an "increase" as well—it must add to the already available knowledge.

Coupled with the emphasis on authenticity pervasive in our culture, a "contribution" in academia is normally formulated along the lines of "original contribution" or "unique contribution". Many journals explicitly require such an "original contribution to philosophy" yet do not also demand a command of the original language, traditional scholarship or commentaries, or even engagement with the discourse in, for example, Chinese academia. Understanding texts in their native contexts is of course expected, if not taken for granted, but still the emphasis is on originality—and this is very telling. More than competence in tracing and comprehending the "origins", what is valued is that one become an originator of an idea, theory, or method oneself. Authors are thus encouraged to present their own perspectives, understandings, and arguments. So they readily admit to, for instance, providing a study of the *Zhuangzi* that makes no reference to the *Analects*. Secondary sources are treated similarly. At times the only coherent explanation for the publication of such work can be that it marks some "original contribution". We might thus wonder where we should draw the limits in this context.

As many note, the humanities are now taking a number of cues from the sciences. Progress in philosophical or historical analysis is seen as comparable to progress in physics. Whether scientific progress is understood as incremental or as successive paradigm shifts, discarding or breaking with old theories and ideas, and increasing knowledge, are deemed indispensable. In many cases the simple transferring of such expectations to philosophy, often done by those who are in administrative positions and/or have a background in "hard sciences", is grossly inappropriate. Indeed, we might note that while a continual increase of knowledge in areas such as medicine is generally welcome, we do not always desire something new and innovative in other areas. I do not want my house built in such a way that completely overturns the old principles, any more than I desire to fly in an airplane that is completely original. In aesthetics we often have similar attitudes. While some modern, funky designs are quite interesting to look at, the well-established patterns that appear on some rugs are traditional (i.e. old and still popular) for a reason. And in writing, reasoning, and a host of other areas, we generally teach our students to do things in certain ways. We do not expect original contributions to *how* term papers are written, and we hardly expect them in content either.[1] (Even when we expect what they say is original we do not expect how they say it will be.)

1 Some societies, particularly the US, have merged the desire for original content with authenticity so that students are (strongly) encouraged to present their own ideas. This satisfies, superficially at least, the need for original contributions and increases in content. Unfortunately, as anyone who has taught in these settings knows, not only is this often done at the expense of learning the actual material, but the results are exceedingly bland. Another undergraduate (or graduate) paper on the difference between Mencius and Xunzi on human nature is just that. Asking for the students' "original opinions" on such matters often simply leads to bad papers.

Truly innovative contributions are rare and do not emerge upon coercion. Certainly there should be space for them to be made—but how much sense does that really make? The "space" or "requirement" for making an original contribution paradoxically tends to bring the opposite result. (Just as demands for authenticity are paradoxical and only result in relative uniformity.) Many of us have experienced that the review process, for example, can make our work blander, more boring, and less innovative then we initially had it. The space for "originality" is predetermined, and something that is actually original would be outside of that space, and is generally frowned upon. The root of this issue can be found by examining methodology, as follows.

Methodology: Old Recipes, New Pizzas

In recent years there has been a growing concern in Western academia about the asymmetry in intercultural philosophical exchange between the West and China. The common sentiment is that while Chinese scholars have been rigorously engaging with Western thinkers for centuries, the West has underappreciated the Chinese philosophical tradition and largely ignored its contemporary contributions. (A quick browse at bookstores bears witness to this: in China we find translations of nearly everything, while in the West translations of Chinese works are relatively rare.) Over the past few decades the situation has been gradually shifting. An increasing number of Western scholars are not only (re)discovering resonances between thinkers, schools, and ideas of the West and East, but also challenging their own assumptions and turning to the Chinese philosophical tradition for ways of reframing contemporary issues (e.g. different ways of structuring the framework of the climate crisis or democracy). It is often suggested that, in our quest for orientative guides to life, and in order to gain a better understanding of the world we live in and improve global cooperation, it is only reasonable that we engage with what we know less, with what is most different. This concern is often coupled with an expressed denouncement of the West's presumed infallibility and the resulting intellectual isolationism.

However, while opening up and appreciating some aspects of difference between the Western and Chinese worlds of thought, we seem to fail to appreciate the full *scope* of difference. Engaging with the cultural Other, Western scholars tend to focus primarily on variance in terms of content (moral, social, philosophical, and religious ideas), not in terms of the framework of critical questions, of research attitudes, and methods. Chinese philosophy is seen as a valuable resource in the global discussion on issues such as sustainable development or transgenerational

responsibility, and yet the method of study Chinese thinkers employ is deemed at best irrelevant, if not improper—although not explicitly, of course. Questions can be (and often are) reformulated and diversified, but the silent reality is that research norms largely remain unchallenged. We may recognize the need to listen to and understand *what* Chinese thinkers are saying, but we seem to be largely uninterested in learning *from where* they say it. Limiting the scope of difference to content ignores the full extent of the difference, so that it necessarily remains superficial. This not only deprives us from valuable resources and opportunities to challenge our operative assumptions, but also creates obstructions to Chinese scholars' participation in Western discussions.

Appreciating the full scope of difference does not mean replacing Western methods with Chinese ones (better or not). The goal is far humbler. Firstly, it means acknowledging that method is inseparable from content. It is a truism that the dialogic form of Plato's work or Wittgenstein's aphoristic style constitute philosophical positions in themselves. Similarly, methodological norms in the Chinese philosophical discourse are part and parcel of what we find important, relevant, and fascinating about Chinese philosophy. We thus have good reason to explore and understand these norms, and even consider applying them ourselves, as changing the way we approach Chinese texts could very well change our understanding of their philosophical content in unforeseeable and important ways. As such, appreciating the full scope of difference also means recognizing that there is no single way of doing philosophy. There are different and equally legitimate ways of philosophical study scholars could consider as options. Appreciating the full scope of difference also means being critical of our own methods and not treating them as the litmus test of academic legitimacy. We thus propose that philosophy, and especially Chinese-comparative philosophy done in English, be more accepting of some rather diverse (though thoroughly traditional) forms of philosophical study.

Western scholars engage with many of the same primary resources as their Chinese peers, but while Western scholars tend not to cite Chinese discourse, Chinese scholars invariably cite Western scholars in their studies of Western philosophy (and regularly in those on Chinese thought, too). Research attitudes in the East and West are also different in a more fundamental way, with these differences rooted in the respective worldviews and mentalities, as expressed in their attitudes to tradition and perceptions of truth, progress, and creativity. Individuality, scepticism, and breaking with received ideas have been traditionally understood to drive the philosophical endeavour in the West. It is thus expected and laudable, as noted earlier, to propose unique, even highly idiosyncratic readings ("*I* read this character/passage to mean…"). On the other hand, the Chinese tradition values

continuity, trust in tradition, and creative adjustment of positions. Chinese philosophical works customarily include introductions replete with references to lineages of thought where the particular work is proudly ensconced, and new works are the product of selective re-arrangements of older ones.

In fact, the Chinese commentarial and exegetical tradition can be understood as a series of "corrected meanings" (*zheng yi* 正義). They are corrected in two ways: first, in terms of how we should understand this character or that passage and the meaning within the text; secondly, it terms of how it applies to contemporary circumstances. In this way, the corrective attitude can mean searching for the "correct" meaning of the text, but also, and philosophically more importantly, it means adapting what *the text* says to current states of affairs. The emphasis is not on how *I* read this text, but on how the text speaks to contemporary issues. And, moreover, what matters is not how *I* can figure out how the text responds to contemporary issues, but whether and how the text *itself* does so. (I may have valid and pressing questions about gender equality, but these questions may very well fall outside the scope of a text like the *Analects* or a commentator's concerns.) The commentarial tradition can be easily misunderstood as simply offering exegeses and not novel analyses based on the particulars of new philosophical issues. What is valued is not novelty *per se*, nor in fact "correction" of faulty interpretations, but the construction of a convincing and authoritative account, based on the work of worthy predecessors with the goal of inspiring ever present in the background.

Throughout the Chinese tradition, philosophical texts have served as practical guides for self-improvement, with Chinese thinkers interested in offering all-encompassing visions of the good life and inspiring readers to embrace and realize them. Reading and mastering the meaning of texts is taken to be a lifetime process of self-improvement, not a one-off act of intellectual understanding. The focus is not on spelling out all-applicable (universal) solutions, but, as mentioned earlier, on mastering the skill of understanding the meaning of a particular character or passage by adjusting it to the unique, concrete situations of one's own life. Texts are thus not meant to provide final answers, but to create the conditions for reflection: for one to be able to ask (and hopefully answer) their own unique questions. They are to be continually explored, and should inspire one to explore them. In today's Western discourses,[2] however, inspiration is considered of little to no importance. Overspecialization and the increasing scientification of philosophical study have shifted the focus to answering narrow questions and providing very specific (and

2 Inspiration was also highly valued in the Western philosophical tradition since its very beginning and was connected to style. Heraclitus's prophetic tone, Parmenides's metaphysical poetry, and Aristotle's essay style evince the awareness that thinkers could trigger emotive and intellectual responses through appropriate writing styles.

original) answers. The focus is on informing rather than transforming, more on contributing to future debates than on inspiring readers in life-changing ways.

Texts inspire by triggering emotive as well as intellectual responses. Inspiration is thus indelibly linked with aesthetic effects through style. Rethinking comparative philosophy as *poiesis* allows us to appreciate the "poetic qualities" of Chinese philosophical texts: elusiveness, suggestiveness, ambiguity, descriptive imagery, and rhythm. These features are a silent affirmation of the partiality of our gaze and the limits of our language: we cannot really say everything, just as we cannot understand nor communicate everything. Chinese philosophy as *poeisis* creates riddles that appear unexpectedly, demanding further thought and engagement. It is a conversation we never planned and thus one of the best conversations we could ever have. There was a time when philosophy was written in verse, when philosophical language inspired with its puzzles. Confucius's collected conversations in the *Analects* and their commentaries, modelled on primary texts, attest to this fact. Reticence, suggestiveness, and obscurity used to be marks of wisdom. While we will likely not completely return to these methods, perhaps we may want to leave space for these qualities in our philosophical discourses or include discussions where these features still retain some prominence. There is much to be gained from listening to the past.

Listening Instead of Speaking: The Joy of Eating Pizza

There is something disconcerting about the expressed demand to "let Chinese philosophy speak on its own terms"—and variations thereof. This is a valid goal, but both structurally and practically, it is an extremely difficult ideal to achieve. As demonstrated in the previous sections, not only does the entire approach to Chinese philosophy in English-language discourse differ from that in Chinese discourse, but Chinese authors are conspicuously non-present. Some do speak, and speak loud and clear—we very much appreciate the works of Huang Yong, Robin Wang, Ni Peimin, and Li Chenyang (to name a few) for instance. However, those who do not have significant training in Western academia find it difficult to publish, and often do not. Some of the most influential scholars in China today, such as Li Zehou, Chen Guying, Chen Lai, Yang Guorong, Guo Qiyong, and Wang Bo, hardly ever publish in English, or only in translation.

Many of those who align themselves with "letting Chinese philosophy speak on its own terms" actually do the speaking themselves, and there is more than a little mediation. One extreme example is the concerns about Western academia being racist because it does not include Chinese philosophy. In China there is little

worry about this issue. Chinese professors are generally more concerned with the fact that Western scholars of comparative philosophy often seem out of touch with Chinese-language discourse, and continue to rely heavily on Western concepts, vocabulary, and categories. In China, whether or not Chinese philosophy is taught in Europe, North America, or Australia is more a political concern than a philosophical one.

Given the observations above on authority, originality, and methodology, it comes as little surprise that many of those who claim to "let others speak" are in fact only hearing their own voices. Tu Weiming has made this point with regard to dominant attitudes in the US: America is a culture that likes to speak, the Chinese culture is one that likes to listen. We are not sure how true this statement is, and whether it is a valid characterization of Western attitudes in general, but, considering the concerns being addressed here, listening is certainly a prerequisite to speaking. The problem therefore is that if our standard is to "let Chinese philosophy speak on its own terms", then whoever does the speaking seems to be dictating which terms (both literal and metaphorical) count and which do not. We observe at least four major points, all of which demonstrate that in "letting Chinese philosophy speak on its own terms" many are actually speaking for Chinese thought, and with little regard for the actual tradition.

Firstly, in the serious complaints that Western academia is racist for not including more Chinese philosophy there have been and are many efforts to get more specialists of non-Western philosophy to teach at colleges and universities in North America and Europe. There is very little, however, attention made to programs in China which cater to the same student groups.[3] As recently as early 2022 the latest "Philosophy Gourmet" ranking list, where nine experts of Chinese philosophy contributed to the grading of nine programs and mentioned six others, only two of the total fifteen programs considered were not American schools, and many excellent programs in China were not mentioned.[4] The charge of racism thus seems to be made from within, and only pertaining to, certain boundaries.

3 For example, at East China Normal University (our school) there is a robust MA and PhD program taught entirely in English. While many schools in the West are happy to boast two, and sometimes even three specialists of non-Western philosophy, the school of philosophy at East China Normal University has more than forty full-time philosophy faculty, nearly all of whom can teach Chinese or comparative philosophy. About half can teach in English as well. Additionally, courses taught for the English-language program in Chinese philosophy include Chinese students, who bring much (real) diversity to classroom discussions. Students are also required to learn Chinese, and most courses consist of reading the classics in Classical Chinese.

4 Among the programs not mentioned were the one at East China Normal University, as well as programs in Hong Kong and one in Macau.

Secondly, and relatedly, while today we are all expected to support unfettered diversity in every corner of academia, there are some rather conspicuous blind spots that many still choose to ignore. It is well known, for example, that Chinese scholars without significant experience in Western academia have serious problems publishing in Western journals. And it is not because they are not interested in doing so.[5] Oftentimes even translations of their work need to be "pushed" through normal review processes. As mentioned above, the methodology is a huge obstacle. However, in our celebration of diversity, in our rejection of anything even remotely resembling racism, and in heeding the clarion call to "let Chinese philosophy speak…", we should be letting Chinese scholars make their own contributions.

Thirdly, "let Chinese philosophy speak on its own terms" is undermined by a strange reality: most scholars who engage in this discourse rarely cite Chinese sources. Looking at the reference list of articles and books published in English the lack of diversity in the sources is astounding. Western academia mainly cites itself. Nearly every text will include references to Chinese classics, but very few include commentators and even fewer include secondary literature. Of course, not every scholar reads Chinese (which itself is a problem in our eyes), but the past decade has seen an explosion of translations of contemporary Chinese scholars, and yet these are hardly cited.

The fourth issue is that, as noted above, Western scholars prioritize contributions and originality over authority and respecting traditions. The very methodology of Western discourse necessitates a rejection of the spirit of the Chinese discourse—at least as it has been practiced since Confucius said "I transmit, I do not innovate". So "letting Chinese philosophy speak on its own terms" is actually not something Western academia can allow, given its extreme emphasis on contributions and originality over authority and respecting traditions. It can only allow that the authors who express this demand, and even those who do not, constantly rework, reword, and speak in original ways. Simply being a mouthpiece will not help one get published, or even accepted at a conference.

We thus propose a different demand. Instead of "letting Chinese philosophy speak on its own terms", which seems to involve a lot of "speaking for", we suggest "letting Chinese philosophy be read on its own terms". In other words, placing

5 The Chinese government wants to increase its influence in all areas, including scholarship. Incentives for publishing in highly ranked Western journals are double or two and a half times what they are for publishing in top Chinese journals. In other words, for promotion and funding in China (professors get bonuses based on publications), publishing in Western journals (such as this one) is highly desirable. Still, we have a surprisingly low number of Chinese philosophy professors even submitting to Western journals.

emphasis on listening instead of speaking. Concretely, this means, first, trusting the authority of commentators and respected authorities—especially considering this is how the tradition developed; and second, rethinking tradition as the condition of creativity, and thus de-emphasizing the importance of making "original contributions". By making more researched commentaries, interpretations, and texts available, we are already contributing to discussions in a unique way. Additionally, we suggest such listening be done by looking at how Chinese discourse reframes familiar problematics.

Engaging with Chinese philosophy in this way will be different than it is commonly practiced today. Relative to what is now commonly practiced, and referred to as "comparative philosophy", there would be much less comparison. Instead, we would emphasize what should precede this, the learning, and publications based on insights *learned* rather than creative contributions *made/spoken*, and also on what comes later—that is, beyond comparison.

Comparison—Before and Beyond: Making Pizza

The term "comparative philosophy" is often coupled with "Chinese philosophy", but the two can be seen as representing completely different types of study. In his recent work Geir Sigurðsson, for instance, often discusses the virtues of "comparative philosophy". Much can be gained from this type of research, which itself does not really belong to the Chinese or Western tradition[6]—though it certainly skews toward the latter. For the virtues of this study see Sigurðsson's own work[7], but in what follows we will note some critical points.

In our experience there is a kind of "Chinese-comparative philosophy" done in Europe and in North America which does not correspond to the way Chinese philosophy is done in China, and how some Westerners do Chinese philosophy, too. For example, in doing "Chinese-comparative philosophy" we find scholars ask questions such as "How does Heidegger's notion of authenticity correspond to the idea of *zhen* 真in the *Zhuangzi*?", "What are the similarities between Confucius's and Aristotle's theories of good?" or "What are the differences between *The Prince* and *Hanfeizi* 韩非子?" These questions may even come in forms that are not explicitly comparative, for example: "What is the good life for Zhuangzi?", "How does the Mencius conceive of justice?" or "Is Confucianism a type of virtue ethics?"

6 We can of course argue that philosophy is always comparative, see Silius (2020, 266–68) and Rošker (2020, 313).

7 See for example Sigurðsson (forthcoming).

It is difficult to adequately articulate in this format, but there is something distinct about how questions are asked, the frameworks used, the vocabulary that informs, and concepts assumed, when doing "comparative philosophy". We fully agree with Sigurðsson that this type of study can be extremely fruitful, but we cannot help noticing some imbalances. "Chinese-comparative philosophy" has been asymmetrical in English: there is much more reliance on Western frameworks, terminology, concepts and questions than Chinese ones. We do not often ask, for example, about filial piety in Plato or humaneness in Rawls. Some corrective attempts have been made, but for the most part it seems that "philosophy" on the global scale needs to play by Western rules. Trying to make Chinese philosophy global we should not forget that it is Chinese. This is not to say that we think Chinese philosophy should be respected or included simply because it is Chinese. We are not arguing *for* diversity in this manner. Instead, what makes Chinese philosophy worthwhile is its philosophical reflections. When we take them out of their own context, however, and make them play by rules they never knew, the game often ends up on one extreme or the other—scholars either find Chinese philosophical texts to be esoteric, bland, or lesser versions of Western ideas, or else tout the Middle Kingdom as home to better versions of everything (Western). Hopefully these extremes will lessen and a more measured view, one which recognizes and respects the distinctiveness of Chinese philosophical discourse, can emerge.

As a first step towards this direction, we propose what might be called a "pre-comparative" stage. Students of Chinese philosophy are first engaged in the discourse itself. They learn how Chinese thinkers speak to one another, what terms they use, how they construe their concepts, how issues are framed, and dialogues form. Understanding how the tradition developed is also important here. At this first stage learning the language is just as important as learning what is said. Just as much as we need to know what the *Zhuangzi* said about Confucius, and how Wang Bi interpreted this, to engage deeply with the *Analects*, for example, we also need to have some grasp of Classical Chinese. Later the related developments, including contemporary Chinese discourse, should also be studied. Research in "pre-comparative" philosophy would include doing translations—of primary texts, commentaries, and contemporary scholarship—and engaging with scholarship on understudied issues. This type of research emphasizes the mastery of skills in facing the (often immense) difficulty of understanding the texts within their own contexts.

When some degree of competency is achieved—through translating, studying commentaries (traditional and contemporary), engaging with Chinese scholars, and memorizing passages from the classics—certain scholars have displayed what we identify as "beyond comparative" philosophy. The "beyond comparison"

approach is readily traceable in the way influential scholars have tackled major issues drawing on diverse resources.

Here, Li Zehou's discussion of the relationship between harmony and justice is a great example. The concepts themselves, thinkers he is in dialogue with, and resources he draws on, span cultures and history. His work is not restricted to Chinese sources, nor is it simply comparative. He goes beyond comparison to deal with the focal issue itself. Roger Ames and Henry Rosemont's work on "role ethics" is similar. Henry Rosemont readily admits that it does not need to be called "Confucian". They are dealing directly with the issue of how we conceive of the person, and what ethics should mean. Early Confucian texts are a major inspiration, but Ames and Rosemont's entire project is indebted to Western resources as well. What "beyond comparison" mainly indicates is a different type of philosophical inquiry. Engaging in philosophy that is "beyond comparison" means addressing philosophical issues drawing seamlessly among various traditions while understanding their distinct frameworks, concepts, and discourses.

Conclusion

Responding to the idea of "trans-cultural" philosophy, this paper has proposed expanding the scope of diversification to include methodology. In particular, acknowledging the need to step back from our assumptions and venture on new paths of philosophical study, we have argued that the Chinese tradition and contemporary Chinese-language scholarship offer valuable methodological insights for reimagining comparative philosophy as *poiesis*: the art of bringing something into being that did not exist before, with existing materials and using tested methods. Unlike dominant models and norms in Western academic discourses, thinking of trans-cultural philosophy as *poeisis* suggests "going with" tradition and "listening" to texts rather than "speaking" for them. Trans-cultural philosophy as *poeisis* includes trust in authorities as the condition for creativity and original contribution. It also involves mastery of skills. On this, we generally agree with Robert Carleo. In his contribution to this volume, he outlines what "skill" can look like in a highly inspiring way. Philosophy thus conceived is less about right or wrong, truth or falsity, "original" or "unoriginal", than the art and skill of reflection.

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Before and After Comparative Philosophy

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Abstract

This paper traces the history of comparative philosophy and points to a transition toward post-comparative philosophy. It is argued that, theoretically speaking, comparative philosophy was created by making a distinction between Western and non-Western philosophy and then re-entering this distinction into one of its sides, namely non-Western philosophy. Historically speaking, comparative philosophy was preceded by Orientalist academic disciplines such as Indology and Sinology founded in the 19th century, as well as by the establishment of disciplines like "Chinese Philosophy" in non-Western countries. With the emergence of the field of comparative philosophy in the 20th century, two camps developed: one focusing on difference and the other on sameness. Post-comparative philosophy, it is argued, moves beyond difference and sameness and engages in diverse philosophical endeavours by employing sources from various traditions without constituting a specific field based on culturalist distinctions.

Keywords: comparative philosophy, post-comparative philosophy, Chinese philosophy, orientalism

Pred primerjalno filozofijo in po njej

Izvleček

Članek sledi zgodovini primerjalne filozofije in kaže v smeri prehoda proti postprimerjalni filozofiji. V članku zagovarjam trditev, da je, v teoretskem smislu, stvarjenje primerjalne filozofije vzniknilo iz vzpostavitve razlike med zahodno in nezahodno filozofijo, ki so ji sledili ponovni vstopi v eno izmed strani, ki jih je to razlikovanje vzpostavilo, namreč v nezahodno filozofijo. Z zgodovinskega stališča je primerjalna filozofija sledila orientalističnim akademskim disciplinam 19. stoletja, kot sta indologija in sinologija, ter osnovanju disciplin, kot je »kitajska filozofija« v nezahodnih deželah. S pojavom področja primerjalne filozofije v 20. stoletju sta se oblikovala dva tabora: medtem ko se je eden osredotočal na razlike, se je drugi osredotočal na enakosti. Avtor zagovarja stališče, da se postprimerjalna filozofija giblje onkraj razlik in enakosti ter se posveča različnim filozofskim podvigom, poslužujoč se virov iz različnih tradicij, ne da bi pri tem tvorila posebno področje, utemeljeno na kulturalističnih razlikovanjih.

Ključne besede: primerjalna filozofija, postprimerjalna filozofija, kitajska filozofija, orientalizem

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Introduction: The Re-Entry of Comparative Philosophy into Philosophy

Comparative philosophy—here understood in a narrow sense as an academic sub-discipline comparing non-Western and Western philosophy—is rather new.[1] Prior to it, academic philosophy in the Western hemisphere had been thoroughly Eurocentric. The historical designations of "classical", "medieval", "early modern", "modern", or "contemporary" did not need to be geographically or culturally specified—they all referred to European philosophy (including, in the case of "contemporary", its Anglo-American extensions). The Eurocentric conception of academic philosophy went along with certain implicit linguistic expectations: philosophy needed to be done, it seemed, in Greek or Latin, or French or German, or English. Anything resembling philosophy, but written in, let's say Chinese, Sanskrit, or Arabic tended to look at first sight suspiciously more like "religion" or "literature" than philosophy.

Moreover, because of its apparent historical, geographical, and linguistic continuity, the term "philosophy" was commonly used only in the singular. While, along with globalization and secularization, a pluralistic concept of multiple and not mutually reducible religions emerged, among which European religion (i.e. Christianity) was only one of many, the concept of philosophy remained "monolithic". Even today, while there is an *Oxford Handbook of Global Religions* (Juergensmeyer 2006) in the plural, its philosophical counterpart is titled in the singular: *The Oxford Handbook of World Philosophy* (Garfield and Edelglass 2011).

Comparative philosophy set out to cross some boundaries—while it kept the grammatical singular in its name signalling some sort of ultimate cohesion of everything it endeavoured to compare. Like its well-established academic cousin "comparative literature", comparative philosophy wanted to globalize and multiply the disciplinary canon of texts worthy to be read and of sources worthy to be studied. Similar to comparative literature, it did so by simultaneously challenging and confirming the Eurocentric standards of its discipline. Yes, there was literature and philosophy beyond the geographical and linguistic borders where "we" used to locate it. But this literature or philosophy was understood as literature or philosophy *in comparison with* the traditional canon, or at least with the methodological, exegetic, and conceptual tools by which this canon had been established. Philosophy ought to become more pluralistic, but its ultimate integrity, its wholeness, its grammatical singular, was preserved.

1 For a critical discussion of the East-West axis that has traditionally dominated comparative philosophy at the exclusion of other possible distinctions such as, for instance, North-South, see Škof (2008).

The very act of comparison differentiated Western and non-Western philosophy from one another (it made philosophy plural) *and* tied it together (it retained philosophy in the singular).[2] The disciplinary inclusion cemented at the same time an exclusion: comparative philosophy was both the same (also studying philosophy) and different from (but studying the 'other' philosophy) what previously had been just philosophy. Using the terminology of the systems theorist Niklas Luhmann and the logician George Spencer Brown, the creation of comparative philosophy can be described as a case of making a distinction and then *re-entering* this distinction into *one side* of the distinction. Philosophy distinguished between Western and non-Western philosophy. This very distinction was then re-entered into the discourse on the side of non-Western philosophy in the form of "comparative philosophy". Comparative philosophy has been a philosophical sub-discipline concerned with the difference and sameness of non-Western philosophy in comparison with Western philosophy. In Western philosophy, however, such comparisons or distinctions remained quite peripheral.

The history of all hitherto existing comparative philosophy is the history of the struggle between difference and sameness. This struggle resulted from a re-entry of the distinction between Western and non-Western philosophy into philosophy. The point of post-comparative philosophy is not to "resolve" the struggle of comparative philosophy, but to move beyond it.

Before Comparative Philosophy: Orientalist Studies and Chinese Philosophy

The distinction between Western and non-Western philosophy that academic philosophy re-entered into itself to create comparative philosophy did not come out of nowhere. In Western academia, it had already been employed within a

2 Some of the earliest detailed outlines and conceptualizations of comparative philosophy were proposed by Paul Masson-Oursel (see Masson-Oursel 1911; 1923). In a programmatic essay, Masson-Oursel emphasized the encompassing and unitary nature of comparative philosophy by defining it as "the general examination of the ways in which human beings of all races and cultures reflect upon their actions and act upon their reflections" (Masson-Oursel 1951, 6). Within such an ultimately singular "general examination" comparisons were to be "as much concerned with differences as with resemblances" (ibid., 9).
The concept of "intercultural philosophy" often shares the idea of "diversity within unity" with Masson-Oursel's understanding of comparative philosophy. One of the proponents of intercultural philosophy, Ram Adhar Mall (see Mall 2000) stresses that "an intercultural philosophical orientation pleads for unity without uniformity" (Mall 2016, 69) and that, while endorsing "plurality, diversity, and difference as values", it does not take these "as deviations from unity and uniformity" (ibid., 71).

wider framework of East-West distinctions in various "Orientalist" disciplines. In non-Western academia, it had been a, if not *the*, major conceptual tool to modernize traditional scholarship.

a) Orientalism

Comparative philosophy had gained increased attention in the West in the wake of a rising "identity politics" since the 1970s. This political trend, with its emphasis on the *other* of White European masculinity, made comparative philosophy more visible. Along with more appreciation, more career and publication prospects opened up, including opportunities for the author of this paper. However, predecessors of comparative philosophy had already been around for more than a century. Along with imperialism and globalization, the "East" was systematically studied so that it could be rationally understood and managed. Various academic disciplines were established to chart and track the East, beginning with Egyptology and Assyriology but soon extending to Indology, Sinology (which will be my main focus here, given my personal academic background[3]), and Japanology (see Said 1978; Zurndorfer 1995).

The historical fact that non-Western philosophy made its way into Western academic philosophy by means of a detour via Orientalist studies is quite significant. The previous housing and nurturing of non-Western philosophy in Orientalist academic contexts "alienated" it from "regular" philosophy in at least three closely interrelated ways:

"Culturalism"

The design of Orientalism in the form of academic disciplines such as Indology or Sinology suggested the existence of some sort of overarching entity—e.g., India or China—that could be explored by studying its language(s), history, geography, anthropology, religion(s), art(s), philosophy, etc. Congregated within an Orientalist frame, all these widely diverse and complex subjects were taken to address a larger cultural framework. China's specific geography, its rivers and plains, for instance, was understood as a natural condition giving rise to a specific "hydraulic civilization" which in turn gave rise to a specific political system of "oriental despotism" (Wittvogel 1931). Alternatively, China's specific religious and philosophical traditions—Confucianism and Daoism—could be seen as decisive factors shaping the Chinese worldview, *la pensée chinoise* (Granet 1934), and

3 I studied and taught at a Sinology department before becoming a comparative philosopher at a philosophy department in 2000.

thereby Chinese society, or *la civilisation chinoise*, as a whole (Granet 1929). From an Orientalist point of view, anything "Chinese" was significant as a contributor to an encompassing "Chineseness".

Culturalist essentialism was not an exclusive feature of Orientalism. It reflected the rise of nationalism in 19th century Europe. Numerous newly founded European nation states had emerged out of the declining or dissolving monarchies and empires. They needed an ideological foundation which was typically provided by culturalist narratives. The new nation states traced and (re-)established their own distinctive languages, literatures, histories, ethnicities, and so on to make political sense and gain legitimacy. At times, philosophy, too, could be drawn on to propose a certain national—e.g., German or French—"spirit". However, non-Western philosophies lent themselves to a greater extent than their Western counterparts to the promotion of culturalist ideas. European philosophy was generally seen as rooted in ancient Greece and Rome and thus more often than not regarded as a shared European heritage rather than a specific expression of national peculiarities. Housed in various oriental disciplines, "Eastern" philosophies, in contrast, seemed to be different: each of these oriental philosophies was seen as embedded in a particular Eastern civilization.

Linguistics

By the 19th century, many European philosophers were academic professionals, but not all of them. Some, like Friedrich Nietzsche, had their home in related fields, like the Classics, while others, like Søren Kierkegaard, had only loose connections with institutionalized academia. And yet they were typically trained in academic philosophy, either formally or autodidactically. The same cannot be said about most Europeans who "produced" Eastern philosophy at the time. Most of them were Orientalists and trained in foreign languages. If studying German philosophy, one was likely to be a philosopher, and not a Germanist. But if studying Chinese philosophy, one was likely to be a Sinologist and not a philosopher.

The essential precondition for non-Western philosophy to be noticed in Europe was the availability of key texts. These texts had to be translated by Indologists, Sinologists, etc. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Sinologists where typically either self-taught linguists, like Abel Rémusat (1788–1832) or Stanislas Julien (1797–1873), or had a background in Christian missionary work (e.g., James Legge 1815–1897, Richard Wilhelm 1873–1930) and/or the diplomatic service (e.g., Herbert A. Giles, 1845–1935) that had taken them to China for extended periods of time. In the 19th century, people (almost exclusively men) where mostly sent to

the Far East by a church, state, or company—and not by a university or academic exchange program that enabled philosophers to travel.

European philosophers in the 19th century were often able to read Greek, Latin, and French and thus did not have to (exclusively) use translations of European classics for accessing their sources. If reading, for instance, Chinese philosophical texts, however, they relied on translations by Sinologists who typically shared the culturalist approach of all Orientalist disciplines. These translations tended to look somewhat pedestrian in comparison with European philosophical classics. They seemed to lack a theoretically consistent conceptual architecture and stringent terminology. Instead, they often resembled, in style or vocabulary, religious treatises, edifying literature, or inspirational poetry. The Orientalist background of their 19th century translators contributed to the emergence of separate categories to classify—and market—Chinese philosophical texts in differentiation from "normal" philosophy. Rather than philosophy, they represented "oriental wisdom", or an "Eastern spirituality" which, more recently, could be labelled "new age", or, in German, *Esoterik*.

Intellectual "Trade"

Chinese philosophical texts had already been translated and made available to European intellectuals before the establishment of academic Orientalism in the 19th century. In 1687 a compilation of Confucian texts had been published in Latin by the printer Daniel Horthemels in Paris under the title *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus, sive, Scientia Sinensis Latine Exposita* (*Confucius, Philosopher of the Chinese, or, Chinese Knowledge Explained in Latin*). The principal translators were Philippe Couplet (1623–1693), Christian Herdtrich (1625–1684), Prospero Intorcetta (1625–1696), and Francis Rougemont (1624–1676). All of them had been Jesuit missionaries in China. The early European reception of Chinese philosophy by philosophers like Leibniz (1646–1716) was based on works like these. They differed from later 19th century Orientalist productions by being more explicitly labelled as "philosophy" and written in the "scientific" language and style of scholarly Latin that limited their accessibility to highly educated elites.

Importantly, the Jesuits translators were "by trade" not mediators of things Oriental to Europe, but harbingers of the "universal (Christian) Truth" to the world. While, like the later Orientalists, they also translated and explained Chinese texts for European readers, their *mission* was not mediation, but conversion and the unification of humankind and human knowledge under a Christian umbrella. This is to say, they did not primarily aim at offering "Chineseness" to a European public, but to show how God was also present among the heathen. In short, they were

more concerned with the spirit of the Lord than with the "Chinese spirit". They were not yet Orientalists, but, if anything of that order, "Occidentalists". Accordingly, when a Christian European philosopher like Leibniz read their translations, he could be fascinated with a certain foreignness of Chinese philosophy, but also, and perhaps even more so, with what seemed to be striking similarities with his own Christianity-based metaphysics (see Perkins 2007). The Jesuit missionaries functioned for Leibniz not merely as cultural transmitters (which they also were, of course), but crucially as facilitators of divine reason.

In Orientalist Sinology in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the rationale for translating Chinese philosophy for a European audience changed. Even if many Sinologists still had a missionary (now often Protestant) background, doing Sinology was not merely a way of working in God's vineyard, but increasingly an intellectual trade in oriental culture—a sort of academic *Kolonialwarenhandel* (colonial goods trade). An academic profession specializing in this trade was established and it could claim a sort of monopoly. One of the goods it offered was Chinese philosophy.

b) Chinese Philosophy

Before comparative philosophy became known in the West, not only Orientalists but also philosophers in non-Western regions had already thought and written comparatively. The emergence of modern Chinese philosophy is one example of the "pre-history" of comparative philosophy in Asia. Virtually all major modern Chinese philosophers, from Liang Qichao 梁啓超 (1873–1929) and Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 (1893–1988) to Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 (1895–1990), Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909–1995), and Li Zehou 李澤厚 (1930–2021) or Du Weiming 杜維明 (b. 1940) focused intensely on East-West distinctions—strikingly different from most of their counterparts in contemporary Western philosophy, who typically did not bother too much comparing themselves with "the East".

Liang Qichao, one of the most influential Chinese intellectuals of the early 20th century, translated works by Locke, Hume, Bentham and other European philosophers into Chinese. However, this did not make him a Chinese "Occidentalist", a kind of reverse Orientalist. Instead, he was at the forefront of the project of preserving Chinese cultural heritage by modernizing it. His translations of Western philosophers had, at least in part, the function of enabling him to relate the Chinese tradition to the contemporary world. He was a professor of "National Studies" (*guo xue* 國學), i.e., Chinese Studies, at Tsinghua University in Beijing, one of the first Western-style higher education institutions in China. Clearly, National

Studies was aimed to help transform China from a premodern empire into a modern nation state like those that had taken shape in Europe in the preceding decades.

Like Liang Qichao, many other leading Chinese academic philosophers in the first half of the 20th century intensely studied and sometimes also translated Western philosophy. They re-constructed Chinese intellectual history in accordance with the categories, concepts, and historical frameworks of modern academia, including, importantly, the concept of philosophy itself, which did not exist as such within the Chinese tradition. The neologism *zhexue* 哲學 for "philosophy" had found its way into Chinese via the Japanese language only toward the end of the 19th century (Makeham 2012a).

Liang Shuming published his first major work *Dong Xi Wenhua Ji Qi Zhexue* 東西文化及其哲學 (*Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies*) in 1921. At the same time, Feng Youlan was a PhD student at Columbia University in New York working on a philosophy dissertation entitled "A Comparative Study of Life Ideals". It dealt with philosophical East-West differences, just like Liang's monograph. "Chinese Philosophy" emerged in China from the start as a comparative endeavour. The professionals shaping the discipline through their writing, teaching, and institutionalizing it at universities were practically without exception trained in or deeply acquainted with Western philosophy. Otherwise, it could be argued, they would not have been able to "reinvent" their indigenous intellectual traditions in the form of academic philosophy.

This "creation" of Chinese philosophy by Chinese academic philosophers during the first part of the 20th century combined at least three methodological means—and all of them were thoroughly comparative. First, histories of Chinese philosophy were produced in analogy to histories of Western philosophy. Like the concept of philosophy, the genre of "history of philosophy" was imported via Japan. As John Makeham writes:

> Japanese scholars had already produced a number of general histories of Chinese philosophy. Their model for the writing of general histories was provided by nineteenth-century publications by German scholars such as Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann (1761–1819), Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), Heinrich Ritter (1791–1869), Albert Schwegler (1819–1857), Albert Stöckl (1823–1895), and Wilhelm Windelband (1848–1915), among others. (Makeham 2012b, 166)

To have a national philosophy, its history needed to be recounted. The first history of Chinese philosophy by a Chinese author was Xie Wuliang's 謝無量

(1884–1964) *Zhongguo Zhexue Shi* 中國哲學史 (*History of Chinese Philosophy*) published in 1916 (ibid.). More influential were, for instance Hu Shi's 胡適 (1891–1962) *Zhongguo Zhexue Shi Dagang* 中國哲學史大綱 (*Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy*) published in 1919 (only the first volume on early China was published), and Feng Youlan's monumental *Zhongguo Zhexue Shi* 中國哲學史 (*History of Chinese Philosophy*) published 1934 in two volumes. Like Feng Youlan, Hu Shi had studied philosophy at Columbia University in New York. He applied the "genetic method" of his teacher John Dewey in writing his history, and was also strongly influenced by Wilhelm Windelband. Feng Youlan's numerous accounts of the history of Chinese philosophy written between the 1930s and 1980s followed European models as well, including Marxist dialectical materialism in the works produced after 1949 (see Moeller and Sun 2017).

Second, along with applying modern Western academic frameworks to reconstruct a history of Chinese philosophy out of the Chinese textual heritage, Western philosophical notions and methods were introduced. Hu Shi, for instance, published a study titled *The Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China* in 1922 (in English language). Here, he wrote:

> Now that China has come into contact with the other thought-systems of the world, it has seemed to some that the lack of methodology in modern Chinese philosophy can now be supplied by introducing into China the philosophical and scientific methods which have developed in the Western world from the time of Aristotle to this day. (Hu 1922, 20)

The introduction of Western "philosophical and scientific" methods into China meant for Hu and many other Chinese philosophers in the early 20th century to reinterpret Chinese texts in terms of Western conceptual frameworks like "logic", "metaphysics", or "ontology".

Third, the creation of Chinese philosophy through comparative means was not restricted to historical reconstructions and reinterpretations of ancient texts. Equally important, if not more so, was the construction of new philosophical systems, comparable in complexity, intricacy, and abstraction to the great philosophical systems of modern European thinkers from Descartes to Kant and beyond. Feng Youlan, for instance, developed a whole "New Metaphysics" (*Xin Lixue* 新理學) during the 1930s and 1940s (see Moeller 2000) in relation to Western metaphysical systems—especially Platonism and New Realism—but on the basis of Confucian, Daoist, and, especially Neo-Confucian ideas. Mou Zongsan followed suit, but on the Western side he relied more on Kant and Heidegger while on the Chinese side he drew more from Buddhist vocabulary than Feng before him.

Without exception, all Chinese philosophy of the 20th and 21st centuries integrates traditional Chinese ideas and language with Western philosophical methods and concepts. It is thus essentially comparative.

Unlike the Orientalist predecessors of comparative philosophy in the West, modern Chinese philosophers were neither linguists nor cultural mediators. They were neither engaged in "European" or "Western Studies" nor were they experts in any particular foreign language. By all accounts, neither Feng Youlan nor Mou Zongsan spoke any Western language fluently. Their specialization was in philosophy. Accordingly, they primarily addressed a narrow academic audience. Unlike in the West, where the Orientalists appealed to a larger public market for "Eastern wisdom", contemporary Chinese philosophers mainly operated within the circles of a scholarly elite. The texts they produced were highly technical and as impenetrable for non-professionals as, for instance, texts by Hegel or Kant are to the average German reader. The point of doing academic Chinese philosophy in a comparative way was not to make foreign ideas and texts palatable for a domestic audience, but to refine and improve the Chinese intellectual tradition so that it would become truly "scientific" philosophy that was up the highest international academic standards.

The asymmetry between a modern, imperialist, and colonizing West and an economically, technologically, and militarily subjugated East produced an asymmetry between the Western and Eastern predecessors of comparative philosophy. The Western Orientalists were cultural mediators who established an intellectual trade in the gap between the East and West where they could flourish by offering their exotic wares. The Chinese philosophers, however, were first of all national modernists partaking in the larger effort of developing their country to enable it to emerge from social and intellectual backwardness. For them, the point of the comparison was not to "exploit" a difference for the sake of establishing an academic profession, but to cope with, and eventually overcome the asymmetric nature of that very difference. For Chinese philosophers, Chinese philosophy had to be done in a comparative manner to raise it to a level where the comparison no longer hurt.

In their effort to renew Chinese philosophy, Chinese philosophers adopted and internalized the culturalist distinction between the East and West that constituted Orientalism. A major aim of doing Chinese philosophy in a comparative way was to recuperate the "spirit" of "Chinese culture" in distinction from "Western culture". From the perspective of Chinese philosophy, comparisons were not simply an exploration of intriguing differences or coming to know a fascinating other. Instead, understanding philosophical differences was regarded as central to the effort of rebuilding China and of establishing it in its own right on the global stage. Chinese philosophy was eventually about rediscovering the Chinese *identity*.

The affirmation of Chinese identity via Chinese philosophy was seen as a crucial step toward the ultimate goal of enabling China to meet the West on an equal footing. In a programmatic essay titled "Chinese Philosophy and a Future World Philosophy" published in 1948, Feng Youlan stated:

> It seems to me that the future world philosophy must be more rationalistic that the traditional Chinese philosophy and more mystical than the traditional Western philosophy. Only a union of rationalism and mysticism will make a philosophy worthy of the one world of the future. (Feng 1948, 545)

This quote refers to *the* Western and *the* Chinese philosophy as two clearly distinguishable and respectively coherent traditions. Each has its complementary strengths and weaknesses: Western philosophy is strong on rationalism but weak on mysticism, and the opposite is the case for Chinese philosophy. Compared in this way, the cultures and spirits of China and the West, encapsulated and contained in their philosophies, are prepared for their eventual amalgamation into a singular future world philosophy. Through comparison, Feng Youlan's modern Chinese philosophy is intended to pave the way for a united global civilization where an emancipated China joins the West on a level playing field.

A very similar kind of "identity politics" by means of philosophy comes to the fore in the so-called New Confucian Manifesto. This text was originally published in 1958 under the rather convoluted but informative title *Wei zhongguo wenhua jinggao shijie renshi xuanyan—women dui zhongguo xueshu yanjiu ji zhongguo wenhua yu shijie wenhua qiantu zhi gongtong renshi* 為中國文化敬告世界人士宣言 – 我們對中國學術研究及中國文化與世界文化前途之共同認識 (*Manifesto on Behalf of Chinese Culture Respectfully Announced to the People of the World: Our Joint Understanding of Sinological Study and Chinese Culture with Respect to the Future Prospects of World Culture*). The authors include Carsun Chang (Zhang Junmai 張君勱 1886–1969), Tang Chun-I (Tang Junyi 唐君毅 1909–1978), Mou Tsung-san (Mou Zongsan), and Hsu Fo-kuan (Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 1904–1982). In an Orientalist manner, the essay proposes a substantial distinction between Chinese and Western cultures. Western civilization is characterized in terms of rationality and technology, whereas Chinese culture is seen as rooted in morality and a unique spirituality. The West is encouraged to learn from Chinese culture to improve itself ethically and spiritually, just as China is supposed to adopt Western science and democratic politics to develop. It is stipulated that in this way a united world civilization can emerge. Like Feng Youlan, the authors of the New Confucian Manifesto do not regard East-West comparisons as a mere sub-discipline in academic philosophy. For them, the rise of the Chinese nation and the future of a global civilization depends on it.

Comparative Philosophy

After Orientalism and Chinese philosophy came comparative philosophy: East-West philosophical comparisons as academic philosophy rather than as a part of Orientalist studies, and also distinct from a Chinese academic discourse intended to modernize the Chinese intellectual tradition. Arguably, the founding of the Philosophy Department at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa in 1936 can be regarded as the beginning of institutionalized comparative philosophy in this context. The department was led by Charles A. Moore (1901–1967) and Wing-tsit Chan 陳榮捷 (1901–1994), both comparative philosophers. The hosting of the East-West Philosophers' Conference Series, first held in 1939, and the founding of the academic journal *Philosophy East and West* in 1951 by the department were further milestones in the history of comparative philosophy.[4] Among others, graduates from the department took on pivotal roles in spreading comparative philosophy, primarily in North America, but increasingly also globally. They are still a minority, but comparative philosophers are now found in philosophy departments all over the world, and there are multiple professional associations in the field, multiple journals, and numerous conferences. Although the non-Western element in comparative philosophy is by no means limited to Chinese philosophy, I will focus on it here given the mentioned limits of my expertise.

As outlined at the beginning of this essay, comparative philosophy resembles a Gordian knot: An increasingly tighter discursive loop created by the perpetual re-entry of a distinction (between Western and non-Western philosophy) into itself. This operation generated two opposing poles—with a large continuum in-between: One pole highlighted the distinction-element of the comparison and, accordingly, emphasized difference. The other pole contradicted this emphasis and insisted on its opposite: sameness.

a) Difference

Seen from the camp of comparative philosophers closer to the difference pole (to which I once belonged) non-Western philosophy was relevant by virtue of being *not* European. What really mattered and fascinated about it was how it was something else, something other than "we". And yet, its alterity was discovered by *us*. Its difference *made sense to us*; we gave it its philosophically validity. Precisely by being different, non-Western philosophy became *like* our philosophy something that *we* (including myself), too, could think and write about. It allowed us to

4 On the first issue of this journal see Škof (2008).

become a philosopher, albeit—and thankfully—in a "distinctive" and "innovative" way. Different, different! But thereby the same.

Representatives of the "difference camp" include Roger T. Ames (b. 1947) and David L. Hall (1937–2001), as well as François Jullien (b. 1951). Toward the end of the last century, Roger Ames, at the time a philosophy professor at the University of Hawai'i, and David Hall, philosophy professor at the University of Texas at El Paso, published four major monographs that reshaped the field in little more than a decade: *Thinking Through Confucius* (1987); *Anticipating China: Thinking Through the Narrative of Chinese and Western Culture* (1995); *Thinking From the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture* (1998), and *Democracy of the Dead: Dewey, Confucius, and the Hope for Democracy in China* (1999). Two "philosophical translations" of core early Chinese texts representing the Confucian and the Daoist traditions followed soon after: *Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the* Zhongyong (2001) and *Dao De Jing: A Philosophical Translation: Making This Life Significant* (2003).

Roger Ames' academic background is in Chinese philosophy, and especially in Confucian thought. David Hall was an American pragmatist, a student of Richard Rorty, and had a keen interest in the philosophy of Alfred N. Whitehead. The titles of their monographs outline the scope of their ideas pretty well: they juxtaposed Chinese and Western culture and this meant, exactly as the Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines the verb "juxtapose", they "compared them or contrasted them to create an interesting effect".[5] The comparisons were mainly contrastive, pointing out, for instance, differences between transcendence (West) and immanence (East), or between selfhood as individuality (West) and selfhood as commonality (East). However, the monograph on Dewey and Confucius in particular also highlighted similarities. Confucian and American pragmatism, Ames and Hall hoped, could converge to generate a political and ethical framework for a global multicultural future within which Eastern and Western cultures could harmoniously coexist.

Since the 1980s François Jullien, who at the same time has been holding positions at several prestigious academic institutions in France, has published dozens of treatises of various length comparing Chinese and Western philosophy. He is regarded as a major living French philosopher, and, as I could personally observe before the pandemic, his books fill shelves in the philosophy sections of Parisian bookstores, right next to postmodernist superstars like Jacques Derrida or Michel Foucault. His writings have been widely translated and often published by intellectually 'hip' publishers like, for instance, Merve Verlag in Berlin or Passagen

5 https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/juxtapose.

Verlag in Vienna. In this way, Jullien has influenced the perception of Chinese and Asian philosophy in the German-speaking world in recent decades much more than any German Orientalist. While his influence on English-language comparative philosophy is not as strong as in French- or German-speaking countries, it is still remarkable. A dozen or so of his books have been translated into English, including *Detour and Access: Strategies of Meaning in China and Greece* by Zone Books in New York (2000; originally published as *Le Détour et l'Accès. Stratégies du sens en Chine, en Grèce* by Grasset in Paris in 1995) and *A Treatise on Efficacy: Between Western and Chinese Thinking* by University of Hawaii Press (2004; originally published as *Traité de l'efficacité* by Grasset in Paris in 1997).

Like Roger Ames and David Hall, François Jullien contrasts Chinese and Western philosophy. Writing in a more French than Anglo-American style, his language is quite poetic and allusive. He characterizes Chinese thought through notions such as "efficacy", "blandness", or "nourishment". Still, most core distinctions between Western and Chinese philosophy drawn by Ames and Hall, such as the distinctions between transcendence and immanence and between an individual and a communal self, also play prominent roles in Jullien's works.

Some European Sinologists reacted with some hostility to Jullien's public success, accusing him of major scholarly inaccuracies and falsehoods. The Swiss Sinologist Jean-François Billeter, for example, wrote a whole book on the philosopher entitled *Contre François Jullien* (*Against François Jullien* 2006). As Thorsten Botz-Bornstein (2014) has outlined, the debate between Jullien and Billeter and their respective allies represents a clash between the more traditional Orientalist treatment of Chinese philosophy by philological means, and a philosophical approach that tries to "mine" non-Western philosophy—in this case from China—to expand existing philosophical frameworks. While the Orientalist Billeter wants to understand and describe "China", or rather, specific Chinese texts as accurately as possible, the philosopher Jullien wants to re-enter new conceptual distinctions (between Western and Chinese philosophy) into philosophy to (if I may paraphrase the Merriam-Webster online dictionary again) "create interesting philosophical effects".

b) Sameness

The second camp in comparative philosophy highlighted the similarity element when comparing Western and non-Western philosophy and, accordingly, emphasized sameness. From this perspective, non-Western philosophy is significant because it confirms that there is no ultimate other to philosophy. While non-Western thought might at first appear foreign, it eventually turns out to be concerned with

universal truth—as all philosophy must be. Human thought, the human ethos, and human hopes and aspirations can transcend contingencies. Seen in this way, non-Western philosophy matters precisely because of its sameness with Western philosophy. The reduction of the alterity of the other proves the commonality of humankind. It confirms the old Platonic truth—the form, or idea, is one and the same, while its concrete manifestations can be diverse. *E pluribus unum*: Out of diversity—Western and non-Western—philosophical unity emerges: Same, Same! But out of difference.

Representatives of this camp include Heiner Roetz (born 1950) and Edward Slingerland (born 1968). Technically, Heiner Roetz was still an Orientalist, as he was employed as a professor of Chinese History and Philosophy at the Ruhr-University in Bochum, Germany. However, his work is thoroughly influenced by his academic background in Karl-Otto Apel's discourse ethics (*Diskursethik*), the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, and, via discourse ethics and critical theory, the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Most of Roetz' publications have been based on these theoretical approaches, and therefore they belong more squarely in the field of philosophy rather than Chinese Studies. In line with widely practiced methodologies in German academic philosophy, Roetz' works mostly focus on conceptual analysis, the reconstruction of the historical development of systems of thought, and the formulation of normative claims.

Heiner Roetz' major work is the monograph *Confucian Ethics of the Axial Age* (1994; originally published as *Die chinesische Ethik der Achsenzeit. Eine Rekonstruktion des Durchbruchs zu postkonventionellem Denken* in 1992). Here, as well as in many of his subsequent essays, Roetz argues vehemently and explicitly against the "difference camp" in comparative philosophy represented by Roger Ames and others (including the "Bonner Schule" at the Sinology Department of the University of Bonn to which I also belonged; see Moeller 2002). According to Roetz, early Chinese Confucian thinkers (Confucius and, especially, Mengzi) were in effect already Enlightenment philosophers. They broke with the cultural and religious traditions they were born into and, similar to modern Western thinkers more than two millennia after them, discovered or developed universally valid ethical principles based on reason. Importantly, Confucius and Mencius also expressed insights into the autonomy of human individuals and their human rights. Roetz categorically rejects any substantial differences between Chinese and Western metaphysics and concepts of selfhood. Despite certain historical and cultural differences on the surface, Roetz argues, early Chinese philosophers did not think differently from their later Western counterparts. This claim is central to Roetz understanding of philosophy as primarily tasked with the establishment of universal ethical norms. Comparative philosophy, for him, participates in this

endeavour by locating the emergence of universal ethical insights in different cultural and historical environments.

Edward Slingerland is Distinguished University Scholar and Professor of Philosophy at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. He is a student of Philip J. Ivanhoe (born 1954), another influential representative of comparative philosophy. In a more explicit manner than his teacher, Slingerland devoted himself to critiquing Roger Ames, François Jullien, and others (including myself, see Slingerland 2011; Moeller 2011) whom he rightly or not associates with the view that Chinese philosophy differs in fundamental ways from Western philosophy. He published numerous works detailing his critiques, culminating in the monograph *Mind and Body in Early China: Beyond Orientalism and the Myth of Holism* (2018).

The main point of *Mind and Body in Early China* is to refute the idea, ascribed to the above-mentioned comparative philosophers, that early Chinese philosophy was "holistic" by not operating with a significant conceptual mind-body distinction. Slingerland employs statistical methods of the digital humanities to prove this point empirically. Similar to Heiner Roetz before him, Slingerland, too, wishes to show certain universal characteristics of the human mind beyond any cultural or historical contingencies. The difference between the two is that Roetz argues from a Kantian background and conceives of the human mind in terms of the philosophical concept of reason (*Vernunft*), while Slingerland operates with a contemporary Anglo-American concept of cognition based on (the philosophy of) psychology. Within the contexts of their respective culturally, historically, and linguistically shaped academic discourses, both argue that the mind (reason for Roetz, cognition for Slingerland) is universal. As for Roetz, the purpose of comparative studies is for Slingerland to detect such universality beneath the appearance of peculiarity.[6] For both, the claim to universality is ethically significant. Slingerland uses the notion of "Orientalism" that occurs in the subtitle of his book with rhetorical undertones. This is meant to slight the "difference camp" in comparative philosophy by implying that it promotes an immoral Orientalist othering of non-Western philosophy.

As noted above, most comparative philosophers fall somewhere in between the two poles and the camps associated with them. The re-entry of the distinction between Western and non-Western philosophy on the side of the latter allowed the transition from Oriental Studies to comparative philosophy in Western, and now global, academia. This field has been characterized first by an emphasis on

6 Slingerland's data-based argument appears to me similar to a potential empirical study which shows that, let's say, the sculptures by Michelangelo and the ancient Greeks are substantially the same because they are all made of stone. Such a conclusion is certainly warranted, but the question of its significance remains.

difference, and then, by way of contradiction, by stressing sameness. To move beyond the "code" of difference/sameness in dealing with Western and non-Western philosophy is to move toward post-comparative philosophy.

Toward Post-Comparative Philosophy and Beyond[7]

This essay is written during the time of the 2022 Olympics in Beijing. One of the stars of the games is Eileen Gu (Gu Ailing 谷爱凌), an 18-year-old woman competing for China who won the gold medal in "big air" freestyle skiing. Gu's father is American, her mother is Chinese, and she grew up in the U.S.A. She is thus one of the many people of this world with a mixed ethnic background, and yet, to compete at the Olympics she has to choose one nation. Unavoidably, especially in the current political climate, her decision to compete for China created considerable controversy (see Rolfe 2022). In a way, the nation-based rationale of the Olympics resembles the Western/non-Western distinction of comparative philosophy. In order to 'count', a philosophy has to be assigned to a specific national or cultural region—and this assignment then permeates all further discussions.

According to media reports, however, Eileen Gu does not really identify with any one nation: When in America, she has said, she's American; and when in China, Chinese (see Ma 2022). Moreover, when speaking to the media she needs no translators, as her Chinese is just as perfectly fluent as her English. Neither nationally nor linguistically is she "in-between", but always "there". She neither relies on nor is a mediator. Instead, she is first a freestyle skier, and second, by virtue of this, an international media celebrity. What matters for her as an athlete is her performance, and this is measured only by the criteria of her sport. Seen from this perspective, her persona resembles post-comparative philosophy: it's all about what she does in her area of expertise, and the national or cultural ascriptions that go along with this are contingent. We know Eileen Gu is great at her sport, and if she's American or Chinese, Western or non-Western, then this is just a matter of being forced to make such a distinction by a social institution that no longer makes total sense.

Eileen Gu skies without an unambiguous sense of national belonging. She is neither a symbol of difference (between essential Chineseness and Americanness) nor of sameness (she does not make being Chinese like being American). Somewhat similarly, post-comparative philosophy neither focusses on differences between non-Western and Western philosophies nor on their sameness. It makes an

7 The title of this section connects with Katheran and Weber (2021).

argument or develops an idea in any philosophical sub-discipline by building on more than one philosophical tradition. Let there be many Eileen Gus in all kinds of sports, and many post-comparative philosophers in in all kinds of philosophies![8]

Theoretically speaking, post-comparative philosophy does not orient itself to the re-entry of the distinction between non-Western and Western philosophy into philosophy. It is not a specific philosophical field. It can be done in any philosophical field simply by employing both Western and non-Western texts or concepts. Unlike Orientalist studies, post-comparative philosophy is neither culturalist nor is it philology—and yet it may freely use both historical and philological methods. Since it is not culturalist, it rejects the labels "intercultural", "cross-cultural", or "transcultural philosophy" as unfortunate.[9] Unlike "Chinese philosophy" once was, post-comparative philosophy is not about tracing the spirit of a civilization, and yet it may well point out peculiar specifics of Chinese philosophical thought hardly found elsewhere.[10] Post-comparative philosophy does not work toward a united

8 An anonymous reviewer is afraid that by regarding the cultural background of a philosophy as contingent—as in Eileen Gu's case in sports—one may ignore, for instance, "the original philosophical argumentations and resolutions of Chinese thought". The point of post-comparative philosophy is not at all to ignore the non-philosophical contexts of any philosophical work or idea, but it suspects that generic categories such as "Chinese" or "Chinese thought" may be too broad to be really useful. We may have to use such labels professionally (I often say that my field is "Chinese philosophy") in order to "compete" academically, just as Eileen Gu has to adopt a nationality to compete at the Olympics—but these national labels are supplied by the social system in which we operate, and they are not inherent in what we are actually doing (in sports or philosophy).

9 The differentiation between these labels is not always clear and they are sometimes used interchangeably. Generally speaking, intercultural philosophy emphasizes philosophical dialogue between philosophies from different cultures while cross-cultural philosophy aims at doing philosophy beyond the boundaries of one particular culture so that two or more culturally different perspectives come to the fore. Transcultural philosophy shares similar aims and stresses the need to extend philosophical reflections through various cultures. Contemporary intercultural, cross-cultural, and, especially, transcultural approaches commonly reject cultural "reifications". Ram Adhar Mall states that intercultural philosophical thinking rejects the idea of "a total purity of a culture" (Mall 2016, 69). Vytis Silius notes that the transcultural approach focuses on the "dynamic (transitional, transforming) elements of cultures and people" (Silius 2020, 274). However, all three concepts indicate, at least by name, a significant relationship between culture and philosophy (however these terms may be defined) that is somehow central to their approach. A post-comparative approach, while not rejecting on principle the use of the word "culture", does not propose, or moves beyond, any privileged connection between philosophy and culture. In short, it does not assume that what it says philosophically is at the same time also "culturally" meaningful.

10 Post-comparative philosophy may be criticized for ignoring a substantial link between cultures or civilizations, and philosophy. Jana Rošker (2020, 306) poses a question indicating such a critique: "Can we really think of knowledge (or philosophy) completely separated from the particular discrete culture in which it was created? Is this, on the other hand, truly something we should wish for?" Post-comparative does not argue for such a separation, but it tends to find the notion of "culture" (however dynamic or hybrid it may be) often too broad to be particularly useful.

global philosophy in the future, which is unlikely to ever evolve in a pluralistic and diverse world society. Post-comparative philosophy is thus also not "world philosophy". It rejects this label as unfortunate, too, because, like "world music" it suggests a prime focus on non-Western, or "folklorist" sources.

As I argued elsewhere (Moeller 2018), Roger Ames can be regarded not only as a major representative of comparative philosophy, but also as a pioneer in post-comparative philosophy. This is also the case for his late co-author and New Confucian ally Henry Rosemont Jr. Both Ames and Rosemont renewed traditional Confucian philosophy in a productive, and often contrastive, dialogue with Western philosophy to develop a contemporary Confucian role ethics. A Confucian role ethics is *not* primarily comparative. Unlike his joint publications with David Hall, Roger Ames single-authored *Confucian Role Ethics: A Vocabulary* (2011) is neither mainly about delineating major differences between Chinese and Western philosophy nor about revealing potential "universal" features of Confucianism (of course not, given Ames' rejection of universalism). Instead, it is about formulating a role ethics for today, generated out of the study of Confucian texts and culture, as an alternative to the currently dominating, utilitarian, deontological, or virtue ethics. As opposed to the latter, which are often primarily derived from Western sources, a Confucian role ethics is decidedly post-comparative because it is rooted, in part, in Confucianism.

Henry Rosemont's New Confucian treatise *Against Individualism* (2015) is also post-comparative. Here, Rosemont says:

> But even if we [Roger Ames and Henry Rosemont] are both interpretively mistaken in attributing an ethics of roles to the early Confucians it would not alter my basic position about the importance of challenging individualism and advancing an ethic of roles, for I could simply re-title this work: *"Role Ethics: A Different Approach to Moral Philosophy Based on a Creative Misunderstanding of Early Confucian Writings."* (Rosemont 2015, 9)

Rosemont's version of a Confucian role ethics targets modern individualism—a general philosophical framework which he regards as responsible for what he believes to be a thoroughly unjust Western society today. Evidently, Rosemont's intention is neither to "get Confucianism right" by finding out how it essentially differs from "the West", nor to unearth any spirit of "Chinese civilization". Instead, he uses his reading of Confucianism to build a powerful moral and political argument that philosophically counters current socials ills.

In my own work, I used a post-comparative approach for quite different purposes. In my book *The Moral Fool: A Case for Amorality* (2009) I combined Daoist ideas from the *Zhuangzi* with, for instance, critiques of morality by the contemporary

German social theorist Niklas Luhmann. But I did not wish to highlight any deeper parallels between the two, and even less to hint at any universal principles. Instead, I wanted to follow Ames' and Rosemeont's example and apply certain inspirations from early Chinese philosophy in discussing a current philosophical theme. Similarly, in our recent book *You and Your Profile: Identity after Authenticity* (2021), Paul D'Ambrosio and I present a critique of contemporary human identity formation that is partly derived from our takes on Daoist philosophy.

I am not referring to my own books here as models of post-comparative philosophy. They are but two among many other very dissimilar examples written by others. Because post-comparative philosophy is *not* a philosophical sub-discipline it cannot be defined in specific terms or identified by specific methods. As has already been pointed out by Ralph Weber, it mixes methods (Kahteran and Weber 2021, 215).[11] I embrace Weber's definition of post-comparative philosophy as amounting

> to just doing philosophy as one thinks fit for getting to the truth about an issue or set of issues by appropriating elements from all philosophical views and traditions one knows of but making no claim of "correct exposition", and instead just addressing hitherto unsolved problems and possibly raising issues that have never been considered before, anywhere. (ibid., 214)

In short, an argument is made because one hopes it is a "good argument", and not because it is, "say, from within Indian philosophy" (ibid., 215).[12]

11 As a mix of methods, post-comparative philosophy is not, as an anonymous reviewer of this essay assumed, "a pursuit of *new* methods and conclusions" (my emphasis). Given its heterogeneous nature, post-comparative philosophy also has no claim to be, as the same reviewer assumed, to "be necessarily superior" to comparative philosophy. It comes after comparative philosophy because it no longer emphasizes comparisons, but it does not claim that comparisons are generally "inferior" to the various methods post-comparative philosophy may employ.

12 Not to aim at "correct expositions", or, like Rosemont, to allow "creative misunderstandings" does not mean, as an anonymous reviewer has assumed, that "anyone can say anything, and without restraints." As Weber says, the aim is to make a good argument—and "anything" is not necessarily a good argument. If someone makes a post-comparative argument on a contemporary issue employing ideas generated by reading, say Plato or Confucius, the main aim is to get the contemporary argument right, and not Plato or Confucius. The same reviewer also stipulates that in this way, post-comparative philosophers may, for instance, "ignore the way Eastern culture perceives its own ideas". But what is "Eastern culture"? Who represents it? Is my take on Hegel privileged over a Hegel scholar from India or China simply because Hegel belongs to "my own culture"? Of course, post-comparative philosophy should try to understand the sources it works with in their respective historical and linguistic context (or any other context that may matter)—this typically makes for a much more nuanced understanding—but this does not mean that this context has to be "personally" shared by the philosopher. To the contrary, to privilege the way a "culture perceives its own ideas" may run the risk of ending up in cultural chauvinism, or even nationalism.

To reiterate: post-comparative philosophy is different from comparative philosophy by not being definable as a field, by not using any specific method, and by not applying the code difference/sameness. Therefore, if successfully practiced the need for the label "post-comparative philosophy" will disappear. We can then eventually discard the term, since it will no longer be unusual or special to utilize sources stemming from diverse traditions. Moreover, since many philosophers will do this, each in their particular ways, it will not be considered a unique method in need of a generic qualification.

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The Problem of Ground in Comparative Philosophy. Quality, Quantity, Intensity

*Margus OTT**

Abstract

In comparative philosophy, there arises the problem of ground for comparison. Qualitative comparison is based on a certain qualitative ground for comparison, e.g., weight. Quantitative comparison brings more clarity into the qualitative comparison, introducing discrete and homogeneous units: how much does it weigh? How much does it cost? Both qualitative and quantitative comparison start from a ground that is already given and clear; they simply apply it to the case at hand (Is this one heavier than the other? If so, by how much?). In other—and more interesting—cases, the common ground is obscure: we have the feeling that A and B can be compared, but how exactly? The inability to immediately proceed to application creates a tension, and this opens the intensive dimension of comparison. The intensity has two sides: obscure and clear. The obscure side has its articulations, but they interpenetrate each other. Our task is to unfold, unravel, unpack. Then we will bring something to clarity where the elements do not interpenetrate so much but are juxtaposed (in different qualities and quantities). This will give rise to new tensions and new unfolding. The obscure articulations do not resemble the clear ones, and their unfolding is a creative process.

Keywords: comparative philosophy, qualitative comparison, quantitative comparison, tension, intensity, obscure ground, interpenetration, juxtaposition, clarity, re-obscuring, groundlessness

Problem osnove za primerjavo v primerjalni filozofiji: kvaliteta, kvantiteta, intenzivnost

Izvleček

V primerjalni filozofiji se pojavlja problem osnove za primerjavo. Kvalitativna primerjava temelji na določenih kvalitativnih osnovah, npr. teži. Kvantitativna primerjava pa prinaša več jasnosti v kvalitativno primerjavo, saj uvaja ločene in homogene enote: koliko tehta? Koliko stane? Tako kvalitativna kot kvantitativna primerjava izhajata iz že danih in jasnih podlag; preprosto jo uporabijo pri obravnavanem primeru (Ali je ta težji kot drugi? Če je tako, koliko težji?). V drugih – zanimivejših – primerih pa je skupna podlaga nejasna: zdi

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se nam, da lahko primerjamo A in B, a kako točno? Nezmožnost takojšnjega pristopa k izvedbi ustvarja napetost, to pa nadalje odpira intenzivno dimenzijo primerjave. Intenzivnost ima dve plati: nejasno in jasno. Nejasna plat ima svoje artikulacije, ki pa se med sabo prepletajo. Naša naloga je pojasnjevati, razreševati, razpakirati. S tem bomo nekaj razjasnili na mestih, kjer se elementi ne prepletajo toliko, temveč so v jukstapoziciji (v različnih kvalitetah in kvantitetah). To pa bo izzvalo nove napetosti in nova pojasnjevanja. Nejasne artikulacije niso podobne jasnim, njihovo pojasnjevanje pa je ustvarjalen proces.

Ključne besede: komparativna filozofija, kvalitativna primerjava, kvantitativna primerjava, napetost, intenzivnost, nejasna podlaga, medsebojno prepletanje, jukstapozicija, ponovno zastiranje, brezosnovnost

What is Comparison

When we bring together philosophers from different traditions, it is usually called "comparative philosophy". There is already a lot of comparative philosophy, but there is still little philosophy of comparison, claims Ralph Weber (2014, 151). In his article "Comparative Philosophy and the *Tertium*: Comparing What with What, and in What Respect?", Weber tries to show that every comparison requires a ground of comparison, a "third of comparison", *tertium comparationis*.[1] He is arguing against the claim that some things are incomparable (e.g. cf. MacIntyre 1991), and his own statement is that "anything can indeed be compared to anything" (Weber 2014, 151), i.e., a comparative ground can be found for any two things or words, if not otherwise, then simply in relation to the fact that both exist in the universe or both are words (ibid., 165, referring to G. E. Moore).

Towards the end of his article, Weber also meditates on the question that sometimes this ground for comparison is not clear. For instance, someone feels the need to compare Confucianism and Cicero, but initially they may not know exactly how or in what respect they should be compared (ibid., 166). But even in that case, Weber argues, we can say that there is a ground, namely the interest of the researcher. Weber acknowledges the role of the person and their intentions and interests, in choosing what to bring together and how. The ground of comparison lies in the identity of the researcher. But it may be pointed out that researchers themselves are not sealed off from the object of their research, and the research changes them in turn, just as Gilbert Simondon said that the knowledge of individuation is the individuation of knowledge, i.e., knowledge itself matures and individuates in the

1 A more detailed presentation can be found in Weber and Chakrabarti (2016), where they distinguish five aspects, including a "pre-comparative *tertium*" (2016, 8). For our purposes here, it does not change much.

course of a process of research (Simondon 1989, 34). Indeed, Weber remarks that the researchers may not be themselves aware of their intentions when they initially bring things together, and their ideas may change in this process.

This topic of obscurity of the ground of comparison, that remains quite tangential for Weber's purposes, will be central here in what follows. For the main part of his article, Weber argues around the identity and identification of the ground that he uses to ward off incomparability and hence the rejection of other philosophical traditions (and I completely share Weber's goal[2]). For my part, I would like to focus on the question of clarity or obscurity of the ground. If the ground for comparison would be always clear from the beginning, there would not be much creativity or philosophical interest involved in a comparison. And it seems that in those considerations where Weber acknowledges a difference, a differentiation, and an obscurity in the one who compares, he comes quite close to the ideas of unfolding and bringing to clarity of obscure articulations that I shall deal with later in this paper.

Ground of Comparison

Let us come to the basics of comparison. Weber argues that for any comparison there must be a ground for comparison, a *tertium comparationis*. That is, since one thing and another thing are in themselves incommensurate, incongruous, incomparable, they need a third one, which would give a common measure to them and through which they can start to communicate.

Money and monetary value are an excellent example. If I want to compare apples and oranges from the perspective of their market value, I note down how much one per kilo costs and how much the other, and then I can compare the numbers. And as we see, it presupposes another common measure, the weight: in order to compare a certain number of apples with a certain number of oranges, I first have to weigh them, in order to say the price per mass unit. I can do it in two different ways, 1) either weighing apples and oranges in relation to each other on a balance scale: if the balance is big enough, so that a sufficiently large number of apples and oranges can be fitted on both sides, I can probably reach a pretty good equilibrium by adding or subtracting fruits on either side; and weight is their common denominator. 2) The other method is to weigh them separately by putting graded

2 The obscure ground involves some incommensurability, but this does not preclude comparison; on the contrary, it warrants multiple comparisons: "The concept of incommensurability is not to be confused with, or reduced to logical incompatibility or incomparability. Incommensurable languages can be compared and rationally evaluated in *multiple* ways. Practically, such comparison and evaluation requires the cultivation of hermeneutical sensitivity and imagination." (Bernstein 1991, 92)

masses on the other plate, or by using a spring scale, and read the number on the display. In this second case there is a further comparison or reduction: I view the weight from the viewpoint of number (summing up the masses on the other plate or reading the numbers on the spring scale); I reduce one ground of comparison, weight, to a more general ground of comparison, number.

All quantitative measures are good examples of *tertium comparationis*. We compare things *as to* the weight, price, speed, length, etc. They serve as the ground of comparison, as the "third". The comparison is always a two-step process: first, I introduce the kind of measurement that interests me: I reduce the phenomenon to that aspect, I take it from that angle. For instance, I take apples from the aspect of price, or from the aspect of weight (and measurements may be nested: in order to compare the price of a certain number of apples to the price of a certain number of oranges, I also have to weigh them). This is the decisive step, a decision to question the phenomena from a certain viewpoint, with a certain intention (I want to know their price and/or their weight), the introduction of a ground (that makes possible comparisons with other things), a "third" that gives the angle from which to view the two.

The second step is to compare two (or more) things. This is usually easier. I already have the common ground for the things, and now I only need to put the things together in this respect (on opposing sides of a balance scale) or compare the numbers read at separate instances of weighing. In the latter case, as discussed above, I compare weights to numbers, I introduce a numerical aspect to the weight, using some units (say, kilograms) which can be divided and added in a uniform way (e.g., in a decimal system, a kilogram can be divided into a thousand grams, and thousand kilograms can be added up and called a ton).

So, in a sense, the "third" (the common ground) comes before the "second" (a thing that differs from the "first" thing). But then again, I could have no quantitative common ground, if there would not be different things. There must always be a "second" in addition to a "first" thing; indeed, we can call something a "first" only if there is also a "second". "First" and "second" cannot be separated absolutely—they may be relatively separate and distinguished, but their very limit or border requires something outside from them, which delimits them, and at the same time which unites them. And this border may be called the "third".[3] So, "first", "second" and "third" form an inseparable complex. Number is the most general ground of

3 If we investigate it further, we will find that this border is not separate from the entity but is its own aspect (see Hegel 2010, 95–101). The whole of Hegel's philosophy can be seen as renewed overcoming of fixed and closed identities and an ever more sophisticated incorporation of otherness. This is another way of comparing without a ground, or of overcoming initial, crude and untrue grounds.

comparison, because any actual thing or process can be quantified in one way or another. A number may represent price, weight, speed, brightness, length, happiness (say, in a happiness index), etc.

Qualitative and Quantitative Comparison

It is useful to make a distinction at this point between quantitative and qualitative comparison.[4] The former involves the repetition of units (as when we count how many units of grams or kilograms "fit" into the weight of a thing). Qualitative comparison is based on similarity and its basis is a holistic or gestalt-like form. In this sense, the first step described above, e.g., the treatment of a thing from the point of view of weight, would be a qualitative comparison;[5] and the second step of comparing numerical values, would be quantitative comparison. Qualitative comparison is based, for example, on the weight as a quality of things. And by qualitative comparison, putting apples and oranges on two plates of a balance scale, we can make a qualitative judgment, e.g., when we say that one is "heavier" than the other or that they are "equally" heavy. But when we want to know *how much* heavier, then we would need a repeating unit and we would become involved in a quantitative measurement and comparison.

Qualitative comparison is a basic fact for all living beings. It is the basis for the categories they form in their interactions with the surroundings. A bacterium has a category for food and another for poison. These categories are evidenced by its behaviour, when it moves up the gradient of a substance or against it, towards the food or away from poison. And perhaps we can detect further differences in its behaviour of feeding or fleeing, in function of the different types of food or poison, or of their abundance (and so there may already be an implicit incipient quantitative comparison). Each category subsumes a certain number of occurrences

4 Quantitative methods of science combine qualitative and quantitative aspects, since they take reality from the viewpoint of some qualities, and segment it quantitatively. Qualitative methods straddle qualitative and intensive aspects (the latter is the main topic of the paper, discussed below); they depart from certain properties of reality, but they do not know beforehand how they fit together. Of course, the outcome of quantitative research may also well be that the initial quality is made problematic and obscure, and that a new distribution of qualities may be proposed.

5 When weight is mentioned, we may be tempted to think that it is something quantitative, since we usually encounter weights in an already quantified form. Yet, in itself, weight is a quality, a property of an object, just as velocity or colour are. It is quantifiable, but in itself, can be distinguished from quantity. In quantity, distinctions are made inside the quality; a certain unit is extracted and imposed on other phenomena. I take a standard for weight, e.g., a thing of one kilogram, and observe, how many of those standard units can I fit on the other side of a weighing scale, before the scale equalizes.

or instances; a bacterium may move towards a new gradient of sugar when the old one has been exhausted (it can do it *again*, exhibiting a generalization over time); and it may perhaps exhibit the same behaviour in case of both glucose and fructose—in that case these two would be the same for it, or at least sufficiently similar (again, showing that a generality is involved).

Qualitative comparison and categorization is behind practically every word of the language: white things include instances of sugar, salt, snow, etc.; "houses" include bigger and smaller houses; "running" includes several different instances and the ways of running of different people and animals; "ouch!" expresses a certain kind of reaction in different people; even "but" or "or" involve some kind of scheme for relating things, behaviours, propositions ("this apple is red, but this orange is orange", "do you want apples or oranges"). The so-called prototype-based categories, investigated by George Lakoff (1987), also have a certain qualitative image or scheme as their basis. For example, a robin may be at the centre of our bird-category, on the basis of which we compare putative birds and either include or exclude them, and include more centrally (sparrow) or more at the margin (ostrich, penguin). The birds at the margin, by qualitative comparison, depart more from the central image than the more "prototypical" birds. This can again be made to correlate to some quantitative data—e.g., that ostriches and penguins weigh way more than a "prototypical" bird—but it requires first some qualitative basis (e.g., that we recognize them all as birds).

In sum, the ground for qualitative comparison—as well as for quantitative comparison—is some actualized feature of the world.

Intensity

The quantitative and qualitative comparison discussed above proceed without much ado. They may involve technical difficulties (e.g., the invention of scales or money, or agreement on the aspect from which comparison will be made), but at least we know what we are doing.

Yet there is another dimension of comparison. Sometimes I face a situation when I do not know how things fit together, I do not yet know their "what" or "how" or "how much".[6] I may have the feeling that "there is something", but I do not yet know, what it is. I grope in the dark. For instance, I watch a movie, read a book,

6 Outside of the most general determinations that these things or ideas "exist" and that they "have some relation to me" some relevance. But all this remains completely empty, undetermined, and obscure.

look at a painting, and I feel that there is something significant there, something important. But I may not be sure in what way exactly it is important, or how it relates to those other things that I have been doing and investigating—or, in the final account, how it relates to the person I am.[7]

Let us look a little bit further, what does the "groping in the dark" involve, or the feeling that "there is something there". First of all, it involves a feeling of tension that can be experienced as exciting, disturbing, or uneasy. In any case, it requires that I do something. It concerns me, it is relevant to me, but I do not yet know how it "fits": how the different elements of the situation fit together, and how it fits together with myself. This is the intensive dimension of comparison.

Although the meaning is obscure, this tension[8] is not completely indistinct. In all situations there is some articulation. But I always grasp only part of it, and partially. If I delve deeper, I may find out that the true (or truer) articulations are, in fact, different, and I may also see why they appeared in such a way. The Earth seems flat, but after some learning (geography lessons) and/or experience (taking an airplane) I understand that it is curved. I will also understand the reason of the apparent flatness: the curvature is, from a human perspective, too slight to be perceived without some sophisticated intellectual or technical tools. The former articulations need not disappear, but they will be inserted into a wider context of more articulations.

So, when something puzzles me I am already immersed in some articulations, but I feel that further articulations lie hidden and implied (literally, "folded in"), and the tension I feel urges me to find them, to bring them into clarity, to fold them out or explicate them.

This applies both to very sophisticated scientific and philosophical research, as well as to our very first explorations of the world as infants. The basic scheme is

7 The person I am, can be seen as a specific way of relating things and relating to things, a specific way that marks out also what is important and relevant.

8 The psychological tension corresponds to some intensity in the world. Intensity expresses various tendencies of things, both in relation to their inner articulations, and to external things. If a kettle is heated from below, a heat difference is created and the water inside it will tend to move upwards. And this intensive situation may be expressed in different solutions: calm diffusion, regular convections cells, and violent boiling (see DeLanda 2002). In mental problems, the psychological tension may become quite decoupled from the objective intensities, but this separation can never become complete. A distinction can be made in the mode of actualization of intensities. Where cognition becomes decoupled from reality, the tension cannot unfold in cooperation with other beings, and its operation will remain repetitive, tedious. For more on this, see below, in next section, where two intensive movements are described. The intensity is intended to correspond to Deleuze's intensive actualization and spatio-temporal dynamisms (see Deleuze 1994, chapter 5). Of course, the notion of intensity has also been criticized (e.g. Garcia 2018).

the same: feeling of tension, implied obscure articulation, effort to explicate it and to bring it to clarity, new situation with new tensions, and the cycle repeats itself.

It is useful to bear in mind the very first steps of developing knowledge, because if we immediately start to consider the most sophisticated expressions of knowledge we may lose sight of the fact that they are part of an already very unfolded understanding that has required very many subsequent steps of unfolding, a maturation process. By going back to the initial stages, we can better appreciate how fundamental this kind of intensity is.

Obscure and Clear Sides

What aspects can we distinguish in this tension and unfolding? Most simply, we could distinguish between two sides, the clear and obscure. Some articulations of the situation are clear, and others lay in obscurity. We should avoid the temptation of imagining the obscure side to be in the likeness of the clear side. They do not differ in degree (as the metaphor of light/darkness would suggest, where adding more lumens will add more clarity, at least up to a point), but they differ in nature. Why is the obscure side obscure? Because its articulations are not juxtaposed, unfolded, or explicated, but interpenetrating, folded, implicated. The mature (unfolded) plant is not already there in the seed (the folded phase). The capacity of the seed to develop into an unfolded plant lies in obscurity. The seed does not follow some "idea", a kind of a picture of the mature plant (with its juxtaposed parts)[9] but unfolds its folded articulations in an intensive process that takes time or rather that creates temporality, since "time" is nothing but the sum total of all the different actualization processes combined. Of course, the obscure and folded side will not disappear when the plant reaches maturity—it still goes on living, adapting to the situation, unfolding its capacities, relying on the articulations of its obscure ground.[10]

This tension does not have to be felt in the psychological sense, and it characterizes any situation, involving also inanimate entities. A physical system also tends towards some state—not in the sense that it would represent this state as a goal,

9 With the discovery of DNA, the old preformist ideas have become popular again, the idea that in the genes the mature unfolded organism is "already there". But it is "already there" only for the external observer who projects his expectations onto the organism. The organism itself is in some phase of unfolding its capacities, and the DNA serves for it the same purpose as lecture notes for the lecturer, so: that things would not go off the rails. DNA is only one component or tool (inherited from our ancestors) in the unfolding process, and its effectively 2D structure does not give in advance the mature 3D form.

10 I have developed these ideas in a couple of articles, see Ott (2019; 2020; 2021).

but this state will simply occur as an outcome of the process itself, as the explication of its implicit articulations. Manuel DeLanda (2002) has discussed the interpenetrating side of the physical systems with great clarity and persuasion, claiming that it is what is meant when the n-dimensional phase space of a system is described, where each dimension represents a meaningful way that a system can change.[11] So that the phase space represents the capacities of a system, the ways it can affect other things and can be affected by them in turn.[12] This is then unfolded in a certain actualization process that draws a phase portrait in that space.

So, on the obscure side the distinctions and differences are still there, it is just that they interpenetrate each other, are wrapped up or folded in. Both the processes of understanding and of living in general are processes of unfolding such obscure interpenetrating articulations and creating the clear side with juxtaposed ideas or bodily parts.

The other side—that of clarity and juxtaposition—is easy to grasp. This is the realm of measurable time and space: the moments and positions that are relatively homogeneous, so that one part of them can be extracted and used as a unit to measure the others. I take "one second" and measure time in seconds; I take a "yard" and use it as a yardstick to measure spatial distances; I take a "character" and measure the length of a text. There are moments and positions clearly outside each other: a moment is before or after another, a position is in front or in back, left or right, above or below, characters are to one or the other side of each other. With a unit we can measure how distant is the moment or position from another. This is the metrical spacetime[13] that permits quantitative comparison.

Although, if we take a closer look, we will find that this clear juxtaposition is the result of an effort by our understanding. The immediate experience has been conceptually overwritten and developed much further towards clarity and juxtaposition than what we find in our lived experience. Our experience is always somewhat interpenetrating, our duration is never momentary, but is spread over a specious present. The same applies to perception of space that is not composed of indifferent pixels next to each other but is made up of continuous chunks of things that furthermore are in continuity with our behaviour: they elicit action,

11 These kinds of models would be heuristic tools to explore the interpenetrating. See also DeLanda (2011, 18–20).

12 Of course, in each system some internal regulation also sets in, i.e., how the system affects itself. Not everything is compossible, as Leibniz would say.

13 A metrical spacetime is one where the distances between points or moments remain fixed. This is distinguished from different topological spaces where the distances can change, but the neighbourhoods of points remain the same. That is, spacetime can be squeezed or stretched (cf. DeLanda 2002, 15 sqq.).

afford it, inhibit it. We usually don't perceive an individual letter, but we see whole words, where characters already blend into each other, and even we do not see the words, but we "see" the meaning through them, so that the physical form of characters is absorbed by the meaning they convey.

In sum, our understanding has pushed a natural tendency towards juxtaposition further in that direction, taking it beyond our experience, and producing the idea of metrical spacetime with completely homogeneous parts.[14]

Two Movements: Unfolding and Refolding

The movement between clear and obscure, interpenetrating and juxtaposed, is always bidirectional. On the one hand, ideas or things are brought to clarity and made to juxtapose each other, but on the other hand, they still (also) interpenetrate each other, so that part of the situation is always obscure. And when we bring more to clarity, new tensions are formed, new obscurities are folded in and require renewed unfolding. This unfolding will be more nuanced since more folds are involved.

Explication and unfolding always take place in a situation, in an environment, in interactions with other beings and processes. When an infant is born, it continues to unfold itself, using food for this purpose, integrating parts of the food to its organism. And from the very beginning there are also other kinds of interactions and integrations: with the caregiver, toys, surfaces (crawling), etc. Through trial and error, the child finds certain patterns that work. From the tension of an obscure situation, it brings to clarity certain forms of relating and acting. They become its property, just as its own body becomes its property, in the sense that these competences are now at its disposal and can be used for new actualizations, new unfolding.

New encounters may re-obscure and re-problematize acquired knowledge and habits, creating new tensions, and requiring new actualizations. Sometimes we need to "melt down" some rigid knowledge (both know-what and know-how), to take a juxtaposed actual system and make it interpenetrating and problematic again. And then find new solutions, new forms. Often this reworking is harder than the original actualization because old attractors can be very strong.

In a sense, anything can indeed be compared with any other thing (Weber 2014, 168). But, as Weber says, this does not mean that "anything can be compared

14 Science has since gone beyond such metric spacetime in non-Euclidean geometries, that have given us, among other things, the Einsteinian relativistic spacetime.

valuably with anything" (ibid.). The difference comes out in the process of comparison: in a "valuable" comparison, the resolution of tension changes the initial state in an important way, and the outcome is that more things can be related in more ways. A conspiracy theory can also take in more and more material, but the scheme of interpretation remains the same, so that the new material does not make any meaningful change in the form of thought itself. The "news" has new content every day, but the form of the news remains the same and unaffected by that new content. In a valuable comparison, on the other hand, the form of thought itself is affected. If Confucius and Cicero are brought together then both acquire a new context, and the comparison transforms their inner articulations, forming a new field of intensities, changing or modifying our initial intuitions. There is an indelible objectivity in valuable comparison, both in terms of the material involved, and in terms of feedback from peers. In short, for comparison, anything goes—but not everything goes well.

In sum, every situation has two aspects: an obscure, interpenetrating, folded side, and a clear, juxtaposed, unfolded side. They are the two poles of the ontological tension that drives movement in two directions. First, the drive to bring things into clarity, to unfold or actualize them. One felt that there was something, and after some experimentation and investigation, one sees what it was. Second, there is a drive to re-obscure or re-fold a situation. The situation was not as simple as one thought. There is something different, something more. New tensions and obscurities are formed that require unfolding.

Groundlessness

We sometimes deal with a ground that is obscure and that has its interpenetrating articulations. Perhaps it would be more precise to say that from my perspective there is, in fact, no ground, and that rather it is groundless. There is "something" in the situation, in certain things and ideas, but they are not (yet) grounded. They float "in the air". And I am searching for how they could fit together and make sense. But since I do not know how they fit together and how I could compare them, I cannot use any precise method either. Or if I can use a precise method for solving the perplexity, then the obscurity was not really so thick, and it was a rather easy question or involved merely technical difficulties. But sometimes the obscurity is indeed thick, and no method can be used, other than some general practical advice like "Persist!", "Keep on searching!" or "Alternate between searching and letting go, between work and leisure!" In case of truly obscure situations, nothing more precise can be said. And this general advice may indeed

work, so that simply by being in contact with the situation or the problem, by trying to intuit it, feeling it, the situation may start to sort itself out, to unravel itself. It may happen by a sudden illumination or by a gradual unfolding, or by a series of illuminations. But there is really no methodology here, no pre-given ground—from my perspective I could even say that it requires that I "abandon" myself to this groundlessness.[15] This is no small task, because this kind of situation may make one feel uneasy, uncomfortable, at loss. It may be despairing to feel that I don't know how it all fits together—and I may have the feeling that I myself am falling apart. I may not withstand the tension. Or it may feel exciting, empowering, and I may experience how this excitement makes certain demands from me, drags me along, just as the promise of a good discourse or dialogue pushed Socrates to take a walk.

Ultimately all those illuminations and solutions will still remain partial, as it is impossible to bring everything to clarity. Because most fundamentally I always differ from myself, I stretch ahead in duration and extension, I leave behind the old time and place and grasp for the next one. My very existence is based on a "cut", on a non-ground.[16] Taking this into account, we may say that it is not so that the main mode would be grounded comparisons and that the lack of a ground would be an exception (to be resolved, sooner or later, with the discovery of a ground). It could be as well said that it is the other way around, that the main mode is being un-grounded and that from this unground or obscure ground we pull out some things that we try to fit together to form a ground upon which we can proceed with qualitative and quantitative comparisons. We have one foot on the ground and the other foot in the air. Things cannot become completely clear to ourselves, and even we ourselves cannot become completely clear and transparent to ourselves.

Yet this should not be seen as a shortcoming, but as a condition of existence and understanding.[17] As particular beings, we do indeed value clarity (when we know "how" and "how much"), but we should also learn to appreciate the obscurity, the groundlessness that lies at our very heart.

15 This is an important topic in the German mysticism of Meister Eckhart and Jakob Böhme, the *Gelassenheit*, that inspired also Søren Kierkegaard (see Kangas 2007). Stephen Houlgate (2006) repeatedly emphasizes the importance of this notion for Hegel.

16 Cf. Kierkegaard's *Afgrund* (1962, 158) and Heidegger's *Abgrund* (2012, 27, 299–306). Cf. also the blog entry "Cut" in https://dechanter.blogspot.com/2018/11/cut.html.

17 "Incommensurability, it turns out, does not after all preclude rational debate and encounter." (MacIntyre 1991, 118)

Some Consequences for Comparative Philosophy

Philosophy is a field where the obscure articulations are captured in concepts; the intensive unfolding is the movement of thought; and the unfolded actual forms are expressed in texts and discourses. It has its ineliminable illusions: when concepts are considered to be the same as words of common speech; where movement of thought is reduced to a mechanics of thought where from one actual form another actual form can be produced (as in syllogistic reasoning, for example, or the Chinese five-phase scheme); where philosophical texts and discourses are evaluated with scientific, religious, or artistic criteria.[18]

But when these illusions are avoided and a philosophical text or discourse is taken in a strong sense, it can blend into your own obscure articulations, redistributing them; its intensities can resonate with you, giving you force; its actual juxtaposed form can initiate a process of melting up and recasting your own actual forms.

Comparative philosophy does not differ essentially from "ordinary" philosophy, but it still has its peculiarities due to the fact that it discusses sources from different traditions. This makes the discrepancies all the more visible, and communalities all the more intriguing. Therefore, the feeling of groping in the dark may be even more impelling, as well as the need to melt down existing juxtaposed actualized forms in both traditions. This can produce intense pleasure.[19]

Conclusion

The starting point of this paper was Ralph Weber's (2014) affirmation that all comparison requires a ground of comparison. I proceeded to distinguish first, a qualitative ground: the mode of being as to which two or more things are compared, e.g., weight, or price. And second, the quantitative ground: a discrete unit that is used to measure a given quality, e.g., kilo or euro. This qualitative and quantitative comparison apply when it is already clear what and how to compare.

But there are other cases where it is not clear what or how to compare. When we do not yet know how things fit together and we grope in the dark. When the ground of comparison is obscure, and we are struggling to shed some light to it.

18 Of course, texts can be treated from different viewpoints: a philosophy may be extracted from a poem, a religious text, or even some common advertisement; and a philosophical text may be treated from poetic, scientific or other viewpoint. The question is to keep these different attitudes apart, at least temporarily.

19 Weber and Chakrabarti (2016, 10) also speak of "philosophical pleasure". I shall leave it to the next occasion to unfold more thoroughly the consequences hinted to in this subsection.

This was called intensive comparison. The tension is created between the obscure and clear sides. On the obscure side, the articulations interpenetrate each other, and in the process of understanding they are unfolded, brought into the clarity of juxtaposition where one idea is next to another. Together with this unfolding we also refold the obscure side that is transformed by the very process of unfolding it. My obscurity of before is not my obscurity of today. And now other things can be unfolded from it.

The clear examples of comparison, discussed at the beginning of this paper (qualitative and quantitative comparison), end up being just one side of the intensity of comparison, its "clear" side that is in tension with its "obscure" side. It is this tension that drives creative comparisons and can be understood as an unfolding of interpenetrating obscure articulations and bringing them to clear juxtaposition, where one thing, idea, or phase is next to another.

For example, I want to know how to bring together Confucianism and Cicero (an example mentioned by Weber). Initially, I grope in the dark. Articulations are there, but they are obscure, stuck together, interpenetrating. During the investigation process they are gradually unfolded, brought to clarity. I can now state, elaborate on how they fit together, what are the commonalities and what are the differences.

Weber's goal was to show that anything can be compared with anything. This is indeed so, but now we can make some distinctions. Qualitative and quantitative comparisons are of low intensity and trivial. Intensity in comparison is not trivial, but there is no guarantee that it will work out. It is always risky. Sometimes the intensity wears off. There was nothing there, after all. But sometimes the intensity stays and generates something interesting. From unfolded bits and pieces, a ground is formed that can be treaded upon, although it floats above an irreducible groundlessness or obscurity.

Especially in the field of comparative philosophy, there is still so much unused potential energy resulting from the differences among philosophical traditions that waits to unleash its kinetic energy in a renewed movement of thought. No *a priori* limitations can be set on it, and it can create its justification only by itself: how interesting is that castle in the air and how much intensity can it provide for further explorations.

Acknowledgments

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Desire *Versus* Ego: On How Kaneko Fumiko Transcended Stirnean Egoism

*Sašo DOLINŠEK**

Abstract

Kaneko Fumiko (1903–1926) was an anarchist rebel during the Taishō era of modern Japan. She was arrested in 1923 and charged with high treason for participating in a plot to attack the imperial family. She also had connections with members of the Korean national liberation movement, most notably her partner Park Yeol. Her experience of abuse, abandonment, and exploitation growing up led her to form a highly critical and dismissive attitude towards established norms and institutions, which she saw as hypocritical, self-serving and oppressive. She describes her position as anarchist, nihilist and egoist and cites Max Stirner, the founder of egoism, as her most significant influence. Egoism is a radical individualism that denies any authority and espouses that the individual pursues her self-interest unhindered.

Kaneko strived to always live by her egoist principles by following her wishes. However, in one of the letters she gave to the court during her imprisonment, she doubts a past decision. Namely, she felt that Park was at one point making decisions unilaterally and not respecting her will. Hence, she wrote that, according to her egoism, she should have left Park. Nonetheless, in the same letter, she reaffirms her love for Park and defiantly accepts all the consequences of their relationship, including the death sentence. Using psychoanalytic theory from the Lacanian tradition, I argue that Kaneko's confirmation of her love for Park indicates fidelity to her desire. This fidelity opens up a dimension where she can be more faithful to herself than through Stirnean egoism.

Keywords: Kaneko Fumiko, egoism, Max Stirner, psychoanalysis, desire, ego

Želja proti egu: o tem, kako je Kaneko Fumiko presegla stirnerjevski egoizem

Izvleček

Kaneko Fumiko (1903–1926) je bila anarhistična upornica v obdobju Taishō moderne Japonske. Leta 1923 je bila aretirana in obtožena veleizdaje zaradi sodelovanja pri načrtovanju napada na cesarsko družino. Imela je tudi številne povezave s člani korejskega narodnoosvobodilnega gibanja, predvsem prek partnerja Parka Yeola. Izkustva zlorabe,

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zapustitve in izkoriščanja med odraščanjem so izoblikovala njen zelo kritičen in odklonilen odnos do uveljavljenih norm in institucij, ki so se ji zdele hinavske, sebične in zatiralske. Svoje stališče opisuje kot anarhistično, nihilistično in egoistično. Kot najpomembnejši vpliv navaja Maxa Stirnerja, utemeljitelja egoizma. Egoizem je radikalen individualizem, ki ne priznava nobene avtoritete in se zavzema za to, da naj posameznik neomejeno uresničuje lastne interese.

Kaneko si je prizadevala, da bi vedno živela v skladu s svojimi egoističnimi načeli, zato je vedno sledila svojim željam. Vendar v enem od pisem, ki jih je med prestajanjem zaporne kazni predala sodišču, podvomi o svoji pretekli odločitvi. Menila je namreč, da je Park nekoč sprejel odločitve enostransko in ni spoštoval njene volje, zato bi ga morala takrat zapustiti, če naj bi še naprej živela po svojih egoističnih načelih. Kljub temu v istem pismu potrjuje svojo ljubezen do Parka in kljubovalno sprejema vse posledice njunega razmerja, vključno z obsodbo na smrt. Z uporabo psihoanalitične teorije lacanovske tradicije trdim, da njena potrditev ljubezni do Parka kaže na zvestobo svoji želji. Ta zvestoba ji odpira dimenzijo, kjer je lahko zvestejša sama sebi kakor pa prek stirnerjevskega egoizma.

Ključne besede: Kaneko Fumiko, egoizem, Max Stirner, psihoanaliza, želja, jaz

Introduction

The subject of this paper is the thought and actions of Kaneko Fumiko (金子文子), a Taishō era Japanese anarchist, nihilist and egoist. Specifically, I intend to reconsider an episode in her life from a philosophical and psychoanalytic perspective when she harboured doubt towards herself and her convictions. As a radical individualist and egoist, Kaneko acknowledged no authority above herself and had a principle to follow only her wants. However, while she was in jail for plotting to assassinate the emperor, she admitted that there was a point when she failed to follow her egoist principle, and that the consequences of that decision ultimately led to her imprisonment. Specifically, as she, her lover Park Yeol (朴烈) and other comrades were discussing the planned assassination, Park made some decisions on his own, without consulting Kaneko and acquiring her consent. For her, that was a severe breach of trust and mutual respect, so she believed that at that moment she should have left Park and gone her own way. However, this did not happen, and she ended up staying with Park and became embroiled in the plot.

Nevertheless, she neither expressed regret for her actions nor pleaded for forgiveness from the authorities, despite this. She instead pronounced her love for Park, confirmed the integrity of her decision at that time, accepted all its following consequences and even provoked the authorities to execute her. An apparent

contradiction arises: how can Kaneko admit that she betrayed herself while concurrently affirming that decision as being true to herself?

This paper attempts to answer this question by reconsidering Kaneko's decision through philosophers influenced by Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis, such as Slavoj Žižek and Mari Ruti. I argue that a rift appeared between her ego, i.e. the image of her ideal self, and herself as a subject. In other words, a rift appeared between demands issued by her ego and her unconscious desires. Her decision to stay with Park and participate in the plot means she chose to follow her desires. Consequently, while Kaneko may have felt that she betrayed her egoist principles, by doing so, she was able to stay true to herself as a desiring subject. That is why she ultimately could identify with her decision and welcome all its consequences, even when such a move ultimately led to her death.

Kaneko's Life

Firstly, a short presentation of Kaneko's life is necessary to acquaint the reader with the basic facts of a generally obscure historical figure. Furthermore, any presentation of her philosophical thought must begin with her life, because her experiences played a crucial role in shaping her worldview. While the various different ideologies that she embraced (and some later discarded) had given her thought an interpretative and expressive tool, her outlook ultimately originates from all the injustices Kaneko was subjected to during her short life.

Her memoirs were appropriately titled *Nani ga watashi o kō saseta ka* 何が私をこうさせたか (*What Made Me Do What I Did)*, since they are essentially a recollection of all her experiences which led her to embrace a nihilistic and rebellious attitude. It is not an exaggeration to say that Kaneko's negative experiences, rife with abuse, exploitation and abandonment, shaped her as a person. In presenting her life story, I will rely on her memoirs (Kaneko in Suzuki 2013, 7–289) and Yamada's study of her life (1996), unless specified otherwise.

Kaneko Fumiko was born in 1903 in Yokohama to her father Fumikazu and mother Kikuno. As soon as she was born, she was already subjected to a form of violence. Her father could not be bothered to record her birth in the family register (*koseki* 戸籍), which would be the source of much pain later. Her days of a happy childhood were short-lived, since her father soon began to lead a life of debauchery and idleness. Therefore, the family fell into poverty. Fumikazu would often argue and be violent toward Kikuno, and their relationship would ultimately end when Fumikazu left them for Kikuno's younger sister (Kaneko's aunt).

Kaneko would, after that, move around with her mother, who had multiple lovers. Their life was so destitute that, at one point, Kaneko's mother seriously considered selling her daughter off to a brothel.

Kaneko was genuinely excited to finally go to school, but she was barred from entering as she was an "unregistered" (*musekisha* 無籍者). After her mother pleaded with the school to allow her to attend class, she was finally allowed to enter, but even then, Kaneko was constantly subjected to discrimination and shaming.

When Kikuno got remarried, she left Kaneko with her parents (Kaneko's grandparents), so Kaneko was in effect abandoned by both parents. In 1911 she received a visit from her grandmother on her father's side, a Japanese colonist in Korea. The grandmother offered to adopt Kaneko and take her to Korea, to which she agreed. Her grandmother's family was well off, so Kaneko hoped that her life would finally take a turn for the better, but this did not come to pass. Instead, she was treated as a servant and would regularly be the victim of beatings, humiliation and abuse. All the mistreatment eventually drove her to attempt suicide by jumping into a river. However, she changed her mind at the last moment and swore revenge upon all those who torment others.

Kaneko went back to Japan in 1919, where she was yet again subjected to abuse. Her father attempted to wed her off to her uncle (Kikuno's younger brother), a monk at a temple. The engagement fell apart, and her relationship with her father further soured. In 1920 she decided to go to Tokyo by herself and study.

While she attended schools in Tokyo, Kaneko supported herself with part-time jobs, such as selling newspapers and soap. However, her employers exploited her aggressively, so she barely made any money. She also became acquainted with different social movements, such as Christianity and socialism. She joined both for a short period, but was left disillusioned by their followers' hypocritical actions, as they preached high ideas but did not seem to practice them.

Nonetheless, socialism left a lasting impact on Kaneko's thought. While all her negative experiences made her discontented with society in general, socialism gave her a language to understand and express those feelings.

> Socialism has not given me anything new. It only gave me a theory of the correctness of my feelings that I had acquired from my past circumstances. I was poor. I had been used, bullied, tormented, held down, deprived of my freedom, exploited, and controlled by people with money. Thus, I have always harboured a deep-seated antipathy towards those with such power. At the same time, I have always had deep compassion for those in

> the same situation as me. […] It was socialism that ignited this rebellion and compassion in my heart.
>
> Oh, I want ... I want to fight for us, the wretched class, even if it entails sacrificing my whole life. (Kaneko in Suzuki 2013, 250)
>
> 社会主義は私に、別に何らの新しいものを与えなかった。それはただ、私の今までの境遇から得た私の感情に、その感情の正しいということの理論を与えてくれただけのことであった。私は貧乏であった。今もう貧乏である。そのために私は、金のある人々にき使われ、いじめられ、なまれ、抑えつけられ、自由を奪われ、搾取され、支配されて来た。そうして私は、そうした力をもっている人への反感を常に心の中に蔵していた。と同時に、私と同じような境遇にある者に心から同情を寄せていた。（中略）私の心のなかに燃えていたこの反抗や同情に、ぱっと火をつけたのが社会主義であった。
>
> ああ私は……してやりたい。私たち哀れな階級のために、私の全生命を犠牲にしても闘いたい。

While Kaneko had always felt indignant because of how people treated her, the socialist theory of class struggle and exploitation made her understand that her misery was not simply the result of simple misfortune, but a systemic issue. Perceiving one's misery as simply a result of bad luck is fatalistic, as it naturalizes one's circumstances and, consequently, gives the appearance that nothing can be done. In contrast, a socialist understanding demystifies and undermines such fatalism since it presents one's circumstances as a result of class divisions that are structured to benefit a small layer of society at the expense of others. This implies that society is not natural but artificially structured to be unjustly stratified, and, therefore, alterable.

Furthermore, a socialist critique also makes evident that systemic injustices affect many others in similar ways, which creates the potential for solidarity for a common cause. It is questionable whether, despite Kaneko's later disillusionment with the socialist movement, she would still have gone down the path of rebellion if she was not exposed to these ideas.

In school, Kaneko became friends with Niiyama Hatsuyo 新山初代, whose strong, independent and assertive personality, and that impressed Kaneko. Niiyama introduced Kaneko to the ideas of Max Stirner, Friedrich Nietzsche and Mikhail Artsybashev, and Kaneko soon noticed the connection between Niiyama's personality and the nihilist-egoist ideas. Disappointed by mass movements and most people, it is not surprising that Kaneko saw her path with the radical individualist

self-assertion of egoism and the rejection of external and established values of nihilism.

She also became acquainted with some Koreans and felt an affinity with them. Kaneko's time in the country had made her compassionate towards Koreans, who, as colonized people, also felt the unjust sting of the system. One of her Korean friends showed her a poem called "*Inukoro* 犬ころ (Pup)" by Park Yeol, which entranced her so much that she became determined to meet its author. When the two finally met, Kaneko noticed that Park possessed similar individualist ideals, so she proposed that they start living together. Park concurred, and they started living together in 1922, making a mutual pact to respect their individualities and treat each other as equals.

They organized many activities, such as publishing rebellious and pro-Korean newspapers and holding meetings with other like-minded individuals. Park introduced Fumiko to the Black Wave Society (*Kokutōkai* 黒濤会), a Korean socialist study group, and together they founded, edited and wrote for its newspaper *Black Wave* (*Kokutō* 黒濤). The Black Wave Society would split between communists and anarchists, and the latter would reorganize themselves as the Black Friends Society (*Kokuyūkai* 黒友会), where allegedly the famous anarchist, Ōsugi Sakae (大杉榮), held a lecture (Raddeker 1997, 199). Raddeker (ibid., 195) suggests that this split echoes the broader dispute between anarchists and communists at the time, called the anarchist-Bolshevik dispute (*ana-boru ronsō* アナ・ボル論争). It is possible that this tension also contributed to Kaneko's further endorsement of the anarchist-nihilist position. Kaneko would edit and write for its journal *Cheeky Koreans* (*Futoi Senjin* 太い鮮人), later renamed *Today's Society* (*Genshakai* 現社会).

While the Black Friends Society was dedicated to legitimate and legal activities, Kaneko, Park and other anarchists also formed its underground wing, the Malcontents' Society (*Futeisha* 不逞者), to carry out direct action. Plotting to assassinate the crown prince, they tried multiple times to procure explosives, including once from the Korean rebel group the Heroic Corps (*Giretsudan* 義烈団). This plot never came to fruition, but that did not stop the authorities from coming after them. The Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 was followed by many fires, for which Korean residents were blamed and massacred. In order to justify this senseless slaughter, the authorities required a scapegoat so they could say that Koreans represented a genuine threat (Yamada 1996, 150). Kaneko, Park and some others were soon arrested and presented as a threat to order and security. The plot to assassinate the emperor came to light during the interrogations, so the authorities found their perfect scapegoat. Despite interrogations and the trial lasting until 1926, Kaneko always stood tall and never asked for forgiveness from the

authorities. In the end, she was convicted of high treason (*taigyakuzai* 大逆罪) and was sentenced to death, but was soon bestowed an imperial pardon and had her sentence commuted to life imprisonment. She died in prison in 1926, and the circumstances of her death remain undetermined. However, it is popularly believed that she committed suicide as the last defiant act against the state, the emperor and his pardon (Raddeker 1997, 68–69).

Kaneko's Egoism

Kaneko Fumiko was not a prolific writer, so few direct reference materials exist. To present Kaneko's egoism, I refer to her memoirs (Kaneko in Suzuki 2013, 7–289) and archives from her imprisonment, such as recorded interrogations (Suzuki 2013, 291–344), and two written statements to the supreme court (ibid., 344–56). Furthermore, while Kaneko mentions other influences on her thought, such as Nietzsche and Artzybashev (Kaneko in Suzuki 2013, 271), she admires the 19th-century German philosopher Max Stirner (1806–1856) the most (Suzuki 2013, 345). Furthermore, Stirner is considered the founder of egoism as a philosophy, so I will refer to him when Kaneko's thought requires clarification.

The following quote is the best starting point here, because it thoroughly and inclusively encapsulates many aspects of Kaneko's philosophy. After making a metaphysical claim that all things in existence consist of two inseparable and utter opposites (light-dark, joy-misery) and denouncing as sophistry any religious hope for the negative aspects disappearing and the world becoming perfect, she concludes:

> So I declare: therefore, I do not recognize any "vocation" or "mission" above human beings, nay, above myself. In other words, "I want to do this, so I do this" is the only law and command that I have to govern my actions. To put it simply, all my actions are just "I do it because I want to", and I don't tell others that "you have to do this" or "you should be like that". I think: just as I have my own head and my own feet to think about myself and walk my own path, so should others have their own head and their own feet. In other words, autonomy and self-governance—there where everyone becomes the master of their lives and governs their lives accordingly is where I feel like drawing a faint picture of my favourite society. (Suzuki 2013, 351)
>
> で、こう私は断定します。したがって私は人間の上に、いな自分の上に「天職」とか「使命」とかいうものを認めません。つ

> まり「自分はこうやりたいからこうやる」これが私にとって自分の行為を律すべく唯一つの法則であり、命令です。もっとわかりやすくいうと、私の行為すべては、「私自身そうしたいからそうする」というだけのことであって、他人に対しては「そうせねばならん」とも「そうあるべきだ」ともいいません。私は思うんです。私が私自身のことを考え、私自身の道を歩むために、私自身の頭と足を持ってるように、他人もまた自分の頭と足とをもってるはずだ。——つまり、自主自治——すべての人が自分の生活の主となって、自分の生活を正しく治めるところに、かすかながら私の好きな社会を描いてみる気にもなるのです。

I extract three significant aspects of Kaneko's egoism from the above quote: denial of authority, ownership of oneself and free association.

Denial of Authority

Kaneko's overwhelmingly negative experiences during her childhood and adolescence instilled a strong suspicion of authority and social norms. For example, during her second interrogation on the 17th of January 1924, she presents her critical understanding of the role of morality in society (ibid., 299–300). Kaneko opens her critique with a rejection of filial piety (*kōkō* 孝行), which she describes as just a power relation where the strong (parent) can do with the weak (child) as they please. She sees this dynamic of weak and strong as the truth of morality in general:

> In that way, morality is always elaborated to suit the strong.
>
> In other words, the strong protect their freedom of conduct and force the weak to submit. Speaking of this relationship from the [the position of the] weak, the promise of obedience to the strong is so-called morality.
>
> This morality governs each era and constitutes each society. Thus, the rulers always make it a primary condition to sustain this morality longer. (ibid., 300)
>
> そうしてその道徳はいつも強い者に都合の好いように練り上げられております。
>
> つまり強い者は自分の行動の自由を擁護しつつ、弱者に服従を強いる。この関係を弱者から言えば強者への屈従が、いわゆる道徳であります。

> この道徳が各時代を支配し、各社会を構成しております。そうして支配者はいつもこの道徳をより長く保つことを第一義的条件としております。

Kaneko also experienced the exploitative and subjugating function of morality in the context of gender dynamics. She describes how she and other women are made to marry without their consent and compares it to slavery. Women are reduced to commodities, yet they are expected to accept such practices as natural (Kaneko in Suzuki 2013, 161, 172).

She extends her critique to the highest echelons of society: the state and the emperor. For her, a state's dignity or the emperor's divinity are not inherent, natural properties. Instead, both the state and emperor depend on violence and brute force in order to claim such characteristics for themselves (Suzuki 2013, 346). Authority has no natural or divine right to its position in a social hierarchy, but instead achieved this position by oppressing others. Hence Kaneko concludes that morality and authority lack inherent worth, so there is no need to obey them.

Stirner is critical of morality as well, and describes it as a kind of "phantasm". The first half of his magnum opus, *The Unique and its Property* (2017), is called "Humanity". There, he describes how people create certain concepts, such as the sacred, morality, legality and humanity, but become enslaved to these ideas when they imbue them with value. They elevate those ideas to a point where they appear as something divine-like and, consequently, as something that demands unconditional respect and obedience. These divine ideas always trump the interests of individuals, so people must suppress their selfish wants and align their lives according to the dictates of these values. Morality, as such a divine-like phantasm, "takes its start where *humiliation* begins; indeed, it is nothing more than this humiliation itself, the breaking and bending of courage down into *humility*" (ibid., 97).

> But if I tell him: "You're going to pray, honour your parents, respect the crucifix, speak the truth, etc., because this belongs to the human being and is the human *calling*"; or even, "this is God's will"; then moral influence is complete: a person should bend to the human calling, should be obedient, become humble, should give up his will to an alien one which is set up as rule and law; he should abase himself before something *higher*: self-abasement. (ibid., 98)

Morality subdues people, and, like Kaneko, Stirner is well aware that it is used to subtly protect and advance certain people's interests, particularly in the context

of the state. The state has a monopoly on morality, and "all that concerns the principle of morality is a state matter" (ibid., 237). For Stirner, the church and state are functionally the same—the only difference is their tools: the former espouses devoutness as a virtue to its flock, the latter propagates morality to its subjects.

Both Kaneko and Stirner reject morality because they see it as essentially empty, as nothing, and this is why nothing is a central concept for both of them: Stirner titles his introduction "I Have Based my Affairs on Nothing" and in it valiantly proclaims that "for me, there is nothing greater than me!" (ibid., 25, 27), while Kaneko describes her desired lifestyle as "living on the edge of nothing (*nihiru no sakai ni ikiru* ニヒルの境に生きる)" (Suzuki 2013, 347). By reducing everything to nothing, they do not recognize the authority of any morality, religion, state or emperor.

I propose that Kaneko's "living on the edge of nothing" applies to the individual as well. Morality gives people commandments about how to behave, but these commandments are often connected to the individual's role in society. A wife is thus expected to embody certain virtues and behave in particular ways, while a teacher in others. In linguistic terms, society confers specific signifiers on individuals, and each signifier carries different social expectations (or lack thereof) and their corresponding treatments. Kaneko felt the weight of these signifiers when her status as an "unregistered" subjected her to abuse in school (Kaneko in Suzuki 2013, 81) or when she witnessed how the signifier of "Korean" brought mistreatment and violence upon colonized bodies (ibid., 88, 111). Another apt example is when she asked her father to let her go to Tokyo and he simply reminded her of her status by saying: "Fool, you're a woman, aren't you? (*baka na, onna ja nai ka omae wa* 馬鹿な、女じゃないかお前は)" (ibid., 178).

Signifiers assign people to designated social positions and bind specific behavioural patterns and expectations to those who occupy these. That is why an egoist must reject identification with such labels by becoming nothing. Stirner says that "I am not nothing in the sense of emptiness, but am the creative nothing, the nothing out of which I myself create everything as creator" (Stirner 2017, 27).

To be nothing means not to be defined by anything that comes from the outside. Moreover, rejecting being defined by social labels is egoistic because an individual is irreducible to any signifier. An individual is one-of-a-kind and singular, beyond any social position associated with a signifier. That is why Stirner calls such a true egoist, who does not identify herself with social labels, as "the unique". Or, as he puts it:

> This is true of me: No *concept* expresses me, nothing that is said to be my essence exhausts me; they are only names. […] I am owner of my power, and I am so when I know myself as unique. In the unique the owner himself returns into his creative nothing, from which he is born. (ibid., 456)

To be creative nothing also means that one defines and builds oneself directly, according to one's own criteria and wants. By rejecting social signifiers, an egoist as creative nothing rejects all authority but herself. In other words, she will not be owned by anyone or anything, whether that be a person or a lofty ideal, but will own herself. This leads us to the next concept, that of "ownness".

Ownness

In the extended quote from the beginning of the paper, Kaneko states unambiguously how she wants to live. She says that everyone should be the master of their own lives (*jibun no seikatsu no nushi* 自分の生活の主) and uses the words "autonomy and self-governance" (*jishujichi* 自主自治) to describe her desired lifestyle. Her usage of verbs and adjectives that donate possession, such as "to have", "to own" (*motsu* 持つ) or "my", "own" (*jibun no* 自分の), is significant. For example, Kaneko says she has her own feet and head to think her own thoughts and walk her own path. The only authority she acknowledges is herself, i.e. her ego.

For Kaneko, an "urge to own" (*shoyūyoku* 所有欲) animates all of society (Suzuki 2013, 344). This urge manifests itself as selfishness or self-love (*jiai* 自愛) and self-benefit (*jiko o risuru to iu katachi* 自己を利するという形), and is "another name for the overflowing of human life that transcends the urge to live (*seimeiyoku no iki wo koete, ningen seikatsu no ue ni afureideta mono no besshō dearu* 生命欲の域を越えて、人間生活の上に溢れ出でたものの別称である)" (ibid., 345).

Kaneko does not give an exact definition of what she means by "ego" (*jiga* 自我), and uses the term interchangeably with "self" (*jibun* 自分). She claims all people are essentially egoists and can only love themselves, i.e. their egos. She also claims that a person's ego is elastic, which gives the veneer of love for another.

> However, that self is never fixed. The ego expands and contracts. Sometimes it expands to the point of being a nation or the human race; other times, it sees a conflict between self and other even within its own individual self. Therefore, the so-called social cohesion of the human world is maintained only on the basis of this elasticity of the ego. (ibid.)

> しかし、その自分は決して固定してはいない。自我は伸縮する。あるときは、国家とか、または人類とかいうところまでも拡大され、またあるときは、この自分一個の個体の裡においてさえ、自他の対立を見るので、人間界におけるいわゆる社会的結合は、ただこの自我の伸縮性の上にのみ保たれている。

Kaneko has a narcissistic understanding of human relations: a person can only accept and love another as long as she can see herself in the other. Consequently, altruism is just egoism in disguise, since a person may believe she is helping another when, in actuality, she is only doing it for herself.

We can thus discern the meaning of ego from the above quote. A person as a unit, a single body, can identify with other people or entities when she projects herself onto the other. So the ego is, therefore, an image, an idea of the self that is projected onto other bodies. However, does it not then follow that a person who, for example, sacrifices herself for the state is also an egoist? To answer this question, I turn to Stirner.

In Stirner's philosophy, we can distinguish between two meanings of egoism: the first being self-aware and the second a "duped" egoism. Stirner gives religion as an example of the latter (Stirner 2017, 179). Religion is a form of duped egoism since it preaches about high-sounding ideals, yet must always promise people a form of compensation, such as an afterlife or a long life in this world. This need for compensation reveals that people follow religions for selfish, egoistic reasons. Even religion's praise of altruism or "doing good for the sake of good" has an egoistic side, since a reward is contained in the satisfaction such actions engender.

The problem with duped or "unconscious" egoism is that, according to Stirner, it is not true egoism (ibid.). Because people dupe themselves into believing that they are not motivated by egoistic urges—they deny their egoism—they end up in self-denial. Consequently, despite its concealed egoistic motive, a single urge is elevated into a virtue, such as altruism, while the rest are stifled, sacrificed. Religion promises the highest good, yet "to gain this [we] pay no attention to any of [our] other desires and do not nourish them" (ibid.).

Hence for Stirner, a true egoist must listen to all her urges and interests and not blindly follow one passion. To give into one passion is equal to becoming a slave to and being owned by it; a person who gives into one passion "is ruled by a passion to which he brings the others as sacrifices" (ibid., 92). Mastery over one's urges, passions and desires is central for a true egoist.

> I am my own only when I am in my own power, and not in the power of sensuality or any other thing (God, humanity, authority, law, state, church, etc.); my selfishness pursues what is useful to me, this self-owned or self-possessing one. (ibid., 183)

Ownness is the essential condition for an egoist. An egoist puts her I (ego),[1] i.e. her uncompromised, unmitigated and unmediated self-interests, as their only criterion and guide.

> Now why, if one strives for freedom out of love for the I, why not choose the I itself as beginning, middle and end? (ibid., 178)

The I or ego is not some abstract philosophical or psychological concept, but the concrete, one-of-a-kind, unique and finite individual (ibid., 195).

To return to Kaneko, a true egoist is a concrete and singular individual whose I or ego strictly coincides with her wishes and self-interests. A person whose ego has extended to incorporate the nation and has, consequently, adopted the nation's interest as her own has already compromised her self-interest, and thus become a false, duped egoist. If one sees her selfish interests as bad or evil, her understanding of said interests is already mediated by social standards. Such a socially mediated view of one's interests means that the individual does not own her interests. Only when the I or ego is strictly the individual's own and unmediated is the individual the unique.

However, this begs the question of how could a collective of egoists function? Would it all end in chaos and violence? To answer this question, we must look at the concept of "association".

1 Stirner uses the German words *Ich* and *der Einzige*, which Landstreicher translates as "I" and "the unique", respectively. However, this is a new translation from 2017, and until that then, the old translation from 1907 by Steven T. Byington was the only English version. In there, *Ich* is occasionally translated as "ego" (cf. Stirner 1995, 127, 134, 318–19, 321). Furthermore, Byington also translated *der Einzige* in the title as "ego" and, consequently, cementing *The Ego and Its Own* as the official title. Interestingly, in the text, he translates *der Einzige* as "the unique one" (cf. ibid., 319–20, 324). Tsuji Jun 辻潤 was the first to fully translate *The Ego and Its Own* into Japanese in 1921 (Matsuo and Takagi 1982, 3–4) while using Byington's translation as his reference (Tsuji 1982, 9). In Tsuji's translation, Stirner's *Ich* is also inconsistently translated in some places as *jiga* (自我) (cf. Tsuji 1982, 268, 545, 547), while in others as *jibun* (自分) or *jiko* (自己). In addition, Stirner's *der Einzige* has also been equated with *jiga* by other thinkers, writing about Stirner's philosophy (cf. Ōsugi 2014, 35).

Association of Egoists

If we assume that all people are essentially egoistic, how is any other state besides a war between everyone even possible? Neither Kaneko nor Stirner shies away from this problem. Kaneko proclaims that good or goodness (*zen* 善) would be a situation of co-existence and co-prosperity (*kyōzon kyōei* 共存共栄). However, she quickly admits that the current state of affairs is far from such goodness (Suzuki 2013, 346–47). Nonetheless, Kaneko still sees hope in the act of rebellion; she sees it as the only goodness and beauty left in the world:

> Here I cry out—Rebel, rebel! Rebel against all power! It is good to restrain a strong power. To rebel against an oppressor is not only good for the oppressed; it is also good for all humankind. And that alone is the only good and the only beauty in what man does. (ibid., 347)
>
> ここにおいて私は叫ぶ——反逆せよ叛逆せよ！あらゆる力に反逆せよ！強い力に掣肘を加えることは、それは善である。すなわち圧制者に反逆をすることは被圧制者にとって善であると同時に、それは全人類の善である。しかしてそれのみがただ人間がすることのうちにただ一つの善であり、美である——と。

The ability to rebel grants us the possibility to retain or recover our human dignity. Of course, like any other activity, rebellion is also egoistic, since it comes from the urge to protect oneself. Through rebellion, people can throw off the yoke that exploits, oppresses and owns them. Through rebellion, people can come to own themselves, which is the very essence of egoism. The difference between the egoism of the state and that of the people's rebellion is in their directionality: the former is unilateral while the latter is multilateral. The state one-sidedly owns its subjects as its property, while rebellion can make people become owners of themselves.

Additionally, the potential for rebellion, what Stirner calls "the war of all against all" (Stirner 2017, 271), functions as a guarantee of fairer relations. As Blumenfeld (2018, 112) points out, there is a reciprocal recognition at work in an association—"the recognition of one another's power of annihilation". However, this "is not the recognition of personhood, or freedom, but of the mutual power for violation, consumption, and expropriation".

With its one-sided, coercive egoism, the state is not a desirable form of collectivity for an egoist, who does not wish to submit her will to that of the state. In contrast, Stirner describes an association as a better alternative where people's self-interests would not be stifled or subsumed by a greater entity (such as the state).

> And if I can use him, I surely come to an understanding and reach an agreement with him, to strengthen *my power* through the agreement and to accomplish more through combined force than individual force could achieve. In this mutuality I see nothing at all beyond a multiplication of my strength, and I'll keep at it only so long as it is *my* multiplied strength. But so it is an–association. (Stirner 2017, 324)

The association provides an opportunity to enhance one's ability to pursue egoistic goals. An individual is limited in many ways, while collaboration with others may help her overcome these limitations. Therefore, associating with others is congruent with egoism.

What is more, a person is free to leave an association when it no longer represents a means for realizing her self-benefit. Alternatively, suppose the association degenerates and becomes a unilateral coercive entity that stifles and subordinates its participants' self-interests to those of a minority (as is the case in the state). In that case, rebellion is still an option for the participants to break the coercive chains and re-establish themselves as owners.

One can describe Kaneko's and Park's relationship as an attempt at forming an association of egoists. The reason Kaneko liked Park in the first place was that she saw him as ideologically similar. She realized that Park "is not a nationalist, but a man who has always been strong enough to start from his ego and to risk his life for the cause" (Suzuki 2013, 305). When they began living together, they made the following pact.

> 1. They live together as comrades.
>
> 2. Kaneko would not be perceived as a woman in the context of their activism.
>
> 3. If one party becomes ideologically corrupt and collaborates with the authorities, they would break up their relationship.
>
> 4. They would mutually cooperate in their activism for the sake of their ideology (*shugi* 主義). (ibid.)
>
> それで私は朴の思想がほとんど私の思想と一致しており、なお同人が直接、民族運動者ではななく常に自我から出発してその運動のために生命を賭し得るだけの力ある男であることを知りましたので、私は朴に対し同志として同棲すること、運動の方面においては私が女性であるという観念を除去すべきこと、一方が思想的に堕落して権力者と把握することができた場合に

> は、ただちに共同生活を解くこと宣言し、相互は主義のためにする運動を協力することを約して、私らは同棲することに決意したのであります。

Kaneko considered it vital that their relationship was based on mutual respect for their individualities and the independence of their wills. No partner should coerce another against their will, or make unilateral decisions concerning both parties without acquiring consent. While in prison, Kaneko would reminisce about their life together and recall an event when Park allegedly breached this pact. The reconsideration of this event would instil doubt about their relationship.

Kaneko's Doubt and Self-Assertion

Naitō (2020, 212–13) rightfully points out the importance of a passage in the letter Kaneko submitted to the court. In that passage, Kaneko expresses doubt (*utagai* 疑い) about her past actions, namely that she stayed with Park. She considers whether the truly egoistic path would have been leaving Park and becoming single (Suzuki 2013, 353).

When Kaneko, Park and others were plotting to assassinate the imperial heir, Kaneko temporarily left the meeting. During that time she was reconsidering whether she truly wished to go through with such a plan. However, despite Kaneko's absence Park continued to negotiate to obtain a bomb. Park's one-sided actions thus subsumed Kaneko's will to his own. The fact that he unilaterally made decisions on such an essential matter without consulting with Kaneko and obtaining her consent was, for her, a clear breach of their pact. In other words, such unilateral action was unambiguously incongruent with the principles of an association of egoists. Kaneko describes her thoughts on the matter as follows:

> So I realised, after this incident came to light, that when I had doubts about myself, I should have pursued myself to the limit. Then I would have seen the gap between Park and me. Park and I were together. But it was not a life of two people. It was a life of one person and one person. No individuality has the right to absorb another individuality. Just as Park follows his own path, I follow mine. In my own world, I am absolute. For me to continue down my own path, unhindered, I should have become alone. (ibid., 353)
>
> それで、私はこの事件が発覚した後、気がついたのです。私は自分に疑いをもつそのとき、どこまでも自分を追求すべきであ

> った。そしたら私は多分朴との間に隔たりを見たろう。朴と私とは一緒にいた。だが、それは二人の生活ではない。一人と一人との生活である。どんな個性にも他の個性を吸収してしまう権利はない。朴が朴の道を歩むように、私は私の道を歩む。自分の世界にあっては自分が絶対だ。私が自分の道を、誰にも邪魔されず、まっすぐに歩みつづけるためには、私はひとりになるべきだったのだ、と。

The very essence of an association is voluntarism. An individual freely chooses to join when they believe that doing so would enhance their ability to pursue their self-interest. Likewise, they can leave it when they believe that their self-interest no longer coincides with the interests of the association. According to such logic, for Kaneko to remain her own, i.e., to stay an autonomous and self-governing individual, she should have left.

Surprisingly, Kaneko completely shifts her tone in the same letter. Instead of expressing regret or repenting, which could have possibly saved her life, she reaffirms her love for Park and all the consequences, including their potential execution.

> I know Park. I love Park. Beyond all his faults and all his shortcomings, I love Park. I now unconditionally acknowledge all the wrongs that Park has done to me. And to Park's companions, I say: "If you find this incident ridiculous, go ahead and laugh at us. That's who we are." And to the bureaucrats, I say: "Please throw us both on the guillotine together. If I die with Park, I will be satisfied." And to Park, I say: "Even if the official's sentence draws us apart, I will never let you die alone." (ibid., 356)

> 私は朴を知っている。朴を愛している。彼におけるすべての過失とすべての欠点とを越えて、私は朴を愛している。私は今、朴が私の上に及ぼした過誤のすべてを無条件で認める。そして、朴の仲間に対してはいおう。私はこの事件がばかげて見えるのなら、どうか二人を嗤ってくれ。それは二人のことなのだ。そしてお役人に対してはいおう。どうか二人を一緒にギロチンに放り上げてくれ。朴とともに死ぬるなら、私は満足しよう。して朴にはいおう。よしんばお役人の宣告が二人を引き分けても、私は決してあなたを一人死なせてはおかないつもりです。

The strong affirmation of love, the acceptance of past events and the readiness to die indicate Kaneko's genuine desire. One cannot but get the impression that, no matter the consequences, staying with Park was the right decision in her eyes after all. Kaneko admits this when she states that such doubts arose only because

the plot had failed (ibid., 354). She says that if the plot had succeeded, she would probably never have had any doubts and would have celebrated the result. She even expresses an apology to Park for doubting him and describes such thoughts as "egoistic" (ibid.), and here we should note that it is unexpected that an egoist like Kaneko would use the word "egoistic" in such a negative way. These are all pieces of evidence that she made the correct decision and did not betray her real desire.

Nonetheless, a problem remains: how can we consider the affirmation of her decision to stay with Park as an expression of her genuine desire when she also states that leaving him would have been the proper egoistic choice? To answer these questions, I turn to psychoanalysis.

The Deceptive Nature of Ego

Lacan's Ego Theory

I have already shown that Kaneko primarily uses the word "ego" to designate herself as a one-of-a-kind individual—a unique, in Stirner's sense of the word. However, there was a case where she was arguing about the ego's flexibility: how it can stretch to encompass a whole nation or even all of humanity or retract to include only part of the individual. Referring to Stirner, I have argued that an ego that extends beyond itself (or retracts to only a part of the self) is a "duped" egoism. This egoism identifies with something other than itself (e.g. the nation) and, consequently, betrays its self-interest. Put differently, it subordinates its will to another and so does not own itself.

Nevertheless, in this particular case, it is clear that Kaneko understands the ego to mean an image of oneself that may be projected onto other entities. This idea of the ego as an image of oneself is not dissimilar to the ego theory of psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. According to Lacan, the ego is an image a subject has of herself. A subject[2] (i.e. the creator and bearer of the ego in contrast with the ego as the imaginary image of the subject) typically creates this image in infancy (6–18 months), when she can recognize herself in a mirror. Because an infant is "still trapped in his motor impotence and nursling dependence" (Lacan 2006a, 76), she has no

2 The definition of the subject in Lacanian psychoanalysis is very complex, and a precise exposition of all its nuances would far exceed the scope of this paper. For now, it is essential only to know that the Lacanian subject is not a substantial entity, such as Descartes' *res cogitans*, but rather something that happens on rare occasions like a lightning bolt. Her presence manifests itself in events that expose something unique and singular about the person. An example of such an event is the explosion of desire for the Thing, which I will explain below.

coherent idea of a self. The mirror projects a holistic image of the infant back to her, giving her a primordial idea of self as a whole.

> We have only to understand the mirror stage as an *identification*, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image—whose predestination to this phase-effect is sufficiently indicated by the use, in analytic theory, of the ancient term *imago*. (ibid.)

This primordial image is indispensable in a person's cognitive development, and will accompany them and evolve throughout their life. Nonetheless, despite the indispensable role the ego plays in one's psychic life, it is still just an image, a fiction, a construct. It is an idea, or rather an ideal, with which one identifies or strives to identify. As an image, it is separate from the subject and therefore something essentially alien to her.

This idea of a whole and coherent self exists only on an imaginary level; the actual individual remains fragmented. A discrepancy persists between the ego and its bearer, and this discrepancy constantly threatens to undermine our sense of self. Lacan calls this discrepancy a "fundamental alienation" (Lacan 1991, 126). Furthermore, identification through a mirror image is a perfect example of a misidentification: the image of ourselves, which we perpetually renew through our daily encounters with mirrors, is a reverse image of how other people see us. Therefore, the ego is not the centre of one's being, the essence of one's personhood, but a product of a fundamental misrecognition. In other words, the ego believes itself to be "the cause of its mirror image, while, in reality it is only an effect of that image. [...] It miscognizes the primacy of the image" (De Kesel 2009, 21).

Psychoanalysis teaches us that the ego, the image of oneself, is not the same as oneself as a subject, the creator and bearer of said image. Because of this discrepancy, there is always a possibility that the ego betrays the subject by no longer being a faithful representation of a subject's desire. In other words, the subject can be surprised by a desire that does not coincide with how she perceives herself. What does this theory tell us about Kaneko's egoism?

Ego as an Authority

Because of the interchangeable way Kaneko uses terms such as "I" (*watashi*), "self" (*jibun*, *jiko*) and "ego" (*jiga*), her egoism acquires two not necessarily compatible facets. These can be discerned from the long quote at the beginning of this paper.

I want to isolate two parts: her egoistic imperative of "I want to do this, so I do this" and her egoistic ideal of an autonomous, self-governing self.

The two aspects are interchangeable in most cases. Being autonomous and self-governing implies Kaneko doing what she desires, and she desires to be autonomous and self-governing. However, this seeming symbiosis fell apart in the incident with Park. There, it became apparent that the ego as an ideal is an image. In other words, Lacan's lesson that the ego is an inherently alienated entity, distinct from the subject herself, came to light. Kaneko's love for Park, i.e. her desire, conflicted with what the ego demanded of her. Kaneko herself describes her egoistic imperative "I want to do this, so I do this" as a law (*hōsoku* 法則) and as a command (*meirei* 命令), but because of the lack of distinction between the ego as an imperative and as an ideal, it was also her ideal giving her orders. She perceives autonomy and self-governance as a condition to follow her desire, and *vice versa*, she perceives being autonomous and self-governing as desirable. Consequently, her ego is ordering her to leave Park so she will again be autonomous and self-governing.

However, because the ego is alien to the subject, it is not unreasonable to conclude that her ego is a figure of authority. Since the subject misperceives the ego as being the subject herself, the ego's authority is also misrecognized as the subject's authority over herself. I propose that Kaneko's ego functions as what is known as "the (big) Other" in Lacanian psychoanalysis. McGowan (2016, 124) explains the Other as follows:

> Social existence involves the encounter with others, but beyond these others the subject sees the Other, a figure of social authority that represents the social order as a whole and makes demands on the subject.

Many rules guide people's interactions. Žižek (2007, 8) gives the example of a Mexican soap opera, where the actors wear earpieces that give them acting instructions directly. Without these rules, such as linguistic grammar or the way we must silently pass obscene innuendos to a partner without being noticed (ibid., 9), interaction would become impossible. In the case of the obscene innuendo, we need to perform it discretely because we presuppose an authoritative gaze that must not notice the gesture. This authoritative gaze can be embodied in personalized figures, such as parents, bishops, teachers, political leaders, or in more abstract figures, such as God. It can be embodied even in a collective like a group of peers or society[3] in general. What is essential is that the subject endows this figure with authority that grounds the rules of social behaviour.

3 I propose that the Japanese word *seken* 世間 is an excellent example of the Other. One must try hard to constantly adopt the correct behaviour and keep up appearances not to be judged by this

This also indicates the insubstantial nature of the Other. It is purely virtual—it represents authority only as long as subjects perceive it as such. It is

> the substance of the individuals who recognize themselves in it, the ground of their whole existence, the point of reference that provides the ultimate horizon of meaning, something for which these individuals are ready to give their lives, yet the only thing that really exists are these individuals and their activity, so this substance is actual only in so far as individuals believe in it and act accordingly. (ibid., 10)

Kaneko is an example of an individual who has disinvested her interest in the rules of the Other, be it her parents, the state or society in general. Nevertheless, considering what has been said about the ego being an inherently alien entity giving commands, Kaneko's ego can also be described as functioning as an authoritative Other.

Granted, this is a different Other from the one described above, i.e. the Other as a social authority. Her adverse experience of society and its norms gave birth to her egoistic ideals. Therefore, her ego, the image of herself she wants to embody, is the opposite of what society expects. For example, Kaneko would often express disdain at her mother's inability to be independent.

> My mother was so dependent [on other people] that even I, as a child, was embarrassed. She was a woman who could not take a single step on her own. She was a woman who needed something to support her in order to take a step forward. (Kaneko in Suzuki 2013, 41)
>
> 子供の私にさえはがゆい程、母は依頼心が強かった。母は、ひとりでは一歩も踏み出しえない女だった。一足歩むにも何か自分を支えてくれるものがなくてはならぬ女であった。

Kaneko's experience living with her mother gave her a disdain for dependence, so she wanted to become the opposite: independent. Her greatest wish was "to be independent and do my own thing. This desire is an irresistible wish that comes from the heart of an I that is greater than myself. (*Watashi no negai wa, dokuritsu shite jibun no koto wa jibun de suru to iu koto da. Kono ganbō wa, watashi ijō no watashi kara deru fukakōna negai da* 私の願いは、独立して自分のことは自分でするという事だ。この願望は、私以上の私の心から出る不可抗な願いだ。)" (ibid., 199).

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gaze. One does not need to be personally acquainted with the people who make up this gaze; they can be complete strangers. Behaving inappropriately in a social situation, e.g. on a public train, can bring shame and a loss of face to the subject.

While in Tokyo, Kaneko also consciously rejected going to an all-female school, and instead chose to go to a school where the number of female students was almost zero. One of her reasons was that the education offered at all-female schools tended to be inferior. However, more than that, her attending a school generally meant for males was a form of revenge by which Kaneko asserted her determination not to lose to men (ibid., 207).

One could say that her ego is an "inverted" (big) Other. I call it inverted because her ego, her ideal self, is born out of her rejection of social norms. She moulded her ego as an obverse, negative image of social norms. Therefore, the Other (parents, state, society, etc.) she rejected is still present in her ego, albeit negatively, i.e., as an absence. In other words, if society as the Other is a photograph, her ego is a negative of that image. The result is that Kaneko elevated her ego to the position of the Other, a position of authority, and she followed the law and command of this inverted Other. Her ego was the gaze before which she regulated her behaviour. However, a desire manifested in her heart that went against the commands of this inverted Other.

The Subversive Nature of Desire

Desire in Psychoanalysis

I have been using the word "desire" in this paper without adequately defining it. In colloquial speech, desire is commonly interchangeable with other everyday words: want, wish, will, craving, yearning, and many more. While all these words may have slightly different nuances, they have one commonality: consciousness. Therefore, in colloquial speech, we say that someone desires something when they know what they want and actively strive to obtain the desired object. Moreover, when they obtain or, at the very least, fantasize about obtaining the targeted object, their desire is satisfied.

However, in psychoanalysis desire has a precise meaning that differs crucially from the colloquial use of the word. A detailed exposition of the Lacanian concept of desire would far exceed the length and purpose of this paper, so I will limit the explanation to the aspects necessary in the context of this text.

The most distinguishing feature of a psychoanalytic understanding of desire is that it is conceived as unconscious. We may believe we know what we want and why we want it, but that is not the case. Unlike a simple biological need, such as hunger, which can be easily satisfied with nourishment, desire is slippery and

is perpetually unsatisfied. We may desire one particular object[4], yet the moment we obtain it, said object loses its desirability, and the odyssey of desire continues. Desire's aim is not to be satisfied but to perpetuate itself as desire. The reason for this perverse structure of desire lies in humans as animals of language.

Language has an objective, social, trans-subjective character. We are born into a linguistic world, and language will persist long after we die. But no one is born with an innate knowledge of language—we must all go through learning what words mean and how to use them. This fact has a radical implication: language is inherently alienating.

An infant is helpless and must rely on others (parents, caretakers, tribe members…) to satisfy her instinctual needs. Consequently, the infant has no choice but to vocalise her needs to call for the caretaker's attention (Evans 1996, 38). In other words, the infant is compelled to express herself by using means that originate from the outside. Because the infant is at the mercy of her caretaker, she sees them as a powerful and authoritative entity—a (big) Other.

Moreover, because language originates from the Other, language is also marked by alterity and authority. The infant is, therefore, compelled to express herself by using inherently alienating means. Also, because an infant's primary exposure to language is through the Other, i.e. an authority figure, language itself becomes associated with authority. From a parent's scolding or order to God's commandments, language has always been the vehicle through which authority asserts itself. What is more, language is a social phenomenon and, as such, transcends any particular individual, so it appears as something that no one person can completely own or master. Hence Lacan (2006c, 688) also describes language as an Other:

> Let us begin with the conception of the Other as the locus of the signifier. No authoritative statement has any other guarantee here than its very enunciation, since it would be pointless for the statement to seek it in another signifier, which could in no way appear outside that locus.

Lacan adopts the term "signifier" from Saussurean linguistics. A signifier is the vocal or visual representation of a word. In contrast, the meaning, i.e. the image conjured up in one's mind when a signifier is uttered, is called a "signified". According to Saussure, the link between signifier and signified is inherently arbitrary. There is no necessary or natural reason why a particular concept, e.g. dog, should be represented by a particular signifier, such as the sound "dog". A particular signifier's

4 By object, I do not mean only material objects, but also people, status, experiences… Anything whose acquisition or experience we believe will finally erase our lack and make us whole again.

association with a particular signified is purely conventional. Since there is no necessary bond between these two elements, signifiers become associated with their respective signifieds through differentiation with other signifiers. The sound "dog" conjures up the image of a dog (a four-legged loyal animal companion with a strong sense of smell) because it is different from the sound "cat", which is associated with a different signified.

Language as a system of signifiers is set up in advance, so an infant must learn to navigate this world full of signifiers by differentiating between them (and associating them with particular signifieds). To have its needs satisfied, a child must learn to express this need as a vocal demand. However, the vocalization of a need as demand becomes associated with the presence of the Other (e.g. parent)—the Other's response to demand also becomes a sign of the Other's attention, its love (Evans 1996, 38). The demand thus acquires two aims: to satisfy a need and call upon the Other's attention. It is in this difference where desire comes into being.

> However, whereas the Other can provide the objects which the subject requires to satisfy his needs, the Other cannot provide that unconditional love which the subject craves. Hence even after the needs which were articulated in demand have been satisfied, the other aspect of demand, the craving for love, remains unsatisfied, and this leftover is desire. (ibid.)

When a child begs their parents to buy chocolate cake, this is not a simple expression of biological need since, in that case, any food would suffice. The verbalization of our needs perverts them, creates an excess which is desire. An excess always permeates the demand for chocolate cake that transcends the need for nourishment. The signifier "chocolate cake" does not only stand for the chocolate cake as an object, but the very excessive nature of the object represents the love and attention of the Other (parent). Desire, which uses demand as its vehicle, aims at the Other through particular objects. Put alternatively, by desiring the Other's love, we desire to be desired by the Other. That is why we learn to desire what the Other desires: by obtaining the object of the Other's desire, we unconsciously believe that the Other's desire will focus on us. Different people, groups, institutions, or ideas come to represent the Other, so our desires also receive their coordinates following what we interpret the Other wants from us. For example, we may desire an attractive partner because we believe this would procure us admiration from our peer group, or we desire a successful job to make our parents happy. This excessive element is the unconscious aspect of desire.

Moreover, we must use language, an Other, to express our wants, which means that this Other gives our demands and desires its parameters. We learn to desire

through the Other, and this is why Lacan famously says that "as a characteristic of an animal at the mercy of language, man's desire is the Other's desire" (2006b, 525).

However, because the craving for love can never be satisfied, we never cease to exist as desiring beings. This insatiability of desire manifests linguistically in the perpetual shifting from one signifier to another. We desire and demand a particular thing, but the moment we acquire it, it loses its desirability. As Ruti (2018, 187) puts it:

> Under normal conditions, the subject's desire as a function of the signifying chain moves metonymically from object to object. […] Moreover, everything that at any given time becomes associated with this chain—any circumstantial object—"can be taken as equivalent to each other under suitable conditions".

This metonymical sliding makes all potential objects of desire interchangeable. Our desires can adapt according to changing social contexts. A different environment has a different Other who gives us the coordinates of our desire. Ruti calls such a desire "hegemonic" (ibid., 111), because its objects are determined by what is socially considered desirable. Moreover, by identifying with and following society's hegemonic desires, we are moulded into hard-working, conformist model citizens who do not threaten the established order. That is why Ruti calls this "the morality of the master". Its purpose is to compute "the value of life by purely pragmatic criteria, so that its model citizen is a subject who shows up at work reliably every morning, undertakes its duties with a degree of diligence, does not allow its desires to get the better of its productivity, and seeks satisfaction ('enjoys') in efficiency-augmenting ways" (ibid., 104).

Nonetheless, desire can also function in a non-conformist, subversive way that is not directed by the Other. Such a desire reflects something truly singular about the subject. It cannot be subsumed by the Other and therefore has a counterhegemonic edge.

Desire for the Thing

A subject's entry into language is, in a way, a traumatic event. Once upon a time, we as infants allegedly existed in a pre-linguistic bliss. All of our needs were quickly met, and we had no sense of lack. Psychoanalysis calls this mythic period a state of unmitigated enjoyment or *jouissance* (ibid., 108). The entry into language disrupts

this state and forces the child to "submit to language, to agree to express his or her needs through the distorting medium or straitjacket of language, and to allow him or herself to be represented by words" (Fink 1995, 50).

By becoming linguistic beings, subjects of the signifier, we also inevitably become subjects of lack. Indeed, if we did not lack in any way, there would have been no necessity to verbalize our needs as demands in the first place. We are compelled to sacrifice the mythical primordial state of non-lacking, pre-linguistic wholeness at the altar of the signifier. As animals of language, we are eternally marked by a constitutive lack, and this lack is the fuel of desire. Furthermore, we desire the Other's love because we believe that the Other can heal our lack.

However, this state of pre-linguistic wholeness and unmitigated enjoyment is a retroactive fantasy, a myth. Psychoanalysis calls this fantasy of primordial loss the loss of "the Thing". Lacan reminds us how a child will often want to get away from his mother's lap—the over-proximity of the mother triggers a sense of anxiety in the child (Lacan 2014, 53). Nevertheless, even if the idea of a lost wholeness is just retroactive fiction, it still holds powerful sway over us. Ruti (2018, 108) explains this as follows:

> This dynamic becomes crystallized around the fantasy of having lost the Thing, the original (non)object that (supposedly) offered unmitigated jouissance. Nothing of course was lost in reality; there never was any unmitigated jouissance. But the fantasy of having lost this jouissance brings us into being as subjects of lack who experience ourselves as having been deprived of something unfathomably precious.

Unlike objects of the Other's hegemonic desire who are metonymically interchangeable, an object who echoes this (imagined to have been) lost Thing gives us a much higher degree of satisfaction and fixates our desire on itself. Moreover, "even though the loss of the Thing is a universal precondition of subjectivity, each of us relates to this loss in a manner that is wholly peculiar to us" (ibid., 110). In other words, a desire that aims at the Thing is unique and singular.

The object that echoes the Thing elicits a powerful sense of fascination that makes us value this object above any others. Notably, it can overshadow the desirability of exchangeable objects promoted by society's hegemonic desire. That is why following one's unique desire for the Thing can liberate a subject from the tendency to conform to the master's morality. Therefore, a stance of fidelity to one's singular desire can "represent an ethical force that we can only betray by betraying something essential about our very being" (ibid., 111).

This advocacy for realizing one's singular desire is why Lacan called his seventh seminar from 1959–1960 the "Ethics of Psychoanalysis". In it, we find his famous statement that "the only thing of which one can be guilty is of having given ground relative to one's desire" (Lacan 1992, 319).

What type of object can be an excellent example for the Thing's echo? Ruti states that "this dynamic is perhaps most obvious in relation to people we love, as Lacan conveys when he proposes that when I desire you, it is because I perceive that there is 'in you more than you'" (Ruti 2018, 113).

When in love, one finds an echo of the Thing in the object of love, i.e. in one's beloved. This "in you more than you" in the beloved person is something sublime, which cannot be definitively verbally expressed as just one characteristic among many. A subject in love no longer desires a partner according to some traits that society designates as desirable. Instead, the subject becomes fixated on that sole partner—her desire's incessant shifting from object to object is arrested. Ruti describes love's fixation as an event where two dignities—the loving subjects' and the beloved objects'—are saved. The latter become dignified as they become vessels for the Thing. At the same time, the formers' dignity as subjects is saved "by turning us into something other than subjects subjected to the infinite sliding of the signifier" (ibid., 188).

I argue that Kaneko's love for Park is an example of such an ethical act. But the question thus remains—what does this mean in relation to her egoism?

Conclusion: Desire Beyond Egoism

From an egoistic standpoint, it is possible to argue that Kaneko betrayed her egoism when she stayed with Park. He made a unilateral decision without her consent and, therefore, forced his will upon her. Nonetheless, this argument holds if we take Kaneko's ideal self-image—an autonomous and self-governing individual—as a starting point. I have shown that the ego, i.e. one's self-image, does not necessarily reflect its bearer, i.e. the subject, but it can come to contradict the subject's innermost desire. This implies that it is desire (in the case desire is aimed at the Thing), not the ego, that expresses what is unique to the subject, what is most her own. Following one's desire can express a subject's singularity that exposes the limits of Stirnean egoism and transcends them.

The reason such a desire escapes the scope of Stirner's egoism is that, despite all its self-centred, anti-moral and anti-societal tendencies, his egoism is still profoundly Aristotelean. As for Aristotle, for Stirner, self-realization is the goal,

and balance is the key to achieving it. According to Stirner, a true egoist must control their passions and keep them in a healthy balance. Focusing on pursuing one passion at the cost of all others brings only partial satisfaction to the individual. It thus cannot be compatible with the individual's comprehensive self-fulfilment.

> Who then is self-sacrificing? In the full sense, certainly one who risks everything else for one thing, one goal, one desire, one passion. Isn't the lover, who abandons father and mother, endures all dangers and hardships, to reach his goal, self-sacrificing? Or the ambitious person, who offers up all desires, wishes, and satisfactions to the single passion, or the miser who denies himself everything to gather treasures, or the pleasure-seeker, etc.? He is ruled by a passion to which he brings the others as sacrifices.
>
> And are these self-sacrificing people perhaps not selfish, not egoists? Since they have only one ruling passion, they provide only for one satisfaction, but for this one all the more eagerly; they're completely absorbed in it. All that they do is egoistic, but it is one-sided, close-minded, bigoted egoism; it is being possessed. (Stirner 2017, 91–92)

For Stirner, an individual who devotes his energies to the pursuit of one passion is possessed. The word "possessed" here has two meanings: to behave irrationally (against one's egoistic self-interests) as if one was being controlled by a supernatural power (e.g. a ghost), and to be owned, in the egoistic sense, by something other than oneself. Furthermore, Stirner is unimpressed by people who are willing to go to self-sacrificial lengths for the truth—he says people need the courage to lie:

> Because no less courage belongs to the lie than to the truth: a courage that the young are most usually lacking in, since they would rather confess the truth and mount the scaffold for it than confound the enemy's power through the insolence of a lie. (ibid., 314)

This is in stark contrast to Kaneko, who wilfully and proudly confirmed the truthfulness of the accusations made against her (intending to harm the imperial family) and did not disassociate herself from Park. It is safe to assert that Kaneko's defiant and death-provoking stance would appear un-egoistic to Stirner, since she behaves as if "possessed" by a single passion. She also does not lie even when doing so would serve her egoistic self-preservation. An out of balance individual no longer owns themselves and therefore cannot be egoistic. Aristotelean ethics, despite their difference from egoism, condemn in the same way an unbalanced attitude:

> The role of ethics is to keep human strivings strictly on track in regard to man's fullest potential. Desires that do not respond to this teleological orientation of being thus fall outside of ethics for Aristotle. Everything one does that has no role in the specific realization of man's being is a reversion to the "bestial". It is not that such behavior is ethically wrong in Aristotle's eyes. It is worse: it does not even come into consideration for ethical qualification because it is corrupted at the level of its very nature—"owing to natural depravity", to quote Aristotle. (De Kesel 2009, 63)

Giving in to a single passion and becoming an unbalanced individual is "bestial" for Aristotle, and akin to "being possessed" for Stirner. However, Kaneko's "bestial" passion, her unyielding desire, which eventually leads to a death sentence, reflects her innermost uniqueness and singularity. Her desire is genuinely her own because it is a desire for the Thing, which is beyond the world of signifiers and, therefore, not sanctioned by the Other. In other words, it cannot be fully domesticated by the broader social environment and thus has an inherent non-conformist and potentially counterhegemonic tendency to it.

The Other in this context is not limited only to the state or society at large but also designates her ego, the inverted Other. Her desire frees her from the imaginary identity with her ego and its commands and, ironically, lets her live in a truly singular and unique way.

> As a result, we—for a moment at least—cease to function as wholly symbolic creatures, creatures enslaved to the signifier (the big Other). We individuate ourselves through the specificity of our desire. Lacan implies that this kind of desire renders not only the object but also the subject "unique, inestimable, irreplaceable". (Ruti 2018, 188)

I conclude that while Kaneko's decision to stay with Park and her acceptance of all the consequences, including death itself, can be interpreted as un-egoistic from a Stirnean perspective, they also represent her being true to herself in a way that goes beyond such an egoism. By being "bestial", by going against an egoistic self-interest, such as self-preservation, Kaneko becomes singular beyond Stirner's horizon. Since desire for the Thing aims beyond the signifier, i.e. the domain of the Other, the subject of desire is perhaps a perfect example of what Stirner calls "the unique". For if I am unique, then "no concept expresses me, nothing that is said to be my essence exhausts me; they are only names" (Stirner 2017, 377).

Furthermore, the death that desire brings upon Kaneko may contradict self-preservation as an egoistic self-interest. Nonetheless, her acceptance of death does not originate from a morbid death wish, but from a will to live to the fullest extent. Moreover, what could be a better expression of living according to one's will than following one's desire? As Kaneko says, simply being alive is not the same as truly living (Suzuki 2013, 349). Only when one acts according to one's will is one genuinely alive, "even if it leads to the destruction of the body. It is not a denial of life. It is an affirmation (*Shitagatte jibun no ishi de ugoita toki, sore ga yoshi nikutai no hametsu ni michibikō to mo. Sore wa sei no hitei de wan ai. Kōtei dearu.* したがって自分の意志で動いたとき、それがよし肉体の破滅に導こうとも。それは生の否定ではない。肯定である。)" (ibid., 349–50).

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REFLECTION

Looking Back on Problems of Transcultural Methodology in *Asian Studies*: A Short Historical Reflection

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Since its inception in 2012, the journal *Asian Studies* has consistently sought to showcase critical thinkers in the cultural sciences, social sciences, and humanities-including philosophy, which is the focus of this double issue.

In previous issues of the journal, its authors have often made it clear that creative philosophers will always seek to improve their own methods. Even those who sincerely respect other cultural values, epistemologies, and methodologies will always retain some of their own preferences, subjective insights, and blind spots (Bunnin 2003, 352). What really matters is only their equality of opportunity, their evaluation regardless of the seemingly pervasive economic, political, and cultural power relations. Regardless of where they originate, and of their individual originators, such subjective inclinations should be checked by an equally reliable culture of academic critique and discussion, rather than silenced by demands for strict conformity in methods, theories, and doctrines.

This problem is of special importance for the actual understanding of philosophy, which is basically not a tool for finding truth, but rather a means for the endless search for ever-changing truths. The task of philosophy is not to establish an objective and eternally valid truth. Because of the situational and emotional nature of human understanding, these truths necessarily always remain partial. Therefore, philosophy must constantly re-open old questions and pose new ones. Rather than being a "hard science" that implies simple justifications and monotonous confirmations of what already exists, it is and should be a constructive, creative, and unending critique of reality.

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In such a framework, human understanding is not conditioned by the normative standards of some objectivity, but by the object of knowledge itself, including the situational context in which it is embedded. Such approaches start from the awareness that our existence is necessarily permeated by dynamic interactions between our confinement to our individual, subjective, and most intimate world on the one hand, and the tangled, continuous mergers of all our individual worlds into one on the other. Thus, none of these new forms of transcultural and post-comparative philosophies presented in *Asian Studies* can be the only "most appropriate" or even "most correct" method for studying Asian philosophies. In the field of transcultural methodology, they simply represent a few of the many possible ways to reconcile universality with particularity.

By unceasingly seeking new methods and simultaneously by developing, upgrading and changing the existing methodological procedures, we might gradually obtain an insight into some new, challenging approaches to the understanding of our world (Rošker 2021, 138–39). Someday, such approaches might even help us to confront differences by transcending the schemas, defined by deep-seated, ingrown prejudices, against so-called "Oriental thought". Seeking such new approaches and methodologies was always one of the main interests that guided the editorial board of the journal *Asian Studies* in its criteria of selecting contents and creating special issues centred on special themes.

Most of the previous publications that focused on elaborating existing, or creating new methodologies were proceeding from the field of logic, and they were mainly dealing with Chinese[1], but also Indian (see Ditrich 2022; Škof 2021) or comparative (e.g. Vörös 2012) logic. New methodologies were also developed by many authors who worked in literary or cultural studies (Ceciu 2013), as well as by those who investigated Asian art history (Vampelj Suhadolnik 2021; Berdajs 2019), different forms of metaphysics (Ames 2020), or human cognition and epistemology (Lee 2012; Vörös 2016; Ditrich 2022; She 2022). We have previously published several important papers dealing with different fundamental questions of transcultural studies, covering various areas of historical (Shirasi 2018), literary (Kang 2016; Ahmadipour 2016), and philosophical (Bartosh 2017; Heubel 2020; Silius 2020) discourse. The journal has also throughout its history welcomed studies in comparative theory: its previous publications on these issues encompassed a wide scope of contents and disciplines, reaching from Buddhist (Hashi 2016) and Islamic (Katheran 2014) studies, through aesthetics (Sernelj 2017) to epistemology and phenomenology (Hashi 2015).

1 See for instance several articles published in the last issue, as for instance Hu and Hu (2022), Liu and Li (2022), Zou and Li (2022), and Rošker (2022), but also many papers that were published in earlier issues, such as Cui (2021), Hashi (2016), as well as Thompson (2017).

This extraordinarily rich variety of contributions in the manifold fields related to the topic of this double issue has led the editorial board to its decision to invite several competent scholars who have helped us to delineate a new field of study which arises—in its permeable and dynamically changing framework—from the diverse approaches included in this, and the next volume of the double issue. It also points to another important feature that is common to all new transcultural philosophical methods—namely their explicit relational nature. This feature is not only connected to their paradigmatic bases, i.e. to different frameworks of reference, but also to its crucial function that enables us to link particular elements from different systems under investigation into new, mutually transformed entities of information, ideas, knowledge, or even wisdom.

On the other hand, this variety of contributions that have played an important role in the publishing policies—and even the very conceptualization of contents that have been at the forefront of the journal's basic interests—prove that conscious approaches to transculturality and the so-called post-comparative methods belong to the most important groundworks of all European (or Western) theories that aim to deal with non-Western cultures.

In this sense, it is important to see that Asian methods of thought, as represented through Asian philosophical, literary and artistic discourses, have—similar to other theoretical discourses all over the world—been the central driving force for creating ideas and shaping knowledge which forms and develops human understanding, launches human curiosity, and inspires human creativity. Therefore, the previously "absurd" assumption that the "Western" theory of knowledge does not constitute the sole, universally valid epistemological discourse, something which would have been unthinkable for the majority of "Western" theorists less than a century ago, is gradually becoming a generally recognized fact among most present-day cultural exponents and communities. It has become clear to most people that "Western epistemology" represents only one of many different forms of historically transmitted social models for the perception and interpretation of reality.

Hence, polylogues among different forms of such intellectual creativity are not only possible, but also a most sensible thing to do (Ames 2015, 109–10). If we consider their value and significance within the framework of contemporary global developments, we can with an easy conscience ask ourselves what role will be played, and what share more modern and appropriate reinterpretations of classical Asian philosophies will have in this process.

Such questions have, of course, no definite and universally valid answers. Their elaboration instead leads to the reopening of new questions. Therefore, they will

doubtless continue to remain in the centre of our interests which will define the future scopes and thematic guidelines of *Asian Studies*.

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BOOK REVIEW

Morris ROSSABI[1]: *China and the Uyghurs: A Concise Introduction*

*Reviewed by Norbert FRANCIS**

(2022. Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 182. ISBN: 978-1538162972)

An account of the history of the Uyghur people is indispensable for understanding the current crisis in Xinjiang province. This is where *China and the Uyghurs* begins. As a historian of East Asia, Professor Rossabi approaches the problem of understanding by applying an objective procedure of fact-finding, as is required of researchers in his field. Objective, here, first implies the gathering of evidence and other reliable information from historical sources and from reports of events, also from reliable sources, as they unfold in real time. Secondly, it implies examining the available information critically, from more than one point of view. Such an approach to history and current affairs is sometimes also called "balanced". The balanced assessment is sometimes difficult when our knowledge of unfolding events suggests that the problem in large part is one of rights violations on a monumental scale. For this reason, some readers may question or even reject the method of this study. Upon skimming the chapters, before reading them closely, I admit to also having been initially predisposed along the same lines.

This review will take the Preface and each chapter in turn, following events more or less chronologically. Being how the book is organized, this will allow us to trace the controversies back to their origin in time.

What came to be designated officially in 1955 by the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), comprised the same territory claimed by the Republic of China, the civil war-torn and largely foreign-occupied republic that emerged from the 1911 Xinhai Revolution overthrowing the almost five thousand years of dynastic rule. The last dynasty, the

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Qing (1644–1911), had also claimed Xinjiang, sovereignty which the republican government carried forward (again, it is important to remember that it barely controlled significant swaths of Eastern China, much less the western provinces). By the mid-18th century, it could be argued that the Qing had in fact administered the region, having expanded into Tibet as well.

Chapter 1 begins with the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE). The Silk Roads, ancient antecedents to the Belt and Road Initiative of today, wound through the Northwest territories connecting the Tang capital, Chang'an (Xi'an), and Central Asia, and beyond. The Tang (618–907) promoted the growing commerce, but despite some incursions it would be wrong to assert that control over the towns and countryside of the northwest was achieved. The chapter emphasizes that the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) current official history on this question—that Xinjiang was "part of China" beginning with the Han dynasty—is misleading at best. In fact, following the collapse of the Tang dynasty, during the period of the Mongol Khanates, the northwest region was effectively independent of Beijing, coinciding with the displacing of Buddhism by Islam. Following the Mongol era, it could not be claimed that Xinjiang was a unified entity either, but the most accurate characterization of the relationship with the East, prior to the actual Qing conquest, is that of "sporadic influence" over essentially self-ruling domains (p. 11).

If effective Chinese sovereignty is established in the mid-1700s, considerable autonomy still prevailed with an attempt to maintain coexistence and promote economic development.

As the last dynasty began to enter its final decline, the relative coexistence also began to come apart. In this context the confrontation with Russian interests becomes a serious issue of interference, continuing to complicate the question of sovereignty well into the 20th century, including the post-1949 years. Up through the 1960s, during the Sino-Soviet split, support for pro-independence forces continued from the USSR. This interesting topic is the focus of Chapter 2. The widespread confusion and generalized disintegration of the republican era gave way to new uprisings. In 1933, the first short-lived East Turkistan Islamic Republic was proclaimed, with initial support from the Soviets, soon to be withdrawn. The second Soviet satellite state, the East Turkistan Republic (1944–1949), deserves a major study all its own to then trace the many years of interaction and competition between Russia/USSR and China, spanning the pre- and post-revolutionary periods of both countries. Needless to say, the recent historical example of an autonomous Uyghur state (albeit foreign sponsored) keeps the idea of an actual separation and independence from China alive, a precedent/idea that no other national minority of China has ever or could ever have plausibly contemplated.

The early CCP posture toward the peoples of Xinjiang presented a semblance of tolerance and gradual transition. Conflict was restricted to land reform measures that, as in Tibet, affected the vast properties owned by the religious institutions. The *bingtuan* (兵團), a military corps established in 1954 that served as a militia and production brigade, grew to a formidable force, later to be implicated in involuntary population transfers and management of the internment camps. But throughout these first years following the Chinese Revolution, economic development and reform appeared to advance without major friction or misunderstanding.

It was the sharp left-turn of 1957, prelude to the hecatomb of the Great Leap Forward, that we can perhaps point to as the beginning of the end of the more or less tense but relatively stable coexistence. The chaos reached up into the Party leadership, prompting it to assign blame. The new adversary was the peoples' religion itself (p. 54), their beliefs and customs. State policy now included the prohibition of pilgrimages and the supervision of mosques and shrines (p. 54). Islam itself came to be seen as an obstacle to progress, in line with the Party's anti-religion doctrine that it imposed in all cases across the PRC. The shift to a hardline in the context of the Great Leap Forward triggered an exodus in both Xinjiang (mainly Kazaks to the USSR) and Tibet (the Dalai Lama and his followers to India). In both regions, the initial response from Beijing was to deepen the conflict until the CCP leadership could temporarily sideline Mao. For a few years, until 1966, a more moderate faction in the Central Committee was able to draw back from the famine and confrontation in Xinjiang, as elsewhere. The four-year relaxation on ideology-driven directives resulted in fewer restrictions on Islam and an economic recovery.

We now arrive at the point in history that fully corresponds to the living memory of today's citizens of China. The Red Guards renewed the campaign against religion and worked to uproot the "capitalist roader" reforms that the moderates had implemented a few years earlier, hoping to head off a free-fall over the cliff. As in Tibet, the widespread physical destruction of places of worship, schools, shrines and religious texts for the three years through to 1969 (p. 69), and continuing albeit with abated enthusiasm until 1976 with the death of the tyrant, remains today as the reference point in recent times for practicing Muslims of Xinjiang and all those who identify with the faith. Thus, it should come as no surprise that today any arbitrary measure even approximating the last major assault on religion, along with the associated sharp rise in Han immigration, has provoked strong resistance.

This is where Chapter 3 picks up the historical account. Here, the question is posed: why even after economic recovery and unprecedented material progress, spanning a period from the late 1970s into the second decade of the 21st century,

has discontent and repeated outbreaks of serious organized violence persisted? The specific kinds of confrontation, in their recurring frequency, have not been previously attested, and as an interesting contrast to Tibet and other autonomous regions, which can be taken as parallel scenarios of conflict, such incidents appear to be specific to the Xinjiang conflict. The reform and opening-up of Deng Xiaoping was implemented along with attempts at some measure of liberalization and greater religious and cultural tolerance, as on previous occasions (p. 75). Up until Tiananmen, opposition and protest seemed to be more or less predictable, and from the point of view of the centre, seemed manageable. However, the following year, 1990, all this appeared to change.

With regard to the above mentioned historical parallel between the XUAR and Tibet (Liu Xiaoyuan 2020), it is important to step back and trace the relationship as it has evolved since 1949. In both cases, when it came to the problem of integrating the minority nationalities, the stage of an initial posture of flexibility and gradualism soon gave way to strike-hard reaction. Across China, such flexibility and gradualism was even more fleeting, with the first violent purges of the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries occurring in 1950 and Anti-Rightist Rectification in the second half of the decade, followed by the waves of Maoist radicalism of the Great Leap Forward beginning in 1958 and the 1960s-1970s Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (Yang 2021). After a brief period of dialogue and negotiation, the fanaticism and devastation that was visited upon Tibet and Xinjiang were the same that the Chinese people as whole endured, with the difference that the respective cultural institutions associated with Buddhism and Islam suffered an additional repression, specific to culture and religion.

Language policy in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) and XUAR, which has swung back and forth between an attempted recognition of inclusion and an exclusionary imposition of Chinese, followed the same directives, from one period to the next, from Beijing. The respective dates for each change in policy in Tibet and Xinjiang largely coincide. In any educational system of a multilingual society, unless a dedicated portion of the teaching program is reserved for using the minority language in learning academic content (e.g. Uyghur-language or Tibetan-language as the medium of instruction), the dominant national language (in this case Chinese) will eventually displace it almost completely in the younger generation, in society, not just in school. The question is not the teaching of Chinese *per se*, but the down-grading of Uyghur and Tibetan from media of instruction to subjects, then potentially reducing them to minimal expression.

The remaining sections of Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 focus on the period of armed actions organized by what other observers have characterized as a loose

confederation of groups—estimated at approximately 26, a number with ties to international terrorist networks (p. 93), and the PRC's response. The author deserves credit for not avoiding discussion of this difficult topic, an important aspect of the present crisis. Readers can consult the details of the incidents beginning in 1990, culminating in 2014 (pp. 77–124), and subsiding in recent years.

The fundamental error of the PRC response, as other experts have called attention to, is the failure to differentiate between violent fundamentalism and peaceful everyday religious practice and affiliation. Confounding the two, in the case of Xinjiang, has seen the emergence of what, by all accounts, seems to be population-level collective punishment on a level with cases seen in the 20th century.

Chapter 4 takes up the question of the camps. The available evidence points to a decision of the security forces to impose a regime of mass internment that stands as one of the most serious violations of human rights since the Maoist era ended in 1976. This decision has counted upon the full support of the PRC and CCP central leadership from the beginning. It appears, from the testimony of former internees and reporters, as a full-fledged if not more aggressive revival of the *laogai* (劳改) and *laojiao* (劳教) penal systems, specifically targeting in this case one of the minority peoples of China. The internment system, of the same design as the Soviet gulag, turns out to be effectively indiscriminate, detaining for the most part completely innocent individuals. This conclusion can be inferred straightforwardly from the estimated number of recent and current detainees. As Chapter 4 points out, the challenge for democracy and human rights proponents continues to be the iron-clad secrecy that has been maintained by the authorities, frustrating any objective investigation. The control of information is on the same level as the lockdown of evidence related to the origin of COVID-19 and the massive application of the death penalty (the latter especially relevant to this review).

The inexorable and accelerating migration of Han Chinese into the autonomous region, now spanning over almost 100 years, is the central point of conflict. It is the overriding factor around which turn virtually all sources of the conflict and all down-stream consequences driving the conflict deeper. Previous regimes going back to the Qing dynasty had encouraged migration, but few workers, much less their families, took up the offer. During the first years of PRC rule, immigrants from Eastern China represented 6% of the population, in 1963, 33%, today 42%. In the north, the urban centres that cluster around Urumqi are majority Han, in the capital itself at a proportion of over 70%. According to the 2020 Census, Uyghurs are now a minority in the XUAR, at 45% (down from 75% in 1953 and 54% in 1963).

Intermarriage, in part a natural outcome of this demographic shift, is largely the result of deliberate PRC policy. As the author points out, this trend is more

complex than appears at first glance. Similar to other traditional societies, and again as in Tibet, modernization, economic development, full-time employment outside the home, new educational opportunities, including in higher education, for girls and young women, have created new options of social life that were unthinkable in the recent past. For obvious reasons, a return to the traditional norms of courtship and marriage is no longer an option at this point.

The thesis of this study suggests a number of implications. One that this reader has taken away, that appears consistent with the facts summarized by the author, is the following.

If under the current conditions of strong nation-level integration, sustainable for the distant foreseeable future, there is no viable or even conceivable pathway to independence—an assessment by the way that also applies to Tibet and Hong Kong (Yu and Kwan 2020)—this consideration should be central in formulating an effective political program for eventual reform. The historical lessons (of hundreds of years) of the different variants of limited or *de facto* autonomy that came to be (partially) implemented could guide the democratic movements going forward, on the example of Charter 08, for example. In fact, the most recent proposal of autonomy was made during the 20th century immediately following 1949, by the very same CCP, under Mao, as it attempted to negotiate with Tibet and Xinjiang a "transition" ("long-term" and "gradual" by its own characterization) toward the PRC model (see Chapter 2; Liu Xiaobo 2020). The transition and negotiation collapsed with military occupation and total Party dictatorship. But the principle of autonomy remains, even as the current Xi regime continues to vacate it of any meaningful content. In retrospect it is questionable as to whether Mao Zedong's proposal was made in good faith. The acceptance of the terms, however, was made in good faith by representatives of Tibet and Xinjiang, still designated, if only in name, as the TAR and the XUAR.

Flagstaff, 10th December 2021

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