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SPECIAL ISSUE
THE CONTEMPORARY REVIVAL OF TRADITIONAL
CHINESE PHILOSOPHY

Guest editors of the special issue
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Editor's Foreword

Introduction: Towards a Communicative Encounter – Traditional Chinese Philosophy in Contemporary Discourses

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Guest editors

The Original Intent

In this special issue, we present contemporary studies of traditional Chinese philosophy, born out of the challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. The scholars who contributed to this volume sought to engage in a profound dialogue, a necessity during a time when the pandemic prevented in-person cross-border meetings. Though COVID-19 is now behind us, the impact it left on our world continues to resonate. This collection should be seen as a response to the concern that "the loss of memory and the possibility of intercultural dialogues …will deal humanism a final, fatal blow" (Rošker 2023, 8). It encompasses a diverse array of systematic studies predominantly authored by scholars from mainland China.[1]

This special issue comprises three distinct sections. The first involves a systematic exploration of contemporary Chinese scholarship. Following this, it delves into contemporary interpretations of classical texts, emphasizing the current state of the field and theoretical reconstructions. Finally, it concludes with a discussion of two Confucian theories relevant to the present and a critical analysis of the comparative approach.

Two notable features warrant explanation. Firstly, it is important to highlight that five out of the ten articles in this issue have been translated from Chinese into English. Secondly, a significant portion of these articles, seven of the ten, have been authored by scholars affiliated with mainland Chinese academic institutions. Additionally, Stephen Angle's paper focuses on the author's interactions and critical reflections on scholars in mainland China. This special issue thus serves as a practical case study of the scholarly engagement between East and West.

In this introduction, we aim to discuss the kind of encounter and communication we intend to achieve. In the process of communication, how can we understand the practice of translation and the function of a translator? How should the existing criticism of the Eurocentric curricula in Western philosophy departments inspire reflection on the Chinese side, especially given that Chinese scholarship has underscored the importance of comparative philosophy?

What Kind of Encounter?

Carine Defoort's observations reveal the evolving dynamics in cultural interactions between China and the West. This interaction commenced in the 17th century, characterized by both sides interpreting each other through their own frameworks of thought. The 20th century witnessed a significant shift, with Western theories and scholarship dominating the discourse. However, recent decades have seen resistance against this one-sided dominance, under the banner of "the legitimacy of Chinese philosophy" (Defoort 2022, 358–59).

In contemplating the Western dominance in global intellectual discussions, Defoort suggests considering the role of emotions, attitudes, institutional structures, and disciplinary rigidity in the process of cultural exchange. She underscores the limitations of relying solely on rational debates to challenge the institutional biases and intellectual preconceptions in Chinese philosophy, a matter also examined by Vytis Silius (2020). Additionally, Defoort encourages an outlook of inclusivity and responsiveness (Defoort 2022).

As face-to-face communication becomes more accessible, whether in person or through virtual platforms, it is essential to explore the practices that drive and exemplify inclusive and responsive attitudes in contemporary Chinese philosophical exchanges with the West. How does communication characterized by inclusivity and responsiveness differ from other communication styles?

One way of understanding *communication* is by emphasizing the argumentation and presentation of facts, theories, and ideas, which constitutes the transaction of information. In this context, the emphasis lies on the significance of truth and facts, overshadowing the identities of the communicators and the manner in which they converse. Rational debate, being truth-centric, is undoubtedly vital and forms the foundation of effective communication. However, it is essential to recognize that genuine communication transcends this framework.

In the words of Eilan (2020, 12), "A shouting out to B in the supermarket that he is spilling sugar does not put him in a communicative relation with B unless B

responds to A in a way that involves his adopting an attitude of address towards A." This underscores that authentic communication extends beyond mere information exchange; it hinges on the acknowledgment and response to one another, fostering a shared sense of engagement and interaction.

An alternative form of communication is instrumental and ideological, aiming to persuade and alter others' viewpoints. However, this approach is distinct from our conception of communication, as it inherently fosters opposition, where individuals advocate their views against one another, resulting in a fixed worldview for the interlocutors. In this type of communication, the relationship concludes once one party successfully persuades the other.

In contrast, our vision of communication centres on reciprocity and mutual attention. In this context, the recipient perceives that the communicator is addressing them directly. The recipient not only recognizes but also reacts and responds to the communication, forming a dynamic exchange. The communicator, in turn, receives and acknowledges this response, fostering a continuous, interactive dialogue.[2] According to Husserl

> All sociality is based […] on the actual connection of the communicative community (Mitteilungsgemeinschaft), the mere community of address and uptake of address, or more precisely, of addressing and listening. (Husserl 1973, 475, cited in Meindl 2023, 363)

If we shift our perspective and view communication not solely as a transaction of knowledge, as exemplified by one-sided shouting in a supermarket, or as a mere instrument for persuading or changing others' opinions, several transformative changes emerge. To cultivate mutually attentive communicative behaviour, we must undertake certain steps.

Husserl's insight into communication initiates a contemplation of the assessment of translation. This signifies that we need to examine the act of translating information, concepts, and perspectives across diverse cultural and linguistic contexts. By doing so, we enhance our ability to engage in meaningful, mutually attentive communication.

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2   The practice of *authors meeting critics* might function closer to the communication intended in this introduction. The author writes, the critic responds, and the author replies. They start with a shared concern. While equally expanding their horizon and the public space of discussion, they also attend to each other. The writer's academic world enters into the critic's space of debate, and the writer is obligated to respond to the critic's attention and comments.

Translation as a Creative Act

To comprehend the essence of translation and the role of a translator, we must explore the concept of translation as a creative act. This leads us to ponder what occurs when certain elements remain untranslatable, a question that often lacks definitive answers. This issue becomes particularly pertinent in the context of *Chinese Literature and Thought Today*, a continuous endeavour to offer the finest English translations and insightful critical essays on contemporary Chinese literature, culture, philosophy, and intellectual history. Furthermore, the "State of the Field Report" within *Dao, A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, underscores the necessity of fostering effective research communication between the realms of Chinese and English academia.[3]

Moreover, Silius proposes that "translation should be taken as a philosophical method", because it creates new meanings, expands language and mind, and allows them to be attested by others (Silius 2022, 72). What Silius probably has in mind is translating classical Chinese texts into modern languages. The significance of this, however, also reaches the translation of research articles, book reviews, conference reports, and so on. If translators are given recognition for "creating new meanings and expanding language and mind", a good translator should be considered to engage with creative and highly skilled academic practice. As such, the different meanings embedded in translations will no longer be perceived as a *gap*, which often leads to the argument of the untranslatability of words due to the lack of lexical items within a cultural context, as criticized by Slingerland (Slingerland 2004, 5). This in return requires the practice of translation as much more than a literal transformation of words and sentences from one language to another, but with reinterpretations of concepts and the repositioning of debates. We need to be aware of the fact that "an estimated 4,000 to 6,000 languages still separate the people of the world, and only a small intellectual elite gather by agreeing to communicate in a common language, usually English" (Fügen 2007, 211). Being able to fully communicate in English should not be a baseline requirement for communication to start from, but should be recognized as an achievable goal by way of translation. In fact, the efforts made to approach Chinese scholarship in English journals reflect the practices of such an inclusive attitude while showing an intention to attend to Chinese scholarship.

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3   For instance, consider contemporary Chinese studies of concepts like *tianxia* 天下 (all under Heaven) as discussed by Tang (2023, 473–90), or the exploration of *wang* 忘 (forgetfulness) in the *Zhuangzi*, a topic addressed by Lam (2023, 297–317).

Comparative Philosophy: A Shared Situation

The articles featured in this volume play a pivotal role in the contemporary resurgence of traditional Chinese thought. They contribute through a diverse range of theoretical and textual reconstructions, reflecting the growing interest in comparative philosophy within academic discourse. Remarkably, this shared interest in comparative philosophy reveals that both East and West face a common challenge – the necessity, that is, to be included in the standard curriculum in university philosophy departments.

In several English-language articles, scholars have advocated for the inclusion of Chinese philosophy or comparative philosophy courses as a part of the standard curriculum in English-speaking universities (Silius 2020; Defoort 2022). This reflection on course structures is not exclusive to English-speaking philosophy departments, as it also extends to Chinese-speaking universities. When assessing the Chinese philosophy curriculum within Chinese-speaking academic settings, it is pertinent to ask how many philosophy courses carry the specific title "Comparative Philosophy". Additionally, how many articles, even if not originally in Chinese, are considered essential readings in Chinese classrooms, reflecting global dialogues on the subject?

Even when a Chinese philosophy instructor encourages the application of a comparative approach in teaching, the course title itself signifies a broader interest in establishing students' foundational knowledge and underscores the significance of addressing both similarities and differences. The call for institutional inclusion of comparative philosophy requires not only extensive research in this field, but also direct communication and mutual attention "for" and "with" one another from both sides.

The Structure of This Issue

This special issue aims to facilitate meaningful communication and is structured into four distinct sections. It commences with an opening section dedicated to the exploration of contemporary Confucian philosophy in mainland China and the critical examination of its methodological underpinnings.

In the first contribution titled "Virtue Ethics, Confucian Tradition and General Predicament of Modern Society: A Discussion of Chen Lai's 陳來 *Confucian Theory of Virtue*" by Tang Wenming 唐文明, the nature of Confucian ethics and its complex relationship with modernity are extensively examined through the analysis of Chen Lai's work on the *Confucian Theory of Virtue*. Tang points out

that Confucian ethical theory is inherently rooted in virtue ethics, and the differentiation between public and private virtues within modern moral constructs inevitably results in the dominance of the former over the latter. This issue encapsulates a broader challenge faced by virtue ethics in the context of modern societies.

The second paper in this section, authored by Zhao Jingang 趙金剛, explores the topic of "Cultural Reflections on the Great and Originating Period: Chen Lai and the Creative Transformation and Innovative Development of China's Rich Traditional Culture". According to Zhao, Chen has been dedicated to resolving this dichotomy by contemplating the role of tradition in modern society through the lens of multicultural structures. He emphasizes the continuity of traditions rooted in value rationality. As a result, Chen has departed from monistic universality and introduced the concept of poly-universalism to reevaluate the manner in which universality exists. Chen argues that universality is not an exclusive mode, where one must select one form of universalism over another, but rather, each civilization inherently contains universality. While certain conditions are necessary to realize universality, one cannot entirely replace the universal values of one civilization with those of another.

In light of this cultural perspective and the consideration of the relationship between the fundamental tenets of Marxism and traditional Chinese culture, Chen upholds the essence of benevolence, advocates for the new four virtues, and reflects upon the value of traditional Confucian virtue in contemporary China.

In the following paper, titled "How to 'Do Chinese Philosophy': On Chen Shaoming's 陳少明 'Method of Doing Chinese Philosophy'", Chen Bisheng 陳壁生 explores Chen Shaoming's approach as a method that marks a shift in perspective. Instead of focusing on the historical study of Chinese philosophy, this method emphasizes the innovative creation of the meaning of Chinese philosophy.

Chen defines Chinese philosophy as philosophy that embodies the cultural spirit and experiences of China. This perspective calls for a broader array of resources beyond the conventional historical study of Chinese philosophy, aiming to bridge classical philosophical ideas with contemporary life experiences. It does not promote a metaphysical presupposition in research, but instead embraces methodological diversity while encouraging the cultivation and application of imagination. Ultimately, this approach aspires to shape a philosophical field that is both intellectually rich and encompassing in its scope.

This section concludes with Liu Yutong's 劉禹彤 paper titled "On the Supremacy of Confucianism and the Periodization of Confucian Classics Learning in the

Han Dynasty". Liu presents a counterargument to Wang Baoxuan's 王葆玹 claim that Emperor Wu 武 of the Han 漢 dynasty esteemed the Five Confucian Classics 五經 and allowed for the coexistence of non-Confucian schools. Liu contends that the full implementation of the supremacy of Confucianism (獨尊儒術) did not occur until the reign of Emperor Cheng 成. Additionally, Wang's twofold premise, which suggests that masters learning (*zixue* 子學) during the Warring States period served as the foundation of classical learning (*jingxue* 經學) in the Western Han dynasty and that the decline of classical learning resulted from the extinction of masters learning during the ascendancy of Confucianism, is also challenged by Liu.

Liu's paper proposes that the supremacy of Confucianism aimed at the second founding of the Han dynasty, rather than altering the relationship between classical texts and masters learning. Both the Qin 秦 and early Han dynasties drew inspiration from masters learning as their guiding ideology. However, Emperor Wu recognized that relying solely on masters learning, a collection of ideas from great thinkers, was unsustainable. Instead, the Han dynasty needed to be founded on classical learning, representing the traditional Chinese civilization inherited from the three ancient sage dynasties of the Xia 夏, Shang 商, and Zhou 周. Hence the supremacy of Confucianism was a means of ensuring the continuity and stability of the Han dynasty, as implemented by Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 and Emperor Wu.

The second section of this special issue looks into the diverse interpretations of classical texts. It comprises three papers, starting with a contribution by Ding Sixin 丁四新 and Zhao Qiannan 趙乾男: "Newly Excavated Confucian Bamboo Manuscripts and Related Research". They comprehensively survey the research on excavated Confucian texts from the past thirty years, including those from the Guodian 郭店, Shanghai Museum 上博, Tsinghua University 清華, Anhui University 安大, and Haihunhou Tomb 海昏侯墓 corpora. In terms of their content, these each have their own focus and characteristics. Among the bamboo manuscripts there is a large number that is dedicated to the *Shijing* 詩經, *Shujing* 書經, *Liji* 禮記 and *Yijing* 易經, as well as to Confucius, making them of great importance. At present, research on the Guodian and the Shanghai Museum manuscripts is mostly completed and that of the Tsinghua University collection is making large strides, while research on the Anhui University collection is only beginning to develop. Among all this research, Ding and Zhao point out that one of the weakest areas concerns the explanation and discussion of Confucian thought and related problems. This includes textual evidence in the form of excavated Confucian texts that provide a foundation for leaving behind the age of doubting antiquity (*zouchu yigu shidai* 走出疑古時代), and related debates by scholars that are beneficial to transmitting and revising this theory.

The next paper, authored by Kevin Turner, bears the title "Reconstructing a Theory of Mind in the *Mengzi*". In this, the focus lies on the reconstruction of the theory of mind as presented in the *Mengzi* 孟子. The central argument of the paper pertains to recent studies that, in advocating for a mind-body dualism, inadvertently introduce Cartesianism through the language they employ. This paper meticulously exposes the utilization of Cartesian language within these arguments, with the intention of catalyzing a significant shift in our comprehension of Confucian philosophy. To achieve this shift, the paper turns to John Dewey's conception of mind, which defines it as both "minding" and "discourse". This view portrays the mind as a product of attentive engagement rooted in a backdrop of traditional values and meanings. Furthermore, the article demonstrates how the Mengzi's concepts of *ren* 仁 and *tian* 天 contribute to a theory of mind. It identifies *ren* as *xin* 心, signifying mindful engagement, and *tian* implies tradition as a shared reservoir of social and cultural meanings. Through a comparative interpretation of the philosophies of the Mengzi and Dewey, a Mengzian theory of mind is reconstructed.

The subsequent paper, authored by Gong Zhichong 宮致翀, delves into the intricacies of Kang Youwei's 康有為 thought, particularly within the context of the Confucian tradition. Gong's analysis centres on a pivotal element of Kang's philosophy, the Theory of the Three Ages (*san shi shuo* 三世說). In particular, it explores Kang's synthesis of Confucius as a reformer (*Kongzi gai zhi* 孔子改制) and the doctrine that humans are born from Heaven (*ren wei tian sheng* 人為天生). These concepts were inherited from the Confucian tradition but underwent transformation in Kang's interpretation. Kang's perception of Confucius as a reformer served as the foundational theory behind his evolutionary Theory of the Three Ages, influencing its fundamental structure. The idea that humans are born from Heaven complemented this theory and provided the ethical basis for the construction of the "Great Unity" (*da tong* 大同). A significant aspect of Kang's philosophy is its role as a bridge, offering insights into the Confucian tradition while also exemplifying a Confucian response to the challenges posed by the modern world.

The final section of this issue, titled "Reconstructing Confucian Philosophy", features three contributions. The first paper, authored by Huang Yong 黃勇, explores the question, "Virtue Ethicist of the Ideal Type: Aristotle or Zhu Xi?" In this, Huang examines the impressive resurgence of virtue ethics as a contender against deontology and consequentialism within contemporary Western normative ethics. This resurgence has sparked great interest among comparative philosophers in identifying potential forms of virtue ethics in various philosophical traditions worldwide, with Confucianism notably in focus.

However, many of these comparative studies tend to employ historical examples of virtue ethics from the Western philosophical tradition, particularly Aristotelian ethics, as the ideal benchmark for measuring historical examples of virtue ethics in other philosophical traditions. This approach can potentially introduce bias, as non-Western examples of virtue ethics, no matter how noteworthy they may be, are often perceived as somehow lacking in comparison to their Western counterparts. In this paper, Huang first constructs the ideal type of virtue ethics, contrasting it with the ideal types of consequentialism and deontology. This ideal type envisions a normative ethics in which virtue takes precedence. Subsequently, Huang uses this ideal type of virtue ethics as a measuring tool to evaluate the virtue ethics of both Aristotle and Zhu Xi's 朱熹, concluding that Zhu's virtue ethics aligns more closely with the ideal type of virtue ethics than Aristotle's.

Following Huang's innovative comparative approach, Stephen Angle presents his own philosophical reconstruction in an essay titled "My Progressive Confucian Journey". This essay looks at the interaction between Progressive Confucianism and mainland China in three distinct parts. It commences with a narrative chronicling Angle's personal journey of self-identifying as a Confucian and advocating for Progressive Confucianism. The second part explores a pivotal phase in his intellectual evolution, marked by a series of ten dialogues held with mainland Chinese Confucians in the Spring of 2017. Angle's article provides an overview of the topics that were debated, emphasizes recurring themes that emerged throughout these dialogues, reveals the diversity of views among mainland Chinese Confucians, and underscores the significance of these dialogues in the context of Progressive Confucianism. The essay concludes by offering reflections on these dialogues, which encompass points of agreement and disagreement, pivotal areas where Angle found himself learning from the conversations, and contemplations regarding the future of Progressive Confucianism in China.

The final paper in this issue, titled "An Introduction to Zoeontology" by Wu Fei 吳飛, introduces the concept of Zoeontology, a modern philosophical system constructed in the spirit of traditional Chinese philosophy. Zoeontology centres on the study of living and reimagines living as the central philosophical concern within the Chinese tradition, contrasting with Western philosophy's focus on "being". While "being" is often seen as eternal, with death as a negation of being, "living" encompasses the entire cycle of birth, growth, aging, and death. In zoeontology time is perceived as the rhythm of living, and space is considered the orientation within a living community. This philosophy views the living subject as a time-space system, interacting with the world from an ego-centred perspective. Zoeontology thus embraces a subjective philosophy. Different living subjects engage with one another when their rhythms of living run parallel or overlap,

highlighting the intimate and profound interactions between generations, such as parents and children. This interaction forms the foundation of a civil community. Zoeontology also explores the dialectical relationship between civilization and nature, emphasizing that the purpose of human civilization is to civilize a natural living community, operating in harmony with the rules of nature. Human civilization is not about changing nature, but rather fulfilling its natural order.

In summary, this special issue presents a wide array of perspectives on the contemporary resurgence of traditional Chinese philosophy. It encompasses discussions within virtue ethics, comparative methodologies, textual analyses, and the reconstruction of philosophical theories grounded in Chinese sources. The fundamental theme running through this issue is the commitment to fostering open communication and a sustained effort to build a mutually enriching dialogue.

The successful realization of this special issue owes much to the participation and dedication of our translators. We would like to extend our gratitude to Kelvin Turner for translating the papers of Tang Wenming and Zhao Jinggang, Yves Vendé for translating the paper of Chen Bisheng, and Oliver Hargrave for translating Gong Zhichong's article. Acknowledging the invaluable input from our reviewers regarding the selection of translated terms, concepts, and book titles, both authors and translators have actively grappled with the challenge of preserving meaning during translation while ensuring enhanced readability for English-speaking audiences.

Our special thanks also go to the chief editor Jana S. Rošker, who provides and encourages this very public space of discussion for communication. Thanks also to the English proofreader of this special issue, Paul Steed, and the technical editor, Nina Kozinc. They have played an instrumental role as diligent readers, identifying gaps in translation and offering questions and solutions.

Acknowledgement

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Contemporary Confucian Philosophy in Mainland China

Virtue Ethics, Confucian Tradition and the General Predicament of Modern Society: A Discussion of Chen Lai's *Confucian Theory of Virtue*

Wenming TANG 唐文明

Abstract

This paper discusses the nature of Confucian ethics and its tense relations with modernity through analysing the arguments contained in Chen Lai's 陈来 *Confucian Theory of Virtue*. The author points out that Confucian ethical theory is a kind of virtue ethics and that the distinction between public virtue and private virtue in modern moral projects necessarily leads to the elimination of the latter by the former. This is a general predicament of virtue ethics faced by modern societies.

Keywords: virtue, rules (laws), public virtue, private virtue, republicanism

Etika kreposti, konfucijanska tradicija in splošna zadrega moderne družbe: razprava o Chen Laijevi *Konfucijanski teoriji kreposti*

Izvleček

Članek razpravlja o naravi konfucijanske etike in njenih napetih odnosih z modernostjo z analiziranjem argumentov v Chen Laijevi 陈来 *Konfucijanski teoriji kreposti*. Avtor opozori, da je konfucijanska teorija etike nekakšna etika kreposti in da razlikovanje med javno krepostjo in zasebno krepostjo v modernih moralnih projektih nujno vodi v odpravo slednje s strani prve. To je splošna zadrega etike kreposti, s katero se spoprijemajo moderne družbe.

Ključne besede: krepost, pravila (zakoni), javna krepost, zasebna krepost, republikanizem

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Is Confucian ethical thought a virtue ethics or not?[1] This has been a hot topic of much recent academic discussion. The controversies that have come out of attempts to answer this question not only involve theoretical judgments on a philosophical level, but also the historical appraisal of the entire modern tradition of research into Confucianism. In answering this question, Chen Lai's 陳來 new book, *Ruxue meidelun* 儒學美德論 (hereafter referred to as *Confucian Theory of Virtue*) encompasses all of the present arguments as well as proposes its own unique position, thereby providing us with a very suitable sample discussion for furthering our exploration of this question. Due to the fact that public virtue (*gongde* 公德) and private virtue (*side* 私德) constitute a focal problem that many scholars have paid attention to, and also because it is an important part of Chen's book, I want to use this article to discuss and analyse this in a detailed account while also participating in the wider discussion.

Confucian Ethical Thought as Virtue Ethics

In brief, Chen Lai acknowledges that Confucian ethical thought includes a narrow virtue ethics, but he also especially emphasizes that we cannot reduce the whole of Confucian ethical thought to a theory of virtue ethics. In relating his conclusion he states that we should understand Confucian ethical thought in terms of "five unities" (*wu ge tongyi* 五個統一) thinking that we should use such terminology as "ethics of exemplars" (*junzi lunli* 君子倫理) to describe the "form of Confucian ethics" (*rujia lunli de xingtai* 儒家倫理的形態). Chen says:

> In relation to the unity of principle and virtue talked about by Liu Yuli 劉余莉, I think that Confucian ethics also includes the unity of virtuous character and virtuous conduct, the unity of morality and amorality, the unity of public virtue and private virtue, and the unity of the moral world and the super-moral world. If we understand these five unities, then we will be able to fully understand the relation between Confucian ethics and virtue ethics. If we do not employ the word "unity", then we can say that Confucian ethical thought emphasizes both virtue and principle, both virtuous character and virtuous conduct, both morality and amorality, both private virtue and public virtue, and both the moral world and the super-moral world. (2019, 300)[2]

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1   This paper is translated by Kevin J. Turner (Hong Kong Baptist University). The original Chinese article was titled "Meide lunli, rujia chuantong yu xiandai shehui de pubian kunjing 美德倫理、儒家傳統與現代社會的普遍困境", published in *Wenshizhe* 文史哲 5, 2020: 15–25.

2   The term "principle" (*yuanze* 原則) in the original citation of Liu is "regulation" (*guize* 規則) which is also a common term found in virtue ethics discussions. Throughout his book, Chen Lai

Being able to arrive at such a conclusion is presupposed on the high recognition of the approach of interpreting Confucian ethical thought in terms of virtue ethics: "Regardless, the idea and movement of virtue ethics, in comparison with other Western philosophies or ethical theories, has a positive efficiency when applied to understanding Chinese philosophy, that is, the possible affirmation that it brings to Confucian ethics is quite prominent" (ibid., 279–89). It is because it is easy to see that Confucian ethical thought greatly emphasizes virtue that Chen Lai did not spend much ink on explaining why Confucian ethical thought is a virtue ethics or analysing the controversies surrounding this problem in any detail (ibid., 284). This is what we must first clarify in order to properly understand his "five unities", and thus in what follows I will analyse in detail how we should understand them from the position of virtue ethics.

The unity of rules (laws) and virtue refers to the problem of the relation of rules and virtue. This is a fundamental problem in the field of ethics. In contemporary Western academic discourse on ethics, virtue ethics is one category that is established in comparison with and in distinction from rule ethics. Rule ethics understands rules as the core ethical concept. Deontology and utilitarianism are two prominent examples that focus on the proper rules of behaviour, and thus they are classic examples of rule ethics. In contrast, the core ethical concept is not rules but instead virtue.[3] Therefore there is only a single correlate question: how does virtue ethics provide proper rules for behaviour? On this question virtue ethicists have undertaken deep analyses, such as those of Rosalind Hursthouse mentioned by Chen Lai, that directly address this problem in academia.

Since determining whether not an ethical theory is a virtue ethics or a rule ethics mainly requires understanding whether or not its intellectual approach focuses on the virtue of agents or the proper rules (laws) of behaviour, then when we look at Confucian ethical thought in light of this standard, what will we find? Borrowing from detailed analysis that I have already carried out (Tang 2012, ff. 111), here I only want to focus on the main ethical concern present in Chen Lai's description. Since it is not difficult to see that Confucian ethical thought greatly emphasizes duty, therefore the question is whether or not it is appropriate to categorize it entirely as a virtue ethics? Without a doubt, this is one of the problems encountered by Chen when thinking about a "Confucian theory of virtue".

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sometimes uses the term "principle" and sometimes the term "regulation". In the following I have used the term "regulation" in accordance with the field of virtue ethics.

3   The view that demands virtue ethics pick a side between deontology and utilitarianism because it views these two as already covering all there is to cover in regard to ethics is actually obsessed with the standard for determining appropriate conduct. It is easy to see that the tenability of virtue ethics is not related to dividing different ethical forms in terms of the standards of appropriate conduct.

In addition to Liu Yuli, Chen Lai also cites the views of Ming-huei Lee 李明輝 in order to explain that it is not appropriate to set Confucian ethics in relation to Kantian deontological ethics. While Liu's theory of conciliation (*tiaohe lun* 調和論) is not perfect, Lee's theory faces much more serious problems that prevent him from achieving what he set out to do. To point out that Kant's thought includes an ethical description of virtue certainly enhances and improves our understanding of Kant's moral philosophy—this is something that some Anglo-American Kantian ethicists have taken too far in their response to challenges to the Kantian system, and have even expressed regret at doing so (Onora O'Neill is an example of this)—however, if we therefore ignore the differences between virtue ethics and deontology, then we can only arrive at paper-thin conclusions.

For Kant, virtue mainly comes from a sense of duty, that is the "respect for moral laws". In other words, Kant's concept of virtue is established in relation to his concept of duty. This is entirely consistent with Kant's deontological ethics. The conceptual image that manifests from this theoretical tradition has a core composed of the concept of duty. We can even say that its definition of the concept of virtue is based on that of moral duty. Therefore, an appropriate inference is that, regarding virtue ethics in Kant's moral thought, we have to say that his moral philosophy is a kind of classical rule ethics that differs from virtue ethics—and the opposite conclusion is simply out of the question. Ming-huei Lee's analysis thus did not go further than providing some effective criticism (2012, 111–17). As far as Lee's use of the ideas of the moral good and the natural good in a Kantian sense to interpret the traditional Confucian debate on duty and profit, we are actually better off saying that duty refers to the good, but duty, in the Confucian tradition, is more like a virtue that includes humaneness (*ren* 仁), propriety (*li* 禮), wisdom (*zhi* 智), and credibility (*xin* 信) alongside each other. Another example provided by Lee that is key to his argument is found in his analysis of Confucius' answer to his disciples' questioning of the three-year mourning period. He makes use of the Kantian sense of attitude ethics, but, in fact, a more appropriate interpretation of Confucius' answer would be founded on the virtue of "filiality" (*xiao* 孝) that is especially emphasized by traditional Confucianism.[4] Simply put, virtue ethics has never ignored the question of motivation and certainly provides a theoretical explanation of ethical behaviour that is based on the concept of virtue.[5]

Actually, if we want to explain the importance of the notion of duty in Confucian ethical thought, then there is no better example than pointing out the rules

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[4]   Chen Lai cites both of these passages from Lee (2019, 297–98).

[5]   Regarding the problem of motivation, virtue ethics' criticism of deontology says that there is a serious problem of disunity between motivation and reason in the former. See Tang Wenming's 唐文明 *Yinmi de dianfu* 隱秘的顛覆 (2012, ff. 124) for more on this.

of interpersonal relationships that are greatly stressed by the Confucian tradition. If we take the relationship between father and son as an example, then of course there exists bidirectional obligations between them. We will have a complete picture of how their relationship "should" be even if all we do is look at it in terms of filiality and parental compassion (*ci* 慈). In my view, the reason why Ming-huei Lee specifically avoided involving himself in examples of interpersonal relationships is because he is fully committed to a Kantian universalism and therefore is not willing to bring to light the interpersonal foundation behind the concept of duty. This stance that abandons particularity for the sake of universality has nothing to do with Confucian ethical thought. If we take Song Neo-Confucianism for example, then all we have to do is remember Cheng Yi's 程頤 (1033–1107 CE) dialectic notion that "principle is one; manifestations many" (*liyi fenshu* 理一分殊). Now, does Confucian ethical thought contain a universal duty that has nothing to do with interpersonal relationships? From an analytic perspective, it is possible for us to provide such an impersonal and therefore universal notion of duty, but this is not at all the means by which traditional Confucianism engaged in ethical thought and moral inference.[6]

Clarifying how deontology deals with the concept of virtue has allowed us to see how virtue ethics understands duty. In Chapter 12 of *After Virtue*, Alasdair MacIntyre (2007, 150) specifically discusses the "crucial link between" virtue and law. He first of all points out that "there is very little mention of rules anywhere in the *Ethics*". That is to say, an Aristotelian virtue ethics fully acknowledges the importance of rules but in its explanation thereof it does not resemble modern explanations that appeal to categorical imperatives or the consideration of the results of human behaviour, but instead appeals to the maintenance and flourishing of a possible communal life that is achievable through virtue. After turning the virtue ethic concern for rules into a concern for laws that the community relies on, MacIntyre says:

> [T]he only way to elucidate the relationship between virtues on the one hand and a morality of laws on the other is to consider what would be involved in any age in founding a community to achieve a common project, to bring about some good recognized as their shared good by all those engaging in the project. As modern examples of such a project we might

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6   According to Bernard Williams, this way of thinking is related to the inappropriate distillation of some distorted moral considerations out of ethical considerations. See below for more on this. In addition, Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont (2016) have proposed the idea that Confucian ethics is a role ethics based on reflections on human relationships. In Chapter 15 of *Confucian Theory of Virtue*, Chen Lai's response to this is based on a line of thought that appeals to a universal virtue ethics that is able to encompass particular ethical roles.

consider the founding and carrying forward of a school, a hospital or an art gallery; in the ancient world the characteristic examples would have been those of a religious cult or of an expedition or of a city. Those who participated in such a project would need to develop two quite different types of evaluative practice. On the one hand they would need to value – to praise as excellences – those qualities of mind and character which would contribute to the realization of their common good or goods. That is, they would need to recognize a certain set of qualities as virtues and the corresponding set of defects as vices. They would also need however to identify certain types of action as the doing or the production of harm of such an order that they destroy the bonds of community in such a way as to render the doing or achieving of good impossible in some respect at least for some time. Examples of such offences would characteristically be the taking of innocent life, theft and perjury and betrayal. The table of the virtues promulgated in such a community would teach its citizens what kinds of actions would gain them merit and honour; the table of legal offences would teach them what kinds of actions would be regarded not simply as bad, but as intolerable. (MacIntyre 2007, 150–51)

It is not difficult to see that all of the examples of duty provided by Kant in his explanation of moral law can be subsumed under what MacIntyre calls the "table of legal offences". This is one of the reasons why Hegel criticized the spiritual substance of Kant's moral philosophy as being nothing more than that of Moses.[7] If we say that the importance of legal rules through a distinction between two kinds of evaluative practices is the first meaning of the laws or rules emphasized by virtue ethics, then MacIntyre's virtue ethics also maintains that there is "another crucial link between the virtues and law, for knowing how to apply the law is itself possible only for someone who possess the virtue of justice" (ibid., 152). Regarding this, MacIntyre appropriately emphasizes that human circumstances differ between past and present: in ancient society, law and morality did not have the same kind of division as they do in modern society. In Chapter 14 of *After Virtue*, MacIntyre summarizes the description developed in Chapter 12: "a morality of virtues requires as its counterpart a conception of moral law" (ibid., 254). Clearly, it is not only the case that virtue ethics does not exclude the necessary legal rules, but in fact lays great emphasis on them. It is just that the reason for emphasizing rules is founded on the concept of virtue. In particular, it appeals to the possibility of virtue and the flourishing community that is possible through virtue and can understand the importance of rules.

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7   See Tang (2012, 113) for more on this. Furthermore, according to Kant's deontology, MacIntyre's so-called "table of legal offences" (2007) basically correlates to whole duties one has for oneself and for others rather than incomplete duties.

Therefore, there are actually two approaches to the problem of the unity of virtue and rules (laws). The first resembles Kant in that it is founded on rules but understands virtue and therefore can be said to unify virtue with rules. The other resembles MacIntyre's description of Aristotle in that it is founded on virtue but acknowledges rules and therefore can be said to unify rules with virtue. Even though Chen Lai did not describe how virtue and rules are to be unified in detail, he nevertheless was aware of the great differences between past and present societies and, moreover, he also clearly noticed that, in regard to this point, there are many similarities between Confucian ethical thought and Aristotelian ethics. For example, he said: "The reflection on the framework that set virtue and rules in opposition in the Western virtue ethics movement is a prominent feature that rose in the 1980s and is not a fact of either Aristotelean or Confucian ethics" (Chen 2019, 285). In light of this, and in addition to what was said at the beginning of this article regarding Chen Lai's acknowledgment of utilizing virtue ethics to interpret Confucian ethical thought, I think there is sufficient reason to state that if we continue in this way then it is not possible for Chen's account of the unity of virtue and rules in Confucian ethical thought to become a Kantian understanding, nor should it be a kind of conciliatory ethics either. The most suitable interpretation is that of MacIntyre, or at least something similar.

Since Chen Lai was clearly aware of the fact that the Chinese words *dexing*[a] 德行, *dexing*[b] 德性 and *meide* 美德 can all be translated as the English word "virtue", when we encounter his so-called "unity of virtuous conduct and virtuous character" (i.e., the unity of *dexing*[a] and *dexing*[b]) we should first of all become clear on what he means by these two terms. We can find clarification in the following passage:

> Early Confucianism did not clearly differentiate between *dexing*[a] and *dexing*[b] so this is one place where we should pay special attention when it comes to research in virtue (*dexing*[a]) ethics. They did not separate mind from action, mind from body, nor doing from what is done. Those things set in stark opposition to each other in Western culture are not so in ancient Confucianism, where instead they are contained in a single unity. Instead of focusing on character to the detriment of conduct, character and conduct are consistent with each other. We see this in such texts as the "Confucian conduct" chapter ("Ruxing pian 儒行篇") of the *Liji* 禮記 (*Book of Rites*) and the "Xiang commentary" (*xiangzhuan* 象傳) of the *Zhouyi* 周易 (*Book of Changes*). Thus, the virtue (*dexing*[b]) of exemplary persons is a realization and expression of their character, and their character necessarily manifests in their conduct. (Chen 2019, 286)

Dexing[a] refers to conduct while *dexing*[b] refers to character. This is a distinction that Chen Lai makes on the basis of the ancient commentary to a passage in the *Zhouli* 周禮 that reads "In the heart-mind it is virtue and in implementing it is conduct" (*zai xin wei de shi zhi wei xing* 在心為德施之為行). This differentiation also involves some important views that Chen holds in terms of his research into the history of ethical thought in China. Prior to the year 2000, Chen Lai tried to utilize Aristotle's virtue ethics—and the Aristotelian virtue ethics MacIntyre tried to reconstruct—as an intellectual resource to try to characterize the Spring and Autumn Period as a "period of virtue" (*dexing shidai* 德行時代), that is, an historical period where "virtue ethics" was the mainstream and which is contrasted with a "ceremonial period" (*yishi shidai* 儀式時代) (Chen 2002a, 15).[8] In an article published in 2002b, Chen again proposed that this virtue ethics of the Spring and Autumn Period was developed by Confucius into a more complete "ethics of exemplars" that focused on a person's total character. In *Confucian Theory of Virtue*, he once more extends this idea and clearly uses the term "post-virtue period" (*houdexing shidai* 後德行時代) to characterize the significance of Confucius in the history of Chinese ethical thought:

> Chinese culture had already entered the period of virtue ethics during the Spring and Autumn Period, and by the time of Confucius it had already entered a post-virtue ethics period. Therefore, even though Confucius' thought contains a part that is a virtue ethics, on the whole, however, it does not belong to a virtue ethics and instead belongs to a new form of "exemplary personality" (*junzi renge* 君子人格) where it is united with the personality of exemplars. (Chen 2019, 300)

From this we can see that Chen Lai's answer to the question of whether or not Confucian ethics is a virtue ethics is not primarily philosophical or at least does not begin from a theoretical judgement. Very early Chen Lai began to utilize virtue ethics resources in his research into the history of Chinese ethical thought, and it is on the basis of his many years earnestly and steadfastly engaging in this research that he arrived at the conclusion quoted at the beginning of this article.[9]

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8   According to the author's explanation in the epilogue, this book was completed two years prior to its publication. In addition, according to the author's explanation in the preface, this book is "Part 2" of 1996's *Gudai zongjia yu lunli* 古代宗教與倫理 which described three different stages of development in pre-Spring and Autumn Period religious and ethical thought. It is clear that the "ceremonial period" mentioned in "Part 2" is related to the stage of ritual and music in "Part 1".

9   We can see that the whole structure of the second half of *Confucian Theory of Virtue* is arranged on the basis on this idea: it first clarifies the relation between Confucian ethical thought and virtue ethics thereby defining the former as an "ethics of exemplars" or a kind of broad virtue ethics (Chapter 9). Following this are the Confucian theory of human beings (Chapter 10) and

In his differentiation between *dexing*[a] and *dexing*[b], Chen Lai also extended his conclusion to periods after Confucius. For example, in discussing Mengzi 孟子, he emphasizes that "Mengzi's proposal that human nature is good is a foundation for virtue ethics" and "the mind-body process of developing virtuous character into virtuous conduct greatly emphasized by the Confucian school, with Mengzi as its representative, includes the generation and extension of moral psychology, it is a process of virtue 'taking shape externally' (*xing yu wai* 形於外) that begins internally" (ibid., 286). Additionally, in discussing the relationship between Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism and pre-Qin Confucianism, Chen Lai says:

> How to become an exemplar or a sage is a question for theories of cultivation in Chinese philosophy. Theories of cultivation occupy a large part of Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism. There is a continuity of virtue ethics between Confucius and Mengzi and the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi, but by the time of Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism it already did not occupy a large part. (ibid., 285)

Actually, the unity of character and conduct is what virtue ethics maintains; virtue ethics does not separate them from each other but instead emphasizes that a focus on character is more fundamental than a focus on conduct, and that in the end character is displayed through conduct. Chen Lai differentiates between a broad and a narrow virtue ethics thinking that the Confucian ethics of exemplars is a kind of broad virtue ethics. This provides us with an appropriate measure for appraising his argument. When Chen Lai says that Confucian ethical thought goes beyond narrow virtue ethics, his purpose is to highlight the characteristics of Confucian ethical thought and the integrity of Confucianism as a whole. From this we can see the most pressing concerns in his argument. Therefore, we see that when the object of comparison is modern theories of virtue ethics, Chen Lai emphasizes those places where Confucius and Aristotle resemble each other but when it comes to the relationship between the teachings of Confucius and Aristotle, he emphasizes their differences (Chen, 2019, 285–86). As far as the most crucial Confucian theories of mind/nature (*xinxing lun* 心性論) and cultivation (*gongfu lun* 工夫論) developed over the course of history are concerned, other than manifesting "differences in culture and civilization", they also manifest "differences in philosophical speculation". But if we give it a little more consideration,

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Confucian practical wisdom (Chapter 11). Next are narrow ethics (Chapter 12) and the virtue ethics of Confucius and Mengzi, as well as that represented in excavated texts (Chapters 13, 14, and 15). Finally, Chen Lai supplements virtue ethics with the theories of two modern philosophers (Chapters 16 and 17). For more on the author's arrangement of the second part of this project, see the preface of *Confucian Theory of Virtue* (2019, 3).

then we can find in the Western tradition of virtue ethics those things of equivalent value that correlate to actual life experiences. For example, that both Plato and Aristotle have an analytic theory of the soul is similar to how Mengzi developed his theory of mind/nature based on the thought of Confucius. Another example that can perhaps shed greater light on the problem is the Western theological tradition, since both theology and Confucianism are complete systems in themselves. For example, in Thomas Aquinas' ethics, not only is there obedience to the Commandments, but there are also the teachings of secular virtues and theological virtues in addition to a theory of spiritual cultivation that can be seen as equivalent to a Confucian theory of cultivation.

When describing how Confucian ethical thought is not limited to virtuous conduct but also includes considerations belonging to an amoral field, Chen Lai also began his discussion on the basis of virtue ethics:

> What Aristotle and broad virtue ethics emphasize is … the entire human life … and it is because of this that some people think that virtue ethics is a kind of "theory of amorality". Similarly, Confucian ethics is clearly not limited to virtuous conduct but focuses on the cultivation of virtuous conduct, personality, and practice. What this book [*Confucian Theory of Virtue*] calls Confucian ethics is meant in this sense. The focal point of life is not what is "appropriate" or "correct", but instead, what is "lofty" and what is an "exemplary" personality, these are what constitute the entire form of Confucian ethics. (Chen 2019, 293–94)

Regarding virtue ethics' concern for amoral virtues, Chen Lai's explanation primarily follows the research of Michael Slote and Wong Wai-ying 黃慧英.[10] The problem is, how should we understand the unity of morality and amorality on the basis of their distinction? The direct answer does not seem to be, at first, incorrect; as Chen Lai tells us, in order to achieve a sagely personality, it is first required to be a moral person, but one cannot simply stop at being a moral person. However, if we understand the term "morality" in a clear Kantian sense as involving the notion of duty, then, I would like to provide a line of criticism that comes from Bernard Williams.

Williams (1993) thinks that considerations regarding the entirety of our whole life are not limited to ethical considerations, but Kant emphasized moral purity and, from ethical considerations, distilled moral considerations, therefore, in terms of agency, there exists moral agency, ethical agency, and even broader general agency.

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10   See Chapter 1 of *Confucian Theory of Virtue* (2019, especially 24–28).

The special emphasis on moral considerations or moral agency is for the purpose of highlighting the importance of morality, and therefore we can easily see that another theoretical measure that correlates with this theoretical distillation must proclaim morality as the highest value. For Williams, this method seriously distorts our ethical deliberation, because if we do not have a particular motivation then normal people will not make morality a life goal and, furthermore, setting morality as the highest value is requires people live an abnormal kind of life. Williams is obviously not a thorough amoralist, even if he has been greatly influenced by Nietzsche, but his more positive views here, at least concerning broad ethical considerations, can satisfy those concerns lying behind the moral considerations distilled and handed out by moral theorists, and it is even more appropriate to situate this consideration in an ethical theory concerning the whole life of the individual. Therefore, Williams' position abandons morality in favour of ethics and he sees morality as a kind of "peculiar institution" that enslaves people.[11]

In modern Chinese academia, usage of the term *daode* 道德 is more often than not ambiguous. This is because *daode* is a term from the ancient Chinese language and has been used as the translation for the Western term "morality". However, the meanings of these two terms that come from two different times and places are quite distinct. Therefore, a common phenomenon reduces Confucian ethical thought to a kind of Western moral philosophy through the appropriation of the Western concept of "morality".[12] As mentioned above, if Williams' criticism of Kant's classical moral philosophy is effective, then discussing the unity of morality and amorality is not the best means of argumentation because there is no need to distil moral considerations out of more holistic ethical ones. In another regard, if we try to explain that an understanding of "morality" should return to its original meaning in classical Chinese texts, then the unity of morality and amorality is untenable because the term *daode*—composed of the separate terms *dao* 道 and *de* 德—originally includes the field of amorality distinguished by modern thought.

In conclusion, it is my view that the "unity of morality and amorality" in Confucian ethical thought proposed by Chen Lai begins from a modern distinction between morality and amorality and is assisted by considerations in the virtue ethic mode of thought to turn attention and focus toward the amoral elements in Confucian ethical thought. This is without a doubt an important topic that is especially helpful in understanding Confucian ethical thought by abandoning stereotypical moralism. As far as the topic of the "unity of the moral realm with the super-moral realm" is concerned, we should base our understanding on a similar

11   See Bernard Williams (1993, 174 ff).

12   See Part 1 "Moral Reductionism" in Tang (2012) for more on this.

analysis so as to rethink and repaint our image thereof, even if the "super-moral realm" can refer to essences and is not entirely different in emphasis from the "realm of amorality". This topic lacks a dedicated chapter in *Confucian Theory of Virtue*, and since it is not something that can be fully explained in relatively few words I will not discuss it further here.

Regarding the relationship between public virtue and private virtue and their expression in Confucian ethical thought, the second part of Chen Lai's *Confucian Theory of Virtue* only summarily points out that one of the biggest problems faced by the Confucian theory of virtue in the modern world is the "serious imbalance between private and public virtues simultaneously contains a general predicament faced by modern society" (Chen 2019, 301). This is the topic that Part 1 of *Confucian Theory of Virtue* discusses in detail. Furthermore, this topic can be divided into three parts. The first is how to understand the meaning and limit of the change in private virtue and public virtue between past and present and the rise of this topic in the modern world. The second is how to understand the unity of "private virtue and public virtue" in Confucian ethical thought. And the third is, based on our answer to the first two, how do we reveal the universal predicament of modern society based on Confucian ethical thought. We will now turn to these issues.

Public and Private Virtues in Confucian Ethical Thought

Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929 CE), in a series of essays published under the title *Xinmin Shuo* 新民說 (*Theory of a New People*) (Liang 1994), proposed the distinction between private virtue and public virtue, which then became a topic of countless debates. However, in tracing these discussions back across nearly one hundred years, one finds something quite perplexing: there has never been a clear definition of either private or public virtue and, moreover, no one has seemed to notice this lack. This clearly shows that the distinction between private virtue and public virtue comes from a strong practical motivation, and it is the urgency of this practical motivation that has caused many people to not worry about obtaining clear definitions of the ideas of private virtue and public virtue. But perhaps there is an even deeper reason for this lack of attention? Since critical reflection is the proper function of philosophy, then in order to reveal the practical motivation behind the distinction between public virtue and private virtue, we first need to undertake a clarification of these two ideas.

A direct standard for distinguishing between private virtue and public virtue is the two realms of life they correlate to. Public virtue correlates to the public nature of the realm of social and political life, while private virtue correlates to the

private nature of the realm of personal and family life. Since there is a distinction in what is meant by public virtue and private virtue between the ancient and modern worlds, we must point out that it is the modern distinction that forms the foundation for the differentiation between private and public virtues. In other words, the distinction between private and public virtues bears the distinct stamp of modernity. In the vast majority of the literature on private and public virtues this point has been taken for granted and considered unworthy of mention all the while being a common presupposition for continued discussion. Obviously, we do not even need to mention that this distinction was never seriously reflected on.

Another standard for distinguishing between private virtue and public virtue is the different ethical forms that are based on different types of ethical objects. This was clearly pointed out by Liang Qichao: public virtue is about the individual with regard to the group, so the group is the ethical object, while private virtue is about one individual and another and thus the individual is the ethical object. In this distinction, the individual and the group are thought of as two different kinds of ethical objects; in correlation, the relationship between individuals and that between individuals and groups manifests as two kinds of ethical forms. If we take the relationship between ruler and minister for example, and if we say that it belongs to the ethics of individual to individual rather than of individual to group (such as the government and its institutions), then the virtue that determines and completes the ruler-minster relationship does not belong to public virtue but instead to private virtue. The reason why Liang arrived at the conclusion that ancient China did not have public virtue but only had private virtue was based on his differentiation between different kinds of ethical objects and different ethical forms. Behind this, of course, was his understanding of the basic features of modern society. That is to say, the term "group", in the sense used here, refers to a kind of rational construction in a social sense rather than an ethical construction based on personal lived experience. This is why he stereotyped the ancient "five relations" (*wuchang* 五常) in terms of familial ethics, social ethics, and political ethics.

In fact, we can see a view similar to Liang's on the "five relationships" appear a few decades later in the Western world. In the concluding part of his 1915 *The Religion of China*, Max Weber, used "personalism" to characterize Confucianism, that is to say, he understood the five social relations as "purely personal". His purpose was to criticize this aspect of Confucianism as the reason why it was unable to lead to the rationalization of economic life:

> For the economic mentality, the personalist principle was undoubtedly as great a barrier to impersonal rationalization as it was generally to impersonal matter of factness. It tended to tie the individual ever anew to his

sib [kin group] members and to bind him to the manner of the sib, in any case to "persons" instead of functional tasks. This barrier was intimately connected with the nature of Chinese religion, as our whole presentation has shown. For it was an obstacle to rationalizing the religious ethic, an obstacle which the ruling and educated stratum maintained in the interest of their position. It is of considerable economic consequence whether or not confidence, which is basic to business, rests upon purely personal, familial, or semi-familial relationships, as was largely the case in China. (Weber 1951, 236–37)

At the same time as acknowledging the profundity of both Liang's view that the five relations are a matter of ethics between private individuals and Weber's view that Confucian ethics have an aspect of "personalism", we also feel a great doubt in this regard. Sticking with the ruler-minister example, how is it possible that their relationship is purely one of private ethics? How can it be that there is nothing public in the relationship between a ruler and a minister? If we understand a ruler as the representative of the government or the state and also understand ministers accordingly, then it becomes very difficult to say that their relationship lacks any trace of a public element or that it entirely belongs to a private ethic.[13] Therefore, a necessary clarification to be made regarding Liang's and Weber's views is that just as the former's distinction between private and public virtues is based on an understanding of modern society, the objectivity and rationality in the eyes of the latter is likewise based on his own understanding of modern society. In other words, both Liang's and Weber's views are based on what Charles Taylor (2004, 23–30) calls "modern social imaginaries". In light of this, behind the distinction between ethical forms in terms of relations between individuals and those between individuals and groups, or between the ethical forms of Confucian personalism and Puritan rationalism, is an intimate connection to the modern distinction between private and public realms.[14]

Based on the standard determined by the dictionary order of the two virtues distinguished above, we can say in conclusion that public virtue is a virtue that takes the

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13 The political ethics of personalism does not only belong to Confucianism nor does it only belong to ancient societies. If we understand the ruler-minister relation in terms of sovereignty and related problems, then there will be a great similarity between this aspect of Confucianism and what Carl Schmitt calls the political form of Catholicism. And it is also well known that Thomas Hobbes is an example of a modern political thinker who maintained a theory of the sovereignty of individual persons.

14 In explaining his difference here Weber also appealed to the problem of transcendence in Confucianism and Christianity. That is, he thought that the dimension of transcendence led Puritanism to rationality and its lack in Confucianism led to personalism (Weber 1951, 242).

ethical form relating to individuals to groups in the social and political realms, while private virtue is a virtue that takes the ethical form relating individuals to individuals in the personal and family realms. However, this conclusion is far from adequate. For example, a faithful Christian, beginning from his own belief, thinks that he has certain responsibilities to his own society and nation and, therefore, generates a series of virtues that are geared toward the public realm. Nevertheless, we would not say that this kind of virtue produced from a public-oriented faith is a public virtue but, in contrast, we would think that is an uncompromising private virtue. Actually, the distinction between private and public virtues proposed by Liang Qichao was greatly influenced by Montesquieu. Montesquieu thought that republican politics required the support of virtue and that such virtues needed to include political ones like patriotism and egalitarianism, rather than those that come from personal belief. It was under the influence of Montesquieu that Liang proposed the distinction between private and public virtues during his fervent calls for Chinese republicanism.

From this we come to another important standard for distinguishing private virtue from public virtue: different sources of normativity. In the concept of public virtue the source of normativity is rationally understood and conceptualized society, and therefore understanding how society is established makes it possible to understand the source of normativity of public virtue. For example, since modern society has been thought to be founded on individual rights, the concept of rights is one of the primary meanings of public virtue. In the concept of private virtue, the source of normativity is extremely individualized beliefs that either come from the traditional culture of one's ancestors, or from one's own beliefs that more often than not appeal to something transcendent or religious. For example, a Catholic might protect a concept of rights based on personal dignity due to their belief system, and even if this concept of rights is in high accord with the modern concept of social rights, this concept of rights that comes from personal belief cannot be considered a public virtue but instead is an uncompromising private virtue.

There is another clarification to make here regarding the conceptual pair of private virtue and public virtue. Based on the different understandings of "morality" (*daode* 道德) and "virtue" (*meide* 美德): a possible problem is whether or not the *de* in the Chinese for public virtue (*gongde* 公德) and "private virtue" (*side* 私德) refers to "morality" or "virtue". If we say that the word "morality" refers more to rules and that "virtue" refers more to character, then the problem becomes whether the "virtue" in "public virtue" and "private virtue" refers to rules or character. Since we have already provided a clear analysis of how normative ethics deals with virtue and how virtue ethics deals with norms, a more serious understanding of this problem is this: The "virtue" in "public virtue" and "private virtue" firstly refers to character, so then the issue is whether this quality of character comes from loving

in accordance with norms, or whether it is an objective requirement for achieving a good life. Behind this debate lie different understandings of society. If we use the terminology used by Fei Xiaotong 費孝通 to translate Ferdinand Tönnies, then the former is a society of laws and the latter is a society of customs. Even if he did not state it clearly, since Chen Lai nevertheless placed his discussion of private and public virtues under the greater heading of *Confucian Theory of Virtue*, it is clear that he understood the *de* of private and public "virtues" as belonging to the *de* of virtue ethics.

In our analysis so far, the distinction between private and public virtues is not one made in terms of different realms of life from the perspective of virtue ethics, because private and public virtues do not only correlate with different realms of life, but also have different origins of normativity. Since public virtue primarily comes from the normative requirements of modern society, the fact of the matter with regard to its distinction from private virtue is that modern society, based on rational authority, makes normative moral requests of citizens and these normative moral requests are what is referred to by "public virtue", and therefore all kinds of profound virtue ethics traditions in ancient society thereby become matters of private virtue. Frankly speaking, the problem of private and public virtues is actually a direct reflection on differences between ancient and modern ethics.

Distinguishing private and public virtues in the historical context of ancient and modern societies obviously has the purpose of promoting public virtue, since it correlates with the modern imagination and construction even if such enlightened figures as Liang Qichao from the early modern period in China quickly realized that it was not possible to ignore private virtue for the sole benefit of public virtue. In the second chapter titled "The Prejudice and Fault of Emphasizing Public Virtue and De-emphasizing Private Virtue in Contemporary China", Chen Lai critically analysed the ethical descriptions and ideas on normativity from the century since the late Qing dynasty.[15] We see that this critical analysis not only includes some important thinkers from the academic world, such as Liang Qichao, Liu Shipei 劉師培 (1884–1919), Ma Junwu 馬君武 (1881–1940), Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (1869–1936) and others, but it also includes important political figures such as Mao Zedong 毛澤東 (1893–1976) and Xu Teli 徐特立 (1877–1968) in addition to important bureaucratic documents such as the 1954 and 1982 constitutions and the 2001 *Gongmin daode jianshe shishi gangyao* 公民道德建設實施剛 要 (Practical Outline for the Establishment of public Morality) published by the

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15   The problem of the modern emphasis of public virtue over private virtue already appears in Chen Lai's *Renxue bentilun* 仁學本體論 (*Ontology of Humaneness*) (2014, 465). In addition, when discussing the modern significance of virtue ethics, Wan Junren 萬俊人 (2008) also mentions something similar.

Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. Included in this list is the highly important intellectual from the Opening and Reform Period, Li Zehou 李澤厚 (1930–2021), whose "two kinds of morality" and related problems are specifically discussed in the sixth and seventh chapters of the first part of *Confucian Theory of Virtue*.

According to Chen Lai, we see the conclusive historical fact is that in the century-long period of modern Chinese history there has always existed the fault of seeing public virtue as more important that private virtue. How are we supposed to deal with this conclusive historical fact? One possible understanding appeals to the characteristics of modern society and the happenstance of historical change. That is to say, our understanding of the "serious imbalance" between private and public virtues should not come from any fundamental doubts regarding modern life but from particular historical experiences, and that appropriate measures for restoring balance should be based on serious reflection on private and public virtues. This is how Chen Lai set up his argument. At the end of the second chapter of *Confucian Theory of Virtue* we see him propose constructive criticism for how to achieve balance between private virtue and public virtue based on his understanding of "basic individual morality" (*geren jiben daode* 個人基本道德):

> In conclusion, our view is that what is truly ethical and moral is centred on basic individual morality. The biggest problem since contemporary times has been the substitution of private morality for political morality, the overwhelming and elimination of individual morality alongside a correlate ignoring of social virtue so that political virtue, social virtue, and individual virtue have become imbalanced. Therefore, the key for reflecting on modern Chinese moral life is in recovering the uniqueness and importance of individual morality and forcefully promoting social virtue. (Chen 2019, 80)[16]

Obviously, calling for the balance of public virtue and private virtue is based on the modern distinction between the two, and therefore it is still a correction based on a modern position. It is probably because Chen Lai begins from a positive attitude towards intellectuals' involvement in social construction that he proposed this idea. However, if we look at his argumentation then I think that his point does not stop here. At the beginning of the second chapter of *Confucian Theory of Virtue*, Chen reflects on the "public virtue/private virtue" framework that appeared in contemporary China, and in doing so he mainly draws on Aristotle's concept of

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16 Distinguishing between the virtue of the public and common morality is another important part of Chen Lai's *Confucian Theory of Virtue*.

the "noble man" and the Confucian tradition's concept of "exemplars" to point out a "great limitation" of the "public virtue/private virtue" framework:

> Even though the distinction between private virtue and public virtue has a certain meaning, if we understand these two as the main division within the entirety of morality, then we will lose some fundamental morality. This also proves that the division between private virtue and public virtue has a great limitation. (ibid., 33)

It must be pointed out that the "basic individual morality" in the previous quotation is actually directed at the virtue of such consummate individuals as represented by the "noble man" and "exemplars" and is not at all what a shallow modern mind would think of as a moral lower limit when seeing this term.[17] If we point out here that both Aristotle's "noble man" or Confucianism's "exemplars" are situated in a classical context, then we can arrive at a reasonable inference regarding Chen Lai's argumentation—his reflection on the "public virtue/private virtue" framework is based on a classical position and is actually a criticism of modernity.

Thinking more on this, we arrive at the right opportunity to answer the question of how we should view the tradition of Confucian ethical thought. Just as we have already seen in Chen Lai's two books *Gudai zongjiao yu lunli* 古代宗教與倫理 (*Ancient Religion and Ethics*) (1996) and *Gudai sixiang wenhua de shijie* 古代思想文化的世界 (*The World of Ancient Intellectual Culture*) (2002a), he has already established his own classificatory system of traditional Confucian virtue ethics, and this is referred to several times in *Confucian Theory of Virtue* (1996, ff. 306; 2002a, 289; 2019, 30, 90). Even if there are some minor discrepancies, he still follows the system described in his *Gudai sixiang wenhua de shijie* (2002a) that classifies Confucian virtue ethics into *xingqing zhi de* 性情之德 (virtue of natural and emotional dispositions), *daode zhi de* 道德之德 (virtue of morality), *lunli zhi de* 倫理之德 (virtue of ethics), and *lizhi zhi de* 理智之德 (virtue of intelligence).[18] That is to say, Chen Lai does not actually discuss Confucian ethical thought in terms of the "public virtue/private virtue" framework, even if he sometimes acknowledges that this distinction between individual virtue and social virtue is appropriate in discussing Confucian ethical thought. Therefore, strictly speaking, the problem of the so-called "unity of public virtue and private virtue" in the Confucian ethical tradition is, according to Chen Lai, not an actual problem; or, at least, it is not a

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17   In *Renxue bentilun* 仁學本體論, "basic individual morality" refers to private virtue (Chen 2014, 467).

18   It is easy to see that his classificatory system of virtue ethics follows Aristotle's differentiation of virtue into ethical virtue and rational virtue. MacIntyre points out that as a teleological theory based on a kind of renewed conceptualization, Aristotle's classification of virtue ethics, still has meaning (2007, 181–203).

serious enough description of related problems. And the modes of questioning and thought regarding the unity of virtue according to the classical tradition of virtue ethics is also the actual path followed by Chen Lai in dealing with problems in the tradition of Confucian ethical thought.

In summary, *Confucian Theory of Virtue* is Chen Lai's most critical book to date. If we say that Liang Qichao's "Lun side"論私德 (On Private Virtue) written the year after he wrote "Lun gongde" 論公德" (On Public Virtue) was an attempt to correct problems of modernity (Liang 1994, 16–17), then, after more than 120 years, Chen Lai not only follows him in ameliorating modern problems but he also follows him in opening up a more critical path for criticizing modernity. In Chen Lai's historical analysis of the problem of public virtue and private virtue we can see a manifest critical attitude that closely follows modern changes and therefore manifests a clear pointedness and sharpness:

> In terms of the problem, in a society based on a market economy system, there is no need for the government to regulate professional morality as each professional unit in society will have its own requirements and will adapt to its own needs. This seems to be a line of thought left over from the system of total ownership by the people. Familial virtues should be guaranteed by the cultural tradition rather than regulated by the government because government regulation of familial virtue reflects a long period of the government ignoring traditional social and cultural habits. (Chen 2019, 77–88)

What kind of concept of society can we glimpse from this passage? Perhaps there will be people who, in connection to the line "the substitution of private morality for political morality, the overwhelming and elimination of individual morality" quoted above, will say that Chen Lai's criticism here is similar to liberal criticism of Chinese social realities. If we connect this passage with Chen's so-called "political morality" that mainly refers to the idea of public virtue maintained by republicanism, then this criticism would seem to become a liberal criticism of republicanism. Here, I must point out that this understanding is incorrect, that it is in fact a misunderstanding of Chen Lai.

In Chapter 8 of *Confucian Theory of Virtue*, Chen Lai explained his understanding of republicanism by borrowing from Michael Sandel's book *Democracy's Discontent* wherein the relation between republicanism and virtue is an important topic (Chen 2019, 261–68). As someone belonging to American society and holding republican ideas, Sandel set his theoretical rival as liberalism. Sandel provides a sharp criticism of the neutrality of liberal government emphasizing the political

value and importance of the virtue of the people. In criticizing Sandel on this point, Chen says: "The Confucian position is amiable to the republican position" (2019, 263), and in his criticism of Sandel's stance on the virtue of the people, he says

> Concern for the loss of the virtue of the people was a persistent theme for republicanism. The political ideal of republicanism is the revolution of the moral character of the people and the strengthening of their commitment to the common good … This understanding has at least a formal resemblance to consistent ideas spanning from early Confucianism (*The Expansive Learning*) to Liang Qichao (*Theory of a New People*) … Republicanism rejects short-term scheming as a core value, believes that the virtuous conduct of the people can overcome selfishness, that freedom should be protected through the virtue of the people, that virtuous people should be in charge of the government, that the government should transcend selfish desires and respond to the needs of the common good, and public opinions should be manufactured through republican government. All of this is similar to the Confucian position. (Chen 2019, 264)

We can see from the above quotation that Chen Lai, from a Confucian position, supported much of republicanism. Therefore, his criticism of *the overwhelming of private virtue by public virtue* in modern Chinese society cannot be seen as belonging to the same way of thinking as the liberal criticism of republicanism. It is better to say that Chen Lai is able to accept Sandel's republican criticism of liberalism, and that it is on this basis that he tried to reflect on the former. Therefore, we can also see in Chapter 8 with its short, review-style format, that Chen Lai raised his own doubts regarding republicanism:

> Sandel raised the question of why we need to insist on the separation between the "we" of the public and the "we" of individuals. What we need to ask is why do we need to separate the virtuous conduct of the public and that of individuals whereby we only focus on the cultivation of the latter? Other than individual virtuous conduct, what is it that republicanism values? (ibid., 269)

Actually, following Chen Lai's line of thought there is much more room for the expansion of his criticism of the overwhelming of private virtue by public virtue in modern society. In other words, Chen's criticism is perhaps still unclear in some parts. To propose public virtue and then classify traditional Confucian virtue ethics as part of private virtue, in addition to promoting the construction

of public virtue based on its importance and also to emphasize the construction of private virtue, appears to be something that was already recognized by Liang Qichao. However, since the proposal and promotion of the concept of public virtue is aimed at modern society and theoretically and practically serves the transformation of the modern social order, the relation between public virtue and private virtue can become a problem of their imbalance. To be clear, public virtue will completely eradicate private virtue not only because public virtue overwhelms individual private virtue, but also because the source of the normativity of public virtue is rationalized knowledge and conceptualized modern society, and that which has been considered a tradition of private virtue ethics actually has no place in such a rationalized and conceptualized society.[19] It is not hard to imagine that in his essay *Lun gongde* Liang Qichao offered insights on the serious historical need for a revolution in morality, although this morality would be in a form not yet seen, and one which those who follow him today in modern China have still not developed.

This seems to already touch upon the limit of republicanism: is it possible to rearrange personal ethical life in the name of public virtue? If the essence of public virtue in the modern context eradicates private virtue and the two are separated from each other, then where does the virtue of the people that modern republicanism relies on come from? There is reason why some claim that the problem of virtue in modern republicanism contains a great paradox that is expressed in the educational predicament of the virtue of the people: modern social structures cause virtue traditions to lose the land on which they exist and grow, and so also cut off the true source of the virtue of the people.[20] This is perhaps one the of the important reasons why modern governments are getting worse and worse when it comes to issues of virtue. As was quoted above, in discussing the serious imbalance between public virtue and private virtue, Chen Lai clearly pointed out the problem of the "universal predicament of modern society". Even though he did not clearly state what this "universal predicament of modern society" is in his *Confucian Theory of Virtue*, we can, nonetheless, through the above analysis and conclusions, see in what direction his answer would take us.

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19   This can be said to be the main theme of MacIntyre's *After Virtue* (2007).

20   This MacIntyre-esque criticism of republicanism comes from Li Tianling 李天伶, and I would like to thank her for the inspiration.

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Cultural Reflections on the Great and Originating Period: Chen Lai 陈来 and the Creative Transformation and Innovative Development of China's Rich Traditional Culture

Jingang ZHAO 赵金刚

Abstract

Since the 1980s, Chen Lai has been attempting to resolve the binary opposition between tradition and modernity. He has contemplated the position of tradition in modern society from the perspective of "multicultural structures", emphasizing the continuity of traditions of value rationality. In an exceptional move, he has departed from monistic universality and established "poly-universalism" to rethink the mode of existence of universality. He argues that universality is not an exclusive mode in which one must select one universalism or another, but rather that each civilization contains inherent universality. While certain conditions are required to realize universality, one cannot comprehensively replace the universal values of one civilization with those of another. Based on this cultural view, and considering the relationship between the basic principles of Marxism and traditional Chinese culture, Chen upholds the essence of benevolence, promotes the new four virtues, and reflects on the value of traditional Confucian virtues in contemporary China.

Keywords: pluralistic structures, poly-universalism, tradition and modernity, benevolence, virtue

Kulturne refleksije vélikega in izvornega obdobja: Chen Lai 陈来 ter ustvarjalna transformacija in inovativni razvoj bogate tradicionalne kitajske kulture

Izvleček

Od osemdesetih let 20. stoletja dalje si je Chen Lai prizadeval za razvozlanje binarne opozicije med tradicijo in modernostjo. O poziciji tradicije v sodobnih družbah je razmišljal skozi optiko »multikulturnih struktur«, pri čemer je poudarjal kontinuiteto tradicij racionalnega vrednotenja. V izjemnem koraku je presegel monistično univerzalnost in vzpostavil »poliuniverzalizem«, ki mu je bil v pomoč pri razmisleku o obstoju univerzalnosti. Poudarja, da univerzalnost nima zgolj ene same oblike, zato naj se ne bi bilo treba odločati o tem, ali izberemo en ali drug tip univerzalnosti; prej gre za to, da vsebuje vsaka civilizacija svojo lastno,

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inherentno univerzalnost. Četudi je za vzpostavitev univerzalnosti potrebno izpolnjevanje določenih pogojev, pa univerzalnih vrednot ene civilizacije ne moremo enostavno nadomestiti z univerzalnostjo neke druge civilizacije. Na temelju tovrstnega kulturnega pogleda ter ob upoštevanju razmerja med osnovnimi načeli marksizma in tradicionalne kitajske kulture Chen ohranja esenco človečnosti, širi nove štiri kreposti ter razmišlja o vrednotah tradicionalnih konfucijanskih kreposti v sodobni Kitajski.

Ključne besede: pluralistične strukture; poliuniverzalizem; tradicija in modernost; človečnost, krepost

Among the scholars of his generation, Chen was an early proponent of the importance of Confucian values, and since 1987 he has continued to focus on "cultural Confucianism".[1] This has allowed him to resolve the tension between tradition and modernity, while also actively constructing and striving to realize China's outstanding creative transformation and innovative development. His position on traditional culture is based on in-depth theoretical research and thought, and is therefore distinct from the nostalgic nationalistic thinking of many scholars. He affirms that cultural conservatism and the subjectivity of national culture should not be dominated by "emotion", but rather should be based on "rationality", oriented towards the healthy development of Chinese modern culture, and guided by the harmonious development of global culture. Chen has systematically addressed the question of whether Confucianism and its value traditions are relevant in modern social culture. He has explored the implementation of Confucian values in social and cultural spaces, as well as in personal lives, and explored the theoretical possibility of transforming the values of Confucianism. The possibility of social disorder and confused values brought about by traditionalism and anti-Confucianism has provided a new ontological foundation for Confucian values in philosophy, and has enabled the "great function of the whole" 全体大用 of Confucianism to be manifested in the present.

In order to explore Chen's thought in detail, we can roughly divide his thought into two stages based around the year 2000. Before 2000, the purpose of Chen's cultural thought was primarily to theoretically resolve the tension between tradition and modernity. He deconstructed the rationality of anti-traditional positions and thoroughly criticized various anti-traditional theories. After 2000, Chen actively took up the mission of cultural awareness, and his thought shifted towards cultural construction. First, he focused on revealing the core values of Chinese

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culture, and second, he engaged in philosophical construction and tried to establish a new philosophical foundation for Chinese culture. It's worth noting that these two stages are not completely divided, as many of Chen's ideas in the 21st century have their roots in earlier times, some as early as the 1980s, such as his research into the virtues in Confucianism. However, this division into two stages could help us discover some characteristics of Chen's cultural view.

This article is divided into three parts. The first analyses Chen's view of the relationship between tradition and modernity, pointing out that we shouldn't see tradition and modernization as in opposition, as tradition has the possibility to revive in a modernized world. The second part analyses Chen's attitude of poly-universalism, emphasizing that every civilization has its own universality and one shouldn't supress the other. The third part analyses Chen's attitudes towards the revitalization of Chinese civilization. The three parts together offer an overall articulation of Chen's thoughts on cultural issues as a whole, thus presenting Chen's deep concerns (and responsibilities) as a modern Chinese philosopher.

Tradition and Modernity

As early as 1987, Chen publicly affirmed his cultural conservatism and conducted a systematic review of cultural trends since modern times. In this context it is worth noting his academic seminar on "Problems and Prospects in the Development of Confucianism" sponsored by the Institute of East Asian Philosophy in Singapore in the summer of 1988. More than 40 Chinese scholars from mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, the United States, Canada, Japan, and Singapore participated in the conference. They represented various schools of thought, and especially the three major ideological trends in mainland China in the 1980s. The proceedings of this meeting were collected in the book *A Macroscopic Perspective of the Development of Confucianism* (儒学发展的宏观透视) (1997). From this work we can clearly see the cultural views and standpoints of the participating scholars at that time. Throughout the text, Chen showed no hesitation in defending the core values of tradition and the subjectivity of national culture. His views on tradition were always based on his own standards and did not rely on external ones. He refuted anti-traditional views from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

Chen submitted two papers for this conference: one was "An Evaluation and Reflection on Traditional Confucianism – Reference Materials for this Year's Discussion of Confucianism". This article set out in detail the attitudes of various schools with regard to Confucianism at that time, and it showed his complete understanding of the state of the ideological world. This is the fundamental quality

of Chen's research—what he thinks and believes is never aimless speculation. Whether it is assimilation, reference, criticism, or dialogue, his arguments are always based on a full understanding of relevant viewpoints. This stands in contrast to the cultural activities of many notable figures, and it means that his writings are still worthy of further study by today's scholars. His other article at the conference was "Confucianism and Its Position within a Multicultural Structure" (1997a). This was Chen's official conference paper, and many of the arguments are still perfectly sound propositions for the creative transformation and innovative development of traditional culture.

In "Confucianism and its Position within a Multicultural Structure", Chen responded to some of the criticisms of Confucian culture made by radicals of the time:

> When we demand that Confucianism embrace science and democracy, and that Confucianism provide a direct utilitarian spiritual source for the process of modernization, I cannot help but wonder: have we ever demanded the spirit of Faust from Buddhism, the theory of democracy from Shinto, individual liberation from Hinduism, or scientific epistemology and methodology from Catholicism? … (Chen 1997a, 53–54)

Chen criticized the utilitarian view that required Confucianism to provide an impetus for modernization. He believed that this requirement was a manifestation of pragmatism, behind which there was a psychology of eagerness for rapid success and instant benefit, and that it amounted to an accusation against Confucianism. As to Confucianism's relationship with modern times, we cannot demand that it be transformed into a system that accommodates all the values needed by modern society, just as we cannot demand that old inner sages inspire new outer kings—in fact, no matter whether or not the old inner sages can inspire new outer kings, it will not affect our understanding of the value of Confucianism in modern society. These issues that Chen raised were affirmed by Du Weiming 杜维明, who is also a cultural conservative, but also by Gan Yang 甘阳, who generally holds different positions. These issues were profound and powerful and became a highlight of the meeting.

Following the thesis of his 1987 article "Looking Forward and Backward at Modern Chinese Thought", which required Confucian ethics to cooperate with the social practices of the modern political and economic system in modern society, and maintain itself in an appropriate form as an indispensable part of social life (Chen 2009a, 25), Chen abandoned the cultural model of transformative Confucianism: the idea that the "old inner sages" could inspire the "new outer kings". He believed that Confucianism could not be required to provide everything for modern China, nor could Confucianism be allowed to restore the status it had attained

in traditional China. Herein, Chen proposed a plan to resolve the tension between tradition and modernity from the perspective of "multicultural structures". He pointed out that "the functional effect of an idea in a certain culture is necessarily related to the structure of the entire culture, as well as the status of this idea within the entire cultural system determined by the structure" (Chen 2009a, 29). Confucianism, which had played a leading role in traditional society, was confronted by the impact of the West, and this had led to many problems. This was because "the irrationality of the structure caused an 'overstep' effect for Confucianism, that is, its moral value surpassed its position and it invaded fields such as politics, cognition, and art" (ibid., 30). Today, it is necessary to "construct a new cultural structure, to adjust the position of Confucianism in the new cultural structure, to eliminate its negative elements such as its 'overstep,' and to continue to exert its positive value rationality" (ibid.). Moreover, Chen states that

> cultural modernization is not based on breaking with tradition. The key may be to deploy rational cultural elements and to achieve a benign structure, so that the synthesis of the multicultural system will indicate a more ideal direction, rather than forcing every element in the system to point towards the same direction. (Chen 2009a, 31)

In the face of contemporary Chinese cultural issues, we should not blindly criticize Confucianism and make it bear all the guilt, since "we are not to think about the ways and means of further development of Confucianism in terms of Confucianism itself, but rather to comprehensively design its development by placing it within the multiple interactions of the modern construction of Chinese culture" (ibid.). The establishment of such a structure means "to return Confucianism to its proper position, which can be said to be a matter of 'repositioning'. But the reorientation of Confucianism does not exclude criticism and development. The critical inheritance and modern interpretation of Confucianism must also contain adjustment, reflection, supplementation, and development" (ibid., 32). Here we can see that Chen is truly aware of the pluralism and variety of cultural structures, as he deftly points out the crux of the problems and presents solutions to resolve the contradictions. At present, when we think about the creative transformation and innovative development of traditional culture, it is important to base ourselves on the overall rejuvenation of Chinese culture, and to find out the contemporary positions of both Confucianism and tradition. It is necessary that we "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto Confucius the things that are Confucius'", so that we could promote the positive factors of Confucianism and the practice of "multicultural structures", which is a particularly urgent issue of our times.

This "pluralistic" position is the basic content of Chen's cultural outlook. Beginning from the position of a multicultural structure, Chen opposes examining Confucianism and Chinese traditions from a utilitarian standpoint, and thus argues that we cannot demand that Confucianism enrich the country, strengthen the military, enhance the legal system, and develop high-grade technology. Chen points out that

> it was originally common that modern Chinese people lost their trust in Confucianism from a functional perspective. Now, however, criticism of Confucian ethics from economic perspectives such as those of Weber and Parsons has strengthened intellectuals' tendency to judge cultural values using functional coordinates. With such a sharp contrast between internal and external comparisons, the impetus for "total westernization" is highly likely to grow. Once these ideas are commonly shared among the people, it will be no surprise if cultural radicalism comes to power again. (Chen 2009b, 92)

Elsewhere, Chen notes that

> people always critically reflected on tradition when China was in the key periods of its "frustrations with modernism", and these criticisms have been based on the general feelings of 'frustrations with modernism' in society at that time. In other words, whenever modernization is frustrated, there is bound to be a strong, general sense of frustration, and during periods of modernization, there will arise a questioning of culture, an inquiry into the cultural reasons for the difficulties of modernization. (Chen 2009c, 334–35)

Anti-tradition arguments based on this kind of mentality are clearly emotional, and they are non-reflective attitudes with a desire for rapid success and instant benefit. Such attitudes were the basic mentality of many scholars during the cultural boom at the end of the twentieth century.

At the same time, Chen does not view Confucianism and modernization in opposition, and does not believe that the relationship between tradition and modernity is unavoidably in tension. In his view, although Confucianism cannot produce modern values, it can accommodate them, and it can promote China's modernization, as seen in the practices of industrial East Asia. Second, Confucianism can play a value-regulating role for the ills of modernity. The importance of Confucianism in the cultural structure of contemporary China is reflected in its promotion of national cohesion and the shaping of national cultural self-confidence. It

is also reflected in the value of Confucianism in overcoming the division between modern morality and modernity, and thus giving full reign to the positive elements of Confucianism will help China achieve modernization without the ills of modernity. Third, Chen emphasizes that the revival of Confucianism depends on modernization, and indeed that the greatest condition for the revival of traditional thought in general is modernization. As early as 1987, Chen predicted that "once China realizes modernization, the redevelopment of Confucian tradition will surely come. At that time, superficial anti-traditional thoughts will disappear, and a cultural revival rooted in our profound national tradition will inevitably take its place" (Chen 2009a, 28). At the end of 1991, Chen was invited to contribute to Hong Kong's *21st Century* magazine. At the beginning of the column "Looking Forward to the 21st Century", he described his outlook on Confucianism in the article "The Cycle of Heaven and Human Affairs Passing Endlessly Onwards", in which he pointed out:

> The most severe test for more than two thousand years that Confucianism has experienced has been the plethora of criticisms by intellectuals in the 20th century led by notions of cultural enlightenment, economic function, and political democracy. But today, as the 20th century is about to pass, looking at the future of Confucian culture there is no reason to despair or to be pessimistic. On the contrary, I am convinced that, having passed through the last hundred years, and especially through the more recent challenges and shocks, Confucianism has passed its most difficult moment and has now exited its trough. (Chen 2015, 119)

We have seen that Chen's predictions have come true time and time again, and entering the new century China has displayed trends indicating the revival of traditional culture, both at the levels of the people and the government. With regard to the recent rise of Chinese studies and the revival of Confucian culture, Chen observes that

> government promotion is the environment, intellectual groups are the key, social culture is the foundation, but the most fundamental condition for the revival of Confucianism is the revival and re-emergence of the Chinese nation. In other words, the success of China's modernization and rapid economic development are fundamental conditions for cultural revival. (Chen 2012)

Chen never put tradition and modernity in direct opposition, and this cultural standpoint is where his thought is particularly valuable. As Chen emphasizes,

only by removing Confucianism's outdated content and at the same time positively and confidently affirming its spirit and principles that are valuable to modern social life, so that it can be legally used in national education and cultural construction, can we rebuild a unified national morality and a stable national spirit, moving towards a rational modern society. (Chen 2009d, 111)

This is Chen's affirmation based on his study of tradition and modernity, and of the contemporary status of tradition. This is the practical attitude we should now be taking.

In fact, the demand for "the old inner sage to bring out the new outer king" has meant that, in terms of cultural standards, the power of judgment has been transferred into the hands of modernity. This means that, unconsciously, the success of the modern transformation of Confucianism has been judged according to whether or not it brings out Western values. Confucianism has thus been reduced in scope. Faced with this implicit attitude of compromise, Chen always looks to China and to Confucian culture for his standards of thought. As he says about himself, "my position is to 'take China as the system', and by 'China' I mean both China and Chinese culture" (Chen 2015, preface, 23). Chen has a high degree of self-consciousness in insisting on a Chinese system. First, he has always emphasized the universal status of Confucian values and been opposed to viewing Chinese culture from a position of relativism. For example, when critiquing the 1958 cultural declaration of New Confucianism, Chen stated that the declaration "mainly engaged Westerners as the objects of its dialogue, and did not comprehensively engage in dialogue with the Enlightenment Movement in modern China or with the general anti-traditional ideological system in modern China" (Chen 2010). As the declaration was communicating solely with Westerners, it implicitly surrendered the right to judge culture. Furthermore, Chen does not adopt a simple attitude of negation or defence when it comes to Western culture. When discussing the dialogue between Chinese and Western cultural values, he extracts the traditional values at the essence of a problem, ponders whether we can accept modern Western values from the standpoint of Confucianism, and asks whether we can put forward deeper thinking from the standpoint of Confucianism after having accepted such a notion. It is clear that for a period of time many scholars' attitude towards Western values was "we have what you have". Even though some scholars emphasized the "uniqueness" and "transcendence" of Confucian values, in fact they had subtly taken the other side's perspective as the yardstick. Chen's self-conscious "focusing on China" is an important characteristic of his

thinking that reaches beyond that of New Confucianism, and indeed beyond many contemporary scholars.

Chen addressed the theoretical problems of anti-traditionalism and provided a thorough response. He extensively criticized anti-traditionalism in theory, drawing heavily on Weber's theories. In fact, Weber is a resource that many contemporary Chinese scholars have used to criticize tradition, and Chen is a scholar who has long paid attention to and responded to Weber's ideas.

As early as 1987, in his article "Looking Forwards and Backwards at Modern Chinese Thought", Chen referenced Weber's view on the distinction between instrumental and value rationality, arguing that "Confucianism has value rationality at its core, while economic reforms prioritize the development of instrumental rationality. Thus, it is unreasonable to expect Confucianism to provide concrete solutions for economic reforms. A tradition of values does not lose its intrinsic value simply because it cannot propose specific reform plans" (Chen 2009a, 25). Chen consistently stressed that "the most fundamental thing to grasp is to understand that the problem of 'East and West, ancient and modern' is in essence the relationship between value rationality and instrumental rationality" (Chen 2015, preface, 7). He emphasizes the intrinsic value of tradition from the independent standpoint of value rationality, and this forms the basis for his opposition to a utilitarian evaluation of Confucianism and his belief in the importance of Confucianism as the continuous development of value rationality. Here it should be noted that no scholar had previously discussed Weber's dichotomy regarding Chinese tradition and modernity.

At the same time, Chen emphasizes the tolerance and adaptation of the Confucian tradition to modernity, which was even more of a development of Weber's thought. In fact, Weber had pointed out long ago that although the Confucian tradition could not develop the values of modernity, after modernity was accepted by China the Confucian tradition could tolerate and adapt to modernity. Chen keenly grasped this point at an early stage (Chen 1994), while most domestic scholars only focused on the first half of Weber's theory when borrowing his resources, that is, that Confucianism could not produce modernity. Chen's grasp of Weber's theory of modernity surpassed that of many domestic scholars. Moreover, Weber had pointed out that although Confucianism could assimilate modernity, he thought that this was a form of "Chinese-style petrification" (*Chinesische Versteinerung*). He believed that China would embrace modern production methods more enthusiastically than other cultures due to the lack of tension between this world and the other side, and that human spiritual life could enter into a state of "Chinese-style ossification of spiritual life". However, Chen notes that:

> All religious traditions are in conflict with modernization. They must all be critical of its negative factors such as materialistic desires, value disintegration, alienation of human nature, interpersonal alienation, and cultural commercialization in the development of modernization. At the same time, we must admit that modernization is an inevitable development. In such a situation, religions that have an excessively tense relationship with the secular world are not suitable, but through the process of assimilation, a system that emphasizes morality and culture may form a reasonable tension with market instrumental rationality. (Chen 2009e, 240)

Regarding modernization and the relationship between modernization and Confucianism, Chen does not share the pessimistic Weberian view. Instead, he adopts the standard Chinese attitude of "this world" and "being in the world". In addition, Chen points out the inconsistency between Weber's research on Confucianism and on Protestantism. When Weber studied Protestant ethics he focused on secular ethics, while when studying Confucianism he focused on elite traditions and failed to analyse his questions from the perspective of secular Confucian ethics. Chen notes that since Weber only made arguments based on elite Confucian culture and ignored secular Confucian culture, his conclusions on Confucian ethics were inevitably incorrect (Chen 2015, 145). By pointing out this incoherence of Weber's theory, Chen is able to conclude that "with regard to secular Confucian culture, Weber's assertion that 'there is an even stronger tension between the Confucian ideal and the ascetic Protestant concept of the profession' is also inappropriate" (ibid.). Chen also argues that "in terms of economic behaviour, people trained by Chinese culture have the qualities of self-discipline and thrifty practice, which can play an active role in the process of simulating modernization, and the legalization of utilitarian motives provides psychological support for Chinese people" (ibid., 146). This is also the theoretical implication of Chen's exploration of elementary learning and secular Confucian ethics.

Pluralism and Trends

We have placed particular emphasis on Chen's 1988 article "Confucianism and its Position within a Multicultural Structure", since it relates to my understanding of the value of Chen's cultural theory, as I believe that this article is the origin of his view of "poly-universalism". Moreover, the concept of "poly-universalism" is the most powerful rebuttal of the views of foreign scholars (represented by Levinson) who claimed that Confucianism had died and entered a museum. Additionally,

the article provides the basic cultural standpoint that we should have when thinking about Chinese culture and contemplating new forms of human civilization.

We find that modern anti-traditional radicalism is characterized by "monist" thinking. This "monist" cultural model reduces the complexity of the various global elements, and when dealing with China's drive for modernization it has manifested in various forms of "cultural determinism". With regard to world culture, it shows a certain kind of exclusive centrism, particularly Western centrism. In practice, it expects to use the "single fix" method, hoping to solve problems quickly and with rapid returns. As a historical practice it has thus appeared eager for quick success, oversimplified, and crude. Mechanization and rigidity are the primary characteristics of monism. We see such characteristics of monistic thinking in Chen's description of radicalism since modern times. It is also worth noting that many scholars are often unconscious of being trapped in "monism". For instance, Chen pointed out that when Hans Küng and several other scholars hoped to find common ground among different civilizations to promote world peace,

> in fact, this was still a kind of monism. Can we not imagine a Chinese way of thinking of 'harmony alongside diversity'? There is no need to expect the final convergence of all religions to resolve conflicts in the world. This expectation can only be a negation of multiculturalism. Common ground in belief and ethics cannot guarantee peaceful coexistence, and more common ground in an area does not mean easy coexistence. (Chen 2011a, 14–15)

In order to oppose monism, some scholars insist on pluralism, but they end up with various forms of relativism. In this regard, Chen's concept of "poly-universalism" undoubtedly has great theoretical significance.

When Chen talks about pluralism in relation to the relationships among culture, politics, economics, and so on, he emphasizes the need to look at problems structurally. Instrumental rationality is universal, as is value rationality. As Chen says, "there is no difference in importance between the value rationality traditions of the East and the West, ancient or modern. Humanistic values must have their own independent dignity and territory" (Chen 2009f, 52). This is what he particularly emphasizes when resolving the tension between tradition and modernity. In a structure, the role of each element should be positioned to form a joint force, rather than expecting a certain element to play all roles. If a certain element is expected to play all roles, then this will cause other elements to overstep their positions, and this will lead to harsh criticism of the various elements. As for the elements in the structure, their value or function is universal, and they

generally act on every part of modern society. The realization of their universality requires the combined efforts of the whole system.

Secondly, in the face of the various civilizational systems that exist in the world, it is emphasized that the values of all civilizations are universal. It cannot be considered that only Western civilization is universal in modern society, and non-Western civilizations have a specific particular culture. This is what is argued in the previous quotation, that there is no difference in importance between the value rationality traditions of the East and West, no matter whether ancient or modern (see also Chen 2002).

Chen views the relationship between tradition and modernity and different cultures with a dialectical and a historical attitude, emphasizing the originality and the universality of the values proposed by various civilizations. He distinguishes between "intrinsic universality" and "realized universality". The term "intrinsic universality" emphasizes the universalizing ability of a certain culture in the historical process. "Realized universality" is how much a culture's "intrinsic universality" has been realized in certain conditions and environments (Chen 2011b, 290). A civilization may have achieved universality earlier due to historical opportunities, but this realization cannot suppress and cover the universality of other civilizations. According to Chen, globalization cannot become "globalization with a subject". As history develops, it may provide opportunities for the realization of universality in other cultures. Therefore, we cannot only regard Western freedom and democracy as universal values. Eastern values, such as benevolence 仁爱 and equality 平等, are still universal. Here, we can see that civilizations with inherent universality can also have diverse relationships, and in the process of realizing universality, a "clash of civilizations" may occur. However, if in a worldwide cultural structure the local roles of various civilizations can be rationally brought into play, the inherent peaceful elements of each civilization can also be brought into play, and at the same time, a "culture of recognition" can be gradually established among civilizations and cultures. Then it will be possible to resolve the conflict of civilizations so that "each beauty is beautiful to all".

On this point Chen notes:

> … Philosophically speaking, it was customary in the past to think that universality is unitary, and that pluralism means particularity. In fact, diversity is not necessarily particular. Whether and how the universality of diversity is possible should become a topic of philosophical thinking in the era of globalization. (Chen 2011b, 291)

Such a cultural view amounts to an internal disintegration of the "End of History". The root of the theory of the End of History lies in the insistence on the universality of the West, and the belief that the full realization of this universality means that there will be no new developments in human history. However, contemporary historical developments prove that we cannot expect the "End of History" to realize the ideal of human development. This extreme appeal of the West for universality may instead lead human history to a dead end. Poly-universalism sees precisely the dynamic balance among civilizations. It is that at different junctures in human history civilizations with different value systems can provide new possibilities for solving human problems and new ideas for human development. The relationship between universalities is not only competitive, as in the process of realizing universalities the various exchanges that take place between different civilizations can promote the creative transformation of each other's cultures. The monist universal view not only suppresses the development of other cultures but also restricts the development of one's own culture, turning one's civilization into a rigid entity and leading oneself and others to a dead end. In the process of "recognizing the beauty of all cultures" we can absorb the strengths of different civilizations, develop our own civilization, and deepen human values with an open attitude.

Further, if we begin with poly-universalism then we can also highlight the characteristics of Chen's own philosophical construction and cultural thinking. As a cultural conservative, Chen neither advocates total Westernization nor restoration of traditional culture. Instead, he rationally arranges the positions of ancient and modern elements into a structure, hoping that they can all play a positive role. The rejuvenation of traditional culture in contemporary China also requires vigilance against monocentric thinking within the field of traditional culture—that is, the idea that tradition is omnipotent, and that Confucian culture can comprehensively solve the various problems that China is currently facing. This approach will only lead to another kind of hurried success and oversimplification.

Poly-universalism shows us Chen's sense of history as a philosopher. It shows us that he views human culture dynamically, historically, and structurally, rather than mechanically, rigidly, and dogmatically making judgments on cultural theory and reality. Of course, from the discussion of poly-universalism we can also see his strong concern for practical issues. Moreover, poly-universalism is still worth exploring for its significance with regard to the future development of human culture.

Creation and Revitalization

Entering the new century, Chen has consistently emphasized that,

> how to make one's own voice heard and express one's own attitude in the face of the reality of today's world and society (including expanding democracy, social justice, and public welfare, etc.) must become a new test ... as we enter an era of governance and security. Culturally, we have moved from the 'criticism and enlightenment' of the last century to the 'creation and revitalization' of the new century. (Chen 2011c, 10–11)

Such an era of "governing the country and ensuring peace" is the so-called Great and Originating Period 元亨之際, and "creation and revitalization" is the mission that Chen has consciously assumed in this era. Much of his thinking and writing revolves around the creativity of Chinese civilization, its transformation and innovative development. We can look at Chen's contribution according to the following aspects.

First of all, Chen pays special attention to promoting the core values of Chinese civilization in the new era. Many of his articles go beyond purely professional research, and spread aspects of traditional Chinese culture to large and medium-sized schools in a clear, popular, and fluid style. He uses the language of modern Chinese to describe the core values of Chinese civilization. This has had profound practical significance. His contemporary practice seeks to provide a way for Confucianism to re-enter social culture and ethics. Within the context of the recent craze for Chinese studies, a large number of pseudo-Chinese studies have also appeared, which has hindered the revival of tradition. This has made it even more necessary to clearly explain the true colours and core values of the tradition to the public. Chen's work in this area is undoubtedly the most representative among contemporary scholars. For example, he has revealed five aspects that elucidate Confucian thought about governing the country: its foundation in the person, its foundation in the people, its foundation in morality, its foundation in self-cultivation, and its foundation in the family. This clarified the Confucian outlook on life from the aspects of life attitude, moral ideals, and universal values. More importantly, Chen has outlined the most important characteristics of the core values of Chinese civilization, comparing them to modern values:

> First, morality is more important than law. Second, the community is more important than the individual. ... Third, spirit is more important than matter. Fourth, responsibility is more important than power. ... Fifth, people's livelihood is more important than democracy. ... Sixth,

> order is more important than freedom. Seventh, this life is more valuable than the next life. ... Eighth, harmony is more valuable than struggle. Ninth, civilization is more valuable than poverty. ... Tenth, family is more valuable than class. (Chen 2015, 105)

The above ten items are Chen's demonstration of the characteristics of Chinese civilization on the basis of comparison with modern Western values. Here we must pay special attention to the propriety of his conclusions. Chen emphasized that these traditional values are more important than Western values, but this is not an exclusive assertion. It is not that the Western values are not wanted, but rather that by absorbing these values he was able to highlight the values and the significance of Chinese civilization. Going back to the pluralistic structure mentioned above, we can say that Chen did not make either-or choices between values, but instead he settled these values within his pluralistic structure, under the main body of China. Thus, the core values of Chinese civilization demonstrate their uniqueness, but they also gain vitality within the structure.

Second, Chen highlights the essence of benevolence, and in doing so establishes its value. In *The Ontology of Benevolence* (2014), Chen stated, "First, benevolence is the fundamental body that is the foundation of all things; second, the fundamental body of benevolence is that which spreads all things; third, the fundamental body of benevolence is the source of life; fourth, the fundamental body of benevolence brings benevolence together with the myriad things" (Chen 2014, 68). The essence of benevolence takes the origin of values as the fundamental body of the universe and of the world, considering values as the foundation of metaphysics, and it directly provides a philosophical basis for the moral reconstruction of our society and its people. The first eleven chapters of *The Ontology of Benevolence* focus on explaining the "body", while the twelfth chapter, "Benevolence Connects the Four Virtues", explains the particularities of "function", i.e., the interpretation of value. This interpretation is still based on the reinterpretation of the content of "benevolence", but it uses the "new four virtues"—benevolence, freedom, equality, and justice—to endow the "four virtues of benevolence" of traditional Confucianism with a contemporary mission.[2] Chen points out that

> in modern society, the theory of the four virtues should be developed, as the existing four virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom still have their value and significance. The traditional four virtues are mostly concerned with moral values or private virtues (though they are not limited to private virtues), while the new four virtues or five virtues are

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2   If we add, "Harmony" then it is what Chen calls the "Five New Virtues."

> mainly concerned with social values, but the two are not mutually exclusive, they are complementary and compatible. (Chen 2014, 429)

Such a value system takes "benevolence" as the core of the structure, embraces modern values, and shows a spirit of tolerance. Furthermore, in the "New Four Virtues" the relationships among the four are no longer flat and juxtaposed. Instead, "benevolence" is used to unify the other three values, and thus takes precedence over them, which highlights the subjectivity of Chinese culture. Whether it is for traditional Chinese values or other values, Chen's analysis is based on the "body of benevolence". This interpretation of values beginning from the universal "body of benevolence" is another core feature of his cultural outlook.

Third, Chen expounds the virtues of Confucianism in order to resolve contemporary moral issues. Regarding the moral problems in China since modern times, in *On the Virtues of Confucianism* Chen once again emphasizes that we cannot criticize Confucianism for lacking certain virtues that are required today. Instead, our judgment should depend on whether the universal principles of Confucianism can be introduced or accepted in the modern context. Chen argues that "we should understand 'Confucianism', especially 'Modern New Confucianism', from a dynamic and developing perspective, and avoid using a single essentialist concept of Confucianism to judge the multiple manifestations and historical development of Confucianism …" (Chen 2019, 156–57). Chen does not want to incorporate Confucian ethics into virtue ethics, nor to use the framework of virtue ethics to "settle" Confucian ethics. Instead, he hopes to highlight the characteristics and contemporary significance of Confucianism in a dialogical relationship. Although this book begins with "virtue ethics", where it really delves deep is in the area of "Confucian ethics" and "Chinese issues". Its inclusion of virtue ethics is more of a question of reference and entry. In Chen's view, Confucius provided a kind of universal value, which is manifested in the personality of a Gentleman 君子. Only by starting from the personality of a Gentleman can we see features such as the unity of principles and virtues, the unity of ethical behaviour and ethical actions, the unity of morality and immorality, the unity of public morality and private morality, and the unity of the moral realm and the super-moral realm. The Gentleman's personality and the cultivation of such a personality show various aspects of Confucian virtue theory. At the same time, the proposal of this personality distinguishes the discourse framework from Western virtue ethics and shows the value of Confucian virtue theory. More importantly, excavating the general characteristics of Confucian virtue theory and the unique status of the "Gentleman" can provide direction for overcoming current problems. That is, we can return to the Confucian

theory of the Gentleman and rethink today's issues surrounding moral cultivation. We can focus on the cultivation of "Gentleman personalities" rather than the one-sided distinction between "public morality and private morality".

In 2010 Chen published his article "Confucian Research and Confucian Development in the Twentieth Century". In this he writes that

> only by an in-depth and detailed study of Confucianism over two thousand years, including its interactions with society and with systems, can we truly understand this great tradition and its partiality, can we have a true cultural awareness of the future development of Chinese culture, and will we be able to respond to the challenges of the study of Confucian learning worldwide. (Chen 2011d, 270)

He later continues,

> only by organizing and reconstructing Confucianism academically and theoretically can we stand in the field of philosophical thought, gain the respect of our opponents of the debate, and form a reasonable interaction with other thought systems; only then can we persuade intellectuals and win the trust of the public, improve our cultural atmosphere and lay a solid foundation for the comprehensive revival of Confucianism. (ibid., 274).

Systematically examining Chen's reflections on the relationship between tradition and modernity, and drawing a picture of the future of Chinese philosophy, we might consider this to be "the master speaking of others, but unwittingly describing himself". With such a gesture, from the perspective of theory, Chen has provided us with a profound and convincing cultural viewpoint.

Summary

The series of cultural reflections presented by Chen, including "poly-universalism", had previously not received sufficient attention within academic circles. With this article, however, we hope to bring awareness to its significance and promote its crucial cultural implications, allowing it to flourish and become an essential perspective within the cultural discourse of China's new era.

On the journey towards the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and in the context of revitalizing Chinese culture to secure its rightful place in the world, it is this poly-universalism that emerges as the solution proposed by Chen. It is evident that as a philosopher and thinker, Chen's proposition of poly-universalism

reflects his profound concern for the development and revitalization of Chinese culture, underscoring his deep cultural responsibility as a contemporary Chinese intellectual.

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How to "Do Chinese Philosophy": On Chen Shaoming's Method of "Doing Chinese Philosophy"

Bisheng CHEN

Abstract

"Doing Chinese philosophy" as a method proposed by Chen Shaoming offers a perspective that shifts from the study of the history of Chinese philosophy to the innovation or creation of the significance of Chinese philosophy. Chen defines the "Chinese philosophy" as a philosophy that embodies the cultural spirit or experiences of China. This approach calls for an expansion of resource beyond the traditional study of the history of Chinese philosophy and seeks to bridge classical thoughts with modern life experiences. It does not advocate a metaphysical presupposition for research but accepts methodological diversity while promoting the cultivation and use of imagination. This approach also aims at envisioning a philosophy field that is rich in thought and broad in scope.

Keywords: doing Chinese Philosophy, Chen Shaoming, classical experience

Kako »delati kitajsko filozofijo«? – O Chen Shaomingovi metodi »delanja kitajske filozofije«

Izvleček

»Delanje kitajske filozofije« kot metoda, ki jo je predlagal Chen Shaoming, ponuja neko perspektivo, ki pooseblja premik od preučevanja kitajske filozofije do inovacije ali ustvarjanja njene pomembnosti. Chen »kitajsko filozofijo« definira kot filozofijo, ki uteleša kulturnega duha ali izkušnje Kitajske. Ta pristop zahteva širitev virov onkraj domene tradicionalnih študij kitajske filozofije in si prizadeva ustvariti most med klasičnimi mislimi ter modernimi življenjskimi izkušnjami. Pri tem ne zagovarja metafizične predpostavke za raziskavo, temveč sprejema metodološko raznolikost, medtem ko spodbuja gojenje in rabo domišljije. Ta pristop si prav tako prizadeva predvideti filozofijo kot miselno bogato in širokozorno področje.

Ključne besede: delati kitajsko filozofijo, Chen Shaoming, klasična izkušnja

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In the early 21st century, discussions on the legitimacy of Chinese philosophy emerged in mainland China, providing a fundamental backdrop for Chinese scholars to contemplate methodological issues within Chinese philosophy.[1] Against this backdrop, scholars including Yang Guorong 楊國榮, Peng Guoxiang 彭國翔, and Chen Lai 陳來 have proposed their own novel insights into the research methods of Chinese philosophy. Within these diverse perspectives, Chen Shaoming 陳少明 puts forth a unique viewpoint, known as the philosophical method of "doing Chinese philosophy" 做中國哲學, which became his significant contribution to the study of mainland Chinese philosophy. His books *People, Events and Things in the Classical World* and *Doing Chinese Philosophy* (2008b) serve as concentrated presentations of this method.

"Doing Chinese philosophy" may look like a slogan, but it is a method and road to philosophy research. Philosophy, in the sense of an academic discipline, is imported to China from the West. Therefore, when "Chinese" is added before "philosophy" it often becomes "the history of Chinese philosophy". Westernization and historicization are the two basic orientations of "Chinese philosophy". They are the foundation of Chinese philosophy as academic science and the necessary impetus for developing "Chinese philosophy". However, over-Westernization and over-historicization can quickly become traps for research in Chinese philosophy. The former, along the "East-West" dimension, overuses Western philosophical concepts, thus ignoring the characteristics of Chinese civilization itself. In contrast, the latter overemphasizes historicization and relies too much on the "ancient-modern" dimension, ignoring the innovations of contemporary Chinese philosophy. The "doing Chinese philosophy" method proposed by Chen is precisely a way to overcome over-Westernization and over-historicization. In his essay "Seeking Method: Insights from Western Philosophy", Chen explains:

> Regardless of values' orientations or ideological debates, the reflection on Chinese philosophy may lead to a tendency to either abandon Chinese philosophy or attempt to examine Chinese learning through the lens of Western science. The reason for this is the overall situation of Chinese philosophical research in the past, which is either very "philosophical" but not "Chinese" or "Chinese" enough but not sufficiently "philosophical". The former refers to the excessive use of Western philosophical concepts and frameworks to make a truncated account of classical Chinese thought. In contrast, the latter refers to a return to the traditional commentary or philological analysis of the Chinese classics. I believe that

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1   This paper is translated by Yves Vendé 温德 Université Catholique de Lille & Centre Sèvres, (France). It was originally published in 2017 in Philosophical Research 哲學研究 (3: 119–26).

overly Westernized Chinese philosophy should be abandoned and that the commentarial mode has its own scholarly value. However, if the latter is taken as the broad path to the renewal of Chinese philosophy, it may lead in the opposite direction. (Chen 2008a)

To be very "philosophical" but not "Chinese" is to be overly Westernized. To be "Chinese" but not "philosophical" is often to be over-historicized. In the preface of Chen Shaoming's most recent book, *Doing Chinese Philosophy* (2015), he emphasizes the methodological meaning of "doing Chinese philosophy".

The first is to distinguish it from the historical discourse of philosophy, which only explains but does not create, and the other is to pursue its Chinese characteristics. "Chinese philosophy" has two meanings: classical philosophy, which refers to classical culture and intellectual experience, and contemporary philosophy, and the former is also included in the latter as a concept of time (Chen 2015, 6).

In other words, "doing Chinese philosophy" is not only to research the history of philosophy, but also for the researcher of Chinese philosophy to engage in "philosophical creation". "Doing" thus carries the meaning of "creating/innovating". Through this innovative action of thinking, it is possible to overcome both the non-philosophical tendency as a result of the focus on "China" and the non-Chinese tendency as a result of an emphasis on "philosophy". The former leads to the development of the history of philosophy without philosophizing, while the latter leads to the emphasis on philosophizing without concern for the Chinese dimension. The fundamental standpoint of "doing Chinese philosophy" lies in the researcher's experience gained through physical activities, ethical living, and conscious thinking. For philosophical innovation, such experiences are both personal and collectively shared in the past and today, in China and the West.

From the History of Philosophy to Philosophizing

The research method presented in the book *Doing Chinese Philosophy* is based on the existing framework and connotation of the discipline of Chinese philosophy. In addition to clarifying matters of the history of philosophy, it intends to discover the concepts, topics, and even schools and thoughts common in ancient and contemporary Chinese philosophy, so that it can directly face the real world and construct contemporary Chinese thought.

In this context it must first be noted that there was no "philosophy" in ancient China, and "Chinese philosophy" in the sense of a modern academic discipline was formed during the transformation of Chinese scholarship from ancient to

modern times (see Sang 2010; Chen 2015). After the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895, Chinese people developed deep doubts about their culture. From Yu Yue 俞樾, Sun Yirang 孫詒讓 to Kang Youwei 康有為 and Zhang Taiyan 章太炎, they all realized that learning the Classics (*jingxue* 經學) alone, the core of traditional learning, which was established in the scholarly context of the Qing dynasty, was no longer sustainable and heading for collapse. The basic structure of traditional culture would inevitably give rise to revolutionary changes. After 1911, Hu Shi's 胡適 generation moved to the centre of the Chinese academic stage, completely turning China—West issues into those of ancient—modern, and after "China" became "ancient", all discussions on the Chinese scholarly tradition quietly all turned into studies of "ancient" scholarship.

In the background of this change from ancient to modern, research on the earlier Chinese civilization has become a form historical study. Therefore, the usual research and conversations in the humanities carried out in China on literature, history, and philosophy use a Western framework to organize Chinese "history". This is precisely the approach of "sorting out the national heritage" represented by Hu Shi. Hu Shi's writings on the history of philosophy and literature are based on this thinking (for details, see Chen 2014). As Chen Shaoming believes: "describing the history of Chinese philosophy with the conceptual framework of Western science is the product of an implicit comparison" (Chen 2015, 57). When the framework and standards of Western "philosophy" are adopted as a reference when searching for the substance of "Chinese philosophy" through such comparing, a complete set of historical narratives of the "history of Chinese philosophy" is established, and the systemization of Chinese philosophy is achieved.

If we affirm that "sorting out the national heritage" was an inevitable choice to establish a new discipline in the early stage of the modern transformation of Chinese academics, the vitality of this discipline lies in its advancement through facing the requirements of contemporary times and engaged in constant self-reflection. After entering the 21st century, the Chinese academic community began to take on some new features to a certain extent. The main background was the re-interpretation of ancient and modern. Specifically, this is reflected in seeing China not as "ancient" in the literal sense of the term, and changing the basis of interpretation to "Chinese and Western", hoping to rediscover the inherent intellectual value of Chinese tradition from the perspective of a comparison between Chinese and Western civilizations. Chen wrote in the chapter "Research on the History of Chinese Philosophy and Invention of Chinese Philosophy" that "the research on the history of Chinese philosophy has little effect on promoting the creation of Chinese philosophy. The underlying reason is rooted in a century of academic and intellectual history" (Chen 2015, 70). This intellectual movement,

which in its beginning phase was generally a reflection on scholarship of the 20th century, was primarily aimed at saving "learning" from history. For more than ten years, whether it is the conversation on "the legitimacy of Chinese philosophy", the renewed attention of history to the issue of the ethnic groups in the borderland, or the various re-examinations of "what is China?" in academic circles, the underlying motives more or less all have the aim of emphasizing the "science/learning" of China.

The model of the history of Chinese philosophy as an academic discipline that Chen Shaoming proposes can be summed up as "from the comparison of philosophy to the science of the history of philosophy". This model, on the one hand, explains the origin of the "history of Chinese philosophy" as a discipline, and on the other hand indicates the genuine creativity of "Chinese philosophy". Starting from the writing of "The Transformation of the Genealogy of Knowledge", what Chen pursued was not only to reflect on the "legitimacy of Chinese philosophy" but to explore a way of creating "Chinese philosophy". There was no "philosophy" in ancient China, but today we have written a "history of (Chinese) philosophy" based on it. This phenomenon is itself worthy of reflection. If the so-called "history of Chinese philosophy" is based on the creation of Chinese philosophy, the description and arrangement of such a history of philosophy cannot only demonstrate the past of "Chinese philosophy", but also serve as a lesson on the creation of Chinese philosophy. But if there is no invention of Chinese philosophy, and only the use of the framework and terminology of philosophy to describe the ancient classics, then it can result in turning the wisdom of the Classics into a theoretical game under a modern logical framework, which does not help us understand modern living. Besides, excessive focus on Western philosophical abstraction does not help examine ancient life, either.

However, when establishing the discipline of Chinese philosophy, there lies an implicit possibility of philosophical creation besides sorting out the history of Chinese philosophy. The two-volume *History of Chinese Philosophy* (2000) written by Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 is a classic work in establishing Chinese philosophy as a scientific discipline. In the "Introduction", Feng stipulates this discipline's fundamental basis, with two points constituting an essential foundation for developing Chinese philosophy.

The first one is the meaning of Western knowledge, which Feng underlines as follows: "Philosophy is a Western term. Today, if we want to talk about the history of Chinese philosophy, one of the main tasks is to discuss the various contents of Chinese history and select those that can be called philosophy according to Western perspective and describe them" (Feng 2000, 3). Although this

statement has been criticized, it emphasizes the meaning of Western philosophy for Chinese philosophy, which is still very important.

The second foundation is to connect "Chinese philosophy" with the "knowledge of justice and pattern(s)" (義理之學). On this, Feng writes: "What the West calls philosophy can roughly be equivalent to what the Wei and Jin people call *xuanxue* (玄學) in China, what Song and Ming's people call *daoxue* (道學), and what people in the Qing dynasty name knowledge of justice and pattern(s)" (ibid., 6). The traditional Chinese "knowledge of justice and patterns" is far more than *xuanxue* and Taoism or anything related to justice and pattern(s), although all these schools can be included in the scope of philosophy. Moreover, in traditional scholarship, the inquiry for justice and patterns is the closest to philosophy. Therefore, Feng Youlan uses philosophy to match the knowledge of justice and patterns, which is insightful. If Western philosophy is changed from being a framework into being a reference method, and the understanding of the school of knowledge of justice and pattern(s) is changed from the analysis of rhetoric into broader traditional principles of inquiry, then Feng's views undoubtedly constitute a basic consensus that the discipline of Chinese philosophy should share. Moreover, precisely because of the emphasis on the importance of Western knowledge and the philosophical nature of the traditional way of inquiring, the discipline of Chinese philosophy, since its establishment, did not lack "philosophical creativity" in its content, e.g., the dedication to "doing Chinese philosophy", although the sorting out of the "history of philosophy" was a priority.

Regarding the understanding of "doing Chinese philosophy", in addition to writing books on the history of Chinese philosophy, Chen Shaoming discovers new threads for the research into Chinese philosophy through a series of articles on Chinese wisdom, examining topics such as: Zhang Taiyan's "Original Name" (原名), "enlightened view" (明見), "Explanations on equalizing things" (齊物論釋), Wang Guowei's (王國維) "On Nature" (論性), "Explaining *Li*" (釋禮), "Original Mandate" (原命), the structure of Feng Youlan's "New Neo-Confucianism" (新理學), Pang Pu's 龐樸 "Talking about *xuanxue*" (談玄) and "Speaking of 'negativity'" (說無) (Chen 2015, 75–77, 184). What is common to all these endeavours is facing modern life and thinking experiences using a philosophical approach and explaining life today through studying classical texts. As Chen Shaoming said, these theses and works discuss philosophy, but "even when interpreting traditional conceptual scopes or propositions, they do not stop at restoring the original meaning, but go farther to the reconstruction and reflection on the ways of reasoning. That's authentic philosophical research" (ibid., 77).

In this sense, the method that doing Chinese philosophy points to is to build on what already exists in the field, based on the history of Chinese thought established by Hushi and Feng Youlan, and then to seek a new method that connects the sorting out of the history of Chinese philosophy with the creation of contemporary Chinese philosophy. To realize this connection, the key is not to conduct academic research on the history of Chinese philosophy, but to engage in philosophical discussions on Chinese people's living and conscious experiences.

In the history of the traditional School of Justice and Patterns (義理學), it has always been a question to determine, formally speaking, whether the proposals and updates of justice and patterns come from Classics or real life. Let us look at the history of the transmission of the Classics in China. We can see that the inheritance contains two types of formal knowledge: one type concerns the knowledge presented in the Classics themselves, including analysing the text and bringing together different commentators' opinions. This leads to establishing parallelisms and describing internal and external connections in the Classics, such as Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200 AD) does in his commentaries, which bridge different meanings to achieve a new "minor unification" of these ancient texts. Another example is the textual research in the School of Qianjia (乾嘉) in the Qing dynasty. This focuses on exegesis and textual criticism, and the purpose is to show the original meaning of the Han Classics. The other type of formal knowledge is real life-oriented knowledge, e.g., proposing a set of theories from real life and verifying these in the Classics by finding no contradiction within them. A typical example of this approach is the Song-Ming Lixue (理學).

These two types of knowledge are only different in a formal sense. Regarding their actual content, merely explaining the texts can lead to a new conceptual system, the reorganization of the Classics, and possibly a brand-new worldview relevant to real life. Similarly, the theories proposed for real life are not principles without foundations in culture but can be verified in the Classics.

But relatively speaking, the knowledge developed for real life has more practical value as justice and patterns. In the Chinese tradition, the pre-Qin schools of thought, the Weijin *xuanxue* (魏晉玄學), and the Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming dynasties were all various peaks of the Justice and Patterns School, when the mere analysis of texts could no longer respond to real-life challenges. In such situations, by focusing on real life philosophers invented new forms of thoughts by integrating real life and texts. Similarly, the difference between doing Chinese philosophy and the study of the history of philosophy lies in the formal shift of focus from the Classics to real-life experience, or more precisely, from the concern of how to interpret the Classics to how to establish a connection between

real life and these texts. Reconstruction of this relationship aims at articulating the two dimensions of "searching for virtue" and "being concerned for the country". At the same time, the meaning of doing Chinese philosophy should also be related to these two dimensions.

Understanding Classical Experience Philosophically

Chen uses philosophical methods to describe the Chinese experience of life, especially in the classical world, as described in *People, Events and Things in the Classical World*. In the preface to that book, Chen Shaoming explains the content as follows: "To absorb classical wisdom fully, it is necessary to start with excavating various narrative contents of classical texts and create Chinese philosophy in addition to the existing history of philosophy. To achieve this, it requires, first of all, not facing classical ideas and concepts but getting in touch with the lifestyle of the classical world. Experience, not concepts, is the fundamental starting point of philosophy" (Chen 2008b, 5).

Several concepts that repeatedly considered in the *History of Chinese Philosophy* do not originally exist as a theoretical system in the Classics. Because the classical philosophers did not have the desire to create a theoretical system, the notions of humanity (*ren* 仁), justice (*yi* 義), rituals (*li* 禮), existence (*you* 有), and non-existence (*wu* 無) are only embedded in their fragmentary narratives to express what is going on in their behaviours and teachings. Most of these key terms that we come into contact with in the Classics have their specific contexts and display their true significance in these particular contexts. For example, according to the *Analects*, the meaning of "humanity" is expressed and illustrated in the display of the disposition of "a human person that loves others", in the character of being "resolute and temperate", in the activity of "restraining oneself and returning to the rites", in the reflection on "the faults of men are characteristic of the class to which they belong. By observing a man's faults, it may be known that he is virtuous". If these "concept-context" analyses are bypassed and the interpretative grid of "Western concept—Chinese concept" is used, the Chinese concept can only be disguised as a variant of the Western discourse system. In contrast, if we use the "concept-context" analysis method to reconstruct the classical world's lifestyle, many textual elements not accepted by the "history of philosophy" will get value. In the book *People, Events and Things in the Classical World*, Chen Shaoming writes:

> We need to address the life experience of the classical world and understand the concepts in their particular context; what's more, to discover

the hidden ideas in the Classics and conduct in-depth philosophical reflection. Undoubtedly, the so-called life experience of the Classics is mainly presented through narratives in the Classics texts. The centre of the narratives can be characters, events, and even things. Characters, things, and events are mutually exchanged into one another so that the central issue is changed. The purpose is to make a deeper exploration of life in the Classics. (Chen 2008b, 26)

We will now take the chapter "Speaking and Training: Rereading the *Analects* of Confucius" in the book *People, Events and Things in the Classical World* as an example to observe how the methods mentioned above are used to explore the issue of education and formation. The chapter discusses Confucius' teaching, but the content does not cover "Confucius' educational thought" or something like that. Instead it considers the literary representation of Confucius and why this is effective in achieving the moral education of his disciples. The *Analects* does not provide us with theories such as a "philosophy of education", but instead examples of how to develop virtue. In the chapter, Chen Shaoming adds a the following caveat to this process): "No one obtains moral awareness by learning the principles of ethics. The study of ethics cannot replace the role of training people" (ibid., 71). In the *Analects* it is common for Confucius to inspire students through examples drawn from daily life. Confucius gives different answers to different people asking the same question depending on the context; for example, when Zhong Gong 仲弓, Fan Chi 樊遲, Yan Yuan 顏淵, and other disciples ask about "humanity", Confucius' answers are entirely different. When Ziyou 子遊, Zixia 子夏, and other disciples ask about "filial piety", Confucius also responds in totally different ways. This is not because Confucius provides inconsistent theoretical interpretations of the terms "humanity" and "filial piety", but because he practices education in a customized manner according to the specific situations, identities, and capacities of his interlocutors. Therefore, the analysis of Confucius' training should not be about removing the particular context of Confucius' words to make a logical synthesis of these fragments, but it should be more about understanding his ideas on teaching by returning to the conversations on virtue in specific situations. What is discussed in the chapter "Speaking and Teaching" is neither the content of teaching (which has been discussed in many textbooks on the history of philosophy) nor the characteristics of education (which has been addressed under headings such as "Confucius' educational thought"), but teaching itself—that is, how Confucius, as a master of wisdom, taught his students to become superior men through good learning in the practice of teaching.

One always encounters various difficulties in one's life experience and moral practice. In the Classics, the sages often use these challenging situations as opportunities for training. For example, in the *Analects* Confucius commented on Guan Zhong 管仲 with his students. On the one hand, Confucius said that Guan Zhong was "humane": "The Duke Huan assembled all the princes together, and that not with weapons of war and chariots—it was all through the influence of Guan Zhong. Whose humanity was like his?" (*Analects*, 14.16). "Guan Zhong acted as prime minister to duke Huan 齊桓公, made him leader of all the princes, and united and rectified the whole kingdom. Down to the present day, the people enjoy the gifts which he conferred. But for Guan Zhong, we should now be wearing our hair unbound and the lappets of our coats buttoning on the left side" (*Analects*, 14.17). On the other hand, Confucius also said, "Small indeed was the capacity of Guan Zhong!" "If Guan knew the rules of propriety, who does not know them?" (*Analects*, 3.22). If we look at these comments (only) within the framework of the history of philosophy built upon the relationship between humanity and rituals, it is impossible to get a conceptually consistent explanation. But if we look at it from the perspective of a way of training, Zilu 子路 and Zigong 子貢 criticize Guan Zhong for being "inhumane", referring to the fact that when Duke Huan killed Gong Zijiu, Guan Zhong did not commit (ritual) suicide at the death of Gong Zijiu. This covers Guan Zhong's lifelong career with Guan Zhong's momentary injustice. Therefore, Confucius did not praise deeds according to "humanity" but honoured people with "humanity". At the same time, Confucius rejects Guan Zhong's lack of frugality and ignorance of rituals. In these three dialogues, what Confucius is doing is not making a comprehensive evaluation of Guan Zhong in theory, but training his disciples in assessing complex and important historical figures based on specific historical events and problems. At a deeper level, when handling the complexity of historical figures, Confucius makes his disciples understand what is right and wrong, good and evil. And this is the real goal of training, as it contributes to the formation of the trainees' characters. Our reflection today on this training experience also enables us to learn from it—that is, to receive training ourselves. As Chen Shaoming says, "Education is not a theory, nor a learning activity prepared for practice. It is the practice itself and a process of shaping moral personality. At the same time, although this practice is the ancient way of life that originates in ancient Confucianism, it is not irrelevant to contemporary ethical life" (Chen 2008b, 72).

Regarding reflections on the present based on the philosophical explanations of the Classics, several essays stand out in the book *People, Events and Things in the Classical World*: "Peace of Mind, or Reasonable?", "Dispelling Confusion", "On Shame", and "Tolerance and Intolerance". Peace of mind, reason, confusion,

shame, disgrace, humiliation, and the need for tolerance are all common psychological experiences in daily life that share the same meaning yesterday and today in the East and West. Therefore, analysing the content presented in the Classics is relevant for our lives today.

Why does "Philosophy" Need the Classics?

When we make real life the object of research and relate it to the innovative dimension of philosophy, then it is enough to "do philosophy", so why should we add "Chinese" in front of "philosophy"?

From the perspective of cultural history, the difference between "doing Chinese philosophy" and "doing philosophy" lies in considering "China". Chen Shaoming says: "The word 'Chinese' in 'Chinese Philosophy' is a cultural rather than a political or geographical concept. It does not refer to philosophical papers written by Chinese nationals or published in China, but theories and thoughts that reflect Chinese culture or Chinese way of life, that is, Chinese philosophy" (Chen 2015, 103). This connotation of "Chinese" is roughly equivalent to the thought and life experience that use the Chinese language as a medium. In Chen Shaoming's terms, "Chinese philosophy" does not mean "the philosophy of China", but "philosophy rooted in China", in which "Chinese philosophy" is understood as an independent and integrated term. This understanding comes from the "experience" emphasized in Chen Shaoming's book *Doing Chinese Philosophy*.

The word "experience" is the most crucial keyword in doing Chinese philosophy (proposed) by Chen Shaoming. Only by understanding the meaning of "experience" can we know how to "do" Chinese philosophy. In Chinese and Western philosophy, "experience" often plays an essential role in constructing a philosopher's philosophical system, but it also implies some significant dangers. Because any experience is individual, and individual experience is often unreliable. Therefore, dealing with experience can be very problematic. In the chapter "Cashing in the Bank-Note of Concepts", Chen Shaoming believes that "experience starts from the moment":

> Although the 'immediate/now/contemporary' experience is both modern and Chinese, it does not exclude the classical and the Western ones. Human experience has/contains universal content, in ancient and modern times, in China and the West. However, for any group or cultural community, it must be something that can be experienced or understood by oneself in the 'here and now'. … The understanding of experience must start with the most general categories. (Chen 2015, 242)

In this text, Chen Shaoming lists several rough categories of experience: first, the experience of physical activity; second, the moral experience (which is above all ethical); third, the experience of learning a language and using it; fourth, conscious experience, including cognitive and emotional activities (ibid., 242–45). This encapsulates several key issues raised in *Doing Chinese Philosophy*: first, a shared human experience can be abstracted from the miscellaneous individual experiences and transformed into a matter for philosophical inquiry; second, this kind of human experience is universal and cannot be distinguished between classical and modern times, or between China and the West; third, this kind of human experience can be grasped in philosophical thinking.

Chen Shaoming repeatedly mentions the importance of "experience" in both the contemporary situation to the creation of Chinese philosophy. In the preface to *People, Events and Things in the Classical World* he writes: "Philosophy or other knowledge creation always uses two major thinking resources, one is the fruit of thoughts of our predecessors, and the other is the current life experience. Ultimately, life itself is the ultimate source of creation of thoughts/creative thinking" (Chen 2008b, 143). One the other hand, he also argues: "Taking the current life experience as the object of reflection is the most basic and fundamental task in contemporary Chinese philosophy. But as far as Chinese philosophical innovation is involved, the classical life experience stored in the literature is an important thinking resource" (ibid., 103–04).

"Experience" involves two types of content: one is "current life experience", which includes contemporary and personal factors like emotions, consciousness, and reflection on experience. Only by exploring the immediate and current life experience can there be real scholarly innovation, not just "history". The other type of content is "classical life experience stockpiled in documents", which is gained mainly through reading the Classics. This type of experience contrasts with the framework and concepts of the history of philosophy or the knowledge held in the texts of the Classics. The textbook-like history of philosophy often focuses on the experience presented in the Classics, and the textual research on academic histories often focuses on the knowledge in the Classics. What *Doing Chinese Philosophy* focuses on is the vivid ancient experience of life preserved in classical literature.

This involves a critical question regarding the method of "doing Chinese philosophy": how should we treat the Classics? Chen Shaoming believes that "Classics are only a medium for philosophical reflection on classical thoughts and experiences" (Chen 2015, 109). Philosophy does not regard the ancient Classics as dead books or knowledge that has nothing to do with those of us living today. It looks

at these texts as lively "classical life experiences" and "classical thoughts and experiences". The greatest significance of the Classics is that they record vibrant details of classical life and thought, as expressed in experiences. Here, the opposite of "experience" are concepts and various interpretations of concepts.

For example, a philosophical reflection on the *Analects* does not understand the *Analects* as a conceptual world composed of humanity, justice, rituals, and wisdom. It looks at every sentence of the *Analects* as a record of Confucius' training and teaching. Chen Shaoming, in the chapter "Speaking and Training: Rereading the *Analects* of Confucius" in the book *People, Events and Things in the Classical World* (2008b) writes: "The *Analects* are the records of Confucius' teachings and training; it is not Confucius' textbook" (Chen 2008b, 63–64). Only by restoring the experiences behind the text can we discover Confucius' way of teaching and training. This approach already existed in ancient times, as seen when Zhu Zi 朱 熹 (1130–1200 AD) writes in the *Commentaries on the Four Books* how to read the *Analects* and *Mencius*, quoting Cheng Yi's 程頤 (1033–1107 AD) words: "In the *Analects*, scholars should put their questions in the mouth of the disciples, and the Sage would answer them with something to be heard today, and they naturally would get it" (Zhu 2010, 61).

Reading in this way is to restore every line in the *Analects* back to the scene where Confucius was teaching. This feature can be seen everywhere in Zhu Zi's annotations and commentaries to the *Analects*, and it is necessary to pay attention to the relationships among various people, events, and things that appear in this text it is to be regarded as a record of Confucius' teaching and training.

For example, the following dialogue between Ji Kangzi 季康子 and Confucius is recorded in the *Analects* in the Yan Yuan 顏淵 chapter:

> Ji Kang asked Confucius about government, saying, 'What do you say to killing the unprincipled for the good of the principled?' Confucius replied, 'Sir, in carrying on your government, why should you use killing at all? Let your evinced desires be for what is good, and the people will be good. The relationship between superiors and inferiors is like that between the wind and the grass. The grass must bend, when the wind blows across it.' If this dialogue is regarded as an expression of thought, it is customary to regard Confucius' answer as merely developing Confucius' theory, in conjunction with 'To govern means to rectify. If you lead on the people with correctness, who will dare not to be correct?' (*Analects* 12.19)

A deeper approach is to even interpret this sentence as the fundamental principle of Confucius' thinking and conduct to refute Confucius's criticism of Shao

Zhengmao 少正卯 and other issues. However, if this dialogue is instead read as a life experience, the problem is not so simple. It is related to Ji Kangzi's status as an influential minister, as well as the departure from the ideal of being a "wise and just" ruler rather than a "tyrannical" one. Even if seen from the perspective of "events", to link it with Confucius' response to a question raised by Ji Kangzi regarding a father-son lawsuit, as recorded in the chapter "You Zuo" 宥坐 of *Xunzi* is another possible interpretation (see Hutton 2015). Assuming that the one asking the question was not Ji Kangzi but Yan Hui 顔回, Confucius must not have given such an answer since there was already a common understanding of the Dao (道) between the teacher and his students.

Another example is the understanding of "filial piety" (*xiao*孝). "Filial piety" is a moral term that implies the relationship between father and son, that is, the son's attitude towards his father. The textbook-style approach to the history of philosophy would be to classify and summarize the content of Confucianism about filial piety and explain the characteristics and evolution of such piety. What is more "philosophical" in this context is to make the concept of filial piety more abstract.

However, if we look at the issue of filial piety from the perspective of *Doing Chinese Philosophy*, what is mentioned about "filial piety" in the Confucian classics is a reflection on the father-son relationship. The father-son relationship exists in ancient and modern times, in China and the West, and is one of the most universal and fundamental human relationships that plays a vital role in society.

If we reduce the filial piety mentioned in the Classics to the relationship between father and son, we can observe how the ancient Chinese sages used this moral term to define and regulate the son's affection for his father and, from this, develop a whole ethical order. If we aim to understand the ever-changing father-son relationship in contemporary times, the wisdom of the ancient people still provides a crucial resource for us to comprehend real life, and even offers theoretical support for analysing family life in the West.

It can be said that when Chen Shaoming observes that "the Classics are only a mediation/medium for philosophical reflection on classical thought and experience", he provides a new understanding of the ancient texts. To reconstruct the text from experience requires the ability to scrutinize the text and then apply imagination and insight into one's current life experience.

From a contemporary perspective, one can agree or disagree with the classical life experience stored in the Classics, and regard it as effective or ineffective when dealing with the problems of today. However, because the life experience of each

person is limited by their personal context, the basic categories abstracted from life experience as a whole can only ever be a summary of modern life. Therefore, "the life experience stored in the Classics" has become the most important resource for Chinese philosophy, and its importance exceeds that of our immediate, contemporary life experience. It can be said that *Doing Chinese Philosophy* focuses on real life, and the research objects in this endeavour are mainly classical texts.

Regarding the meaning of "experience", the immediate life experience and the life experience of the Classics are connected. When we think and express ourselves in Chinese, whether ancient or modern, we experience the same world. Because of the language differences between China and the West, the issues involved will be more complicated. But for China, the descriptions of the classics and what people know today share a continuity regarding the meaning of "experience". For example, in a series of essays by Chen Shaoming, such as "Dispelling Confusion", "On Shame", and "Tolerance and Intolerance" in the book *Doing Chinese Philosophy* (Chen 2015), we can identify a large number of nameable moral emotions that have common meanings in both ancient and modern times. It is only by going into an analysis based on the Classics that an experience which starts now can transcend the limits of individual experience and achieve a true universalization. Therefore, the method of *Doing Chinese Philosophy* is essentially to carry out research on classical thought, which is also manifested as research based on classical thought.

Chen Shaoming believes that N experience starts from the immediate present, which can be compared to the "involved learning" emphasized in Zhu Zi's theory. Zhu Zi's method of reading focuses on relating to oneself while reading. In the *Classified Conversations of Master Zhu* he states

> 'In reading, one must be humble and relate it to oneself. Being humble allows one to understand the Sages' ideas; by relating the words to one's life experience, the words of the sages will not become empty talks.' He also said: "Be humble and involve yourself. Being humble, the truth will manifest and become clear (*daoli* 道理); relating to your own experience, you will acknowledge it spontaneously.' (Li 2010, 335)

When reading, it is only when the words of the Sages are connected with your own experience can you understand them properly. Cheng Yichuan says: "Readers should observe the intentions of the sages in writing the scriptures, the reasons behind, what makes a Sage achieve perfect wisdom, and why I haven't achieved it yet. Dig in every sentence, recite it every day, and review it. Think about it in the middle of the night, calm down and be patient, eliminate the doubts, then you

will be able to reach the perspective of the Sages." (Cheng and Cheng 2004, 332) In the *Classified Conversations of Master Zhu*, it is said: "someone asked him about Yi Chuan's saying that 'reading should be viewed as searching the meaning of the sage(s)' scriptures and the intentions of the Sage(s)'. He answered: 'I identify the most with this line of Cheng Yichuan talking about reading.'" (Li 2010, 633) That is to say, through reading one can understand the classical life experience as presented in the Classics and use it as a reference for one's immediate experience. In this way, experience-oriented philosophical research and innovation can overcome the limits of individual experience and reach universal experience.

Since the transformation of modern Chinese academia, how best to treat the Classics has always been a crucial issue. However, in "sorting out the national heritage" the Classics have become historical relics and dried specimens—to use the metaphor presented by Chen Shaoming—"making the classics into specimens of conceptual labels is like making fresh flowers into dried flowers" (Chen 2008b, 144).

What *Doing Chinese Philosophy* advocates—other than summarizing and generalizing the contents of the Classics under Western concepts—it is to restore the texts back to their original thoughts, lives, consciousness, and emotions, and from these experiences to generate a dynamism shared in the past and present, so that it can serve as the foundation for philosophical innovation based on modern life experience. Because of this, *Doing Chinese Philosophy* must bear the "Chinese dimension" in the cultural sense. It can even be said that any "doing philosophy" done by Chinese people is inherently "doing Chinese philosophy". If we want to go away from these "Chinese" and "classical" dimensions, e.g., denying that today's philosophical innovation must build on a 2,000-year-old tradition and "do philosophy" in the Chinese language, it will only be a monologue. There are Chinese and Western traditions, and no one is without a tradition. In the same sense, "philosophy" can be neither Chinese nor Western, but philosophical research and even philosophical innovation, when carried out in Chinese, can only differentiate between "Chinese philosophy" and "Western philosophy".

Considering China in *Doing Chinese Philosophy*

Chinese philosophy has developed from analysing the history of Chinese philosophy to "doing Chinese philosophy", emphasizing the innovation in Chinese philosophy. This shift to putting method at the centre has brought about a transformation of Chinese philosophy, and what stands behind it is the consideration of the Chinese dimension in philosophy.

Over the past decade or so, various breakthroughs in research on Chinese philosophy can be closely related to this adoption of the Chinese dimension. Chen Lai's 陳來 reconstruction of a new Confucianism in "Ontology of Humanity's Learning", Zhang Xianglong's 張祥龍 philosophical demonstration of the traditional Chinese core concept of "filial piety" in *Family and Filial Reverence* 家與孝 (2017), and Chen Shaoming's emphasis on the meaning of methodological transformation in *Doing Chinese Philosophy*, all demonstrate that "Chinese philosophy" is moving away from a pure description of the history of philosophy, and confronting more and more directly the contemporary life of China.

Behind these changes is a new understanding of ancient and modern issues. At the beginning of the foundation of the discipline of Chinese philosophy, "China" was regarded as "ancient". Thus research on the history of philosophy was equated with philosophy itself, and so the discipline could only produce a large number of researchers working on the history of philosophy, but was not able to train new Chinese philosophers.

What is behind the emphasis on producing innovations in philosophy in connection with contemporary life is a reflection on the responsibilities that the discipline of "Chinese philosophy" can and should take on—that is, to regard Chinese civilization as an independent cultural system. Under this premise, it is possible to draw lessons from the methodological experience of Western philosophy to re-interpret the classics and understand the current intellectual situation and emotional world of Chinese people.

From the perspective of China, the Classics, and the experience highlighted in Chen Shaoming's book *Doing Chinese Philosophy*, the philosophical innovation advocated by this method mainly uses experience to connect with ancient and modern times and adopts appropriate methods of Western philosophy to analyse this kind of experience. This is the reason why "the life experience stored in the Classics" must become the resource for today's philosophical research and innovation. A clear conception of history also supports this. The meaning of history for a country is like that of memory for a person. Just as one can become oneself because of one's memory, China can exist because of its history. The understanding of memory is experience, and Chen Shaoming believes that the dimension of historiography that investigates history is the way to understand experience, writing that: "Strictly speaking, history is not a science that exists side by side with philosophy, literature, sociology, economics, mathematics, or natural sciences. It is a way of understanding human experience" (Chen 2011).

In this view of history, it can even be said that the "philosophy" in "doing Chinese philosophy" exists because of "China". Therefore, "China" is not an adjective

(defining word), and rather "Chinese philosophy" is an independently sufficient term and a linguistic unit.

Chen Shaoming writes the following in "Confucianism, Historiography and Historical Metaphysics": "Just as a person achieves his personality in learning, working and self-cultivation, a nation or a country forms its shared community in the transmission, creation, and development of cultural values. The history that records all this bears the great responsibility of cultural transmission" (ibid.). That is to say, the history of a country is the existence of the country itself. There is thus a strong sense of history and China behind *Doing Chinese Philosophy*.

Since the transformation of modern academia, traditional learning centred on an exegesis of the Confucian Classics (*jingxue* 經學) and Neo-Confucianism (*lixue* 理學) has collapsed, and instead the focus of scholars who care for traditional culture has shifted to how to truly make the past and present communicate. The two great revolutions in the first 50 years of the 20th century led to changes in China's past and present. It is an objective fact that the inherited Chinese culture has now become history, because traditional knowledge alone can no longer explain and respond to the facts of real life. Traditional learning has become "history" in a broad sense, and it must also be researched in the broad sense of "history"—that is, in the study of the Confucian Classics. But if this is only textual research then it naturally has only archaeological significance, which is an inevitable result of these earlier revolutions.

However, this does not mean that the Classics carrying the accomplishments of Chinese culture will become "history". It can also be seen that more and more "modern" Chinese people will feel that traditional culture is omnipresent in their lives and thoughts, and many traditional elements can still explain modern life. As far as the experience of the Classics in Chinese history is concerned, there have been major changes in Chinese civilization due the replacement of the Yin dynasty by the Zhou, Qin, and Han dynasties, and with the changes that occurred with the Tang and Song dynasties. However, Chinese civilization has been able to maintain its continuity thanks to the strength of the Classics. Therefore, how to re-interpret tradition and reactivate the dynamism contained in the Classics in contemporary life is still required for the continuity of Chinese civilization.

In fact, every major development of argumentation in Chinese history has absorbed the spirit and existential vision contained in the Classics. For example, during the Song dynasty, as the core carrier of "tradition" (*chuantong* 傳統) at that time, the study of the Five Classics was facing a major crisis. Many learned scholars in the Northern Song dynasty no longer believed that the traditional exegesis of the Classics (*jingxue* 經學) could continue to exert its power, as it did through

the Han annotations during the Han dynasty and the Tang sub-commentaries in the Tang dynasty. Therefore, they changed how they approached the ancient scriptures and started doubting the *Prefaces to Ode*s (traditionally attributed to Zixia). They abandoned the three commentaries' approach to the *Spring and Autumn Chronicles*. From the perspective of later generations, this approach made the study of the Classics entirely out of context. With the rise of Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi's learning, who were no longer satisfied with deriving knowledge from the Classics but turned their attention to real life, proposed "Heavenly principles" 天理, rebuilt the "Confucian Orthodoxy" (*Daotong* 道統), offered a new understanding of the "moral character" (*xinxing* 心性), and constructed a new system of justice and pattern(s). The purpose of this set of knowledge was not to promote an "archaeological" truth, but instead the construction of a way to re-understand the real world based on the Classics.

Because of this, Lixue Confucians proposed a new intellectual system based on reality and applied this system to the Five Classics. They could then reinterpret the texts so that the Five Classics learning could continue to survive. The justice and pattern(s) experience of Neo-Confucians in the Song and Ming dynasties is still one of ancient China's most important intellectual contributions. At the same time, their way of reconstruction of the justice and pattern(s) tradition can be considered as a way of "doing Chinese philosophy", as they emphasized excavating justice and pattern(s) from both the Classics and real life, regarding the these works as the teaching experience of the ancient sages. The main idea of the method presented in *Doing Chinese Philosophy* is to relate to real life and regard the Classics as a presentation of Chinese thought and experiences to enable communication between ancient and modern times, and the reconstruction of a new philosophical system that is both "Chinese" and "philosophical". Only in this way can we establish a philosophical foundation for re-understanding what China means, for the reinterpretation and reconstruction of the contemporary Chinese way of life.

In addition, it should be pointed out that the method in *Doing Chinese Philosophy* is not only applicable to Chinese scholars, but also holds significance for researchers in the West who are engaged in the study of Chinese philosophy. The position that such researchers find themselves in naturally leads them to approach Chinese philosophy from the perspective of Western philosophy. However, this often results in a lack of accurate and appropriate understanding of Chinese thought and culture, leading to many misinterpretations. Therefore, some Western scholars, such as Roger T. Ames, have argued that to truly comprehend the meaning and significance of the Chinese Classics one must be immersed in the cultural milieu of the texts to grasp their deeper implications. In short, by adopting the "doing Chinese philosophy" approach, researchers in both China and the West are

able to gain a more accurate understanding of the traditions and characteristics of Chinese thought. This method allows for the comprehension of abstract philosophical ideas within the realm of experiential reality. As such, a potential path for addressing real-world challenges can be discerned from an experience rooted in the Chinese Classics.

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On the Supremacy of Confucianism and the Periodization of Confucian Classics Learning in the Han Dynasty

Yutong LIU

Abstract

Wang Baoxuan's 王葆玹 argument that Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty respected the Five Confucian Classics and tolerated non-Confucian schools because the "supremacy of Confucianism" (獨尊儒術) was not implemented until the reign of Emperor Cheng can be disputed. Additionally, Wang's premise that masters learning (子學) in the Warring States period was the source of classics learning (經學) in the Western Han dynasty, and the extinction of masters learning during the supremacy of Confucianism led to the decline of classics learning, can also be debated. This paper proposes that with regard to the supremacy of Confucianism, the focus was on the second founding of the Han dynasty, not on the relationship between classics learning and masters learning. Both the Qin dynasty and the Western Han dynasty had masters learning as their guiding ideology, but Emperor Wu found that solely relying on masters learning, which was a collection of ideas by important thinkers, was not sustainable. Instead, the Han dynasty needed to be based on classics learning, which represented the traditional Chinese civilization that was inherited from the three ancient and sacred Chinese dynasties of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou. The supremacy of Confucianism was thus a means of ensuring the continuity and stability of the Han dynasty that was applied by Dong Zhongshu and Emperor Wu.

Keywords: classics learning, masters learning, the supremacy of Confucianism, the Five Confucian Classics

O prevladi konfucijanstva in periodizaciji konfucijanskih klasičnih študij v dinastiji Han

Izvleček

Argument Wang Baoxuana (王葆玹), da je cesar Wu iz dinastije Han spoštoval pet konfucijanskih klasikov in dopuščal nekonfucijanske šole, ker se je prevlada konfucijanstva (獨尊儒術) uveljavila šele v času vladavine cesarja Chenga, je sporen. Poleg tega je vprašljiva Wangova predpostavka, da je bil Zi Xue (子學) v obdobju vojskujočih se držav vir za Jing Xue (經學) v zahodni dinastiji Han in da

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je izumrtje študij Zi Xueja v času prevlade konfucijanstva povzročilo tudi zaton študij Jing Xueja. Ta članek predlaga, da je bila prevlada konfucianizma usmerjena v drugo ustanovitev dinastije Han, in ne v razmerje med Jing Xuejem in Zi Xuejem. Tako dinastija Qin kot zgodnja dinastija Han sta sledili ideologiji Zi Xueja kot vodilni ideologiji, vendar je cesar Wu ugotovil, da zgolj zanašanje na Zi Xue, ki je zbirka idej velikih mislecev, ni vzdržno. Namesto tega je morala dinastija Han temeljiti na Jing Xueju, ki je predstavljal tradicionalno kitajsko civilizacijo, podedovano od treh svetih in starodavnih kitajskih dinastij Hsia, Shang in Chou. Tako je bila prevlada konfucianizma sredstvo za zagotavljanje kontinuitete in stabilnosti dinastije Han, ki sta ga uporabljala Dong Zhongshu in cesar Wu.

Ključne besede: Jing Xue, Zi Xue, prevlada konfucijanstva, pet konfucijanskih klasikov

Over the past two decades, there has been a resurgence of classics learning (經學) scholarship in Chinese academia. This trend reflects a re-examination of how Chinese civilization ought to confront the challenges posed by globalization, as well as a deeper understanding of the distinctive characteristics of this civilization. While Wang Baoxuan's 王葆玹 work *The Source and Stream of Classics Learning in the Western Han Dynasty* (西漢經學源流) was initially overlooked during the 1990s, when Neo-Confucianism dominated academic discourse, it is now considered a masterpiece by many scholars. Originally published in 1994, the book was recently reissued in 2021.

Classics learning has long been underestimated, as Wang mentions in his introduction: "In the past, people had a bad impression of the classics learning of the Han dynasty" (Wang Baoxuan 2021, 1). After the revolution of 1919, traditional classics learning was overshadowed by criticism of and reflection on Confucianism. Gu Jiegang's 顧頡剛 Historical Text Research School (古史辨派) and Zhou Yutong's 周予同 historical research on classics learning both announced the end of such learning in different ways. In contrast to trends in modern Western thought, such as democracy and republicanism, the backward nature of classics learning was scorned by generations of scholars.

Even in the 1980s and 1990s, scholars such as Yu Yingshi 余英時 still believed that Confucianism during the Han dynasty was "inferior and not very high-minded" (Yu Yingshi 1987, 127), indicating little room for the development of classics learning in modern academia. However, this view has changed over time. Today, classics learning has gained recognition for its distinctive contributions to Chinese culture. This resurgence has helped scholars appreciate the significance of classics learning in the Han dynasty. Moreover, further study of

this field can provide valuable insights into ancient Chinese thought processes and cultural practices.

Wang Baoxuan suggests that the extroverted cultural atmosphere of the Western Han and the introverted philosophy of the Song and Ming dynasties complement each other, and that it was not until the prevalence of the research style known as "chapter and verse" (章句) in the late Western Han and Zheng Xuan's 鄭玄 exegesis in the Eastern Han dynasty that the independent, inclusive and open-minded characteristics of the classics learning of the Western Han became corrupted, thus hindering the communication between classics learning and Neo-Confucianism (Wang Baoxuan 2021, 45). While classics learning of the Eastern Han may leave a negative impression on modern readers, Wang asserts that the classics learning of the Western Han could effectively offset the weaknesses of Neo-Confucianism, which is commonly criticized for its emphasis on inner sagehood at the expense of outer kingliness. As such, it is important to recognize the contributions of the Western Han dynasty (ibid., 7).

Furthermore, Wang contends that the classics learning of the Western Han was notable because it carried on the spirit of the masters learning (子學) of the Warring States period. Notably, the classics learning of the Western Han was mainly comprised of the Qi School (齊學) and the Lu School (魯學) (Wang Baoxuan 2021, 51). The former was passed down from Zigong 子貢 and Mencius 孟子, while the latter was passed down from Xunzi 荀子 and other Confucian scholars. These schools coexisted with numerous non-Confucian schools during the early Western Han dynasty.

As we all know, the thought of the Modern Enlightenment reshaped the spirit of masters learning through the values of freedom, openness and progress. This allowed masters learning to escape the dark historical period of the Warring States and become the quintessential academic ideal of that era. Wang delayed the implementation of "the supremacy of Confucianism" (獨尊儒術) policy until the reign of Emperor Cheng 成, which took place at the end of the Western Han dynasty. This ensured that the Western Han as a whole maintained an atmosphere of tolerance and academic freedom. However, Emperor Cheng's implementation of "the supremacy of Confucianism" policy was responsible for the decline of classics learning during the golden age of the Western Han. Wang's idea goes against the general consensus that Emperor Wu's 武 implementation of "the supremacy of Confucianism" policy contributed to the development of classics learning in the Han dynasty (Wang Baoxuan 2021, 8).

Wang Baoxuan's book seemingly provides an objective intellectual history of the Western Han period under the rubric of its "source and stream", but actually highlights the growth and decline of the classics learning of that era in particular, with

its source being characterized by growth, while its stream was one of decline. Wang intentionally and primarily focuses on the essence of classics learning that manifested during the early and middle Western Han period, while the supremacy of Confucianism was delayed until the end of the dynasty. He also pushes back the eventual collapse of classics learning to the end of the Western Han. Wang's fresh arguments have restarted the discussion about the intersection of classics learning and politics in the Western Han dynasty.

Reflection on the Legitimacy of the Qi and Lu Schools

The distinction between the Qi and Lu Schools in the classics learning of the New Text School (今文經學) has a long history. According to the scholar Meng Wentong 蒙文通, classics learning has its historical origins in three regions: Qi, Lu and Jin 晉, making it the most representative field of learning in early China (Meng 2006, 21–30). Further developing this notion, Wang Baoxuan proposes that there is a primary thread running through classics learning during the Western Han period. The cultural conflict between the Qi and Lu Schools in the pre-Qin era persisted into the early Western Han dynasty, eventually becoming a confrontation between the two. By the middle of the Western Han the Qi and Lu Schools encountered a crisis about ritual, causing scholars like Hou Cang 后蒼 to integrate both schools into the realm of ritual (Wang Baoxuan 2021, 101). This integration should have brought classics learning to its peak, but instead it declined. Wang Baoxuan identifies two primary reasons for this, the first being that Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty respected the Five Confucian Classics (五經) while tolerating other schools of thought as well. The second, more fundamental reason was that Emperor Cheng of the Han dynasty revered only the Five Confucian Classics and rejected all non-Confucian schools. This led to a decline in the unified political coordination and integration of Hou Cang's ritual system, ultimately contributing to the downfall of the culture (ibid., 111).

Wang's motivation for establishing the Qi and Lu Schools is now evident. During the Warring States period the Qi and Lu Schools emerged as two prominent streams of thought, which eventually became vital components of the classics learning of the Western Han dynasty. However, similar to how we cannot enforce a universal political system for all schools of thought, we cannot impose a single heart to govern the two arteries of the Qi and Lu Schools under Hou Cang's ritual system. Such an artificial imposition cannot sustain vital scholarship.

Wang firmly believes that the schools of thought during Emperor Wu's reign could not be replaced by Hou Cang's ritual system, no matter how intricate the

latter's generalized system may have been (Wang Baoxuan 2021, 53). Letting it drown out the Qi and Lu Schools, which were the pinnacles of classics learning during the Western Han dynasty, just to satisfy the supremacy of Confucianism, would be a grave mistake. Instead, Wang praises the classics learning of the Old Text School (古文經學), which emerged during the late Western Han dynasty. However, both Hou Cang's ritual system and the classics learning of the Old Text School were hampered by the supremacy of Confucianism, making it difficult for them to compete with the exceptional Qi and Lu Schools. Overall, Wang contends that the value and significance of the Qi and Lu Schools cannot be undermined by either Hou Cang's ritual system or the classics learning of the Old Text School. These two arteries of classics learning both played a crucial role in shaping the intellectual development of the Western Han dynasty. In conclusion, Wang stresses the importance of recognizing the diversity of scholarly traditions and emphasizes the need to allow each school of thought to thrive in its own unique way, without imposing a rigid overarching system (ibid., 55).

We have to point out that there are many theories about the relationship between masters learning and classics learning, but the most widely supported viewpoint comes from Liu Xin 劉歆, who believed that classics learning was originally the form of learning appropriate for the sovereign and those serving in government (王官學). When the government lost authority, official scholars flowed into the various schools of thought of the Warring States period, and Confucius collected and edited these official classics, which is why they were called the Five Confucian Classics (Ban 1962, 1728–45), and which suggests that masters learning was to some extent derived from these texts. In Liu Xin's opinion, the reason why the thought of the masters is called masters learning is that these ideas were influenced by the Five Confucian Classics, after which the masters had created their own schools, rather than teaching the original ideas of classics learning. For example, Mozi 墨子 first learned Confucianism before he became a critic of it. Meng Wentong (2006, 23), influenced by Liu Xin, holds the view that "masters learning transmitted classics learning" (諸子傳經), and argues that many ideas in masters learning contain elements from classics learning.

This paper argues that although the masters learning of the Warring States period came prior to the classics learning of the Western Han dynasty, in terms of scholarly lineages classics learning was the primary source of guidance for masters learning. It is worth noting that classics learning incorporated some of the achievements of Warring States scholars, but served as the leading source from which many schools emerged, while masters learning was more like a small stream feeding into it. The scholar Meng Wentong asserted that without the instruction of the classics learning of the New Text School, the schools of thought in the Warring States period would

lack direction (Meng 1987, 239). Thus, our understanding should acknowledge the significance of classics learning as the main source, instead of seeing masters learning as the origin. In essence, classics learning provided the foundation for many schools, whereas masters learning served as an offshoot of it.

Classics learning is crucial for returning to Confucius's original teachings, being the most important path towards true understanding. However, Wang Baoxuan does not share this idea, choosing instead to remain focused on the era of masters learning. Wang argues that classics learning in the Western Han dynasty is based upon the study of masters learning, and in fact goes even further to claim that "classics learning transmitted the masters" (經傳諸子) (Wang Baoxuan 2021, 84), which puts him in opposition to many other scholars such as Liu Xin and Meng Wentong. This paper contends that the idea that the classics learning of the Western Han dynasty was primarily influenced by masters learning only serves to blur the true purpose of classics learning—to return to Confucius's teachings. In fact, Wang Baoxuan's true view of classics learning can be portrayed as being in line with masters learning. Ultimately, while classics and masters learning might share similarities, classics learning is an entirely separate entity and should not be subsumed by another field of learning. The true value of such learning lies in its ability to guide us closer to the principles in the teachings of Confucius.

We claim that while the reconstruction of the Qi and Lu Schools is useful for understanding the genealogy of scholarly transmission, it tends to narrow the universal scope of classics learning down to a regional dispute between these two schools. Admittedly, Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty established the court academicians of the Five Classics (五經博士), with the *Classic of Poetry* (詩經) having court academicians for all three of the Qi, Lu and Han 韓 Schools of that classic, while the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (春秋) had only one court academician for it in the Gongyang tradition (公羊傳), which demonstrates that there was no dispute between the Qi and Lu Schools with regard to the *Annals*. In fact, the division between the Qi and Lu Schools in terms of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* originated during the reign of Emperor Xuan 宣 of the Western Han dynasty, when his prime minister Wei Xian 韋賢 and other Lu scholars advocated for the establishment of a court academician for the Guliang tradition (穀梁傳) of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, declaring that the Guliang tradition originally came from Lu, while the Gongyang tradition came from Qi (Ban 1962, 3618).

The division between the Qi and Lu Schools of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* cannot be attributed solely to the power struggles among scholars, mentioned above. While scholars from the Guliang School may have identified with the Lu School, those from the Gongyang School who adhered to the ideal of "great

unification" (大一統) did not necessarily consider themselves part of the Qi School. For instance, Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒, the most prominent court academician of the Gongyang School during the early Western Han dynasty, was born in the region of the former state of Zhao 趙, but studied with Hu Wusheng 胡毋生 from the Qi region. Despite his association with Qi, Dong Zhongshu would not have identified solely with the Qi School. It is true that there were some differences in the scholarly characteristics of the Qi and Lu Schools during the age of masters learning, but these differences were not significant enough to create a clear distinction between schools of classics learning.

This paper rejects the division of the Qi and Lu Schools in classics learning, as primarily determined by a scholar's place of origin or residence. For instance, Wang Baoxuan believes that Zigong was the originator of the Qi School due to him having died there, despite being originally from Wei 衛. Wang argues that Zigong must have taught some members of the ruling Tian 田 clan to improve his status in Qi, as he probably would have ran into difficulties with them otherwise (Wang Baoxuan 2021, 71–72). However, Wang's views lack support from historical sources and classical literature. Another example is Dong Zhongshu, a native of Zhao and proficient in all Five Confucian Classics, but who is disregarded by Wang in favour of Xiahou Shichang 夏侯始昌, a scholar from the Lu region who was active during the later part of Emperor Wu's reign, and who transmitted both the *Classic of Poetry* and the *Classic of Documents* (書經) of the Qi School and mastered all Five Confucian Classics, bridging the gap between Qi and Lu (ibid., 104–105).

It is important to note that the integration of the Qi and Lu Schools was not simply a change in the study of the Confucian classics, but rather representative of the natural progression from a feudal system to a prefectural one during the Han dynasty. Classics learning, which focuses on nation building rather than philology, is intertwined with politics and history. Without a grasp of this historical consciousness, scholars may fail to comprehend why the Han dynasty considered Zixia, who taught in Wei, to be the original scholar of the Gongyang tradition. Wang's view that the Gongyang and Guliang traditions, both of which interpreted the *Spring and Autumn Annals* independently on the basis of the Qi and Lu Schools, had nothing to do with Zixia, shows a regional bias that is detached from its historical context. This leads Wang Baoxuan to deny that Zixia was the original scholar of the Gongyang tradition, arguing instead that Zou Yan 鄒衍 and Zou Shi 鄒奭, two Yin-Yang scholars (陰陽家) from the Qi School, were the true progenitors of Gongyang learning (Wang Baoxuan 2021, 179). However, Wang's perspective is a static interpretation of the dynamic character of classics learning. It is crucial to recognize the comprehensive historical, political and cultural factors that shaped the evolution of classics learning over time.

This paper argues that while there are differences in customs between Qi and Lu, and classics learning was influenced by the political machinations at the time, a regional division of schools can only apply to masters learning. In classics learning noting the differences between scholars from the regions of Qi and Lu is not conducive to considering the bigger picture. It is important to note that classics learning differs from the personalized expressions of ideas found in masters learning. The former is a tradition inherited from the three ancient Chinese dynasties of the Xia, Shang and Zhou, and thus requires a greater emphasis on transmission rather than innovation. Conversely, masters learning emphasizes innovation over transmission. During the Warring States period a multitude of intellectuals vied for the favour of rulers, often overshadowing those Confucian scholars who emphasized the Five Classics. Therefore, it is essential for scholars to understand the respective traditions of classics and masters learning, as well as the context in which they were developed, in order to fully comprehend and appreciate their ideas.

For example, Confucius entrusted to Zixia the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, so Zixia's teaching of the Gongyang tradition was widely recognized as the most important tradition of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* from the Warring States period to the early Han dynasty. The genealogy of the Gongyang tradition is as follows: Zixia – Gongyang Gao 公羊高 – Gongyang Ping 公羊平 – Gongyang Di 公羊地. It was not until the reign of Emperor Jing 景 of the Western Han dynasty that Gongyang Shou 公羊壽 and his disciple Hu Wusheng wrote their Gongyang commentary to the *Spring and Autumn Annals* down on bamboo slips. Wang argues that this genealogy of classics learning is a false history except for Gongyang Shou and Hu Wusheng (Wang Baoxuan 2021, 178), and that the doctrines of the Gongyang tradition were almost directly derived from the Yin-Yang School at the Jixia Academy (稷下學宮) in Qi (ibid., 175). Wang shows that the influence of masters learning on classics learning during the Western Han was greater than that of classics learning from the Warring States period. We must admit that scholars of the Warring States period had a certain degree of influence on classics learning, but these influences did not affect its intrinsic quality. As a submerged stream that ran beneath the surface of chaotic history, classics learning scholars of the Warring States period, who devoted their lives to Confucius's classics, were the real source of the classics learning of the Western Han dynasty.

In his construction of the Qi and Lu Schools, Wang Baoxuan aimed to challenge the idea that Confucianism reigned supreme throughout the Han dynasty. By viewing the Qi and Lu Schools as branches of classics learning that shared similarities with masters learning, he was able to argue that they existed much longer than previously thought. This also highlights the difference in the scholarly atmosphere between the Western and Eastern Han dynasties. Wang contends

that classics learning underwent a significant transformation after the supremacy of Confucianism was established under Emperor Cheng. Essentially, he suggests that schools of thought continued to flourish throughout the long period of Emperors Wu, Zhao 昭, Xuan, and Yuan 元 (ibid., 123). However, Wang is unable to explain the relationship between classics and masters learning. While the Qi and Lu Schools of classics learning are based on the principles of masters learning, it is unclear why they are considered to be a component of classics learning. The arguments of Meng Wentong and Wang Baoxuan, which suggest that either masters learning or classics learning inherited the other, only partially explain their historical situation. As classics and masters learning are distinct disciplines, they must each have their own independent meanings.

Classics learning is not just a branch of Chinese philosophy, but a subject that is closely intertwined with politics and history (Hong 2012, 205). Recognizing this, classics learning is the underlying and unchanging bedrock of traditional Chinese culture, which sets it apart from philosophy or literature. While philosophy tends to focus on the ideas of renowned thinkers, classics learning is a repository of accumulated wisdom that is central to Chinese civilization and its traditions. Although masters learning is often seen as representative of Chinese philosophy, classics learning cannot be defined solely within philosophical parameters. As a result, classics learning has not been able to stake out a suitable niche within modern academic fields such as literature, history, or philosophy. It is important to distinguish between these two domains and only then merge philosophy's adaptability with classics learning's conservatism, if we are to revive Chinese culture and bring it up to date.

The Policy Implementation of "the Supremacy of Confucianism" Policy

The connection between Confucianism and classics learning is intricate, with some instances where they can be considered synonymous, while others require differentiation. Confucianism was initially established by Confucius and his followers before spreading out into various schools of thought. Consequently, it was a branch of masters learning during the Warring States period. On the other hand, the Five Confucian Classics were the source of the classics learning of the Western Han dynasty. Over time, these Classics were passed down by specialized Confucian scholars during the Warring States period. Emperor Wu established the court academicians of the Five Confucian Classics and deposed the court academicians of the transmitted records (傳記博士), such as those of Mencius 孟子, effectively ending the era of masters learning and ushering in the new era of classics learning. This marked a

change in the direction of the Han dynasty, driven by the emperor's vision. The complex relationship between Confucianism and classics learning makes it necessary to trace their origin and development to fully understand their essential nature.

Dong Zhongshu's theory and Emperor Wu's implementation of "the supremacy of Confucianism" policy played a crucial role in the political unification of ancient China. By uniting the concept of the "great unification" from the *Gongyang Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* 公羊傳 with the policy of the supremacy of Confucianism, Emperor Wu reset the Han dynasty. However, making the concept of "the supremacy of Confucianism" part of that of the "great unification" would be criticized by scholars like Yan Fu 嚴復 and Liang Qichao 梁啟超 during the late Qing dynasty, as they argued that the policy represented a monarchical dictatorship and has hindered China's modernization. Consequently, the concept of "the supremacy of Confucianism" was rejected, and Confucianism was unfairly labelled an obstacle to progress. This reinterpretation made the concept difficult to accept in modern Chinese society.

Liang Qichao and other modern scholars believed that the idea of monarchical dictatorship and the concept of "the supremacy of Confucianism" were interconnected, and together formed the political practice of the "great unification". While this concept has upheld the identity of Chinese civilization for over two thousand years and ensured the political identity of the Chinese state during the Qing dynasty, according to modernist scholars it had to be dismantled (Wang Baoxuan 2021, 123). The issue of monarchical dictatorship and the supremacy of Confucianism was the focus of many scholars in the late Qing. A consensus was formed among political groups and scholars that the detrimental aspect of the supremacy of Confucianism needed to be removed from the framework of the great unification of Chinese civilization. This would eliminate the outdated component of the Chinese identity while preserving the essential cultural foundations that had contributed to the nation's enduring legacy.

In his discussion of the supremacy of Confucianism, Wang Baoxuan claims that the reason why cultural expression after the Western Han dynasty failed to reach the same level of accomplishment as seen in Emperor Wu's reign was because the latter did not aim to depose all non-Confucian schools of thought. Instead, Emperor Wu had respected the Five Confucian Classics while incorporating the branches of masters learning into a system of transmitted records that supported the dominant Confucian ideology. This resulted in Confucianism becoming the primary school of thought, while remaining compatible with all non-Confucian schools (Wang Baoxuan 2021, 55). Wang thus argues that Confucianism's supremacy can lead to despotism and ignorance. In contrast, a golden age might

emerge if all schools of thought are allowed to flourish, instead of Confucianism's dominance. Wang believes that it is essential to preserve a diversity of ideas and maintain a balance of power among opposing schools.

In Wang's writings, "the supremacy of Confucianism" refers to the recognition of Confucianism as a branch of masters learning rather than classics learning. The original flaw of this idea lies in its ignorance of classics learning as a force in constructing the political and cultural order of the Chinese nation. It is important to note that the supremacy of Confucianism does not entail exclusive reverence for Mencius or Xunzi. These two scholars may represent Confucianism, but if their ideas were to replace those of the Taoist, Legalist and Mohist schools of thought, it would indeed lead to a dictatorship of ideas. Ban Gu 班固 succinctly summarized this as follows: "Dong Zhongshu promoted the merits of Confucius and suppressed the hundred schools" (Ban 1962, 2525). Therefore, "the supremacy of Confucianism" pertains specifically to Confucius and the Five Confucian Classics, rather than Confucianism as a whole, and this paper argues that we must understand this distinction to properly apply the concept of "the supremacy of Confucianism".

In Ban Gu's biography of Emperor Wu it is stated that "upon his ascension to power, Emperor Wu abolished non-Confucian schools and elevated the Five Confucian Classics" (Ban 1962, 212). Sima Guang 司馬光 later revised this statement to "the supremacy of Confucianism". Both expressions underscore the belief that studying the Classics entails a direct transmission from Confucius. It is important to note that Emperor Wu and Dong Zhongshu shared the same commitment to establishing Confucianism and the Five Confucian Classics as the guiding ideology of the Han dynasty, replacing the Legalism of the Qin dynasty and Huang-Lao 黃老 thought of the Emperors Wen 文 and Jing. However, detached from its historical context or evaluated from a modern viewpoint, the emphasis on the supremacy of Confucianism is not helpful in understanding its significance to the Western Han dynasty, or for reflecting on the practical meaning of Confucianism's role in history.

Before his exclusive endorsement of Confucianism, Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty faced a dilemma with regard to the endorsement of Legalism during the Qin dynasty and of Huang-Lao during the early Western Han. Therefore, this paper argues that the main objective of the supremacy of Confucianism was to instigate a second founding of the Han dynasty through re-evaluating the value of Confucius and the Five Confucius Classics. Ban Gu has made it evident that the idea of "the supremacy of Confucianism" rose to prominence during the reign of Emperor Wu, and this was also the time when Dong Zhongshu answered the

emperor's inquiries. According to Ban Gu, Dong's response was given during the early years of Emperor Wu's reign. This stance is also shared by modern historians like Yang Xiangkui 楊向奎, who has written about the subject in his book *The Great Unification and Confucian Thought* 大一統與儒家思想 (Yang 2011, 74).

However, Wang Baoxuan has attempted to prove that Emperor Wu did not suppress other schools of thought when he established the court academicians of the Five Confucian Classics. His argument revolves around Dong Zhongshu's proposal of the supremacy of Confucianism, which, according to most scholars, occurred in the first year of the Yuanguang 元光 reign period (134 BC) or earlier. But Wang suggests that an error may have occurred in the records of Dong Zhongshu's reply to Emperor Wu, as he referred to the government being over "seventy" years old, and the character for "seven" (七) may have been written instead of the grammatical particle "也". Based on this, Wang argues that Dong Zhongshu's reply to Emperor Wu took place in the fifth year of the Yuanshuo 元朔 reign period (124 BC). Therefore, Emperor Wu had already established the court academicians of the Five Confucian Classics for over ten years before Dong Zhongshu's advice to him to remove the court academicians of non-Confucian schools (Wang Baoxuan 2021, 158). In conclusion, Wang's argument aims to prove that Emperor Wu did not suppress other schools of thought and that Dong Zhongshu's proposal to exclusively honour Confucianism was suggested more than ten years after Emperor Wu's establishment of the court academicians of the Five Confucian Classics.

However, relying on written evidence that only serves a predetermined perspective or selectively presents information to support a particular argument, without taking into account the wider intellectual historical context, often leads to misunderstandings. Wang's perspective contradicts the historical account of Ban Gu, and he even suggests that Ban Gu's self-interest in writing *The History of the Han Dynasty* 漢書 and its illogical conclusions have resulted in misunderstandings. But how does Wang prove his claim that the supremacy of Confucianism occurred during the reign of Emperor Cheng, rather than during the reign of Emperor Wu, without there being any historical written record of this? According to Wang Baoxuan, Wang Feng's 王鳳 family was the true force behind the supremacy of Confucianism. Wang Mang 王莽, a relative of Wang Feng, ended the Western Han dynasty by usurping the throne, and his reign left a negative impression on the people of the subsequent Eastern Han dynasty. The implementation of "the supremacy of Confucianism" policy was regarded as a significant achievement by the Confucians of the Eastern Han period. However, Wang Baoxuan contends that Ban Biao 班彪 and his son Ban Gu skewed historical accounts and deliberately suppressed and obscured Wang Feng's reputation for dismissing

non-Confucian schools (Wang Baoxuan 2021, 172). However, it is crucial to recognize that Wang's viewpoint is highly contested and requires further factual and corroborative evidence.

While Ban Gu and other scholars during the Eastern Han dynasty may have been biased against Wang Mang, it would be a baseless accusation to claim that Ban Gu deliberately distorted history for his own selfish reasons. During the Han dynasty, Emperor Wu deposed the Legalists and disregarded their political and educational opinions upon ascending to the throne. Later, he planned to depose Huang-Lao scholars as well, but faced opposition from the Empress Dowager Dou 竇. It was not until the establishment of the court academicians of the Five Confucian Classics in the fifth year of the Jianyuan 建元 reign period (136 BC) that a series of political decisions led to the actual implementation of "the supremacy of Confucianism" policy. This historical narrative is unlikely to be altered or rewritten.

The political practice and historical process of the supremacy of Confucianism were not the result of the personal will of individuals such as Ban Gu, Dong Zhongshu, or even Emperor Wu. Unlike the Five Confucian Classics, which carry the entire historical tradition in them, the schools of thought of the Warring States period were personalized and innovative interpretations of ideas. Among them, classics learning needed to be transmitted from generation to generation, while the ideological characteristics of masters learning meant that it did not require this. As a result, once masters learning left the historical environment of the Warring States period it declined, due to a lack of teachers to pass on its ideas. The decline of Legalism was not solely related to the fall of the Qin dynasty, as Legalism is only suitable for chaotic times, and a unified state cannot rely on Legalism alone to obtain long-lasting peace. Huang-Lao, as an updated version of Legalism, gained momentum for a short time due to special historical conditions that necessitated its rapid rehabilitation. However, when it comes to the long-term stability and maintenance of the political system, scholars who started with individual ideas were unable to undertake this historical task. Even if the Qin dynasty relied on masters learning rather than Legalism, it would not have been able to maintain a long reign.

Tracing the origin of the classics learning of the Western Han back to the masters learning of the Warring States, as Wang Baoxuan did, is a misinterpretation. When referencing "the supremacy of Confucianism", this does not mean strictly the Confucianism represented by Mencius or Xunzi, but rather refers to the Five Confucian Classics of Confucius. The Han dynasty emperors elevated and respected Confucianism, along with the Five Classics. To reject all non-Confucian

schools of thought is to ignore the historical context of the Han dynasty emperors seeking legitimacy as rulers and aiming to establish an ideal government following the Warring States period. This paper argues that it is crucial to step out of the chaos and consider how the Han dynasty inherited and emulated the governance of the Sage Kings Yao 堯, Shun 舜, Yu 禹, Tang 湯, Wen 文 and Wu 武, while still progressing toward a new era.

Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty was concerned with restoring the glory of the era of the three legendary Sage Kings, Yao, Shun and Yu, and sought advice from various schools of thought to achieve this goal. However, he realized that the prevailing schools of the previous dynasties, such as the Legalism of the Qin dynasty and the Huang-Lao of the early Western Han, were limited by the chaotic times of the Warring States and shortly after, and could not provide an answer to the problem of how to continue Chinese civilization in a different context.

Emperor Wu thus sought the guidance of Dong Zhongshu. The latter proposed breaking with the Han dynasty's political and educational guidelines that were influenced by Warring States thought and to focus instead on Confucius's principles, which summarized the three sagely reigns of high antiquity. This allowed the Han dynasty to achieve parity with the sage kings of the past and create a new path to success. Overall, Emperor Wu understood the need to move beyond the schools of thought that were rooted in the Warring States era. He recognized that Confucius's teachings offered a vital guide for the continuation of civilization. By following this path, he was able to restore the Han dynasty's glory to its initial heights.

The flourishing of classics learning during the Han dynasty can be traced back to Emperor Wu's respect for Confucianism, rather than the assertion made by Wang Baoxuan that the decline of classics learning began only after the abolition of non-Confucian schools. According to Wang, the dismissal of non-Confucian schools was merely symbolic, relegating masters learning to the court academicians of the transmitted records who served as auxiliaries to the court academicians of the Five Confucian Classics. He further argues that promoting the Five Confucian Classics did not amount to elevating Confucianism above other schools of thought, but rather established it as a major source of knowledge (Wang Baoxuan 2021, 123–124).

This paper disagrees with Wang's view and argues that classics learning and masters learning should not be equated. Classics learning derived its political and educational traditions from the interpretations of the three Sage Kings, which requires an in-depth understanding and interpretation of the Classics, rather than of individual ideas. Therefore, it is essential to supplement classics learning with masters learning, to facilitate the exchange of views and knowledge. But the

advancement of classics learning requires the interpretation of the Classics rather than the addition of individual ideas from masters learning.

Wang provides an analysis of the dominance of Confucianism in two dimensions: intellectually with the court academicians of the Five Confucian Classics, and politically with the Han dynasty inheriting the Qin system of government (漢承秦制). We have to mention that, first of all, the establishment of the court academicians of the Five Confucian Classics in the fifth year of the Jianyuan reign period (136 BC) was a major initiative of Emperor Wu. As Zhao Qi 趙岐 of the Eastern Han dynasty mentions, Emperor Wu abolished the court academicians of the transmitted records and established the court academicians of the Five Confucian Classics independently (Zhao Qi 1987, 17). Moreover, scholars widely agree that these court academicians were established solely for Confucian teachings.

Wang Baoxuan has a different perspective regarding the court academicians of the Five Confucian Classics in the court academician system than Wang Guowei 王國維. While Wang Guowei argues that Emperor Wu established the court academicians of the Five Confucian Classics solely for the Five Classics (Wang Guowei 2004, 84), Wang Baoxuan believes that the court academicians of the Five Confucian Classics were only one part of a larger group. The emperor added them alongside the court academicians of the transmitted records, which means that the post of court academician was not exclusively for Confucians (Wang Baoxuan 2021, 124). Wang Baoxuan attempts to provide evidence for the significance of the court academicians of the transmitted records in the court academician system and to refute the notion that Emperor Wu only honoured Confucianism. Nevertheless, his arguments have failed to overturn the commonly accepted consensus in scholarship.

Wang's analysis of the supremacy of Confucianism centres around the elimination of the court academicians of the transmitted records. However, this assumption lacks supporting evidence as the court academicians of the Five Confucian Classics were established during Emperor Wu's reign, along with the abolition of the court academicians of the transmitted records. To reinforce his argument, Wang cites a passage from *The History of the Han Dynasty* that mentions that over seventy magicians (方士), envoys (使者) and assistants (副佐) returned home awaiting the imperial edict. Wang asserts that "awaiting the imperial edict" (待詔) refers to Emperor Cheng's dismissal of non-Confucian schools (罷黜百家) (Wang Baoxuan 2021, 153–55). Nevertheless, the argument remains speculative, as other interpretations of this passage in the historical context cannot be ruled out, and the current paper presents a contrasting viewpoint.

Firstly, the term "awaiting the imperial edict" is not solely limited to court academicians. Secondly, the original text states that those who returned to their homes were magicians and other functionaries, so why does Wang claim that Emperor Cheng deposed the court academicians of the transmitted records? If masters learning still had court academicians associated with it, why is there no record of any court academician of the transmitted records of Mozi 墨子 or Han Feizi 韓非子 during the Western Han dynasty? Since the preference for Confucianism was dominant, why are there no court academicians of the transmitted records of Mencius or Xunzi in the history of the Western Han dynasty? It must be acknowledged that the distinction between the court academicians of the Five Confucian Classics and the court academicians of the transmitted records becomes unjustifiable after Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty, as the former were themselves court academicians of the transmitted records of the Five Confucian Classics. For example, the Gongyang tradition consisted of the court academicians of the transmitted records of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*.

Wang includes masters learning in the scope of transmitted records, and cites Wang Chong's 王充 *Lunheng* (論衡) as proof: "Confucius's *Spring and Autumn Annals* was the King's work; the transmitted records of books by masters were the minister's business." Wang argues that this is "direct evidence that in the Han dynasty transmitted records included the works of masters learning" (Wang Baoxuan 2021, 134). As we all know, "master" (子) is an honorific title, and one that does not refer exclusively to scholars of the Warring States period, but also includes scholars of the Han dynasty. For example, Wang Chong's *Lunheng* says: "The words of scholars and masters are mostly intended to create a strange and different theory, and to shock the people of the world" (Wang Chong 1990, 167). Then Wang Chong cites two stories from the *Han Shi waizhuan* (韓詩外傳) as examples from masters texts, but its author Han Ying 韓嬰 was also a court academician of the *Classic of Poetry* in the Western Han dynasty.

Furthermore, Emperor Xuan said that Emperor Wu's virtue was capable of "broadening the path of truth and art", and Wang Baoxuan believes that this is obviously not in line with the supremacy of Confucianism (Wang Baoxuan 2021, 149). However, this paper argues that the establishment of the court academicians of the Five Confucian Classics does not imply the burning of non-Confucian books, like Emperor Qin Shihuang 秦始皇 burning Confucian texts. What we need to clarify is that without needing to establish a system of court academicians of masters learning, it was still possible to collect anonymous books and seek advice from magicians who had realized the techniques of the Way (道術). For example, even after Emperor Cheng's complete reverence for Confucianism, Liu Xiang 劉向 and his son Liu Xin took orders from the emperor to organize and compile old

books, and many works of masters learning that have been passed down to us were edited and finalized by the two Lius, so the extinction of the schools of thought at the end of the Western Han dynasty was not simply a political decision.

As we all know, the Five Confucian Classics continued to be transmitted and inherited even after the burning of books by Emperor Qin Shihuang. But Emperor Wu not only refrained from burning books, he also "expanded the path to the techniques of the Way" (廣道術之路) (Wang Baoxuan 2021, 149). However, it is worth considering why masters learning went extinct during the mid-Han period, and the belief that the Warring States period was the golden era of learning or the Axial Age of Chinese civilization may be an anachronistic analogy that misses the point.

Chinese philosophy has undergone significant developments since the time of Hu Shi 胡適, who held that the schools of thought in the Warring States marked the pinnacle of free thought. This view owes its genesis to Karl Jaspers's theory of the Axial Age, which has been a cornerstone of the study of Chinese philosophy for over a century. Nonetheless, Tang Wenming 唐文明 argues that the age of masters learning cannot be considered the Axial Age of Chinese civilization, since the latter signifies a break from tradition. However, it remains unclear what kind of discontinuity was constructive enough to make the age of masters learning truly transformative. Failure to answer this question means that placing China's Axial Age in the Warring States period loses significance when it comes to outlining the trajectory of Chinese civilization (Tang Wenming 2019, 239–40).

Moreover, it is crucial to understand the constructive power of masters learning to regulate its impact on history and order. Wang Baoxuan suggests that China's Golden Age occurred when many schools of thought coexisted, and classics learning was developed as a manifestation of masters learning. However, we should avoid the temptation of viewing Chinese civilization purely through the lens of masters learning. The Han emperors valued Confucianism because they understood that classics learning, not masters learning, had the necessary depth to capture the complexity of China's past, present and future.

From a political perspective, Wang Baoxuan contends that the supremacy of Confucianism signalled an end to the legacy of the Qin system. Confucianism inherently opposes the ideology of the Qin dynasty, and it was only during Emperor Cheng's reign that the state system was restructured in accordance with the requirements of classics learning. Many of the proposals of classics learning were subsequently implemented in concrete policies, such as the examination system, the bureaucracy, the court ritual system, and the system of the imperial sacrifices – a complete reversal of the legacy of the Qin system.

This paper presents a contrasting perspective to Wang's argument. Although the Western and Eastern Han dynasties pursued the prefectural system with the feudal system as its background, Emperor Cheng only partially referenced the institutional model of classics learning during his reforms. Furthermore, it is important to note that neither the Western nor Eastern Han dynasty were able to fully implement the ideal system of the Five Confucian Classics, despite their reverence for Confucianism. Therefore, if we define "the supremacy of Confucianism" as strict conformity to classics learning at all institutional levels, then it is clear that even both Han dynasties could not achieve this. However, this does not negate the significance of the Five Confucian Classics, as it is important to remember that the ritual system is only one aspect of classics learning. While it is tempting to measure the realization of the supremacy of Confucianism by the implementation of rituals, this approach neglects the broader principles and values of classics learning. Ultimately, this paper argues that we should not let our focus on the implementation of rituals distract us from the higher ideals of classics learning.

Moreover, Wang argues that one of the most important signs of the Western Han dynasty freeing itself from the influence of the Qin dynasty was the recognition of Confucius as the "Uncrowned King" (素王) for the first time during Emperor Cheng's reign, when he conferred the title of "Duke Who Continues and Honours the Shang dynasty" (殷紹嘉公) to Confucius (Wang Baoxuan 2021, 126). Wang's discovery is crucial for understanding the change in Confucius's status during the Han dynasty, but it is important to know that being considered a descendant of the Shang dynasty does not mean being considered an "Uncrowned King". To regard Confucius as a descendant of the Shang dynasty means that he was regarded as belonging to one of the old Three Dominions (三統), namely that of the Shang. If we take the view of the Gongyang School, however, Confucius wrote the *Spring and Autumn Annals* to establish a new dominion beyond the rule of the Xia, Shang or Zhou, which is why they call him the Uncrowned King. Confucius being considered a descendent of the Shang dynasty was a revolutionary way of diluting his attributes as the Uncrowned King, which is contrary to Wang's recognition of Confucius's status. Therefore, we cannot use Confucius's new title of "Duke Who Continues and Honours the Shang dynasty" to prove that "the supremacy of Confucianism" was not achieved until the reign of Emperor Cheng.

In sum, this paper argues that during the second stage of the development of the Western Han dynasty, Emperor Wu accurately recognized the importance of relying on classics learning, as the civilizational tradition, instead of on the individual ideas of masters learning. The learning of the Five Confucian Classics is a crucial aspect of Chinese civilization, allowing for the connection of the Han dynasty with the ideals of the three Sage Kings. Whereas reliance on masters

learning would have only connected the Han dynasty with the ideological patterns of the chaotic Warring States period, Emperor Wu's respect for the Five Confucian Classics, as well as Dong Zhongshu's promotion of Confucianism, enabled the preservation of Chinese civilization for hundreds of generations. When it comes to constructive political and educational policies, the Qin Emperor Shihuang failed to survive under the guidance of masters learning, while the Han emperors flourished under the instruction of classics learning. This perspective highlights the importance of understanding and maintaining the traditional roots of a civilization. Through the conscientious study of the Five Confucian Classics, the Han dynasty was able to build upon the successes of its predecessors and establish a strong and lasting political and educational system.

The Validity of Dividing the Western and Eastern Han Dynasties

Pi Xirui's 皮錫瑞 view that the golden age of classics learning was during the period from the Emperors Yuan and Cheng of the Western Han dynasty to the Eastern Han dynasty, followed by a decline during the Wei and Jin dynasties (Pi 2015, 47), is widely accepted in current scholarship. However, Wang Baoxuan challenges this commonly held belief and instead argues that the peak of classics learning was from the early years of the Western Han dynasty to the reign of Emperor Cheng, while its decline was during the remainder of the Western and Eastern Han dynasties after the reign of the Emperors Yuan and Cheng.

Wang believes that the cause of this turning point was the overemphasis on Confucianism, resulting in the neglect of other schools of thought during the Western Han. He further asserts that the intermingling of Confucianism with prophecy and prognostication (讖緯) further exacerbated this decline. Even the revival of classics learning during the Qing dynasty was mainly a continuation of the Eastern Han dynasty's style of annotation and exegesis. In light of the long history of classics learning, Wang suggests that only the Western Han dynasty deserves serious study, as it represents the height of classics learning's influence. While Pi Xirui's perspective is widely accepted, Wang's challenge to the common interpretation of the historical periodization of classics learning offers an alternative approach to understanding this important legacy of traditional Chinese thought.

At the beginning of his book, Wang Baoxuan writes: "In the past, people had a very bad impression of the classics learning of the Han dynasty" (Wang Baoxuan 2021, 1). At the conclusion of his book Wang further clarifies this by stating that: "In the past, people had a very bad impression of the classics learning of the Han dynasty, because they focused on the Eastern Han dynasty" (ibid., 433). Wang contends

that Emperor Cheng's admiration for Confucianism at the end of the Western Han serves as the defining intellectual historical stage of the dynasty. As a result, a clear divide is created between the Western and Eastern Han dynasties, with the prominence of Confucianism shaping the different cultural environments of each.

Wang posits that the source of the classics learning of the Western Han can be traced back to the masters learning of the Warring States period. The evolution of the classics learning of the Western Han dynasty occurred through four distinct schools: the Qi School, the Lu School, Hou Cang's ritual system, and the classics learning of the Old Text School. However, Wang's argument emphasizes the continuity of scholarship from the Warring States period to the Qin and early Western Han, thanks to the tolerant political environment that provided freedom of thought. In Wang's view, there is a close correlation between the Western Han dynasty and the era of masters learning, which necessitates a clear break between the hitherto perceived as continuous Western and Eastern Han.

In the realm of classics learning, the disagreement between the Western and Eastern Han dynasties primarily revolves around the classical learning of the New and Old Text Schools, with the former dominating the Western Han and the latter dominating the Eastern. It is important to note that Wang's alignment with the Western Han is not solely based on his support for the classics learning of the New Text School, but rather due to his affinity for the intellectual atmosphere that existed prior to the supremacy of Confucianism. According to Wang's perspective, the flourishing of classics learning during the Western Han dynasty was due to the flourishing of schools such as those from Qi and Lu, the ritual system of Hou Cang, and the classics learning of the Old Text School. Conversely, with the rise and dominance of Confucianism and the abandonment of other schools, the decline of classics learning was inevitable. It is fair to say that Wang's stance is anti-classics learning, as he believes that the conflict between the Western and Eastern Han dynasties is not a dispute between the Old and New Text Schools, but rather one of masters learning versus classics learning.

As we know, the dispute between the New Text School and Old Text School is still ongoing within classics learning, so the continuity between the Western and Eastern Han is greater than the discontinuity. However, if we take the argument between Western and Eastern Han scholars as a dispute between masters learning and classics learning, then the discontinuity between the two is greater than the continuity. Wang makes several anti- classics learning statements under the assumption that the classics learning of the New Text School in the Western Han dynasty was the fruit of masters learning. For example, Wang praises the independence of traditions (傳), persuasions (說), and records (記) in the classics

learning of the Western Han, and argues that masters learning was also regarded as transmitted records, which implies that the classics learning of the Western Han was written entirely in masters learning's mode. Only under this premise does Wang think that the learning of transmitted records (傳記之學) and the learning of chapter and verse (章句之學) of the Western Han dynasty stand in opposition, and does he criticize Zheng Xuan's style of learning as restrictive, archaic and conservative (Wang Baoxuan 2021, 43–46).

We admit that the development of the classics learning of the Han dynasty underwent changes in form, from orally transmitted records to the learning of chapter and verse, and then to the exegesis of commentaries. For example, the *Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals Fanlu* (春秋繁露) by Dong Zhongshu, who was a court academician of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* in the Western Han dynasty, was indeed an independent work, often containing statements that go beyond the original Classic of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, while He Xiu's 何休 *Gongyang Exegesis* (公羊解詁) from the Eastern Han dynasty is a word-by-word interpretation of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*.

However, this paper argues that while Dong Zhongshu of the Western Han and He Xiu of the Eastern Han dynasty may have had a differing understanding of classics learning, they still maintained the fundamental spirit of the Gongyang tradition. Although the approach to classics learning shifted between the two dynasties, we cannot assume that the changes in content were due solely to differences in form. Therefore, it is critical to recognize that even with these differences, classics learning continued to be rooted in the principle of the Gongyang tradition throughout both periods.

According to Wang's strict distinction between the Western and Eastern Han dynasties, the classical learning of the New and Old Text Schools can be classified into two categories. The classics learning of the New Text School can be divided into a Western Han model and an Eastern Han model, while the classics learning of the Old Text School can also be divided into Western and Eastern Han models. It has been noted that the classics learning of the New Text School in the Eastern Han dynasty, as represented by the *Baihutong* (白虎通), was considerably different to the classics learning of the New Text School in the Western Han dynasty (Wang Baoxuan 2021, 425). Such a divergence, according to Wang, could be attributed to two factors: the prominence of Confucianism and the emergence of prophecy and prognostication.

Wang believes that the rise of the classics learning of the Old Text School during the Eastern Han dynasty can be regarded as a response to an excessive focus on Confucianism during the Western Han. The emergence of the classics learning

of the Old Text School was a compensation for the dismissal of various schools of thought. However, this is the same as arguing that the classics learning of the Old Text School is not part of orthodox Confucianism. Regardless, the classics learning of both the New and Old Text Schools offered highly recognizable interpretations of to the Five Confucian Classics, which form the basis of their disagreement.

Wang's historical periodization of classics learning is reasonable, but may be misleading. From a scholarly perspective, it is appropriate to divide the Western and Eastern Han dynasties into two camps due to their different methodologies, although the Eastern Han and Wei-Jin dynasties have more in common. In terms of scholarly achievements, the *Commentaries and Explanations on the Thirteen Classics* (十三經注疏) were completed from the Eastern Han dynasty to the Wei-Jin period, with no complete classics learning commentary from the Western Han dynasty remaining extant. Therefore, Pi Xirui's assertion that the period from the middle and late Western Han dynasty to the Eastern Han dynasty was the Golden Age of classics learning, while the Wei-Jin period represents its decline, warrants scrutiny. Furthermore, Pi Xirui's arguments suggest that the Western Han may not have been as significant a period for classics learning as previously thought. We can review his arguments as follows:

> The transition from Emperors Yuan and Cheng of the Western Han dynasty to the Eastern Han dynasty is known as the time of the greatest prosperity. At the dawn of the Han dynasty, Confucianism was not yet prominent. However, Emperor Wu initiated the appointment of Gongsun Hong 公孫弘 as prime minister, along with his enfeoffment as Marquis. This move encouraged the nation's scholars, and from that point forward, Emperor Yuan became a strong advocate for Confucianism. Wei 韋, Kuang 匡, Gong 貢 and Xue 薛 were appointed as assistant ministers, ushering in an era of scholarly excellence. The civil service embraced classics learning, and prioritized the teaching of these classics to future generations. The Huan 桓 family became renowned for its court academicians, while the Yang 楊 family produced generations of ministers during the Eastern Han dynasty. Prime ministers were chosen from among the court academicians of the Five Confucian Classics, with Emperor Wu setting the precedent and subsequent emperors such as Yuan, Cheng, Guangwu 光武, Ming 明, and Zhang 章 continuing to follow this pattern. These developments accounted for the enduring popularity of classics learning. (Pi 2015, 35)

Both Pi Xirui and Wang Baoxuan argue that the politics of the Han dynasty had a profound impact on the development of classics learning. Wang identifies the supremacy of Confucianism as the critical moment of classics learning, while Pi considers the fall of the Eastern Han dynasty as the major turning point. According to Pi, the success of classics learning was not determined by its implementation on the ground, but by the extent to which its scholars were involved in national governance and policy formulation. Pi claims that the appointment of Gongsun Hong as the prime minister by Emperor Wu marked the beginning of classics learning's flourishing. After Emperor Yuan, classics learning scholars filled many prominent public positions. Consequently, a large number of classics learning scholars deeply influenced the history of the Han dynasty. These scholars were not only devoted to the ritual system of classics learning, but they also infused philosophy and values of classics learning into every aspect of political life. Overall, the sweeping ideas of classics learning have reverberated through China's ancient history, with an indelible impact on the nation's culture, society, politics, and governance.

Pi Xirui emphasizes the influence of classics learning on politics, while Wang Baoxuan emphasizes the influence of political actions on classics learning. This paper aligns with Pi Xirui's view that the flourishing of classics learning was not solely due to the adoption of its books and institutions, but rather to the scholars themselves. Chen Bisheng 陳壁生 concurs with this, noting that classics learning scholars possessed a spirit that not only valued books, but also considered the real world in which they lived. Additionally, the transmission of classics learning by scholars was not a mere repetition of the past, but instead conferred the ability to confront contemporary realities (Chen 2018, 8).

Pi Xirui's historical periodization of classics learning may seem incorrect from a single academic perspective. However, if we consider the common driving force that affected the cultural and intellectual development of the Western and Eastern Han dynasties, we can identify a set of values that was shared among its scholars. Even though the mode of learning changed during the four centuries of the Han dynasty, there was a universality in it stemming from Emperor Wu's recognition of the Five Confucian Classics and Dong Zhongshu's promotion of Confucianism. According to Xu Fuguan 徐復觀, the Western Han dynasty was founded on a pattern of thinking inherited from the pre-Qin era, until Dong Zhongshu redefined its thought (Xu 2013, 269). The Han dynasty can be seen as a whole because the thought pattern running from the Warring States period to the early Western Han dynasty was abruptly cut off by the exclusive focus on Confucian values and the Five Confucian Classics, which reshaped the character of thought of the new dynasty.

This paper posits that classics learning relied heavily on the expertise of scholars rather than written texts. Wang Baoxuan cites Wang Chong to describe classics learning as a profession where one "revises books day by day and dies by candlelight" (Wang Chong 1990, 583), implying that the influence of Confucianism in politics led to its gradual decline. However, the supremacy of Confucianism prompted classics learning scholars to revive seemingly outdated classics, enhancing both political and daily life. Whereas Pi Xirui detects a dynamism in the classics learning of the Eastern Han dynasty, Wang Baoxuan's portrayal of its lethargy during the same period is a hasty generalization. Pi Xirui's assessment of the vitality of the classics learning of the Eastern Han dynasty is perceptive, while Wang Baoxuan's categorization of the Western and Eastern Han dynasties is a careless oversimplification.

Conclusion

The Western Han dynasty marked the beginning of the integration of Confucianism and Chinese politics, with the establishment of the court academicians of the Five Confucian Classics under Emperor Wu as its core facet. This alliance paved the way for the unification of culture and governance, and set the stage for the development of traditional Chinese political philosophy. Meng Wentong emphasizes that the classics learning of the Western Han dynasty lies at the centre of Chinese philosophy and history, and thereby forms the centre of Chinese culture (Meng 1987, 241), which is bold statement but also a historical fact.

Wang Baoxuan has suggested that masters learning was the source of classics learning in the Western Han dynasty. However, this paper argues that the actual origin of classics learning predates the Warring States period. Although there were similar schools of thought to masters learning, such as the Qi and Lu Schools during the early years of the Western Han, the true foundation of classics learning goes back to Confucius. Therefore, the assertion that the masters learning of the Warring States period was the source of the classics learning of the Han dynasty should be reevaluated.

Emperor Wu faced a dilemma regarding the exclusive adoption of Huang-Lao at the time of the Emperors Wen and Jing, and of Legalism during the Qin dynasty. This paper argues that Emperor Wu's primary objective was to establish the supremacy of Confucianism as the foundation for a second founding of the Han dynasty. This was achieved by reassessing the value of Confucius and the teachings of the Five Confucian Classics. It is important to emphasize that the supremacy of Confucianism does not refer to Confucianism as represented by the works of

Mencius or Xunzi, but rather that of the Five Confucian Classics which represent the teachings of Confucius himself. That is to say, the supremacy of Confucianism also rejected the Confucianism of Mencius and Xunzi in the Warring States period.

To overcome the turbulent historical period and embrace the legacy of the Sage Kings Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, Wen and Wu, it was necessary to reject those schools of thought that had stepped away from Confucius's original Five Classics. This rejection enabled the establishment of the Han dynasty's legitimate authority, capable of guiding the country towards an ideal government beyond the Warring States period. Therefore, the division of the Western and Eastern Han dynasties into two parts for the purpose of understanding the historical periodization of classics learning is invalid, as the essence of classics learning was upheld by a group of people who shared the same ideal of the supremacy of classics learning, a concept that was upheld throughout the entirety of the Han dynasty after Emperor Wu.

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SPECIAL ISSUE
THE CONTEMPORARY REVIVAL
OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE
PHILOSOPHY

New Interpretations of Classical Texts

Newly Excavated Confucian Bamboo Manuscripts and Related Research

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this article is to comprehensively survey the research on excavated Confucian texts from the past 30 years. Newly excavated Confucian manuscripts are seen in such collections as those from Guodian 郭店, Shangbo 上博, Tsinghua 清華, Anda 安大, and Haihun 海昏. In terms of their content, they each have their own focus and characteristics. Among these bamboo manuscripts there is a large number dedicated to the *Shijing* 詩經, the *Shujing* 書經, the *Liji* 禮記, the *Yijing* 易經, and to Kongzi 孔子 making them of great importance. At present, research on the Guodian and the Shangbo manuscripts is mostly completed and that into the Tsinghua collection is making large strides while research into the Anda collection is just beginning to develop. Among all this research, one of the weakest areas revolves around the explanation and discussion of Confucian thought and related problems. This includes textual evidence in the form of excavated Confucian texts that provide a foundation for "leaving behind the age of doubting antiquity" (*zouchu yigu shidai* 走出疑古時代) and the related debates carried out by scholars are beneficial to transmitting and revising this theory.

Keywords: Warring states bamboo manuscripts, Confucian texts, doubting antiquity, interpreting antiquity

Novoizkopani konfucijanski bambusovi rokopisi in z njimi povezane raziskave

Izvleček

Osnovni namen tega članka je celovit pregled raziskav izkopanih konfucijanskih besedil v zadnjih 30 letih. Na novo izkopani konfucijanski rokopisi so predstavljeni v zbirkah, kot so tiste iz mest Guodian 郭店, Shangbo 上博, Tsinghua 清華, Anda 安大 in Haihun 海昏. Vsebinsko so vsak po svoje osredotočeni in imajo svoje značilnosti. Med temi bambusovimi rokopisi je veliko število posvečenih *Shijingu* 詩經, *Shujingu* 書經, *Lijiju* 禮記, *Yijingu* 易經 in *Kongziju* 孔子, zato so zelo pomembni. Trenutno so raziskave rokopisov iz krajev Guodian in Shangbo večinoma končane, raziskave zbirke iz kraja Tsinghua

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močno napredujejo, medtem ko se raziskave zbirke iz Andaja šele razvijajo. Med vsemi temi raziskavami se eno najšibkejših področij vrti okoli razlage in razprave o konfucijanski misli in z njo povezanih problemih. To vključuje besedilne dokaze v obliki izkopanih konfucijanskih besedil, ki zagotavljajo podlago za »opustitev dobe dvomljive starine« (*zouchu yigu shidai* 走出疑古時代), s tem povezane razprave, ki jih izvajajo znanstveniki, pa so koristne za posredovanje in revizijo te teorije.

Ključne besede: bambusovi rokopisi vojskujočih se držav, konfucijanska besedila, dvom o starodavnosti, interpretacija starodavnosti

Preface[1]

There were two great discoveries of pre-Qin texts in historical times. The first was at the beginning of the Western Han when King Gong Lu discovered a large number of hand-copied Confucian manuscripts in the walls of Kongzi's 孔子 (Confucius) old home during its demolition, including the *Guwen shangshu* 古文尚書, *Liji* 禮記, *Lunyu* 論語, *Xiaojing* 孝經 and many more.[2] These have thus been referred to as the "ancient writings of Kongzi's walls" (*kongbi guwen* 孔壁古文). These texts are all pre-Qin texts and were probably hidden in the walls to avoid the burning of the books carried out during the Qin dynasty. The other great discovery came in the Western Jin period during the reign of Emperor Wu (236–290 CE), when people found a great cache of bamboo books in a Warring States tomb in the Ji 汲 county (modern day Weihui in Henan), which have historically been referred to as "Jizhong bamboo books" (*jizhong zhushu* 汲冢竹書). However, it is unfortunate that other than a few particular instances, most of these texts have not been transmitted through history to today.

With the excavation of bamboo books in Zidanku 子彈庫 in 1942, the third great period of the discovery of ancient Chinese texts began. This discovery, in addition to those of 1972 and 1993, together constitute three stages of this period. In 1972, a great number of texts written on bamboo slips was discovered at Linyi 臨沂 Yinqueshan 銀雀山 in Shandong province. Afterwards, a series

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1 This article was published in Chinese by Ding Sixin in 2023 as "Xinchu Rujia jiandu wenxian ji qi yanjiu" 新出儒家簡牘文獻及其研究, Kongzi yanjiu 孔子研究 (Confucian Studies) 4: 111–23. It has since been revised and updated by Zhao Qiannan, and was translated into English by Kelvin J. Turner (HKBU).

2 Since this article is aimed at scholars who have a good foundation regarding Chinese philosophy and excavated texts, We will not translate book titles of either first- or second-hand materials in the body of the article in order to guarantee a certain degree of readability. Only publication dates will be provided for essays, books, and annotated collections within the body of the article. Full bibliographical information has been removed from the footnotes and can be found in the References. – Translator

of discoveries was made at Bajiaolang 八角廊 Han tombs (1973), Mawangdui 馬王堆 Han tombs (1973), Shuanggudui 雙古堆 Han tombs (1977), Zhangji-ashan 張家山 Han tombs (1984), Cili 慈利 Chu tombs (1987), and Jiudian 九店 Chu tombs (1980–1989). These bamboo and silk manuscripts include such texts as the *Wuxing* 五行, *Lunyu*, *Shijing*, *Zhouyi* 周易, *Guoyu* 國語, *Yizhoushu* 逸周書, and other Confucian texts. In 1993, Tomb No. 1 at Guodian 郭店 in Jingmen 荊門 in Hubei produced the *Wuxing*, *Ziyi* 緇衣, *Xing zi ming chu* 性自命出, *Liude* 六德 and more than ten other Confucian texts in addition to versions of the *Laozi* 老子 and the *Taiyi sheng shui* 太一生水. This discovery has had a great impact. Following this, a subsequent series of discoveries was made in the Shangbo 上博 (Shanghai Museum) (1994), Tsinghua 清華 (2008), Beida 北大 (Peking University) (2009), Anda 安大 (Anhui University) (2015), Hai-hun 海昏 (2015), Xiajiatai 夏家台 (2015), and the Wangjiazui 王家嘴 (2021) collections, among others. These collections also contain a large number of Confucian texts.

Correlated with the abovementioned three periods, there are three definitions of so-called "newly excavated texts" (*xinchu wenxian* 新出文獻). The first definition is related to the discoveries of the Western Han and Western Jin and refers to the pre-Qin texts discovered after 1942; the second definition refers to the texts excavated or discovered from after 1972; and the third refers to the ancient texts excavated or discovered after 1993. This article mostly follows the third definition. Because all of the ancient pre-Qin texts discovered after 1993 are written on bamboo rather than silk, we can therefore directly refer to them as newly excavated bamboo slip texts. Because there are few whole texts we can refer to these as bamboo slip manuscripts. The phrase "newly excavated Confucian bamboo texts" refers to the Confucian texts written on bamboo materials discovered over the past 20 and 30 years.

By "Confucian texts" (*rujia wenxian* 儒家文獻) this article means those texts that contain ideas which are Confucian in nature. Generally speaking, the scholarly fields of Chinese classical studies and Confucian studies determine which texts are "Confucian" according to the information contained in the *Hanshu* "Yiwenzhi" 漢書·藝文志. It is usually thought that the texts in "six arts" category and those marked as Confucian in the "masters" category mentioned in this text are all considered to belong to the larger category of "Confucian texts". This categorization, however, excludes those texts which are recorded as for elementary education. Furthermore, this article also surveys such texts as the *Shifa* 筮法 from the Tsinghua bamboo collection, the *Guizang* 歸藏 from the Qin bamboo collection, and others that are helpful in solving problems related to the characteristics and origin of the hexagrams in the *Zhouyi* 周易.

The primary purpose of this article is to comprehensively survey the research on excavated Confucian texts from the past 30 years. In terms of methodology, Li Xueqin's 李學勤 idea of "leaving behind the period of doubting antiquity" (*zou-chu yigu shidai* 走出疑古時代) has been highly influential and is closely related to excavated texts. Therefore, this article will also briefly introduce Li's theory and the debates surrounding it.

Newly Excavated Warring States Confucian Bamboo Texts and Related Research

Since 1993 a large number of bamboo slip manuscripts have been excavated in the ancient territory of Chu 楚, including many Confucian texts. At present, there is no lack of research on manuscripts from the Guodian, Shangbo, or Tsinghua collections, and research is just getting underway on the collection from Anda. The following paragraphs will provide a brief overview of the research on each collection in the chronological order of their discovery:

1. Guodian Bamboo Slips

In October 1993 a cache of excavated texts was discovered in Tomb No. 1 at the Guodian archaeological site in Jingmen city in Hubei province. The excavators think that this tomb is from the later period of the middle era of the Warring States, approximately 300 BCE. There was a total of 804 slips in the Guodian cache, of which 730 had writing, with more than 13,000 characters being represented in the texts. The cache contained 16 books: other than the *Laozi*, *Taiyi sheng shui*, and *Yucong si* 語叢四, there were the thirteen Confucian texts of the *Zun deyi* 尊德義, *Liude*, *Chengzhi wenzhi* 成之聞之, *Xing zi ming chu*, *Wuxing* 五行, *Ziyi* 緇衣, *Lu-mugong wen zisi* 魯穆公問子思, *Qiongda yi shi* 窮達以時, *Tangyu zhi dao* 唐虞之道, *Zhongxin zhi dao* 忠信之道, *Yucong yi* 語叢一, *Yucong er* 語叢二, and *Yucong san* 語叢三. The discovery and publication (1998) of these texts had a great influence, and is one of the most important events in the worlds of international sinology, international Confucianism, and international Chinese philosophy.

The *Guodian chumu zhujian* 郭店楚墓竹簡 was published by Wenwu Chubanshe 文物出版社 in May 1998, and the appended annotations and commentaries were carried out by Peng Hao 彭浩, Liu Zuxin 劉祖信, and Wang Chuanfu 王傳富 while Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭 supervised the whole work. Improvements on this work were carried out by Li Ling 李零 (2002), Liu Zhao 劉釗 (2005), and Wuhan University

Bamboo and Silk Manuscript Research Center in conjunction with the Jingmen City Museum (2011), published under the titles *Guodian chujian jiaoduji* 郭店楚簡校讀記, *Guodian chujian jiaoshi* 郭店楚簡校釋, and *Guodian chumu zhushu* 郭店楚墓竹書, respectively. The *Guodian chumu zhujian* was edited by Peng Hao and revised by Qiu Xigui, hence the quality of this arrangement and explanatory notes is quite high. Li's annotations make liberal use of common characters to make it easier for a wide audience to understand. Liu's recognition of the characters is very strict, and he also rearranged some of the bamboo slips while referencing a great deal of transmitted texts. The *Guodian chumu zhushu* collected the work of these other experts, collated their arrangements of the bamboo slips, annotations, and commentaries, thereby resulting in a markedly improved edition. It can be said that the *Guodian chumu zhushu* is the best version of the excavated texts with annotations and commentaries.

The Confucian texts that have attracted the most attention from these collections are the *Wuxing* and the *Xing zi ming chu*. The *Wuxing* is from the Mawangdui silk collection. Important work researching this text have been done by Pang Pu 龐樸, Wei Qipeng 魏啟鵬, Asano Yuichi 淺野裕一, Ikeda Tomohisa 池田知久, Yang Rur-bin 楊儒賓, and Chun-Chieh Huang 黃俊傑. Studies on the bamboo version of the *Wuxing* can be found in Pang Pu (2000), Liu Xinfang 劉信芳 (2000), Wei Qipeng 魏啟鵬 (2005), Chen Lai 陳來 (2009), and Chang Sen 常森 (2023). There is an abundance of research on the bamboo version of the *Wuxing*, and a general survey thereof can be found in Gou Dongfeng 茍東鋒 (2011). Advances made through research on the *Wuxing* include the following conclusions: the bamboo version of the text was written by Zi Si 子思 while the silk version of the text was written either by Mengzi 孟子 in his later years or else by his disciples; the notion of *chengde* 成德 (consummating virtue) is a central theme and the question of how to consummate virtue (the problem of the theory of cultivation) is one of the text's main focuses; the ancient Chinese philosophical concept of *shendu* 慎獨 (being morally circumspect) should be understood in accordance with the theory set out in the *Wuxing*. The question of the concept of *shendu* is very important and Liang Tao 梁濤 has compiled a collection on just this topic. Recently, according to the Anda collection's *Zhongni yue* 仲尼曰, we can infer that *shendu* was originally a topic for Kongzi himself and that Zi Si and Zengzi 曾子 did no more than transmit and expand on the idea.

After the publication of the *Xing zi ming chu*, scholars quickly affirmed its connection to the *Zhongyong* 中庸 and to Zi You 子游. The bamboo version's concepts of *tian* 天, *ming* 命, *xing* 性, *qing* 情, *xin* 心, *dao* 道, and *jiao* 教 are reflected in the opening passage of the *Zhongyong*. The *Xing zi ming chu* gives special attention to the concept of *qing*, the way of ritual and music, and the problem of self-cultivation, and it is possible that it was written by Zi You, a disciple of Confucius.

The consensus on this was achieved relatively quickly after the publication of the *Xing zi ming chu*. There are many studies on this text, including: Pang Pu, Tang Yijie 湯一介, Du Weiming 杜維明, Li Zehou 李澤厚, Meng Peiyuan 蒙培元, Chen Lai, Guo Qiyong 郭齊勇, Chen Wei 陳偉, Liao Mingchun 廖名春, and Li Jinglin 李景林, to name just a few prominent ones. Through comparison we know that the Shangbo's *Xingqinglun* 性情論 is an earlier manuscript version of the text. Because the *Xing zi ming chu* does not have the line beginning with *xi si dao* 喜斯愁, the argument that the bamboo version was authored by Zi You loses its evidence. Books on the *Xing zi ming chu* include Li Tianhong's 李天虹 (2002) *Guodian zhujian* xing zi ming chu 郭店竹簡性自命出, and Chen Linqing's 陳霖慶 (2002) *Guodian xing zi ming chu ji shangbo xingqinglun zonghe yanjiu* 郭店性自命出暨上博性情論綜合研究. In addition, there is the *Guodian chujian yanjiu* 郭店楚簡研究, supervised by the Japanese scholar Ikeda Tomohisa (1999-2006).

There is likewise an abundance of research on Confucian thought in the Guodian collection of manuscripts. Other than Ding Sixin's 丁四新 (2000) *Guodian chumu zhujian sixiang yanjiu* 郭店楚墓竹簡思想研究, there is also Guo Yi's 郭沂 (2001) *Guodian zhujian yu xianqin xueshu sixiang* 郭店竹簡與先秦學術思想, Wang Bo's 王博 (2001) *Jianbo sixiang wenxian lunji* 簡帛思想文獻論集, Lee Seungyul's 李承律 (2001) *Kakuten sobo chikuken no jyuka shisō kenkyu* 郭店楚墓竹簡の儒家思想研究, Liang Tao's 梁濤 (2008) *Guodian zhujian yu simeng xuepai* 郭店竹簡與思孟學派, Xie Junzhi's 謝君直 (2008) *Guodian chujian rujia zhexue yanjiu* 郭店楚簡儒家哲學研究, and Dirk Meyer's (2011) *Philosophy on Bamboo: Text and the Production of Meaning in Early China*. Essay collections focused on this text include the *Guodian chujianguoji xueshu yantaohui* 郭店楚簡國際學術研討會 (2000) and *Guodian chujian yanjiu* 郭店楚簡研究 (1999), *Guodian chujian rujiao yanjiu* 郭店楚簡儒教研究 (2003), etc.

Regarding recent trends in research on the Confucian texts from Guodian, scholars have tried to think about the four texts *Zun deyi*, *Liude*, *Chengzhi wenzhi*, and the *Xing zi ming chu* together on the basis of similarities in the production of the bamboo slips they are written on, and hints that they belong to the same physical book. Shan Yuchen 單育辰's (2015) article "Guodian *zun deyi chengzhi wenzhi liude sanpian zhengli yu yanjiu* 郭店尊德義成之聞之六德三篇整理與研究" mostly researches textual problems of the three texts mentioned in its title. We think that it is very possible that these three texts were written by Kongzi and that the *Xing zi ming chu* either came from Kongzi or his disciples, and even if it is the latter, then they nonetheless give expression to Kongzi's thought. If this point is accurate, then this will greatly affect our current understanding of Kongzi.

2. Shangbo Bamboo Manuscripts

In May and November of 1994 the Shanghai Museum (referred to as Shangbo herein) acquired two caches of Chu bamboo slips from a seller in Hong Kong that appeared on the market in spring of that year. According to the editors, these bamboo materials are from the same tomb and belong to the same collection of manuscripts. Ma Chengyuan 馬承源 even thought it is possible they came from the Guodian tombs. The bamboo slips were determined to be from the same time period as the Guodian tombs through scientific dating. The bamboo slips were interred prior to 278 BCE, the year when Bai Qi 白起 invaded the capital city of Chu, and thus they are from a similar period to the Guodian slips. There are a total of 1,700 slips with over 80 different kinds of texts, including more than 20 that are titled. Between 2001 and 2012, the *Shanghai bowuguancang zhanguo chuzhushu* 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書 was published in nine volumes by the Shanghai Guji Chubanshe 上海古籍出版社. The texts from the Shangbo collection mostly contained Confucian and Daoist texts, including such Confucian texts as *Kongzi shilun* 孔子詩論, *Ziyi*, and *Xingqinglun* published in the first volume; *Min zhi fumu* 民之父母, *Zi gao* 子羔, *Lu bang dahan* 魯邦大旱, *Congzheng* 從政, *Xizhe junlao* 昔者君老, and *Rongchengshi* 容成氏 published in the second volume; *Zhouyi* and *Zhong Gong* 仲弓 published in the third volume; *Caifeng qumu* 采風曲目, *Yishi* 逸詩, *Neili* 內禮, and *Xiangbang zhi dao* 相邦之道 published in the fourth volume; *Ji kangzi wen yu kongzi* 季康子問於孔子, *Junzi wei li* 君子為禮, and *Dizi wen* 弟子問 published in the fifth volume; *Kongzi jian ji huanzi* 孔子見季桓子, and *Tianzi jianzhou* 天子建州 published in the sixth volume; *Wuwang jianzuo* 武王踐阼 and *Junrenzhe hebi ran zai* 君人者何必然哉 published in the seventh volume; *Zidao e* 子道餓, *Yan yuan wen yu kongzi* 顏淵問於孔子, and *Chengwang ji bang* 成王既邦 in the eighth volume; and *Juzhi wang tianxia* 舉治王天下 and *Shiliu wen yu fuzi* 史蒥問於夫子 in the ninth volume. The *Ziyi* and *Xingqinglun* are also seen in the Guodian corpus where the latter text correlates to its *Xing zi ming chu*. The work of organizing and annotating the materials was done by Ma Chengyuan, Chen Peifen 陳佩芬, Pu Maozuo 濮茅左, Li Chaoyuan 李朝遠, Zhang Guangyu 張光裕, Li Ling, and Cao Jinyan 曹錦炎. Because this work was undertaken on individual bases and there was a lack of internal discussion, the arrangement of and annotations to the Shangbo materials are widely divergent.

The trend in research on the Shangbo collection mostly takes the form of work notes and essays published after the publication of each volume by those involved. These essays were first published on websites such as the "Fudan University Center for Excavated Texts and Ancient Philology" 復旦大學出土文獻與古文字研究中心

run by Fudan University (http://www.fdgwz.org.cn/) and "Bamboo and Silk Manuscript" run by Wuhan University (http://m.bsm.org.cn/). The same essays were later published after some improvements in such journals as *Jianbo* 簡帛, *Jianbo yanjiu* 簡帛研究, *Chutu wenxian* 出土文獻, and *Chutu wenxian yu guwenzi yanjiu* 出土文獻與古文字研究. It needs to be pointed out that the interest of scholars shifted due to the publication of the Tsinghua manuscripts in 2011, so there is a lack of research on the eighth and ninth volumes of the Shangbo collection.

Many scholars have researched the Shangbo materials. Other than Ding Sixin 丁四新, these include Sarah Allan, Cao Feng 曹峰, Chang Sen, Chao Fulin 晁福林, Chen Jian 陳劍, Chen Sipeng 陳斯鵬, Chen Wei 陳偉, Fukuda Testuyuki 福田哲之, Scott Cook, Taninaka Shinichi 谷中信一, He Linyi 何琳儀, Hou Naifeng 侯乃峰, Huang Dekuan 黃德寬, Huang Rener 黃人二, Ji Xusheng 季旭昇, Li Rui 李銳, Li Xueqin, Liao Mingchun, Lin Suqing 林素清, Liu Xinfang, Pang Pu, Asano Yuichi, Qiu Xigui, Shan Yuchen, Shen Pei 沈培, Yuasa Nikuhuri 湯淺邦弘, Wang Zhongjiang 王中江, Xu Shaohua 徐少華, Yang Hua 楊華, Zhao Ping'an 趙平安, Zhou Fengwu 周鳳五 and many more. Important books on the Confucian texts from the Shangbo collection include *Shanghai bowuguancang chuzhushu yanjiu* 上海博物館藏楚竹書研究 (Zhu Yuanqing 朱淵清 and Liao Mingchun 廖名春, 2002) , *Shanghai bowuguancang zhanguo chuzhushu duben* 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書讀本 (Ji Xusheng, 2002-2017) , *Shanhaihaku soken no kenkyū* 上海博楚簡の研究 (Ikeda Tomohisa, 2007-2012) , *Shangbo chujian ruxue wenxian jiaoli* 上博楚簡儒學文獻校理 (Hou Naifeng, 2018) , *Shangbo chuzhushu zhexue wenxian yanjiu* 上博楚竹書哲學文獻研究 (Ding Sixin, 2022), to just name a few. In addition, the graduate student conference held by the Fudan University Center for Excavated Texts and Ancient Philology should also be given attention. At present, the research into the Shangbo bamboo collection (including Confucian texts) has for the most part been completed and the arrangement of the slips along with their annotation and commentary have been elevated to a high level. Not only is this the case, but scholars' research into this collection has also been fairly penetrating.

Among the Confucian texts belonging to the Shangbo collection, the *Kongzi shilun* and the *Zhouyi* have been given the most attention, and thus the related research is quite abundant. Searching for "*kongzi shilun*" as a keyword on cnki.net returns a total of 194 items. Books focusing on this text include Liu Xinfang's (2003) *Kongzi shilun shuxue* 孔子詩論述學, Zheng Yushan's 鄭玉姍 (2008) Kongzi shilun *yanjiu* 孔子詩論研究, Cao Jianguo's 曹建國 (2010) *Chujian yu xianqin* shi *xue yanjiu* 楚簡與先秦詩學研究, Chao Fulin's (2013) *Shangbojian* shilun *yanjiu* 上博簡詩論研究, and Chang Sen's (2023) *Chutu wenxian* shilun wuxing *yu xianqin xueshu sixiangshi de chonggou* 出土文獻詩論五行與先秦學術思想史的重構. Books on the

Shangbo collection's *Zhouyi* include He Linyi's (2007) *Shanghai bowuguancang chu-zhushu* zhouyi 上海博物館藏楚竹書周易, Chen Renren's 陳仁仁 (2010) *Zhanguo chuzhushu zhouyi yanjiu* 戰國楚竹書周易研究, and Ding Sixin's 丁四新 (2011) *Chuzhushu yu hanboshu zhouyi yanjiu* 楚竹書與漢帛書周易研究.

There are many texts in the Shangbo collection that are also seen in the trans-mitted versions of the *Liji*. Therefore, according to this, many scholars have de-termined that much of the material in the *Liji* was written during the period be-ginning toward the end of the Spring and Autumn Period and ending near the middle of the Warring States Period. Furthermore, much of the Confucian texts in the Shangbo collection focus on politics and take Kongzi as their central nar-rative figure. Ding's (2022) *Shangbo chuzhushu zhexue wenxian yanjiu* 上博楚竹書 哲學文獻研究 has a chapter for each relevant text.

3. Tsinghua Slips

In July 2008, Tsinghua University purchased a cache of Warring States bamboo slips from Hong Kong that had already appeared on the market there in the winter of 2006. It is suspected that they were from somewhere in Hubei province associat-ed with Chu culture. These slips were written with Chu script, and there were a to-tal of 2,388 pieces (including broken slips). After completion of the rearrangement work, the editors estimated that there were originally a total of 1,700–1,800 slips constituting around 70 books. The date of these slips was determined to be from the year 305±30 years through AMS carbon dating. (Research and Conservation Center for Unearthed Texts 2010, 3–4) This means that they are from the latter part of the middle Warring States Period and of the same time as the Guodian manu-scripts. One point where the Tsinghua slips differ from the Guodian and Shangbo slips is that the former contains more manuscript copies of classical and historical texts. There are 12 volumes of the *Qinghua daxuecang zhanguo zhujian* 清華大學藏 戰國竹簡 and there are about four or five volumes of material yet to be published. Scholars who have participated in the work of organizing, arranging, and editing the slips include: Li Xueqin, Huang Dekuan 黃德寬, Zhao Ping'an, Li Shoukui 李守 奎, Liu Guozhong 劉國忠, Shen Jianhua 沈建華, Li Junming 李均明, Shi Xiaoli 石小力, Cheng Hao 程浩, Ma Nan 馬楠, and Jia Lianxiang 賈連翔. On the whole, the arrangement and annotation of the Tsinghua slips is of a high quality.

Confucian texts in the Tsinghua bamboo collection include: *Yinzhi* 尹至, *Yin'gao* 尹誥, *Chengwu* 程寤, *Baoxun* 保訓, *Shiye* 耆夜, *Zhou wuwang youji zhou gong suoziyi dai wang zhi zhi* 周武王有疾周公所自以代王之志, *Huangmen* 皇門, and *Jigong zhi guming* 祭公之顧命 published in the first volume (2010); *Shuoming*

shang 說命上, *Shuoming zhong* 說命中, *Shuoming xia* 說命下, *Zhougong zhi qinwu* 周公之琴舞, and *Ruiliang fu bi* 芮良夫毖 published in the third volume (2012); *Houfu* 厚父, *Fengxu zhi ming* 封許之命, *Mingxun* 命訓, and *Yin gaozong wenyu sanshou* 殷高宗問於三壽 published in the fifth volume (2015); *Sheming* 攝命, *Bangjia zhi zheng* 邦家之政, *Bangjia chuwei* 邦家處位, *Zhibang zhi dao* 治邦之道, *Xin shi wei zhong* 心是謂中, and *Tianxia zhi dao* 天下之道 published in the eighth volume (2018); *Zhizheng zhi dao* 治政之道, *Chengren* 成人, *Naiming yi* 廼命一, and *Naiming er* 廼命二 published in the ninth volume (2019); and *Sigao* 四告 published in the tenth volume (2020). Among these, the *Yin'gao* of the first volume is referred to as *Xianyou yide* 咸有一德 in the preface of the *Shiji* 史記 "Yinbenji 殷本紀" chapter and it is also contained in the *Guwen shangshu* found in the walls of Kongzi's old home. However, there are significant differences between the *Yin'gao* and Mei Ze's 梅賾 (a ca. 4th century CE scholar) *Guwen shangshu* "Xianyou yide", showing that the latter is a fabricated text. The *Chengwu* is the same as the chapter of the same name in the *Yizhoushu* that was lost in transmission very early on in history, but which can now be supplemented with the bamboo manuscripts. "*Zhou wuwang youji zhou gong suoziyi dai wang zhi zhi*" is the name written on the bamboo slips themselves, but the text thereof is referred to as *Jinteng* 金滕 in the *Shangshu*. The *Huangmen* is also in the *Yizhoushu* under the same title. "*Jigong zhi guming*" is the name on the bamboo slip and is referred to in both the Guodian and Shangbo versions of the *Ziyi* when it quotes from the *Shangshu* while the *Yizhoushu* refers to it as *Jigong* 祭公. The three chapters of the *Shuoming* in volume three are given the title *Fushuo zhi ming* 傅說之命 on the slips themselves but the editors have changed the title in accordance with the preface of the *Shiji*. Mei Ze's version of the *Shuoming* diverges greatly from the Tsinghua manuscript, proving again that the former is a forgery. The first of the nine songs in the *Zhougong zhi qinwu* is the same as the "Jingzhi" chapter in the *Shijing*. The *Zhibang zhi dao* in the eighth volume and the *Zhizheng zhi dao* in the ninth volume are actually the same text — a point made clear by the editors in the ninth volume.

In drawing conclusions from the above Confucian texts, those that belong to the *Shujing* include *Yinzhi, Yin'gao, Chengwu, Baoxun, Shiye, Zhou wuwang youji zhougong suoziyi dai wang zhi zhi, Huangmen, Jigong zhi guming, Shuoming, Houfu, Fengxu zhi ming, Mingxun, Sheming, Chengren,* and *Sigao*; those that belong to the *Shijing* include *Zhougong zhi qinwu* and *Ruiliang fubi*; the remaining texts belong to those of the "masters tradition". In addition, the *Shifa* 筮法 and *Biegua* 別卦 in the fourth volume belong to divinatory *Yijing* texts, but have nevertheless provided important insights for solving problems related to the "numbers" of the hexagrams. Again, it is clear that the content of the Confucian texts in the Tsinghua collection focuses on governance.

The Tsinghua manuscripts have drawn much scholarly attention and related research has been quite penetrating. This research was first undertaken mostly by scholars affiliated with Tsinghua University and published in such journals as *Wenwu* 文物 and *Chutu wenxian* as introductory and research articles, and then other scholars followed with their own research on the basis of these publications. The graduate student reading group of the Fudan University Centre for Excavated Texts and Ancient Philology is worthy of note with regard to increasing the quality of the arrangement of bamboo slips and annotations. The classical texts in the Tsinghua collection have been researched by no small number of scholars, for example: Li Xueqin's *Chushi qinghuajian* 初識清華簡 (2013) and *Qinghuajian ji gudai wenming* 清華簡及古代文明 (2017), Feng Shengjun's 馮勝君 (2021) *Qinghuajian* shangshu *lei wenxian jianshi* 清華簡尚書類文獻箋釋, Liu Guangsheng's 劉光勝 (2022) *Qinghuajian yu zhongguo zaoqi wenming yanjiu* 清華簡與中國早期文明研究, Xu Wenxian's 許文獻 (2021) *Qinghuajian yiyin wupian yanjiu* 清華簡伊尹五篇研究, and the *Qinghuajian yanjiu* 清華簡研究(2019) published by the Tsinghua University Research and Conservation Center for Unearthed Texts. In addition, there are a few books that deal with historical problems based on the texts related to the *Shujing* in the Tsinghua collection that We will not go over here. However, other than the *Baoxun*, *Houfu*, and *Xin shi wei zhong*, there is not enough research on the other Confucian materials in the collection.

4. Anda, Xiajiatai, and Wangjiazui Collections

The Anda manuscripts were purchased from Hong Kong in 2015 and are held by Anhui University. According to carbon dating, the slips date from approximately 2,280 years ago (with 1,950 years ago as the standard date) and according to relevant chemical analyses it was determined that they are from the early-middle period of the Warring States (see the preface in the *Anhui daxuecang zhanguo zhujian* vol. 1). This means that they are older than the Guodian, Shangbo, and Tsinghua collections. There are total of 1,167 slips in the collection, including the *Shijing* in 97 slips, texts related to the history of Chu in more than 300 slips, nine groups of texts related to the study of the masters, and two groups related to the Chuci 楚辭 (*Elegies of Chu*). In addition, this collection also contains some materials related to physiognomy and dream divination. At present, two volumes have been published. The first volume published in 2019 includes the *Shijing* and the second volume published in 2022 contains *Zhongni yue* and *Caomo zhi chen* 曹沫之陳. The bamboo versions of the *Shijing* and *Zhongni yue* are Confucian texts. The *Shijing* is consistent with the "Guofeng" section of the transmitted text in a

total of 57 chapters, but their arrangement differs from the *Maoshi* 毛詩 ordering. There are 13 slips to the *Zhongni yue* and this text was originally lacking a title. The content of this text is highly important to confirming information regarding the thought of Kongzi. For example, we can know that the idea of "moral circumspection" (*shendu* 慎獨) was originally Kongzi's idea, and that the *Zhongyong* and *Daxue* 大學 in the *Liji* were developments thereof.

According to reports, between August of 2014 and August of 2015, the Jingzhou Museum undertook emergency excavations of Warring States tombs at Liujiatai 劉家台 and Xiajiatai 夏家台 wherein they discovered more than 400 bamboo slips in Tomb No. 106 containing content from the *Shijing* (14 chapters), the *Shangshu*, and the *Rishu* 日書. Both the bamboo *Shijing* and *Shangshu* are Confucian classics, where the chapter "Lüxing 呂刑" from the latter is especially important. At present, these bamboo slips have yet to be published.

In June of 2021, the Jingzhou Museum discovered 3,200 bamboo fragments at Tomb No. 798 at Wangjiazui, and these are estimated to constitute a total of 800 complete slips. This collection includes the *Shijing*, *Kongzi yue* 孔子曰 and several pieces of music taking up approximately 160 slips. The tomb that these bamboo fragments were found in is from the early part of the later period of the Warring States (Jingzhou 2023, 5–14). Even though the Wangjaizui materials have yet to be edited and published, two articles on the *Shijing* and *Kongzi yue* have already been published. The *Shijing* in more than 300 slips is the largest collection related to that text to date, representing a complete Warring States version, the content of which comes from the "Guofeng" section, where each chapter is titled (Jiang and Xiao 2023, 30–42). According to the editors, the *Kongzi yue* discovered at Wangjiazui will be very useful in resolving problems related to the formation of the *Lunyu* 論語 and has certain connections with Han Dynasty versions of that text, while diverging from the structure of the current version of the *Lunyu* that we have today, and thus it cannot be seen as the same book (Zhao 2023, 43–48).

Newly Excavated Qin-Han Confucian Texts and Related Research

Since 1972, many silk and bamboo manuscripts have been excavated, including many Confucian texts: a Han bamboo copy of the *Yanzi* 晏子was found at Yinqueshan in 1972; Han bamboo copies of the *Lunyu*, *Aigong wen wuyi* 哀公問五義, *Baofu zhuan* 保傅傳 and *Rujiazhe yan* 儒家者言 were found at Bajiaolang in 1973; silk copies of the *Zhouyi*, *Sangfu tu* 喪服圖, *Wuxing*, *Desheng* 德聖, *Mingjun* 明君 were found at Mawangdui in 1977; and Han bamboo copies of the *Zhouyi*, *Shijing*, and *Rujiazhe yan* were found at Shuanggudui in 1977. All of these are Confucian

texts, but they do not belong to the range of texts meant by the phrase "newly excavated silk and bamboo texts" in this article. The *Changsha mawangdui Hanmu jianbo jicheng* 長沙馬王堆漢墓簡帛集成 compiled and edited by the Hunan Museum and Fudan University Center for Excavated Texts and Ancient Philology published in 2014 includes many newly excavated bamboo manuscripts. Among the manuscripts, are those of a Confucian nature such as the Haihunhou Liu He Han tomb manuscripts and the Peking University Western Han bamboo manuscripts.

1. Haihun Han Texts

The Haihunhou Liu He tomb is situated north of Nanchang in Jiangxi province. Liu He 劉賀 (92–59 BCE) was Han Feidi 漢廢帝 and the grandson of Liu Che 劉徹 or Han Wudi 漢武帝 (156–87 BCE). Liu He's tomb produced a large number of Confucian manuscripts.

In July of 2017, the Jiangxi Cultural Artifacts Archaeological Institute discovered over 5,200 bamboo slips and 109 wooden stakes in Liu He's coffin room. Most of the bamboo slips belong to ancient texts, with over 500 being related to the political and ritual affairs of the kingdom of Changyi and fiefdom of Haihun. Included among the over 80 documents were both books and official documents. The wooden stakes contained notations on funerary goods such as clothing and other objects along with their quantity (Zhu 2020, 60–61). The Confucian texts excavated from the tomb of Liu He were mostly on the six arts. We can provide the following summary analysis based on the *Haihunhoumu chutu jiandu gaishu* 海昏侯墓出土簡牘概述 (ibid., 60-71):

1. *Shijing*. There are over 1,200 slips belonging to the *Shijing* and the titles and text of the poems were recorded on the slips with such phrases as "305 chapters of poems", "30 chapters xof *song* poems", "31 chapters of the *daya* poems", and "60 chapters of *feng* poems". The character for "chapter" (*pian* 篇) is written throughout without the radical (i.e. as *bian* 扁). According to calculations, there are 74 chapters in the Haihun version of the "Xiaoya 小雅" section. These are all consistent with the transmitted Mao version of the *Shijing*, with the only difference being that the bamboo version has 1,076 passages while the transmitted version has 1,142. The editors of the collection think that the Haihun *Shijing* might represent "the form of the Lu *Shijing* from the Han dynasty".

2. *Liji*. There are around 300 slips relating to the *Liji* but many of them are damaged in one way or another. They can be categorized into four groups according to the form, script, and content of the bamboo slips. The first group has content seen in the transmitted version of the *Liji's* "Quli shang 曲禮上"

and "Quli xia 曲禮下" resembling almost 30 passages. The second group has content seen in the *Liji's* "Jiyi 祭義" and "Sangfu sizhi 喪服四制", but there is a rather large discrepancy between them. The third group has content seen in the transmitted *Dadai liji's* 大戴禮記 "Baofu保傅". The fourth group has content seen in the *Liji's* "Zhongyong中庸", "Jiyi祭義", and the "Gong Mingyi listens to Zengzi discuss filiality" passage in the Dadai *liji's* "Zengzi daxiao 曾子大孝". At the time of excavation this material was mixed up with that belonging to the *Lunyu*.

3. Temple ceremony texts. There are over 100 slips about temple ceremonies involving prayers to the spirits and for blessings. These texts are records of Liu He's ceremonial activities during his time as king of Changyi.

4. *Lunyu*. There are over 500 slips belonging to the *Lunyu* containing approximately a third of the transmitted version of the *Lunyu* extant today. The titles of each chapter are written on the back of the bamboo slips, and those of "Yongye 雍也", "Zilu 子路", "Yao 堯", and "Zhidao 智道" have been identified. Much of the content belongs to the chapters "Gongye zhang 公冶長", "Yongye", "Xianjin 先進", and "Zilu", but nothing from the "Xiangdang 鄉黨", "Weizi 微子", or "Zizhang 子張" chapters has been found. The Haihun bamboo version of the *Lunyu* belongs to the so-called Qi *Lunyu*. It can be pointed out here that the version of the *Lunyu* found at Bajiaolang八角廊 belongs to the Lu version of the text.

5. *Chunqiu* 春秋. There are over 200 slips belonging to the *Chunqiu*, but much of the written characters are unidentifiable and only 40 or so have been deciphered, which all belong to sections on the reign of Xi Gong 僖公. While some of the bamboo version's content can be seen in all three transmitted versions of the *Chunqiu*, most of the content is found in the *Gongyangzhuan* 公羊傳. That being said, there are some differences between the excavated and transmitted versions.

6. *Xiaojing* 孝經. There are over 600 slips relating to the *Xiaojing* which mostly deal with explaining and interpreting the idea of *xiao* 孝 (filiality). The bamboo texts repeatedly refer to and directly quote from the *Xiaojing*, and some lines and passages are the same as or related to the *Rujiazhe yan* from Bajiaolang and the Han bamboo *Xiaojing* from Jianshuijinguan 肩水金關.

7. Political texts. There are over 50 slips related to politics that focus on governing through humanity and rightness (*renyi* 仁義). These are similar in nature to the kinds of Confucians discussed in the "Yiwenzhi" chapter of the *Hanshu*. In addition, there are many slips that begin with "The *Chunqiu* says …"

8.   Divinatory texts. There are more than 180 slips belonging to the *Yizhan* 易占 that have been preserved quite well. These bamboo slips are not direct copies of lines or passages from the *Yijing*, but instead use it to undertake divination for everyday purposes of determining auspiciousness and inauspiciousness, and therefore are of a divinatory nature. Even though the Haihunhou *Yizhan* does not belong to the corpus of Confucian classics and commentaries, it nevertheless helps us solve problems related to the study of the *Yijing*.

At present, the Haihun bamboo materials have yet to be edited and published, but there have been a few attempts to provide an account thereof. Among them, the *Haihun jiandu chulun* 海昏簡牘初論, published in 2020, is worthy of attention as it is a relatively comprehensive introduction and summary of the collection. This book has three parts in 20 chapters. Of the four chapters in the first part, the central one is "Haihunhou liu he mu de kaogu fajue yu chutu jiandu zongshu 海昏侯劉賀墓的考古發掘與出土簡牘綜述"; of the 12 chapters in the second part, the central one is "Haihun zhushu chulun 海昏竹書初論"; of the four chapters in the third part, the central one is "Haihun mudu yu kongzi yijing chulun 海昏木牘與孔子衣鏡初論". Each of the twelve chapters in the second part has to do with a Confucian text: "Haihun zhushu *shi* chudu 海昏竹書詩初讀" by Zhu Fenghan 朱鳳瀚 (2020, Ch. 5); "Haihun zhushu *baofu* chutan 海昏竹書保傅初探" by Han Wei 韓巍 (2020, Ch. 6); "Haihun zhushu 'yi' lei wenxian chulun 海昏竹書"儀"類文獻初論" by Tian Tian 田天 (2020, Ch. 7); "Haihun zhushu *chunqiu* chudu 海昏竹書春秋初讀" by Chen Suzhen 陳蘇鎮 (2020, Ch. 8); "Haihun zhushu *lunyu* chulun 海昏竹書論語初論" by Chen Kanli 陳侃理 (2020, Ch. 9); Haihun zhushu *xiaojing* shuojie jian chulun 海昏竹書孝經說解簡初論" by He Jin 何晉 (2020, Ch. 10); and "Haihun zhushu *yizhan* chushi 海昏竹書易占初釋" by Li Ling (2020, Ch. 13). These chapters all aim to provide initial explanations and interpretations of these various Confucian texts.

2. PKU Slips

In 2009 Peking University was gifted a collection of Han bamboo slips from someone who had purchased them in Hong Kong. According to the editors of this collection, this cache of bamboo texts was written sometime after the reign of Emperor Wudi 漢武帝. There are a total of 3,346 pieces and approximately 1,600 complete slips with an estimated total of 2,300 complete slips. All of the texts from this collection are classical books, numbering 20 or so, and the texts with a Confucian nature have been published as the *Rujiashuo cong* 儒家說叢.

The *Rujiashuo cong*, edited by Zhu Fenghan 朱鳳瀚 and Chen Kanli 陳侃理, was included in the third volume of the *Beijing daxuecang xihan zhushu* 北京大學藏西漢竹書 (2015). This text is constituted of a total of 11 pieces and after being put together they made a total of nine slips. In its current form, it can be divided into three parts whose content corresponds to that of transmitted texts, such as the *Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋, *Shuoyuan* 說苑, *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳, *Kongzi jiayu* 孔子家語 and others.

Other than this, the *Guizang* 歸藏 from the Wangjiatai Qin bamboo collection is related to the study of the *Yijing* and is worth highlighting. In March of 1993, archaeologists working at Tomb No. 15 at Wangjiatai discovered the bamboo *Guizang* version of the *Yjing*. According to Wang Mingqin's 王明欽 summarization, this bamboo text has over 4,000 characters with over 70 hexagram images (excluding those that are repeated, there is a total of 54). The trigrams use ▬ for *yang* lines and ⌄ for *yin* lines (whereas the transmitted version uses a solid—line for *yang* and a broken - - line for *yin*). There are 76 hexagram names and excluding those that are repeated leaves a total of 53. (Wang 2004, 29–39) The *Guizang* has yet to be officially published, but individual scholars have undertaken some discussions based on Wang Mingqin's work.

Conclusion

We are living through a new era of discoveries of pre-Qin and imperial Qin and Han silk and bamboo texts, which started with the Guodian excavations of 1993. The excavated Confucian texts discovered since 1993 can be summarized in the following few points:

1. Texts related to the *Shijing*. This category of texts, other than the bamboo manuscripts discovered at Fuyang 阜陽, mostly come from the Anda, Xiajiatai, Wangjiazui, and Haihun collections. The first three belong to Chu manuscripts from the middle of the Warring States period and the latter is a Han dynasty manuscript from the middle of the Western Han dynasty. Among them, evidence for "lost odes" and "deleted odes" have been found in the Shangbo and Tsinghua collections. Even though the three Warring States versions of the *Shijing* have differences among themselves and with the transmitted version, they nonetheless show that the *Shijing* had more or less taken shape by the middle of the Warring States Period, and that the legend of Kongzi editing the *Shijing* and *Shujing* is reliable. The *Kongzi shilun* in the Shangbo collection directly showcases Kongzi's own ideas on the odes, including the interpretive principle that "odes reveal hidden aspirations, music reveals hidden emotions, and culture reveals hidden doctrines", as

well as explanations of various individual odes. In contrast with the discovery of the bamboo *Shijing*, the discovery of the *Kongzi shilun* is seemingly more important. It should be said that this is one of the most important theoretical texts for the field of *Shijing* classical studies, and it has become an important focus of academic research with many results.

2. Texts related to the *Shujing*. This category of texts is mostly from the Shangbo collection and not only includes several texts seen in the transmitted version of the *Shujing* and the *Yizhoushu*, but it also includes texts from the Western Han ancient text *Shangshu*. Scholars have reaffirmed that the *Yizhoushu* is a pre-Qin text based on evidence from the Tsinghua bamboo texts, and also that many of the chapters therein were written prior to the middle period of the Warring States Period. In addition, Mei Ze's *Guwen shangshu* has been proven to be a forgery. According to the *Shuoming*, Guanzhong 管仲, *Wuji* 五紀, and *Sanbuwei* 參不韋 in the Tsinghua collection, it can be inferred that the "Hongfan 洪範" chapter of the *Shangshu* was written even earlier than the Warring States Period. The *Shangshu* materials from the Tsinghua collection greatly enriched the thought from the Western Zhou and the Spring and Autumn Periods, and have garnered great attention from various scholars whose research has been related above.

3. Texts related to the *Liji*. This category of texts is seen in the Guodian and Shangbo collections. The discovery of the bamboo versions of the *Ziyi*, *Min zhi fumu*, *Neili*, *Wuwang jianzuo* and others has proven that the two transmitted versions of the Dai 戴 family *Liji* are most likely from the end of the Spring and Autumn to the middle of the Warring States Period. However, some of the specifics in these chapters regarding their characters and length differ between the Warring States and imperial versions. It is especially worth mentioning that the excavated *Zhongyong* from Liu He's tomb at Haihun has already drawn much scholarly attention.

4. Texts related to the *Yijing*. Other than those discovered at Mawangdui and Fuyang, this category of texts includes the "classic" in the Shangbo collection and the *Guizang* Qin bamboo version found at Wangjiatai. In addition, other texts related to the *Yijing* include the *Shifa* and the *Biegua* from the Tsinghua collection and the *Yizhan* from the tomb at Haihun. The Shangbo version of the *Yijing* proves that the *yao* lines were composed no later than the middle period of the Warring States and that the modern versions of the hexagrams was produced no later than this period as well. According to the *Shifa* and *Biegua*, we can arrive at a solution to the problem of the form and origin of the *yao* lines themselves: the hexagram images originate in divinatory numerology and were either determined by the numbers six and seven or seven and eight. Furthermore, according to the *Shifa* in the Tsinghua collection and the *Yizhan* from the Haihun collection,

the *najia* 納甲 and *nazhi* 納支 methods of divination were actually formulated quite early rather than being a late invention of Han dynasty Confucians. There are many articles and books on the excavated *Yijing* materials, and in addition to those mentioned above others include Xing Wen's 邢文 (1997) *Boshu zhouyi yanjiu* 帛書周易研究, Liu Dajun 劉大鈞's (2005) *Jin bo zhushu* zhouyi *zongkao* 今帛竹書周易綜考, Liao Mingchun's (2008) *Boshu* zhouyi *lunji* 帛書周易論集, Zhang Zhenglang's 張政烺 (2008) *Mawangdui boshu* zhouyi *jingzhuan jiaodu* 馬王堆帛書周易經傳校讀, Ding Sixin's (2017) *Zhouyi suyuan yu zaoqi yixue kaolun* 周易溯源与早期易學考論, Ikeda Tomohisa's (2022) *Mawangdui chutu wenxian yizhu congshu yi* 馬王堆出土文獻譯註叢書·易, and Edward Shaughnessy's *The Origin and Early Development of the Zhou Changes* (2022). These and many more texts are worth referencing.

4. Texts related to Kongzi. The types of texts in this category are found in the Guodian, Shangbo, Anda, and Wangjiazui collections. According to the latest investigations, the Guodian texts of the *Zun deyi*, *Liude*, and *Chengzhi wenzhi* were possibly written by Kongzi himself, while the *Xing zi ming chu* (and the *Xingqinglun*) were either written by Kongzi or his disciples. The *Kongzi shilun*, *Ziyi*, *Min zhi fumu*, *Zi gao*, *Ji kangzi wen yu kongzi*, *Kongzi jian ji huanzi*, *Zhong gong*, *Junzi wei li*, *dizi wen*, and *Yan yuan wen yu kongzi* all belong to this category, where the latter four belong to texts related to the *Lunyu*. The *Zhongni yue* in the Anda collection and the *Kongzi yue* in the Wangjiazui collection are thus written records of Kongzi's sayings. These various kinds of bamboo manuscripts are from the middle period of the Warring States. Previously, people often limited the study of Kongzi to the single text of the *Lunyu*, and some even went so far as to doubt whether this text was even reliable, so there was a serious lack of material resources to research the thought of Kongzi. However, the excavated items have greatly increased the materials available for studying the thought of Kongzi. Furthermore, the excavated texts have also influenced scholars' understanding of the phrase "*zi yue* 子曰" ("the Master said"), so that we have a clearer understanding of what materials are quotations and what materials are summarizations or have been imputed to the voice of Kongzi. It is now necessary to rewrite the history of Kongzi's ideas due to the new knowledge gained from these materials.

5. Finally, from an academic perspective, a great number of excavated Confucian texts deal with the fields of politics and ethics, but because there are so many we will not rehearse them here. It remains to be pointed out, though, that at present the academic studies of these political and ethical texts are far from sufficient, as there are few books with focussed treatments of these topics.

The excavated silk and bamboo texts considered in this paper have had a great influence on contemporary ideas about academic research. Among these, one particularly important idea is Li Xueqin's notion of "leaving behind the age of doubting antiquity". The excavated silk and bamboo texts are the basis upon which Li's idea was founded. Not only is this the case, but Li's "leaving behind the age of doubting antiquity" has led to a debate between those in Li's camp and those in the "doubting antiquity" camp. Those who adhere to Li's notion include Liao Mingchun, Guo Yi, Liang Tao, and Xie Weiyang 謝維揚, while those in the latter camp who have criticized Li Xueqin and defended Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 include Ikeda Tomohisa, Cao Feng, Nishiyama Hisashi 西山尚志, Yang Chunmei 楊春梅, and Chen Chun 陳淳. It should be said that Li's slogan of "leaving behind the age of doubting antiquity" embodies an important transition in the movement of Chinese classical studies. In terms of practice, modern Chinese-language research into excavated silk and bamboo texts has developed under this idea. Thanks to both sides of the debate this academic slogan has now spread far and wide, and has seemingly had a great influence on the minds of people all over the world.

Acknowledgements

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Reconstructing a Theory of Mind in the *Mengzi*

Kevin James TURNER

Abstract

This article reconstructs a theory of mind in the *Mengzi* 孟子. It argues that recent studies in favor of mind-body dualism import Cartesianism through the vocabulary their arguments are couched in. This article exposes this "Cartesian language game" in order to effect a gestalt shift in our understanding of Mengzian philosophy. It then appeals to John Dewey's conception of mind as both "minding" and "discourse" where mind is a function of attentive engagement predicated on a background of traditional values and meanings. This article then shows how the *Mengzi's* concepts of *ren* 仁 and *tian* 天 contribute to a theory of mind where the former is defined as *xin* 心 thus to be understood as "mindful engagement" and the latter implies tradition as shared reservoir of social and cultural meaning. Through the interpretive comparison of the philosophies of the *Mengzi* and Dewey, we can reconstruct a Mengzian theory of mind.

Keywords: *Mengzi* 孟子, *ren* 仁, *tian* 天, mind, John Dewey, dualism

Rekonstrukcija teorije uma v *Menciju*

Izvleček

Članek rekonstruira teorijo uma v *Menciju* 孟子. Zagovarja stališče, da nedavne raziskave, ki zagovarjajo dualizem uma in telesa, vnašajo kartezijanstvo s pomočjo besedišča, v katerem so izraženi njihovi argumenti. Ta članek razkriva to »kartezijansko jezikovno igro«, da bi dosegel geštaltni premik v našem razumevanju Mencijeve filozofije. Nato se sklicuje na pojmovanje uma kot »umevanja« in »diskurza« pri Johnu Deweyju, kjer je um v funkciji pozornega delovanja, temelječega na ozadju tradicionalnih vrednot in pomenov. Članek zatem pokaže, kako Mencijeva koncepta *ren* 仁 in *tian* 天 prispevata k teoriji uma, kjer je prvi opredeljen kot *xin* 心 in ga moramo torej razumeti kot »čuječe delovanje«, drugi pa pomeni tradicijo kot skupni zbiralnik družbenih in kulturnih pomenov. S pomočjo interpretativne primerjave filozofij Mencija in Deweyja lahko rekonstruiramo mencijansko teorijo uma.

Ključne besede: *Mencij* 孟子, *ren* 仁, *tian* 天, um, John Dewey, dualizem

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The question of mind in Chinese philosophy is an old one.[1] In 1932 I. A. Richards published *Mencius on the Mind* where he set out to explore "Chinese modes of meaning", the difficulties of cross-cultural translation, a clarification of the "methods of controlling our meaning", and to "present a Chinese view of psychology" (1932, xii). Richards consistently questioned the universal and absolute validity of our own ways of thinking going so far as offering the "uncomfortable suggestion" that the commonsense foundations of Western psychology might only be so "foundational" because we have talked about them being so for so long (ibid., 82). Herbert Fingarette, in his seminal *Confucius: The Sacred as Secular* published 40 years after Richards' book, put forth the thesis that "The metaphor of an inner psychic life, in all its ramifications so familiar to us, simply isn't present in the *Analects*, not even as a rejected possibility" (1972, 45). Following Fingarette, A. C. Graham states that the mind-body dichotomy of the Western tradition "never emerged in pre-Han philosophy" and that "Confucius is not a victim of the post-Cartesian superstition of mind as 'ghost in the machine'" (1989, 25–26). These three scholars are all keen on understanding Chinese philosophy within its own narrative context and, in arguing against Cartesian readings, desire to prevent the kinds of distortive interpretations that arise when foreign intellectual frameworks are uncritically employed.

However, these arguments have given rise to much debate in recent years. A slate of scholars has argued that while Cartesian dualism was absent, there did exist at least some kind of dualism. However, it seems to me that these arguments in favour of dualism are both misguided and undercut themselves at the same time.

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1   The Western word for "mind" did not enter into the Chinese language until at least the early 1800s and when it did, it was readily associated with *xin* 心. The 1819 *Dictionary of the Chinese Language* glosses *xin* as "*Intended to represent the human heart*. The heart; the affections; the mind; the intentions; the motive; the origin; the middle of a thing". The 1904 *Commercial Press English and Chinese Pronouncing Pocket Dictionary* and the 1908 *An English and Chinese Standard Dictionary* both include such Chinese terms as *xin*, *xinling* 心靈, and *xinshen* 心神 in their definitions of "mind". In today's Chinese, the term *xinling* has become the commonsense translation of the Western concept of "mind" as seen in the term *xinling zhexue* 心靈哲學—philosophy of mind. The association of the two characters *xin* and *ling* 靈 (i.e. nimble, agile, spiritual) goes all the way back to the *Zhuangzi*'s concepts of *lingfu* 靈府 and *lingtai* 靈台 ("spiritual storehouse" and "spiritual platform" respectively). Guo Xiang 郭象 (252–312 CE) comments on *lingtai* that it is "*xin*, clear and free-flowing, thus, there are no worries that can enter into it" (see Guo Qingfan 2016, 789) and the Tang dynasty commentator Cheng Xuanying 成玄英 (c. 7th century) says of *lingfu* that it "is the abode of the spirit (*jingshen* 精神), and this is what is called *xin*." (ibid., 219) In addition, Cheng uses the term *xinling* several times through his *Zhuangzi shu* 莊子疏 (*Commentary to the Zhuangzi*). Interestingly, the closely related concept of *jingshen* 精神 has also been used as a translation for "mind". Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 uses it as a translation for "mind" when he compares John Locke's analogy of mind as "white paper" (1997, 89) to Wang Yangming 王陽明's saying that "there is no thing outside *xin*" (*xinwai wuwu* 心外無物) (Zhang 2008, 368). Yet in modern Chinese, *jingshen* is almost universally understood to mean "spirit". All translations of first- and second-hand Chinese sources are my own unless otherwise stated.

They are misguided because they misunderstand their target and they undercut themselves because in proclaiming their disavowal of "Cartesian dualism" they nevertheless continue to "couch" their account of "Chinese dualism" in the vocabulary of the Cartesian tradition. Therefore, in attempting to answer the question of mind in the Chinese tradition it is necessary to critically reflect on the philosophical assumptions so familiar to us that we no longer see them before we can effectively begin reconstructing a theory of "mind" in Chinese philosophy.

This article represents such an attempt and focuses on the Confucian philosophy of the *Mengzi* 孟子. I first rehearse the criticisms against the arguments for a non-dualist understanding of the Chinese tradition to illustrate how such arguments fail on two points: misidentify their target's position and retain a Cartesian vocabulary. I then argue that a proper account of mind in the Chinese tradition requires an interpretive "gestalt shift" and that this shift requires critical reflection on our familiar philosophical assumptions. Therefore, I first expose the "Cartesian language game" and correlate philosophical assumptions before introducing John Dewey's account of mind as "minding" and as "discourse" to provide a possible alternative vocabulary for interpreting the *Mengzi*. Finally, I attempt to reconstruct a *Mengzian* theory of mind through an analysis of the concept of *xin* 心 in relation to its definition as *ren* 仁 (humanity, consummate conduct, love) and through the related concept of *tian* 天 (nature, society, culture, tradition). Through this hermeneutical project we can reconstruct a theory of mind in the *Mengzi* devoid of Cartesian connotations and "couched" in language that more accurately conveys its native significances.

Chinese Dualism and the "Cartesian Language Game"

The argument for the presence of mind-body dualism in Chinese philosophy can be represented by three influential scholars: Paul Goldin, Edward Slingerland, and Alexus McLeod. These three scholars all express a legitimate concern for properly understanding Chinese philosophy, but it is unfortunate that in their criticisms of those who argue against the presence of dualism in the Chinese philosophical narrative, their claims both misidentify the argument of those they criticize and undermine themselves at the same time because their desire to reinstate dualism brings Cartesianism in through the backdoor via the language they deploy. This is not to deny that there are common-sense dualisms in Chinese philosophy;[2] rather,

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2   There are all kinds of "dualisms" in Chinese philosophy, the most prominent of which is perhaps that of *yinyang* 陰陽. But we should not mistake this "dualism" as indicating a "strict dualism" whereby one has ontological priority over the other. Chinese "dualisms" in this sense are, rightly understood, "bipolarisms" or "biphasalisms".

it is to deny the imposition of a foreign "frame of reference" (Rošker 2021, 9–56) that is dependent on a notion of strict dualism.

First, Paul Goldin, in his article "A Mind-Body Problem in the *Zhuangzi*?", directly challenges what he says "has attained the status of a taboo", that is, "the suggestion of a mind-body dichotomy" in Chinese philosophy represented by such figures as Herbert Fingarette and A. C. Graham (2003, 232). While Goldin does recognize that the kind of Cartesian dualism popular in the Western tradition certainly was not an element of ancient Chinese thought (ibid., 233), he nevertheless insists that there was some kind of dualism. He characterizes two ways of conceptualizing "mind" in Chinese philosophy: materialist and immaterialist. Under the former he includes such texts as the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, and the *Mengzi* with their "thoroughgoing materialism" and under the latter Goldin includes such texts as the *Xunzi* 荀子 which he describes as "mentalist." Commenting on a passage where the *Xunzi* says "One might sit in a room and still see the Four Seas" (he quotes Knoblock's translation), Goldin says:

> When a philosopher declares that one might sit inside one's chamber and still "see" everything within the Four Seas, there cannot be much doubt that he conceives of a mind with an actively theatrical imagination, with entire worlds and fantasies parading before a disembodied mental "viewer". This is not a mind that is unfamiliar with … "inner mental states". (ibid., 235)

However, this interpretation of the *Xunzi* is not necessarily the most accurate. If we appeal to other pre-Qin texts in the Legalist and Huang-Lao traditions that the author(s) of the *Xunzi* were certainly aware of, we can see that to be able to "see everything within the Four Seas" can also refer to the idea that the political leader does nothing while his ministers and subordinates do everything: they bring news of the four seas to him (Wang 2018, 230–84). Therefore, there is no need to think of the author(s) of the *Xunzi* as imagining a kind of mental world only accessible to a "disembodied viewer". Goldin concludes by relating all of this to "folk psychology" and illustrates his final point with a story from the *Mozi* 墨子 about a medium possessed by a spirit who then kills someone through the medium's body while the mind of the medium is elsewhere. Goldin says this is a stark example of a literal "ghost in the machine" (ibid., 236).

From this we see that even though Goldin argues against the presence of Cartesian mind-body dualism in the ancient Chinese tradition, when talking about the kind of dualism he *does* think exists, he nevertheless provides a Cartesian picture because he makes use of the *language* of Cartesian mind-body dualism. That is, the whole talk of "materialism", "mentalist", "disembodied viewers", and "inner

mental states" are part and parcel of the Cartesian language game (see below) and, whatever merits his argument might have otherwise, such vocabulary undercuts his argument for a non-Cartesian dualism in the Chinese tradition.

Next, Edward Slingerland follows Goldin's (2008, 1–22) lead when he adopts the language of "myth" in his criticism of what he calls "strong mind-body holism" (Slingerland 2019, 11). "Strong mind-body holism", Slingerland tells us, is characterized by two claims in particular: "for the early Chinese there exists no qualitative distinction at all between anything we [i.e. Westerners] would call *mind* and the physical body or other organs of the body" (ibid., 40) and "the *xin* [i.e. heart or mind] is simply one organ in the body, not in any way qualitatively different from other organs" (ibid., 42). Slingerland's criticism, then, is that this "strong holism" is actually a radical reductionism, a reduction of mind to body. In contrast to this "strong holism", Slingerland introduces his own notion of "weak mind-body dualism": "Unlike strict Cartesianism, weak mind-body dualism involves the conception that mind and body are functionally and qualitatively distinct, although potentially overlapping at points" (ibid., 13). As with Goldin, whose language reveals the prejudices of his interpretive framework, Slingerland likewise employs a vocabulary of Western philosophy of mind. Particularly, he refers to the Chinese concept of *xin* 心 as "metaphysical" saying that "It is reasonable to describe the *xin* as *meta*physical, somehow free of the limitations of the physical world" (ibid., 101; italics in original) and that "It is possession of this metaphysical mind that is the key to our personal identity and individual moral responsibility, and it is also what makes human beings special among the 'ten thousand things'"[3] (ibid.). Even though he avows himself against Cartesianism, the dichotomy he sets up between the "metaphysical" and the "physical" brings it back into his analysis.

The final example is Alexus McLeod, whose insightful account of madness in the Chinese tradition goes off course due to the same methodological shortcomings seen above in Goldin and Slingerland. McLeod is right when he says that

> While early Chinese thinkers did maintain a mind-body distinction, their conceptions of the distinction do not map neatly onto familiar historical ways of making the distinction. We find nothing like the kind of substance dualism offered by Descartes in early Chinese texts, in which mind and body form two separate and incompatible categories of basic "stuff" in the world. (McLeod 2021, 35)

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3   Both Goldin and Slingerland share a methodological shortcoming in that neither seems to take seriously the implications of the *qi* cosmology of ancient Chinese thought (see Turner 2022, 1089–1108) and do not properly consider the Chinese understanding of ghosthood and embodiment (Lewis 2006, 59–60).

But he misses the point when he mistakes the thought of the actual Descartes for the Cartesian language game that he inspired (ibid., 36–37). It does not matter that René Descartes the man believed in a "mind-body unity" (ibid., 37) because the tradition which he inspired and *still informs much of our common sense today* maintains a form of dualism. Furthermore, McLeod accepts Slingerland's account of mind as having an "intrinsic 'otherness'" as distinct from the other organs of the body where it is taken as "immaterial, in control of the self, and the source of free will and moral responsibility" (ibid., 39). He oscillates back in the other direction, however, when he states that "To the extent that there are differences between them, mind and body are different formations of *qi* 氣, but ultimately they are both caused by and constituted by *qi*" (ibid., 40). McLeod's account is self-contradictory because a *qi* cosmology that prioritizes the continuity of existence does not permit the kind of division between the physical and metaphysical or material and immaterial that is integral to the kind of description that he borrows from Slingerland.

If we might summarize the main concern of these three scholars, it is that much scholarship on early China has come to the agreement that dualism is not a prominent feature of the tradition while, in fact, it is. The crux of the debate, then, is just what is meant by "dualism". It seems to me that, on the whole, both sides of the debate are arguing past each other. Whereas Richards, Fingarette, and Graham are arguing against the presence of a particular form of dualism in the Chinese tradition, that is, Cartesian dualism with all of the concomitant philosophical prejudices its referential framework brings, what Goldin, Slingerland, and McLeod are arguing is that there can be Chinese dualism without it being Cartesian dualism. Yet, as stated above, these latter three mistake the former three as arguing that no distinctions between mind and body in a general sense were ever made in the Chinese tradition—despite whatever examples of scholars engaging in such a reduction they might have found. The problem is not whether the early Chinese distinguished between bodies, emotions, and thoughts—they certainly did—but rather how they chose to theorize about these things. As we famously learn from Ludwig Wittgenstein (2005), "*the limits of my language* mean the limits of my world" (§5.6, 68) and as Richard Rorty teaches, because philosophical problems are usually a problem of the language we use to ask our questions, a change in language is likely to result in the resolution of our philosophical problems (1979, xiii).

This problem of language requires serious consideration. Even though the three scholars discussed above deserve recognition for their attempt to provide an accurate description of the mind/body relationship in Chinese philosophy, it must be pointed out that the means which they adopt to achieve such an end undermine their argument for a Chinese dualism. This is primarily because their criticism of

the anti-dualist position reflects a feature of the Western philosophical tradition that Richard Bernstein has called the "Cartesian Anxiety". This is

> a grand and seductive Either/Or. *Either* there is some support for our being, a fixed foundation for our knowledge, *or* we cannot escape the forces of darkness that envelop us with madness, with intellectual and moral chaos. (Bernstein 1983, 18)

In applying this notion of the "Cartesian Anxiety" to the dualist position, we see that they conceive of the mind-body relation along Cartesian lines despite their explicit disavowal, thereby retaining the basic Either/Or dichotomy: *either* there is mind and body *or* else there is only body.[4] But as Bernstein says, "if we question, expose, and exorcise Cartesianism, then the very possibility" of this Either/Or "loses its plausibility" (ibid., 19).

The concern of the dualists with substituting a holism with a dualism is indicative of this Cartesian Anxiety because the very language by which they undertake their critiques and institute their own version of dualism continues to play what I call the "Cartesian language game". This idea of the "Cartesian language game" draws inspiration from John Searle, who explains:

> [A]long with the Cartesian tradition we have inherited a vocabulary, and with the vocabulary a certain set of categories, within which we are historically conditioned to think about these problems. The vocabulary is not innocent … [it] includes a series of apparent oppositions: "physical" versus "mental", "body" versus "mind", "materialism" versus "mentalism", "matter" versus "spirit". Implicit in these oppositions is the thesis that the same phenomenon under the same aspects cannot literally satisfy both terms. (Searle 1994, 14)

In other words, the criticism against the "holist" position as resulting in a materialist reduction of mind to body is only possible in the "logical space of reasons" (Sellars 1991, 169) of the Cartesian language game because the very categories of material/immaterial, physical/mental, subjective/objective and so on belong to a culturally specific way of parsing the world:

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4   While Slingerland does correctly identify some scholars who do make this reduction, he nevertheless lumps scholars with a more nuanced account of mind/body in Chinese philosophy into the reductionist camp treating them all as being cut from the same cloth. For example, he singles out Roger Ames' claim that the person was conceptualized "holistically as a psychosomatic process" as an example of mind being reduced to body. Yet, the very word "psychosomatic" involves both "mind (psyche)" and "body (soma)". Furthermore, in the article this quotation is taken from, Ames describes mind and body as existing at the two poles of a single continuum (Ames 1993, 159). This is far from the reduction of mind to body that Slingerland claims it to be.

> Both traditional dualism and materialism presuppose conceptual dualism … materialism [i]s really a form of dualism. It is that form of dualism that begins by accepting the Cartesian categories … Materialism is thus in a sense the finest flower of dualism. (Searle 1994, 26)

Whether it be materialism or immaterialism, the language of the Cartesian philosophical tradition had no cash value in the view of "how things hang together" (Sellars 1991, 1) of ancient Chinese philosophy.[5] What this means, then, for the dualists, is that the very language of their criticism is Cartesian in nature and thus, any of the dualisms they wish to instate in our understanding of Chinese philosophy are Cartesianism in disguise. This is why in asking after the question of mind in the Chinese tradition it is first necessary to critically reflect on our familiar assumptions and second to look for a vocabulary appropriate for expressing Chinese ideas.

There is a corelate problem that arises in the scholarly literature on both sides of the debate and the concern with the mind-body problem where there is an over-emphasis on the concept of *xin* 心 (heart/mind) as it relates to mind. This focus prevents insights into how other concepts might function in a Confucian theory of mind. This problem exists because there is an insensitivity to a fact about Chinese concepts: they are often bivalent, existing on lower- and higher-orders. In other words, the term *xin* can both refer to the "organ of reflection" as well as the entire conceptual network that constitutes a robust theory of mind and a synthetic concept of mind.[6] Said differently, we should not expect there to be a one-to-one correspondence between the concepts of *xin* and mind, but instead should recognize that we can use the higher-order concept of mind (or *xin*) to encapsulate a synthetic theory that includes *xin* as well as a whole set of other terms. This breaking down of the walls of our conceptual focus is what allows us to see how, along with *xin*, other concepts play an important role in a synthetic Mengzian theory of mind. They do so not because any one of them correlates to an actual thing in the world we call "mind" but rather because they contribute to a higher-order theory of mind that is descriptive of a way of living in the world.

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5   For a related discussion, see Turner (2019, 351–62).

6   For example, Donald Munro (2002) elevates one of the "four sprouts"—the heart-mind of right/wrong discrimination—to the status of a higher-order concept of mind: "When Mencius refers to the *shifei zhi xin* [是非之心], or the mind of right and wrong, he is asserting that human beings evaluate. The human mind is an evaluating mind." (ibid., 320) Yet, does it not make more sense to the see this *xin* in relation to the other three *xin* as four lower-order concepts that contribute to a higher-order, synthetic concept or theory?

Exposing the Cartesian Mind

In reflecting on the mind-body problem in the Chinese tradition, Roger Ames (1993) claims that

> the correlative relationship between the psychical and the somatic militated against the emergence of a mind/body problem. It was not that the Chinese thinkers were able to "reconcile" this dichotomy; rather, it did not arise. (Ames 1993, 163)

The idea that the mind/body dichotomy never arose in the Chinese tradition is of great significance because it clues us into the fact that we should not expect the familiar language of Cartesianism to provide an accurate portrayal of the Chinese philosophical discourse on the parts of experience that we denote by the terms "mind" and "body".[7] Ames' point here is not to deny that Chinese philosophers made distinctions between what we are accustomed to demarcate as either "mind" or "body" but instead to focus on the language that talk of "mind" and "body" are "couched" in (ibid., 158) because this language reveals the philosophical assumptions that we have taken for granted for so long that we have come to think of them as fixed in metaphysical stone.

Elsewhere, in discussing a "process notion" of the Chinese concept of *xing* 性 (loosely translated as "human nature"), Ames (2002) argues for the need to make a "gestalt shift" in our interpretation of Chinese philosophy: "to appreciate the difference between 'human nature' understood within a substance (or essence) ontology and the term understood within a process ontology requires a gestalt shift, a rethinking of our philosophical language" (ibid., 81). In other words, we have to stop seeing a duck where Chinese philosophers saw a rabbit and this shift in interpretive paradigms is expressed in the language we choose to portray Chinese philosophy.

In trying to effect this gestalt shift by finding the best possible vocabulary to reconstruct a Confucian theory of mind, it is necessary that we move away from the language of Cartesian philosophy. This "gestalt shift" is not directed at René Descartes' philosophy as laid out in the *Meditations* or anywhere else. Instead, it is a move away from the philosophical tradition that he initiated and which dominated the early modern period of Western thought all the way to the critical

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7   Lisa Raphals has provided supporting evidence for this claim when she argues that the "dualism framework of analysis" loses out on seeing "important dimensions of the mind and spirit or soul" and "how both relate to the body" (2023, 22). She argues that instead of a "dualist framework" we should adopt a "tripartite" one that accounts for the mind, spirit, and body, as well as their relations.

self-reflections of the 20th century.[8] This philosophical tradition has been called the "mirror of nature" by Richard Rorty (1979). Its key feature is the bifurcation of human experience into two distinct realms: what is inside the mind and what is outside the mind, including body. The "mirror of nature" is thus the mind of an epistemological subject that through corresponding internal representations with external phenomena achieves clear and distinct knowledge.

We should not confuse this "mirror of nature" as a historical oddity because its influence is far-reaching and today still informs many philosophical arguments regarding the relation between mind and body. For example, Evan Thompson describes a strand of cognitive science known as "cognitivism" thus:

> Cartesian dualism had long ago created an explanatory gap between mind and matter, consciousness and nature. Cognitivism, far from closing this gap, perpetuated it in a materialist form by opening a new gap between subpersonal, computational cognition and subjective mental phenomena. (Thompson 2007, 6)

Hilary Putnam's famous "Brains in a Vat" (2004, 1–21) thought experiment is a prime example of this because it is presupposed on the separation of the mental activities of the brain and nervous system from the other activities of the body as if they did not provide the physiological scaffolding for them to occur.[9] In other words, while the philosophy of Descartes might have gone out of fashion, the way of talking and thinking about the world initiated by him still informs much of our modern philosophical discourse.[10]

However, this Cartesian language game is of a different "sensibility matrix" (Hall and Ames 1995, 112) whose philosophical assumptions justify a different world than that of Chinese philosophy. Angus Graham has noted that one of the major differences between the Western and Chinese philosophical traditions is that the former asks "What is the truth?" and the latter asks "Where

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8   In addition to the pragmatic tradition discussed here, the phenomenological tradition represented by such figures as Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty also severely criticized the Cartesian tradition. Merleau-Ponty, for example, opens his *Phenomenology of Perception* with robust criticisms of what he calls "empiricism" and "intellectualism"—the two poles of the Cartesian language game (2012, 3–65).

9   Thompson and Cosmelli have, on the basis of good cognitive science, debunked this view of the "brainbound mind" (Thompson and Cosmelli 2011, 163–80).

10   While "cognitivism" might mostly be a skeleton in cognitive science's closet today, Jakob Hohwy is an example of a more recent cognitive scientist who directly aligns himself with Cartesian philosophy (Hohwy 2007, 249–54). Joseph Levine has also provided an argument for a "Cartesian theater" view of phenomenal experience (Levine 2010, 209–25).

is the way?" (Graham 1989, 3). In other words, the Western tradition is focused on *what* things are in terms of their "being" while the Chinese tradition is focused on *how* things are in terms of their "becoming". Similarly, while affirming their commensurability, Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 draws the main distinction between Western and Chinese philosophy as that between the Chinese tradition's emphasis on "life as such" and the Western tradition's emphasis on "nature" as "external object" (Mou 1990, 18). The Chinese "sensibility matrix" is summarized by Tang Junyi 唐君毅 in his seven cosmological postulates among which include "no fixed being" (*wu dingti guan* 無定體觀), "ceaseless activity of procreation" (*shengsheng buyi guan* 生生不已觀), "inseparability of one and many" (*yiduo bufen* 一多不分觀), and "no going without returning" (*wuwang bufu* 無往不復觀) (Tang 2016a, 1–17).

These basic assumptions encourage us to understand the central notion of *xin* as different from that of mind as it obtains in the Cartesian tradition. In correcting some "misconceptions", Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 tells us that "*Xin* in Chinese culture is fundamentally not the mind of an immaterialist philosophy" (Xu 2013a, 295) and that if we consider the *xin* of Chinese philosophy to belong to an immaterialism then "there will be no path for the most fundamental aspect of Chinese culture to take" (ibid., 296). At the same time, to simply replace "immaterialism" with "materialism" would be to remain playing the Cartesian language game and is thus also a dead-end for interpreting Chinese philosophy. Hence, Lik-kuen Tong 唐力權 describes the *xin*-world relationship thus: "There is no absolute subject, no absolute object; there is no absolute mind, no absolute thing; in conclusion, the existence of both poles of these complementary pairs is mutually interdependent and they cannot exist on their own" (Tong 1996, 6) and he further describes the Chinese position as "unobstructed suchness between response and its field" (*ganshi ruyi* 感一如實) where *xin* is continuous with the things in its field of relationality (ibid., 36–41).[11] From these considerations of the processual sensibilities of the Chinese tradition we see that the vocabulary of the Cartesian language game is not suited to the translation and interpretation of the Chinese philosophical narrative.

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11   Tang Junyi sees the "fundamental aspect" of *xin* as the "illuminating awareness" of its "empty activity": "*Xin* was not seen as a subjective substance, but instead was viewed as a thing which contains emotions, desires, and intentions and which can be set in correlation to the external world of nature. They [Chinese philosophers] thought that the illuminating awareness of the heart-mind's empty activity (*xin zhi xuling de mingjue* 心之虛靈的明覺) is expansive without end so that it could encompass all of the ten thousand things." (Tang 2016a, 103)

On the Path of Reconstruction: John Dewey's Theory of Mind

Drawing inspiration from Roger Ames work to achieve a gestalt shift in our understanding of the Chinese concept of *xing* as a "process notion" by appealing to John Dewey,[12] I also want to make the most of Dewey's philosophy as a valuable resource for reconstructing the *Mengzi's* theory of mind. John Dewey's conception of mind differs radically from that of the Cartesian tradition, a tradition he was highly critical of. In *Art as Experience*, Dewey describes mind as not an "underlying substance" that is an "independent entity *which* attends, purposes, cares, notices, and remembers" (Dewey 1958, 263; italics in original) but rather "as primarily a verb" that "denotes all the ways in which we deal consciously and expressly with the situations in which we find ourselves" (ibid.). In other words, "mind" is not a Cartesian substance but instead

> denotes every mode of variety of interest in, and concern for, things: practical, intellectual, and emotional. It never denotes anything self-contained, isolated from the world of persons and things, but is always used with respect to situations, events, objects, persons and things. (ibid., 263)

Mind is a mode of being in the world mediated through attentive engagement: "In short, 'to mind' denotes an activity that is intellectual, to *note* something; affectional, as caring and liking, and volitional, practical, acting in a purposive way." (ibid.; italics in original) Furthermore, "Mind forms the background upon which every new contact with surroundings is projected." (ibid., 264) This "minding" is presupposed on a social and cultural tradition: "[A person] would be poorer than a beast of the fields were it not for traditions that become a part of his mind." (ibid., 270)

Dewey had developed his idea of "minding" as socially and culturally situated in his earlier *Experience and Nature* where he offered a conceptualization of mind as "discourse". There, even though he finds fault with Greek metaphysics, Dewey still thinks there is some wisdom to be learned in the Greek notion of mind: "*Logos* has been correctly identified with mind," however, the problem remains for the Greeks that "*logos* and hence mind was conceived supernaturally" (Dewey

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12   Ames says: "Fortunately, we do not have to reinvent the wheel. To assist us in considering a process understanding of *renxing*, we have available as analogy the *process of philosophy* of thinkers such as John Dewey … I want to identify in Dewey several of the terms that have a bearing on what he would call human nature and to see if they do not suggest a new direction for understanding Mencius. This is not to reduce Mencius to Dewey or to provide a 'Deweyan' reading of Mencius but is rather an attempt to use a Deweyan vocabulary to stimulate us to think differently about Mencius." (Ames 2002, 80–81)

1929, 168–69). This *logos* is word, discourse. Dewey thinks that while the Greeks were right in seeing discourse as the most important feature of the human mind, he criticizes them for hypostasizing it as a transcendent entity. Moreover, this "mind as discourse" is not a naturally endowed mental language that we can all turn to in our private soliloquys to access the truth. Hence, Dewey says: "Mind as individualized could be recognized in other than a pejorative sense only when its variations were social, utilized in generating great social security and fullness of life." (ibid., 215) This mind is embodied in and emerges from our learned ability to communicate with others:

> If we had not talked to and with others and they with us, we should never talk to and with ourselves ... Through speech a person dramatically identifies himself with potential acts and deeds; he plays many roles, not in successive stages of life but in a contemporaneously enacted drama. Thus mind emerges. (ibid., 170)

For Dewey, mind is not a static, thinking thing, but is instead a function that emerges from the intercourse that takes place between different people and in different communal, social, and cultural fields: "The modern habit of using self, 'I', mind, and spirit interchangeably is inconceivable when family and commune are solid realities." (ibid., 209) Mind is a social reality and exists in and through the relations between discoursing individuals.

As for how this "mind as discourse" brings meaning to the world, it does so, because communication and thus the mutual effort to achieve communal goals literally makes something "common in at least two different centres of behavior" (ibid., 178). That the world should have meaning is a consequence of the fact that things matter through their implication in "situations of shared or social purpose and execution" (ibid., 181). For meaning to exist at all it must exist in such social and shared situations, and therefore Dewey says that "meaning" is the "community of partaking" (ibid., 185). In other words, a thing is only meaningful when it enters a field of communal behaviour. Without such community there is naught but raw existence; meaning is the "essence" of a thing communally distilled out of its existence (ibid., 183).

For someone accustomed to the Cartesian way of thinking of mind, Dewey's concept of mind as "minding" and as "discourse" is striking. Our relationship with others and the world is not one of pure cogitation, but is rather one of mindful engagement and when we think, we do so with the social and cultural linguistic repertoire given to us by our upbringing in certain social and cultural environments and thereby engage with the world and others. This is why Dewey says

we should not say that "I think" or "I feel" but that "it thinks" and "it feels" (ibid., 232–33). Therefore, Dewey's concept of mind is necessarily communal and individual thinkers share in this communal mind as unique instantiations. As is argued below, this alternative definition of mind offered by Dewey provides a vocabulary for discussing mind in the *Mengzi* that better captures its original import.

Reconstructing the *Mengzi's* Theory of Mind through *Ren* and *Tian*

As noted above, the concept of *xin* 心 is central to discussions on mind in the *Mengzi*; it is highly complex and takes on various dimensions of significance. Among these, commonly noted ones are as (1) the organ of thinking, reflecting, and knowing, (2) the lord of the body, and (3) embedded moral responses.[13] There is, however, a dimension of the *Mengzi's* concept of *xin* that is often left out of discussions of mind. In *Mengzi* 6A11 it defines *ren* 仁 (humanity, consummate conduct, love) as the "human heart/mind" (*ren renxin ye* 仁人心也). It is as *ren* that its concept of *xin* resonates with Dewey's notion of "minding". That is to say, *ren* is a mindful engagement with others and the world. Moreover, a proper understanding of *xin* and *ren* should be connected to the *Mengzi's* concept of *tian* 天, which I will argue below is not a metaphysical substance or an anthropomorphic deity[14] but instead is the cultural and social values embodied in tradition elevated to a sacred level that serves as the background for *xin* as "minding". The following analysis will reveal that when the set of concepts of *xin*, *ren*, and *tian* are understood alongside Dewey's theory of mind, we can generate a higher-order, synthetic Mengzian concept of mind.

When it comes to the *Mengzi's* concept of *ren* 仁, the best place to start is the character itself. It is composed of two components: *ren* 亻 (i.e. person/humanity) and *er* 二 (i.e. two). This is our first indication that *ren* is a concept of interpersonality. In other

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13   Regarding the first dimension, *Mengzi* 6A15 says *xin zhi guan ze si* 心之官則思 (the office/organ of the xin is to think/reflect); regarding the second dimension, the *Mengzi's* use of the terms *dati* 大體 and *xiaoti* 小體 in the same passage reflects its acceptance of its intellectual predecessor's—the *Wuxing* 五行—analogy of *xin* as ruler of the body; regarding the third dimension, *Mengzi* 2A6 refers to "four sprouts" (*siduan* 四端) that constitute the materials out of which moral dispositions are cultivated. For discussions of these various aspects of xin, see Munro (1969, 74–75); Lau (1970, 15–16); Schwartz (1985, 266–77), Chan (2002, 55); Geaney (2002, 84–108), and Ames (2021, 373–80).

14   Despite adopting the translation of *tian* as "heaven," Perkins warns against confusing it with familiar Christian notions: "*Tian* is not a place where good people go when they die" (Perkins 2022, 19) and he says elsewhere that "Heaven simply represents those forces or events in the world that are inexplicable and irresistible" (Perkins 2014, 123). For a fuller discussion on the various interpretations of *tian*, see Behuniak (2019, 207–42).

words, where only one person exists there is no possibility for *ren* (in both senses as "person" and "humanity") to exist. The alternative version of this character found in the Guodian 郭店 excavated manuscripts that is written with *shen* 身 (body, person) over *xin*[15] is of great importance not only because it links *xin* to *ren* logographically but also because the character *shen* was not only originally a depiction of a pregnant body (thus two people) but also because this term generally refers to the social body.[16] In other words, as a matter of "mind", *ren* involves both the body and others in its conceptual range. This precludes any strict dualism inherent in the notion of *ren*. An important feature of this concept is that rather than being a moral virtue that we possess, it requires actual ethical practice for its realization in the world.

This moral practice entails the "extension" of one's moral feelings from what is nearest to what is furthest away. This notion is clearly expressed in *Mengzi* 7A45's "Treat your parents with familial affection, treat the people with proper humanity, and love the [ten thousand] things" (*qinqin renmin aiwu* 親親仁民愛物). We must *mind* these things lest we fail to treat them properly. *Mengzi* 1A7 offers a greater account in a dialogue between Mengzi and King Xuan of Qi regarding the latter's choice to replace a trembling ox on its way to slaughter with a sheep. After interpreting the king's behaviour in terms of his compassion for the ox whose immediate presence moved him, Mengzi says that the king can "spin the whole world in the palm of his hand" if only he treats the elders and the young of other people as he does is own. He then says:

> All this is about is applying this *xin* to others. Thus, if you extend your grace then it will be sufficient to protect the four seas but if you do not then you won't even be able to protect your wife and children. The ancients surpassed us in no other regard than this: they were excellent at extending what they did to others. Today, your grace is sufficient to reach beasts, but your deeds do not go as far as the common people. Why is this?

We might translate the "applying this *xin* to others" (*ju sixin jiazhu bi* 舉斯心加諸彼) simply as "minding others" and not miss any of its import. The point here is that rather than just being a principle of relationality between two objects, *ren* is a method by which relations are constructed, enriched, and expanded to ever greater degrees. It is a way of being attentively engaged in the world, a way of minding the world in an ethical manner. The idea of relationality has led Tang Junyi to describe the *xin*-world relationship in terms of action:

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15   For a detailed discussion of this character in the excavated texts see Wang (2011, 210–38; 2021, 1–46).
16   See Sommer (2010, 212–28) and Lewis (2006, 69–73).

> It is not a way of thinking of the world as an object opposite to the subject. It is a way of thinking which begins by withdrawing the light in the ordinary outward-knowing process back to our inner self; and then throws the light out again, along the very line of the extending of our moral ideal and our moral action; and knows the world as mediated by that very ideal and action, and as the realm for the embodiment of that ideal and action. (Tang 2016b, 27)

Therefore, the key feature of *xin* is the ethical relationality contained in the concept of *ren* that rather than entailing a cognitive comprehension of objects in the world instead entails an ethical minding that expands the scope of our lived-in worlds to ever greater degrees to eventually encompass all of the ten thousand things and the whole world in its moral embrace as we give them attention and engage them in our ethical practice.

This way of understanding *xin* through the concept of *ren* shows great resonance with John Dewey's concept of "mind" as "minding" because they are both relationally dependent: neither can exist outside of the relationships that obtain between people engaged in social intercourse. Yet neither the *Mengzi* nor John Dewey simply understand their respective concepts of "mind" as the relationships that exist between isolated individuals. Instead, as was pointed out above, "mind" emerges out of the discourse that takes place between people in their mindful interactions who draw on a communal reservoir of meaning that binds them together and gives their relationships value. This communal reservoir is, in short, society, culture, and tradition. An idea very reminiscent of this exists in the *Mengzi*'s concept of *tian* 天 (often translated as "Nature" or "Heaven").

For the *Mengzi*, there is an undeniable internal and direct relationship between human *xing* 性 (natural dispositions) and *tian* where the latter is seen as the origin or source of the former and which finds expression in *xin* through moral action. *Mengzi* 7A1 says "Those who fully realize their *xin* can know their natural dispositions; those who know their natural dispositions thus know *tian*." The question is, then, what does this *tian* here mean and how does it relate to *ren*?[17] In order to answer this question, I will elucidate the *Mengzi*'s concept of *tian* to show how it was understood as "human discourse" elevated to a social and sacred level and something that humans share communally.

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[17]   The evolution of this term is quite complex, but Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 has listed five basic meanings: "material", "sovereigntial", "fatal", "natural", and "philosophical" (Feng 2009, 35). Yu Ying-shih 余英時 also notes three kinds of *tian*: religious, metaphysical, and ethical, further saying that "*tian* and humanity (*ren* 人) were often used to distinguish between a transcendent realm and an actual realm" (Yu 2014, 73).

First, the *Mengzi* does not understand the relationship between humans and *tian* as being one of a top-down determinism. It is not the case that *tian* determines absolutely what humans are.[18] Instead, the relationship between humans and *tian* is one of interpenetration and mutual determination. Thus, Cheng Chung-ying is right to say that *xin* is "an emergent creation of human nature, just as human nature can be considered an emergent creation of [*tian*]" (Cheng 2003, 442) because the idea of emergence implies a bottom-up relationship rather than a top-down one. However, Cheng only presents half the picture because *tian* is also emergent out of humanity. Luo Anxian 羅安憲 captures the bidirectionality of this relationship when he says that

> The *Mengzi* makes of the cosmos and human life a single thing, bringing about the mergence and concentration of things and people and of *tian* and humanity. Moving from *xin* to natural dispositions and to *tian* is to ascend and to transcend while moving from *tian* to natural dispositions and to *xin* is to cross over and to fall into place. (Luo 2007, 126)

Thus we see that between *tian* and humanity there exists a bidirectional process of emergence. Yet both of these scholars conceive of *tian* along metaphysical lines in a manner that misses its meaning in the *Mengzi* as "tradition sacralized". In order to see how *tian* functions in the *Mengzi* not as metaphysical substance but as social and cultural values embodied in sacred tradition, we have to take a closer look at the meaning of *tian*.[19]

The concept of *tian* had begun to take on new meanings during the time between Kongzi 孔子 (Confucius) and Mengzi. Particularly, it evolved from a more anthropomorphic notion of a deity to a more natural notion of the world.[20] This shift is seen taking place, for example, in *Analects* 9.5 where Kongzi, on the one hand,

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18   Andrew Plaks' translation of the *Zhongyong's* 中庸 (a Confucian text in the same lineage as the *Mengzi*) opening line, *tianming zhi wei xing* 天命之謂性, as "By the term 'nature' we speak of that which is imparted by the ordinance of Heaven" (Plaks 2004, 25) is an example of such an understanding.

19   For an extended discussion of this topic, see Turner (2023).

20   See Zhang X. (2007, 234–54) and Wang B. (2011, 5–11). Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 states: "By the Spring and Autumn period, *tian* and *tianming*天命 had already transformed from having the characteristic of an anthropomorphic deity to having the characteristic of a moral rule." (Xu 2013b, 74) Jana Rošker confirms this when she states that "The Chinese had anthropomorphic deities in the periods of Shang (Yin) and Zhou Dynasties but Confucius and Mencius transformed this anthropomorphic form of heaven (*tian*) into the concept of the Heavenly Mandate (*tian ming*), which was a moral or ideal concept" (Rošker 2016, 181) and that "the idea of Heaven (*tian* 天) was transformed from an anthropomorphic higher force into something which determined the inner reality of every human being" (ibid., 187).

says "If *tian* wanted to eliminate this culture, then I who have come to it so late would not have acquired it; if *tian* does not want to eliminate this culture, then what can the people of Kuang do to me?" and on the other hand, in 17.19, he says: "What does *tian* say? The four seasons cycle and the hundred things are produced. What does *tian* say?" While Kongzi is notorious for not saying much about *tian* (*Analects* 5.13), from this we at least get the idea that he understood it, in part, as the silent power of natural processes.

There are several places in the *Mengzi* that explicitly discuss *tian* (2B13 and 5A6 are two key instances), but there is one place that is of particular importance to the present discussion because it shows that the *Mengzi* carried the transformation of *tian* as anthropomorphized deity beyond natural forces to turn it into human discourse, into society and culture, in other words, into tradition. *Mengzi* 5A5 records a dialogue between Mengzi and his student Wanzhang 萬章 on the transmission of power between the mythical kings of Shun and Yu. Wanzhang asks if it was Shun that "gave" (*yu* 與) the throne to Yu to which Mengzi replies by saying "the son of the heavenly (*tianzi* 天子) cannot give the world to other people" and that it is *tian* who does so. Regarding how *tian* does this, Mengzi says "*Tian* does not speak, it reveals its choice through deeds and tasks". He goes on to say that if whomever is recommended to succeed the throne dutifully serves the spirits and manages the affairs of the people, then that person will be accepted by *tian* and by the people and will therefore be fit for the throne. As a cap to this argument, Mengzi quotes from the "Taishi 太誓" chapter in the *Shangshu* 尚書 (*Documents*): "*Tian* sees as my people see and hears as my people hear" (*tian shi zi womin shi tian ting zi womin ting* 天視自我民視天聽自我民聽). In other words, whatever the content of human discourse is, that is what the content of *tian* is. To say that *tian* sees and hears as the people do is to replace the notion of *tian* as anthropomorphized deity not with the notion of natural processes but with the notion of human discourse. The *Mengzi* has elevated human discourse to the highest level and made society into something sacred. Hence, Pu Pang 龐樸 says:

> This kind of *tian* goes beyond humanity; but it also cannot leave behind humanity because its root is society. And humanity cannot leave behind *tian* because humans are mainly understood to be social beings. Therefore, the relationship between *tian* and humanity talked about by the Confucians is actually a relationship between society and social individuals or that between greater society and humans themselves… Mengzi clearly affirmed this relationship and sacralized it, elevating society to *tian*. (Pu 2005, 364)

Jim Behuniak captures this idea when he says that "*Tian* in this context is understood as the history, experience, culture, institutions, and general processes that have shaped human emergence" (Behuniak 2005, 94). Thus, when the *Mengzi* says that those who fully realize their *xin* know their *xing* and knowing their *xing* they know *tian*, and that the capacity of thinking and feeling is "that which *tian* has given me" (6A15) what it means is that humans have acquired from society a collective means of discourse that makes their worlds meaningful. The social and cultural values of the human community is the source of the *ren* that is the "human mind". Thus when it says that one "serves *tian*" (*shitian* 事天) it does not mean subservience to a transcendent being but instead the creative process of individuals giving back to and remaking the society from which they have received so much.

That this "thing" given to us by *tian* is something communal is made clear in *Mengzi* 6A7:

> People all want to eat the same things when it comes to the preferences of the mouth; people all want to hear the same things when it comes to the preferences of the ears; people all want to see the same things when it comes to the preferences of the eyes. How could it be that *xin* is alone in there being no common preferences between people?

The *Mengzi's* point is not that these things that people have in common are part of a ready-made human nature.[21] Instead, because people are "alike" (*xiangsi* 相似), therefore, the things they want are also alike. Furthermore, that people are "alike" in their various tastes is a product of their belonging to a particular tradition. This is why the *Mengzi* appeals to the historical gourmet of Yi Ya 易牙, the master musician of Shi Kuang 師曠, and the famed beauty Zi Du 子都 as the standards for the tastes that all people have in common. It is not that these three represent a metaphysical Good but that they are representative of the common goods that have sedimented into human culture that Mengzi the philosopher and his fellows were born into and have grown up in.

Thus, when *xin* is understood within the proper conceptual web alongside *ren* and *tian*, a synthetic conception of mind emerges that does not resemble anything like a subjective knowing mind in the Cartesian style but is instead the socio-culturally situated "minding" one's way in the world that draws on a shared set of communal values in extending them to ever greater degrees through interaction with one's peers.

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21   Benjamin Schwartz says, for example: "In dealing with the inborn moral capacity, Mencius describes it in terms of four parts or aspects. The capacity itself may be thought of as a kind of Aristotelian *entelechy* since the final goal of full moral realization is already present as a potentiality from the beginning." (Schwartz 1985, 267; italics in original)

Conclusion

Through the above discussion I have attempted to reconstruct the concept of mind in the philosophy of the *Mengzi*. I first rehearsed arguments revolving around the problem of mind-body dualism in the Chinese philosophical narrative in addition to showing how even though these arguments avow themselves of Cartesian dualism, the language they employ is nonetheless suffuse with Cartesian vocabulary thereby undermining their position on Chinese dualism. I then argued that a "gestalt shift" is needed in the kind of philosophical vocabulary we use to translate and interpret Chinese philosophy. Following this, I exposed the Cartesian concept of mind by showing how it operates within what I call the "Cartesian language game" as the "mirror of nature" that differs from Chinese views which understand *xin* within a process "sensibility matrix". Following this, I paved the way for reconstruction by considering John Dewey's alternative theory of mind that emerges in social intercourse where it is understood as both "minding" and "discourse". Finally, through the *Mengzi's* concepts of *ren* and *tian* I showed how the *Mengzi's* understanding of *xin* resonates strongly with Dewey's idea of mind because both entail socially and culturally situated interpersonal engagement that draws on a common reservoir of meaning. Thus, in conclusion, when the *Mengzi's* concepts of *xin*, *ren*, and *tian* are taken together, they constitute a synthetic conception of mind where mind is understood as an engaged minding informed by society, culture, and tradition.

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Kang Youwei's Establishment of the Three Ages Theory

Zhichong GONG*

Abstract

In recent years, there has been an emerging trend in research on Kang Youwei 康有為 to return to a focus on the civilizational outlook of China, and in particular to return to an understanding of Kang Youwei from the perspective of the Confucian tradition. This article attempts to further advance this trend and analyse a major element of Kang Youwei's thought, namely his "Three Ages Theory" (*sanshi shuo* 三世說). Specifically, it will focus on Kang's combination of ideas of Confucius as a reformer (*Kongzi gaizhi* 孔子改制) and the idea that humans are born from Heaven (*ren wei tian sheng* 人為天生), doctrines that he inherited from the Confucian tradition but then transformed. His understanding of Confucius as a reformer was the theoretical starting point of the evolutionary theory of the Three Ages, because it determined the basic form of the Three Ages Theory. The idea that humans are born from Heaven supplemented the Three Ages Theory and served as the value foundation for the construction of "Great Unity" (*datong* 大同). A major significance of Kang Youwei's thought is that it acts as a bridge to understanding the Confucian tradition, but it also serves as an example of a Confucian response to the challenges of the modern world.

Keywords: Kong Youwei, Three Ages Theory, Confucius as a Reformer, Humans are born from Heaven

Kang Youweijeva vzpostavitev teorije treh dob

Izvleček

V zadnjih letih je v proučevanju Kang Youweija opazen trend, ki se ponovno osredotoča na civilizacijski pogled na Kitajsko, zlasti pa na ponovno razumevanje Kang Youweija s perspektive konfucijanske tradicije. Ta članek sledi temu trendu in globlje analizira pomemben vidik njegove misli, imenovane »teorija treh dob« (*sanshi shuo* 三世說). Osredotoča se predvsem na Kangovo povezavo med Konfucijem kot reformatorja (*Kongzi gaizhi* 孔子改制) in idejo, da Nebo ustvari človeka (*ren wei tian sheng* 人為天生), torej naukoma, ki ju je prevzel iz konfucijanske tradicije in ju nato preoblikoval.

Razumevanje Konfucija kot reformatorja je služilo kot teoretično izhodišče za oblikovanje osnovne strukture za njegovo teorijo »treh dob«. Ideja, da Nebo ustvari človeka, je to

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teorijo dodatno utrdila in hkrati služila kot vrednostna osnova za izgradnjo koncepta »velike enotnosti« (*datong* 大同). Pomen Kang Youweijeve misli je v tem, da predstavlja most do razumevanja konfucijanske tradicije, hkrati pa je tudi primer konfucijanskega odgovora na izzive sodobnega sveta.

Ključne besede: Kong Youwei, teorija treh dob, Konfucij kot reformator, ljudje se rodijo iz Neba

Emerging Trends in Research on Kang Youwei's Ideas[1]

Kang Youwei (1858–1927) is a highly influential figure in the history of late 19th and early 20th century China. This influence is not limited to his significant involvement in the politics of the late Qing and Republican eras, but also to the profound influence of his ideas on the intellectual trends and historical movements of the 20th century. This points to a deeper phenomenon: at every important turning point in history since his death, Kang Youwei has been rediscovered and discussed. He was a topic of heated debate in the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China, shortly after the opening up and reform era, and remains so in this century, with different themes emphasized in each period. Kang Youwei, it seems, has not yet become a "historical figure"—he is still one of us.

This continuing influence is of course due to the breadth and complexity of his ideas, which can provide inspiration and support to people of different intellectual positions. Indeed, it is in this manner that he has influenced modern thinking, as his ideas opened up numerous potential directions of development which were then explored in depth. However, this complexity has also created a fundamental difficulty in studying Kang Youwei's ideas, as it can be difficult to grasp their sources, nature, and structure. For example, in the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China, there was a focus on discussing the nature of his political reforms and his concept of the Great Unity (*datong* 大同). In the 1980s, the emphasis was on the organization and analysis of his thoughts and their sources. However, due to the intellectual and methodological limitations of their eras, neither of these two stages reached a credible consensus. Without returning to Kang Youwei's own concerns and positions, it is impossible to comprehensively grasp his ideological system. It was not until this century that the study of Kang Youwei's thought took a new turn in the humanities, as the nature, structure, and influence of civilizational traditions were re-examined. Increasingly, researchers have come to understand and evaluate Kang Youwei from China's own perspective, especially from the Confucian tradition.

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1   Translated by Oliver Hargrave.

The first person to make progress in this direction was Gan Chunsong 干春松. His 2002 monograph *Zhiduhua Rujia jiqi jieti* 制度化儒家及其解體 (*Institutionalized Confucianism and Its Disintegration*) examined the relationship between the political and the religious in traditional China through the lens of the institutionalization of Confucianism (*Rujia de zhiduhua* 儒家的制度化) and the Confucianization of institutions (*zhidu de Rujiahua* 制度的儒家化). He placed Kang Youwei in the context of the disintegration of institutionalized Confucianism, and saw Kang's controversial Confucian Religion Association (*Kongjiao hui* 孔教會) as his solution to rebuilding the foundations of the Confucian system. This accurately grasps Kang's fundamental concern: how to separate Confucianism from the old political system while maintaining its institutional form to sustain its vitality.

Gan continued to study Kang Youwei and published two works, *Baojiao liguo: Kang Youwei de xiandai fanglüe* 保教立國：康有為的現代方略 (*Protecting the Religion and Founding a Nation: Kang Youwei's Modern Strategy* (Gan 2015a)) and *Kang Youwei yu Rujia de xinshi* 康有為與儒學的「新世」(*Kang Youwei and the "New Era" of Confucianism* (Gan 2015b)). The former focuses on how Kang Youwei set about to preserve Confucian civilization and build a modern China in the face of the impact of modernity. Gan is clear on this point: "The most important reason why Kang Youwei has been rediscovered is his thinking on how China should find its own path when entering the modern system of nation-states" (Gan 2015a, 327).

The latter work discusses Kang's modern reforms and considers him as the starting point and lynchpin of modern Confucianism. The reasons for this can be summarized in five points: first, Kang's thinking is grounded in the Chinese tradition and its inherent issues; second, his thinking is based on the Confucian classical tradition; third, his programme has a holistic nature, combining individual cultivation and the socio-political order; fourth, his programme embodies a combination of Confucian universalism and local positions—his thought is problem-centred and transcends political positions and doctrinaire ideologies (Gan 2015b, 174–76). It can be said that this research is forward-looking in terms of its updating of perspectives and paradigms.

Another scholar who has deeply researched Kang Youwei's thought is Zeng Yi 曾亦 (Zeng 2010), whose work *Gonghe yu junzhu: Kang Youwei wanqi zhengzhi sixiang yanjiu* 共和與君主：康有為晚期政治思想研究 (*Republic and Monarchy: A Study of Kang Youwei's Late Political Thought*) explores Kang's political thought after the Xinhai Revolution. This phase of his thought has attracted less attention from scholars because it is not very "glorious" from the perspective of

revolutionary history. The theme of Kang's late political thought is a reflection on the Republican system, and his series of political insights and sharp criticisms are based on the holistic judgment of the Three Ages Theory. Therefore, Zeng Yi first analysed and evaluated Kang Youwei's reconstruction of the Three Ages Theory based on the Gongyang Learning (*Gongyang xue* 公羊學). On this basis, Zeng is able to consistently understand and grasp Kang's conception of the relationship between religion and politics, the relationship between family and state, and the relationship between the central government and local politics, as well as his various insights into the chaos of the Republic. As such, Zeng presented Kang's later conservative image of deep concern and far-reaching thinking. It is worth noting that this research is subordinate to Zeng Yi's larger research framework, which is grounded in the New Text classical studies (*Jinwen jingxue* 今文經學) tradition, so both Kang's strengths and his weaknesses receive attention.

Moreover, the problems of Confucian Religion (*Kongjiao* 孔教) have been another focus of research on Kang Youwei's thought at this time, with Tang Wenming's 唐文明 *Fujiao zai kuan: Kang Youwei Kongjiao sixiang shenlun* 敷教在寬：康有為孔教思想申論 (*The Broadening of the Dissemination of Religion: An Essay on Kang Youwei's Confucian Thought*) being a notable monograph on this theme (Tang 2012). Tang focuses on the connection between Kang Youwei's early thought and the Learning of Principle (*lixue*),[2] and discusses the role of Kang's *Jiaoxue tongyi* 教學通義 (*General Discourse on Teaching*) in the development of Confucian ideology. It highlights Kang's efforts to use Confucian thought and institution building to reconfigure Confucian education for both intellectuals and the common people, emphasizing the significance of this endeavour for the construction of modern China as a nation-state.

These works are important examples of recent studies of Kang Youwei's thought. They focus less on Kang Youwei's class position, Westernizing reforms, or utopian fantasies, and more on the image of Kang as the defender of Confucianism and China, but at the same time its reformer and even challenger. In Kang's case, reform was needed to better preserve China and Confucianism—and served to rejuvenate both. As a result, the relationship between Kang's thought and the Confucian tradition, especially the inheritance and contributions of the New Text classical studies (*Jinwen jingxue* 今文經學) tradition, has received increasing attention.

This is clearly in line with the historical reality. Kang repeatedly made it clear that his intention was to expound on the doctrine of Confucius, and even though his

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2   Translator's note: Learning of Principle is an intellectual movement most associated with the Song dynasty literatus Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200). The Chinese term lixue is one of the many commonly translated as "Neo-Confucianism" in English.

ideas were new, they were still based on the New Text classical studies' (*Jinwen jingxue* 今文經學) tradition of Confucius as the "Uncrowned King" (*suwang* 素王), as a reformer (*gaizhi* 改制), and the concepts of the "Three Ages" (*sanshi* 三世), "Humans are born from Heaven" (*ren wei tian sheng* 人為天生), "Great Unity" (*datong* 大同), and "Moderate Prosperity" (*xiaokang* 小康), among others, not to mention that Kang's most important works were all studies of the classics and the commentarial tradition. As a representative figure of the late Qing revolution in New Text classical studies (*Jinwen jingxue* 今文經學), Kang Youwei's *Xinxue weijing kao* 新學偽經考 (*The Forged Classics of the Wang Mang Era*), *Kongzi gaizhi kao* 孔子改制考 (*Confucius as a Reformer* (2010b)), his research on the *Spring and Autumn Annals* as well as the results of his work on the theories of the Three Ages and Great Unity all had a huge influence on the history of Chinese classical studies and the history of modern thought. Kang Youwei's thought is thus mainly a rediscovery and creative reconstruction of the New Text classical studies' (*Jinwen jingxue* 今文經學) tradition. This is certainly the consensus among researchers, and the direction that further in-depth studies should take.

Indeed, some scholars have already made good progress in this direction. Zeng Yi and Guo Xiaodong 郭曉東 studied Kang Youwei's *Chunqiu Dong shi xue* 春秋董氏学 (*Dong Zhongshu's Studies of the Spring and Autumn Annals* (Guo 2018; Zeng 2021)), while Ma Yongkang 馬永康 studied Kang's post-1900 "New Studies on the Four Books" (*xin sishu xue* 新四書學), namely his *Zhongyong zhu* 中庸注 (*Commentary on the Zhongyong*), *Liyun zhu* 禮運注 (*Commentary on the 'Evolution of Ritual' Chapter of the Book of Rites*), *Mengzi wei* 孟子微 (*The Esoteric Meanings of the Mencius*), and *Lunyu zhu* 論語注 (*Commentary on the Analects*) (Ma 2008; 2010; 2016; 2019). Zhang Xiang 張翔 has focused on Kang Youwei's doctrine of "reform" and that of the Great Unity, and noted a change the predated his later position on the classics (Zhang 2014; 2015a; 2015b). Chen Bisheng 陳壁生 (2017) examined Kang Youwei's systematic reform of the classics by taking his *Chunqiu bixue dayi weiyan kao* 春秋筆削大義微言考 (*The Profound Principles of the Writing and Corrections of the Spring and Autumn Annals*) as an example, while Pi Mimi's 皮迷迷 (2017) "Chongjian Rujia de pubian zhuyi: Kang Youwei jingxue yanjiu 重建儒家的普遍主義：康有為的經學研究 (Reconstructing Confucian Universalism: Research on Kang Youwei's Classical Studies)" is the first doctoral dissertation to study Kang Youwei's classical thought and writings. And the list goes on.

The true framework of Kang Youwei's ideological system is the theory of the Three Ages. When he said that by the time he was 30 years old he had already

achieved his great scholarly achievements,[3] he was referring to the establishment of the theory of Confucius as a reformer, which laid down the basic form and nature of the Three Ages Theory. Thereafter, Kang's writings on the classics and political petitions, his optimism in the early period and his move to conservatism after 1900 were all incorporated into the framework of the evolution of the Three Ages. Moreover, his most idealistic work, *Datong shu* 大同書 (*The Book of the Great Unity* (2010a)), is also a product of the Three Ages Theory, residing at the terminus on the path of the evolution of the Three Ages. Previously, Gan Chunsong 干春松, Zeng Yi 曾亦, Chen Bisheng 陳壁生 and others studied the nature and function of the Three Ages Theory in the context of the New Text classical studies (*Jinwen jingxue* 今文經學).[4] On the basis of their views, this paper focuses on how he inherited and reconstructed the two concepts of "Confucius as a reformer" and the idea that humans are born from Heaven in order to construct the theory of the Three Ages. This paper thus attempts to further advance the recent research trend.

Confucius as a Reformer: The Starting Point of the Theory of the Three Ages

The issue of Confucius as a reformer is a pivotal one in Chinese classical studies, and is related to the identity and status of Confucius himself. Historically, classical studies have taken three forms: the New Text School, the Old Text School, and Song Learning,[5] and they all have fundamental differences regarding the identity of Confucius. During the cultural crisis of the late Qing dynasty, Kang Youwei revisited the issue of Confucius as a reformer, not only analysing the dispute over New and Old Texts, but also carving a new image of Confucius from it. This became the starting point of his thinking, and also led him to a very different answer to that given by the New Text tradition.

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3   "By the year 1885, my studies were already greatly set in place, and would not progress further" (至乙酉之年而學大定, 不復有進矣 (Kang 2007, 237)). "[Kang] Youwei often said, 'My studies were complete by the age of 30, afterwards no progress was made, and nor was there need to progress'" (有為常言：吾學三十歲已成, 此後不復有進, 亦不必求進) (Liang 1998, 90).

4   The main resource that Kang Youwei drew on in developing his thought was the New Text classical studies (Jinwen jingxue 今文經學), as while he cared for the whole of the classical tradition he denied the authenticity of the Old Text classical studies (Guwen jingxue 古文經學). Moreover, his thought also went on to influence the classical tradition. As such, this paper makes a distinction in terminology, using the term "the New Text classical studies" to refer to the direct source of his ideas, and the term "the classical tradition" to refer to the influence of his thought.

5   Translator's note: Song Learning (Songxue 宋學) is another term that is often translated as "Neo-Confucianism" in English.

In classical studies, no matter how one answers the question of whether or not Confucius was a reformer, the issue itself unfolds in a common context: that of the tradition of the Sage King (*shengwang* 聖王). However, the arrival of modernity saw the collapse of both the traditions of the Mandate of Heaven (*tianming* 天命) and the Sage King, and thus Kang Youwei could easily accept the idea that Yao 堯, Shun 舜, and Yu 禹 were "like the tribal headmen of Yunnan and Guizhou today" (Kang 2010c, 17).[6] The traditional Sage King was reduced to being the tribal leader of early human society, which led to the value of the Six Classics being in doubt. In order to overcome this difficulty, Kang Youwei attributed the "authorship" of the Six Classics to Confucius alone, and the glories of the Five Emperors and Three Kings that appeared in the Six Classics were merely the "ancient pretext" (*tuogu* 托古) of Confucius.

Therefore, Kang Youwei's conception of the reforming Confucius fits the narrative of civilizational history in the modern era, and completely separates the Six Classics from the tradition of the Sage Kings, placing them into the era of uncultivated barbarism. But he nevertheless insists on Confucius as the last bastion to defend the value of the Six Classics, seeing his reform of these as the beginning of civilized life. This brought about a number of significant changes. First, the subject of the Six Classics became civilization. Kang wrote (2012b, 127):

> 蓋至孔子而肇制文明之法，垂之後世，乃為人道之始，為文明之王。蓋孔子未生以前，亂世野蠻，不足為人道也。蓋人道進化以文明為率，而孔子之道尤尚文明。

> Confucius created a system of civilization, which was handed down to future generations and he became the first to take the human way (*rendao*), becoming the king of civilization. Before Confucius, the world was disordered and savage, and one could not take the human way. The evolution of the human way is toward civilization, which is why the Confucian way especially reveres civilization.

"Civilization" (*wenming* 文明) here is not being used in the classical sense, but rather with its modern meaning, that is, the "evolution" of human life toward a better form. Kang Youwei accepted the modern narrative of the history of civilization, but he made the reforming of the Six Classics by Confucius the pivot of this transition. He believed that human beings did not naturally emerge from barbarism into civilized life, but that they were guided by Confucius' reforms.

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6   On page 4, Kang also says "In the time of Yu there were ten-thousand states, which if this is the case, then they certainly were [tribal] headmen" (禹時有萬國，其說確是，即土司也).

In volume nine of his *Confucius as a Reformer*, Kang Youwei cites "cap and costume (*guanfu* 冠服), the three years of mourning (*sanniansang* 三年喪), the greeting fiancée rite (*qinying* 親迎), the well-field system (*jingtian* 井田), the school (*xuexiao* 學校), and selection for posts (*xuanju* 選舉)", among others, as typical examples of Confucius' reforms (Kang 2010b, 191). However, these ritual systems have a long history in the classical tradition and are not regarded as being "reforms of the system" (*gaizhi* 改制). To take the three-year mourning period as an example, *The Book of Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書) records that "Gaozong in his mourning hut did not speak for three years", and when asked about this line by Zizhang, Confucius replies, "Not merely Gaozong, all the ancient people did so".[7] The "Questions on the Three Years" (*sannianwen* 三年問) section of the *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記) states: "On this the one hundred kings agree, and the ancients and moderns are united." From here we can see that the three-year mourning period was not presented as a reform by Confucius. However, Kang noticed that, from Confucius' disciple Zaiwo to the Mohists outside the Confucian School, many questioned the necessity of the three-year mourning period (Kang 2010b, 208, 225, 227, 275). He thus asks: If the three-year mourning period is indeed a solid historical tradition, why were there still such doubts and dissent? Clearly this is an extreme form of scepticism.

In Kang's view, the era before Confucius was one of benighted and barbaric pre-civilization. It lacked a tradition of Sage Kings and also lacked the three-year mourning period upon which "the one hundred kings agreed, and the ancients and moderns were united", as well as the greeting fiancée rite, the well-field system, schools, and other ritual systems. As for Confucius' "reforms of the system", these were a reform of the system of "immemorial old customs" (*taigu jiusu* 太古舊俗), and not—as traditional belief has it—a reform of the system of the Five Emperors and Three Kings (Kang 2007, 2:24). This can also be said to be Confucius' "creation of a system". In ancient times, everything was wild and primitive, so there was no guidance on values and ideals in people's lives. It was not until Confucius established systems such as the three years of mourning, the greeting fiancée rite, and criticizing hereditary ministers (*ji shiqing* 譏世卿) that the values of filiality between fathers and sons (*fuzi qin'en* 父子親恩), unity between husband and wife (*fufu qiti* 夫婦齊體), and the selection of the worthy and able (*xuanxian yuneng* 選賢與能) were established. In terms of values, Confucius created something out of nothing.[8]

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7   Translator's note: Gaozong is the posthumous title of the Shang king Wuding.

8   The author has another article on "Confucius as a Reformer" which explains this in more detail (Gong 2022, 62–69).

However, according to Kang Youwei the system was reformed by Confucius, marking a change from barbarism to civilization, and there must therefore have been a change in that system. But in fact the difference between the old system and customs of the ancient times and the system as reformed by Confucius is not significant. For example, during the Xia, Shang, and Zhou, lords were all hereditary, and the reform of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* was only extended to "criticizing hereditary ministers", while the succession of the Son of Heaven and the vassal lords remained hereditary. According to Kang, this indicated that the reform of the system had not been completed, a problem rooted in the limitations of history.

> 蓋原世法之立，創於強者，強者無有不自便而凌弱者也。國法也，因軍法而移焉，以其尊將令而威士卒之法行之於國，則有尊君卑臣而奴民者矣。家法矣，因族制而生焉，以其尊族長而統卑幼之法行之於家，則有尊男卑女而隸子弟者焉。雖有聖人，立法不能不因其時勢風俗之舊而定之，曰君為臣綱、夫為妻綱。於是君日尊而日驕，臣民日卑而日苦。夫日尊而日肆，婦日卑而日苦。大勢既成，壓制既久，遂為道義焉。

The establishment of laws in the ancient times was initiated by the strong, as the strong always impose their will upon the weak. In the case of national laws, they were derived from military laws, where the authority of the generals and the obedience of the soldiers governed the country. This resulted in the hierarchy of a revered ruler, subservient officials, and enslaved commoners. As for family laws, they originated from clan systems, where the authority of the clan elders and the obedience of the younger generations governed the household. This led to the hierarchy of respected males, subordinate females, and obedient children. Even if there were sages, the establishment of laws had to consider the prevailing customs and circumstances of the time, such as the ruler being the mainstay for the subjects and the husband being the mainstay for the wife. Consequently, the ruler became more respected and arrogant while his subjects became more subservient and wretched. Similarly, the husband became more respected and wanton while the wife became more subservient and wretched. As these power propensity solidified over time and the oppressive system persisted, they eventually became regarded as the norm in terms of morality and justice. (Kang 2010a, 7–8)

As such, the ancient barbaric era was not a blank nothingness, but the hierarchy it formed was the historical background of Confucius' reforms, and Confucius

had no choice but to compromise with it. This amounts to saying that Confucius' doctrine had a certain "historicity" (*lishixing* 歷史性), or that the development of Confucius' doctrine was limited by (a barbaric) history.

Consequently, Kang Youwei's theory of Confucius as a reformer encompasses not only a general value judgment on Confucius and the Six Classics as the beginning of humanity's transition from barbarism to civilization, as it also explores the specific institutions within the Six Classics, which contain numerous hierarchical relationships centred around the Three Mainstays (*sangang* 三綱).[9] Kang Youwei believes that these are historical remnants from the barbaric era that Confucius could not completely eradicate, as the inertia of history cannot be suddenly overturned, and thus many old historical accounts and rituals were retained within the Six Classics. In fact, this represents a deepening of the theory of Confucius as a reformer after it was integrated into the classical system, aiming to explain the relationship between the institutions of the Six Classics and Confucius' reforms. It led to a unique way of interpreting the Six Classics, commonly known as "one divides into two" (*yi fen wei er* 一分為二). To take the example of the relationship between husband and wife:

> 蓋太古蒙昧之世有一妻數夫者，亦有一夫數妻者，而男子尤強，故一夫數妻之制行之最久。孔子一時不能削之，故為之定制。天子娶十二女，諸侯九女，大夫三女，士一妻一妾，庶人匹夫匹婦。……蓋一夫多妻之世，至國主尤為無限，孔子定此已為減之又減，亦不得已之制，欲其易行者也。然男女同為天生之人類，本無高下，特以男強女弱，積久相凌。然孔子制昏禮首曰下達，又曰妻者齊也，義本平等。

In the ancient benighted era, there existed practices of one wife having multiple husbands and one husband having multiple wives. However, men were generally stronger, so the practice of one husband having multiple wives prevailed the longest. Confucius was unable to immediately abolish this practice, so he established regulations for it. The Son of Heaven could marry twelve women, vassal lords could marry nine women, high-ranking officials could marry three women, low-ranking nobles (*shi*) could have one wife and one concubine, and commoners were couples of one husband and one wife. [...] In an era of one husband and multiple wives, the rulers of the states especially indulged in unlimited marriages. Confucius tried to lessen it through regulation, but it was a

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9   Translator's note: The Three Mainstays (or guide ropes) were the three defining hierarchical human relationships in Confucian thought, consisting of the relationship between ruler and minister, father and son, and husband and wife.

reform without alternative, and it was his aim to make it likely to be implemented. However, men and women are both human beings born from Heaven and inherently equal; there is no inherent superiority or inferiority between them. It is only due to the physical strength of men and the weakness of women that over time transgressions have accumulated. Confucius' reform of marriage rituals emphasizes the use of a matchmaker to seek out a suitable woman (*xiada*) and also claim the equality of the wife, thus it embodies equality in principle. (Kang 2007, 6:78)

On the one hand, both the concepts of the husband as the mainstay of the wife (*fu wei qi gang* 夫為妻綱) and many wives for one husband (*yi fu shu qi* 一夫數妻) are remnants of barbaric history and should be rejected in terms of value, but historical trends cannot be changed abruptly, so the Six Classics are still dominated by such concepts, which is an unavoidable compromise with history. On the other hand, Confucius, through the matchmaker ritual (*xiada* 下達), the unity of husband and wife, and so on, demonstrated the equality of "men and women both humans born from Heaven" (男女同為天生之人類) which is the actual future direction of civilization. To put it in Kang's terms, the former is the doctrine of "Moderate Prosperity", and the latter is the doctrine of the Great Unity.

The so-called barbaric age of the ancient past, or the "Chaotic Age" (*juluanshi* 據亂世), should be overcome and transcended in value, but it also has in reality a "historical" body, becoming a force that hinders the evolution of civilization. Confucius reformed the system by injecting the spirit of civilization into the historical remnants of barbarism, which is synthesized into the doctrine of "Moderate Prosperity". The true future of civilization lies in continuously overcoming the "body" of history with civilized values, ultimately achieving an utterly transformed civilization of Great Unity.

For this reason, Kang often said that Confucius "established the Three Ages in an era of chaos, thus while his regulations were numerous, his heart was focused on great peace (*taiping* 太平), which is the essence of his intentions" (Kang 2007, 6:3).[10] Here, the "mind-body relationship" (*shenxin guanxi* 身心關係) of Confucius actually refers to the "mind-body relationship" of the Six Classics. Confucius, being situated in an era of chaos, gave rise to traditional history and rituals within the Six Classics. However, Confucius' thoughts were aimed at achieving great peace, thus the ultimate spirit of reforming the Six Classics transcended the physical realm and represented the ideal of a harmonious world. The theory of Confucius as a reformer can be likened to a sharp blade named "civilization".

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10   In the magazine Buren, the word "intentions" (*yisi* 意思) was originally written "state of mind" (*shensi* 神思). See also Kang (2012b, 18).

Kang Youwei took up that knife and stuck it into the classical system, probing the cracks and gaps, and what "dropped to the ground like earth"[11] was physical body of the system, which can be classified as remnants of the era of chaos. What was liberated from it was the spirit of civilization, which in turn blossomed into the doctrine of Great Unity.

Therefore, when Kang Youwei scrutinized each regulation of the classics through the lens of modern civilization, their meanings were reconstructed. Each regulation was divided into two aspects—a synthesis of barbarism and civilization. He further enriched these two aspects into different ideal types, imagining a civilizational order purely organized by certain values, thereby giving rise to the ascending stages of Moderate Prosperity and Great Unity, or Chaotic Age, Rising Peace (*shengping* 升平), and Great Peace. Strictly speaking, Kang Youwei reconstructed the significance and meaning of the classics through the theory of Confucius as a reformer and extended the process of construction into different ideal types, which can be seen as purely theoretical. The framework of the Chaotic Age, Rising Peace, Great Peace or Moderate Prosperity and Great Unity is primarily an analytic framework for political philosophy.

However, Kang Youwei's original intention goes beyond this, and the substantive effect of this theory extends beyond it as well. The Three Ages Theory becomes a theory of historical evolution. All of this stems from the fact that Kang regards Confucius' reform of the classics as the beginning of the history of civilization. As he repeatedly states:

> 太古、中古皆當亂世，爭殺無道，去禽獸不遠。孔子改制撥亂後，乃為人道，故以為人道之始也。……孔子以人世宜由草昧而日進於文明，故孔子日以進化為義，以文明為主。

> The ancient and medieval world were both considered chaotic eras, filled with violence and lawlessness, little different from the realm of the birds and the beasts. Once Confucius carried out his reforms and swept away the chaos, then the human way could be taken, thus it was the establishment of the human way. ... Confucius believed that in the human world, it is natural for society to gradually progress from primitiveness to civilization. Thus, Confucius saw evolution as his guiding principle, and gave priority to civilization. (Kang 2007, 6:11)

This places Confucius in an important position within the narrative of modern civilizational history. Prior to Confucius, history was wild and barbarous, and

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11   Translator's note: this is a reference to the story of the masterful Cook Ding from the Zhuangzi.

civilization originated in the legislative moment of Confucius' reforms. After this, China entered a historical period marked by civilization. The framework of barbarism-civilization within the theory of Confucius as a reformer is not merely a framework for value judgments, it is also a fundamental coordinate in the history of civilization.

We can observe that this theory itself is an irreducible "process". It provides concise answers to the questions of how civilization originates and develops, and in this sense it discusses "evolution". Although the subsequent path of civilization can be divided into different stages, the driving force and direction throughout the entire process stem from Confucius' reforms. Therefore, the meaning of "evolution" is "the entering into transformation by civilization" (進於文明之化), where "entering" (*jin* 進) carries the connotation of "those who first entered [into study]" (*xianjin* 先進) and "those who later entered [into study]" (*houjin* 後進) from the *Analects*, and "transformation" (*hua* 化) embodies the education (*jiaohua* 教化) significance of Confucianism. It is based on that original legislative moment where people first entered into the transformation by developing civilization out of barbarism, and the subsequent unfolding of the process depended on the continuous implementation of the originating driving force. Thus, in the *Book of Great Unity* we can see that Kang's work begins each aspect of the construction of the Great Unity by retracing the history of civilization, returning to the moment of Confucius' reforms, and showcasing Confucius' civilizational judgment. If the Three Ages Theory represents a beam of light projected towards the future, its source of light is Confucius' reforms, and the ultimate projection is the construction of the Great Unity. The path of the evolution of the Three Eras is the gradual realization of the direction and momentum set by Confucius' reforms.

Therefore, Kang Youwei stated that the theory of the Three Eras encompasses Confucius' doctrines, while the Six Classics were limited by the historical context of their chaotic era and are insufficient to fully embody Confucius' spirit.[12] However, it is precisely because it starts with the structure of a "process" that the subsequent path of the Three Eras has a clear historical nature. From the perspective of human evolution as a whole, although "Confucius' reform and creation of the Six Classics" (孔子改製作六經) marked the first transition between ancient and modern in the history of human civilization, with significant foresight and spiritual power, it was still just a "transition" (*guodu* 過渡). The journey of evolution is a long one, and only through the comprehensive realization of the initial

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12   "According to the Book of Changes, 'Writing does not exhaust words, words do not exhaust meaning'. Those under Heaven who read Confucius' writings well must know that the Six Classics are insufficient to reveal all of Confucius." (《易》曰：'書不盡言，言不盡意'，天下之善讀孔子書者，當知六經不足見孔子之全.) (Kang 2012b, 63)

plans can it be considered complete. Therefore, it requires continuous transitions. Each typified conception in the theory of the Three Eras represents a transition that sheds the body of Moderate Prosperity and realizes the spirit of the Great Unity. Theoretically, the theory of the Three Eras is not limited to just three eras, as Kang Youwei later envisioned nine eras and then even eighty-one (Kang 2012d, 222–23; 2007, 5:415–16). These repeated transitions between ancient and modern form a cohesive path of evolution. Each era, as a step in the evolutionary path, is designed for upward progression, and each advancement entails abandoning the previous step. Therefore, each era of the Three Eras is historical in nature. The theory of the Three Eras can only be considered as a historicized theory, making it a theory about how human history evolves.

As such, a significant consequence of the theory of historical evolution is the belief that it predicts the end of history. The era of Great Unity represents both the most perfect world and the endpoint of civilization. Since the endpoint is the fulfilment of its origins, it also means that when the era of Great Unity is fully realized, then the mission of Confucius, the Six Classics, and the theory of the Three Eras are also fulfilled. At the conclusion of the *Book of Great Unity*, Kang Youwei presents a scene that traditional Confucianism dared not imagine:

> 大同太平，則孔子之志也。至於是時，孔子三世之說已盡行，惟
> 《易》之陰陽消息，可傳而不顯矣。蓋病已除矣，無所用藥，岸
> 已登矣，筏亦當捨。

> Great Unity and Great Peace, this is Confucius' aspiration. When they arrive, Confucius' theory of the Three Eras will have been fully realized, and only the secrets of *yinyang* in the *Book of Changes* will be passed down without being revealed. For the illness will have been cured, and there will be no need for medicine. The shore will be reached, and the raft can be abandoned. (Kang 2010a, 325)

According to the New Text School tradition, due to Confucius' position as an "uncrowned king" who "possesses virtue but lacks office" (*youde wuwei* 有德無位), so his doctrine was not fully implemented in his own time. However, in Kang Youwei's theory of Confucius as a reformer, Confucius is regarded as the "spiritual leader" (*jiaozhu* 教主) who shaped Chinese—and even human—civilization. Kang Youwei believed that the two-thousand years of Chinese history had proven the effectiveness of Confucius' doctrine, providing historical confidence in its eventual complete realization. From a more Confucian standpoint, the history of human civilization is a process of progressing towards the ideals of Confucius. Once the era of Great Unity is realized, Kang Youwei believed,

"the shore will be reached, and the raft can be abandoned"—an outcome that Confucius himself would have welcomed.

Above, we have briefly explained how the theory of Confucius as a reformer shaped the basic form of the Three Ages Theory. However, the spiritual direction of the theory of Confucius as a reformer, which determines the substantive content of the evolutionary process of the Three Ages, is encapsulated by another doctrine known as the theory that "humans are born from Heaven". It serves as the core principle in Kang Youwei's construction of the society of Great Unity, and we will discuss it in detail in the following section.

"Humans are Born from Heaven": The Value-Principle of the Construction of the Great Unity

For Kang Youwei, writing the *Book of Great Unity* was a way to carry on the "unfulfilled wishes" of Confucius regarding the Great Unity. Therefore, his annotations on the "Great Unity" section of the "Evolution of Ritual" serve as the key to unlocking the spirit of the Great Unity, which he personally provided. In his annotations, there is the following general discussion:

> 然人之恆言曰天下、國、家、身，此古昔之小道也。夫有國有家有己，則各有其界而自私之，其害公理而阻進化甚矣。惟天為生人之本，人人皆天所生而直隸焉，凡隸天之下者皆公之。故不獨不得立國界，以至強弱相爭，並不得有家界，以至親愛不廣，且不得有身界，以至貨力自為。故祇有天下為公，一切皆本公理而已。公者，人人如一之謂，無貴賤之分，無貧賤之等，無人種之殊，無男女之異。……此大同之道，太平之世行之。惟人人皆公，人人皆平，故能與人大同也。

Thus the common phrase 'All Under Heaven, the nation, the family, the self' reflects a lesser way of the ancients. When there is a nation, a family, and a self, then each has its boundaries and partialities, which greatly hinders the principles of the impartial and obstructs evolution. Only Heaven is the origin of human life, as everyone is born from Heaven and directly under Heaven's jurisdiction and All Under Heaven belongs to the Impartial. Therefore, not only should there be no boundaries between nations, as they lead to conflicts between the strong and weak, but also there should be no boundaries between families, as they limit the breadth of affection. Furthermore, there should be no boundaries within oneself, as they lead to exploitation and self-interest. Thus, only All

> Under Heaven can be impartial, with everything based on the principles of impartiality. "Impartial" (*gong*) means that all people are considered as equals, without distinctions of rank or status, without distinctions of wealth or poverty, without distinctions of race or ethnicity, and without distinctions of gender. This is the way of Great Unity, to be practiced in an era of Great Peace. When everyone is equal and on the same level, it becomes possible to achieve Great Unity with others. (Kang 2007, 5:555)

Traditionally, it was believed that the chapter on the Great Unity in the "Evolution of Ritual" (*liyun* 禮運) section of the *Book of Rites* was Confucius looking back on a simpler time. Therefore, its tone is generally descriptive, with only the phrase "All Under Heaven is impartial" (*tianxia weigong* 天下為公) carrying some conceptual significance. In other words, the "Evolution of Ritual" does not provide theoretical explanations or discuss how to live in an era where "All Under Heaven is impartial" is practiced, it simply depicts a historical period. However, for Kang Youwei the Great Unity represents the ambition of Confucius' reform, and thus the "Evolution of Ritual" must possess theoretical space and power. Therefore, the introduction in the previous passage includes the fundamental principles of the doctrine of Great Unity. The key distinction between Moderate Prosperity and Great Unity lies in the establishment and dissolution of boundaries. Pursuing Great Unity requires breaking down the boundaries of nation, family, and self (status, wealth, ethnicity, gender) because "only Heaven is the origin of human life, as everyone is born directly under Heaven's jurisdiction, and All Under Heaven belongs to the public". In fact, his interpretation of "All Under Heaven is impartial" is completely new. Indeed, it can be said that he injected new vitality into the concept of "All Under Heaven is impartial" by introducing the concept of "Humans are born from Heaven". The various innovations in the construction of Great Unity are all based on the concept that humans are born from Heaven. Now, let us briefly explore the origins and development of this doctrine.[13]

Kang Youwei had previously written a book titled *Common Principles of Humanity* (*Renlei gongli* 人類公理) which is highly likely the same as the *Complete Book of True Principles and Public Laws* (*Shili gongfa quanshu* 實理公法全書) that we see today. The first principle in this book is "Each person is allocated the original essence of Heaven and Earth to become human" (人各分天地之原質以為人) (Kang 2007, 1:148). However, this book was only a rough draft, and the nature and meaning of this principle is somewhat ambiguous. Kang Youwei properly

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13   The author has another article on "Humans are Born from Heaven" which explains it in more detail." (Gong 2018, 91–97))

clarified the doctrine that humanity is born from Heaven during his time in the Thatched Hut of Ten-Thousand Trees (*wanmu caotang* 萬木草堂) (Kang 2012c, 87, 136).[14]

In fact, the doctrine that humanity is born from Heaven is a conceptual trend within the Confucianism of the Warring States and the Han dynasty. It originated from the traditional study of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and can be found scattered throughout works such as the *Classic of Filial Piety* (*Xiaojing* 孝經), the *Book of Rites*, the *Xunzi* (荀子), *Elder Dai's Book of Rites* (*Da Dai liji* 大戴禮記), and even in the New Text classical studies (*Jinwen jingxue* 今文經學) and memorials of the Han dynasty. It was further elaborated as a philosophical system of the relationship between Heaven and humans by Dong Zhongshu. The doctrine that humanity is born from Heaven essentially deepens the existential aspect of Confucian humaneness, confirming the connection between humans and Heaven and affirming the connection between humans and humaneness (*ren* 仁) (Gong 2021).

After his failed attempt at submitting a petition to the emperor in 1888, Kang Youwei spent several years disengaging from political affairs and focused on studying the classics. He returned to the traditional study of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and, particularly inspired by Dong Zhongshu, rediscovered the doctrine that humanity is born from Heaven. He keenly grasped the significant value of this doctrine and believed that "it was a unique creation that was part of Confucius' oral discourse" (當是孔子口說特創此義) (Kang 2012a, 129). In the traditional study of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, "oral discourse" (*koushuo* 口說) was equivalent to "subtle words" (*weiyan* 微言), but for Kang Youwei it was in these "subtle words" that the spirit of the reformer Confucius was truly embodied. Thus, he further stated, "These are truly the subtle words of Confucius' school, and they encompass all the meanings of Confucius" (此真孔門微言，而為孔子一切義所出也) (Kang 2007, 6:60). The theory that humanity is born from Heaven became for Kang the fundamental purpose underlying all of Confucius' teachings.

This belief, when combined with the theory of Confucius as a reformer, can be understood as stating that the fundamental principle of the spirit of Confucius' reforms is that humanity is born from Heaven. Since the theory that humanity is born from Heaven is essentially a manifestation of Confucian humaneness, this proposition is essentially equivalent to another frequently stated proposition by Kang Youwei: that Confucius established his teachings based on humaneness.

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14   Translator's note: The Thatched Hut of Ten-Thousand Trees was a private college in Guangzhou where Kang Youwei taught from 1891 to 1898.

仁者，在天為生生之理，在人為博愛之德。……尸子曰：「孔子
本仁。」此孔子立教之本。孟子謂：「道二，仁與不仁而已。」
老子以天地為不仁，故自私；孔子以天地為仁，故博愛，立三世
之法，望大道之行。

Humaneness is guided by the principle of nurturing life, which originates
from Heaven, and resides in the virtue of universal love among people.
[…] As Shizi said, 'Confucius is fundamentally humane.' This forms the
base of the founding of Confucius' teachings. Mencius stated, 'There are
only two ways: the humane and non-humane'. Laozi regarded Heaven
and Earth as non-humane, and thus there is selfishness, while Confucius
regarded Heaven and Earth as humane, and thus there is universal love.
He established the doctrine of the Three Ages, anticipating the realiza-
tion of the great way. (Kang 2012d, 208; 2012a, 154)

Kang Youwei's basic judgment is accurate. The Confucian principle of humane-
ness is based on the recognition of the virtue of Heaven and Earth (*tiandi zhi
de* 天地之德), and the doctrine that humans are born from Heaven vividly and
deeply reflects this. However, the way in which Kang Youwei understands and
applies the doctrine that humans are born from Heaven is fundamentally differ-
ent from the tradition in New Text classical studies (*Jinwen jingxue* 今文經學).
Although the tradition takes humaneness as its fundamental purpose and regards
the illumination of Heaven and Earth as the basis of the proper order of ritual and
music, humaneness and the concept of "Heaven-born" (*tiansheng* 天生) are not in
opposition to other principles. In particular, the establishment of hierarchical re-
lationships based on natural differences among people is a fundamental principle
in creating order. The New Text classical studies (*Jinwen jingxue* 今文經學) tra-
dition was not unaware of the potential gaps in this regard, but always sought to
balance these relationships.

However, when Kang Youwei states that the fact that Confucius established his
teachings based on humaneness (孔子立教本仁) and the idea that humans are
born from Heaven are the source of "all the meaning of Confucius", he embeds
them within the theoretical framework of Confucius making reforms towards a
future civilization. These theses became the most ideal principles of value and the
goal of the evolution of human civilization. Under their influence, various hier-
archical orders and ethical relationships that formed due to natural differences
among humans lost their legitimacy. The latter includes many "boundaries" (*jie* 界)
as Kang refers to them: national boundaries, family boundaries, personal bound-
aries (class, wealth, ethnicity, gender), and so on. Their tense opposition to the
"humaneness" of humans being born from Heaven constitutes the core value that

distinguishes Kang Youwei's vision of Moderate Prosperity from the Great Unity. Below, we will briefly provide examples to demonstrate this.

First, we will focus on the political sphere. The hierarchy of political order, with its distinctions of rank and status, is summarized in the Confucian tradition by the relationship of "ruler and minister" (*junchen* 君臣). Kang Youwei was from the beginning particularly concerned with the issue of hierarchy. Drawing from the New Text School tradition, he discovered an inclination towards equality, an innovation that he attributed to Confucius (Kang 2010a, 64). His theory of Confucius as a reformer implies that prior to Confucius society was characterized by a rigid division of ranks, but Confucius introduced a turn towards an egalitarian civilization. The basis for this is the concept that humanity is born from Heaven. Kang Youwei states, "All people are born from Heaven, they are equally the children of Heaven, sharing the same rounded head and square feet, belonging to the same human race, and thus achieving equality" (人皆天所生也，同為天之子，同此圓首方足之形，同在一種族之中，至平等也) (ibid., 59).

As for the hierarchy of rank and status, in Kang Youwei's work it comes about as a result of human vices such as selfishness, deceit, and tyranny that have existed since ancient times, taking form over the long course of history. The "spiritual leaders" of various ancient civilizations, including Confucius, had no choice but to compromise with the already-existing hierarchical social structure. Unlike traditional Confucianism, which upholds the significance of hierarchical order, Kang Youwei, invoking the notions of barbarism and history, rashly undermines the significance of hierarchy in civilized life. As such, equality and hierarchy become the yardstick by which he measures civilization. As he says,

大抵愈野蠻則階級愈多，愈文明則階級愈少。

Generally speaking, the more barbaric a society, the more classes there are, while the more civilized a society, the fewer classes there are. (Kang 2010a, 60)

且以事勢言之，凡多為階級而人類不平者，人必愚而苦，國必弱而亡，如印度是已。凡掃盡階級，人類平等者，人必智而樂，國必盛而治，如美國是也。其他人民、國勢之愚智、苦樂、盛衰，皆視其人民平等不平等之多少分數為之。

Moreover, speaking in terms of practical situations, whenever there are many classes causing inequality among human beings, people are bound to be ignorant and suffer, and the country is bound to be weak and perish, as is the case with India. On the other hand, when classes are eradicated and

human beings are equal, people are bound to be intelligent and happy, and the country is bound to prosper and be well-governed, as is the case with the United States. The level of ignorance or intelligence, suffering or happiness, prosperity or decline in other peoples and nations is all determined by the degree of equality or inequality among their people. (Kang 2010a, 65)

Following this trend of the evolution of civilization, in volume two of his *Book of Great Unity* Kang Youwei provides a "Table of Human Equality and Evolution" (人類平等進化表). He envisioned a world of Great Unity with no monarch but with a democratic system and no distinction between nobility and commoners, and where the people elect officials who serve a limited term and then return to being ordinary citizens (Kang 2010a, 79–80). In short, the Great Unity is a world where the masses are the political subjects, organizing and functioning autonomously—a world without a "ruler" (*jun* 君). The Great Unity dissolves "ruler and minister", that symbol of the system of hierarchy and social rank, thus realizing universal political equality.

Furthermore, let us turn our attention to the domain of family and society. The relationship between men and women in the household is traditionally summarized by the Confucian concept of "husband-and-wife" (*fufu* 夫婦). Its core principle is that there is a distinction between the genders, and in practice this leads to women's lives being confined to the household and makes them heavily dependent on their fathers, husbands, and sons. Kang Youwei, however, responded to this using the principle of humanity being born from Heaven:

> 人者天所生也，有是身體即有是權利，侵權者謂之侵天權，讓權者謂之失天職。男與女雖異形，其為天民而共受天權，一也。

> Human are born from Heaven, and with their physical existence comes their inherent rights. Those who violate these rights are infringing upon heavenly rights, while those who relinquish their rights are failing in their heavenly duties. Although men and women have different physical forms, as heavenly people, they share the same entitlement to heavenly rights – this is unity. (Kang 2010a, 91)

> 女子為天生之人，即當同擔荷天下之事者也。性分所固有者，分於天之仁智，當施於人人；職分所當為者，既有人之心思，當任其事業。

> Women are born from Heaven, and so should equally shoulder the responsibilities of All Under Heaven. The qualities inherent to their gender, bestowed upon them by the humaneness and wisdom of Heaven,

should be shared with all people. When duties are assigned to those who should do them, since women are humans with thoughts, they ought to be trusted with various tasks. (Kang 2010a, 106)

Kang Youwei acknowledges that there are differences between men and women in terms of physical abilities and temperament. However, he believes that these natural differences should not overshadow their equal qualifications as human beings. Since both men and women are equally human, they should enjoy the same happiness and possess an equal degree of freedom and independence. He argues that the hierarchical relationship of male superiority and female subordination has existed since ancient times, based on male physical advantages and the necessity of procreation. However, Confucius' reform of the classics introduced the greeting fiancée rite which signified the equality between men and women. In short, in early human society "nature" (*ziran* 自然) gave rise to the dominance of men and the subordination of women, but Confucius revealed the equality of men and women, since there were both "naturally" (*tiansheng* 天生) equal. The progress of civilization thus requires the complete and independent equality of men and women.

For this reason, Kang Youwei tentatively set out what marital relationships in the era of Great Unity would look like. Men and women would be completely equal in marriage, with complete freedom in forming and dissolving unions. He even proposed that marriage contracts should not be long-term to avoid creating dependency (Kang 2010a, 127–30). In reality, however, this type of marital life lacks a shared purpose and substance, leaving only an empty form. Kang has only one purpose: to guarantee absolute individual independence and freedom. This, however, undermines the Confucian concept of the husband-and-wife relationship.

Kang Youwei clearly recognizes that an important reason for the establishment of the relationship between husband and wife is the "deep affection between father and son" (篤父子之親). Therefore, his dissolution of the husband-and-wife relationship also laid the groundwork for dissolving the relationship between father and son. Kang Youwei was not unaware that the relationship between father and son is a prerequisite for human existence, the most natural ethical relationship, and the foundation of human society's procreation and survival. However, he also sees that making the family the foundation of society has various shortcomings. Firstly, within the family there are conflicts, troubles, and resentments that suppress individual desires. Furthermore, the societal impact of the family is a particular focus of his criticism. He sees that the limited love within the family is the root cause of social inequality, as when people only love their own relatives then all kinds of resources and wealth will not flow into other areas of society, and public affairs are destined to be weak, hindering the progress of civilization. Moreover, when people

only care about their relatives they will do anything for them, which leads to various evil deeds. Therefore, basing societal development solely on the family will limit society to a lower stage, and human nature will not be fully realized.

In sum, Kang Youwei's criticism is not directed at the family itself but rather at a particular type of civilization. This is his reinterpreted conception of "[Ruling] All Under Heaven [Like] a Household" (*jiatianxia* 家天下), which refers to a civilization centred around the family that leads to a situation where there is only the household and no country (or politics), only private matters and no public affairs. To transcend this stage, it is necessary to dissolve the foundational relationship between father and son and enter a civilized order where everyone is subordinated to "natural" (*tiansheng*) public values. He writes:

> 康有為曰：孔子曰：人非人能為，人皆天所生也，故人人皆直隸
> 於天而獨立。政府者，人人所共設也，公立政府當公養人而公教
> 之、公恤之。……故必天下為公，而後可至於太平大同也。

> Kang Youwei said: 'Confucius said: A human is not able to be produced by a human. Humans are all born from Heaven. Thus, people are directly subject to Heaven alone. Governments are established by people, and a public government should provide for and educate the people, and care for their welfare ... Therefore, it is necessary for the world to be governed impartially before we can achieve Great Peace and Great Unity.' (Kang 2010a, 157–58)

For this reason, he designed a comprehensive public system to replace the functions of the family and to take on the responsibility for life, aging, sickness, and death (ibid., 156–201). He hoped that through this a new civilizational order would arise where a new meaning of "All Under Heaven is impartial" could be established.

This article has, in brief, demonstrated how Kang Youwei used the idea that humans are born from Heaven to dissolve the three ethical relationships of ruler and minister, husband and wife, and father and son, as well as three major aspects of human life: politics, gender, and the family. However, these three relationships are the most cherished parts of the Confucian political and ethical tradition, known as the "Three Mainstays". In this sense, Kang Youwei's ideal of the Great Unity, constructed based on the principle that humans are born from Heaven, represents a profound breakthrough in the Confucian tradition.

For example, even his contemporary Liao Ping 廖平 (1852–1932), who shared Kang's progressive stance, sharply criticized the era of Great Unity depicted in the "Evolution of Ritual" for retaining a monarch (Liao 2015, 11:835). Moreover, the

statement "women have their [husband's] family" (*nü you gui* 女有歸) that appears in the "Evolution of Ritual" suggests their subordination to the male household, so Kang Youwei had to change this to "women have prominence" (*nü you kui* 女有歸)[15] to emphasize female independence (Kang 2007, 5:555).

Furthermore, the line "Do not only treat your kin as kin, do not only treat your children as your children" (不獨親其親，不獨子其子) in the "Evolution of Ritual" suggests that individuals could expand their love to others while still having a family. Kang Youwei understood this as the elimination of familial attachments in order to achieve selflessness, which was a daring interpretation. Therefore, although he claimed that his construction of the Great Unity was expounding on the spirit of Confucius' reform, his ideal of the Great Unity was constructed after placing the concept that humans are born from Heaven within it, and so was far removed from the original "Evolution of Ritual" itself, and it greatly exceeded the ideal scope of the Confucian tradition.

However, we should not simply conclude that Kang Youwei is not a Confucian, a recurring claim since his appearance on the stage of modern history which has proven to be unhelpful in understanding his ideas. We must first grasp his fundamental ambition, which is to demonstrate Confucian universalism in the face of the modern world, preserving China's cultural status and revitalizing it. In terms of this stance and its historical influence, Kang Youwei can be considered to be a pioneer who expanded the theoretical vision of Confucianism and responded to the modern challenges his era faced.

Conclusion: Kang Youwei's Reinterpretation of Classical Studies and Its Modern Challenges

Although this article has emphasized the significance of Kang Youwei's theory of the Three Ages, it has also recognized the difficulties and shortcomings inherent in it. Therefore, we do not consider it as a definitive answer to any of the questions raised, but rather as a bridge to understanding the Confucian tradition, especially the tradition of classical studies, and as a response to contemporary challenges.

In summing up, first let us discuss the significance of Kang Youwei's understanding of the classical studies tradition. His theory of the Three Ages is built upon

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15   Translator's note: Kang has changed the character gui, which here refers to women "returning" to their husband's household after marriage, to the similar-looking character kui, which is a word that refers to the protruding qualities of mountains. Indeed, the only difference in the characters gui and kui is that the latter has the semantic component for "mountain" at the top.

two fundamental theories: the reform by a spiritual leader, and the concept that humans are born from Heaven. They both are ancient theories that had long been obscured in the history of classical studies, but due to Kang's adherence to that tradition they were rediscovered and further developed into stronger and more thorough forms.

Fundamentally, the intent behind the traditional view of Confucius as a reformer is to emphasize for later generations the eternal value and significance of the Five Classics, with the *Spring and Autumn Annals* being the pivotal text. This theory was a product of classical studies, but had not yet entered into history. Since the establishment of the Erudites of the Five Classics (*wujing boshi* 五經博士) by Emperor Wu of Han 漢武帝, classical studies began to exert its power in shaping civilization, and some have said that at this point classical studies entered the history of civilization. In a sense, the theory of Confucius as a reformer had fulfilled its mission and gradually faded from the intellectual stage. However, in modern times, figures like Kang Youwei and other scholars of classical studies recognized that the true crisis of the civilizational change of modernity lay in the separation between classical studies and the history of civilization, and that perhaps classical studies could no longer continue to have an impact on Chinese civilization. It was thus for this reason that Kang Youwei revived the theory of Confucius as a reformer, in order to defend the civilizational significance of classical studies.

In this sense, it is not unreasonable for him to define "civilization" as the fundamental principle of the Six Classics. The concept of civilization not only aptly encapsulates the profound significance of classical studies in the last two thousand years of China's history, but it is also a central topic in the modern world where civilizations coexist and compete. Only by addressing how classical studies have shaped the history of civilization and can lead us to a better civilization in the future, can classical studies overcome the danger of being separated from the history of civilization and maintain the continuity of the Chinese civilizational tradition. This is the profound and far-sighted thinking behind Kang Youwei's construction of his theory of the Three Ages.

Next, let us look again at his theory that humans are born from Heaven. In unearthing the theory that humans are born from Heaven, and fully developing its conceptual power, Kang Youwei has made a significant contribution. This unique ancient theory serves as a space for the expression of numerous precious virtues and values within Confucianism, and its influence is profound. By examining the dimensions of the idea that humans are born from Heaven and the natural differences between individuals, we can uncover many fundamental tensions in human life and use it as an analytical framework to understand the various institutional designs in classical

studies. Kang Youwei, through a process of "ideologization" (*zhuyi hua* 主義化), constructed a symmetrical portrayal of Moderate Prosperity and Great Unity that can serve as an ideal model, demonstrating its theoretical significance.

Let us look at the issue from another perspective. Being thrust into the modern world was a fate that China just had to accept. Confucianism and classical studies can only respond to the various challenges of modernity though a swift adjustment of mindset and by having a clear understanding of those challenges. Compared to many conservatives, Kang Youwei was sufficiently clear-minded and insightful in this regard, and his fundamental understanding of the modern world is something that later generations cannot ignore.

Firstly, he recognized that modernity is represents the disenchantment of the world. As a result, the revered historical accounts of the Sage Kings preserved in the Six Classics have lost their status as models of civilization. The continuing nostalgia of Confucians for the virtues of the illustrious Five Emperors and the rituals of the flourishing Three Dynasties is an anachronistic sentiment. From his portrayal of Yao, Shun, and Yu as local chieftains to his critique of the antiquated nature of the Six Classics, what Kang Youwei said was indeed startling and continues to be difficult for people to accept. However, this demonstrates his frank confrontation with modernity.

Moreover, in the modern world people believe that civilization has evolved away from the eras of barbarism and ignorance. One cannot but accept this belief, but it carries a hidden danger: if we simply adopt the narrative of modern civilizational history then the entire Chinese cultural tradition becomes a mere validation or puzzle piece in world history, and the continuity with that cultural tradition becomes severed. So, how can we relate China's own narrative within this framework? This fundamentally requires an interpretation of civilization in the Chinese context, and the answers must be sought within the Confucian classics that shaped Chinese civilization. After the decline of the historical accounts of the Sage Kings, Confucius, the last author of the Six Classics, stands as the sole answer to assume this significant cultural responsibility. Only by taking Confucius' reform of the Six Classics as the beginning of civilization can China's civilizational identity be maintained, which opens up the discussion of civilizational history starting from Confucian classics. Therefore, to a large extent, this is not even about personal sentiments towards Confucius, but is rather a necessity to safeguard China's cultural tradition in the face of the challenges of the times.

Furthermore, in a modern world characterized by the coexistence of multiple civilizations, the dominant position held by the West, with its entirely different way of life and civilizational order compared to China, poses a significant challenge to

China's traditional standards of civilization. On the other hand, China itself is undergoing a transition from an ancient empire and traditional society to a modern nation and society, necessitating guidance on what constitutes a better civilization. Therefore, the modern mission of classical studies is to provide a comprehensive explanation and evaluation of issues such as the existence of other civilizations, China's position in the world, and its own future path. In essence, it is about providing a universal interpretation of world history. For Kang Youwei, the challenges of the modern world revolve around the relationship between civilization and history, and constructing a narrative of civilization history is the most direct way to respond to these challenges. Of course, this is not without flaws or drawbacks, as Kang Youwei's pursuit of an extreme and thorough approach turns it into a theory of historical evolution, with profound and far-reaching consequences.

In fact, the real legacy left by Kang Youwei is, in each concrete elaboration, the way he fully demonstrated his understanding of the modes of traditional Chinese civilization and modernity. He posed questions, expressed doubts, and attempted to provide answers that future generations can learn from. As we are still living in essentially the same world today and the task of carrying on the tradition of civilization is not yet complete, we need to continuously challenge each discussion and discourse raised by Kang Youwei. His significance has not yet come to an end.

Acknowledgements

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SPECIAL ISSUE
THE CONTEMPORARY REVIVAL
OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE
PHILOSOPHY

Reconstructing Confucian Philosophy

Virtue Ethicist of the Ideal Type: Aristotle or Zhu Xi?

Yong HUANG

Abstract

There has been an impressive revival of virtue ethics as a rival to deontology and consequentialism in contemporary Western normative ethics. Correspondingly, many comparative philosophers have shown a great interest in finding virtue ethics potentials in other philosophical traditions in the world, the most impressive of which is Confucianism. While the result of such comparative studies is equally impressive, in almost all these studies, scholars tend to use a historical example of virtue ethics in the Western philosophical tradition, particularly the Aristotelian one, as the ideal type of virtue ethics, to measure historical examples of virtue ethics in other philosophical traditions. The result is thus conceivably skewed: however great these non-Western examples of virtue ethics are, they are perceived to be deficient in one way or another in comparison with the Aristotelian one. In this paper, I first construct an ideal type of virtue ethics in its contrast with ideal types of consequentialism and deontology: a normative ethics in which virtue is primary. I then use this ideal type of virtue ethics to measure Aristotle's virtue ethics and Zhu Xi's virtue ethics, both regarded as historical types of virtue ethics, concluding that Zhu Xi's is closer to the ideal type of virtue ethics than Aristotle's.

Keywords: Zhu Xi, Aristotle, Virtue Ethics, Confucianism, Comparative Philosophy

Etika vrlin idealnega tipa: Aristotel ali Zhu Xi?

Izvleček

V sodobni zahodni normativni etiki je opazna izjemna oživitev etike kreposti, ki se postavlja kot tekmica deontologiji in konsekvencializmu. Kot odziv na to so se številni primerjalni filozofi z velikim zanimanjem posvetili raziskovanju potencialov etike kreposti v drugih filozofskih tradicijah po svetu, pri čemer izstopa konfucianizem. Kljub izjemnim rezultatom takšnih primerjalnih študij pa teoretiki in teoretičarke v skoraj vseh teh študijah pogosto uporabljajo zgodovinske primere etike kreposti iz zahodne filozofske tradicije, še posebej Aristotelove, kot idealen model za vrednotenje etike kreposti v zgodovini drugih filozofskih tradicij. To lahko privede do pristranskega dojemanja: ne glede na to, kako izjemni so ti nezahodni primeri etike kreposti, se jih v primerjavi z aristotelovsko

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na tak ali drugačen način dojema kot pomanjkljive. V članku najprej razvijem idealen tip etike kreposti v kontrastu z idealnimi tipi konsekvencializma in deontologije, pri čemer gre za normativno etiko, kjer je krepost postavljena v ospredje. Nato uporabim ta idealni tip etike kreposti za oceno Aristotelove in Zhu Xijeve etike kreposti, ki ju smatramo za zgodovinska primera, in sklenem, da je Zhu Xijeva etika vrlin bližja idealnemu tipu etike kreposti kot Aristotelova.

Ključne besede: Zhu Xi, Aristotel, etika vrlin, konfucianizem, primerjalna filozofija

Introduction

In the last a few decades, virtue ethics, once regarded as ethics appropriate only for the ancient people, has experienced a very impressive revival, becoming a serious rival to deontology and utilitarianism, once considered to be the only appropriate ethics for the modern people (see Slote 2015). There are at least three indications for the flourishing of virtue ethics today. First, virtue ethics itself has become pluralized: while Aristotelianism is still the mainstream of virtue ethics, there are other schools of contemporary virtue ethics primarily drawing on other philosophical traditions, such as the Stoic, the Humean, the Nietzschean, and the Deweyan, among others. Second, while at the beginning of its revival, virtue ethicists devoted their main efforts to criticizing its rivals, deontology and consequentialism, virtue ethicists today are more seriously reflecting on its own potential or actual difficulties and respond to criticisms its rivals have started to lodge against them; in contrast, its rivals, especially Kantianism, and especially in China, start to unrelentlessly attack virtue ethics. Third, scholars doing comparative philosophy have become eager to look for the virtue ethics potentials in their own traditions, and thus articles and even books abound in Hindu virtue ethics (Gier 2005), Buddhist virtue ethics (Kewn 1992), Islamic virtue ethics (Bucar 2017), Daoist virtue ethics (Huang 2010a; Huang 2015), and, most importantly, Confucian virtue ethics (Huff 2015; Walsh 2015; Harris 2014).

However, comparative studies of virtue ethics have generally tended to use a historical instance of virtue ethics in the Western philosophical tradition, particularly the Aristotelian virtue ethics, as a measure, first to identify its main features and then try to see whether such features can be found in the tradition the comparativist is concerned with in order to identify whether virtue ethics also exists in that tradition. An obvious deficiency of such a comparative work is that, since it uses a historical instance of virtue ethics in the Western philosophical tradition as a paradigm to measure instances of virtue ethics in a different philosophical tradition, it not only tends to cut the feet of latter to fit the shoes of the former but also to draw the conclusion that, while the latter does contain something like virtue

ethics, it is somewhat defective or at least deficient in the sense that it doesn't contain all the features the former has or doesn't contain them as systematically, thoroughly, and coherently as the former does. This problem can be seen better if we imagine a comparativist starts off his or her comparative work from the opposite side: to use the instance of virtue ethics in the tradition the comparativist is concerned with, Confucian virtue ethics for example, as the paradigm, first to identify its main features and then try to see whether such features can be found in an instance of virtue ethics in the Western philosophical tradition, Aristotle's ethics for example, in order to identify whether the latter is a virtue ethics. We can easily imagine the result: although we can say Aristotle's ethics is something like virtue ethics, compared to Confucian ethics as the paradigm of virtue ethics, it is more or less defective or deficient. This tells us that, in order to determine whether a particular ethical theory in a particular historical tradition is a virtue ethics or not, we should not use a different ethical theory in a different historical tradition as a measure. Instead, we should use virtue ethics of an ideal type as a common measure to be applied to any ethical theories in any historical traditions. For this reason, in this essay, I shall first explain what virtue ethics of the ideal type is or should be (Section 2), and then apply it to Aristotle's ethics, concluding that it is short of being a virtue ethics of the ideal type (Section 3), and then apply it to the neo-Confucian Zhu Xi's ethics, arguing that it is a genuine virtue ethics of the ideal type or at least closer to it than Aristotle's (Sections 4), before drawing a brief conclusion (Section 5)

Ideal Type of Virtue Ethics

Virtue ethics is not any type of ethics that includes virtue talks, as otherwise almost every normative ethics would be a virtue ethics, since almost every normative ethics includes some type of virtue talks to some degree. The best way to characterize the ideal type of virtue ethics is to see how it is contrasted with other two familiar (ideal) types of normative ethics: deontology and consequentialism. In contrast to deontology, in which duty or principle is primary, and consequentialism, in which consequence of actions/rules are primary, virtue ethics is a normative theory in which virtue is primary. To say that virtue is primary in virtue ethics is not to say, on the one hand, that moral principles or consequence cannot have any role in virtue ethics; nor is it to say, on the other hand, that virtue cannot have any role to play in deontology or consequentialism.

On the one hand, virtue ethics does not (have to) exclude consequence or principle. A benevolent person, i.e., a person with the virtue of benevolence, for example,

cannot be the one who doesn't care about the consequence of his or her action at all. It is in this sense that Michael Slote claims that agent-based moralities, his term for virtue ethics, or the pure form thereof, "*do* take consequences in account because they insist on or recommend an overall state of motivation that worries about and tries to produce good consequences. Someone genuinely concerned with the well-being of another person wants good consequences for that other" (Slote 2001, 34). However, this doesn't mean that virtue ethics is no different from consequentialism. On the one hand, "if someone does make every effort to find out relevant facts and is careful in acting, then I think she cannot be criticized for acting immorally, however badly things turn out" (ibid.); On the other hand, "if the bad results are due to her lack of intelligence or other cognitive defects she is incapable of learning about, we can make epistemic criticisms of her performance, but these needn't be thought of as moral" (ibid.). In both of these two cases, in contrast, consequentialism will make negative moral judgements, as the consequence turns out to be bad.

Similarly, virtue ethics can also leave room for moral principles or rules. It's true that a completely virtuous person, like Confucius in his 70's when he can "follow what his heart desires without trespassing any moral rules" (*Analects* 2.4), has no need for moral principles. However, moral rules are certainly helpful for people who are not (so) virtuous and would like to be virtuous. So although radical virtue ethicist, such as Anscombe, would like to replace virtue for moral principles, most virtue ethicists today allow moral principles to play their roles in virtue ethics. However, there are a few salient features of such rules in virtue ethics, which distinguish it from deontology. First, these rules are derived from human characters, both virtuous and vicious. In Aristotle, corresponding to every feeling, there are three character traits, one virtue and two vices. So, as pointed out by Rosalind Hursthouse, "Not only does each virtue generate a prescription—do what is honest, charitable, generous—but each vice a prohibition—do not do what is dishonest, uncharitable, mean" (Hursthouse 1999, 36); Second the primarily function of such rules in virtue ethics is not to provide action guides for non-virtuous people but to provide opportunities for such people to realize the internal value of moral actions so that they will form a habit to act morally and become virtuous; Third, even when following such rules, a person at least need to be willing to acquire the corresponding virtues and in this sense and to that degree is already virtuous. This is because "a certain amount of virtue and corresponding moral or practical wisdom (*phronesis*) might be required both to interpret the rules and to determine *which* rule was most appropriately to be applied in a particular case" (ibid., 40; emphasis original). So, while virtue ethics can have moral principles, such principles are derived from, subordinated to, and relying upon virtue, which is primary.

On the other hand, deontology and consequentialism can also leave room for virtues. Kantian ethics is a typical version of deontology, which aims to formulate some formal principle(s), the so-called categorical imperative(s), to determine whether a person's action has any moral worth. However, virtue is an important concept in Kant's ethics as well. Indeed, while the first part of his *The Metaphysics of Morals* is "Metaphysical First Principles of the Doctrine of Right", its second part is "Metaphysical First Principles of the Doctrine of Virtue". In this part, Kant provides the following definition of virtue: "the capacity and deliberate resolve to withstand a strong but unjust opponent is fortitude (*fortitudo*); and fortitude in relation to the forces opposing a moral attitude of will *in us* is virtue (*virtus*, *fortitudo moralis*)" (Kant 1964, 38). This definition is quite revealing. For Kant, the moral attitude of will is free, rational, and without any empirical elements. However, human beings are not only rational but also empirical. Thus a person as an empirical being often has the natural inclinations to not follow moral laws legislated by the person as a rational being, and virtue is precisely the fortitude to resist such natural inclinations. Here, virtue is clearly subordinated to moral law: its function is to help one overcome anti-moral forces and thus follow moral laws. Indeed, virtue here understood as a kind of fortitude, as pointed out by Robert Johnson and Cureton Adam, is very different from virtue in virtue ethics, where it is a kind of habitualized disposition of emotions and desires. As a matter of fact, Kant's virtue is more like continence in Aristotle, which, just like incontinence, is not virtue (Johnson and Cureton 2016, §11).

For this reason, we can understand why attempts to interpret the Kantian ethics as a virtue ethics cannot succeed. In her paper, "Kant after Virtue", published in 1984 on a book symposium on Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, Onora O'Neill, focusing on Kant's idea of maxim, argues that Kant is a virtue ethicist. This is because, in her view, maxims, as "underlying principles that make sense of an agent's varied specific intentions," "can have little to do with the rightness or wrongness of acts of specific types, and much more to do with the underlying moral quality of a life, or aspects of a life…. To have maxims of a morally appropriate sort would then be a matter of leading certain sort of life, or being a certain sort of person" (O'Neill 1989, 152). Thus, she claims that Kant "sees our duties as in the first place duties to act out of certain maxims—that is, to structure our moral lives along certain fundamental lines, or to have certain virtues" (ibid., 153). However, as we know, the most fundamental concept in Kant is not maxim but duty. Sometimes we have to refrain from acting on a maxim. It is duty that can tell whether we should act on a maxim or not. Realizing that, O'Neill adds a "Postscript" to this paper when collected in her *Constructions of Reason: Exploration of Kant's Practical Philosophy* a few years later, acknowledging that "characterizing Kant as offering an ethic of

virtue because he insists on the priority of principles over their outward expression is misleading…. Kant's fundamental notion is that of the morally worthy principle that provides guidelines not only for matters of outward right and obligation, but for good characters and institutions as well" (ibid., 161–62).

In his "Kant's Virtue Ethics", instead of maxims, Robert B. Louden focuses on Kant's idea of "good will", which, Kant claims, is the only thing that could be considered good without qualification. Since Kant's good will is "a state of character which becomes the basis for all of one's action," Louden argues that for Kant "what is fundamentally important in his ethics is not acts but agent" (Louden 1997, 289). In this sense, Kant may also be regarded as a virtue ethicist, since for Kant "virtue is the human approximation of the good will" and "the good will is the only unqualified good", and thus "moral virtue, for Kant, is foundational, and not …. a concept derivative or secondary" (ibid., 290). However, Louden immediately realizes that Kant is not a genuine virtue ethicist:

> Both the good will and virtue are defined in terms of obedience to moral law, for they are both wills which are in conformity to moral law and which act out of respect for it … Since human virtue is defined in terms of conformity to law and the categorical imperative, it appears now that what is primary in Kantian ethics is not virtue for virtue's sake but obedience to rules. Virtue is the heart of the ethical for Kant, in the sense that it is the basis for all judgments of moral worth. But Kantian virtue is itself defined in terms of the supreme principle of morality … therefore is subordinate to the moral law, and this makes him look like an obedience-to-rules theorist. (Louden 1997, 7).

Similarly, consequentialism can also allow virtue to play its role. In Chapter 2 of his *Utilitarianism*, John Stuart Mill discusses an objection to his claim that we do everything for the sake of happiness: what about the hero or martyr, who does things "for the sake of something which he praises more than his individual happiness"? To respond, Mill asks,

> But this something, what is it, unless the happiness of others, or some of the requisites of happiness? It is noble to be capable of resigning entirely one's own portion of happiness, or chances of it: but, after all, this self-sacrifice must be for some end; it is not its own end; and if we are told that its end is not happiness, but virtue, which is better than happiness, I ask, would the sacrifice be made if the hero or martyr did not believe that it would earn for others immunity from similar sacrifices? (Mill 1972, 16)

So virtue for Mill is important only instrumentally, because virtuous people tend to increase happiness by their self-sacrifice, and indeed we regard someone as virtuous only in the sense and to the degree that they increase happiness. Indeed, if one makes self-sacrifice for purpose other than increasing others' happiness, then he "is no more deserving of admiration than the ascetic mounted on his pillar. He may be an inspiriting proof of what men can do, but assuredly not an example of what they should" (ibid., 16–17). So virtue in Mill's ethics is not primary; the consequence of happiness is primary in his ethics.

This is also true even in Chapter 4, which is entirely devoted to the topic of virtue, of the same book when Mill seems to argue even that virtue has its intrinsic and not merely instrumental value. Here, Mill not only says that it is palpable that people desire things other than happiness, virtue, for example, and the absence of vice and that his utilitarianism doesn't deny it; but he also maintains that virtue "is to be desired disinterestedly, for itself," and utilitarian moralists "not only place virtue at the very head of the things which are good as means to the ultimate end, but they also recognise as a psychological fact the possibility of its being, to the individual, a good in itself, without looking to any end beyond" (ibid., 37). In this sense, we can seek virtue not only as a means to happiness but for itself. If so, virtue seems to have obtained its primacy, at least in terms of its intrinsic value, in Mill's utilitarianism. However this is not the case. On the one hand, at the very beginning of Chapter 4, Mill states that "happiness is desirable, and the only thing desirable, as an end; all other things being only desirable as means to that end" (ibid., 63–64). Here he makes his point crystal clear: happiness is the *only* thing desirable as an end, which must have excluded everything else, including virtue, as desirable as an end; all other things, which must include virtue, are desirable only as means to happiness. On the other hand, he states that to seek virtue as an end is not contradictory to the utility principle:

> the mind is not in a right state, not in a state conformable to Utility, not in the state most conducive to the general happiness, unless it does love virtue in this manner – as a thing desirable in itself, even although, in the individual instance, it should not produce those other desirable consequences which it tends to produce, and on account of which it is held to be virtue. This opinion is not, in the smallest degree, a departure from the Happiness principle. (Mill 1972, 37).

Here, Mill still maintains the view that virtue tends to increase happiness and so one should seek it, but the point is that even if it does not have the instrumental value to produce happiness, one should still seek it, not as a means to happiness

but as an end in itself. Yet he says that even when one seeks virtue as an end and not as a means to happiness, there is no departure from the utility principle, which seems to be contradictory to what he said in Chapter 2 discussed above.

In Mill's view, happiness is the satisfaction of desire. In order to satisfy a desire, i.e., seek happiness, we often need to seek something else as a means to satisfying such a desire. Indeed, initially, this something else has only instrumental value: we seek it only because it helps us seek happiness and we will not seek it when it ceases to help us seek happiness. However, in the process of seeking this something as instrument, gradually we may have desires for it itself so much so that we will feel happy when our desire for this particular thing is satisfied even if it does not lead to the satisfaction of the desire we originally want to satisfy as an end. Here, "What was once desired as an instrument for the attainment of happiness, has come to be desired for its own sake. In being desired for its own sake it is, however, desired as part of happiness. The person is made, or thinks he would be made, happy by its mere possession; and is made unhappy by failure to obtain it" (Mill 1972, 38–39).

Mill uses money as an example to illustrate this point. Originally we don't desire money except for what it will bring to us. If it cannot bring to us what we want, we would not desire it. So in this sense money only has instrumental value. However, Mill points out,

> the love of money is not only one of the strongest moving forces of human life, but money is, in many cases, desired in and for itself; the desire to possess it is often stronger than the desire to use it, and goes on increasing when all the desires which point to ends beyond it, to be compassed by it, are falling off. It may be then said truly, that money is desired not for the sake of an end, but as part of the end. From being a means to happiness, it has come to be itself a principal ingredient of the individual's conception of happiness. (Mill 1972, 38)

Similar to money are power, fame, and, yes, virtue:

> Virtue, according to the utilitarian conception, is a good of this description. There was no original desire of it, or motive to it, save its conduciveness to pleasure, and especially to protection from pain. But through the association thus formed, it may be felt a good in itself, and desired as such with as great intensity as any other good … And consequently, the utilitarian standard … enjoins and requires the cultivation of the love of virtue up to the greatest strength possible, as being above all things important to the general happiness. (ibid., 39)

What is crucial here is that, when Mill says that when we seek virtue in itself and not merely as a means to happiness, he doesn't say that we are seeking virtue not for the sake of happiness; instead, he says that we are seeking it as a *part* of happiness. For Mill, happiness is not "an abstract idea" but "a concrete whole", to use his own terms, consisting of different parts. Indeed, in comparison with satisfaction of primitive desire, the happiness derived by having virtue is "more valuable … both in permanency … and in intensity" (ibid.). It is in this sense that Mill concludes that "it results from the preceding considerations, that there is in reality nothing desired except happiness" (ibid.).

So virtue ethics as an ideal type is a normative ethics in which virtue is primary, just as deontology is one in which duty or moral principle is primary and consequentialism is one in which consequence is primary. Virtue ethics doesn't have to, usually doesn't, and often cannot afford to, exclude moral principles or consequence as long as they are reducible to, derived from, and subordinated to virtue, just as deontology can allow virtue (and possibly consequence) to play their roles as long as they are reducible to, or derived from, and subordinated to duty or moral laws and consequentialism can leave room for virtue and moral laws as long as they are reducible to, derived from, and subordinated to consequence. As we generally agree that Kant is an example of deontologist of the ideal type and Mill one of consequentialist of the idea type, we are tempted to and normally do think Aristotle is an example of virtue ethicist of the ideal type, but it is here that we are facing a question.

Is Aristotle a Virtue Ethicist of the Ideal Type?

Aristotle's ethics is clearly different from modern normative theories of deontology and consequentialism, for both of which the rightness of actions is the primary concern. For Aristotle, however, right actions are actions that a virtuous person would characteristically do in circumstances, and thus the rightness of actions is dependent upon, derived from, and subordinated to the virtue of the agent's characters. So it is clear that in Aristotle's ethics virtue of the agent has the primacy over the rightness of action. This, however, doesn't necessarily mean that Aristotle's ethics is a virtue ethics of the ideal type. To know this, we need to know whether virtue of character has the primacy in this ethics as a whole; in other words, while virtue of characters is primary in comparison to the rightness of actions, we need to know whether there is anything that is more primary than virtues of the characters. When we start to ask this question, we may realize that, at least in two senses, as pointed out by Michael Slote, Aristotle's ethics comes short of being a virtue ethics of the ideal type.

Although Michael Slote doesn't deny that Aristotle's ethics is a virtue ethics, he says that it is not a pure or radical type of virtue ethics, which is equivalent to what I mean by virtue ethics of the ideal type. This is because, in Slote's view, in Aristotle's ethics, although virtue rather than action is the focus and virtue is prior to action, virtue is not primary. Slote argues that a pure and radical type of virtue ethics is an agent-based ethics and not merely agent-focused or agent-prior, and for him, Aristotle's ethics can at most be interpreted as agent-focused or agent-prior but not agent-based. According to one prevailing interpretation of Aristotle's ethics, in contrast to modern ethics that is focused on action, Aristotle's ethics is focused on the agent, in the sense that "Aristotle seems to focus more on the evaluation of agents and character traits than on the evaluation of actions. Moreover, for Aristotle an act is noble or fine if it is one that a noble or virtuous individual would perform, and he does say that the virtuous individual is the measure of virtue in action" (Slote 2001, 5). However, why can the virtuous individual be the measure of rightness in action? This is because Aristotle "characterizes the virtuous individual as someone who sees or perceives what is good or fine or right to do in any given situation" (ibid.). If this is the case, Slote argues, a virtuous person does it because it is a right thing to do, which forms a contrast to the view that it is a right thing to do because it is what a virtuous individual would do. In other words, according to this view, whether a thing is a right thing to do or not is in a sense independent of the agent. A virtuous person is different from non-virtuous persons only because this person has a special ability to perceive or otherwise know what is the right thing to do, but the criterion of the right thing to do is independent of the virtuous person, and virtuous person has to use this criterion to make judgement about whether a particular thing is the right thing to do or not. It is in this sense that Slote argues that Aristotle's ethics, interpreted this way, is only an agent-focused ethics and so is not a virtue ethics in a pure or radical sense. In the terms used in this paper, we may say that, since the criterion of right action, which is primary, lies outside the agent and thus must also lie outside agent's virtues, virtue in such an ethics cannot be primary, and such an ethics therefore cannot be a virtue ethics of the ideal type.

However, Slote notices that there is another equally, if not more, prevailing interpretation of Aristotle. According to this interpretation, the way to determine whether an action is the right thing to do is to see whether it is what a virtuous person would characteristically do in circumstances. In other words, the rightness of action depends upon the virtuousness of the agent's character traits. In still other words, virtue is prior to action. However, whether a character trait is a virtue or not depends upon its relationship to something else, i.e., eudaimonia, which is primary in Aristotle's ethics. At the beginning of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle

says that every skill, inquiry, action, rational choice aims at some good. For example, the good medicine aims at health, the good economics aims at wealth, and the good military science aims at victory. Moreover, some of these skills, inquiries, actions, and rational choices come under some master ones, "as bridlemaking and other sciences concerned with equine equipment come under the science of horsemanship" (Aristotle 2004, 1094a), and so the end of the master one is more worthy of choice than the subordinate ones; or we choose the subordinate ends for the sake of the master one. For Aristotle, the master science of all master sciences, the highest science, is political science, and the good it aims at is what all agree upon, eudaimonia, i.e., happiness or human flourishing, although not all agree on what eudaimonia means. So it's clear that eudaimonia has the overall primacy in his ethics. The question is how virtue is related to eudaimonia.

About this, Aristotle states clearly when he distinguishes among three types of ends we are seeking. There are ends that we aim at purely as means to other ends, which include wealth, flutes, and implements generally; there is end that we aim at just for itself and not as means to some other ends, which is eudaimonia; and there are ends we aim at both as means to other ends and for themselves, which include honour, pleasure, intellect, and every virtue. We do choose the ends of the third group

> for themselves (since we would choose each of them even if they had no good effects), but we choose them also for the sake of happiness [eudaimonia], on the assumption that through them we shall live a life of happiness; whereas happiness no one chooses for the sake of any of these nor indeed for the sake of anything else. (Aristotle 2004, 1097b)

In Slote's view, since Aristotle's ethics, interpreted this way, holds the view that

> treats the evaluation of actions as derivative from independent aretaic character evaluations and to that extent the view can be described as an agent-prior one, but since the character evaluations are not regarded as fundamental and are supposed to be grounded in a theory or view of eudaimonia, the theory is not agent-based in the above terms. (I assume here that eudaimonia and the ideas of well-being and a good life are not themselves aretaic, even though some ethical views treat them as closely connected to or based in aretaic notions). (Slote 2001, 6–7)

In contrast, Slote argues, an agent-based ethics, or virtue ethics of the ideal type, "treats the moral or ethical status of acts as entirely derivative from independent and fundamental aretaic (as opposed to deontic) ethical characterizations of

motives, character traits, or individuals. And such agent-basing is arguably not to be found in Aristotle" (ibid., 5). Here Slote emphasizes that the aretaic ethical characterizations of motives, character traits, or individuals are independent and fundamental in order to show that they are not dependent upon anything else. In Slote's view, only the agent-based ethics can be regarded as a pure and radical type of virtue ethics, which is equivalent to virtue ethics of the ideal type used in this essay, because it alone maintains the primacy of virtue in such an ethics.[1]

It may be objected that neither of the above interpretations of Aristotle's ethics, particularly regarding the role or place of the virtue in it, is adequate. We have been emphasizing that, for Aristotle, virtue is subordinate to eudaimonia, but this, the objection goes, fails to see the genuine relationship between virtue and eudaimonia. To have a proper understanding of this objection, we may turn to Aristotle's so-called function argument. Aristotle argues that the uniquely human function cannot be the life of nourishment and growth, as it is shared even by plants; it cannot be the sentient life either, as this is shared by animals. So, Aristotle claims, "what remains is a life, concerned in some way with action, of the element that possesses reason" (Aristotle 2004, 1098a). To relate virtue to such a life, Aristotle further points out,

> If the characteristic activity of a human being is an activity of the soul in accordance with reason or at least not entirely lacking it … and the characteristic activity of the good person to be to carry this out well and nobly, and a characteristic activity to be accomplished well when it is accomplished in accordance with the appropriate virtue; then if this is so, the human good [eudaimonia] turns out to be activity of the soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are several virtues, in accordance with the best and most complete. (ibid.)

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1   Although Slote himself aims to develop an agent-based virtue ethics, which is different from Aristotle's ethics that is either merely agent-focused (according to one interpretation) or agent-prior (according to another interpretation), because he refrains from providing an account of virtue, telling us what virtue is, while successful in maintaining the primacy of virtue, such an ethics, to use Gary Watson's term, is non-explanatory, as it is strange for an ethics to not tell us what virtue is when virtue is the most fundamental concept in such an ethics. In an earlier work, Slote does try to provide an account of virtue: "traits of character can qualify as virtues through what they enable their possessors to do for themselves as well as through what they enable their possessors to do for others, and so we saw there that our ordinary employment of the aretaic notion of a virtue gives fundamental evaluative significance to the well-being of the self (i.e., the agent of an act or possessor of a trait) and to the well-being of others" (Slote 1992, 91). By doing so, Slote renders virtues secondary to the well-being of the self and others, which becomes primary in his ethics, and thus his ethics is no longer a virtue ethics of the ideal type.

We have said above that eudaimonia is ultimately primary in Aristotle's ethics, to which virtue is subordinate and we seek virtue, in addition to being for the sake of virtue itself, for the sake of eudaimonia. However, here virtue seems to be more primary than eudaimonia, since the latter is defined by the former: eudaimonia is "activity of the soul in accordance with virtue." If so, Aristotle's ethics is a virtue ethics of the ideal type that we have been looking for.

However, unless we think that Aristotle is a thoroughly inconsistent philosopher, he would not hold this self-contradictory view that we seek virtue for the sake of eudaimonia which itself is defined by virtue. Richard Kraut argues that there is "no circularity in Aristotle's procedure. Happiness [eudaimonia] is the standard by which virtuous activity is judged; such activity has its prominence only because it meets the criteria Aristotle uses in his search for happiness" (Kraut 1976, 228). The criteria Aristotle uses in search for happiness, according to Kraut, includes (1) belonging "to a person in such an intimate way that it can be taken from him only with great difficulty" (1095b25-26), (2) consisting "in using a capacity that is distinctive of human beings, whatever that capacity turns out to be" (1092b22-1098a18), (3) not something that come "to us purely by chance (1099b20-25)," and (4) something that requires "hard work" (1176b28-30) (ibid.). So eudaimonia is final in Aristotle's system. The question is what eudaimonia is or what eudaimonia consists of. For Aristotle, whatever it is, it must meet above criteria, and it just turns out that virtue meets at least one of these criteria. So, Kraut continues, "It is not as though Aristotle is measuring the value of virtuous activity by means of a yardstick which has already been defined in terms of that activity. For [he] builds a reference to such activity into his definition of *eudaimonia* only after he has arrived at the conclusion that virtuous acts are among the principal ingredients of a happy life" (ibid.).

If Kraut's interpretation is correct, then Aristotle's definition of eudaimonia in terms of virtue doesn't render eudaimonia secondary to virtue and thus doesn't establish that Aristotle's ethics is a virtue ethics of the ideal type. However, even so, it appears that at least our interpretation of Aristotle's virtue as a means to eudaimonia, which renders virtue subordinate to eudaimonia, may still be wrong, as Kraut makes it clear that virtue is among the principal ingredients of eudaimonia. In other words, virtue is not instrumental to but constitutive of eudaimonia. Indeed this is perhaps the most prevailing interpretation of Aristotle among Aristotelian scholars. J. L. Ackrill, for example, compares the relationship between virtue and eudaimonia to the relationship between putting and playing golf or between playing golf and having a good holiday. The point is that

> one does not putt *in order to* play golf as one buys a club in order to play golf; and this distinction matches that between activities that do not and

that do produce a product. It will be "because" you wanted to play golf that you are putting, and "for the sake" of a good holiday that you are playing golf; but this is because putting and golfing are *constituents of* or *ingredients in* golfing and having a good holiday respectively, not because they are necessarily preliminaries. Putting *is* playing golf (though not all that playing golf is), and golfing (in a somewhat different way) *is* having a good holiday (though not all that having a good holiday is. (Akrill 1999, 61)

With this analogy, to say that virtuous activities are for the sake of eudaimonia is not to say that these activities are means through which an end, eudaimonia, can be produced outside these activities; it is rather to say that these activities are constituents of or ingredients in eudaimonia. To act virtuously is living well (having eudaimonia), though it is not all eudaimonia is.

However, even if we agree that virtuous activities are constitutive of eudaimonia, it still does not mean that virtue and eudaimonia are therefore the same concept or otherwise equal in terms of their primacy in Aristotle's ethics. Indeed, even Ackrill himself claims that here we still have "a kind of subordination which makes it perfectly possible to say that moral action is for the sake of *eudaimonia* without implying that it is a means of producing … something other than itself" (ibid., 62). We may ask why virtue is still subordinated to eudaimonia when it is constitutive of eudaimonia. There are at least four things we can say to explain this.

First, since Aristotle clearly says both that we do virtuous things for the sake of eudaimonia and that virtuous activities are constitutive of eudaimonia, to do full justice to Aristotle, we should not opposing virtue as a means to eudaimonia and virtue as a constituent of eudaimonia and force ourselves to choose one of the two as the appropriate interpretation of Aristotle's view. Instead, it is more appropriate to describe Aristotle's virtue as constitutive means to eudaimonia. Constitutive means is in contrast to productive means. According to Kiera Setiya, productive means is an efficient cause. For example, our daily exercise is a productive means of health, where health is produced by and resides outside the daily exercise. In contrast, constitutive means is an example or a component of its end. For example, jogging is a constitutive means of daily exercise (Setiya 2007, 174). Clearly, virtue as a means to eudaimonia for Aristotle is not a productive means but constitutive means to eudaimonia. However, constitutive means is still a means, and a means, whether productive or constitutive, is subordinated to its end. It is in this sense that virtue, despite its being a constituent of eudaimonia, is subordinated to eudaimonia.

Second, for Aristotle, while virtue is constitutive of eudaimonia, eudaimonia is not exclusively constituted by virtue or virtuous activities. There are at least three constituents or components of eudaimonia: "the contemplative life is best; but since we are human we will be happy only if we act from the moral virtues; and as accessories we need the external goods" (Kraut 1976, 228). Now Aristotle doesn't say eudaimonia is merely an aggregation of these three components or these three components in their interactions with each other.[2] If it is latter, then virtuous activities in themselves cannot be regarded as constituents of eudaimonia; only in their interaction with contemplation and external goods can they become constituents of eudaimonia, but virtuous activities in interaction with contemplation and external goods may not be the same as virtuous activities themselves. In this sense, clearly virtuous activities are subordinate to eudaimonia as the end. However, even if eudaimonia is merely an aggregation of the three components, including virtuous activities, there is still a good sense in which we can say virtuous activities are subordinate to eudaimonia. In this respect, Ackrill makes an important point with an interesting analogy:

> *eudaimonia*, being absolutely final and genuinely self-sufficient, is more desirable than anything else in that it *includes* everything desirable in itself. It is best, and better than everything else, not in the way that bacon is better than eggs and tomatoes (and therefore the best *of the three* to choose), but in the way that bacon, eggs, and tomatoes is a better breakfast than either bacon or eggs or tomatoes—and is indeed the best breakfast without qualification. (Ackrill 1999, 64)

Here he makes it clear that eudaimonia is absolutely final and is more desirable than anything else, including virtue, which is part of eudaimonia.

Third, as we have seen, Aristotle says that we do indeed choose all virtues "for themselves (since we would choose each of them even if they had no good effects), but we choose them also for the sake of happiness [eudaimonia], on the assumption that through them we shall live a life of happiness" (1097b). In the above, we have been talking about choosing virtues for the sake of eudaimonia, but what about choosing virtue for themselves? Does it mean that virtue is primary at least when we choose virtue for themselves? The key to answering this question is to see whether seeking virtue for themselves and seeking virtue for the

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2   Ackrill raises this issue: "The very idea of constructing a compound end out of two or more independent ends may rouse suspicion. Is the compound to be thought of as a mere aggregate or as an organized system? If the former, the move to *eudaimonia* seems trivial—nor is it obvious that goods can be just added together. If the latter, if there is supposed to be a unifying plan, what is it?" (Ackrill 1999, 65)

sake of eudaimonia are related. While there are scholars, who, highlighting the similarity between Aristotle and Kant, believe that when we seek virtue for themselves we are not seeking virtue for the sake of eudaimonia, there are more scholars who emphasize the connection between the two. On the one hand, we have scholars like Kraut, according to whom, what Aristotle really says in the quoted passage is this:

> We human beings choose to have some honor, pleasure, intelligence and virtue rather than none, and in so doing we are choosing these things for themselves. That is, even if nothing, not even happiness, resulted from these things, we would still rather have some of each than none. But in fact, we human beings do choose these goods for the sake of happiness, for some of us say that happiness is honor, some that it is pleasure, some that it is intelligence, and others that it is virtue. (Kraut 1976, 230)

In short, according to this interpretation, even seeking virtue in themselves is related to one's own eudaimonia. On the other hand, we have scholars like Jennifer Whiting, who provides a non-egoistical interpretation of Aristotle's view about choosing virtuous actions for themselves and for the sake of eudaimonia. According to this interpretation, choosing virtuous actions for themselves is compatible with choosing them for the sake of eudaimonia, both the eudaimonia of the agent and the eudaimonia of others. To illustrate it, she says that "[e]ven if temperance contributes primarily (though no doubt not exclusively) to the agent's own health and good disposition, generosity aims straightforwardly at the eudaimonia of others" (Whiting 2002, 281).

Finally, it is important to note that, as we have also seen above, Aristotle doesn't simply say that eudaimonia turns out to be the activity of the soul in accordance with virtue, which seems to imply that virtue is constitutive of eudaimonia; rather, immediately after this, Aristotle adds that "if there are several virtues, in accordance with the best and most complete" (Aristotle 2004, 1098a). We all know that Aristotle distinguishes between moral virtues, virtues that we are concerned with here, as our theme is virtue ethics, and intellectual virtues, and he makes it clear that intellectual virtues are best and most complete virtues. So if we understand this sentence in isolation from what Aristotle says elsewhere in his ethics, eudaimonia is activity of the soul in accordance with intellectual virtue, where the role of moral virtue, if at all, is not clear. Of course, almost no serious Aristotelian scholars think that we should read this sentence in such an isolation, and thus various theories have been developed to explain the relationship between moral virtue and intellectual virtue. Richard Kraut adopts a monist interpretation,

according to which philosophical contemplation is the single aim of a happy life; every other good is good and worth choosing only for contemplation's sake (Kraut 1989, 202–03, 211–13). In contrast, Irwin and Ackrill hold an inclusive interpretation, according to which the highest goal of human life contains a set of goods, including philosophical contemplation and virtuous actions (see Irwin 1991; Ackrill 1999). Gabriel Richardson Lear criticizes these two interpretations, arguing that the monistic interpretation cannot explain Aristotle's claim that one should choose virtuous actions for their own sake (as well as for the sake of contemplation), while the inclusivist interpretation cannot explain Aristotle's claim that contemplation is the highest good. In their stead, Lear proposes an approximation interpretation, according to which moral actions are choiceworthy for the sake of philosophical contemplation, as the former teleologically approximates and imitates the latter (Lear 2004, chapter 5). It is not my intention to join the debate. It seems to me, however, that, whichver interpretation we adopt, we cannot interpret away the fact that Aristotle himself says unequivocally that philosophical contemplation is the highest goal of human life, while virtuous actions can only have a secondary place.

While not all the points above I've made are without controversy, it is at least controversial to say that Aristotle has a virtue ethics of the ideal type as defined in the previous section of this paper. In addition to Slote, Gerasimons Santas claims that "the widespread belief that Aristotle had a virtue ethics is false" (Santas 1997, 281). Thomas Hurka also asks "the question of how distinctively virtue-ethical a theory is whose central explanatory property is in fact flourishing [eudaimonia] .... This ethics would not be at all distinctive if it took the virtues to contribute causally to flourishing, as productive means to a separately existing state of flourishing" (Hurka 2001, 233). Finally Gary Watson, for example, regards Aristotle's ethics as still an ethics of outcome, similar to ethical perfectionism, as it depends on a theory of ultimate good (see Watson 1997, 63). Watson himself does provide an account of virtue which he claims maintains the explanatory primacy of virtue without falling back into an ethics of outcome, an account in which "the theory of ultimate good is dependent on the theory of virtue" (ibid., 65). Yet, in a lengthy note on whether Aristotle had an ethics of virtue in this sense, with a negative answer, he laments that "it is somewhat disconcerting not to be able to adduce here a single clear instance of a historically important ethics in the sense I have identified" (ibid., 71n26; see also Hutton 2015, 333). I shall argue that such a clear instance of a historically important virtue ethics of the ideal type can be found in the Neo-Confucian Zhu Xi's philosophy.

Zhu Xi as a Virtual Ethicist of the Ideal Type

Whether virtue is primary in Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian ethics or not, it goes without saying that it occupies an important place in it. One way to start to explain this is to examine his commentary on *The Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大學), one of the so-called Four (Confucian) Books (*sishu* 四書). It is customary to hold that this text consists of "Three Keys" (*san gangling* 三綱領) (to brighten the bright virtue, to renew people, and never stop until one reaches the highest good) and "Eight Items" (*ba tiaomu* 八條目) (to investigate things, to extend knowledge, to rectify one's heart/mind, to make one's intension sincere, to cultivate oneself, to harmonize family, to govern the state, and to make the world peaceful). However, in Zhu Xi's view, "when adequately understood, the sentence that 'we ought to brighten the bright virtue' (*ming mingde* 明明德) [the first key] is already enough, and there is no need for anything said thereafter. It is only upon realizing that people found it difficult to understand it that sages talked about many things" (Zhu 1986, 15.308). How can Zhu Xi say that?

First of all, Zhu Xi claims that among the three keys, the third one is not an independent one but one further qualifying the first two keys to show their degree (Zhu 1986, 260), i.e. one ought to go to the extreme in, and not merely make some minor efforts at, "brightening one's bright virtue and renewing people" (ibid., 270). Since brightening the bright virtue refers to oneself and renewing people refers to others, "'to never stop until one reaches the highest good' including both keys: the self needs to reach the highest good, and others also need to reach their highest good" (ibid.). So now only two keys and eight items are left.

Second, Zhu Xi argues that the eight items are already included in the two keys: the first five items, to investigate things, to extend knowledge, to rectify one's heart/mind, to make one's intension sincere, to cultivate oneself, belong to the key of brightening one's own bright virtue, while the last three items, to harmonize family, to govern the state, and to make the world peaceful, belong to the key of renewing people. So now only two keys are left.

Third, Zhu Xi argues that these two keys are really one and the same thing. In his *Commentary on* The Great Learning *Chapter by Chapter and Sentence by Sentence* (*sishu zhangju* 四書章句), Zhu Xi explains what these two keys mean. On the one hand, "the bright virtue here is what humans get from the heaven, which is immaterial, spiritual, and unobscured, compassing all principles to respond ten thousand things" (Zhu 1994, 5). The reason one needs to brighten it is that, "limited by endowed *qi* 氣 and obscured by selfish desires, one's bright virtue sometimes may become darkened…. For this reason, a learner ought to brighten it where it is affected by *qi*" (ibid.). On the other hand, the second key in the ancient text is

to love people (*qin min* 親民), but Zhu Xi adopts Cheng Yi's 程頤 view, understanding it to mean "renewing people (*xin min* 新民)", and further explains it: "to renew means to get rid of the old. What is said is that, having brightened one's own bright virtue, one ought to extend it to other people so that they can also get rid of the dirt caused by previous contaminations" (ibid.). From here it is already clear that for Zhu Xi these two keys are really one thing in two senses. On the one hand, the first key is to brighten one's own bright virtue, which can also be described as renewing oneself, while the second item is to review people, which can also be described as brightening others' bright virtue. In this sense, both are about brightening the bright virtue. For this reason, Zhu Xi states that "to brighten the bright virtue is to renew oneself, and to renew people is to help them brighten their own respective bright virtues. Though there is some distinction between the two, in the sense that both are about brightening the bright virtue, there is no distinction between the two" (Zhu 1986, 308). On the other hand, properly understood, to brighten one's own bright virtue and to renew people are really not two separate things, one taking place after another. In other words, it is not the case that only after one has fully brightened one's own bright virtue can one start to help others brighten their virtues (to renew people). This is because to renew people, to help others brighten their bright virtue, is part of the same effort to brighten our own bright virtue. It is in this sense that Zhu Xi states that "if one has not reached the highest good in renewing people, this indicates that one has not yet reached the highest good oneself" (ibid., 272). In other words, if I do not renew people, this means I have not brightened my own virtues; if I have not renewed people to the highest good, this means that I have not brightened my own bright virtue to the highest good. As I've pointed out elsewhere (see Huang 2010b), one of the salient features of Confucian ethics is its emphasis that a truly virtuous person is not only concerned about others' external wellbeing such as happiness, joy, health, and peace, but also with their internal wellbeing, i.e., their virtues.[3]

At the very beginning of his "Preface" to *Commentary on the* Great Learning *Chapter by Chapter and Sentence by Sentence*, Zhu Xi emphasizes that "The Great Learning is the way of teaching one to be a human in the ancient great learning." So the way of the great learning is the way to become a human, and the way to become a human that The Great Learning teaches is the so-called three keys and eight items, which can now be crystalized into one single key: brightening the bright virtue. This shows the importance of virtue in Zhu Xi's Confucian ethics. Of course, just from this it is still not clear whether virtue is primary in Zhu Xi's ethics and thus whether Zhu Xi's ethics is a virtue ethics of the ideal type. To

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3   For a counter-argument that Confucianism, though not specifically focused on Zhu Xi, doesn't hold this view, see Schuh (2023).

know this, we need to investigate whether Zhu Xi has an account of virtue, and if so, whether this account gives or maintains the primacy of virtue. So what does Zhu Xi mean by the bright virtue? In one place, he says that "humans originally all possess this bright virtue, which includes humanity (*ren* 仁), rightness (*yi* 義), propriety (*li* 禮), and wisdom (*zhi* 智). They would become impaired if they are submerged by external things and thus lose their brightness. For this reason, the way of *The Great Learning* must be to brighten this bright virtue" (Zhu 1986, 262). This makes it clear that by "the bright virtue" Zhu Xi means nothing but the four cardinal virtues in the Confucian tradition. This of course doesn't count as an account of virtue, as it only lists four items of virtues, answering only what counts as a virtue and not what is virtue.

To see Zhu Xi's view on this latter question, we may examine what he says about one of the four cardinal virtues, humanity. This is because, although it is only one of the four cardinal virtues, for Zhu Xi, it is the most important virtue and, indeed, in some sense it includes all other virtues. Zhu Xi makes this point most clearly in his essay "On Humanity" (*ren shuo* 仁說):

> Although the virtue of heart/mind is all encompassing and all integrating, with nothing left outside, to use one word, we can say it is nothing but humanity …. The virtues of the heart/mind of heaven and earth are four: origination, flourishing, advantage, and firmness, and nothing is not included in origination. In the operation of heaven and earth, there are spring, summer, autumn, and winter, and yet the *qi* of spring penetrates all. Similarly, the virtue of the heart/mind of humans also constitutes of four, humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom, and yet nothing is not included in humanity. When emanated, these four virtues function as love, respect, being right, and discrimination respectively, and the heart/mind of commiseration [love] penetrates all …. This is the reason why the Confucian teaching always aims to make learners to earnestly seek humanity. (Zhu 1997, 3542)

Here we need to keep two things in mind. On the one hand, Zhu Xi explains in what sense humanity is one of the four virtues and in what sense it includes all four virtues: "spoken without distinction, it is humanity and there is just this atmosphere of generation, and rightness, propriety, and wisdom are all humanity; comparatively speaking, however, humanity is just like rightness, propriety, and wisdom" (Zhu 1986, 107). On the other hand, Zhu Xi emphasizes that, since humanity includes all other virtues, "we cannot understand the word 'humanity' unless we also see it as rightness, propriety, and wisdom. Humanity [in the specific

sense] is the substance of humanity [in the general sense], propriety is ritual of humanity, rightness is judgement of humanity, and wisdom is the discrimination of humanity" (ibid., 109).

In the above, we can see that, when regarding humanity as including rightness, propriety, and wisdom, Zhu Xi says that it is the virtue of heart/mind. Commenting on *Analects* 1.2, Zhu Xi says that "humanity is the principle of love and the virtue of heart/mind" (Zhu 1994, 62). In *Classified Sayings*, Zhu Xi also says that "humanity here is the virtue of the heart/mind; as long as you preserve this heart/mind, nothing is not humanity" (Zhu 1986, 114). Immediately following this, Zhu Xi compares the virtue of heart/mind and virtue of eyes and ears: "the virtue of ears is keenness in hearing, the virtue of eyes is clearness in seeing, and the virtue of heart/mind is humanity" (ibid.). Since humanity is the virtue of heart/mind and humanity includes rightness, propriety, and wisdom, when a student asks, "I heard you, my teacher, saying that 'humanity is the virtue of heart/mind.' Then are rightness, propriety, and wisdom also virtues?" Zhu Xi responds: "Yes, they are virtues. Humanity is just the greatest one" (ibid., 607–08). All these discussions at least show that the virtue (*de* 德) that Confucians talk about is also the character traits of the heart/mind and in this sense is similar to virtue that virtue ethicists in the Western philosophical tradition talk about. Although we have so far not made much progress toward our goal (to understand Zhu Xi's account of virtue), we can see that, in order to know what virtue is for Zhu Xi, we can at least try to see what is humanity, one item of virtue, for Zhu Xi.

So what is humanity? Commenting on "what is meant by humanity (*ren* 仁) is nothing but humanness (*ren* 人)" in the *Mencius*, Zhu Xi states that "the reason that humans are humans is simply that they have this [humanity]" (Zhu 1986, 1458). Here Zhu Xi regards humanity as what makes humans human, without which a person ceases to be a human. To say that humanity is what makes humans human is to say that humanity is the human nature, and this is precisely what Zhu Xi says when he responds to a student's question regarding the statement about humanity (*ren* 仁) and humans (*ren* 人): "humanity is humanity, itself not sayable. So we can say it only in terms of humans, i.e., in terms of human nature" (ibid., 1495). In other words, from Zhu Xi's point of view, what Mencius says is really that humanity is human nature. It is in this sense that humanity (*ren* 仁) and humans (*ren* 人) can illustrate each other: "The reason that humans get the name 'humans' is that they have humanity. To speak of humanity without speaking of humans, one cannot tell where the principle resides; and to speak of humans without speaking of humanity, a human is nothing but a pile of flesh and blood. Only when speaking of them in combination can we see the truth" (ibid., 1459).

Here we start to see Zhu Xi's account of virtue: virtue is human nature, what makes humans human. In the above, what we see is the relationship between humanity as the general virtue and human nature. When speaking of separate virtues, humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom, and their relationship with human nature, Zhu Xi's view is also consistent. In one place, one of his students asks: "is the bright virtue the human nature of humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom?" Zhu Xi simply responds "Yes!" (ibid., 260). What is noteworthy is that Zhu Xi approves his student's use of "human nature of humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom," which shows that humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom belong to human nature, and this human nature is precisely the bright virtue that we need to brighten in the *Great Learning*. Elsewhere, Zhu Xi states more clearly that "humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom are the great items of human nature" (ibid., 107); "humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom are human nature" (ibid., 108); and "human nature, as the undistinguished substance of the great ultimate, is originally something that we cannot talk about, but it contains ten thousand principles, out of which there are four great ones, which we can speak of as humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom" (Zhu 1997, 2977).

So, for Zhu Xi, on the one hand, virtue is the virtue of human nature (*xing zhi de* 性之德): "humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom are all virtues of human nature" (Zhu 1986, 2583); on the other hand, human nature is one with virtues and so is virtuous human nature (*de xing* 德性), and so Zhu Xi responds affirmatively when one of his students asks whether "virtuous human nature refers to the human nature of rightness and principle" (ibid., 1585). Here, the human nature of rightness and principle (*yi li zhi xing* 義理之性) is nothing but the human nature of humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom, as pointed out by Zhu Xi: "generally speaking, one's virtuous human nature indeed contains these four: humanity is its warm and peaceful aspect; rightness its serious and resolute aspect; propriety its obvious and manifest aspect; and wisdom its restraining and traceless aspect"; immediately after this, Zhu Xi explains why humanity is prior in these four aspects:

> there are these four aspects in human nature, but sages regards humanity as something most urgent for us to seek. This is because humanity is the head of the four. If the warm and peaceful aspect is kept, then when the time comes for it to be obvious and manifest, it will naturally be so; when the time comes for it to be resolute, it will naturally be so; and when the time comes for it to be restraining, it will naturally be so …. This is the reason that humanity includes all four aspects. (Zhu 1986, 110)

When a student asks, "since humanity is human nature, can the word 'human nature' refer to humanity?" Zhu Xi responds: "human nature is a general term. It is like a human body, while humanity is the left hand, propriety is the right hand, rightness is the left foot, and wisdom is the right foot"; when the student further asks, "humanity includes all the four; does this mean that left hand include all the four limbs?" Zhu Xi responds: "this is just an analogy. While the [left] hand indeed cannot include all the four limbs, when speaking hand and foot, we say hand first and foot later; and when speaking left and right, we say left first and right later" (ibid.).

Earlier we saw Zhu Xi claiming that humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom are virtues of human heart/mind, and now we see him saying that humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom are the great items of human nature, the fundamental principles of human nature, and the virtues of human nature. So, for Zhu Xi, humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom are both virtues of human heart/mind and virtues of human nature. If so, what is the relationship between human heart/mind and human nature? According to Zhu Xi, "human nature is the principle possessed by human heart/mind, and human heart/mind is the place where the principle resides" (Zhu 1986, 88); and "if there is no human heart/mind, where can human nature reside! It is necessary that there is the heart/mind so that there is a place for human nature, from which it can be issued. All the principles that the heart/mind has are humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom. They are all substantive principles" (ibid., 64). In other words, humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom are virtues of human nature, which has to reside in human heart/mind; in this sense, humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom can also be regarded as the virtues of human heart/mind. Although human nature resides in the heart/mind, Zhu Xi argues that human nature is the substance of human heart/mind: "generally speaking, human body has a heart/mind; the substance of the heart/mind is human nature, while the function of the heart/mind is feeling (*qing* 情)" (ibid., 2822). Here, other than the addition of heart-mind in human body to human nature in heart-mind, Zhu Xi's emphasis is that human nature is the substance of heart/mind. Since the substance of the heart/mind is human nature, human nature consists of humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom, which are bright virtues that *The Great Learning* talks about, Zhu Xi explicitly approves what his student says: "*The Great Learning* emphasizes nothing but brightening the virtue and renewing people" (ibid., 308).

To say that humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom are virtues of the heart/mind, are virtues of human nature, and are what make humans human is to say that, without humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom, one is a defective person. Indeed, this is how Zhu Xi distinguishes between human beings and non-human

animals. For example, in his letter to Yu Fangshu, Zhu Xi states that "human beings are most spiritual, possessing the five constant human natures. In contrast, birds and beasts are dark, without possessing them" (Zhu 1997, 3067). Here, by "the five constant human natures", Zhu Xi means humanity, rightness, propriety, wisdom, the faithfulness. In *Classified Saying*, when discussing with his students the chapter on the distinction between humans and birds/beasts of *The Mencius*, Zhu Xi makes a similar point: "The reason humans are unique is that they have humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom, so that they are filial as children and loving as brothers. How can birds/beasts be so!" (Zhu 1986, 1347). For this reason, Zhu Xi maintains that human beings "must preserve this uniqueness, only in virtue of which can they be distinguished from birds/beasts" (ibid., 1389).

However, Zhu Xi's view on this issue is a bit complicated, as sometimes he also claims that other beings have humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom as well. For example, he says that humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom, as the nature of the heavenly destiny, are

> not partial …. Those who are darkened are darkened by *qi*, and thus their nature is obscured …. However, there is a way to clear the obscured nature in humans; the same nature is also present in birds/beasts. Only due to constraints by their body is their nature obscured to the extreme, and there is no way to clear it. Tigers and wolves do have some humanity (*ren* 仁), jackal and otter do have ritual of sacrifice, and bees and ants do have rightness, but all just a little bit. (Zhu 1986, 58)

Here, Zhu Xi acknowledges that birds/beasts also have the nature of humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom, even just a little bit and constrained by their body, which seems to be contradictory to his claim we examined earlier that only humans have humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom. This, however, is not the case. Zhu Xi's view is that, while all things have the nature of humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom, there is a distinction between the clearness and turbidness, between balance and one-sidedness, and between openness and blockedness, in terms of the *qi* that they are endowed with. The *qi* that humans are endowed with is balanced and open, and so even if it may be turbid to various degrees, it can still be purified. For this reason, the nature of humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom can become the virtue of humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom. Non-human beings are endowed with one-sided and blocked *qi*, which obscure the nature of humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom. Thus, while ontologically speaking, they still have the nature consisting of the four, functionally speaking, they don't have it. Of course, the degrees to which the *qi* is one-sided and

blocked in different things are also different. When not so serious, as is the case with some animals, there are still bits and pieces of humanity, rightness, propriety, and rightness that are not obscured, and this is the reason that there is some humanity among tigers and wolves and there is some rightness among bees and ants. Indeed, for Zhu Xi, there may exist some extreme cases in which the animals that have the least degree of the one-sidedness and blockedness of their *qi* can be very close to human beings, and human beings that have the highest degree of turbidness of their *qi* can be very close to animal (Zhu 1986, 58).

So when Zhu Xi claims that only human beings have these four virtues as their nature and animals do not have them, Zhu Xi uses the term "have" in a special sense, different from merely possessing in Aristotle's sense. In his discussion of a person's "having" knowledge, Aristotle makes a distinction between a person's merely possessing knowledge and the person's actually using or exercising it. A person asleep, mad, or drunken may still possess the knowledge he or she has previously acquired but is not able to use it (Aristotle 2004, 1147a17-18). Zhu Xi makes a similar distinction between the two senses of "having" when he talks about human and non-human beings' "having" or "not having" humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom in their nature. When Zhu Xi says that only human beings have these four elements, he means that only human beings can actually exercise them. Correspondingly, when Zhu Xi says that animals do not have these four elements, he only means that they cannot exercise them and not that they do not possess them. For Zhu Xi, both human and non-human beings are endowed with both nature, or principle, and *qi*. While their nature is the same, the vital forces they are respectively endowed with are different. As they are endowed with the same nature, they both have, in the sense of possessing, humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom; as they are endowed with different *qi*, the upright and balanced one for humans and the crooked and one-sided one for animals, only humans have, in the sense of actually exercising, the four constituents of nature, and non-human beings do not have (also in the sense of exercising) them. Thus, in a letter to his teacher Li Tong 李侗, Zhu Xi states that

> all living things between heaven and earth have the same root. Human beings, animals, and plants all have this principle, which is fully present in all of them …. This is humanity (*ren*). However, the *qi* can be clear or turbid, and so their endowment in things can be either upright or crooked. Only human beings are endowed with the upright *qi* and therefore are seen to exercise *ren*. Non-human beings are endowed with the crooked *qi* and so, while possessing humanity, are not aware of it and are not seen to exercise it. (Zhu 2010, 335)

To explain how different *qi* affect the same nature different beings are endowed with, Zhu Xi uses an analogy. The same nature of both human and non-human beings can be seen as clear water, while different vital forces can be seen as bowls with different colors in which water is placed: the same clear water appears white in a white bowl, black in a black bowl, and green in a green bowl (Zhu 1997, 4.53). In a slightly different and perhaps more appropriate metaphor, Zhu Xi says that human nature is like the originally clear water. Put in a clean utensil, it remains clear; put in a dirty utensil, it is smelly; and put in a muddy utensil, it is turbid (*Yulei* 4; Zhu 1997, 66).[4]

Now, we can see clearly that Zhu Xi does have an account of virtue, explaining what virtue is. However, does his account of virtue, like Aristotle's, makes virtue no longer primary in his ethics? The answer is negative. Although Zhu Xi's account of virtue, just like Aristotle's, starts from human nature, which distinguishes human beings from non-human beings, there is a clear difference between their accounts of virtue in terms of human nature. For Aristotle, what makes human being unique is a life consisting of active rational activities, which is eudaimonia. Virtue is the character traits that makes such rational activities excellent. Thus, virtue has lost its primacy, as it is subordinated to eudaimonia. For Zhu Xi, however, what makes humans unique, i.e., human nature, is nothing but such virtues as humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom.[5] In the previous section, we have seen that, in his discussion of the second interpretation of Aristotle, Michael Slote argues that the reason Aristotle's ethics, interpreted this way, is not a virtue ethics is that eudaimonia, which is primary in his ethics, itself is not an aretaic concept. In contrast, we can see that the uniquely human life for Zhu Xi is life with humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom, which are character traits or virtues of heart/mind and human nature and thus are aretaic. In this sense, Zhu Xi's ethics is a pure, radical, ang agent-based virtue ethics in Slote's sense. Also in the previous section, we mentioned Gary Watson's view that virtue ethics of the ideal type

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4   It might be objected that Zhu Xi's conception of human nature is essentialist, which is problematic in this post-Wittgensteinian era. However, if Zhu Xi is indeed an essentialist, he is a naturalistic essentialist rather than a non-naturalisic essentialist. A naturalistic essentialist view of human nature has two salient features. On the one hand, it is consistent with the evolution theory in the sense that human nature as Zhu Xi conceives it is the result of evolution at its current stage, and so it is not fixed, with the possibility of its being changed in the next stage of evolution, which may last millions if not billions of years. On the other hand, it conceives what distinguishes between humans and non-human beings to be a narrow regions instead of a mathematical line, where resides beings that look like human beings in some aspects and non-human beings in some other aspects.

5   One may say that Zhu Xi here makes a circular argument: he first uses human nature to explain human virtues, and then he uses human virtues to explain human nature. I have shown why it is not the case elsewhere (see Huang 2011, 269–73).

is the ethics in which virtue is primary, an ethics "whose account of the highest good depends upon an account of virtue" and not other way round (Watson 1997, 65). What is the highest good in Zhu Xi? Of course, it is to live a uniquely human life. Then what is the uniquely human life? It is the life that exhibits such bright virtues as humanity, rightness, propriety, and wisdom. It is clear that, in Zhu Xi, the account of the highest good does depends upon a theory of virtue, and it is in this sense that Zhu Xi's ethics is precisely a virtue ethics of the ideal type, no single instance of which can be found in the history of Western philosophy according to Watson.

Conclusion

In the beginning of this essay, I briefly mentioned a rather common methodology of comparative philosophy, which tends to use a historical instance of a philosophical theory from a particular historical tradition (normally the Western philosophical tradition) as a paradigm or ideal type of the theory to examine a different historical instance of the theory from a different historical tradition (normally a non-Western tradition). The conclusion of such a comparison is often that, while the latter contains some features of the former, it either doesn't contain all the features of the former or that it doesn't exhibit these features as well as the former. This essay compares a historical instance of virtue ethics in the Chinese tradition, Zhu Xi's, with a historical instance of virtue ethics in the Western tradition, Aristotle's, arguing that we should not use Aristotle's as the paradigm or the ideal type of virtue ethics to measure Zhu Xi's, nor the other way round. Instead, we need to construct an ideal type of virtue ethics, particularly in its contrast with deontological ethics and consequentialist one. A virtue ethics of the ideal type is one in which virtue is primary in the sense that all other concepts in this ethics are derivable from, reducible to, or subordinated to the concept of virtue, which is not derived from, reducible to, or subordinated to any other concepts. This parallels deontology, in which duty or moral law is primary in the sense that all other concepts in this ethics are derivable from, reducible to, or subordinated to it, which is not derived from, reducible to, or subordinate to any other concepts, and consequentialism, in which consequence of actions is primary in the sense that all other concepts in this ethics are derivable from, reducible to, or subordinated to it, which is not derived from, reducible to, or subordinated to any other concepts. I then use this constructed ideal type of virtue ethics to measure both Aristotle's ethics and Zhu Xi's ethics, concluding that Aristotle's ethics comes short of meeting the criterion of virtue ethics of the ideal type, while Zhu Xi's meets the criterion well.

It is important to note that to say that Aristotle's ethics is not a virtue ethics but Zhu Xi's is is not to say that Aristotle's ethics is inferior to Zhu Xi's ethics as normative ethics (though we can say that Aristotle's ethics is inferior to Zhu Xi's as a virtue ethics). After all, Aristotle himself doesn't say that he would like to develop a virtue ethics, let alone doing so as an alternative to deontology and consequentialism, which appears in the West only many centuries later. Strictly speaking, what this essay does is merely a work of classification: if ethics can be divided into deontology, consequentialism, and virtue ethics, strictly speaking Zhu Xi's is a virtue ethics, while Aristotle's is not. As to whether Aristotle's ethics is indeed a type of consequentialism or teleology as some scholars have claimed is not the task of this essay. In this sense, the contribution this essay makes to ethics in general or virtue ethics in particular is not significant if at all. The more important thing to do is to see what contributions we can make to virtue ethics of the ideal type, including responding to criticisms of virtues ethics by its rivals, overcoming its internal problems, and exploring its implications to metaethics on the one hand and virtue ethics on the other, to which I have dedicated my work for the last decade or so (see, for example, Huang 2010b; 2011; 2014; 2019; 2024b). However, since Aristotle is normally the first person who comes into our mind when we think of virtue ethics, and since Confucian ethics, when measured with Aristotelian ethics as an ideal type of virtue ethics, has often been regarded as a more or less deficient, if not defective, version of virtue ethics, the conclusion this essays arrives at may still not be trivial either.

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My Progressive Confucian Journey

Stephen C. ANGLE

Abstract

This essay examines the engagement between Progressive Confucianism and Mainland China in three steps. I begin with a narrative of how I came to be someone who identifies as Confucian and advocates Progressive Confucianism. Part II examines an especially important phase in this evolution: the series of ten dialogues I held with Mainland Chinese Confucians in the Spring of 2017. I give an overview of the topics we debated, themes that cut across individual dialogues, and indicate some of the diversity of views among Mainland Confucians—and how all this relates to Progressive Confucianism. The essay concludes with some reflections on the dialogues, including notable points of agreement and disagreement, key areas in which I felt that I had learned from the conversations, and some thoughts about the future of Progressive Confucianism in China.

Keywords: Progressive Confucianism, philosophy, Mou Zongsan, Mainland Confucianism, global philosophy

Moje napredujoče konfucijansko popotovanje

Izvleček

Ta članek v treh korakih obravnava razvoj naprednega konfucijanstva na kitajski celini. Začenjam z opisom, kako sem postal nekdo, ki se identificira kot konfucijanec in zagovarja napredno konfucijanstvo. Drugi del preučuje še posebej pomembno fazo te evolucije: vsebuje namreč niz desetih dialogov, ki sem jih izvedel s kitajskimi konfucijanci s celine spomladi leta 2017. Predstavim pregled tem, o katerih smo razpravljali, pri čemer se osredotočam na tiste, ki se prepletajo med posameznimi dialogi. Zatem nakažem nekaj razlik med stališči posamičnih celinskih konfucijancev in razložim, na kakšen način se vse to povezuje s progresivnim konfucijanstvom. Na koncu se posvetim bolj konkretnim refleksijam omenjenih dialogov; v tem okviru prikažem tudi nekaj pomembnih stičnih točk in nesoglasij, preko katerih sem se iz teh pogovorov tudi sam naučil marsikaj novega. Članek zaključim z razpravo o možnostih bodočega razvoja naprednega konfucijanstva na Kitajskem.

Ključne besede: napredno konfucijanstvo, filozofija, Mou Zongsan, celinsko konfucijanstvo, globalna filozofija

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Introduction

From my first encounter with Confucianism in the classroom of Prof. Yu Ying-shih, I have always understood it to be dynamic. Prof. Yu introduced me to early debates (Mengzi versus Xunzi) and to later developments (Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming). He also made clear that the status of Confucianism in the East Asia of the day—this was 1985—was complex and contested. Eight months after that class ended I had my first opportunity to travel to China and witness for myself some of those complexities. In the almost four decades since, my knowledge of and relationship to Confucianism have grown and changed, but two constants have been my understanding of the Confucian tradition as something that has value insofar as it makes sense to people in their own contexts—it is not just an abstract system of ideas—and my belief that the experiences of people in Mainland China play a special role in any overall assessment of Confucianism today. This is not to say that Confucianism can have no role outside of China, but simply that as the nation with the longest history with Confucianism, and as the largest nation in the world, we ignore the ways that Chinese citizens view Confucianism at our peril. As I gradually came to see that something I called "Progressive Confucianism" was a particularly attractive way to develop the tradition, therefore, learning from Mainland Chinese interlocutors has been extremely important. This essay examines the engagement between Progressive Confucianism and Mainland China in three steps. I begin with a narrative of how I came to be someone who identifies as Confucian and advocates Progressive Confucianism. Part II examines an especially important phase in this evolution: the series of dialogues I held with Mainland Chinese Confucians in the Spring of 2017. I conclude with some reflections on those dialogues and thoughts about the future of Progressive Confucianism in China.

Part I: The Path to "Progressive Confucianism"

I arrived at Nanjing University to study abroad in the spring of 1986 with a decent foundation in Mandarin and a few courses on Chinese history and politics, but no real sense of what I was about to experience. I had never even eaten Chinese food before. One question that I would be asked repeatedly as I met new Chinese friends can sum up some of the challenges I faced: "Are you from the city or the countryside?" This dichotomy made sense in China at the time, and a memorable visit to the Jiangsu village in which my Chinese roommate had grown up helped to make the distinction real to me. But which category did my suburban US upbringing put me in? I had no good answer to the question, but it helped

me to dig deeper into the many differences between my background and those of my Chinese classmates and acquaintances. Discussing these differences was also good for my Chinese! Another crucial realization took place after a conversation with someone I met while travelling on a train. We had gotten beyond the "city or countryside" issue and I explained that I was interested in Chinese philosophy. "Oh," he replied, "you mean Marx and Lenin?" Over time I discovered that this man's view—that Confucian thought was outdated, "feudal", and best left behind—was widespread, even if peoples' ideas about China's future were increasingly diverse.

Still, from my studies back in the US I was increasingly intrigued by Confucianism. I wrote my Senior Essay on the populist tendencies of Wang Yangming and his followers in the later Ming dynasty under Prof. Yu's supervision, and applied for a Fulbright fellowship to Taiwan to both continue my Chinese studies and learn more about Confucianism. In the meantime, while I had decided I wanted to pursue a PhD after my Fulbright year, it took me some time to decide which discipline made the most sense: history, religious studies, or philosophy? Prof. Yu was an historian. Unlike the way I was engaging with Western thought in my philosophy classes, my approach to Chinese thought under Prof. Yu's tutelage was primarily descriptive. Rather than challenging the ideas, we tracked the ways that ideas changed, largely as effects of broad social processes. Two important lessons that I learned from Prof. Yu were to appreciate the diversity and dynamism of the Confucian tradition, and to see that Chinese philosophical texts were not produced in a vacuum of pure speculation, but were produced by political and social actors with many, complex motives. These lessons have stayed with me, but ultimately I decided that instead of tracing the development of Chinese ideas, I was most interested in trying to take them seriously in their own right. This led me to study for a PhD in philosophy at the University of Michigan.

I found in Prof. Donald Munro at the University of Michigan a mentor who sought to interrogate Chinese "philosophy" in just the way that intrigued me. Through Prof. Munro, I learned of a global community of scholars who were developing this project of "Chinese philosophy", including great modern Chinese thinkers like one of Prof. Munro's own teachers, Tang Junyi. Perhaps the most important lesson that I learned from Prof. Munro was that while it was possible, albeit with considerable effort, for us moderns (and Americans) to access the millennia-old teachings of Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism, we must be careful to note the ways in which their concerns and methods are not identical to our own. This was not a matter of insuperable incommensurability, but the differences that did exist meant that we could not safely expect the pre-existing categories

and questions from the Western tradition to fit neatly onto Chinese debates. Prof. Munro saw that early Chinese philosophers were less interested in explicit, abstract questions about truth than their Greek contemporaries; he also showed that by attending to the metaphors Zhu Xi employed, we could understand that Zhu Xi's core concepts did not match with those of the Western rationalists with whom he was sometimes compared. I ended up writing a PhD dissertation that used Liang Qichao's writings about "general virtue" (*gongde* 公德) and "personal virtue" (*side* 私德) as a case study to examine cross-cultural ethical differences and the ways that ethical discourses did and did not change (Angle 1994). Liang saw himself as learning from Western thinkers like Kant but also from Chinese thinkers like Wang Yangming to synthesize a new Chinese ethic. I admired his efforts to think openly and creatively about the relevance of Chinese traditions to the rapidly changing world that he inhabited.

By the Fall of 1994 I had finished my PhD and taken up a position in the philosophy department at Wesleyan University. My new colleagues and I quickly learned that in addition to the new courses I was offering, other changes to the department's curriculum were needed. After all, the standard course on "Classical Philosophy" included Plato but not Kongzi, and "Early Modern Philosophy" featured Descartes but not Wang Yangming. We thus re-named several history of philosophy classes to make clear that there are distinct philosophical traditions, and also made some efforts to bring ideas from these distinct traditions into conversation with one another (for example, in a team-taught course on "moral psychology"). I also experimented with ways to teach Chinese thought as philosophy. Part of this, I felt, was to encourage students to inhabit the ideas, to try them out, to appreciate but also to challenge them. This seemed to work; after a class session in which I had asked students to discuss how using Zhu Xi's idea of Pattern (*li* 理) might illuminate a conflict they had with a friend or roommate, one student came up to me and said that she was finding my course "the most relevant" of anything she had taken in college. It wasn't that she was becoming a Neo-Confucian, exactly, but rather that in our classroom she was being pressed to think in a systematic and yet accessible way about values for the first time, and she was finding this to be extremely meaningful.

During my first few years at Wesleyan I was working on my first book – what would become *Human Rights and Chinese Thought: A Cross-Cultural Inquiry* (Angle 2002). This book was a kind of evolution of my dissertation: Liang Qichao still played a role, but now instead of looking in detail at Liang's ethical thought, I focused on what he had to say about rights (*quanli* 权利) and looked at the whole evolution of Chinese rights discourse. This meant going back into the Neo-Confucianism of the 16th–18th centuries, to see how those philosophers responded

to changing social-economic realities; 19th century thinkers who may or may not have identified as "Confucian"; then Liang and some of his key contemporaries; and ultimately reaching the debates about rights and human rights in late-20th century China. For many of these latter theorists, their theoretical touchstones were Marxist, Liberal, or other philosophers who lived and wrote in Europe or North America, and indeed, the argument of my book was not that Chinese rights discourse is purely Confucian. Still, Confucians have played roles and some Confucian themes continued to resonate with modern Chinese theorists. Most striking to me was a reaction that I witnessed on multiple occasions while attending conferences in China in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In a session reserved for Chinese-speaking scholars that was attached to the otherwise-Anglophone "International Conference on Political Philosophy" in Beijing in 2001—I was the only foreigner in the room—several people emotionally lamented the absence of Chinese sources and Chinese traditions from the discussions at the conference. "Are thousands of years of Chinese thought just to be abandoned as not relevant to modernity?", wondered one scholar. A few others agreed, calling on one another to work to reclaim and build upon Chinese ideas. In the years to come, Chinese scholars shouldering this task would be crucial interlocutors as I explored some of the same territory myself.

I will return to my engagement with Mainland Chinese scholars shortly, but it is worth emphasizing that I never understood the task of developing Confucian philosophy to be strongly culturally, geographically, or even linguistically delimited. I read Robert Neville's book *Boston Confucianism* (Neville 2000) soon after it was published, and very much appreciated Neville's insistence that Confucianism could be a "portable tradition", influencing but also adapting to new environments like Boston (or, I was beginning to think, Middletown). I therefore felt that the book's success would ultimately be measured by the degree to which Confucianism lived up to Neville's hopes for it as a dynamic, fruitful tradition. This idea that Confucianism needed to be "dynamic"—that is, developing in new ways in response to the challenges of the modern world—was also a central theme of a seminar I taught in the Fall of 2000 called "Challenging Confucianism". My students and I read both Confucian texts and critiques of Confucianism in the areas of politics, society, and gender. Could Confucianism respond? It was in this context that I first began to read works by Mou Zongsan and other 20th-century "New Confucians".

During a visit to Beijing in 2003, a friend recommended that I read the newly published 《政治儒學》 (*Political Confucianism*) by Jiang Qing (Jiang 2003), which I promptly purchased and began to read on the plane home. What a fascinating book! Here was someone not undertaking intellectual history but instead

looking to develop Confucianism in creative ways, very much in response to his perceptions of contemporary challenges. Jiang engages in detailed criticism of Mou and others, draws on the somewhat neglected Han dynasty emphasis on political institutions, argues for a distinctive kind of Confucian methodology of reading and justification, and puts forward dramatic, even outlandish proposals for political change. It was clear to me why Jiang was getting a lot of attention, because this was new Confucian philosophizing. I also felt there were real problems with some of Mou's arguments. I developed these ideas in a 2005 lecture called "中國哲學家與全求哲學" (Chinese Philosophers and Global Philosophy) that was ultimately published in a Hong Kong journal (Angle 2007). I saw Jiang, like Mou and others, as engaged in what I was coming to call "rooted global philosophy", which was exciting; but I also criticized Jiang for calling for a Classics-based methodology that seemed designed to insulate his Confucianism from external assessment and critique. The biggest problem with this methodology was that Jiang himself manifestly did not use it in *Political Confucianism*! I returned to Jiang somewhat later in a review of the English translation of some of his essays (Angle 2014); if anything, I am even more critical in the later review. Jiang is important because he played a major role in opening up the idea that mainland Confucians could have a distinctive voice, different both from mainland Marxists and Liberals but also from Confucians like Mou who lived outside of the mainland after 1949. But Jiang is certainly not definitive of what Mainland Confucianism can be.

The next stage in this narrative is centred on academic year 2006-2007, which I spent in Beijing on a Fulbright fellowship affiliated with Peking University's philosophy department. Leading into this year I had been reading Thomas Metzger's deeply researched and provocatively argued *A Cloud Across the Pacific: Essays on the Clash Between Chinese and Western Political Theories Today* (Metzger 2005). Three things about Metzger's book struck me most forcefully. First, he offered detailed, charitable readings of modern Chinese political writers that were unlike the work of any other Anglophone scholar I knew. It seemed that Metzger had read not just everything his subjects had written, but everything they had read! I was extremely impressed by his immersion in Chinese-language political theorizing. Second, Metzger identifies weakness with both mainstream Chinese and Western discourses and seeks (though does not find) a way to draw creatively on the best each has to offer. In other words, he is not just an historian but also an innovative philosopher. Third, I felt that although his emphasis on holistic discourses led to many insights, it also ultimately limited him to seeing "continuity" even where there might have been some crucial breakthroughs. The way out of the "seesaw problem" that he identified might already have been

found, I thought, in some of Mou Zongsan's key insights. I discussed these points in a review of *Cloud* (Angle 2006) but more importantly, they helped me to solve a problem that had been bedevilling me as I worked during my Fulbright year on the manuscript that would become *Sagehood: The Contemporary Significance of Neo-Confucian Philosophy* (Angle 2009). *Sagehood* is two things: a synthetic account of core Neo-Confucian ideas focused mainly on Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming, and a philosophical engagement with these ideas that draws on contemporary Western theorists, especially virtue ethicists. My problem was that while I felt confident that the Neo-Confucians could hold their own in the areas of moral psychology, virtue theory, and moral education, I also planned to discuss issues like politics and law in the last part of the book, and here I felt very constrained by the fact that no Neo-Confucian ever imagines an alternative to monarchy. What sort of dialogue is then possible, if today monarchy is a non-starter? Metzger catalysed me into viewing New Confucians like Xu Fuguan and especially Mou Zongsan as much more viable dialogue partners, which of course also meant beginning an on-going process of reading and engaging with their work; at this point it was Mou's 《政道與治道》 (*Authority and Governance*) (Mou 1991) that had the most impact on me.

The final two chapters of *Sagehood* were the launching pad for Progressive Confucianism but they were not yet Progressive Confucianism itself. That came a little later, when I was invited to deliver the inaugural Tang Junyi Lecture Series at my alma mater, the University of Michigan in 2010. My mentor, Donald Munro, had by this time been retired for several year but was actively promoting Chinese philosophy and had raised the money to fund the lecture series. It was an extraordinary honour to return to Ann Arbor in this way. The four lectures I delivered became the nucleus of a book I would publish two years later, *Contemporary Confucian Political Philosophy: Toward Progressive Confucianism* (Angle 2012a). The lectures and book had three related goals: to offer an overview and introduction to various contemporary approaches to Confucianism, to engage critically with some key thinkers, and to defend an approach to the modern development of the tradition that I now began calling "Progressive Confucianism". In brief, Progressive Confucianism is an understanding of the Confucian tradition as dynamic, continually developing in response to new situations, challenges, and information. Its attitude toward modernity is one of critical acceptance: not denying the changes modernity has variously brought to our societies and seeking to turn back the clock, but also not abandoning the deep insights of the Confucian tradition as we seek to grapple with these changes. At the core of Progressive Confucianism is the idea that the healthy growth of moral selves (which we can also think of as the development of

virtue) is intimately related to our actions with and for others in the wider world. Individuals and societies "progress" together, neither at the expense of the other. That idea is often labelled within the tradition as "inner sageliness–outer kingliness" (內聖外王) and it is a key to my arguments for political and social inclusiveness. Because of the dependence of virtue and socio-political opportunity on one another, Progressive Confucians must identify and critique all forms of oppression.

In the process of preparing the lectures and then book, I realized that I was presenting myself more explicitly than ever before as not just a scholar of Confucian philosophy, but as a Confucian philosopher. I was seeking in my own limited way to contribute to the on-going life and growth of Confucianism. This led naturally to the question of whether I identified as a Confucian. I grappled with this question in the Preface to the book, landing squarely on an answer of "maybe". As I wrote there,

> whatever Confucianism means today, … it is more than a vague commitment to ritual, family, and community. It is both broader and more specific. Broader, in that almost any version of Confucianism will also emphasize an on-going commitment to moral growth and a serious involvement with a textual tradition, and many types of Confucianism will add an effort to balance our concern for one another with an apt concern for the environment we inhabit. More specific, both because Confucian ways of valuing family and so on are going to differ, to one degree or another, from other ways of doing so; and also because within the Confucian tradition itself, there are disagreements about the details. So, figuring out what exactly it means to be a Confucian in the contemporary world is complex. (Angle 2012a, vii–viii)

Now, more than a decade later, I feel more confident in asserting that yes, I identify as a Confucian, in part because of the ways in which a range of other self-identified modern Confucians (in China and elsewhere) have accepted me, even as we debate with one another what the best way forward for Confucians might be.

In the Tang Lectures and then in *Contemporary Confucian Political Philosophy*, I sketched a vision of Confucianism that drew in significant ways on Mou Zongsan and other 20th-century New Confucians, but also developed beyond anything that they had said. Throughout, I make clear that while the perspectives and arguments of Euro-American and Chinese liberals, socialists, feminists, and others all served as catalysts for my work, I nonetheless saw myself as offering

Confucian answers to problems that could be framed in Confucian terms. At its core, my argument is simple. All people have the ability to grow in the direction of sagehood—that is, to become better people. The central objective of Confucianism is to support such growth, and so all social and political structures need to be assessed in terms of how well they contribute to this objective. I criticize authoritarian politics, rejection of human rights, and patriarchal oppression—among other things—as making it harder instead of easier for groups of people to develop their virtue. There are many ways in which the resulting picture differs from contemporary liberalism, such as in my emphasis on the roles of rituals, deference, and certain kinds of state perfectionism, but there are also many ways in which this differs from the institutional and social reality of traditional, pre-modern Confucianism. Progressive Confucianism is a development of Confucianism and remains consistent with the deep commitments of the tradition, but looks very different on the outside.

In the subsequent decade the engagement between my understanding of Progressive Confucianism and various strands of Mainland Confucianism have grown ever deeper. A splendid translation of *Contemporary Confucian Political Philosophy* into Chinese by Han Hua was published in 2015 (Angle 2015), which together with excellent translations of *Human Rights Across Cultures* in 2012 and *Sagehood* in 2017 allowed my work to reach new audiences in China (Angle 2012b; 2017). I continued to speak on topics related to Progressive Confucianism at conferences and other fora in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. And then in academic year 2016-2017, thanks to a fellowship from the Berggruen Institute, I was able to spend a year in Beijing affiliated with the Tsinghua University philosophy department. By this time I had come to realize that although I did discuss some Mainland Confucians in *Contemporary Confucian Political Philosophy*, I was too narrowly focused on certain early representatives of "Mainland New Confucianism" like Jiang Qing and Kang Xiaoguang. There were now many more self-identified Mainland New Confucians with a wide range of fascinating views. My goal for the year was to learn more and to find ways to engage with these important theorists. And thanks in particular to the enthusiastic interest of Chen Ming of Capitol Normal University, the year surpassed my hopes, culminating in the series of dialogues with Mainland Confucians that is the subject of most of the rest of this essay. Before turning to that, I will close this section by noting that as I understand it, Progressive Confucianism is not just a matter of socio-political philosophy. It is a comprehensive approach to the modern Confucian tradition, very much including matters of individual moral development. This is the focus of my most recent book, *Growing Moral: A Confucian Guide to Life* (Angle 2022) and we can find a similar, expansive approach to Progressive Confucianism in Chenyang

Li's recent book, *Reshaping Confucianism: A Progressive Inquiry* (Li 2023). I believe that the next stage of growth of Progressive Confucianism must include many Mainland Confucians engaged in a similarly wide-ranging reflection on the tradition's meaning today.

Part II: Dialogues on Contemporary Confucianism

I took part in ten dialogues with Chinese Confucians in the spring of 2017. Two took place in Shandong's capital city of Jinan; the other eight were in Beijing, all but one of these on the campus of Renmin University. The format for the Beijing dialogues remained constant throughout and each had a distinct theme that was established in advance. One professor—in most cases, Renmin University's Chen Bisheng—chaired the session and began with an introduction. The first half of the session was divided between remarks by me and remarks by one or two main interlocutors; the second half contained briefer remarks by other colleagues followed by wrap-up comments by the speakers from the first half. The two Jinan dialogues were somewhat more wide-ranging, one-on-one conversations. All the dialogues took place in Chinese and were recorded and then transcribed; each speaker then had an opportunity to edit their remarks, clarifying where needed. The Jinan dialogues have each been published in China (Angle and Huang 2017; Angle and Guo 2017). It has proven more difficult to publish the Beijing dialogues in China, and so colleagues and I have translated them into English and their publication is now underway (Angle and Jin, Forthcoming).

The organization of these exchanges as dialogues—which was Chen Ming's suggestion—bears emphasizing. In each of the Beijing dialogues, the main speakers were seated across a table from each other, explicitly engaging with one another and responding to points each had raised previously, either in print or during that very dialogue. This helped to throw into sharp focus some of the crucial themes that are relevant to the future of Confucianism. The format and sustained nature of the debates—with some participants present for most or all of them—also pressed each side to take the other seriously and charitably, as opposed to just reporting their own views without really thinking about the challenges being raised. Contrast this with the result of the several written critiques of Jiang Qing's work that are published together with translations of Jiang's own essays in a 2013 volume: the critiques completely fail to move him to make any revisions to his views in the response included at the end of that volume (Jiang 2013). The dialogue format allows participants to realize where new arguments are needed

and where topics have been ignored (or answers taken for granted) within a given discourse community. Indeed, one outcome toward which the dialogues at least hint is the possible creation of a broader, cross-cultural, and multi-linguistic community in which we are each concerned with the issues that matter from all the others' perspectives.

To get a sense of how these dialogues developed, it makes sense to begin with the Beijing dialogue on "Contemporary" Confucianism. Unlike the other Beijing dialogues in which I lead off the conversation, here Chen Ming opened with an analysis of three different lenses through which China's last two centuries can be viewed and an argument that New Confucians like Mou Zongsan were stuck in a Eurocentric narrative of "enlightenment" that Confucians today should be able to transcend. This is especially important in the context of the dialogue because my Progressive Confucianism both draws on Mou Zongsan and is committed to an idea of "progress" that might depend on a particular, modernist narrative of what counts as progress. Chen argued that in a post-Cold War context in which the ideologies of liberalism and communism—together with their attendant narratives of enlightenment and revolution—no longer dominate, Chinese thinkers can elaborate a narrative based around Confucian values to re-centre Chinese cultural self-understandings. One way Chen put this was to advocate a "return to Kang Youwei" and Kang's slogan of "preserve the state, preserve the nation, and preserve the religion".

At the core of my response to Chen was the idea that notwithstanding the various contingent reasons for the rise (and perhaps fall) of different Eastern and Western experiences of modernity, there are nonetheless key ideas and values associated with modernity that Confucians have good reasons to preserve. Progressive Confucianism involves the critical acceptance of modernity: rejecting or modifying some aspects but retaining the inner logic that defends a new "outer kingliness" (i.e., democracy and so on) on the basis that it protects the ability of people to seek Confucian ideals, unhampered by interference from powerful people pursuing their own agendas. In the subsequent discussion, participants regularly returned to Chen Ming's connection between contemporary Confucianism and the preservation of China as a political entity led by the Chinese Communist Party. For some, criticism of Western-centred ideas of modernity went hand-in-hand with rejecting the value of institutionally protected minimal values, while others disagreed and from their own standpoints embraced legal and constitutional protections, albeit emphasizing that such "negative liberties" must not be seen as the whole substance of Confucian aspirations.

Mou Zongsan was the main topic of a second dialogue. In this one, I began by noting Mou's polarizing status within contemporary scholarship: one finds a great deal of hagiographic appreciation and an equal amount of uncharitable rejection, but relatively little careful, critical engagement with Mou's ideas. I believe both myself and my main interlocutor in the dialogue, Tang Wenming of Tsinghua University, to be exceptions to this generalization. In the balance of my remarks, I explained what I took to be Mou's most important contribution: namely, his argument for an "indirect" connection between moral value and political value, mediated by the concept of "self-restriction". This concept lies at the heart of key aspects of Progressive Confucianism, and I summarized my argument—inspired by Mou but going beyond anything Mou himself said—for the Confucian credentials of institutions (like rights and laws) that protect our ability to engage in the socio-political realm.

Tang Wenming replied, drawing in part on his book 《隐秘的颠覆：牟宗三，康德与原始儒家》 (*Secret Subversion: Mou Zongsan, Kant, and Originary Confucianity*) (Tang 2012). While Tang is critical of many of Mou's specific arguments, Tang is even more worried about those who think that Mou is outdated and no longer relevant. To the contrary, Tang said that Mou's philosophical approach to the Confucian tradition, which builds on the distinctive philosophy of Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism, is vital to the depth of Confucianism today—and to universalizing Confucian thinking across different cultures, which Tang agreed with me in endorsing. The bulk of Tang's remarks then summarized four key themes from his book in which he engages critically with Mou, focusing on morality, autonomy, ontology, and human relationships. Chen Ming was the third main speaker and he offered his own understanding of Mou's significance, arguing that Mou's contributions lay more in his metaphysical and historical/genealogical views and less in his distinctive methodology or his political philosophy (which Chen suggested was overly-fixated on democracy). For Chen, Mou is simply a "transitional figure". The dialogue concluded with some spirited conversation, much of it focusing around the degree to which contemporary Confucianism needs to follow the methods of "philosophy".

The liberal tone struck by the notion of progressivism can invite skepticism from Mainland Chinese Confucians, and in the next few dialogues, I encountered what can be seen as "rightwing" backlashes against the interpretation and reconstruction of Confucian thought along progressive lines. This critical engagement with progressive Confucianism played out through arguments on such topics as Kang Youwei, Confucian religion, and Classical Studies. Among many early Confucians whom Mainland Confucians invoke, one central figure is Kang, whose profoundly shaped the categories in terms of which subsequent

generations of Confucians revive and preserve the Confucian tradition. When we discussed Kang, I set the stage by discussing four potential ways of understanding Confucianism. The first approach is localism, which takes Confucianism as a cluster of indigenous thoughts, habits, and rites not relevant to outsiders. The very opposite of localism is universalism, which attempts to replace Western-centric philosophy by uncovering the universal aspects of Confucianism. The next approach is what I called "emergent cosmopolitanism", which envisions a new global community as the site of philosophical reflection and theorizing based on a convergence of different languages, categories, and assumptions. Lastly, my preferred approach was "rooted global philosophy", which firmly grounds Confucian philosophical thinking in its lengthy tradition of texts and practice while still holding that Confucianism needs to avail itself of foreign concepts and categories instrumental to its own progress. Against this conceptual map, I argued that it is possible to think of Kang as doing rooted global philosophy in his own way, but Kang's own arguments (such as his dismissal of family) and approach to textual interpretation (such as his idiosyncratic reading of Confucian Classics) may raise questions about his own work and the rooted global philosophy with which he can be associated.

In response, Chen Bisheng argued that what Kang was doing was closer to universalism than to rooted global philosophy, based on his use of the Three Ages Theory of the Gongyang School and his transformation of it into a theoretical framework capable of explaining all of human history. Kang's universalist tendencies notwithstanding, Chen believed that returning to Kang, far from a conservative turn, is a proper way of understanding the cultural identity of China – what China is, how China came to be the way it is, and where China is heading. Zhang Guangsheng, another professor from Renmin University, disagreed that we can retrieve from Kang a cultural identity of China. Rather, Zhang claimed that a return to Kang is a return to the problems he framed and confronted, rather than to the answers he gave. Kang points us to the survival of China as a civilization state (as opposed to a nation state) under the idea of "all-under-Heavenism", and intellectuals such as Mou Zongsan and Jiang Qing can all be seen as responding to the problems that Kang sharply discerned. Disputing the idea of the civilization state, Chen Ming then emphasized Kang's slogan of "protecting the state, the nation, and the religion" as the most relevant legacy that he left to contemporary China.

The approaches of religion and Classical Studies, which are already nascent in Kang's thought, were the central topics of two subsequent dialogues. In the first, two issues—the religiosity of Confucianism and Confucianism as a civil religion—structured the conversation on Confucian religion. Participants

debated the extent to which a religious reading of Confucianism is spurred or tainted by Western influence. Emphasizing the importance of not using Western categories of religion to distort Confucianism, I downplayed the question of "is Confucianism a religion" and instead asked what kinds of religiosity Confucianism values and displays. I argued that central to traditional Confucianism was not religious "faith" nor the existence of transcendental God, but an attitude of reverence for *Tian* 天 (Heaven) and the values that it embodies, which opened up its unique way of modernization and progress. The religiosity of Confucianism is also related to contemporary Confucianism as modern society needs to find a way to accommodate it—either as a state religion, civil religion, a background culture, or an individual ethic. Finally, I problematized the relationship between the Classics and religion, asking how it is possible to connect the Classics up to Confucian (civil) religion in a way that is not trapped in dogmatic textual disputes.

All Chinese Confucians participating in the dialogue agreed that Western categories do not fit neatly into an understanding of Confucian religion. Further, Chen Ming made a distinction between Confucian religion and Confucian civil religion, the latter of which is focused on Confucianism's historical and cultural functions and its practical (rather than theoretical) role in sustaining the unity and stability of Chinese society. Lu Yunfeng (Peking University) and Wang Qingxin (Tsinghua University) shared the view that Confucianism as an indigenous form of religion is still tacitly shaping the moral sentiments of the Chinese though, as Wang said, they are not conscious of it. While Lu emphasized the need to recognize diverse ways in which Confucian religion manifests itself, which include both elite beliefs and folklore, Wang specifically targeted Chen's civil religion account as he believes that the narrowing down of Confucianism to its functional utility undermines the very religiosity of Confucianism—or its external transcendence, as he called it. Drastically different from Chen and myself, who both saw a sharp conflict between religion and modernity, Zhao Feng (Central Party School) took divinity as indispensable to all great civilizations, which, in turn, called for more of an effort to religionize Confucianism and the broader Chinese culture.

In the next dialogue, we disputed a second key aspect of Kang's thought, which is the Classical Studies approach. The dialogue primarily featured a conversation among Chen Ming, Chen Bisheng, Tongji University's Zeng Yi, and myself. Chen Bisheng claimed that the values of the classics have already been embodied and acted on by ordinary Chinese in their quotidian life. Studying classical texts, however, can help us understand both the cultural identity of the Chinese along with the political issues of state building that undergird it, which is the

contemporary value of Classical Studies; and the genealogy of how China came to be a successive whole as it is known today, which is its historical value. Drawing a bigger picture of comparison among civilizations, Zeng Yi compared the historical narratives of Christianity, Islam, and Confucianism and discussed their intricate relationships with the regime types of theocracy, monarchy, and democracy. Zeng addressed Confucius's aborted ambition of building up the Confucian Lu state in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and—partly through a comparison with Shi'a Islam—explored the possibility of fitting Confucianism, which never directly wielded political power, into a theocratic state structure.

Chen Ming was sceptical of the Classics approach. He accused Chen Bisheng of relegating China into a cultural-anthropological entity incapable of political innovations, while being equally critical of Zeng Yi's goal of reviving Confucian classicism in an Islam-inspired, theocratic regime, which he took to be detached from reality. From a progressive perspective, I offered a more systematic critique of Confucian classicism. Against a taxonomy of different ways of reading classics, I pointed out a discrepancy in Chen Bisheng's account between his attachment to ancient texts and commitment to philosophical justifications. I maintained that Chen Bisheng's own arguments undermined the distinction between Classicism and philosophy. Similarly, I cast doubt on a dichotomy in Zeng Yi's reasoning between following the tradition and wholesale Westernization, which leaves out many options that can otherwise be intelligible in Classical Studies. Further, in terms of political institutions, I discouraged us from narrowing down the focus of Classical Studies to the texts in the Han and Tang dynasties, as Song Neo-Confucians like Zhu Xi, who is well-known for his study of the heart-mind, is equally, if not more, concerned with political and social order.

Triggering culturally conservative responses from Mainland Confucians does not mean that Progressive Confucianism has firmly posited itself on the leftwing of the political spectrum. In fact, the labelling of "leftwing" and "rightwing" is a matter of fierce and ongoing dispute. One of the sources of the dispute comes from their different connotations in the Chinese and Western contexts. In the last three of the Beijing dialogues, we see different strands of Confucian thought coming from what can be loosely called "leftwing" in relation to Progressive Confucianism. One of them focused on how Confucianism relates to the Marxist-Socialist tradition. It opened with my discussion of "leftwing Confucianism" by reference to Zhang Guangsheng's book, 《返本开新：近世今文经与儒家政教》 (*Returning to the Past for the Future: New Text Confucianism and the Unity of Confucian Religion and Politics*) (Zhang 2016). I maintained that leftwing thinkers such as Zhang often have distinct, dual commitments to Confucianism and to Marxism, which do not always overlap. For example, state

unity based on the idea of race and quasi-theocracy emphasized by leftwing Confucians such as Zhang presupposes homogeneity, while Confucians put a great premium on harmony which attempts to reconcile, rather than suppress, diversity and difference. In addition, Confucians bear a responsibility to think more about institutional accountability, which is a hallmark of Progressive Confucianism, while leftwing Confucianism has greater faith in elite leadership at the expense of rule-governed constraints.

Recognizing the definitional issue of the "left" and the "right", Zhang traced the genealogy of leftwing Confucianism back to the tradition of classical studies and modern figures like Xiong Shili and Liang Shuming, those earlier generations of Confucians who chose to stay in Mainland China after the communist takeover. Although Confucianism and Marxism are very different politically, Zhang said their difference is one of scope rather than kind. According to Zhang, Confucians have long been concerned with the broad strokes of historical continuity and change while losing sight of detailed political and economic proposals, which Marxism helps to supply. Against this backdrop, Zhang argued that leftwing Confucianism supports the welfare state because of its concern with economic equality, just as traditional Confucians did, and further that the welfare mechanisms should be supervised by a theocratic state based on the unity of state and religion, which differs meaningfully from the nation state which was born out of the threat from the church peculiar to the Western experience. Chen Ming joined the discussion by pointing to the inherent problem of trying to find a universal definition for the "left" and the problematic nature of Zhang's civilizational state, which tends to undermine the unity of the state. Peking University's Gan Chunsong, in his turn, addressed the tension between leftwing and rightwing in the context of Chinese intellectual thought, which pivots around tensions first between Confucianism and Legalism, and second within the Confucian tradition itself between Wang Anshi and the Cheng Brothers in the Song dynasty.

Given Progressive Confucianism's embrace of human rights and basic freedoms, the closest normative position to Progressive Confucianism is so-called liberal Confucianism, which is another sense in which Confucianism can be rendered leftwing in a way that is not Marxist. However, disputes arose both from an interpretive perspective (whether Confucianism can be read in terms of liberal values) and on normative grounds (to what extent Confucianism needs to accommodate liberal concerns). I objected to the idea of "liberal Confucianism" for several reasons. For one, it brings in an inherent tension structured by dual commitments to liberalism and Confucianism and does justice to neither of them. For another, construing Confucianism in liberal terms is not only conceptually confusing

(since Confucianism is much broader in scope than liberalism), but also too easily susceptible to the critique of doctrinaire Confucians who already accuse Progressive Confucians of betraying the tradition in favour of liberal values. Instead, I emphasized the Confucian value of "self-achievement" (*zide* 自得), rather than the liberal value of freedom (*ziyou* 自由).

Defenders of liberal Confucianism put forward different arguments disputing my position. Ren Jiantao from Renmin University believed that the notion of progress is equally, if not more, confusing because progress denotes a static destiny toward which Confucianism evolves, which is subject to reasonable dispute. Further, according to Ren, a recognition of freedom is a precondition for all cultures pursued by all human beings, and so the idea of freedom, if not the concept thereof, is nascent in the Confucian tradition. Different cultures may have different forms and social norms for expressing human freedom, but their ultimate goal should be seen as the same (see also Ren 2013). Liang Tao (Renmin University) and Zhao Xun (Hong Kong University), however, were more sceptical that Confucianism has already adopted freedom; instead, both of them believed that Confucianism needs to do more to incorporate the idea of freedom. For Liang, however, this did not mean that contemporary Confucians should follow Mou Zongsan's path of self-restriction, but that they should keep traditional Confucian thinking about institutions including rites and legal codes while rendering them more egalitarian. Zhao, on the other hand, distinguished between thick and thin Confucianism. Thick Confucianism refers to a comprehensive package of Confucian metaphysics, epistemology, and moral and political philosophy, while thin Confucianism only bears on political arrangements in the public sphere. For Zhao, any prospect for Confucianism today lies in its providing a public background culture for Chinese society, resembling liberal background culture's role in Rawlsian liberalism.

The topic of the final Beijing dialogue was Confucian constitutionalism. Participants disagreed on the meaning of the constitution, its role in Confucianism, and how it should be applied to the contemporary context. For me, constitutionalism should not be confined to its meanings in the West; looking at Confucianism can help us grasp various ways in which it is interpreted. Nevertheless, I argued that one central function of the constitution lies in limiting political power. Confucians have Confucian reasons to adopt the constraint of political power: by limiting the power of the elite, ordinary people can freely develop their own agency in the direction of moral perfection. The creative tension between perfectionism and the check on political power lies at the centre of Progressive Confucianism.

While also acknowledging the rich sources of constitutional thinking in traditional Confucianism, Ren Feng, a professor at Renmin University and an advocate of "conservative constitutionalism" in China, put forward a different vision. His version of Confucian constitutionalism was directly opposed to a culture and political zeal for democracy, which is no panacea for the needs of Chinese society today. For Ren, what China needs is a conservative constitution that makes the best of mechanisms of checks and balances traditionally available in Confucianism and updates it under contemporary conditions. The lesson from Chinese history is that Confucian constitutionalism prioritizes the Sagely Way over the Kingly Way, ritual governance over legal codes, political governance over the choice of regime types, and finally educational functions of the government over exacting public recognition from ordinary people. Chen Ming disputed Ren's approach on all four fronts. First, the distinction between the Sagely and Kingly Ways presupposes an artificial rupture between them, which never existed. Second, traditional China was governed by political and legal institutions more than it was by rituals. Third, infusing Confucian values with politics is about the regime structure, not just about governance. And finally, Confucianism's role in Chinese history not only served as moral code educating the people, but also constituted the civil religious spirit of Chinese society.

Before turning to some reflections on what we might make of all this back-and-forth, let me sum up the two Jinan dialogues. The first, with Shandong University's Huang Yushun, worked similarly to the Beijing exchanges with the exception that only the two of us spoke (until the end, when there was time for audience questions), and we had exchanged a general outline of topics and questions we wanted to pose to one another in advance. The result of this format (which Huang had proposed) was perhaps the highest level of mutual understanding among all of the dialogues. Among other things, it became clear that I had been mistaken when in a previous publication I had characterized his "生活儒學" (Life Confucianism) as synthetic, drawing equally on Confucianism and on Heidegger. For his part, Huang—who had been willing to have his political thought characterized as "liberal Confucianism," or even "Confucian liberalism" (Huang 2016)—granted that both these labels and some of the substance of his view moved too quickly from the recognition that modern Confucianism needs substantial modification of its "external politics" (or *waiwang* 外王) to the conclusion that liberal democracy is the answer. Another critical point of overlap between us was our mutual recognition that structural oppression is a problem that Confucians need to face. As Huang put this, our current life possibilities are the product of past structures (*xingxia* 形下). We also had a valuable discussion of the comparative roles of the general lifeworld versus explicit traditions in shaping how we

think and value. My "rooted global philosophy" buts more emphasis on the latter, whereas his "Life Confucianism" puts more emphasis on the former. By distinguishing between what happens when (or to the extent that) we are explicitly doing theoretical reflection and when we are just going about our lives, we were able to arrive at a shared understanding.

My final dialogue, with Guo Ping (Shandong University) in Jinan, also revealed a significant degree of consensus. We discussed methodological issues such as the differences between "synthetic" views that draw independently on Confucianism and on another, distinct tradition (such as liberalism or Marxism), on the one hand, and rooted global philosophy on the other, with both of us characterizing our own views as the latter. We discussed the degree to which pre-modern Confucian ontological categories can still be helpful and relevant today. One important area in which there may have been some disagreement concerned the degree to which modern Confucianism should be recast with the "individual" at its core, and the related issue of how strictly we Confucians should distinguish between public and private realms. In the conversation and even more in her book, 《自由儒学的先驱：张君劢自由观研究》(*The Harbinger of Liberal Confucianism: Research on Zhang Junmai's Concept of Liberty*) (Guo 2017), Guo emphasized the role of an individual's legitimate self-care as the source of broader Confucian ideas of humaneness and virtue. While agreeing with Guo that it was a mistake to lean too far in the direction of collectivist or purely role-based ontologies, I argued that we still cannot abandon the relationality which is so central to Confucian selfhood. Even here, I suspect our views overlapped much more than they diverged.

Part III: Reflections on the Dialogues

In order to get some perspective on all of these dialogues, let me take you back to the spring of 2017. Donald Trump had just begun his term as President of the United States; Xi Jinping was still in his first term as President of the People's Republic of China. Xi's regional ambitions were growing, with China launching its first home-built aircraft carrier; Trump's "America First" agenda led him to ban travel from many Muslim countries, though his initial efforts to do this were rejected by the U.S. court system. Domestically, contrasts manifested in different ways. As anti-Trump protests proliferated in the U.S., in China internment camps were established in Xinjiang and increasing limits imposed on political expression more generally. As I prepared for the dialogues to commence, I knew that some theorists in China who were already suspicious of democracy saw the election of Trump as confirmation: meritocratic systems were superior to systems which

left leadership to the whim of the masses. I was not so sure, as even in the early months of Trump's presidency we were seeing ways in which the constitutional framework of checks and balances was limiting his mischief.

In the China where I was living, surveillance (even in college classrooms) and self-policing of the written and even spoken word was at the highest level I had experienced in thirty years of visiting (and periodically living in) the country. Surveillance and censorship have only increased since 2017, one minor casualty of which was the planned Chinese-language version of the Beijing dialogues. As I reflect now on where my interlocutors and I found common ground, where we differed, and what I learned, I want to begin with the twin matters of censorship and my own role. Parsing the effects of political surveillance on the views expressed in the dialogues is complicated, but there is no question that open, public debate over some of our topics was and remains impossible within China, and even poses some kinds of risks outside of China's borders. I cannot presume to speak for others—to claim that such-and-such is what they would have said, if only they could—because this tramples on their agency. But I can endeavour to speak as a Confucian (and not simply or only as an American), taking seriously the need to balance the conservation of tradition with the progress of that same tradition. My aim in these dialogues was to participate as one Confucian theorist in conversation with others, beholden to the same tradition of moral responsibility and textual learning. And I sought to take seriously the sociopolitical context of contemporary China. Ren Jiantao—whom I had never met before our encounter in the dialogue on "liberal Confucianism"—lumped me together with William Theodore de Bary. While in another context being compared to a great historian like de Bary would be tremendously flattering, Ren meant to suggest that we were both purely outsiders investigating Confucianism for purposes disconnected from the reality of China, which I believe is a mistake. In the same dialogue, Chen Ming suggested that I be seen not as an "Edgar Snow" reporting on Confucianism for an outside audience, but as a "Henry Bethune". This is undoubtedly an exaggeration—Bethune was a heroic doctor who was praised by Mao Zedong for his service to the Communist cause in 1938 and 1939—but it gets at something of my desire to engage with Chinese colleagues in a deeper way than mere academic exchange. Even despite whatever familiarity I have with modern Chinese history, I must of course acknowledge that my position gives me options, concerns, and perspectives that are quite different from those of my Chinese colleagues. I to have tried to use my liminal, insider/outsider standpoint and platform in ways that are both sensitive to its limitations but also constructive.

Over the course of the dialogues we identified quite a bit of largely common ground, though the diversity of the Chinese participants ensured that there would

always be an outlier or two. First, there was pretty general agreement that Confucianism today cannot be viewed just as philosophy in a narrow sense, but neither can we Confucians set aside philosophy. Ever since the advent of Western-style research universities in China, philosophy has been the primary institutional home of Confucian studies, though more recently other categories like "religion", "classicism", and "political theory" have also been important—as we discuss in the dialogues. These institutional innovations build on the academic arguments that have been made for decades concerning the relation of pre-modern Confucianism to categories like "politics", "ethics", "philosophy", and "religion" (for example, see Huang 1983; Yu 2004). It is simply obvious that the pre-modern practice of Confucianism was much broader than the contemporary practice of philosophy, especially if we confine ourselves to the practices of current university professors and their students. There has recently been some important broadening in university philosophical practice, much of it under the banner of "philosophy as a way of life", but even so Confucianism will continue to overflow the banks of philosophy. Most participants agreed, nonetheless, that holding onto the core philosophical practice of critical, creative reason-giving is essential. I took this to be the key upshot of the dialogue on classicism: both Chen Bisheng and Chen Ming, in their own ways, agreed that "classicism" as a methodology did not mean abandoning the need to give reasons and make arguments. In the dialogue on religion I introduced the idea of "rooted global philosophy," and by the end I think it is fair to say that all participants in the conversation had endorsed the need for both rootedness in the Confucian tradition and the "global" aspiration to listen to the reasons of others and offer up one's own reasons for consideration.

A second area of common ground was the need to rethink the modernist and Eurocentric narratives that have structured thinking about China's present and future. The details here were much debated, and at various points over the dialogues I was taken to be stuck in a kind of mid-century modernism with Mou Zongsan; I will come back to our differences in a moment. But to one degree or another, we all agreed that contemporary Confucians should advocate a reframing of our concerns that is less structured around distinctive Euro-American categories and questions. Third, almost everyone in these dialogues felt that significant room needs to be made for some type of "religious" understanding and/or practice of Confucianism, with Huang Yushun—who is very suspicious of what passes for "Confucian religion" these days—being a notable exception. Most of us were not sympathetic to Jiang Qing's model of "state religion" in which Confucianism is re-imagined along the lines of a monotheistic, church-and-clergy-based religion, with Zeng Yi's striking remarks about and equivalence between Confucianism and Shi'a Islam as an extreme exception. Instead,

there was interest on all sides both in some sort of public, ritual role for Confucianism along the lines of a "civil religion", as well as in some of the more profound sides of human religiosity—although again there was disagreement here on the details, as well as on how civil religion and individual relationships to ultimate meaning might be combined.

A final area on which there was much discussion and quite a lot of agreement was the need for contemporary Confucianism to pay attention to both "inner sageliness" and "outer kingship"—and, according to many of us, to the interrelationship between inner and outer. Some participants focused primarily on the outer side (often calling this "political philosophy"); Ren Jiantao argued that we simply cannot evaluate another person's character. But elsewhere in that dialogue Liang Tao argued at length for the importance and interconnection of inner and outer, basing himself in part on his readings of Mengzi and Xunzi; and Zhao Xun offered some very provocative thoughts about the need for Confucianism to be sufficiently "thick" without becoming doctrinaire or exclusivist. For my part, I replied to Ren that even though it is indeed hard for bystanders to judge to what degree one's virtue has progressed, we can objectively analyse the conditions that better enable people to develop their virtue. Growing more moral is ultimately one's own responsibility, but Confucians should seek socio-political arrangements that make such growth more common.

So much for common ground. What were the key points of dispute? They can be grouped into three areas: (1) details about how common the common ground really is; (2) the strength and explicitness of constitutional checks on the power of the state, and other matters relating to the role and expanse of the state; and (3) social issues, especially related to feminism and the role of women. One thing that was not in dispute was the legitimacy of my participation in the dialogues in the first place. There was almost no patronizing, explaining-to-the-foreigner what Confucianism really was. I was sometimes lumped together with old-fashioned, modernist Confucians and occasionally called a "White lefty" but never written off as just a Western liberal. This almost certainly was the result of the extended, iterative nature of the dialogues with several of the same people participating repeatedly. In fact, I'd had a number of dinners with the some of the same cast of characters in the fall of 2016, out of which emerged the idea for the dialogues in the first place.

Even where I have said there was common ground, there was often disagreement on the details. For example, what did it mean to re-narrate Chinese and Confucian modern history? For me, one key was balancing the usefulness of certain widely used, Euro-American-derived concepts with an effort to avoid importing

unnecessary assumptions whose roots lay in contingent European experiences. Let's keep "philosophy" and "religion", say, but avoid understanding the latter primarily through the lens of "faith" or even "belief", because these ideas are not particularly central to Confucian religiosity. To one degree or another the Chinese participants were sympathetic to this stance, but for them the re-narration had a different centre of gravity. They might say: whereas the May-Fourth-obsessed, mid-century Confucians like Mou Zongsan had taken primary inspiration from Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism, let's look instead to the way that Kang Youwei provides a fulcrum that can both skip over the Song back to the "institutionalist" focus of Han-Tang Confucianism, and skip forward (over May Fourth) to the present day. (For their part, both Huang Yushun and Guo Ping were quite a bit more comfortable with the May Fourth narrative.) Beijing participants' reasons for desiring a re-narration had a lot to do with the imperative of state-and-nation building, which I will discuss next, but we also debated to what degree the caricature of Neo-Confucianism as inward-focused could be maintained. Many participants argued that it was critical to draw on the political/institutional insights of Gongyang Confucianism and of Dong Zhongshu, in particular, though it is worth noting that my main interlocutor in the last Beijing dialogue, Ren Feng, has built his reputation on studying the institutional or even "constitutional" aspects of Song dynasty Confucianism. But in any event, the real crux of a narrative emphasizing institutions lies in what sorts of institutions those are.

At various times throughout the dialogues the subject of a minimal, bottom-line morality came up. We all agreed that this was not the full extent of Confucian thinking on morality or ethics, and furthermore that having some sort of bottom line was a good thing, but for some of us figuring out how to ensure that bottom-line morality was adhered to was more important than for others. In particular, was *this* a key function of political "institutions", or did the main function of such institutions lie elsewhere (for example, in encouraging or even ensuring conformity with state policies or national identity)? Xie Maosong of the Central Party School was startling clear in his view: the contemporary Chinese Communist Party is the second coming of Confucius; being a good Confucian means following the Party's directives. I consistently argued, in a way that I readily acknowledge builds on Mou Zongsan, for the need for legal, constitutional checks on government and respect for human rights. Most of the other participants lay somewhere in between: not comfortable, perhaps, with Xie's wholesale endorsement of the Party but also worried about the effects of true democratic contestation and selfish, rights-based litigiousness on China's huge and fractious society, among other things. There were hints of concern with the effects of unchecked state power here and there. It was unclear how confident

participants really were that China's "next thirty years" will not return to the "first thirty years" of the Mao era. Chen Bisheng's pointing out, in response to Zhang Guangsheng's narrative of leftist Confucianism, that Xiong Shili's post-1949 works were done under the influence of political power might be a gesture at some of the dynamics in play today. Let us not forget that a few weeks after I departed China that spring, the cultural critic, political activist, and Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo died in prison.

Sex and gender did not serve as a topic for a specific dialogue, but these issues came up periodically—or I should say, I brought them up periodically. I think they are not on the radar of most contemporary Confucians. Most of the participants would not go as far as Jiang Qing, who published an infamous interview titled "只有儒家能安顿现代女性" (Only Confucians Can Make a Place for Modern Women) that argued for a return to traditional gender roles on the basis that they are "natural" (Jiang 2015; see also Jiang 2019). But I am not sure that they viewed Jiang's piece as shocking in quite the way I did. Only two women participated in the dialogues: the Singaporean scholar Tan Sor-hoon, whom I invited to join us when she happened to be in Beijing, and Guo Ping in Jinan. Ren Jiantao—among the most explicitly "liberal" of the participants—tried to set feminist concerns aside as rooted in and relevant exclusively to Western experiences, arguing that Du Weiming's pioneering engagement with feminism "must strike real Confucians as something alien and strange". I take exception to this sentiment, which strikes me as blind to the realities of contemporary China—and, in particular, to the experiences of contemporary Chinese women. Instead, we contemporary Confucians need to pay careful attention to our societies and grapple with the resulting challenges by deploying in new ways resources that are internal to Confucianism, insofar as this is possible.

So far I have focused on areas of agreement and disagreement, but the point of a dialogue is not just to clarify existing stances but to learn from one another. So what did I learn over the course of these dialogues? Most basically: it is crucial for anyone interested in the future of Confucianism to take the diverse and evolving voices of "Mainland New Confucians" seriously. I did not do this sufficiently in my earlier book *Contemporary Confucian Political Philosophy* (published in 2012) but have been working on it since. As I have put it elsewhere (Angle 2018), Mainland New Confucianism has now moved beyond its earliest stage, dominated by Jiang Qing, to enter a more disparate "adolescence"; in characterizing this period as adolescence, I am adverting to the fact that none of the thinkers who participated in the dialogues would assert that they have everything figured out. Jiang Qing was exciting because he was creative, provocative, and offered some good arguments (but also some bad ones) to back up his claims. Today's Mainland New

Confucians are his heirs in these ways, but most of them are less interested in the inflammatory and unrealistic extremes that he sometimes reached. The most interesting and innovative reflection on Confucianism that is taking place in the Sinitic world today comes from Mainland New Confucians.

It's also important to recognize the validity of their concerns with "state-and-nation building", and to value open-minded thinking about what shape a future China might take. As I have noted, it is impossible to have entirely open conversations in today's China about political matters, including about the literal shape of the country (whether it does or should include Xinjiang, Tibet, Taiwan, and so on), but that does not mean that outsiders should dismiss the desire for a unified, flourishing Chinese state as mere "nationalism". I also admire the creative thinking about methodology, disciplinary frameworks, and justification that one finds in some of the talk about classicism, for example. In a recent PhD dissertation, Wei Shi does an exemplary job of appreciating but also engaging critically with the somewhat similar methodology ("using the history of philosophy to do philosophy") employed by another contemporary Confucian, Chen Lai (Shi 2022, 74; and see Chen 2014). It is very important that "classicism" not become an excuse for a rigid, unquestioning attitude toward the classics—which after all would have been rejected by the great Confucian classicists of the past—but neither need Confucian reasoning perfectly mimic the ahistorical style of analytic philosophy.

Another thing I learned was how challenging it is to pinpoint the right level of generality at which to pitch "Progressive Confucianism". Is it just the idea that Confucianism is a developing ("progressing") tradition, which rules out some approaches but not many? Or is it much more specific, requiring commitment to activism against oppression and to explicit constitutional constraints on power? I found Zhao Xun's reflections on the importance of being thick, but not too thick, to be extremely relevant here. To borrow his key term, what would a public culture capable of endorsing Progressive Confucianism look like? Here I would call attention to a recent book by Kwon Kyung Rok in which Kwon offers the most realistic understanding of pluralism in contemporary East Asia of any theorist writing on Confucianism today. Kwon explains how the right kind of Confucian leader will help non- or even anti-Confucian citizens "acknowledge a Confucian leader as the partner of political cooperation" (Kwon 2022, 113). I believe we might be able to draw together these ideas and others from the dialogues, including much that is said about Confucianism's role in a civil religion, to sketch an approach to Confucianism that is more robust than Ren Jiantao's anything-goes approach but not exclusivist in the sense that Zhao warns us against.

Conclusion

No one person gets to decide what Confucianism means today. Neither detailed arguments nor bold assertions stand on their own; what is critical is that a community comes to be persuaded by and endeavours to implement a given perspective on the tradition. In a plural and changing society like China's, it is inevitable that different groups will find different visions of Confucianism to resonate with their life experiences, with still other groups questioning or even rejecting the tradition. After all, over its long history Confucianism has not just been dynamic—as I have been emphasizing—but also diverse and contested. My own journey has led me to embrace Progressive Confucianism as an inspiring path forward, but its future depends on continued engagement among scholars and citizens both in China and around the world.

Acknowledgements

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An Introduction to Zoeontology

Fei WU

Abstract

Zoeontology, or the study of living, is a philosophical system the author is constructing in the spirit of traditional Chinese philosophy. We see living as the central philosophical inquiry in the Chinese tradition, rather than being as in Western philosophy. Being is supposed to be eternal and death is a negation of being, but living consists of birth, growing, aging, and death. Hence in zoeontology, we see time as the rhythm of living, and space as the orientation in a living community. As a time-space system, a living subject interacts with the world from the perspective of the ego. Zoeontology is also a kind of subjective philosophy. Different living subjects interact with each other if their living rhythms parallel or overlap with each other. A child's living process is internal to the parents' living process, and hence there must be intimate and profound interactions between them. This is the beginning of a civil community. There is a dialectical relationship between civilization and nature. The purpose of human civilization is to civilize a natural living community, but it must obey the rules of nature. Human civilization is not meant to change nature, but to fulfil it.

Keywords: zoeontology, living, time-space system, subjective philosophy, civilization

Uvod v zoeontologijo

Izvleček

Zoeontologija ali preučevanje življenja predstavlja filozofski sistem, ki ga avtor gradi v duhu tradicionalne kitajske filozofije. Na življenje gledamo kot na osrednjo filozofsko vprašanje kitajske tradicije, in ne kot obstoj, kot v zahodni filozofiji. Medtem ko naj bi bil obstoj večen, smrt pa njegova negacija, življenje sestoji iz rojstva, rasti, staranja in smrti, zato se v zoeontologiji čas obravnava kot ritem življenja, prostor pa kot orientacija znotraj življenjske skupnosti. Kot časovno-prostorski sistem prihaja živo bitje v stik s svetom s stališča ega. Zoeontologija pa je prav tako vrsta subjektivne filozofije. Mnogoteri živeči subjekti se medsebojno sporazumevajo, če so njihovi življenjski ritmi vzporedni drug z drugim ali pa se prekrivajo. Ker je življenjski potek otroka notranji v odnosu do življenjskega poteka starša, morajo med njima obstajati tesne in temeljne interakcije. To je začetek državljanske skupnosti. Med civilizacijo in naravo obstaja dialektično razmerje. Smoter človeške civilizacije je civilizirati naravno življenjsko skupnost, medtem ko mora hkrati

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tudi slediti pravilom narave. Ni mišljeno, da mora človeška civilizacija spreminjati naravo, ampak kvečjemu, da bi jo morala izpopolniti.

Ključne besede: zoeontologija, življenje, časovno-prostorski sistem, subjektivna filozofija, civilizacija

Zoeontology (性命論), or the study of living, is a philosophical system I am attempting to construct in the spirit of traditional Chinese philosophy.[1] Since 2018, amidst heated discussions about the main spirit of Chinese philosophy as well as its modern form (Ding 2018; 2020; Yang 2020), I have published several articles in Chinese on zoeontology (Wu, 2018; 2020a; 2020b; 2022). I am now writing a book on this system in Chinese, and am delighted to introduce its main ideas here in the following English text.

Living as a Philosophical Question

The central concern of zoeontology is to understand contemporary questions from a Chinese point of view. There have been rich philosophical ideas in China, but seldom have they been organized in a systematic way. The encounter with Western philosophy, especially in recent four decades, has taught Chinese philosophers to organize these ideas in at least three aspects. 1) the systematic form of Western philosophy has offered a model to organize philosophical ideas; 2) the central concerns of Western philosophy have stimulated Chinese philosophers to identify the major features of our own philosophy, especially those which are different from the major features of the Western traditions; 3) the major problems that modern Western philosophers have been struggling with are also important to Chinese philosophers. Both Western and Chinese philosophies have been concerned with similar central issues for human beings, but in different ways. While contemplating such pan-human questions from a Chinese point of view, we might offer some new insights on them for Western audiences in particular.

In the Western philosophical tradition ontology, or the study of being, is seen as the first philosophy. Shakespeare's famous line "to be or not to be, that is the question", could best describe the central concern of the major Western philosophers. The real concern of Hamlet, however, is whether he should live or not. From a Chinese perspective, we would say, "to live or not to live, that is the question", and this is exactly how the main Chinese translations of *Hamlet* render it, as it would

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1   A similar idea is seen in Roger Ames' Zoetology (forthcoming). I share quite a few ideas with Ames, but the term "zoeontology" fits what I describe here better, and this I will continue to use it.

be unreadable if we literally translated "to be" as 存在. There have been intensive debates about the Chinese counterpart of the term "being" in philosophical texts. "Being" seems to be so simple a word that we could use it to describe philosophical objects in any cultural tradition. But there is a long intellectual history behind this simple word which Chinese philosophy does not share, and how could we use a term without considering the rich cultural assumptions underlying it? Because there is no copula in Chinese there can be no exact counterpart of "being". The major question of Chinese philosophy is not being, but living.

Although the term being seems suitable to describe everything in the world in everyday language, whether in Greek, English, or any modern European language, as a philosophical term originally discovered by Parmenides, being does not signify anything that exists in the world. It is eternal and unchangeable. Plato inherited and developed the Parmenidean understanding of being. In *The Republic*, he famously defined a philosopher as someone who studied "the being that is eternally and does not wander between generation and decaying" (ἐκείνης τῆς οὐσίας τῆς ἀεὶ οὔσης καὶ μὴ πλανωμένης ὑπὸ γενέσεως καὶ φθορᾶς) (Plato 2016, 485b2). For Plato, anything that generates, changes, and decays is becoming instead of being. Only the idea (εἶδος) really is, and everything else only exists in a rough sense. Aristotle, who defined a philosopher as one who studies being *qua* being (Aristotle 1979, 1005b24), made more compromises with the everyday use of the word and agreed that everything that exists is, and that being must change (ibid., 1012b28). As a philosophical inquiry, however, the primary concern of being *qua* being is form or actuality, which is neither generated nor destroyed (ibid., 1043b17), nor moveable (ibid., 1067b10). What is more, for him there must be a prime mover to make the world run, and this prime mover is an eternal being. Hence the idea of eternity or immovability is still inherent to his philosophical concern with being.

Although there have been great developments over its history, the study of eternity in a changing world is still inherent to the ontological concerns of Western philosophy. In Christian philosophy, the eternal being is understood as God Himself, who has created the whole world together with all the beings in it. The created beings only exist in a secondary sense, and only God exists in the true sense. Although God seems to be becoming less of a focus of concern in modern philosophy, and subjective philosophy is now the mainstream, the eternality of being also seems to be on the decline, and everything that exists can be said to be being. Hegel, who defined pure being as "without any determination", almost equated it to nothing. (Hegel 2010, 59) This does not mean, however, a reduction of being, but a new understanding of its universality in a modern intellectual context. What Hegel really meant is not that being is not anything, but that being underlies everything. Being is so universal that any determination of it would destroy

this fundamental role (Tabak 2017, 42). As the highest form of being, the absolute spirit is also the full realization of being. Heidegger's philosophy is a modern reflection of the long history of the Western metaphysics of being. His famous distinction between *das Sein* and *das Seiende* challenges the metaphysical understanding of being as a thing eternal and highest, while reserving its universality. According to Heidegger's understanding, we could not see being as something eternal, immovable, or highest, even not as a thing, but something underlying everything existent and changing. Yet what is it that underlies everything but does not exist itself? Although Heidegger was fully aware of the philosophical dilemma in the ontological tradition, he still kept the idea of being.

In a certain sense, zoeontology is a continuation of Heidegger's efforts in this regard. We will study living in a world full of different living subjects, without worrying about mixing up life and living. The distinction between living and life is close to Heidegger's distinction between *das Sein* and *das Seiende*, but springs from a quite different intellectual history. By zoeontology, we want to remake our understanding of the world we live in and its history from a Chinese perspective.

Living, of course, is not a precise translation of being in philosophy as it is in *Hamlet*. The difference between living and being shows the central difference between Chinese philosophy and Western philosophy. In mainstream Chinese philosophy, no idea of an eternal being is presumed, but living is posited as the primary concern of philosophical inquiry. There are several key characters in Chinese that are closely related to the idea of living. The first is 生, which, originally depicting grass breaking through the soil, means "to live". The second is 性, roughly corresponding to "nature" in English, but since its etymological root is 生, its precise meaning is "the nature of life" or "the living nature". It is quite probable that 性 was originally only another form of 生, and then got a more abstract meaning. The third one is 命, which has three basic meanings: "mandate", "lifespan", and "fortune". Based on the primary meanings of these three characters, we have the words 生命 and 性命, both of which could be rendered as "life" in English. But 生命 is more about biological life, while 性命 emphasizes the philosophical significance of life. There is another important word 生生, repeating 生 to indicate the ongoing process of living, including giving birth, living a life, and the continuity of living between different generations. The nuances between these Chinese characters and terms could hardly be rendered to English precisely. For the sake of English readers I will use the simple English terms "life" for 生命, "living" for 性命 and 生生, "living nature" for 性, and "mandate", "life", "lifespan" or "fortune" depending on the context for 命, sometimes with the original Chinese text for clarity. Living, the central term in zoeontology, means not only to live biologically, but also the nature of life, fortune, and the internal relationship between a living subject and the cosmos.

A saying by Liu Kanggong (劉康公) recorded in *Zuo Zhuan* (左傳), often seen as one of the earliest philosophical texts in China, expresses the basic concern of zoeontology: "Endowed by the cosmos with precious life, human beings live to their fortune. They should take care to cultivate the principle of their behaviour and manner to build their own living fortune" (Ruan 2021, vol. 17, 1022).[2] The famous opening sentence of *The Doctrine of Mean* (中庸) reads: "The mandate from Heaven makes living nature" (天命之謂性) (ibid., vol. 15, 2427). There are also several key statements in *The Book of Changes* (易經), "All lives live up to their own living nature" (各正性命) (ibid., vol. 1, 27), "The great virtue of the cosmos is living" (天地之大德曰生) (ibid., 543), and "The nature of change is living" (生生之謂易) (ibid., 491). All these quotes indicate that living is the central question in Chinese philosophy. It is almost common sense among Neo-Confucianists that their major teaching is zoeontology (性命之學), while Taoists also see zoeontology as their tradition's most important teaching. Mencius made a famous distinction between living nature and life, which is very important to later teachings of zoeontology:

> What the tongue tastes, what the eyes see, what the ears hear, what the nose smells, and what the body touches, are nature, but more likely fortune, and the gentlemen would not call them nature. The humanity between father and son, the justice between king and officials, the civility between host and guest, the wisdom of the wise, the sainthood for the heavenly way, are subject to fortune, but more likely nature, and the gentlemen would not call them fortune. (ibid., vol. 25, 679)

The five senses are faculties of the sensible life, but for Mencius they are too biological to be living nature. In contrast, the five virtues also depend on changing fortune, but they are the core of human nature, and should not be called fortune. Although Mencius had different attitudes toward the five senses and five virtues, he actually acknowledged that both are nature (性) as well as fortune (命), i.e., both are central issues in zoeontology. Virtues could not be without natural life, and human nature could not be completed without virtuous behaviours. This is a basic stance of zoeontology, although there is a fundamental tension between these two aspects.

An important difference between zoeontology and ontology is in the attitude toward life and death. Because the idea of being originates from eternity, and although modern philosophy does not insist on the eternity of authentic being any more, generation and destruction are usually not seen as parts of being. Heidegger

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2   All quotations are translated by me if not otherwise marked.

talks much about death not because death is an unavoidable part of being, but because it is the negation of being. Only with the absolute negation of being by death could one grasp the totality of *Dasein*. This is a fundamental paradox of being, which could disclose the meaning of being in a powerful though cruel way (Heidegger 1966, 219). Heidegger's understanding is a result of the rich history of Western understanding of being. Living is also seen as being, as implied by Hamlet, and hence death is understood as nonbeing, i.e., the negation of life. The opposition between life and death is equivalent to that between being and nonbeing, and has inspired great and exciting ideas. The fear of death, as shown by Heidegger, is not only essential to our understanding of *Dasein*, but also the very drive for us to inquire deeply into the meaning of being and life.

From the perspective of zoeontology there is nothing eternal in the world, and everything is generated and will decay sooner or later. Death is bad and sorrowful, but should be encountered by everyone, because it is a part of living. We do not see living as something static or changeless, but a process including generation, growing up, aging, and dying, none of which are outside or a negation of life. Living is nothing else than alternation and a combination of *yin* and *yang*. As central terms in Chinese philosophy, I define *yang* as the positive and thriving principle of living, and *yin* as the negative and restraining principle of living. From generation to growing up, similar to spring and summer in a year, *yang* is increased and *yin* is decreased; while from aging to dying, similar to autumn and winter, *yang* is decreased and *yin* is increased. There would be no death without life, and death is an unavoidable stage of every life. Hence when we study living from a zoeontological perspective we do not see death as its negation, but as its last stage. In our lives it is only a false impression that we spend every day in the same way. Our experience of each day is different, because each day has its distinct meaning in our lives, just as each day is different in different seasons. It is very significant whether a day is in the first part, middle, or last part of our lives. It also matters whether it is an exciting day or a depressing day, which is the personal experience of *yin* and *yang*. Zoeontology should weigh all these different experiences carefully and philosophically.

Because of such a different perspective of living and death, we also have quite a different understanding of time and space in zoeontology. The philosophy of time and space is very important to the Western philosophical tradition, but there has not yet been a serious study of time and space in modern Chinese philosophy. A time-space philosophy will set the framework for zoeontology.

Because of the features mentioned above, zoeontology views nature and civilization from a special point of view. The relationship between nature and

civilization has always been an important philosophical issue, especially in to-day's world. In the Christian tradition, God is believed to transcend not only civilization but also nature, because He is the creator of everything in the world. Civilization is created by human beings, who can also make a future above na-ture. Subjective philosophy has been dominant in modern Western philosophy since Descartes, and human beings have given up the possibility of knowing the natural world since Kant. Although natural science is the ideology of mod-ern times, it is not about nature as such, but nature as reconstructed by human knowledge. The objective natural world has been set aside as a thing-in-itself. Hence the true dominating power of the modern world is human knowledge. Now human science and technology have become so dominant that human na-ture itself is almost subdued, let alone the natural world outside us. In zoeon-tology, however, there is not such a gap between nature and civilization. Behind zoeontology there is not a monotheistic religion, and there is not a personified deity as the creator of the world. Nature as such is the most sacred thing from which everything springs. Human civilization is a kind of creation out of nature, but it is never above nature. We can describe, analyse, or even modify nature with our knowledge, but we can never surpass or remake it. The nature we know the best is our own lives. We can study our lives from different perspectives, but we can never grasp them in their entity or create a life from nothing. Cul-tures, languages, knowledges, technologies, politics, and religions are all human creations, and we cannot presume they could be equal to or even above nature. These creations could improve human life in certain ways, but they must run within the limits of nature, otherwise nature will punish us, sooner or later. A great spiritual crisis in the modern world is that some people assume that their beliefs are so sacred that they could pursue them at the price of other people's lives, and even the whole secular world. Self-deification has put the world into crisis several times. In zoeontology we do not think that any human effort is sa-cred, and the only sacred thing is nature. Nature is not a substance, but the way every life lives. The world is a living community. For the sake of a better life, human beings should civilize this living community. Civilization is the way of life in this community, and the precondition of any living community is respect for living nature.

Having outlined these basic aspects in zoeontology, now we will examine some important propositions in it: time-space as living rhythm, the zoeontological sub-ject, and the dialectics between nature and civilization.

Time and Space in Zoeontology

Time-space philosophy is a key issue in both Western philosophy and science. The great debates about whether time is objective or subjective, whether it is lineal or cyclical, and the relationship between eternity and temporality, have been lively throughout the history of philosophy. Because of the development of relativity theory and quantum theory, the philosophy of time has seen much activity in the last century.[3] As the difference between ontology and zoeontology is about the idea of eternity, it is unavoidable that we should first discuss time-space philosophy in this context.

Seen from the perspective of zoeontology, time is the living rhythm, and space is the orientation of a subject in a living community.

The Chinese character for time is 時, which, signifying where the sun orientates, originally meant "seasons". The characters for spring and autumn have been discovered in the inscriptions on bones or tortoise shells from the Shang dynasty, but not those for summer and winter. It is quite probable that people of the Shang dynasty divided the whole year to two seasons, spring for *yang*, and autumn for *yin*. This might also be the reason why Confucius entitled his historical book *Spring and Autumn*. Afterwards the two seasons were divided into four, and then the four seasons again were divided into eight solar terms, two for every season: the beginning of spring (立春), spring equinox (春分), the beginning of summer (立夏), summer solstice (夏至), the beginning of autumn (立秋), autumn equinox (秋分), the beginning of winter (立冬), and winter solstice (冬至). These eight solar terms were further divided into 24 solar terms. Finally, the 24 solar terms were divided into 72 phenological terms, with five days each. Time on a smaller scale is also divided in this way. The ancient Chinese regarded daytime as *yang* and the night as *yin*, and one whole day was divided into 12 parts in the same way that a year is divided into 12 months. This is quite different from the Western idea of time (χρόνος), which begins with the moment (καιρός), and the fundamental measurements for time are past, present, and the future. The contrast between a timeless eternity and the flowing of past, present and the future becomes a central question in Western philosophy. In Chinese tradition, however, time is nothing but the rhythm of living. The seasonal cycling between *yang* and *yin* is firstly divided into two periods, and gradually it is divided into shorter and shorter units, because the living process is understood with more and more precision. The living process is understood as the alternation of *yin* and *yang*, and there are many possible combinations of the two basic principles. Since the Han Dynasty scholars have used the symbols in *The Book of Changes* to represent the calendar for this reason.

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3   For a comprehensive picture of the philosophy of time in recent decades, see Oaklander (2008).

The same alteration between *yang* and *yin* is also seen in the philosophy of space. Hence there is a correspondence between time and space, as seen in a famous passage in *The Canon of Yao* in *The Book of History*, which I quote in full here despite its length:

> Then Yao told the four brothers of Xi and He families to respectfully and cautiously follow the principle of Heaven to calculate the motive law of the sun, the moon and the stars, to work out the calendar, and then to respectfully and cautiously let the broad masses of the people know the seasons and their changes. He firstly sent Xi Zhong to Yanggu from which the sun rises to respectfully welcome the sun rise, to observe and determine the time of the sun while rising in the east. When the day is as long as night, a constellation of seven stars appears in the south in the evening. Yao ordered him to determine mid-spring according to these things. Because it must be the spring equinox, while the labouring people disperse in the fields, birds and beasts begin their breeding. Yao then sent Xi Shu to Jiaozhi in the south to observe and determine the southward motive law of the sun, and respectfully meet the sun's southward returning. Yao said that when the day was the longest, Mars of the constellation of the seven stars in the east appeared in the south. Yao wanted him to determine mid-summer according to what he had just said. Because it must be the summer solstice, while the labouring people lived in the higher places, the feathers and hair of birds and beasts became few and thin. And again Yao sent He Zhong to Meigu in the west, to respectfully send off the sunset, and to determine the time of the sun falling afterwards. Yao said when the day was as long as the night, the star Xu of the constellation of seven stars appeared in the sky of south. Yao wanted him to observe and determine mid-autumn according to these rules. Because it must be the autumn equinox, while the labouring people returned to live on the flat ground, birds and beasts began to change into their new coats. At last he further ordered He Shu to Youdu in the north to observe and distinguish the movement of the sun to the north. He said at this season the day was shortest, the star Mao of the White Tiger constellation of seven stars speared in the south in the evening. Yao wanted him to determine mid-winter according to what he observed. Because it must be the winter solstice, while the labouring people lived within the house, birds and beasts had their downy coats. Then Yao said to them, "Ah! You the brothers of Xi and He should know that a round year has 366 days, and you should add a leap month to complete four seasons and make it a year." (Quoted from Luo Zhiye 2017, 141–43, with slight revisions by the author)

This is the first historical record of an official calendar in China, and it is the major achievement of the sage-king Yao. Here we can see the correspondence of four seasons and four directions: spring corresponds to the east, summer corresponds to the south, autumn corresponds to the west, and winter corresponds to the north. This implies certain level of astronomical knowledge, because we cannot determine the exact directions without a precise observation of the sun and stars. Similarly, we cannot decide on the time of the two equinoxes and two solstices without knowledge of the four directions. As recorded in *The Canon of Yao*, the four brothers of Xi and He determined the four seasons according to the four directions. There are similar ideas in other pre-Qin books. For example, it is written in *He Guan Zi* (鶡冠子) that "when the Plough directs to the east, it is spring; when the Plough directs to the south, it is summer; when the Plough directs to the west, it is autumn; when the Plough directs to the north, it is winter" (Huang 2014, 70). A poem in *The Book of Poetry* (詩經) entitled "When Pegasus is in the middle of Heaven" (定之方中) reads, "When Pegasus is in the middle of Heaven, we build a noble palace; after the directions of the sun, we build a noble room" (Ruan 2021, vol. 3, 348). These quotations show that the drawing up of a calendar and the building of a city are closely interconnected. In the six books of *The Nomos of Zhou* (周禮), the opening sentence of each of the books reads, "when a king builds the capital, he should fix precisely different directions, measure the city and the countryside, and establish a bureaucratic system" (ibid., vol. 7, 15). Here the first task of a king is to fix directions. Because different directions correspond to different seasons, the king must use some astronomical knowledge to fix these directions. And hence the six ministries of the government are: the heaven ministry of personnel affairs, the earth ministry of revenue, the spring ministry of rites, the summer ministry of war, the autumn ministry of law, the winter ministry of construction. The fixing of directions in *The Nomos of Zhou* is closely related to the making of calendar in *The Canon of Yao*. Since Yao, the power of a Chinese monarch was symbolized as the power to make and publish the official calendar. Indeed, when Yao passed the throne to Shun he said: "Now it is up to you to decide on the calendar" (ibid., vol. 23, 475).

Space as understood in zoeontology is not the extension of matter, but a subject's orientation in a living community. For a subject who is in the centre, like Yao who sent out the four brothers, four directions are not abstract spaces. Together with spring, the east symbolizes birth; together with summer, the south symbolizes growing up; together with autumn, the west symbolizes aging; together with winter, the north symbolizes death. Space is also the alternation and combination of *yang* and *yin*. Spring and summer are seasons in which *yang* dominates, and *yin* dominates in autumn and winter. Similarly, the east and south are directions in

which *yang* dominates, and *yin* dominates the west and north. A life extends itself in time and orientates itself in a living community.

Every life has its own living rhythm. A worm whose lifespan is only one day might see daytime as its spring and summer, and night as its autumn and winter. A great animal whose lifespan could last to hundreds of years would see us as such a worm, because one of its seasons could last to tens of years, far beyond our understanding (Wang 2012, 2). Even for different human beings, although their lifespans are very close to each other, they still have subtly different rhythms of life. Living experience is particular to everyone, and nobody could share it with others. In the Taoist theory of self-cultivation, it is emphasized that everyone should find his own rhythm and grasp his own beginning. Time and space are subjective in the sense that everyone has his own lifespan and place in the community. It is also objective in two senses. Firstly, although everyone has his own time-space system, he cannot change it to whatever he wants. It is there and moves ahead whether he is aware of it or not. Secondly, the common time-space system in a civilized community is objective to any member, otherwise they could not communicate with each other. In order to civilize a living community, it is essential to make a public time measure, which is the calendar. This happened in all civilizations. The Greeks numbered years with the Olympics. The Romans regarded the building of Rome as the beginning of their calendar. The Christians regard the birth of Jesus Christ as a new beginning of human history. In China, when a new emperor was enthroned, the first thing was to set a new beginning of history, to show that a new era had begun. That is why calendars are so important in Chinese politics. There is also a common spatial system. as shown in *The Nomos of Zhou*. For instance, a person in Guangdong, a province in southern China, sees provinces like Hunan, Zhejiang and Jiangxi as in north, but officially these provinces are all in the south. The city of Luoyang was a favourite capital in many dynasties because it is in the geographical middle of China.

In the zoeontological understanding of time, there is not a lineal history spanning from a beginning to an end, but there are always cycles between *yin* and *yang*. There will always be a new beginning when *yang* is vigorous, and there should be an end when *yin* dominates. This is how time circulates naturally. A regime is established, lasts for a period and then is overthrown, and this is quite similar to the natural circle.

But there is also a kind of lineal time, namely, the historical time established by human civilizations, which is beyond the cyclical time of any individual. Without civilization, human beings would live and die like any other creature. Living itself is significant, although everyone finally dies. The cosmos is a living community

(生生共同體), in which every life pursues its own way to live (各正性命). Human beings, however, are different from other lives and able to reflect rationally on their existence. They civilize their living community by establishing a common time-space system. A condition for civilization is that it must form a common living rhythm for everyone to live together. Although the common time-space system should be formed according to the natural cycle of *yang* and *yin*, there is still much left for human beings to do. For instance, it is a political matter to decide on the way to number years. Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty contributed a lot to the making of common time system. He created the reign title, which became the standard way to number years in Chinese history. He also organized a group of scholars, among whom was the great historian Sima Qian, to draw up Taichu Calendar (太初曆), the first calendar that can be verified in Chinese history. An official calendar makes lineal history possible. Although reign titles imitate the seasonal cycle in nature, people know that one reign title follows another, just as one dynasty follows another. Hence there is a sense of continuous history. The life of every individual is a cycle from life to death, and so is the reign of an emperor and a dynasty. Human civilization, however, is not satisfied with such repetitive cycles. People believe that human history composed by these cycles will continue forever. *The Historical Records*, the masterpiece composed by Sima Qian, is the first among 24 official historical books. The book was started by Sima Tan, Sima Qian's father, after whose death Sima Qian took great efforts to complete this work, because he believed that his father and he would be immortal because of it. In later dynasties it was believed that every new dynasty should be responsible for compiling an official history of the previous dynasty. Writing history was thus seen as the most important way to civilize the nation.

The idea of immortality is very important among Chinese intellectuals. There is a famous discussion in *Zuo Zhuan* about three immortalities (三不朽): by virtue, by achievement, and by words (Ruan 2021, vol. 18, 1614). There was no discussion about the imperishable nature of a spiritual being, as in Plato's *Phaedo*. It was only after Buddhism was introduced into China that the idea of an immortal spirit became familiar among Chinese intellectuals. In his famous discussion with Buddhist scholars, Fan Zhen, a fifth century Confucian scholar, argued powerfully that spirit, as a part of the body, could not survive the body (神滅論). Fan Zhen represented the mainstream idea of Confucianism, and this is also the idea of zoeontology. The three immortalities depend on a belief in continuous history. Only on the condition that the historical record is always right and complete could people believe that their virtues, deeds, or words would be remembered forever. Among Chinese intellectuals, there is a common practice of "entrusting immortality" (托以不朽). When someone was about to die, he entrusted his immortality

to a trusted friend, and thus asked his friend to publish his books or record his achievements in historical works (Xie Yan 2017, 99–106).

There has been a great tradition of historiography in China, one that can be compared with the philosophy of history in the West. However, the two great civilizations weigh history for quite different reasons. In the West, the idea of lineal time is the philosophical basis for a history with a beginning and an end. In China, history is important because it is the way for human civilizations to make progress and even become immortal. All human spiritual achievements, including culture, literature, philosophy, and religion are important to make human civilization immortal, but if we raise them above nature and even destroy nature in the name of civilization, it would be entirely against the very purpose of civilization. There is no divine reason which guarantees that any specific civilization or community will make the progress needed to become immortal. Human beings could preserve and develop their civilization with their collective wisdom, but it is always possible that their stupidity, ignorance, pride, and internal conflicts will make their civilization decline or even die out. It is already a huge achievement that human civilization has made such great developments over the millennia. Indeed, human history is a miracle compared with the natural living cycles, but the more developed a civilization is, the easier it is for people to make terrible mistakes. The rapid development of human civilization often creates an illusion that we have conquered nature and can do whatever we want, but this is likely the most dangerous misunderstanding we have ever had. Nature is the only sacred thing that needs to be respected at all times. This kind of respect, however, is not a religious one, but based on the rational reflection and development of human beings.

Subjective Philosophy in Zoeontology

Subjective philosophy is the mainstream of modern philosophy. Descartes realized that the first certain thing that one can know is the ego. The very fact that I am thinking proves that I am, hence is the famous saying *cogito ergo sum* (Descartes 1998, 64). From the standpoint of the ego, one can also realize the existence of the external world and God, and hence knowledge of the whole world. Descartes also established the dualism between spirit as something thinking and matter as something extending. The essence of the ego is a spirit, and one's body is something material. The interaction between spirit and material is a serious problem in Cartesian subjective philosophy, and hence one cannot identify another person as a thinking ego as oneself, but merely treat the other person as an extending body.

Since Descartes, subjective philosophy has become the dominant philosophical trend. Empiricists such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke also viewed the world from a subjective perspective, though quite differently in some ways. George Berkeley and David Hume made a step forward and questioned the objectivity of the external world. If we know everything from our own perspective, how can we know our cognition accurately reflects the objective world? It is Kant who made the decisive step to denounce knowledge of an objective world entirely. For him, human beings are not capable of knowing the objective world, and what they regard as objective rules are rules within their own logic. While denouncing such epistemology, Kant also established a moral metaphysics. We could not prove the existence of God, but could realize what is right morally, and if we obey all the categorical imperatives without a second thought, we are obeying God's rules and spiritually free. While Kant pushed subjective philosophy in a more radical direction, he also made an important turn. For him, it is not cognition, but will, that makes up a subject. The most important thing is not what we know, because we cannot know anything outside of ourselves, but what we will. Hence it is will that makes a person what he is.

While Schelling and Hegel tried to make the objective world philosophically significant again, the Kantian philosophy remains the ideology of liberalism. The 19th and 20th centuries saw the flourishing of the philosophy of life. Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Dilthey, Bergson, and Freud all contributed to this intellectual trend. I consider the philosophy of life a kind of subjective philosophy as well. Following Kant's line, the ego in their philosophy is not constituted by cognition, but by will. What makes them different from Kant is that their voluntarist philosophy is not centred on morality. For them, will originates more from life instinct, and hence the concept of will in Freud is hardly distinguishable from desire. In this way their philosophy went to another extreme as to be amoral or even antimoral.

The problem of subjective philosophy was a major concern of Husserl and Heidegger. Husserl saw his philosophical efforts as a further deepening of Descartes' subjective philosophy, but he also fully realized the problem of subjective philosophy. One starting point in Heidegger's *Time and Being* is to criticize and revise subjective philosophy. The perspective of *Dasein*, however, seems to be another subjective philosophy, and that is why Heidegger would make a great turn in his later period.

For me, subjective philosophy as such is reasonable. We cannot deny the fact that Descartes and his followers presented: we do everything from the perspective of ourselves. What makes it problematic is how subjectivity is constituted. For

Descartes, the ego is a thinking spirit; but for Nietzsche and Freud, the ego is a willing or desiring self. We accept the fact that we do everything from the perspective of ourselves, but our subjectivity is not constituted by thinking or willing alone, but by living. What makes zoeontology different from the philosophy of life is that it centres on living. Thinking and willing are both important faculties of living, but not its totality. A living subject is an individual who has his own time-space system. Living, as the entire nature given to us by Heaven, is sacred, unsurpassable, and unreducible. Living is not composed of carbohydrates, but of time-space rhythms.

In order to build civilizations, human beings have to analyse the living nature and highlight a part of it, but this does not mean that nature could be grasped in this way. The most common way to highlight nature is dualism, that is, to divide nature into spirit and body. Dualism has been very important in Western philosophical tradition, since body and soul are seen as two kinds of being. Cartesian dualism is the modern type of this philosophical stance, but there have been serious challenges to it since the last century (Lovejoy 1930, 31; Watson 1987, 181). An important feature of zoeontology, however, is its monism. Life is an entity and could not be divided into different parts. In Chinese philosophical tradition, the monistic understanding of life is the mainstream. The thinking mind is an important and even the dominant part of life, and in several philosophical texts the metaphor of a king and officials is used to describe the relationship between the mind and other parts of a body. Although a king is the predominant force, he is the same kind of human being as his officials and subjects, and his being a king depends on their existence and support. Similarly, although the mind is the predominant organ in a human body, it is not different to the body itself, and its dominating faculty depends entirely on the body, as the mind does not survive when the body dies. Although sometimes we treat the body and mind as two kinds of things, that is only for the convenience of language, and we cannot take this division seriously.

When a child is born they are already in the process of living, and begin to orientate themselves in the living community, albeit unconsciously. When they grow up and get the mature ability of reasoning and willing things, they begin to realize and rationalize this orientation, but cannot start it afresh. According to Kant, a child is brought to the world unwillingly by his parents, and hence owes nothing to their mother and father. Instead, the parents are obliged to raise their child (Kant 1991, 99). Zoeontology does not see it this way. Because life is the noblest thing in the world, being born is the greatest benefit. Whether I will my birth or not is meaningless, because before my birth I was not there to will it. If I find my life is not so good after I have been raised by my parents, it is unreasonable and ungrateful to complain to them for giving birth to me without my consent.

Although I have my own time-space system, I do not start it all myself. In the living community, my living process runs in parallel to that of all other subjects. It is understandable if we do not communicate with each other, but if different living processes intersect it is necessary that different subjects must do so. Further, if a subject is essential to another's living process, there must be deep interactions between them. This is exactly what happens between parents and children. My birth is an important moment in my parents' living process, and their marriage initiates my living. My relationship with my parents is my first orientation in the living community. When I begin to desire anything necessary after my birth, I enrich my living world by my primary living abilities. With more nourishment and knowledge I grow up. My central knowledge is the origin of my life. Living is common to all the lives in the world, and not something particular to human beings. There are also instinctive affections between parents and children in animals, but the children of animals do not take care of their parents after growing up. Instead, they will establish their own families somewhere else. What distinguishes human beings is that they can reflect on their own origin and life. When I fully realize that my parents are the people who gave me life and then express my gratitude to them in an appropriate way, I have a solemn respect for my own life, and that is the beginning of civilization. Human reasoning could be used in many ways, but it is filial piety that is its proper use. That is why Mencius says that the essence of humanity is nothing but filial piety (仁之實，事親是也) (Ruan 2021, vol. 23, 366).

Parents are the first people who have a living relation with their child's ego. It is such a special relationship that I owe my life itself to them. I start my orientation in the living community from my parents, centring on the very fact of living. In the Chinese language the term 生 means both living and giving birth, since generation is the very beginning of living. There are three preliminary relationships springing from giving birth: husband and wife, the cause of birth; parents and children, the very product of birth; and siblings, different products of the same parents. These three are called "the closest relatives" (至親) or "relatives in a body" (一體之親) in *The Etiquette*. "Parents and children are like head and limbs, (父子首足也) husband and wife are like two halves of one trunk, (夫妻胖合也) and siblings are like different limbs (昆弟四體也)" (ibid., vol. 11, 908). Starting from my parents, I extend my network to my siblings, who are also children of my parents. I will then learn that my parents also have parents and siblings, and hence I will extend my living network to them too, and then to the whole lineage of my family. In addition to these people linked by blood, I should also find a spouse with whom to generate our own children. Then I would extend my living network to people from other families. Mencius says, "Treat your parents well and then

treat other people's parents in a similar way" (老吾老以及人之老) (ibid., vol. 25, 52). I could not treat the parents of a stranger well from the beginning, but must start with the parents of a related person, that is, my parents-in-law. This is exactly what Fei Xiaotong calls "the differential mode of association" (差序格局) (Fei 1992, 60). It is quite different from the Christian idea of treating any other person as a brother. It is human nature that in general a person will treat relatives better than strangers. Only after I can treat my relatives in the proper way could I learn how to treat other people with whom I have different relationships. After I can manage a family well, I would be able to manage a community bigger than a family. Here is an example that Mencius presented: suppose that I drink with some people from a community, among whom there is both my older brother and a senior member of the community. When I propose toasts to everyone present, should I propose to my older brother first or to the senior member of the community? Although my older brother is closer to me, I should drink a toast to the senior member of the community first (Ruan 2021, vol. 25, 512). Only by knowing this could I also know how to manage a community properly. When I have learned how to treat different people in a community properly, I might be qualified to manage a government, because I could regard the whole country as an entity. A step further, I would also learn how to treat different countries in a proper way, and so manage the world under Heaven (天下) well. This is the order presented in *The Great Learning* (大學): to cultivate yourself, to regulate your family, to govern your country, and to bring peace to the whole world under Heaven (修身，齊家，治國，平天下) (ibid., vol. 17, 2707). In the hierarchy of feudal China, the emperor should be able to bring peace to the whole world under Heaven, the feudal princes should manage their own countries, and high officials should manage their large families, usually consisting more than one hundred people, and an ordinary person should only treat their core family well. Although different people could extend their relationships to a different extent, what is common to all is the cultivation of the living self, which is the starting point of any subject.

In his old age, Fei Xiaotong developed his theory of the differential mode of association and extended it to a broader scope (Fei 2009, 302). Now we know that the Earth is not the whole cosmos, and it is quite possible that in the future we will extend our network beyond the planet. It is still debatable whether the universe is limited or limitless. From a zoeontological perspective, we could never get a "God's eye view" to grasp the whole universe. Starting from the ego, anyone can have knowledge within a certain scope, of the family, country, the Earth, and so on. These are living communities at different levels. Even without human civilizations, the world is already a living community in which every life is engaged in living. Civilization is nothing but a self-conscious living community. A human

being knows his place in such a community and consciously make it a better one for everyone in it. If a person could think beyond himself and consider the family from the perspective of the whole, then he could manage the family well; if he could think about the country from the perspective of the whole, he could manage the country well; and if he could think about the world from the perspective of the whole, he could achieve peace for the whole world. With the development of human civilization, we are extending the scope of our lives and becoming responsible for bigger living communities. Now we can already see the possibility of life beyond the planet. On the one hand, however broad our scope becomes, we know everything from the perspective of the ego; on the other hand, we could know the whole only relatively, but never absolutely. As civilization develops, our scope might extend more and more, but it will never reach an end. We should thus be open forever.

In such a world view there are three ways to treat non-human lives. First, they might be only objects of our desires or tools in our life. When human beings are confined to a very narrow scope, they could only treat other things in such a pragmatic way. Second, when human beings have better knowledge of the world they would be able to find beauty in other things and treat them in an aesthetic way. Thirdly, when they see the world as a living community, they would realize that even other things are living things, and treat them as co-lives. As such they might make efforts to make the whole community a better one for all its members. When they are more civilized they will have a larger scope and treat more things as co-lives. However, artificial things like robots can never be co-lives, but merely tools.

Dialectics between Nature and Civilization

What is the relationship between civilization and nature, and what is human being's place in the universe? These are key questions for human knowledge. Nature was seen as sacred both in ancient Greek philosophy and ancient Chinese philosophy. It is in the Jewish-Christian tradition that nature began to be seen as something created by God. While God is regarded as the creator of the whole world, human beings' salvation is also seen as beyond the reach of nature. In Cartesian dualism, nature is nothing but the material world measurable mathematically, and the spirit is of course far greater than this material world. This idea has long been dominant in the modern world and become a great driving force for scientific developments. However, it has also caused great problems. Nature has been dethroned, conquered, and humiliated, which is a fundamental dilemma in today's world.

From a zoeontological perspective, though, there is a dialectics between nature and civilization. Naturally, every life has its own time-space system. By establishing a common time-space system, human civilization creates an idea of lineal history beyond natural cycles and a civilized world much larger than any individual. We also have created a lot of spiritual products to enrich our living community. But human civilization could never surpass or rebel against nature. Nature is an entity that has no will, feeling, or any personal ability, containing many time-space systems. It is neither a personified God in any religious sense nor a mechanical unity. We could not have any objective knowledge of the whole of nature, but we could have some knowledge in a certain scope, that is, we can extend our common time-space system to a much large scope. Kant is right that we know everything with our own forms of time and space. That does not mean, however, that this is not an efficient way to know the outer world. With our common time-space system we can not only communicate with each other in the living community, but also learn about other time-space systems and make the world a better living community, although we cannot know the whole universe.

The English word "civilization" has its origin in the deep tradition of Greek city-state politics. In its Chinese counterpart. 文明, however, the character 文 originally means the vein in a thing, and 明 means enlightenment. Civilization comes into being when the vein within human nature is discovered and enlightened. This idea is somehow close to Leibniz's metaphor of the vein in a piece of marble, after which a statue of Hercules is sculptured (Leibniz 1996, 52). In *The Book of Harmonia* (樂記), it is said, "the deeper natural feeling is, the more civilized we are" (情深而文明) (Ruan 2021, vol. 14, 1905). Confucius himself also talks about this point, "it is too artificial if the culture outweighs nature, and it is too savage if nature outweighs the culture. Only when there is a balance between culture and nature, could there be real gentlemen" (文勝質則史，質勝文則野，文質彬彬，然後君子) (ibid., vol.23, 152). Civilization could not flourish by conquering nature. Civilization is fully developed only if living nature is vigorous.

In *The Book of Changes* there is an important discussion of the origin of civilization, "with the combination of *yin* and *yang*, we grasp astronomy, i.e., the vein of heavenly nature; with the extent of civilization, we see humanity, i.e., the vein of human nature. After astronomy, we could understand the seasonal changes; after humanity, we could civilize the world under Heaven" (剛柔交錯，天文也；文明以止，人文也。觀乎天文以察時變，觀乎人文以化成天下) (ibid., vol. 1, 196). While civilization is created by human beings, it must follow the way of natural living and is aimed at enlightening it instead of conquering or changing it.

I define civilization as a civil community, i.e., a special living community established by human beings to transcend private time-space systems. Though different from a natural living community, a civil community is still a living community, and every member of a civilization is still a natural life. Although we have a common time-space system, it could not replace our private time-space rhythm. Civilization only provides a community for better communications and a better life, but any individual still lives according to his own rhythm. Any human creation could not be made from nothing, but must make a living and die according to nature.

Fuxi, a legendary ruler of great antiquity, is said to be the inventor of human civilization (Ruan 2021, vol. 1, 535–36). There are many legends about his inventions, which could be classified into five categories: 1) written language and the eight diagrams; 2) marriage rules, family order, bureaucracy, and laws; 3) music and instruments; 4) the system of five elements and calendar; 5) all kinds of tools. And these are exactly the most important aspects of a civilization.

Language distinguishes human civilization from nature, an idea that is now common sense in modern social sciences. Because the Chinese written language is based on pictographs, the importance of written characters is especially emphasized. Chinese characters are also seen as a kind of vein within nature. This has a quite similar role to the *logos* in Western civilization, yet it is not a kind of human creation or divine inspiration, but the abstraction of the inner vein of natural things. The eight diagrams are also a kind of abstract characters, resembling the eight most important natural phenomena: Heaven (☰), earth (☷), water (☵), fire (☲), wind (☴), thunder (☳), mountain (☶), and marsh (☱). The combination of these not only represents all kinds of natural changes, but also civil events and the vicissitudes of fortune.

Language and a calendar could be seen as preconditions for civilization, while all other inventions are under the same category of *nomos* and *harmonia* (禮樂), which are the framework of human civilization. The basic idea is expressed in *The Book of Harmonia*: "the great institute of nomos resembles the differences in the cosmos, and the great institute of harmonia resembles the harmony in the cosmos" (大禮與天地同節，大樂與天地同和) (Ruan 2021, vol. 15, 1866). *Nomos* is established according to the natural difference, for instance, the difference between two genders, the difference between different generations, and so on. The basic theory of *harmonia*, however, is to establish harmony between different melodies, and hence represent the idea of harmony in civilization. All these institutions are designed to turn natural living into a kind of civil living.

It is said in *The Book of Changes*: "the intercourse between Heaven and Earth makes all lives possible; the intercourse between men and women makes all lives

live" (天地絪縕，萬物化醇；男女構精，萬物化生) (ibid., vol. 1, 557). The first part is about the natural living in the cosmos, while the second part is about how marriage follows the natural way in human civilizations.

These two parts represent the functions of the two parts of *The Book of Changes* itself. The key point of the first part, which contains 34 hexagrams, is "because there are Heaven and Earth, everything is generated" (ibid., 600). It is about the living rhythm in the natural world. The second part, which contains 30 hexagrams, is about the order in human civilization

> because there are Heaven and Earth, there is everything; because there is everything, there are men and women; because there are men and women, there are husbands and wives; because there are husbands and wives, there are parents and children; because there are parents and children, there are monarchies and ministers; because there are monarchies and ministers, there are rulers and the ruled; because there are rulers and the ruled, nomos could have its right place. (Ruan 2021, vol. 1, 603)

The beginning of the second part is almost identical to the first part. This shows that human civilization is a part of nature, and should follow the natural way of living. The rest of the second part, however, presents what is particular to human civilization. It begins from regulations of copulation and generation, which is not a deviation from nature, but a human way to fulfil nature.

On the one hand, everything in human civilization follows instead of departing from natural ways; on the other hand, there is something quite artificial in human creations. It is not easy to balance the two aspects, and this is an important theoretical tension in zoeontology. There are many related debates in the history of Chinese philosophy. Zhuang Zi, for instance, saw the natural way of living as the best, and regarded the development of human civilization as a kind of corruption because it unavoidably destroys the nature of life. Xun Zi, however, held the very opposite view. He regarded human nature as inclining to evil, because people are always selfish and greedy, and there would be serious conflicts and confusions without external constraint. Mencius, whose idea became the mainstream of Chinese theories on human nature in Neo-Confucianism, stood between these two poles. For him, human nature is good because it has the seed for the order and *nomos* of civilization. Hegel argued that evil human nature is a better theory than good human nature (Hegel 2010, 51). He was right as far as the Western philosophical tradition is concerned, because a transcendent idea of absolute spirit is set as the goal. When human nature is presumed to be evil, people could be whipped to raise themselves to a better spiritual state. However, things are very different

in the Chinese theories of human nature. Good human nature is a better theory because it could better balance nature and civilization.

In our modern version of zoeontology, this tension is even more remarkable, because it points to a key problem of modernity. Zhuang Zi was right that civilization is destroying nature, but it is impossible to return to the primitive life as he advocated. What is more, Zhuang Zi could not want an absolutely natural life. He required at least some social order, i.e., he could not denounce the living community. If there is a living community, it necessarily has some order. Once there is social order, how could we prevent it from developing further? From Mencius' point of view, human civilization is created from the good nature of living. The problem is that once we start to create, how can we guarantee that we do not corrupt nature? In the modern understanding of science, nature is something measurable by mathematical methods. Everything we do is to analyse, make use of, and even change nature. How could we then respect nature as something sacred? The core idea of zoeontology is the dialectical balance between these two poles. We do not understand such a dialectics as a kind of compromise, but as a kind of mutually beneficial situation.

As a human effort to build a better living community, civilization is innate to human nature. There is nothing wrong when human beings civilize a living community. It takes a child quite some time to have a good understanding of his place in the family, community, country, and world. It takes a much longer time for human civilizations to have a better understanding of their proper place in the world and universe. There are lessons in the process of our growing up. Religious fanaticism, self-deification, and the idea of conquest are all things which have drawn punishments from the nature. We are learning when we grow up. From a zoeontological perspective, neither a good nor bad future is destined in a religious sense. The mutual understanding and cooperation between different civilizations is the precondition of a better living community.

There is a noteworthy idea in Chinese tradition: "human beings are the heart of the cosmos" (人者，天地之心也) (Ruan 2021, vol. 1, 1223). Zhang Zai, a great philosopher of the Song dynasty, regarded it as an important task for intellectuals to "set the heart of the cosmos" (爲天地立心) (Zhang 2012, 376). Human beings, as the only intelligent lives on Earth, are the heart and wisdom of Heaven and Earth. This is not the arrogance of human beings, but their duty. We are responsible for managing the world we live in well and making it a better place for all members of this living community. When we establish a common time-space system for better communication between different lives, we should also remember that everyone has his own living rhythm, which is the living nature of each private

individual. The dialectic between civilization and nature is first of all a balance between the common living rhythm and the private living rhythms. The freedom of individuals is fulfilled by preserving the private living rhythm, while the common rhythm could help everyone achieve freedom through living together in a civilized community. In this way human beings help Heaven and Earth to enable everyone to live a better life (參贊化育). In traditional Chinese philosophy, only the sages could do this, but from a modern zoeontological point of view, I see this as the most important function of human civilizations.

Conclusion

From a zoeontological perspective, we have reconsidered some central issues in the history of philosophy: time and space, subjectivity, the meaning of history, and the relationship between civilization and nature. This was not meant as idle speculation, but instead an attempt to rethink some contemporary questions that the human world is facing.

With the rapid development of science and artificial intelligence (AI), there has been heated philosophical debate about the role of AI in the human world. As it is deeply concerned with the nature-civilization relationship, zoeontology sees nothing that is artificial as having any claim over the natural world. AI is a kind of tool created by human civilization, but not one of our co-lives. Robots are not natural lives, and they can never replace human beings, and any scientific attempt to change nature would result in punishment from the nature.

Zoeontology should also offer new insights on political life and the international order. Modern theories of natural rights and international law started from the idea of self-preservation. Facing the danger of a violent death, one could do anything to protect oneself. Self-preservation is similar to, but not equivalent to, living. Zoeontology sees living as the most important thing, but one should not weigh one's own life as above everything else, because the state of nature is not a condition of all against all, but a natural living community. At least parents are not against their children. The community is not an artificial thing, but a precondition for all human life. Hence one is obliged not only to protect one's own life, but also the living order of the community. In a family, a responsible person should protect the living order of all family members; in a country, one is responsible for the living order of all citizens; in a world, one is responsible for the living order of all human beings. A civilized person is not one who has denounced nature, but one who not only weighs nature in his own person, but also in the living community.

The greatest difficulties in today's world are due to cultural misunderstandings and political clashes. We have experienced some serious human disasters in recent centuries, and are very close to new ones. I see all these disasters rooted in the ontological understanding of history, which has sacralized wars and massacres as something above human nature and everyday life. From a zoeontological perspective, however, everything in human civilizations is created for the sake of living. Originating from Confucianism, zoeontology does not see anything besides living as sacred. Living is the measure of everything, and human beings should not sacrifice human lives for anything else.

Presented above are some brief zoeontological arguments about contemporary issues. We now wait for other opportunities for further clarifications of them.

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ASIAN STUDIES IN SLOVENIA

Research on the Confucian Revival in Slovenia

Jana S. ROŠKER

Abstract

There has been a significant amount of research carried out in Slovenia on the revival of Confucianism, particularly since 2012 and 2014, when the first two research projects on this topic were approved. Members of the Department of Asian Studies at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, have been consistently conducting research in Slovenia and various Chinese, Taiwanese, and East Asian archives and libraries. These efforts have led to several important publications in Slovene, English, and even Chinese, and represent an ongoing commitment that continues in the present day. Therefore, it is not surprising that the present special issue of the Slovenian academic journal *Asian Studies*, focusing on the Confucian revival, already marks the fourth special issue in this area of research.

This review article's objective is thus to summarize the key achievements of Slovenian research in this field and provide a comprehensive overview of the diverse Slovene research activities and publications related to Modern New Confucianism. It covers not only research on the revival of Confucianism in China and the broader Sinic region, but also includes Confucian studies in other East Asian regions and the wider Sinic area.

Keywords: Modern New Confucianism, Confucian revival, Modern Chinese philosophy, East Asian Confucianism, Chinese studies in Slovenia, Sinology in Slovenia, Chinese philosophy in Slovenia

Raziskave konfucijanskega preporoda v Sloveniji

Izvleček

V Sloveniji je bilo opravljenih veliko raziskav konfucijanskega preporoda, zlasti od leta 2012 oz. 2014, ko sta bila odobrena prva dva raziskovalna projekta na to temo. Člani in članice Oddelka za azijske študije na Filozofski fakulteti Univerze v Ljubljani so odtlej kontinuirano izvajali raziskovalno delo tako v Sloveniji kot tudi v različnih kitajskih, tajvanskih in vzhodnoazijskih arhivih in knjižnicah. Te študije so privedle do vrste pomembnih publikacij v slovenščini, angleščini in celo v kitajščini, ki predstavljajo rezultate kontinuiranih prizadevanj, ki se nadaljujejo še danes. Zato ni presenetljivo, da je pričujoča številka že četrta posebna številka slovenske znanstvene revije *Asian Studies* (*Azijske študije*), ki je posvečena preporodu konfucijanstva.

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Cilj tega preglednega članka je torej povzeti ključne dosežke slovenskih raziskav na tem področju ter zagotoviti celovit pregled različnih raziskovalnih dejavnosti in publikacij v Sloveniji, povezanih s sodobnim novim konfucijanstvom. Obravnava ne le raziskave o preporodu konfucijanstva na Kitajskem in v širši vzhodnoazijski regiji, temveč tudi študije konfucianizma v drugih vzhodnoazijskih regijah in na širšem siniškem območju.

Ključne besede: moderno novo konfucijanstvo, konfucijanski preporod, moderna kitajska filozofija, vzhodnoazijsko konfucijanstvo, kitajske študije v Sloveniji, slovenska sinologija, kitajska filozofija v Sloveniji

Introduction

The resurgence of Confucianism has been a subject of extensive scholarly inquiry in Slovenia since 2014, with primary contributions coming from the Department of Asian Studies at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. In addition to the published works highlighted in the concise annotated bibliography below, Slovenian researchers in the field of Modern New Confucianism have disseminated their findings at over a hundred international conferences and in numerous guest lectures at prestigious institutions across Europe and East Asia.

This research is crucial in fostering cross-cultural understanding and promoting the exchange of ideas between East and West, contributing to a deeper comprehension of the contemporary relevance of Confucianism in the modern world. As such, this research holds significance due to its role in bridging cultural divides and advancing global dialogues on ethics, governance, and societal values. In this sense, it serves as a vital catalyst for global discourse, offering insights into the enduring relevance of Confucian principles in today's interconnected world.

This research not only enriches Slovene academia with a unique perspective on global philosophy but also enhances Slovenia's cultural and intellectual standing on the international stage, fostering academic collaborations and cultural exchanges that contribute to the country's academic and diplomatic prowess.

Special Issues of *Asian Studies* and Edited Volumes

Understanding the phenomenon of the Confucian revival is a fundamental prerequisite for comprehending the distinctive facets of Chinese modernization. Hence, it is no mere coincidence that this journal, established in 2012, is now presenting its fourth special issue dedicated to themes associated with the modernization of Confucianism.

The initial special issue, titled "Modern Confucianism and Chinese Modernity", graced the inaugural issue of the second volume in 2014 and featured a significant contribution by the eminent contemporary Confucian scholar from Taiwan, Lee Ming-Huei (Lee 2014). Several other distinguished experts in classical and contemporary Confucianism also enriched this inaugural issue with their contributions (see, for example, Sigurðsson 2014; Dessein 2014; Sernelj 2014; Poškaitė 2014; Gänßbauer 2014).

The second special issue, "Confucianism and Education", appeared in the second issue of the fifth volume in 2017. While half of the published papers centred on classical Confucianism, three explicitly explored its contemporary relevance and application (see Thompson 2017; Rošker 2017b; Ambrogio 2017).

The third special issue looked at Confucian studies in Vietnam, an under-explored domain in international Confucianism research. Released in 2020, under the straightforward title "Confucianism in Vietnam" (Volume 8, Issue 2), it featured noteworthy contributions from Vietnamese scholars, many of whom had not previously published in English (e.g., Nguyen Tuan-Cuong 2020; Tran 2020). This issue, presenting novel insights and theoretical nuances previously unknown in Western academia, was made possible by the guest editor Professor Tho Ngoc Nguyen, who also contributed an article (Nguyen Tho Ngoc 2020).

A significant publication addressing the Confucian revival in Taiwan was the special issue "Taiwanese Philosophy and the Preservation of Chinese Philosophical Traditions", released in the third issue of the same volume in September 2020 (Vol. 8 No. 3). Notably, this issue included three articles specifically devoted to the pivotal figures of the second generation of Taiwanese Modern New Confucianism: Mou Zongsan, Xu Fuguan, and Tang Junyi (see Sernelj 2020b; Huang 2020; Van den Stock 2020).

Moreover, the Department of Asian Studies at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, the publisher of this journal, has also produced several edited volumes focused on the study of modern and contemporary Confucianism in China and East Asia. The first, titled *Contemporary East Asia and the Confucian Revival*, was published in 2015 by Cambridge Scholars Press and edited by Jana Rošker and Nataša Visočnik. The second, edited by Jana Rošker and Barbara Pihler Ciglič in 2016, bears the title *Confucius and Globalization: Ancient and Contemporary Confucian Discourses*, and was released by Ljubljana University Press as a special issue of the journal *Ars & Humanitas*.

Two Research Projects Focused Exclusively on the Confucian Revival

The inaugural Slovenian research project addressing the theme of the Confucian revival received approval from the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange in 2012, as documented on their official website (see https://as.ff.uni-lj.si/raziskovanje/raziskovalni-projekti/taiwanese-modern-confucians-and-their-philosophical-contribution). Helmed by project director Jana S. Rošker, this endeavour bore the title "Taiwanese Modern Confucians and their Philosophical Contribution to Asian Modernization" and lasted for three years, from June 2012 to August 2015.

From the fruits of this research project emerged two edited volumes (see Rošker and Vampelj Suhadolnik 2013; Rošker 2015), in addition to numerous original scientific articles and chapters within monographs. The second year of the project's progression (June 2013–July 2014) witnessed the publication of these significant contributions (see Rošker 2013a; 2013b; 2014a; 2014b; Sernelj 2013; 2014). Furthermore, the research yielded two scholarly monographs in the Slovene language. The first one presented an analysis of the works produced by philosophers of the second generation of Modern Confucians (Rošker 2013c), while the second focused on Confucian political philosophy, and particularly theories concerning the Confucian state (Rošker 2014c).

In the project's third and final year (July 2014–August 2015), the project leader published seven papers exploring various facets of the Confucian revival in China and Taiwan in prominent international journals (Rošker 2014d-I; Greif and Rošker 2014). Notably, two of these papers (Greif and Rošker 2014; Rošker 2014d) explored topics related to Korean Confucianism.

The subsequent research project received funding from the Slovene National Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS), as noted on their official website (see https://as.ff.uni-lj.si/raziskovanje/raziskovalni-projekti/confucian-revival-and-theoretical-foundations-chinese). Titled "The Confucian Revival and the Theoretical Foundations of Chinese Modernization", this initiative spanned three years, from July 2014 to July 2017. The project's most significant scholarly achievement manifested in a highly influential scientific monograph on Modern New Confucian philosophers, authored by the project leader and published by the Chinese University Press in Hong Kong (see Rošker 2016a). Within the framework of this project, the project leader also contributed eight original academic articles addressing various issues within Modern New Confucian philosophy (Rošker 2015; 2016a-f; 2017a; 2017 b).

The project researcher Téa Sernelj made especially valuable contributions to the results, particularly focusing on various aspects of Xu Fuguan, a pivotal figure in the second generation of Modern New Confucianism in Taiwan (e.g., 2017a; 2017 b).

The Research Program Asian Languages and Cultures, Other Research Projects, Dissertations and Translations

Several members of the Asian Languages and Cultures Research Program Group (P6-0243) have also addressed various issues related to Confucian revival in China and other East Asian regions. Most of these texts were written in Slovenian (Motoh 2016; 2017; Vampelj Suhadolnik 2016; Visočnik 2016; Culiberg 2016; Pihler Ciglič 2016), but two of them were also written in English (Culiberg 2015; Visočnik 2015). In this context, it is important to highlight the work of Barbara Pihler Ciglič (2016), as it presents an unknown area of research on the Confucian revival in Portuguese, particularly in Brazil.

Two dissertations completed in the PhD program of the same department also addressed the topic of Confucian revival (Vidmar 2017; Sernelj 2018a).

The department has also published two translations from this field. One is Huang Chun-chie's book on the spread and transformation of Confucianism outside China in other East Asian and Sinic regions (Huang 2016), and the other is an essay by André Bueno that presents the Confucian revival from a Latin American perspective (Bueno 2016).

A third research project from this research area, successfully solicited by members of the same department, did not deal exclusively with the phenomenon of Confucian rebirth. It was funded by the Chiang Chink-kuo Foundation and titled "Modern and Contemporary Taiwanese Philosophy" (see https://as.ff.uni-lj.si/raziskovanje/raziskovalni-projekti/modern-and-contemporary-taiwanese-philosophy), and thus included research on other Sinophone philosophical traditions. However, since the second generation of Modern New Confucian thinkers lived and worked predominantly in Taiwan, much of the research output of this project was also related to this current, which is one of the most important intellectual movements of the modern and contemporary Confucian Revival. The project lasted three years, from 2018 to 2021.

In the context of this project, researchers have explored the broader geopolitical dimensions of contemporary Confucian studies. Noteworthy contributions include Marko Ogrizek's meticulous analysis of contemporary Japanese and East

Asian interpretations of Japanese Confucianism and its impact on Japanese society and culture (Ogrizek 2019; 2020; 2021). Téa Sernelj primarily focused on modern Confucian aesthetics (Sernelj 2020b; 2021a; 2021b; 2021c; 2022) but also played a vital role in introducing the general characteristics and historical evolution of Modern New Confucianism, particularly regarding the second generation (Sernelj 2018b; 2019a, b). She further enriched the project with two academic monographs published in Slovene and English (Sernelj 2020a; 2021c).

In contrast, project leader Jana S. Rošker published five academic monographs during the project's duration, although none were directly or exclusively focused on the Confucian revival. Nevertheless, her numerous articles and chapters in edited volumes addressed this topic (Rošker 2019a; 2019b; 2020a; 2020b; 2020c; 2021a-e).

Following this project, the research team embarked on a new project centred on Chinese humanism, moving beyond the confines of the Confucian revival. Despite this shift in focus, team members continued to contribute to the field of modern and contemporary Confucianism during the three-year project duration (2021–2023) (Sernelj 2023; Rošker 2022a; 2022b).

Research Background

The research team members operated on the premise that the Confucian revival constitutes a highly compelling and profoundly significant theoretical discourse across China and various regions within the Sinic sphere. Comprehending modern and contemporary Confucianism is, therefore, instrumental in gaining insight into Chinese society and several other East Asian and Sinic cultures.

In the 21st century, East Asian societies are redrawing the map of progress: the centre of economic, if not political, power is shifting from the Euro-American to the Asian region. This shift confronts us with many problems, related to transformations of material and ideal paradigms that not only define the development of Asian societies as such, but also strongly influence international relations on a global level. Strategic solutions for these problems need to consider broader perspectives in the context of particular cultural backgrounds. Such perspectives are not limited to economic and ecological issues, but include the political and social functions of ideologies and culturally conditioned values, representing the axial epistemological grounds which the most characteristic and enduring institutions of these societies rest upon.

One of the recent and central theoretical concerns in China (and, in fact, in the entire East Asian region) is related to various developmental trends of the Confucian revival, which form the main subject of the Slovenian research on this

broader issue. This intellectual revival is one of the most important reversals in modern Chinese history, and manifests itself in the philosophical stream of Modern Confucianism, one of the most significant currents that form the new Chinese ideologies of modernization. This stream of thought mainly developed during the 20th century in Taiwan and Hong Kong, but also gained widespread popularity in most of the other East Asian societies that were traditionally influenced by Confucian thought, as in, for example Japan and South Korea.

In the early 1980s, Modern Confucianism also began to reappear in China as one of the most important ideological concerns. This phenomenon is very much worth examining for what it can tell us about our times—and as one of the most important philosophical legacies in the contemporary globalized societies.

The current is defined by a search for synthesis between Western and traditional Chinese thought, aiming to elaborate a system of ideas and values suitable to resolve some of the many social and political problems of the modern, globalized world. The central research questions of the proposed project are thus not only focused upon the main Modern Confucian philosophical approaches, ideas and methods, as the research also aimed to illuminate the political, social and ideological backgrounds of the socalled Confucian revival on the one hand, and its inherent connection to the theoretical foundations of Chinese modernity on the other.

Based upon Weber's argument that the Protestant ethic was extremely useful in promoting the rise and spread of modernization, it is worth trying to critically examine the so called post-Confucian hypothesis, which has emerged in China on recent decades, and according to which societies based upon the Confucian ethic may in many ways be superior to the West in the pursuit of industrialization, affluence and modernization. Weber also wrote extensively on China, concluding that its traditions were deeply uncongenial to modernization. In order to clarify the question as to whether such a Eurocentric view of modernity is still valid or not, the investigations carried out by the team of the Department of Asian studies, aimed to investigate the above mentioned presuppositions, following the hypothesis, according to which modernization represents a complex process of social transitions which includes both universal and culturally conditioned elements.

It was thus also important to analyse the question of whether such an East Asian model is really capable of generating a nonindividualistic (i.e., communitarian) version of modernity. The verification of this hypothesis has indeed proven that the universally presupposed relation between modernity and individualism which has previously been seen by international modernization theories as " inevitable" or " internal" was, in fact, nothing more than an outcome of specific Western historical paradigms.

Theoretical Framework

Hypothesis: The Cultural Conditions of Modernity

The research team has operated under the hypothesis that modernity is not universal but encompasses culturally conditioned elements that may differ from one society to another.

An important consequence of the present transnationalization of capital may be that, for the first time in history, the modern mode of production appears as an authentically global form, separated from its historically specific origins in Europe. Hence, the narrative of capitalism is no longer a narrative of the history of Europe. For the first time, nonEuropean capitalist societies are making their own claims for the history of modernization. Due to the fact that little is known in Western theory about Chinese streams of thought which treat these problems, the project has investigated the Modern Confucian modernization theory, focusing on its interpolation in the methodological and theoretical framework of global contemporary discourses on modernization. The works written by the adherents of the Modern Confucian current, which represented the main primary material of the research, reflect the special relationship that has been mainly elaborated in the specific circumstances of modern Chinese societies (China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore), namely the relation between the new Confucian cultures and the rapid emergence of a superindustrial economy. The research team has investigated the abovementioned relationship through the lens of the presupposed cultural determination of modernization processes.

Central Concepts

The members of the project team have analysed the principle works of the leading theoreticians of Modern New Confucianism who attempted to reconcile "Western" and "traditional Chinese" values, in order to create a theoretical model of modernization that would not be confused or equated with "Westernization". Given that Modern Confucians viewed modernization primarily as a rationalization of the world, they explored their own tradition for authentic concepts comparable to the two Western paradigms essential for modernization, i.e. the concepts of subjectivity, and of reason and rationality. Taking this as its point of departure, the project members have investigated the central values of Confucianism, and interpreted them in Chinese and Taiwanese contexts, two different sociopolitical arenas, in order to evaluate their impact upon prevailing contemporary ideologies. Among other issues, the team has also examined the axiological differences

within modern East Asian societies, and focused on Modern Confucian treatments of epistemological and ethical concepts that can serve as a foundation for a "Chinese" modernization theory. Of particular importance in this regard are the notions of the moral self, unlimited heartmind and intellectual intuition. On this basis, the research has provided a systematic and coherent examination of the contents, axiological innovations and social significance of Modern Confucianism.

The Analysis of the Relationship between Ideological, Economic and Political Factors

The researchers have also examined the main elements that enable the amalgamation of traditional Chinese values into the framework of (post-)capitalistic ideologies and axiological contexts. The new value systems developed by the Modern Confucian movement are designed to ensure economic efficiency while also preserving political stability. The social order was historically dominated by state doctrines which focused on hierarchical and formalistic social structures. The current demand for the coexistence of social stability (assumed to be possible only within a capitalist mode of production), with the "democratization" of society, is inherently paradoxical. In the studies carried out by the members of the research team, this ambivalence is contextualized within a set of issues related to the economic and cultural transition, which are determined by diverse social phenomena emerging from the gap between "tradition" and "modernity". The team has shown that when evaluating Modern Confucian attempts at establishing a Chinese philosophical base for modernization, we need to assess them within the context of questions linked to "invented traditions" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1995). We need to consider to what extent the philosophical "traditions" are based upon historic assumptions, and to what extent they are merely produced due to the (ideological and political) demands of the current period.

Problem Identification

The research has followed the above-mentioned hypothesis about the cultural conditionality of modernization. This hypothesis has been investigated through the lens of the Confucian revival that manifests itself in the work of Modern Confucians, who have tried to reveal some of their reservoir of values and knowledge, which can undoubtedly enrich our assumptions as regards the differences in traditions and modernities. However, the researchers did not forget the fact that we live in a period which is not defined merely by attempts to revive various

traditions, but also by attempts to harmonize them with the needs of the dominant economic, political and axiological structures found in the globalizing world. The affirmation of modernity as a palette of living styles and clashing values forms an unquestionable assumption of almost all modern Confucian discourses.

While Maoist historiography relegated Confucianism to the past, most Western modernization theories also implied the necessity of abandoning Confucianism if China were ever to develop a dynamic modern society. Marx and other classical theorists of modernity assumed the imperviousness of traditional Chinese culture to modernization. Based upon Max Weber's argument that the Protestant ethic was extremely useful in promoting the rise and spread of modernization, it was thus sensible to critically examine a notion that has gradually emerged in the last two decades in East Asia—that societies based on the Confucian ethic may in many ways be superior to the West in the pursuit of industrialization, affluence and modernization. In doing so, the team considered the fact that Weber also wrote extensively on China and India, concluding that Asian cultural and philosophical or religious traditions were deeply uncongenial to modernization. This supposition was also further investigated and the research findings have clearly shown that such a Westerncentred perspective on modernity is not valid.

Methodology and Main Objectives

A basic premise of the research was that Western epistemology represents only one of many different models of human comprehension. The research has thus followed the main methodological principles of transcultural research, taking into account the incommensurability of diversely (culturally) conditioned paradigms, or theoretical frameworks deriving from diversely formed discourses of different cultural and linguistic environments. The methods applied sought to synthesize perspectives, knowledge, skills, and epistemologies, in order to facilitate the study of a topic which, while intrinsically coherent, cannot be adequately understood from a single perspective. Within the broader scope of intercultural humanities, the studies of the research team have thus been structured in an interdisciplinary fashion, and have comprised methods and forms of investigation pertaining to the following research areas:

- Sociocultural perspective: different patterns of modernization;

- Epistemology: the cultural and linguistic conditionality of comprehension;

- Chinese intellectual and institutional history: the political and ideological background of Modern Confucianism;

- Comparative philosophy: the impact of German Idealism upon modern Confucian philosophers, their elaboration of traditional paradigms and the creation of syntheses between Chinese and Western philosophies;

- Conceptual analysis: the elaboration and cultural renewal of crucial modernization concepts especially subject and reason in Asian philosophies;

- Axiology: the creation of new "Asian Values" and the Modern Confucian contribution to the "new values of the contemporary world";

- Ideological: the impact of Modern Confucianism on new theoretical streams in East Asia and the theoretical background of the new prevailing ideology in the P. R. China, which is based upon the concept of harmony.

These areas have been investigated by experts in Sinology (and partly in Japanese studies), specialized in the fields of postcolonial studies, history, sociology and philosophy.

Since the research has raised the question of differences in values within modern Chinese societies, its results have highlighted the occupational, class and state appropriations of Confucian values, as well as the differential impact of these values on different generations and genders. The research has enabled the team members to introduce the most relevant Modern Confucian contributions to contemporary global theory to a wider academic public in the West. Although there have been a large number of books and articles on this topic published in Asia, there was previously a lack of such academic results in Western languages. Since Modern Confucian efforts to revitalize and reconstruct traditional Confucian thought can be seen as an attempt to counter the dominant ideological trends and preserve Asian cultural identity, the research has also contributed to the development of theoretical dialogues between Asia and Slovenia.

Conclusion

The findings of the research set out above show that the classical modernization model on the global level led to a situation in which the problems such a model brings are no longer merely those of the socalled "nonEuropean" societies, but also problems of EuroAmerican ones. The related research studies clearly indicate that the need to learn about "alternative modernities" represents a challenge for all EuroAmerican modernization cultures, as it has established their new borders and hence relocalizes the very concept of modernity as such.

In essence, this body of research stands as a vital catalyst for global discourse. It reaffirms the enduring significance of Confucian principles in our interconnected world, demonstrating how age-old wisdom continues to shape and enrich our understanding of the complex challenges and opportunities that confront us today. As we move forward, this research will undoubtedly remain a beacon, guiding us toward a more harmonious and enlightened global community.

The research on modern and contemporary Confucianism presented above is also important for Slovenia itself, because it not only enhances the country's academic standing, but also contributes to cultural exchange, global perspectives, cultural enrichment, and the pursuit of economic and diplomatic opportunities with East Asian nations.

Acknowledgements

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OTHER TOPICS

The Attitude of The Chinese and Vietnamese Ruling Class Towards Western Astronomy From the 16th to the 18th Centuries

Anh Thuan TRUONG

Abstract

From the 16th century to the 18th century, in order to realize the goal of promoting its propaganda and strengthening the influence of Christianity in China and Vietnam, Western missionaries, especially Jesuit missionaries, applied the method of "missionary academic" and "missionary bibliography" thoroughly, effectively and creatively. As a result, Western science and technology in general, and astronomy in particular, were gradually introduced into these two countries. The ruling class in China and Vietnam still had a few critical and negative reactions to such moves, but in general openness to and active acceptance of Western astronomical achievements were always the dominant attitudes of emperors, kings and mandarins in these two countries.

On the basis of taking advantage of the original historical data sources and research achievements of Chinese, Vietnamese and international scholars, and at the same time combining the application of the research method of historical science along with other approaches, especially the comparative research method, this article will thoroughly analyse the attitude of the ruling class of China and Vietnam in receiving Western astronomy. This article also clarifies the main cause for the difference in the reception of Western astronomy by emperors, kings and mandarins in these two countries, thereby making a contribution to the study of the history of East-West cultural exchanges in China and Vietnam in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.

Keywords: Chinese, Vietnamese, ruling class, Jesuit missionaries, Western astronomy

Odnos kitajskega in vietnamskega vladajočega razreda do zahodne astronomije od 16. do 18. stoletja

Izvleček

Zahodni misijonarji, zlasti jezuiti, so od 16. do 18. stoletja temeljito, učinkovito in ustvarjalno uporabljali metodo »misijonarja akademika«, da bi promovirali in utrdili vpliv

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kršćanstva na Kitajskem in v Vietnamu. Posledično sta se splošna zahodna znanost in tehnologija, še posebej pa astronomija, postopoma uvajali v obe državi. Kitajski in vietnamski vladajoči razred sta se sicer še vedno delno kritično in negativno odzvala na takšne poteze, a sta bila na splošno odprtost do zahodnih astronomskih dosežkov in aktivno sprejemanje teh prevladujoči odnos cesarjev, kraljev in uradnikov v obeh državah.

Na osnovi primarnih zgodovinskih virov in raziskovalnih dosežkov kitajskih, vietnamskih in mednarodnih znanstvenikov ter s pomočjo raziskovalne metode zgodovinske znanosti v povezavi z drugimi pristopi, zlasti s komparativnim, bomo v tem prispevku analizirali odnos vladajočega razreda na Kitajskem in v Vietnamu do sprejemanja zahodne astronomije. Hkrati bomo pojasnili glavni vzrok za razlike v sprejemanju zahodne astronomije s strani cesarjev, kraljev in uradnikov v obeh državah in s tem prispevali k preučevanju zgodovine kulturnih izmenjav med vzhodom in zahodom na Kitajskem in v Vietnamu v 16., 17. in 18. stoletju.

Ključne besede: kitajski, vietnamski vladajoči razred, jezuitski misijonarji, zahodna astronomija

Introduction

Upon arrival in China and Vietnam in the 16th to 18th centuries, Jesuit missionaries soon realized that these countries were either one of the cradles of Oriental astronomy (in the case of China) or received and thoroughly applied the foundations of Oriental astronomical knowledge (in the case of Vietnam) from a very early period. They also recognized the attitude of respecting and highly appreciating observational and astronomical work by the emperors and mandarins of these lands, where there was always an astronomical agency with mandarins who were knowledgeable about performing scientific tasks, such as creating calendars and carrying out surveys and calculations of solar and lunar eclipses, star observations, weather forecasting and also spiritual and mystical tasks, such as the evaluation of Fengshui 風水, prediction of a good or bad dates and times, and the prediction of good and evil from abnormal astronomical and natural phenomena (Yao 2004, 43; Shi 2002, 54; Trương 2017, 28–29). Besides, they also discovered that the calculation and forecasting of the solar and lunar eclipses of the contemporary Chinese and Vietnamese astronomers were often not completely accurate or correct (Zhao 1977a, 1657; Borri 1931, 373–74). As a result, Jesuit missionaries decided to use Western astronomical knowledge to help the rulers in these two countries overcome their weaknesses in these areas, thereby hoping to access and convert the ruling class, or at least receive the sympathy of the Chinese and Vietnamese emperors, kings and mandarins for the Christianity propaganda they were tasked with spreading. Meanwhile, at certain stages or times, and due to a variety of causes and purposes, when hearing that Jesuit missionaries had arrived in an imperial

city or other area, the emperors, kings and mandarins of China and Vietnam often issued a summoning command to invite the missionaries to the palace so that they to directly interact with these foreigners and so acquire Western knowledge in general and astronomy in particular. There were thus extremely favourable conditions for Western astronomy to be introduced and accepted by the ruling class in both China and Vietnam in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.[1]

Chinese Ruling Class: Openly Receiving Western Astronomy for Cultural Exchange

Jesuit missionaries arrived in China in the late Ming dynasty. However, right from the beginning they encountered boycotts and opposition from the court and the people. Matteo Ricci – the pioneer of missionary work in China – noted that the Chinese followed the concept of "respecting God" profoundly, as well as "considering agriculture as a foundation" of the nation, but he also discovered that the astronomical achievements in China, and especially the calendar, had some shortcomings (Zhao 1977a, 1657). So he used Western astronomy to help the Ming

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1   From the 16th century to the 18th century, in response to the introduction of European science and technology into China, including astronomy associated with the role of Jesuit missionaries, a small part of the ruling class in China had a critical attitude towards receiving Western achievements in astronomy, leading to boycotts and other forms of rejections. Although the Datong Calendar that was used in the late Ming dynasty had many errors and was carefully corrected by Jesuit missionaries, some mandarins, notably Xu Dashou 許大受 and Lin Qilu 林啟陸, had a conservative view, criticized the Jesuit missionaries and stubbornly defended traditional concepts with regard to calculating and issuing the calendar used in China. They said that calculating and issuing the calendar was the court's business, and other forces in society were not allowed to engage in such work. Therefore, the act of calculating and revising the calendar, as carried out by the Jesuit missionaries, was suspected of being intended to upset the Ming dynasty. The mandarins expressed their scepticism about the accuracy in calculating the calendar and astronomic events as practiced in the West. During the Qing dynasty, and under the reign of Kangxi 康熙, a conflict between Chinese and Western astronomy erupted, when several mandarins of headed by Yang Guangxian 楊光先 fiercely criticized Johann Adam Schall von Bell and other Jesuit missionaries, and argued that the calculation and compiling of the calendar produced by these missionaries had many errors. In Vietnam, during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, although the historical data sources from the royal court do not mention any strong criticisms from Vietnamese mandarins with regard to Western astronomy, and certainly not to the extent seen in China, some Jesuit missionaries noted their debates with the mandarins in charge of astronomy and the calendar, in particular in terms of the timing of solar and lunar eclipses. Despite this, the boycott and antagonism of some Vietnamese and Chinese mandarins with regard to Western astronomy from the 16th century to the 18th century was a single phenomenon, albeit not popular and continuous, so it was not a dominant trend in society. On the contrary, the openness and proactive acceptance of Western astronomical achievements were still the dominant attitudes of the ruling class in both countries. (Sun 2015, 55; Zhao 1977c, 10021–024; Huang 1991, 12–15; Wang 2008, 22; Borri 1931, 376–81; Luis 1628, 122–23).

dynasty revise the Datong Calendar 大統曆 to realize his missionary purpose. In Ricci's opinion, Western astronomy and the revised calendar could create a connection between two completely different cultures that made it possible for the Christian God to be in harmony with the royal authority of Chinese emperors. In short, if astronomy was not applied, the mission could not be successful (Pfister 1932, 175). Thus in 1605 Ricci pleaded with the Roman Pope to urgently dispatch astronomers and others who were familiar with calculating calendars to Beijing (Stürmer 1989, 6). Meanwhile, the emperors and mandarins of the Ming dynasty were also quite open to using missionaries and receiving the achievements of Western astronomy. In fact, in the late Ming dynasty—the first half of the 17th century—and in response to the introduction of Western science associated with the promotion of Christianity into China by the Jesuits, many contemporary mandarins and intellectuals were attracted by the new astronomical knowledge originating from Europe. Of these, Li Zhizao 李之藻 and Xu Guangqi 徐光啟 are two of the most prominent names (Liang 2001, 321). They repeatedly petitioned to the Emperor of the Ming dynasty to approve the establishment of a specialized agency to use the Western method to revise the applicable Datong Calendar 大統曆 which had many errors (Fang 1966, 424). That was then also approved by Chongzhen 崇禎—the last emperor of the Ming dynasty. In 1629, the Calendar Bureau was established, using Jesuit missionaries Nicholas Longobardi 龍華民, Johann Schreck 鄧玉涵, Johann Adam Schall von Bell 湯若望 and Giacomo Rho 羅雅谷 to revise the calendar.[2] With the constant efforts of the missionaries, until 1634, the Western-style revised calendar was completed and called the Chongzhen Calendar 崇禎曆書. In particular, recognizing the necessity for the Western astronomical instruments for observational and astronomical activities, Xu Guangqi 徐光啟—one of the typical mandarins at that time advocated speeding up the acceptance of the Western astronomical and calendar achievements; he had petitioned Emperor Chongzhen 崇禎 of the Ming dynasty twice in July and September of 1629 for approving the manufacture of some new Western astronomical instruments that the Chinese had never known before such as the Quadrant 象限儀, the Sextant 紀限儀, the Astrolabe 星盤, the Celestial globe 天球儀, the Terrestrial globe 地球儀, the Sun-dial 日晷, the Star-dial 星晷, and the

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2   When the Calendar Bureau 歷局 was founded in 1629, two Jesuit missionaries named Niccolo Longobardi 龍華民 and Johann Schreck 鄧玉涵 involved in revising the calendar here. However, because missionary Niccolo Longobardi paid more attention to the mission, in fact, the work of revising the calendar was in charge of missionary Johann Schreck. After Johann Schreck died (1630), two other Jesuit missionaries named Johann Adam Schall von Bell 湯若望 and Giacomo Rho 羅雅谷 continued to revise the calendar here. Thus, from 1629 until 1634—the time to complete the revision of Datong Calendar 大統曆, there were a total of four Jesuit missionaries working at Calendar Bureau 歷局 (Xu 1984, 343–44, 427–28; Song 2006, 122–23).

Telescope 望遠鏡 (Xu 1984, 336, 341–42). Subsequently, the design and manufacture of these astronomical instruments were assigned by the Emperor Chongzhen 崇禎 to the missionary Johann Schreck 鄧玉涵, Johann Adam Schall von Bell 湯若望, and Giacomo Rho 羅雅谷. Until 1634, along with the completion of revising the Datong calendar by the Western method, these astronomical instruments were also manufactured (Xu 2004, 436). These were typical examples of the interest and willingness of the ruling class of the Ming dynasty at that time to receive the Western astronomical achievements brought by the Jesuit missionaries.

In the Qing dynasty, in recognition of the superiority of Western astronomy compared with the traditional astronomical and calendar system, the emperors of Qing dynasty ruling the country in the 17th and 18th centuries, including Shunzhi 順治, Kangxi 康熙, Yongzheng 雍正, and Qianlong 乾隆, consistently followed the thought of respecting the missionaries and openly receiving the Western astronomical knowledge and technology, although at that time their attitude towards Christianity was quite complicated and constantly varied[3]. However, in the late Ming dynasty period, the use of Western missionaries in the field of astronomy was only limited to revising the calendar, while in the 17th and 18th centuries, the Western missionaries were increasingly engaged in various professional jobs at Qin Tian Jian 欽天監—astronomical agency of Qing dynasty, especially holding the highest management positions of this agency. In fact, from Kangxi 康熙 of the 8th imperial year (1669), the appointment of the Western missionaries to hold the position of Zhili lifa 治理曆法 (the position specialized in the calculation and compilation of the calendar) was applied (Zhao 1977b, 3325) and lasted until Yongzheng of the second imperial year (1723). From 1724 to the late 18th century, the use of the Jesuits in the management of the Bureau of Astronomy of the Qing dynasty was raised to a new and breakthrough level when the missionaries of this society were gradually appointed into positions of Jianzheng 監正 (Director) and Jianfu 監副 (Vice Director)—the highest management positions of the Astronomical Agency of Qing Dynasty (Shi 2001, 333). According to the statistics of the author of Wu Boya 吳伯婭, in the 17th and 18th centuries, three emperors Kangxi 康熙, Yongzheng 雍正, Qianlong 乾隆 appointed a total of 16 Western missionaries to hold positions in the Bureau of Astronomy (Wu

3   The 17th century and 18th century were the periods of time of recording a constant change in the attitude of the Qing dynasty emperors toward Christianity. Under the reign of Shunzhi 順治 (1644–1661), this emperor applied an extremely open and friendly policy towards Christianity and missionaries. However, under the reign of Kangxi 康熙 (1662–1722), he began to enforce the policy of banning the religion, expelling missionaries, but not really drastically. From 1723 to 1795, during the reign of two emperors of Qing dynasty named Yongzheng 雍正 (1723–1735), Qianlong 乾隆 (1736–1795), the prohibition of Christianity became even more fierce and drastic (Zhang 2016, 131–32).

2002, 223), in which there were 14 Jesuit missionaries, including Johann Adam Schall von Bell 湯若望, Ferdinand Verbiest 南怀仁, Thomas Pereira 徐日昇, Antoine Thomas 安多, Philippus Maria Grimaldi 闵明我, Bernard Kilian Stumpf 纪理安, Ignaz Kögler 戴進賢, Andreas Pereira 徐懋德, Augustin Ferdinand von Hallerstein 劉松齡, Felix da Rocha 傅作霖, Joseph d'Espinha 高慎思, Anore Rodrigues 安國寧, Antoine Gogeisl 鮑友管 and Joseph Bernard d'Almeide 素德超. Along with the appointment of the Jesuits to the professional and managerial positions at the Bureau of Astronomy, the emperors of the Qing dynasty also entrusted them with many important tasks such as compiling and revising the Western-style calendar (Pfister 1934, 653; Pegg 2019, 46; Yang 2002, 4), renovating and manufacturing new astronomical instruments (Zhang 2000, 161–70; Yao 2004, 44; Needham and Wang 1959, 451–52) or establishing star tables (Yao 2004, 44–45). Thus, the presence of Jesuit missionaries in the Qing dynasty court, especially their activities at Qin tian jian 欽天監—the astronomical and calendar research agency of this dynasty during the 17th and 18th centuries, regardless of the increasingly negative attitude of the Qing dynasty's emperor and mandarins towards Christianity later, once again showed the openness of the Chinese ruling class in receiving Western astronomical achievements for cultural exchange.

Vietnamese Ruling Class: Proactively Receiving Western Astronomy for Political Purpose

In Vietnam, right from the end of 16th century, the struggling status for dominion made political forces at that time[4] actively call for Western missionaries to the land where they governed with the aim that through the presence of missionaries in those areas, they could attract European merchants to bring goods, especially weapons for trading. Evangelistic historical data in Vietnam during this period showed that from 1556 to 1589, the government of the Le clan in Thanh Hoa (Southern dynasty) sent a representative four times to Macao and once wrote a letter to Melchior Cameiro, the Father Superior of this Diocese, in order to request sending missionaries to this area for mission (Nguyễn 1959, 22–34). Meanwhile, also at that time, with the aim of gaining the presence of missionaries in the territory under its rule, strengthening trade relations with the Western countries, and thereby reinforcing its economic and military potentials, the Government of Mac clan in Thang Long (Northern dynasty) also wrote a letter to the

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4   From 1527 to 1592, there was a war between the Southern dynasty and the Northern dynasty in Vietnam between the Mac clan in Thang Long (Northern dynasty) and the Le clan in Thanh Hoa (Southern dynasty). To find out the specific development of this political situation, see (Chapuis 1995, 113–19; Taylor 2013, 237–57).

Franciscans Giovanni Battista da Pesaro and Father Superior of the Diocese of Macao Melchior Cameiro in 1581 (Du Caillaud 1915, 17–18, 20–21, 30, 36–38; Nguyễn 1959, 22–34). Although, at that time, the appeal of the monarchy government in Vietnam failed to be satisfied because the number of missionaries in Macao was too small to meet the missionary requirements of the country, and the territory managed by this Diocese, including China, Japan, Vietnam and the Malay Archipelago (except the Philippines), however, that proactive attitude in such an appeal, in addition to political purposes, at a certain level, also showed the openness and initiative in receiving the Western civilization achievements by the Vietnamese kings during this period. This created an important premise, positively affecting the process of East-West cultural exchange in many fields, including astronomy.

In the 17th century, the flexible, creative and thorough application of the "missionary academic" guideline as well as the policy of "adaption to indigenous culture" of the Jesuit missionaries in Vietnam not only made the mission to achieve positive results but also started a process of spreading and receiving the Western scientific and technological achievements, including astronomy in this country.

In the course of preaching the Gospel, Jesuit missionaries realized that Vietnamese kings highly appreciated their astronomical work (Borri 1931, 373). When calculating the calendar, especially the time of solar and lunar eclipses, the Vietnamese astronomers working in the astronomical agency of the government of Lord Nguyen in Cochinchina and Lord Trinh in Tonkin[5] often made errors (ibid., 373–74). Therefore, on the basis of grasping the psychology of "deification" and "spiritualization" of Vietnamese people's astronomical phenomena,[6] as well as recognizing the limitations and errors in surveying these phenomena, the Jesuits

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5   In the 17th and 18th centuries, the astronomical and calendar research agency in the government of King Le Lord Trinh in Tonkin was called Tu Thien Giam (Directorate of Astronomy and Calendar), while called Chiem Hau Ty (Office of Imperial Observatory) in the government of Lord Nguyen in Cochinchina. In 1657, Zhu Shunshui 朱舜水, an exiled mandarin of the Ming dynasty, refers in *Annan gongyi jishi* 安南供役紀事 (*Chronicle of Service in Annam*) to the fact that he met a mandarin of the Calendar Bureau 治曆局 of Lord Nguyen in Ngoai Dinh Sa (Quang Tri Province). The Calendar Bureau 治曆局 mentioned by Zhu Shunshui was probably Office of Imperial Observatory mentioned by Vietnamese historical records. (Phan 2006, 545–46, 591; Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn 2001, 97; Zhu 1982, 21).

6   In a letter written by a Jesuit missionary in Tonkin, Vietnam to the missionary Cibot in Beijing, China (at ab unknown time), it was clearly stated that the Tonkin people adored the sky, moon, and stars. Once the lunar eclipse occurred the people believed that a dragon was fighting the moon and wanted to annex it. Therefore, they had to immediately gather to save the moon. When the lunar eclipse was over, they returned home with satisfaction as if they had just won a great victory. That was mentioned in a report about Cochinchina by Cristoforo Borri (Du Halde 1781, 203–07; Borri 1931, 373–75).

used Western astronomical and mathematical knowledge to calculate and give accurate predictions in order to gradually make the Vietnamese king and mandarins feel curious, respect and admire the practice and accuracy of Western astronomy. The missionaries would thus gradually approach the ruling class of Vietnamese society and attempt to convert them, or otherwise take advantage of the conditions created by such high individuals' political and economic status for the development of Christianity.

Although the historical data sources recorded by Jesuit missionaries in Vietnam in the 17th and 18th centuries are not vast, there is enough to see the initiative and openness of Vietnamese emperors in receiving Western astronomical achievements. In *Histoire du Royaume de Tunquin*, the Jesuit missionary Alexandre de Rhodes mentions the extremely enthusiastic and excited attitude of Lord Trinh in Tonkin when listening to the explanations of a solar eclipse, lunar eclipse as well as the movement of stars in the sky in 1627 (De Rhodes 1651, 152–53; 1653, 91–92). In the same document, Alexandre de Rhodes also mentions the admiration and praise of Lord Trinh expressed for the specific and accurate prediction of the time of appearance as well as the development of the lunar eclipse in 1628 (De Rhodes 1651, 195). In fact, in the 17th and 18th centuries Jesuit missionaries took the initiative in using Western astronomy as one of the most effective ways to reach Vietnamese authorities and thus obtain the opportunity to stay for a long time and expand the spread of Christianity in the country. Meanwhile, the Vietnamese king also realized that the stable and long-time presence of Western missionaries in the territory he ruled was one of the important factors that ensured the European merchant ships frequently came for trade, thus bringing many goods, especially weapons and ammunition. For all these reasons the Vietnamese king proactively communicated directly with the missionaries and so acquired Western astronomical knowledge from them. The fact that the Italian Jesuit missionary Baldinotti was invited by the Lord Trinh to his palace in Tonkin to preach and discuss astronomical issues in 1626 was thus not unusual (Baldinotti 1903, 71–78).

Meanwhile, in Cochinchina, from the 17th to 18th centuries, and with a clear awareness of the importance of establishing relationships with the West in order the strengthening his economic and military potential to fight against his political rival Lord Trinh in Tonkin, Lord Nguyen at first showed a relatively open attitude in using Jesuits who had some scientific and technological knowledge that was then lacking among the Vietnamese people, with astronomy being one such topic. According to the scholar Truong Ba Can, right from the first half of the 17th century Jesuit missionaries operating in Cochinchina began to use their knowledge of astronomy, especially about solar and lunar eclipses, to find a way to approach

and leave a good impression on Lord Nguyen (Trương 2008, 527). However, from the second half of the 17th century onwards the use of Western missionaries was encouraged by the Cochinchina ruler. Then there was an official presentation of several Jesuit missionaries who were also astronomers and mathematicians in the palace of the Lord, such as Antoine Arnedo, Jean Baptiste Sanna, and Francisco de Lima (Saraiva 2013, 32–33; Dehergne 1973, 16, 152, 239–40; De Montézon et al. 1858, 387–88). During the 1730s there was no decrease in the desire for Jesuit missionaries to teach on astronomy and mathematics, and in 1731 Lord Nguyen Phuc Tru asked the Diocese of Macao to send missionaries good at math, and especially astronomy, to help in this regard. In response to Lord Nguyen's call, in 1738 two missionaries, Jean Siebert and Grueber, were sent to Cochinchina to work as astronomer-mathematicians for Lord Nguyen (Saraiva 2013, 32; De Montézon et al. 1858, 389), and they received an extremely respectful and joyful reception from the royal family (De Montézon et al. 1858, 261–63), especially from the mother of Lord Nguyen Phuc Khoat, who succeeded Lord Nguyen Phuc Tru in 1738. From 1740 to the time when the Cochinchina government was overthrown by the Tay Son peasant movement (1777), Lord Nguyen continued to welcome two other Jesuit missionaries to Cochinchina, namely Jean de Loureiro and Joseph Neugebeaur, to take over the role of astronomer-mathematicians in the royal palace (Maybon 1919, 141; Li 1998, 72–73).

Here, the Jesuit missionaries used their knowledge of Western astronomy to attract the attention of those with the highest political power, along with the Vietnamese ruler (Maggs 2000, 446). In the 17th and 18th centuries, the Jesuit missionaries also used the achievements and knowledge of Western astronomy to accurately calculate and forecast solar and lunar eclipses phenomena during. In some cases they had the opportunity to set foot in both Tonkin and Cochinchina, and gained sympathy and a positive attitude from the mandarins in order to impart their knowledge in this scientific area. In the *Histoire du Royaume de Tunquin*, the Jesuit missionary Alexandre de Rhodes mentioned a case that occurred in 1629—while preaching in Nghe An province (Tonkin), he also calculated the time, drew images of the solar eclipse that was coming on August 25, and gave notice four days prior to the event to the mandarin leading the area. Everything then happened as predicted by Alexandre de Rhodes. That surprised the mandarin of Nghe An province, and made him admire the accurate understanding that de Rhodes had of the secrets in the sky and stars, an ability that completely exceeded the abilities of Vietnamese people at that time (De Rhodes 1651, 237–38). In Cochinchina, documents from Jesuit missionaries operating in this area in the early 17th century also recorded similar cases about the active attitudes of mandarins and intellectuals in the process of receiving Western astronomy through the

missionaries' activities of calculating and forecasting solar and lunar eclipses, as seen in the reports on the missionary situation in Cochinchina written by Cristoforo Borri and Gaspar Luis (De Rhodes 1651, 237–38; Luis 1628, 122–23; Borri 1931, 376–79).

Despite this, from a comparative perspective, it can be seen that during the 17th and 18th centuries in China the attitude of the ruling class towards Christianity became increasingly critical. That said, this did not greatly affect the positive attitude of Chinese emperors and officials to the appointment of Western missionaries to managerial and professional positions in Qin Tian Jian 欽天監, the astronomical research agency of the Ming dynasty and Qing dynasty. Meanwhile, in Vietnam although in the organizational structure of the government of King Le and Lord Trinh in Tonkin and Lord Nguyen in Cochinchina there was an astronomical and calendar research agency, no documents from the history recording agency of these two governments, nor from the Western missionaries in Vietnam, mention the fact that Vietnamese leaders appointed Jesuits to hold managerial and professional positions at the state's astronomical and calendar research agency, as in China. This shows that the use of the Jesuits to carry out astronomical research work in Vietnam was unofficial. Their presence in the palace of Lord Nguyen (Cochinchina) and Lord Trinh (Tonkin) in the 17th and 18th centuries was simply to serve to explain some of the Western astronomical and mathematical concepts that the Vietnamese kings and lords were curious about, or to help calculate the timely forecast of solar and lunar eclipses (Trương 2008, 529). What caused this? It must be acknowledged that in the 17th and 18th centuries Vietnamese rulers were greatly attracted to and felt curious about and interested in Western astronomical instruments, as well as the novelty of the knowledge in this field carried by the Jesuits. However, political conflicts at that time limited the openness to receiving such Western astronomical knowledge. It was important for the Vietnamese leaders to establish relationships with Westerners in order to ensure the presence of missionaries as well as the continued supply of weapons and ammunition. That was the ultimate objective, and no matter how accurate and miraculous the instruments and knowledge of Western astronomy that the missionaries brought, if Western merchant ships failed to come for a long time or came but did not carry what the Vietnamese needed, then Christianity would be strictly banned, the missionaries would be deported, and the opportunity for Vietnamese people to learn about Western astronomy would cease. And indeed in the 17th and 18th centuries the banning and banishing missionaries was regularly ordered by the government of Lord Nguyen and Lord Trinh in Vietnam (Zhang 2016, 44–56), due to instabilities in trade relations with the West. Therefore, although the process of receiving Western astronomy took place directly in this period through the presence of Jesuits in the Vietnamese royal courts, it was

continuously interrupted. This is one of the reasons why the process of receiving Western astronomy in Vietnam in the 17th and 18th centuries was not as profound as that seen in China.

Conclusion

From the 16th to the 18th centuries, and in order to promote the preaching of the Gospel in China and Vietnam, European missionaries, especially Jesuit ones, used Western scientific and technological achievements, including astronomy, to attract and win the favour of the upper classes. In that context, emperors, kings and mandarins in China and Vietnam generally expressed an active and open attitude to receiving Western astronomy. However, the difference in a historical and political contexts as well as an actual objective that the ruling classes in China and Vietnam pursued when receiving Western astronomy made this process develop differently in each country. In China, primarily for the purpose of cultural exchange, the Ming and Qing dynasties basically showed a consistent attitude in appreciating the missionaries and their scholarly knowledge about astronomy. The Jesuit missionaries' early involvement in the managerial and professional work at the astronomical research agency of the Ming and Qing dynasties made the process of receiving Western astronomy in China more acceptable. It took place directly in the court and palace as well as being maintained continuously throughout the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, despite negative and increasingly critical reactions of emperors and mandarins of this country towards Christianity at that time. Meanwhile, in Vietnam, the great upheavals created by the power struggles between the political forces from the 16th to 18th century made the ruling class's openness to receiving Western knowledge of astronomy and the active use of Jesuit missionaries in calculating and forecasting some astronomical phenomena only a way to express goodwill and establish relationships and keep missionaries on their territories. The ultimate aim was to attract frequent visits by Western merchant ships carrying essential goods, especially weapons and ammunition to use in the struggle for political power. Because the political aim was more important than cultural exchange, no matter how accurate and preeminent Western astronomy was, it would never appeal to the Vietnamese ruling class more than Western goods and weapons. Therefore, whenever there was an inconvenience or dissatisfaction arising in trade relations with the West, the Vietnamese kings strictly banned Christianity and expelled the missionaries, including Jesuit missionaries who were the leading force in spreading European science and technology into the countries of the Far East. As such, the process of transmitting Western astronomy to the Vietnamese ruling class from the 16th to 18th century was often interrupted, and so this exchange was much more limited than that seen in China.

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Tianzhujiao zhengce zhi yitong 十七世纪至十九世纪越南阮氏王朝天主教政策研究——兼论与中国清朝天主教政策之异同 (*From 17th Century to 19th Century Vietnam Ruan Dynasty Catholic Policy Research—Concurrently Discuss with the China Qing Dynasty Catholic Policy of the Similarities and Differences*). Wuhan: Huazhong Shifan Daxue.

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Zhang Dongsun's Encounters with "Logicism" – From Russell to the Objectivist Bases of "Science and the View on Life"

Jan VRHOVSKI

Abstract

The article surveys the early work of Zhang Dongsun on topics like the logicism of Bertrand Russell and scientific philosophy, which aimed to criticize its foundations and replace them with a Neo-Kantian alternative. It tries to show how a series of Zhang's articles from the early 1920s, in which he sought to create a new "neutral" variety of logicism, can be used to better understand the intellectual foundations of the neovitalist "philosophy of life" of Zhang Junmai. By delving deeper into the underlying ideas and possible motivations behind Zhang's philosophical endeavours from the early 1920s, the article argues for a different kind of understanding of the historical basis of humanism in modern Chinese philosophy. Moreover, it strives to show how the "Science and the View on Life" controversy, as initiated by Zhang Junmai in 1923, might be rooted in or at least directly related to a syncretistic ideal, to conjoin science *and* the view of life in a new kind of harmonistic outlook. Most importantly, the article will try to show how Zhang Dongsun's critical engagement with Russell's philosophy, modern logic and physical science could be understood as the theoretical nucleus of the so-called "view on life" philosophy, not only in the context of the 1923 controversy, but possibly the entire Republican Period. Due to limited space, the article does not offer a concise introduction to Zhang's life and philosophy, but instead provides a focused discussion of particular fragments of his work from the early 1920s.

Keywords: science, view on life, Logicism, Zhang Dongsun, Zhang Junmai, Bertrand Russell

Zhang Dongsunova srečanja z »logicizmom« – od Russlla do objektivističnih osnov »znanosti in pogleda na življenje«

Izvleček

Članek proučuje Zhang Dongsunovo zgodnje delo na tematskih področjih, kot sta logicizem Bertranda Russlla in znanstvena filozofija, na katerih si je avtor prizadeval za kritiko

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njunih osnov in jih nadomestiti s svojo novokantovsko alternativo. Pričujoča študija želi pokazati, kako je mogoče uporabiti Zhangove članke iz dvajsetih let 20. stoletja, v katerih si je prizadeval ustvariti novo »nevtralno« različico logicizma za naše boljše razumevanje idejnih osnov Zhang Junmaijeve neovitalistične »filozofije življenja«. Poglabljajoč se v temeljne ideje in motive, ki so botrovali Zhangovim filozofskim prizadevanjem v zgodnjih dvajsetih letih, ta članek zagovarja novo razumevanje zgodovinskih osnov humanizma v moderni kitajski filozofiji. Prav tako pa si prizadeva pokazati, da je kontroverza o »znanosti in pogledu na življenje«, ki jo je leta 1923 zanetil Zhang Junmai, zelo verjetno izhajala iz sinkretističnega ideala združiti znanost *in* pogled na življenje v neko novo obliko harmonist999ičnega pogleda ali pa je bila z njim neposredno povezana. Najpomembnejši prispevek tega članka pa je njegov poizkus pokazati, da je mogoče razumeti Zhangovo kritično soočenje z Russllovo filozofijo, moderno logiko in fizikalnimi znanostmi kot teoretsko jedro tako imenovane filozofije »pogleda na življenje«, ne samo v kontekstu kontroverze iz leta 1923, temveč prav gotovo tudi v celotnem republikanskem obdobju. Zaradi prostorskih omejitev v tem članku ne bom podal jedrnatega uvoda v Zhangovo življenje in filozofijo, temveč zgolj osredotočeno razpravo o določenih fragmentih njegovega dela iz zgodnjih dvajsetih let 20. stoletja.

Ključne besede: znanost, pogled na življenje, logicizem, Zhang Dongsun, Zhang Junmai, Bertrand Russell

Prologue – Zhang Dongsun, Russell and the "Science and Metaphysics Debate"

The 1920s represent a pivotal period of intellectual transformation, a period of major turning points in modern Chinese intellectual history. In the aftermath of the extremely far-reaching May Fourth Movement, the Chinese intellectual world entered a new phase of the spread and proliferation of modern Western science and philosophy on the one hand, and novel attempts to reinterpret Chinese traditional systems of ideas on the other. Apart from several, relatively notable, instances of confluence and syncretism, in certain circles of representative Chinese scholars and intellectuals increasingly antagonistic opposition grew between these two positions. If the broader period of the May Fourth Movement (1917–1921) conveyed a unifying, rather than separative, trend in Chinese socio-political and intellectual modernization, this initial revolutionary fervour was quite naturally followed by a period of clarification of sets of leading ideas promulgated in the context of the movement as well as particular socio-political, cultural and scientific identities implied by the various versions of objectivity advocated in the pivotal years of the May Fourth period. One of the key events marking the outset of an open formation of disparate intellectual options, which continued growing and developing in the decades to follow, was the so-called "Science and View on Life Debate" (*Kexue yu rensheng guan lunzhan* 科學

與人生觀論戰, also referred to as the "Science and Metaphysics Debate" (*Kexue yu xuanxue lunzhan* 科學與玄學論戰))[1] that broke out in 1923.

This debate was a vital expression of the trends in contemporary Chinese intellectual world in many different ways: First of all, it was a concentrated expression of the internal developments relating the "scientific worldview" and "philosophy of life" (i.e. life view) in the time between the May Fourth Movement and the year 1923. More precisely, the proponents of the so-called "view on life" (人生觀 *rensheng guan*) consisted of a certain group of philosophers/intellectuals, who in the above-mentioned period of time moved back and forth between representative currents of modern scientific modernity, on the one hand, and Chinese cultural foundations of modernity, on the other. Secondly, the content of the debate reveals the outcomes of the "scientization" of Chinese philosophy[2] and intellectual worlds in the preceding years. Moreover, the notion of "scientific objectivism" advocated within the above-mentioned debate was an idea which emerged at the intersection between various different intellectual spheres of influence. In this paper, I will investigate one of the relatively understudied and less well understood strains of intellectual influence behind the formation of the notion of science and philosophy of life prior to the controversy in question (1918 to 1923; see Vrhovski 2022b, 9–12). In so doing, I shall focus on the more or less ignored link between Russell's visit to China (October 1920 to July 1921) on the one side and the establishment of the "philosophy of life" current, represented by Zhang Junmai and other members of the *Gongxueshe* 共學社 (Common Study Society) and other related associations from the time. As the key link between these two periods, I focus on the impact of Bertrand Russell's "scientism" on the understanding of objective science and subjective view on life (see Zhang Junmai 1923a, 5–7),

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1   While Zhang Junmai 張君勱 referred to the debate as "View on Life and Science" (*Rensheng guan yu kexue* 人生觀與科學) debate, the "opposite camp" headed by Ding Wenjiang 丁文江 coined the name "Science and Metaphysics" (*Kexue yu xuanxue* 科學與玄學). Apart from the use of language the contenders' preference is also expressed in the sequence of the concepts in the title. In contrast to individual papers, the title of one of the earliest exhaustive anthologies compiled by Ding (December 1923; later, in February 1924, reprinted in an enlarged edition—twice the original length—under the same title, by the East Asia Library (*Yadong tushughuan* 亞東圖書館) officially named the Oriental Book Company in Shanghai) even adopts a third option, using "kexue yu rensheng guan 科學與人生觀" (1923).

2   Regarded from the perspective of the circumstances prevailing in Chinese academia at the time, the "scientization" of Chinese philosophy in the 1920s and 1930s was process in which modern logic and scientific methodology gradually gained special status in the philosophy as taught at Chinese universities. For example, for the case of Peking University, see Vrhovski (2022c). In the 1920s and 1930s, the process revolved mainly around the role of modern logic (not traditional Western formal logic) and a scientific outlook as advocated by Russell and other "scientific philosophers", and whether this ought to be integrated into interpreting Western and building modern Chinese academic philosophy. See further Lin (2005; 2012).

which underlay the later controversy between more explicitly established currents or groups of intellectuals. In the article I will thus argue that the role of the key agent of critical involvement[3] of the very foundations of Russell's philosophy and logic into the genesis of the controversy (as well as broader philosophical movement, which persisted after the debate) was played by Zhang Dongsun, who at the time was both attracted to as well as highly critical of the epistemological basis of Russell's logicism and his epistemology in general. Considering Chinese publications (articles and books) from the time between 1921 (Russell's departure) and 1923/1924, Zhang's extensive studies on Russell's logicism and the philosophical meaning of relativist physics were undoubtedly the most in-depth, advanced and widely noticed studies on Russell's philosophy conducted by an adherent of, so to say, a contending "camp" of philosophers. Moreover, as Zhang himself also clearly indicated, his critiques aimed at setting the stage for the later broader current of a "philosophy of life". In its early stages, the current that emphasized the importance of the "view on life" over "science", that is, the independence of former from the latter (see Zhang Junmai 1923b-c), made use of their own interpretations of Neo-Kantian philosophy and Neovitalism, regarding them as the most appropriate modern philosophies to be used in their objections against scientific objectivism, Russellian-type New Realism, and dialectical materialism.

Since a concerned reader might, and rightfully so, question the assumption that Russell's philosophy in any way impacted both sides engaged in the actual polemics of 1923 and 1924, I must state the following: The analysis presented here derives from the presupposition that Russell's direct influence on Chinese intellectual discourse, which is amply attested for in the years immediately before the debate (see Vrhovski and Rošker, 2021; Vrhovski 2021; 2022a), persisted to influence the shaping of intellectual trends in China via, amongst other things, institutionalization of modern philosophy at Chinese universities on the one side and members of the leading communities of Chinese intellectuals on the other. As for the "Science and Metaphysics Debate", it is not difficult to see that it was the very same scholars and intellectuals who took part and spearheaded in the debate.

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3   What I mean here is that Zhang Dongsun and Zhang Junmai regarded discussing either Russell's philosophy or the notion of scientific method related to Russell in Chinese intellectual discourse in the early 1920s as vital for their engagement with modern "science" and "philosophy". In other words, when the "view on life" motion was still fermenting within the small community (the two Zhangs and possibly others) of intellectuals, Zhang Dongsun saw it as necessary to deal with Russell's logicism and Einstein's relativism—as spoken about by Russell—so as to establish a strong, "logicist" methodological basis of the epistemological basis of the "view on life" philosophy. However, as apparent from Zhang Dongsun's writings, aside from criticising the epistemic core of Russell's logicism, he seemed to recognize and adopt, the remaining parts of Russell's notion of science and logic. That is to say, he gave his own "Neo-Kantian" interpretation of the ontological-epistemic (mind-cognition) basis of "logicism" to the remaining body of Russell's logic.

Zhang Dongsun, for one, was closely affiliated with Liang Qichao and Zhang Junmai—the latter being the initiator of the debate and the neorealist wave at Chinese universities and intellectual circles which underlay the entire controversy. More specifically, what this implies is that Zhang Dongsun's criticism of Russell's logicism and the foundations of neorealist epistemology represented a theoretical precursor to the later intellectual "current". While in his latter expositions of the neovitalist "view on life" (*rensheng guan* 人生觀)[4] Zhang Junmai focused on the overall characteristics of the opposition between science and the view on life, Zhang's contributions should be considered as a foundational enterprise, striving to make a case for a Neo-Kantian alternative to notorious notions such as the "materialist", "logicist", or "neorealist" methodological bases of modern scientist philosophy.

Due to the limitation of space on the one hand and the rather specialized subject on the other, this paper will not be able to provide a general reader with an adequate introduction to either the work and life of Zhang Dongsun or the more general background of phenomena and concepts from modern Chinese intellectual history mentioned in the discussion. A certain acquaintance with both these subjects is thus required. Interested readers are thus advised to consult the relevant scholarship on Zhang Dongsun's life and thought, as well as the role of his ideas in formation of modern Chinese philosophy during the 1920s and 1930s.

Although the Anglophone academic world has already seen several written attempts at summarizing or critically evaluating the content of the 1923 debate, most of these studies focused either on outlining the debate or on its place in the evolution of ideas of certain intellectual figures who took part in the debate, or particular currents of thought that emanated from the related worlds of ideas (e.g. Zhang Junmai and the subsequent development of Modern Confucianism as in Nelson (2020); Ding Wenjiang's life and thought, as in Furth (1970)). Thus, a fairly in-depth analysis of the debate from the perspective of Ding Wenjiang's life and work was delivered by Charlotte Furth in her 1970 book *Ting Wen-chiang —Science and China's New Culture* (Furth 1970, 94–136), while the first concise summary of the debate in the English language had already been written five

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4   On a more general note, it must be further indicated that traditional "Chinese philosophy of life" must not be confused with the philosophical movement which spread in Germany in the late 19th and the early 20th centuries under the name *Lebensphilosophie,* even though the two discourses share some commonalities, such as a critique of purely materialist and mechanistic approaches to human existence and thought. These two philosophical discourses also proceeded from similar lines of thought in their basic epistemology, for they are both rooted in the supposition according to which a comprehension of life can only be obtained by and through life itself, and from within itself (see Rošker 2021). On Chen Lifu's 陳立夫 vitalism as the central GMD ideology in the 1930s, see Bodenhorn (2002).

years earlier by Kwok (1965), albeit in a rather tangential and fleeting, summarizing manner, some introductory research on the intellectual origins of the notion of *rensheng guan* was conducted by Gad C. Isay in his work *The Philosophy of the View of Life in Modern Chinese Thought*. Works like his and, for example, the contribution made by Huang Yushun 黃玉順 (2002, 211–39), are of great value for research on the general intellectual developments of early modern China, for they critically delve into the conceptual tissue underlying not only public debates such as this one, but also present a deeper insight into the conceptual developments of the intellectual discourse of the period under research. A recent noteworthy contribution directly addressing the content and the beginnings of the debate was made by Joseph Ciaudo (2019).[5] Critical evaluations of Zhang Junmai's contributions in the context of the later developments of Modern Confucianism were attempted, for example, by Nelson (2020; etc.), Fung and Yung (2021) and so on. While within the Anglophone scholarship there exists a relative abundance of both general references as well as more in-depth accounts of the content and overall course of the debate, these surveys usually tend to disregard the role of Zhang Dongsun's critique of Russell for setting the intellectual stage for not only the "Science and View on Life" controversy, but for an entire current within Chinese philosophy, which underwent public development within the aforementioned process.

Russell, Neo-Kantianism, and Zhang's Early Epistemology

In the early 1920s a current started to form which primarily advocated a traditional Chinese view of humanity and its relationship with the objective world, and in their argumentation its leading members were often reaching out for similar theoretical and intellectual means as used by their "adversaries". By so doing, in a certain broader sense, they adapted a similar kind of "objectivity" into their own intellectual arsenal, even though they were originally opposed to this. By the same token, the opponents of Russell's notion of objectivity, which they understood as a philosophical system founded on mathematical logic and modern physical sciences, would have to set up "their own notion of logic", or even logicism, as a fundamental "anatomic element" of an objective and modern philosophical theory. Usually, as in the case of Zhang Dongsun and Zhang Junmai, this meant that they simply set out to seek alternative notions of essentially

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5   In the German language considerable contributions have been made by Fröhlich (2000). Less focused assessments of the debate either with regard to Modern Confucianism or the thought of individual intellectuals from the time have also been made by Fröhlich (1999), Metzger (2005), Suter (2011) and elsewhere.

formally identical types of logic, by seeking to replace their key epistemic and ontological categories with their own categories of choice. It seems that in their eyes, solutions like, for example, setting "mathematical logic" upon a different conception of thought and mind—e.g. neovitalist or Neo-Kantian—entailed the loss of "control" (*zhichi* 支配; Zhang Junmai's term used, for instance, in relation to "control of logic over life" etc.) of the objectivist science over "human life" or life in general (vitalism)[6]. Thus, in other words, the goal was not to radically restructure logic, but rather to reframe it and "contextualize" its objectiveness in a comprehensive view of existence, based on different ontological and epistemological bases. As I shall try to briefly demonstrate below, Zhang Dongsun's engagement with Russell's logicism was thus not an attempt to dissect and refute the essential content of his theory of logic, but rather its epistemic assumptions referred to as "Neorealist logicism". What is of greatest importance to us is the apparent understanding of Chinese philosophers like Zhang, and that such a reframing resulted in a change of character or even possibilities with regard to evolutionary classifications of logic.[7] In other words, such a reframing signified an essential limitation of the objectivist claim of "logicism" or "scientism" over all other aspects of human existence. Somewhat paradoxically yet at the same time also necessary, in the early 1920s Zhang Dongsun's and Zhang Junmai's

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6   It has to be pointed out that what Zhang understands as the pinnacle of Neo-Kantianism is the philosophy of Heinrich Rickert. In the preface to his 1922 article on New Realist logicism Zhang stated: "I wrote this article because, recently, I became very interested in researching German Neo-Kantian philosophy ... Aside from Bergson, the modern philosopher I respect the most is Rickert." A few lines later, he also remarked that: "... there also exists another [reason], which is that, according to my view, New Realist logicism appears not to be as thorough as in the philosophical faction affiliated with Rickert ... Since my idea behind writing the present discussion was to present a prequel to my future introduction of Rickert's philosophy, as regards my plans to synthesize Bergson with Rickert, for now, this will have to wait for another day." Here, we can see that while Zhang's admiration was centred around Rickert, at that time he was already aware that the "logicism" of the Neo-Kantian school was created by the members of the former's broader or close circle of philosophers. While it is probably the case that Rickert did not attribute too much importance to logic, a philosophical enterprise that could indeed be described as Neo-Kantian logicism can be found in the works of the work of Ernst Cassirer, whom Zhang does not seem to mention back in 1922. As a representative work of Rickert from the time, which would probably fit Zhang's idea of the former's thought, see *Die Philosophie des Lebens* (1920); the work by Cassirer, which epitomizes the foundations of an as it were "Neo-Kantian logicism" and fits the temporal frame of the here-discussed texts see *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der Neueren Zeit* (two volumes, 1922). This connection was pointed out to me by Matthias Neuber, to whom I would like to thank on this occasion.

7   This becomes most clearly visible in the subsequent developments of Chinese discourses on logic, in which Zhang Dongsun played a rather central role. On Zhang's later idea that thought (*sixiang* 思想) and logic are relative to the culture of their origins and existence see Zhang Dongsun (1938; 1939). For a discussion of broader significance of Zhang's later ideas on the nature of logic in the 1930s, see Vrhovski (2020).

reference to science or the "scientific character" of presuppositions served as a way of verifying their standpoints as objective, even if these were innately antiscientific.

Zhang Dongsun, for one, started his analytic engagement with Russell's philosophy even before he was able to accompany him on his journey from Shanghai to Beijing. However, it was the personal encounters he had with Russell which kindled Zhang's profound interest in epistemology and the logic of neorealism (New Realism), and later also Einstein's relativist physics. His extraordinarily thorough scholarly attitude and desire for new knowledge, soon led Zhang into the depths of New Realism and its logicism, in relation to which he eventually established his own philosophical position, not only when it came to verity of Russell's epistemological basis but also his own position within philosophy as he knew it. Already by 1922 Zhang's engagement with the significance of a "logicist" attitude within New Realism, as well as across all modern schools of philosophy, started to yield the first concrete results. In the same year he thus composed his first concise critique of the epistemological foundations of Russell's logicism, in which he also outlined, what can be considered the starting arguments for the notion as well as the use of "logic" as an important token of argument in those currents of contemporary Chinese philosophy that, in the decades to come, established a fierce opposition to a Russellian type of scientism and materialism. Zhang's early elucidations of the potential—for want of a better expression—non-realist and non-materialist foundations of modern Chinese philosophy, resonated as a paradigm throughout the antecedent theoretical endeavours of his fellow philosophers, especially those connected to the so-called "neo-vitalist" current that started with Zhang Dongsun and related to philosophical ideas centred on "human life". Without taking greater risk, one would be even tempted to assert that Zhang's articles from this period preceded and possibly also directly influenced the gradual formation of a new wave of "Chinese humanist philosophy" as a counter-current to materialism and scientific realism in the 1920s. This is the same wave of "life views" or "philosophies of life", which in the following decades partly incorporated not only its merely seeming conceptual synonym "(neo)vitalism" but even currents or waves like "modern humanistic Buddhism" (although partly inclined towards Russell's realism), early Modern Confucianism, Feng Youlan's synthetic metaphysics, and so on. Although it deals primarily with epistemological elements of logicism and the nature of logic in Western modern realism, Zhang's 1922 [2021]. article "Logicism of Neorealism" ("Xin shizailun de lunli zhuyi 新實在論的論理主義"; for the English translation of the article see Vrhovski and Rošker 2021) played an immensely significant role for the establishment of the contemporary philosophies of the "view on life", which was centred around the subject and intuition. It

questions the very relationship between human mind and the object of cognition, which in logicism is related to the logocentric predicament and the notion of a relation as existing externally and not internally. This kind of early contribution by Zhang was of especially great importance for the establishment of semi-traditional modern epistemologies, which started to appear within Chinese intellectual discourse from the mid-1920s onwards.

As Zhang elucidates in his long study on the subject, the main aim of his critique of Russell's logicism was to establish, what he understood to be tantamount to a concise and effective "Neo-Kantian" logicism or epistemology of logic.[8] The latter, however, was of key importance for his—never fully realized—project of a synthesis between Bergson's philosophy of life (alleged to contain the ontological bases) on the one hand and Neo-Kantian epistemology on the other. Exactly this combination was reflective of Zhang's personal approach towards the current which one year later became associated with the term "life view" or "philosophy of life" (after German *Lebensphilosophie* (Eucken)). As a matter of fact, very much akin to other contemporaries who took their ideas both from tradition as well as modern Western thought, Zhang's project represented an attempt to counterbalance these two central currents of Western philosophy so that the obtained synthesis would be, for example, consistent with the conceptions of the mind or the role of subjectiveness in traditional Chinese epistemologies. In Zhang's opinion, the two main currents of Western philosophy were defined alongside the following binary-based oppositions: logicism against psychologism, philosophy of thought against philosophy of life, emphasizing the universal form against particular form, transcendentalism versus empiricism, and emphasizing rational knowledge against opposing rational knowledge. From the above couples we can deduce that Zhang's overall endeavour must have also consisted of incorporating logicism and psychologism as well as transcendentalism and empiricism into a unified epistemological standpoint. Zhang Junmai's lecture and his subsequent writings on "Science and the View on Life" from 1923, on the other hand, dealt with the complementarity between these categories at a different level. In fact, the strategy of the entire "view on life" current consisted of this very point, to create an all-encompassing balance between two opposing schools of modern philosophy. While the way in which these were understood as "opposing" was related in greater part to their

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8   See footnote no. 6. On the difference between Russell's and Cassirer's notions of logic see, for instance, Smart (1943). Smart points out that: "Russell's conception of an immaculate, transcendent realm of logic and pure mathematics, which thought simply discovers, and Cassirer's thesis that logical and mathematical concepts are ideal constructions or creations of pure thought, are nothing but simple antinomies resulting from one and the same profoundly mistaken endeavour to disregard the experiential context of one particular science among all others and to link it, instead with logic …" (Smart 1943, 173)

objective science-based propensies towards one or the other pole of a spectrum, rather than a series of dialectical negation. This tendency is particularly evident in the contemporary Chinese philosophers' treatment of the idea of "universality" as a comprehensive harmonic pattern of principles. What is not so clear on the first sight, however, was that exactly the same kind of Neo-Kantian foundations of logic as so eagerly advocated by Zhang could, rather paradoxically, be conducive to (in the intellectual development and not as a direct inference) the emergence of cultural relativism or pluralism in relation to the notion of logic itself. Moreover, if we regard Zhang's own intellectual development, this can be also stated for him. When we are speaking about intellectual developments, be it of Zhang's philosophy or his extended community of interlocutors, we are essentially observing a process in which, for instance, the Neo-Kantian notion of mind or "logic" was to a certain extent "re-contextualized" and interpreted within the Chinese intellectual context. That is not so say, however, that Zhang's conclusions reached by means of his understanding of Neo-Kantian philosophy should be regarded as the conclusions of the latter itself. Moreover, the manner in which Zhang utilized such ideas or abstractions (in a formal and not conceptual sense) from Western theories and how he constructed his arguments and ideas is exactly what is so precious for scholars of Chinese intellectual history to observe. Strikingly, even today objections to such research might be raised from the perspective of "rational universalism", by which one would assume that, for instance, Neo-Kantian presuppositions can only bear conclusions consistent with "Neo-Kantian philosophy", be it Europe or China. Our case, however, teaches us that in practice Chinese intellectuals' use of Western notions of logic, science, mind and so on were less Western than they were Chinese. Moreover, it is in their use in which we may discover the strains of reasoning hiding behind the apparently Western terms and language of discourse. By and large, the same manner of "use" or "adaptation" was also the underlying common characteristic of the new theories of logic which developed in China in the 1930s. Zhang's work from the early 1920s, however, also derived its importance by serving as an example of advocacy of human subjectiveness by virtue of discussing epistemological elements of logic and their role within the structure of humanity's objective consciousness.[9]

Although in his article from 1922 [2021] Zhang Dongsun's discussion appears to have revolved around completely theoretical or insignificant details of Russell's theory, his objectives were in fact exceptionally general and universal, with inferences that would be pivotal for his entire system of philosophy. His argument against Russell's epistemology was centred around the presupposition of

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9   For further developments of this line of argument see Zhang's later thought relating to "cultural relativism" of logic, see Zhang Dongsun (1939).

the separate existence of the "world of logical entities" and the definition of relation as the basic epistemological-ontological category (Zhang Dongsun 2021, 173). By so doing, he strived to show that relations cannot exist separately from the state of relatedness in the first place. Since relations in no way precede relatedness, he claimed, they could not represent the primal precondition of existence. The next thing Zhang wanted to point out as the shortcoming of the New Realist logicism was, that the latter allegedly only dealt with the domain of "thusness" and not also the "whatness?" He gave the following description of this situation:

> Let's say that now here is a table, and that we identify it as a table is based entirely on our judgment. What is called judgment is a "that" of any new simple experience placed into the previous complex system of experience, which is consequently turned into "what?" So, after we have looked at the table, we say that the table still is a table and still exists here. This statement cannot be asserted. Because, according to Russell, we can say that the table is only one perspective, and today's perspective is not bound to be necessarily identical with the one from tomorrow. Therefore, we can only say that the "that" of table still exists. As regards the question whether it will again change into "what?", this then cannot be asserted without any further cognition. (Zhang Dongsun 2021, 182)

Here, Zhang presents the paradigm of his understanding of what is ontologically given in perception and forming judgments. The duality (simply, as two separate domains) of "that" and "what?" is reflective of a dynamic relationship between objective reality and the self. Above, Zhang demonstrates how a judgment that "there is a table", which originates in a particular case of sensory-perception or a "new simple experience", is eventually changed into "what?", a complex network of experience, which we could tentatively describe as the self's "sedimentation" of previous experiences together with how these are processed in accordance with the individual's mind. In Zhang's opinion, Russell's philosophical error pertains to his over emphasizing of "that", namely the forming of initial judgments, in human cognition, while in so doing disregarding the role of, so to say, the substance of mind which is the key agent in the eventual formation of the comprehensive substantiation of "what?" in self's cognition—outside of the direct contact with "that". Subsequently, Zhang also reasoned that while Russell's New Realism can be efficiently applied only to the world of "that", its logicism is capable of no effective accounting about the realm of "what?" He argued this in the following way:

Because the world of "what?" is a completely known world and knowing is judgement. If we say "A is A", the second A includes an A opposite to "not A" or the meaning of "A" in A, B, C, D. If A did not contain "not A" or "B, C and D," then A would not be established in the first place. Therefore, distinguishing and judging is what Hegel called "concepts used in particularities." Based on that, the realist philosophy can be naturally applied to the world of "that". But we cannot differentiate between "that" and "what?" There is no "that" which does not change into "what?" Consequently, we can say that in fact there only exists the world of "what?" Since there is only this world, the prerequisites to know this world are constituted entirely of differentiation and judgements, otherwise there would only be chaos and ignorance. At the centre of our research are not randomly established "relations" but rather the mysterious "judgments", for relations still have to be subjected to judgment. In other words, relations are formed and made from judgments themselves. If we accept this point, we can see that our problem is not any more the form of relations, but only the nature of judging. (ibid.)

What Zhang is trying to say here is that the New Realism's exclusive focus on "that" is not tenable in the first place, since by so doing they ignore the fact that the preconditions for "that" lie in "what?". That is to say, "what?" or human consciousness in its entirety (not only reasoning as in formal logic) is the original locus of differentiation, which is the key precondition for "that" having any sense at all. Otherwise, "that" would be just a collection of sensory affirmations, blunt impulses, suspended in one's "mind", with no meaning at all. On the other side, and following Zhang's reasoning, it can thus be assumed that, since "what?" is the place, be it either *a priori* or by evolutionary segmentation of awareness, from where judgments originate and by which they have any meaning, it must thus be subsumed that judgments are such after what is referred to as "what?" and not after what is essential only to the domain of "that". It is essential to recognize that Zhang believed that Russell's notion of relation derives exclusively from the latter. This was also how in the first half of the 1920s Chinese philosophers came to understand the relationship between the New Realist theory of external relations on one hand, and the "idealist" theory of internal relations on the other.[10] How Zhang understood Russell's logicism was thus, as an epistemological *and* ontological standpoint, as a claiming of the priority of relations essential to "that" over the judgments embodying these relations that are actually formed in "what?"

10   I have explained the historical side of these developments in 1920s China in one of my forthcoming publications. Because, at the time of writing this paper, I have not yet received a confirmation of its publication, I am unable to list the publication in the references.

According to Zhang, it is that external relations are part of judgments in the first place and that judgments are *not part of simple forms of* "that", such as individual instances of sense perception (sense-data and propositions about them). On the contrary, relations are part of judgments which derive from "what?" and make recognition of "that" in the world possible in the first place.

Based on the grounds given above, Zhang concluded that Russell's neorealist logicism was utterly incomplete. At the same time, however, he still emphasized that logicism cannot be simply discarded as useless or even replaced by a form of psychologism. As an alternative solution, he sought a suitable and accordingly ontologically "sound" form of logicisim in the German school of Neo-Kantian philosophy. As far as the general notion of logic was concerned, the cancellation of relationism led him to a rather hasty conclusion that logic cannot account for its own nature or existence, for—as he believed was maintained by the American New Realists—the logical form was only a reflection of external relations (ibid., 183). In this point we are able to realize a perspective which was adamantly set against the logocentric predicament of the realist philosophy of mathematics and logic. Consequently, Zhang assumed that the question of the nature of logic can be solved through studying the properties of logical relations alongside the essence of ideas as the carrier and the main groundwork of logical form. This very position further amply illustrates the *ratio* against Zhang's later understanding of culture-based evolution of logic. That is, of logic as an organism inextricably bound to individual intellectual cultures and their languages. For the above theses entail that there it is not possible to assume the existence of a universal formulation of logic, after which human reasoning would be shaped, but rather the reverse: It would make more sense to assume that, as an expression of an aspect of the nature of the human mind, the human thought as such must be essentially plural, and as such the sole basis for logical pluralism. Exactly this kind of understanding of the notion of the human mind (*xin* 心) was emphatically reiterated in the conclusion of Zhang's article, where he was criticizing the neorealist idea of the "conscious mind" and Russell's notion of the mind as a special kind of relation. Amongst other things, in the concluding paragraphs of his analysis Zhang thus posited that the real nature of the mind exceeds the "division between subjective and the objective, while its existence precedes the given distinguishing judgment" (ibid., 184). Here, "mind" probably means "pure mind", which was supposed to embody the empirical access to the "pure experience", further manifested in various forms of cognition and sensation. What is even more important is that Zhang regarded the human "mind" and its secondary realizations—for example, in the form of ideas—as the core as well as the root of the nature of judgments and consequently also logic(s). In this way, the human mind is a real and independent

entity, and not only a reflection of external relations, the logico-mathematical structure of the world. From the synchronic perspective of Western philosophy, from which we are bound to set out today, this can be a rather problematic notion, since it scrutinizes the idea of "universal mind" by setting it against the prerogative of "logical relativism". But if we observe the later "cultural relativism" which gained momentum in Chinese intellectual world in the 1930s, and consider the fact that one of its foremost proponents in the field of logic was Zhang Dongsun, then we realize that the underlying reasoning which was conductive to its gradual formation must be primarily reconstructed and only subsequently subjected to theoretical scrutiny, relating the conclusions in Chinese intellectual discourse with its "sources" in Western philosophy. In other words, and observed from contemporary standpoint, it appears to us rather absurd to propose "logical relativism" (many different types of logic) and "cognitive universalism" (that is to say, a universal mind in all members of the humankind) at the same time. Yet what might lurk underneath such apparent contradictions might be related to contextual ambiguities underlying the Chinese philosophers' use of the notions of "logic" and "mind" in the first place.

In the framework of the later vitalist-coloured polemics on the "view on life", the above-mentioned epistemic turn in Zhang's philosophy can be tentatively described as the "humanistic turn", and in its ontological extension, a "vitalist turn". The autonomy thus acquired by the human mind over material, physical reality falls easily within the domain of the neovitalist biology-based humanism. The human organism or its evolutionary entity of human life is thus not only the main carrying vessel of the autonomous mind, but also a category of entity superposed to the mere material *level* of the universe. Life and its inherent autonomy is thus not only established in opposition to material existence, but should be considered as existentially superimposed (as determinating) on the material existence.

As already hinted above, in the last calculation Zhang's critical analysis of Russell's logicism signified some sort of essential complementarity between the subjective and objective spheres. Considering what was said above, an important precondition for that is that the objective sphere is not considered as a mere synonym for the material. Furthermore, such complementarity was probably to be reserved above all for the accomplished form of human consciousness, which, however, does present itself in the form combining intuition with rational insight. It should not come as a surprise, however, that this very idea was implicitly presented as the fundamental paradigm by the proponents of the "view on life" in the 1923 controversy.

Zhang's Engagement with "Logicisms" (New Realism and Neo-Kantianism) in the Context of Zhang Junmai's "View on Life" (1923)

The consequences Zhang's critique of Russell's logicism had for the idea of the human being and the value of subjectivity in China became clear in 1923, when in the broader Chinese intellectual community, the controversy over "Science and the View on Life" broke out. Looking back, Zhang's writing from 1922 in a way foretold the advent of a new current of philosophy onto the central stage of Chinese intellectual discourse. This was, of course, no coincidence, for the flame of controversy was started by Zhang Dongsun's close collaborator and colleague Zhang Junmai, who in 1922 was still in Europe, learning about the then popular neovitalist thought and forms of idealism, which were intertwined with ever more biological foundations of neovitalist philosophy. When Junmai was still learning from his mentor and interlocutor Rudolf Eucken, Dongsun, who had stayed in China, was already devoting his efforts to the establishment of epistemological and logicist foundations of their future intellectual enterprise. After Junmai had finally returned to China, the key role in the ferment of neovitalism within the new wave of "view on life" or "philosophy of life"[11] was played by the German embryologist Hans Driesch, who arrived in China in that same year. His was the third and last in the series of visits of Western philosophers organized by the Lecture Society.

Between the years 1921 and 1922, Zhang Junmai, who became the central figure of the controversy in question, visited the University of Jena, where he studied under and later also worked together with Rudolf Eucken. For Zhang, this year was more or less formative, for this was quite obviously the time when his previous contact with Bergson's philosophy and German idealism became rapidly updated by Eucken's idealism and neovitalist ideas. A considerable part of the discussions which took place between Eucken in Zhang in 1921 were recorded by Lin Zaiping 林宰平, who published his records one year later in the *Reform* (*Gaizao* 改造) journal, then edited by members of Liang Qichao's circle (see Lin 1922). Arising from their cooperation, in 1922 the book *The Problem of Life in China and Europe* (*Das Lebensproblem in China and Europa*) (Eucken and Chang 1922)

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[11]   The first major appearance of the notion took place in the months surrounding the May Fourth events of 1919. In its first emergence, the surge in uses of the term *rensheng guan* 人生觀 and *rensheng* 人生 was closely tied to pragmatist philosophy of social change, liberalism, and even early socialist meditations on revolution and the change of human thought. While the view kindling the revolutionary transformation of Chinese society was often referred to as *xin rensheng guan* 新人生觀 ("new view on life/life view"), the reformed (*gaizao* 改造—also one of key terms between 1917 and 1919) human life (*rensheng*) was considered just a different end of the same thing as the *xin sixiang* 新思想 or "new thought". For more on this, see Vrhovski (2022b).

was published, in which Zhang took his first steps towards his later notion of the "view on life" and human subjectivity. Emulating the model of contemporary trends in European neovitalism, where Bergson's vitalism fused together with biological objectivism, Zhang also understood "human life" as a part of the category of biological life as such. It was precisely these views that were representatively synthesized in the philosophical thought of Hans Driesch, the objectivistic bases of which went back to the contemporary discussions about embryology, zoology, and the theory of evolution.

The controversy over science and the view on life broke out in the year 1923, after the transcript of Zhang Junmai's lecture on the "View on Life" ("Rensheng guan 人生觀" (1923a)) was first published in a periodical. The main thesis of Zhang's lecture was the independence of the domain of subjectivity from that of scientific objectivity, which was embodied in the universe of discourse of the scientific method. This very same disparity between two "independent" spheres of human cognition was also reflected in Zhang's classification of science into "spiritual" and "material sciences", where some segments of "spiritual sciences" represented different forms of life views and were thereby mutually nonexclusive. Herein lies an extraordinarily significant idea of the necessity of plurality of life views that Zhang referred to as subjective (*zhuguan* 主觀), for plurality, if understood as the relationship of no exclusion and non-affirmation between different life views, meant that formal logic could not do justice to the properties of human life and thus also of the scientific method within the domain of subjectivity. In this regard, we are able to recognize the method in which Zhang Junmai could have set out to build by basing himself on Zhang Dongsun's epistemological-logical theory. The remaining contradictions within which Zhang Junmai endeavoured to define the domain of the subject were the following: (1) Science is based on the *logical method* (*lunli fangfa* 論理方法), while the view on life derives from *intuition* (*zhijue* 知覺), which means that the views on life do not abide by logical laws. (2) The method of science is *analysis*, while the method of life view is *synthesis* (*zonghe* 綜合), and rational argumentation, on the other hand, is not the same as a form of thinking within a life view. (3) While science rests on the *law of causality*, life views are based on *free will* (*ziyou yizhi* 自由意志). (4) Science originates from *universality, generality of appearances of objects*, while life views are founded on the *uniqueness of human nature*; while science uses psychological tests to distinguish between intelligent and stupid people, the view on life rests solely on *individuality*. (5) Lastly, Zhang also distinguishes between science as the discourse on matter and the view on life as the discourse on human mentality; the first is centred around the *external world and relations between objects*, while the latter is devoted to the *cultivation of one's inner life* (see Zhang Junmai 1923a, 3–4).

The oppositions given above essentially constitute a form of autonomy on the side of the domain of the individual realization of the subject, whereas Zhang Junmai actually limits the domain of intuition, cultivation and so on to the individual, while the collective manifestation of the mentioned subjectivities is an intellectual formation, which he identifies exclusively within a "view on life". In the same period of time, the aforementioned "subjectivity" was often equated with the "Chinese (referred to both as cultural/civilizational or spiritual) essence", which was generally referred to as "non-scientific". "Subjectivity" as the essential characteristic of Chinese culture was much discussed in the framework of the new "enlightenment movement" (*qimeng yundong* 啟蒙運動) from the mid-1930s. From this point of view, Zhang's taking resort in the concept of the "view on life" or "inner life" of humanity as a category independent from objectivistic scientific realization is in fact a quest for the autonomy of Chinese cultural essence from the objectivity of Western civilization. However, if, in reading Zhang's contributions to the above-mentioned controversy, we also take into account Zhang Dongsun's papers from the same period (1923–1924), an entirely different image emerges. Nevertheless, what this kind of image might imply pertains not so much to the question of explicit boundaries of "discourses" as it does to the potential internal discourse. A major corollary to this assumption is that an internal intersubjective discourse might not have had the same formal aim as the ultimate public "codification" of Junmai's "view on life", which also had to incorporate the rhetorical and terminological "objectiveness" following the example of neovitalism.

Since, at least in general theoretical sense, Dongsun seems to have maintained similar positions to Junmai, what was his exact take on the way in which the "Science and the View on Life" debate was conducted? By the year 1923, Zhang Dongsun's focus had shifted to the more "ontological" bases of Russellian scientific realism. In the year the controversy began, for example, Zhang published an article entitled "Relativistic Philosophy and New Logicism" ("Xiangduilun de zhexue yu xin lunli zhuyi 相對論的哲學與新論理主義"). Amongst other things, in the concluding lines of his paper Zhang wrote the following:

> The relationship of some compatriots towards Western philosophy is not the same as that of textual criticism of Chinese philology (*Hanxue* 漢學), namely to meticulously study one or two points of Western empiricism, but rather an approach from Buddhist metaphysics; to noncritically select one or two points of Western sophism, even to the extent that [their treatises] become similar to the Song dynasty Confucianism, where philosophy is regarded as identical to morality. In my opinion, this approach is not consistent with a complete learning about the Western philosophy.

> I believe that we are only capable of gaining an insight into Western philosophy by leaving aside all these things and delving directly into it. Similarly, in the Science and Metaphysics debate the opponents do not at all understand what exactly they are attaching, representing the scientific method, which they are thus advocating, without any concrete standards. It must be borne in mind that the Occam's Razor in fact represents one of the scientific spirits, while at the same time it does not suffice to summarize the whole substance of scientific method. Nevertheless, I am also convinced that, so far, science and metaphysics have already been completely separated because of their lack of mutual understanding. Science is thus not what it used to be in the past, while philosophy has also changed. Because of this very reason, there is no doubt that the already antiquated materialism will soon be discarded, together with the already antiquated idealism. Words like "deity" (*shen* 神) or "soul" (*linghun* 靈魂) should not be occurring in philosophy anymore. (Zhang Dongsun 1923a, 81)

What exactly are Zhang's intentions in the above excerpt and how does this relate to his "life view" agenda? Before I try to answer this question and establish the ultimate link between Zhang Dongsun's philosophy and the 1923 debate initiated by Zhang Junmai, we must first say more about the broader context in which these conclusions were given.

Zhang's article, from which the above excerpt was cited, represented an important building stone in his philosophical project. What he intended to illuminate with his meticulous dissection of relativism and "new logicism" were the very ontological foundations of modern scientific objectivity and its related scientific philosophy. It thus appears that Zhang's engagement with Russell's New Realism was very systematic. After his initial deconstruction of the epistemological bases of Russell's New Realism, he then attempted to establish a direct connection between logicist epistemology and modern physical science as the objectivist basis of realist logic and philosophy. However, contrary to what one might expect, Zhang's aim was not to discard Russell's logicism and his theory of external relations, but rather to improve his philosophy by establishing a lost balance. In the same essay from 1923, Zhang also presented the first outline of his idea of a sound theory of logicism, which would be founded on the epistemology and philosophy of mind of the German Neo-Kantians such as Heinrich Rickert (1863–1936). However, as hinted above, Zhang's intention was not to discard logical formalism or disconnect it from modern scientific cosmology—the structure of the universe. Instead, he set out to show that Russell's relational externalism was in fact the underlying paradigm of relativist physics. Moreover, he used Whitehead's "natural

philosophy" to emphasize that "nature and perception" are one, that "time and space are not independent from each other", and that change is truer than constant identity of objects. It is in this "synthesis" of aspects which Zhang apparently considered antagonistic or binary where he felt some sort of affinity. At the same time, as in the article from 1922, Zhang reiterated his rejection of the primacy of logical relations over ideas and the mind, which gives rise to judgments. To Zhang, however, this did not mean that logic was not the structure of the universe itself. It was just that "logic cannot be separated from thought. The realm of logic is the realm of thought… if New Realism would develop any further, it would inadvertently turn into objective idealism. But if we derive more from the perspective of the development of mathematics, then we can learn that the universe is an infinitely developing idea of value" (Zhang Dongsun 1923a, 80–81). Considering what was already said above, it is evident how the statement that "the realm of logic *are* the realm of thought" ought to have its emphasis on the second part, namely the realm of thought and not vice versa. Aside from that, here lies an important clue as to how Zhang Dongsun's enterprise might be directly connected to Zhang Junmai's "view on life" and his classification of thought into two major currents. Were both Zhangs in fact intending to present a system of philosophy or a worldview that was "science *and* the view on life"? Was the entire controversy just a misunderstanding of their emphasis on the conjunction—in the introduction of Zhang (1923a) we can read that the boundaries between science and philosophy have already been blurred (ibid., 58).[12] On one side, the main clue that Zhang Dongsun for one was in fact in search for a "neutral order" is given in the conclusion of his article on relativism, as follows:

(1) In theory of relativity, the mind and object of knowing, and even the movement and stillness in time and space are *synthesized* into one undividable and independent thing.

(2) From the results of fusing mind and objects, time and space, we are able to learn about another kind of a *neutral order*.

(3) This order is "expansion" (*kuo* 擴).

(4) Because mathematics arises from that, it thus possesses possibility.

(5) We thus know that logic can be used as a means of profound research of the universe. (ibid., 81; my emphasis)

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12   Later in the text, he further pointed out that: "The principle of relativity has got mathematical foundations, which is why his [Newton's] hypothesis has got a scientific value. The relativist truth is basic to common sense and philosophy. The today's theory of relativity is merely using scientific method to repudiate scientific absoluteness." (Zhang Dongsun 1923a, 59)

There are two key clues how to interpret the above conclusions in the context of the controversy prompted by Zhang Junmai. The first is the classification of two main currents of thought given in Zhang Dongsun's 1922 article, which he specifically attributed to Zhang Junmai. The other clue is given in another article from 1923, entitled "This is *A*" ("*Zhe shi jia* 這是甲"), in which he finally made the connection between his Neo-Kantian thought-based "logicism" and his Bergsonian high regard for life (*shengming* 生命), which he chose to call his theory of "objective idealism" or "pragmatic rationalism" (Zhang Dongsun 1923b, 61).[13]

The Connection – Neutrality of Objective Idealism and "Thought is Life"

Not only the subtle texture of Zhang's philosophical encounters with New Realism and modern scientific objectivity, but also its essential connection, become more evident when we take a closer look at two main features of his works from 1922 and 1923. Back in 1922, when his encounters with Russell's logicism and its theory of relations had first taken the form of a treatise, Zhang already revealed his agreement with the dual classification of modern thought, as maintained by Zhang Junmai. Most importantly, this paradigm, which was reiterated throughout his early-1920s treatises, seems to have meant more to both Zhangs than merely a scholarly distinction. Moreover, to them it probably represented the dual nature of human cognition and its purely ontological basis (Kantian transcendental conditions). In other words, to them the following paradigm was probably reflective of the pattern of the mind-universe (Zhang Dongsun 2021, 166):

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13   A considerably more substantial clue about how Junmai's ideas corresponded with Dongsun's motion can be found in one of the articles that the former contributed to the "Science and the View on Life" controversy. In Zhang Junmai (1923c), he pointed out: "Since the times immemorial, of all systems of ideas established by philosophers which integrated all phenomena, and whose teachings was able to leave an imprint on the human minds, none was as splendid the system of philosophy as established by Kant ... ant distinguishes between two things: related to ethics is the scope of human free will; and related to knowledge is the scope of laws of causation. In this sense, freedom and causation do not stand in conflict with each other, so that subsequently human affairs and knowledge can both obtain reasonable explanations. This is one of the advantages of Kant's philosophy. As for the object of knowledge, whether it arises from sense-perception or reason, Kant proposed a harmonistic theory, which posited that perception without conception is ignorance, while conception without perception is emptiness. In this explanation, both currents are reconciled. This constitutes the second strength of Kant's philosophy."

System A	System B
Logicism	*Psychologism*
Philosophy of thought	*Philosophy of life*
Stressing the general form	*Stressing particular content*
Transcendentalism	*Empiricism*
Advocating rational knowledge	*Opposing rational knowledge*

Although at first sight the above binary classification of the extremes of the "human mind" seems to be divided by an unsurmountable gap of disjunction, in the light of the idea of *neutral order* this could perhaps be necessarily understood as conjunctive. As a matter of fact, Zhang's 1923 article "This Is *A*" ("Zhe shi jia 這是甲") supports this very assumption. In this article, Zhang's provided a synthetic overview of his theses argued for in the previous two articles.[14] This time, however, he also revealed a very clear picture of how the disparities of the above-named contending currents could be brought into an intellectual developmental perspective. In other words, Zhang showed how the two systems were merely an outcome of the initially binary nature of cognition, which ought to be embodied in the human mind and reflected its thought. In this sense, it is reasonable to assume that a neutral order, combining both sides of the "mind", should be considered not only as more wholesome use of our cognitive capacities, but also a step towards a more comprehensive understanding of reality as such. The latter point was particularly in line with the Neo-Kantian notion of pure mind and cognition so much admired by Zhang.

It is important to understand, that the above-mentioned evolutionary overview served Zhang as an "evolutionary" argument for his own philosophy, which he chose to name "objective idealism". This argument was conducted through several stages, in which Zhang gave his evaluation of the currents of philosophy representative of the above two systems. He thus set out by giving an analysis of the conceptions of the "structure of experience" (*jingyan de goucheng* 經驗的構成) in pragmatism, empiricism, realism and idealism. Next, he closely observed the "conditions of truth" (*zhenwei de biaozhun* 真偽的標準) in the neorealist theory of verification and idealism. In his penultimate step he then investigated the "commonality of order" (*tiaoli de gongtong* 條理的公同) in light of the idea of relativism

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14   Following its publication, a minor written discussion developed between Zhang Dongsun, Zhang Junmai and Wang Jinxin 王晉鑫. See, for instance, Zhang Dongsun (1923c).

in contemporary scientific philosophy and "critical realism". Last but not least, he arrived at what may be the most pertinent point for the present discussion, namely the very important thesis that "thought is life" (*sixiang ji shenghuo* 思想即生活). At this final stage, all the previous assumptions and arguments Zhang presented in his previous papers were combined to form one sensible whole.

Firstly, Zhang gave a much-needed elucidation of his understanding of the ontological-epistemological spheres of "this" and "what?" These seem to have been used as two manifestations of the above-mentioned dual nature of the mind, while their actual role in cognition became clear within the dynamic perspective of life. Zhang first pointed out that:

> Empiricism tells us about accumulation [of knowledge] through experience; pragmatism, on the other hand, tells us at a more profound level that our accumulation of experience is a realization of values; while New Realism goes even deeper to tell us that the realization of our values has got a universal form. As consequence, we can attain a revelation about how to solve the question of how "that" turns into "what?", by combining the generation problem of transforming "that" into "what?" with the problem of necessity of changing "that" into "what?" (Zhang Dongsun 1923b, 55)

What the above excerpt describes is Zhang's understanding of the gradual advancement of the "that" branch of Western philosophy. In Zhang's description, the empiricists' turn seems to have been towards the "that", namely the emphasis of external experience in knowledge-formation. Pragmatism, however, made a slight turn back towards the subject as the locus of "what?", when it pointed out that empirical engagement with "that" results in inner values. Finally, New Realism makes another sharp turn towards the external "that". What, according to Zhang, neither of these schools really grasped is the problem of how "that" is generated into "what?" and what necessitates such generation. Of course, for us it would be also vital to understand what exactly constitutes such generation and the actual nature of these two "spheres" presupposed by Zhang. Is such "generation" only epistemic or is it also an ontological process of becoming? To completely grasp what Zhang is trying to achieve here, it would be necessary to answer all these and many more questions. However, due to the limitation of space, here we shall only follow up on a certain aspect of this apparently dynamic and complementary relationship, which links generation with "becoming", a view which may be seen as Zhang's attempt to make use of idealism encapsulated in contemporary neovitalist teaching. It seems that he recognized in the becoming of human life

the very nexus of the domain conjoining the embodiment of the *moral imperative* (necessity related to values, which are based on experiences) and the driving force of *physical becoming* (generation problem?).

Moreover, the dynamic relationship between "that" and "what?", which Zhang strived to expound on using the propositional form "this is *a*", was not only a reflection of the dual nature or structure of the human mind. More so, it was the nature of very "becoming" (*Werden*) embodied in biological life. In this sense, mind was the cosmos, mind was thought, and thought was life, which in turn was nothing else but the manifestation of the pure essence of ever-changing existence. As for the bipolar nature of mind, its necessity was also further embodied within the nature of human intellectual evolution as such. In this sense, the above-mentioned empiricism, pragmatism, New Realism, and even Kantian "formalist" idealism were merely side products of a meandering developmental path of human ideas, fluctuating between one extreme and the other. It is thus in the concluding lines of Zhang's article from 1923 where it becomes clear that he was indeed pursuing a neutral fusion between the two extremes. How the idea of "life view" and "human life" fitted into the equation is explained in the following paragraph from his article:

> The result of various kinds of preceding lessons are known only with this elementary form "this is *a*" as its core. It is because all forms are all under this form. But this elementary form is not a pure form. The so-called "this" is given in its bare form; while the so-called *a* is "what?" which is already distinguished from the other; and the so-called "is" designates "becoming" (*huacheng* 化成, *Werden*) – which means something like Hegel's idea of *Werden*. Therefore, this elementary form is on the one hand the root of why cognition is established, while on the other hand it is the foundation for why the universe is established. Because both sides express the same entity, therefore once we have resolved epistemology, we have also resolved cosmology. In my opinion, "this is *a*" is a bare "this" turning into "what?" with already given differentiation. This kind of becoming [(*Werden*)] is what Bergson refers to as the "vital impetus". This impetus is differentiation, in the sense that, for example, "this is *a*" also includes the "this" of *a, b, c, d* etc., while differentiating itself from "*a*" not including *b, c, d,* and so on. The function of such differentiation is the distinctive feature of the vital impetus. But there are still some philosophers, who have not yet clearly understood this point, who only regard life as noumenon and thought as ethereal. The reason for this is that there are some philosophers who overly emphasize thought, in this way making it overly inflexible and shallow,

and thus giving rise to this kind of reaction. In fact, aside from "this" turning into "what?" we are unable to find any other fundamental type of vital impetus. Life's development is nothing but this kind of change, while the development of thought is nothing but the change of this into what. Therefore, the development of life itself is thought and the establishment of thought itself is life. (Zhang Dongsun 1923b, 56–57)

To explain the very intricate meaning of what Zhang attempts to point out above, it first needs to be noted that Zhang regards "this is *a*", namely a formal expression of a judgment or a proposition, from the perspective of the so-called "pure" domain of "what?", while still maintaining that "what?" is given *a priori* within the human mind—thence the distinction. For this reason, he points out that the existence of *a* asserted within the judgment, is given *a priori* within the capacity of "what?". On the other hand, the dynamic mover of "what?" consists in its constant interaction with "that". As Zhang further notes, however, when it comes to understanding the generational dynamics between "that" and "what?", its conditions must be common to both sides: in this way, both sides share the static or rigid[15] object *a* on the one side, and the dynamic existential ingredient, which he links with Hegel's becoming. How extremely generalizing Zhang's understanding of this principle actually was becomes apparent in the following lines, where we gradually learn that Zhang does not distinguish between cognitive "becoming", moral "becoming", and physical, that is, biological "becoming". This is exactly why his extreme theoretical propensity can be called a modification of (neo-)vital*ism*. In so doing, Zhang gathered inspiration from what he understood to be the quintessential idea of Bergson's *vitalism*. Moreover, he expanded the idea of "vital impetus" to integrate all aspects of becoming, which can amount to what we could collectively refer to as "human life". For him, the above line of reasoning seems to have been a clear indication that there is no line of division between thought and life, thought and change even, but the complementary and dynamic relationship between "that" and "what?", which makes an individual at the same time on a certain (vitalistic?) continuum with the universe, and by virtue of the cognitive part of becoming necessarily different from it.

To return to the starting point of the present discussion: according to what was said above, a neutral, harmonic, and comprehensive form of logicism would have to derive not from logical form, but from the nature of mind and human thought in the first place. For logic is the formal structure of the universe and the *a priori* structure of the human mind, at least in its purest form. Logical structures are given in

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15   That is to use Zhang Junmai's term, *ningzhi* 凝滯, which he uses to refer to the basic properties of material objects as opposed to changing, dynamic life. See Zhang Junmai (1923c).

the subject of cognition in the first place, which enables it to advance towards purer forms of awareness. Moreover, the ontological, the object of cognition is given within thought as such; yet not only in one of its two extremes, but in their totality, which is attained by realizing that thought is life (another harmonic combination of the two currents) and that life is thought in development. In other words, life in all its forms itself contains the potential of the neutral order of becoming. Neutral order is possible because of the process of becoming manifested in life which "*is* thought". Moreover, this position further entails that none of the previous stages in human intellectual development are to be excluded from a modern and more advanced "*philosophy of life*" (*Lebensphilosophie*). This is to say that—as noted by Zhang Dongsun (1923b, 55)—New Realism is not to be discarded but rather openly accepted and adopted, for its results are nothing but an imbalanced yet very much true and pertinent advancement of human thought. Similarly, logic or relativist physics are both very useful revelations about the formal, logical, material, etc. aspects of the universe, which an "objective idealism" cannot but integrate into its objectivist foundations. In this very sense, assuming that between Zhang Dongsun and Zhang Junmai there indeed existed a direct intellectual exchange and cooperation, the "view on life" (*rensheng guan*) was utilized as what they saw as a pertinent and theoretically tenable counterbalance to excessive "scientific objectivism" or extreme "neorealist logicism", which in their view was circulating the mainstream intellectual discourse in early-1920s China. Zhang Dongsun's philosophical enterprise was thus not merely an attempt to discard Russell's philosophy, but rather an endeavour to give it its proper place and value within the "neutral order" of "science *and* the view on life". And the opposing side's inability to recognize this very motion is what Zhang criticized in the conclusion to his essay on relativism and logicism. What he meant is that they were aware neither of the actual nature of modern science nor modern "scientized" philosophy which, as he pointed out, already transcended their past confines, taking an important leap towards a possibly "neutral" unity between "subjective" and "objective". The alleged "Science and the View on Life" opposition as noted by Zhang Junmai in 1923 was nothing but their common reading of the next stage in the evolution of modern scientific objectivity on the one side, and its corresponding modern philosophy on the other.

Epilogue – On the Necessity to Evaluate the Origins of the "Science and the View on Life" Controversy

In summary, the above analysis casts light on several important aspects relating to the development of ideas in Zhang Dongsun's thought in the early 1920s, on the one side, and the possibly broader influence of the "scientific objectivity" he

adopted in his writings, on the other. As regards the first aspect, it has been clear-ly shown that Zhang's philosophical enterprise was based on his ambition to (a) identify the new character of objectivist, scientific philosophy, and (b) construct a new synthetic philosophical view, which would encompass both the essence of contemporary philosophy as well as its scientific foundations. Furthermore, in so doing he was also indirectly making use of the philosophy of Bertrand Russell, which he regarded as second in importance and level of development only to his new logicism, which would combine the objectivistic capacities of modern sci-ence and logic with Neo-Kantian ontology of mind and thought. As pointed out above, if we observe Zhang's attempt to "use" Russell's logicism as a phenomenon of intellectual history, then, prior to passing judgments about the soundness of his understanding and tenability of his conclusions, we must, aside from other things, also regard the pragmatic aspects of such use.

When it comes to Zhang's "use" of Russell's logic and logicism, I found this to be revelatory about the less clearly and explicitly expressed aspects of not only his thought but also the discourse he shared with other Chinese thinkers at the time (the 1923 debate and so on). As such, Zhang's criticism of individual posi-tions and claims advocated by Russell did not mean that he rejected the latter's notion of logic altogether. On the contrary, it seems that he ended accepting most of Russell's logic as objectively valid, while changing the notion of *objectiveness* of logic in the first place. As I have tried to show, the contextual turn in Zhang's "use" of Russell's logic was primarily epistemic. In this way, he could retain the aggregated positive results of the evolution of thought in the West, including for-mal logic, while redefining their scope of application by providing what he saw as sounder epistemological and ontological bases, that were at the same time in line with his strong preference for the neovitalist regard for the autonomy of life against the "static" and "mechanic" material universe. In other words, this very the-oretical grounds enabled Zhang to realize the ambition which was emphasized by Liang Qichao as well as many other Chinese intellectuals in the late 1910s and early 1920s, namely to adopt everything that is useful from Western knowledge. It seems that Zhang Junmai thought that his treatment of Russell's logicism and his scientific philosophy was the most relevant path towards attaining all his phil-osophical objectives at the time. It was not just a direct engagement with a po-tential adversary when it came to the "logicist" claims, but also a process of the more or less adoption of certain aspects and paradigms of the latter's thought, that made him central to Chinese discourse on science, logic, and philosophy in the first place. Moreover, it was a path towards a synthesis of knowledge, driven by one major precondition, that the foundations of a thus emerging worldview would also allow due autonomy to human life, along with one's subjectivity, intuition,

spiritual existence, and so on. The recent experience of Western material civilization—the disaster of WWI—illustrated that the autonomy of life should not be subordinated to objective science (on WWI and the critique of modernity see, for example, Van den Stock (2021)).

While Zhang regarded the above-mentioned synthesis as based on what is given as such within the nature of both the mind and as well as the universe, from a temporal perspective such a synthesis was not only regarded as necessary but already ongoing within Western scientific thought itself. As he explicitly noted, if New Realism was to develop any further—i.e. beyond the bias of relational logicism, it would have reached the same conclusions. Another important aspect of Zhang's thought, which connects him quite clearly with Zhang Junmai's "View on Life" from 1923, was his insistence to balance out Neo-Kantian objectivism with a form of vitalism, which derived from Bergson's philosophy. Thus, the final destination of Zhang's attempt to remodel Russell's logicism resided in the thesis that the form, essence, and the laws of thought are life itself. In so doing, he resorted to the very same kind of dynamism which a decade later he set out to defend against the materialists' claims of the monopoly of dialectical materialism over the so-called "dynamic logic" (*dongde luoji* 動的邏輯; see Zhang 1933). The quintessential difference between Zhang's notion of logic and such "dynamic logic" lay in the fact that, in his view, rather than logic the dynamic thing was thought. Moreover, the dynamism of thought could not be separated from life itself. What was particularly pertinent for the "Science and the View on Life" controversy was related to the fact that this "life" was life as a whole. If one was to remove the "subjective" or "psychologistic" or even "transcendental" part from it, this would severely diminish or even disable its movement. This can be particularly well recognized in his and Zhang Junmai's bipartite classification of world philosophy. As mentioned above, for the two Zhangs this was not only a scholarly line artificially drawn between two schools of philosophy, but a line reflective of human intellectual development as well as psychological character as such. Thus, in his 1923 article "This Is *A*", for instance, Zhang Dongsun even connects the two currents with different national characters and so on. As a consequence, the main problem of contemporary philosophy was not which of these school to choose, but was incorporated in the very fact of the existence of the bipartite division. Hence, the problem lay in opposition and objectivistic exclusivism as an inherently "subjective" attitude, which infringed upon the, not in any way inferior, "objective" humanism.

Relating to the general intellectual-historical discussion, the above analysis can give us important insights into the complexity of intellectual change in the early 1920s. We are thus able to see that, for instance, Bertrand Russell's scientific philosophy, his logicism, his theory of external relations, and even his strong

propensity towards modern relativistic physics, had an extremely profound impact on what, at least on the surface, seems to be tantamount to the early formation of modern Chinese humanism. This idea is staggering in many different ways. On the one hand, for example, it challenged the paradigm of *science* against *the view on life* established in contemporary historiography of modern China, while on the other it, most importantly, sets the 1923 developments in direct continuity with the developments in the years immediately before that. In other words, the 1923 controversy was one of the *direct outcomes of Russell's visit to China and the wave of scientization of Chinese philosophy, which his visit and ideas had set into motion* (for the developments at Peking University, see Vrhovski 2022c). Since, as shown above, Zhang Dongsun's criticism of Russell was not aimed at dismissing his logic as a whole but merely to set it on different foundations—which could also account for the formal nature of logic—the former's work from early 1920s could also be called a form of positive *appropriation of major segment of Russell's notion of objectivity*. Moreover, it is my conclusion that this casts important light on the nature of the entire "science and life view" enterprise, which in the domain of the public discussion was spearheaded by his colleague Zhang Junmai. All that said, I believe that the above analysis makes a strong case not only for redefining the nature of the "view on life" side of the 1923 controversy, but for redefining the roots and theoretical foundations of Chinese *humanism* or *philosophy of life* in the entire Republican Era. Of course, as Zhang Dongsun himself pointed out, in so doing we would also have to consider the possibility of the very human factor of *misunderstanding* the other party's intentions, which would thus be attributed not only to the later scholar of this segment of Chinese intellectual history, but even more so to the science side of the controversy as well.

By and large, the above conclusions might not seem so extraordinary at all if we regard them in the context of the intellectual trends of the time. That Zhang Junmai and Zhang Dongsun were not direct opponents of scientific objectivity but rather of philosophical scientism and objectivism does not make them exceptions to their contemporaries, with whom they shared a common enthusiasm for the modern age of science. At the same time, it would not be too risky to assume that the Zhangs' intention was to create a harmonic fusion of the, at the time, rather common-sensical antagonism between either *two opposing currents* or *cultures/civilizations*. In the early 1920s, the idea that the solution to the Chinese dilemma resided in a harmonic unity or pragmatic combination of the two was a widely held conviction amongst the leading Chinese intellectuals. What is more staggering though is something which seems to have sunken into oblivion, namely —and as originally remarked by Liang Qichao in his welcome speech for Russell

at the famous Chinese Lecture Society in 1920—that the society's intention in inviting all these scholars from the West was to learn about everything of value in its culture and knowledge. Following the disaster of WWI, in 1920 Liang was well aware of the problems of intellectual "one-sidedness" or cultural "biases" of civilizations, which is why he already urged that "what the world needs the most today is the idealization of life and making ideals more true to life (*shenguohua* 生活化)" (Vrhovski and Rošker 2021, 67). Could not the same motto be recognized in both the philosophy of Zhang Dongsun as well as the public polemicizing of Zhang Junmai? What we can learn by reinvestigating the intellectual complexity behind the "Science and the View on Life" debate is that the prism of strict discursive boundaries, through which we tend to observe the contest between science and metaphysics in the West, might not only be misapplied in the case of Chinese modern intellectual history, but, more importantly, conducive to our blindness about certain aspects of intellectual continuity and ingenious creativity which went on behind what from the outside might appear as the dry and shallow intellectual emulation of the Western paradigms. Only when we delve deeper into the way Chinese philosophers like Zhang Dongsun both learned from and responded to ideas like those of Russell, Einstein, Whitehead, Kant, Rickert and others, do we then begin to realize the dimensions of "elan vital" and intellectual creativity which underlay the process of Chinese intellectual modernization.

Acknowledgments

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Representations of Post-Industrial Shanghai: Industrial Chronotopes in Documentary Photography

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Abstract

This article explores how vernacular aesthetics have been re-appropriated from pictorial to modern documentary photography over the past century to bring about a modern collective imagination of the industrial disintegration in the Chinese urban milieu. Within the scope of a discursive visual process, Jean Philippe Gauvrit (b. 1963) documents the departure of the industrial urban society in his photo-essay *Shanghai in JP Gauvrit* (2008). The paper claims that Gauvrit's documentary photography can be understood as a visual critical discourse of several representational perspectives of time that render visible anachronistic and new social structures that come into being: between utopias of the past and visions of the future in an alternative chronotopic 'present' cartography. Drawing on Bakhtin's (1981) conception of chronotope, in this study the sublime industrial comes to be represented as an intelligible reconfiguration of linear and cyclical time. By linking that socio-economic reality of that time with a collective consciousness, documentary photography can serve as a chronotope that reveals both the tension and the assimilation relating to the historical myths that lie between the fall of an industrial mode of production and the birth of a post-industrial cultural city in an era of de-industrialization.

Keywords: documentary photography, chronotope, time, modernity, post-modernity and socio-cultural semiotic representation

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Reprezentacija postindustrijskega Šanghaja: industrijski kronotopi v dokumentarni fotografiji

Izvleček

Prispevek raziskuje, kako je bila vernakularna estetika v preteklem stoletju preoblikovana iz slikovne v sodobno dokumentarno fotografijo, da bi ustvarila sodobno kolektivno domišljijo o industrijskem razpadu v kitajskem urbanem okolju. Jean-Philippe Gauvrit (r. 1963) v okviru diskurzivnega vizualnega procesa dokumentira opustitev industrijske urbane družbe v svojem fotoeseju *Shanghai in JP Gauvrit* (2008). Prispevek trdi, da je Gauvritovo dokumentarno fotografijo mogoče razumeti kot vizualni kritični diskurz več reprezentacijskih perspektiv časa, ki upodablja vidne anahronistične in nove družbene strukture, ki nastajajo: med utopijami preteklosti in vizijami prihodnosti v alternativni kronotopski »sedanji« kartografiji. Na osnovi Bahtinovega (1981) pojmovanja kronotopa je v tej študiji sublimna industrija predstavljena kot razumljiva rekonfiguracija linearnega in cikličnega časa. S povezovanjem družbeno-ekonomske realnosti tistega časa s kolektivno zavestjo lahko dokumentarna fotografija služi kot kronotop, ki razkriva tako napetost kot asimilacijo v zvezi z zgodovinskimi miti, vezanimi na čas med padcem industrijskega načina proizvodnje in rojstvom postindustrijskega kulturnega mesta v dobi deindustrializacije.

Ključne besede: dokumentarna fotografija, kronotop, čas, modernost, postmodernost in družbenokulturna semiotična rezprezentacija

Introduction to the Industrial and Post-industrial Chronotopes of Suzhou Creek

The French amateur photographer Jean Philippe Gauvrit (b. 1963) documents the departure of industrial urban society in his photo-essay book, *Shanghai in JP Gauvrit* (2008). His camera portrays the abandoned factories and warehouses in the corridor between Zhongshan East Road and Zhongshan West Road along Suzhou Creek's industrial waterway. The article undertakes a chronotopic reading of Gauvrit's post-industrial geographical locations, and by developing the concept of a chronotope as a tangible conceptual tool that reorganizes space-time relations between sociocultural understandings of events and narratives, we argue that the viewer can be challenged to visualize a variety of images within these landscapes. The notion of a creative chronotope was first proposed by Bakhtin (1981) and refers to the reconfiguration in time and space of a novel, whose knots and twists invigorate its plot or storyline. Bakhtin's chronotope has already been adopted in visual studies to elucidate the means of how concepts of time and spatial practices in cinema transform the socio-cultural and historical identities of place through narrative screening texts (Ganser, Puhringer and Reindorf 2006). We extend Bakhtin's study of the chronotope in literature to documentary

photography to determine that knowledge can be brought about in the interstices of Suzhou Creek's industrial landscapes by addressing the associations between identity, marginalization, and privilege.

When it comes to documentary photography, and as a body of cultural theory, previous studies have shown that there is an apparent lack of mediation of an intentional agent behind the creative process that distinguishes the camera work, capable of recording reality, from pictorial representations (Bazin 1960; Savedoff 1997 Walton 1984). Along with this embedded automatism of the camerawork, there is a subjective abstract constructivism that privileges blurred aesthetics and 'creative images' over reality (Jay 1993; Sontag 1977; Berger 2013). Yet alongside these two outlooks, which emphasize the dual characteristics of documentary photography, runs another argument, which encourages the reading of the photographic text as a cultural product with the capacity to permeate a wide range of socio-cultural relations with the outside world. However, there is limited discussion of the representational theory of documentary photography from a literary and cultural studies perspective (Sekula 1986; Tagg 1988; Clarke 1997; Watney 1999). This article aims to discuss this chronotopic approach, which can supplement the understanding of material found in Western photography in China by bringing attention to the nexus between the chronotope metaphor and myth-making creation. Suzhou Creek's riverfront between 2000–2008 offers different insights with regard to chronotopic thinking and sub-concepts related to semiotic and social devices, which are rediscovered systematically throughout the critical analysis of Shanghai's post-industrial landscapes as they were documented by the French photographer.

In order to fully realize the active role of chronotopes in our dialogical single case study, the paper first highlights the importance of the historical past of Suzhou Creek in the industrial development of Shanghai. By looking at the industrial history of Suzhou Creek's geography, this section traces its cityscapes as a purveyor of ideological and even allegorical meaning. The industrial city of Shanghai first came to greater prominence as a colonial port, forcibly opened to foreign settlements and trade during the First Opium War (1839–1842) (Wang 2010). In the second half of the 19th century, the city thus became the hub of China's import-export trade and its gateway to the world. The new British enclaves and their political administration were subjected to the policy of extraterritoriality, which gave way to the rise of the bourgeoisie class. As an elite was formed under semi-colonial rule, social privileges went not only to foreigners, as "[m]any of the original investors in Chinese-owned shipping, financial and manufacturing enterprises were men who had grown wealthy as compradors of the leading foreign firms in Shanghai" (Fairbank and Liu 1980, 57). China's opening up meant

that the initial heavy steel and iron industries in the area had almost disappeared by the end of the 19th century, whilst cotton and silk mills continued to operate. Within this historic context, Suzhou Creek, in the north of the city, began to flourish with a seemingly endless array of British-style warehouses within the district of Zhabei, facing the international concessions across the Suzhou River. Textile factories and depot outlets amounted to almost half of the industrial presence in Shanghai (Bracken 2019). Yet it is also interesting to note that other symbols of modernity, such as the Waibaidu bridge (built in 1906) by the English architect Howard Erskine in addition to the famous *Sihang* storehouse, grew into important landmarks of the city's rampant industrialization within the embankment building area constructed in 1932 (Bergère 2009). At this time the treaty system adopted by the foreign powers was also splitting China into two antagonistic halves, in which the interior's self-sufficient and hermetic economy could not compete with the dynamism found in the coastal cities (Wakeman 1995).

Shanghai's reliance on foreign protection came to an end with the arrival of Communist China in 1949, although the city remained the principal source of tax revenues during the Maoist Period (1949–1976) (Cheng 2020). Although Shanghai was the most industrialized city in China from the 1930s on, with the post-Mao reforms of the 1980s the metropolis suffered a slow decline in manufacturing activities as these moved into the industrial districts of Suzhou Creek over the course of the 1990s (O'Connor and Gu 2012). One of the most immediate consequences of this was the deindustrialization of the city centre. Driven by the urban economic policy, Shanghai's most central industrial zone went through dramatic physical changes (Zheng 2010). Interestingly enough, the discourse of nostalgia embedded in the defunct factories' visual allure tapped into a transnational cult narrative of "the age of machinery", which injected fresh vitality into the newly built post-industrial atmosphere. This cult of the factory could also be interpreted as a landmark of neoliberal progress that called for capital investment and the attraction of the so-called creative class (Niu at al. 2018).

Our case study focuses on the M50's post-industrial arts district on the south bank of the Suzhou River, which was just a serious of progressively abandoned built structures in the 1980s until their operations were definitively closed in 1999. The company which was operating the site (Shangtex), a state-owned enterprise (SOE), was gradually being put up for sale, in order to compensate for the costs of rehabilitating the Suzhou riverside waters (Zhong 2012). M50's arts district arose as a bottom-up organic model, and: "since the early 1980s, many international artists came to Shanghai and they soon joined those artists based in these warehouses—or as they were soon to be known, "creative industry clusters". These connections allowed Chinese artists to extend their networks outside China" (Gu 2012,

199). This revival of an artist-led cultural alternative also mirrored the rapidly growing economy of the coastal metropolis. As a cultural product in its own right, industrial renewal was seen as a way to carry out both ecological inner-city development and population control in the overpopulated central districts of Shanghai (Evans 2009). Indeed, these landscapes of post-industrial Shanghai eventually captured the attention of the public and media, and the authorities began to commit to supporting these new post-industrial processes. In 2005, the Shanghai municipal government adopted a strategy focused on 14 creative clusters aimed at enhancing the industrial enclosures to attract tourism and real estate development (O'Connor and Gu 2012). As a result, several "art factories" were converted into reusable post-industrial buildings, a process that then expanded to other old mercantile sites with funds and subsidies from the government (Wu Weiping 2004).

However, even if the official discourse of the Chinese government was to carry out harmonious urban regeneration, the emergence of these cultural clusters attracted a new upper-middle class, a process which very often excluded local residents and low-skilled "rural-to-urban" migrant workers (*mingong*) from state planning (Yu and Francis 2018). These two antagonistic positions engendered and deepened the myth of identity creation and the understanding of Suzhou Creek's deindustrialization process. Gauvrit's photography attempts to capture the impossibility of both parallel worlds, in a moment where their trajectories were intersecting with each other. This article explores how documentary photography as an object of representation can also bear witness to the broadest and most profound socio-cultural changes, and specifically the historical links between the industrial and post-industrial cityscapes in Shanghai.

The Notion of Time in Documentary Photography and the Evolving Representation of Industrial Landscapes

From the outset, the history of documentary photography has been associated with institutional endeavours that sought, since the end of the 19th century, the apprehension of reality as a positivist effort for capturing the telos of progress (Newhal 1982; Berger 2013). As a matter of fact, during most of the history of photography, there was also a predominant trend to depict both natural and human-altered landscapes. One of the first artistic movements triggered by the new technology, pictorialism, grew as part of the colonial apparatus and its expansion toward the American West. In the search for beauty, the earliest pictorialist artists set their hearts on seizing every detail in the visual interpretations of pristine and virgin natural locations, laying the foundations of early photography. Their

photographic canvasses thus reinforced sanctioned discourses of American civilization as opposed to the newly found wilderness (Cronon 1992). Apart from this link between the camera and America's nation-building, there was also a parallelism between photography and modernism, which originates from Baudelaire's publication (1859) *On Photography, from The Salon of 1859,* and relates to the fact that photography was humbly serving both the sciences and the arts. This was a departure point and inspired a debate around the new medium as a space for reflection situated halfway between positivism and the artistic issue of representation. Scientific knowledge and artistic actions have constantly adapted to the historical development of the industrial world. In this regard, documentary photography has not only been concerned with puritanism and conservatism in terms of building the nation via the picturesque in rural, old, and natural settings but it has also been involved with the dangers of industrialization in terms of dislocation, landscape transformation, and countryside's depopulation.

More specifically, there was also a great interest in photography focusing on the manufacturing process, partly because industrialists understood the power of such visuals to promote both their industrial manpower capabilities and products to the public (Peterson 1992). Photography thus contributed to creating strong bonds between cultural identity and the memory of the state-of-the-art of the largest industrial undertakings. For example, Ford Motor Company commissioned a photographer to document its engineering facilities in Michigan in 1927. Such photography was concerned with the rhythms and forms of production, to accentuate technological developments and astonishing structures with colossal machinery, large workshops, vast production lines, and towering chimneys (Nye 1985). This objectivist epistemology embodies what Paul Strand termed "straight photography" in *Camera Work: A Photographic Quarterly* (1917) which turned its back on the pictorial movement to produce simpler and flatter photography. Strand's modern selection and framing of suspension bridges, urban scenes, and industrial ecosystems forged the identity of documentary photography in the years between World War I and the 1929 stock market crash (Langford 1977).

Against the historical background of Fascism and Communism, the modernist photographers were interested in the power of technology, using the medium's technical applications to combat authoritarianism through propagandistic visual messages, knowing that their utopias were promising a better present: "By the 1920s, aesthetically ambitious photographers abandoned the painterly imperative and followed divergent paths—some embraced pictorial rhetoric influenced by Dadaism and Surrealism (e.g. Man Ray) while others (e.g. Eugène Atget) were closer to realist paradigms" (Ray 2020, 141). Photography and the visual representation of cultural heritage thus underwent significant changes during the

post-World War II period "From the singular 'historical-cultural' to the plural adjective, the patrimony unfolded in urban, industrial, genetic, natural, scenic, environmental, archaeological, covering a semantic declension that no longer confines themselves to the limits of the material world" (Nedel 2011, 7). To some extent, the new objectivity of photography laid emphasis on the depth of field and froze the most extraordinary industrial landscapes to reveal their "nowness", whilst mediating with a transformative modern experience (Toth 2015). For this purpose, the camera's possibilities guide us into Benjamin's (1968) term "aura", which designates time as a temporal permanence that haunts the image itself. This reflection about the aura offers a genuine concept of time in photography, since Benjamin thought that the mass reproduction that photography enabled destroys the auratic values of unrepeatability and singularity.

From these art critics and artistic revelations, the 'new vision' photography was born, and its embrace of abstraction rejected the 'real' photography of the New Objectivity: "While with the New Objectivity the referent object was accorded priority, the pure visuality of the New Vision dematerialized the object, which circulated through the aesthetic social form of the photographic. A further challenge to temporal fixing was apparent in critical social realism, for example in workers' photography, whereby the representation of the real was embedded in a utopian temporality" (Ray 2020, 152). With reference to the second point of this quote, it was necessary for the photography of factory workers to engage in some sort of transparent realism, even though it was arbitrated by beautiful arrangements that could, simultaneously, suggest more than was directly evident. And yet as Barthes (1980) states, this temporal and formal realism is joined with an emotional punctum, as an expansive temporal response that endorses a past experience or action that is temporally extended into the present. Barthes affirms that both the formal and temporal punctum go beyond the image, to yield a blind spot that allows the viewer to revisit the past, even if it is as a fleeting moment that allows us to recall something. In other words, the power of authentication is more crucial than the one of representation, because it maintains the referent itself in the image. This intersubjective breaking point or punctum can be enacted through a glitch in the lighting composition of those iconic objects and other coded devices, which renders the visible industrial transformation before World War II into naïve realities (Ray 2020). As such, the emotional punctum that Barthes mentions is recorded in the smoke rising from colossal machinery and large metal pipes that shrink the labourer.

A new practice that emerged in the US and Europe was the development of institutional documentary projects between the 1930s and 1960s, which principally bore witness to the social problems among poor farmers (Newhall 1982). The Farm

Security Administration's (FSA)[1] photographic project directed documentary photography to provide epistemological validity to the reality of poverty in America, and it was carried out under the non-explicit propagandistic control of the state (Tagg 2003). Davis (1996) insisted that FSA photographers were not only giving dignity to ordinary people by recording their domestic circumstances, anchored the reality of the Great Depression, but their active and investigating cameras were also blending the pictorial and humanistic virtues in a distinct and socially aware manner. Without completely eschewing the world outside of the photographs, the visual documents created under the FSA locate their point of view in the unintentional relationship between the index and the object (Dubois 1986).

From the 1960s to the end of the 1980s, the Western industrial landscape was changing. This reconfiguration process emptied the city of industries and caused a subsequent industrial restructuring and conversion of old properties (Palmer 1990). The disappearing cultural memory of the industrial city proved that the manufacturing landscape was awakening and succumbing to the new productive paradigms (Lynch 1960). Bernd (1931–2007) and Hilla Becher's (1934–2015) images of steel mills' tanks and plants in silver gelatin typologies (1970–1985) captured the last moments of these industries, which became outdated in the Ruhr wastelands. These photographers were not interested in the functionality of these compositions but in highlighting the obsolescence of industrial production in West Germany in those years. What is in fact highlighted on these archaeological sites is Europe's most essential rustbelt, since: "the Bechers' archive brings a new visual layer to the landscape of memory associated with the Ruhr district, challenging our perceptions of this region as a landscape of labour, coal, and smog" (Barndt 2010, 276). Regardless of their scientific rigor, the Bechers' direct documentary photography with frontal shots, orthodox lines, and a certain distance of the infinite combinations of buildings and machines, obtained fascinating results with historical value, without being sublimated. Despite the mimetic reality or the figurative and socio-cultural codes of the Bechers' Dusseldorf School imprints, paraphrasing Barthes (1980, 155), their topologies gave an account of the historical, ethnological, and ideological extent of those abandoned places.

In 1975, the Bechers were also part of one of the most far-reaching exhibitions in the history of the genre, *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape* (1975), whose most representative photographers denaturalized the sublime and eternal imagery of the American pictorialists. By contrast, the Bechers' visual claims advanced banal motifs of the growth of American suburbs (Szarkowski

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1   Franklin D. Roosevelt established an agency called the Farm Security Administration (FSA) in 1935, which was in charge of coordinating photographic documentation efforts in the country's impoverished rural areas.

1966). Moreover, after this success, and with the rise of television, documentary photography came to be a subset of the contemporary institutional art gallery system. It is worth mentioning that the efforts of photo-journalism and mass media to replicate endless images in both print and audiovisual broadcast programming expanded its intellectual scope through Manovich's literary theory of the image in real-time (2001). Indeed, Manovich's arguments about the evolution of screen technologies partially explain the new complexities of documentary photography and how it is able to survive with respect to the mass production of the news-media industry. As an attempt at survival, the apparent neutral aesthetics of the new topographic vernacular photography took a similar stance to the Russian formalists, whose aesthetic devices departed from the idea that art is something extraordinary, whilst non-art records can be designated as ordinary. Hence, it is the ambiguity of these topographic works that both beautify and strip industrialization of any pictorial frills and which position those artists as the most politicized and activist documentary photographers (Kane 2018). The neutrality of the documentary in the new topographers can also be put into question in their appropriation and re-appropriation of an everlasting continuum of striking iconic symbols and vernacular vocabularies from previous documentary photographers, including pictorialists and modernist movements of all kinds. There is a continuity between the past and present artistic concerns that progressively stretches those earlier aesthetic experiences. This "that-has-been" past subjective becomes a form of "theatricality" over time, in Barthes' (1980) words, and can be interpreted as the reconciliation of different artistic formulas, where language materializes and transpires, breaking away any agreement with verisimilitude.

By the end of the 1970s, the modernist trajectory entered a crisis of representation in a moment when the mainstream of creative documentary's scientific discourses, which set forth the undercurrents of realism and positivism, was also put into question. To this end, the cultural and institutional conditions that supported the scientific and quasi-photo-journalist conditions of documentary photography began to change (Clarke, 1997). Furthermore, in the 1980s, Deng Xiaoping's open-door policy promoted a renewed realism in documentary photography, which departed from the earliest expression of socialist realism, whilst the country experienced a "cultural fever", and experimental art spread throughout the nation, culminating in avant-garde photographers documenting and intervening in cities (Wang 2015; Ortells-Nicolau 2017). Art academies and photographic salons reopened their doors in an atmosphere of relative political relaxation, which smoothed the way for the reintroduction of formalistic compositions intermingled with humanism. These changing cultural and institutional conditions were indigenizing documentary photography in post-socialist China, which crossed the space between

legitimization and social commentary on the one hand, and the sacrifices and huge progressive efforts being made in the regeneration of a service-based economy and its post-industrial logic on the other (Wu Weiping 2004; Lu, 2007; Hacking 2015; Shi 2018). As Zhou (2018) discusses, there was a compendium of power relations from intellectuals, journalistic practices influenced by both socialist realism and Western documentary media, as well as curatorial persuasive methods that carved out the documentary genre as an art, forging a non-critical Chinese post-socialist realism. It was in the context of these broader developments within the "domestic turn" that home-grown documentary photography was developed. In this respect, Lopez-Mugica and Whyke (2022) contextualize a kind of more experimental photography that was critically capturing the incessant gentrification of Chinese cities, which crumbled the Maoist-style architectural arrangements of downtown areas into ruins. The authors further claim that amateur documentary photography and other independent experimental visual forms "served as evidence of exploitative and brutalizing political factors. Over the past last decades, artists' perceptions have made visible the limits of growth beneath the surface of utopic political imagination" (Lopez-Mugica and Whyke 2022, 5).

Social commentary concerning urban modernity was also noted by Wang Bing, a key member of the documentary movement, who shares his preoccupation in his *West of the Tracks* (2002) with regard to the industrial change of Shenyang in Jingling province, singled out as the once-prosperous central-planning capital of the northeast rustbelt. Wang Bing's nine-hour documentary pays homage to Sebastian Salgado, the extraordinary social documentary photographer who recorded the impoverished conditions of factory workers during the manufacturing decline caused by the shift to a service-based post-industrial reality in Brazil (Lü 2005). What also makes Bing's documentary special is that the factories and their surroundings are brought closer to the audience as leading protagonists of the documentary, whose distressing unresponsiveness reminds the spectators of the state-run machinery and its embryonic rationality. It showcases how the ruination of the soviet-design urban model that functioned as a social engine of "utopia" has finally upset the stability of factory workers and land use, whilst rendering visible desires for the rustbelt's rejuvenation and new developments driven in the uninterrupted intersections of state-capital and the development of urban villages (*chengzhongcun* 城中村) in post-socialist China (Chu et al. 2022).

From a different perspective of the ruins amidst the old state-sponsored heavy industry factories, some Western landscape photographers, such as Edward Burtynsky and Andreas Gursky, to name a few, have sublimated the degradation or factory zones which makes them suitable for use as timeless locations of non-progress in the new, profit-led market economy. Their photographic efforts "reduce

the thread of time to a point" which can re-contextualize the ambiguous meaning of the documentary genre (Dubois 1986, 163). As happened with the first avant-gardes, there is a break with the sensorimotor relationship of the real in their images, and their representations what Augé claims as "the presence of the past in a present that supersedes it but still lays claim to it…" (2009, 75). In a similar vein, Deleuze (1989) addresses the evolution of the perception of time from the modification of the movement-image in classical cinema to the time-image in modern cinema via experimental films, including those which draw on Dada and Surrealism, or *nouvelle vague* works such as Resnais's *Last Year in Marienbad* (1961). The shift from the movement-image into the time-image is equal to the repetition of the real-time in the present, which gives rise to the breaking of the chronological logic of time (Deleuze 1989, 360). Considering Deleuze's accounts of temporal experience, we could also rethink how documentary photography was repeating the present time, situated between linear time and atemporality. On the one hand, these temporal sequences, as they stretch out in the subliminal landscapes of Burtynsky and Gursky, privilege the parts over the whole, reassembling them in stereotyped visualizations of post-colonized societies, rather than taking control away from expected visions of the industrial other. Documentary photography has transferred colonial and imperial ways of seeing the world to celebrate the benefits of the industrial landscape and to classify the industrialized other with a simplified picture of reality (Kolenda 2019). On the other hand, Burtynsky and Gursky's sublime ethnocentrism blends overpowering colours, which are profoundly altered by non-human forms of industrialization and essentially pose formal and conceptual questions of contemporary art photography: "Although remnants of materiality, of 'thing-ness', still adhere to it [the photo], its value is not in its being a thing, but in the information, it carries on its surface. This is precisely what characterizes the post-industrial in general: it is the information, not the thing, which is valuable" (Flusser 1984, 36).

However, between Deleuze and Flusser comes a third way through the idea of movement as a mediator, which moulds the geographical shape of space and the subjective experience of time. It is crucial to account for what Ashmore (2019) suggests concerning the mobility between dispersed geographies that can be moulded as prolonged events. Ashmore draws on the context of northeast England's industrial landscape and its linkage to the past, to claim that there is a kind of mobile contract between those who inhabit those spaces with their representational pictures, proving that local viewers' imaginary visions have always been on the move. Such mobilization of socially eventful interactions, historical objects, and internal structures exists beyond the image itself. This harvests neutral factualness, which can adjust to the subjective experiences of the people who linger

around such locations. Likewise, we argue that Western photography's diverse spaces and timelines can be mobilized by people and things found in Asia in an ongoing transnational process between the West and China.

Having to reflect on how the qualities and properties of Western documentary photography deconstruct modernism, its representations seem susceptible to the crisis of the universal values of modern progress (Foster 1983). There is not just a rupture with the uniformity of modernist aesthetics, but also with heterogeneity in the epistemic interpretations of how the development of post-colonial landscapes and the unequal effects of globalization affect the ways of perception and knowledge. Such a reflection does not attempt to be exhaustive, but it imagines the beginning of the description of some expressions and categories that allow us to clarify the conceptions of time associated with Western documentary photography and its own history in its intersection with the Chinese industrial and post-industrial scenes. Our interpretations in the ongoing process of post-industrial landscapes in Shanghai lie in the shared imaginary universe of Gauvrit's documentary chronotope. As Holquist (1990) explains, Bakhtin cultivates the idea of a chronotope in novels, which can develop nuances from spatial locations to move events along, and thereby represent historical time. Gauvrit's chronotopes and sub-chronotopes are examined to realize how both parameters not only re-erect boundaries that can challenge the viewers to visualize those abstract images, but can also convey threads to understand the frictions and ruptures before, during, and after this post-industrial transition and the post-socialist belief system that continued.

Case Study: The Chronotopes of *Shanghai in JP Gauvrit* (2008)

Chronotopes and Sub-chronotopes as a Socio-cultural Semiotic Method

Based on a socio-cultural semiotics analysis, semi-structured interviews, and archival work, this article explores post-industrial cartography from a constructivist and relational perspective, rejecting it as a given ontological category. Gauvrit's cultural vistas of an industrial past allow the artist to reflect reality and acquaint the audience with a set of knowledge and visual cues with the objective of reproducing an economic and socio-cultural identity: the industrial myth. In doing so, the article assesses how these industrial landscapes have changed over time, and how these visual places also conceal spatial arrangements that inscribe and reinscribe the smallest socio-cultural stories. In particular, in order to explore the capacity of time and space to engage in such a cultural construction, we draw from

Greimas and Courtés (1982) to adapt Bakhtin's "chronotopes" in Gauvrits' documentary photography. By inferring Greimas and Courtés's alethic modalities, as linguistic principles of both truth and possibility, we propose a cultural matrix so as to understand Gauvrit's photo-essay as follows: (1) the chronotope of necessity (premodern), which corresponds with the chronotope of the idyllic and the chronotope of the castle, as chronotopes of cyclical time; (2) the chronotope of the possibility (modern) related with the chronotope of the "road" as an avenue for possibilities; (3) the chronotope of impossibility (postmodern) in close proximity to the idea that any rearrangement of time and space cannot transpire like a modern utopia. This schema corresponds to the essential characteristics of the chronotope of "genre"—an intertextuality of belated photographers and styles—which are endowed as sub-chronotopes of possibility in our analysis. We consider documentary photography as a visual tool that moves between art and realism to eventually grow into a channel of representation of the myth of industrialization, an essential symbol that represents the cultural and social transformation of Suzhou Creek's post-industrial landscape.

The Cyclical Photographic Necessity of Suzhou Creek

Documentary photographers have often attempted to depict the images of industrial power plants and assembly factories as part of a shared imagination to perpetuate an idealized nostalgia. Bakhtin's (1981) reading of the past sketches out knowledge and understanding about how the past persists in the present, a temporal quality that resonates with one of the most significant defining characteristics of the chronotope of the castle. These theoretical interpretations of the Bakhtinian chronotope of the castle could thus be supplementary to Gauvrit's specificities of time. Bakhtin metaphorically describes the chronotope of the castle as "architecture […], as furnishings, as weapons, the ancestral portrait gallery, the family archives" (Bakhtin 1981, 240). In that view, this chronotope can correspond with the permanency caught in the historical temporalities of the factories haunting Suzhou Creek, adding an archival value to their cultural heritage. Gauvrit is familiar with the changes concerning the temporal modes of production, unveiling the darkest side of this urban renewal: "Thus, there will be no museum of an end of a century Shanghai. Gone are the chains of buildings with faded colours and laundry hanging in the open, the blackened lanes with badly ensured concrete houses with tilting roots, the barges on opaque canals and the muddy Suzhou Creek, formerly the belly of Shanghai and today a new Rivera for a privileged elite and a Nouveaux Riche" (Interview, January 21st, 2015) (Figure 1). In light of this quotation, it is considered that the historical

time or the chronotope of the castle replaces the socialist image repository of a utopian industrial world, intensifying these eventful changes into historical details. In the task of envisaging the newly embryonic post-industrial landscapes, Gauvrit does not want to enter into the "danger of excessive antiquarianism" with regard to a nostalgic past of Suzhou Creek's deindustrialization process (Bakhtin 1981, 246).

Figure 1. View of Zhabei district. (Source: JP Gauvrit, The reproduction of the images is strictly forbidden without the author's written approval)

Thus, in Figure 1, the corrosion and rust of the industrial structures become projections of Maoist forces, which are interrupted by the overhanging buildings of a new post-industrial Shanghai or by the farming spaces of a pre-industrial era (Figure 2). These signs of deindustrialization convey what is described by Dubois (1986) as being a territorial need/cyclical time couplet. In this respect, Gauvrit is also concerned with the Barthesian "the thing has been there" (1980, 76), which can only be rediscovered by the Chinese other's comprehension of non-linear time. On the basis of the above, the "chronotope of the castle" can alter the most obvious historical narratives, what Bakhtin claims as "historical inversion" (Bakhtin 1981, 397). Most of all, the natural, the industrial and the post-industrial come together as a continuous "historical inversion" to produce a post-pastoral

co-existence. Gauvrit reinforces this point when he asserts "I am sometimes like a French post-impressionist ([laughs]). I like their underlying composition" (Interview, January 21st, 2015) (Figure 2). Undoubtedly, there is a certain tone of impressionism in his spatial aesthetics that has been gathered by the picturesque quality with the aim that: "the picturesque [...] permitted the illusion of hope. It not only brought the contraction of future time bringing distant objects closer, but also the magnification of the minute, the God-like survey of the great, the picturesque assembled by time and space, presenting society as a community of objects" (Carter 1997, 244) (Figure 2). Accordingly, it is plausible through the picturesque to penetrate into the topography and the imagination of Suzhou Creek, even when Gauvrit's pictorial outlook might destroy the idyllic non-dualist Chinese chronotope. Therefore, the dialectics of an idyllic unitary time and space alignment is exposed by Gauvrit's chronotope photography, which has free license to continue or discontinue with the indigenous temporal unity of place (Figures 1 and 2). This impact is particularly obvious in Bakhtin's (1981, 221) notions of both the "idyllic chronotope" and its antinomy, the "destruction of the idyllic chronotope". Bakhtin proposes that the idyllic chronotope is: "[...] An organic fastening-down, a grafting of life and its events to a place, to a familiar territory [...] unity of place [...] unity of rhythm, the common language used to describe phenomena of nature and the events of human life" (Bakhtin 1981, 225–26). This homogeneity is modified by Gauvrit's multifaceted idyllic sense of place and time, which is similar to Bakhtin's "destruction of the idyllic" (Figure 1):

> We see the breakdown, the hero's provincial romanticism, which is in no way idealized: the capitalist [(post-)socialist] world is also not idealized, its inhumanity is laid bare, the destruction within it of all ethical systems, which had been formed at earlier stages of development, the disintegration of all previous human relationships (under the influence of money), love, the family, friendship, the deforming of the scholar's and the artist's creative work and so forth, all these are emphasized. (Bakhtin 1981, 224)

The two farmers that can be seen in Figure 2 and their individual ways of cultivating the land represent a symbolic-mythical character of a romantic pastoral West, rather than the cyclic symbolic recurrence of an idealized Chinese landscape. They thus symbolize the destruction of the idyllic chronotope, and the defeated way of farming by urban civilization, conquered by the overhanging skyscrapers behind the imposition of globalized Western capitalism. The irrefutable suffocating urban feature of these rural landscapes (Figure 2) exemplifies how the uniform aesthetics of the new gated communities and their slogans of a harmonious civilization prevent their inhabitants from continuing with a collective kinship. Wu

(2010) claims that the presence of gated communities, as result of post-socialist city sprawl, has also eroded the continuity of old ways of developing social relations and everyday interactions.

Figure 2. View of Zhabei district. (Source: JP Gauvrit, The reproduction of the images is strictly forbidden without the author's written approval)

There is also a clear intention in Gauvrit to evade the clichés of abandoned industrial plants (Figure 1), like those other emblematic artistic photographs that were circulating in the city at the time, either in official or non-official photographic circles, including Burtynsky's (b.1955)[2] wall-sized photographs of industrial landscapes, Liang Weizhou's (b.1962)[3] large format "pictorialist" series of the outskirts of Shanghai,[4] and Su Jin's (b.1981) massive black and white collages of industrial plants:

> I was fully aware that around 2005, it was a very common practice to shoot photographs of abandoned industrial buildings, and I was not interested in converting these places into museums. I started fooling around in

2   See *China* (2005).

3   See *Scenery and Still Life* (2008) *and Post-Jiangnan* (2006), in Liang (2010).

4   See *Memory City* (2009).

2001–2002, quite before their popularity. (Interview, January 21ˢᵗ, 2015)

Gauvrit's remarks situate us closer to the concept of the chronotope, and how the language of photography can also pick up space to build knowledge. In this light, the multidimensionality of the function of the idyllic chronotope is transformed through the destruction of the idyllic chronotope; these being two contrasting modes of production: the industrial and post-industrial. On the one hand, the idyllic chronotope does not allow the disruption of national myths and local identities as "accepted" prerequisites of "unity". On the other hand, the destruction of the idyllic may not necessarily be in search for the scars of Chinese history in the ruins of these industrial zones. Both chronotopes threaten the real value of these re-used buildings, turning them into a kind of museumification of this selected industrial heritage in an age of over-commodification and large-scale industrial regeneration. Gauvrit's chronotopes pose questions about whether or not "the duty of remembrance is not, to a certain extent, a strategy of forgetfulness" (Debary 2004, 122). Only in this way does Gauvrit find the everlasting indexicality of the here and now that traces back to repeated and identical images found in Western artistic representations of landscapes, which can extend cultures and materialities (Dubois 1986).

The Modern Photographic Possibility of Suzhou Creek

When contemplating Gauvrit's stylistic modernism, it is important to introduce Bakhtin's chronotope as an insightful tool to explore the metaphor of the road to explain the photographer's adventurous intersections between the West and China. Rode (2006, 13) defines the road as the threshold between two different spatial fringes: "centripetal forces orient culture toward the uniformity of a central authority and order; centrifugal forces orient culture away from a uniform centre toward the diversity of the margins". Rode claims that these combinations of centrifugal and centripetal events are a typical phenomenon of the chronotope of the road, in which the road could be a heterotopia for being equally close to the centre as to the margins. There is no doubt that Gauvrit's amateur chronotope responds to Bourdieu's (1965/1996) middle-ground position, in his analysis of the middle-aged and middle-income Frenchmen's use of photography. Photography is a middle-class art that infuses a comprehension of class habits through experience. Gauvrit's class customs can also be perceived through his mid-brow aesthetic practices, which can be placed somewhere between the conflicting margins and the conformism of the centre. The centrifugal-centripetal spatial organization can be deduced from Professor Lin Lu, who wrote the

following in the preface to Gauvrit's photographic book: "His angle and the position in pointing to objects is different, it is also the value in it. One can find this value in the discomfort or pain of confronting these pictures that seem to be unfamiliar to the Shanghainese, like those specific sinks in the backyard, cheap and colourful plastic tables, cloths hanging, high-voltage electric poles struggling with vegetables" (cited in Gauvrit 2008) (Figure 3). This coexistence consists of both heterogeneous familiar-marginal social geographies and unfamiliar-centres of Western abstractionism, in which these different expressions can be understood as heteroglossia of socio-ideological languages under Gauvrit's photographic codes. The term heteroglossia here comes from Bakhtin's analysis of the intersection of texts and subaltern voices, which can pervade a wide range of perspectives between the generic and the specific chronotopes, within a variety of social and artistic utterances and styles (Clot and Faita 2000). Prof. Lin Lu makes some interesting remarks on the socio-cultural constellations that emanate from the objects themselves while producing a reality that seems to contribute to a discursive "heteroglossia". Gauvrit's artistic and social voices thus finally meet at the chronotope of the road. The spatial uncertainty caused by the photographer's unfamiliar "modern" documentary style reformulates the familiar-marginal industrial idiosyncratic local life. As in Figure 3, Gauvrit's modernist composition of vivid abstractions configured abstract shapes and lines made by letters and the empty billboard grids, contrast with the brownish deteriorated concrete of the house, showcasing people's most intimate household belongings as well their humble and precarious conditions. It expresses a generational ability to survive when pushed away from the post-socialist centre, as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has shied away from Chinese Maoist thinking to save the factory workers' job security in these former new villages, to embrace policies that emanate from the speculative real-estate market (Pan 2005) (Figure 3). But it also grants some remarkable dignity to the subject matter within the strictest terms of Walker Evans' tradition of social realism, which developed in his work for the FSA. Gauvrit recognizes the admiration for Evans' photographs and their moral beauty in which, as Sontag (1977) proposes, there is a blurry line between the insignificant and essential. Yet upon closer examination, Evans was elevating the ethical scale of the subjects or objects photographed. The torn billboard in Figure 3 recalls Evan's vernacular language of signs-advertisements during the Great Depression that ironically reappear in Shanghai, and so establishes a parallel reflection of the living conditions of Western capitalist and post-socialist consumer societies, where pleasure and dreams cannot be realized as such.

Moreover, this socio-artistic peripheral arrangement situates the heterogeneous chronotope in a frame of tension, because of the smallest of material possessions.

Figure 3. View of Zhabei district. (Source: JP Gauvrit, The reproduction of the images is strictly forbidden without the author's written approval)

What makes the chronotope of the road become a border is that it bridges "several sites that are in themselves incompatible", not only in the relationship to the "chronotope of the real" found in Suzhou Creek, but also within the photographic representation of space (Foucault 1984, 10). As Gauvrit suggests, such virtual and fluid space "does not only come directly from the proper materials given by the language of photography, but also from a space that is not entirely derivative from the tangible or topological references of Suzhou Creek. It also comes from a space that contains instances as abstract relations" (Interview, January 21st, 2013). The materiality of these places is not a tongue-in-cheek reference to Flusser's (1984, 36) "thing-ness", as a toolkit metaphor used here to mobilize information and knowledge. Gauvrit is conscious of the potential of his heterogeneous photographic spaces, and "thingness" as a prominent feature of post-industrial photographs:

> My visual language intends to re-arrange the communal pivotal unit of all the possible spatial categories, in a basic dialogue between variety and harmony. Spaces can be seen as dispersed through the diverse parts of my photographic structures depicted, and can also be perceived as a coherent unity. (Interview, January 21st, 2015)

From here, the author's idiosyncrasies are also buttressed by his visual prompts, colours, shapes, and textures that make up his counter-intuitive utterances within his chronotope of the road. These "signs" or "parts" work as Bakhtinian's "sub-chronotopic" utterances that enrich the chronotope of the road and can all come fortuitously together despite their spatial or social remoteness (Bakhtin 1981). This threshold unfolds the border dynamics among social and material outer spaces (as independent and multiple voices including the light-sensitive objects) and can be valuable for an exploration of place as enunciated in the socially constructed space of a photographic story-telling account (Figures 3 and 4). Somehow Gauvrit simultaneously rejects any comparison of his photographic prints with a "postcard-exotic sort of illusion", and he goes on to state that "the abstract aesthetics do not veil the "banal", since the Chinese people that I have talked to, they have asked me why I am interested in the ugly pictures of such underprivileged areas of Shanghai" (Interview, January 21st, 2013). Far from an act of postmodern pastiche, which can be observed in his amateurish colourful prints, these images are constant reminders of the carnivalesque. Gauvrit harvests a set of lofty expressions of abstractionism that serve to dignify the "authentic" poor "other". This modernist attitude is likely neither ordinary nor synthetic to the gaze of the Chinese, who might not share those modernist dualist perspectives of subject-mind and object-nature (Figure 4) (Greenberg 1988). As for Chinese aesthetics, and the disappearing relation between subject and object in art that situates the self in unison with the universe, Tu Wei-ming (1983, 56) discusses that such a "privatized ego" can also engage in a fecund relationship with the natural world and the experiences of artists and their receptive audiences in different time periods. For this reason, in particular, Gauvrit appears to articulate the common folkloric histories of Suzhou Creek according to the rules of his own documentary syntax to address many "centres" (post-socialist policies of demolition/geometrical abstractionism) and "peripheries" (social encounters). This semiotics of culture means to encourage as many "border" dialogues as possible in a post-industrial society (Herr 2013). In Figure 5, there is not a highly rigorous Western perspective, and it is only slightly defined with three separated planes, which do not allow the viewer to step into a single area (even the main character the dog, it is not in the centre), but instead enables them to wander around the image, as happens with the multiple perspective technique used in traditional Chinese painting.

To an extent, the selection of these enunciated positions is part of Gauvrits's artistic and polyphonic *modus operandi* that sweeps along towards the interior of his photographs, together with the thematized referents of the real, to "enforce a movement through space" (Bakhtin 1981, 105). As in Figure 4, the hermetic framing of the old housing structures underlines the sense of asphyxia and how Shanghai's new service economy is speeding up the rhythm of life and excluding

Figure 4. View of Zhabei district. (Source: JP Gauvrit, The reproduction of the images is strictly forbidden without the author's written approval)

unskilled labour from the new knowledge economy. Gauvrit's modernist photography creates a modern chronological form of linear sequences that expands from the rural and industrial to the coming information society. These semiotic utterances are an abstract representation of space, which displays the social relations of an era. It makes it possible to reflect Chinese modernity through the photographic image that resounds with Barthes' (1980) premises, that photographs were real at one moment in time.

A Post-modern Photographic Impossibility of Suzhou Creek

To illustrate the crisis in the representation of Shanghai's industrial history, there is a chronotope in this photo-text that is a uchronic representation, referring to what would have occurred in Gauvrit's documentary photography if the conversion to a creative cultural hub would have not happened in Suzhou Creek (Portelli 1988). In other words, it secures a temporal punctum, defeating the historical to validate, simultaneously, that something has both existed and ceased to exist. Gauvrit's documents insinuate an additional emotional value, the prescribed punctum (Barthes 1980). The latter relates his work to the modernist mythological stories that idealize

science and technology, as authentic narratives of the documentary genre. It is important to be mindful that Gauvrit also actively contests his subjective intention, even when he acknowledges that "I attempt to be as neutral as possible. There are also images loaded with abstractionism" (Interview, January 21st, 2015) (Figure 5). As shown in Figure 5, Gauvrit gives a glimpse into an archetypal contemporary manufactured environment with a focus on factories that are still working (Figures 1 and 5) suggesting that the "post-smokestack" industrial era is not metaphorically visible or is still not happening in the presence of Gauvrit's camera lenses. There is also another reading that points to the possibility of a psycho-scientific complex state of subrogation in his desire to portray the factory as a fetishistic object that is no longer functional in the wake of deindustrialization. It begins with Freud's idea of working-through, whose double form of ritualization lies between remembering the dead as the regressive melancholia, and then accepting that the object is dead (never possessed, as a principle of masochism) (Freud 1985) (Figure 5). In Figure 5, the factory reveals nearly nothing about its organization, and our comprehension of it is still based – as Sontag (1977, 42) would put it – "on functioning". Nostalgia is probably the only way to comprehend it, since the operational lifespan of the factory is temporal. This mediated melancholic representation with ideological interests could be regarded as an ontological reality dependent on a ritualized transcendent entity that is no longer contingent on the everyday activities identified in his depictions. Rather than a mere autonomous aesthetic, this transcendental ritual form attempts to retrieve the "lost object of pleasure" to alleviate its disappearance (Adorno 1997). Mitchell (2002) warns us of the iconicity's excessive simplification of cultural and social connotations, in the selection of industrial frames that takes on several deliberately beautifying guises that can impede visions of other less attractive realities.

Moreover, as the densest semantic trope, the chronotope performs as a uchronic representation that permeates the most profound structural changes and the impossibility of representing a form of organizing work around the factory's utopian, Soviet model. This political system with Chinese characteristics, the so-called "Datong Socialism", epitomizes "the vision of a morally defined order, based on the principles of freedom and equality and on the absence of any kind of borders and other sources of conflicts" (Spakowski 2019, 92). The impossibility of a socialist utopia is replaced in this photo-essay album by a heroine (Figure 6), a girl doing intellectual homework, personifying the Chinese ideals of the "made in China" and "created in China' logos, which demonstrates, as Keane puts it, that the "creative process needs to be deeply embedded in the education system" (2006, 294). Mao's archetypal "iron worker" genderless model of Daotong Socialism appeared as young and strong females, looking both determined and gracious to convey ideal behaviours and thus ensure economic prosperity and national unity. This functional

Figure 5. View of Zhabei district. (Source: JP Gauvrit, The reproduction of the images is strictly forbidden without the author's written approval)

and anti-cerebral direction has been prolonged beyond the Maoist's proletariat thought in the superstructure of the regime, as part of a broader discourse in the "culture and education, literature and arts" (National People's Congress 1975, 16). Against this restriction of self-determination, Gauvrit's ideal heroine is literally turning her back to the camera, and metaphorically this gesture also could evoke the hope of a new generation of critical thinkers who could change the repetitive ways of doing things in China. Thus, this photo-essay is creating the possibility to imagine a China that could have been but—at the time the photo fieldwork occurred—had never been. Probably, although under the radar of the CCP and only in a few post-socialist and more contemporary New Village projects, artists and villagers were able to engage in some sort of community-building to create:

> novel space of social commentary and critique, not simply in the reception of the films by audiences but much more in the actual process of producing the documentaries. Most notably, this production process includes long-term relationships developed between filmmakers and subjects, in which the [documentarist] filmmaker might spend several years living with those being filmed, more in the manner of an anthropologist than of an investigative journalist. (Berry, Xinyu and Rofel 2010, 10)

Therefore, due to this limitation of creative provision and the impossibility of spending time with the others in the community, the poor Other is not necessarily portrayed as living within the confines of an undesirable circumstance. There is a possible alternative world, in which the subject matter of poverty is not necessarily represented with the ingrained passivity and distance seen in the Western tradition.

Figure 6. View of Zhabei district. (Source: JP Gauvrit, The reproduction of the images is strictly forbidden without the author's written approval)

Gauvrit also uses the word "toolkits" to describe the voices or styles of the genre of photography that are continuously used in his narratives and visual representations (Interview, January 21st, 2015). These voices give way to an alternative form of expression, turning Gauvrit's toolkits into a network of heterogeneous stylistic (multiple) voices, which in Bakhtinian terms could be translated as a sense of unity "in a polyphonic work" (Morson and Emerson 1990, 235). Gauvrit thus tends to cite or quote previous modernist genre styles, as he himself recognizes, "one can see Evans almost everywhere" (Interview, January 21st, 2015). In some photographs in the book, we can see a photographer full of resources, who, like Walker Evans in the 1930s, is able to use his straight photography while making use of all types of signs, billboards, posters, and other elements. Evans's photographic life started in Paris, where he was influenced by modernism and the avant-garde.

When he began to photograph the most difficult years of the American economy after the financial crash of 1929, it was possible to find a third meaning in his apparently meaningless oeuvre and impersonal neutrality (Tagg 2003). For this reason, there was always a clear intention by Evans to blend the photographic and linguistic signs to refer to, on many occasions, a nation that has been drawn into misery, or even to show it with a sense of nostalgia. Evans was able to find the extraordinary in the ordinary details of a gloomy America. While revisiting Evans' depictions of the poorest parts of the American South, Gauvrit's style of photography might not depict the underprivileged and their wealthy surroundings as well as Evan's work, in which "Hollywood glamour and consumer pleasures, image to create desire—were omnipresent" (Grundberg 2010, 14). There are no clear marks in Gauvrit's images of the discoloured luxury and glowing advertising "consumer economy" that abound on Shanghai's high streets. This prevents the locals from collectively imagining and fulfilling the banal desires of the Chinese consumer society that was emerging in their own territories.

Moreover, Gauvrit's concise style and middle-class adventurism are not actually interested in de-mystifying much of the Western "magic" documentary photography of the last century. In one of the images, we can see a dog that recalls Daido Moriyama's (b. 1938) most famous picture of a suburban "stray dog", a photograph he took during one of his many road trips in America (Figure 4). For this subject, the figure of the dog in both pictures seems to be an outcast, a punctum that rearticulates social class relations and becomes a poignant Barthesian punctum (Figure 4). On the one hand, the presence of the dog re-establishes a channel of communication between those who live in these traditional local industrial areas, and those who are no longer living in this type of rural atmosphere and might feel that uncanny punctum. On the other hand, with the subject matter of the dog, Gauvrit also permeates the sensual abstract poetics of his pleasurable dealings around these areas in a liminal way as "time-out-of-mundane-time", which can also inspire a sense of pastoral nostalgia (Howell 2013, 60). Therefore, Gauvrit's artistic fate is also tied to entire generations of Western photographers, who have been trapped by their private pleasurable and painful obsessions with the poor Other as middle-class tourists. Michelangelo Antonioni's *Chung Kuo* (1972) subverted the seed of socialist realism with his ultra-realist devices, which were related to the excessively stereotyped images connected with negative values outside China. However, Antonioni's (1912–2007) experiences of socialist modernity have been questioned by Sontag, who argued that the Chinese gaze cannot be blamed and that it is wrong to "find the Chinese naïve for not perceiving the beauty of the cracked peeling door, the picturesqueness of disorder[?]…[B]eauty is not inherent… it is to be found by another way of seeing" (Sontag 1977, 90).
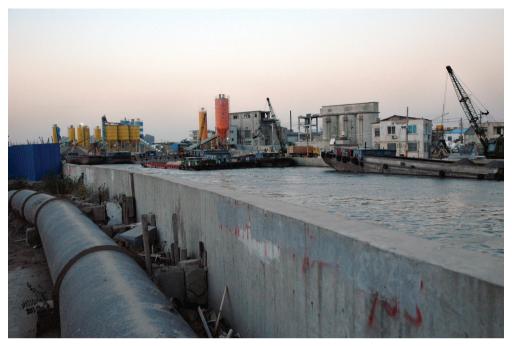
Figure 7. View of Zhabei district. (Source: JP Gauvrit, The reproduction of the images is strictly forbidden without the author's written approval)

These non-spontaneous and non-interventionist origins may justify Antonioni's aesthetic-related purposes since, as Sontag recognizes, "nobody ever discovered ugliness through photographs. But many…have discovered beauty" (Sontag 1977, 85). The Chinese expert gaze would recognize that there is an unshakeable connection between the river-side images of Gauvrit and some of the cinematic spaces created by Lou Ye's (b. 1965) *Suzhou River* (2000), which catches the imaginary eyes of the Western *flaneur* (Figure 7) (Lu 2010). In Figure 7, the riverfront is composed of industrial factory frontages, ships, metal pipes, water towers, smoke stacks, and abandoned buildings bringing about a temporal and timeless intimacy with the surroundings, so much related to slow documentary filmmaking. These screening spaces take us away from the crowds and carry on the legacy of the aforementioned Antonioni and Lou Ye to explore solitude in cities. Art and cinema remind us that we have lost our intimacy and that even if we have stronger visual contact with those who surround us in cities, we have lost our emotional connection with them. This transcultural visual dissemination of abandoned post-industrial places produces cityscapes, whose transmedia environments share similar deep and intense deindustrialized emotional landscapes. The possibility to represent Suzhou Creek without bearing in mind its future cultural cluster in this photo-essay implies that Gauvrit's representation also includes grim images of the deserted city in ruins and

the mistiness of the river, as ghostly fleeting glances, so predominant in transnational cinematic and artistic representations of Shanghai (Lopez-Mugica and Whyke 2022). There is thus also room to think differently about the creative city to come, through the derelict factories and the heroine-girl, as a creative place that has never happened yet, but both can exist in an ephemeral moment. Such a sub-chronotopic array of elements repurposes the decline of factory work from the old Maoist-age architecture and the rise of "creative" spaces, which have finally discarded the liberation of the working-class struggle and the eternal Maoist hope of security in work and life. Gauvrit's revelation can also come from the crystal-image category of Deleuze (1987), as one of his three chrono-sign strands that match orderly time. The crystal-image chrono-sign problematizes this post-modern impossibility by accepting historical and non-historical moments taken from the real and imaginary both being blurred in a kind of representational photomontage. Gauvrit's photo-album embraces uchronia as the impossibility of representing a "now-when event" (Portelli 1988). This alternative photographic present embraces the other re-visualizations of this deindustrialization event to modify and mediate with the sanctioned narratives of Suzhou Creek, projecting itself as a parallel cosmos.

Conclusion

Based on archival research, socio-cultural semiotic analysis, and in-depth interviews, this article revisits the local identity, cultural memory, and ultimately the myths of Suzhou Creek's post-industrial landscapes. The analysis outlined above can be complemented by arguments that the genre of documentary photography has its own spatial and temporal chronotopes. The production of borderless spaces between formalist and social enunciations imbues a history of visual language combined with less abstract features in producing dynamic chronotopes in transition. Through Bakhtin's chronotope of the castle, Gauvrit's time becomes artistically and culturally visible, as an uninterrupted cyclical expression of time-necessity. In other words, there is still a goal-directed historical narrative that is resilient with regard to the idyllic chronotope as a pre-modern consensus about Chinese history. However, the destruction of the idyllic local chronotope by means of the fast-track modernization introduced in China in the 1980s and 1990s disrupts the sense of consensus around the unity between the pre-modern and modern industrial myth. Furthermore, Gauvrit's road chronotope ties and unties a mythical time of the castle chronotope over the geography of these places. His modernist devices also point to the stories, origins, or signs as "modern" alternatives to a goal-oriented history. As such, the chronotope of the genre of photography together with other sub-chronotopes of time and space pinpoint visual forms of

"subgenres" and "belated photographers", which are brought about by his inter-textual manoeuvres. This is perpetuated by a technological fetishism that can reveal the significance of transnational myth that revolves around a "magic" form in photography, which is superimposed over any uchronic dreams and memories of the underprivileged working class of Suzhou Creek. Gauvrit's documentary photography lodges the consciousness of the displaced local self and the unconsciousness of those in more privileged positions and re-creates them in an authentic and creative chronotope of temporal and spatial representation.

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